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Wesleyan Theological Journal

Volume 19, 1 — Spring — 1984

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Presidential Address:

**Kuhn Kohlberg And Kinlaw:
Reflections For Over-Serious Theologians**

by
David L Thompson

He wanted very much to be reassuring and congratulatory. If there ever was a man who loved the Lord with all his "heart, soul, mind and strength," it was this septuagenarian saint. We had grown to love and appreciate each other through key conversations over the last few years, several times with him as my counselor. Now he was responding to the seminar I had just given as president of WTS at last spring's Christian Holiness Association convention in Kankakee, Illinois.

"Neglected Holiness Teachings in St. Mark" was the title of the seminar. The study presented Mark 8:31-10:52 as a narrative exposition of the central call to discipleship in Mark, "If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, take up the cross and follow me" (8:34). The presentation drew among others the following conclusions:

1. In these chapters Mark addresses issues of considerable import to the holiness movement. Some of these are:
 - a. Full surrender and death to self-sovereignty with corresponding surrender to the Messiah and His way as the heart of Christian discipleship.
 - b. Commitment to the Christ-like mind and way.
 - c. Discipleship from start to finish seen as surrender to the way and mind of God vs. the way and mind of man/Satan.
 - d. Exposition of the central problem facing anyone who would follow Christ as the "way of man," the self-centered mind diametrically opposed to the way of the cross and the Messiah.
 - e. Radical separation from sin.
2. Mark deemed the first disciples' experience useful for Christian instruction in spite of the essentially "pre-Christian" situation and the historically unique character of that experience.
3. Special concern for Holy Spirit language is absent from Mark's presentation, but the entire book is set in the context of the Messiah's ministry by the power of God's Spirit.
4. Evidence emerges that the call to discipleship is a livable, realizable goal.

5. Mark's emphasis in these chapters is not on victory, though victory is implicit in the victory of Christ and the continued validity of the call to discipleship, but rather on the disciple as a servant and on the content of that "service."
6. Mark presents the "following" of the Messiah as accomplished by a synthesis of God's grace and the disciple's faith.
7. Mark presents continuity in the call to discipleship from start to finish, parallel to the other "Be what you are" models in the New Testament.

Concluding remarks emphasized the seminar did not present a full-blown New Testament view of Christian holiness. The study rather focused on the contributions St. Mark could make to this theme in New Testament theology.

My sainted friend, a veteran of years of holiness preaching, sought to be warm and accepting as he suggested a time where we might discuss the seminar more fully. At that later meeting, this brother was able to express deep concern at several points. What he heard sounded more Calvinistic than Wesleyan, he thought. He was alarmed not to have heard the trade phrases of the holiness movement, particularly those referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and its power to effect entire sanctification and also to the instantaneous nature of the second blessing.

At the conclusion of what turned out to be a seminar for me, surveying important concerns of the holiness movement and the various Biblical passages to which they are attached, I confessed ambivalence to my friend. "In spite of the conclusions you heard from the Mark study," I tried to encourage him, "I agree with your main theological concerns and am willing to use the language you use in settings where that will communicate best. But I would only grant a third of the Biblical base you cite for those concerns."

As it happened this brother's disease reflected concern which surfaced elsewhere at CHA last Spring. A survey of 171 "holiness leaders" conducted by Wesley Duewel, Vice-president of CHA, showed (with 73% response) widespread perception that there is a lack of frequent, clear presentation of the holiness message, lack of commitment to and emphasis on holiness distinctives by ministers graduated from "holiness seminaries," and similar absence of clarity and commitment in other slices of the movement-such as youth workers, hymn writers and laity.¹ The results of the survey were aired in a plenary session of the association, with urgent concern expressed for the rectifying of these perceived departures from the movement's clear historic witness.

The misgiving in my older friend's "questions" and the somber tone of the survey presentation reminded me of other discussions to which I have been privy in WTS and at various academic institutions where it has been my privilege to serve. With an air of earnestness betraying the conviction that far more than doctrinal clarification was at stake, we have discussed questions such as the inerrancy of Scripture and the relationship of Christian perfection to the baptism/fullness of the Holy Spirit (but by no means limited to these). Clearly some of the participants felt deeply that the actual quality of Christian character to be produced in the adherents to the doctrine under discussion, the level of devotion to the Master to be anticipated

in them, and perhaps even their eternal destiny lay in the balance. Warnings sprinkled throughout the conflabs led one to know that not only faithfulness to the founders of an institution or movement were at issue, but the prospect of betraying the Gospel itself loomed before us.

Theological statement deserves careful attention, of course, as Dr. Bassett observed in his presidential address to this society last fall. While genuine theology, especially Protestant theology "does not permit itself to be confused with revelation itself" and "understands itself to be the time-and-place-bound reflection of believers . . . it is to be taken seriously as witness, even as vehicle for common witness."²

But for several reasons, I have come to the conclusion that the approach to the relatively narrow kinds of theological distinctions being drawn in the evangelical Wesleyan movement and the holiness movement that significantly overlaps it is far too serious. Therefore, with some trepidation and with the aid of Doctors Kuhn, Kohlberg and Kinlaw, I offer three main "reflections for over-serious theologians," hoping to provide perspective for ongoing dialogue.

Before proceeding, a disclaimer must be registered. Some will already have begun to position themselves with respect to the perceived viewpoint of the paper. In particular, some "old timers" will have concluded they are in for another unfeeling broad-side, and some "young timers" will have settled in to enjoy the fray with a tinge of sadistic, though sanctified glee. My own concerns are by no means so easily divided. The "over-serious theologians" addressed in the paper include the entire constituency of the WTS and the CHA, not some few persons marked by a particular age or traditional loyalty. Furthermore, in my judgment the concerns of the "holiness leaders" surveyed by Mr. Duewel are well founded and need very much to be heard and sympathetically responded to. If it were not overly redundant, this disclaimer should be placed at several points in the paper. Here, I can only ask the reader to take it seriously and come back to it now and again, if he or she thinks the "battle lines" are being too clearly drawn.

I. Paradigm Shifts and the Crises in the Holiness Movement

Enter Dr. Kuhn-Thomas S. Kuhn, that is, to assist with the first reflection for over-serious theologians. "Take heart! The crisis we perceive carries promise for tomorrow!" In his fascinating work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn analyzes the nature of scientific advance, attempting to understand the process by which presently accepted scientific views, methods and equipment came to be in place.³ While Kuhn's work was not intended to be applied to fields beyond science, I found his work stimulated my reflection on developments within the constituency of the Wesleyan Theological Society and the Christian Holiness Association of which this body is a commission.

Kuhn's analysis, which has drawn both lavish praise and severe Criticism,⁴ runs something like this. A scientific community proceeds in the context of a paradigm, "an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community."⁵ This ruling theoretic construct governs research, sets agendas for inquiry, defines anticipated results. Anomalies are dealt with by specific adjustment of the paradigm or by ad hoc explanation, or are simply left as unresolved

problems.⁶ When a sufficiently large number of anomalies inexplicable by the prevailing paradigm have accumulated, a crisis of confidence in the problem-solving ability of the paradigm arises. Out of this disequilibrium and loosening of stereotypes a new paradigm will emerge, eventually to displace its predecessor as the ruling construct under which normal science is carried on. Often insight for the new paradigm comes to those who are "either very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change," for they lack commitment to prior practice and to the traditional rules of the field.⁷ So they are able to see both the problems and possible solutions in new light.

As the crisis progresses and transition is being made to the new paradigm, proponents of competing paradigms frequently "talk through" each other, 1) because they disagree about the problems that paradigm must solve to be acceptable, 2) because the vocabulary and apparatus of the traditional paradigm is borrowed but used in new ways, and 3) because they in reality practice their trades in different worlds, looking from the same point but seeing different things.⁸

"The transfer of allegiance from paradigm to paradigm is a conversion experience that cannot be forced."⁹ Long term resistance, "particularly from those whose productive careers have committed them to an older tradition" is rooted in confidence that "the older paradigm will ultimately solve all its problems, that nature can be shoved into the box the paradigm provides."¹⁰

The conversion often requires a generation or more and may involve matters completely outside of scientific inquiry, idiosyncrasies of autobiography or personality. Nationality and reputation of the innovator or his or her teachers sometimes are factors. Faith in the paradigm's ability to solve future problems and also those problems which led to the crisis are the most effective persuaders.¹¹

In this viewer's opinion, anomalies arising from two major and at times related sources have brought the holiness movement to the sort of *kairotic* moment described by Kuhn, a "crisis" registered in the perceptions uncovered by Mr. Duewel and in the concern of my questioning friend. On the one hand, the paradigm for Christian perfection expounded in Fletcher's Last Check and eventually espoused by those who became the holiness movement, came more and more to be propagated by persons less and less interested in rigorous Biblical exegesis or serious theological reflection. The resulting extravagance in testimony and writing and preaching now enshrined in many of the holiness classics produced such a chasm between what was advertised and what the saints actually experienced that the credibility of the entire paradigm was widely called into question. Confusion was and in many places still is sufficient that numerous ministerial conventions and denominational seminars came to be devoted to explaining the meaning of Christian perfection to the professionals who should already have had the best chance of understanding their movement's central distinctive. Ten years ago Mildred Wynkoop called this first anomaly "The Credibility Gap."¹²

On the other hand, a generation of holiness students arose who committed themselves to the historical-critical study of Scripture in a way impossible for the preceding generation. That earlier generation's rebound

from classic modernism led them to associate such critical methods with theological liberalism and often to reject advanced theological education itself. As holiness students began to "go back to school," scholars emerged who pressed their use of historical-critical method into defending and elaborating the traditional paradigm in academically respectable ways, quite parallel to Kuhn's view of the function of research in most "normal science."

Their students have often been unconvinced by the defense, but by their mentors' devotion to scholarly study of Scripture have been brought to a willingness to press for an approach to Biblical study that would stand the scrutiny of professional exegetes outside the movement as well as inside. Thus, while they were committed to the central concerns of Wesleyan theology and often of the holiness movement itself, they were more concerned with whether or not the theology proposed could be squared with untendentious exegesis than they were with whether or not it sounded Calvinistic, Charismatic or whatever. This second strand of the crisis could be called "The Exegetical Gap."

My own guess would be that the perceptions gathered by the CHA survey are not all that wide of the mark. But the conclusions being drawn from those perceptions are, in my judgment, too somber. There is little enthusiasm among recent students from the holiness movement to repeat the previous generation's exact phrases or to mouth their testimonies quite as confidently, primarily because the paradigm won't quite square either with reality or with contemporary exegetical demands.

But it would be a serious misunderstanding of these students to construe them as non-Wesleyan or even non-holiness. They have not become Calvinistic, have not changed families and do not wish to. It is a mark of the movement's success, not its failure, that those emerging from the crisis or probing an altered paradigm seek to stand in the tradition, not outside it. That the generations "talk through" each other is unavoidable in some cases.

In 1977 I was asked to write a chapter in a proposed work to be called *The Wesleyans*, the chapter to be entitled "Wesleyan Theology: Is It Biblical?"¹³ The work has yet to see the light of day, not totally, I hope, due to the quality of my essay. My judgment was that while Wesley was capable of the kind of rigorous exegesis associated with Luther,¹⁴ his true gift lay in his broad comprehension of the deep unity of the Bible's major themes.¹⁵ The result was a vision of redemption that captured the genius of the Biblical covenants where grace and law, faith and works, holiness and love, sovereignty and responsibility, objectivity and subjectivity, individuality and corporateness, converge to sustain a relationship with the living God both secure and candidly dynamic.

And my silver-haired friend, uncomfortable with a historical-grammatical approach to the Scriptures, had still by reverent immersion in the Word imbibed those grand themes as well. So I meant it when I affirmed that my heart beat with his on his major theological concerns. But try as he would, he could not persuade me that Malachi's promise, "The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple" (Malachi 3:1), has the foggiest relationship to an instantaneous work of grace first, second, or fifth. That sort of exegesis will not stand in the market place of Biblical studies today

and will convince no one but those already in the paradigm. The intriguing fact is that he need not convince me of an "instantaneous" work of grace, for I am already agreed, in spite of what he thought he heard from Mark, but not on the basis of Malachi 3:1 or any other abused text or tense.

Perhaps it would be well here to return to Thomas Kuhn's study to draw the analogy more carefully between the scientific revolutions he describes and development within the contemporary Wesleyan/holiness movement. The processes described above by which Kuhn sees one paradigm displacing a preceding one was extracted from such major scientific revolutions as the Copernican revolution or the quantum physics revolution. But Kuhn says essentially the same processes go on at various levels in the scientific community. Paradigm shifts in scientific specializations arise out of the same sorts of problems and occasion the same "world view" alterations, sending, albeit more limited, side effects rippling in all directions through that specialization. The "discovery" of oxygen leading to the oxygen theory of combustion (vs. the phlogiston theory) and the "discovery" of X-rays by Roentgen are examples of such paradigm shifts within specializations.¹⁶

Of course, in the larger faith community there are theological revolutions going on, and have been for the last several centuries, of the magnitude of the Copernican revolution. In these major paradigm shifts the theistic question itself has been and is at stake. Whether theology can continue as theology without the "God of the Fathers" is the issue.

The paradigm shift underlying the present ferment in our movement is not that larger question, but rather a transition within the theological specialization of Biblical studies. The shift to a thoroughly critical study of Scripture within the evangelical scholarly community has rippling effects beyond the specialization, but is not immediately to be linked with the rejection of the God of the Fathers or the jettisoning of the larger Wesleyan paradigm.

When I confessed I could only grant a third of the exegetical foundation my friend cited, he felt such a confession depreciated the last generation's exegetes. The choice in his mind was between accepting the exegesis of the holiness classics or calling them inferior exegetes. But those are not the choices and no depreciation of our predecessors' work is necessary. Here again Kuhn helps one. It has been fashionable in scientific circles, he says, to look rather patronizingly at the primitive and sometimes mythological viewpoints of "scientists" whose paradigms no longer govern scientific inquiry. Kuhn contends that a more responsible accounting of these past figures demands the admission that their work was no less scientific and no less adequate than current views, given the paradigms under which they functioned.¹⁷

In some cases, no doubt, one would have to call some of the past exegetical work of the holiness movement unworthy, as one would have to say of some of our own work today. But not so in most cases. It is not a matter of patronizingly looking back on our predecessors and judging their work inadequate. It is rather a matter of the questions in the light of which their work was conducted. They could not answer questions their paradigm did not allow them to raise. They cannot be faulted for not working within a paradigm which, for various reasons, they could never accept. It is not that

Steele or Chadwick or Wood were poor exegetes. Such a judgment would betray both ignorance and arrogance, I think. But a paradigm shift has occurred within a specialty affecting their work. And that paradigm shift must now be taken into account. We are now accountable to questions they were not prepared to entertain.

But I am convinced Wesley's thought and the major concerns of the holiness movement can stand the more grueling exegetical test, though not simply by retracing the exegetical journey of the previous century. Several path-finding works in our generation demonstrate, I think, that an unshackled return to Biblical study leads to conclusions compatible with the themes Wesley perceived in Scripture also, not because they are Wesleyan, but because at those points Wesley was Biblical.

From a Baptist background in the 1950s Robert Shank conducted a thorough study of the issue of unconditional (i.e., "eternal") security of believers, reviewing the exegetical history of all relevant passages and doing his own careful work on them as well. The result was the famous work, *Life in the Son*, in which he confesses to be "one whose study of the Scriptures led him to abandon a definition of doctrine he once cherished." The quest brought him to an essentially Wesleyan position on that question-not because conditional security is Wesleyan, but because it is fundamentally Biblical.¹⁸

More recently Daniel P. Fuller has written of his pilgrimage out of a firm commitment to covenant theology, with Luther and Calvin's sharp distinction between Law and Grace. He worked to the conclusion that "in Pauline and other Biblical theology, true faith is not merely accompanied by good works as something coordinate with it, but that faith itself is the mainspring for producing works. . . . Sanctification, like justification, must be by faith alone."¹⁹ He came to see that the antithesis between law and grace "is only apparent and not real. This, then," he says, "makes the enjoyment of grace dependent on faith and good works," but in such a way that no door is open to human endeavor in which one may boast.²⁰

Fuller's quest was initiated by hard-nosed, exegetical questions on such texts as Romans 3:27; 9:31-32 and 10:4, questions that simply would not go away and could not adequately be handled by his covenant theology, certainly not by dispensationalism with which he also does battle in the book.

A third path-finding book appeared between these two, Thomas C. Oden's *Agenda for Theology*.²¹ Out of the bankruptcy of modernity with its unfulfilled promises and the persistent urging of his students for more adequate answers to their own emptiness, Dr. Oden came to issue a call for "post-modern orthodoxy." He proposes a critical return to the apostolic faith and what he calls the "ecumenical consensus" documented in the creeds, liturgies and spiritual directions of the first millennium church. He commends the breadth and power of that early consensus and calls for Christian community now centering in the presence of the resurrected Christ and living in moral and spiritual responsibility.²²

I do not want to put words in Oden's mouth, but he also seems to me to be a witness to the power of Biblical faith and its ability to draw persons from long treasured paradigms, when once the faith is seen for what it is.

It appears to me the time is ripe for precisely the sort of "new paradigm" look at Scriptures in the holiness movement that is seen in these

pathfinders. It is also my contention that precisely here lies hope for the very rebirth of the holiness movement for which the surveyed leaders seemed to long. But it will never come by repetition of the old paradigm or by recourse to the traditional exegetical supports in some cases, for some will no longer hold water in the market place.

The issue of the relationship of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and entire sanctification is an important case in point. At this point, among others, serious erosion is perceived. In spite of all the rhetoric, the main exegetical work of Robert Lyon and Alex Deasley, published in WTJ, 1979,²³ has not yet been adequately answered, and, in my opinion, cannot be. In my judgment they have done the sort of foundational work that can endure cross-traditional scrutiny and stand. In spite of the fact that some passages remain problematic when viewed from the perspective of questions holiness folks are trying to answer from them, their work makes it untenable in my judgment, directly to equate the various pentecostal experiences in Acts with what we call entire sanctification. Luke's intentions lay in completely different directions, as Wesley himself recognized.

That is, in my opinion, an exegetical concession long overdue in the holiness movement. The fact that their work "sounds Calvinistic" is irrelevant if the exegesis is sound. The granting of the case can only strengthen the movement's ability to press in the open market its more fundamental, Biblical distinctive: the witness that by God's grace we can live in the fullness of the Pentecostal grace and Spirit. The concession parallels those forced upon Shank and Fuller and Oden by the apostolic witness, critically encountered.

But such a concession is by no means the end of the line for those who wish, as I do, to link Christian perfection with the fullness of the Spirit. The work of Lyon and Deasley supports the conclusion that the New Testament presents life in the Spirit in a "Be what you are" scheme parallel to the Pauline indicative-imperative link. The transitions described by 1) dead to sin/alive to God and 2) old man/new man language are widely recognized (Romans 6, Colossians 3, Ephesians 4). The key Wesleyan contribution to the understanding of these "Be what you are" schemes is the expectation of their fulfillment here and now. Neither Wesley nor the holiness movement brings to the texts views of law-grace or overly pessimistic ideas of sin unconquered by grace that force them to draw back from the apostles' plain call. Wesley's understanding of the power of God's grace, enthusiastically propagated by the holiness movement, allows the interpreter to share the apostles' own apparent conviction that life in the "new man" is entirely possible now, life "alive to God" and "dead to sin" is a livable reality now, and life "full of the Holy Spirit" is an actual possibility now by grace and faith. Indeed they are not simply possibilities. These constitute normative discipleship.

Further it is not an abuse of Luke's work to appropriate pentecostal language in expounding the work of God's Spirit in the entire sanctifying process. Nor is it inappropriate to use the first disciples' histories to illumine our own biographies with God. The Gospel of Mark's major exposition of the call to discipleship rests on the assumption that the disciples' own foundering to "be what they were," should prove helpful to the church. Thus, if one ventures to describe the "experience" of the disciples, to ask

what actually happened to them at Pentecost in terms of the psychology of religious experience or the biography of spiritual formation, I would not hesitate to say they were "entirely sanctified" or "perfected in love," using terminology from my heritage. Their biographies were unique, spanning the dispensation.⁹ Those first disciples were not technically "Christian," the Christian kerygma (as for example in I Corinthians 15:1-3) as yet being unknown. But they were true believers in the Messiah, disciples in the making. In the Gospels they stand over against the Pharisees, Herod, Pilate and other Christ-rejectors. These men and women had left all to follow Jesus, and in significant ways were not "of the world." Granting all this, I have no difficulty understanding their experience at Pentecost, when all the pieces finally fell into place, as tantamount to entire sanctification.

But these are not Luke's concerns. If one proceeds to claim the same "experience" for the other converts at Pentecost to whom the "gift of the Holy Spirit" was promised and for the Samaritans, Paul, Cornelius and the Ephesians, by some lexical link with Pentecost, one has, I think, missed the point of Luke's story of the "spreading flame" and ventured into a sort of exegesis that will not stand. Luke has no such ethical or "Christian experience" interests, as sympathetic exegetes like I. Howard Marshall make clear.²⁴

Luke does have at the core of his presentation the reality of the fulfilled promise of the Father. Linking the vast Old Covenant hope of the day when God's Spirit would be poured out to the promise of John the Baptist and Jesus himself, Luke proclaims the day has dawned, the promise in all its marvelous power has been fulfilled. The message has spread in ever widening circles from the upper room, carrying with it all the potential of the mighty acts of God in redemption.

It is this grand vision which the holiness movement's exegetes so clearly caught. And the power accompanying its proclamation to call men and women to full life in the Spirit is long since proven. There is no reason why the grand sweep of that pentecostal vision need be abandoned, why the language of Pentecost must stop serving the message of full salvation. But, and here is the issue, it will have to be done from an altered Biblical paradigm, in slightly altered forms on a different exegetical base than the last century developed. My own judgment is that concerns registered by the holiness leaders surveyed may well be best met by those who 1) grant the exegetical case to Lyon and Deasley, and then 2) proceed to demonstrate the ways in which the essential contours of the holiness movement's vision of life in the fullness of the Spirit can be rebuilt and articulated from the altered Biblical paradigm. In my humble opinion, precisely those students most eager to refute the 1979 papers stand most likely to succeed in reconstructing such a vision that will pull two generations of Wesleyans together around the fulfilled promise of the Father.

To all of us who have the high privilege of participating in the disquieting time of crisis, when old stereo-types are dislodged by questions no longer satisfactorily answered and when new creative work can give rebirth to the entire endeavor of which we are a part, I say "Take heart!" Take heart, for the very crisis we perceive carries more promise than anything we have seen in recent years for the renewal of an effective Wesleyan and holiness witness in the world. The challenge for those from an older

paradigm will be to perceive the truly Wesleyan vision of their offspring. The task for those who have espoused an altered paradigm, to communicate the reality of a heartbeat synchronized with their mentors.

II. Holiness Thought and Character Development

Exit Dr. Kuhn and enter Dr. Lawrence Kohlberg to assist with reflection number two for over-serious theologians. "Relax! God's Spirit and the dynamic of the Gospel itself transform human character. Theological definition does not bear the burden." Kohlberg is widely known for his promulgation of a theory of moral development involving growth through levels of moral reasoning: I. Preconventional (dominated by self-interest), II. Conventional (oriented to authority), and III. Post-conventional (orientation to principle).²⁵ Extending work begun by Jean Piaget in the 1930s, Kohlberg began his study of human moral development with his doctoral research at the University of Chicago completed in 1958.²⁶ Since then he has become a lively catalyst for moral development inquiry in this country, inspiring numerous studies related to our concerns. We will not stick with Dr. Kohlberg but will use him as an umbrella under which to reflect on the relation of doctrinal formulation to character development.

Persons in the Wesleyan/holiness movement have already begun to appropriate and also critique his work as attested most recently in Donald Joy 's work, *Moral Development Foundations: Judeo-Christian alternatives to Piaget/Kohlberg*.²⁷ Among Joy's conclusions in other studies using Kohlberg's structures is the contention that over-concern with the proper use of theological language is a sign of arrested, not advancing moral development.²⁸

Years before Kohlberg's work, Hartshorne and May did a now famous study relating Sunday School attendance to the development of moral values in children. They drew the disturbing conclusions that 1) Sunday School attendance had little affect on moral values, and 2) only general, not specific relations existed between moral knowledge and moral conduct.²⁹ As recently as 1979, a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Texas assessed the work of Hartshorne and May in their "Character Education Inquiry" and drew conclusions supporting the validity of their research.³⁰

These general conclusions are supported by one of the most far-reaching studies of the beliefs, needs, values and practices of young people yet conducted by a religious body in North America. From 1958-1962 Lutheran Youth Research studied 2,274 selected Lutheran youth in the upper-Midwest, using the LYR Youth Inventory, directed by Merton P. Strommen and supported by six Lutheran bodies.³¹ The results of the entire study are presented in a fascinating work entitled *Profiles of Church Youth*, published by Concordia in 1963. Among the many significant conclusions the following are particularly relevant to our discussion.

Especially noteworthy is the lack of relationship between religious knowledge and values. Contrastingly, there is a relationship between religious earnestness and value scores. This information only reaffirms the obvious fact that indoctrination is not tantamount to communicating values.³²

And again,

Youth need the dynamic which indoctrination alone cannot give. The compelling pressure of mass media, friends, and family background shout the need among youth for an inner power. The evidence throughout the study clearly indicates the limited value of religious knowledge. And increase in cognitive beliefs is quite unrelated to the degree to which youth experience personal assurance, aspirations to service or are helped to live exemplary lives. . . . Something more potent than a knowledge of right or wrong is needed-and that is a living relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the power of God.³³

More directly related to our interests is a dissertation project completed in 1981 for the D. Min. at Asbury Theological Seminary.³⁴ In what, so far as I know, is the only work of its sort in our movement, Ronald Kelly studied selected groups from the Wesleyan Church he pastored and a neighboring Christian Reformed Church in order to test whether, in Mr. Kelly's words, "Wesleyans [were] measurably affected in their practical living by the doctrine of heart purity."³⁵ The core of the study was an analysis of responses to three case/dilemmas in which the respondents were asked, among other things, to isolate the issues involved in the case/dilemma, give elements to be considered in decision making related to the case, and recommend a course of action.³⁶

Mr. Kelly concluded that his Wesleyans and the neighboring Christian Reformed participants showed no significant differences in their responses to the case/dilemmas.³⁷ In an additional part of the survey where respondents were able to describe their "growing edges" the Wesleyan group verbalized more about "loving or caring for others."³⁸ Whether or not they are more apt to implement love than the Reformed group who phrased their growth points differently the study could not say.

To these studies I must add a reluctant conclusion from my own experience with the denomination of which I am a part. After fifteen years of ordained ministry, I confess seeing little evidence at any level of the church that we produce as a whole persons of loftier Christian character, more authentic devotion to Christ, more penetrating moral perception or more courageous moral action, more apt to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength than any other group of persons who claim to take the Gospel seriously. Our lofty doctrinal claims and enthusiastic trumpeting of holiness distinctives make the very average results all the more disillusioning.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development is weak, among other points, precisely at his "inability to explain the moral energy necessary for developmental growth," as Paul Philibert puts it.³⁹ Explaining the motivation that leads persons to want to do the moral acts of which they can reason, the why of it, is the problem.

It is clear enough that cognitive, doctrinal commitment cannot provide the "motors of morality," as Philibert phrases it. He concludes the three motors of morality are: 1) "marker events" which have "notable impact" and require adaptation,⁴⁰ 2) "relational commitments" calling for the "respect of another as a unique presence," and⁴¹ 3) "religious experience/conversion," "The experience of God."⁴² Philibert's conclusion parallels

Stommen's who discovered that it was Lutheran youth who were "earnest" about their pursuit of God whose values were altered, youth who somewhere in the process had been engaged by the living God. This laboring of the obvious is called for because of the equally obvious fact that while we know knowledge cannot produce godly character, we guard our cherished phrases, and define highly confined distinctives with a seriousness bordering on idolatry. The gist of this reflection is to remind us of what we are about in theologizing-the definition of who we are, the establishment of ground for common witness, the building of bridges to ever changing cultures who wish to know what we believe. And those are serious tasks, to be done with care and skill, but not with the sobriety attached to tending patients in an emergency room. If we can articulate theologically the Biblical claim that God has redeemed us and the entire cosmos in the person of His Son and calls us by the power of His Spirit to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, persons and cultures who hear and believe will be changed from glory to glory. Do not fear. "Relax! God's Spirit and the dynamic of the Gospel itself transform human character. Theological definition does not bear the burden."

III. Holiness Proclamation and the Larger Vision

Exit Dr. Kohlberg and enter Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw with reflection number three for over-serious theologians. "Rejoice! Where theological inquiry clarifies the vision of the living God acting to redeem His entire creation-including us, miracles of liberating grace occur!"

It would be a mistake from this essay to depreciate the theological task. One could reason, "You have claimed that theological definition makes little difference in character development. Of what good then is it?" One has to take seriously the conclusions of careful students of history who, having viewed the world from end to end, ask "Does history support a belief in God?" and then opine, "If by God we mean not the creative vitality of nature but a supreme being intelligence and benevolent, the answer must be a reluctant negative."⁴³ But historical "evidence" does not clearly warrant such a pessimistic conclusion. Without accepting an overly simplistic idea of the uniqueness of Israel in the ancient world, for instance, one can still cite data to support the contention that God's revelation of Himself not only instructed Israel but significantly elevated her moral and social character. The same may be said for the faith of the New Testament community known early, for example, by the fact that they did not "expose their children," in a world where such remedies were common place.⁴⁴ The thread continues observable through the whole history of the church, with Wesley's impact on decadent England arguing persuasively for a link between an authentic vision of God and the development of human moral character and positive social transformation. Of course there is merit to the theological task.

But only the grand vision of God who acts then and now in love to redeem His lost creation and who calls the redeemed to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, carries the power to break the world's mold and renew the mind of man. So, the grand vision of God's Spirit who breathes life into dry bones and who gives birth to the living Church by His fullness, making good the long awaited promise of the Father is no illusion.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is life. But whether one is "filled with the Spirit" at conversion or entire sanctification, whether "receive/be baptized with/be filled with the Holy Spirit" are synonymous terms or no, whether Saul was converted on the Damascus Road or at Ananias' home, whether Cornelius was sanctified holy when he was "cleansed" in some way like the disciples at Pentecost—none of these doctrinal minutiae will increase or decrease the power of the overall vision. They are battles in a theological thimble.

Thus the entry of Dr. Kinlaw. At the same CHA convention where my conversation with the septuagenarian saint occurred, Dr. Kinlaw delivered an inspiring address from Exodus 3:1-15 and 20:1 ff. entitled "The Spirit Calls Us to Advance." The message painted a stirring picture of God's ability to call men out of bondage into responsible relationship with Him and to accomplish everything in their lives to which he calls them. Claiming our need to be neither doctrine alone nor experience alone, but knowledge of the living God, Dr. Kinlaw urged surrender to God until the "last corner of resistance to the will of God is committed to him for Him to conquer" (according to my notes of his address).

But those listening carefully for the holiness or Wesleyan movement's pet phrases to be repeated went away disappointed, for the flag words were conspicuous by their absence in this great holiness preacher. Nothing Dr. Kinlaw said could not have been said at a Keswick convention, a Southern Baptist conference or a Roman Catholic renewal convocation. In a conversation with him later, this leading exponent of Christian holiness agreed this presentation was a "broad strokes" vision characteristic of his ministry, developed over years of calculated attempts to communicate the call to Christian holiness effectively to the widest possible audience.

One could just as well have opened this section with "enter Mr. Colson," Charles Colson, that is, for he illustrates as well as Dr. Kinlaw that the Wesleyan message and the Pentecostal vision of the Holiness movement is alive and well. In my opinion, one would be hard pressed to name a truer son of Wesley in North America in our generation than Charles Colson. If his own ministry through Prison Fellowship and through his recent works, *Life Sentence* and *Loving God* is not an authentic call to Christian holiness and a testimony to the reality of perfect love expelling sin,⁴² I know not where one would look to find such a call. This is true in spite of the fact that Mr. Colson would be very uncomfortable with some of the theological claims we make, and probably could not sign the WTS statement of faith.

All of this to say that the future of the holiness movement does not lie in its success in perpetuating either a traditional exegesis of the book of Acts or a set of treasured phrases relating to the exegesis. The genius of the Wesleyan revivals and of the holiness movement's renewal was their success in setting before the masses the powerful "vision that transforms." Both Kinlaw and Colson admirably continue that holy calling. And, if Philibert's conclusions have any significance, we may be confident that when the promise of the Father is proclaimed in conjunction with life's "marker events," and brought clearly into life's significant human relationships, clothed in believable persons, the "motors of morality" will turn, leading men and women to be what they are in Christ.

So, take heart! The crisis we perceive carries promise for tomorrow! Relax! God's Spirit and the dynamic of the Gospel itself transform human character. Theological definition does not bear the burden. Rejoice! Where theological inquiry clarifies the vision of the living God acting to redeem His entire creation, including us, miracles of liberating grace occur.

Notes

1 "The Holiness Movement as Viewed by Holiness Leaders." Distributed and compiled by Mr. Duetzel, the results were distributed to members of the Board of Administration of CHA with Board minutes and other documents from the April, 1983 convention in a June 13, 1983, mailing. Two samples of the survey's findings are representative of the perceptions uncovered by the poll:

"7. The Holiness ministry today presents the message of a second definition work of grace:

a. Frequently and in a clear way 11%

b. Frequently but in generalities 53%

c. Occasionally but in generalities 33%

d. Only rarely in any way 3%

8. Of the ministers trained in our Holiness seminaries today:

a. Most continue a strong holiness ministry after graduation 2%

b. Most continue to be doctrinally committed to the Holiness emphasis but do not emphasize it in their ministry 60%

c. Many begin their ministry entirely committed to our holiness emphasis but gradually cease to emphasize holiness 11%

d. Many graduates from the beginning of their ministry Have little holiness emphasis 19%

2 Paul M. Bassett, "The Holiness Movement and the Protestant Principle," WTJ 18,1 (1983): 9.

3 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Second edition, enlarged, volume 2, number 2, *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970).

4 For example, Ian G. Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 102-118, as well as Kuhn's remarks in "Postscript-1969," *op. cit.*, pp. 174-210.

5 Kuhn, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 10-13.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 148-150.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 150.

- 10Ibid., pp. 151-152.
- 11Ibid., pp. 153-155.
- 12Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1972), pp. 39-52.
- 13Edited by Donald Dayton and Howard Snyder.
- 14The Biblical message was corrupted, in Wesley's opinion, by "putting a wrong sense upon" the words of Scripture, "one that is either strained or unnatural, or foreign to the writer's intention in the place from whence [the words] are taken." *The Works of John Wesley*, Reprint of the 1872 edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), Vol. VII, p. 470. Cf. XI, p. 429.
- 15In much the way called for now by Archibald M. Hunter *The Message of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1944), pp.9-20,118-122, and more recently by John N. Oswalt, "Celebrating God's Call and Our Potential," *WTJ* 14, 2 (1979): 96-98.
- 16Kuhn, op. cit., pp. 53-60.
- 17Ibid, pp. 2-3.
- 18Robert Shank, *Life in the Son* (Springfield, MO: Westcott, 1959), p. vu.
- 19Daniel P. Fuller, *Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum: The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. xi.
- 20Ibid., p. 63.
- 21Thomas C. Oden, *Agenda for Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).
- 22Ibid., pp. 3-4, 31-47, 126 and 157 ff., for example.
- 23Robert W. Lyon, "Baptism and Spirit-Baptism in the New Testament," *WTJ* 14,1 (1979): 14-26, and Alex R. G. Deasley, "Entire Sanctification and the Baptism with the Holy Spirit: Perspectives on the Biblical View of the Relationship," *WTJ* 14, 1 (1979): 27-45.
- 24I. Howard Marshall, "The Significance of Pentecost," *The Asbury Seminarian* (April, 1977), pp. 17-39, particularly pp. 31-34.
- 25As summarized in Donald M. Joy, "Human Development and Christian Holiness," *The Asbury Seminarian* (April, 1976): 11-13.
- 26Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Development of Moral Thinking and Choice in the Years 10-16," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1958.
- 27Donald M. Joy, ed., *Moral Development Foundations: Judeo Christian Alternatives to Piaget/Kohlberg* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983).
- 28Joy, op. cit., pp. 23-24.
- 29Hugh Hartshorne and Mark A. May, "A Summary of the Work of the character Inquiry," *Religious Education*, 25 7(1930): 607-619, and "A Summary of the Work of the Character Education Inquiry, Part II," *Religious Education* 25 8 (1930): 754-757.

30Earle Wayne Kenyon, "The Character Education Inquiry, 1924-28: A Historical Examination of Its Use in Educational Research," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1979, Noted in David S. Steward, "Abstracts of Doctoral Dissertations in Religious Education, 1979-1980," *Religious Education* 76, 4 (1981) 422.

31The sponsoring bodies were the Augustan Lutheran Church, the American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

32Merton P. Strommen, *Profiles of Church Youth* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), p. 85.

33Ibid, p. 241.

34Ronald D. Kelly, "The Relationship of Christian Practice to the Doctrine of Heart Purity in the Wesleyan Tradition," Unpublished D.Min. dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1981.

35Ibid., p. 2.

36Ibid., p. 60.

37Ibid., pp. 118-119, 130. 38Ibid., pp. 60 ff.

JOHN WESLEY: DISCIPLE OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

by
Luke L. Keefer, Jr.

Memorial inscriptions frequently attempt to sum up the essence of an individual's life. Two such inscriptions associated with Wesley's City Road Chapel in London are instructive in this regard. The significant excerpt from his tombstone reads:

This Great Light arose
(By the singular Providence of God)
To enlighten THESE Nations,
And to revive, enforce, and defend
The Pure, Apostolical Doctrines and Practices of
The PRIMITIVE CHURCH:
Which he continued to do, by his Writings and his Labors,
For more than Half a Century. . . .¹

The commemorative tablet in the chapel speaks of Wesley as

A Man in Learning and sincere Piety
Scarce inferior to any;
In Zeal, Ministerial Labours, and extensive Usefulness,
Superior, perhaps, to all Men,
Since the days of St. Paul.²

Should these early assessments of Wesley be dismissed as the hyperbolic extravagance of sentimental Methodists? Or do they have a justifiable basis in the factual materials documenting Wesley's life and labors? What did he say and do that would warrant such a conclusion? More importantly, what was his own self-conscious assessment of his role in Christian history? These are the questions that lead us to a study of the primitivistic³ motif in Wesley's life.

The Development of Wesley's Primitivism

Taught by his father to revere the patristic age as containing the best commentaries upon the apostolic writings and schooled at Charterhouse in the classics, Wesley arrived at Oxford University at a propitious time. The

patristic revival of the previous century at both Oxford and Cambridge had made numerous writings of the early church available to the serious student. The record of Wesley's reading at Oxford shows that he availed himself of this privilege and read much of the Fathers, especially after his decision to become a clergyman.

Two additional influences played key roles in Wesley's developing primitivism during his Oxford years. The Holy Club was an experiment in early Christianity in many respects. As Wesley noted late in life, the Holy Club practiced the community of goods modeled in Acts 2 and 4. The group's charities were in imitation of the earthly ministry of Christ to the needy. The more serious members were instant in prayer and the study of the Scriptures. They made virtues of fasting and frequent attendance at the Lord's Supper. The persecution they suffered for being "righteous overmuch" was reconciled in terms of the eighth beatitude. Wesley's rejoinder to his critics in these matters was the query: "Ought not the disciple to be like his Lord in all things?"

In his last years at Oxford, Wesley was in extreme debt to the Non-Jurors of the Anglican tradition. They turned his interests to early ecclesiastical tradition, especially its liturgical and sacramental features. Wesley adopted the Non-Jurors' assessment of the so-called Apostolic Constitutions and the Apostolic Canons, for they held them to be the authentic collection of apostolic teaching concerning proper church order.

Wesley went out to Georgia as a missionary inspired with this vision of the ancient church. The Georgia colonists showed little inclination to their pastor's ecclesiastical primitivism so carefully culled from the Apostolic Constitutions and other treatises on the primitive church. His insistence upon the immersion of infants, early morning worship services, water mixed with the communion wine, and other ancient practices had them mystified. They suspected he was a Roman Catholic in disguise, and fervently wished he would establish his new Jerusalem in some other parish, preferably on the other side of the Jordan.

His first attempt to restore primitive Christianity had been a failure. It was mitigated, however, by several redeeming factors. His reading of Bishop Beveridge corrected his views of the primitive church imbibed from the Non-Jurors. He discovered that he had extended the primitive era too late into Christian history. Also, he had accorded too much weight to the ecclesiastical decisions of the early councils, giving them a universal authority that should pertain to Scripture alone. Henceforth, he would date the end of the primitive church with Constantine's rise to power, would consider the Apostolic Constitutions and Canons to be sub-apostolic, and would be a faithful "homo unius libri," allowing no authority to approach that of Scripture. In the process Wesley had moved to a new understanding of the early church, but it would be nearly a decade before that became obvious to himself and to others.

At the same time Wesley was attracted by the evangelical primitivism of the Moravians. It was their piety that first caught his eye, but it was not long before he was probing them with questions about their doctrine and discipline. He was favorably impressed by the primitive character of their movement in these areas. Having been an observer of their election and consecration of Bishop Anton Seifert, he imagined himself carried back

through the centuries to the primitive Christian assembly, where leaders were called to their task with true simplicity. The Moravian revival of the primitive agape also captivated his spirit. In short, he saw the Moravians as those who had recovered more of the primitive Christian religion than those like himself who had devoted themselves to ancient ecclesiastical practices. Undoubtedly Wesley was prepared by the Moravians' demonstration of genuine Christian primitivism to be instructed by them concerning justifying faith.

The years 1738 and 1739 were crucial in the development of Wesley's primitivism. They were also symbolic in that Aldersgate and Bristol serve as significant code names for the soteriology and ecclesiology that marked the rest of his career.

One must first note the relationship of Aldersgate to Wesley's vision of a repristinated Christianity. Some nineteenth century Methodist writers gave the impression that Aldersgate was the termination of the primitivistic nonsense that marked Wesley's life at Oxford and Georgia. This is a most unfortunate misconception. Quite the contrary, Wesley found his true link to the primitive faith at Aldersgate, namely, conversion as a conscious work of the Holy Spirit.

He found his way to Aldersgate precisely because he agreed with Bohler to rest the case upon Scripture and experience. His study of the book of Acts convinced him that conversion was an instantaneous work of the Holy Spirit. The testimonies of eighteenth century Englishmen convinced him that God's work of salvation was identical in all centuries. Suddenly the door to primitive Christianity was open to him, a door he had searched for in vain among the ecclesiastical practices of the ancient church. Aldersgate, then, refocused Wesley's primitivism from ecclesiology to soteriology.

The wedding of soteriology and primitivism is pervasive throughout the entire course of Wesley's subsequent writings. It is the general perspective in the doctrinal standards of Methodism: his Standard Sermons and the Notes Upon the New Testament. However, a few specific examples from his writings might help to grasp the point. In Wesley's last sermon before Oxford University, he preached on Acts 4:31: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." His description of salvation in the early church is Aldersgate theology through and through. He offended his polite audience in the extreme by holding them to this standard of the primitive faith and asking them if their Christian profession measured up to it. Bishop Gibson's handwritten summary of what he felt Wesley was saying in this sermon indicates that he understood Wesley's clear implication that apostolic faith was being restored in Methodist evangelism.⁴

Wesley's first Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion (1743) is a careful defense of Methodist doctrine and methods. Since it was directed primarily to Anglicans, he made frequent appeals to the doctrinal formularies of the English Church. However, his ultimate appeal was to Scripture and the testimony of the primitive church, for he portrayed the Methodist revival as a restoration of primitive Christianity. If any missed the point in his narrative, his brother's thirty verse poem on Primitive Christianity, appended to the end of the treatise, should have established the fact.⁵ For Wesley experiential salvation and primitive Christianity were now synonymous.

The last example comes from Wesley's Christian Library, his fifty volumes of abridged selections of the best treatises on practical divinity available to English readers. His first volume was most instructive. After extracts of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Macarius, which he felt best represented the Christianity of the sub-apostolic period, he skipped over more than a millennium of history and next presented John Arndt's True Christianity. Arndt was considered by many to be the John the Baptist of Pietism. Under the term "mystical Christianity," Arndt called people to an experiential knowledge of salvation. Thus, in the clearest possible way, Wesley was saying that the new birth, as Pietism understood it, was the connecting link to the piety of the early church. He gives us a strong hint here about his understanding of his own conversion under the influence of Moravian Pietism.

For Wesley the path from Aldersgate to Bristol was one of his shorter journeys. Bristol was the historical location where the implications of Aldersgate broke through into Wesley's churchmanship. Thus it serves as the appropriate code name for the inevitable ecclesiological readjustment brought on by Wesley's shift to soteriological primitivism.

In the early years of the revival Wesley came to a new understanding of the church. He perceived now what he first glimpsed uncertainly in reading Bishop Beveridge. His misguided ecclesiology at Oxford and Georgia was due to a static view of the ancient church. He mistakenly attributed universal value to church practices which were simply fitted to the cultural conditions of the early Christian era. His study of the church in Acts revealed a dynamic concept of the church. The Spirit providentially led the church to forms of government and ministry that enhanced the spread of the gospel. This fitted exactly with Wesley's own revival experiences at Bristol and elsewhere, where he was led to innovative measures to spread the revival.

In the first place, this meant that the true church was a missionary church as was the primitive church. Wesley told his preachers their chief task was to save souls. Parish boundaries established by centuries of ecclesiastical tradition would not be observed. Like the early apostles the Methodists would go anywhere the Spirit led to announce the joyful news of salvation. Moreover, Methodism repudiated the sacramental theology which saw salvation as conferred upon the entire community through the rites of the church. Christianity for the Methodists was not a matter of territory or ceremony; it was a personal matter of conversion.

Secondly, church government and practice now became purely functional issues for Wesley, though they had been absolutely formal issues for him at Oxford and in Georgia. Now, the determinative question regarding ecclesiastical practices was the degree to which they contributed to or detracted from the missionary task of the church. Wesley's reply to "John Smith" said it best.

I would inquire, what is the end of all ecclesiastical order? Is it not to bring souls from the power of Satan to God, and to build them up in His fear and love? Order, then, is so far valuable as it answers these ends; and if it answers them not, it is nothing worth.⁶

One senses the implications of these words when he discovers the phenomenal changes Wesley was making in his ecclesiology during the 1740's. He abandoned his prior belief in apostolic succession, the threefold order of ministry, and the divine right of the episcopal form of government in the church. Books on the early church by Bishop Stillingfleet and Lord Peter King were influential in these areas. Their impact was the greater because they confirmed Wesley's experiences in the Methodist revival. The Established Church, which held these ecclesiastical matters to be of supreme importance, was not winning souls in Wesley's estimation. In fact its very insistence upon these structures hindered the work of evangelism. Meanwhile, Methodism's lay preaching, field preaching, and itinerant ministry were fulfilling the church's evangelistic mandate.

Armed by the Biblical and patristic support for a dynamic, functional view of ecclesiology, Wesley took some rather decisive stands. The minutes of the Methodist Conferences for the years 1745-1749 demonstrate the extent to which Wesley was prepared to go.⁷ One is struck by his account of the functional development of offices in the early church. His description of the office of bishop is so obviously autobiographic in its overtones that one understands his statements, later, that from this point onward he considered himself to be a true, scriptural "episkopos." His measures to ensure the continuity of Methodism taken near the end of his life, especially his ordination of Methodist preachers, find their roots here in the first decade of the revival.

Aldersgate and Bristol served as twin prisms through which Wesley's view of the early church was refocused. He was a different primitivist thereafter, but he was no less a primitivist. If one doubts Wesley's continuing interest in the early church after Aldersgate, he should peruse his letter to Vincent Perronet in which he explained the entire Methodist system as it existed in 1748. He explained the functions of the society, the classes, the bands, the penitents' group, and the visitors of the sick. His account also reflected upon the Methodists' watchnight and lovefeast services, their practice of discipline, their charities, and the foundation of their schools. While he acknowledged that each of these features developed to meet pressing needs, following only the Scripture and common sense, he noted with obvious pleasure the correspondence of these features with similar institutions in Christian antiquity. So confident was he that Methodism had revived significant aspects of the apostolic age that he wrote: "I can now say to all the world, 'come and see how these Christians love one another!'"⁸

To the very end of his life Wesley's actions regarding Methodism, as well as his support for certain features of it, are best explained in terms of his primitivism. Thus he pressed for the separate seating of men and women in the services, the continuation of early morning services (preferably at 5 a.m.), and the practice of regular fasting. The role of women in the spiritual ministries of Methodism was justified on the basis of the deaconesses in the early church, and the role of the Methodist stewards was compared to the New Testament deacons. When he prepared the doctrinal articles and the service book for the American Methodists in 1784, he did so with the urging of John Fletcher that he purge the articles and the liturgy of the English Church according to the purity of the primitive church.⁹

Wesley came to the end of his career with the conviction that Methodist doctrine and discipline, evaluated comprehensively, came nearer the primitive pattern of the church than any ecclesiastical organization that he knew. In his declining years he frequently marveled at the Methodist revival. In the swiftness of its growth, the extensiveness of its influence, and the depth of its piety, he could find no equal since the first age of the church. He died with the satisfaction that primitive Christianity was being restored in his day, believing that the *eschaton* could not be long in coming.¹⁰ When his followers, therefore, compared Methodism to the primitive Church, they were merely taking their cue from Wesley himself.

Wesley's Conceptual Model: Reformation, Restitution, or Revival?

A feature common to Christian primitivists is a view of history that divides time into three periods: a golden age, a fall, and a restoration. Wesley shared this general scheme of ecclesiastical history. One of the best expressions of this periodization is found in a cluster of sermons he published in 1788.¹¹ Our interest here is in Wesley's unique perceptions of each of these periods.

For Wesley the golden age of the church extended from Christ's incarnation to the coronation of Constantine. His golden age, however, was arranged hierarchically in a series of concentric circles. An analogy to the Biblical temple might illustrate his understanding. The sub-apostolic age was the temple courtyard. The New Testament era was the holy place and thus qualitatively distinct from the second and third centuries. Within the New Testament era, the church of the first four chapters of Acts constituted the holy of holies. The Jerusalem Church was Wesley's supreme model of primitive Christianity.

The "mystery of iniquity" forms the core of Wesley's understanding of the fall. It existed already in the New Testament, tarnishing the image of the Jerusalem Church itself. Covetousness (Acts 5), partiality (Act 6), and prejudice (Acts 15) troubled even the golden age. The apostolic epistles reflect various defects in the church. Wesley believed these defects gradually increased in the second and third centuries, offset by periodic revivals, and culminated in an abysmal plunge when Constantine tried to Christianize the empire. Wesley believed the restoration of the church began in the Protestant Reformation. It was, however, a reformation that was both inadequate and incomplete. Wesley credited the reformers with purging the church in doctrine and worship, but for him these were not the essential issues. Purifying the church of Romanism did not remove the errors of Constantinianism. Until people were reformed in heart and life, a less Roman church was still not a primitive church. A facelift could give the appearance of youth, but it could not restore the vigor nor the vision of the youthful church in Acts.

This suggests clearly that the word "reformation" is not radical enough to characterize Wesley's conception of reprimed Christianity. While he stands very close to the restitutionist vision, on the other hand, he differs from it, also, in several areas. This is quite evident when, for example, he is compared to the Anabaptists. It should be noted parenthetically that Wesley's knowledge of the Anabaptists was both meager and second-handed. This obviously conditioned his criticisms of restitutionism.

First, Wesley believed restitutionists viewed the golden age of the church too naively. They imposed upon it an artificial purity and did not credit sufficiently the detrimental influence of the "mystery of iniquity." This meant that restitutionist groups proliferated successionist movements, each intent upon establishing the absolutely pure church.

Secondly, Wesley's identification of the Constantinian error differed from many of the radical reformers. The fall of the church for Wesley was not the merging of the church and state per se. To the end of his life Wesley could tolerate an established church, and he felt Christians could be civil servants, including the use of legal oaths and the use of the sword. The Moravians were not able to bring him to a different conclusion regarding these matters in the primitive church. Constantine's damage, in Wesley's eyes, was that he "poured in a flood of riches, honours, and power, upon the Christians; more especially upon the Clergy."¹² Thus the church lost the riches of saving grace, the honor of suffering for Christ's sake, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the love demonstrated in the community of shared material goods.

Thirdly, Wesley criticized Anabaptistic groups for their separatistic tendencies. Here he spoke more from the English context, thinking of the Puritans and Quakers a century after their most notable accomplishments. Such groups, he charged, became proud of their purity and thus lost the power of the Spirit that once invigorated them. In standing aloof from other communions they cut themselves off from the very people they needed to evangelize. Hence they never became a missionary force capable of reforming the nation.

If Wesley, then, cannot fit comfortably with restitutionism, especially the historic manifestations of it known to him, what word can describe his primitivism? This paper would suggest the word "revival." Revival sits well with the earlier comments about Wesley's soteriological primitivism and the centrality of Aldersgate to his life and career. It also works much better with his refocused ecclesiology. Wesley shied away from restitutionism precisely because he felt it made ecclesiology—a particular form of the church—more important than soteriology.

Wesley's reaction here was in terms of his own experience. His experiment at Oxford and Georgia with ecclesiastical primitivism ended in failure. Ecclesiology at best could produce Christians only in form. The New Testament Church owed its very life to the dynamic working of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was the birthday of the church, and unless the Spirit was present in his saving work, one could never have an authentic church according to the primitive model. Soteriology led inevitably to ecclesiology, but it always preceded it.

Wesley feared that restitutionism implied static views of the church. He felt many restitutionist groups became in time as lifeless as the churches from which they initially withdrew. Unless the Spirit constantly saved from the "mystery of iniquity," the purest of churches would eventually fall as did the first church. Furthermore, any church that failed to follow the providential leadings of the Spirit, adapting its ecclesiology to the missionary needs of the age, would become salt without savor.

If Wesley had lived in the sixteenth century, he might have felt that ecclesiology was the crucial question of the age. He lived, instead, in

eighteenth century England, and soteriology was then the burning issue of the day. This conditioned Wesley's perceptions quite strongly. It is not that he disparaged ecclesiology; many felt he was too rigid in his insistence upon the Methodist system. Nor did he think lightly of the primitive forms of the church; he positively rejoiced whenever Methodism could imitate any of them. But, at a deeper level, he was not trying to restore the church; he was trying to recapture primitive Christianity. He was more interested in the spirit of the early church than its form.

If Protestants must be assigned to either the camp of the magisterial reformers or the fold of the radical restitutionists, then, Wesley clearly belongs with the company of the restitutionists. But in a very real sense his stance was more radical than that of either group. The magisterial reformers were content to stop with a church purged of Romanism. The radicals were satisfied that they had successfully restored the church of the apostles and martyrs. Without denying their accomplishments, Wesley said these were not sufficient in themselves. The "mystery of iniquity" is a constant menace, even to the best church. The church is in constant need of salvation, lest it lose the vital breath of the Spirit. Unless there is a continuous revival of primitive Christianity, one could never talk of having recaptured the primitive church.

The Significance of Wesley's Primitivism

We could not be authentically Wesleyan unless we insisted upon the pragmatic value of such a study. I will try to imitate Wesley's penchant for brevity in sketching out three possible implications. First, Wesley's primitivism serves well as a hermeneutical key to his life. It runs through all the stages of his life, providing a unifying theme that binds together both sides of Aldersgate. It explicates his soteriology, which was the existential core of his theology. Its insight into his mature churchmanship solves many riddles in his ecclesiology. Primitivism explains the comprehensive nature of Wesley's Methodism, an eclectic breadth that defies standard theological labels. And it provides the background to his social concern.

An illuminating aspect of Wesley's social concern was his view of wealth. His comments upon Acts 2:44, 45 and 4:32-37¹³ indicate that Wesley believed that the community of goods was the Lord's intention for the church in all ages. He believed Constantine's flood of riches upon the church caused its great fall. In the Holy Club at Oxford and in his missionary party in Georgia, the Christian community of goods was the virtual practice.¹⁴ Wesley tried to structure a form of shared goods into the Methodist system, but apparently it never received widespread acceptance.¹⁵ Thus he tried to get his people to contribute sacrificially to the needy around them in terms of his famous formula: "get all you can, save all you can, and give all you can."¹⁶ Late in life he was greatly troubled that many did not follow his example in philanthropy. He believed that wealth was hindering the revival of true primitive Christianity for eighteenth century Methodists as it had originally destroyed the primitive faith in the days of Constantine¹⁷ Thus stewardship and social action were integral parts of Wesley's primitivism.

In the second place, Wesley's primitivism enlightens the perennial task of being a faithful church. If we invest Methodist models with ultimate value we are not being true to Wesley. Neither are we true to Wesley if we glorify the spontaneous and the novel. The early church is our one true model, but it is the Spirit alone who can both tie us to the primitive community of saints and lead us providentially as He did them, functionally and dynamically, in carrying out the missionary task of the church. This same model of the Jerusalem Church also speaks to the quality of our worship and fellowship, to our need for discipline and discipleship, and to our lack of stewardship and philanthropy.

In the area of ecumenicity there well may be a third implication. Wesley would caution us against seeking unity in terms of agreements concerning orders of ministry, theology of sacraments, or forms of worship. Such areas of ecclesiastical particularity may well be insurmountable. But even if "lowest common denominator" agreements should yield a widespread reunion, Wesley would have a crucial word for us. What then? If there is no more evidence of the Spirit in the united church than in the fragmented bodies, how has Christianity been restored to its primitive health? As at Pentecost, so in every age, it is the Spirit who creates the church. If his vital breath does not infuse our lump of clay, our ecumenical efforts will be merely the dressing of a corpse.

Disciple and Apostle

After Wesley was gone, those who knew him best tried to pin down the cause of his singular influence upon his age. It is interesting how many mention the word "apostolic" in their attempt to portray the character of the man. Many today still feel that quality when they read his sermons, journals, letters, or varied treatises. Like the character Ernest in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Great Stone Face*, Wesley contemplated the primitive age until he began to reflect it in his own person. A lifelong disciple of the early church, he became at last an influential apostle of Christian primitivism.

Notes

- 1A copy of the complete epitaph can be found in John Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, 2 vols. (Boston: J. McLeish, 1844), II, 282.
- 2The complete inscription can be found in Beecham's "The Life of the Rev. John Wesley," *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958-9), V, 549.
- 3Primitivism throughout this article stands for a religious outlook in Christianity in which one tries to recapture the spirit, thought, and practices of the early Church in one's own religious context.
- 4One can read Bishop Gibson's six point summary of the sermon in John S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*(London: The Epworth Press, 1923), p. 319.

5Works, VIII, 43-45.

6John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), II, 77-78.

7Publications of The Wesley Historical Society, No. 1. John Bennet's copy of the Minutes of the Conferences of 1744, 1745, 1747, and 1748; With Wesley's Copy of Those for 1746 (London: Charles H. Kelley, 1896), pp. 24-50.

8Letters, II, 292-311. The quote is found on p. 308.

9Nehemiah Curnock, ed., *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1909-16), VIII, 331-334. Note also Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 249.

10At the foundation service (April 21, 1777,) for his new chapel on City Road, London, Wesley reviewed the history of Methodism from its rise to that late moment in his life. Wesley summarized Methodism as the revival of the genuine old religion of the Bible, the primitive church, and the English Church of the reformation era. He saw it as a singular work of God, unparalleled by any age since apostolic times. Works, VII, 419-430.

11Four sermons in sequence in that addition give a rather comprehensive sweep of his mature conception of sacred history. They are "The Mystery of Iniquity," "The End of Christ's Coming," "The General Spread of the Gospel," and "The New Creation." Works, VI, 253-296.

12Works, VI, 261-262.

13See, for example, his Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament for the passages cited.

14Works, VII, 421-422; Letters, I, 190.

15Note the action of the Methodist Conference of 1744 in regard to the Rules for the Select Society in Bennet's Minutes, p. 14. See also M. Riggall, "Richard Viney's Diary, 1744: Part VI," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, XIV (1923-24), 29-30.

16This formula is spelled out in his sermon on "The Use of Money." Works, VI, 124-136.

17These views are expressed in detail in his sermon on "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity." *Ibid.*, VII, 281-290.

**SPIRIT AND FORM IN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY:
A RESPONSE TO KEEFER'S "JOHN WESLEY: DISCIPLE OF EARLY
CHRISTIANITY"**

by
Howard A. Snyder

Luke Keefer's principal thesis, as I see it, is that "Aldersgate refocused Wesley's primitivism from ecclesiology to soteriology" (p. 4). The Aldersgate experience brought about an "inevitable ecclesiological readjustment" in which Wesley's primitivism continued but became primarily soteriological, rather than ecclesiological.

I find myself in essential agreement with the main body of Keefer's paper. I would qualify, however, Keefer's argument at several points.

The Meaning of Aldersgate

1. It is somewhat misleading to speak of a shift from "ecclesiological primitivism" to "soteriological primitivism" in Wesley, or in connection with Aldersgate. One needs to remember that restoration of the form of life of primitive Christianity was always Wesley's goal, both before and after Aldersgate.

2. Keefer connects Wesley's Aldersgate experience with Pietism, seeing the stress on the New Birth as the connecting link between Wesley, Pietism, and the early church. I believe the sources reveal, however, that the real connecting link was the stress on the life of Christian perfection. It is true that the New Birth was a prominent theme in Spener and Francke, but both saw this as means to the end of Christian perfection. Both before and after Aldersgate Wesley's primary concern was with the holy life, and this is what drew him to John Arndt (often considered the father of German Pietism) and to such early sources as Macarius—all of whom emphasized Christian perfection, with the image of God as an important theological starting point.

3. It is true that after Aldersgate we find a shift from a more static to a more dynamic view of the church in Wesley—but this is not a shift away from ecclesiology. It is a shift toward a more organic and functional view of

the church. The concern after Aldersgate is not with life rather than form, but rather with life and with life-nurturing form, with how to enliven the forms. In this connection, it goes too far to say that "Methodism repudiated sacramental theology," unless we are speaking of Methodism after Wesley.

The Ecclesiological Constant in Wesley

Wesley maintained a continuous interest in ecclesiology-in the nature and structure of the church-throughout life, from his Oxford days until his death.¹ This was, in fact, one of the constants in Wesley's life. It was parallel to and connected with his consistent life-long stress on the Eucharist. Yet it is a Wesleyan theme which is largely overlooked today. In part, the ecclesiological interest was a reflection of Wesley's personality; this remarkable man was always, from childhood on, interested in method and form.

There are many ways of illustrating this in Wesley. Wesley said he considered himself, Biblically, as an *episkopos*. This was an important question for him; he felt he had to be able to justify his practice as head of the Methodists according to a Biblical ecclesiology. He pointed to the correspondence between Methodist and early church practices and forms as evidence for the authenticity of the Methodist revival and as signs of the restoration of primitive Christianity. (Cf. Wesley's "Plain Account of the People Called Methodists.")

Wesley's understanding of holiness as "social," and the ideal of a community of goods in the church (which he also maintained to the end of his life), further attest the ecclesiological bearing of his whole theological system. To speak of community of goods in the church is to speak of the wedding of spirit and form, not simply of one or the other. So-called Wesleyan theology is not truly Wesleyan, in fact, if it ignores this dimension.

Reformation, Restitution, or Revival?

Keefer suggests that Wesley was trying to "recapture primitive Christianity," not "to restore the church." In fact, however, these two were inseparable for Wesley. It may be argued that one of Wesley's keenest insights was precisely the inseparable link between spirit and form.

In his helpful comparison of Wesley's view of the church with the Radical Protestant or Anabaptist theme of restitution, Keefer suggests that revival, rather than restitution or reformation, is in fact Wesley's conceptual model for the recovery of primitive Christianity. I would argue, however, that revival is inadequate as a model precisely because it usually fails to connote the ecclesiological dimension which was prominent in Wesley. Perhaps the more fundamental Wesleyan model, which has affinity with the Radical Protestant model, is restoration-the restoration of both the spirit and the form of primitive Christianity. We know that a fundamental theme of Wesley's theology (as also of Arndtian and Spenerian Pietism) was the restoration of the image of God in human experience. Ecclesologically for Wesley, this translates into the restoration in principle, if not in detail, of the form of the early church. Wesley desired, and believed he was witnessing in part, the restoration of the image of God in Christian experience and of the life of the early church in the corporate experience of the

Methodists. Revival in personal, individual experience of the life of the primitive church is not enough; genuine revival means restoration of a committed, covenant life together. This is precisely what Wesley was attempting, and this is what marks him off, in part, from George Whitefield.

The Ecclesiological Bearing of Soteriology

In sum, Keefer's paper tends to move from ecclesiology to soteriology in a way which is not really Wesleyan. It does, however, reflect the common tendency in the contemporary church to neglect the ecclesiological bearing of soteriology. At this point Wesley stands closer to the Radical Reformers than to Luther or to contemporary Evangelicalism. There is a strong tendency among Evangelicals to dissolve ecclesiology into the immediacy of personal Christian experience—a tendency, in the name of functionality, to make the question of normative patterns of shared Christian life irrelevant. This tendency testifies not only to the individualism of much contemporary Christianity but also to a kind of sociological naivete.

Keefer rightly says that "If we invest Methodist models with ultimate value we are not being true to Wesley." On the other hand, however, if contemporary Wesleyans do not develop functional equivalents to such Methodist structures as the class meeting, "lay" preaching, and the Methodist society, they also are betraying Wesley. As even the name "Methodist" suggests, it is hard to imagine an authentic Wesleyan theology which focuses exclusively on spirit, to the neglect of form. And one does not really have Methodist or Wesleyan "experience" without some form of life together in community.

In this sense, one of Wesley's profoundest insights remains his statement in Discourse IV on the Sermon on the Mount: "Christianity is essentially a social religion, and . . . to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it."²

Notes

¹See in this connection my *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal* (InterVarsity, 1980).

²Wesley, *Works* (3rd ed.), V. 296.

A RESPONSE TO LUKE L. KEEFER

by
Clarence L. Bence

Dr. Keefer presents a convincing case for John Wesley's primitivism—a primitivism that is modified in several crucial aspects. My question would be, "To what degree can one speak of a modified primitivism and still retain the force of that designation?" We might lift several comments from Wesley's writings and speak of his modified Calvinism. The description might have some validity; however the Reformed elements of Wesley's thought would be over—shadowed by the far more telling modifications he made to Puritan thought. I want to draw attention to the significant departures from what I understand to be genuine primitivism in Wesley.

For the sake of clarity let us use the definition of primitivism given in the footnotes of the paper presented this morning. Primitivism is "a religious outlook in Christianity in which one tries to recapture the spirit, thought, and practices of the early Church." There is much of the spirit and thought of the apostolic community in Wesley. Keefer designates this as "soteriological primitivism" and distinguishes it from an ecclesiastical primitivism that is more concerned with the structures and practices of the early church. But is such a distinction helpful? Does a commitment to a scriptural doctrine of salvation qualify one as a primitivist? If it does, then such diverse persons as Luther, Moody, Barth, and Falwell might join the ranks of soteriological primitivists along with Wesley. The argument would be better served by keeping the focus on ecclesiology and the issue of whether the structures, more than the message, of the New Testament Church serve as a model for contemporary Christianity.

Wesley did look to primitive church government and practices to find insights pertaining to his own ministry. But what he appropriated was the functional dynamism of the apostles rather than the specific procedures they used. Hence Wesley's pragmatic and creative approach to the evangelistic mission of Christianity becomes, for Keefer, evidence of his primitivistic bent. But again, is this not a bit too general? One could appeal to this primitive functionalism for establishing structures and practices quite alien to the book of Acts; such an unscriptural ecclesiology might be as effective as the early church in its impact on the lost, but I question whether it would be proper to call it primitive on that account. Such is the case with Wesley's Methodism. Many of its features do find striking

parallels to the early church. The classes correspond rather well with the house congregations; the itinerant ministry looks quite similar to the work of the apostles and evangelists of the first century. But taken as a whole, the Methodist system cannot be judged a quid pro quo restructuring of the early church . . . nor was it designed to be such.

What is striking when we read of the Bristol experiment is the rather serendipitous discovery by Wesley and his followers of their reappropriation of first-century Christianity. After his laypersons began visiting the sick, Wesley observed, "Upon reflection, I saw how exactly . . . we had copied after the primitive church."¹ Concerning the formation of classes, he wrote, "Upon reflection, I could not but observe this is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity."² Again after establishing charities for the poor, "Without any design of so doing, we have copied another of the institutions of the apostolic age."³ And in describing the entire system of Methodism, Wesley said of his preachers,

. . . they had no previous design or plan at all; but everything arose just as the occasion offered. . . . Many times they fell unawares on the very thing which secured the good or removed the evil. At other times they consulted on the most probable means, following only common sense and scriptures. Though they generally found in looking back, something in Christian antiquity likewise very parallel thereto.⁴

Here is primitive Christianity in retrospect, not by conscious design. One has to wonder how central primitive practices were to Wesley if they were discovered upon reflection rather than pursued as a deliberate program in his ministry.

It was certainly to Wesley's advantage to appeal to the practices of the early community when challenged by the established church. As Keefer observes in his dissertation, Wesley was "relieved to find justification from the practice of the early church for his departures from Anglican order."⁵ This is not to deny that he was a man of one book, committed to spreading scriptural Christianity throughout the land; it is only to suggest that in his searching for warrants for his innovative measures, Wesley might naturally have turned to the earliest traditions of the primitive church, as well as reason and scripture in building a defense for his practices.

If the restitution of the New Testament community is not the prevailing concern for Wesley, where do we turn to find his vision of a society transformed by the gospel? I would suggest that a study of the eschatological kingdom in Wesley's writings might offer fertile insights. In two of his sermons where he describes the spread of Christianity ("Scriptural Christianity" and "The General Spread of the Gospel"), Wesley's scriptural allusions are not to the book of Acts, but to the Old Testament prophecies of the glorious kingdom to come, and the book of Revelation. Wesley's desire for believers is that they would be a "part of the firstfruits, if the harvest is not yet."⁶ In one address he describes the church as

. . . a body of men compacted together, in order, first to save each his own soul; then to assist each other in working out their salvation, and, afterwards, as far as in them lies, to save all men

from present and future misery, to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and set up the kingdom of Christ.⁷

For Wesley, the mission of the church is clarified by looking forward to the kingdom that is to come, and preparing for it, rather than looking back to the community that was, and re—establishing it.

However, that Wesley discovered the New Testament Church on the way to the kingdom is not coincidental. His understanding of history was conditioned by a belief in a literal fall, both of the human race in Adam and the Christian Church under Constantine. And Wesley was confident that whatever was lost could be recovered as one pressed on toward glory. For the individual, the image of God could be restored and even surpassed as the believer experienced higher degrees of holiness and glory than would have been possible if Adam had not sinned. In a similar fashion, as the Spirit renews the world through the proclamation of the gospel, that which had been lost since the days of the apostles could be regained and even surpassed by grace.

God is already renewing the face of the earth. And we have strong reason to hope that the work he has begun, he will carry on unto the day of the Lord Jesus—that he will never intermit this blessed work of the Spirit, until he has fulfilled all his promises, until he has put a period to sin, and misery, and infirmity, and death, and re—established universal holiness and happiness.⁸

Here is a primitivism that transcends the apostolic community—a primitivism modified by a vision of the fullest possibilities of divine grace in this age and the age to come.

Notes

1John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958—9), VIII, p. 263. (Italics mine)

2Ibid, p. 251. (Italics mine)

3Ibid., p. 256. (Italics mine)

4Ibid., p. 248. (Italics mine)

5Luke Keefer, "John Wesley: Disciple of Early Christianity" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Temple University, 1981), p. 286.

6Wesley, V., p. 277.

7Ibid., VI, p. 149.

8Ibid, p. 287.

CHRISTIAN HOLINESS AND THE PROBLEM OF SYSTEMIC EVIL

by

Albert L. Truesdale

This paper is an invitation to theologians within the Holiness tradition to give serious and sustained attention to the theological and ethical implications that derive from the modern social—solidaristic view of the self. Specifically, what are its implications for the Holiness tradition's doctrines of sin and salvation?

There are six parts to the paper. The first defines the solidaristic model of the self. The second traces the emergence of this view in post—Kantian thought. The third looks at this view as it is represented in twentieth century philosophy, sociology, psychology and theology. The fourth part gives some current examples of systemic evil. The fifth investigates the relationship between the structures of society and Paul's understanding of "principalities and powers." And the sixth asks about the availability of resources in John Wesley which can help us respond to this modern understanding of the personal.

I. Definitions

The view of human existence with which I wish to deal uses no universally accepted nomenclature to identify itself. It may be called the solidaristic, individual—social, or dynamic apprehension of the self. In any event, the language designates a view of human life that has a fair degree of consistency among its many proponents. In contrast to the traditional atomistic point of view which saw the self as either a pure subject for whom the world is object (e.g. Descartes and Rousseau), or as an act of consciousness whose objective is theoretical and egocentric complete self—consciousness (e.g. Fichte)¹ its successor sees self—consciousness (the personal) as the result of a process of interchange with other persons and participation in (as well as creation of) diverse social structures. In place of the self viewed fundamentally as subject it offers a view of the self as agent. It rejects the egocentrism and idealism (i.e. the I whose essence is thinking, the dualism of mind and matter) inherited from Descartes. In place of the primacy of the self—as—thinking substance, it places the primacy of the self—as—acting agent, an action out of which self—consciousness arises.

Hence, this model understands self—consciousness as essentially joined to social and physical reality. It insists that the self exists only in dynamic relationship with the other.

As represented in Descartes and the social atomism which flourished in France and England in 18th century Enlightenment thought the older view of human existence posited a static, atomic individuality not essentially dependent upon the social whole.² For Rousseau, for example, the individual is prior to society.

The more dynamic view does not assume the existence of the self as "naturally endowed" with reason and self—consciousness which is then free to act upon the world which is its distinct object. Rather it understands self—consciousness as the actualization of unique human capacities essentially dependent on social participation for their realization. But if this concept of the self rejects atomistic individualism it also rules out all forms of social determinism.

The modern dynamic understanding of the personal closely parallels the concept of the open system employed by the life sciences. As opposed to the view which reduces the organism to isolated organs or systems, the open system conceives of highly interacting, complex, and overlapping elements, related to each other contextually.³

According to Karl Heim this change in our understanding of the self is part of a larger shift in our understanding of reality. To the static world—picture characteristic of Newtonian physics, we now see opposed a dynamic conception of the world—"reality lived no longer as Being but as act."⁴ The process philosophies of people such as Whitehead and Hartshorne are the most extensive and consistent philosophical statements of this shift.

II. The Emergence of the Dynamic Model

The rise of the solidaristic concept of self—consciousness in post Cartesian philosophy can be traced directly to Hegel, if not to Schelling and Fichte before him. It is dimly anticipated in Kant. There is debate as to how much Fichte contributed to the emergence of this view. George Herbert Mead believed that he contributed significantly.⁵ But Karl Marx⁶ and Jean Hyppolite⁷ are certain that he did not. Hyppolite says that whereas Schelling affirmed nature as being a certain expression of the I, Fichte "reduced nature merely to the opposition needed for the I to pose itself."⁸

George Mead held that for all three (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) the self arises in the social experience. But the self carries within it the very unity that makes society possible, which makes the world as a more or less ordered whole possible. The self organizes the world and in doing so realizes itself.⁹

Personality, Schelling maintained, is not something given from the start, it must be won. The free human spirit must give birth to human personality.¹⁰ In the society about him—in social relations and in history—the individual finds the ideas which he or she (the 'artist') is trying to bring to consciousness. He discovers in the "landscape" of the world the unity and organization which belong to himself. Nevertheless Schelling's 'philosophy of identity' too closely identifies the object of knowledge with the self that knows.

For Hegel the "I" of self—consciousness must not be thought of as a substance which is antecedently there—from which the activities spring—but as a subject which constitutes itself in its activities. Individuality is itself only realized as a part of a concrete whole of individuals; its life is drawn from common life in and with others. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel says that individuality in its immediate essence must be actively affirmed through a process of actualization which amounts to achieving the purpose which we may recognize as potential in essential individuality. What we may call the special capacity, talent, or character of the individual qua potentiality is achieved as actual through intense interaction with moral others, and with culture.¹¹ The objective social order is realized in and through individuals.

Hence, he rejects the idea of the self as an atom which regards itself as central and all other selves as extrinsic. Such a fragmented view of the personal, torn from its social basis, sees the self "as a cosmos in which the other fragments are mirrored as distorted reflections of itself."¹² Rejecting the contractualism of Hobbes and Locke who start with abstract individualism Hegel insisted that genuine individuality is the realization of activity and not the presupposition of society. For Hegel the "truly individual is revealed in the systematic character into which things enter." For example, the family is more of an individual than its members, and the community is more of an individual than the family.¹³ Hook insists that for Hegel the institutions, customs and laws of the community are the "source, substance and repository of all that the individual creates. It owes little to him, he owes everything to it."¹⁴

But there are numerous instances in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* where the reciprocal creativity of self and world seem much more balanced than Hegel is given credit for. For example, he says that while spirit is the basis and starting point for the action of all and every one (it is their goal), it is also a product "wrought and created by the action of each and all and constituting their unity . . . and identity of meaning."¹⁵

For Ludwig Feuerbach man's being is contained only in community, in the unity of person with person. But this unity is built upon a real difference between I and thou, the self and the legitimate other. "The ego, " he says, "attains to consciousness of the world through consciousness of the thou."¹⁶ Martin Buber says that Feuerbach "introduced the discovery of the Thou and thereby inaugurated the revolution against the lone Cartesian *res cogitans*. " In my opinion Buber is incorrect when he gives this honor to Feuerbach.¹⁷

According to Karl Marx, Hegel correctly saw that man "creates himself in a lengthy process of which the motive force is human praxis, the actual practice of men living in society."¹⁸ But Marx's analysis of social activity is based not on metaphysical assumptions, but on historical and sociological "fact." His is an investigation of the social conditions under which consciousness is discovered. Bourgeois society, Marx said, treats its members as if they were impenetrable atoms. It views the individual as "an absolutely complete and blessed creature, independent and free from any need."¹⁹ But the individual's daily experience compels him to admit the error of atomism and recognize his manifold interrelationships with others.²⁰ "The principle of division of labor," Hook says, "links together

the social status and opportunities of men in such a way that the latter can no longer intelligently regard themselves as independent."²¹ This is especially true in the commodity system of capitalism where the wealth of one class means the poverty of another, and a bankruptcy here means distress there.

Consciousness arises in social relationships and is directly shaped by those relationships. Although of a different dimension, society is just as real as any of its members. And although it does not exist apart from the individuals who constitute it, it cannot be reduced to them. "It is," Hook says, "an order out of which individuals arise and acquire their very individuality."²²

Consciousness, for Marx, is social before it is individual, ". . . man first sees and recognizes himself in other men. Peter only establishes his own identity as a man by first comparing himself with Paul as being of like kind," and vice versa²³ Marx spelled out the psychological, ethical, and social consequences for the individual that stem from economic interdependence within society.

III. The Solidaristic View of Self Consciousness in 20th Century Thought

In the late 19th, and 20th centuries the solidaristic view of human existence reaches maturity and gains wide—spread acceptance in psychology, social psychology, philosophy and theology. Let us observe how this model is developed in representatives of each of these fields.

1. Psychology. Let us first look to Karl Jung's psychology of the self. Not only do we encounter in his thought an intense reciprocity between self and world, but an exploration of the factors that condition the explicit self—making process. Through his concept of "the collective unconscious" Jung showed that we begin our pilgrimage to selfhood millions of years before our birth. We possess certain genetic predispositions of size, height, and inherited possibilities of psychic functioning which characterize us as human and predispose us to distinctively human mental processes. We are endowed with racially collective possibilities which are actualized in life. But they are subject to many environmental factors, undetermined human interactions, and to social and cultural influences.²⁴

The primordial images and patterns which make up the collective unconscious recapitulate the evolution of mankind and the common human situations of all people. They reveal the innate potential of human development. When they become operative these archetypes cease to be merely potential or latent and become effectively realized in the individual and society.²⁵

The archetypal self constantly prompts the ego (the "I", which directs, abstracts, and adapts) toward its common humanity and toward the fulfillment of its innate potential, a fulfillment achieved in manifold social relationships. "The self is expressed in culture and culture is an avenue to the self. Culture shapes personality, and personality culture." In this way the ongoing process of self—transcendence occurs. As a result of its interaction with social forms, sometimes the self is enlarged and enriched, sometimes it is diminished and impoverished.²⁶ In either case this is the route to individuality and potentially greater integrity.

2. Social Psychology. One of the most important contributions to the solidaristic understanding of human existence to come from sociology was made by social psychologist and philosopher George Herbert Mead (d. 1931) who taught at the University of Chicago from 1894—1931. Mead rejected the idea that individuals endowed with mind and self—consciousness could exist prior to and outside society. Minds and selves emerge only in the process of social interaction and communication; they do not antedate society. Through our unique capacity for language, the emergence of the self and social interaction are made possible. The self, he says,

is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience. After a self has arisen, it in a certain sense provides for itself its social experiences, and so we can conceive of an absolutely solitary self. But it is impossible to conceive of a self arising outside a social experience.²⁷

For Mead, therefore, the self is a process, an achievement and not an entity.²⁸

Another very important contribution to the solidaristic understanding of the self was made by social psychologist Harry Stack Sullivan, who was himself strongly influenced by George Herbert Mead (among others). For Sullivan "personality" is an illusion if conceived apart from the interpersonal events in which it arises and manifests itself. "Personality only manifests itself when the person is behaving in relation to one or more other individuals," even when the other person is a folk hero (e.g. Paul Bunyan) or a fictional character such as Anna Karenina. Personality is a "dynamic center of various processes which occur in a series of interpersonal [exchanges]."²⁹

3. Philosophy. The influence of Martin Buber on both philosophy and theology in the 20th century is incalculable and much of his influence has to do precisely with the subject we are considering. Buber's rejection of atomistic individualism is succinctly stated in *Between Man and Man*. He says ". . . an individualistic anthropology . . . which is substantially concerned only with the relation of the human person to himself . . . cannot lead to a knowledge of man's being."³⁰

According to Buber the human spirit, primarily understood, is not something that is but something that happens. Through the power of the word—through the images of language—the spirit of the child steps forth—is born.³¹ In the word, chaos is subdued to form.

The time of atomic individualism is over, he says. Now we know that the meeting of man with himself takes place not as Descartes described, but

as the meeting of the individual with his fellow—man. . . . Only when the individual knows the other in all his otherness as himself, as man, and from there breaks through to the other, has he broken through his solitude in a strict and transforming meeting.

The fundamental fact of human existence is neither the individual as such nor the aggregate as such. Each considered by itself, is a mighty abstraction. The individual is a fact of

existence insofar as he steps into a living relation with other individuals. The aggregate is a fact of existence insofar as it is built up of living units of relation.³²

Another 20th century philosopher who has given extensive consideration to the form of the personal and who has shown the failure of Cartesian and Contractualist atomism is John MacMurray. In his 1954 Gifford Lectures MacMurray follows paths similar to those walked by Buber. We know existence, he says, by participating in existence.

This participation is action. When we expend energy to realize an intention we meet a resistance which both supports and limits us, and know that we exist and that the Other exists and that our existence depends upon the existence of the Other. . . . Existence is not my own existence as an isolated self.³³

MacMurray criticized the atomism of a psychology which understands itself as a science of mind. Rather, psychology must think of itself as a science of human behavior. Atomism appears in philosophy when the self is primarily conceived as the subject in experience. The error in both psychology and philosophy can be corrected by conceiving of the self not theoretically as subject, but practically, as agent. ". . . human behavior is comprehensible only in terms of a dynamic social reference; the isolated, purely individual self is a fiction." The personal exists only in dynamic relationship with the Other.³⁴

4. Theology. When we turn to Christian theology in the 20th century at least three figures stand out as principal representatives of the dynamic—solidaristic understanding of the self: Walter Rauschenbusch, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich.

To Walter Rauschenbusch must be chiefly credited the application to theology and ethics of the relationship between the individual and the social structures in which he or she lives. With prophetic clarity Rauschenbusch saw how an atomistic view of the self restricts the range of the gospel in the world. Certainly not one to diminish the importance of personal conversion,³⁵ he saw that the gospel of the Kingdom is incomplete if it does not speak to the social structures through which individuality is expressed. Rauschenbusch lamented the church's lack of a "scientific comprehension of social development."³⁶

He pled with the church to adopt a vision of redemption that actually addresses the truth of human existence.

The individualistic gospel has taught us to see the sinfulness of every human heart and has inspired us with faith in the willingness and power of God to save every soul that comes to him. But it has not given us an adequate understanding of the sinfulness of the social order and its share in the sins of all individuals within it. It has not evoked faith in the will and power of God to redeem the permanent institutions of human society from their inherited guilt of oppression and extortion. . . . The social gospel seeks to bring men under repentance for their collective sins and to create a more sensitive and more modern conscience.³⁷

Atomistic individualism and the corresponding concepts of salvation built upon it miss the fact that "sin is lodged in social and institutions"³⁸ just as surely as it is in the individual. Not only of what he had learned from a "scientific comprehension of social development,"³⁹ but also because of what he had observed in the urban social structures of New York City,

Rauschenbusch perceived that ". . . original sin is partly social. It runs down the generations not only by biological propagation but also by social assimilation." ⁴⁰ (For this view he expressed indebtedness to Schleiermacher and Ritschl.) ⁴¹

The social institutions that emerge in a society assume a life of their own (he calls them "composite personalities") ⁴² which is not immediately under the control of the individual. Many of these structures are to some extent socially beneficial. But most, if not all, "assume an authority in sin." ⁴³ Such structures become "social idealizations of evil." ⁴⁴

To adequately understand individual existence the role played by "composite personalities" must be faced.

Our theological conception of sin is but fragmentary unless we see all men in their natural groups bound together in a solidarity of all times and all places, bearing the yoke of evil and suffering. ⁴⁵

Rauschenbusch correctly saw that no vision of redemption can be complete or truly Christian which fails to give to sin the scope and seriousness due it. Lose the social—corporate pole of sinfulness and our doctrines of sin and salvation "will be mainly concerned with the transient acts and vices of individuals." ⁴⁶ Although Reinhold Niebuhr's expectations for social redemption were much more restrained than those expressed by Rauschenbusch, he certainly inherited the latter's understanding of the relationship between the individual and social structures. With equal tenacity he attacked the atomistic individualism of "Bourgeois democracy" which misunderstands the social substance of human existence. The liberal illusion that communities remain primarily the instruments of atomic individuals who are forced to create some kind of minimal order for their common life ⁴⁷ bore the full brunt of his repeated attacks.

No one has seen more clearly than he that individual consciousness and awareness are rooted in social experience and that they find their ultimate meaning in relation to the community. The individual, Niebuhr said,

is the product of the whole socio—historical process, though he may reach a height of uniqueness which seems to transcend his social history completely. His individual decisions and achievements grow into, as well as out of, the community and find their final meaning in the community. ⁴⁸

Niebuhr did not share Rauschenbusch's optimism that the whole social order could be Christianized. He recognized that social groups do not have, personal centers, or centers of consciousness, as do individuals. Consequently, the imperatives of a sensitive conscience cannot be directly addressed to social institutions. Whereas restraint of the egoistic impulse may be checked at the individual level by the ideal of unselfishness it cannot be so checked at the level of group relations. There is an intransigence

in the evil of social institutions which is not directly governable by individual good will.⁴⁹

A morality of pure disinterestedness [pure love] is impossible. "There is not enough imagination in any social group to render it amenable to the influence of pure love. Nor is there a possibility of persuading any social group to make a venture in pure love."⁵⁰

The selfishness of social groups can at times be checked by competing groups, and although a spirit of love may preserve a degree of sensitivity to "the common weaknesses and common aspirations which bind men together above the areas of social conflict,"⁵¹ Social selfishness is inevitable. Niebuhr realized that there always exists the possibility for individual acts of unselfishness.

In spite of the limitations imposed by the selfishness of social groups, he admonishes us to pursue the "valuable illusion" that the collective life of humankind can achieve perfect justice. But it is an "illusion that must be controlled by reason."⁵²

In the theology of Paul Tillich the Self—World character of the personal plays a fundamental role. According to Tillich human existence stands out of the potential provided by God. The actualization of potential life—of the self—occurs within the two complementary polarities of Self and World (a structure or unity of manifoldness).⁵³ These polarities are analogically characteristic of all existence, analogically because only in humanity is there the actual potential for selfhood and the intentional creation (through language) of complex political, religious, moral, and aesthetic structures of meaning.

In his ontology and subsequent anthropology Tillich carefully safeguards the importance of the individual so that it is not lost in the collective, and he carefully safeguards the social basis of self realization so that the old atomistic individualism cannot resurface. There is a conscious effort to harmonize existentialism and idealism. He always strives to balance the subjective and the objective poles of existence and ontology.

For Tillich the possibility of self—consciousness is bound up with the possibility of world—consciousness. A person can be a self because he or she can have a world. We come to know ourselves as having a world to which we belong. In every experience there is something that has and something that is had, and the two are one.⁵⁴

Never simply bound to an environment, we can transcend and shape it according to universal norms and ideas.⁵⁵ The self both creates and is created by the structures in which it comes to expression. Through the world the self encounters itself and without a world self would be an empty form. World provides the content—psychic as well as bodily.⁵⁶

Therefore there is no self—consciousness without world consciousness and no world—consciousness apart from self—consciousness. If we lose either side of the polarity then both vanish.⁵⁷

Tillich clearly realized that this polar view of human existence was the result of an identifiable process in post—Cartesian philosophy.

The social structures in which we participate evidence both blessings and curses. They either facilitate the fulfillment of the individual's moral, cultural and religious capacities, or they retard or block them. In most

cases the social structures of which we are a part represent a mixture of both blessings and curses.

In many instances the "benefits" which a structure offers to one group are gained at the expense of denying these benefits to another group. In such instances the self of the person who reaps these costly benefits is so closely identified with the structure and invests so much in its maintenance, that he or she is either unwilling or unable to identify its evil and is consequently unable to recognize the evil in himself. As Niebuhr clearly showed, forfeiture of social benefits gained through injustice to others is seldom done willingly.

In some instances a social structure can only be described as demonic i.e. the "life giving strength" which it provides to one group is inseparably joined to its power to deny life to another group. A social structure's exploitation of one national, racial, economic or sexual group may be seen as necessary to generate "meaning" for another group.

All of us participate in structures that promise life to us at the expense of others. We are born into such structures and we daily contribute to their continuation by feeding on their benefits and by encouraging their survival. We identify their existence with our own; any threat to them becomes a threat to us.

The dimensions of the gospel are such for Tillich that the New Reality which appears in the Christ must seek the transformation of both the self and the world. According to him the New Reality that appears in Christ envisions the transformation of all three functions of life: religion, culture and morality, of both the self and its world.⁵⁸

The corporate view of the self as expressed in the twentieth century is more consistent with the Biblical understanding of corporate life than is eighteenth century atomism.

IV. Contemporary Examples of Systemic Evil

Let us now give attention to some contemporary illustrations of the relationship between the individual and sinful social structures. Hopefully these illustrations will demonstrate the inadequacy of atomism and will show just how deeply involved you and I are in structures which daily generate alienation and exploitation of both victim and offender.

1. Racism. A common misconception about racism is that it can be reduced to prejudice against a person of another race. But, says Robert Blauner this error misses the systemic character of racial oppression. Although individual prejudice is certainly a part of it, racism in the United States is structural, and reaches into every dimension of American life. The processes that maintain domination over blacks by whites are built into the major social structures. Through procedures that have become conventional and for which there is little immediate need of prejudice as a motivating force, systemic racism excludes or restricts full participation in American society by blacks.

Virulent prejudice, Blauner says, is not necessary to maintain a racist social structure. Often the people of good will and tolerance who identify racism with prejudice exempt themselves from responsibility and involvement. In fact, often such people of good will "help maintain the racism of American society and in some cases even profit from it."⁵⁹

The logic of racism denies to blacks access to the resources for human fulfillment that exist within a society. This happens in ways of which most whites are ignorant. But its results are felt directly by its immediate victims.

Blacks pay higher rents for inferior housing, higher prices in ghetto stores, higher insurance premiums, higher interest rates in banks and lending companies, travel longer distances at greater expense to their jobs, suffer from inferior garbage collection and [often have] less access to public recreation facilities. . . .⁶⁰

The fallout from institutional racism that benefits whites and which in turn fortifies these institutions is at least five—fold: more steady employment for whites, higher wages, more lucrative occupations, greater investment in education, and the monopoly over the labor unions.⁶¹

The deliberate nature of racism is not to be minimized. Racist oppression of blacks in the ghetto or predominant black neighborhoods does not result from "blind" economic or market forces. Instead, it results from deliberate policies applied by real estate companies, is "supported by powerful segments of federal and local government and, unfortunately, is buttressed by majority sentiments in the white population."⁶²

2. Exploitation of the world's resources by first world countries. A second example of systemic evil to which most of us make significant contributions and from which we daily reap appreciative dividends is the "free enterprise" system of production and distribution. A large part of the world is excluded from this system, and to a large extent our standard of living is predicated upon their continued exclusion. Probably most North Americans are unaware of the extent to which their "American way of life" is dependent on the exploitation of third and fourth world peoples.

Most of us are willing members of the 34% of the world's population that consumes 87% of the world's GNP each year, while the poor two thirds of the world's population is left to divide the remaining 13%. While less than 6% of the world's population lives in the United States we regularly demand 33% of the world's annual consumption of minerals and energy.⁶³ I am a part of a society which consumes almost five times as much grain per person as do the people of the developing countries.⁶⁴ I am a part of the American eating pattern which, when the amount of grain we feed cattle is calculated, places a feeding burden on world resources not of two hundred and twenty million people but 1.6 billion people.⁶⁵ I seem not to mind that it takes seven pounds of grain to produce one pound of edible beef. And I am an active part of a society which, in exchanging approximately 3 million metric tons of cereal protein for 4 million metric tons of other proteins which are all superior in nutrients, perpetuates the "protein drain" from the third world.⁶⁶

Can I ignore the fact that my desire for cosmetically attractive fresh produce, much of which comes from third world countries, often demands large plantations which only the economic elite can own? Can I ignore the fact that the large plantations help suppress movements for land redistribution and other democratic social reforms in third world countries? Such redistribution . . . could lead to a higher standard of living for the dispossessed

peoples who must now work for minimum wages to produce my affordable coffee, bananas, pineapples, tomatoes, and carnations?⁶⁷

My lifestyle, and perhaps yours as well, makes it possible for almost half the cultivated land of Central America and the Caribbean countries (invariably the best) to be used to produce coffee, bananas, cocoa, sugar and beef, while as many as 80% of its children are undernourished.⁶⁸

At the heart of the problem of poverty and hunger in the world are economic and political systems which ignore, mistreat and exploit people. Often maintenance of these systems is essential to my self—world structure. A threat to them appears as a threat to me. As a result I engage in all sorts of rationalizations and ignorance to insulate myself against criticism of the ideologies which I have inherited and which I sanctify through active participation.

3. Sexism. Space does not allow an adequate discussion of the intricate network of laws, customs, and language which constitute the systemic evil of sexism. The social institutions which deny full human dignity to women are no less intransigent than racism. Cessation of participation in, and surrender of the "benefits" derived from sexism threaten the identity of many men. Apparently, being "Christian" is no guarantee against this fear. Think of how religion is used to shore up the foundations of sexism. Who among us can wink at the sin which allows men to share sexist spoils grasped at the expense of women who are denied opportunities to fulfill their God—given abilities?

4. We can only mention ecclesiastical structures which encourage and institutionalize the will to power and which often generate petty carnal kingdoms in the name of The Kingdom. Such kingdoms grind under foot the gospel's investment in a new humanity.

Systemic or structural evil is normally so much a part of our self identity that it is difficult to either recognize or admit it. It is so subtle, says Ron Sider, that "one can be ensnared and hardly realize it."⁶⁹ For the Christian, moral and religious atomism offers a ready escape from this admission.

But can any of us actually justify our claim to faith and ignore the extent to which we "have profited from systemic injustice—sometimes only half knowing, sometimes only half caring, and always half hoping not to know"?⁷⁰ Sin in Scripture, Steven C. Mott adds, "includes participating in injustices of the social life or failing to correct them."⁷¹

V. Systemic Evil and Paul's Understanding of the Principalities and Powers

It would be incorrect to say that the New Testament speaks of structural evil in the sense that I have been using the phrase. But there are good reasons to believe that at least in the writings of Paul the concepts of cosmos, and the principalities and powers, indicate an objective social reality which can function for good or for evil. Steven C. Mott, working from a theme presented earlier by Allan Galloway in the Cosmic Christ,⁷² says that these concepts indicate a mystery of evil which appears in our social life.⁷³ Galloway had argued that for Paul the demonic principalities and powers

symbolize all the distortions in the structures of existence. They signified all that was chaotic, discordant and deadly as

against that which maintained structural integrity, harmony and life. They signified all the irrational forces of nature, the blind determinism of her physical laws, her storms, her famines and droughts, diseases of the body and of the mind, the enmity between man and beast, tyranny, social distress—all those natural structures which form the basis of human anxiety.⁷⁴

Later, G. B. Caird wrote in agreement with Galloway that

the powers [e.g. Ephesians 1:21; 6:12; Colossians 2:15] represent organized evil, evil imbedded in the structure of society or woven into the fabric of the universe. . . . The powers owe their hold upon the world, and upon humanity in particular to sin."⁷⁵ G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 84.

Writing after Caird, Markus Barth, in his study of the Epistle to the Ephesians, carefully examines what Paul means by "principalities and powers." He concludes that "Paul means the world of axioms and principalities, of politics and religion, of economics and society, of morals and biology, of history and culture."⁷⁶

They all agree that the principalities and powers "indicate that evil has a social and political character beyond [the] isolated actions of individuals."⁷⁷

As striking as the array of the principalities and powers are, far more awesome is the range of Paul's claims about Christ's intentions for them. According to G. H. C. Macgregor Paul's language of cosmic redemption as found in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians "signifies the redemption of man's whole environment as distinguished from the redemption of his inward state." Paul's gospel and his teachings about the principalities and powers are designed to combat a dualism which thinks of redemption simply in terms of escape from the world. Paul extends the scope of redemption to the whole cosmos.⁷⁸

Following the lead of Alan Richardson who maintains that "the death of Christ reconciled to God the hostile, fallen powers and set free from bondage . . . the world powers,"⁷⁹ Jung Young Lee argues that Paul's words in II Corinthians 5:19, "God was in Christ reconciling the *cosmos* to himself," means not only the world of humankind, but the universe as well, including *stoicheia* (Galatians 4:3; 5:9; Colossians 2:8, 20) and *cosmokratoras* (Ephesians 6:12), alternative expressions meaning "the elemental spirits " or "the world rulers, " and signifying the "cosmic powers which are 'weak and beggarly elements.'"⁸⁰ Lee agrees with Barth. According to Paul, "By the great mercy of God the cosmic powers shall return to their original functions as instruments of God's fellowship with his creation."⁸¹

Caird suggests that Paul developed his hope of cosmic reconciliation (Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians) as a complement to his earlier (Galatians) insistence on their (the powers) defeat. "The powers could be reconciled to God only when they had been deprived of their evil potentiality and made subject to Christ."⁸²

We conclude that while the New Testament does not view systemic evil in the same way as did Rauschenbusch, Niebuhr and Tillich, in the Pauline

corpus there is more than ample justification for a view of sin and salvation which involves both the individual and the structures of society in which we live. Steven C. Mott correctly insists that our theology and ethics must come to terms with the social material to which the Biblical language of principalities and powers points.⁸³

VI. Resources in Wesley for Coming to Terms with the Theological Implications of Systemic Evil

Is it possible to do theology and ethics within the framework of the solidaristic—dynamic understanding of the self and still identify as a Wesleyan theologian or ethicist? Are we faced with the harsh alternative of either Wesley or modern thought about the self and its world? Or is there sufficient ground in Wesley's own thought to accommodate a thorough consideration of the self—world structure of life? I believe that the latter is the case.

I would like to suggest that in Wesley's thought there are four essential factors that can help prepare us for the work ahead.

1. First we need to give careful consideration to the implications of Wesley's view of salvation as being cosmic in scope. That the atoning work of Christ reaches to the whole creation is essential for Wesley's understanding of salvation. That the Christian gospel intends the redemption of the social order was not just theory with him, it was indistinguishable from the gospel he preached and his entire mode of conduct. In fact, it may be argued that Wesley believed that calling for the social structures to become Christian was simply a matter of calling on England to live up to what it had already verbally committed itself.

Essential to the scope of salvation as envisioned by Wesley is his understanding of prevenient grace. We need to spell out its implications not only for the self, but for the social and physical material out of which our worlds arise. The category of prevenient grace, which has as its *telos* evangelical transformation, establishes a continuity between grace and nature. The religious category of prevenient grace converts directly into an ontological category in which God is the immediate ground of being not only for the individual person but for the physical world and all social institutions to which he is related. The *telos* of prevenient grace must bear directly not only on the self but also on the world in which the self is expressed.

Consequently, to be consistent with Wesley's vision of redemption, our soteriology and hamartiology must fully locate the individual in his or her world and must not make claims that can succeed only in an atomistic framework. The optimism of grace must not live in league with a truncated view of the personal.

2. This leads to the second aspect of Wesley's theology that can help us. For Wesley there is no holiness but social holiness. Wesley used this phrase to counter the religious atomism of the mystics. But it is applicable not only to the *koinonia* of the church but to the social dimensions of the gospel as well. God raised up the Methodists, he says, "to spread scriptural religion throughout the land," and "to leaven the whole nation with that 'faith that worketh by love.'"⁸⁴ Atomism in religious experience and in moral awareness was clearly anathema to him. Even the poorest Methodist

was expected to bring to each class meeting some food gift for distribution to the needy. Genuine discipleship, he believed, reaches toward the transformation of other people and of the social institutions in which they live. His discussion of the evils of smuggling, for example, which robbed the king and every honest citizen, shows his awareness of the intricate and extensive reaches of evil institutions.⁸⁵ He denounced the heavy drain on the corn resources for distillery purposes which caused a scarcity of corn for the poor, and moral distress in the land.

Wesley wanted his doctrine of Christian perfection to be viewed primarily as perfect love towards God and man. Not the neighbor in the abstract but the neighbor caught in the complexities—as either oppressor or victim—of eighteenth century industrialized England. Perfect love, for Wesley, contained a compelling moral dimension. Witness his efforts to rid Britain of slavery, smuggling, widespread poverty, and to bring about prison reform. Social holiness in Wesley reached out not only to the individual but to his social environment as well.

3. The third area in Wesley's thought which holds promise for us is his anthropology. For this insight we are indebted to the recent contribution made by Theodore Runyon in his essay, "Wesley and the Theologies of Liberation."⁸⁶

Runyon notes that when Luther and Calvin removed salvation from the realm of dependence on human action and placed it in the realm of divine promise and faithfulness they paid a stiff and (for Wesley) unacceptable price: the shift in the location of essential humanity.

According to Luther and Calvin the Christian's true being is to be found in God, in his election, or in his forensic declaration of our justification through Christ, rather than in our existence in the world. "The result is [a] split . . . between the transcendent realm in which our salvation is actually occurring, and this world, which is in effect bracketed out of salvation history."⁸⁷ Runyon appeals to Reformed theologian Otto Weber to support this assessment. Weber calls this "split" a non—Biblical distinction in which the "person" is separated from his or her "works."⁸⁸

The contrast drawn by Runyon between Wesley on the one hand, and Luther and Calvin on the other is striking. Without in any way detracting from the Protestant insistence that salvation is by grace through faith alone, the locus, exercise, and model of salvation changes remarkably. For Wesley the locus of redemption is the world. The assurance of divine love must be exercised in the service of renewing the world and the race. The model for this is God's own being as seen in his work, "which takes the form not of divine fiat in the councils of heaven but of the creative intervention of divine love, intent to restore a lost creation."⁸⁹

For Wesley, according to Runyon, the self is a dynamic rather than a static reality. It is an achievement, an activity, a project. It is a work which is always directed toward some purpose, either toward the service of God and the world, or the service of self in pride, vanity or gain.⁹⁰

For Wesley, Runyon maintains, essential humanity is a potentiality (in Christ) to be realized in the world through grace. It cannot be achieved in isolation from the world in which God is active. The renewal of the race, for Wesley, is the *telos* of redemption and the faith which works by love expresses in action this vision of cosmic renewal. Becoming in reality what

one is essentially (or potentially) inseparable from this process of transformation, the project— in— process—of—achievement.⁹¹

The relation between Christ and the structures of this world is one of a Transformer to the transformed.⁹² The Christian as agent of transformation also undergoes transformation in the process of achieving the project of transformation. "This is Wesley's model of synergism— human partnership with the divine."⁹³

If Runyon's assessment of Wesley is correct, then its implications for theology in the Holiness Movement are staggering indeed. Simply, rather than being a true expression of faith and redemption, all forms of religious and moral atomism which insist on viewing either sin or salvation apart from the social structures in which our redemption occurs disclose in fact a failure of faith. All that we say about sin and salvation must show an awareness of life in its complexity. This seems to be a consistent extension of Wesley's anthropology.

4. The fourth aspect of Wesley's thought to which we should look for help lies in what we may call his distinction between the "already" and the "not yet" of perfect love.

Before we examine this distinction we should take note of a criticism of Wesley's concept of sin that has been made by numerous interpreters. People such as Robert Chiles,⁹⁴ R. Newton Flew, Paul Hoon⁹⁵ and John L. Peters have pointed to ambiguities in Wesley's view of sin which make a consistent statement of his position difficult, if not impossible. Some of the criticism is unjustified, as when Lindstrom interprets Wesley as saying that only the "fully sanctified do not deliberately transgress the law of love."⁹⁶ In numerous instances Wesley maintains that the regenerate person does not deliberately transgress the will of God but is instead set free from "an earthly, sensual . . . mind" and filled with "the mind that was in Christ."⁹⁷ But Wesley is not always consistent on this point. Sometimes he seems to attribute "voluntary transgressions" to the regenerate.⁹⁸

The central part of the criticism seems to be aimed at Wesley's sharp distinction between sin as a "voluntary transgression of a known law" and "sin as an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown." The former he clearly labeled sin "properly so called," and the latter he termed sin "improperly so called."⁹⁹ R. Newton Flew charges that Wesley's stress on the "conscious and deliberate intention of the agent is "the most formidable defect in his doctrine of the ideal."¹⁰⁰ He and others maintain that sin "improperly so called" is too "active" to be dealt with adequately under the rubric of "involuntary sin." Lindstrom attributes this rigid distinction to a narrow individualistic line in Wesley's thought which cannot be easily reconciled with his broader realization that the entirely sanctified person stands in need of forgiveness and atonement.¹⁰¹

Keeping this criticism in mind, let us turn to the distinction between the "already" and the "not yet" of perfect love. While in one sense a sanctified person fulfills the law of love (i.e. his or her whole disposition, thoughts and actions have their source in love) in another important sense he or she does not. Through inevitable human defects, even the sanctified person will make many mistakes which "will frequently occasion something wrong, both in our temper, and words, and actions."¹⁰²

The entirely sanctified are intensely aware not only of their "own ignorance" but also of their "littleness of grace, coming short of the full mind that was in Christ, and walking legs accurately than they might have done after their divine Pattern."¹⁰³

Though not burdened with guilt and not in need of forgiveness for 'willful' transgressions, the entirely sanctified nevertheless stand in the need of the atonement. The most perfect have continued need of the merits of Christ and need to pray "forgive us our trespasses." Remarkably, Wesley says that the sanctified need "Christ as their Priest, their Atonement their Advocate with the Father" because of "their coming short of the law of Love" even as their every blessing depends on Christ's death and intercession. Christian perfection, he says is not freedom from all sin because "sin is the transgression of the law" and the perfect transgress the very law they are under. Those who are made perfect in Christ "need the atonement of Christ; and he is the atonement of nothing but sin."¹⁰⁴ The sanctified do not need the atonement of Christ in order to restore the favor of God, "but to continue it."¹⁰⁵

For Wesley, Lindstrom says, even the most sanctified Christian must live on the basis of forgiveness.¹⁰⁶ For on the one hand the work of entire sanctification is a divine gift, a divine work wrought by God and to be accepted by faith. On the other hand there is a gradual work of transformation that issues from a day—to—day relationship with Christ and this transformation continues throughout life.¹⁰⁷ In light of all this one can understand Lindstrom's quarrel with Wesley.

I would like to suggest that even when we admit the ambiguity in Wesley's distinction between "sin properly so called" and "sin improperly so called," and even if we agree that the strictly passive character of "involuntary" inadequately accounts for the full meaning of "coming short of the law of love," it still may be the case that Wesley has at least indicated a way whereby as Wesleyans we can deal candidly with the reality of systemic evil. In fact, Paul M. Bassett says that Wesley's insistence that the Anglican Liturgy, steeped in the recognition of racial evil, be used by the Methodists, and the importance he attached to the Lord's prayer make explicit his recognition of our participation in systemic evil, a participation for which confession and atonement are imperative.

May it not be the case that the time has come for us to restate the "not yet" of perfect love in contemporary language (not limited to the rigid distinction between "voluntary" and "involuntary") which takes unflinching account of our involvement in systemic evil even as the moral import of the doctrine commits us to an implacable struggle for systemic evil's elimination?

Do we not fall victim to a failure of theological nerve if the "not yet" is stated only in passive terms which trivialize both the pervasiveness of evil and the grace of God? In the interest of theological credibility and devotional fidelity, are we not now forced to rethink the meaning of *simul justus et peccator* within a Wesleyan framework? And finally, are we not now faced with the need to give what is for the Holiness tradition unaccustomed consideration to the corporate aspect of original sin?

Notes

- 1John MacMurray, *The Self as Agent* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953), p. 12.
- 2Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1978), p. 42.
- 3Frank M. Bockus, "The Archetypical Self: Theological Values in Jung's Psychology, The Dialogue Between Theology and Psychology, Ed. Peter Homans (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 228.
- 4Karl Heim, *God Transcendent*, trans. Edward Dickie (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1936), p. 184.
- 5George Herbert Mead, *Thought in the 19th Century*, pp. 123ff.
- 6Hook, op.cit., p. 44, from *Capital*, English Translation, I, 61 (Hook does not tell us which English Translation).
- 7Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 234.
- 8Ibid
- 9Mead, op.cit., pp. 124ff.
- 10Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 7, Part 1 (New York: Image Books, 1965), p. 165.
- 11G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* Trans. J. B. Bailey (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), pp. 420, 421. Bailey traces Hegel's line of thought to Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744—1803) who, though partially within the framework of the Enlightenment, was already on the way toward Romantic thought. Translator's introduction, p. xxviii.
- 12Hook, op.cit., p. 42.
- 13Hook, Ibid.
- 14Hook, Ibid.
- 15Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 458; see also pp. 423, 459. Hegel is far more empirical than his existentialist interpreters give him credit for being.
- 16Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (First published 1841) (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1957), p. 83. See also pp. 82, 158. See also Hook. pp. 236, 252, 258, 259.
- 17Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1947), p. 148.
- 18Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, iii.
- 19Karl Marx, *Die Heilige Familie* 1902, II 227.
- 20Hook, op. cit., p. 46.
- 21Ibid., p. 45.
- 22Ibid

- 23Karl Marx, *Capital*, as quoted by Hook, p. 44. Compare Hook, p. 303. See also Marx's discussion of the Four Alienations in the "First Manuscript," *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, Trans. T. B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw—Hill Book Company, 1964), pp. 69—134. See especially pp. 129—134 ". . . the relation of man to himself is first realized, objectified, through his relation to other men" (p. 130).
- 24Carl Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche," *The Basic Writings of Carl Jung*, ed. Violet Staub De Laszlo (New York: The Modern Library, 1959), pp. 80ff.
- 25Carl Jung, "Two Essays on Analytical Psychology," *The Collected Works*, Vol. 7, 1953, p. 108. Bockus notes that Jung "never analyzed the stages of human development as extensively as have contemporary thinkers [e.g. Erik H. Erikson]. He did, however attempt to identify the various aspects of self—development and the critical issues in the life history, and there is considerable similarity between Jung's understanding of the dynamics of the self—realization tendency and some of the prevalent contemporary theories of human development" (Bockus, *op.cit.*, p. 227).
- 26Bockus, *op.cit.* p. 236.
- 27George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. 140.
- 28Mead, *Movements of Thought*. . . , p. 372
- 29Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, *Theories of Personality* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1970), p. 140.
- 30Buber, *op.cit.*, p. 199.
- 31Ibid, p. 193.
- 32Ibid., pp. 202—203. Karl Heim clearly perceived and stated the understanding of the self as described by Buber. To the static, atomistic world view Heim opposed "a dynamic conception of the world—reality lived no longer as Being but as Act" Karl Heim, *God Transcendent* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1936), p. 184.
- 33John MacMurray, *Persons in Relation* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 17. The Gifford lectures were entitled "The Form of the Personal" and were published in two volumes.
- 34John MacMurray, *The Self as Agent* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953), p. 38.
- 35Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1922), pp. 95ff. For twelve years Rauschenbusch pastored among the working people on the west side of New York City.
- 36Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920), p. 194.
- 37Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, p. 5.
- 38Ibid., p. 60.
- 39Rauschenbusch was dependent in part on Josiah Royce who emphasized the reality of superpersonal forces in human life. Royce was influenced by Wundt's *Volkerpsychologie*.

- 40Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, p. 61.
- 41Ibid, pp. 92—94.
- 42A *Theology for. . .*, p. 75
- 43Ibid, p. 62
- 44Ibid, p. 78.
- 45Ibid, p. 81.
- 46Ibid., p. 90.
- 47Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1944), p. 53.
- 48Ibid, p. 50.
- 49Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1932), p. 257.
- 50Ibid, p. 272.
- 51Ibid
- 52Ibid, p. 277.
- 53Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), I:170.
- 54Ibid, p. 169. He prefers "self" over "ego" because he believes that it is much more comprehensive, i.e., that it includes the subconscious "basis" of the self—conscious ego as well as self—consciousness.
- 55Ibid, p. 170.
- 56The distinction made here by Tillich is very similar if not identical to Hegel's discussion of content in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as it relates to the individual and the emergence of Spirit through his interaction with culture.
- 57Tillich, p. 171.
- 58Ibid, III:157.
- 59Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), pp. 9, 10.
- 60Ibid, p. 33. Here Blauner quotes from Michael Reich, "The Economics of Racism," *Upstart* 1 (1971), pp. 55, 56.
- 61Ibid, p. 25.
- 62Ibid, pp. 32, 33.
- 63Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study* (Downers Grove, IL. InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 18.
- 64Ibid, p. 42.
- 65Ibid, p. 152
- 66Ibid, p. 156
- 67Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins, *World Hunger: Ten Myths* (1979), p. 28.

- 68Ibid, p. 32.
- 69Sider, op.cit., p. 136.
- 70Sider, p. 166.
- 71Steven C. Mott, "Biblical Faith and the Reality of Social Evil," *Christian Scholars Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1980, p. 236.
- 72Allan D. Galloway, *The Cosmic Christ* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951).
- 73Mott, op.cit., pp. 231, 232.
- 74Ibid., p. 28.
- 75Markus Barth, *The Broken wan*: (London: The Judson Press, 1959), p. 83. Barth notes that Paul does not say that all "rule, authorities, powers and dominions" are evil or that they serve the evil one. But all of them do exert an influence over the world. "Their rule is felt as coming from somewhere above us. . . . They seem to form a whole empire, and defy easy control, else there would have been no need of the resurrection of Christ to put them under his feet."
- 76Ibid., pp. 81, 82.
- 77Mott, op.cit.. p. 226.
- 78G. H. C. Macgregor, "Principalities and Powers: The Cosmic Background of St. Paul's Thought," *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 1, 1954—55, p. 26.
- 79Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1959), p. 213.
- 80Jung Young Lee, "Interpreting the Demonic Powers in Pauline Thought," *Nouum Testamentum* Vol. 12; No. 1, 1970, pp. 60—61.
- 81Ibid, p. 66.
- 82Caird, op.cit., p. 83.
- 83Mott, op.cit., p. 232.
- 84John Wesley, "On God's Vineyard," *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. VII, p. 208.
- 85John Wesley, "A Word to a Smuggler," *Works*, Vol. 11, p. 175.
- 86Theodore Runyon, Ed., *Sanctification and Liberation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981).
- 87Ibid, p. 27.
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- 89Ibid, p. 29.
- 90Ibid.
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- 92H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1951) pp. 218ff.

- 93Runyon, op. cit., p. 28.
- 94Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism, 1790—1935* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 122ff.
- 95See Chiles, Paul W. Hoon, "The Soteriology of John Wesley," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh, 1936, pp. 303ff.
- 96Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Stockholm: *Nya bokforlags Aktiebolaget*, 1946), p. 148.
- 97Wesley, "On God's Vineyard," Works, VII, p. 205. See also "The Marks of the New Birth," and "The Great Privilege of Those Who Are Born of God," Works, V; "Salvation by Faith," Works, V, Part II, paragraph 6.
- 98Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, Works, X, p. 396.
- 99Ibid.
- 100R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 333.
- 101Lindstrom, op.cit., p. 97.
- 102Wesley, "A Farther Account of Christian Perfection," Works, XI, pp. 417 ff.
- 103Lindstrom, p. 147. Lindstrom is quoting from Letters, V, Letter XV, September 1762, p. 189.
- 104Wesley, "A Farther Account," pp. 417, 418.
- 105Ibid, p. 418.
- 106Lindstrom, op.cit., p. 152.
- 107Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 186.

HOLINESS AND SYSTEMIC EVIL: A RESPONSE TO ALBERT TRUESDALE

By
William Hasker

I would like to begin with some personal references which may help to clarify both the perspective from which I am replying to Professor Truesdale's paper, and the possible limitations of the reply. First, I am by trade a philosopher rather than a theologian; theologically speaking you will get more questions from me than answers. Second, while I identify my theological stance as Arminian, much of my study and training has been in the Reformed tradition and I find myself sympathetic to many of the emphases and insights of that tradition in spite of the rather profound differences concerning such matters as free will and divine decrees. Finally, I want to say that while I have read in Wesley with blessing and profit, I am by no means able to give an independent evaluation of Professor Truesdale's construal of Wesley's thought.

I find that I have just one major comment to make, and this comment begins very nearly at the point where Professor Truesdale's paper ends! Before coming to that, however, I want to express my appreciation for the material in the paper. Professor Truesdale's narration of the development of the dynamic conception of the self leads us with clarity and purpose through material which has the potential to be highly confusing. His depiction of systemic evil as it manifests itself in contemporary society is forceful and convincing, and his suggestion for connecting this conception of evil with Pauline theology is thought-provoking. Also commendable is his effort to demonstrate the affinity in Wesley's thought with the dynamic view of the self and the conception of systemic evil. About this part of the paper I have one caveat and one observation. My caveat concerns the claim, quoted with approval from Runyon, that in Luther and Calvin there is a "split . . . between the transcendent realm in which our salvation is actually occurring, and this world, which is in effect bracketed out of salvation history" (p. 33). This may be roughly correct as applied to Luther, but I think it unfair to Calvin and the Reformed tradition. The emphasis on common grace and on the "cultural mandate," as well as the repeated attempts, from Geneva on down, to bring about a Christianized social order testify to the Reformed belief in the relevance of salvation to life in this world. The

observation is this: I think it is not clear, from the material cited by Truesdale, just how much of the notion of "systemic evil" should be attributed to Wesley. Certainly it is important that Wesley recognized the widespread social evils of his own day and addressed them in his ministry. But the notion of systemic evil carries us a step beyond this, to the recognition that the valid and necessary institutions of society have such evils as racism, sexism and economic exploitation built into them in ways that may defy our power to eliminate. It may be that Wesley took this further step, but the claim that he did so requires evidence beyond what is cited in Truesdale's paper.

And now I come to my comment. When I first heard the title of Professor Truesdale's paper a question occurred to me. The question was this: Is there perhaps an inconsistency or incompatibility of some kind between the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness and the recognition of systemic evil? It seemed to me that there might well be, and I thought that the paper itself would throw some light on this perplexing question. When I received the paper I found that it did not, as I had expected, provide an answer for my question. On the contrary, it seems to me that Truesdale himself, in the concluding pages of his paper, is in effect inviting us to consider that same question. Let me explain why I think this.

Professor Truesdale identifies Wesley's concept of sin as an aspect of Wesley's thought "to which we should look for help." It turns out that the help is not really to be found in Wesley's thought; rather, it is a correction of Wesley's thought in the light of the notion of systemic evil. Wesley's idea of sin is ambiguous in that he has both a "narrow" and a "wider" view of sin. In the narrow view, only "voluntary transgression of a known law of God" is sin; in the wider view any "failure to fulfill the law of love" is sin, even if it does not result from a failure of the will. This distinction is crucial for Wesley's doctrine, because only if sin is taken in the narrower sense can it be maintained that the sanctified are without sin.

Now of course it can be questioned, as it has been by Flew and others, whether a "perfection" which consists only in the absence of deliberate and conscious disobedience deserves the importance which Wesley attributes to it. And these doubts are intensified when the reality of systemic evil is taken into account. As Truesdale asks, "Just what is the meaning of perfect love when our participation in exploitative social groups is faced?" Can I be in a meaningful sense "without sin" if it is true that the American economic system, in which I participate and on which I depend for my livelihood, depends on exploitation of the poor in Third World countries? And what shall I do about this? Shall I throw myself into activism, devoting my energies to rooting out this and other systemic evils? Perhaps I should, but there are many dangers-as Niebuhr, for example, well knew. My efforts may turn out to be ineffective; my reforms, if they are enacted, may bring other evils in their train. And my reformism may become a subtle but nonetheless deadly form of works-righteousness. Or should I reassure myself with the thought that the exploitation involved is not my personal doing, that no doubt if I have the opportunity I shall do something to correct it but that in the meantime I need not be deeply concerned? That is certainly our predominant inclination, but it is also a retreat into the "religious and moral atomism" which Truesdale so roundly castigates. In

fact, it would seem that any attempt to deal practically with systemic evil must begin by arousing a sense of guilt and responsibility on the part of those who benefit from it. Does systemic evil confront us with a situation in which guilt is inevitable? I take it that such a conclusion is not very welcome in Wesleyan theology. And perhaps the conclusion is not inescapable. Just as, according to John, "perfect love casts out fear," it might be true that perfect love casts out complicity in systemic evil. But if this is true, there is an urgent need for someone to explain to us how it is true.

But perhaps it is irresponsible of me to take refuge behind a string of unanswered questions. (Is calculated ambiguity in academic discourse an example of systemic evil?) So I will, in closing, state briefly some personal convictions about the matter we are discussing. First, I think that the reality of systemic evil in our society and in all societies is something that cannot be seriously questioned. Specific examples can be debated, of course, but it is beyond all doubt that the "mystery of evil" involves much more than individual, conscious transgressions. Secondly, I suggest that we need to be extremely cautious in assigning blame and guilt for specific instances of systemic evil which we think we have uncovered. Sometimes claims about systemic evil-economic injustice, for instance-presuppose views about "rights" and "justice" which have little basis outside the utopian imagination. But supposing that the injustice is real, the assessment of blame and guilt for it is often extremely difficult. We need to avoid letting our judgments about this be colored by the particular political and/or programmatic ends which we may have in view. The Marxists are experts at manipulating guilt and blame for their political ends, but for Christians our guilt and responsibility before God are too serious a matter to allow us to play this game.

Finally, I must say that it seems to me that the reality of systemic evil makes any thought of individual spiritual perfection extremely problematic. Let me briefly suggest a reason for this conclusion. According to Wesley, even the entirely sanctified may "walk less accurately than they might have done," but this is due to a "failure of knowledge . . . rather than to a failure of love." But the doctrine of systemic evil places this "failure of knowledge" in a new and sinister light. For our "failure of knowledge" concerning the systemic evils in which we are implicated is by no means simple ignorance: rather, it is "false consciousness," a deeply motivated failure to recognize evils whose recognition would cost us something, psychically and perhaps in other ways as well. To be sure, false consciousness can sometimes be overcome; I take it that this is what "consciousness-raising" is all about. But this would seem, at best, to be a gradual process rather than something accomplished all at once in a crisis experience of sanctification.

In conclusion I want to express my hearty agreement with Professor Truesdale's call to theologians to rethink the doctrines of sin and salvation in view of the implications of systemic evil.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD AND WESLEYAN PERFECTIONISM

by
Timothy L. Smith

Three religious impulses lay behind the evangelical movement that was born in English Christianity during the 1730's when John and Charles Wesley drew together at Oxford University the company of students scornfully labeled "Methodists." One was the Anglican moralism that started John Wesley on his spiritual pilgrimage. Inspired by his parents, particularly his mother Susanna, Wesley soon concluded that the call to righteousness that pervades the Old and the New Testaments was the central theme of Scripture. He read such works as Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying* and William Law's *Plain and Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. And he set out in earnest to find by God's grace that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."¹

The second impulse was the persisting force of Puritanism, the English version of Calvinism that in the preceding century had turned the nation first to prayer and then to political revolution. The Puritan movement subsided with the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, and the crowning of William and Mary twenty—eight years later reinforced the growing aversion to all forms of intense piety. But in Presbyterian Scotland and among the dissenting Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists of England and America Puritan fervor and moral seriousness persisted. Meanwhile, George Fox's Society of Friends propagated on both sides of the Atlantic their radical commitment to moral discipline and their belief that the light of Christ, usually identified with the Holy Spirit, awakened the conscience, or "seed," that remained alive in fallen human hearts.²

The third impulse stemmed from German Pietism. This movement of prayer, Bible study, and corporate discipline brought laypersons and pastors into hundreds of local associations that were intent on renewing the spiritual life of the established Lutheran or Calvinist churches. By the time the Wesleys were completing their studies at Oxford, the Pietists had established an orphan house and training school at what became the University of Halle, in Saxony, and had begun sending missionaries to the cities of the Old World and the frontiers of the New. In 1722, Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a Pietist, allowed an intensely spiritual

group of Moravians, from what is now Czechoslovakia, to settle at Herrnhut, on his new estate in Saxony. Within a few years, the growing settlement launched the missionary movement that became The Moravian Church.³

In the summer of 1734 George Whitefield, nineteen years old and a poor widow's son, entered Pembroke College, Oxford, earning his keep as a servant waiting on better—off students. Shy and self—conscious, he was already in deep search of saving faith. Charles Wesley befriended him and gave him Pietist August Francke's book *Against the Fear of Man* and, a bit later, Scottish Henry Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man*. During the following months with the Wesleys, Whitefield wrote in 1739, "religion began to take root in my heart, and I was fully convinced my soul must be totally renewed ere it could see God." Whitefield's recently—published letters make plain that as early as 1735 the idea of the new birth, though not the instantaneous assurance of it, was a commonplace among the Oxford Methodists. Two years later, he was ordained a deacon in the Church of England and began preaching on the new birth with notable success in his native city of Gloucester as well as at London, Bristol, and other places. In 1737 he sought and received appointment to go to Georgia, following in the steps of the two Wesleys, as chaplains to the new colony being established there.⁴

Before his departure, Whitefield's sermon *On the Nature and Necessity of Our Regeneration of New Birth in Christ Jesus*, based on the text "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature" (2 Cor.5:17), appeared in London, the first of many English and American editions.⁵ John Wesley, still in Georgia, had not yet experienced the grace Whitefield's sermon described, and returned to England the following winter conscious of his great need of it.⁶ Wesley's earlier sermons, however, especially two that he preached at Oxford in 1733—"The Circumcision of the Heart" and a borrowed one, "Grieve Not the Holy Spirit of God"—and several others that were until recently attributed to Charles Wesley, show that before their earliest contacts with Moravian teachers the Holy Club was moving in close accord toward the doctrines that were to become central in the evangelical awakenings.

Of these, Whitefield declared in the sermon of 1737, "the doctrine of our regeneration, or new birth in Christ Jesus" is "one of the most fundamental." It is a "fatal mistake," he warned, to "put asunder what God has inseparably joined together" and to "expect to be justified by Christ" without also being sanctified, that is, having one's nature "changed and made holy." Many, he continued, "are baptized with water, which were never, effectually at least, baptized with the Holy Ghost." To be "born again" implies "an inward change and purity of heart, and cohabitation of his Holy Spirit." It means "to be mystically united to Him by a true and lively faith, and thereby to receive spiritual virtue from Him, as . . . branches from the vine." To be thus "made anew" is necessary to our happiness in heaven. Hence the "irrevocable decree of the Almighty, that without holiness, that is, without being made pure by regeneration, and having the image of God thereby reinstamped upon the soul, no man living shall see the Lord." In his closing appeal, Whitefield asked, "Have we receiv'd the Holy Ghost since we believed? Are we new creatures in Christ or no?" Nothing but "the wedding garment of a new nature" will suffice.

"Unless the Spirit, which raised Jesus from the dead, dwell in you here," he concluded, "neither will your mortal bodies be quickened by the same Spirit to dwell with him hereafter."⁸

The doctrines of this discourse, though not all its pentecostal proof-texts, parallel those of John Wesley's sermon on "Salvation by Faith," preached before Oxford University in June the next year, two weeks after his experience of "living faith" at a prayer meeting in Aldersgate Street, London.⁹ Both sermons proclaimed to all the world the three points of Christian belief upon which Whitefield, the Calvinist, and John and Charles Wesley, the Arminians, always agreed. Indeed, they shared these convictions with Quakers and Baptists, with the German Pietists, Mennonites, and Moravians, and with a growing majority of the heirs of the Puritans, whether Presbyterian, Anglican, or Congregationalist, in Great Britain and America. All such "evangelicals" affirmed the moral authority of the Bible, declaring that it called human beings to a righteousness that is not only imputed to them in Christ's name but actually imparted to them by His grace. All stressed the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing sinners to repentance and faith in Christ, assuring them of forgiveness, and by His presence thereafter in their hearts nurturing in them the love and holiness that please God. And they declared it the duty of all who had discovered these truths and experienced this grace to proclaim the good news of salvation everywhere, at home and abroad.¹⁰ From that day until this, these three convictions have marked the boundaries of evangelical Protestantism. The Bible is its authority, the new birth its hallmark, and evangelism its mission.¹¹

Whitefield returned from Georgia for his ordination to the Anglican priesthood in November, 1738. In London, Bristol, and several towns between them, the revivals that had begun under his earlier preaching broke out afresh. The transformed evangelism of the Wesleys had given a new impulse to them, as had that of the Moravian missionaries, particularly in London.¹² Whitefield's American experience had accustomed him to preaching in dissenting houses of worship and, occasionally, in the open air. Now, whether excluded or not from Anglican pulpits, he greatly expanded both practices.¹³ Campaigning through Wales in March, while the great revival at the nearby port of Bristol was getting underway, he met and formed an alliance with young Howell Harris, some of whose Welsh societies afterwards became the nucleus of the Calvinistic Methodist Church.¹⁴ During these same months, however, John Wesley was earnestly seeking the full "witness of the Spirit" to the new life in Christ he had found at Aldersgate. I have "peace with God," he wrote shortly afterwards, "and I sin not today." But the joy he thought Scripture promised eluded him.¹⁵

Whitefield's Journal and published letters show he agreed entirely with the Wesleys that "nothing but an assurance that we are born again, that we are members of CHRIST, that we are united to Him by one and the same Spirit with which He himself was actuated" can "satisfy the heart of man."¹⁶ The three men also agreed on the nature and extent of the sanctification begun through the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.¹⁷ Whitefield preached often and distributed widely his new sermon, "The Marks of

the New Birth," which appeared later under the title, "Marks of Having Received the Holy Ghost."¹⁸ In it, he linked the question St. Paul asked the Ephesian believers—"Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" (Acts 19:2)—to the experience of the Apostles at Pentecost. The miracles that accompanied their experience are not necessary, Whitefield declared, "but it is absolutely necessary that we should receive the Holy Ghost in his sanctifying graces as really as they did, and so will it continue to be till the end of the world." We must "be baptized with his baptism and refining fire, before we can be stiled true members" of Christ's "mystical body." For that experience accomplishes the aim of Christ's coming, namely, to make those who believe on Him "partakers of the divine nature" and restore them to "that primitive dignity" in which they were "at first created." Christ's atonement, Whitefield continued, "purchased again for us the Holy Ghost," so that He might "once more reinstamp the divine image upon our hearts, and make us capable of living with and enjoying God."¹⁹ One who was thus born of the Spirit would "not willfully commit sin, much less live in the habitual practice of it." Rather, on any fall into evil, such a true believer quickly repents, and afterwards "takes double heed to his ways . . . and perfects holiness in the fear of God."²⁰ Here, in short, was a view of regeneration that in substance matched precisely what the two Wesleys had been preaching for nearly twelve months, and for which they, like Whitefield, found the doors of Anglican churches closed against them.²¹

Little wonder that as the time drew near for Whitefield to return to Georgia, he urged John Wesley to come to Bristol and assume the leadership of the revival there. Wesley arrived the first of April, 1739, and undertook the open—air preaching he had hitherto loathed.²² Speaking several times each day, he began systematic expositions of the doctrines of the evangelical awakening in concurrent series of sermons on the Gospel of John, the Sermon on the Mount, the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul's Epistle to the Romans.²³ Meanwhile, Whitefield's departure was delayed for some months by the French embargo. This enabled him not only to spread the revival to other towns, but to join the Wesleys frequently in public and private meetings at Bristol and London.²⁴

The unity of the three men was everywhere apparent during this crucial summer; and they muted the single point of disagreement among them, the doctrine of predestination. John Wesley set forth his longstanding objections to that doctrine in a sermon entitled "Free Grace," preached at Bristol in late April; but in response to Whitefield's pleas, he did not preach it again and deferred publishing it for many months.²⁵ They and their helpers affirmed, from a broad range of scriptural texts, what Whitefield called "the reasonableness of the doctrine of the new birth, and the necessity of our receiving the Holy Ghost in his sanctifying gifts and graces" in connection with it. They scorned the charge that expecting the Holy Spirit to deliver seekers from the power as well as the guilt of willful sin was enthusiasm.²⁶ All three taught that concrete acts of charity to suffering human beings—orphans, poor families, persons in prison, and victims of war or national disasters—must blossom in the midst of any authentic spiritual awakening. Whitefield was no less than the Wesleys the advocate of a socially concerned Christianity. And he grounded that concern as earnestly as they did in the law of Moses and Jesus that God's people must

love their neighbors as themselves.²⁷ They all resisted heartily the Moravian notion of "stillness," namely, that seekers must not exercise any effort, either by prayer, repentance, or good works, nor share in Holy Communion until, in Whitefield's words, they had "received the Holy Ghost in the full assurance of it," as the Apostles did at Pentecost.²⁸ And they rejected those called "French prophets," several of whom were women, for insisting that "extraordinary gifts of the Spirit" (such as the trances, exorcism, speaking in the unknown languages and miracles of healing recorded in the church of Pentecost) should accompany what Whitefield and the Wesleys always called His "ordinary gifts," namely, "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."²⁹

The doctrine of the sanctifying Spirit thus became crucial to the evangelical awakening, as it had been, in Geoffrey Nuttall's accounting, to the Puritan movement of the preceding century. During a week of evangelism with John Wesley in Bristol and nearby Bath in July, Whitefield wrote and Wesley helped edit for immediate publication his sermon *On the Indwelling Spirit, the Common Privilege of All Believers*, from the text in John 7:37—39.³⁰ It was reprinted many times in the next few years and, with only minor editing, including in Whitefield's first collection of his discourses, published in 1745. The theme of the sermon, like that of the one on "The Marks of the New Birth," was the promise of Jesus that His followers should be filled with the Spirit, not so they might work miracles or show "outward signs and wonders" but in order to be partakers of "His sanctifying graces."³¹ The fact of original sin, in his view, made this promise reasonable. "The great work of sanctification, or making us holy," he said, belonged to "the sanctifying Spirit promised in the text"; He would restore those who "truly believe" to the "glorious liberties of the sons of God."³² Before his departure for America in mid—August, Whitefield also wrote and published *The Power of Christ's Resurrection*, based on Philippians 3:10, which reiterated these points. Its central question was, as Whitefield put it, whether or not believers "have received the Holy Ghost, and by His powerful operation in our hearts been raised from the death of sin, to a life of righteousness and true holiness."³³ During the year that followed he made that question the key to a broad extension of the religious awakenings then going on in the towns of New England and the Middle Colonies.³⁴

Meanwhile, growing controversy with the Moravians moved the Wesleys steadily toward the conviction that some of the Biblical passages they had been using to describe the new birth referred primarily to a second and deeper experience of hallowing grace.³⁵ John Wesley's renewed study and repeated exposition during the late summer and fall of 1739 of the opening sentences of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (which I think we have grounds to believe yielded the essence of the discourses he published on those sentences seven years later) may have catalyzed that conviction.³⁶ From that time on he taught that to be made "pure in heart" and filled with righteousness was the essence of Christian perfection, and that this "second benefit" was promised only to those who, in poverty of spirit, meekness, and mourning, were already born into the family of God and made heirs of His kingdom.³⁷ On November 7 and 8, after a crucial encounter with the Moravian bishop, Augustus G. Spangenberg, John Wesley

wrote at least portions of his widely—read condensation of William Law's Christian Perfection. Either then or during the next few days he may have composed the momentous sermon entitled "Christian Perfection" that he published in September, 1741; for on November 12, I believe, at Oxford and again on Saturday evening, November 17, he explained to small gatherings of his followers "the nature and extent of Christian perfection," words that point to that sermon's contents.³⁸ During the following winter he preached important sermons from a group of texts he always thereafter used to declare the promise of full cleansing from the corruption of "inbred sin" that remains in believers after they are born again. Among their texts were II Peter 1:4, I John 1:7 and 2:12, Ephesians 4:23—24, Hebrews 10:19, and Hebrews 4:9.³⁹ And in the spring of 1740 Wesley published to all the world a scriptural account of the two moments of grace by which he had come to believe the Spirit made sinners whole—characteristically, in the preface to a hymnbook, the second volume of his and his brother's Hymns and Sacred Poems.⁴⁰ That preface, reprinted with only slight revision twenty—six years later in his Plain Account of Christian Perfection, remained for the rest of John Wesley's life the benchmark of his doctrine of inward holiness.⁴¹

During these months, however, Whitefield's theological sensibilities were subject to quite different influences. He seems to have left England unaware that his friends were moving rapidly toward the idea of a second and "entirely" sanctifying moment of grace. In a letter to a Scottish minister written in early August, 1739, the young evangelist rejoiced that the revival spirit had spread to that country, then added, in response to a complaint that seems almost too early to have been aimed at the Wesleys, "I follow them as they follow CHRIST. I am no friend of sinless perfection.—I believe the being (though not the dominion) of sin remains in the hearts of the greatest believers." (His "greatest believers," of course were John Wesley's "young men in Christ"—persons who had received the "abiding witness of the Spirit" to their new birth.)⁴² The sermon Whitefield enclosed with this letter may have been another he wrote and published that year under the title A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions, and Want of Principles, in regard to Righteousness and Christian Perfection. Its text. Ecclesiastes 7:16, "Be not righteous overmuch," had been used to attack the Methodists. Whitefield's sermon explained that the Biblical writer's actual purpose was "to exhort the truly righteous" to continue in "constant pursuit of greater and greater perfection and righteousness, till they rest in Christ." He declared that Yahweh's appeal to Abraham, "Walk thou before me, and be thou perfect," as well as the passage in Deuteronomy 18:13, "You shall be blameless before the Lord your God," were the basis of Jesus' exhortation in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."⁴³

During his first days aboard ship, Whitefield plunged into writing the Short Account of his early life that he sent home for John Wesley to publish. It radiated the language of the Methodist awakening, emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit both in regeneration and in bringing believers up to "the measure of His fulness who filleth all in all."⁴⁴ But his journal for the remainder of the voyage to Philadelphia revealed a growing struggle. "I was frequently enlightened to see the pride and selfishness of my heart," he stated on August 25, "and as frequently longed for that perfect liberty

wherewith Christ sets his servants free—" Two weeks later he wrote, "I groan daily to be set at liberty. Dearest Redeemer, I come unto Thee weary and heavy laden. Oh do Thou bring me into the full freedom of the sons of God." The shame of his past sins often oppressed him.⁴⁵ During the latter part of the voyage he read and found himself approving the writings of certain "Cambridge Puritans who championed imputed righteousness and who charged that Arminians relied upon their own works for justification. When a Quaker on board preached reliance upon "Christ within and not Christ without, as the foundation of our faith," Whitefield commented that "the outward righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us" is "the sole fountain and cause" of all that believers receive from the Spirit of God.⁴⁶ On October 13 he expressed gratitude for the "blessed teachings of His Holy Spirit" during the previous weeks. They had convinced him, he said, "of the pride, sensuality, and blindness of his heart."⁴⁷

On his arrival at Philadelphia November 3, the young evangelist found his way prepared by the news of the awakenings in England, by the spirituality of the Quakers and of the fifteen denominations of German Christians" that flourished in the area, and by the growing influence of the Presbyterian pastor—revivalists William and Gilbert Tennant in the Middle Colonies. Within a few weeks, he breathed new life into their efforts and brought thousands of people in towns from Wilmington, Delaware, to New York City face to face with the evangelical call to be born again.⁴⁸

At the end of the month Whitefield composed his great sermon, "The Lord our Righteousness." Its major purpose was to declare, from the messianic text in Jeremiah 23:5—6, that Christ dealt with human sinfulness by imputing to believers His perfect righteousness.⁴⁹ The sermon was not a digression from Methodist doctrine, however, but an exposition of one major facet of it, as a comparison with John Wesley's later sermon on the same text and his many summaries of the same point will show.⁵⁰ Whitefield acknowledged "the unChristian walk" of some who "talked of Christ's imputed righteousness. " But he insisted, as Wesley often did, that the teaching of Jesus and Paul only excluded good works "from being any cause of our justification in the sight of God." Doing them, Whitefield declared, was "a proof of our having this righteousness imputed to us"; and he warned that "an unapplied Christ is no Christ at all." For the text, he said, promised not only "Christ's personal righteousness imputed to us, but also holiness of heart wrought in us. These two God hath joined together. He never did, He never does He, never will put them asunder. If you are justified by the Blood you are also sanctified by the Spirit of the Lord."⁵¹ All this from a young man twenty—four years of age, whose spiritual pilgrimage had begun only five years before!

Clearly, however, during the very months when John Wesley was finding that the promise of heart purity pervaded both the Old and New Testaments and staking the future of his movement upon it, Whitefield, reveling in America's awakening, allowed sanctification to become a secondary concern. His journal and correspondence written during this second American journey (November 1739 to December 1740), while he preached his way from Pennsylvania to Georgia twice and then from Georgia to Boston and back again, indicate a growing alignment of his beliefs and sensibilities with those of the Calvinist pastors in the colonies-Presbyterians,

Congregationalists, and Baptists. None of these were friends of either free grace or Christian perfection.⁵² Hints also recur that although the young clergyman realized that his personal quest of holiness was being frustrated, the immense response to his preaching made the frustration less painful.⁵³

Because several bundles of letters sent across the Atlantic were misdirected and only slowly forwarded, Whitefield spent this year of evangelism in America largely out of touch with his English friends. He did not learn for many months that soon after his departure John Wesley decided to publish his sermon on "Free Grace" and began clearly to proclaim and to set his closest followers to seeking the experience of heart purity and perfect love. He received a letter from Wesley in March that has not survived. But it prompted him to write pleading that they quarrel no more, either over the doctrine of predestination (of which, Whitefield declared, he was "ten thousand times more convinced" than when he left England) or over Wesley's belief that certain Scriptures promised full deliverance from the "strugglings of indwelling sin." Two months later, Whitefield warned in another letter that he also differed from Wesley's "notions about committing sin." Since the American revivals were being carried on without divisions over these issues, he hoped Wesley had no plans to come there and thought it might be best that he not return to England.⁵⁴

A few hours after Whitefield arrived in Boston on September 20, 1740, he wrote in his journal that though refreshed by accounts of the success of the gospel in "several packets of letters sent to me from different parts of England and America," he was "a little cast down to find some English friends had thrown aside the use of means" [that is, the means of grace; apparently a reference to those who had joined the Moravians] while "others were disputing for sinless perfection and universal redemption. I know no such things asserted in the gospel, if explained aright."⁵⁵ To a friend in New York he wrote that he believed God was calling him back to England, and that "Mr. W—and the M—S [Wesley and the Moravians?]" were "sadly erroneous in some points of doctrine." To another in Britain, who had complained that some were teaching "sinless perfection," Whitefield replied that in his view such a state was "unattainable in this life" and that "there is no man that liveth and sinneth not in thought, word, and deed." It was absurd, he added, "to affirm such a thing as perfection, and to deny final perseverance."⁵⁶

Five days later Whitefield wrote directly to John Wesley, in answer to Wesley's letter of March 25, which does not now exist. "I think I have for some time known what it is to have righteousness, peace, and joy in the HOLY Ghost," Whitefield began, quoting words of St. Paul (Romans 14:17) that Wesley used constantly to describe what it meant to be a child of God. "But I cannot say I am free from indwelling sin; no, I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, that makes me to cry out, even now, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' " (Romans 7:24). These words suggest that the evangelist did not yet comprehend fully that Wesley was now teaching that deliverance from the inward bent to sinning was promised in a second work of grace, beyond the new birth. For he cited then the article in the Anglican creed that Wesley still and always heartily affirmed, declaring inward corruption to remain in those who have experienced regeneration. "I am sorry, honoured Sir," Whitefield

continued "to hear by many letters that you seem to own a sinless perfection in this life attainable." On the contrary, he reasoned, the continual struggle with inbred sin is necessary to keep a Christian humble "and to drive him constantly to Jesus for pardon and forgiveness." True, he acknowledged, many abuse this teaching "and perhaps willfully indulge sin, or do not aspire after holiness." But he could not on that account "assert doctrines contrary to the gospel." Wesley must have been startled to read the words, "I know no sin (except that against the Holy Ghost), that a child of God (if God should withhold his grace) may not be guilty of." Was this, indeed, the same man who had written the sermon on "Marks of the New Birth?"⁵⁷

The letter did not, however, mean that Whitefield had abandoned the teaching both men knew they shared with Pietists, Quakers, and Puritans—that the power of the Holy Spirit enabled persons who were truly born again to overcome temptation. Whitefield had simply begun to rely on the doctrines of election and final perseverance to deal with the fact that they often yielded to it, as did King David, whom Scripture called "a man after God's own heart," and Peter, who denied his Lord.⁵⁸ The very next day, however, the evangelist explained to another correspondent what must have been for him a new understanding of the link between a predestined new birth and the assurance of final salvation: "Thus (says Saint Paul) 'those whom He justified, them He also glorified'; so that if a man was once justified, he remains so to all eternity."⁵⁹

Returning south by way of Philadelphia in early November, 1740, Whitefield found in the Quaker city another letter from Wesley, this one also written a full eight months earlier. "O that we were of one mind," Whitefield responded. "For I am yet persuaded you greatly err. You have set a mark you will never arrive at, till you come to glory. . . . O that God may give you a sight of his free, sovereign, and electing love. . . ." Then, pleading friendship, he wrote, "I am willing to go with you to prison, and to death; but I am not willing to oppose you. . . . Dear, dear Sir, study the covenant of grace, that you may be consistent with yourself."⁶⁰

At his orphanage in Bethesda, Georgia, Whitefield wrote John Wesley on Christmas eve a long letter in answer to his friend's views on both Christian perfection and free grace. At the risk of their friendship, he had decided to publish it in Charleston, Boston, and, on his return, in London. The letter demonstrates that this fateful decision stemmed from what Whitefield thought was the interlocking character of Wesley's rejection of predestination and his doctrine of Christian perfection. It also records, however, the young evangelist's retreat from his once high view of the "sanctifying graces" imparted in the new birth. He acknowledged "with grief and humble shame" that during the "five or six years" since he had received the "full assurance of faith," although he had "not doubted a quarter of an hour of having a saving interest in Jesus Christ," he had "fallen into sin often." He had not been nor did he expect ever to be "able to live one day perfectly free from all defects and sin."⁶¹ Lumping the last two words together, of course, confused the careful distinction between human frailty and a corrupted heart that Wesley had drawn from the moment he began to preach the promise of cleansing from all sin.⁶² Worse, Whitefield in the next breath denounced an error that Wesleyans have never held, namely, "that after a

man is born again he cannot commit sin." And in the letter's closing paragraphs he abandoned his customary deference to tell his friend bluntly, "I believe your fighting so strenuously against the doctrine of election, and pleading so vehemently for a sinless perfection, are among the reasons . . . why you are kept out of the liberties of the gospel, and that full assurance of faith which they enjoy who have experimentally tasted and daily feed upon God's electing, everlasting love."⁶³

John Wesley, always careful not to claim more grace than he had, stood thus publicly judged by one of his closest associates as not enjoying even a clear experience of regeneration.⁶⁴ But the judgment was grounded in Whitefield's persisting belief that Scripture taught only one renewing work of the Holy Spirit, the new birth, whereas Wesley was now hungering and thirsting for a second and deeper renewal in God's image. In that sublime moment, Wesley declared for the rest of his life, the underlying impulse to pride, self—will and anger that persisted in every believer's heart, and that he thought represented the "remains of inbred sin," would be entirely cleansed away. Persons thus sanctified would then be able to love God with all their heart and their neighbors as themselves.⁶⁵ Having been preoccupied for fifteen months with resisting the antinomianism he thought was implicit in Moravian "stillness," Wesley now had to confront the "speculative antinomianism" of the Calvinist party. Many of that party were far more willing than Whitefield to condone sin in believers. And they were happy to be able to draw upon Whitefield's letter to accuse John Wesley of teaching salvation by works rather than by grace, and to ground that accusation upon both the doctrines in question: unlimited atonement and Christian perfection.⁶⁶

Once having joined the argument against entire sanctification in public print, Whitefield never relented. Late in April, 1741, he responded to a friend (possibly Howell Harris) who had been put off by his statement that there was "no such thing" as dominion over the carnal nature with these words: "We shall never have such a dominion over indwelling sin as entirely to be delivered from the stirring of it." Moreover, he continued, "the greatest saint cannot be assured but [that] some time or other, for his humiliation or punishment for unfaithfulness, God may permit it to break out into some actual breach of his law, and in a gross way too."⁶⁷ To a lady in Edinburgh, recently converted, Whitefield wrote: "What does the Lord require of you now, but to walk humbly with him? Beg him to show you more and more of your evil heart, that you may ever remain a poor sinner at the feet of the once crucified, but now exalted lamb of God. There you will be happy." Earlier he would have declared, with all the other awakened Methodists, that the Christian's happiness stems from the power to live righteously. A bit later, Whitefield published an answer to an anonymous tract, attributed to the Bishop of London, entitled *Observations upon the Conduct and Behaviour of . . . Methodists*. The evangelist stoutly defended the doctrine that the new birth was "a sudden and instantaneous change," in which "the Righteousness of Jesus Christ" is imputed and applied to their Souls by Faith, through the Operation of the Eternal Spirit." This doctrine he and the Wesleys continued everywhere to declare. But he denied ever imagining that he "had attain'd or was already perfect," or

teaching others "to imagine that they were so." On the contrary, he wrote "I expect to carry a body of sin and death about with me as long as I live."⁶⁸

During the years that followed both Whitefield and John Wesley worked hard to minimize their estrangement. Both men wrote gracious letters which, though reiterating their differences, demonstrated their common opposition to Moravian teaching, affirmed their resistance to antinomianism, and cleared up the libel that Wesley had excluded Calvinists from his societies.⁶⁹ In his most important theological tract, published in 1745 Wesley declared the charge that he and Whitefield anathematized each other was "grossly, shamelessly false." In every one of the "fundamental doctrines" of Christianity, he said, "we hold one and the same thing. In smaller points each of us thinks, and lets think . . . I reverence Mr. Whitefield, both as a child of God, and a true minister of Jesus Christ."⁷⁰ In 1748 the evangelist wrote John Wesley wishing for a union of their followers but regretting that it was not feasible. Wesley's recently—published volumes of sermons demonstrated, he said, "that we differ in principles more than I thought." Moreover, his "attachment to America" would not allow him to make long visits in England or to organize his followers into a permanent association of societies, as Wesley had.⁷¹ Whenever he was in Britain, however, Whitefield preached among Wesley's societies, as he put it, "as freely as among those who are called our own."⁷²

In 1763, William Warburton, the Anglican bishop of Worcester, wrote a volume deeply critical of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that both Calvinistic and Arminian evangelicals freely proclaimed. Whitefield and John Wesley published closely parallel rejoinders. Both stressed the scriptural promise that the gifts of the Holy Spirit would empower believers to live a righteous life.⁷³ Whitefield declared that the "divine tempers" described in St. Paul's great hymn to Christian love in I Corinthians, chapter 13, are "flowers not to be gathered in nature's garden. They are exotics—planted originally in heaven, and in the great work of the new birth, transplanted by the Holy Ghost, not only into the hearts of the first apostles or primitive Christians, but into the hearts of all true believers, even to the end of the world."⁷⁴ The last two phrases had appeared long before in both his and Wesley's sermons of 1739, the one referring to initial and the other to entire sanctification. They had reappeared in 1757 in John Wesley's Notes on Acts 1:5, recording Jesus' promise to His apostles of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵ Whitefield urged that "our earthly hearts do now, and always will, stand in as much need of the quickening, enlivening, transforming influence of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, . . . as the hearts of the first apostles." The Spirit's abiding presence gradually makes "every believer, in every age," truly Christian, he wrote, "by beginning, carrying on, and completing that holiness in the heart and life . . . without which no man living shall see the Lord."⁷⁶ Here, revived, was the language of Whitefield's earliest sermons.⁷⁷

The closing days of the year 1766 found the evangelist writing a friend praising the Countess Selina, Lady Huntingdon, for her "single eye" and "disinterested spirit" and her "laudable ambition" to lead the Christian vanguard. "O for a plerephory of faith! To be filled with the Holy Ghost," Whitefield exclaimed to his friend. "This is the grand point. God be praised that you have it in view."⁷⁸ Three years later a similar spiritual ambition led

John Fletcher, with Wesley's blessing, to accept Lady Huntingdon's invitation to preside over the founding of Trevecca College. She hoped that at Trevecca the youthful followers of Wesley and Whitefield would unite again, in a love inspired by the Holy Spirit's outpouring.⁷⁹

Little wonder that when news reached England in 1770 that George Whitefield had died and been buried at Newburyport, Massachusetts, John Wesley would allow no one to keep him from fulfilling Whitefield's wish that he preach the memorial sermon in his friend's London pulpit.⁸⁰ And in that sermon, before a vast congregation, Wesley proclaimed that these two firebrands of the evangelical movement had never differed on the great doctrine that the gift of the Holy Spirit in the experience of regeneration and His continuing presence thereafter delivered believers from the power as well as the guilt of sin, enabling them to "walk as Christ also walked."⁸¹

In retrospect, the research for this paper, undertaken simply to find out what Whitefield thought were John Wesley's views, also casts new light on many aspects of his own thought and ministry and, accordingly, on the evangelical awakenings in Great Britain and America. Whitefield's priority is evident in many matters on which he and the Wesleys were in substantial agreement. Without any acquaintance with Moravians, but believing himself indebted to the Wesleys, he led the way in preaching that in the experience of the new birth, the Holy Spirit gave believers victory over the dominion of sin. He rooted that proclamation, as the Wesleys always did, in the reformation doctrine of justification, of being "made just" by faith. He grounded it, as they did, in what the early church fathers believed was the promise of both the Old and New Testaments: that God's purpose—manifest in Moses and the prophets, in the atonement and resurrection of Christ, and in the pouring out of His Spirit at Pentecost—would renew fallen humankind in the divine image of holiness and love. Holiness, for these three and most other leaders of the evangelical awakening, consisted in a life of loving God supremely and one's neighbor as oneself, as both Moses and Jesus had taught. And both that life and the experience of the Holy Spirit's presence that made it possible required growth in holiness, by grace alone, through faith. Moreover, Whitefield, by far the youngest of the three men, pioneered many of the evangelistic measures that the Wesleys and others adopted, such as preaching in the open air, cultivating Anglican fellowship with dissenting ministers and their congregations, and nurturing a sense of common purpose among an interdenominational community of English, continental, and American evangelicals.

Whitefield's testimony also helps us understand better the origin and substance of the Wesleys' perfectionism, which was the more important of the two major points of disagreement between them. Clearly, the central issue was the Wesleyan contention that believers should pray for and expect a second work of sanctifying grace that would cleanse away the "remains of inbred sin." The letters that Whitefield and John Wesley exchanged in 1740 confirm what I had earlier concluded on the basis of Wesley's writings: that this doctrine of "perfect love" emerged in the months between July and November, 1739. And the Wesleys and their followers proclaimed it without diminishing the high doctrine of the new birth that was the hallmark of the evangelical awakening. The timing, the

scriptural basis, and the moral rigor of this teaching make no longer tenable, I believe, the notion that John Wesley embraced it only after, and largely because, members of his London and Bristol congregations had begun to profess entire sanctification. Those professions followed, they did not precede, the preaching of it.

Whitefield's writings also bring into clearer focus the character of the New Light Calvinism that he helped colonial pastors to popularize during the revivals of the 1740's. Although certain parallels between Jonathan Edwards' views and what Whitefield believed and preached—and, for that matter, some aspects of what Wesley believed and preached—are now apparent, it is clear that his New Light Calvinism differed substantially from the stark Augustinian orthodoxy usually ascribed to Edwards. Rather, what Whitefield nurtured in the American Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Baptist churches was their renewal of the emphasis that both John Calvin and his Puritan heirs had placed on a morally transforming experience of saving grace. This helps to explain the ease and consistency by which Wesley's perfectionism was exported to America, but the idea that righteousness in both private and public life is the central purpose of redemption and the actual consequence of mass conversions was never a monopoly of Wesleyans, in either Britain or America. If these conclusions are valid, they pose important new questions about the cultural history of revolutionary and early national America. The first stages of the long struggle between piety and moralism, between "dead orthodoxy" and the power of righteousness, involved primarily the two parties of Old and New Light Calvinists; for Methodists were few indeed until after 1775. Francis Asbury's Methodists, who after 1780 multiplied as rapidly in the cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Charleston, and, later, Boston as in the pioneer western settlements, shared fully the New Light moral perspective. That the drive for holiness, and not simply the assurance of salvation, was the governing theme of early Methodism on both sides of the Atlantic is now becoming commonplace among students of that movement's history, as indeed it was among the first generation of Methodist historians. Neither in England or America did Wesleyans see any way to fulfill their mission to "reform the nation," as the Book of Discipline put it, than "to spread scriptural holiness over these lands." This larger moral purpose, I think, was the basis of the "evangelical united front" that persisted through most of the nineteenth century, drawing together Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, and German Pietists. Pioneer black Methodists and Baptists slowly embraced, though on their own terms, the same moral hopes. They sustained both the loyalty to America and the resistance to slavery and all other forms of oppression that their spiritual descendants have ever since displayed.

Broader aspects of American political and religious history also look different when the moral promise of Whitefield's Reformed evangelicalism is clear. The revolutionary rhetoric calling for "a republic of virtue" may not have owed as much to the fascination of colonial elites with Enlightenment ideals as to the revivalist conviction that personal rectitude was one of the sure marks of new life in Christ. And the mid—nineteenth century "righteous empire," scorned by a generation of recent scholars for its alleged separation of public and private morality, reflected an admirable

if often frustrated effort to untie the two, as I and others have persistently argued. During the early part of that century Unitarians found both popular and intellectual support for their ethical preaching from the growing concern for righteousness in private and public life that Jonathan Edwards had sparked, Whitefield's preaching had kindled, and Francis Asbury and Samuel Hopkins had brought to white heat.

Notes

1Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York, 1964, in *A Library of Protestant Thought*, ed. John Dillenberger and others), "Introduction," 3—34, and 121—23; Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley, A Theological Biography: Volume I* . . . , tr. Norman P. Goldhawk (New York, London, 1962), 43—53, 73—114.

2Schmidt, *Wesley*, I, 23—30. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1946), 4—8, 14—19, 28—33, 42—45, 134—40, and 154—57 illuminates the Puritan and Quaker backgrounds of the evangelical movement; but on the precise distinction between the convicting and the evangelically converting work of the Holy Spirit in every person, cf. Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven, 1964), 110—113.

3F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leyden, 1973); John R. Weinlick, "Moravianism in the American Colonies," in F. Ernest Stoeffler, ed., *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976), 123—34.

Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1978), 394—406, 421—31, 434—45, synthesizes powerfully the recent scholarship on these three impulses to the eighteenth—century awakenings. His account of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection, however, 428—29, is awry, apparently from inattention to the central doctrine of prevenient grace. On that theme, see Harald G. A. Lindstrom *Wesley and Sanctification, A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Nashville 1946; reprinted, Wilmore, Kentucky, 1982), 44—50. Jean Orcibal, "The Theological Originality of John Wesley and Continental Spirituality," in Rupert E. Davies and Gordon Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* (2 vols.; London, 1965, 1978), I, 81—113, sets Wesley in the context of Catholic as well as Protestant traditions of spirituality.

4George Whitefield, *A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield . . . to the Time of His Entering Into Holy Orders* (London, 1740), reprinted, with critical notes, in *George Whitefield, Journals . . .*, ed. Arnold Dallimore (London, 1960), 46—47, 68—69, 77, 80—89, relies on Whitefield's slightly revised text of 1745; John Wesley arranged the publication of the original edition at London, early in 1740. For Whitefield's writing of this Account aboard ship to Philadelphia, see, in the same place, his journal entries for August 27 and September 8, 1739. Cf. George Whitefield, Gloucester, June 11, and summer, 1735, to John

76 Wesley, in George Whitefield, *Letters . . . for the Period 1734—1742* (London, 1976), 483, 485.

Schmidt, Wesley, I, 52—58, analyzes Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man* and its impact upon Susanna Wesley and her sons; John Wesley published an abridgement of it at Bristol in 1744.

5George Whitefield, *A Sermon on Regeneration, Preached to a Numerous Audience in England* (2nd ed.; Boston: T. Fleet, 1739), which I use here, appeared first in London in 1737 under the title stated in the text. Whitefield describes its preparation and reception there in *Short Account*, 86.

6John Wesley, *Journal*, in his *Works* (14 vols.; London: 1872, reprinted, Kansas City, Mo., 1968), I, entries for January 8, 9, and 24, 1738 and May 24, 1738, paragraphs 9—17. Charles Wesley, *Journal . . .*, ed. Thomas Jackson (2 vols.; London, 1849; reprinted, Kansas City, Mo., 1980), I, 72—79, entries for June—November, 1737, show that after his return from Georgia and parallel to his growing acquaintance with the Moravians, Charles was wholly absorbed in seeking, and teaching the doctrine of, the new birth, though he may not have yet conceived it to be experienced instantaneously, by faith, as Peter Bohler convinced the Wesleys it was in the spring of 1738; see the same, 84—87, April and May, 1738.

7Key passages in the two sermons of 1733 appear in Wesley, *Works*, VI, 204—5 and 209—10 (sec. I, par.6—9 and sec. II, par. 4,5) and VII, 491 (sec. III, par. 1). Cf. in Charles Wesley, *Sermons . . .*, with a *Memoir of the Author* (London, 1816), discourses that Richard Heitzenrater has recently demonstrated that John Wesley composed, no later than the dates indicated: "He That Winneth Souls Is Wise" (July 12, 1731), pp. 13—14, 17; "One Thing Is Needful" (May, 1734), pp. 85—86, 89—91; and "Thou Shalt Love the Lord Thy God" (Sept. 15, 1733), pp. 136—137, 144, 159. Compare John Wesley's other early sermons, "The Christian's Rest" (21 September, 1735), *Works*, VII. 367—63; and "On Love" (February 20, 1736), the same, 497—98.

8Whitefield, *Sermon on Regeneration*, 5, 6, 7, 20, 21. Frederick Dreyer, "Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley," *The American Historical Review*, 88 (February, 1983), 15—16, misreads the continual Methodist emphasis on "righteousness" as the "ordinary" gift of the Holy Spirit to believers, without which the "emotional reactions or effects" of "peace, love, and joy" bore no witness of salvation at all. That the young evangelist preached this same doctrine during his first stay in Georgia, in 1737 and 1738, is clear from George Whitefield, on board the "Mary," October 2, 1738, to "The Inhabitants of Savannah," in *Whitefield, Letters . . . 1734—1742*, 491—493.

9John Wesley, "Salvation by Faith" (June 7, 1738), *Works*, V, 11—12 (sec. II, par.5—7). I have attempted to assign the earliest likely dates of their composition in my article. "Chronological List of John Wesley's Sermons and Doctrinal Essays," *The Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 17 (Fall, 1982): 88—110; notes that appear in parentheses after the titles of sermons cited below are drawn from that necessarily preliminary effort.

- 10 On the centrality of these evangelical affirmations to John Wesley, see the same, 15—16 (sec. III, par. 7, 9), and *passim*, John Wesley, London, March 20, 1739, to James Hervey, in John Wesley, *Letters*, I, 1721—1739, ed. Frank Baker (*The Works of John Wesley, Volume 25*; Oxford, 1980), 610—11. Cf. the close analysis of the ecumenical character of early eighteenth century "spiritual theology" in Richard F. Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather: Origins of American Evangelicalism* (Washington, 1979), 3, 33, 35—36, 91—92, and, generally, 251—281.
- 11 The constancy of this definition of "evangelical" from the eighteenth century to the present is spelled out in my as yet unpublished chapters prepared for a forthcoming volume that I have written jointly with several younger colleagues, *The American Evangelical Mosaic*.
- 12 Whitefield, *Journals*, December 8, 1738 to March 1, 1739, *passim*, especially December 10, February 9—10, and March 1; Wesley, *Journal*, December 11, 1738.
- 13 Whitefield, *Journals*, February 23, 1739, seems to record Whitefield's earliest consciousness that he was committed to "field preaching," a phrase that referred not to rural fields, of course, but to open spaces in or near the centers of cities and towns; cf. George Whitefield, *A Further Account of God's Dealings . . . from the Time of His Ordination to His Embarking for Georgia* (June, 1736—December, 1737) (London, 1740), reprinted in Whitefield, *Journals*, 90.
- 14 Whitefield, *Journals*, March 3, 7—9 and April 4—7, 1739.
- 15 Wesley, *Journal*, May 25, 1738. Cf. his subsequent entries recounting this search: May 26—29, June 6—7, July 6, October 14, 1738, and January 4, 1739. His intensely pessimistic self—examination of October 14, 1738, should be read in the light of the following: John Wesley, *A Second Letter to the Author of The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared* (London, 1750), ed. Gerald R. Cragg, in Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, XI (Oxford, 1975), 402 (also in Wesley, *Works*, I X, 36); and his restrained but seemingly clear testimonies to a satisfying witness of the Spirit in Wesley, *Journal*, June 11, 1730 and in John Wesley, Bristol, May 10, 1739, to Samuel Wesley, his brother in *Letters*, I, 645—46, on the latter of which he comments in his *Journal*, May 20, 1739.
- 16 George Whitefield, Gibraltar, February 27, 1738, to an unidentified person; the same, at sea, April 14, 1738, to Mrs. A. H.; the same, Basingstoke, February 8, 1739, to an unidentified man; and the same, Oxon, April 24 and 27, 1739, to Mrs. H.—all in George Whitefield, *Letters . . . Written to His Most Intimate Friends, and Persons of Distinction . . . from the Year 1734 to 1770 . . .* (3 vols.; London, 1772, a reprinting, from the same plates, of the first three volumes of his *Works*, ed. John Gillies, 6 vols, London, 1771), I, 39, 40—41, 47—49. See also, Whitefield, *Journals*, January 23 and 24, 1739, and cf. February 25 and March 6, 1738.
- 17 John Wesley's sermons of the same period, "Salvation by Faith" (June 7, 1738), *Works*, V, 11 (sec. II, par. 5, 6), "Marks of the New Birth" (April 3, 1741), *Works*, V, 214—16 (sec. I, par. 4—6), and "The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God" (September 23, 1739), the same, 227—33

- (sec. II), affirm and explain the nature of that "dominion over sin" that his Journal for May 24 (par. 11, 12, 16), 25, 27, and 29 declared the pre—eminent sign of regeneration.
- 18I have used the text Whitefield edited for his *Twenty—three Sermons on Various Subjects . . .* (new ed.; London, 1745), 203—219. Cf. George Whitefield, *Works . . .* (6 vols.; London, 1771), VI, 161; and Whitefield, *Journals*, January 9 and March 21, 1739.
- 19Whitefield, "Marks of the New Birth," in *Twenty—three Sermons*, 204, 205—6, 207.
- 20The same, 209—210.
- 21Charles Wesley's Oxford sermon, "Awake Thou That Sleepest" (April 4, 1742, in John Wesley, *Works*, V, 30—34 (sec. II, par. 7—11, and III, par. 1—9), summarized the constant linkage the two brothers made between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the experience of the "new creature" who partakes of the divine nature, precisely as Whitefield did in his *Sermon on Regeneration*, 20—21. Cf. John Wesley, "The First Fruits of the Spirit" (June 25, 1745), *Works*, V, 88—89 (sec. I, par. 1—6), and "The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption" (April 25, 1739), the same, 105—107 (sec. II, par. 9—10, and III, par. 1—6); and Wesley, *Journal*, February 4, and April 8, 1739.
- 22Wesley, *Journal*, March 15, 28, 31, and April 1—2, 1739.
- 23The same, April 1—3, 5, 8; and John Wesley, Bristol, April 9, 1739, to James Hutton, summarizing the first full week of the revival at Bristol, in his *Letters*, I, 631—33. The latter was the first of a weekly series to James Hutton that provide an invaluable supplement to the *Journal* for April and May.
- 24Whitefield, *Journals*, May 9 and June 3, 1739, record the immense size of his open—air congregations in London, and his visits to Bedford, Hertford, Northampton, and other places; but see especially the "Fourth Journal" for June 4—August 3, 1739, particularly the entries for June 18, July 10—14, and July 21.
- 25Wesley, *Journal*, April 26, 29, 1739; John Wesley, Bristol, April 26, 1739, to James Hutton, in Wesley, *Letters*, I, 635—37; George Whitefield, London, June 25, 1739, and Gloucester, July 2, 1739, to John Wesley, in Whitefield, *Letters*, . . . 1734—1742, 497, 499 (also in Wesley, *Letters*, I, 661, 42, 667); and, for Whitefield's continuing admiration for John Wesley's work in Bristol and that of Charles in London, Whitefield, *Journals*, April 30 and July 7 and 21, 1739. Wesley never re—issued the sermon, and did not include it in any collection of his writings; see Wesley, *Works*, VII, 363, for the editors' comment, and, for the offending sermon, 373—86.
- 26The quotation is from Whitefield, *Journals*, May 28, 1739. Cf. George Whitefield, Bristol, July 9, 1739, to the Bishop of Gloucester, in the same, entry for July 9, 1739.
- 27Whitefield, *Journals*, March 24, 25, and 28, and May 9, 13, 1739. The same, July 11, 1738, indicates the likelihood that the orphanage that Salzburger pietists had established in Georgia inspired his plan to build one at Savannah.

- 28 Whitefield, *Journals*, April 21, 22 (containing his letter, dated Oxon, April 22, 1739 to Charles Kinchin), and 25; and Wesley, *Journal*, June 6, 1738, recording the first of his many sensible responses to this Moravian notion.
- 29 George Whitefield, Blendon, June 12, 1739, to an unnamed society, in *Letters*, I, 50; Wesley, *Journal*, January 28 and June 22, 1739. Cf. John Wesley, Bristol, June 7, 1739, to James Hutton, *Letters*, I, 658; and Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth—Century England* (Berkeley, 1980), 311—318.
- 30 Wesley, *Journal*, July 6, 12, 1739.
- 31 Whitefield, *Twenty—three Sermons*, 299; the quotations here and later in the paragraph all agree with the fifth edition, published in Boston, 1741. Cf. Whitefield, *Journals*, May 28 and July 12, 1739; and Lovelace, Mather, 50—52, 91—97, 185—87.
- 32 Whitefield, *Twenty—three Sermons*, 309—11.
- 33 George Whitefield, *The Power of Christ's Resurrection. A Sermon Preached at Werburgh's in the City of Bristol* (London, 1739), 10 and, for strong language about the inward sanctification of the "true Christian," 11—13.
- 34 Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind, from the Great Awakening to the Revolution*, 34—39, links Whitefield's doctrine of the new birth more closely to Calvinism, I think. than the evidence he cites justifies.
- 35 The Moravian challenge was a long—standing and persistent one; see Wesley, *Journal*, June 6, 1738, November 1, 4, 7—10, and December 13, 19, 31, 1739, and April 23, 25, 30 and June 22—24, 1740; and John Wesley, Oxford, November 17, 1738 to Benjamin Ingham and James Hutton, in Wesley, *Letters*, I, 580. Much of Wesley's elaborate account of his own experience after Aldersgate as a "babe in Christ" who was "weak in the faith," as well as his lengthy report of what he heard at Herrnhut in August, 1738, was composed after the crisis in the Fetter Lane Society in London had reached its height, and may have been shaped by his need to counter Moravian arguments.
- 36 Wesley, *Journal*, July 21—23 and October 9 and 19, 1739; cf. his references to explaining the nature of Christian holiness (apparently to Society meetings), the same, September 13, and October, 1, 3, 7, 10, and 15, 1739. Cf. the same, August 1, and 12, 1738, for Wesley's account of Moravian Christian David's exposition of the Sermon on the Mount at Herrnhut, written up for publication of that section of the *Journal* late in 1739.
- 37 John Wesley, "Sermon on the Mount—Discourse III" (July 26, 1739; published, 1748), *Works*, V, 278—79, 282—85, 293.
- 38 John Wesley, "Diary," printed parallel to his *Journal*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock (8 vols.; London, 1909—16), entry for November 7—8, 1739, records his reading and writing on William Law's *Christian Perfection*, the first portion of which he published the following summer. Wesley, *Journal*, November 17, quoted here, is echoed in the entry for August 10, 1740, where his use of that sermon's text (as expounded in its opening

paragraphs) to urge believers to "press forward for the prize of their high calling, even a clean heart. . . ." Compare, also, John Wesley, comp., of William Law, *The Nature and Design of Christianity* (London, 1740), discussed in Frank Baker's ms. Bibliography under item 41, pp. 265—68.

39Wesley, *Journal*, entries for January 9 and 15, March 5 and 28, April 14, May 5, June 1 and 24, and August 1, 1740.

40My article, "The Holy Spirit in the Hymns of the Wesleys," *The Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 17 (Summer, 1981): 28, pays special attention to this earliest published description of the experience of entire sanctification: John Wesley's preface to the second volume of Charles and John Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London, 1740), which appears in his *Works*, XIV, 322—27.

41John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection . . .* (London, 1766), in *Works*, XI, 378—81. Wesley misdated this hymnbook as 1742 in the *Plain Account* and accordingly gave priority there to his essay on *The Character of a Methodist* and his sermon, *Christian Perfection*, though both were published after the hymnbook; see the discussion in my article, "The Holy Spirit in the Hymns of the Wesleys," loc. cit., 28—29.

42George Whitefield, London, August 3, 1739, to an unnamed Scottish clergyman, in *Letters*, I, 58.

43I have used the text of the original edition (London, 1739), where these quotations appear on pp. 3, 10—11. These Scripture citations appear to be Philippians 3:12, 15, Genesis 17:1, Deuteronomy 18:13, and Matthew 5:48. Cf. Whitefield, *Journals*, April 29, 1739, and Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth Century Revival* (2 vols.; London, 1970, 1980), I, 197, 224, 316, and 404—9. Dallimore was so absorbed with the early signs of Whitefield's developing Calvinism that he did not comment at all on these deep and long—standing agreements with the Wesleys.

44Whitefield, *Short Account*, 71 (where these words from the 1740 edition appear alongside a revision and extension of them in his later editions) and, generally, 47, 51—2, 54—5, 59, 60, 84, 90. George Whitefield, Philadelphia ["wrote at sea"], November 8, 1739, to John Wesley, in Wesley, *Letters*, I, 698—699, requested Wesley to publish his *Short Account*, and reported lovingly that his close reading of Puritan authors had confirmed his Calvinist convictions.

45Whitefield, *Journals*, August 25 and September 8, 1739. Cf. entries for August 31 and September 22, 1739.

46The same, September 29 and 30, 1739. Cf. November 4, 1739, for a parallel observation on Quaker preaching.

47The same. October 13, 1739. Dallimore, *Whitefield*, I, 401—409, argued strenuously that the evangelist's journal and correspondence show that he became a full—blown Calvinist during this voyage as a result of reading Calvinist theological tracts in the light of his own severe self—examination. But the statements that Dallimore quoted, 406—408, do not seem to me different from Whitefield's language of the previous years, and no more

"Calvinist" in their insistence that good works follow and depend upon regeneration than Wesley had been since Aldersgate.

- 48Whitefield, *Journals*, November 27 (for the quotation), October 30, and November 8, 10, 13—18, 20, 22, and 29—30, 1739; Weinlick, "Moravianism in the American Colonies," in Stoeffler, ed., *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*, 134—139; Martin H. Schrag, "The Impact of Pietism Upon the Mennonites in Early American Christianity," the same, 74—87; and evidence of a long debate between Quakers and Brethren over the nature of the baptism of the Spirit in anon., *A Humble Gleam of the Despised Little Light of Truth . . .* (Philadelphia, 1747), reprinted in Donald F. Durnbaugh, ed., *The Brethren in Colonial America* (Elgin, Illinois, 1967), 434, 439—40, 442, 445—46.
- 49Whitefield, *Journals*, November 25, 1739 and October 12, 1740; Whitefield, "The Lord Our Righteousness," in John Gillies, comp., *Memoirs of George Whitefield . . .* (Middletown, Conn., 1838), 298—308.
- 50For direct parallels with Whitefield's points cited below, see John Wesley, *The Lord Our Righteousness* (London, 1766) [which I have concluded he preached as early as October 22, 1758], in *Works*, V, 239—42, 244.
- 51Whitefield, "The Lord Our Righteousness," in Gillies, comp., *Whitefield*, 301, 308. Cf. the same, 302, on the opening lines of the *Sermon on the Mount*, with John Wesley, "Sermon on the Mount—Discourse I" and "Discourse II" (July 21, 1739), in *Works*, V, 256, 267—69. See also Whitefield, *Journals*, January 9, 1740, quoting a Wesley poem of prayer for the coming of the "Spirit of refining fire."
- 52Whitefield, *Journals*, show the sharp contrast between opposition from colonial Anglican pastors and support from dissenting ones in Philadelphia, New York, Charleston, Providence and Boston; see entries for November 8—10, 14—17, 20 and 22, 1739, and April 23 and 29, May 1 and 11, July 13, August 25, and September 19, 1740.
- 53Whitefield, *Journals*, November 14, 1739 and September 25 and November 5, 1740. Dallimore, *Whitefield*, I, 405, seems to me correct in minimizing the influence of Jonathan Edwards and other New Englanders on Whitefield's developing Calvinism, for Whitefield did not meet any of them until September, 1740. Moreover, his *Journals*, October 17—19, recording his visit to Northampton, indicate no significant doctrinal discussion or reflection. But Dallimore underestimated the influence of the Calvinist clergy in the middle and southern colonies upon him.
- 54George Whitefield, Savannah, March 26, 1740, to John Wesley, in *Whitefield, Letters*, I, 155—57 (also in Wesley, *Letters*, II, 11), and Whitefield, Cape—Lopen, May 24, 1740, to John Wesley, the same, 181—82. Cf. Whitefield, Savannah, June 25, 1740, and Charles—Town [South Carolina], August 25, 1740, to John Wesley, in the same, 189—90, 204—5; and John Wesley, London, August 9, 1740, to George Whitefield, in Wesley, *Letters*, II, 31—all in a friendly spirit, and urging avoidance of public controversy over the issues of predestination and final perseverance.
- 55Whitefield, *Journals*, September 20, 1740.

- 56George Whitefield, Boston, September 23, 1740, to "Mr. N., at New York," in Whitefield, Letters, I, 208; and George Whitefield, Boston, September 23, 1740, to "Mr. A.," the same, 209.
- 57George Whitefield, Boston, September 25, 1740, to "The Rev. Mr. J. W.," the same, 210—12, quoted here from the more accurate text in Wesley, Letters, II, 31—3.
- 58The same, 211—12. Whitefield's radical doctrine of the Holy Spirit's gifts of sanctifying grace in regeneration, published in 1737 in his Sermon on Regeneration, 5—7, 20—21, and in 1739 in The Power of Christ's Resurrection, 10—12, had commended him to the Boston clergy. Cf. Gillies, comp., *Memoirs of George Whitefield*, 48, for William Seward's report that at a German settlement near Philadelphia in April 24, 1740, Whitefield pressed poor sinners to "claim all their privileges" in Christ, "not only righteousness and peace, but joy in the Holy Ghost." Afterward, Seward wrote, "our dear friend, Peter Bohler, preached in Dutch, to those who could not understand Mr. Whitefield in English."
- 59George Whitefield, Boston, September 26, 1740, to "Mr. I.," in Letters, I, 213—14.
- 60George Whitefield, Philadelphia, November 9, 1740, to John Wesley, the same, 219 (also in Wesley, Letters, II, 43).
- 61George Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley: In Answer to His Sermon, Entitled, Free Grace* (London, 1741), 11—12, 17, 19 (also in Dallimore, Whitefield, II, 551—69).
- 62The classic case is the sermon *Christian Perfection*, 2—6.
- 63Whitefield, Letter to . . . John Wesley, 19, 20.
- 64Wesley, *Journal*, entry for Sunday, February 1, 1741, shows that someone had distributed at the door of the chapel at the Old Foundry printed copies of an earlier Whitefield letter, which Frank Baker's yet unpublished research establishes was the one written to Wesley from Boston on September 25, 1740. Wesley, standing in his pulpit, declared his belief that Whitefield had not authorized its publication, and invited the congregation to join him in tearing up their copies of it. Wesley's subsequent dismay, following his meetings with Whitefield and the publication of Whitefield's open letter, appears in the same, March 28, and April 4; the evangelist, Wesley wrote, "had said enough of what was wholly foreign to the question to make an open (and probably irreparable) breach between him and me." Cf. George Whitefield, [on board the *Minerva*], February 1, 1741 to John and Charles Wesley, in Whitefield, Letters . . . 1734—1742, 507.
- 65See the discussion and citations above at notes 37—41. Cf. John Wesley, *Scripture Way of Salvation* (London, 1765; composed, I believe, as early as May 22, 1758), Works, VI, 45—46, 50; and John Wesley, "On Perfection" (composed, I believe, March 29, 1761 and preached repeatedly thereafter), *The Arminian Magazine*, 8 (March—April, 1785): in Works, VI, 412—16, 418—19; John Wesley, "Minutes" of the Fourth Annual Conference, for June 17, 1747, in Albert Outler, *John W.* (New York, 1964), 167—172; John Wesley *A Plain Account of Genuine Christian* (Dublin, 1753), in

Outler, Wesley, 181—191; and John Wesley, "Thoughts on Christian Perfection," from *Sermons on Several Subjects* (London, 1760), in Outler, Wesley, 283—298.

66The two terms are an organizing principle in Bernard Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (New York, 1973). Cf. [John and Charles Wesley], *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love, To Which is Added, The Cry of a Reprobate and The Horrible Decree* (Bristol, 1741), reprinted in their *Poetical Works*, coll. and arr. G. Osborn (13 vols.; London, 1869), III, 1—138; Osborn's "Preface," xiii—xx, stressing the theological content and arguing the conciliatory character of these hymns.

Whitefield, of course, shared completely Wesley's view of the errors of Moravian "stillness," and returned to England as intent on drawing his admirers away from it as on resisting Wesley's doctrine of heart purity; see his summary of both issues in George Whitefield, on board the *Minerva*, February 20, 1741, "to T K , at London," in *Letters*, I, 251—53.

67GEORGE WHITEFIELD, BRISTOL, APRIL 28, 1741, TO MR. H H , " *Letters*, I, 259—60. Harris remained for a long time, as Whitefield's letter put it, "tinctured with the doctrine of sinless perfection." For Harris's efforts to avoid a break between the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and Wesley and his resistance to any opening for sinning religion, see Wesley, *Journal* October 9, 10, and 17, 1741; and John Wesley, London, August 6, 1742, to Howell Harris, in *Letters*, II, 85.

68Cf. George Whitefield, Edinburgh, December 24, 1742, "to Miss S ," *Letters*, II, 5—6, with quotation above, fn. 20; and see George Whitefield, *An Answer to the First and Second Part of an Anonymous Pamphlet Entitled "Observations Upon the . . . Methodists" in Two Letters to the . . . Bishop of London* (London, 1744), 9 and, on the new birth, 10, 12. Ralph Erskine, *A Fair and Impartial Account of the Debate in the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, October 6th, 1748, Against Employing Mr. Whitefield* quoted in Gillies, *Comp., Memoirs of George Whitefield*, 120, shows the evangelist's defenders arguing that despite his earlier extreme statements about the spiritual "assurance" of salvation, Whitefield for the past two years had insisted "that a holy life is the best evidence of a gracious state."

69See Whitefield's letters to Wesley as follows: Aberdeen [Scotland], October 10, 1741, Edinburgh, October 11, 1742, in *Letters*, I, 331, 448—49 (also in Wesley, *Letters*, II, 66, 87); and London, December 21, 1742, in Wesley, *Letters*, II, 97—98. Cf. Wesley, *Journal*, August 24, 1742; and his identification with John Calvin's view of justification in John Wesley, Londonderry, May 14, 1765, to John Newton, in Outler, John Wesley, 78.

Charles Wesley, [London], March 16—17, and Bristol, September 28, 1741, to John Wesley, in Wesley, *Letters*, II, 54—65—66. reveal the younger brother's sharper judgment of Whitefield. But Charles Wesley, Sheffield, October 8, 1749, to Ebenezer Blackwell, records the great and public reconciliation of the three men at Newcastle and Leeds in September, 1749.

70John Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part I* (London, 1745), ed. Gerald R. Cragg, in Baker, ed., *Works of John Wesley*, XI, 173 (also in Wesley, *Works*, VIII, 108).

- 71George Whitefield, London, September 1, 1748, to John Wesley, in Wesley, Letters, II, 327—28.
- 72George Whitefield, London, March 5,1758, to "Professor F ," Letters, III, 230. Cf. Gillies, comp., Whitefield, 132—33.
- 73John Wesley, A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop [Warburton] of Gloucester; Occasioned by His Tract, "On the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit" (London,1763), ed. Gerald R. Cragg, in Baker, ed., Works of John Wesley, XI, 505—508 (also in Wesley, Works, IX, 150—153, 165—71); George Whitefield, Observations on Some Fatal Mistakes . . . [in Dr. William Warburton's] "The Doctrines of Grace; or, The Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit". . . (London and Edinburgh, 1764), 16 (heaping scorn on Warburton's attack upon Wesley), and passim.
- 74Whitefield, Observations, 10.
- 75Whitefield, "Marks of the New Birth," in Twenty—three Sermons, 205; Wesley, Christian Perfection, in Works, VI, 11.
- 76Whitefield, Observations, 16.
- 77My cursory reading of The Christian 's Magazine, published by and for Whitefield's followers in London, yielded several examples of similar languages: anon., "On Purity of Heart," 5 (September, October, November, 1764): 385, 387, 433—35, 483, consisting of the opening section of a long series summarizing "Systematical Divinity"; and J. K., "Thoughts on Christian Perfection" [signed January 8, 1764], 5 ([April?], 1765): 600—4.
- 78George Whitefield, London, December 30, 1766, to "W P Esq.," Letters, III, 342—3. Cf. Whitefield, London, December 14, 1768, to the same, in Letters, III, 379, affirming his "moderate Calvinism."
- 79I have summarized the evidence in Timothy L. Smith, "How John Fletcher Became the Theologian of Wesleyan Perfectionism," The Wesleyan Theological Journal. 15 (Spring, 1980): 70—1. Cf. Whitefield's comments on his visit to Trevecca August 26, 1768, in Letters, III, 373—4.
- 80Wesley, Journal, November 10 and 18, 1772.
- 81John Wesley, On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield . . . November 18, 1770 (London, 1770), Works, VI, 178—9.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD AND WESLEYAN PERFECTIONISM: A Response

by
Leon O. Hynson

Nearly twenty years ago at Princeton, Lefferts Loetscher assigned a major paper for the Th.M. degree which involved extension of Timothy Smith's thesis in Revivalism and Social Reform. The task required assessment of Dr. Smith's analysis of the movement from personal holiness to social sanctification as worked out in social reform movements in pre-Civil War American history. From about 1960 my thinking with regard to Christian social ethics had been gradually maturing. Revivalism and Social Reform was surely the key catalyst in that growing concern which has continued to this time. To see the theology of Christian holiness modeled in such serious and exciting scholarship was, as it continues to be, a very vital contribution to the evangelical formulation of a theology for social transformation.

For his inspiration to hundreds of students of Christian faith and history and for his exemplary scholarship and modeling of Christian faith, I want to pay tribute to Timothy Smith.

The paper before this assembly illustrates afresh Tim Smith's correlation of Christian perfection and reform. Recognizing that his key inquiry has been toward identifying the agreements and the divergences of Whitefield and Wesley on Christian perfection, the paper amplifies the moral power which flows from the proclamation of the doctrine of sanctification. That one theology (i.e., Whitefield's) differs sharply from another (i.e., Wesley's) on the temporal possibility of deliverance from the "in-being of sin" does not cut off the kerygmatic impact and the moral renewal which flows from such preaching. Dr. Smith suggests that American evangelicalism, presenting the promise of renewal in the energy of the "sanctifying Spirit," should be credited with much of the dynamic present in the revolutionary quest for "a republic of virtue." In other words, the preaching of the doctrine of the sanctifying Spirit, whether in the modified Calvinism (or modified Wesleyanism) of Whitefield, or the Wesleyan drive "to reform the nation, and especially the Church" brought about a new moral atmosphere which pervaded eighteenth century American society.

Dr. Smith indicates that as Whitefield preached in America and interacted with other evangelical leaders, "the doctrine of the sanctifying Spirit thus became crucial to the evangelical awakening." (page 67). On the basis of his analysis in the paper, we may be cautioned not to restrict that doctrine to its Wesleyan forms, but to recognize its varied expressions in the preaching of Wesley, Whitefield, and others. Smith's frequent emphasis on "the sanctifying Spirit" as a description of the Wesleyan position is here broadened. That Whitefield was one with Wesley in affirming a subjective experience of sanctification in regeneration is cogently argued in the paper.

Dr. Smith has reasserted here, what he so helpfully demonstrated in *Revivalism and Social Reform*, that the theology of perfection evokes social change and structural renewal. Two questions may be raised. First, what are the ethical differences in a doctrine of the sanctifying Spirit which stops short of full deliverance from the bias of original sin? Second, how will these differences be fleshed out in social reform? The "simplicity of intention and purity of affection" affirmed in Wesley's doctrine of perfection surely possesses the seeds of a higher moral impact on church and society. The pure in heart know a quality of single minded commitment to God and humanity which makes their presence in the world to be a fresh display of Christ's holy influence. If the heart is pure, the vision of God will be discerned by the world in which we move. In the strength of that purity, we are salt and light which carry out their own preserving and purifying work, frequently in unobtrusive ways.

The doctrine of perfection incorporates an ethics of promise and fulfillment. The pure in heart anticipate the moral transformation of their world because they understand that purity means wholeness, health, freedom from the divided spirit which siphons away the spiritual force of our lives. To paraphrase certain nineteenth century Methodists, we believe that the nation and the church may be reformed by the preaching and the exemplary presentation of holiness.

At the minimal level we recognize a difference in the moral force in the "entirely" sanctified as they impact their homes, and cities and nations.

To this point my response is related to the latter part of the essay. I wish now to summarize the first part by making several statements which deal with areas of agreement and disagreement between Wesley and Whitefield on issues directly relating to sanctification. Some of these represent initial agreements which were subsequently modified.

Points of Agreement

1. No sinless perfection is possible in this life (non posse non peccare).
2. The norm and expectation for the Christian life is holy, not sinful, living.
3. This means subjective, personal holiness in the life of the regenerate.
4. The dominion of sin is broken in the regenerate by the power of the sanctifying Spirit.
5. The regenerate may avoid willful sin (posse non peccare). See Whitefield's "Marks of the New Birth" in the essay, pp. 67f, including footnote 20.
6. Both hold an ontological or substantialist definition of original sin. They agree with the Church of England that the "corruption of sin remains in the regenerate." Thirty Nine Articles, Art. 9.

Disagreement

Whitefield argues that there is no deliverance from the "in-being" of sin in this life. He professes to struggle with "indwelling sin day by day."¹ J. R. Andrews has cited one expression of that struggle:

Punctual himself, he was strict in exacting this quality from others: nothing annoyed him so much as to have to wait for meals; a delay of even a few minutes he considered a great fault. In this matter he was often extremely irritable, but his anger was soon over and his regret at it often expressed. One day having been very angry with his servant for a want of punctuality and so hurt her feelings, he burst into tears and exclaimed, "I shall live to be a poor peevish old man, and everybody will be tired of me." This infirmity of temper he often regretted to his friends. "I have nothing to disturb my joy in God," he wrote on one occasion, "but the disorder of my passions; were these once brought into proper subjection to Divine grace, well would it be with me and happy should I be; but so long must my heart be like the troubled sea, and so long must I consequently be unhappy."²

Trends

From a point of agreement on the nature of original sin and the sanctification wrought in the new birth by the Holy Spirit.

1. Whitefield, both theologically and in personal experience, moves toward a Reformed theology of imputed righteousness which subsequently is modified toward his earlier emphasis on subjective holiness in the regenerate. However, while Whitefield's gravitation to a Reformed position is clearly detailed, his subsequent movement in the direction of his earlier, more Wesleyan, stance is less apparent. Wesley's Sermon at Whitefield's funeral is cited to affirm that he and Whitefield "had never differed on the great doctrine that the gift of the Holy Spirit in the experience of regeneration and his continuing presence thereafter delivered believers from the power as well as the guilt of sin, enabling them to "walk as Christ also walked." (p. 74). This does not seem consistent with Whitefield's lament that he had "fallen into sin often." (p. 71). How do we reconcile the disparity between Wesley's affirmation of Whitefield's theology and Whitefield's own admission of deviation? Was it the neutralizing influence of the location of Wesley's sermon, i.e., delivered at the funeral sermon for Whitefield in Whitefield's church? Was Wesley deliberately playing down their decisive differences in the interest of a ministry of healing mandated by the death of the great pastor of the flock? In the funeral sermon Wesley surely stressed the deliverance of believers "from the power as well as the guilt of sin." Whitefield had once agreed to that claim, but it is not certain, judging from the paper, that he held to it as forthrightly at the end of his ministry. Smith's laudatory comment concerning Whitefield's "doctrine of the new birth so exalted that it resembles [what was wrongly thought to be] Wesley's teaching about sanctification," obviously describes Whitefield in 1739-1740, but it seems less evident in the later Whitefield.

2. Wesley moves to the doctrine of a second grace with its corollaries of deliverance from indwelling sin, and its restriction or qualification of purity of intention, not expression (or execution).

Problems

Whitefield misunderstood Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection. He identified it as sinless perfection. This misunderstanding may have been sustained by Whitefield:

1. Because Wesley failed to clarify it? Irwin Reist implies that Wesley failed to give prompt attention to clearing up the confusion in Whitefield's mind: "Perhaps if Wesley earlier had emphasized to Whitefield the concept of love, the instrumentality of faith (which both he and Whitefield taught was the gift of God), the necessity of continual growth, and the privilege of a second crisis experience after the new birth, the latter might have been able to accept the Wesleyan exposition of sanctification."³
2. Because the two were widely separated during these years, Whitefield in America coming into frequent fellowship with Calvinistic preachers like the Tennents, while Wesley was laboring in England. The occasions for adequate clarification seem too limited. Whitefield became as confirmed in his views as Wesley in his.
3. Because some of the Methodists affirmed a deliverance which made sin impossible. Dallimore cites Whitefield's conversation with Edward Nowers in which the latter professed it "impossible for him to sin."⁴ A letter to Wesley dated 11 September 1747 demonstrates Whitefield's belief that the Wesleys had taught sinless perfection although they were becoming "more moderate."⁵ By 1763, according to Dallimore, Charles Wesley gave evidence of a gradual weakening in his view of Christian perfection,⁶ that is, sinless perfection.

Conclusion

All of us are indebted to Timothy Smith for his demonstration of Whitefield's commitment to the life of the Spirit in the believer. Given the usual conception of Whitefield's consistent adherence to Calvinism on the question of imputed righteousness, it is helpful to recognize the way in which Whitefield wrestled with Scripture, and both early and late affirmed a theology which was close to Wesley's.

Notes

¹See Whitefield's Letter CLXIX to the Rev. Mr. J. W. Works I, p. 156 cited by Irwin W. Reist, "John Wesley and George Whitefield: A Study in the Integrity of Two Theologies of Grace." *The Evangelical Quarterly* XLVII, (1975), p. 31.

²J. R. Andrews, *The Life of George Whitefield* (London: Marshall Morgan and Scott, (n.d.), p. 117.

3Reist, p. 32. By "earlier" Reist is referring to Wesley's clarification several decades later.

4Cited by Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth Century Revival, II.* (Westchester, Illinois: Cornerstone Books, 1980), p. 66, from Tyerman *Whitefield I*, p. 478. Dallimore believes that Wesley espouses a doctrine of entire sinlessness or sinless perfection. *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 66-67.

5*Ibid.*, p. 239. citing *Whitefield Works II*, pp. 126-128.

6*Ibid.*, p. 461, citing Tyerman, *Life of Wesley II*, p. 442. Dallimore's intensive research on Whitefield deserves much praise. It is flawed by the author's compulsive need to assert Whitefield's greatness by undercutting Wesley. Whitefield's genius is assured and Dallimore's affirmation by negation, contrary to his larger intention, does not give Whitefield the recognition he deserves. The author's special pleading detracts from the objective picture of Whitefield which is needed by students of the second great awakening.

A COVENANT CONCEPT OF ATONEMENT

by
R. Larry Shelton

A key concern of evangelical theology in general, and of Wesleyan—Arminian theology in particular, is the need of sinful humanity for restoration to fellowship with God. This need for salvation is addressed by the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Although some of the theological and Biblical metaphors for atonement reflect cultural, legal or governmental concepts, the foundational understanding must be essentially interpersonal. The issues of sin and salvation are profoundly interpersonal in nature. It is a personal humanity which stands in need of reconciliation with a personal God. In Scripture, the central paradigm of this saving relationship with God is the covenant motif. In both its cultic and interpersonal elements, the covenant metaphor serves as the basic hermeneutical reference point for the doctrine of salvation in the Biblical narrative.

In developing a theology of atonement, the entire canonical witness of Scripture must be considered. Such a methodology must consider the theological witness of the entire canon rather than to present a truncated focus which emphasizes only certain thematic emphases such as the juristic or penal metaphors, or which relies on word studies alone. Parenthetically, because of the covenant context of the atonement, even the juridical metaphors occur in contexts where the relational emphasis has been previously established. While such a canonical procedure cannot be carried out with completeness in the space available here, it is possible to stress the Covenant relationship between God and His people while minimizing the assertion of theological constructs which are external to the canonical text or which are occasional rather than universal paradigms for atonement.

It is clear that the Biblical canon presents God consistently as a personal Being who interacts personally with those beings created in His image. In the Old Testament, He is seen initiating a series of events leading to the salvation of His chosen people. Likewise, in the New Testament, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19, KJV), and thus in Christ God reveals His personhood in historical and experiential ways. Thus, while salvation history presents a rich and diverse description of God's saving activity, the primary and continual theme of the covenant relationship underlies the canonical treatment of atonement.

I. The Covenant Context of Atonement

The Old Testament sacrificial system which was used in part to accomplish atonement between Israel and God found its expression in the context of the covenant. Indeed, as a result of the covenant, the sacrificial cultus was established by divine initiative in order that a humanity which was estranged from God might have a way of removing the barrier caused by sin. Although Israel tended to understand the sacrificial cultus as an *ex opere operato* action performed for its own sake, the basic character of Old Testament religion was interpersonal. Israel was united with Yahweh only in the context of interpersonal, covenantal faith, not by blind trust in the promises of the covenant or by faithful performance of the prescribed legal or sacrificial ritual. Therefore, in order to explicate a theology of atonement, it is first necessary to establish the meaning of the covenant context in which the atonement occurs.

Although the etymology of *berith* is not thoroughly clear and its usage is controversial, as seen by the discussions of Weinfeld, Barr, Kutsch, and others, the frequency of its usage indicates its importance in Old Testament theology.¹ Davidson notes that the term *berith* occurs nearly 300 times in the Old Testament in addition to many allusions to the concept of covenant.²

The etymology of the term is inconclusive for establishing the semantical usage of *berith*. A variety of diverse and sometimes conflicting meanings emerge from an etymological analysis. Meanings as different as "bind" and "cut or cleave" are found.³ A semantical analysis of *berith* is more fruitful for an understanding of its Biblical usage. As James Barr has shown, *berith* is an opaque word which has little relationship to its etymology in actual usage. It functions quite idiomatically. For example, it is not pluralized in Old Testament usage in spite of the number of covenants attached to persons, times and places. Such a singular usage of the term, Barr insists, reflects a restricted range of meaning which is determined not by the larger etymology but by the specific semantical application of the concept. Furthermore, *berith* is virtually lacking in synonyms, and it is used in very limited contexts.⁴ All in all, however, the concept of covenant reflects a relationship which is interpersonal rather than an objective, impersonal statement of law.⁵ It provides a particularly apt metaphor for the relationship between God and Israel. The Mosaic Covenant in Exodus 19—24 and the covenant in Joshua 24 are examples. Particularly at Sinai, the covenant metaphor is used to describe a divinely initiated agreement which is ratified by Israel's response (Ex. 24:4—8), and conditioned upon Israel's obedience. Only if certain stipulations are followed is there a guarantee of a continuance of fellowship between Israel and God. Israel will enjoy the benefits of the covenant promises only if she obeys the demands articulated by God at Sinai. Indeed, the conditionality of covenantal fellowship with God is explicitly stated in Leviticus 18:24—28; Deuteronomy 4:25—26; Jeremiah 4:1—2; and Ezekiel 33:23—29.

At Sinai, God gave expression to the relationship between Himself and Israel which had begun with Abraham. His offer to make a covenant with Israel was an act of grace, for Abraham had not merited the promise, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3, KJV). Yet there were obligations. Eichrodt says:

There is emphatic indication that the covenant cannot be actualized except by the complete self—commitment of man to God in personal trust. Hence the obedient performance of the rite of circumcision takes on the character of an act of faith.⁷

With the Sinai covenant, God was to continue His assistance and faithfulness while Israel's behavior was subjected to specific standards. God thus forbade that which abolished the relationship created in the covenant with His elect nation. Every breach of this Law was a personal offense against this God whose concern and love had been so explicitly expressed.⁸ As long as Israel was obedient to the Decalogue and observed the standards of the sacrificial system, God would continue to assist and deliver her. Because of this specifically defined relationship, the fear of arbitrariness in God was excluded from Israel, and in this atmosphere of covenant security Israel found its strength.⁹

This communion with God was mediated through the rite of sacrifice. In this context of sacral communion, the rite of blood—covenanting brought God and Israel together in a mutual union. This did not reflect, however the pagan concept of magical power residing in the sacrificial victim. Instead, the covenant sacrifice resulted in a personal and moral commitment to God and a personal union with Him which gave Israel life and strength.¹⁰ While pagan rituals had to be continually repeated in order to maintain the cycle of nature or appease their gods, in the Israelite covenant, the sacrifice was not repeated in order to maintain a magical nature cycle, but to commemorate the establishment of the relationship and to express faithfulness to it.¹¹

Thus, the relationship between God and Israel took the shape of an interpersonal covenant relationship which became the basis of Israel's history. When this covenant was transgressed, Israel was alienated from God and the covenant sanctions became operative. Only through repentance could Israel be forgiven and restored to covenantal fellowship.¹²

In the New Testament, the frequency of explicit references to the covenant is diminished. The word *dialtheke* is used some thirty times in the sense of "covenant." In Galatians 3:16, Paul relates the covenant of Abraham to Christ, and the Letter to the Hebrews also compares the new covenant in Christ to the old under the Law (Heb. 7:1—22 and ch. 8). Thus, while the New Testament retains the idea of a covenant relationship to God, this is a new covenant which functions through the agency of Christ rather than through the sacrificial cultus. The universal invitation of Christ's covenant establishes a covenant relationship with all who will accept it. In making explicit this covenant which was implicit in Creation, God profoundly demonstrates that He is indeed Lord of all creation. In the Eucharist, a lasting and personal relationship between Christ and the Church is expressed in a new and creative way. The Last Supper is understood to anticipate Jesus' death as the historical event upon which the new covenant relationship with God is to be based. The "new commandment" (John 13:34) of love becomes the stipulated condition which binds Jesus and the Church. The Eucharist as the anticipation, then, and the remembrance, now, of the Cross becomes the most profound expression of the covenant relationship.¹³

The cup of faith takes the place of the oath in confirming the new covenant relationship. As Mendenhall says, "Since the relationship to Christ is both the content and the obligation . . . of the covenant, all the detailed prescriptions of Jewish law are both unnecessary and (for Paul) inimical to Christianity."¹⁴ In place of these prescriptions, the Church bases its covenant faith on God's work in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19); Rom. 3:25ff, etc.), the abolition of the curse of the Law through the Cross, and the rejection of the covenant relationship because of sin. Christ's person and work are God's offer and the Eucharist and life of faith are the Church's response. Thus, the OT and NT covenants have continuity and yet distinctiveness, as Mendenhall notes:

and yet the Sinai covenant of the OT and the NT covenant in Christ's blood are one: each created a people of God out of those who were no people, demanded the complete self—surrender to God as a joyful response to the love of God which preceded. The simple stipulations of the Decalogue were summed up in the yet simpler obligation of love at Jesus' command—but this is no command; it is rather the very nature of the relationship between God and the community.¹⁵

The need for atonement, then, is directly tied to the nature of the covenant. Because of disobedience to the covenant stipulations, in short, because of sin, both Israel and the Church, indeed all humanity (Rom. 1:18—3:20), finds itself in desperate need for a means of restoration to God's fellowship. As the basis of reconciliation, the atonement provides the means by which this can occur.

Furthermore, since all sin is essentially relational, the overcoming of the curse of sin must involve personal and relational means. The sacrifice, for example, is an endeavor to remove the barrier created by sin between God and the person. It is important to remember that in the OT, it was God Himself who initiated and established the sacrificial system for the purpose of Israel's making atonement of sin. However, the sacrificial cultus is limited to sins of inadvertence. Intentional sins are not covered and some may not be atoned for at all (I Sam. 3:14; Isa. 47:11). For those sins covered by sacrifice, the person who has violated the covenant obligations must avoid God's wrath by a proper use of the cultus. What occurs in the process of avoiding wrath is the essence of atonement, or *kipper*.

Much controversy surrounds the meaning of *kipper*. The term can mean "make expiation," "wipe away," "forgive," "appease," or "propitiate," as well as a number of other nuances. The debate over *kipper* relates primarily to whether atonement means "expiation," "propitiation," or both. "Propitiation" suggests that God, who is angered by sin, requires that something be done to appease that anger before forgiveness can be offered the sinner. "Expiation" focuses on the removal of the sin which incurred God's wrath, and this is usually done through sacrifice.¹⁶ While he has probably overstated his case, C. H. Dodd has argued that *kipper* is most accurately rendered "expiate," since God is not an irascible deity whose anger must be appeased by sacrifices and bribes so that His reluctance to forgive may be overcome. Dodd notes that the Biblical writers portray God as the One who initiates forgiveness rather than as a capricious

and vindictive deity who must be bribed back into a good mood by sacrificial gifts. Thus, expiation better represents the nature of the sacrifice which removes or annuls the sin so that God can forgive with integrity because the cause of His anger has been removed.¹⁷ The strength of this argument is that it denies that God's reluctance to forgive is a hindrance to reconciliation. Its weakness lies in its unwillingness to admit that there is divine wrath and hence a propitiatory element, although not pagan appeasement, in the Biblical usage of kipper. For example, propitiation is certainly the intended usage in Numbers 25:1—13. Here God's anger was being executed against those who had worshipped Baal—peor. However, His wrath ceased when the guilty couple was slain by Phinehas the priest.¹⁸

Others, such as Leon Morris, object to the expiatory interpretation of atonement because it gives inadequate consideration to the moral nature of God whose anger at sin is based on His holiness and integrity. Morris does not see God's wrath as impersonal retribution, for God has provided means for averting His wrath. However, he strongly stresses the propitiatory means of satisfying God. These propitiatory ways of purging sin include destroying the offending city (Deut. 13:15—17), putting away heathen wives (Ezra 10:14), and repentance (Jonah 3 7, 10).¹⁹ Interestingly, the last two examples he gives seem certainly to involve expiation, which is reconciliation by removing the cause of God's wrath. Other OT examples of expiation include intercession (Ex.32:30), offering incense (Num.16:47), and possibly an offering of money (Ex. 30:16). Indeed, neither propitiation nor expiation can exclusively convey the entire range of atonement ideas, and etymological means alone will not settle the debate.

The important issue, then, is how God's wrath against sin can be averted. Ultimately, in both the OT and NT atonement is achieved by some means of expiation which results in propitiation. Sacrifice, or some other means such as prayer, expiates sin and removes the cause of wrath. This removal of sin and the corresponding repentance and obedience of the person results in the propitiation of God. He is propitiated because His intention was to maintain the covenant fellowship in the first place. Whatever makes possible the restoration of that fellowship appeases Him, whether it be sacrifice, prayer, or the destruction of the guilty party.

Repentance in itself may serve to expiate sin and propitiate God. Milgrom shows that repentance can have an expiatory function. While sacrificial atonement is useful only for involuntary wrongdoing, a deliberate sinner may mitigate his offense by confessing it and repenting. Through remorse and confession, the penitent reduces his intentional sin to an inadvertent one and thus makes it eligible for sacrificial expiation.²⁰ This may well have been what Moses was trying to accomplish for the people by praying for their forgiveness for sins not covered by the sacrificial system (Ex. 32:30). In any case, God's forgiveness at all levels was conditioned upon the repentance of the sinner and this involved a contrite confession of sin (Lev. 5:5). The sacrificial acts were not effective unless they were accompanied by true repentance.²¹ Not only must atonement involve something which changes God's attitude toward the sinner (propitiation) but something must also change the sinner's attitude toward sin (expiation). Thus, the personal repentance of the sinner resulted in the personal forgiveness of

God and the restoration of the relationship of covenant love between God and the penitent.

It is clear, then, that in the OT the expiation of the sacrificial atonement was not a mechanistic removal of sin apart from forgiveness for sin. God's forgiveness was conditioned upon the sinner's repentance (Lev. 5:5).²² Only when the breach caused by unconfessed and unforgiven sin was healed could the relationship with God be restored. Since sin had broken the relationship, it could not remain operative in the sinner's life if the covenant fellowship was to be restored.²³ Through the sacrificial cultus, the penitent expressed his penitence and submission to the will of God. By conformity to the ritual prescribed by God's grace, the sinner acted in such a way as to show his personal surrender to God and because this obedient action indicated repentance and confession for the sin, the broken covenant fellowship was restored. Obedience to the Law thus expressed love for God who had established the covenant community. Since this kind of covenant love was the essence of fellowship with God, the covenant relationship was normalized and the purpose of the covenant order was restored.²⁴ Entrance into the covenant was by faith in God and obedience to His Law as sealed by circumcision (Gen. 17:11, 12). Maintenance of the covenant was thus contingent upon faith and moral obedience to its stipulations, including repentance for sin through its sacrificial provisions.²⁵

II. Christ's Atonement in the Covenant Context

In the NT, the atonement of Christ functions to initiate and maintain God's new covenant with all humanity. While Christ's death may seem analogous to the OT sacrifices, it is not entirely so. Not only His death, but His life are revelations of God's love which work to reconcile an alienated humanity back to Himself (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 8:32). Christ's sacrifice of death and resurrection delivers humanity from sin and establishes a new covenant with God.²⁶ The OT sacrifices are limited in usefulness to atone for the involuntary sins of those living under a previously established covenant. Christ's Incarnation is efficacious for all sin and for all people, regardless of their previous covenant affiliation with God. His death is sacrificial, but not identical with the definition and function of the OT system. Also, it should be noted that since the OT sacrifices incorporated more than the sin offering, but worship and praise as well, the sacrifice of Christ is certainly not limited to any penal or judicial function.

Indeed, *diatheke* in the NT expresses primarily the idea of forgiveness in connection with the work of Christ. Because of Christ a relationship between God and man has become possible in a way previously impossible. What the Law could not do in overcoming sin, God has done in Christ (Rom. 8:3—4). The writer of Hebrews speaks of a "better covenant" (Heb. 7:22; 8:6). Paul compares the old covenant with a schoolmaster whose purpose was to lead Israel to Christ, while the new covenant is spiritual and based on faith (Gal. 3). Morris says, "Each time the New Testament refers to the new covenant as having been prophesied it links an explicit reference to forgiveness of sin with the new covenant."²⁷

While it is clear that Christ establishes this new covenant as a context in which forgiveness and reconciliation may occur, it is less clear how what Christ does can cancel the effects of sin and reconcile humanity to God. A

number of metaphors are used to convey pictorially the means of atonement.²⁸ These metaphors include the ideas of sacrifice, ransom, redemption, reconciliation, justification, adoption, and regeneration. The common element in these concepts is the concern to release the sinner from the wrathful consequences of sin and restore the penitent to fellowship with God through forgiveness. In interpreting these metaphors it is important to remember that all of them must be understood against the background of the covenant with its personal and relational implications. Scholars such as Leon Morris tend to stress the irrevocable nature and authoritative disposition of the covenant. This tendency may reflect a Reformed predestinarian bias more accurately than it reflects the evidence. As noted earlier, Barr and others caution against any facile attempt to render "covenant" as a unilateral sort of obligation.²⁹ Furthermore, the dispensationalists notwithstanding, the Abrahamic covenant is at least implicitly conditional and the Mosaic covenant is explicitly conditional and stresses Israel's responsibility. Note Exodus 19:5:

". . . if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples. . . ."

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel stressed the conditionality of the covenant promises (Jer. 4:1—2; Ezek. 33:23—29). In the NT, Paul certainly sees the covenant promises as conditioned upon obedience. After recounting Israel's being "broken off" from the olive tree because of their unbelief (Rom. 11:17—20), he declares that only if they do not continue in their unbelief will they again be grafted in (Rom. 11:23). The community of the covenant are those who believe in Christ as "children of the promise" (Rom. 9:8).³⁰

The sacrificial metaphors in particular should receive attention from Wesleyan—Arminians. Since the atoning work of Christ is frequently described with sacrificial terminology, it is tempting to understand terms such as "cross," "blood," "sacrifice," "lamb" as referring exclusively to Christ as a sin offering. Furthermore, the sacrificial victim in the sin offering is sometimes understood as having a vicarious penalty inflicted upon it. In fact, it is not clearly established that the sacrificial victim in the OT absorbed the penalty deserved by the sinner. Instead, the victim reflected the repentance of the one who offered the sacrifice. Also, when Christ is spoken of as a "paschal lamb" by Paul (I Cor. 5:7) and the "Lamb of God" by John (John 1:29, 36), he is understood to be a sacrifice but not a sin offering. The paschal lamb of Passover indicates celebration over deliverance from bondage.

Furthermore, the significance of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), is that the atonement of Christ is not just the single act of the cross, but is the "righteousness of God," the eternal, saving character of God Himself. The death of Christ is the "eternal, suffering love of God for man,"³¹ which may not indicate His absorption of His own penalty as much as it indicates the extent to which He will go to restore a covenant which He did not break and to deliver helpless humanity from bondage which it brought upon itself.

These sacrificial metaphors imply that Christ's incarnation was a sacrifice to God which fully achieved what the OT ritual did only in figure

and, in constant necessity of repetition. Also, it must be remembered that the sacrifice in the OT was effective in restoring the covenant relationship only when it was accompanied by the faith and obedience of the one on whose behalf it was offered. The wrath of God was averted by the obedient performance of a ritual made available by grace.

As a sacrifice, Christ also functioned as a representative of all sinners. In His baptism at the hands of the Baptist, He identifies with Israel and the whole of humanity in giving Himself to God. Cullmann says in this regard:

. . . Jesus is baptized in view of his death, which effects forgiveness of sins for all men. For this reason Jesus must unite himself in solidarity with his whole people, and go down himself to Jordan, that "all righteousness might be fulfilled."³²

Christ thus becomes the ultimate statement of humanity's repentance and confession of faith. His atonement is vicarious not simply in that He became a sacrifice so that we would not have to be sacrifices, but it is vicarious in that by His life, death and resurrection He modeled to us how we were to be "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1—2). It is only as our repentance and obedience are complete so that we are united with Christ in the sacrifice of His total life (Rom. 6:1—10) that sin is expiated and God is propitiated. In the OT, the sacrificial ritual whereby repentance was to be expressed was prescribed by God. In the NT, the proper sacrificial attitude is exemplified by Christ's life and death. Instead of a sacrificial ritual we have a sacrificial example. This example does not simply inspire the sinner to moral renewal, but requires that the sinner also express repentance for sin and personal surrender to God by identifying in faith with the dying and rising experience of Christ (Rom. 6:1—10). Thus, by obedient union by faith in the events of Christ's sacrificial life and death, the believer is enabled to conform to the covenant expectations. This is justification since the believer is now brought into a relationship of righteousness in the covenant union.³³

Thus, a sacrificial understanding of the atonement in the context of the covenant relationship emphasizes the need for participatory involvement in the "fellowship of his sufferings." Christ's work benefits me only as I experience it in faith—union with Him. When the objective work of Christ in atonement is divorced from the subjective need for the appropriation of his work by faith, the vicarious implications of Christ's dying "for many" (Mark 10:45) give way to a substitutionary emphasis in which Christ's work becomes an external and transactional satisfaction of penalty which tends to separate the believer from responsibility for moral and spiritual growth.³⁴ This kind of monergism is avoided with the Wesleyan—Arminian emphasis which stresses both the objective work of Christ before God and the subjective work of Christ in the believer which leads him/her to an appropriate faith response.

By placing himself among humanity as a part of it, Christ as the perfect expression of humanity in obedience to God, took the place of our weakness and rebellion and accomplished a reconciliation with God for us. God "made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21, NASV). The fact that He "bore

our sins in his body on the cross" (1 Peter 2:24 NASV), gives us an example of what obedience to God really is. Peter has said in 1 Peter 2:18—23, that what finds favor with God is obedience to Him in the face of unjust suffering:

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example (emphasis mine) for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth, and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by his wounds you were healed (NIV).

In the OT, the prescriptions of covenant expectations were made clear so that the believer would have measurable standards by which his behavior was judged. In the NT, Christ is the incarnation, the example, of covenant expectations. Ritual obedience to the Law could not make the believer like Christ. Only union with Him in faith could make the believer righteous. In this new covenant, the believer is asked to be his/her own sacrifice by a faith—union with the perfect expression of covenant obedience, the sacrifice of Christ's life, death and resurrection. Christ is not only a sin offering which expresses our repentance, He is the entire covenant who also expresses our thanksgiving and worship and pattern for covenant life. Christ as our sacrifice expresses a repentance so perfect and complete that it expiates the effects of sin for all those who in faith allow Christ to be the expression of their repentance. Because Christ speaks for us and perfectly expresses our repentance and obedience, God's wrath against us is propitiated and we are restored to covenant fellowship. Christ, therefore, as our hilasterion, establishes us in righteous relationship to God "that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Thus, Christ breaks the barrier between humanity and God (Eph. 2:14) not just by changing the attitude of God, but by expressing a change in humanity as well. Reconciliation occurs not because God's justice is satisfied by retributive punishment but by a correction of humanity's covenant relationship to God and thus removing the cause for God's wrath.

The kind of obedience God desires is the kind Christ showed when He obeyed to the point of death. Thus, Peter makes clear that he understands what Christ did in His life and death to be the perfect example of obedience, in order that by identifying with His example of perfect obedience, we might "die to sin and live to righteousness" also in a relationship of acceptable covenant obedience. The writer of Hebrews expresses a similar emphasis in calling Christ the "pioneer of our salvation" (Heb. 2:10; 12:2).³⁵

The prevalence of atonement theories derived primarily from cultural and political settings, such as the penal substitution theory, has tended to obscure the covenant emphasis of the believer as a "living sacrifice" following Christ's example by faith—union with Him. In particular, the penal theory has been compatible with theories of limited atonement. John Wesley's reaction to such doctrines is clear. Because such objective theories relate atonement to eternal decrees resulting in a determinism which gives the sinner no opportunity for a faith response, they reflect a love "as makes the blood run cold," says Wesley.³⁶ Unless grace is free for all, there is really no gospel to proclaim. Because of its Biblical predominance and relational emphasis which expresses expectations to which a penitent may respond, the covenant understanding of atonement avoids the difficulties of other theories.

III. A Brief Survey of Atonement Theories

In addition to the Biblical metaphors for atonement, other theological metaphors have been set forth throughout the history of doctrine, primarily since the eleventh century. The Church has never endorsed any of these theories as tests of faith, although some of them have enjoyed wide acceptance. While these theories have been useful within their cultural contexts, the very fact that they have arisen out of specific cultural/historical settings has tended to limit the universality of their relevance. Theological creativity in expressing the Gospel in relevant cultural terms is to be encouraged, but the freezing of some of these theories into creedal and dogmatic forms tends to diminish their effectiveness when the cultural and historical milieu changes.

For example, the satisfaction theory advanced by St. Anselm in the eleventh century reflects the understanding of honor and satisfaction which was found in the Code of Chivalry when "kighthood was in flower." Anselm saw the atonement as a restoration of God's offended honor by the meritorious and supererogatory obedience offered by Christ on behalf of humanity. The obedience of Christ's life had merit to make amends for the infinite dishonor brought upon God's name by sinful humanity.³⁷ However, once the idea of the treasury of merits was discounted by Protestantism, the relevance of Anselm's theory was minimized and its influence went the way of chivalry.

Another theory which has had wide influence is the penal substitution theory developed by the Reformers. This concept which has its roots in Anselm's theory develops the idea that Christ absorbs the penalty of God's curse upon sin in the place of the sinner. Again, the historical context provides a framework for a new metaphor for the atonement. The indulgence controversies had raised the issue of merits, and Martin Luther struggled to demonstrate the sole sufficiency of Christ for salvation apart from merit attached to the lives of saints or the efforts of the believer. This Augustinian view of sin as depravity led him, as well as Calvin, to place salvation beyond the level of human participation. Also, through the period of feudalism, Teutonic political theory had come to view justice in terms of abstract law rather than in terms of personal honor as in the age of chivalry. Justice was accomplished not by restoration of personal relationships, but by satisfying the penalties required by law. In this context of retributive justice,

the satisfaction of the legal penalty of death for sin was the only option for understanding atonement. Thus, passages like 2 Cor. 5:21, "He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf," were understood not in the covenant context of sacrifice as an expression of repentance and obedience, but in the legal sense of penal substitution. Such verses were interpreted without reference to the covenant understanding of sacrifice. The result was a very rigid and objective view of atonement which reinterpreted the sacrificial metaphor as a propitiatory offering, and which overlooked the fact that the most serious kinds of sins had no means of sacrificial expiation. Forgiveness was based on God's forgiving grace in response to repentance and obedience.

Calvin saw the problem in part, but scarcely improved the situation. His strange doctrine of imputation led him to say that God's wrath does not really rest on Christ, but God treats Him as if He were angry. Thus, Christ does not bear God's anger, but merely something exactly like it! This negates any practical understanding of sanctification because the believer is not really righteous, but by a moral fiction is treated as if he were.³⁸

Later Protestant Scholasticism continued to interpret the work of Christ as a penal substitution, and viewed justice as exclusively retributive and transactional. The personal faith relationship essential to a Biblical covenant tended to be replaced by a Lutheran sacramentalism and a predestinarian Calvinism which understood covenant as a unilateral, deterministic, and juristic set of divine decrees. The result was a loss of the covenant/interpersonal understanding of the Biblical covenant concept of salvation.

In the face of the increasingly effective attack on the penal theory by the Socinians, Hugo Grotius altered the penal theory by defining justice as a need for orderly government in a moral universe, rather than as the need for God to administer retributive penalties upon the offending parties. For Grotius, Christ's suffering is penal, but voluntary, and the example of Christ's passion deters sinners from continuing in a path which disrupts moral order.

The Arminian and Wesleyan theologians tended to follow Grotius' governmental theory with some changes. Curcellaeus emphasized the idea of sacrifice rather than satisfaction of wrath through punishment, thus describing the priestly work of Christ as propitiatory, but not penal. Curcellaeus says:

Christ did not therefore . . . make satisfaction by suffering all the punishments which we had deserved for our sins. For, firstly, that does not pertain to the nature of a sacrifice, and has nothing in common with it. For sacrifices are not payments of debts, as is evident from those of the law. The beasts which were slain for sinners did not pay the penalties which they had deserved, nor was their blood a sufficient ransom for the souls of men. But they were simply offerings by which men sought to turn God to compassion, and to obtain from Him remission of sins.³⁹

Wesley was less creative in adapting the governmental concept. He saw the necessity of a moral government of the universe being consistent

with the character of God. However, he also seemed to reflect Anselm's idea that since sin is a violation of God's honor, it deserves infinite punishment. His Notes on the New Testament also show that he understood Christ's death as a punishment due to us because of our sins.⁴⁰ However, his understanding of the atonement differed substantially from the Calvinistic penal views. He saw Christ's work as universal in extent and conditional upon faith. Furthermore, he did not systematically develop an atonement theory. He was concerned with the practical and evangelistic applications of the doctrine. In a letter to Mary Bishop, 7th February, 1778, he said:

Our reason is here quickly bewildered. If we attempt to expatiate in this field, we 'find no end, in wandering mazes lost.' But the question is (the only question with me; I regard nothing else), What saith the Scripture?⁴¹

His thrust in his sermon, "Salvation By Faith," emphasizes that the faith through which we are saved "acknowledges the necessity and merit of His death, and the power of His resurrection . . . a recumbency upon Him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us. . ." ⁴² His emphasis on the believer's response of faith and the life of sanctification and the universal nature of Christ's work are greatly dissimilar from any consistent form of a penal substitution theory as developed by Reformed and Lutheran theology.⁴³ His understanding of the atonement, then, was syncretistic and functional and certainly leaves room for further analysis of this concept by those who follow in his spirit.

Wesley's followers generally developed some form of the governmental theory of atonement. Richard Watson developed a modified governmental theory which emphasized that God's government is based on His ethical character, not just on abstract concepts of moral rectitude. He emphasized the penal character of Christ's death because he understood the sacrificial system to be a context in which the penalty of law—breaking could be executed. He understood the execution of a penalty to be the only means by which expiation for sin could be attained. He said that the holiness of God is so intense and inflexible and His justice so absolute that a penalty for sin must be enacted, or else the law must be repealed and God's veracity rendered unworthy. He rejected the notion that repentance on the part of the offender placed him in a new relationship with God. Repentance must be accompanied by an atonement which makes forgiveness right as well as merciful. Repentance must be connected with a satisfaction which propitiates, or appeases, the wrath of God. He says:

. . . No other alternative existed but that of exchanging a righteous government for one careless and relaxed . . . or the upholding of such a government by the personal and extreme punishment of every offender; or else the acceptance of the vicarious death of an infinitely dignified and glorious being. . . .⁴⁴

His understanding of sacrifice, then, grows out of judicial theory rather than being inductively derived from the covenant context. As Milgrom (note #20) has shown, repentance can have an expiatory function. Furthermore, Leviticus 5 shows that the efficacy of the sin offering lies not in any

penal implication of the death of the animal, but in the repentant confession and sacrificial offering from the sinner and the subsequent atonement made for his sin by the priest. The sinner, if poor, could even use flour as a sin offering (Lev. 5:1—10). It is difficult to see how an offering of flour can be construed as a penal substitute for the sinner. Also, it is difficult to see God's holiness interpreted, as Watson insists, as intense and inflexible justice in narratives such as Hosea and Jonah. In Jonah, it was certainly repentance which brought God's forgiveness:

But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way. . . . When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity . . . and He did not do it (Jonah 3:8—10, NASV).

God's forgiveness is based on compassion (Jonah 4:11), not on abstract concepts of inflexible cosmic justice, if one includes the whole canon. Of course, there is punishment for sin, but there is also pardon, as Jesus indicates in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11—32).

The English Methodist William Burt Pope was also drawn to the governmental theory, but like Watson, tended to relate Christ's vicarious work to the concept of penalty. While rejecting Anselm's idea of a *quid pro quo* satisfaction which led to a view of limited atonement in Calvin, he does not seem to see that if Christ suffered the penalty which God had pronounced on sin, then divine justice would be satisfied even for those who do not repent. This would result in universalism, a legacy which Arminianism has not totally escaped. Pope thus sees Christ's death as a sacrifice which takes the place of a penalty and renounces the commutative penal idea of Christ's death as exact and mutual compensation for sin. He thus rejects the consequences of his penal view, by showing that as a substitute for judicial penalty, Christ's work was counted sufficient as an atonement, although not the precise equivalent of the penalty due to sin.⁴⁵

John Miley, the nineteenth century American Methodist, attempts to show that the personal character of God does not require penal satisfaction in order to maintain His integrity. He fully accepts the atoning nature of Christ's sufferings, but rejects the idea that they are penally retributive. His governmental emphasis stresses that the atonement is provisory in that it renders sinners salvable, but does not of necessity save them. What Christ does makes possible God's actual forgiveness which does not rest on Christ as the substitute for penalty, but on faith in God as the proper context for moral government. Penal substitution results in the absolute removal of all further need for justice, thus there can be no conditioned penal substitution as some governmentalists attempt to show. God's integrity does require that sin be punished, but Miley says:

To exaggerate it into a necessity for satisfaction in the punishment of Christ as substitute in penalty, is to pervert Scripture exegesis, and equally to pervert all theology and philosophy in the case. . . . God may and does wish that He may save. . . . And real as the divine displeasure is against sin and against sinners, atonement is made, not in its satisfaction, but in fulfillment of the rectoral office of justice.⁴⁶

Thus, Miley sees the death of Christ as a declaration of God's honor and justice, and this, he says, is the only consistent soteriology for Wesleyan—Arminianism.

More recently, H. Orton Wiley has cautioned against failing to distinguish between the fact of the atonement and theories about it. He warns against stating the idea of Christ's substitution as a penalty for sin in such a way as to make Christ a sinner or to make the atonement merely a commercial transaction. However, like Wesley, Wiley seems to vacillate between describing Christ's sacrificial work as a "representation of the pure life which the sinner should have" and that "His sufferings were penal inflictions for our sins."⁴⁷ He understands "propitiation" to mean that "the substitute endures the punishment which otherwise would fall upon the guilty themselves," while saying on the same page, "It is on this basis of representation that the idea of substitution must be considered."⁴⁸ Furthermore, while affirming a penal understanding of the cross, Wiley clearly rejects the "penal satisfaction theory" as a Calvinistic theory. The danger of this theory, he says, is that our sin is only imputed to Christ, according to this view, and therefore only an external transfer of merits results while the internal union of the believer with Christ is not clearly expressed. The penal substitutionary theory also leads either to universalism or unconditional selection, because, on the one hand, the nature of a penal atonement cancels all punitive claims against the elect, thereby predestining them to salvation. On the other hand, if Christ's penal death was for all, then all will universally be saved.⁴⁹

Wiley seeks a middle ground in describing Christ's sufferings as "a provisory substitute for penalty in the interest of moral government."⁵⁰ He sees the atonement grounded in a governmental necessity which makes it impossible for God to dispense with the sanctions of His immutable laws. Since God cannot set aside the execution of the penalty, He must either inflict His retributive justice on the sinner or provide a substitute. Thus, God "makes prominent the sacrifice of Christ as a substitute for penalty."⁵¹

It seems obvious that if Wiley and other governmentalists see Christ's sacrifice as only a substitute for penalty, they cannot consistently describe His work as penal in any clear way. It appears that while the governmental theory rejects the penal substitution and unconditional election of Calvinism, it has not totally separated itself from the liabilities of a penal understanding of the atonement. A covenant understanding of the meaning of sacrifice allows a more consistent understanding of Christ's vicarious work than the governmental tension between penalty and a provisory substitute for penalty. Penalty is not an appropriate category for describing the sacrificial work of Christ. That is why a clear distinction between the Calvinist penal views and the governmental penal views cannot satisfactorily be made.

While space does not permit an exhaustive survey of theories, another prominent view of atonement which has its roots in ancient orthodox tradition is the dramatic, or classic, theory of Gustaf Aulen. Modifying the Latin ransom motif, he sees Christ in cosmic combat with the powers of darkness. Aulen sees the atonement not as a legal transaction or juristic sentence, as in the Latin and Swiss/German traditions, nor does he see Christ merely as an inspiring example of love, as in the Abelardian/Eastern Orthodox

traditions. Instead, Christ is the cosmic champion who overcomes the evil forces which hold humanity in bondage. Through his work we may sing, " In all this we are more than conquerors. . . ." (Rom. 8:37, KJV).⁵²

IV. Concluding Observations

While some of the theological models for the atonement give very useful insights into various aspects of God's magnificent work of redemption in Christ, some of them insert concepts which are alien to the Biblical realities which they are attempting to explain. The cultural baggage of some of these theories may reflect the characteristics of certain historical periods and worldviews more substantially than they reflect the Biblical message of redemption.

While the penal substitution and governmental models, in particular, have been very influential in Wesleyan theology, these theories must be evaluated for contemporary usefulness. One must question not only the accuracy with which they reflect the Biblical reality of atonement, but how relevant they are to be a culture which is reluctant to understand justice as punishment or morality in terms of a world governmental system which is corrupt, fragmented, and often an expression of systemic evil.

It seems that an appropriate theological methodology for Wesleyans would involve openness to truth, creative approaches to the proclamation of the gospel, a contextualizing of Biblical realities, and an inductive attitude which resists the intrusion of alien categories into Biblical revelation. A fresh examination of the usefulness of the Biblical covenant model may well reveal a satisfactory context for describing God's work in terms which are culturally relevant. The Biblical concept of covenant describes an interpersonal relationship and the Biblical metaphors for salvation, such as husband—wife and father—son, are profoundly personal. This understanding of the reconciling love of a personal God appeals strongly to an alienated society which sees no future but despair.

Christ's sacrificial act of submissive obedience to God in the face of the sin of self—righteous humanity is the supreme historical revelation of God's self—giving love. As a vicarious expression of penitence for all humanity who will participate in Christ's life and death by faith, Christ enables a grieving God to believe in us again. The love which goes to such lengths to win back a "crooked and perverse generation" creates hope anew for a world which is lacking in integrity, trust, and community.

Furthermore, the covenant model, since it is Biblical, provides a balance which prevents an overemphasis on either mere sentimentality or on the rigid deterministic categories which obscure both the seeking love of God and the reality of His actual work in the believer. The participation of the believer by faith in the work of sacrifice retains both the subjective and objective, the expiatory and the propitiatory emphases. Such a model should be seen both as compatible with Wesleyan—Arminianism and as critical of it at points where the Wesleyan—Arminian tradition has not fully divested itself of the vestigial remnants of alien epistemological systems. A critical review of models which attempt to describe the atonement in ways which direct attention away from the distinctives of free will, experiential salvation, the sufficiency of Christ, and the personal relationship to God by the Holy Spirit thus reveals a divergence from the covenant context for salvation in God's redemptive history.

Notes

- 1The discussion grows out of the thesis that the concept of covenant does not reflect the traditional connotation of pact or mutual agreement, but rather an obligation imposed upon one party by another. Primary contributions to this discussion are: Ernst Kutsch, *Verheissung und Gesetz (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft)*, 131; Berlin New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973); M. Weinfeld, "Berit—Covenant vs. Obligation," *Biblica*, 56(1975) pp. 120—128; James Barr, "Some Semantic Notes on the Covenant," *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walther Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. by H. Donner, R. Hanhart, and R. Smend (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1977), pp. 23—38.
- 2A. B. Davidson, "Covenant," *A Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898), p. 509; G. E. Mendenhall, "Covenant," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 715.
- 3Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 136; Mendenhall, *Ibid.*; J. A. Thompson, "Covenant," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1979), p. 790. Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 509.
- 4James Barr, *op. cit.*, pp. 23—36.
- 5Mendenhall, *op. cit.*; also see G. E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh: The Biblical Colloquium, 1955).
- 6Dwight Van Winkle, "Christianity and Zionism," unpublished faculty research, Seattle Pacific University, 1983, pp. 4—9.
- Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 792—793; for further development of the personal aspects of the covenant relationship and the personal elements in the problem of sin, see the chapter by the author on "Initial Salvation," in *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1983).
- 7Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 2:228.
- 8*Ibid.*, p. 1:75.
- 9*Ibid.*, p. 1:38.
- 10*Ibid.*, pp. 1:154, 157.
- 11*Ibid.*, pp. 1:43, 44.
- 12Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 792—793; for further development of the personal elements of the covenant relationship and the personal elements in the problem of sin, see the chapter by the author: R. L. Shelton, "Soteriology: The Redemptive Grace of God in Christ," *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*.

- 13Mendenhall, *op. cit.*, pp. 722—723; Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 792; D. F. Estes, "Covenant (NT)," *ISBE*, Vol. I, ed. by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 793.
- 14Mendenhall, *Ibid.*, p. 723.
- 15*Ibid.*
- 16John E. Hartley, "Expiate; Expiation," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), pp. 246—247; C. L. Mitton, "Atonement," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 310.
- 17C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), pp. 88—93.
- 18Hartley, *op. cit.* p. 247.
- 19Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), p. 153.
- 20J. Milgrom, "The Priestly Doctrine of Repentance," *Revue Biblique*, 82(1975), pp. 198—199.
- 21H. H. Rowley, *The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Manchester: John Rylands Library, 1950), p. 87.
- 22J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 298.
- 23Shelton, *op. cit.*, pp. 15—17.
- 24Eichrodt, *op. cit.*, pp. 2:445; 1:256.
- 25Shelton, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
- 26Vincent Taylor, *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching* (London: The Epworth Press, 1963), pp. 51—52; 170.
- 27Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 103 (see pp. 90—109).
- 28Mitton, *op. cit.*, p. 312.
- 29See note #1.
- 30Van Winkle, *op. cit.*, pp. 8—10.
- 31Mitton, *op. cit.*, p. 312.
- 32Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1950), p. 18.
- 33For a more thorough development of the concept of justification, see R. L. Shelton, "Justification in the Pauline Corpus," *An Inquiry Into Biblical Soteriology*, Vol. 1 in *Wesleyan Theological Perspectives* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1980).
- 34George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1974), p. 428.
- 35On the issue of salvation in Hebrews, see Wayne McCown, "Such A Great Salvation," *An Inquiry into Biblical Soteriology*, ed. by John Hartley and Larry Shelton (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1980).

- 36John Wesley, "Predestination Calmly Considered," *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd edition, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 10:229.
- 37Anselm of Canterbury, *Why God Became Man*, Library of Christian Classics, Vol. X, ed. & trans. by Eugene Fairweather (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 179—181.
- 38L. W. Grensted, *A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, reprinted 1962), pp. 210—219; see also the discussion of these theories in Shelton, "Initial Salvation. . .," *op. cit.*, pp. 54—66.
- 39Cited by Grensted, *Ibid.*, p. 300; Grensted quotes from Curcellaeus *Institutes*, V, 19.15.
- 40John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: The Epworth Press, reprinted 1966), pp. 837 (Heb.9:8) and 879 (1 Pet.2:24).
- 41John Wesley, *Wesley's Works, Letters*, Vol. XIII, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), p. 34.
- 42John Wesley, "Salvation By Faith," *Forty—Four Sermons* (London: Epworth Press, 1944), p. 3.
- 43A. S. Wood attempts to show that Wesley held a penal substitutionary view while not setting the atonement inside a legal framework" in which God is made subject to an eternal, unalterable order of justice." Such a position is inherently contradictory by definition. The penal theory is based on an unalterable order of justice. Wesley's view is syncretistic and more governmental than penal. See A. S. Wood, *The Burning Heart* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 237f. See also, William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), pp. 209—211; and Albert Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 273, 276, 287—288.
- 44Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton Phillips, 1856), p. II, 139; see also pp. II, 87—102; 113; 149—151.
- 45William Burt Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, 2 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1880), pp. 2:265, 313, 314; see the discussion in Shelton, "Initial Salvation," *op. cit.*, pp. 63—64.
- 46John Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1984), p. 2:186; see pp. 123, 168. Miley also quotes Raymond and others for support; see Miner Raymond, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1880), pp. 2:257—258.
- 47H. Orton *Wiley Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1952), pp. 2:221, 225.
- 48*Ibid.*, p. 226.
- 49*Ibid.*, pp. 245—249.
- 50*Ibid.*, p. 258.
- 51*Ibid.*, p. 275.
- 52Gustaf Aulen, *The Faith of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 228.

A RESPONSE TO LARRY SHELTON

by
Arthur M. Climenhaga

I am grateful for this opportunity to interact publicly with Larry Shelton's paper, because the covenant motif in God's dealing with His people has been an increasingly important theme in my own thinking.

Allow me to recapitulate briefly the major points of the paper:

1. "The foundational understanding [of atonement] must be essentially interpersonal."
2. "The entire canonical witness of Scripture must be considered."
3. The Old Testament sacrificial system arose out of and was part of the expression of the covenant relationship between God and Israel.
4. Jesus Christ established a New Covenant whose "most profound expression" is the Eucharist.
5. Propitiation and expiation are involved in atonement; atonement is relational and results in the restoration of the covenant relationship.
6. Neither Christ nor the Old Testament sacrificial victims may be understood solely in terms of absorption of penalty.
7. Christ in His sacrifice is both representative and example.
8. Historically/culturally framed metaphors for atonement include Anselm's satisfaction theory, the penal substitution theory of Grotius-adapted by Wesley and many of his followers, and the "cosmic champion" theory of Aulen.
9. The covenantal model of the atonement ought to receive the serious attention of Wesleyan scholars because it is a truly Biblical model, it avoids the serious difficulties of the other models, and it is susceptible of presentation in ways which are culturally relevant, and thus of greater impact.

If I have accurately understood and summarized Dr. Shelton's paper, then I may say that I agree with his approach and his conclusions. Allow me to raise a few points, some major and some minor, as a means of initiating our discussion.

Our understanding of the concept of covenant itself ought to be informed by the usage of the ancient Near East, of which Israel was a part. Meredith Kline, in his form-critical analysis of Deuteronomy, the Decalogue, and other passages, has shown that the covenant God made with

Israel utilizes the form of the suzerainty treaty current in the 2nd millennium B. C.¹ Kline works extensively from the Hittite treaties; Old Babylonian materials also support his thesis. We are interested here primarily in the results of breaking covenants (treaties). One Old Babylonian king, Hammurapi, insisting on his faithfulness to a covenant-partner, asked with some vehemence, "Do you not know that I love life!"² The penalties exacted for covenant-breaking most often meant death.

This brings us to a point concerning etymology (which I agree cannot be normative). I do not find "cut or cleave" as a root meaning of Akkadian *biritu*, "clasp," "fetter," "bond," is regarded as the most likely cognate. However, the common Hebrew idiom is "to cut a covenant." This arose from the practice, attested in Genesis 15 and in the Mari texts,³ of cutting sacrificial animals in two and passing between the halves, to signify the penalty to be exacted if the covenant were broken.

Parenthetically, we should note that the pagan sacrifices mentioned were not ceremonies for the ratifying of a covenant, as we are discussing here. I do not understand Dr. Shelton to be saying they were, but the differences in character between most pagan animal sacrifices and those of Israel need to be stressed.

In the suzerainty treaties, of which Israel's covenant(s) with God is/are example(s), the initiative to renew or not to renew a broken covenant lay always with the suzerain, and renewal was always of grace. Repentance of the vassal would be a natural precondition, and the suzerain determined whether such repentance were genuine and whether punishment were to be imposed. Re-establishment was really a new covenant.

Even though covenants were regularly imposed upon vassals by suzerains, they were nevertheless the working documents of interpersonal, and not primarily legal, relationships. The genius of the covenant was its interpersonal nature; here Mendenhall and Kline are right in their understanding (though Mendenhall, for programmatic reasons, minimizes the importance of the suzerainty treaty for Israel). Weinfeld, it seems to me, obliterates the significance of the covenant by his characterization of it as an imposition upon Israel of a set of laws.⁴

I believe that Dr. Shelton is right to reject the penal substitution theory of atonement both on logical and on Biblical grounds. Our easy lumping together of all O.T. sacrifices as sin offerings will not stand in the face of careful exegesis. Not all sacrifices were for the atonement of sin. At least five distinct offerings are prescribed in Leviticus, and at most two are for the purpose of atonement for sin. There were sacrifices for consecration, for praise, for thanksgiving, and for worship.

Further, not all atonements were made in blood, as pointed out in the case of a sin offering of meal on the part of a pauper. Another example is the atonement money *kesepe hakipurim* of Exodus 30:16.

It cannot be stressed too much that repentance is absolutely prerequisite to forgiveness and restoration to the covenant relationship. Compare Isaiah 1:10-17 with its almost venomous tone, "Bring your worthless offerings no longer"; Micah 6:6-8 and its rhetorical hyperbole; and Malachi 1:6-14, with its sarcastic advice to "offer it to your governor."

While the legal transactional emphasis of the penal substitutionary theory of atonement does not do justice to the Biblical data, there is one

further point to be made about covenant and law.⁵ Even the apparatus of the legal system, both ancient and modern, whether of Christ, Hillel, Hammurapi, or Locke, is intended ultimately for the preservation or restoration of cordial, or at least correct, interpersonal relations. With this in mind, it is interesting to note how frequently the prophets bring their complaints against Israel's conduct in the form of the rib, or lawsuit. God brought into court His suit against Israel for breaking the covenant because the covenant had legal force; it was not an unenforceable private agreement. But the charges rib are never impersonal, merely the violating of an external standard. The offense is personal, and the charges are framed that way.

Justice in the A.N.E. and in Scripture was not always retributive in motive. Many times the focus was on restitution. Incarceration was relatively infrequent, and the death penalty was for serious infractions. Imposing Western ideas of proper disposition upon the Bible or the A.N.E. results in distortion.

I would like to add a few observations which I will not have time to develop: The Abrahamic and Davidic covenants also illuminate for us the function of covenant. I think that it is significant that in post-2nd Temple Rabbinic Judaism, prayer is substituted for the sacrifices. It is ironic that covenant was such a dominant theme in the (Calvinist) Puritans' conception of themselves as the people of God. "Law" is an unfortunate translation of Hebrew *torah* and perhaps of Greek *nomos*. The metaphor employed in Hebrews 9 is that of a last will and testament, and does not imply a punishment, vicarious or not; however, the author is quoting (v. 20) Exodus 24:8, where the Hebrew word is *berith*. The meaning of hewed needs more work. The atoning life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is more multifaceted than we are wont to recognize. That is exciting, challenging, and humbling.

Notes

¹Kline has three studies: *Treaty of the Great King* (1963); *By Oath Consigned* (1968); and *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (1972). He builds on the study of G. Mendenhall in *Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1954), reprinted in 1955 as *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Mendenhall was the first to point out the Hittite treaty/Sinai Covenant parallels.

²See *Archives Royales de Mari* II 72:24.

³See discussion and references in E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, Vol. I, *The Anchor Bible*, pp. 112-113.

⁴Moshe Weinfeld, "*Berith*," *TDOT*, Vol. I, pp. 253-279.

⁵Dr. Shelton mentions it on p. 1 of his paper, and in a sense his paper is a development of this point.

BOOK REVIEWS

Interpreting God 's Word For Today: An Inquiry into Hermeneutics from a Biblical Theological Perspective. ed. Wayne McCown and James Earl Massey. Volume II: Wesleyan Theological Perspectives. ed. John E. Hartley and R. Larry Shelton. Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1982. x and 264 pp. Reviewed by Roger L. Hahn, Assistant Professor of Religion, Bethany Nazarene College, Bethany, Oklahoma.

This second volume of the Wesleyan Theological Perspectives series contains nine articles dealing in one way or another with hermeneutical issues. The preface sets the volume in the context of the dialogue on hermeneutics stimulated by the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship's 1980 study program on hermeneutics. The essays are arranged to provide a general progression from the historical to the contemporary to the practical. Though summarizing all the essays in a collection of articles can produce a tediously lengthy review a brief description of each of the essays is necessary.

The lead article, "Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic," by co-editor, Wayne McCown, is presented as a position paper and is to be seen as more than simply one of the essays; it purposely introduces the volume. McCown writes self-consciously as a Wesleyan. He both summarizes the contribution of John Wesley in the shaping of a Wesleyan heritage of hermeneutics and describes the effects of Biblical criticism in terms of how "we" interact with those influences. He stresses the discipline of Wesley in dealing with large portions of Scripture, Wesley's devotional and expository use of Scripture and the close relation Wesley saw between Scripture and life. McCown calls for a modified use of Biblical criticism that allows the canonical and supernatural dimensions of Scripture to receive just due.

McCown concludes his article with a brief programmatic statement for Wesleyan hermeneutics. Accepting the basis of Traina's inductive approach as standard he calls for increased study in the original Biblical languages, a wider use of modern reference resources, an extension of interest from individual texts of Scripture to larger patterns, and the development of a hermeneutic for application. Such an approach would improve Wesleyan preaching, enrich our Biblical Theology and provide the basis for a significant Wesleyan contribution to contemporary music.

The second article is, "The Hermeneutics of Holiness," by Carl Michalson. Beginning with the centrality of preaching in Wesley's ministry,

Michalson demonstrates the way Wesley reflected the changing concept of hermeneutics during the 18th century. The importance of application as part of the process of understanding is clearly seen in the way Wesley spoke of "unconcerned" congregations that heard the Word of God but did not receive it. Michalson then describes Wesley's understanding of holiness as augmenting the hermeneutical circle, transforming it to a hermeneutical "cycle." The pre-understanding of the Christian man is different from that of the sinner, opening the believer to understanding at a higher level. The call to perfection, a call to attain the whole mind of Christ, pulls the hermeneutical circle into an upward spiral.

Michalson also demonstrates Wesley's use of holiness to "demythologize" Scriptural texts. Wesley's zeal for inward holiness led him to interpret much of the first-century language of the New Testament in terms of his own message of deliverance from sin. The article concludes with a demonstration of the tension in Wesley between being released from the world and released into the world by means of holiness.

Robert Traina provides the third article, "Inductive Bible Study Reexamined in the Light of Contemporary Hermeneutics," written in two parts: "Interpreting the Text," and, "Applying the Truth." Traina reexamines the inductive method developed by Wilbert W. White as presented in the works of Howard T. Kuist and Charles Eberhardt from the perspective of several modern developments in Biblical studies. The view of Bultmann and the New Hermeneutic that presuppositionless exegesis is impossible is set in uneasy tension with White's desire for a scientific and objective investigation of Scripture. White is then credited with anticipating in his method the canonical criticism of Child's, the literary criticism of Perrin and modern structuralist interpretation of Scripture. Traina then argues that White's goal of re-creating the author's intentions provides a safeguard against the dangers of emulating the hermeneutics that New Testament writers used in interpreting the Old Testament. Walter Wink's Transforming Bible Study is the next modern to have been anticipated by White, and Traina concludes Part I by discussing the tension between induction and deduction posed by the use of Biblical criticism.

Part II of Traina's contribution, "Applying the Truth," focuses on the need for the inductive method to develop a better process for application. Traina notes that this weakness of the inductive method is also a weakness of contemporary Biblical studies in general. He proposes an inductive methodology for application in three steps: Biblical analysis, situational analysis and application proper which correlates Biblical and situational analyses. Biblical analysis is seen to be complicated by the difficulty of resolving tensions between the ethics of Old and New Testaments and between situational and absolute teachings of Scripture. Situational analysis will both examine the motivations and intentions operative in current practice and practitioners and provide help in resolving the problem of which of conflicting Biblical absolutes to apply in a given situation. Traina concludes by discussing the conflict between induction and deduction when a theological position is expected to be the result of induction! He points out, "Induction . . . has much unfinished business. But it can be done, and it is worth doing!"

John Culp's, "The Impact of Modern Thought upon Biblical Interpretation," is the following article. Culp begins by describing what he sees as the three dominant perceptions that have shaped the modern understanding of reality: reality as historical, as secular and as pluralistic. He then proceeds to show the influence of these perceptions on contemporary Biblical interpretation. The wide-spread influence of the historical perception of reality can be seen both in the development and use of the historical critical method and the interest by conservatives in archaeology as a tool to "verify" the Bible. The assumption that the Bible can be studied like any other book and thus the development of methods to do so are evidences of the impact of the secular perception of reality.

Culp concludes by attempting to formulate a Wesleyan response to this impact of modern thought on the study of Scripture. He warns against the dangers of relativism, the exclusion of God from our explanations of events, the denial of human autonomy, isolation and a subjectivism that results from trying to harmonize all views. Wesleyan interpreters will affirm, according to Culp, the historical relativity of Biblical materials, the need for application of the Biblical materials and the place of both the activity of God and the freedom of humans.

The fifth essay, "Evangelicals and Critical Historical Method," is contributed by Robert W. Lyon. Lamenting the failure of evangelicals to encounter Scripture from a post-Enlightenment perspective, Lyon calls on evangelicals to "embrace wholeheartedly the critical and historical approach to the study of the Biblical texts." After acknowledging that such a call, "may appear ill-timed," in light of recent obituaries for the historical critical method, Lyon moves from a brief history of the development of the method to a critique of the method. He explores the particular inability of the historical-critical method to make theological judgments. Using the resurrection of Jesus as a test case he points out the inability of historians to verify the kerygma of the resurrection. Even if a historian could verify the fact of the resurrection that would not confirm the meaning of the resurrection. Lyon concludes his essay with a call for evangelicals to use the historical-critical method as a tool for understanding rather than for substantiating (or refuting) Scripture. He turns to Jesus' teaching on divorce as an example of an important contemporary issue that would be profited by such a historical-critical study. The works of John Murray and John R. W. Stott on divorce are criticized for relying on the dogmatic rather than the historical approach, but Lyon ends his essay without demonstrating the historical-critical understanding of Jesus' teaching on divorce.

Frank R. Spina submits an introduction to the current discussion of the canon in his article, "Canonical Criticism: Childs Versus Sanders." Spina summarizes the role of Childs' article in *Interpretation* 18 (1964) and his *Biblical Theology in Crisis* in introducing the issue of canonical criticism. The debate between Childs and Sanders is shown to take shape with the publication of *Torah and Canon* by Sanders and the Exodus commentary and *Old Testament Introduction* by Childs and the reaction of each to the other's publications. Spina then synthesizes the agreements and differences between Childs and Sanders. Among the differences are Childs' emphasis on the product of the canon as opposed to Sanders'

interest in the process, Childs' rejection of a canon within a canon as opposed to Sanders' insistence on the necessity of it and Childs' interest in the canon as a vehicle of revelation as opposed to Sanders' interest in the canon as a vehicle of salvation. Spina concludes his contribution by posing a number of questions to both Childs and Sanders.

The Wesleyan interest in practical application mentioned in the lead essay by McCown is demonstrated by the last three articles. John E. Hartley develops a theme for Biblical theology in, "The Use of Typology Illustrated in a Study of Isaiah 9:1-7." Frank G. Carver gives very practical and detailed suggestions for Bible teachers in his, "A Working Model for Teaching Exegesis." Finally, James Earl Massey concludes the volume with, "Hermeneutics and Pulpit Work," an article that reflects the intersection of preaching and application in the Wesleyan tradition.

Hartley begins with a definition and defense of a limited use of typology. After briefly mentioning the extremes of the typology of earlier centuries, he interacts with the discussions of Wright and von Rad in developing his understanding of an appropriate typology. Following a literary and historical exegesis of Isaiah's 9:1-7, Hartley applies his proposed methodology. He develops Isaiah's use of previous events and images, comparing Scripture with Scripture to show the rich Old Testament understanding of ritual, worship and theology that informed the passage in Isaiah. Hartley's typology shows its richness in the final section that demonstrates the way the themes and images just described from throughout the Old Testament find their focus in Jesus. Jesus' ministry in Galilee, bringing the light of the Kingdom, fulfilling the imagery of Gideon, and His realization of Yahweh's covenant with David serve to illustrate how typology can illuminate the inter-relationships of the Word of God.

Carver's title, "A Working Model for Teaching Exegesis," aptly describes his contribution. He begins by presenting his presuppositions as a Wesleyan for studying Scripture. He sees Scripture as incarnational, Christological and God-breathed. Carver also believes that holiness is the integral context of the Biblical message as a whole and that that holiness is revealed in Scripture both as God's offer of a grace relationship with himself in Christ and as the human response to such an offer.

Carver presents both the way he has used the model he will present and alternative ways in which he believes it could be used. He then lays out, in considerable detail, the model itself. He presents the questions that must be asked the text in literary, historical and content exegesis with suggested readings in every area. The model is bracketed with suggested readings on interpretative theory and the questions that lead to application. A person preparing a syllabus for a course on exegetical method will find much of their work done for them here.

Massey's concluding essay affirms the necessity of hermeneutics for preaching. He makes the basic observation that the Scriptures are the Church's book and the Church certainly expects its preachers to study that book. Suggesting that "basic sense units" are the proper objects of that study Massey mentions the largest sense unit—a single book of the Bible—and the simplest sense unit—the sentence. He develops and illustrates the importance of the sentence for preaching in the central section of his essay. Massey also calls for a probing of the text to find the common focus that can produce a common faith for preacher and people. The final

portion of the article affirms the role of the Holy Spirit in the hermeneutical process.

The book is physically easy to read but difficult to study. The type is relatively large and the pages are not crowded. Only one typographical error and one failure to italicize a transliterated Greek work come to mind after reading it. But the eye-pleasing type and spacing is undermined by the abominable practice of using end notes rather than footnotes. The necessity of keeping a book open to two places at once and having to constantly turn back and forth and find one's place on the other pages is a severe impediment to reading for understanding.

Every essay of the volume is useful, informative and worthy of both reading and re-reading. In each article this reviewer responded more than once with that, "Aha," that accompanies either recognition of a new expression of one's cherished views or an awareness of a valuable new insight. Spina's essay is a splendid introduction to whole issue of contemporary canonical criticism. Hartley's treatment of Isaiah 9:1-7 is a rich example of work that transcends the academic to become devotional as well. For devout Bible scholars that is a rare, but greatly desired delight. Michalson's contribution is lively and stimulating. The reader senses that Michalson has engaged Wesley in dialogue over his hermeneutics rather than merely reporting what Wesley said as so many Wesley studies do.

Naturally each of the articles also had points of weakness but engaging in critical dialogue with each is beyond the scope of this review. I prefer rather to simply note a few reservations about the book in general. If the editors or contributors seriously wrestled with the question of the difference between hermeneutics and exegesis, it is not apparent. Some contemporary writers use the word hermeneutics in the plural as a virtual synonym for exegesis and reserve the singular, "hermeneutic," to describe the general principles for interpreting a text meaningfully to a contemporary audience. If such definitions were intended for this work they were not articulated as is still customary when these altered understandings are used. When one sees the word, "Hermeneutics," as the key word of the subtitle and reads the title, "Interpreting God's Word for Today," one expects more discussion on the principles and methods of making Scripture speak meaningfully to the present generation. One can see that the contributors are, in general, skilled at determining what the text meant (though they seldom demonstrate that skill at any length) but they deal in generalities about the need for application. As one fairly well trained in exegesis I am appreciative of exegetical skill but the title of the book raised my hopes for help in the other half of hermeneutics-a hope that was disappointed.

The use of the word, "hermeneutics," in the subtitle and the preface description of this volume as being in dialogue with other Christians on the subject of Hermeneutics gives rise to the hope that one will find both an explanation and engagement with the so-called, "New Hermeneutic." Such a hope is also disappointed in this book. Although there are frequent allusions and side-glances there is no sustained direct engagement with Fuchs, Ebeling and others of the New Hermeneutic movement. Traina comes the closest to meeting this need in one brief section of part I of his essay, but he is more using the New Hermeneutic as a foil than he is engaging them in

serious discussion. Surely a collection of essays on Hermeneutics could have included at least a single article that addressed this important area.

Reflection on what this reviewer perceives to be lack of engagement with an important issue in recent Biblical studies raises another question. What was the intended audience of both the contributors individually and the volume as a whole? Was it scholars? If so, in what field? Was it theological students, or pastors? Was the audience intended to be Wesleyan, non-Wesleyan or both? Many of the essays suffered from generalness when it was apparent that the authors were capable of more detailed and specific work. Did a self-conscious attempt to be both "practical" and "scholarly" undermine aiming at a specific audience and thus specific writing? Too much contemporary Wesleyan writing attempts to aim at every audience and ends up affecting none. This work could have benefited from a sharpened focus upon a specific audience.

Regardless of such weaknesses one is delighted to see such a book on the market. Wesleyan scholarship is under-represented in print and the Wesleyan Theological Perspectives series is a commendable effort to address the problem. Our credibility can only be enhanced by continuing to write, critique and be critiqued, and by improving in response to criticism.

John Wesley's Message for Today, by Steve Harper. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983, 160 pp. Reviewed by H. Ray Dunning, Ph.D., Professor of Theology and Philosophy, Trevecca Nazarene College, Nashville, Tennessee.

Taking his cue from Wesley himself, Steve Harper has attempted to set forth the Wesleyan message in "plain words for plain people." He has avoided technical discussions and embellished his text with illustrations in presenting a simple statement of John Wesley's understanding of the Christian life.

The structure of this little book is the *ordo salutis*. The author's thesis is that Wesleyan Theology is dynamic rather than static and he seeks to demonstrate this dynamic character in relation to each of the "stages on life's way," thus making an effort to bridge what Mildred Bangs Wynkoop has called "the credibility gap" between life and theology which has developed in "Wesleyan scholasticism." It is this reviewer's opinion that it will serve as an excellent resource for laypersons in grasping a viable and Biblical theology of the Christian life.

While this book does not propose to be a piece of scholarly research, it is quite perceptive in its interpretation of Wesley and generally quite accurate.

However, there are a few points which might be questionable. In an attempt to reject a substantial view of sin, Harper rejects the idea of eradication because it "treats sin as a thing." This may be true if you take the metaphor literally, but then certain Biblical metaphors would result in similar inadequacies if not recognized as figures of speech. The most confusing thing about this discussion is that he raises the question in connection with conversion rather than entire sanctification where Wesleyans

usually address the issue. Also, our author follows the American Holiness Movement rather than Wesley in making a sharp distinction between initial sanctification and the New Birth.

Harper's interpretation of Christian perfection follows his central emphasis on the dynamic character of Wesleyan theology. However, it seems to this reviewer to emphasize the "growing" aspect of sanctification to such a degree as to tend to lose the emphasis on the decisiveness of the instantaneous "second blessing." This is almost inevitable when the positive side is given exclusive attention, whereas Wesley was emphatic on the negative side as well. That is, there is a dealing with the sin that remains in believers and this sin in believers is given a death blow in the moment when God "cuts short his work in righteousness."

Our author does not speak of this side of the teaching about Christian perfection, except to speak about "power over sin" (p. 97), a victory which he also claims for conversion (pp. 67-68) and in much the same terms. It is difficult to see how a distinction is made between the first and second works of grace in this interpretation.

A particularly helpful aspect of this book is the concluding emphasis on the corporate character of the Christian faith. This is thoroughly Biblical and Wesleyan, and an important ingredient in cultivating the spiritual life, which is the end to which this work addresses itself.