

Wesleyan Theological Journal

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Wesleyan Theological Society

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

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EDITOR'S NOTES

The 1994 annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society convened on the campus of United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, November 4-5, 1994. Celebrated on that occasion was the Society's thirtieth anniversary. Included here are brief historical overviews of these three decades by William Kostlevy, Leo Cox, Donald Dayton, and Howard Snyder. The intent is to remember with gratitude and to highlight key theological issues that have characterized this eventful history.

Issue 30:2 will carry a selection of papers from the 1994 annual meeting. In this issue Randy Maddox and David Bundy provide perspective on how best to read John Wesley as theologian in light of the wide range of original sources available, the central issues that have dominated Wesley Studies, and the interpretive works that have appeared in recent years. Melvin Dieter takes a fresh look at the holiness movement through the "primitivism" lens, followed by Barry Callen's case study of Daniel Warner done in the general context of Dieter's historical analysis. The remaining essays address a range of topics that are explored historically and biblically.

The Wesleyan Theological Society now is beginning its fourth decade of service to the Wesleyan/Holiness theological tradition. It is hoped that the carefully considered perspectives found in this issue of the *Journal* will help keynote the continuance of what is a proud and productive past.

B. L. C.

READING WESLEY AS A THEOLOGIAN

by

Randy L. Maddox

Six years ago I began a study of John Wesley aimed at providing a book-length survey of his theological convictions. This project finally reached fruition with the 1994 publication of *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. One reason that the project took so long was that I began it as an outsider, with only cursory awareness of prior Wesley Studies. As I dug into this field, I discovered several debated issues concerning how best to read Wesley as a theologian. The purpose of this essay is to provide a survey of these methodological debates and to indicate the conclusions that I found most convincing on each issue. As such, it provides a methodological introduction to my current reading of Wesley as in *Responsible Grace*. My hope is that it will also help foster greater methodological awareness and agreement among future studies of Wesley's theology.

I. THE ISSUE OF WESLEY'S THEOLOGICAL SETTING

The central conviction driving the professionalization of Wesley Studies that has taken place over the last thirty-five years is the need to read Wesley in light of his own theological sources.¹ The most-focused debate that has formed around this conviction is the question of which Christian theological traditions were most influential in the formation of Wesley's doctrinal convictions. This question may appear to be of merely antiquarian interest, but it actually plunges one into the most crucial

¹Cf. Outler 1985a, 41ff.

disagreements over the meaning and implications of Wesley's writings. The reason for this is that the various theological traditions are driven by distinct fundamental concerns. These concerns provide the interpretive focus for each tradition's specific theological claims. As a result, different traditions can use the same terms or references with significantly varying emphases and implications. If one's task is to determine the distinctive emphases and implications of Wesley's theology, therefore, it is helpful to know which traditions were most influential in forming his doctrinal convictions, or to which tradition he bore the greatest similarity.

There is significant room for debate about this issue because Wesley grew up and took his theological training in an Anglican context. Eighteenth-century Anglicanism was perhaps the most diverse theological arena of its time, due to its unique history. The original split from Rome had been more over jurisdictional matters than theological ones. As a result, the English church has never lacked influential voices sympathetic to Catholic concerns.² At the same time, there were powerful currents within the newly autonomous church that urged it to complete its reformation by casting off the theology of Rome along with Roman jurisdictional authority. A few of these advocates turned to the Lutheran tradition for a model of a fully Protestant church, while most were attracted to the Reformed tradition as a guide for purging Anglicanism of its remaining "popish" elements. Ultimately, neither Protestant alternative carried the day. Instead, Anglicanism gravitated toward an understanding of itself as a *via media* (middle way) between the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions.

Given this Anglican setting, it is not surprising that there have been debates over Wesley's theological location from the beginning, or that these debates initially focused on whether he was more Protestant or Catholic. The following survey of the major alternatives in these debates will concentrate on recent representatives.

A. Wesley the Protestant

During his ministry Wesley was frequently accused of being a Roman Catholic in disguise! He rejected this classification rather

²I am using "Catholic" here broadly, to designate an appreciation for such themes as sacramental spirituality, requisite human growth in holiness, and human participation in salvation—themes that characterized much of pre-Reformation Christianity in both its Eastern and Western forms.

sharply.³ These rejections can easily be overplayed. On careful reading, it is clear that Wesley was not intending to reject the broadly Catholic elements of his Anglican setting but only some specific controverted claims of the Roman church. Not all of Wesley's later interpreters have been careful to make this distinction. Indeed, the dominant tendency of nineteenth-century Methodism was to deny or ignore Wesley's Catholic convictions and practices, portraying him as a reactionary low-church Protestant.⁴

While more nuanced than their nineteenth-century predecessors, many recent interpreters of Wesley have continued to argue that he is best understood as essentially Protestant in his theological convictions. The major contention of such a claim is that an emphasis on justification by grace (as contrasted with the Roman Catholic emphasis on infused righteousness) was the measure and determinant of all Wesley's teachings.⁵ That is, Wesley's fundamental concern is assumed to be the preservation of the freedom (sovereignty) of God in offering forgiveness and reconciliation to guilty, undeserving humanity.

Since the basic doctrine of justification by grace was affirmed by both Luther and Calvin, some interpreters simply defend a broad Protestant reading of Wesley (e.g., George Bolster, Roger Ireson, and Gordon Rupp). More typical of the recent discussion has been the attempt to determine which branch of the Protestant family Wesley more nearly resembles.

For example, in 1951 Franz Hildebrandt presented a forceful argument that Wesley was closer to Luther than normally recognized, and much closer to Luther than to Calvin.⁶ His expressed reason for this claim was the contention that Wesley was more concerned to affirm the absolute graciousness of salvation than the sovereignty of God (with its unacceptable corollary of predestination). One suspects that this interest in the correlation between Wesley and Luther also owed much to Hildebrandt's German Lutheran roots. Indeed, even German Methodist studies of

³For examples of such accusations, see his *Journal* for 27 Aug. 1739 (*Works*, 19:89), 5 Feb. 1749 (*Works*, 20:263), and 2 June 1749 (*Works*, 20:279). For responses to this accusation, see *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's 'Review of all the Doctrines Taught by Mr. John Wesley,'* §§24-5, *Works* (Jackson), 10:408; and *Popery Calmly Considered*, *Works* (Jackson), 10:140-58.

⁴Cf. Dunlap 1956, 441-8.

⁵Note, for example, Cannon 1946, 14.

⁶Hildebrandt 1951, 14, 91ff.

Wesley have characteristically focused on the similarities between Luther and Wesley (though there have been a few exceptions).⁷

Aside from German Wesley scholars, it has been more common, particularly since the emergence of Neo-Orthodoxy, for Wesley to be identified with the Reformed or Calvinist tradition.⁸ One of the earliest and strongest advocates of this identification was George Croft Cell, who argued that the kinship of Wesleyanism and Calvinism greatly exceeded their common affiliation with Luther.⁹ Behind this claim was Cell's conviction that the stress on human initiative in salvation (synergism) typical of the liberal streams in the Methodist theology of his day needed to be replaced by the Neo-Orthodox emphasis on the sole efficacy (monergism) of God in salvation.¹⁰ This emphasis is more characteristic of Calvin than of Luther, and Cell perceived this emphasis in Wesley—hence his identification of Wesley with Calvin. Other Wesley scholars who have joined Cell in reading Wesley in terms of the Reformed tradition include William Cannon, Robert Cushman, Robert Hillman, Paul Hoon, I. Howard Marshall, and Lycurgus Starkey.

Several Wesley scholars, while assuming a general Protestant reading of Wesley, have suggested that the categories "Lutheran" and "Calvinist" are still too broad for adequately characterizing his approach. They have focused attention on particular movements within these traditions. For example, some have stressed the influences of Lutheran Pietism and the closely related Moravians upon Wesley (though recent studies have greatly qualified such influence).¹¹ Others have tried to isolate the distinctive influence of English (Reformed) Puritanism upon Wesley's theology and worship practices.¹² Finally, there has been a

⁷See the generalization of Voigt 1982, 51-2. An excellent example of such an emphasis on similarities is Eichen 1934. By contrast, Gerdes 1958 argues that Wesley is more Reformed than Lutheran.

⁸The most significant non-German proponents of affinities with Luther are two Methodist Luther scholars, E. Gordon Rupp and Philip Watson.

⁹Cell 1935, vii.

¹⁰See the recently published letter where Cell explains the purpose of his book (Dunlap 1981).

¹¹The strongest affirmations of similarities between Wesley and forms of Lutheran Pietism are Nagler 1918, Scott 1939, Towlson 1957, Schmidt 1976, and Stoeffler 1976. For studies also noting the differences between Wesley and the forms of Pietism, see Collins 1992a, Hynson 1979, Kinkel 1990, McGonigle 1993, Snyder 1989 (esp. p. 208), Stephens 1988, and Zehrer 1975.

¹²E.g., Davies 1961, Monk 1966, and Newton 1964.

protracted debate (ever since Cell identified Wesley as monergistic) over whether Wesley would not be better located within the Arminian revision of the Reformed tradition.¹³

There is little doubt that Wesley was influenced by each of these Protestant perspectives. However, the implausibility of an extended identification of him with any of them has become increasingly apparent. Wesley explicitly distanced himself from central aspects of both Calvin and Luther,¹⁴ and several recent studies have substantiated this move by highlighting the differences between Wesley and the Reformers.¹⁵ While Wesley was clearly sympathetic to Protestant concerns, a one-sided Protestant reading of his work has proven to be inadequate.

B. Wesley the Catholic

The most significant problem with an exclusively Protestant reading of Wesley is the pervasive presence of some characteristically Catholic themes in his work: e.g., the assumption of requisite growth in holiness during the Christian life, the emphasis on “faith working by love” (i.e., active human participation in salvation), and his sacramental spirituality. In light of these themes, it is not surprising that there have been several appreciative readings of Wesley by Roman Catholic scholars—beginning with J. Augustin Leger, and including Louis Bouyer, Aelred Burrows, Brendan Byrne, Donal Dorr, Michael Hurley, Charles Koerber, Daniel Luby, Frank McNulty, Mark Massa, Jean Orcibal, Maximin Piette, Thomas Pucelik, Michael Scanlon, John Murray Todd, and Philip

¹³The earliest extensive discussion of this topic was Pask 1939 (conclusions summarized in 1960 essay). The issues are given independent up-to-date review in Eaton 1988 and McGonigle 1994. Briefer discussions can be found in Keefer 1986 & 1987; and McGonigle 1988. Ultimately, the question of how “Arminian” Wesley was is related to the question of how “Calvinist” Arminius was! On this question see the differentiation of an “authentic” Calvin from both high Calvinism and Arminianism, with suggestions of some of Wesley’s affinities to this authentic Calvin, in Clifford 1990, esp. pp. 125, 132-4, 161, 189.

¹⁴On his problems with Calvin’s monergism, see the 1770 *Minutes*, Q. 28, *Minutes* (Mason), 95-6 (also as “Large Minutes,” Qq. 74 & 77, *Works* [Jackson], 8:336-8). On his perception that Luther’s understanding of free grace undercuts sanctification, see Sermon 107, “On God’s Vineyard,” §1.5, *Works*, 3:505; and *Journal* (15 June 1741), *Works*, 19:200-1. For an argument that Wesley was misreading Luther, see Rupp 1983, 11-12; and Walls 1981. Attempts to reconcile Calvin and Wesley abound in the advocates of a Reformed reading of Wesley.

¹⁵See esp. Hall 1963, Meistad 1987 & 1989, and Wainwright 1983, 1987 & 1988.

Verhalen.¹⁶ Nor is it surprising that parallels have been suggested between some of Wesley's theological convictions and those of prominent contemporary Roman Catholic theologians such as Rahner and von Balthasar.¹⁷

A specialized topic within the general discussion of Wesley's Catholic affinities concerns the influence of mysticism upon him.¹⁸ During his early adulthood Wesley read mystical writers with great appreciation, especially French and Spanish Roman Catholic mystics.¹⁹ Eventually he became critical of some aspects of their teachings (such as their undervaluing of the means of grace and their exaltation of the experience of the "dark night of the soul"), though he always valued their concern for religious experience and their stress on the progressive development of inner holiness. Perhaps the most significant difference between Wesley and many of these mystics was that they tended to pursue a mystic *union* with God while Wesley was more oriented toward *communion* with God.²⁰

These various studies make clear that any adequate reading of Wesley must recognize the Catholic elements in his thought. At the same time, most of them acknowledge several problems that Wesley had with specific claims and practices of *Roman* Catholicism, problems which he enumerated on many occasions, including his tract on "The Advantage of the Members of the Church of England over Those of the Church of

¹⁶The first such study was apparently Leger 1910. Leger's perspective is summarized in his 1914 English article. Massa 1983 summarizes and critiques the approaches of Hurley, Orcibal, Piette and Todd. One further Roman Catholic discussion of Wesley can hardly be classified as appreciative in its perspective, for it caricatures and rejects Wesley as an extreme enthusiast; namely, R. Knox 1950, 422-548.

¹⁷E.g., Dorr 1964a, 172; Jones 1988, and Maddox 1987.

¹⁸The best studies of this topic are Tuttle 1969 (popularized and slightly updated as Tuttle 1989); Källstad 1988 (reprinted in Källstad 1989 along with some of the relevant primary mystical writings); and Collins 1993b. Note especially Tuttle's thesis about how the mature Wesley integrated the valid concerns of the mystics with his larger theology (1969, 218ff, 229; 1989, 127). See also D. Wilson 1968, but note Tuttle's cogent criticism of Wilson (1969, 225; 1989, 124-5).

¹⁹Cf. Orcibal 1951, and English 1992. The major Protestant mystic that influenced Wesley was William Law. For analyses of this relationship, see E. Baker 1948, Green 1945, and J. R. Tyson 1982.

²⁰Cf. Källstad 1988, 39-40.

Rome.”²¹ Thus, a “Catholic” reading of Wesley would best be construed in the broad sense of the term, designating themes that characterized pre-Reformation Christianity in both its Eastern and Western forms.

Obviously, the most pressing question that the recognition of the Catholic elements of Wesley’s thought raises is how these are related to the Protestant elements already admitted. The typical nineteenth-century claim was that Wesley’s Catholic inclinations were a product of his early training and that he rejected them following his “evangelical conversion” at Aldersgate.²² Such a reading runs aground on the fact that the Catholic aspects of Wesley’s thought and practice can be located throughout his life and seem to strengthen in his latter years. This fact has led some to talk about a temporary Protestant swerve in Wesley that is followed by a fundamental “retroversion” to a basically Catholic stance.²³ More common has been the suggestion that Wesley developed a creative synthesis of Protestant and Catholic themes.²⁴

C. Wesley the Anglican

Talk of a synthesis of the basic Protestant and Catholic concerns obviously returns us to a consideration of Wesley’s Anglican context, for we noted above that this was precisely the goal of Anglicanism. Recently, the course of the debate over Wesley’s theological location has returned full circle to the argument of Richard Urrill (in perhaps the first book devoted to this question) that Wesley was essentially an “Anglican in Earnest.”²⁵ Since the 1960’s a growing group of scholars have portrayed Wesley as a typical moderate eighteenth-century Anglican divine.²⁶

Such an Anglican reading of Wesley is surely more adequate than either of the one-sided Protestant or Catholic alternatives. One simply cannot understand Wesley’s model of theological activity or his theological convictions without properly appreciating their distinctively

²¹*Works* (Jackson), 10:133-40.

²²One of the best examples is Rigg 1868, esp. p. 41.

²³The term and basic argument is found in Rattenbury 1938, 193.

²⁴This characterization was first suggested by Cell (1935, 347). It has been appropriated broadly in Wesley Studies. There have been critics however, who argue that such a synthesis is fundamentally impossible—e.g., Rupp 1952, 82; and Williams 1960, 174.

²⁵Urrill 1870, 29.

²⁶E.g., Crow 1964 & 1966; English 1969; F. Baker 1970; Knickerbocker 1991; Miller 1991; and Walker 1993.

Anglican tone. And yet, this very point raises other questions. Eighteenth-century Anglicans were a diverse group with competing and sometimes conflicting elements. Which of these elements were most influential on or attractive to Wesley?

D. Wesley the Primitivist

One strand of his Anglican context with which Wesley resonated was the renewed appreciation of *early* Christian theology and practice. When seventeenth-century Anglicans moved toward becoming a *via media*, it was not by direct mediation between contemporary Protestant traditions and Roman Catholicism. Rather, influential voices called for a recovery of the faith and practice of the first four centuries of the church.²⁷ Since this early tradition antedated the later divisions, they believed that its recovery would provide a more authentic mediating position.

Wesley readily adopted this esteem for “primitive” (i.e., pristine!) Christian theology and practice. Moreover, this was hardly a casual attitude of respect. He devoted considerable attention to the scholarship that was being produced by the Anglican patristics renaissance. This has led some to suggest that the distinctive blend of Wesley’s theology reflects more dependence on primitive Christianity than on any of the more contemporary traditions. That is, they argue that Wesley is best understood as a “primitivist.” His differences from the various Protestant and Roman Catholic voices of his day (and his distinctive type of Anglicanism!) are a result of his commitment to recovering the theological balance of the Early Church.²⁸

E. Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy

The general importance of the Early Church to Wesley’s understanding of Christian life and doctrine has come to be widely recognized by Wesley scholars. Recently, some have drawn attention to a specific aspect

²⁷For descriptions of the appeal to and study of patristic material in England just prior to Wesley, see Barnard 1988, Cornwall 1990, and Campbell 1991, 7-21. Campbell distinguishes between polemical, conservative, and programmatic appeals to Christian Antiquity.

²⁸The most vigorous defense of Wesley as a primitivist is Keefer 1982 (synopsis in 1984). The most thorough study of Wesley’s conception of and use of early Christian material is Campbell 1991. Campbell’s focus, however, is not on Wesley’s “primitivism” per se; it is on how Wesley connects this commitment to Christian tradition with his “evangelical” attempt to renew ideal Christianity (104, 114-16).

of the Anglican patristics scholarship in which Wesley showed keen interest—this scholarship devoted particular emphasis to Greek authors who had receded from Western consciousness following the fourth century of the Church’s existence. Wesley not only became aware of many of these Greek authors through his study, he imbibed a marked preference for them over the Latin writers!²⁹

It is becoming evident how important the influence of these early Greek authors (whether directly or through summaries in Anglican patristic scholars) was on Wesley’s theology. The reason for this importance is that early Greek-writing theologians tended toward a different understanding of the relation of creation, sin, and salvation than that which became dominant in the Western churches. Comparatively, the soteriology of the main strands of Western Christianity (both Protestant and Roman Catholic!) has been characterized by a *juridical* focus on guilt and absolution, while early Greek Christian (and later Eastern Orthodox) soteriology has more typically emphasized the *therapeutic* concern for healing our sin-diseased nature.³⁰ A growing number of scholars have become convinced that Wesley shared this more therapeutic understanding of sin and the Christian life.

From where might he have derived such an emphasis? Obviously, a strong historical demonstration of any specific source is extremely problematic. Surely those minority voices in Western Christianity that inclined toward a more developmental and therapeutic model of Christian life (some mystics, many Pietists, and the Anglican “holy living” divines) would be among the likely sources.³¹ However, these scholars contend that another important source of Wesley’s therapeutic emphasis was his exposure to the theological themes of the early Greek-speaking church. They argue that any adequate determination of Wesley’s location in the Christian theological traditions must therefore include Eastern Christian influences and similarities.³²

²⁹Actually, there had once again been early suggestions about the importance of these Greek theologians to Wesley. See especially A. Knox 1844, 483; and Umlin 1870, 10, 59-86. The one most responsible for recovering this agenda in contemporary Wesley Studies is Albert Outler (cf. 1964, viii-ix; and 1980-2).

³⁰For further discussion of this difference see Maddox 1990b & 1994.

³¹On the difficulties of historical demonstration of sources see Bundy 1991; and Campbell 1991, 3.

³²For a recent survey of this discussion, see Maddox 1990b. Subsequent contributions are Snyder 1990, Bundy 1991, Lee 1991, T. Martin 1991, McCormick 1991, Campbell 1994, and Im 1994.

F. Evaluation

How should one evaluate the various positions just summarized? It is tempting to play it safe and simply describe Wesley as eclectic in his influences and theological convictions, for he clearly does draw upon a wide range of disparate sources.³³ However, such a response fails to do justice to the basic consistency that can be discerned in Wesley's overall thought, a consistency that I believe results from his orienting concern about "responsible grace." This concern resonates deeply with the therapeutic emphasis noted in early Greek theologians and minority streams of Western Christianity, both of which were important to Wesley. This has led me to the conclusion that Wesley is best read as a theologian who was fundamentally committed to the therapeutic view of Christian life, who struggled to express this view in the terms of the dominant stream of his Western Christian setting, and who sought to integrate some of the central convictions of this setting into his more basic therapeutic viewpoint.³⁴

II. THE ISSUE OF CONSISTENCY IN WESLEY'S PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

The first methodological issue was somewhat external in focus, debating Wesley's location within the spectrum of Christian theological traditions. This second issue is decidedly internal in aim, questioning how best to discern and demonstrate the degree of consistency among Wesley's own theological convictions. Two concerns combine to raise interest in this question. One is the simple desire to construct an adequate account of Wesley's theological convictions, recognizing the contribution of insights concerning consistency to this end. The second concern is more apologetic in tone, assuming that verifiable consistency is central to demonstrating that Wesley merits consideration as a "serious" theologian.

Approaching this issue historically, Wesley himself was forced to respond to accusations that there were inconsistencies among his various published thoughts from nearly the beginning of his revival movement.³⁵ He typically rejected such charges, often arguing that the supposed inconsistencies reflected simply the accuser's failure to recognize variations in the audiences being addressed. For example, if he had preached mainly

³³See the classic summary of these sources in Outler 1964, viii.

³⁴Cf. Maddox 1994, 67, 82, 85, 142ff.

³⁵For one of the first instances (1740), see his response to such charges in *The Principles of a Methodist*, §§14ff, *Works*, 9:56-66.

about forgiveness of sins early in the revival, and later shifted his emphasis more to the need for growing in holiness, it was because his early audience were unbelievers while his later audience were followers who had begun the Christian life.³⁶ Contemporary Wesley scholars tend to concede more true tensions in Wesley's writings than he appeared to allow himself. Yet, the majority of them have still agreed with Wesley's basic self-evaluation that there is a fundamental consistency within his theological convictions. As William Cannon once put it, the simple fact "that Wesley was not systematic in the arrangement of his doctrines does not warrant the assumption that he was inconsistent or contradictory in his theological opinions."³⁷

Cannon's claim takes us to the issue at the heart of this matter: What accounts for an appropriate consistency in one's theological convictions? Under the influence of the Hegelian *Encyclopedia*, modern Western university theology has broadly adopted an approach to doctrinal reflection committed to constructing a System in which every item of theological interest is subsumed under, or derived from, a single principal Idea. Accordingly, the standard means for insuring (or demonstrating!) theological consistency has become the construction of a Systematic Theology. The problem that this raises for Wesley scholars, of course, is that Wesley never authored a Systematic Theology. On the terms of the reigning academic model, this omission raises grave doubts about the consistency (and "seriousness") of Wesley's theological work.

Several Wesley scholars have responded to these doubts by attempting to explain away or compensate for this perceived deficit in Wesley's work. For example, some have tried to demonstrate that there is actually an underlying complete System implicit in Wesley's published work.³⁸ A few have even attempted to excavate this System and collect it into a compendium.³⁹ Somewhat more common (and less ambitious) are those who argue that Wesley chose to focus his systematic concern on the doctrinal

³⁶*Minutes* (2 Aug. 1745), *John Wesley*, 150.

³⁷Cannon 1946, 7-8. For other assertions of a basic consistency in Wesley, see Heitzenrater 1984, 1:28; Outler 1964, 27; and Tuttle 1978, 10.

³⁸A few of the stronger examples are Eayers 1926, 72-3; Coppedge 1987, 14; Coppedge 1991, 268; and Bryant 1992, 11-2.

³⁹The first such attempt was Carpenter 1825 (the work is anonymous and actual editor uncertain, the British Museum attributes it to William Carpenter). The most recent such work is Oden 1994.

locus of the order of salvation, and then offer an organized summary of his thought on this locus.⁴⁰

As I began my own work on Wesley, I became convinced that these alternatives were measuring (and attempting to read) him by a standard that was historically inappropriate. This led me to argue in a preparatory essay that Wesley's theological activity could only be appropriately understood and assessed in terms of the approach to theology as a practical discipline (*scientia practica*) which characterized the pre-university Christian setting and remained influential in eighteenth-century Anglicanism.⁴¹ For this model the quintessential practitioner of theology was not the detached academic theologian; it was the pastor/theologian who was actively shepherding Christian disciples in the world. Likewise, the defining task of "real" theologians was neither developing an elaborate System of Christian truth-claims nor defending these claims to their "cultured despisers;" it was nurturing and shaping the worldview that frames the temperament and practice of believers' lives in the world. Finally, the primary (or first-order) literary forms of "real" theological activity were not Systematic Theologies or Apologetics; they were carefully-crafted liturgies, catechisms, hymns, sermons, and the like. Judged on such terms, Wesley's voluminous writings emerge as serious theological activity indeed!

This is not to say that recovering an appreciation for Wesley's model of "practical theology" immediately settles the issue of consistency in his theological convictions. It actually heightens the issue, though it also suggests an alternative approach to address the legitimate concern involved. A central aspect of Wesley's model is that theological activity is integrally related to the *praxis* of the Christian community. One of the direct results is that this activity is most frequently occasional and contextual in nature. It is sparked by issues in specific situations and tends to adopt unique emphases or strategies appropriate to each situation. This raises a legitimate concern that the demands of the situation might so dominate theological reflection that there would be no uniformity between the various situation-related theological judgments.

But, what is the nature of this desired uniformity, and how should it be achieved? The Hegelian System sought more than simply a lack of

⁴⁰E.g., Meredith 1962, 45-8; Borgen 1972, 44; Lessmann 1987, 10; and Collins 1989, 129ff.

⁴¹Maddox 1988.

contradiction between theological claims (consistency); it desired their logical co-entailment (coherence). But it often attained such coherence at the expense of contextual considerations. Within a truly practical theology, consistency would appear to be a sufficient goal; but how can even this be obtained without overriding contextual authenticity? In dialogue with my reading of Wesley, I was drawn to the suggestion that it is the functioning of an “orienting concern” that can potentially provide consistency to situation-related theological reflection. Particular theological judgments might vary as appropriate to their situation and yet remain reasonably consistent if each situation is addressed with a dynamically-consistent concern or “worry.”⁴²

What this means methodologically is that an adequate reading of Wesley’s theology depends less on identifying some System present (even implicitly) in his writings and more on discerning the existence and nature of an orienting concern with which he addressed the various situations involved in theologically shepherding his Methodist people. I have tried to make the case in *Responsible Grace* for the existence of such an orienting concern, and to demonstrate that it effectively provided a reasonable consistency among Wesley’s situation-related theological judgments. Whether my specific characterization of this orienting concern proves adequate remains to be seen, but I am convinced that the discussion of Wesley’s theology will be best advanced on these general terms.

III. THE ISSUE OF TRANSITIONS IN WESLEY’S THEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS

One particular dimension of consistency requires specific attention when dealing with a theologian like Wesley who produced work over an extended lifespan—the dimension of consistency *over time* in their convictions. Concern with this dimension of consistency is heightened when, as again in the case of Wesley, there is the obvious existence of some significant transitions in the spiritual life and thought of the theologian. This explains why the issue of transitions in Wesley’s theological convictions has been quite prominent in debates within Wesley Studies.

A. Transitions in Wesley’s Spiritual Development

It is helpful to begin with consideration of transitions in Wesley’s spiritual life. While this issue is interesting in its own right, it also has

⁴²For a more detailed description of the nature and function of an “orienting concern,” see Maddox 1994, 18.

relevance to the methodological question of whether there were transitions in his major doctrinal convictions or overall theological perspective, and what consistency may have survived through these transitions. Given that the experiences to which persons are “open” depend to an important degree upon their presuppositions, Wesley’s spiritual journey is one indicator of his implicit theological convictions and of possible changes in them. Likewise, if Wesley’s theological convictions did change over time, reflections on the inadequacy of his current convictions for making sense of his own experience surely played a role.

Wesley repeatedly mentioned certain transitions in his spiritual development: the formation of the holy club, his decision to enter ministry, his reading of William Law, his Aldersgate experience, and so on. Perhaps no issue has divided later Wesley scholarship more than the evaluation of the significance of these various transitions.

A particular focus of this debate has been the event of Aldersgate. Was this Wesley’s “conversion”? If not, when was he converted? If so, what happened at those previous events? Part of the reason that there has been so much debate on this topic is that Wesley seems to have revised his own perspective on these questions.⁴³

One of the ways that Wesley scholars have attempted to analyze Wesley’s overall spiritual development is by comparison to some standardized pattern. Naturally, different interpreters utilize alternative patterns. The most typical pattern of nineteenth-century biographers was the disjunctive model of conversion that William James was to name the “twice-born” model. These writers adopted Wesley’s own early post-Aldersgate characterization of his previous life as a human struggle to be a Christian, until (at Aldersgate) he finally surrendered his Pelagian inclinations and accepted God’s free gift of grace, becoming (for the first time) truly a Christian. Such a reading has carried over in some twentieth-century studies of Wesley as well.⁴⁴

An explicitly alternative approach has been to emphasize the continuity in Wesley’s spiritual development, viewing him as a “once-born”

⁴³For a detailed history of the differing interpretations of Aldersgate, and a discussion of the issues involved, see the various essays in Maddox 1990a; and the subsequent dialogue in Collins 1991, Maddox 1992, and Collins 1992b.

⁴⁴The most explicit identification of Wesley as “twice-born” is Roland 1944. The best extended twentieth-century example of such a reading is Jeffery 1960.

person. This model has been particularly attractive to Roman Catholic interpreters of Wesley, though others have championed it as well.⁴⁵

A few interpreters have attempted comparisons of Wesley's spiritual development with the five classic stages of mystical progress: 1) Awakening, 2) Purgation by discipline, 3) Illumination, 4) Mortification or the "Dark Night of the Soul," and 5) Union. However, they have had to modify the model significantly to make it fit Wesley.⁴⁶

Most recently there have been insightful analyses of Wesley's spiritual life in terms of the progressive stages of moral development theory and faith development theory. These studies discern a marked continuity within Wesley's spiritual development, without denying the presence of significant transitions.⁴⁷

This latter reading of Wesley's spiritual development, with its recognition of transitions but emphasis on continuity, is becoming the dominant view of Wesley biographers. A major reason for this is that it appears to be the view that Wesley came to hold himself in his later years.⁴⁸

B. Transitions in Wesley's Theological Convictions

We noted earlier that Wesley had to respond frequently to accusations of inconsistencies in his writings. In these responses he occasionally admitted that there had been a significant alteration in his doctrinal convictions between his earliest publications (1725) and the beginning of

⁴⁵The classic Roman Catholic example is Leger 1910, 77-82, 350, 364. For a sympathetic Methodist review of Leger, see Beet 1912.

⁴⁶A early example is Dimond 1926, 75ff. The most extended treatment is in Tuttle 1989.

⁴⁷See respectively Joy 1983, and Fowler 1985. Note as well James Nelson's claim (1988) that James Loder's conversion theory is more adequate for understanding Wesley's development than Fowler's approach because it puts more emphasis on the discontinuities in conversion. Källstad 1974 and Moore 1979 also attempt psychological readings of Wesley. However, they focus more on genetic explanations for his theological viewpoint or method than on understanding his spiritual development. Their method is rather idiosyncratic and, as a result, controversial in Wesley Studies (cf. the critique of Källstad in Hall 1988, 44-5; and the review of Moore by Heitzenrater in *MethH* 19 [1981]:243-6). Equally idiosyncratic and controversial is the attempt of Abelove 1990 to "explain" the success of Wesley's revival movement in neo-Freudian categories of the "seduction" of his people (cf. the review by Heitzenrater in *MethH* 30 [1992]:118-20).

⁴⁸This point is argued in detail in Heitzenrater 1989, 106-49.

the Methodist revival (1738); namely, he had acquired a deeper appreciation for the doctrine of justification by grace and for the experience of faith as a conscious pardon from sin. However, Wesley typically insisted that he had remained thoroughly consistent in his doctrinal convictions since this earlier alteration. As he put it in 1789, “I defy any [one] living to prove that I have contradicted myself at all in any of the writings which I have published from the year 1738 to the year 1788.”⁴⁹ To be sure, there were a few times when he quietly admitted changes on issues even after 1738 (such as whether one must have a sense of pardon to be justified).⁵⁰ But, as Albert Outler notes, Wesley was more willing to qualify overstatements later than to acknowledge them as being overstatements in the first place, or to admit any inconsistency between earlier and later remarks.⁵¹

Wesley’s own emphasis on continuity in his convictions carried over into the early generations of Wesley scholarship. Through the first half of the nineteenth century, if transitions were noted in Wesley’s theology, they were typically seen as developmental rather than disjunctive. For example, Robert Brown divided Wesley’s life into three major periods, each dominated by Wesley’s appropriation and clarification of a major doctrine: first, the doctrine of justification; then, the doctrine of assurance; and finally, the doctrine of Christian perfection. The key point is that Brown viewed this as a matter of the progressive broadening of Wesley’s theology, free from any significant tensions or radical transitions.⁵²

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the emphasis shifted among Wesley scholars from the continuities to the discontinuities in his theology. This was particularly evident in the struggles over the Catholic elements of Wesley’s early theology. We noted above the typical strategy of negating Wesley’s early training in—and obvious sympathy for—his Anglican tradition (with its Catholic elements) by construing Aldersgate as a radical theological reversal to low-Church Protestant convictions. This basic approach has carried over (in somewhat nuanced form) in most twentieth-century “Protestant” readings of Wesley, which stress the contrast before and following 1738 while minimizing any variations

⁴⁹Letter to William Green (25 Oct. 1789), *Letters* (Telford), 8:179. See also *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Rutherford* (28 Mar. 1768), §I.3, *Works*, 9:375; *Journal* (1 Sept. 1778), *Journal* (Curnock), 6:209; and Letter to John Mason (13 Jan. 1790), *Letters* (Telford), 8:196.

⁵⁰See his Letter to Charles Wesley (31 July 1747), *Works*, 26:254-5.

⁵¹Outler 1985b, 125.

⁵²See Brown 1865, 12, 45.

thereafter.⁵³ Meanwhile, recent champions of a “Catholic” Wesley have tended to echo the earlier claim that any Protestant deviation in 1738 was temporary, followed by a fundamental Catholic retroversion.⁵⁴

Current Wesley scholarship broadly mediates these earlier positions. It has become common for studies of his theological convictions to distinguish between the “early Wesley” (1733-1738), the “middle Wesley” (1738-1765), and the “late Wesley” (1765-1791). While emphases differ, these designations are typically correlated to transitions in Wesley’s general view of the Christian life from (1) a dominant emphasis on the importance of moral rectitude or conformity to the likeness of God (or, at least, sincere attempts at obedience⁵⁵); to (2) a deeper appropriation of Protestant emphases concerning salvation by grace, creating some initial tensions within his thought; and climaxing in (3) a mature integration of the primacy of grace into his enduring concern for Christian holiness.

Those adopting this threefold model of Wesley’s theological transitions have usually argued that there was both greater continuity between the early Wesley and the middle Wesley, and more significant development from the middle Wesley to the late Wesley than had been acknowledged in prior Wesley scholarship.⁵⁶ For example, it is now widely agreed that the early Wesley did not have a total lack of appreciation for the role of grace and faith in the Christian life. After all, the doctrine of justification by faith is present in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican tradition. While Wesley undeniably gave this doctrine more orienting influence following 1738, this transition was neither *de novo* nor a total

⁵³The classic example from more recent studies is Schmidt 1962-73. He presents a chronological analysis of the developments in Wesley’s thought up through his “Protestant” conversion at Aldersgate. Then he switches to a systematic analysis from 1738 on, assuming a theological consistency throughout the remainder of Wesley’s life.

⁵⁴A good example is Turner 1988, 166-71. Interestingly, Weißbach 1970 has *negatively* evaluated Wesley’s development in similar stages, and there are like suggestions in Kim 1992, 146.

⁵⁵Cf. Heitzenrater 1989, 28.

⁵⁶E.g., Heitzenrater 1984, 1:31. Some early uses of this typology portrayed the moves much too dialectically (especially Tuttle 1969, 409-10). Such uses sparked a strong critique, particularly of emphasis on a transition between the middle Wesley and the late Wesley, in J. H. Tyson 1991. Unfortunately Tyson does not dialogue with the most nuanced presentation of these transitions (Heitzenrater 1989, 106-49).

reversal of his concern for Christian holiness.⁵⁷ Likewise, most of these scholars are convinced that Wesley progressively revised or nuanced several of the assumptions about salvation by grace surrounding the transition to his middle period, integrating them more fully into his continuing interest in holy living.⁵⁸ This move was facilitated in part by renewed emphasis of the older Wesley on the Anglican and early Greek sources that had shaped his early convictions. The result, however, was not simply a Catholic retroversion. It is better characterized as an “upward spiraling” that wove his deepened conviction of the graciousness of salvation into his consistent emphasis on God’s desire for our holiness in heart and life.⁵⁹

While debate will surely continue over the exact number, nature, and degree of the transitions in Wesley’s theological convictions, their clear existence has important methodological implications. For example, when interpreting any particular piece of Wesley’s work one must always be prepared to ask, as Frederick Maser has put it:

At what time of his life did Wesley believe this, and how does it compare with what he believed earlier or later?” and “How much of this is the result of Wesley’s matured thought and how much a hasty abridgment of something that temporarily appealed to him?”⁶⁰

Likewise, when considering apparent tensions between multiple sources on any particular theme in Wesley’s theology it is essential to take the possibility of temporal transitions into consideration, rather than resorting immediately to “scholastic” harmonization. Some tensions may be appro-

⁵⁷On Wesley’s earlier awareness of justification by faith, see Rogers 1966. On the continuity of Wesley’s concern for holiness through the whole of his life, see J. H. Tyson 1991.

⁵⁸I have tried to draw together the evidence for several such revisions in *Responsible Grace*. See particularly the discussions of Wesley’s views concerning the benefits of initial universal revelation (29-30), the role of suffering in God’s providence (61), the contribution of inherited guilt to human damnation (74-5), the nature of grace as power or pardon (85), the imputation of Christ’s active righteousness to believers (104), the assurance of faith (124-7), the place of works before justification (148-9), the relation of the New Birth to sanctification (159), the expectation of entire sanctification shortly after justification (180-7), the purpose of the means of grace (200-1), and the question of millennialism (236-9).

⁵⁹I take this image from Albert Outler (1987, 139).

⁶⁰Maser 1978, 12.

priately harmonized, but many others are better understood in terms of temporal development.

C. The Wisdom of the “Whole Wesley”

The existence of transitions in Wesley’s theological convictions suggests a normative issue as well; namely, which phase of his thought should be considered definitive of his position? This question may seem subsidiary, at best, if one’s interest in Wesley is merely historical. But most traditions descended from Wesley’s ministry ascribe some continuing authority to his theology. For them, any differences between Wesley’s various phases pose a significant problem.

Perhaps the first detailed articulation of this problem was A. S. Graves’ article on “Wesley’s Variations of Belief, and the Influence of the Same on Methodism,” published in 1887. Graves wrote in the context of vigorous Methodist debates over the doctrines of conversion and Christian perfection. He noted how each of the alternative positions in the debates was able to cite Wesley as warrant for their view by appealing to different phases in his life. He then raised the crucial normative question, “Is the fact that each of the views can find warrant somewhere in Wesley’s corpus a legitimization of them all (i.e., an endorsement of pluralism); or, should one of Wesley’s phases be considered most authoritative?” Graves’ answer was that we should lean most heavily on the wisdom of Wesley’s mature thought, giving it authority over earlier phases.

The basic logic of Graves’ answer remains compelling. Particularly given the important role that Wesley assigned to life-experience in theological reflection, it would seem appropriate to value the “wisdom” that he acquired through the full course of his life.⁶¹ Thus, I would agree with Albert Outler that the broadened and nuanced perspective of the late Wesley should be given more weight in defining his characteristic theological convictions than has been the case in most previous studies of Wesley.⁶² However, I hasten to add that this does not mean that earlier phases (or materials produced therein) should be neglected. Wesley’s mature position coalesced long before 1765 on several issues. Moreover, the dynamic theological consistency that I believe unites the phases of Wesley’s life and ministry is often most evident in his very process of

⁶¹For a discussion of the role of experience in Wesley’s practical theology, see Maddox 1994, 44-6.

⁶²Cf. Outler 1984, 54-5; 1985b, 353.

nuancing disputed issues.⁶³ As such, consideration of the *whole* Wesley is necessary to understand his mature position adequately.

IV. THE ISSUE OF WEIGHTING WESLEY'S VARIOUS PRACTICAL–THEOLOGICAL WORKS

There is one other major issue related to interpreting Wesley's theological convictions that must be considered. This issue is taking on new importance and focus as Wesley scholars are adopting a more positive valuation of his model of practical theology. This adoption brings with it a recognition of both the necessity—and the challenge—of dealing with the full range of Wesley's practical-theological materials. In addition to his well-known sermons, these materials include letters (both public and private), controversial essays and tracts, minutes from conferences, disciplinary guides for Christian life, his journal, other spiritual biographies, and a range of editorial work on creeds, liturgies, prayerbooks, Bible study aids, hymnals, catechisms, and devotional guides.

The methodological issue which this wealth of materials creates is clear: How should the various materials be used and weighed in determining Wesley's theological convictions? There are four interrelated aspects to this issue: (1) the question of whether some works should be granted an official status versus the others; (2) the distinction between works that Wesley intended to be published and his private materials that are available to us; (3) the relative value of Wesley's numerous abridged and edited publications of other writers' works, as compared to material he authored; and (4) the relationship between John and Charles Wesley, particularly in reference to publications they released together.

A. An Official Wesley versus the Whole Wesley?

When studies of (or appeals to) Wesley are made within the context of later Methodist doctrinal debates, one often encounters a distinction between those writings of Wesley that are "official" and the remainder of his work. An explanation of this distinction, and reflection on its consequences for understanding Wesley, is an appropriate place to begin evaluating the variety of his materials.

In approaching this distinction, one must remember that Wesley was an Anglican, and remained so to his death. As such, he consistently

⁶³For example, note my discussion of Wesley's nuancing of the doctrines of justification by grace (1994, 51) and entire sanctification (187).

professed loyalty to the Anglican standards of doctrine: (1) The Thirty-Nine Articles, (2) the Elizabethan *Homilies*, and (3) the *Book of Common Prayer*.⁶⁴ Moreover, Wesley viewed his Methodist revival as being a renewal movement within the Anglican church, not an alternative to it. Thus, he could generally assume (and sometimes bragged) that his Methodist people also affirmed the authority of these standards.⁶⁵

However, while most Methodists were Anglican, not all Anglicans were Methodist. As a result, Wesley frequently found it necessary to explicate the *distinguishing* marks of the Methodists (assuming their larger shared Anglican beliefs and practices). This need was intensified by the fact that not all Methodists were Wesleyan! A rival Calvinist branch of the Methodist revival developed, and Wesley often found it necessary to distinguish his movement from theirs—both to deflect certain criticisms of “Methodists” that did not apply to his societies, and to protect his people from what he considered to be the pathogenic doctrines of Calvinism.

This is the context within which Wesley eventually designated certain materials as “official” expressions of his movement. These materials were to be used for nurturing the members of his societies and, when necessary, for determining who was qualified to be leaders of the societies. The first designation of such materials is found in the deeds developed to monitor the leadership of Wesleyan Methodist preaching houses. The eventual model for these deeds (1763) required that those who preach in these houses “preach no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley’s ‘Notes upon the New Testament,’ and four volumes of ‘Sermons.’ ” A second example of such designation dates from 1769, when Wesley circulated an open letter seeking to persuade the various traveling preachers that the best way to maintain union after his death would be the recognition of the minutes of his (nearly annual) conferences with his preachers

⁶⁴The complete title of the *Homilies* is *Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory* (1562; most recent edition, London: SPCK, 1938). The most thorough discussion of Wesley’s general loyalty to these standards (while noting the points where Wesley objected to or departed from them) is F. Baker 1970.

⁶⁵A qualification of this statement is in order. Technically, Wesley encouraged all of his people to attend Anglican worship, but he allowed members of most dissenting churches to participate in his society without changing their denominational affiliation. Such persons were a minority in the society, and Wesley resisted any attempts on their part to lead current Anglicans into dissenting churches.

as the norm for doctrine and discipline. This explains why, while not explicit in their formal “Deed of Declaration” (1784), British Methodists came to ascribe official status to the four volumes of Wesley’s sermons, the *NT Notes*, and the “Large Minutes” (a distillation of the minutes of the various conferences).⁶⁶

The situation of the American Methodists is more complex. The Revolutionary War destroyed any remaining supposition about a connection with the Anglican Church. In 1784 they organized as an independent denomination, with Wesley’s (somewhat reluctant) blessing. Prior to this time they had already pledged loyalty to Wesley’s sermons, the *NT Notes*, and the “Large Minutes”; however, these materials dealt mainly with the distinguishing marks of Methodism. What expression of the larger common Christian faith could they use to take the place of the Anglican Articles, *Homilies*, and *Book of Common Prayer*? Wesley, at least, was very worried about this question and took it upon himself to provide them with materials. He produced edited versions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (the *Sunday Service*) and the Thirty-Nine Articles (the twenty-five Articles of Religion), which he sent to the American church, recommending their adoption. Both items were acknowledged in 1784.

Theoretically then, one might characterize the Articles of Religion, the *Sunday Service*, the “Large Minutes” (included with some editing, along with some of Wesley’s doctrinal essays and the General Rules, in their early *Discipline*), the four volumes of Wesley’s sermons, and the *NT Notes* as the “official” doctrinal standards of early American Methodism. In actuality, the Americans saw the *Sunday Service* more as an example of worship (which they almost immediately abandoned!) than a doctrinal standard, their *Discipline* gradually altered or deleted much of its original Wesley material, and the exact status that they assigned to the Wesley’s sermons and the *NT Notes* has been a subject of recent vigorous debate.⁶⁷

⁶⁶The Model Deed is found in Q. 61 of the 1789 edition of the “Large Minutes,” *Works* (Jackson), 8:331. The relevant section of the Letter to the Traveling Preachers (4 Aug. 1769) is found in *Letters* (Telford), 5:145. Note that the “Large Minutes” would have contained the Model Deed, so the ascription to the “Sermons” and *NT Notes* is implied. For an excellent overview of this entire process, see F. Baker 1970, chapter 13.

⁶⁷For a general discussion of these issues, see Oden 1988. On the status of the *Sunday Service*, see Wade 1981. On developments in the *Discipline*, see F. Baker 1966. For the recent debate over the “Sermons” and *NT Notes*, see Cushman 1989, A. W. Martin 1990, and the collected essays in Langford 1991.

While the task of seeking the most adequate understanding of Wesley's theological convictions is distinct from canonical debates within the denominations descended from his ministry, it is still helpful to reflect upon the unique contribution of each of these "official" sources to this understanding. I will consider the sources in what is often assumed to be the order of their importance, though my discussion will challenge any such clear ordering. In the process, I will also suggest why any exclusive limitation to these sources seriously undercuts the adequacy of our understanding of Wesley.

1. The Minutes of the Conferences. As the early Methodist revival grew, it became clear to Wesley that there was a need to decide (and to control!) several matters of doctrine and discipline. To meet this need, he began (in 1744) to invite several of the Methodist lay-preachers and clergy to meet with him in conference. The minutes of these conferences were published and a compilation of them (the "Large Minutes") came to have defining authority for the Wesleyan branch of Methodism.⁶⁸ There are two characteristics of these conferences that are relevant to the methodological question of the contribution of their minutes to an investigation of Wesley's theological convictions. First is the fact that Wesley carefully controlled the attendance at the conference, the direction of the discussion, and the decisions made. As he put it, the others were there to *advise* him, not *govern* him.⁶⁹ Thus, the minutes of the conferences can be considered a fairly reliable guide to Wesley's own convictions. The other relevant characteristic of the conferences is that their discussions focused on *distinctive* Methodist issues (including the distinctive Methodist General Rules), largely assuming the broader scheme of Christian doctrinal and ethical teaching. Accordingly, it is on such issues that they render most help in determining Wesley's theological convictions.

⁶⁸The most accessible complete text of the minutes of the earliest conferences (1744-7) is in *John Wesley*, 136-77. The other minutes can be found in *Minutes* (Mason), as can a parallel column comparison of the various editions of the "Large Minutes" (443-675). The 1789 edition of "Large Minutes" is also in *Works* (Jackson), 8:299-338.

⁶⁹See the 1766 *Minutes*, Q. 29, *Minutes* (Mason), 61 (also as "Large Minutes," Q. 27, *Works* [Jackson]), 8:312; and Letter to Thomas Taylor(?) (18 Jan. 1780), *Letters* (Telford), 6:376. See also Letter to Charles Wesley (9 July 1766), *Letters* (Telford), 5:20; and Letter to Thomas Wride (8 July 1785), *Letters* (Telford), 7:279. Cf. the discussion in Doughty 1944, 17-18.

2. Wesley's Sermons. While the conferences were for deciding disputed theological issues and enforcing such decisions, Wesley's expressed purpose for his published collections of sermons was to provide positive explications of his doctrinal convictions. As he claimed in the preface of his first volume, "I am not conscious that there is any one point of doctrine on which I am accustomed to speak in public which is not here . . . (i.e.,) those doctrines which I embrace and teach as the essentials of true religion."⁷⁰ Two characteristics of this volume and its successors help substantiate their doctrinal intent. The first is that Wesley's published sermons were written specifically for this purpose and were shorter and less anecdotal than his oral sermons.⁷¹ The second characteristic is that, while Wesley published some "awakening sermons" addressed to outsiders who were not yet seriously pursuing religion, such sermons were not included in his collected volumes. The collected sermons were intended primarily for the theological sustenance and development of his lay preachers and the members of his societies.⁷²

In this light, the collected sermons surely deserve a central role in the investigation of Wesley's theological convictions. But, *which* sermons should be given most authority? It is on this question that debates about an "official Wesley" have been most intense. We noted that the Model Deed (1763) designated the "four volumes of 'Sermons'" as authoritative. The four volumes then available contained forty-four sermons. When Wesley reissued these volumes as the first four volumes of his collected works in 1771, he inserted nine additional sermons in them, bringing the total to fifty-three. In subsequent canonical debates, British Methodists would decide that only the forty-four sermons in the first edition should be considered authoritative, while the American church would eventually opt for the edition containing fifty-three.⁷³

There is actually a more fundamental question than this choice between forty-four sermons or fifty-three: Why limit ourselves to only the first four volumes of sermons? At the time that the Model Deed was adopted four volumes were all that existed and Wesley apparently did not anticipate that there would be more.⁷⁴ In 1778, however, he published four further volumes. There is good reason to doubt that he had intended

⁷⁰*Works*, 1:103.

⁷¹Cf. Heitzenrater 1984, 1:146; Outler 1971, 21-2; and Outler 1984, 14.

⁷²This point is demonstrated in Outler 1987, 422.

⁷³See the discussion in Sugden 1921, 2:331-40; and Outler 1984, 40-4.

⁷⁴Cf. *Journal* (1 Oct. 1759), *Works*, 21:231.

the Model Deed to discriminate between the first four volumes and these which followed. As Albert Outler notes, the very title of his collections (*Sermons on Several Occasions*) has an open-ended connotation, allowing for enlargement and development in his thinking.⁷⁵

Whether Outler's suggestion is accepted in ecclesiastical debates over canonical authority or not, it is important to separate such debates from the agenda of Wesley Studies. When we are seeking the most adequate understanding of Wesley's theological convictions, it is surely legitimate to draw on all the volumes of collected sermons that he published. Indeed, we should not even limit ourselves to these. Wesley omitted six previously-published sermons from his final collection (due to their special purposes or topic) and he published eighteen new sermons in his *Arminian Magazine* following the 1778 collection. It would seem equally legitimate to consider these sermons in any analysis of Wesley's theology, since he circulated them publicly.⁷⁶

Not only is consideration of the sermons outside of his first four collected volumes legitimate in analyzing Wesley's theological convictions, it is *methodologically crucial*, for two major reasons. First, we noted earlier the importance of analyzing possible transitions through the course of Wesley's life and works. The first four volumes of sermons contain material exclusively from the middle Wesley. If we limit ourselves to these volumes, we will be deprived of potential insights into the "whole Wesley."⁷⁷ The second reason that it is important to consider all of Wesley's sermons is that the first four volumes deal almost entirely with soteriological issues, reflecting the focus of debate in the early Methodist revival. While these issues are important, the sermons leave largely

⁷⁵Outler 1984, 54.

⁷⁶The fact that Wesley did not include some previously published sermons in his collected volumes does not mean that he intended to disown them. Indeed, some of them went through several editions as independent sermons following the first collection! These sermons are now available in *Works* 3:533-629. Their lack of inclusion was due to their special audience or topic. Wesley did include the sermon "Free Grace" in his collected works, but in the section on "controversial writings"! Likewise, it is understandable that George Story (Wesley's successor as editor of the *Arminian Magazine*) would consider it appropriate to issue a Volume IX of the Wesley's *Sermons* containing those sermons that were published in the *Arminian Magazine* after the 1778 edition (actually, all but one! Cf. *Works*, 4:1). There is no indication from Wesley that he viewed these sermons as significantly different from the others that he had collected. These sermons are now available in *Works*, 4:5-200).

⁷⁷Cf. Heitzenrater 1989, 57-8.

implicit Wesley's broader theological framework. The additional volumes of sermons that Wesley added in 1778 explicate much of this broader theological framework, from creation through eschatology.⁷⁸ As such, consideration of these later sermons dramatically increases one's information on Wesley's theological convictions.

3. The *NT Notes* (and *OT Notes*). The next of the designated "official" materials is the *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*. Wesley prepared this source to enable his people to read through the New Testament with understanding and to answer the exegetical arguments of their opponents. In preparing the *NT Notes* Wesley relied on several previous commentators (J. A. Bengel, Philip Doddridge, John Heylyn, and John Guyse), often summarizing or quoting them at length (without references!).⁷⁹ However, this dependence should not discredit the *NT Notes* as an important source for understanding Wesley's own convictions. At least half of the material in the *NT Notes* can be traced to Wesley himself. Moreover, his extractions from his sources comprise only about eight percent of their original material and evidence theological discrimination in their selectivity. As such, when used in corroboration with other materials, the *NT Notes* provide a reasonably reliable indicator of Wesley's theological convictions.⁸⁰

Though they are less well-known and were never officially designated like the *NT Notes*, Wesley also prepared a companion *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*.⁸¹ This time he relied extensively on two major predecessors: Matthew Henry and Matthew Poole. His additions to Poole and Henry comprise less than one percent of the *OT Notes* and his

⁷⁸This has been pointed out by Theodore Runyon (1985, 11). Since Collins 1989 limits himself to the fifty-three sermons of the 1771 edition of Wesley's works, he finds Wesley discussing only the "order of salvation" (129ff); contrast the larger scope in Collins 1993a, 12-3!

⁷⁹Such utilization of other works was not uncommon in the eighteenth century. Wesley had admitted dependence on these authors in his preface. One of the most significant features of the forthcoming critical edition of the *NT Notes* (*Works*, Vols. 5-6) will be the detailed identification of Wesley's sources and his original contributions.

⁸⁰For the statistical analysis of the *NT Notes*, see McCormack 1986. For a defense of their representativeness of Wesley's convictions, see Lerch 1941, 22, 24.

⁸¹No doubt, the major reason that Wesley did not give the *OT Notes* the same status as the *NT Notes* was that, while he believed that the Old Testament bore witness to the truths of God, he did not believe that the "experience of the Jews" was to be a standard of Christian experience. Compare Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," §III.9, *Works* 1:388; with Letter to Elizabeth Hardy (5 Apr. 1758), *Letters* (Telford), 4:11.

extracts from them evidence minimal editing. For this reason, the *OT Notes* are much less reliable as an indicator of Wesley's theological convictions, although characteristic themes come through in the few places he adds to or corrects his sources.⁸²

4. The Articles of Religion. As mentioned earlier, Wesley prepared the twenty-five Articles of Religion for the American church by editing the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles.⁸³ The importance of considering the Articles of Religion in determining Wesley's theological convictions has too often been dismissed, on the grounds that they do not reveal *distinctive* Wesleyan convictions.⁸⁴ Such a dismissal is ill-advised for two major reasons. First, an adequate understanding of Wesley's theological convictions should include those that he held in common with his Anglican tradition as well as his distinctive concerns. Second, one should not underestimate the serious theological nature of the task of editing and revising the Thirty-Nine Articles. If Wesley retained an article in his list, this is evidence of his (often, otherwise implicit) agreement with that common conviction. Likewise, an analysis of Wesley's changes and deletions from the list highlights some of his distinctive concerns about predestination, entire sanctification, and even the use of inclusive language for humanity!⁸⁵

5. The Sunday Service. The last of the possible "official" Wesley sources is the *Sunday Service*. Its methodological value for determining Wesley's theological convictions parallels that of the Articles of Religion. It derives from another expression of Wesley's Anglican theological context—the *Book of Common Prayer*. Wesley valued this prayerbook highly but had developed concerns about a few claims and expressions in it. When given the opportunity to edit the prayerbook for his American followers, these concerns found expression.⁸⁶ The significance of the

⁸²See the excellent survey and analysis of *OT Notes* in Casto 1977, esp. 220, 240ff.

⁸³For a handy parallel comparison, see Oden 1988, 112-26.

⁸⁴E.g., Meredith 1962, 48.

⁸⁵For general theological analyses of his editorial decisions, see Wheeler 1908, 14-46; F. Baker 1970, 249-55; and Blankenship 1964. Concerning inclusive language, see Maddox 1991.

⁸⁶See Wesley's earlier delineation of these concerns in "Ought We to Separate From the Church of England?" §II.4, *Works*, 9:571-2. For analyses of the theological concerns evident in Wesley's editing of the prayerbook, see F. Baker 1970, 234-48; Bishop 1975, 74ff; George 1984; Selleck 1983; Tucker 1992; and Wade 1981.

resulting editorial changes for highlighting some of Wesley's theological convictions is signaled by his claim that he took care "to alter nothing merely for altering's sake."⁸⁷

B. The Public Wesley versus the Private Wesley

Besides the items that have some traditional warrant for being considered "official" expressions of his doctrinal commitments, Wesley authored several other types of material. One major methodological issue concerning these materials is the distinction between items that Wesley published and unpublished materials that are available to us. This distinction figures prominently in the evaluation of the relative legitimacy and reliability of these various items for determining Wesley's characteristic theological convictions.

1. Major Controversial Writings. Wesley wrote most of his sermons with the spiritual and theological formation of his people as his primary aim. He preferred to pursue this formative type of theological activity. Only with expressed regret did he take up the genre of controversial theology—i.e., seeking to explain or defend his practices and theological convictions that were under attack.⁸⁸

While perhaps not Wesley's favorite type of theological activity, these works of controversial theology are immensely important for understanding his convictions, because he is often forced in them to clarify or balance claims that had been made in his sermons or other materials. Of particular merit in this category is Wesley's longest single theological treatise, *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, which was written in reply to a rejection of the doctrine by the unitarian John Taylor. Likewise crucial is his *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, which Wesley considered to be among the best overviews of his position. The various other controversial writings and appeals contain further helpful insights.⁸⁹

⁸⁷Letter to Walter Churchey (20 June 1789), *Letters* (Telford), 8:144-5. See also the evaluation of James White (1984, 16).

⁸⁸Cf. his comment that sometimes we must write and preach controversially, but the less the better. Letter to Joseph Benson (31 July 1773), *Letters* (Telford), 6:35.

⁸⁹*The Doctrine of Original Sin* can be found in *Works* (Jackson), 9:191-464. The length of this treatise is somewhat deceiving. About 40% is appended abridgements of works by Thomas Boston, Samuel Hebden, and Isaac Watts. Moreover, the other material is composed of extended quotes of Taylor, with Wesley's response. *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* is available in *Works*, 11:37-94. Some of the other controversial writings are also present in this volume. The remainder will be collected in volumes 12-13. Until then, they can be found scattered in the last few volumes of *Works* (Jackson).

2. Open Letters. A special subset of Wesley's controversial writings is his "open letters." These letters were written in response to public attacks upon his movement or theological claims. Since the debate was public, Wesley published his response. Among the most important of these open letters for understanding Wesley's theology are those to Edmund Gibson, Conyers Middleton, and William Warburton.⁹⁰

3. Tracts. Wesley also published several tracts dealing with political, ethical, and social issues of his time.⁹¹ While not all are overtly theological, these pieces often provide insight into Wesley's characteristic convictions and his specific ethical commitments.

4. Dictionary. One of Wesley's lesser known publications was *The Complete English Dictionary*. This work was intended to enable his unschooled followers to read the "best" English authors. It also aids later students of his theology by showing *his* understanding of words that he uses.⁹²

5. Journal. Another distinctive publication was Wesley's *Journal*, originally issued in installments. It is crucial to note that Wesley's initial decision to publish selections from his manuscript journal was apologetic. He wanted to defend himself and his movement from attack.⁹³ Not all of these attacks related to theological issues. However, such issues did come into consideration at various points and the relevant accounts can be taken as expressing his theological convictions. One must deal with these materials with care, however. For example, the original *Journal* account of Aldersgate was supplemented with later footnotes that significantly altered Wesley's evaluation of the theological significance of the event. In addition, as Gerald Cragg warns, the very style of the genre of Wesley's *Journal* invites one-sided accounts and must be balanced by a comparison with his more didactic material.⁹⁴

6. Diary. Wesley's published *Journal* must be carefully distinguished from both his manuscript original and his private diary. In

⁹⁰Cf. *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London* (Gibson), *Works*, 11:335-51; *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Conyers Middleton*, *Letters* (Telford), 2:312-88; *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Gloucester* (Warburton), *Works*, 11:467-538.

⁹¹See *Works* (Jackson), vol. 11.

⁹²For a description and evaluation of Wesley's *Dictionary*, see Lawton 1962, 81ff; and Partridge 1932.

⁹³Cf. Rogal 1988; and Ward 1988, 34-40.

⁹⁴Cragg 1975, 7.

particular, the latter document was never intended for publication; indeed, major sections of it were written in a code that scholars have only recently deciphered. The purpose of Wesley's diary was to measure and record his progress in holy living, and to serve as a prod to such progress. Those portions of his diary and manuscript journal available to us are now being published because of their value for reconstructing Wesley's biography and for testing his *public* claims and evaluations of his work.⁹⁵ They also provide insights into his assumptions about the practice of Christian spirituality. They should be used with caution in any theological context, however, because Wesley never imagined that they would have public exposure.

7. Unpublished Early Sermons. Besides the published sermons discussed above, we also have access to eighteen unpublished sermons from the years 1725-41.⁹⁶ These sermons are indicative of the early Wesley and his staunchly Anglican training. They provide some insight into the movement toward the "whole Wesley" but should be used with an awareness of their context and the fact that Wesley chose not to publish them.

8. Private Letters. There is one other major category of originally unpublished Wesley materials available to us: over 5,000 private letters written to or by Wesley in correspondence with his family, his preachers, and numerous members of his Methodist societies. Frank Baker has suggested that the primary value of these letters lies in their revelation of John Wesley as an individual and of the people and events of his day.⁹⁷ While this relative judgment may be correct, their theological importance should not be overlooked.

Many of these letters were responses to requests for clarifications of claims that Wesley had made in his published works. The responses often reveal earlier and more candid insight into specific qualifications of his theological convictions than Wesley chose to provide in his public didactic materials.⁹⁸ They also provide much-needed perspective on the pastoral dimension of Wesley's theological activity.⁹⁹ As such, they can

⁹⁵For a characterization of these materials, see Heitzenrater 1988. We have available Wesley's diaries from his Oxford period through 1741, and from 1783 to near his death. Those published so far are in *Works*, Vols. 18-20.

⁹⁶Now published in *Works*, 4:206-419.

⁹⁷In *Works*, 25:ix. See also F. Baker 1980.

⁹⁸For a few examples, see Maddox 1994a, 126, 155-6, 183.

⁹⁹Cf. Baker 1980, 97; and Tracy 1988.

be quite useful in supporting or clarifying claims about Wesley's theology, though one should probably not depend on them as the sole source for interpretive claims. Lest one doubt the propriety of such use of private letters, it can be noted that Wesley himself granted permission for the publication of some of them—provided that it was made clear that they were originally “private letter(s) of a private friend, without any thought of (their) going any farther.”¹⁰⁰

C. Wesley the Author versus Wesley the Editor

In terms of sheer volume, Wesley published more as an editor and abstractor than as an author. It was his common practice to abstract and reprint for his Methodist followers (and whatever larger public might be interested) any material that he found to be particularly edifying or theologically appropriate. His was an age before detailed copyright restrictions and such practice was not uncommon.¹⁰¹ Typically he identified the source from which he was abstracting, though there are instances where the question of whether Wesley is editor or author is contested.

There is a wide divergence of practice and opinion concerning the use of such edited material in analyzing Wesley's theology. He was not always careful in his editing and it was not uncommon for opponents to point out contradictions between his claims elsewhere and some edited item that he published with his commendation.¹⁰² As such, it would be precarious to base claims about Wesley's theology on these materials alone. Used judiciously, however, they can make a subsidiary contribution. In the first place, an analysis of the items that he selects to commend by republication is itself revealing. Even more significant are analyses of any of his changes in, or omissions from, the original that betray theological concerns. I noted previously that consideration of such points in Wesley's editing of the Thirty-Nine Articles, the *Book of Common Prayer*,

¹⁰⁰Letter to Richard Tompson (22 Aug. 1759), *Letters* (Telford), 4:72. Cf. Letter to Samuel Furly (9 Dec. 1760), *Letters* (Telford), 4:118. Wesley also read letters he received aloud to his people! Cf. *Journal* (3 Sept. 1745), *Works*, 20:87; and *Journal* (27 Apr. 1748), *Works*, 20:221.

¹⁰¹Wesley was called to task for it a couple of times however—cf. *Works*, vol. 20, 47 fn13 and 51 fn23.

¹⁰²This is particularly true in the case of the *Christian Library*. Note his concession that he cannot be held accountable for every expression he included therein, in Letter to the Editor of the *London Chronicle* (5 Apr. 1763), *Letters* (Telford), 4:207; and *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's "Review of all the Doctrines Taught by Mr. John Wesley,"* §12, *Works* (Jackson), 10:381-2.

and the sources behind his *NT Notes* and *OT Notes* can be very enlightening. While most of Wesley's other edited materials were less directly theological than these earlier examples, they are not devoid of theological implications. Unfortunately, there have been few detailed analyses comparing them with their sources.¹⁰³

1. Collected Edited Works. The most significant example of Wesley's editorial activity is the *Christian Library*—a fifty-volume collection of extracts and abridgements of "Practical Divinity." Wesley included in this collection what he judged to be the best examples of such literature in the English language. A consideration of the persons included, and editorial changes made, reveals his theological inclinations at the time of its publication (the middle Wesley).

An analogous type of material would be the various items abstracted or reprinted by the late Wesley in his *Arminian Magazine*. Once again he was endorsing (and editorially correcting) current theological and spiritual writings, though this time including more controversial than practical treatises.¹⁰⁴

2. Edited Devotional/Catechetical Materials. Given his concern for the spiritual formation of his people, it is not surprising that Wesley published several edited items for this purpose. Indeed, his very first publication (1733) was *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day of the Week*, providing a selection of his favorite models. He later published additional collections of prayers for both children and families and an edited version of a devotion manual by John Austin, which Wesley titled *Devotions for Every Day in the Week and the Great Festivals*.¹⁰⁵ For more explicitly catechetical use Wesley developed a series of *Bible Lessons for Children* (1746-54). He also translated and abridged material by Claude Fleury and Pierre Poiret for a volume entitled *Instructions to Children*.

¹⁰³The most notable exceptions are MacDonald 1906 (dealing with the abridgement of the Shorter Catechism in the *Christian Library*); Monk 1966, 49-61 (looking at Puritan material in the *Christian Library*); Kim 1992 (analyzing selectively throughout the *Christian Library*); and Clapper 1984 (reprinted in 1989, 127-53), Brantley 1990, and Steele 1994, 182ff (all considering Wesley's editing of works by Jonathan Edwards).

¹⁰⁴See the prefaces to Vols. 2 & 3 in *Works* (Jackson), 14:281-4.

¹⁰⁵Abridged copies of the three collections of prayers can be found in *Works* (Jackson), 11:203-72. The 1733 *Forms of Prayer* was reprinted by the United Methodist Publishing House in 1992.

For his older followers he provided a translated extract of Claude Fleury's *The Manners of the Antient (sic) Christians* and a selection of translated passages from Jean Duvergier de Hauranne (Abbe de Saint-Cyran) in *Christian Instructions*.¹⁰⁶ These materials were used in the homes of his followers and in the schools that Wesley established. The particular value of these sources for considering Wesley's theology is in revealing some of the doxological and formative aspects of his convictions.

3. Theological Commentary on History, Science, Medicine, and Literature. Wesley's own reading interests ranged widely and he encouraged his people to follow his example. In keeping with this desire, he provided them with edited republications of works ranging from history to medicine. The major concern of his editing was to reduce the size and simplify the language of the original. However, he frequently included a preface providing some theological commentary on the work, and sporadically interjected his own opinions into the text. Thus, occasional insights into Wesley's theological convictions can be gained from these works as well. Included in this category of works would be the *Concise Ecclesiastical History*, a *Concise History of England* (1776), the *Primitive Physick*, his *Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation*, and some selections of classical poetry.¹⁰⁷

D. The Relationship of John and Charles Wesley

The final facet of John Wesley's work as editor warrants separate consideration. It is his collaboration in the publication of Charles Wesley's early hymn collections. One of the departures of the current Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's works from the example of its predecessors is the inclusion of the 1780 *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (hereafter, *Hymns*). Such inclusion might seem inappropriate on first consideration, because it is commonly agreed that Charles Wesley wrote nearly all of the hymns in this collection.¹⁰⁸ To understand the decision to include *Hymns* in John Wesley's works, it is necessary to recognize his editorial role in its original publication.

¹⁰⁶*Instructions for Children* and *Christian Instructions* have a complicated bibliographical history, often being confused with each other and as to their sources. For a brief discussion of this history, see F. Baker 1985, 45-6 & 52-3. *The Manners of Antient Christians* was first published in 1749.

¹⁰⁷For an overview of this various literature, see Herbert 1940.

¹⁰⁸On the vexing question of determining authorship of hymns in the Wesleys' joint publications, see F. Baker 1988.

In the early years of the Methodist revival John and Charles Wesley were concerned to present a united front against opponents. Therefore, they co-published Charles' earliest collections of hymns. While Charles wrote the hymns, John authored the preface to each collection. John also edited Charles' hymns, with an eye for both stylistic and theological matters. This is the reason that Albert Outler could claim that "one may speak realistically of the theology of John in the hymns of Charles Wesley."¹⁰⁹

Outler's evaluation is particularly appropriate for *Hymns*, because John's contribution to this collection exceeded that of any other.¹¹⁰ To begin with, John conceived of *Hymns* and selected the pieces to be included from previous collections, without consulting Charles. Secondly, John edited the hymns, often omitting several stanzas of the original. In the third place, John developed the distinctive theological organization of the selections in *Hymns*, structured around the differing aspects of human salvation. Finally, John provided the preface for the volume. Thus, while the original hymns were by Charles, the collection nonetheless provides a reliable indicator of John's theological convictions.

There is no better evidence of the legitimacy of drawing on the joint collections of hymns when discussing John's theology than the fact that he repeatedly did so himself! Note especially *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, where he drew on the prefaces and selected hymns from collections jointly published in 1739, 1741, and 1742 to demonstrate a claimed consistency about his doctrine of perfection. He then notes some apparent divergences in a 1749 collection, but disavows any responsibility for this because he did not see these hymns before Charles published them!¹¹¹

As the last sentence suggests, the policy of co-publishing Charles' hymn collections eventually broke down. Behind this change were growing differences of opinion between John and Charles. These differences should not be overplayed. There was a profound level of shared beliefs between the brothers. However, Charles increasingly developed dis-

¹⁰⁹Outler 1964, 18 fn63.

¹¹⁰The following summary is drawn from Beckerlegge 1983, 55-8.

¹¹¹*A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, Works* (Jackson), 11:366-466. Compare §§9 (370), 13-14 (378-82), and 15-16 (383-6) with §18 (391). For some examples of John's reactions to the 1749 volume (written in the margins of his personal copy of this volume), see Dale 1960, 226-7. See also the discussion of this general issue in Rattenbury 1941, 62-3.

tinctive emphases on key issues such as the possibility of entire sanctification, the contribution of suffering to spiritual growth, and the relationship of Methodism to the Anglican Church. These distinctive emphases troubled John, who would edit them out. In response, as Charles became more convinced of his position on these issues, he began to issue volumes of hymns without submitting them to John for editing. This decision strained, but did not break, the relationship between the brothers.¹¹²

The shifting cooperation between John and Charles Wesley suggests guidelines for drawing on Charles' hymns to enlighten John's theological convictions. One should obviously never use the hymns as the sole evidence for John's views. At best, they can provide corroboratory evidence and/or illustrations. Even in this case, one is on firmest ground when drawing on the *Hymns* because of John's tight control over this volume. Next in value would be those collected volumes that were co-published. Finally would come Charles' independent volumes, which would be of some benefit in light of the brothers' broad base of shared beliefs. Of course, if one's task were to highlight the *differences* between John and Charles, the value of the various collections would be reversed!

¹¹²Cf. two letters in which John asks Charles to seek his direction more and be less independent, or quit saying that he is in concert with John: Letter to Charles Wesley (20 Oct. 1753), *Works*, 26:527; and Letter to Charles Wesley (31 Oct. 1753), *Works*, 26:528.

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THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE WESLEYAN/HOLINESS TRADITION

by

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In developing a research agenda, the scholar is limited both by the work that has gone on before and the sources available for analysis. This truism has been the subject of significant reflection among philosophers of history. However, scholars of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition¹ generally have not taken time to examine their methods and sources, especially at the points where their sources present disjunctions vis-a-vis the methods and sources used by scholars of American religion who focus on the so-called “mainstream.”

It is the intent of this essay to begin a discussion of the tradition of rationalization in the study of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement. The argument is that new attention must be paid to the diverse genre of social and theological discourse used within the Wesleyan/Holiness movement and that tools of structural and social analysis may provide new paradigms of understanding. The method of the essay is to discuss the *status quaestionis*, examine the range of sources used, and suggest historiographical issues raised by this investigation.

In the basis of this analysis, *desiderata* for research and recommendations for developing new structures of discourse about the

¹In this essay, for consistency and felicity of style, the term “Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition” is in the singular. However, it should be understood that the author considers the historiography and phenomenology of the “Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition” to represent a variety of traditions, with varying histories, theological emphases, liturgies, and systems of praxis.

Wesleyan/Holiness tradition will be proposed. Although occasional reference is made to publications concerned with theological issues, the study of the theology of the tradition is generally beyond the scope of this essay. The intention is not to be exhaustive with regard to bibliography. Many significant works, especially unpublished dissertations and theses, cannot be mentioned due to space. For the same reason, scholarly articles are rarely mentioned. The focus of reflection in this essay is the effort to place the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition in the context of American religious experience and to provide structures for self-understanding and for the articulation of ideals and values to groups outside the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. While mention is made of works written by scholars outside the tradition, the emphasis is on research internal to the tradition.²

Research on the Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition

The Wesleyan/Holiness tradition has had its chroniclers from its earliest years, due perhaps in part to a concern with documentation inherited from the Methodists. This record-keeping tradition was generally maintained, although not always preserved, despite the fact that these persons often understood themselves to be over against the Methodist Episcopal Church (North and South) in calling it back to its presumed theological heritage. The historical works, based on selected primary literature and historical, biographical or autobiographical in genre, were often composed for special anniversaries or to keep the morale high and funds flowing, as well as to celebrate the life and work of individuals consecrated to an activist spirituality.

Included in this category are volumes like W. W. Cary's history of the National Holiness Missionary Society (which became World Gospel Mission)³ and George Hughes' narrative of the first half-century of the Tuesday Meeting held at the home of Phoebe and Walter Palmer (and later Sarah Lankford Palmer).⁴ Similar were the historical, missiological,

²Because of this focus, many important works cannot be mentioned. This lack of mention is not to disparage their worth, but results from limitations of space and interpretative framework.

³W. W. Cary, *Story of the National Holiness Missionary Society* (Chicago: National Holiness Missionary Society, 1940). This volume is valuable, among other things, for the large number of primary sources published verbatim.

⁴*Fragrant Memories of the Tuesday Meeting and the Guide to Holiness, and their Fifty Years Work for Jesus*, introductions by Bishops W. F. Mallalieu and William Taylor (New York: Palmer and Hughes, 1886). Compare also Phoebe Palmer, *Four Years in the Old World. Comprising the Travels, Incidents and Evangelistic Labors of Dr. and Mrs. Palmer in England, Scotland and Wales* (Louisville: Pickett Publishing, n.d.).

self-promotional contributions of William Taylor, which, despite their shortcomings, preserve otherwise unavailable primary documents.⁵ These volumes and hundreds like them are worthy of a major study for their public relations and propaganda value as well as historical documents. The same can be said for most Wesleyan/Holiness denominational histories, many of which were produced during the 1950s and 1960s. Nearly all of these were written in an effort to revise the historical traditions of the Holiness churches so that they might appear more “mainstream” and more in continuity with Wesley than mere observers might have noted. For example, Bishop Leslie Marston endeavored to create a respectable Methodist heritage, arguing that Free Methodists are in direct continuity with Wesley, without taking into account the radical structures of the tradition during the first six decades of the group’s history.⁶ The most useful of these volumes are Timothy Smith’s work on the Church of the Nazarene, which recognized the diversity and actual class structures of many of the early components of the denomination, and John Smith’s analysis of the Church of God (Anderson).⁷

Before the 1950s. The Wesleyan/Holiness tradition was first considered in academic terms by Wilson T. Hogue in his University of Chicago dissertation.⁸ William Warren Sweet and his students at the University of Chicago, particularly Merrill E. Gaddis’ 1929 dissertation, “Christian Perfection in America,” applied Sweet’s thesis about frontier religion to the phenomena. Sweet, formerly a professor at Indiana Asbury

⁵See especially William Taylor, *Four Years Campaign in India* (London: Hodder and Stoughton; New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1876); *idem*, *Our South American Cousins* (London: Hodder and Stoughton; New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1879), and, *idem*, *Story of My Life: An Account of What I have Thought and Said and Done in My Ministry of More than Fifty-Three Years in Christian Lands and Among the Heathen*, ed. J. C. Ridpath (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1896). See D. Bundy, “William Taylor and Methodist Mission: A Study in Nineteenth Century Social History,” *Methodist History* 27(1989), 198-212; 28(1989), 3-21 and *idem* “The Legacy of William Taylor.”

⁶For example, Leslie R. Marston, *From Age To Age A Living Witness* (Winona Lake: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1960).

⁷Timothy Smith, *Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes: The Formative Years* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962); John W. V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity. A Centennial History of the Church of God* (Anderson, Indiana) (Anderson: Warner Press, 1980).

⁸Wilson T. Hogue, *History of the Free Methodist Church of North America* (Introd. Bishop E. P. Hart; Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1915).

University (DePauw University) in Indiana wrote of Methodism in Indiana as if the holiness movement were totally irrelevant to the development of Methodism in the state.⁹

Three other dissertations/theses of the decade made significant contributions to the historiography of the tradition. Perhaps the most important was never published, that of Harold Reed which applied H. Richard Niebuhr's sect theory to the Church of the Nazarene.¹⁰ Published by their respective denominational publishers were the works of Clarence E. Cowan (Church of God, Holiness) and Maury E. Redford (Church of the Nazarene). Cowan's was probably the first critical history of a Wesleyan/Holiness denomination and remains one of the best.¹¹

The 1950s. Despite the popularity of the analysis published by denominational publishers, it was the paradigm of Gaddis over against which subsequent work would be undertaken. Modern efforts to analyze the tradition are dependent upon six monographs published during the 1950s, all of which responded to Gaddis and/or Sweet at some level. Whitney R. Cross led the way, pointing out the roles of women and lower class participants in the revivals of the antebellum period and noting the geographical, ideological, and prosopographical proximity of Adventists, Mormons, Finneyites, and Wesleyan Methodists. This dissertation directed by Arthur M. Schlesinger was a crucial test in the relativizing of the W. W. Sweet thesis mentioned above.¹²

⁹M. E. Gaddis, "Christian Perfection in America," Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago, 1929; W. W. Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946).

¹⁰Harold Reed, "The Growth of a Contemporary Sect-Type Institution as Reflected in the Development of the Church of the Nazarene," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Southern California, 1943).

¹¹C. E. Cowan, *A History of the Church of God (Holiness)* (Overland Park, KS: Herald and Banner Press, 1949; formerly, Ph.D. Diss., University of Missouri, 1948; M. E. Redford, *The Rise of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1948; revised and expanded from "The History of the Church of the Nazarene in the South," M.A. Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1935).

¹²Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950). See the analysis of Judith Wellman, "In Retrospect: Whitney Cross's Burned-Over District as Social History," *Reviews in American History* 16(1989), 159-174.

This was followed by the remarkable work of Delbert Rose, a volume published under two titles, both infelicitous and misleading.¹³ The titles promised, according to traditional categories of analysis, a volume on dogmatic theology. What the volume actually contained was a history of the National Holiness Association (NHA), a biographical study of Joseph H. Smith, president of the NHA (1924-1928), and an exposition of Smith's theological structures which were presented as paradigmatic of the tradition. The volume was far more significant than the modest reception it received in Wesleyan/Holiness circles. Outside those circles it attracted no notice. Rose's work constituted the first effort to analyze folk theological literature produced by the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition as serious theological literature. Rose had located all of Smith's publications in popular Wesleyan/Holiness periodicals and attempted to let Smith speak through them as a theologian. Furthermore, the theological developments culled from these disparate sources were interpreted in the matrix of Smith's life and ministry. It was an effort decades ahead of its time.

Also made available in 1952 was George Turner's Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard, 1946) written under the direction of H. J. Cadbury.¹⁴ This was an effort to develop the theological theses of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition "inductively" from the Bible and Wesley, with attention to the concept of "Christian Perfection" in patristic and medieval contexts. It was the first major work to assume direct theological continuity between the mid-twentieth century form of the tradition and Wesley, as though there had been no influence by either the American context or the

¹³Delbert R. Rose, *A Theology of Christian Experience: Interpreting the Historic Wesleyan Message* (originally Ph.D. Diss., University of Iowa, 1952; photocopy reproduction, Wilmore, KY: Seminary Press, 1958; the dissertation was first formally published more than a decade after its composition, Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1965; reprinted as *idem*, *Vital Holiness: A Theology of Christian Experience: Interpreting the Historic Wesleyan Message* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975).

¹⁴George A. Turner, *The More Excellent Way: The Scriptural Basis for the Wesleyan Message* (Winona Lake: Light and Life Press, 1952). More careful to place Wesleyan/Holiness writers and their theology in the context of their culture was the never published 1949 Drew Ph.D. dissertation of Claude Thompson, "The Witness of American Methodism to the Historical Doctrine of Christian Perfection," which received little attention within the tradition after Thompson was forced to leave Asbury Theological Seminary in the notorious "Thompson Affair" of the early 1950s.

existential experience of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. It was, in many ways, a primitivist vision seeking to return the tradition to a more theologically pure past. No attention was given to nineteenth or twentieth century Wesleyan/Holiness theologians. Turner's book is essential for an understanding of the theological and historical structures of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition since the 1950s. It provided the theoretical framework for the work of Marston discussed above. The Turner paradigm continues to dominate Wesleyan/Holiness theological, if not historical thinking.

More interactive with Wesleyan/Holiness authors was the analysis of developments relating to the doctrine of "Christian Perfection" given by John L. Peters, a former Nazarene who had become United Methodist.¹⁵ Peters was well acquainted with a wide range of Wesleyan/Holiness theological literature, and his work remains arguably the best introduction to the corpus. This volume was influential on Methodist historiography, but the analysis of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement as a perfectionizing rather than restorationist effort limited its appeal to Wesleyan/Holiness audiences. Its appropriately narrow focus led other scholars to miss the wider theological concerns of the tradition and to view it as a one-point theological system.

The fifth "golden oldie" of the fifties is Timothy L. Smith's Harvard Ph.D. dissertation, also directed by Arthur M. Schlesinger.¹⁶ Smith managed to position the revivalists on the side of social reform, a stance that was beginning to be appreciated in academic circles during the period. Contrary to Gaddis and Sweet, Smith portrayed the Holiness Movement as urban and Northeastern. Many young Wesleyan/Holiness radicals of the 1960s found comfort in this exposition of their heritage. This thesis, also argued by Donald W. Dayton,¹⁷ will probably, on closer examination, require revision. For example, Phoebe Palmer forbade discussions of slavery at her meetings, and her two closest Methodist ecclesiastical supporters, the holiness bishops Janes and Hamline were the principal architects of the policy of avoiding condemnations of slavery by the

¹⁵John L. Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (Nashville: Pierce and Washabaugh, 1956; reprinted, Zondervan: Francis Asbury Press, 1985).

¹⁶*Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (New York: Abingdon, 1957; reprinted, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

¹⁷*Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976; 2nd ed., Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988).

Methodist Episcopal Church in the interest of preserving the unity of the denomination. It also appears that the racism of Southern holiness leaders (e.g., J. L. Brasher) was little different from that of the larger Southern white culture. Smith's volume made an impact in the academic discussion by presenting Wesleyan/Holiness concerns in structures comprehensible to secular and "mainline" scholars.

Perhaps less influential than the other volumes of the 1950s was the biography of B. T. Roberts, founder of the Free Methodist Church, by Clarence Zahniser and published on the basis of his University of Pittsburgh dissertation. It, like the volume of Rose about J. H. Smith, focused on an individual using all available resources, but Zahniser did not have the interpretative framework of Rose. The correspondence and other personal and family materials used by Zahniser have only recently become available to scholars when they were filmed by the Library of Congress.¹⁸

The 1960s. The decade of the sixties was quiet. History departments of Wesleyan/Holiness colleges and universities rarely offered courses on the history of their own traditions, and religion departments followed that lead and even began to remove them. History, where it survived, was the step-child of church polity. Significant numbers of Wesleyan/Holiness graduate students wrote on Wesley and Fletcher, but the discipline of choice during the 1960s was education as these institutions worked to establish graduates in middle-class service positions. A few intrepid students wrote theses and dissertations, but these were not published either by academic presses or by the churches.¹⁹ The latter usually viewed these efforts with some concern because the results of the research began to reflect a picture quite different from the apologetic historiographical tradition represented by the denominational histories. Two exceptions to this general pattern were the works of Wilcox and Ford. Ford wrote a University of London doctoral dissertation on the British Church of the

¹⁸Clarence Howard Zahniser, "Earnest Christian: Life and Work of Benjamin Titus Roberts," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1951), partially published as *idem*, *Earnest Christian: The Life and Work of Benjamin Titus Roberts* (Winona Lake: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1957).

¹⁹For example, James A. Reinhart, *Personal and Sociological Factors in the Formation of the Free Methodist Church* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Iowa, 1971), and Barry L. Callen, *The Church of God Reformation Movement: A Study in Ecumenical Idealism* (M.Th. Thesis, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1969).

Nazarene.²⁰ Wilcox provided an introduction to the theology and history of the tradition based on his research at God's Bible School.²¹

Change began with the 1966 founding of the Wesleyan Theological Society (WTS). This organization provided new structures and energy for serious scholarly reflection on the history and theology of the Wesleyan/Holiness traditions. The focus of the WTS, however, remained primarily theological as the organization explored the acceptable limits of theological diversity within the movement, unfortunately without often taking the history of the tradition into account. Historical analysis was, at best, auxiliary to the theological questions addressed. The historiography of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement remained a cottage industry. The result was an entire decade without major published contributions to the study of the history of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition that could function in the scholarly academy.

Symptomatic of the documentation situation of Wesleyan/Holiness historiography at this juncture is the relative "non-existence" of this religious movement for American historians reflected in the landmark works of Bucke, Barclay, and Ahlstrom.²² The two Methodist histories continuously denigrate or ignore Holiness Methodists. Ahlstrom mentions only Phoebe Palmer, Phineas Bresee, and E. Stanley Jones, and identifies Jones as a "liberal" theologian.

The 1970s. Several volumes appeared in the first half of the 1970s which radically changed research on the Wesleyan/Holiness movement.

²⁰Jack Ford, *The Church of the Nazarene in Britain, the International Holiness Mission and the Calvary Holiness Church with Reference to Holiness Movements in Christian History* (Ph.D. Diss., University of London, 1967), published as, *In the Steps of John Wesley: The Church of the Nazarene in Britain* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1968). This may have been possible because Ford was already a trusted, established figure in the Church of the Nazarene throughout the world.

²¹Leslie D. Wilcox, *Be Ye Holy: A Study of the Teaching of Scripture Relative to Entire Sanctification, with a Sketch of the History and Literature of the Holiness Movement* (Cincinnati: God's Bible School and Missionary Training Home, 1965).

²²Emory Stevens Bucke, ed., *The History of American Methodism*, 3 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), despite the contribution of Timothy Smith to volume 2, pp. 608-627; Wade Crawford Barclay, *The Methodist Episcopal Church 1845-1939: Widening Horizons 1896-1939* (History of Methodist Missions, 3; New York: Board of Missions of the Methodist Church, 1957); Sidney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

Vinson Synan published research in which he definitively demonstrated the close relationship between the Wesleyan/Holiness churches and Pentecostalism, to the great discomfort of both groups. The WTS would devote significant time to the issue of the relationship between the two revivalist traditions, as is clear from the articles published in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* during the years 1973-1980.²³ Donald Dayton suggested the same in his groundbreaking monograph (1971) which delineated and evaluated the important bibliography, and provided an interpretative framework for looking at the tradition.²⁴

Monographs by William Faupel and David Bundy contributed to establishing the parameters of the movement.²⁵ Charles Jones revealed the extensive bibliography of the tradition, identifying in his *Guide*²⁶ about 5,000 titles as relevant to the study of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, including many periodicals. A second and significantly expanded edition is in process. It is important to note that Jones deals minimally with the Holiness Movement outside North America and is very restrictive with regard to bibliography related to the Salvation Army. Wesleyan/ Holiness writers in Germany, Sweden, Korea, and India have been quite prolific. Jones includes materials about the North American Wesleyan/ Holiness Pentecostal churches in his *A Guide to the Study of the Pentecostal Movement*.²⁷

Recent efforts to re-evaluate the impact of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition on American and European culture²⁸ began with the work of

²³See the reflections of Donald Dayton, "Wesleyan Tug-of-War on Pentecostal Link," *Christianity Today* 23 (15 Dec. 1978), 43.

²⁴*The American Holiness Movement: A Bibliographic Introduction* (B. L. Fisher Library Occasional Bibliographic Papers, 1; Wilmore: B. L. Fisher Library, 1971).

²⁵D. William Faupel, *The American Holiness Movement: A Bibliographic Essay* (B. L. Fisher Library Occasional Bibliographic Papers, 2; Wilmore: B. L. Fisher Library, 1972); David Bundy, *Keswick: A Bibliographic Introduction to the Higher Life Movement* (B. L. Fisher Library Occasional Bibliographic Papers, 3; Wilmore: B. L. Fisher Library, 1975). These, together with the volume by Dayton, have been reprinted as *The Higher Christian Life*, ed. Donald W. Dayton (New York: Garland, 1984).

²⁶Charles E. Jones, *A Guide to the Study of the Holiness Movement* (ATLA Bibliography Series, 1; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1974).

²⁷Charles E. Jones, *A Guide to the Study of the Pentecostal Movement* (ATLA Bibliography Series, 6; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1983). A second edition of this important work is also in preparation.

²⁸The discussion of the impact of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition on Europe, Africa, and Latin America will be reserved for another essay.

Melvin Dieter. He demonstrated the complex network that fostered the revivalist efforts and traced its influence in Europe, a thesis further developed by John Kent and Richard Carwardine, albeit in less enthusiastic tones.²⁹ David Bundy proffered an analysis which suggests that the arrival of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement in Europe must be understood in light of the intellectual and religious structures into which insights from the American revivalists were appropriated and in which these developed.³⁰ An entire meeting of the European Methodist Historical Society (1992) was devoted to the question of Wesleyan/Holiness influence in Europe. Unfortunately the papers will not be published as a collection.

Efforts at social analysis of the North American situation were proffered by Charles Jones, Val Clear and Carl Oblinger.³¹ These scholars found a Holiness movement quite different from the New England urban identity proposed by Timothy Smith. Paul E. Johnson returned to the study of the “burned-over district” with the tools of a contemporary Marxist social historian to offer a revised analysis of revivalism, especially of Finney’s revivals in Rochester, New York.³²

²⁹Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Ph.D. Diss., Temple University, 1973; published as, *Studies in Evangelicalism*, 1; Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1980). A new edition of this volume is in preparation. John Kent, *Holding the Fort: Studies in Victorian Revivalism* (London: Epworth, 1978). Kent unfortunately provides little documentation for his volume. Richard Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America. 1790–1865* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978).

³⁰David Bundy, “Keswick and the Experience of Evangelical Piety,” *Modern Christian Revivals* (ed. E. L. Blumhofer and R. Balmer; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 118-144.

³¹Charles E. Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement in American Methodism* ([originally Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1968] ATLA Monograph Series, 5; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1974), *idem*. “Disinherited or Rural? A Historical Case Study in Urban Holiness Religion,” *Missouri Historical Review*; Valorous Bernard Clear, *Where The Saints Have Trod: A Social History of the Church of God Reformation Movement* (Chesterfield, IN: Midwest Publishers, 1971 [originally a University of Chicago Ph.D. Diss., 1953]); Carl Oblinger, *Religious Mines: Social Bases for the Holiness Schism in Late Nineteenth Century Methodism* (Monograph Studies, 1; Evanston: Institute for the Study of American Religion, 1973).

³²Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester. New York. 1815–1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

John Hammond argued, based on an examination of the relationship between voting patterns and religious revivalism in the same area, that religious revivalism was committed to achieving agreement and action on a specific social issue, that of slavery.³³ Norris Magnuson studied Wesleyan/Holiness social service activism in the Holiness tradition after the Civil War, providing a clear warning about theories of the declension of Wesleyan/Holiness social involvement in that urban arena.³⁴ Moody and the Salvation Army have also received attention.³⁵ The primary and secondary literature on the “Army” is vast, but generally it has not been examined using critical social and historical tools. A narrative of the American Salvationist experience can be found in the volume by Edward McKinley,³⁶ and material for evaluating the Holiness relationships is provided in *Heritage of Holiness: A Compilation of the Historical Background of Holiness*.³⁷

The 1980s. The works of Timothy Smith, Charles Jones, Carl Oblinger, and Paul Johnson, *et al*, were the precursors of a number of studies on the intellectual and social impact of the holiness revivals of the nineteenth century. As examples, Darrel Robertson used tools of social analysis to examine the 1876 Moody revivals in Chicago.³⁸ Lawrence Lesick examined the significance of the Lane Theological Seminary experiment on the anti-slavery crusade.³⁹

Of special significance is the social history of the Church of God (Cleveland) by Mickey Crews. Originally submitted as a doctoral dis-

³³John Hammond, *The Politics of Benevolence: Revival Religion and American Voting Behavior* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1979).

³⁴Norris Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work, 1865–1920* (ATLA Monograph Series, 10; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1977; reprinted, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990).

³⁵Stan Gundry, *Love Them In: The Proclamation Theology of D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976).

³⁶Edward H. McKinley, *Marching to Glory: The History of the Salvation Army in the United States* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980). McKinley also wrote the remarkable volume *Somebody's Brother: A History of the Salvation Army Men's Social Service Department, 1891–1985* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986).

³⁷New York: Salvation Army, 1977.

³⁸Darrel M. Robertson, *The Chicago Revival, 1876: Society and Revivalism in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Studies in Evangelicalism, 9; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1989).

³⁹Lawrence T. Lesick, *The Lane Rebels: Evangelicalism and Anti-Slavery in Antebellum America* (Studies in Evangelicalism, 2; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1980).

sertation at Auburn University, written under the direction of J. Wayne Flynt, this is the first study of a Wesleyan/Holiness denomination published by a university press.⁴⁰ Curtis Johnson continued the tradition of research on the “burned-over district,” offering an alternative to Paul Johnson’s (1978) analysis by emphasizing the rural and religious structures of the traditions.⁴¹ The impact of the Holiness movement on African American culture is in the initial stages of analysis.⁴² The same can be said about the impact of the Wesleyan/Holiness revivals on other traditions. An initial evaluation (negative) of the influence on the Friends has been made by Thomas Hamm.⁴³

Others have focused on Wesleyan/Holiness leaders. Several male leaders have been studied. The writer/scholar/activist most studied has been Charles G. Finney. Not only has the original text of his memoirs been published in a critical edition, Finney also has been the subject of numerous dissertations.⁴⁴ Among the other figures who have received

⁴⁰Mickey Crews, *The Church of God: A Social History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

⁴¹Curtis D. Johnson, *Islands of Holiness: Rural Religion in Upstate New York, 1790–1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

⁴²Charles E. Jones, *Black Holiness: A Guide to the Study of Black Participation in Wesleyan Perfectionist and Glossolalic Pentecostal Movements* (ATLA Bibliography Series, 18; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1987); Sherry S. DuPree, *Biographical Dictionary of African-American Holiness Pentecostals 1880–1990* (Washington: Middle Atlantic Regional Press, 1989). The unpublished work of William Clair Turner, “The United Holy Church of America: A Study in Black Pentecostalism,” (Ph.D. Diss., Duke University, 1984) is an important analysis of one denomination.

⁴³Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800–1907* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1988). See also the more positive analysis in the thesis of Arthur O. Roberts, “The Concept of Perfection in the History of the Quaker Movement,” B. D. Thesis, Nazarene Theological Seminary, 1951.

⁴⁴*The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney. The Complete Restored Text* (ed. Garth M. Rosell and Richard A. G. Dupuis; Grand Rapids: Zondervan-Academie Books, 1989). The bibliographic essay, pages 671–701, presents a selection of dissertations which deal with Finney written between 1899 and 1985, as well as a discussion of manuscripts and primary source material.

Unfortunately, few of the dissertations have been published. See especially Keith Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney, 1792–1875* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987) [Hardman downplays the interaction with and participation in the holiness revivals, as well as Finney’s debt to the New England Methodist revivalists such as Lorenzo Dow]; David L. Weddle, *The Law as Gospel: Revival and Reform in the Theology of Charles G. Finney* (Studies in Evangelicalism, 6; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1985); and John Leroy Gresham, *Charles G. Finney’s Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987).

attention are Asa Mahan,⁴⁵ Thomas Upham,⁴⁶ and Charles Parham.⁴⁷ Larry Brasher has written about the southern holiness leader and camp meeting founder, J. L. Brasher.⁴⁸ There have been several studies of the life and impact of the Maine phenomenon, Frank Sanford. William Hiss wrote as a participant observer in the “Kingdom,” Murray as a participant, and Nelson as a person whose parents and grandparents had been key members of Shiloh.⁴⁹

Related are the efforts to analyze the role of women in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. Donald Dayton and Lucile Sider Dayton wrote a groundbreaking essay which provided the basis for the work of Nancy Hardesty and others.⁵⁰ Phoebe Palmer has, appropriately, attracted the most attention. She has been the focus of the work of Harold Raser, the more apologetic exposition by Charles White, and she has been included

⁴⁵Barbara Brown Zikmund, “Asa Mahan and Oberlin Perfectionism,” (Ph.D. Diss., Duke University, 1969); Edward H. Madden and James Hamilton, *Freedom and Grace: The Life of Asa Mahan* (Studies in Evangelicalism, 3; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1982).

⁴⁶Darius Salter, *Spirit and Intellect: Thomas Upham’s Holiness Theology* (Studies in Evangelicalism, 7; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1986).

⁴⁷James Goff, *Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988).

⁴⁸John Lawrence Brasher, *Standing Between the Living and the Dead: John Lakin Brasher, Holiness Preacher* (Ph.D. Diss., Duke University, 1986), published as *The Sanctified South: John Lakin Brasher and the Holiness Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

⁴⁹William C. Hiss, *Shiloh: Frank H. Sanford and the Kingdom. 1893–1948* (Ph.D. Diss., Tufts University, 1978); Frank S. Murray, *The Sublimity of Faith: The Life and Work of Frank W. Sanford* (Amherst, MA: Kingdom Press, 1981); and the insightful, but marginally documented contribution of Shirley Nelson, *Fair, Clear and Terrible: The Story of Shiloh Maine* (Latham: British American Publishing House, 1989).

⁵⁰Donald W. Dayton and Lucile Sider Dayton, “Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Feminism in the Holiness Movement,” *Methodist History* 14(1976), 67-92; Nancy Hardesty, *Your Daughter Shall Prophecy: Revivalism and Feminism in the Age of Finney* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago, 1976). Rosemary Radford Reuther and Rosemary Skinner Keller, eds., *Women and Religion in America: The Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981) draws on Dayton but does not acknowledge the work.

in the "Sources of American Spirituality" anthology of Thomas Oden.⁵¹ Three other Wesleyan/Holiness women leaders, Jennie Fowler Willing, Hannah Whitall Smith, and Mary Lee Harris Cagle have been the subject of yet unpublished dissertations.⁵² Alma White was treated in a major biography by Susie Stanley.⁵³

The most important monograph of the decade in terms of its implications for the historiography of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition has been Donald Dayton's study of the roots of Pentecostal theology. Dayton has endeavored to place the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition in the contexts of American Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism.⁵⁴ It builds on the research of the past four decades and offers a sophisticated theological analysis in the tradition of the "history of ideas" school.

The Present Situation. The issue which provides the backdrop for Dayton's analysis (1986) is the position of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement in American historiography. Dayton offered a more pointed critique, with particular reference to the historiography of Evangelicalism in a yet unpublished essay presented at a Wesleyan/Holiness Studies Seminar at Asbury Theological Seminary.⁵⁵ A similar essay was published by Leonard Sweet at the end of the same year.⁵⁶ The argument of

⁵¹Harold Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1987); Charles White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986); and, Thomas Oden, *Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings* (Sources of American Spirituality; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988).

⁵²Joanne Carlson Browne, *Jennie Fowler Willing (1834–1916): Methodist Churchwoman and Reformer* (Ph.D. Diss., Boston University, 1983); Roberta Joy Stewart, *Being a Child in the Father's House: The Life and Work of Hannah Whitall Smith*, (Ph.D. Diss., Drew University, 1990); and, Robert Stanley Ingersol, *Burden of Dissent: Mary Lee Cagle and the Southern Holiness Movement* (Ph.D. Diss., Duke University, 1989).

⁵³Susie Stanley, *Feminist Pillar of Fire: The Life of Alma White* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1993). This was a revision of Stanley's dissertation at Iliff, *Alma White: Holiness Preacher with a Feminist Message* (Ph.D. Diss., Iliff School of Theology, 1987).

⁵⁴Donald W. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1987).

⁵⁵Donald Dayton, "An Analysis of the Self-Understanding of American Evangelicalism with a Critique of its Correlated Historiography" (Lecture: Asbury Theological Seminary, January, 1988).

⁵⁶Leonard Sweet, "Wise as Serpents, Innocent as Doves: The New Evangelical Historiography," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56(1988), 397-416.

both writers was that Wesleyan/Holiness sources were not being taken into account in the general historiography of American Evangelicalism.

George Marsden made an effort to include Wesleyan/Holiness factors in his volume on Evangelicalism, although “perfectionists” are generally relegated to the sidelines of the historical trajectories.⁵⁷ However, Dayton has insisted that Marsden ignored the Wesleyan/ Holiness and Pentecostal aspects of the story when discussing the formative period of Fuller Theological Seminary.⁵⁸ Dayton (1988) and Sweet have argued that the volume of Douglas Frank offers a more adequate presentation of the period.⁵⁹

However, Wesleyan/Holiness historiographical transparency is not only a problem in Evangelical historiography. For example, Wesleyan/Holiness sources and people are not included in William Hutchison’s magisterial presentation of American mission theory.⁶⁰ Similarly, Stanley Burgess edited an entire volume on “perfectionism” as it related to the self-understanding of Pentecostalism. Astonishingly, he did this without a chapter devoted to the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition as it influenced the newer movement.⁶¹ Only Victor Howard has made the effort to examine the primary sources of the tradition in order to interpret the impact of Wesleyan/Holiness and other “Evangelical” traditions on the American Civil War and Reconstruction.⁶²

The survey of recent historiography would suggest that recent Wesleyan/Holiness historians have been only marginally more successful than their predecessors in getting their material into the contemporary discussions of American religious culture. Scholars are aware of the existence of the movement and have reason to suspect its significance,

⁵⁷George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

⁵⁸George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

⁵⁹Douglas W. Frank, *Less than Conquerors: How Evangelicals Entered the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

⁶⁰William Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Mission* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

⁶¹Stanley Burgess, *Reaching Beyond: Chapters in the History of Perfectionism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986).

⁶²Victor B. Howard, *Religion and the Radical Republican Movement, 1860–1870* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990).

but it has not yet become a standard feature of American religious historiography.⁶³

Sources Exploited and Unexploited

The Wesleyan/Holiness tradition has been given little notice in the historiography of American religion, either by “mainline” or Evangelical writers. However, scholars of American religious life who would include the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition within their scope have a problem which defies simple solution. There is a dearth of scholarly monographs, either books or articles, which interpret the story of the tradition into categories that make them useful to scholars of religion outside the Holiness churches. Those that are available, including those discussed above, relate to the more literate, middle and upper class elements of the tradition [e.g., Finney, Mahan, the Palmers, Upham, Parham, H. W. and R. P. Smith] and generally are dependent upon a restrictive appropriation of the extant literary genre.

If one considers the entire range of literary genre available [theology, history, biography, testimony/hagiography, liturgy, novels, self-help or moralistic literature, oral tradition], the forms of presentation of the printed material [books, pamphlets, tracts, periodicals, other serials, music], and the unpublished sources [diaries, correspondence, church records, institutional records, films, recordings], and examines the notes and bibliographies of the monographs devoted to the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, one finds that the vast majority of the sources exploited are printed theological and historical works. Only preliminary use has been made of periodical literature, and that has largely been restricted to official church (e.g., *The Free Methodist*) or national periodicals (e.g., *The Guide to Holiness*). Institutional and personal records are virtually untouched, as are diaries and correspondence. Major exceptions to these generalizations include the works of Rose, Browne, Stanley, Brasher, and Howard mentioned above.

Historiographical Issues

There are two primary reasons that these holiness-related materials have been minimally exploited. First, they are presently unavailable

⁶³Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life*, 3rd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981) gives three pages to the Holiness tradition under the rubric of “disaffected churches,” pp. 344-347; Edwin Scott Gaustad, *A Religious History of America*, new revised edition (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990) notes the continuous presence of the tradition, but neither attempts to gauge its impact nor provides a relevant bibliography related to the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition.

except to the persistent and the lucky. Second, traditional scholarly tools offer scarce results for the analysis of folk or narrative theologians. The first problem is being addressed by the soon-to-be-published work of William Kostlevy who has traveled throughout the country to identify archival materials for the study of the Wesleyan/Holiness movements in institutional (and some personal) collections. The second issue involves not only the selection of scholarly tools, but the self-understanding of the tradition which prejudices these choices.

Briefly stated, the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition has understood itself as Ahlstrom understood it, as a sectarian movement in search of becoming a church.⁶⁴ The evaluation of the phenomenon by Wesleyan/Holiness scholars and adherents has been somewhat more positive than that of Ahlstrom, but with the same deleterious result. The best sources for theological reflection (broadly understood) have been assumed to be those of the established churches, or of other Evangelical traditions farther up the social mobility scale. Doctrinal, ecclesial, literary, and other structures were “corrected” in light of the assumption that Holiness distinctives were merely baggage of lower class experience and had no relevance to the new social realities. This meant that the more personal sources (testimony, oral history, hagiography, biography, novels, liturgy) were considered inferior, naive, and socially degenerate. They were useful only insofar as they provided “facts” or “examples.” Deprivation theories, and variations on that theme, provide no more adequate bases for analysis.

The same is true of the “orthodoxy and heresy” analysis. Many Wesleyan/Holiness scholars have succumbed to the notion that the Warfieldian analysis of their doctrinal structures is correct and have urged the adoption of American Fundamentalist/Evangelical theological and philosophical categories, despite the fact that these contradict and undermine Wesleyan/Holiness spirituality.⁶⁵ Assumptions about the social

⁶⁴Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*.

⁶⁵B. B. Warfield, *Perfectionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931-1932). These conclusions have also influenced Wesleyan Theological Society discussions, as evidenced by articles in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* discussing “secondness,” “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” and the nature of Scripture. The acceptance of Fundamentalist defined categories like “inerrancy” are symptomatic of this Wesleyan/Holiness failure of theological nerve. Fortunate exceptions to this trend are the major theological works of Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972) and Ray Dunning, *Grace. Faith and Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1988).

location (sophistication) and “orthodoxy-heresy” issue regarding Wesleyan/Holiness theological positions have had a deleterious effect on the use of Wesleyan/Holiness historical data in contemporary work on American religious history in general and in American Evangelicalism in particular.

These scholarly theories have led many Wesleyan/Holiness scholars and church leaders to devalue the most extensively available resources as sources for historical, theological, ethical, and missional reflection. This does not mean to imply that Wesleyan/Holiness scholars should retreat from the academic study of history and theology. Quite the contrary. It merely suggests that the intellectual and spiritual resources of the movement should be valued and carried into that discussion. On this point, Wesleyan/Holiness scholars stand to learn much from Pentecostal scholars, scholars beyond North America and Europe, and students of women’s history. It also means that interpretative structures appropriate to the genre in which the spirituality and history are expressed must be found, and alternative patterns of rationalization must be tested.

Desiderata for Research

____In order to address the historiographical problem described above, several steps are essential. These include: (1) providing access to resources for research; (2) experimenting with and developing interpretative tools; (3) articulating the self-understanding of the tradition in light of both the present realities and the social, historical, and theological heritage of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement and developing an ecumenical profile.

1. **Resources for Research.** Providing access to Wesleyan/Holiness historical sources is the primary *desideratum*. This needs attention at two levels. The first level is the identification and collection of documentation for the tradition. The full range of literary genre must be included, but especially archival materials and periodicals.

The collection and organization of archival materials by Wesleyan/Holiness institutions is in its earliest stages, with the library of Asbury Theological Seminary, the Salvation Army Archives, and the Church of the Nazarene Archives far ahead of the rest. Progress on the archives of the Wesleyan, Free Methodist, and Church of God (Anderson) churches is continuing slowly after major efforts at documentation during recent years. World Gospel Mission has a minimalist collection available to scholars. OMS archival materials were sent to Asbury for processing and

some filming before they were reclaimed for the personal use of a former OMS administrator. Their location is presently unknown.

William Kostlevy, funded by the grant of the Pew Charitable Trust to the Wesleyan/Holiness Studies Project, Asbury Theological Seminary, has described the collections of established centers and identified a large number of unpublished archival materials in institutional and private collections. His guide, published in the ATLA Bibliography Series of Scarecrow Press, will significantly increase access to these resources, and invariably, because of his work, others will come to light.⁶⁶

Wesleyan/Holiness periodicals, except those generated by national organizations or established institutions, rarely have been collected and are seldom catalogued into on-line data systems or reported to the *Union List of Serials* published by the Library of Congress. The project of Michael Boddy, librarian at Claremont School of Theology, to develop a "Union List of Non United Methodist Periodicals and Serials in North America," will be useful, but does not include para-church publications, yearbooks, or conference and district serials. Unfortunately, non-U.S.A. originated periodical publications and holdings are not covered in any of the standard reference tools. This is especially serious since many of the Methodist mission efforts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were undertaken by Wesleyan/Holiness missionaries within the Methodist Episcopal Church. Wesleyan/Holiness mission periodicals, both denominational and independent are often difficult or impossible to locate. A "Union List of Wesleyan/Holiness and Methodist Episcopal Periodicals Outside the U.S.A." remains an important, even crucial need for the development of Wesleyan/Holiness history and theology.

The second level of access concerns the definition and preservation of a corpus of primary and secondary material as well as prosopographical research. Thousands of volumes have been published by the various branches of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. The historians discussed above have contributed a very preliminary sorting and evaluating of sources. However, most of the printed sources remain unused and unevaluated. Preservation is also problematic. Most Wesleyan/Holiness books were published on inexpensive, highly acidic paper. Despite high

⁶⁶William Kostlevy, *Holiness Manuscripts: A Guide to Sources Documenting the Wesleyan Holiness Movement in the United States and Canada* (ATLA Bibliography Series, 34, Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1994).

circulation of many of the volumes,⁶⁷ many of these are now frequently extant in but one or two copies. Reprinting and microfilm are both expensive undertakings. Deciding what to preserve is difficult given the state of the historiography.

Every scholar who has studied the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition has been vexed by prosopographical questions. It is often impossible to ascertain for given individuals basic information, such as birth and death dates, ministry positions, denominational affiliation, and theological perspective. A "Dictionary of the Wesleyan/Holiness Traditions," contracted for publication by Scarecrow Press (*circa* 1996), is in the planning stage, and, if completed, will *begin* to address the prosopographical problem. Resource identification, evaluation, and preservation is basic to any other level of research.

2. *Interpretation of the Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition.* The holiness tradition has its roots in popular culture. The vast majority of Wesleyan/Holiness adherents traditionally have come from lower and lower-middle class (small property owners) contexts. When upper-middle class individuals such as Phoebe Palmer and Hannah Whitall Smith became adherents of the movement, they were very aware of the class distinctions, and embarrassed by their less sophisticated co-religionists. To this point, most of the research has focused on the elite of the movement. Social analysis has begun; the studies of Jones, Oblinger, Johnson, and Hammond are especially suggestive. Assumptions about social location need to be tested with empirical and quantitative methods. Many detailed, carefully defined studies of the demographic make-up of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement are needed to provide a basis for the study of theological and historical issues.

It is necessary to develop new approaches to the documents of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement. Some recent essays have begun to experiment. Paul Livermore applied Jacob Neusner's analysis to the *Discipline* of the Free Methodist Church.⁶⁸ Robert Wall used literary criticism methods to ascertain the shifts in values underlying changes in

⁶⁷Many volumes sold between 10,000 and 100,000 copies in 1-25 printings. The Wesleyan/Holiness presses conducted an enormous publication effort on behalf of their causes.

⁶⁸Paul Livermore, "The Formative Document of a Denomination Aborning: The Discipline of the Free Methodist Church (1860)," in Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs and A. J. Levine, eds., *Religious Writings and Religious Systems: Systemic Analysis of Holy Books in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Greco-Roman Religions, Ancient Israel and Judaism*, Vol. 2: *Christianity* (Brown Studies in Religion, 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 175-195.

the Free Methodist *Discipline*.⁶⁹ Insights of the *Annales* historiographical tradition as modified by Structuralist reflection have been used to examine the life and ministry structures of William Taylor, E. Stanley Jones, and T. B. Barratt.⁷⁰

Beyond this is the matter of popular piety and lifestyle which have been addressed tangentially by these writers. Assertions have generally reflected the ideological biases of the respective scholarly analysis rather than employing careful social and historical analysis. Research needs to focus on the laity of the tradition who sustained the religious experiences, funded the organizations, and practiced the piety devoid of much of the cynicism that characterizes leaders of any movement. Studies of charitable giving have normally shown Wesleyan/Holiness adherents as among the highest per capita givers, despite their social location. This was underlined by a rigorous asceticism and radical desacralization of the present realities. At the same time, the practices were shaped by social, political, regional, and economic environments. Wesleyan/Holiness ritual participation is high. There appear to be comparatively few “nominal” members.⁷¹ This is the case even though lay and clerical loyalty to the institutions generated by the tradition appears to be low.

Also unexplored is the spiritual and theological creativity sustained outside the official “magisterial” structures of the tradition. Much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century “hardening of theological categories” in the movement may be traceable to institutional efforts to suppress or control this phenomenon. Only when issues posed by popular piety and practice are addressed will there be a basis for placing the Wesleyan/Holiness movements in the context of American religious history.⁷² American folklore studies may well prove profitable approaches to the written and oral texts of the tradition.

⁶⁹Robert Wall, “The Embourgeoisement of the Free Methodist Ethos,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 25(1990), 117-129.

⁷⁰David Bundy, *William Taylor*, see above; *idem*, “Theology of the Kingdom of God in E. Stanley Jones,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23(1988), 58-80; *idem*, “T. B. Barratt: The Methodist Years,” to appear in *EPTA Bulletin*.

⁷¹My study of Holiness churches in Indianapolis in an article for the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (to appear circa 1995) suggests that church attendance is declining in relation to membership.

⁷²The best survey of European investigation of religious life from this perspective is Jon Butler, “The Future of American Religious History: Prospectus, Agenda, Transatlantic Problematique,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 42(1985), 167-183. Unfortunately, Butler does not also introduce the reader to the philosophical structures behind the approach.

3. Self-Understanding of the Tradition and its Ecumenical Profile.

Most Wesleyan/Holiness adherents are members of small denominations which have their origins in doctrinal controversies or regional identities. Individual members, indeed entire denominations, have no conception of the national or international structures of the larger tradition. The Wesleyan/Holiness churches comprise the seventh largest Christian group in the world after Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Orthodox, Baptists, Lutherans, and Methodists. It has been projected that there are 10,318,586 members of Holiness churches.⁷³ This does not include adherents or participants in churches, such as the United Methodist churches, or the Pentecostal churches which are also Wesleyan/Holiness. It would appear that there are more human and spiritual resources in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition to be marshalled than find expression in present Wesleyan/Holiness academic, ecumenical and institutional structures.

For these resources to be effectively interjected into the arenas of church and world, attention will need to be given to the role of the tradition in American religious culture, its relation to other Evangelical and mainline traditions, and the forms in which it has become established within other cultural contexts. This endeavor to articulate an identity will need to address theological as well as historical issues.

This identity, which will not be monolithic but diverse and populist, will provide a framework for the development of an ecumenical profile. Every tradition has a perspective on Christian faith and life. The values and perspectives of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition need to be projected into contemporary discussions of these issues throughout the world.

Conclusion

The problems posed by (1) the lack of integration of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition into the historiography of American and international religious culture and (2) the diverse historical sources of the tradition combine to present a significant challenge and opportunity. As these sources are allowed to provide their own interpretive matrices, they will provide a door into the life, mind, and spirituality of the nineteenth and twentieth century movement. More than that, they will provide a basis for contemporary theological (in the widest sense of the term) reflection.

⁷³David Barratt, *Encyclopedia of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 14. The Salvation Army was, inexplicably, counted apart from Holiness churches. The two numbers are added for this figure.

Such a process will require location of “misplaced sources,” prosopographical work, as well as synchronic and diachronic social analysis. It also will require new philosophical and historiographical sophistication as new structures of discourse are sought. Only when this quest begins to place new monographs in the academic marketplace will Wesleyan/Holiness scholars fulfill the quest of the past four decades to insert the perspective of the tradition into the ongoing theological and historical discussions.

PRIMITIVISM IN THE AMERICAN HOLINESS TRADITION

by

Melvin E. Dieter

Was the holiness tradition in the American churches a primitivist/restitutionist or a reformationist/traditionalist movement? This analysis argues that both of these themes shaped the movement with particular intensity at specific periods in the tradition's development. At the same time, enduring elements of each tinged its life and thought throughout the whole of its history.

This essay first summarizes how John Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection encouraged the adoption of a reformationist-traditionalist movement. Then it shows how this doctrine and other developments encouraged a primitivist-restorationist inclination.

The Historic Church Connection

Some scholars have contended that Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification, the reason for existence of Methodism and the Holiness tradition, was a natural filling out of certain deficiencies in Reformation doctrine. They conclude that his teaching of the possibility of the believer's freedom from willful sin and perfection in love in this life wedded the Reformation's concerns for salvation by faith alone with the Roman Catholic ethic of love. Consequently, Wesley stood directly in the line of the "magisterial" reformers. This Reformed-Anglican-Methodist rootage of the holiness revival is one factor which tends to tie the

movement to the now existing “main-line” churches of the Christian tradition.¹

The holiness movement’s early self-understanding of its mission in relation to the existing churches also contributed to its “main-line” character. The holiness revival in America was born in the 1830s out of the efforts of its Methodist founders to restore the experiential knowledge of Wesley’s evangelical perfectionism to the central position which the doctrine traditionally had held in Methodism. At the same time, the movement’s conviction that the grace of Christian perfection—or entire sanctification, or the Baptism of the Holy Ghost—was Biblical and was to be the normal expectation of every believer’s experience aroused a sense of evangelistic responsibility among its ardent advocates to spread their gospel of “Full Salvation” to Christians of every ecclesiological, theological and social stripe. The extensive Arminianization and Methodization of American religion prepared the field for a more ready acceptance of the holiness revivalist’s message among non-Methodist evangelicals than might otherwise have been possible.²

Because of its concerns for reform and renewal, for almost three generations most of the movement remained loyal to the churches in which the revival arose, resisting the separatist tendencies which often accompany such renewal movements. A direct program or demand for the reformation of the accepted polity or orthodoxy of the churches was not part of the holiness advocates’ call for ethical and social reformation at that period. At the peak of the revival in 1875, it was a movement working wholly within the existing Methodist and non-Methodist Protestant churches in America, England, Europe, and their missions extensions around the world.

The National Holiness Association, the dominant agency of the revival, adamantly maintained its anti-separatist stance even in the face of the constantly increasing separatist pressures by thousands of newly acquired converts who had never joined any church. No one could be a member of one of the hundreds of county or state holiness associations,

¹William Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956); George Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1935); Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (London: The Epworth Press, 1956); Maximin Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1938)—all follow this judgment.

²Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), 88-91.

who did not maintain good standing within one of the existing denominations. The National Association's leaders looked with dismay as Daniel Warner and other early "come-outers" called for separate organizations "on the holiness line" in the early 1880's.³ For three generations the prevailing vision had been to "Christianize" Christianity within whatever form or rubric it found a home.⁴

It was not until the end of the century that large numbers of Methodists together with lesser numbers of Baptists, Presbyterians and others reluctantly joined the earlier "come-outers." They organized such holiness churches as The Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene, now the Church of the Nazarene, and the Pilgrim Holiness Church, now part of the Wesleyan Church. Even then, the historic Methodist influences on the movement remained strong through the involvement of the Free Methodist and the Wesleyan Methodist Churches, two smaller Methodist groups who were strongly committed to the revival. Many other "friends of holiness" walked the difficult path of continuing their allegiance to the holiness movement while remaining loyal to the older churches.

All of these factors helped to maintain among holiness adherents a sense of historical continuity with the traditional churches, even when more radical primitivist-restitutionist themes came to the fore as the revival approached the end of the century. This factor goes a long way in explaining why the holiness adherents tried to distinguish themselves so radically from their much more eschatologically oriented Pentecostal movement siblings.⁵ The holiness movement generally had seen itself as a movement growing out of the development of the historical church; the Pentecostal movement came to regard itself as a *de novo* act of God.⁶

³Melvin Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, Studies in Evangelicalism, No. 1 (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1980), chap. 6. For a biographical recounting of Daniel Warner's separatist views and actions, see Barry Callen, *It's God's Church!: The Life and Legacy of Daniel Warner* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1995), chapters 5-6. Warner idealized not a "separate organization," but a stance outside all "man-made organizations."

⁴John Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956) and Melvin Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (1980), set the history and thought of the movement within Methodism and the broader revivalist context.

⁵Donald Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1987). The main burden of Dayton's book is that Pentecostalism is deeply rooted in the holiness revival and movement of the nineteenth century.

⁶T. Rennie Wharburton distinguishes between the two movements at this point in his "Holiness Religion: Anomaly of Sectarian Types," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* VIII (Spring 1969), 135, 137.

In its historical and theological development, therefore, it is easy, as well as legitimate, to identify a pervasive reformationist/traditionalist strain within the holiness tradition, one which seems to segregate it from the primitivism/restitutionism.

The Restorationist-Restitutionist Themes

But the initial reformationist/traditionalist orientation of the holiness movement is only part of the story. If we follow Richard Hughes' contention that perfectionism and restitutionism are natural bedfellows,⁷ we may make an even stronger argument for placing the holiness tradition within the primitivist/restitutionist family. The eclectic character of Wesley's practical theology guaranteed that historians could not so easily catalog or put into a traditional ecclesiastical or theological pigeon-hole either his own early Methodism or later movements which looked to him as their mentor. If Wesley was an Anglican, he was also a Pietist out of Puritan heritage. The inscription on Wesley's tombstone catches up a primitivist theme:

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. . . .

In one of the few available formal analyses of Wesleyan primitivism, Luke Keefer identifies Wesley's life and ministry more closely with the primitivist/restitutionist camp than with that of the Anglican high-church traditionalism which he often exhibited.⁸ Keefer contends that the failure of Wesley's experiment in Anglican (Non-Juror's) ecclesiastical primitivism that he experienced in his ministry in Georgia, followed by his

⁷Richard Hughes, "From Primitive Church to Civil Religion: The Millennial Odyssey of Alexander Campbell," *Journal for the American Academy of Religion* 44 (1976), 92; the same, "Christian Primitivism as Perfectionism: From Anabaptists to Pentecostals," in Stanley Burgess, ed., *Reaching Beyond: Chapters in the History of Perfectionism* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 213-255.

⁸Luke Keefer, Jr., "John Wesley: Disciple of Early Christianity," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19 (Spring 1984), 23-32. The paragraph which follows summarizes Keefer's argument.

evangelical experience at Aldersgate in 1738, did not end his primitivism, as some have maintained. His contact with Moravian primitivism and his new understanding of salvation by faith merely turned his primitivist paradigm from ecclesiological to soteriological categories. He no longer addressed the nature of the church in *formal* terms, but rather in *functional* terms. Now, he defined Christianity in terms of mission; the world was his parish. He saw himself, an ordained Anglican priest, as a primitive *episcopos* who could rightfully ordain his ministers if the occasion demanded it, as it did for his American movement after the Revolutionary War. At the close of his life he believed that his Methodist societies were so close to the model of the primitive church that “the *eschaton* could not be long in coming.” Keefer concludes that, when Wesley’s followers also exhibited strong primitivist tendencies, “they were merely taking their cue from Wesley himself.”⁹

Given this jump-start of Wesleyan influence, primitivism showed up in various ways in the course of the tradition’s development. None of these were unique to the holiness tradition by any means, but the way in which primitivist tendencies clustered around the tradition’s central theme of Christian perfection may have been unique.

On Being A Bible Christian: Ethical Primitivism

The basic primitivism in the movement was the primitivism evinced in Wesley’s insistence that perfection in love in this life is an evangelical experience promised and even commanded in Scripture, taught in the Sermon on the Mount, and exhibited in the lives of the New Testament saints. Enabled by prevenient grace which, he believed, restores every person’s ability to receive the saving grace of the Second Adam, all Christians should seek for nothing less than the restoration of the fullness of God’s love in their hearts and freedom from the necessity to sin. By the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, one could love God with an undivided heart even though suffering all the limitations of life in a fallen body and in a world still under the curse of sin and the power of Satan.

The genius of the incipient American holiness movement was to promote this Wesleyan perfectionist theme within the context of the revivalism which constituted the preeminent feature of American Christianity in the nineteenth century.¹⁰ The tradition’s perfectionist theme was not a

⁹Keefer, *op. cit.*, 28.

new one among primitivists.¹¹ It was prominent in the Anabaptist ferment as well as in early Quakerism, but, in the holiness revival, it was being thrust as a challenge upon the whole church with new urgency in the revivalist call for faith and action “now.”¹²

Phoebe Palmer, the “mother” of the holiness tradition in America, declared that total consecration of self to God and entire sanctification by God were really at the heart of what it means to be a “Bible Christian,” a Christian as Christians were in the beginning. Her authority, she declared, was “not Wesley, not Finney, not Mahan, but the Bible, the Holy Bible.”¹³ Her Biblical primitivism, fortified by the Scottish common-sense rationalism prevalent in American revivalism, led her to defend the legitimacy of lay and women’s ministry.¹⁴

Most significantly, she defined a new and shorter way to experience entire sanctification. She taught that if justified believers saw the promise of heart purity in the Bible, then, at the moment they placed themselves in faith and without reserve upon Christ, the Christian’s altar, they would be cleansed from all remaining inbred sin, enabled to love God and neighbor

¹⁰When leaders in other American revivalist traditions, such as Oberlin’s Charles Finney and Asa Mahan and Bowdoin’s Thomas Upham, joined the holiness crusade in the late 1830s, the American holiness movement was well on its way.

¹¹Samuel Hill, Jr, “A Typology of American Restitutionism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44 (1976), 67. Hill’s definition of Anabaptist restitutionism as the emulation of “New Testament moral purity, even perfection, resulting in the establishment of pure communities of faith” is helpful to understanding the two stages of the holiness tradition described in this paper. In the first stage, a revival of New Testament perfectionism within the churches was the goal, but the second stage produced the more radical expression of creating “pure communities of faith”—holiness churches.

¹²As a result, groups such as a majority of American Quakers and large numbers of Baptists in New Brunswick, Canada, became openly Wesleyan. It caused others, such as New School Calvinists and Keswick’s evangelical Anglicans, who fought desperately to avoid the perfectionism of the revival, to find a place within their Biblical and theological understanding for a further crisis experience of God’s grace subsequent to the new birth and commonly related to a Spirit baptism.

¹³George Hughes, *Fragrant Memories of the Tuesday Meeting and Guide to Holiness, and Their Fifty Years’ Work for Jesus* (New York: Palmer and Hughes, 1886), 38.

¹⁴Phoebe Palmer, *Promise of the Father, or a Neglected Specialty of the Last Days Addressed to the Clergy and Laity of All Christian Communities, by the Author of the Way of Holiness*. . . (Boston: Henry Degen, 1859).

freely, and grow daily in the life of holiness. The believer was to claim this experience “by faith.” The command of God to be holy was also the promise of God to make one holy.¹⁵

This new emphasis on the crisis and moment of entire sanctification, challenged the older Wesleyan understanding which set Wesley’s own acceptance of a “second blessing” crisis within a much more extended process of growth and development.¹⁶ The appeal to the Bible alone to defend the redefinition of Wesley’s basic doctrine of Christian Perfection marked a strongly primitivist turn within the American holiness tradition. In its most radical mode, it found expression in the “name it, claim it” teaching of some sectors of the contemporary Charismatic movement.¹⁷

Placing *The Church* “On The Altar”: Ecclesiastical Primitivism

A second significant expression of primitivism in the holiness revival’s development rose directly out of the revival’s widespread successes in the immediate post-Civil War period. Large numbers of converts, especially in the more rural mid-western United States, became restless under what they judged to be the heavy-handed Methodist control of the movement. The revival was being thwarted by sectarianism. This more radical, populist sector of the movement demanded that one’s sect be placed on the “altar” of consecration along with anything else which might fault the integrity of the believer’s total commitment to God.

Such a “consecration of the church” resulted, about 1880, in various proposals for the restoration of the true church by the creation of “New Testament Churches,” or “Churches of God” on “the holiness line.” Embracing these concepts in varying forms were Daniel Warner, primary pioneer of the Church of God movement (Anderson, Ind.),¹⁸ John Brooks,

¹⁵For an analysis of Palmer’s theological method and use of the Bible, see Charles Edward White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), 106-117.

¹⁶Some Methodist leaders felt that the revival’s claims to spiritual reality were based more on a common sense syllogism than on the witness of the Spirit which Wesley had so avidly emphasized. In spite of such qualms, Palmer’s “shorter way,” as it came to be known, became the central, though not the exclusive paradigm for preaching and testifying to the experience within the movement. See White, *Beauty of Holiness*, 130-143.

¹⁷Especially is this the case in the teachings of Charismatic movement leaders Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland.

founder of the New Testament Church of God, and James Washburn, founder of the Holiness Church.¹⁹ They rallied believers into the first formal churches organized out of the revival. The following brief review of Brooks' ecclesiology, as outlined in *The Divine Church*,²⁰ provides a precise and concise summary of such primitivism at work in the holiness tradition.

After his advocacy for the revival had ended his relationships with the Methodist Episcopal Church, John P. Brooks²¹ took up the cause of "nosectism" or the "New Testament Church of God" concept as the answer to the "church question" among the revival's converts.²² Brooks contended that the movement being populated and shaped the revival could not be contained within Methodism. The revivals converts faced a situation not unlike that which Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, addressed: "To which church should the revival's converts turn?" The same answer came to Brooks that came to Smith: "None of the above."

Brooks introduced his "New Testament Church of God" argument on a note which ties him, at least ideologically, to earlier primitivist traditions. The success of Luther's and Calvin's work, he contended, was limited to the restoration of the authority of the Bible and an evangelical understanding of justification by faith; but, the idea of the true church remained to be fleshed out in history.²³ Brook's "New Testament Church"

¹⁸For Warner's views and early actions, see the essay by Barry Callen elsewhere in this *WTJ* issue and his *It's God's Church!: Life and Legacy of Daniel Warner* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1995).

¹⁹Washburn proposed that only the entirely sanctified constitute the membership of the true New Testament church. He believed that the truth came to him as "a Vision or Revelation direct from Jesus, by the Holy Spirit." Mrs. J. E. Washburn, *History and Reminiscences of the Holiness Church Work in Southern California and Arizona* (South Pasadena, Cal.: Record Press, n.d.), 58-60.

²⁰John Brooks, *The Divine Church: A Treatise on the Origin, Constitution, Order, and Ordinances of the Church: Being a Vindication of the New Testament Ecclesia, and an Exposure of the Anti-Scriptural Character of the Modern Church or Sect* (Columbia, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1891).

²¹Brooks, one time conference secretary and influential pastor in the Central Illinois Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church became a central figure in this more radical sector of the budding holiness revival. See Carl Oblinger, "John P. Brooks: Separatist Tendencies in the Holiness Movement," unpublished student paper, Northern Illinois University, 1968.

²²Brooks, *Divine Church*, iii.

ideas had deep Old Testament roots. “The true Church resided in embryo in the fellowship of grace experienced by the redeemed and restored pair [Adam and Eve].²⁴ The unity envisaged for the New Testament Church was the unity of the Old Testament people of God under “one true God,” “one true law,” “one true worship,” etc.²⁵ Any conception of the Church which is contrary to unity is untrue and unnatural.

“The Church,” he contended further, “now exists under the dispensation of the Spirit . . . the dispensation of liberty. . . .” This freedom creates worship characterized, not by “a formal subserviency with rites,” but rather by an “interior, heartfelt spirituality.” Worship is not to be shaped by all the old shadows of traditional ceremonies, but rather by the new spirituality nurtured by the Holy Spirit in each individual member. Most significantly, he said, “The Church does not come into existence to make its communicants spiritual, but rather, because they are spiritual. . . .”²⁶ This did not mean, however, that all its members are entirely sanctified, for “one may be a true Christian who is not a perfect Christian.”²⁷

Additional marks of the true church were its “diffusive and assimilative character.” It is “the Church of all humanity.” The sacraments in their simplicity teach the spirituality of the Church.²⁸ The “power of miracle” was intended to be “a permanent investiture.” In that the Church is the continuity of the ministry of Christ, “it is to be accompanied by the same phenomena of supernaturalism. We have seen little of the true Church “since the time of the early apostasy,” Brooks continues, therefore, as it reasserts itself, there also will be “a reassertion of the original gifts.”²⁹

After defending each of these signs of the true church in some detail, he concludes that only with the restoration of such a church, a New Testament Church of God, untrammelled with human laws, ordinances and priesthoods, could the holiness revival continue to flourish and conserve its victories. The “spirit of holiness” opposes the “spirit of sect; therefore, “the holiness movement as such cannot be affiliated with the sects,” even holiness sects such as the Wesleyan Methodist and the Free Methodist

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 3.

²⁵Ibid., 4-5.

²⁶Ibid., 11.

²⁷Ibid., 13.

²⁸Ibid., 13-16.

²⁹Ibid., 20-21.

churches. Although both of these ardently espoused and promoted the holiness cause, they still were part of the old system of Rome and the Reformation.³⁰

By his primitivistic appeal, Brooks had turned the tables completely on the sects, which were accusing his radical movement of “come-out-ism.” His appeal to Biblical authority declared the existing sects to be the source of disunity and a hindrance to the restoration of true apostolic order, worship, and experience by their refusal to establish New Testament Churches “on the holiness line.”

The Church At Pentecost: Experiential Primitivism

If we adopt primitivistic categories used by Richard Hughes to explain the development of the concept in the American churches,³¹ we may conclude the following. John Wesley’s appeal to the Bible, to the early church fathers, and to tradition, all strengthening his conviction that the doctrine of Christian perfection was the ultimate goal of salvation in Christ, was an expression of *ethical primitivism*. The appeals of Warner, Brooks, and Washburn to the New Testament Church, to free this doctrine from what they believed was its entrapment within the sectarian divisions of their day, constituted an *ecclesiastical primitivism*. The full expression of Hughes’ third category, *experiential primitivism*, may be found in the phenomenal growth of the importance of the Pentecost event to the movement’s self-understanding and vision as the century progressed.

John Wesley had explicated his doctrine of Christian Perfection within the classical Christological context in which he had found it in the Greek Fathers and in other traditional sources. But it was the more pneumatological-dispensational context within which John Fletcher, the first systematic theologian of Methodism, developed the doctrine that set the tone for the expectations and experience of the American holiness revival. Fletcher’s paradigm brought such themes as Pentecost, Baptism of the Spirit, and “new age of the Spirit” into play within Methodism and the Holiness and Pentecostal revivals. Throughout the nineteenth century, a flood of literature on the Holy Spirit, unparalleled in Christian history, reinforced this “Pentecostalism.”³² The theme, fed in turn by the excep-

³⁰*Ibid.*, 267-272.

³¹Richard Hughes, “Christian Primitivism as Perfectionism: From Anabaptists to Pentecostals,” in Stanley Burgess, ed., *Reaching Beyond: Chapters in the History of Perfectionism* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 239-245.

tional tide of revival being experienced in camp meetings and union meetings for the “Promotion of Holiness,” raised new expectations of divine intervention and leadership in human life through Holy Ghost power and miracles of direct divine intervention and guidance in human affairs. All of these set the stage for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and its accompanying Pentecostal motifs to come to the fore in a measure not experienced in the church since Pentecost itself.

As the revival progressed, nothing less than the Pentecostal experience of purification of the heart and enduement with power for life and witness by the baptism with “the Holy Spirit and fire” marked the true apostolic church for many holiness adherents. “The remarkable days described in Acts 2” had not ended, but had “opened a glorious dispensation of the Spirit” and “were being repeated. . . .”³³ Back to Pentecost was the cry heard in much of the preaching and literature of the revival. In gospel songs and hymns such as George Bennard’s “Pentecostal Fire is Falling” and Mrs. C. H. Morris’s “Another Pentecost,”³⁴ the Pentecost event became the lodestone of the movement’s expectations and experience.

It is not practical here to outline the persistency of the rising tide of these themes within the movement. Again, a concise summary of their application by a well-known representative leader, Seth Cook Rees,³⁵ Quaker holiness evangelist, will suffice.

In his treatise, *The Ideal Pentecostal Church*, Rees, like Brooks and Warner before him, rooted his arguments for the nature of the true church in the whole history of God’s relationship with humankind. “For at least six thousand years,” Rees wrote, “God has had his idea of what the Pentecostal Church should be,” and “God has not left us in the dark as to what his

³²Martin Marty, *The Irony of It All, 1893-1919*. Vol. 1 of *Modern American Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 239

³³Adam Wallace, *A Modern Pentecost: Embracing a Record of the Sixteenth National Camp-Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness Held at Landisville, Pa., July 23rd to August 1st, 1873* (Philadelphia: Methodist Home Journal Publishing House, 1873), viii.

³⁴R. E. McNeill, J. F. Knapp, M. G. Standley, eds., *Praise of His Glory Songs* (Cincinnati, Ohio: God’s Bible School and Revivalist, 1922), hymn #151; G. A. McLaughlin, J. M. and M. J. Harris, eds., *Spiritual Songs* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Co, 1908), hymn #16.

³⁵Rees (1854-1933) was a Quaker pastor and evangelist who, with Martin Wells Knapp, a Methodist, founded the Apostolic Holiness Union in 1897. It later became the Pilgrim Holiness Church.

thought for the Church is.” Therefore, “If we can know God’s opinion . . . it is of no consequence to us what churches think or what creeds say. It makes no difference about the jargon of the schools. From the ‘Thus saith the Lord’ there can be no appeal.”³⁶ Whoever sought “God’s opinion” concerning the “Ideal Pentecostal Church” would find it “plainly enunciated” in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.³⁷ Here Rees discovered the marks of the true church and, as in Wesley’s soteriological primitivism, they were functional marks, not formal in nature.

Rees noted that the church that sought to model Pentecost would be a church of regenerate people who, like the disciples at the first Pentecost, had “forsaken their nets,” had “hugged reproach” and “followed Christ.” The day of Pentecost found them “blessing and praising God.” Nor were they afraid of “the emotional element in salvation,” but really “felt” joy and peace in the Holy Ghost.”³⁸ “The ideal Pentecostal church,” he continued, was to be “a clean church,” preaching “holiness through the experience of entire sanctification, wrought by the omnipotent energies of the Holy Ghost.” This, he declared, was the “‘baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire’ administered by Christ himself.” The “Pentecostal company” always consists of those “who have received their own Pentecost and live pure, holy lives.”³⁹ A “Pentecostal electrocution” has put an end to their self-seeking sectarianism, the kind of sectarianism which in his day, he observed, failed to sympathize with any movement, “however praiseworthy,” which was “not in full union” with itself “on all points.”⁴⁰

The Pentecostal Church was a *powerful* church, whose strength did not lie in reliance on large memberships,⁴¹ intellectual acumen (although it “places no premium on ignorance”), or great wealth. All these, Rees charged, characterized the popular churches of his time and were especially evident in their neglect of the poor. He concluded that the strength of the ideal Pentecostal Church was “the Holy Ghost himself,” coming into the church by coming into individual members and so “purifies, electrifies and endues her with power.”⁴²

Another mark of the “Ideal Pentecostal Church” was that it is “a

³⁶Seth Rees, *The Ideal Pentecostal Church* (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Revivalist Office, 1897), 6.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 7.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 10.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 18.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 20-22.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 28.

witnessing Church.” At no point is the force of the Pentecostal hermeneutic revealed more sharply than when this Indiana Quaker concluded that “never once did the fire-touched disciples think of sitting down and holding a silent meeting.” “Testimony was the ‘life’ of the church of Pentecost.”⁴³ Rees declared that interior religion without external witness accomplishes nothing. If Jesus, he observed, had delivered lectures on the Talmud instead of preaching the Sermon on the Mount, if he had talked hazily of evolution instead of exhorting to holiness, he would never have been put to death.⁴⁴

Nowhere does the radical nature of the holiness movement’s Pentecostal primitivism stand out more distinctly, however, than in Rees’ contention that “The Ideal Pentecostal Church” was “without distinction as to the prominence given to the sexes.” He argued his case for the equality of men and women with the authority of the supporting account of the original Pentecost event: They “continued with one accord . . . *with the women.*” “Your *daughters* shall prophesy.” “Upon the *handmaids* . . . I will pour out my Spirit.” Women, as well as men, were to prophesy when “this holy baptism with the Spirit” was administered. Rees insisted that “originally, woman was not only man’s helpmeet but his equal. . . . Sin cursed and degraded her. . . , but, by “the grace of God . . . woman is elevated, until at Pentecost she stands, a second Eve . . . sharing in the beatific blessings of the baptism with the Spirit.” He concluded that “No church that is acquainted with the Holy Ghost will object to the public ministry of women.”⁴⁵

The church of Pentecost was also a church that was liberal with its finances. “Whenever Pentecostal fire has fallen upon men or churches,” Rees observed, “it has invariably burned the purse strings off.”⁴⁶ Whenever and wherever this “generosity-breeding flame” falls from the skies, such money raising schemes as “pew-rents, entertainments, bazaars, festivals, poverty suppers and all other devilish nonsense will disappear” from the churches.⁴⁷ “The Ideal Pentecostal Church” was said to be a “demonstrative church.” The members are “filled with new wine.” Pentecostal endowments, he observed, were always “noised abroad.”⁴⁸ While, not encouraging “thunder out of an empty cloud,” Rees complained that “that freedom from excitement which is so complimented by the world,

⁴³Ibid., 35.

⁴⁴Ibid., 38-39.

⁴⁵Ibid., 40-41.

⁴⁶Ibid., 40.

⁴⁷Ibid., 45.

⁴⁸Ibid., 47.

and which is so common in nearly all Protestant churches, will never bring a harvest of souls.”⁴⁹ This was an appeal to primitive authority in support of the more open pattern of worship which had once been fostered by the “shouting Methodists,” was later nurtured in the holiness camp meetings, and finally was institutionalized in the services and rituals of holiness and Pentecostal churches.

Such a Pentecostal Church would be “magnetic” and would “never want for crowds.” It would purify itself of all reliance on human talents and means and allow the Holy Spirit to preach the message.⁵⁰ The result would be a congregation of “healthy converts” who would continue “steadfast in the apostles doctrine and fellowship.” The baptism of the Holy Ghost was their “safeguard against backsliding.”⁵¹

Summary

In summary, we go back to the beginning of our discussion and say that the holiness movement was a tradition torn between the two polarities of restitutionism and reform. Its strong attachment to the historical church did not prevent some of its adherents from taking up ecclesiastical primitivism with a commitment as thorough as that of the Mormons or Christians (Disciples) before them. On the other hand, an even stronger element within it took up an experiential primitivism ordered by the Pentecost event, a primitivism that turned some of its number to the even more radical experientialism of its Pentecostal sibling.

The larger portion of the movement, however, remained committed to its historical roots in Anglicanism, Wesleyanism, and even the Reformation, and created holiness churches, disclaiming any charges of “come-outism.” But it was a primitivist model of Pentecost, a Church of the Spirit, often explicated in the natural, ecclesiastical and spiritual freedom of the holiness camp meeting which shaped their doctrine, worship, and mission. The tradition represents a “via media” among the traditions we have under review. Today, the Pentecostalism dimension of this tradition has diminished, with the historic “main-line” inclinations coming more and more to the fore. Like many other contemporary churches, the holiness denominations struggle with the questions of self-identity and mission to a degree they have never experienced before. For those on the “via media,” it is difficult to escape a double mind, even as one seeks holiness.

⁴⁹Ibid., 49.

⁵⁰Ibid., 51-59.

⁵¹Ibid., 60-64.

DANIEL SYDNEY WARNER: JOINING HOLINESS AND ALL TRUTH

by

Barry L. Callen

In its earliest decades the Holiness Movement in America sought to be a reforming force *within* existing church structures. Eventually many movement adherents, often reluctantly, became separatists, judging themselves forced out of the churches because of their commitment to holiness.¹

The Holiness Movement was “reformationist” early; elements of it later became more “restorationist” based on “primitivist” ideals often associated with the holiness emphasis. Daniel Warner (1842-1895) and the Church of God movement (Anderson, Ind.) he helped inspire came especially early in this “separatist” process, although his motivation was anything but the further dividing the church by setting up another human organization, even one justified by a concern for holiness. As early as 1880, Warner became an aggressive, idealistic “separatist,” not only from the established churches, but also from the formal structures of the Holiness Movement that seemed insistent on supporting them.

Warner’s come-outism was inspired by a vision of the church outside *all* denominations, enabled by the dynamic of holiness. He cared deeply about the unity of believers, saw holiness as the way to it, and judged the

¹For a tracing of this process, see Melvin Dieter elsewhere in this *WTJ* issue.

continuing existence of multiple and often competitive denominational structures to be an evil among God's people that God intended to end.² Years later many other holiness people would feel "pushed out" of their denominational homes by the nominalism of unresponsive church establishments. They would organize their own alternatives. Warner, by contrast, "came out" in response to his own vision of what he had come to understand as God's higher will for the sanctification of the church itself.

Sounding The Trumpet

Participants in the early Wesleyan/Holiness Movement apparently were avid readers. Holiness papers were common, sometimes competitive, and often ceased publication altogether or merged with others. For example, the official paper of the Church of the Nazarene, *Herald of Holiness*, was established as this denomination's official organ in 1912, but its history stretches back into Warner's time. Four papers lay behind this one, and "each of these had at least two direct ancestors."³ A similar pattern is seen in the earliest editorial work of Daniel Warner.

The first issue of the *Gospel Trumpet* appeared January 1, 1881. It originated from Rome City, Indiana, and was a merging of *The Pilgrim*, published in Indianapolis by G. Haines, and the *Herald of Gospel Freedom*. Warner was founding editor, with publishing supervision provided by the Northern Indiana Eldership of the Churches of God (Winebrennerian) through whom Warner was ministering. Warner's subsequent ministry would be felt by the world largely through the medium of this new holiness paper. Although he did not know it at the time, he was "standing on the threshold of an exciting adventure for both himself and the whole Christian church" (Smith 1965, 9).

The new paper carried this statement of purpose: "The glory of God in the salvation of men from all sin, and the union of all saints upon the Bible." Expressed here were the major burdens of Warner. He had been "disillusioned with the shortcomings of the denominational system of his time—the fierce and unbrotherly rivalries, the rigidity of creedal systems, the lack of any real and deep commitment to serious Christian living on the part of so many nominal church members. With Bible in heart and hand, and by faith, Warner saw something better than this . . ." (Phillips 1979, 21).

²For a full presentation of the evolution and application of the come-outism vision of Warner, see Barry Callen, *It's God's Church!: The Life and Legacy of Daniel Warner* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1995).

³Paul Bassett, in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Spring/Fall, 1993), 104.

Only two issues of the new *Gospel Trumpet* were published in Rome City. Haines owned a job-printing business in Indianapolis, the state's rapidly growing capital city, so he suggested moving the *Trumpet* there. Seeming a progressive opportunity, in February, 1881, this modest holiness periodical found a home at 70 North Illinois Street, Indianapolis, very close to the railroad station and the new statehouse then under construction. This was an exhilarating setting, certainly different for Daniel and his wife Sarah whose backgrounds were in small Ohio farming communities. Maybe now, it was hoped, the publishing of holiness would move more to the center stage of public life.

By the summer of 1881 the Haines-Warner partnership had dissolved. Warner paid Haines \$100 for his share of this obviously modest operation. The negotiation led to the reluctant agreement of Haines not to launch a rival holiness paper in Indianapolis. He soon did, however, even sending samples of his new paper to *Gospel Trumpet* subscribers. All was not "perfect" in holiness circles!

Warner soon wrote of this awkward circumstance. He deplored such a development as necessarily hurtful to the holiness cause. Haines is said to have brought to the previous partnership "a chilling iceberg, an austere, worldly, complaining, and mere money policy." Warner notes that the primary time commitment of Haines had been to his other role as Indianapolis agent for the *Cincinnati Times-Star*.⁴ Already beginning was what has been called "the miracle of survival,"⁵ a miracle that would have to last for decades, clear to the present time. Publishing the holiness message, especially in opposition to the denominational establishments, was hardly a lucrative or persecution-free business. It required very dedicated and sacrificial servants. Daniel Warner was prepared to be one of these.

Warner managed on his own the best he could. He moved the printing office to his home at 625 West Vermont Street near downtown Indianapolis and built a makeshift office beside the house by using lumber from an old horse stable that he tore down himself. There he began printing the paper, setting all type and doing all the folding and addressing by hand—and by himself at first. There were only a few hundred subscribers to serve in this tedious way. When winter came, the

⁴Editorial, *Gospel Trumpet*, June 1, 1881.

⁵See the history of the Gospel Trumpet Company (Warner Press) by this title (Phillips 1979).

drafty little office was not at all practical and there was no money to plaster the walls so that the cold could be kept out. There seemed only one option. He moved the noisy and ill-smelling printing press into the kitchen of his home, reporting that “Dear Wife tendered her kitchen to the Lord for the use of publishing salvation. Praise the Lord!” An independent report from Sarah is not available, but one wonders how thankful she really was to have her kitchen so invaded.

Sarah Warner had just given birth to their second child, son Sidney. There they were, with little money, a new baby, a press in the kitchen, and few people who seemed to care. About the only bright spot was a subscriber in Michigan, a Joseph Fisher who was so enthusiastic about the *Gospel Trumpet* that he sent generous support and voluntarily sold subscriptions. Soon Warner was listing Fisher on the masthead as the co-publisher.

Growing Come-Outism Conviction

As the issues of the *Trumpet* kept coming, in spite of all obstacles, a conviction of Warner’s kept growing. In part it was rooted in the theological emphases of John Winebrenner (1797-1860) that had shaped him from his earliest life as a Christian. Winebrenner loomed large in Warner’s mind as “a spiritual father,” to the extent that “his very mental furniture bore the Winebrennerian stamp.”⁶ This stamp centers in a five-point theological transformation that Winebrenner experienced across the 1820s⁷ and led by 1830 to the rupture of his relationship with the German Reformed Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. These five points are:

1. The Bible is the Word of God, the only authoritative rule of faith and practice. This “only” left no place for church tradition, including human inventions like creeds, catechisms, rituals, etc.;
2. Spiritual regeneration, being born again, always is necessary for a person to become a real Christian and church member. Thus the Christian faith is rooted in the Bible and in such spiritual experience;

⁶L. Leon Long, “To What Extent Was Warner a Winebrennerian?” in *The Church Advocate* (February, 1976), 6.

⁷This transformation of Winebrenner was encouraged by his involvement in revivalism and his interaction with leaders of groups like the United Brethren in Christ that reflected roots in German Pietism and other “radical” elements of the Protestant Reformation that had been transplanted to America.

3. Humankind possesses free moral agency and the ability, with the Spirit's assistance, to repent, believe, and be saved. Thus denied were the Reformed doctrines of predestination, providence, and perseverance;

4. Baptism and the Lord's Supper became seen as symbolic "ordinances" rather than grace-conveying "sacraments." Baptism necessarily is to be preceded by belief and regeneration and is best administered by immersion (eliminating the appropriateness of infant baptism). Footwashing also joined the list of the church's ordinances;

5. Regarding the church, the only requirement for membership in a local congregation is having been born again and the true Biblical name for a local congregation or for the Body of Christ as a whole is "Church of God."⁸

Warner's own spiritual conversion was in a revival meeting being held near Montpelier, Ohio, in 1865. The evangelist was a minister of the General Eldership of the Churches of God (Winebrennarian). Warner then received his ministerial license from the West Ohio Eldership in 1867, having decided that this body represented best the true faith and practices of the New Testament church.⁹

After years of ministry, Warner's relationship with the West Ohio Eldership would also rupture, deepening his suspicion that human structures and creeds are a human intrusion into the life of God's church. This suspicion would deepen further as he became involved in the holiness movement and saw in this the experiential means whereby Christians could counter the evil of sectarian chaos. In addition, in 1868, near the very beginning of his ministry, Warner had purchased a copy of the book *Discourses on the Nature of Faith* by William Starr (1857). Starr was a Congregational minister in Illinois who felt his ministry stifled by a restrictive church establishment. Sometime before 1880, Warner wrote this annotation in his personal copy, alongside Starr's call for believers to rise up against sectarianism and bring to reality a "holy and unified church":

⁸J. Harvey Gossard, "John Winebrenner: Founder, Reformer, and Businessman" in *Pennsylvania Religious Leaders* (Historical Study No. 16, The Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1986), 89-90.

⁹For a recounting of this whole story, see Barry Callen, *It's God's Church! Life and Legacy of Daniel Warner* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1995).

If this holy man, perceiving only the eavil [sic] of division, is thus moved to cry out, what must be the guilt of one who sees both the eavil [sic] and remedy and yet will close his mouth and see the world go to ruin? (231).

The conviction that God was calling for a freedom of the church from denominational division, on the basis of Christian holiness, had matured in Warner's thinking.¹⁰ It was time to act.

The New Commission

By 1880 Daniel Warner himself was ready to cry out and act out against sectarianism. An increasing number of leaders of the holiness movement were feeling significant tension between their passion for church renewal and the viability of continuance in their home denominations. Soon there would be new holiness-oriented denominations, one way of finally dealing with the holiness movement's "search for order" (Dieter 236-275). Another way was that of the more "radical" holiness reformers who soon became known as "come-outers." Prominent and one of the first among them was Daniel Warner.¹¹

Warner now was growing impatient with compromises to his vision. He was gripped increasingly by the "new commission" that he felt God had given him. According to the March 7, 1878, entry in his personal journal:

The Lord showed me that holiness could never prosper upon sectarian soil encumbered by human creeds and party names, and he gave me a new commission to join holiness and all truth together and build up the apostolic church of the living God.

¹⁰The major published expression of this conviction at the time was Warner's *Bible Proofs of the Second Work of Grace* (1880). There also soon would be his booklet *The Church of God* (1885) that reflects key themes of Thomas Campbell's classic restorationist *Declaration and Address* (1809) and bears close resemblance to John Winebrenner's booklet *The Church of God* (1829, rev. ed. 1885, Harrisburg, Pa.: Board of Publication, General Eldership of the Churches of God).

¹¹Others were John P. Brooks, leader of a movement in Missouri that became the Church of God (Holiness), and James Washburn, leader of the Southern California and Arizona Holiness Association from which the Holiness Church was organized. See especially John Brooks, *The Divine Church: A Treatise on the Origin, Constitution, Order, and Ordinances of the Church; Being a Vindication of the New Testament Ecclesia, and an Exposure of the Anti-Scriptural Character of the Modern Church or Sect* (Columbia, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1891).

This new commission carried major implications that, at least in Warner's judgment, could not be ignored any longer. Like a growing number of others, he "sought to apply the logic of Christian perfectionism, with all its ultraistic inclinations of the perfectionist mentality, to the church question" (Dieter 246). The first compromise that Warner called into serious question was his own participation in the Holiness Association. By doing so, he was "the first to propose such radical applications of the revival's promise of unity among all true Christian believers" (Dieter 246).

Both Warner's affinity with and his questioning of the reform-from-the-inside approach of the mainstream holiness movement can be seen in one setting in 1880. A convention of the Western Union Holiness Association convened from December 15-19 in the Brooklyn Methodist Episcopal Church in Jacksonville, Illinois.¹² The planning committee said that this gathering, comprised of about two hundred holiness leaders from a range of denominations and states, would only be in the interests of holiness. Thus, it was to be "strictly and purely undenominational." People were to come not representing any particular denomination, but only to celebrate and strengthen "the holiness cause."

One delegate was to represent each holiness periodical, with all delegates to be in agreement with the doctrine of holiness "that sets forth entire sanctification as an instantaneous work of God, wrought in the heart through faith, subsequent to conversion." Likely Daniel Warner was present both as a representative of the *Herald of Gospel Freedom* and because he had been asked to make a formal address, an honor in this select ecumenical crowd. He also was appointed to the program committee charged with the responsibility of planning the next convention.

The topic of Warner's address to the convention was "The Kind of Power Needed to Carry the Holiness Work." The main point he made was that "it is the power of God Himself that is needed for this work." He warned that "the devil is set against this work. . . . We need God's power to the fullest degree promised to meet this adversary." "God is looking around to find someone he can trust," announced Warner. God "generally finds them among the holy ones."

¹²See the published *Proceedings* (1881) now housed in the archives of Anderson University. Also see John Leland Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956, 136), and Charles Edwin Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism* (The Scarecrow Press, 1974, 55).

Some of the statements by other speakers heard by Warner at this convention stirred the evolving struggle within him. For instance, Thomas Doty from Cleveland, Ohio, editor of the *Christian Harvester*, said that “if you belong to a church, it is your duty to promote holiness right in it: in the Presbyterian church, as a Presbyterian; in the Baptist church, as a Baptist, etc.” Doty admitted that he disliked the whole denominational idea, but said God “permits it, and so must we.” Warner did not address this issue in his formal remarks, but M. L. Haney (Methodist Episcopal leader) did. He attacked come-outers “who insist on the silly dogma of no-churchism, and favor the disorganization of all Christian forces.”

But J. W. Caughlan, editor of *The Good Way*, realized that there was a real problem to be addressed somehow. Holiness believers needed encouragement and support between holiness camp meetings, especially when and where denominational leaders were unsympathetic to the holiness cause. When the organized church comes into conflict with Christ, suggested Caughlan, maybe that “church” should be “consecrated” on the altar of sacrifice. By endorsing the idea of holiness associations and bands, this Western Convention “was a first step toward creating a potentially separatist group within the church” (Jones 55).

It may be that, as Warner heard such men speak in these ways, “the conviction was being cemented in his heart and mind that there was no room for him and for the burning message he felt in a situation where denominationalism was being exalted and continued membership in a denomination was being made a requirement of continued fellowship and acceptance.”¹³ The message beginning to burn inside Warner tended to question the easy, status-quo assumption that God passively permits rampant division of Christ’s body, the church.

Maybe being a “come-outer” was the way to go. Warner saw the charge of no-churchism as very wrong, unfair, and demeaning of the unifying potential of the promised sanctifying power of the Spirit. He believed deeply in the church and refused to accept the claim that genuine reliance on the Holy Spirit to establish and guide the church inevitably is the way of anarchy. Is God the author of confusion? The church is, after all, God’s church! God is capable of constituting, gifting, and governing believers who are fully yielded to the Holy Spirit. Is that not exactly what the New Testament says? Since holiness cannot prosper on sectarian soil, Warner judged, his new commission to “join holiness and all truth together” impelled him to take definitive action.

¹³Harold Phillips, editorial in *Vital Christianity* (October 20, 1974), 8.

I'm Coming Out!

The strength of Warner's convictions grew and began to be acted out. In April, 1881, he was elected an Adjutant-General in the Salvation Army in Indianapolis. He promised that the *Gospel Trumpet* would carry reports of some "battles and conquests of the Lord's Salvation Army." But the February 8, 1882, issue reported an apparent end of this relationship. Being joined to anything but the Lord now was said to be a trick of Satan.

This vigorous come-out view rooted in a pivotal event in April, 1881. While conducting a revival meeting in Hardinsburg, Indiana, Warner reported that he "saw the church." No longer would he be patient with church bodies that organized their lives on the basis of sect recognition and requirements. For years Warner had been troubled about the inconsistency of his repudiating "sects" in principle and yet continuing to belong to organizations that insisted on basing their memberships on formal sect recognition. Now he no longer would condone the disjunction between his holiness-generated unity vision and the standard acceptance of sect division. What he now "saw" was God's intended alternative, a Spirit-inspired, Spirit-enabled, Spirit-governed, and Spirit-unified gathering of all God's people. Holiness also is to extend to *the church*, not only to the inward experience of individual believers. Visible unity is a key aspect of the church's intended holiness.

Instead of passive acceptance of the usual compromises, Warner determined to be faithful to a fresh vision, a new way of conceiving how things might be for the church of the Spirit. The Israelites of the Exodus and the Babylonian Exile finally were able to see dramatic new possibilities in the worst of circumstances. Their seeing opened their imaginations, inspired their faith, and generated new hope. God always has been in the business of regathering the faithful. God intends a church that is *visible* in this world, not one that is *invisible* (the typical Protestant theory that the true church is inevitably buried out of sight, somewhere within the spoiled "churches" of our sinful world).

Warner now chose to walk the ancient prophetic path that announced God's higher intention. As Merle Strege puts it, Warner rejected "the American religious *status quo*, the business-as-usual way of denominational religion" (96). Since the church really is God's, surely there is a better way of showing it to the world than settling for a network of quarreling and divisive denominations.

This prophetic position brought an immediate crisis in Warner's relationship with the National Holiness Association.¹⁴ "The Spirit showed me," he wrote, "the inconsistency of repudiating sects and yet belonging to an association that is based on sect recognition."¹⁵ No longer would he be patient with the placing of *human* conditions on membership in God's church. He went to a meeting of the Indiana Holiness Association in Terre Haute, Indiana, and tried to get changed the "sect endorsing clause" of the association so that its membership would be open "to all true Christians everywhere" (whether denominational adherents or not). The effort failed. Many holiness people persisted in believing that abandoning the "churches," with all their obvious faults, was not the best way to renew the people of God. So Warner reported in the *Gospel Trumpet* (June 1, 1881): "We wish to co-operate with all Christians, as such, in saving souls—but forever withdraw from all organisms that uphold and endorse sects and denominations in the body of Christ."

The stance of the Holiness Movement at first did not generate for itself the dilemma faced by Warner. Its purpose was to be a trans-denominational renewal force. Its primary concern was not the evil of denominationalism as such, although some leaders were uncomfortable with all the formalized division; it was the evil of nominal Christianity. The intent was that participants in the holiness associations would remain loyal members in their respective denominations so that they could be renewed by the holiness emphasis and return to their denominational homes to broaden the renewal impact.

By the 1880s, however, frustrated by attempts to renew existing churches, many holiness converts had begun considering the possibility of one or more distinctively holiness denominations. Warner was a pioneer of this "come out" trend, although he opposed the very idea of denominations, *even new ones organized under a holiness banner*. The

¹⁴Warner's specific involvement focused primarily in the Indiana Holiness Association, which at one point named him as a vice-president (Dieter 255). He also had significant contact with the larger holiness movement in both Ohio and Illinois.

¹⁵*Gospel Trumpet*, June 1, 1881.

extent of Warner's renewal vision was greater than this, thus the inevitable clash.¹⁶

Reported church historian Henry Wickersham in 1900: "Before this he [Warner] was in good standing with many editors and sectarian holiness workers, but because of his decided stand for the truth, he was denounced in their papers, set at naught by the ministry, and rejected by his former friends" (300). According to sociologist Val Clear (36):

It was in the small cells of the holiness-minded individuals scattered about the country in the 1870s and 1880s that the future adherents of Warner's movement were to be found. Most of the holiness people stayed within their denominations, forming a type of church-within-the-church. But many others were disaffected, felt that Old Ship Zion was sure to sink. For many of these latter persons, D. S. Warner became a spokesman, and the *Gospel Trumpet* was his voice.

The significance of Warner is clear. In this earliest phase of the life of the Church of God movement, "it was Warner who was prophet, teacher, evangelizer, poet, advisor, theologian—the *voice* of the reformation. Since the *Gospel Trumpet* was the only formal organizational entity, it was Warner's dominant personality and the *Trumpet* that kept the movement from disintegrating into a thousand isolated and disconnected parts" (Reardon 24). So far as the larger holiness movement is concerned, Warner is the one who brought to the movement clear elements of the Anabaptist tradition. These elements came in part from his reliance on the central teachings of John Winebrenner and partly from his close association with the Evangelical United Mennonites in northern Indiana.¹⁷

¹⁶In 1993 Barry Callen, a contemporary leader of the Church of God movement, became editor of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, current publication of the holiness body from which Warner withdrew more than a century earlier. A sect-endorsing clause no longer is required by this holiness body. Warner's vision is admired in principle by today's Christian Holiness Association, but it still is not actively pursued as such. The primary agenda remains more the Christianizing of Christianity by in-depth renewal through the holiness experience and the holy life.

¹⁷Says Melvin Dieter (254): Warner's "development of the church as the dwelling place of the Spirit, the baptism of believers only, the centrality of the Word of God in the midst of the congregation as the 'universal law,' the strong sense of mission as a reformer, the strongly apocalyptical tone, and even the retention of the rite of foot washing as an ordinance of the church—all may be closely identified with the Anabaptist tradition."

Having ruptured his formal tie to the holiness movement, Warner wasted no time in questioning his future with the Northern Indiana Eldership of the Churches of God by which he was licensed as a minister. In October, 1881, he attended a meeting of the Eldership in Beaver Dam, Indiana. There he tried and again failed to have accepted the radical implications of his holiness-unity vision. He proposed that this body “conform more perfectly to the Bible standard with reference to government” by ending the practice of granting ministerial licenses and eliminating formal church membership procedures so that all who bore the fruit of true regeneration would belong automatically by the action of God. When this body said a firm “no,” five people walked out of the meeting with Warner, declaring that they were “coming out” of all sectism. Thus was constituted in Beaver Dam the first congregation of the Church of God movement.

This walk-out was repeated later in the same month in Carson City, Michigan. Joseph and Allie Fisher, staunch *Trumpet* supporters, had asked Warner to come to Michigan to speak to a special holiness meeting being held prior to the annual camp meeting of the Northern Michigan Eldership, also a breakaway from the General Eldership of the Churches of God (Winebrennerian) over issues like Freemasonry. The local congregation objected to the holiness meeting, so the Fishers and twenty others, finding this the last straw, left the Eldership.

So a second group had separated from sectarianism. The “Carson City Resolutions” that they agreed to include this: “That we adhere to no body or organization but the church of God, bought by the blood of Christ, organized by the Holy Spirit, and governed by the Bible. . . . That we recognize and fellowship, as members with us in the one body of Christ, all truly regenerated and sincere saints who worship God in all the light they possess, and that we urge all the dear children of God to forsake the snares and yokes of human parties and stand alone in the ‘one fold’ of Christ upon the Bible, and in the unity of the Spirit” (see Callen, 1979, I, 295-96).

Here were elements of the rationale for a new movement, one intending to be truly trans-denominational in the sanctifying and unifying power of the Spirit. Joined were the passion for Christian holiness, the dream of Christian unity, and the belief that the first enables the second, but only when free of the artificial restrictions of human attempts to organize and “run” the church. Human hands must be taken off of God’s church!

Warner's thrust was echoed by John Morrison¹⁸ as he addressed the International Convention of the Church of God movement convened in Anderson, Indiana, in 1963. He told the crowd of thousands that "Christian fellowship ought to be wide enough and warm enough to take in a Christian wherever you may find him." Then Morrison concluded:

So go home loving all Christians; but for heaven's sake don't join any of them! That's right! As I understand it, D. S. Warner's major contention was that a person can be a good Christian and cooperate with other Christians in proper fashion without joining any of the religious organizations known as churches. You do not join the Church—you are born into it! (see Callen, 1979, II, 651).

With the Beaver Dam and Carson City walk-out events, a new "movement" now was gaining momentum and definition. The *Gospel Trumpet* was the movement's primary medium of conveyance, with Warner its tireless visionary and mouthpiece. The initial purpose of this holiness paper changed because of the dramatic events of 1881. Before then the *Gospel Trumpet* had been one of many holiness papers; but after Beaver Dam and Carson City it became Warner's major vehicle for furthering a "cause" extending beyond the goals typical of the larger holiness movement.

This cause drew considerable sympathy from many Christians longing for more vision and power, more holiness and unity than they had found to date. Judges Melvin Dieter: "Warner's promise of a group, gathered together under the guidance and instruction of the sanctifying Spirit, free of denominational and sectarian trammels, as he pictured them, combined with a reformatory, eschatological thrust, carried a certain populist magnetism" (256). Indeed it did, as the last years of the nineteenth century made very clear.

Most holiness people who separated from their denominations during the last quarter of the nineteenth century thought of themselves as "pushed-outers," not "come-outers." They judged themselves chased off by the increasing "carnality" in the churches, a sin situation intolerant of a

¹⁸From 1925 to 1958 Dr. John Morrison was president of Anderson College (University). For detail, see Barry Callen, *Guide of Soul and Mind: The Story of Anderson University* (Anderson, Ind.: Anderson University and Warner Press, 1992).

holiness renewal.¹⁹ Warner was both *pushed out* (West Ohio Eldership) and later intentionally *came out* of the Holiness Association and the Northern Indiana and Northern Michigan Elderships. In all instances, holiness was the key issue. At first, holiness was an unwelcome emphasis. Then holiness generated a unifying vision that called believers out of the compromised and unresponsive denominations. This vision also was intensely opposed by many who judged it idealistic, impractical, even arrogant; but it was embraced enthusiastically by thousands who saw it as the will and direct action of God.

New Movement of the Church of God

Daniel Warner would devote the remaining fourteen years of his life to restoring the unity of God's people through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. He was a "come-outer." He and soon many others "saw the church," a vision of the seamless, undivided body of Christ. Warner began sprinkling the pages of the *Gospel Trumpet* with testimonies of fresh sightings of the church beyond division.²⁰ One of his many poems soon became a central vehicle for singing and celebrating the vision of the Church of God movement concerning the relationship between holiness and the God-intended unity of the church. Reads verse one and the chorus:

How sweet this bond of perfectness,
The wondrous love of Jesus!
A pure fore-taste of heaven's bliss,
O fellowship so precious!

Beloved, how this perfect love,
Unites us all in Jesus!
One heart, and soul, and mind: we prove
the union heaven gave us.²¹

¹⁹See Paul Bassett, *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Spring/Fall, 1993), 74. A good example is the formation of the Free Methodist Church in 1860 following the experience of Rev. B. T. Roberts being "pushed out" of the Methodist Episcopal Church. See L. R. Marston, *From Age To Age a Living Witness* (1960) and Clarence Zahniser, *Earnest Christian: Life and Works of Benjamin Titus Roberts* (1957).

²⁰For examples, see Charles Brown (1939, 1951) and Barry Callen (1979, I, 123-240).

²¹Daniel Warner and Barney Warren, "The Bond of Perfectness," verse one and chorus, as in *Worship the Lord: Hymnal of the Church of God* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1989), 330.

The “perfect love” of sanctification, it was argued, enables Christians to live above sin, including the sin of rending the body of Christ. Human lines of denomination, race, sex, and social status are to be discounted, even ignored in the face of the transforming grace of God in Christ. The emphasis should be on *seeing*, not arrogantly claiming to *be* the whole, pure, undivided church. The vision calls for refusing either to erect or recognize human controls on Christian fellowship. God sets the members in the church. It’s God’s church! The church exists for mission, and disunity is hurtful to the church’s attempt to bear a credible witness in the world.

Warner finally had found a church home. It was not one of the Winebrennerian elderships or the Holiness Movement as such. It was *the whole body of Christ*. He sensed God moving to complete the sixteenth-century Protestant reformation and the eighteenth-century Wesleyan revival in a “last reformation.”²² There was a new sense of liberty and joy, inspiring Warner to compose many new songs that express the fresh vision. Testifies one song by Warner and his faithful colleague Barney Warren: “My soul is satisfied; my soul is satisfied; I am complete in Jesus’ love, and my soul is satisfied.”²³ Another announced, “There’s music in my soul.”

So strongly did Warner feel about the new movement that he later re-numbered the volumes of the *Gospel Trumpet*, repudiating its first three volumes when it had appeared under earlier names and in connection with the Northern Indiana Eldership of the Churches of God. He explained:

Since the *Herald* was started back in the fogs of Babylon, and died before it saw the evening light clearly, we have desired to drop off its three years and cast it back into the burning city where it belonged, and have our volume indicate the actual

²²Late in Daniel Warner’s ministry he increasingly couched his view of the evolving new movement of the Church of God in terms rooted in a church historical interpretation of the Bible’s apocalyptic literature (especially the books of Daniel and Revelation). See *The Cleansing of the Sanctuary* (Warner and Herbert Riggle, 1903), Frederick Smith’s *What the Bible Teaches* (1913) and *The Last Reformation* (1919), and John Stanley, “Unity Amid Diversity: Interpreting the Book of Revelation in the Church of God (Anderson),” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Fall 1990).

²³The full text is found in the current hymnal of the Church of God movement, *Worship the Lord* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1989), 649.

number of years that the *Trumpet* has been sounding. For when a person gets clean out of Babylon, that should be the beginning of months and years to him.²⁴

Historian John Smith summarizes Warner's "enlightenment" experience this way:

He had found the freedom in Christ for which he had so long sought. A new ingredient entered his life. It was as if he had been released from a great load and for the first time was able to stand erect. He felt as though he had stepped from the condemnatory shadow of his own and all other sectarian walls and now stood in the full light of truth—the "evening" light of which the prophet Zechariah had spoken. There was indeed cause for rejoicing. God had begun a new work in the church.²⁵

These breaks from traditionally organized Christian denominations focused on (1) rejecting all sects, (2) refusing to form another, (3) in part by not defining or limiting the new cause by any set creed. The emerging movement was similar to many previous movements by its (1) seeing the church as a voluntary gathering of all and only the truly regenerate (like the Anabaptists, Campbellites, etc.) and (2) highlighting the Bible and the Spirit as together the sufficient guides to all truth (Quakers, etc.). The *distinguishing feature* of this new "cause" was primarily that Warner and others "put all of these emphases in a single package and then wedded them to the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness" (Smith 1980, 48).²⁶

The early tone of this new cause was celebrative in nature and aggressive in style. In the new year's greeting for January, 1882, the *Gospel Trumpet*, that is, editor Daniel Warner, was very plain:

To Babylon and all her concomitants, we promise nothing but fire, sword and hammer, and confounding blasts from the armory of God's Word. We have scarcely begun the bombardment of the wicked harlot city. By the grace of God, we expect to deal with sin and sinners as we never yet have done. . . . We know no man after the flesh, and we seek to please no man.

²⁴*Gospel Trumpet*, August 1, 1889.

²⁵John Smith, in *Vital Christianity* (July 25, 1965), 8.

²⁶Also see John Smith's unpublished doctoral dissertation, "The Approach of the Church of God (Anderson, Ind.) and Comparable Groups to the Problem of Christian Unity" (University of Southern California Graduate School of Religion, 1954).

Propositions Still Worthy of Note

Several editors of other holiness papers, themselves now targets, reacted with criticism of Warner's new stand that claimed to be outside the presumed evils of sectism. Warner sought to answer them at length.²⁷ The new freedom had its own dilemmas—and certainly its detractors (soon even to include Mrs. Warner!). It still does. It also has its vision, its hope, its determination to release the church back into God's control.

In more recent years, and in a more irenic tone, various leaders of the Church of God movement have reflected on the new commission of Daniel Warner and have sought to state ways in which "joining holiness and all truth together" continues to have relevance for the contemporary church's quest for Christian unity. Of particular note are the writings of Charles E. Brown (1939), Barry L. Callen (1969, 1979, 1995), James Earl Massey (1979), John W. V. Smith (1954, 1980), Gilbert Stafford (1973), and Merle Strege (1993).

A former historian of the Church of God movement, John W. V. Smith, recalled (1) that holiness groups have tended to remain aloof from general ecumenical activity and (2) that the work of Daniel Warner is a clear exception to the pattern of holiness leaders giving only marginal attention to the matter of Christian unity. He then offered six "concluding propositions" about the relationship between holiness and unity that reflect the "new commission" of Daniel Warner and remain worthy of careful consideration. They are:

1. Believers in holiness must not be too ready to accept easy answers in rationalizing division in the Church. Even "liberal" Christians pray God's forgiveness for participating in the sin of division.
2. A passionate concern for personal sanctification should not subvert an equally great concern for the doctrine of the Church. It is well to keep in mind that the Apostle Paul used the word *sanctify* in regard to *both* persons and the Church.
3. In the light of Christ's prayer for the Church (John 17), the concepts of "spiritual unity" and "invisible oneness" are inadequate and inconsistent with the apparent implications of "perfect love."

²⁷See the *Gospel Trumpet*, Jan. 16, 1882. Also see Byers, 1921, 299ff.

4. Associationalism and conciliarism are abortive approaches to Christian unity in that they only mitigate the evils of division and do not remove it.
5. Nondenominationalism is an inadequate concept for the full realization of Christian unity in that it expresses primarily a negative rather than a positive character to the Church.
6. This time in Christian history seems to be an especially propitious one for all proponents of holiness to dedicate themselves to giving major attention to the relational implications of this doctrine to the end that, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, we may be able to lead the way toward unification of the whole Church so that, indeed, the world may believe.²⁸

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JOHN WESLEY ON THE ORIGINS OF EVIL¹

by

Barry E. Bryant

One of the more important questions ever confronted by Christian theologians has been how to reconcile the idea that God is loving, good, and just with the presence of evil in the world. The Greek Epicurus summarized the issue well when he asked, "What is the cause of evil?" In answering this question he concluded:

God . . . either wished to take away evils, and is unable; or He is able, and is unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then are evils? or why does He not remove them?²

Epicurus maintained that the existence of evil is logically inconsistent, and self-contradictory with the Christian belief that God is good, all-knowing, and all-powerful.³ That, in brief, is the issue of theodicy, which

¹This was the annual lecture of the Wesley Fellowship, Great Britain, and was read 12 September 1992 in Birmingham, England. Some alterations have been made to the conclusion. Apart from this, it appears as published by the Wesley Fellowship as Occasional Paper No. 7.

²Lactantius, "A Treatise on the Anger of God," xiii (ANF 7:271).

³E.g., Antony Flew, *God and Philosophy* (London: Hutchinson Press, 1966), 48. Also see John Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 92-3; and Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974).

literally means “the justice of God.”⁴ The presence of evil in the world appears to place the Christian doctrine of a just and loving God into a no-win situation.

Wesley had a long interest in theodicy,⁵ often asking, “Whence came evil?”⁶ Without any semblance of impiety, Wesley sought to “justify the ways of God to man”⁷ and ultimately saw theodicy as an important test of God’s ability “to extract good out of evil.”⁸ What this essay will attempt to show is how Wesley answered the question, “Whence came evil and why?” To look at Wesley’s understanding of the origin of evil, the subject will be divided into two sections. The first section will deal with what I shall call Wesley’s aesthetic theme. It will consider topics such as the goodness of God, the goodness of creation, the “chain of being,” good and bad angels. The second section will treat his moral theme, which will show how Wesley accounted for evil, and how he defined it. This theme will be developed within the context of his reaction to the neo-Augustinians of his day, the eighteenth-century optimists. How Wesley answered this question had profound consequences for the remainder of his theology. Finally, I will suggest what I think is a resulting major implication.

⁴The etymology of “theodicy” is derived from the Greek word for God, “theos,” and justice, “dikei.” The word appears to have been coined by Leibniz “in 1697 in a letter to Magliabechi . . . as the title of an intended work” (John Merz, *Leibniz*, London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1884, 101, in John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, London: Macmillan Co. Ltd, 1966, 6 n.).

⁵See *BEW*, 25:240-2 (Dec. 19, 1729), 25:258 (Dec. 11, 1730), 25:264-7 (Jan. 15, 1731); also see *AM* 3(1780):604-6, 607-11; *BEW*, “The Promise of Understanding” (1730), 4:285; *BEW*, “The End of Christ’s Coming” (1781), 2:476. A close inspection of Wesley’s “Sermon Register” reveals twenty-seven instances of preaching from this text (1 John 3:8) between 1742 to 1789, leading Outler to conclude, “This confirms the impression of Wesley’s serious preoccupation, both early and late, with the problem of evil, and especially *moral* evil (*BEW*, 2:471).

⁶E.g., *BEW*, 25:240-2 (Dec. 19, 1729); *BEW*, 2:476, “The End of Christ’s Coming” (1781); *AM* 3(1780):604-6.

⁷A slight misquote from Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I.26, found on the title page of “Predestination Calmly Considered” (1752), which was later republished in *AM* 2(1779), 505 ff, 553 ff, 609 ff. The quote also appeared in “The Great Assize” (1758), *BEW*, I:365; “God’s Approbation of His Works” (1782), *BEW*, II:399; “On the Fall of Man” (1782), *BEW*, II:401; “The Promise of Understanding” (1730), *BEW*, IV:282-3; *JWL* VI:137, (1775).

⁸“On Mourning for the Dead” (1727), *BEW*, 4:239; cf. Augustine, “Enchiridion” (421-23), XI, XXVII (*NPNF1*, 3:240, 246).

1. The Aesthetic Theme

We will begin looking at Wesley's theodicy by considering his aesthetic theme. By this I am referring to Wesley's appreciation of the beauty, grandeur, and wonder of creation, both before and after the fall. The pronounced aesthetic theme in Wesley's doctrine of creation is perhaps one reason that some have been able to argue for a connection between Wesley and English Romanticism.⁹ Wesley's was the day in which Locke and Newton reigned supreme as two of the more innovative and boundary-pushing thinkers of the age. This resulted in a new science that caused others to look at the world differently. Instead of solving most of the mysteries of creation, for Wesley this new science only deepened the mysteries of creation by providing answers to questions, answers that led to even more profound questions.¹⁰ As the questions became more profound, so did Wesley's appreciation for the wonder of creation.

The Goodness of God. While all of this is true, the aesthetic theme of creation as an important part of Wesley's understanding of the origins of evil is not the starting point. The aesthetic theme must begin with the goodness of God. Wesley began his search for the origins of evil by applying to God the moral attributes of justice and goodness,¹¹ while maintaining that God is all-powerful,¹² all-knowing,¹³ and all-wise. A God with such attributes could only create something filled with goodness. The goodness of God was thus the presupposition behind the

⁹See Richard Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism* (Gainesville, Florida: University Presses of Florida, 1984). For a critique of Wesley's aesthetic theme in creation see Joseph Barker, "A Review of Wesley's Notions Respecting the Primeval State of Man and the Universe" (London: 1848), 22.

¹⁰See "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge" (1784), *BEW*, 2:568-86.

¹¹E.g., "The Repentance of Believers" (1767), *BEW*, 1:344-5; "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, IV" (1748), 1:538; "Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law" (1750), *BEW*, 2:12-3; "On the Fall of Man" (1782), 2:411; "God's Love to Fallen Man" (1782), 2:424; "The General Deliverance" (1781), 2:449; "A Call to Backsliders" (1778), *BEW*, 3:211; "The Promise of Understanding" (1730), *BEW*, 4:285-6.

¹²E.g., "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VI" (1748), *BEW*, 1:589; "On Divine Providence" (1786), *BEW*, 2:540-1; "On the Omnipresence of God" (1788), *BEW*, 4:44; "The Unity of the Divine Being" (1789), 4:62; "Public Diversions Denounced" (1732), 4:320-1; "Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty" (1777), *Works*, 10:361-3.

¹³"The Unity of the Divine Being" (1789), *BEW*, 4:62.

aesthetic theme and the goodness of creation. He came to this conclusion by observing creation and developed these observations into a natural philosophy. That the wisdom and goodness of God could be seen in creation was reflected in the title of his natural philosophy, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: or a Compendium of Natural Philosophy* (1763).¹⁴

The Goodness of Creation. Wesley unequivocally believed in the total goodness of creation and that the sum of its goodness was greater than the goodness of its individual parts. He said, for instance: “as every creature was ‘good’ in its primeval state, so, when all were compacted in on general system, ‘behold, they were very good.’”¹⁵ In the “very good” creation before the fall, Wesley was convinced that all was “the most perfect order and harmony,” no “volcanoes or burning mountains,” “no putrid lakes, no turbid or stagnating waters,” “no unwholesome vapours, no poisonous exhalations,” “no violent winter or sultry summer, no extreme either of heat or cold.”¹⁶ All this left Wesley to exclaim:

Such was the state of the creation, according to the scanty ideas that we can now form concerning it, when its great Author, surveying the whole system at one view, pronounced it “very good”! It was good in the highest degree whereof it was capable, and without any mixture of evil.¹⁷

Now the wisdom, as well as the power of God, is abundantly manifested in his creation, in the formation and arrangement of all his works, in heaven above and in the earth beneath; and in adapting them all to the several ends for which they were designed; insomuch that each of them apart from the rest is good, but all together are *very good*; all conspiring together in one connected system, to the glory of God in the happiness of his intelligent creatures.¹⁸

Here, the aesthetic theme clearly emerges. Wesley believed creation before the fall was “very good,” the best it could possibly have been. He was convinced that the goodness of creation was

¹⁴This went through several editions, being expanded with virtually each edition: (1763) 2 vols., 1st edn; (1770) 3 vols., 2nd edn; (1777) 5 vols., 3rd edn.

¹⁵“God’s Approbation of His Works” (1782), *BEW*, 2:388.

¹⁶“God’s Approbation of His Works” (1782), *BEW*, 2:390-1.

¹⁷“God’s Approbation of His Works” (1782), *BEW*, 2:396-97.

¹⁸“The Wisdom of God’s Counsels” (1784), *BEW*, 2:552.

a firm foundation laid on which we may stand and answer all the cavils of minute philosophers; all the objections which “vain men who would be wise” make to the goodness or wisdom of God in the creation. All these are grounded upon an entire mistake, namely, that the world is now in the same state it was at the beginning. And upon this supposition they plausibly build abundance of objections. But all these objections fall to the ground when we observe this supposition cannot be admitted. The world at the beginning was in a totally different state from that wherein we find it now. Object therefore whatever you please to the present state either of the animate or inanimate creation, whether in general or with regard to any particular instances, and the answer is read: these are not now as they were in the beginning. Had you therefore heard that vain King of Castile crying out with exquisite self-sufficiency, “If I had made the world I would have made it better than God Almighty has made it,”¹⁹ you might have replied: “No: God Almighty—whether you know it or not—did not make it as it is now. He himself made it better, unspeakably better than it is at present. He made it without any blemish, yea, without any defect. He made no corruption, no destruction in the inanimate creation. He made not death in the animal creation, neither its harbingers, sin and pain. It was only [. . .] after man, in utter defiance of his Maker, had eaten of the tree of knowledge, that [. . .] a whole army of evils, totally new, totally unknown till then, broke in upon rebel man, and all other creatures, and overspread the face of the earth.”²⁰

Wesley’s argument for the “best possible world” was a proposition that can be known to be true or false without any reference to experience, something that is inconsistent with his method of deriving knowledge from observation, or empiricism.²¹ He reached this conclusion only by imagining what the present world would have been without evil and sin.

¹⁹See *BEW*, 2:397 note 43, part of which says, “The ‘vain king’ was Alphonso X, ‘El Sabio’ (1221-84),” and his ironic aphorism survives in many different versions. Cf. John Norris, “Sermon Preached Before the University of Oxford, Mar. 29, 1685,” p. 2, where mention is made of “that arrogant and peevish mathematician who charged the architect with want of skill in the mechanism of the world” saying he could have done better.”

²⁰“God’s Approbation of the His Works” (1782), *BEW*, 2:397-8.

²¹Cf. Bruce Reichenbach, *Evil and a Good God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 121.

Once he did he was convinced a better world could not have been created than this world without blemish, defect, corruption, or propensity to destruction. To have imagined otherwise would have been an affront to “the goodness or the wisdom of God in the creation.” God in divine goodness and wisdom, attributes of divine morality and omniscience, created from divine omnipotence the best world possible.

This did not prevent Wesley from appreciating nature even as it now has been marred by the fall. His, *Natural Philosophy* was a well developed celebration of God’s power, wisdom, and goodness even in a post-fall creation. He concludes that natural philosophy as a disciplined observation of even a fallen creation is still capable of demonstrating to its observers the existence of God,²² not replacing standing Revelation (i. e., Scriptures), but as support to it, subordinate to the Holy Spirit. There is implied by this a natural revelation, or a revelation through nature that can be seen in Wesley’s natural philosophy as a whole, all of which was presupposed by the aesthetic theme within his search for the origins of evil and the goodness of creation.

Wesley and the “Chain of Being.” The principle concept and structure beneath Wesley’s doctrine of the utter goodness of creation is what has been called by some the “chain of being,” or the “principle of plenitude.” Wesley described it in this way:

Every part was exactly suited to the others, and conducive to the good of the whole. There was “a golden chain” (to use the expression of *Plato*)²³ “let down from the throne of God”—an exactly connected series of beings, from the highest to the lowest: from dead earth, through fossils, vegetables, animals, to man, created in the image of God, and designed to know, to love, and enjoy his Creator to all eternity.²⁴

This entire concept was developed at great length in his *Natural Philosophy*.²⁵ Wesley began this discussion by acknowledging Locke’s thoughts on

²²*NP* (1777), 5:225-6.

²³“The ‘proof-text’ here is Plato’s *Thaetetus*, 153C, where Plato cites Homer’s *Iliad*, viii.19, as a proof-text for the phrase [. . .] ‘the golden chain,’” see Outler *BEW*, 396 n. 40.

²⁴“God’s Approbation of His Works” (1782), *BEW*, 2:396-97. Cf. Locke, *Essay*, III. vi.12, where he does not insist upon the necessity of plenitude, saying its existence is only probable.

²⁵*NP* (1777), 4:57 ff.

the subject,²⁶ but quickly proceeded to add: “This reflection upon the *scale of beings* is pursued at large by one of the finest writers of the age, Mr. Bonnet of Geneva, in that beautiful work, ‘The Contemplation of Nature.’”²⁷ From there he proceeded to extract Bonnet’s work. In the “chain of being,” referred to by Wesley as the “golden chain,” all the parts “are admirably connected together, to make up one universal whole.”²⁸ There has never been a time in which such a variety of writers from such a variety of disciplines talked so much about the chain of being than in the eighteenth century. Writers such as Joseph Addison, William King, Lord Bolingbroke, Pope, Haller, Thomson, Akenside, Count De Buffon,²⁹ Goldsmith, Diderot, Kant, Lambert, Herder, and Schiller all drew from this theme new or previously evaded consequences.³⁰ It was within this rich context that Wesley constructed his own understanding of the chain of being.

One aspect of his understanding was that in the paradise state this “chain of being” was used to convey the blessings of God as they “flowed through man to the inferior creatures; as man was the great channel of communication between the Creator and the whole brute creation; so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off.”³¹ This based Wesley’s hierarchical construction of the chain on the role of mediation, not on function and usefulness. The implication is that, in the Wesleyan model, Adam and Eve were there to serve creation in a “quasi-sacramental” way—by being a means of God’s grace.

Another part of his understanding was that while the creation of human beings may have been the pinnacle of the Genesis creation account, man and woman were only the “via media,” the middle link in the chain of being.³² It must be noted, however, that in his comments on Psalm 8:5 (“Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels”) in *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*, Wesley said,

²⁶*NP* (1777), 4:58-9; cf. Locke, *Essay*, III.6.12.

²⁷*NP* (1777), 4:60.

²⁸“Of Evil Angels” (1783), *BEW*, 3:16.

²⁹For Wesley’s sound rebuke of Buffon’s *Natural History*, see “Remarks on The Count De Buffon’s ‘Natural History’”, *AM*, 7(1782); in *Works*, 13:448-55.

³⁰Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 183-4.

³¹“The General Deliverance” (1781), *BEW*, 2:442.

³²Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 189-95. An opinion also held by Locke (*Essay*, III.vi.12); Addison (*Spectator*, no. 621, Nov. 17, 1714); Bolingbroke (*Fragments in Works* (1809), VIII.44, 186; and Pope (*Essay on Man*).

the words more literally rendered are, *Thou madest him a little less than God*. And hence some have inferred, that man in his original state was the highest of all creatures.³³

With this possible exception aside, we are still left with the question, “What is above humanity in the chain of being?”

“Chain of Being” and “Plurality of Habitable Worlds.” Many in the eighteenth century supposed that higher life forms on other planets were above humanity in the chain. As Lovejoy has shown, in 1764 Bonnet supposed there could be life on other planets, and on those other planets higher life forms could be found to fill the gaps in the chain of being between humanity and God, leaving angelic life forms to fill the gap beyond that.³⁴

Bonnet was not the first to contemplate the plurality of habitable worlds. The plurality of worlds was a tradition of thought with a history in its own right, a tradition familiar to Wesley. It was suggested as early as Cicero in *On the Nature of the Gods*,³⁵ a work well known by Wesley and quoted no less than eight times in his sermons alone.³⁶

Additionally, Wesley displayed familiarity with at least three popular authors on the subject.³⁷ Two make something of an obscure appearance in his *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation*—Louis Dutens, *Inquiry into the Origin of the Discoveries Attributed to the Moderns* (1769) and Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle, *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*.³⁸ The other, Christian Huygens (1629-95) and his work, *Celestial Worlds Discovered, Or Conjectures on the Planetary Worlds* (English translation, 1689), Wesley quoted in his sermon, “What is Man” (1787). Wesley first read this work in September 1759 and remarked:

I read Mr. Hygens’s [sic] *Conjectures on the Planetary World*. He surprised me. I think he clearly proves that the moon is not inhabitable; that there are neither “Rivers nor mountains on

³³ENOT, 3 vols (1st vol. 1765). The exact date of publication is disputed because of its being published in weekly installments. This was not a work by Wesley, but an extraction of Matthew Henry’s *Exposition*, and Poole’s *Annotations*.

³⁴*Contemplation de la Nature*, 2nd ed. (1769), 1:23-24, 84, in Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 194-5.

³⁵I.x.25, cf. I.xxxix.98.

³⁶BEW, 1:252; 2:473, 503, 535, 536, 577, 578; 3:86. See 4:587.

³⁷See BEW, 2:503 note 20.

³⁸See, NP (1777), 5:3, 114.

her spotty globe";³⁹ that there is no sea, no water on her surface, nor any atmosphere. And hence he very rationally infers that "Neither are any of the secondary planets inhabited." And who can prove that the primary are? I know the earth is. Of the rest I know nothing.⁴⁰

The important thing is what Wesley made of all this speculation about the plurality of habitable worlds. In the end, he called it

a very favourite notion with all those who deny the Christian revelation—and for this reason: because it affords them a foundation for so plausible an objection to it. But the more I consider that supposition, the more I doubt it. Insomuch that if it were allowed by all the philosophers in Europe, still I could not allow it without stronger proof than any I have met with yet [. . .]. "But," you will say, "suppose this argument fails, we may infer the same conclusion, the plurality of worlds, from the unbounded wisdom, and power, and goodness of the Creator. It was full as easy to him to create thousands or millions of worlds as one. Can anyone then believe that he would exert all his power and wisdom in creating a single world? What proportion is there between this speck of creation and the great God that filleth heaven and earth! While

We know the power of his Almighty hand
could form another world from every sand!"⁴¹

To this boasted proof, this *argumentum palmarium*⁴² of the learned infidels, I answer, Do you expect to find any proportion between finite and infinite? Suppose God had created a thousand more worlds than there are grains of sand in the universe, what proportion would all these together bear to the infinite Creator? Still, in comparison of him, they would be, not a thousand times, but infinitely less than a mite compared to the universe.⁴³

³⁹Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I.291 (see *PWHS*, 5:116).

⁴⁰*JWJ*, 4:354; cf. Aquinas, *ST*, Pt. I, Q. 47, Art. 3.

⁴¹Cf. William Broome, "The forty-third Chapter of Ecclesiasticus Paraphrased," and *Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems* (1744), II.99, *BEW*, 3:463 note 50.

⁴²An unanswerable argument.

⁴³"What is Man?" (1787), *BEW*, 3:462-3. But cf. *NP* (1777), 5:114-6.

Here, Wesley anticipated an argument for the plurality of worlds because of the tremendous gap in the gradation between this creation (i.e., the empirical, observable world) and the “great God that filleth heaven and earth.” Wesley’s own “argumentum palmarium” was that all the habitable worlds combined could still not compare to the “infinite Creator.” The plurality of worlds did not solve the gaps in the chain of being.

The Chain of Being and Angelology. In Wesley’s view, higher up in the chain of being from humanity are angels, not extra-terrestrials.⁴⁴ He said:

But the scale of the creation does not terminate at man. Another universe commences there, whose extent, perhaps, compared to that of this, is as the space of the solar vortex to the capacity of a nut. There shine the CELESTIAL HIERARCHIES, like glittering STARS.⁴⁵

Although angels exist in the chain of being beyond empirical observation, we know through philosophy and Scripture that they exist. Wesley started his argument for their existence from Plato and Socrates. Ultimately, however, their existence can be understood only by revelation, which supplies the defect of philosophy. Only revelation “gives us a clear, rational, consistent account of those whom our eyes have not seen, nor our ears heard. . . .”⁴⁶ Since the reality of angels exists beyond sensory perception, they can only be known by faith.⁴⁷ Where empiricism (or experience) fails, philosophy (or reason) and revelation complete our knowledge.

Revelation and Greek philosophy alone were not enough to supply Wesley with what he knew about angels. Another source of influence was Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. This was by far the most significant source of influence on Wesley’s angelology. Not only did he quote Milton at least 77 times in his sermons alone, he also published *An Extract from Milton’s Paradise Lost* (1763), an attempt to popularize Milton for Methodists.⁴⁸

⁴⁴For an interesting poetic comparison between angels and men see Charles’ hymn, “A Dialogue of ANGELS and MEN” in, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 3rd edn (1756).

⁴⁵*NP* (1777), 4:110. This was a part of his extraction of Bonnet.

⁴⁶“Of Good Angels” (1783), *BEW*, 3:6.

⁴⁷“On the Discoveries of Faith” (1788), *BEW*, 4:31.

⁴⁸*An Extract from Milton’s Paradise Lost* (1763), 2nd ed. (1791). See Oscar Sherwin, “Milton for the Masses: John Wesley’s Edition of *Paradise Lost*,” *Modern Language Quarterly*, 12(1951):267-85; Samuel Rogal, “The Role of *Paradise Lost* in Works by John and Charles Wesley,” *Milton Quarterly* 13(1979):114-19.

His regard for Milton was such that he once said Milton's account of the creation and fall was "not only simple, easy, and comprehensible, but consistent with the highest reason, and altogether worthy of God."⁴⁹

Fletcher's thesis is that Milton's doctrine of angels was partially influenced by the Scholastics who were decidedly Christian and non-Jewish. But mostly,

Milton has obviously used rabbinical material in developing his conceptions of individual Angels and in his whole idea of the order and arrangement of the Angels. His use of the quadrumvirate of Jewish angelology instead of the triad of Christian angelology is an indication of how greatly he depended upon rabbinical sources for his whole treatment of Angels.⁵⁰

Fletcher presents a strong case, which has obvious implications for Wesley's angelology, suggesting a second-hand connection between Wesley and Medieval Christian and Rabbinic angelology.

Whatever its historical connection, Wesley's angelology was worked out in three sermons, "Of Good Angels" (1783), "Of Evil Angels" (1783), and "On Guardian Angels" (1726). In his "Introductory Comment" to the sermons on good and evil angels, Albert Outler writes:

He must have thought that he needed to say something about the place and role of angels in "the great chain of being" that, along with the Christian Platonists, Wesley conceived of as the general structure of creation. . . . But angelology was not one of his prime interests [. . . and] references to angels are few and scattered in his writings as a whole.⁵¹

Regarding angels, Wesley believed that sometime before the foundations of the earth were laid God created angels. "And what is the duration which has passed since the creation of angels to that which passed before they were created—to unbeginning eternity? to that half of eternity (if one may so speak) which had then elapsed!"⁵²

⁴⁹"Remarks on Mr. H.'s account of the Gentoo Religion in Hindostan" in *Lloyd's Evening Post*, Nov. 30, 1774; and *Works*, 13:403-8.

⁵⁰Harris Fletcher, *Milton's Rabbinical Readings* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1930), 255.

⁵¹*BEW*, 3:3.

⁵²"What is Man?" (1788), *BEW*, 3:458.

As created beings, they were finite. When God created angels, they were God's "first-born sons intelligent beings,"⁵³ created as, "spirits, even the highest angels, even cherubim and seraphim, to dwell in material vehicles, though of an exceeding light and subtle substance."⁵⁴ Through an interesting exegesis of Psalm 104:4, he concluded that angels are

not material or corporeal beings; not clogged with flesh and blood like us, having bodies, if any, not gross and earthly like ours, but of a finer substance, resembling fire or flame more than any other of these lower elements. And is not something like this intimated in those words of the Psalmist, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire!"⁵⁵

The understanding, sight, knowledge, wisdom, holiness, and strength of angels are all beyond our human comprehension.⁵⁶ After being endowed with these "super-human" traits, the moral law, written by "the finger of God" on the "inmost spirit," was given to the angels.⁵⁷ By the moral law they knew the perfect will of God, which they did willingly, perfectly, and continually.⁵⁸ They were able to do this because . . .

As spirits he has endued them with understanding, will, or affections (which are indeed the same thing, as the affections are only the will exerting itself various ways), and liberty. And are not these—understanding, will, and liberty—essential to, if not the essence of, a spirit?⁵⁹

All of which enabled even the angels to

discern truth from falsehood, good from evil; and as a necessary result of this, with liberty, a capacity of choosing the one and refusing the other. By this they were likewise enabled to

⁵³"Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law" (1750), *BEW*, 2:6.

⁵⁴"The Unity of the Divine Being" (1789), *BEW*, 4:63. Cf. *JWL*, 6:214 (April 17, 1776), where he talks about paradise, and how "the soul will not be encumbered with flesh and blood; but probably it will have some sort of ethereal vehicle, even before God clothes us 'with our nobler house of empyrean light.' "

⁵⁵"Of Good Angels" (1783), *BEW* 3:6. Cf. his comment on Psalm 104:4 in *ENOT*; cf. Aquinas, *ST*, Pt. I, Q. 50-51 on angels.

⁵⁶"Of Good Angels" (1783), *BEW* 3:6-8; "On Guardian Angels" (1726), *BEW* 4:228-9, 233.

⁵⁷"Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law" (1750), *BEW* 2:7.

⁵⁸"Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VI" (1748), *BEW* 1:583-4.

⁵⁹"Of Good Angels" (1783), *BEW* 3:6.

offer him a free and willing service: a service rewardable in itself, as well as most acceptable to their gracious Master.⁶⁰

Because they were given a will, even the angels are said to be capable of sinning. Eventually this liberty became the cause of the heavenly revolt.

“How came evil into the world?” It came from “Lucifer, son of the morning”: it was “the work of the devil.” “For the devil,” saith the Apostle, “sinneth from the beginning”;⁶¹ that is, was the first sinner in the universe; the author of sin; the first being who by the abuse of his liberty introduced evil into the creation. “He, of the first, if not the first archangel,”⁶² was tempted to think too highly of himself. He freely yielded to the temptation, and gave way first to pride, then to self-will.⁶³

This was reiterated in another sermon.

See how this was first planted [the general root of sin] in heaven itself by Lucifer, “Son of the morning”⁶⁴ till then undoubtedly “one of the first, if not the first archangel.”⁶⁵ “Thou saidst, I will sit upon the side of the north.”⁶⁶ See self-will, the first-born of Satan!⁶⁷ “I will be like the Most High.”⁶⁸ See Pride, the twin sister of self-will. Here was the true origin of evil. Hence came the inexhaustible flood of evils upon the lower world. When Satan had once transfused his own self-will and pride into the parents of mankind, together with a new species of sin—love of the world, the loving the creature above the Creator—all manner of wickedness soon rushed in, all ungodliness and unrighteousness, shooting out into crimes of every kind, soon covering the whole face of the earth with all manner of abominations. . . . From the devil the

⁶⁰“Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law” (1750), *BEW* 2:6.

⁶¹The “Apostle” was Isaiah, in Isaiah 14:12.

⁶²Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V:659-60.

⁶³“The End of Christ’s Coming” (1781), *BEW* 2:476.

⁶⁴Isaiah 14:12.

⁶⁵Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V:659-60. Notice how Wesley quotes Scripture and Milton side by side in such a way that only the scholars of the Bible or Milton could tell them apart.

⁶⁶Cf. Isaiah 14:13.

⁶⁷A phrase used by Polycarp, “The Epistles of Polycarp,” VII (*ANF*, 1:34).

⁶⁸Isaiah 14.14.

spirit of independence, self-will, and pride, productive of all ungodliness and unrighteousness, quickly infused themselves into the hearts of our first parents in paradise.⁶⁹

The abuse of liberty, penultimately caused evil. But the ultimate answer to “Unde malum?” had to be Lucifer’s self-will. Furthermore, he was not the only self-willed angel. When Lucifer fell, “He did not fall alone, but soon drew after him a third part of the stars of heaven; in consequence of which they lost their glory and happiness, and were driven from their former habitation.”⁷⁰

In Wesley’s angelology, this fall occurred in spite of their existing without flesh and blood, and in spite of their being endued with super-human traits of understanding, sight, knowledge, wisdom, holiness, and strength, many privileges not to be enjoyed by Adam. The angelic revolt occurred, and evil came about because of self-will, pride, and the abuse of free-will. The consequence of this revolt was that it divided the upper part of the chain of being between good angels and evil angels, creating two opposing moral forces in creation, those obedient to God, and those disobedient to God. God and the good angels are working for humanity, and against Satan and the evil angels.⁷¹ This struggle—what we shall call a cosmological dualism—was what preceded Adam’s temptation and fall.

Wesley’s aesthetic theme consists of these parts: (1) the goodness of God; (2) and the goodness of creation; (3) the “chain of being” within creation which serves as a channel of God’s grace to the remainder of creation; (4) an angelology in which angels are seen as the pinnacle of the chain of being; (5) the angelic fall that brought evil into the world and divided the chain of being, resulting in a cosmological dualism.

2. Wesley’s Moral Theme

What begins to emerge from these points is that Wesley’s definition of evil is not derived from his aesthetic theme, but from a moral theme. His doctrine of an impeccable creation indicates that evil cannot be defined in those terms. He thought evil could be completely accounted for through the abuse of free-will, which was defined by Wesley as being “a power of choosing or refusing either good or evil.”⁷² How Wesley came to

⁶⁹“The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart” (1790), *BEW* 4:152, 154.

⁷⁰“The End of Christ’s Coming” (1781), *BEW* 2:476.

⁷¹“Of Evil Angels” (1783), *BEW* 3:16-29.

⁷²“The End of Christ’s Coming” (1781), *BEW* 2:476.

this conclusion can be seen particularly in his reactions to the works of William King, Soame Jenyns, two of the “optimists” and eighteenth-century heirs of the Augustinian tradition. It is now time to turn our attention to this moral theme for a closer investigation.

King, Jenyns, and the Eighteenth-Century Optimists. William King argued, like G. W. Leibniz, that when God created the world, God created the best world possible.⁷³ Like Augustine, he also argued that because it was created from nothing it was by necessity imperfect. From the imperfection of creation King explained natural evil, saying it arose by necessity from matter in motion,⁷⁴ not all of which is necessarily bad, as pain warns the soul against danger and thus operates to preserve life.⁷⁵ To account for moral evil, King introduced his second main argument. Within this imperfect, but best of possible worlds, God created the first humans and endowed them with a will to choose between good and evil, saying that unless God had done so, “more and greater evils would befall the universe from such an interposition, than from the abuse of free-will.”⁷⁶ The universe simply required free-will to benefit the universe.⁷⁷

Soame Jenyns, in *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (1757), did not argue for free-will at all. He maintained

that natural Evils exist from some necessity in the Nature of things which no power can dispense with or prevent, the expediency of moral Evil will follow on course: for if misery could not be excluded from the works of a benevolent Creator by infinite power, these miseries must be endured by some creatures or other for the good of the whole. . . .⁷⁸

All of this comes from the “Evils of Imperfection” which “are in truth no Evils at all, but rather the absence of some comparative Good[. . ..]”⁷⁹ This meant for Jenyns that:

The true solution then of this incomprehensible paradox must be this, that all Evils owe their existence solely to the neces-

⁷³See comments of Leibniz on King’s work in “Observations on the Book Concerning ‘The Origin of Evil,’ in the “Appendices” of *Theodicy* (Huggard, 405-42).

⁷⁴King, *Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 9-15.

⁷⁵King, *Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 150-55.

⁷⁶King, *Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 356; cf. 340.

⁷⁷King, *Essay on the Origin of Evil*, 369.

⁷⁸Jenyns, *Free Inquiry*, 102.

⁷⁹Jenyns, *Free Inquiry*, 25.

sity of their own natures, by which I mean they could not possibly have been prevented, without the loss of some superior Good, or the permission of some greater Evil than themselves; or that many will unavoidably insinuate themselves by the natural relations and circumstances of things into the most perfect system of Created Beings, even in opposition to the will of an almighty Creator, by reason they cannot be excluded without working contradictions; which not being proper objects of power, it is not diminution of omnipotence to affirm that it cannot effect them.⁸⁰

Jenyns was clearly more radical in his assertion of the defective nature of creation as a result of his denial of free-will. This introduced a necessitarian strand in Jenyns' thoughts. Nonetheless, Jenyns was confident his system could unlock

all the mysteries and perplexing doctrines of . . . all those abstruse speculations of Original Sin, Grace and Predestination . . . which the most learned have never yet been able to make consistent with Reason or Common-sense.⁸¹

Wesley's Response to the Optimists. Wesley was aware of both works by King and Jenyns. He would have been familiar with King's work as it appeared in Latin without Gay's introduction, or Law's copious footnotes. On December 11, 1730, Wesley wrote a letter to his father saying:

A week or two ago I pleased myself mightily with the hopes of sending you a fully satisfactory solution of your great question, have at last procured the celebrated treatise of Archbishop King, *De Origine Mali*. But on looking farther into it I was strangely disappointed, finding it the least satisfactory account of any given by any author whom I ever read in my life. He contradicts almost every man that ever writ on the subject, and builds an hypothesis on the ruins of theirs which he takes to be entirely new, though if I do not much mistake, part of it is at least two thousand years old. The purport of this is, "that natural evils flow naturally and necessarily from the essence of matter, so that God himself could not have prevented them, unless by not creating matter at all." Now this new supposition seems extremely like the old one of the

⁸⁰Jenyns, *Free Inquiry*, 15.

⁸¹Jenyns, *Free Enquiry*, 110.

Stoics, who I fancy always affirmed, *totidem verbis*, that “all natural evils were owing not to God’s want of will, but to his want of power to redress them, as necessarily flowing from the nature of matter.”⁸²

In his next letter Wesley revealed something of a better regard for King. He published it in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1780.⁸³ It is a rather straightforward extraction with no critical notes inserted into the text, apart from this introductory remark:

Though some of the *postulata* upon which Archbishop King builds his hypothesis of the origin of evil be such as very few will admit of, yet since the superstructure is regular and well contrived I thought you would not be unwilling to see the scheme of that celebrated work.⁸⁴

Wesley was aware that King asserted the necessity of imperfection of created beings, and also that King saw God and man both endued with a self-determining power. Of this latter point Wesley, in his extraction of King, said

That man partakes of this principle I conclude (1) because experience shows it [and] (2) because we observe in ourselves the signs and properties of such a power. We observe we can counteract our appetites, senses, and even our reason if we so choose; which we can not otherwise account for than by admitting such a power in ourselves.⁸⁵

Wesley would certainly not have disagreed with this. However, the “*postulata*” upon which King built his “hypothesis” was what Wesley disagreed with and what initially led him to call King a “Stoic.” It was not because King denied free-will, but because he held that evil flows by necessity from the constitutive manner of matter’s existence. This point became more abundantly clear in Wesley’s objection to Jenyns, when he said

evil did not exist at all in the original nature of things. It was no more the necessary result of matter than it was the necessary result of spirit. All things then, without exception were very good. And how could they be otherwise?⁸⁶

⁸²BEW, 25:258.

⁸³BEW, 25:264-67, which appeared in *AM* 3(1780):607-11.

⁸⁴BEW, 25:264.

⁸⁵BEW, 25:266.

⁸⁶“God’s Approbation of His Works” (1782), BEW, 2:399. Note Wesley’s footnote as enhanced by Outler.

In another place, Wesley declared free-will alone was the

full answer to that plausible account “of the origin of evil” published to the world some years since, and supposed to be unanswerable “that it necessarily resulted from the nature of matter, which God was not able to alter.” It is very kind of this sweet-tongued orator to make an excuse for God!⁸⁷ But there is really no occasion for it. . . .⁸⁸

If evil did not arise from creation, “Unde malum?”, or “Whence came evil?” For Wesley, evil was caused only by the will. What followed in the quotation just above were these words:

God hath answered for himself. He made man in his own image, a spirit endued with understanding and liberty. Man abusing that liberty produced evil, brought sin and pain into the world. This God permitted in order to a fuller manifestation of his wisdom, justice, and mercy, by bestowing on all who would receive it in infinitely greater happiness than they could possibly have attained if Adam had not fallen.⁸⁹

We must put aside the last and perhaps the most provocative part of this quotation which says that if Adam had not sinned, Christ had not died.⁹⁰ What should be pointed out is Wesley’s belief that evil can be accounted for entirely by the will.

This can be seen in his extraction of Humphrey Ditton.⁹¹ Wesley’s extraction of Ditton was published along with the one of King’s, *Origin of Evil* in the *Arminian Magazine*. It was concerned with two things: (1) Ditton wished to deny that there were two gods, one good and the other evil, in order to account for evil; and, (2) account for the presence of

⁸⁷Perhaps this is an obscure reference to the fact that Jenyns was the elected MP for Cambridge (1742 and served until 1780).

⁸⁸“God’s Love to Fallen Man” (1782), *BEW*, 2:434. Cf. “God’s Approbation of the His Works” (1782), *BEW*, 2:397-8 as referred to in note 81 above.

⁸⁹“God’s Love to Fallen Man” (1782), *BEW*, 2:434. Cf. “God’s Approbation of the His Works” (1782), *BEW*, 2:397-8.

⁹⁰See “On the Fall of Man” (1782), *BEW*, 2:411 and note 60. This thought connects Wesley with the “felix culpa” tradition, which renders the entire controversy with Calvinists meaningless. If the fall resulted in the redemption, does it then matter whether or not God is responsible for the fall?

⁹¹*BEW*, 25:240-2 (Dec. 19, 1729); cf. *AM*, 3(1780): 604-6. Ditton was responding to the materialism of Hobbes.

evil by attributing it to the willful deviation from God's "eternal rules and measures of fitness."

Leading up to the point where Wesley started his extraction, Ditton argued that one cannot hold to a materialist's view of creation and free-will at the same time.⁹² For Ditton, a denial of a mechanical explanation of the universe which is bound tightly to the rule of cause-and-effect had to be established before one could affirm free-will, in order to exonerate God of evil. As long as there was a view of creation being strictly cause-and-effect there could be no free-will. Once this point is established, free-will can account for the presence of evil in the world. In Wesley's extraction of Ditton we read:

Farther, it no way derogated from any one perfection of an Infinite Being to endow other beings which he made with such a power as we call liberty; that is, to furnish them with such capacities, dispositions, and principles of action that it should be possible for them either to observe or to deviate from those eternal rules and measures of fitness and agreeableness with respect to certain things and circumstances which were so conformable to the infinite rectitude of his own will, and which infinite reason must necessarily discover. *Now evil is a deviation from those measures of eternal, unerring order and reason not to choose what is worthy to be chosen, and is accordingly chose by such a will as the divine.* And to bring this about no more is necessary than the exerting certain acts of that power we call free will. By which power we are enabled to choose or refuse, and to determine ourselves to action accordingly. Therefore, without having recourse to any ill principle, we may fairly account for the origin of evil from the possibility of a various use of our liberty, even as that capacity or possibility itself is ultimately founded on the defectibility and finiteness of a created nature.⁹³

Here evil is defined not in the Augustinian sense of being the absence of good, but as deviation from the perfect good, or by not choosing good. The defect was not material, but in the will. To say otherwise (as King had), Wesley thought, made God the author of evil.⁹⁴

⁹²Ditton, *Discourse*, 474, 490 (the emphasis is his).

⁹³BEW, 25:241-2 (Dec. 19, 1729); cf. Ditton, *Discourse*, 424-7 (the emphasis is mine).

⁹⁴A position also held by Browne, Winnett, *Peter Browne, Provost, Bishop, Metaphysician* (London: SPCK, 1974), 30-49.

This position was further reinforced by one of Wesley's later sermons, "The End of Christ's Coming" (1781), part of which already has been referred to above. Says Wesley:

And God created man, not only in his *natural*, but likewise in his own *moral* image. He created him not only *in knowledge*, but also in righteousness, and true holiness. As his understanding was without blemish, perfect in its kind, so were all his affections. . . . But it cannot be doubted he might mistake evil for good. He was not infallible; therefore not impeccable. And this unravels the whole difficulty of the grand question, *unde malum?* "How came evil into the world?" It came from "Lucifer, son of the morning": it was "the work of the devil." "For the devil," saith the Apostle, "sinneth from the beginning";⁹⁵ that is, was the first sinner in the universe; the author of sin; the first being who by the abuse of his liberty introduced evil into the creation. "He, of the first, If not the first archangel,"⁹⁶ was tempted to think too highly of himself. He freely yielded to the temptation, and gave way first to pride, then to self-will.⁹⁷

The defectibility of the created nature was precisely located in the fallibility and imperfection of both the angelic and human wills. Their wills were not impeccable. The defect was not in the manner of creation, but in the will, which was located in the soul, an immaterial substance. All this seems to indicate that, for Wesley, the defect in creation was moral, not aesthetic; immaterial, not material. From here, Wesley attempted to unravel the entire question of the origin of evil.

From the abuse of free-will the different types of evil can be explained. In the sermon prepared by Wesley during the "*Unde malum?*" correspondence with his father, Wesley wrote:

It has indeed been well observed, that all evil is either natural, moral, or penal; that natural evil or pain is no evil at all if it be overbalanced with following pleasure; that moral evil, or sin, cannot possibly befall anyone unless those who willingly embrace, who choose it; and that penal evil, or punishment, cannot possibly befall any unless they likewise choose it by

⁹⁵The "Apostle" was Isaiah, in Isaiah 14:12.

⁹⁶Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V:659-60.

⁹⁷"The End of Christ's Coming" (1781), *BEW*, 2:475-6. Cf. the view of Clement of Alexandria, "The Stromata," 1:17.

choosing sin. This entirely cuts off all imputation on the justice or goodness of God, since it can never be proved that it is contrary to either of these to give his creatures [the] liberty of embracing either good or evil, to put happiness and misery in their own hands, to leave them the choice of life and death.⁹⁸

From this quotation it is clear that Wesley held to a traditional division of natural, moral, and penal evil. Moral and penal evil was thought completely contingent upon free-will. That he also thought natural evil was also is somewhat obscured. But he did believe that somehow the material world was affected by this defect of the will in the immaterial world. For example, he demonstrated how even natural evil is the consequence of Adam's choice of evil, saying that after Adam's sin,

man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off. The intercourse between God and the inferior creatures being stopped, those blessings could no longer flow in upon them. And then it was that "the creature," every creature, "was subject to vanity," to sorrow, to pain of every kind, to all manner of evils. "Not" indeed "willingly"; not by its own choice, not by any act or deed of its own; "but by reason of him that subjected it"; by the wise permission of God, determining to draw eternal good out of this temporary evil. But in what respects was "the creature," every creature, then "made to subject to vanity?" . . . The very foundations of their nature are out of course, are turned upside down.⁹⁹

The chain of being was made dysfunctional by Adam's sin. Adam had not suffered as the result of a defective creation. Creation had suffered as the result of a defective Adam. The human defect was located precisely in the will.

Wesley seems to have held to a mythological explanation of evil, which locates the origin of evil in a primordial rebellion of creatures (Satan, Lucifer, et al.) against their Creator. A more modern version of this view is put forth by N. P. Williams in *Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin* (1924). King's presentation of the Augustinian view is more of a

⁹⁸"The Promise of Understanding" (1730), *BEW*, 4:285.

⁹⁹"The General Deliverance" (1781), *BEW*, 2:442-3.

metaphysical one which ascribes moral evil to the nature of finite existence. A modern representative of this view is F. R. Tennant.¹⁰⁰

3. An Implication

There is one significant implication from all this. Because Wesley held to a moral definition of evil, he was able to deny the concept of the “sinful body.” To Wesley, some may say,

“But surely we cannot be saved from sin while we dwell in a *sinful body*.” A “sinful body”? I pray, observe how deeply ambiguous, how equivocal, this expression is! But there is not authority for it in Scripture: the word “sinful body” is never found there. And as it is totally unscriptural, so it is palpably absurd. For no *body*, or matter of any kind be *sinful*: spirits alone are capable of sin. . . . Only the soul can be the seat of sin.¹⁰¹

There was what appeared to be a disjunction between the body and the soul, where sin and even the origin of evil was concerned. Only the soul, which was the source of volition and free-will, could be ultimately responsible for sin since evil and sin were defined as choosing not to do God’s will. The body was morally neutral in Wesley’s view. To say otherwise would have jeopardized Incarnation theology. When Christ became flesh, or a whole person, he “united himself to our miserable nature, with all its innocent infirmities.”¹⁰² To speak of infirmities was the way in which Wesley discussed the moral neutrality of the body, all of which was the consequence of his aesthetic view of creation and moral account of the origins of evil. Only by maintaining the moral neutrality of the body, and a moral definition of evil, could Wesley argue for the possibility of entire sanctification in this lifetime.

How Wesley answered the question “*Unde malum?*” determined much of what followed in his understanding of salvation. How one explains and defines evil has important theological consequences for the remainder of one’s theological system. What this also indicates is that Wesley saw practical consequences in what some wrongly consider insignificant theological trivia.

¹⁰⁰A similar contrast is made between King and Browne by Winnett, *Peter Browne* (1974), 35-6.

¹⁰¹“On Perfection” (1784), *BEW*, 3:79-80.

¹⁰²*ENNT*, (1755), John 1:14.

Abbreviations

- AM* Wesley, John, *Arminian Magazine* (1778-97).
- ANF* Roberts, Alexander, and James Donaldson, eds, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark/Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.
- BEW* *Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's Works*. Nashville: Abingdon Press/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975- .
- ENNT* Wesley, John, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*. London: 1755.
- ENOT* Wesley, John, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*. Bristol: 1765).
- Essay* Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Peter Nidditch, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- JWJ* *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., [. . .] enlarged from Original Manuscripts*, 8 vols, Nehemiah Curnock, ed. London: Epworth Press, 1909-16.
- JWL* *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, 8 vols, John Telford, ed. London: Epworth Press, 1931.
- NP* Wesley, John, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: or a Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, 3rd ed. 5 vols. London: J. Fry, 1777.
- NPNF1* Schaff, Philip, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, first series, 14 vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark/Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988.
- PWHS* *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*.
- Works* *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson, ed., 3rd ed. 14 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979.
- WTJ* *Wesleyan Theological Journal*.

“EXPERIENCE” IN TWO CHURCH TRADITIONS: DIFFERING SEMANTIC WORLDS

by

Byron C. Lambert

* * * * *

Editor's Note: In recent years the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana) and the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ have been in dialogue, each seeking to understand better the other tradition for the sake of enhancing Christian unity and mission. The first group, a holiness body rooted in American revivalism, has had a particular understanding of the nature and role of Christian “experience.” It differs at least in subtle ways from the understanding typical of the second group. In a dialogue session in October, 1994, Dr. Lambert, representing the latter body, prepared this essay in hope of furthering mutual understanding of this crucial subject.

* * * * *

In philosophy, empiricism is an epistemological theory defined in opposition to rationalism. In the early modern age it arose in reaction to the metaphysics of Descartes (1596-1650), Leibniz (1646-1716), and Spinoza (1632-1677), who sought to bind the whole of reality together, including God, by deduction from one or two fundamental principles. The rationalists believed that the universe was best approached and understood along the lines of a logical system, whatever the five outer senses might lead humans to believe.

Varieties of British Empiricism

A science of nature was growing, however, which looked to the outer world of sense experience as a guide to what reality is truly like.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was one of the first to formulate and make popular the new approach in books like *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) and the *Novum Organum* (1620). Comparing the studies of metaphysicians unfavorably to that of spiders spinning theories out of their bellies, Bacon said men should rather use the bee as a model, collect data from everyday experience, sort it out in concert with one another, conduct experiments, and learn nature's secrets by organized observation of her regularities. It is no accident that philosophical empiricism should find a home in Britain.

Just as rationalism is said to rise from the thought of Descartes, so empiricism, in its modern form, is credited to John Locke.¹ Locke held that the mind was awakened solely by the action of the senses. Pushed to the extreme, such an approach would hold that everything we know is limited to what the experience of the senses delivers. In its more moderate form, such an approach would only say that the materials for knowledge are sense-based. Locke was an empiricist in the latter sense, but the logic of his theory was carried to radical extremes by Berkeley and Hume.²

What has to be remembered is that Locke was not just an epistemological empiricist; he was also a rationalist. He was not a rationalist after the fashion of the Continental thinkers, however. Locke used experience-governed thought, not to build a complex ontology, but as a method of reining in irrationalism, hallucination, and superstition at the popular level. He also warned against imagining that the human mind has unlimited powers of knowledge and said that, for life's ultimate meanings and purposes, human beings have to depend on divine revelation.

Unlike Berkeley, who said that only minds exist, and Hume, who said that only experiences exist, Locke argued that there is an underlying soul-substance in which experience "happened," even though there is no way of experiencing that underlying reality itself. Although beyond sensory certainty, the "soul," for Locke, has to be there: how could "experience" take place except for a mind to receive it? The Greek word *empeiros*, from which empiricism gets its name, means experienced *in* or emperiened. The Latin term *experientia* translates *empeiros* and gives us the word *experience*. Dare one say that the Greek term points more in the direction of the mind and the Latin term more in the direction of the

¹John Locke (1632-1704). Empiricism, it must be noted, goes much further back in philosophy, through Aquinas to Aristotle.

²George Berkeley (1685-1753); David Hume (1711-1776).

senses?³

The term *experience*, however it is used, has some real ambiguities, because there is no experience that isn't organized by the mind in some fashion. This was Kant's answer to Hume. Like Locke, Kant also posited a *noumenon*, or unknowable subject within which provides the rational framework for raw sensation coming from an equally unknowable-in-itself outer world.

Not only is experience a "mixed" phenomenon, but our range of experience includes much more than that delivered by our senses. The imagination, for example, gives us an amazing array of mental images and events, which from the point of view of the inner subject can be said to be "experienced." The human being can have delusions, emotions, and impulses clearly as unforgettable as sensory experiences. There is very little one could say he or she has not experienced, since even a process of exact reasoning can be recalled, with a certain indelibility, especially if it led to an important conclusion, and hardly any mental work is done without a feeling of overcoming resistance and a corresponding strain in body and nerves. William James, who developed a doctrine of *radical* empiricism (his term), held that even the relationship between things, whether conjunctive or disjunctive, were as much matters of "direct particular experience . . . [as] the things themselves."⁴

Empiricism is a philosophical theory, or way of looking at things, which can be stretched in more than one direction.

Religious Experience for Christian Churches and Churches of Christ

Both Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and the Church of God movement (Anderson) belong philosophically to the British Empiricist tradition, but they understand experience in quite different ways. Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) and John Wesley (1703-1791) both took the Lockean analysis of knowledge as a given, but went in contrasting directions in their use of it.⁵ Neither accepted the further develop-

³There is a possible study in the history of ideas arguing that Greeks saw sensation as happening *inside* the subject and the Latin word indicating that sensation happens *to* the subject from the outside in.

⁴William James (1842-1910). See Dagobert D. Runes, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy* (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1981), 90.

ments of empiricism by Berkeley and Hume, preferring the more widely disseminated and enduring opinions of the great originator of the philosophy.

For Campbell and his co-laborers, experience, as a test of fact, was what is publicly verifiable. When they spoke of Christian experience they referred primarily to what had happened in gospel history, as verified by faithful witnesses in Scripture. The faith of the Christian was to be based on the *apostolic* experience, since it alone could be reliably certified as revelation. While “Christian experience,” as an expression, necessarily includes what happens to Christian people as they live out their spiritual development in all times and places, these multitudinous personal experiences, each private and particular, for Restorationists are hardly the test for truths that must serve the Church as a whole and universally. It is normative, not clinical experience which must serve to unite the Church.

Christian Church/Church of Christ people, therefore, tend to have little regard for subjectivity, as such, in religion. If they speak of their “religious experiences” they do so diffidently, thinking of God’s answers to prayer, unusual providences, or the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives as phenomena understood best at a distance and in retrospect. Almost all of their enthusiasm centers around the notions of belief, correct understanding, and obedience. Terms like *loyalty* (“our loyal brethren”), *faithfulness* to Scripture (“inerrancy”), *joy* of duty done, *satisfaction* with things being worked out according to Divine plan, *seeing* the deeper meanings in Christ’s words, or those of the apostles, define what they mean by “Christian experience.”

In the last generation there has been a growing emphasis on the

⁵Good, but brief discussions of the Lockeanism of Campbell and Wesley can be found in Leroy Garrett, *The Stone–Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 1981), 29-35, and Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley’s Theology Today* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), 31. Some Christian Churches/Churches of Christ leaders like Dean E. Walker, however, believe Campbell was more in the tradition of Thomas Reid (1710-1796) and Common Sense philosophy. See Walker, *Adventuring for Christian Unity and Other Essays*, collected and arranged by Thomas Foust and edited by William Richardson (Johnson City, TN: Emmanuel School of Religion, 1992), 446. Walker’s revisionism may stem from his opposition to the Lockeanism of liberals in the Disciples movement like Edward Scribner Ames (1870-1958). For a discussion of Ames, see D. Newell Williams, ed., *A Case Study of Mainstream Protestantism: the Disciples’ Relation to American Culture, 1880–1989* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans and St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1991), 120-125.

inward workings of the Holy Spirit, but it is a sanctification doctrine entirely gradualist in its approach. Attempts to bring “deeper life” studies into the life of Christian Church/Church of Christ people have met with only marginal success. Expressions like, “God told me to do thus and so,” or “I felt irresistibly moved in this direction by the Holy Spirit,” or “God laid it on my heart to tell you this” are met with suspicion, if not outright rejection *a priori*. Restorationists do not hold testimony meetings.

All of this does not mean that the people of Restorationist churches are unemotional. They weep when believers come forward in their services to accept Christ; they enjoy music, poetry, choruses, and sermons that excite the heart and deepen commitment; but these are expressions that fix loyalties previously entered into mentally and volitionally. They do not weep in order to be saved, but because they *are* saved.

The people of the Wesleyan tradition struggle with the *quality* of their Christian commitment; the Restorationist struggles with the initial commitment itself, as the defining act of Christian birth. The former wants to feel he or she has gone through the proper exercise; the latter considers only that a decision needs to be made and maintained. The Restorationist too often is thought of as a rationalist, but is better described as a volitionist, not typically intellectualist, but a pragmatist, a doer, one who looks for results. Christian experience for such believers is primarily found in success in a congregation’s numerical growth, faithful giving, a respectable missionary budget, an efficient church staff, excitement in the fellowship gatherings, and the quiet joy of prayer circles and Bible studies.

Obviously, there is much of Locke’s genteel rationalism embedded in the thought patterns of early Restorationists, but it is not so much the epistemology of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* as the style of thinking found in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* and his commentary on Galatians.⁶ Locke’s fundamental picture of the human mind works its way into the latter works, since they presuppose the limitation of human knowledge, the need for specific revelation, and the vanity of dogmatizing.⁷ For Locke there are only a few majestic truths God asks us

⁶*The Reasonableness of Christianity* was published in London in 1695. Defenses of the book followed in 1695 and 1697. *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians* [etc.] was published in London in 1705.

to believe. For example, he says that the four gospels have only one purpose, that of showing Jesus to be the Messiah and Saviour of the world. Walter Scott's *Messiahship* (1859) is only a descant on this theme.⁸

Historically, the emotions calling the Stone-Campbell movement into existence were strikingly different from those giving rise to the Church of God (Anderson) holiness movement. The Campbells and company were distressed at the uncharitable and wasteful divisions among Presbyterians, and then by extension the many more numerous divisions in Christendom. Their solution—one they thought the New World had been called into existence to support—was simple: return to the universally accepted word of the New Testament, abandoning all those post-apostolic institutions and tests of orthodoxy that clutter and clog church history, and allow to reappear the fundamental unity of the church that lay concealed under it all. The plan was rational, simple, and Scriptural.

It is easy to see that the roots of Restorationism sink deep into the eighteenth century. In many ways it would be possible to see the Stone-Campbell movement as an eighteenth century movement in assumptions and style, one working its way through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—albeit with increasing difficulty.

Religious Experience for John Wesley

On May 24, 1738, at 8:45 in the evening, at a Moravian meeting in Aldersgate near London where a reading of Luther's commentary on Romans was in progress, John Wesley felt his heart "strangely warmed"

⁷I take the phrase "the vanity of dogmatizing" from the title of a book by another typical seventeenth century rationalist, Joseph Glanville (1636-1680), who wrote *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* in 1661. Note: "For our initial age is like the melted wax to the prepared seal, capable of any impression from the documents of our Teachers. The *half-moon* or *Cross* are indifferent to its reception; and we may with equal facility write on this *rasa Tabula*, Turk, or Christian." This quotation is from the 1661 edition, found in Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth Century Background: The Thought of the Age in Relation to Religion and Poetry* (Doubleday Anchor Book, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Dec., 1953), 175.

⁸Walter Scott (1796-1861), early Christian Churches leader, whose *The Messiahship: or, Great Demonstration, Written for the Union of Christians, on Christian Principles as Plead [sic] for in the Current Reformation* (Cincinnati: H.S. Bosworth, 1859), went through several editions.

by an assurance that his sins were forgiven. He had been baptized as an infant in the Anglican church, brought up in a priestly home, accepted the teaching of all the Thirty-Nine Articles, ordained as a presbyter in 1728, sent as a missionary to Georgia, had gathered around himself a small group of believers who were seeking to reach new levels of Christian devotion and purity at Oxford (“the Holiness Club”), and had steeped himself in the devotional literature of Thomas a’ Kempis, William Law, and Jeremy Taylor, but was still dissatisfied with his Christian experience. On his way to America, Wesley had been struck by the calmness of certain Moravians on shipboard during a storm and, in a conversation with one of them, Peter Böhler, was questioned about the adequacy of his Christian faith: “Have you the witness within yourself?” Böhler asked, “Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?”⁹

Wesley had never had the question put just that way. Conversion, real conversion, was what the 18th-century church had lacked. The whole upper class in England appeared lost to unbelief, a lostness that threatened to spread to the rest of society. The Church was largely latitudinarian; immorality in the streets and on the stage seemed out of control. Yet all these citizens, listed in church baptismal registries, were supposed to be Christian. But they had no “living experience” of their religion. They needed a *conscious* awakening to Christ’s power for their lives. What they needed was Wesley’s experience to be theirs.

In January of 1738, Wesley wrote in his journal, “I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it.”¹⁰ It was the tangible, palpable work of the Holy Spirit in his heart, directly recognized inwardly, at once and infallibly, that validated all he had previously believed and hoped. The truth of Christ now had “the living sense” which the apostles of the first century had written about; he believed he now had the assurance of salvation they spoke of. The experience was self-authenticating.¹¹

Perhaps it could be argued that Wesley’s experience is anything but empiricist in the usual sense, since it transcends sensory knowledge and is not subject to public test. But Wesley extends Locke’s doctrine in a new

⁹George Fisher, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1893), 516.

¹⁰Colin Williams, *John Wesley’s Theology Today*, cited in note 5 *supra*, 103. Hereafter, Williams, JWT.

direction:

[S]eeing our ideas are not innate, but must all originally come from our senses, which in this respect profit nothing, as being altogether incapable of discerning objects of this kind: Not those only that are called natural senses, which in this respect profit nothing, as being altogether incapable of discerning objects of a spiritual kind; but spiritual senses, exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. It is necessary that you have *the hearing ear*, and the *seeing eye*, emphatically so called, that you have a new class of senses opened in your soul, not depending on organs of flesh and blood. . . . The ideas of faith differ *toto genere* from those of external sensation. . . . What a gulf is here! By what art will reason get over the immense chasm? This cannot be, till the Almighty come in to your succor, and give you that faith you have hitherto despised. Then upborne, as it were, on eagle's wings, you shall soar away into the regions of eternity; and your enlightened reason shall explore even "the deep things of God"; God himself "revealing them to you by his Spirit."¹²

Wesley was one among a number of prominent empiricists of his age to extend the meaning of experience beyond the limits of sensory knowledge. After Hume had taken Lockean empiricism into the *reductio ad absurdum* of denying there was any soul or mind because no such entity was ever "experienced" by anyone, he ventured into the field of ethics where he had to account for the fact of human morality. Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) before him, drawing on Locke's "internal sense" (a source of ideas in addition to the external senses) had worked up a whole set of internal senses to account for the civilizing instinct, one among them being the "moral sense," the feeling of approval we experience when we see someone act out of benevolence.¹³

Hume carried Hutcheson's idea further; changing the word, *sense* to

¹¹Ibid., 33, 104, 110.

¹²Ibid., 31. The quotation in Williams is taken from Thomas Jackson's edition, *The Works of John Wesley, A.M.*, 14 vols., third edition, London: John Mason, 1829, vol. 8, 13.

¹³D. D. Raphael, "Moral Sense," in *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. Philip Wiener (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), vol. 3, 231.

sentiment, he argued that moral distinctions are not grounded in reason, but sentiment. It is sentiment that selects the ends of life; reason serves only as a means to bring these ends about. Since only moral judgments can be a motive to action, they cannot be dictates of reason.¹⁴ Moral sense philosophy became a la mode throughout 18th-century Britain and fed unquestionably into the broader stream of “natural feeling” as a source of truth developed by later Romanticists.

I am not trying here to develop the historicist thesis that Wesley was an emerging figure in a powerful Romanticism which was to turn neo-classical England on its head, although it has been argued that his theology, like Schleiermacher’s, was simply a reaction against the rationalizing, respectable Christianity of the cultural church. What I am trying to do is show that there is an empiricism of the heart, that it seems as perfectly plausible as that of the head, that it can be based as surely on Locke as the empiricism of the senses. The thing that it does, however, is overturn Locke’s particular sort of rationalism.

Take, for example, Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification. While there is much evidence to show that, over the course of his life, Wesley changed his view of how holiness comes about, he seemed to settle for a stage in the regenerated Christian life when we “experience a total break from sin.” Like the conversion experience, this ultimate sanctifying experience is said to be achieved in a moment.¹⁵ J. Kenneth Grider defines the experience as “an instantaneous cleansing from Adamic sin, and an empowerment, which Christian believers may receive, by faith, through the baptism with the Holy Spirit.” Wesley regarded this teaching as “the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists.”¹⁶

Once again, it can be debated whether Wesley ever consistently held to an instantaneous second work of grace or to the more gradualist doctrine of “growth” in perfection, or in both at once(!).¹⁷ What is operative

¹⁴Ibid., 231-232.

¹⁵Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan, 1980), 116. Hereafter, Lindström.

¹⁶J. Kenneth Grider, *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1980), 91-94, 13, for the respective quotations.

in any form of Wesleyanism, original or contemporary, is the notion of experience. The Roman Catholic interpreter of Methodism, Maximin Piette, says that Wesley was not trying to reform Anglican doctrines, but conducting a campaign of spiritual fervor. He was a man presenting a new, but necessary spiritual experience: “[S]ince experiment was shown to be so extraordinarily fertile in the field of natural sciences, might he not expect as wonderful results for the spiritual life?” Piette goes on: “To justify his experimental method, Wesley appealed to the practical results of his preaching; the moral betterment of his hearers.”¹⁸

“Experimental religion” was the early nineteenth century way of conflating science and religion, presumably to the support of both. Nothing could be closer to the language of Baconian/Lockean empiricism.

Wesleyanism in the New World

Wesleyanism became something different when it was transplanted to the American frontier. While Wesley was Arminian, his close associate, George Whitefield (1714-1770) was Calvinistic and, in bringing open field preaching to the colonies, had linked up with Jonathan Edwards. Although the Great Awakening in New England had already begun by the time Whitefield began his many trips to America, the special enthusiasm of Methodism was blended with the ecstatic phenomena of the Congregationalist election sessions to produce the familiar American “revival.” D. Newell Williams, the Disciple historian, calls the new religious experience the Edwardsean/Wesleyan synthesis. Conversion is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit, following a basic three-step process—*awakening* to God’s existence and love, *distress/conviction* over one’s hopeless sinfulness and separation from God, and *deliverance* through prayer and putting oneself in the way of the Holy Spirit (Edwards, a modified Calvinist, allowed that a person could cooperate with God to some

¹⁷Lindström, ix. See also Maximum Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, trans. J. B. Howard (London: Sheed and Ward, 1938), 442-443. Hereafter, Piette. Other books that would be helpful: Robert Tuttle, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids, F. Asbury Press, 1989); Randy Maddox, ed., *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Kingswood Books, Nashville, TN, 1990); and T. Chrichton Mitchell, *Charles Wesley: Man with the Dancing Heart* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1994). Tuttle’s book shows how Wesley went through three devotional stages, from reading the traditional Christian mystics, to reading Scripture alone, to a final return to mysticism, this time “anchored in Scripture.”

¹⁸Piette, 475.

extent).¹⁹

Both Wesley and Whitefield had witnessed the outbreak of unusual spiritual phenomena under their preaching in the British Isles, but it did not compare to the sweeping fire of tongues, trances, seizures, chest music, and joyous screamings of the American frontier. In America not just Methodists and Congregationalists, but Presbyterians and Baptists of many descriptions flocked to the growing camp meeting revivals which established a new non-sacramental, evangelical, and individualist Christianity at the heart of the new nation. The test of the genuineness of one's Christianity became one's experience of the Holy Spirit either in conversion (if predestinarian, then in the confirmation that one was of the "elect") or in full sanctification. A certain irrelevant nostalgia for vestigial usages like infant baptism and clerically ordered communion sessions kept old ecclesiastical forms in place, but logically they had little to do with what the new denominations regarded as essential Christianity.

Was this still empiricism? It was not only empiricism, it was a representation of one of the key notions—too often understated and misunderstood—of Locke. The "modern age" begins with Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, and Wilhelm Windelband sums it up when he says, "[T]he heterogeneity of the outer and inner worlds gives the mind a proud feeling of a substantial quality peculiar to itself as contrasted with things. . . ." He goes on:

This favoring of inner over outer reasserts itself in Locke, despite the fact that he made reflection dependent on sensation, because in the dualism which was followed, sensation, furnishing knowledge of the corporeal outer world, was less reliable as a source of true knowledge than reflection, which gives knowledge of the mind itself and is more suited to its task. Our knowledge of our own states is *intuitive* and the most certain of all.²⁰

How beautifully this predisposition to the inner, the psychological, the superiority of the mental attaches itself to the Scriptural teachings

¹⁹D. Newell Williams, "The Gospel as the Power of God to Salvation: Alexander Campbell and Experimental Religion," lecture 7 in *Lectures in Honor of the Alexander Campbell Bicentennial, 1788–1988* (Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Nashville, TN, 1988), 130-131.

²⁰Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, *Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Modern*. Harper Torchbook TB39 (New York: Harper and Bros., 1958), 466-467. Hereafter, Windelband.

about Spirit witnessing to spirit, knowing what is the mind of the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit, and having God's love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, one can almost see empiricism as a kind of *preparatio evangelica* (prevenient grace?) for the Wesleyan revival.

What is not at all evident here is the cool, genteel rationalism of Locke's "reasonable" Christianity. While there is certainly a turning away from traditional conventions and established authority, there is no appetite in Neo-Augustinian terms, for the rare power of simple ideas, cogently expressed. In a comparison between Wesley and Alexander Campbell, it is Campbell who is the Neo-Augustinian, non-experience centered empiricist (if the paradox can be permitted), and Wesley, who carries Lockeanism in religion to its ultimate expression. Let Piette say it again for Wesley: the rebirth in the Holy Spirit puts the believer in a new universe. Like the new infant, suddenly the convert has an awareness of God, *new spiritual senses* [italics mine] to see good and evil, "sees" what it is to be loved and pardoned by God, can now "hear" and "obey," "knows" joy and peace, "dwells" in God.²¹ In Lockean language, the convert's "cognitive substance" is totally transformed.²²

Religious Experience in the Church of God Movement

Once the experience of conversion and sanctification had passed into the freer atmosphere of the new nation, it was not long before a number of "holiness" groups, dissatisfied with the turn the Methodist Episcopal Church was taking, went off on their own, taking new interpretations of justification and Christian perfection with them, and leaving behind ecclesiastical forms of the church that Wesley had bequeathed to the new land. In studying the literature of several of these groups, in evidence are a number of varying interpretations of what both the conversion experience and the experience of the second blessing convey. What I am trying to bring to light for myself as a member of the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ is what the "*experience*" is that is being asserted, and not especially the results of the experience, however important. I focus on the Church of God movement (Anderson) as a helpful case study.

That it is "the experience" itself which needs focusing on, and which thus places the Church of God squarely in the empiricist tradition, is con-

²¹Piette, 440.

²²Windelband, 468.

firmed in the paper “Defining the Vision: a Heritage to Cherish,” delivered by Merle Strege at the annual meeting of the Indiana Ministries of the Church of God, September, 1993. In section 2.5 of his paper, titled “The Church is Experientially Grounded,” he states that the Church of God movement holds that “the church [is] a place where the *experience* of salvation makes one a member of that church.” He traces this emphasis to the Pietistic roots which feed the epistemology of the movement. “Knowing God” and being “certain” of one’s salvation are phrases springing from such an epistemology.

Strege states that the fundamental notion that “we ‘know’ by way of experience” allows Church of God people to alter their traditional doctrine if it needs to be brought “into conformity with new insights derived from experience.” He cites as an example this movement’s changed belief about divine healing which has undergone modification through the experience of “new light.” He notes that it is this doctrine of experience which grounds the movement’s opposition to creeds, since creeds represent “a spurious substitution of the Spirit by the letter.”²³ He says, Church of God folk rally around Christ “experientially.”²⁴

Arlo Newell, in an editorial in *Vital Christianity* (June, 1993), writes, “Holiness does not make it impossible to sin, but it is an *experience* [italics mine] of grace that makes it possible not to sin.” He says it is “an experience of spiritual surrender,” one that must be normative for the Christian community.²⁵

Kenneth Jones delivered a paper titled “What the Church of God Understands about Conversion” to the Dialogue on Doctrine (Church of God and Christian Churches/Churches of Christ) August, 1991. He stated that conversion gives the believer “the witness of the Spirit. *One can know for sure* that God *has worked* salvation and forgiveness in the heart. He cited certain key Scriptures to substantiate his point.²⁶ The Bible is what the Holy Spirit works through [as a means?], but the Spirit’s actual work is “within” the heart and mind of each person.²⁷ Saving faith, he

²³Merle D. Strege, “Defining the Vision: A Heritage to Cherish,” address to the annual meeting of the Indiana Ministries of the Church of God, Sept. 23, 1993, 16.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 17.

²⁵Arlo F. Newell, “A Serious Call. . . ,” *Vital Christianity*, June, 1993, 10-11.

²⁶Kenneth E. Jones, “What the Church of God Understands about Conversion,” Dialogue on Doctrine, August, 1991, 16-17.

avers, is not rational acceptance of a fact or belief in propositional form, nor even a decision to follow Christ, but response to the inward initiatives of the Holy Spirit in the heart.²⁸ In another paper, “Authority of the Bible in the Church of God,” Dr. Jones writes that “the only way to interpret Scripture correctly is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,”²⁹ presumably the lengthening out of the “experience” of the Holy Spirit felt initially at conversion. He does not explain what an *interpretive* experience would be as compared, for example, with either the experience of conversion or the experience of sanctification.

Larry C. Taylor, in his paper “My Vision for Christian unity,” delivered at the Open Forum, March 15, 1990, says that the origin of the Church of God movement, as seen by D. S. Warner, was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church in the last days before the Lord’s return, whereby the Spirit was gathering the “sanctified” into one family before the final judgment. The sanctified in other fellowships or churches were considered to be in “Babylon” and warned to “come out.” Leaders typically took the position that the saved were members of God’s church whether they left their denominations or not (as long as they walked in all the “light” they had).³⁰

It would appear from the above that early Church of God leaders really thought of their unity movement as a call of the *sanctified* into a visible unity, the logic being that only the truly sanctified could ever be united, and that therefore the call to sanctity in all reality is essential to a call to unity. It is not at all clear, however, whether the sanctity and holiness called for was specifically the second work of grace. James Earl Massey says that unity is trans-denominational and is achieved when all believers have an experiential knowledge of Christ.³¹

In a Bachelor of Divinity thesis, written for the School of Theology of Anderson University in 1953, Charles Alford, comparing the two approaches to Christian unity in the Church of God and Disciples of Christ, stresses that the vital basis for Christian unity can only be that of “a Christian experience.” But he goes on to say that this vital basis is no

²⁷Ibid., 14.

²⁸Ibid., 12-13.

²⁹Kenneth E. Jones, “Authority of the Bible in the Church of God,” Open Forum I, Traders Point Christian Church, Indianapolis, March, 1989, 11.

³⁰Larry C. Taylor, “My Vision for Christian Unity,” presentation to Open Forum II, Park Place Church of God, Anderson, IN, March, 1990, 2-3.

³¹As quoted by Taylor, op. cit., 4.

longer that of entire sanctification as held by early pioneers of the Church of God, but “Christian experience as a living and growing thing.”³² Who are members of God’s church, he asks? Not those who depend upon what “the mind thinks and the lips confess, but upon what the heart and the soul ‘know.’”³³ He states that the difference in the approach to Christian unity in the two movements is that, while Church of God people stress “experience,” Disciples focus on “the core of assured Divine revelation” held in common by all Christians, needing exposure simply by stripping away all of those doctrines and practices extrinsic to the unity already existing.³⁴ The Church of God, he writes, consists of a group of holy individuals, possessing “a personal experience of Christ in the atmosphere of a prophetic charism” who make up the church. Disciples, by contrast, he holds, believe in a holy institution which people join.³⁵

Spencer Spaulding comes as close as any contemporary Church of God writer to an analysis of the experience of sanctification for my purposes in his paper, “Some Observations on Sanctification in the Church of God,” read at the May, 1993, Doctrinal Dialogue. He points out that the word “experiential” does not mean “emotional.” He says that the two are easy to confuse since emotion often accompanies religious experience. He holds that there is more of the affective than the cognitive in the experience of sanctification, but the experience cannot be defined as “sheer emotionalism.” Since, he argues, it is spiritual wholeness the believer seeks, it is to be expected that cognitive approaches to the experience are less effective in trying to understand what happens than the affective approach.³⁶ Like Kenneth Jones and others, Spaulding says that this experience is “a kind of real world validation of the theological beliefs of the group” and serves as a proper guide to the interpretation of Scripture, since there is much of Christian doctrine “still open to whatever the Holy Spirit might reveal.”³⁷

I have corresponded finally with David Lawson and Kenneth Jones to get their understanding specifically of what an experience of con-

³²Charles H. Alford, “A Comparison of the Doctrine of Christian Unity in the Church of God and in the Disciples of Christ,” masters (B. D.) thesis, School of Theology, Anderson University, 1953, 20.

³³*Ibid.*, 21.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 115.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 115, 126.

³⁶L. Spencer Spaulding, “Some Observations on Sanctification in the Church of God,” paper for Dialogue on Doctrine, Cincinnati, May, 1993, 9. Spaulding teaches Biblical studies at Anderson University.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 9, 1.

version or an experience of sanctification actually consist in—as an *experience*. Those of us in the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ have difficulty grasping how one distinguishes between a true and a false experience, if a specific kind of experience validates doctrine and guarantees a proper understanding of Scripture. We want to know what we are missing, if there is something here to be missed, because it appears to be something added over and above to simple belief and the decision to follow Christ.

David Lawson³⁸ responded to my inquiry in a letter dated June 8, 1994. He said that I was imagining Church of God people “to be relying on ‘experiences’ [plural] of the Holy Spirit, when in fact it would be more correct to say . . . we ‘experience’ the Spirit in His enabling, empowering presence.” He went on to say that the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life has to meet two tests: agreement with the promises of Scripture and consistency of witness (I suppose the agreement between profession, practice, and spiritual endurance). He explains that Church of God people don’t get their concepts of God out of philosophical reasoning and doctrinal study so much as through “the conviction that they have a personal relationship with this God through prayer and meditation and through sensing Him at work. . . .” The object of conversion in Church of God thinking is said to enable the convert to live Christ’s style of life, and the Holy Spirit is given so that life can actually be lived with a power over and above the human.

I see nothing in most of this to which Christian Churches/Churches of Christ people would not give a hearty “Amen.” It is possible that Christian Churches/Churches of Christ emphasizes conceptual study a tad more than the Church of God. We, too, judge God to be at work in ourselves individually and through the Church, although we might be wary of saying “We *sense* Him at work,” which seems to imply an immediate awareness of His working at the moment. We prefer to be less hasty and more retrospective, waiting to see whether present experiences really deliver what we hope.

Kenneth Jones responded to my inquiry in a letter dated June 25, 1994. He confessed that he experienced frustration in trying to explain what a religious experience is *in itself*, since he and a few others with whom he had shared my questions found it incomprehensible that a

³⁸David Lawson is Associate General Secretary of the Leadership Council of the Church of God movement in North America.

Christian could be converted without *experiencing* it. He was careful to point out that what the Church of God teaches is not a form of mysticism,³⁹ that religious experiences of whatever sort are not “a source of truth or knowledge,” and that Scripture is the only guide to knowing if one is saved: “Experience must always be tested by the Word.” There might be other confirmatory sources of truth like tradition, reason, and experience, but they are secondary, according to Jones. The Church of God, he says, rejects both Schleiermacher and Pentecostalism. Too much can be read into Wesley’s phrase that “experience is self-authenticating,” he continues; the “experience” is entirely fictitious if obedience and holiness of life do not follow it. “Being saved” means that God has accepted that person into the church.

There is very little in the above that sounds contrary to the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ understanding of Scripture. But, of course, these are not the only things said in the letter, and it is the language, or the angle of vision reflected in that language, that alerts a Restorationist. When Dr. Jones says, “the Spirit leads us to Christ, and works within us a desire to know God,” Christian Churches/Churches of Christ people could agree if it means the *effect* of God’s Word upon us and our *experience* of that effect intellectually and emotionally as it moves us to obey it.

When Jones asks, “Faith itself, whether it is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8) or not, is experienced, is it not?”, one can only answer “yes”; except that it seems a strange way of saying one has faith. I have never thought of saying to anyone, “I have *experienced having faith*.” When he writes, “We experience the Holy Spirit’s assurance of his work,” in this case in sanctification, Christian Churches/Churches of Christ folk would agree if it means that we can see that the Holy Spirit has been at work in this or that case by how things have turned out (in our best judgment), and if it means that we enjoy the confidence such evidence instills in us as a result. Is it the *faith* which is the value? Or is it *experiencing the faith* that has the value? This probably is a false dichotomy, because both church bodies would say it is the faith itself which is of chief value; and both would ask how one could have faith without at the same time enjoying it and being aware of all the benefits it confers. The range of difference is quite narrow.

Dr. Jones adds that all individual experience “must be tested and understood in the context of the church, of other Christians.” The fellow-

³⁹Personal letter, Kenneth Jones to Byron Lambert, June 25, 1994. Jones is retired dean of Warner Pacific College and Mid-America Bible College.

ship provides “the norm,” he says. He has never heard of a standard of experience by which to test the fitness of a person for membership in the church and cannot imagine how such a standard could be devised, since everyone experiences salvation and sanctification differently. Believers experience the *same* salvation *differently*. What Christian Churches/Churches of Christ ask is that there be a greater focus on those Scriptural, transpersonal statements than on the subjective enjoyments of those commands and promises.

Dr. Jones closed his letter to me warmly but with perplexity: “I am certain that you have experienced conversion and that the Holy Spirit works in your heart and life. How can you wonder what we mean by experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit?” I suppose my only answer can be, “But that isn’t the way we put it.” I can remember how I *felt* when I came to Christ as a boy, what I experienced in my confession and baptism, how I had to choke back my tears; I can still remember the “floating” experience when I was immersed and how it was not what I thought it was going to be like to be put under water. But it is an effort to bring all this back. What I value is that I did what the Bible requires, not what I experienced in doing so.

As for the Holy Spirit in my life, I trust He has kept His promise to be with me and that I am whatever I am because of His work in me; but I cannot say that at any special moment “I now experience Him”; I can only affirm that if I have grown in Christ, He has worked with me to make it so and that at certain times, from the perspective of distance, it has to have been the case He was guiding me. It seems to me that the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and Church of God speak to each other from different worlds of discourse while affirming and enjoying the same faith.

Closing Thoughts

The value of this investigation may simply be that of calling attention to those factors that govern the somewhat differing ways that the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and the Church of God movement have looked at Christian unity, thus showing that presuppositional or world-view theology may have more to do with barriers to our overt unity in Christ than any doctrines we espouse in our more visible teaching agenda. It is important that we reexamine those presuppositions controlling our Christian perspectives.

Certainly Christian Churches/Church of Christ have some listening to do when it comes to the Church of God teaching on the Holy Spirit. We

have not brought our thinking up to date with the actual language of the New Testament when it comes to the indwelling of the Spirit. It is encouraging to see Restorationists take more interest in pneumatology, in the topic of baptism with the Holy Spirit, and with empowerment doctrines contained in neglected Scriptures like Acts 4:31 (where the *whole* assembly was “filled” with the Holy Spirit after receiving the “gift” in Acts 2:38), Rom. 8:9-11, 16 (the Spirit lives in ordinary Christians and “testifies” inwardly), I Cor. 2:12 (the Spirit is given to us so “that we may understand what God has freely given us”), Gal. 4:6 (it is the Spirit who calls out, “Abba,” in our hearts), Col. 1:27 (Christ in us is the hope of glory), all of this over and above letting the *word* of Christ dwell in us as we teach and sing to each other (Col. 3:16), I John 3:24b (where we know Christ lives in us “by the Spirit he gave us”), and other like passages.

Whether Christian Churches/Churches of Christ will ever accept the Wesleyan formula of conversion and sanctification is highly improbable, but if the Church of God movement can make us stay open to those opaque and mysterious Scriptures which speak of the vital presence of the Holy Spirit in our personal lives and in the counsel of the gathered faithful, we shall be far ahead of where we are now and might possibly understand where we have failed in our restorative mission to the Church.

In the same way, by remaining open to their principle of listening to the voice of the Spirit in the Church as they seek to understand Scripture, the Church of God may find that the mystical attaches to more than the psychological, that there is more to “spirit” than just mental factors, and that there are profoundly non-cognitive elements at work in the first (and second) century “whole person” understanding of salvation. I speak here of the sacramental aspects of prime Christianity, misunderstood by both Christian Churches/Churches of Christ and the Church of God as either legal or optional attachments to faith. The more I investigate early Christian thinking about the relation between body and spirit, the material and the volitional, the corporate and the individual, the more convinced I am that we have never entered into the world-view of the first church and understood its notion of whole-universe redemption.⁴⁰ I think we are more prisoners of the Cartesian universe than we have realized.

Both movements, in their divergent empiricisms, are nevertheless pervasively ahistorical. Both miss what is instructive in church tradition.

⁴⁰I would invite attention to my unpublished paper for the North American Christian Convention’s Theological Forum, July, 1993, on “What Happens in the Lord’s Supper?” This paper provides perspective on early Christian mystical somaticism.

They find it difficult to account for the church between A.D. 100 and either 1812 (the Brush Run Church) or 1881 (D. S. Warner and the *Gospel Trumpet*) and experience a deep disconnection with historical Christendom. Being anti-creedal, anti-hierarchical, and anti-liturgical, both movements have all the difficulties associated with starting over again, with its cost in theological naivety and ecclesiastical bumbling (the Church of God far less so in this latter respect). The Christian Churches/Churches of Christ have the great added cost of their recent separation from the Disciples, with the loss of most of those institutions ante-dating the division.

I confess to a certain joyful mystification over the results of independent missions around the world and church planting at home, in which God has worked through the massive incohesiveness of so much that we do. Still, our hyper-congregationalism and whimsical individualism keep us from having much of a “presence” vis-a-vis the world we’re trying to save and the Church we are trying to unite.

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JOHN WESLEY'S SYNTHESIS OF THE REVIVAL PRACTICES OF JONATHAN EDWARDS, GEORGE WHITEFIELD, NICHOLAS VON ZINZENDORF

by

Richard B. Steele¹

The recent publication of Michael Crawford's monograph, *Seasons of Grace*,² should be a welcome event for students of eighteenth century religious history. Crawford analyzes with unprecedented thoroughness the reciprocal influences among the various religious revivals that erupted in Great Britain and her American Colonies during the 1730s and '40s,³ and shows how these revivals not only affected each other, but also how they affected and were affected by the social, political, ecclesiastical, and spiritual conditions of North Atlantic British culture during that period. Further, he demonstrates their enduring influence upon English, Scottish, and North American evangelicalism.

¹An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the New England Historical Association on October 17, 1992 in Providence, RI. I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Charles L. Cohen for his judicious criticisms of that version, most of which have been incorporated below. A revised version was delivered at the annual meeting of the Midwest American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies on October 14, 1994 in Normal, IL. The present redaction differs only slightly from the second.

²Michael Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in Its British Context* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

³For a briefer treatment, see my "Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue" According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994), ch. 4.

One of Crawford's more suggestive—but I think ultimately unsatisfactory—claims is that by the year 1742 two quite distinct “models” of revivalism had emerged within the Anglo-American evangelical communions, one epitomized by the American Puritan pastor-theologian, Jonathan Edwards, and other by the itinerant Anglican orator, George Whitefield.⁴ Although Crawford's differentiation between Edwardsian and Whitefieldian revivalism is illuminating, it seems to me that at least two other well-articulated approaches to religious “awakening” were operating in Great Britain and its American colonies by 1742, namely those developed by Nicholas von Zinzendorf and John Wesley respectively.

There were, of course, many family resemblances among the doctrines and practices espoused by these four evangelists, and indeed, a certain amount of borrowing back and forth among them. But Zinzendorf's approach to evangelism was so different from those of Edwards and Whitefield, and his impact on Anglo-American religious life in the late 1730s and early '40s so considerable, that its omission from Crawford's typology is egregious.⁵ Moreover, Crawford is mistaken in regarding Wesleyan Meth-

⁴Crawford, *op. cit.*, 165.

⁵Crawford makes no direct reference to Zinzendorf at all, despite the Count's visits to London in 1737 and 1746 and to Pennsylvania in 1741, visits which had the effect of considerably strengthening the Moravian presence in Great Britain and America. Crawford does make a few sporadic references to the Moravians, but accords them no extended treatment. This may be forgivable in view of Crawford's stated objective, which is to explore “Colonial New England's revival tradition in its British context.” The Brethren, though interested in religious “awakening,” were hardly “revivalists,” and they never made much headway in New England. Yet the influence they had upon Anglo-American evangelicalism—or perhaps we should say, the rivalry that many Anglo-American evangelicals resented them for posing—cannot be overlooked. Consider, for example, the following facts: Wesley's early disciple, Benjamin Ingham, later broke with his mentor, became a popular independent evangelist in Yorkshire, and ultimately turned his societies over to the Moravians in 1741 (though without joining them himself). (See Clifford W. Towlson, *Moravian and Methodist: Relationships and Influences in the Eighteenth Century* [London: The Epworth Press, 1957], 133, 256; and John R. Weinlick, *Count Zinzendorf* [New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956], 142-143). Another Oxford Methodist, John Gambold, ultimately became the first bishop of the English Moravian Church (See Towlson, *op. cit.*, 245-255). From the German side, Henry Melchior Mühlenberg was sent in 1742 by the Pietists of Halle to check the spread of Moravian influence among the German settlers in Pennsylvania. (See Weinlick, *op. cit.*, 162-169.) And David Brainerd, a colleague of Edwards and a missionary to the Indians of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, feared Moravian influence among his flock in the mid-1740s. (See Norman Pettit, “Editor's Introduction” to Jonathan Edwards, *The Life of David Brainerd*, Vol. 7 in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985], 30-32.)

odism as a mere variant of the Whitefieldian brand, for this both ignores Wesley's deep indebtedness to Edwards and Zinzendorf and obliterates the originality and distinctiveness of Wesley's own achievements.

My intent is to try to refine Crawford's typology by showing that there were at least four distinct "models" of revivalism operating in Great Britain and America in the mid-eighteenth century. I shall begin by summarizing the two that Crawford proposes, amplifying his pictures with material from other sources. Then I will discuss briefly Zinzendorf's model. Against this background, I then will chronicle the development of Wesley's "hybrid" model, arguing that while he unabashedly appropriated elements from the other three, he also introduced some novelties of his own, and ultimately forged a synthesis that was far more than the sum of its parts. To delineate the similarities and differences between these four models, I will consider each evangelist's understanding of the preacher's office, his views on the role of religion (and/or church) in society, the literary genres he favored for publicizing and defending his work, and his methods of organizing and providing spiritual nurture for his converts.

I. JONATHAN EDWARDS

The model of revivalism enunciated by Edwards presupposed the social structures of the typical Colonial New England town. The political, economic, and religious life of most Yankee communities was focused "inward," on the "commons" or town square. In the square stood the parish church, the town hall, and various shops and cottage industries. Privately owned farmlands and orchards, as well as public pasturage, were located on the outskirts. Even many of the community's agricultural folk lived "in town." Commerce and trade grew steadily during the eighteenth century, and efficient means of transportation and communication were evolving. These developments ultimately broke down the isolation and parochialism of Puritan days. Nevertheless, many towns still were—or at least still thought of themselves as being—largely self-sufficient and autonomous, and so did their fiercely independent Congregationalist churches.

It was in and for this kind of society that Edwardsian revivalism was developed. Such revivalism was aimed at . . .

the spiritual awakening of an entire community led by its settled pastor. There was more to the awakening than a spate of new converts and the rededication of saints to their calling. The people perceived the revival as a communal event and joined with one another to reform their community.⁶

⁶Crawford, *op. cit.*, 165.

Such community-based revivals typically unfolded according to a standard pattern. At first there were stirrings of conscience among the members of the local church, often in response to the “preaching up” of traditional Calvinist doctrines by the pastor. Then followed a phase of several weeks or months when there was a dramatic increase in attendance at worship services, prayer meetings, songfests, etc. This phase typically was marked by a flood of conversions and a “visible” improvement in the morals and general *esprit* of the community.⁷ Eventually a third phase set in, during which the fervor abated and business gradually returned to usual, although the post-revival community was expected to show a net gain in godliness. This was often enforced by the passage of “blue laws.”

The literary genre most often used to report such community-based religious awakenings was the revival narrative, a form perfected by Edwards in a book whose title precisely illustrates the sociological pre-suppositions of his evangelistic method: *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighbouring Towns and Villages of the County of Hampshire, in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New England*. In this work, local color, civic pride, and religious enthusiasm were delicately interwoven, and abundant practical advice was ingenuously dispensed on how to stage similar extravaganzas elsewhere. The revival methods developed at Northampton were put into practice in towns throughout New England and Scotland in the next decade, and the *Faithful Narrative* was, like all best-sellers in religion, breathlessly imitated by a host of lesser literary lights among the clergy.⁸

⁷Cf. Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963).

⁸See, for example, James Robe, *A Faithful Narrative of the Extraordinary Work of the Spirit of God at Kilsyth and other Congregations in the Neighborhood . . .* (Glasgow, 1742); D. Macfarlan, *The Revivals of the Eighteenth Century, particularly at Cambuslang . . .* (Edinburgh: Johnston & Hunter, 1847; reprint ed., Wheaton, IL: Richard Own Roberts, Publishers, 1980); and Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield* (Boston: Charles Tappan, 1841, 1845; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969).

It should be noted that while Edwards' *Faithful Narrative* was unprecedented in its documentation of a New England revival, and unrivaled in its influence upon subsequent American and Scottish revivalism, the Northampton revival of 1734-1735 was by no means the first of its kind. For example, both Solomon Stoddard and Timothy Edwards, Jonathan Edwards' maternal grandfather and father, respectively, were New England pastors renowned for the revivals they led in their parishes in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

II. GEORGE WHITEFIELD

The second model for revivals which Crawford describes was developed by George Whitefield. According to Crawford:

Whitefield was an evangelist with an extraordinary call to preach to all who would listen. Instead of leading to religious awakening and moral reformation a specific community over which he exercised recognized spiritual authority, he traveled from place to place, seeking to transform the entire nation. The phenomena associated with the Methodist revival were the itinerant preacher, large outdoor religious gatherings, and the organization of the awakened into religious societies.⁹

If Edwards could still trade on the cohesiveness and self-sufficiency of the Yankee village for his revivals, Whitefield capitalized on the dramatic changes that were gradually reshaping North Atlantic society. The rigid, sometimes oppressive, social world of agrarian feudalism, in which everyone's "place" was fixed by law and custom, was steadily giving way to the restless, contentious world of mercantilism and open-franchise democracy. As Harry Stout observes:

Increasingly the logic and structure of the marketplace came to stand as a shaping metaphor for society in general. In place of a local, face-to-face world premised on trust and personal familiarity, people were everywhere being thrust into larger webs of association premised on contract, mobility, and impersonal interest in common products, services, and markets. As the public sphere grew more impersonal and abstract, the private self gained proportionate importance as the repository of spiritual experience.¹⁰

In such a context, religious revivals aimed not to reform the village or revitalize the parish, but to appeal to the increasingly rootless and dispossessed "masses," many of whom had no connection with any local church. Meetings were advertised well in advance—through word of mouth, in the newspapers, on broadsides, and by supportive local clergy. They were held where vast crowds could be assembled and where the

⁹Crawford, *op. cit.*, 165.

¹⁰Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), xvi-xvii.

orator's homiletical histrionics could be displayed to full effect,¹¹ i.e., in fields, town squares, natural amphitheaters or huge, barn-like "tabernacles" constructed for the occasion.

The literary genre that proved most serviceable for Whitefieldian revivalism (and also, be it noted, for the Wesleyan variety) was the published journal.¹² Similar in some ways to conventional religious autobiographies and to the Edwardsian revival narrative, the evangelist's journal nevertheless differed significantly from both.¹³ It had the exoticism of a foreign travelogue, the didacticism of an apologetic tract and, best of all, the edifying tone of a miracle story. By expressing (or at least by affecting) astonishment over what God had wrought, the evangelist could wrap the most brazen self-display in the mantle of humility and devotion.

But the very strength of Whitefield's model of revivalism was also its weakness. It appealed to people who were either bored with the predictable parish routine or entirely alienated from religious and civic institutions, but it largely failed to provide them with follow-up spiritual nurture after the spiritual event. In America and Scotland, where the established churches shared his Calvinistic doctrinal convictions, Whitefield could depend on the local clergy to reap where he had sown—and often

¹¹For an insightful (and very amusing) account of Whitefield's "theatricality," see Stout, *op. cit.*, pp. xviii-xxiv and chapters 1 and 2.

¹²The first of Whitefield's published *Journals*, covering the period between December 28, 1737 and May 7, 1738, was first circulated privately and published without the author's knowledge in 1738; this was followed later that year by a revised edition published by Whitefield himself. Wesley's first published *Journal* covered the period from October 14, 1735 through February 1, 1738, but it was not published until 1740. Thus, while Wesley had been writing copious diaries and journals long before Whitefield started, and continued to do so long after Whitefield stopped, Whitefield was the first Methodist to use this literary genre as a means of evangelistic propaganda.

¹³On the tradition of autobiography before and after Wesley, see W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., "Introduction" to John Wesley, *Journals and Diaries I (1735-1738)*, Vol. 18 of *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 1-36 and 105-119. See also Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), chapters 5-8.

Note: The edition of Wesley's *Works* referred to above, known as the "Bicentennial Edition," will henceforth be abbreviated as *WJW (Bi)*. Publication information for each volume used will be provided at the time of its first citation.

they were glad to oblige.¹⁴ In England, where the state church was often hostile to his doctrines and methods, he established a “connexion” of societies under the patronage of the Countess of Huntingdon. But organizational skill was not Whitefield’s specialty. “My brother Wesley acted wisely,” he observed with a mixture of sadness and envy. “The souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class and thus preserved the fruits of his labours. This I neglected and my people are a rope of sand.”¹⁵ After his death, most of “his people” joined Dissenting churches.

In short, Whitefieldian revivalism emerged at a time when the “private self” was coming into its own. The religio-political turmoil of the previous century had dealt the death blow to the Elizabethan notion that Britain was a “Christian commonwealth,” i.e., a nation whose entire populus belonged (at least in theory) to a single state church. The Act of Toleration had made religious pluralism an accepted fact of British life, and thereby abolished the idea that people’s religious identity was part of their birthright as citizens of the state. Whitefield insisted, to the contrary, that it could and should be determined by their personal experiences and decisions; that it was, so to speak, a matter of *re*-birthright. And he was a master at evoking such life-changing “religious experiences” and appealing for the “personal decisions” which he said were so necessary. But he was less successful at providing his converts with a sense of place in the world, at organizing them into cells for the cultivation of their spiritual life and the practice of Christian discipleship. Almost everything of this sort that did exist was modest in scope, brief in duration, and run by some enterprising local leader, not by the evangelist himself.

III. NICHOLAS VON ZINZENDORF

If communitarianism was simply taken for granted in Edwardsian revivalism by the very nature of the New England town, and almost

¹⁴It is worth noting at this point that while the Edwardsian model was indigenous to New England and the Whitefieldian model to old England, *both* models were used on *both* sides of the Atlantic. Thus, for example, during his second American tour, Whitefield preached at Northampton at Edwards’ invitation, and conversely, Edwards’ writings were expressly used in designing the community-based revival at Cambuslang, where, again, Whitefield was a featured guest preacher. In other words, the *heuristic* value of Crawford’s models is not diminished, but rather enhanced, by recognizing that, in any given revival, methods characteristic of different models might be used.

¹⁵Quoted in Stanley Ayling, *John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 201.

entirely neglected in Whitefieldian revivalism, with its appeal to the new “private individual” of the early industrial revolution, it was the central aim of the model to which we now turn, the one developed by Nicholas von Zinzendorf, the leader of the Moravian Brethren.

The Moravians traced their lineage back to Jan Hus, a forerunner of the Reformation who was executed for heresy at the Council of Constance in 1415. Forced underground, his followers maintained a precarious and shadowy existence in eastern Europe for the next three centuries. In 1722, several bands fled from the harassment to which the Czech authorities were then subjecting them. They emigrated to Saxony, where they were given refuge on the estates of Count Zinzendorf. Himself an ardent Hallensian Pietist,¹⁶ the Count nevertheless respected the Hussites’ ancestral customs. When in 1727 he refounded their church under the name of the Renewed Unity of the Brethren, the result was a curious blend of the tenacity and reclusiveness of the ancient and persecuted Czech Brethren and the introspectiveness and emotionalism of Lutheran Pietism.

Compared with the evangelistic methods of Whitefield and Edwards, those of Zinzendorf hardly seem “revivalistic” at all. He shared their profound Christocentric devotionism and their insistence on the necessity of the “New Birth” and “heart religion.” But his way was less one of “outreach” than of “ingathering.” He understood evangelism as the work, not of itinerant superstars like Whitefield, but of Christian communities living and supporting themselves in their field of mission.¹⁷ The social, political, and economic life of these communities (which were further subdivided into classes, bands, and choirs) was minutely regulated according to the religious goals of the sect, sometimes to the detriment of their members’ economic prosperity and personal happiness. Mission-

¹⁶That is, he was reared in a home steeped in the methods of Philip Jacob Spener and August Hermann Francke and trained at the universities of Halle and Wittenberg. However, Zinzendorf was always something of a “loose cannon” in the movement and was ultimately repudiated by the Hallensians.

¹⁷For detailed studies of some of these Moravian settlements, see Adelaide L. Fries, *The Moravians in Georgia, 1735–1740* (Raleigh: n.p., 1905; reprint ed., Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1967); Gillian Lindt Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967); Jacob John Sessler, *Communal Pietism Among Early American Moravians* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1933; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press Inc., 1971).

minded the Moravians certainly were,¹⁸ and to some extent this offset the spiritual clannishness to which they were prone.¹⁹ But the nurture of the community was itself understood to be an indispensable feature of gospel proclamation. In a sermon titled, “Concerning the Proper Purpose of the Preaching of the Gospel,” delivered (in German) at the Fetter Lane Society of London in 1746, Zinzendorf stated:

We must establish this principle, that the blessed, fruitful, and almost irresistible “calling in” of many thousands of souls presupposes a little flock in the house which cleaves to the Saviour with body and soul, souls which are already there, united with the Saviour, so that one may point to these very people with a finger when one wants to invite others. It is an advantage, a blessing, a sound preaching of the Gospel, when one can say, “Come, everything is ready. I can show you the people who are already there; just come and see.”²⁰

Thus, whereas small groups for mutual spiritual edification played a relatively minor role in Edwardsian and Whitefieldian evangelicalism, and no economic or social reorganization was contemplated in the towns that experienced *their* revivals, Moravian communities were expressly organized to facilitate religious devotion among their members, to provide financial support for those directly engaged in mission work, and to offer tangible evidence of what the corporate Christian life should be.

Regrettably, the introversion of Moravian life and the subjectivism of Moravian piety led eventually to bizarre excesses. During the so-called “Sifting Period,” which spanned the years from 1738 to 1750 (and therefore coincided with the Great Awakening and the early Methodist Revival), the Moravians were decidedly self-absorbed. They fondly

¹⁸For the dramatic and inspiring story of their evangelistic exploits among oppressed and disenfranchised peoples in European colonies around the globe, see John Taylor Hamilton, *A History of the Missions of the Moravian Church, During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Co., 1901); and J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum, 1722–1957* (Bethlehem, PA and Winston-Salem, NC: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, Moravian Church in America, 1967).

¹⁹Gollin, op. cit., 18.

²⁰Nicholaus Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures on Important Subjects in Religion Preached in Fetter Lane Chapel in London in the Year 1746*, trans. and ed. George W. Forell (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1973), 25.

referred to Jesus as “Brother Lambkin,” to Zinzendorf as “*der Herzens Papa*” (Heart’s Daddy), and to themselves as “little fools,” “little blood worms in the sea of grace,” and “little bees who suck on the wounds of Christ [and] who feel at home in the Sidehole and crawl in deep.”²¹

The Moravian literature of this period reflects their inward-looking piety. Diaries and letters proliferated, some by individuals about their own religious experiences, others by community leaders about the spiritual and temporal affairs of their settlements and small groups. Hymns, litanies, sermons, catechisms, and liturgical rites, often composed in an effusively precious and sanguinary style, were typical. Sentimentality was often taken for sanctity, emotional intensity equated with spiritual integrity, and bridal mysticism confused with faith.

Despite this morbid enthusiasm, Zinzendorf clearly understood the importance of organizing his followers into cell groups—and indeed, into thriving theocratic communities—for corporate spiritual nurture. He could thus provide them with an experience, not only of “regeneration” in Christ, but of intimate fellowship with other Christians—something that was disappearing from the free-market, open-franchise society that was emerging in North Atlantic society, and something that the Edwardsian and Whitefieldian revivals could only partially restore.

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF WESLEY’S HYBRID MODEL

In view of Michael Crawford’s stated objective to describe “Colonial New England’s revival tradition in its British Context,” he might be forgiven for overlooking Zinzendorf, whose methods for “awakening” the spiritually somnolent were hardly “revivalistic” (as that term is now generally understood) and whose followers made little headway into New England. But Zinzendorf and his followers had a profound impact on England and the Middle Atlantic Colonies during the 1730s and ‘40s, and were crucial in propelling Wesley to work out *his* model of revivalism. As I shall now try to show, Wesley’s model was so different from those of Edwards, Whitefield, and Zinzendorf—though it borrowed elements from each—that it must be accorded the status of a separate, though hybrid, type. Moreover, its results on both sides of the Atlantic have proven far more enduring than any of the others. To describe both the genesis and the genius of Wesley’s model, I will chronicle some of the major events in

²¹For documentation of these and other such cloying expressions used during the Sifting Period, see Sessler, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-163; and Weinlick, *op. cit.*, 199-200.

his life during the 1730s and '40s, adding some theological commentary.²²

It is well known that John and Charles Wesley and two of their fellow Oxford Methodists traveled from England to Savannah, Georgia in 1735 in order to serve the spiritual needs of the English colonists, provide administrative assistance to General Oglethorpe, and serve as missionaries to the Indians. They blundered badly in these tasks and all four of them retreated to England by early 1738. But during their stay, they came into contact with a group of Moravian settlers under the leadership of Augustus Spangenberg. Moreover, after Wesley's return to England he promptly made contact with the Brethren society in London, led by Peter Böhler. Now Spangenberg and Böhler radiated that admirable combination of evangelical zeal, human warmth, and sober practicality that marks the Moravian spirit at its best, and were notably free of the sentimental mysticism into which their church was beginning to slide. Under their guidance, Wesley came to see the poverty of his own spiritual state and was propelled toward his famous "Aldersgate Experience" of May 24, 1738, when he received the assurance of God's love.²³

One might have expected Wesley to align himself thereafter with the Moravians, or at least to copy their model of inward-looking piety. But this is precisely what did not happen. Less than a month after Aldersgate, John Wesley left England to visit several Moravian settlements in Germany. Though evidently pleased to meet Zinzendorf and impressed by the fraternal love among the residents of these communities, he was troubled by the paternalistic autocracy of the Count and the secrecy and spiritual smugness of his followers. Shortly after returning to London in September, he penned (but apparently never posted) a letter to the Brethren that indicates his growing ambivalence:

I cannot but rejoice in your steadfast faith, in your love to our blessed Redeemer, your deadness to the world, your meekness, temperance, chastity, and love of one another. I greatly

²²For a much fuller account, see my "Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue" according to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley, op. cit., ch. 4.

²³WJW (Bi) 18:214-215, Jan. 29-Feb. 1, 1738. Cf. Sermon No. 2, "The Almost Christian," in Albert Outler, ed., *Sermons I*, Vol. 1 of WJW (Bi) (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 131-141. For a thorough study of the Aldersgate Experience and its meaning for Wesley and his followers, see Randy L. Maddox, ed., *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon Press, 1990).

approve your conferences and bands, of your method of instructing children, and in general of your great care of the souls committed to your charge. But of some other things I stand in doubt. . . . Is not the Count all in all? Are not the rest mere shadows, calling him Rabbi, almost implicitly both believing and obeying him? . . . Do you not magnify your own Church too much? Do you believe any who are not of it to be in gospel liberty? . . . Do you not use cunning, guile, or dissimulation in many cases? Are you not of a close, dark, reserved temper and behavior? Is not the spirit of secrecy the spirit of your community? Have you that childlike openness, frankness, and plainness of speech so manifest to all in the Apostles and first Christians.²⁴

This letter says as much about Wesley as it does about the Moravians. He had come both to admire the intimacy of their community life and to fear their spiritual elitism. As we shall see, his own emerging model of revivalism would be aimed at cultivating the former without lapsing into the latter.

In the wake of Aldersgate, Wesley came to believe that God's grace is free for all who will receive it. On September 17, 1738, Wesley "began again to declare in my own country the glad tidings of salvation . . . to a large company" in London, and on the following day he "went to the condemned felons in Newgate and offered them free salvation."²⁵ This new doctrine of "free salvation" would eventually embroil him in controversy with the Calvinists, who believed that Christ's atoning work was applicable only to the elect. But at this point it was apparently the ecclesiological exclusivism of the Moravians, rather than the soteriological exclusivism of the Calvinists, to which Wesley was objecting. He needed what might be called a "centrifugal" model of evangelism for his message of God's free grace, in contrast to the "centripetal" approach of the Moravians.

²⁴Unfinished and unposted letter to the Moravians at Marienborn and Herrenhut, in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. John Telford, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931, 1960), 1.257f., dated September, 1738. Cf. Wesley's open letter "To the Moravian Church, More especially that part of it now or lately residing in England," dated June 24, 1744, which prefaces *An Extract of the Reverend Mr. John Wesley's Journal, from November 1, 1739 to September 3, 1741* (London: W. Strahan, 1744), in W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds. *Journal and Diaries II (1738-1743)*, Vol. 19 of *WJW (Bi)* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 116-118.

²⁵*WJW (Bi)* 19:12.

This he found three weeks later in a book by Jonathan Edwards. For he tells us that on Monday, October 9, while hiking from London to Oxford . . .

I read the truly-surprising narrative of the conversions lately wrought in and about the town of Northampton, in New-England. Surely "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." An extract from this I wrote to a friend, concerning the state of those who are "weak in faith." His answer, which I received at Bristol, on Saturday, 14, threw me into great perplexity. . . .²⁶

The book that Wesley read and abridged was, of course, Edwards' *Faithful Narrative*, and as Albert Outler observes, the spiritual crisis which reading it precipitated in him "ranks with Aldersgate in importance if not in drama."²⁷ It induced him to make a thorough self-examination, the results of which were far-reaching both for his personal piety and for his evangelical methodology.

Wesley does not slavishly reiterate Edwards' ideas, but uses them as a point of departure for his own meditation on the characteristics of the regenerate. He lists five aspects of one's "new life in Christ": (1) new judgments of oneself and of what makes for true happiness and holiness; (2) new purposes in life; (3) new desires, passions, and inclinations; (4) a new manner of personal comportment in one's dealings with others; and (5) new actions which either "spring from, or lead to, the love of God and man." This list is reminiscent of the Puritan autobiographies and conversion narratives with which both Edwards and Wesley were familiar. The sober introspection avoids the illuminism and sentimentality then popular among the Moravians, and the ethical rigorism is typical of British Calvinism.

But did Wesley think that he actually possessed these five characteristics of regeneration at that point?

. . . [U]pon the whole, although I have not yet that joy in the Holy Ghost, nor the full assurance of faith, much less am I, in

²⁶WJW (*Bi*) 19:16, Oct. 9, 1738. Unaccountably, there is no reference to Wesley's reading of Edwards' *Faithful Narrative* on this date in F. M. Jackson, "A Study of John Wesley's Readings," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 4 (1904): 17-19, 47-51, 74-81, 107-111, 134-140, 173-176, 203-210, 232-238.

²⁷In his editor's "Introduction" to *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 15.

the full sense of the words, “in Christ a new creature:” I nevertheless trust that I have a measure of faith, and am “accepted in the Beloved:” I trust “the hand-writing that was against me is blotted out;” and that I am reconciled to God through his Son.²⁸

So Outler is correct. Just as hearing Luther’s “Preface to Romans” at Aldersgate in May had facilitated Wesley’s experience of renewal, reading Edwards’ *Faithful Narrative* during the Oxford excursion in October equipped him with the conceptual tools for diagnosing that experience.

But we are less concerned here with Wesley’s personal piety than with his evangelistic methodology,²⁹ and it would exceed the evidence provided by this *Journal* entry alone to suppose that Wesley immediately repudiated Moravian exclusivism in favor of the Edwardsian—or for that matter the Whitefieldian—approach to revival. What can be said is that from this point forward, Wesley grew both increasingly disenchanted with the Brethren and increasingly attracted to the methods, if not the doctrines, of the two Calvinist evangelists. A brief discussion of his contacts with them in the years which followed will demonstrate this.

In December, 1738, Whitefield returned from his first journey to America. His dramatic success there stood in sharp contrast to Wesley’s dismal failure, but Wesley bore him no grudges. They collaborated amicably during the following year, until Whitefield left again for America. It was during this period that Whitefield first experimented with field-preaching and bade the reluctant Wesley to follow suit. This practice, of course, would become the stock-in-trade for both Methodist itinerants.

Yet it was also during this period that their dispute over the doctrine of predestination first erupted. Wesley had come to reject the Calvinist view that while God commands the church to *call* everyone, He intends to *save* only a few.³⁰ In his programmatic sermon called “Free Grace” and first preached on April 29, 1739, Wesley agreed with the Calvinists that an absolute difference exists between the natural and regenerate states, but he denied that God has unalterably assigned each person to one or the other. He saw no way to offer salvation to sinners without assuming that they possessed the freedom to accept or reject that offer. Whitefield, on the other hand, saw no way to grant them that theoretical freedom of

²⁸WJW (*Bi*) 19:19, Oct. 9, 1738.

²⁹It hardly needs to be said that these cannot be neatly separated from one another.

³⁰See, e.g., WJW (*Bi*) 19:51, Apr. 26, 1739.

choice without implying that they deserved credit for their own salvation. One passage from “Free Grace” is particularly instructive for our purposes:

The point which the wisest of the modern unbelievers most industriously labour to prove, is, that the Christian Revelation is not necessary. They well know, could they once show this, the conclusion would be too plain to be denied, “If it be not necessary, it is not true.” Now this fundamental point you give up. For supposing that eternal, unchangeable decree, one part of mankind must be saved, though the Christian Revelation were not in being, and the other part of mankind must be damned, notwithstanding that Revelation. And what would an infidel desire more? You allow him all he asks. In making the gospel thus unnecessary to all sorts of men, you give up the whole Christian cause.³¹

It is important to note that Wesley’s rejection of double predestination is in no way rooted in a bland humanitarianism that makes conversion unnecessary, and good works sufficient, for salvation. On the contrary, it is based on his belief that human beings are naturally depraved and that each person’s salvation depends upon the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ. This far Wesley was in complete agreement with the Calvinists. Where he differed was in asserting that each person must decide whether or not to believe in Christ. That is, he denied that God foreordains anyone’s salvation. The significance of this fact for our purposes is evident. It shows the clear advantage that Wesleyan Arminianism had over Whitefieldian Calvinism for people who were increasingly feeling that “the private self [is] the repository of spiritual experience,” namely that it made *their* choice to believe the Gospel, rather than *God’s* act of electing them, decisive for their ultimate destiny.

Whitefield had rightly seen that the private self needed “religious experience,” but his theology left that self essentially passive. Wesley took the step that the logic of evangelicalism in that social world demanded: he made the private self fully responsible for its acceptance or rejection of divine grace. He extended the domain of human moral agency in matters of the spirit, just as the Whigs were expanding the influence of the middle classes in national politics and as the venture capitalists were developing

³¹John Wesley, *Sermons I: 1–33*, Vol. 3 of *WJW (Bi)*, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 551–552.

new products and breaking into new overseas markets. Evangelical Arminianism proved to be an attractive theological option for “the nation of shopkeepers.”

Despite Whitefield’s protests, Wesley published “Free Grace,” though he tactfully (or guilefully) waited until after Whitefield had sailed for Philadelphia (early August, 1739) before doing so. When Whitefield later learned that Wesley had publicly avowed Arminianism, he launched a volley of public and private letters of protest, to which Wesley replied in kind. Their friendship was sorely strained for three years. But by late 1742, peace between them had been restored. For, in spite of their doctrinal differences, Wesley and Whitefield had a deep personal regard for one another and employed many of the same evangelistic methods (e.g., itinerant field preaching, extemporaneous prayer, the publication of journals, etc.).

Perhaps more importantly, they shared certain fundamental religious sensibilities. Both preferred the staunch biblicism and rigorous work ethic of the Puritan tradition to the illuminism and quietism then growing among the Moravians. Both accepted the Calvinist notion of “progressive sanctification” (although Wesley’s twist on it, his famous doctrine of Christian perfection, was anathema to those like Whitefield who thought sin ineradicable in this life). And both were convinced that the Church of England would never be “awakened” by its lordly bishops and comfortable vicars. Extraordinary methods were needed, and Wesley readily acknowledged that for more than two centuries it had been the Calvinists who had provided most of the “evangelical” impetus in British Christianity.³²

³²Wesley’s debts to and affinities for English Puritanism have been thoroughly documented by George Croft Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1935); and Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage. A Study of the Christian Life* (Nashville & New York: Abingdon Press, 1966; reprint ed., London: Epworth Press, 1967). For a fine account of Wesley’s battles with the hyper-Calvinists in the 1770s, see W. Stephen Gunter, *The Limits of ‘Love Divine’: John Wesley’s Response to Antinomianism and Enthusiasm* (Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon Press, 1989).

It is important to note that not all eighteenth century English Calvinists were technically Dissenters. In addition to the likes of Whitefield, there was a small but active band of a non-revivalistic evangelical Anglican clergy. See G. C. B. Davies, *The Cornish Evangelicals, 1735–1760: A Study of Walker of Truro and Others* (London: S.P.C.K., 1951). Conversely, not all Dissenters were strict Calvinists. Philip Doddridge and Isaac Watts, for example, staked out a position that was in many ways closer to Wesley’s “evangelical Arminianism” than the vitriolic double predestinarianism of their colleague, Augustus Toplady.

This is especially evident in the heavy use he made of the devotional and ethical writings of Puritan and Dissenting divines—suitably amended by himself, of course! We saw above how deeply affected Wesley had been by Edwards’ *Faithful Narrative*. His abridgment of this work was published in 1744, and over the next thirty years he published shortened versions of four more of Edwards’ revival treatises, namely *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England*, *The Life of David Brainerd*, and *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*. The appearance of these abridgments—and their frequent reprinting, right up to the twentieth century, on both sides of the Atlantic, and often by publishing houses affiliated with various Wesleyan denominations—indicates the great extent to which the Edwardsian theory and methods of revivalism influenced Wesley and the whole course of British-American evangelicalism.³³ Moreover, between 1749 and 1755 Wesley brought out his mammoth *Christian Library*, which, as its subtitle indicates, consisted “of extracts from and abridgments of the choicest pieces of practical divinity which have been published in the English tongue.”³⁴ Most of the featured authors were British Dissenters.

But, although Wesley’s affinities for the British nonconformist tradition were deep enough to immunize him against Moravian quietism, he could not abide the supralapsarian Calvinism to which many of them subscribed. Indeed, he was opposed in principle to all religious dogmatism, and sought to honor and publicize the personal sanctity and spiritual insights of Christians from all periods of church history and all positions on the theological spectrum. Thus he also featured in his *Christian Library* selections from the Apostolic Fathers, several Catholic mystics,

³³The publication dates of Edwards’ originals and Wesley’s abridgments are as follows: *Distinguishing Marks*: 1741/1744; *Some Thoughts*: 1743/1745; *Religious Affections*: 1746/1773; and *Life of Brainerd*: 1749/1768. For a detailed account of the publication histories of these treatises and the Wesley abridgments, as well as an analysis of Wesley’s redactional principles as applied to Edwards, see my “*Gracious Affection*” and “*True Virtue*” According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley, op. cit., ch. 5.

³⁴First ed., 50 [duodecimo] vols. (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1749-1755); 2nd ed., 30 [octavo] vols. (vols. 1-18, London: T. Cordeaux, 1819-1824; vols. 19-30, London: J. Kershaw, 1825-1827). The contents of the two editions are substantially the same, although the 2nd ed. does contain some material not included in the 1st, most notably four of the five revival treatises by Edwards that Wesley abridged.

and various Anglican divines. Moreover, he and his brother published several hymnals in the late 1730s and early '40s that included translations or adaptations of poetry from such diverse sources as the Moravians, various continental Catholic ascetical writers, and the British metaphysical poet, George Herbert. Thus, while Wesley's theology can probably be classified as "Reformed" in the broadest sense, it was certainly not Calvinistic, and quite self-consciously (if not always self-consistently) borrowed elements from many sources.

Indeed, it seems not entirely whimsical to suggest that the distinctive literary genre of Wesleyan revivalism was precisely the digest. Wesley purloined and blue-penciled the revival narratives of Edwards and the christocentric hymns of Zinzendorf, imitated the journals of Whitefield, and expurgated dozens of other writers of "practical divinity." And this was not simply because he happened to have an editor's fondness for trimming other people's copy. His habit of culling and condensing material from diverse sources was an expression of his "catholic spirit," his fundamental theological conviction that God's Spirit has been active in the Church all ages and places. His distaste for sectarian wrangling, pedantic disputation and speculative abstraction bade him to cut; but his intuitive appreciation for holy living bade him to keep. As he says in the preface to the *Christian Library*:

I have endeavoured to extract such a collection of *English Divinity*, as (I believe) is all true, all agreeable to the oracles of God: as is all practical, unmixed with controversy of any kind; and all intelligible to plain men: such as is not superficial, but going down to the depth, and describing the height of Christianity. And yet not mystical, not obscure to any of those, who are experienced in the ways of God. I have also particularly endeavored to preserve a consistency throughout, that no part might contradict any other; but all conspire together, "to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work."

Thus, in contrast to Michael Crawford, who appears to regard Wesleyan Methodism as a mere variant of the Whitefieldian model on the grounds that the former borrowed so much from the latter, I maintain that Wesley drew so much from so many different sources that he cannot be said to have called any man father. His eclecticism *was* his originality. His methodology of revival was a hybrid, a synthesis of many divergent approaches that was nevertheless greater than the sum of its constituent parts.

VI. CONCLUSION

Let us now summarize the Wesleyan hybrid: From Edwards he borrowed his spiritual diagnostics and learned the value of the revival narrative and the spiritual autobiography for promoting the work. But Edwardsian revivals were meant to be staged by and for the citizens of a town and led by its settled pastor. Under the circumstances of mid-eighteenth century British society, Wesley could not rest content with this.³⁵ Hence he turned to Whitefield, who showed that an evangelist could be most effective as an itinerant, preaching wherever he could gain an audience and often in the face of opposition from the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. Wesley also learned from Whitefield the value of publishing his journals for propagandistic and apologetic purposes. And from Whitefield and Edwards alike, Wesley learned that preaching had to animate the affections if it was to galvanize the will for holy living. But against the two great Calvinists, Wesley realized that in the world of growing free-market capitalism, social mobility, and open-franchise democracy (none of which he himself wholeheartedly endorsed!) an evangelist had to respect the right and ability of private individuals to make their own moral and religious decisions. Hence the power—and the staying-power—of his Arminian doctrinal position, which has, in the intervening centuries, largely supplanted high Calvinism among English and American Evangelicals.

Finally, Wesley learned from Zinzendorf that in an increasingly depersonalized world, many people still crave genuine community, even if few are willing to surrender their individualism and autonomy to the kind of theocracy and “general economy” found in the early Moravian settlements. Hence he imitated the Brethren in subdividing his societies into bands and classes for the purpose of nurturing the piety and supervising the morals of his followers, but never tried to organize them into socially exclusive and economically self-sufficient colonies.

³⁵However, the continuing popularity of Wesley’s abridgments of Edwards’ revival treatises into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggests that when Methodism itself became virtually the “established church” in the American South and Midwest, the community-based paradigm gained a greater pertinence than it had in mid-eighteenth century England.

ADVENTIST SOTERIOLOGY: THE WESLEYAN CONNECTION

by

Woodrow W. Whidden

In his thoughtful contribution to Johnston and Dayton's *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, Russell Staples suggests that, for Seventh-day Adventist theology, "the cluster of doctrines relating to the Fall, sin, and salvation constitute a thoroughgoing evangelical Arminianism."¹ Affirming the correctness of this identification, I would add that such soteriology should be characterized further as essentially Wesleyan/Holiness. The thesis of this article is that the Wesleyan/Arminian cast given to Adventist soteriology had its origin in the early experiences of Seventh-day Adventism's most important formative figure, Ellen G. White (1827-1915). What follows is a tracing of White's early experiences of salvation as a means of identifying Wesleyan/Holiness influences and the ways in which such influences informed her thinking about soteriological issues.

The Conversion Experiences

Ellen White was born to parents who were devoted members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This devotion to Methodism, however, did not prevent their involvement with another manifestation of American revivalism—Millerism. Theirs was the world of pietistic revivalism, a

¹Donald Dayton and Robert Johnston, eds., *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 63.

potent blend of Methodism and Millerism that provided the setting for the emerging salvation experience of young Ellen Gould Harmon.²

A Severe Injury. Her experience of salvation (as she recollects it) began in earnest after the family had moved from Gorham to Portland, Maine when she was a child. At nine years of age (1836) she was struck in the face with a stone thrown at her by a classmate. This traumatic event, with its physical and emotional aftermaths, provided an impetus for a serious spiritual quest. Following the injury she “began to pray the Lord” to prepare her for “death.” She strongly “desired to become a Christian” and prayed “earnestly for the forgiveness of . . . sins.” The youthful invalid remembered a “peace of mind” and a desire that “all should have their sins forgiven and love Jesus” as she did.³

During this period of convalescence, it is interesting to note that White already had a lively sense of the second coming of Jesus which she believed would relieve her suffering.⁴

The Conversion Crisis. In the chapter “My Conversion” in *Testimonies*, Vol. I, the first thing White speaks of is William Miller’s March, 1840 visit to Portland, Maine for “his first course of lectures on the second coming.”⁵ These lectures created a serious soteriological crisis for the twelve year old Ellen, a crisis that was not to be resolved until 1842—in the wake of Miller’s second series of lectures in Portland.

Not only did Miller present his arguments for the imminent, visible, and literal return of Christ from the prophecies of the apocalyptic Biblical books (especially Daniel and Revelation), but “sinners were invited

²Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. I (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 9. Our analysis of these early experiences is based primarily on her autobiographical accounts, drawn mainly from *Early Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1882, 1945), 11-13, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. I, and *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2 (published in 1860 [facsimile reproduction by Review and Herald, 1945]). Ellen Harmon married Millerite preacher James Springer White (1821-81) on August 30, 1846. She has since been known by her married name, White.

³*Testimonies*, Vol. I, 11; see *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. II, 9.

⁴*Testimonies*, Vol. I, 11; see *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. II, 10.

⁵*Testimonies*, Vol. I, 14. Arthur White has suggested that this visit was incorrectly dated by Ellen White as 1839 in *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. II, 12 (*Ellen G. White: The Early Years* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1985], 34).

forward to the anxious seat,”⁶ to which “hundreds responded.” White recalls pressing through the crowd to take her place with other earnest “seekers.” She, however, found it hard to obtain an assurance of acceptance since she felt she “could never become worthy to be called a child of God.” She went on to relate the “great effect” which Miller’s lectures had on her: “I knew that I must be lost if Christ should come, and I be found as I then was.” She found it hard to “give entirely up to the Lord.”⁷

One evening, on the way home from a particularly stirring presentation on the second coming, she shared her deep concerns with her brother Robert: “I told him that I dared not rest nor sleep until I knew that God had pardoned my sins.” Apparently the preaching of the second coming had the effect of causing her to lose the assurance of forgiveness which earlier she had found in the aftermath of her injury.⁸ She was so burdened that she told Robert she had “coveted death in the days when life seemed so heavy a burden” for her to bear, but now the thought that she might die in her “present sinful state” and be eternally lost filled her with “terror.” Robert assured her that God would spare her if she came to God in faith. He told Ellen that they must never forget the words they had heard that night.⁹

When Ellen arrived home she spent most of the night in “prayer and tears.” Her hope was “so small” and faith “so weak” that she feared to share her condition with anyone else lest their knowledge of her spiritual debility plunge her “into despair.” She longed, however, for someone to explain “the steps” needed so that she could “meet” her Saviour and give herself “entirely up to the Lord.” She remained in this condition “for some months.”¹⁰

⁶This reference to Miller’s use of the “anxious seat” is a clue to his consonance with contemporary evangelical culture, despite Millerism’s reputation for fanaticism and heterodoxy. Recent studies have rather unanimously demonstrated that “Miller’s message was so orthodox that the movement achieved a comprehensiveness that sociologists of religion usually ascribe to formal churches. It appealed to people from all walks of secular life and from all the evangelical sects that comprised the bulk of church members in that day” (see Ronald Numbers and Jonathan Butler’s [eds.] *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987], 2; compare these comments by David Rowe with the more elaborated comments of Ruth Alden Doan, 119-38)).

⁷*Testimonies* I:14, 15; and *Spiritual Gifts*, II:12.

⁸*Testimonies* I:15, 11.

⁹*Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 16.

During these months she apparently continued attending Methodist meetings, but her main spiritual focus was the Adventist gatherings which were being held at the Christian Church on Casco Street in Portland. In the summer of 1842, however, she attended a Methodist camp meeting at Buxton, Maine where she “was fully resolved to seek the Lord in earnest . . . and obtain, if possible,” pardon for her sins.¹¹ At this camp meeting she heard a helpful discourse that caused her to see the futility of (1) sinners “waiting to make themselves more worthy of divine favor” and (2) the “vague idea that they must make some wonderful effort” to “gain the favor of God.” She was convicted that this was all “self-dependence” and found comfort in the thought that it is “only by connecting with Jesus through faith that the sinner becomes a hopeful, believing child of God.” She now began to see her “way more clearly, and the darkness began to pass away.”¹²

She earnestly sought forgiveness, but a feeling that forgiveness should be accompanied by “spiritual ecstasy” as the “evidence” of her acceptance with God caused her to doubt her conversion in the “simplicity of it.”¹³ While earnestly and persistently seeking the Lord for forgiveness at the altar, and sensing her “needy, helpless condition,” suddenly her “burden left” and she felt a light-heartedness that seemed too good to be true. She sensed that Jesus was near and that He “had blessed” her and pardoned her sins.¹⁴

The aftermath of the Buxton camp meeting was for her an almost constant state of joy in the Lord. Soon after her return home she was baptized by immersion in Casco Bay and received into full membership of the Chestnut Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Portland, Maine.¹⁵ Her baptismal experience supplied the emotional ecstasy that seemed to

¹¹Ibid., 16. The chronology found in the *Testimonies*, Vol. I and *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. II narratives of these events makes it appear that the Buxton camp meeting experience was the summer of 1840 or 1841, but A. L. White suggests that this was actually the late spring or early summer of 1842, since her baptism occurred soon after her return from camp meeting on June 26, 1842 (*The Early Years*, 36).

¹²*Testimonies* I:16, 17.

¹³Ibid., 17.

¹⁴Ibid., 17, 18; see *Spiritual Gifts* II:12.

¹⁵She had been taken into membership “on probation” right after her return from the Buxton camp meeting, but baptism signaled “full acceptance” into membership (*The Early Years*, 37).

be lacking at the Buxton camp meeting: “When I arose from the water, my strength was nearly gone, for the power of God rested upon me” and she felt that she “had risen from the watery grave into a newness of life.”¹⁶ The whole of her conversion and baptismal experience clearly revealed a fervent search for assurance and ecstatic evidence so common to evangelical Methodism.

Seeking Sanctification

Shortly after White’s conversion and baptism, William Miller returned to Portland, Maine, in the summer of 1842 to present his second course of lectures. It was about this same time that she had developed a longing “to be sanctified to God.” Her desire to be sanctified, however, was frustrated by two factors: (1) Sanctification was preached in such a manner that she could not “understand it” and she thought she could never “attain to it”; and (2) Miller’s second course of lectures created a sanctification crisis that caused her to feel that she was “not holy, not ready to see Jesus.” The first frustration caused her not to attempt to gain sanctification, but to settle down with her “present enjoyment.”¹⁷ Such a resigned attitude, however, did not last for long.

Sometime after her baptism and before Miller’s second Portland lectures, White “had fallen under discouragements and did not feel prepared to meet her Saviour.”¹⁸ What remnants of peace and joy that remained were shattered by Miller’s 1842 Portland lecture series. These lectures created a great deal more excitement than did his first series in 1840 and this excitement provoked considerable opposition from other ministers who felt called upon to “expose the alleged fanatical errors” of Miller. It was during this time that Ellen’s mind “constantly” dwelt “upon the subject of holiness of heart.” She “longed above all things to obtain this great blessing” and feel that she was “entirely accepted of God.” The inherently perfectionistic message of William Miller certainly intensified her great distress of mind.¹⁹

¹⁶*Testimonies* I:20.

¹⁷*Early Writings*, 11; *Spiritual Gifts* II:14.

¹⁸*Testimonies* I:21.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 21, 22. Adventist studies have noted the inherently perfectionistic appeal of Miller’s proclamation; see Butler, Doan, and Graybill in Ronald Numbers and Jonathan Butler’s *The Disappointed*, 191, 192, 132, 147, and 150.

White's first autobiographical account²⁰ speaks in some detail of her experience:

I then felt that I was not holy, not ready to see Jesus. . . . I was hungering for full salvation, and entire conformity to the will of God. Day and night I was struggling to obtain this priceless treasure, that all the riches of earth could not purchase.²¹

In a later recollection she speaks of a desire to avoid "a mere belief in the second coming," and of her longing "for a living experience in the things of God" that would be "soul-purifying" in its effects. Once again, she made mention of her "thirsting for full and free salvation," which she "knew not how to obtain."²²

It is abundantly apparent that White was wrestling with the second blessing experience commonly taught among Methodists,²³ but more in a context of a crisis precipitated by apocalyptic expectations rather than by Methodist/holiness revivalism. Methodism, however, was never far from the surface of her spiritual consciousness. In a later recollection,²⁴ she elaborates further on the way Methodist understandings of sanctification were influencing her. She wrote about hearing much regarding sanctification "among the Methodists" and the "loss of physical strength under the influence of strong mental excitement" as "evidence of sanctification." She was, however, at a loss to understand full consecration to God. Her friends urged her to exercise a simple belief in God's acceptance of her "now" (emphasis of Ellen White). But she found it "impossible to believe" that she had received such a blessing since she expected it to "electrify" her "whole being." She came to the depressing conclusion that

²⁰This is found in *Early Writings*, which was originally published in 1851.

²¹*Ibid.*, 11.

²²Her later recollection is found in *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. II, originally published in 1860. See pp. 14, 15.

²³It should be pointed out that Methodism in nineteenth-century America was not unanimous in its understanding of the "second blessing." There was much opposition, both North and South, to the revival of the perfection and holiness emphasis: see John Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1956), especially 100-80; and Thomas Langford, *Practical Divinity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), especially 92-9 and 131-46. When Ellen White spoke of Methodist sanctification, however, she seemed always to have the "holiness" emphasis in mind.

²⁴Found in *Testimonies*, Vol. I, originally published in 1885.

she was hard-hearted and so unique in experience that she would be “forever shut out from the perfect joy of holiness of heart.”²⁵

Her confusions were not all experiential. She also felt confused about the theology of “justification and sanctification,” failing to comprehend “the difference or understand the meaning of the terms.” She was unable to “claim the blessing” and “wondered if it was to be found only among the Methodists,” and if, in attending the Advent meetings she had shut herself away from that which she desired above all else, the “sanctifying Spirit of God.” Her confusion was further compounded when she observed some believers who displayed a “bitter spirit” at the mention of the “subject of the soon coming of Christ,” but who still “claimed to be sanctified”—all of which did not seem to her “a manifestation of the holiness which they professed.”²⁶

The evidence suggests that Ellen White’s struggle was clearly precipitated by convictions about the soon return of Christ; but there was also a struggle going on between Adventism and Methodism, probably due to the opposition of her local Methodist congregation.²⁷ It is also evident that the second coming teaching had intensified her longings for the blessing of “the perfect joy of holiness of heart.”

Her initial conclusion was that she could claim “only what they called justification,” but this brought no relief when she juxtaposed the Scriptural statement that “without holiness no man will see God” and the conviction that Scripture warned of the soon return of Christ. She concluded that there was “some higher attainment that I must reach before I could be sure of eternal life.” This conclusion brought her no comfort. Her views of the imminent advent caused her to fear that without this “higher attainment” she would be found “unprepared” to meet the Lord.²⁸

Even with all this theological and experiential confusion, the bottom had not yet been reached. More than theological clarity was now demanded. Duty, seemingly impossible duty, would thrust her into a final crisis that would bring her search for “the blessing” to a satisfying resolution. During this time of deep depression it was impressed upon her that she should

²⁵*Testimonies*, I:22, 23.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 23.

²⁷This opposition soon became manifest in the expulsion of the White family from the Methodist Church because of their Millerite convictions. More on this below.

²⁸*Testimonies*, I:23.

“seek God in prayer” at a “small social meeting,” an impression that she fearfully resisted. The resistance only increased her anxiety: “The duty was impressed upon my mind so forcibly that when I attempted to pray in secret I seemed to be mocking God because I failed to obey His will.” The result was that every time she prayed, even in secret, “this unfulfilled duty presented itself” and caused her to settle into a “melancholy state which increased to deep despair.” This sad state lasted for three weeks.²⁹

During this time of despair she had two dreams, the first being a rather nightmarish affair which left her with a sense of impending disaster. It seemed to her that her “doom was fixed” and that she was totally bereft of the Spirit.³⁰ The “horror” of this nightmare was soon alleviated by another dream in which she, with the help of a guide (a visionary personage of “beautiful form and countenance”), was ushered into the presence of Jesus as One Who bade her “fear not.” Passing out from the presence of Jesus, her guide handed her a “green cord coiled up closely” which he told her to place next to her heart. The cord “represented faith to my mind, and the beauty and simplicity of trusting in God began to dawn upon my soul.”³¹

The Experience of Sanctification

It was at this more hopeful juncture that White confided her struggle to her mother, who urged her to go for “counsel” with a certain “Elder Stockman [a Methodist minister] who then preached the Advent doctrine in Portland.”³² Stockman assured Ellen “that the Spirit of the Lord was

²⁹Ibid. 26; *Spiritual Gifts*, II:15, 16; see *Early Writings*, 11, 12.

³⁰*Testimonies*, I:27, 28; see *Spiritual Gifts*, II:16-8 and *Early Writings*, 12 and 78-81 for supplemental accounts to what is here taken from *Testimonies*, Vol. I and *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. II.

³¹*Spiritual Gifts*, II:18, 19; her guide asked Ellen to abandon all things before entering the presence of Jesus. She then testified that she “cheerfully . . . laid down all” she possessed. Compare *Testimonies*, I: 28.

This terminology evidences some influences from Phoebe Palmer’s holiness, altar theology, which was making its presence felt in Northern New England at this time (see Charles White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House (Francis Asbury Press), 1986], xx, 33-5).

Testimonies, I:28, 29; see *Spiritual Gifts*, II:18-20.

³²*Testimonies*, I:29; compare *Spiritual Gifts*, II:20, 21 and *Early Writings*, 12. Levi Stockman was a Methodist minister in the Maine Conference, “expelled in 1843 by the conference for preaching Millerite views as ‘contrary to Methodism’ ” (Don Nuefeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1966], 1263).

striving” with her, saying that “hardened” sinners would not be experiencing such conviction. He told her of a loving God who “instead of rejoicing in their [sinner’s] destruction . . . longed to draw them to Himself in simple faith and trust.”³³

The Stockman interview was most helpful. White now claimed more knowledge on the subject of God’s love than she had received previously from all the sermons and exhortations she had ever heard. She went home and promised “to do and suffer anything” the Lord would require of her. The same duty to pray in the public assembly was again impressed upon her and that very evening opportunity presented itself at a prayer meeting. After a few others had prayed, she suddenly, almost unconsciously was able to lift up her voice in prayer. As she prayed, her “burden and agony of soul” left her and she sensed the “blessing of the Lord” descending on her “like the gentle dew.” The results of this experience were heart-felt praise, happiness, assurance, and a new understanding of God as a benevolent Heavenly Father.³⁴

Peace and happiness were the hallmarks of her experience for the next six months. She reports that the “night after receiving so great a blessing” she attended the “advent meeting” and joyfully gave her testimony of what the Lord had done for her. Not long after “receiving this great blessing”³⁵ she attended a conference meeting at the Christian Church where she again shared her story, with telling effect on those present:

While relating my experience, I felt that no one could resist the evidence of God’s pardoning love that had wrought so wonderful a change in me. The reality of true conversion seemed so plain to me that I felt like helping my young friends into the light. . . . The plan of salvation was so clear to my mind. . . .³⁶

From this time on it is quite evident that there were no more serious ups and downs in her experience of salvation. Even the trauma of expulsion from the Methodist Church did not provoke another soteriological crisis. This expulsion sheds additional light on the question of what to make of her experience of the “great blessing.”

³³*Testimonies*, I:30.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 31.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 32 and 33.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 33, 34; compare *Spiritual Gifts*, II:21.

Leaving the Methodist Church

The chapter in White's *Testimonies* (Vol. I) following the description of her reception of the "great blessing" tells of "Leaving the Methodist Church" (the chapter title) and employs some revealing terminology.

Describing their occasional attendance at the appointed meetings of the Methodist Church, she related how one evening she and Robert went to the class meeting. Robert "spoke with great humility . . . of the necessity for a complete fitness to meet our Saviour." When she was called upon to speak she "arose, free in spirit, with a heart full of love and peace" and shared her story of "great suffering under the conviction of sin" and how she "had at length received the blessing so long sought, an entire conformity to the will of God." She continued on, expressing her longing for the "coming of Jesus" when sin "would have an end, and we could enjoy sanctification forever."³⁷ Note the close relationship between "complete fitness" and the anticipated literal Advent in Robert's testimony and Ellen's close association of "sanctification" with the "blessing" in her testimony.

Later, at another class meeting, Ellen again testified to her belief in the soon return of Jesus. Her belief in the nearness of Christ's coming had stirred her soul "to seek more earnestly for the sanctification of the Spirit of God." This confession brought a strong remonstrance from her class leader: "You received sanctification through Methodism, through *Methodism*, sister, not through an erroneous theory." Ellen was quick to reply that it was not through Methodism that her "heart had received its new blessing, but by the stirring truths concerning the personal appearing of Jesus." It was through these stirring truths that she claimed to have found "peace, joy, and perfect love."³⁸

It should be noted that in this last testimony which she would bear in a Methodist class meeting, though she did not ascribe the experience of sanctification to Methodist influences, she was clearly using Wesleyan terminology ("perfect love") to express the essence of it. Soon after this confrontation she and her family were "expelled" from the Methodist Church for having "walked contrary to their rules," namely attending

³⁷*Testimonies*, I:35, 36. This testimony was given in the face of opposition from her Methodist brothers and sisters, who were very much into an understanding of the millennium which envisioned an earthly, temporal rule of Christ (which opposition soon became explicit).

³⁸*Testimonies*, I:37; compare *Spiritual Gifts*, II:22 and 23.

other meetings and neglecting to meet regularly with the class. It is of further interest to note that in the discussions with the Methodists over their expulsion, Ellen said that “We were not conscious of any wrong, unless it was a sin to be looking for, and loving the appearing of, our Saviour.”³⁹

Summation of Conversion and Sanctification Crises

What is the meaning of Ellen White’s experience of “sanctification”? Was it clearly the Methodist “second blessing” classically taught in the American Wesleyanism of the time? Or was it a reinforcement of her earlier conversion and the experience of forgiveness and acceptance? The evidence suggests that the answers to both questions are primarily affirmative. Note the following:

1. Ellen clearly had experienced a deep conviction of acceptance and ecstatic conversion in the course of the Buxton Methodist camp meeting in the Spring of 1842 and in the baptismal experience which followed soon after the camp meeting. Thus it was not forgiveness and conversion that she sought, but a resolution of her sanctification expectations.

2. Her confusion about whether she had really retained this acceptance, justification, or conversion was precipitated by (a) misunderstanding over both the theological and experiential morphology of “sanctification” (not her understanding of forgiveness) and (b) the crisis of the realization that imminently she would have to face the Judge of all the earth at His literal second coming. It seems most likely that her lapse in understanding justification was caused by a failure to see the right relationship between justification and sanctification in the anxious setting of her frantic search for “the blessing” of entire sanctification. She still felt, in the heat of the crisis, that she “could claim only what they called justification.”⁴⁰

3. From the beginning of this crisis until its resolution in the summer of 1842, she employed all of the classic terminology one would expect a Holiness/Methodist to be using who was going through the “second blessing” experience. Carefully note the following expressions:

a. In the immediate aftermath of her conversion and baptism, she “longed to be sanctified;” she “constantly” dwelt “upon the subject of holiness of heart” and “longed above all things

³⁹*Testimonies*, I:43, 42 and *Spiritual Gifts*, II:23-5.

⁴⁰*Testimonies*, I:23.

to obtain this great blessing” of being “entirely accepted of God;” sensing a lack of “holiness,” she hungered and thirsted “for full and free salvation,” an “entire conformity to the will of God,” calling it “this priceless treasure.” After experiencing “holiness,” she testified (at a Methodist class meeting) that she was “full of love and peace” since she “received the blessing so long sought,” referring to it as “entire conformity to the will of God,” hoping to enjoy “sanctification forever.”⁴¹

b. Part of her confusion over the experience of “sanctification” was due to the expectation that the experience would be emotional, involving loss of “physical strength” and “strong mental excitement” as “the evidence of sanctification”; her inability to experience this “exaltation of spirit” caused her to wonder if she was “forever shut out from the perfect joy of holiness of heart.”

c. She wondered if the blessing was to be found “only among the Methodists” and was fearful that in attending the “advent meetings” she might be shutting” herself “away from that which I desired above all else, the sanctifying Spirit of God.”⁴²

d. In her last Methodist class meeting, she again spoke of her belief in Christ’s imminent Advent which had stirred her soul “to seek more earnestly for the sanctification of the Spirit of God”; the class leader clearly understood her to be referring to sanctification, which the leader thought was the rather exclusive province of Methodism. Ellen’s response was that she had found “peace and perfect love” through Adventism, not Methodism.⁴³

e. In the course of the White family’s expulsion “trial” at the Methodist Church, Ellen testified of not being “conscious of any wrong,” a classic Wesleyan evidence of full salvation.⁴⁴

Another evidence that should be mentioned was her testifying about her experience after receiving the “blessing;” such testimony was very

⁴¹*Spiritual Gifts*, II:14; *Testimonies*, I:22; see *Spiritual Gifts*, II:15; *Early Writings*, 11. Note that this testimony was in her first autobiographical publication, written about six years after her “sanctification” experience. In this earliest remembrance, the classic Wesleyan terminology is explicit. *Testimonies*, I:35, 36.

⁴²*Testimonies*, I:22, 23.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 37; compare *Spiritual Gifts*, II:22, 23.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 23.

typical of the Wesleyan morphology, and an absolute requirement in the Phoebe Palmer version of the “second blessing.”⁴⁵ It also should be recalled that Elder Levi Stockman was a Methodist minister.⁴⁶ What he said to her in the encouraging interview she had with him was only sketchily reported; but it must be pointed out that this exchange provided the immediate backdrop to the resolution of her search for sanctification. Thus the Methodist mentoring just before her resolution of the sanctification quest is another piece of evidence suggesting an experience that was essentially understood in terms of a Wesleyan “second blessing.”

With this seemingly overwhelming evidence that it was a classic American/Wesleyan second blessing experience, there are some hints that perhaps it wasn’t totally in the classic Wesleyan mold. Soon after experiencing “so great a blessing,” Ellen related her experience during a conference meeting at the Christian church. She spoke of “the evidence of God’s pardoning love that had wrought so wonderful a change in me” and testified to the “reality of true conversion” and “being accepted of God.”⁴⁷ The evidence, however, suggests that none of these expressions lessens the force of an essentially “second blessing” morphology. John Wesley and the American Wesleyans never argued for a radical separation between justification and sanctification, and “the evidence of God’s pardoning love that had wrought so wonderful a change” was a classic expression of the accepted Wesleyan sequence—first the evidence of acceptance and then the witness to perfect love.

The association of “true conversion” and “being accepted of God” can easily be understood as the “second blessing” of “sanctification” *reinforcing* the reality of the conversion and justification experience that had taken place at Buxton’s Methodist camp meeting, but which had been called into serious question during the events that immediately followed.⁴⁸

⁴⁵*Testimonies*, I:32; see Charles White, *The Beauty of Holiness*, 139, 140.

⁴⁶*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1263.

⁴⁷*Testimonies*, I:33.

⁴⁸These conclusions are somewhat contrary to the interpretation of Rolf Poehler (“Sinless Saints or Sinless Sinners? An Analysis and Critical Comparison of the Doctrine of Christian Perfection as taught by John Wesley and Ellen G. White” [Research Paper, Andrews University: April 1978. Typescript. James White Library, Heritage Room]). Poehler has, to date, made the most thorough analysis of Ellen White’s conversion and early “sanctification” experience. For a detailed response to Poehler, see my “The Soteriology of Ellen G. White: The Persistent Path to Perfection, 1836-1902” (Ph.D. Diss., The Graduate School, Drew University, 1989).

Conclusion

Even though her later expositions of sanctification modified the classic Wesleyan morphology of sanctification, they never effaced the essentially Wesleyan orientation of her treatment of the importance of sanctification. She was critical of two Wesleyan emphases: (1) that the experience of sanctification was to be “instantaneous” (she denied this and gave strong stress to its linear nature—often referring to it as the “the work of a lifetime”); (2) that the sanctified person could be conscious of perfection (she pointedly emphasized that perfection is psychologically a constantly receding horizon).⁴⁹

The importance of these early conversion/sanctification crises cannot be stressed enough for their foundational contribution to Ellen White’s later theological development. As her long and productive ministry unfolded, persistent emphasis was given to the importance of sanctification and perfection. This emphasis is most obviously demonstrated by the sheer bulk of her writings devoted to these themes. Of the approximately one hundred thousand pages of her written material, the greater bulk of it has to do with spiritual themes, and a great deal of this deals directly with soteriology. Of this soteriological material, the amount which addresses (and stresses) sanctification and perfection roughly outnumbers entries concerned with justification by about three to one.⁵⁰

Thus, while she modified the details of the holiness experience, the essence of “holiness of heart and life” was the dominant theme of the bulk of Ellen White’s later soteriological writings. Furthermore, through these writings, she stamped an unmistakable Wesleyan/Holiness imprint on Adventist soteriological teaching and proclamation.

⁴⁹See George Knight’s *The Pharisee’s Guide to Perfect Holiness* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 166. Ralph Neall has suggested that one reason for Ellen White’s often severe criticisms of Holiness sanctification was that she perceived it as tending to antinomian extremes (Ralph Neall, “The Nearness and the Delay of the Parousia in the Writings of Ellen G. White” [Ph.D. Diss., Andrews University, 1982], 49, 50).

What of Neall’s suggestion? First of all, note that Mahan, Finney, Palmer, and the vast majority of holiness advocates in the nineteenth century (following the Wesleys) insisted on obedience to God’s commandments. Furthermore, Charles Edwin Jones, noted holiness historian and bibliographer feels that there was very little evidence of antinomian fanaticism in the holiness movement (observation made in personal conversations with Dr. Jones). In spite of such evidence that seems contrary to Neall’s contention, it is clear that Ellen White did strongly suspect the Holiness Movement of antinomianism. But it could well be that Ellen White’s almost totally negative reaction to the Holiness movement was due to its refusal to accept the Sabbath and other distinctives of Adventism—a self-evident manifestation of antinomianism in her view of things.

⁵⁰For a detailed treatment of her soteriological development, see my “The Soteriology of Ellen G. White.”

MODELING THE HOLINESS ETHOS: A STUDY BASED ON FIRST THESSALONIANS¹

by

George Lyons

The question is, how do pagans learn to live holy lives? This is not simply an academic question in a rapidly repaganizing Western civilization. True, most so-called “converts” in Christian churches in America today are actually recycled Christians from the church down the block—disgruntled sheep grown tired of the grass or the shepherds in their familiar pastures. They are people who decide to sample life on the other side of some churchly fence. But on those occasions when there are true conversions, we can no longer take for granted that the converts will be familiar with Judeo-Christian morality.

Christianizing the Church

Secular people in the last decade of the second millennium cannot be presumed to know either the Scriptures or the traditions of the Christian faith, much less the ethic of the Holiness Movement. Unfortunately, many who attend our churches are not much better informed. “One reason the church today is so ineffectual in certain parts of the world,” observes Lutheran New Testament scholar Karl Donfried, is

because it no longer offers pagan society an alternative intellectual or ethical option. Not only does the church seldom

¹This essay was presented as the Wesleyan Theological Society seminar paper at the annual convention of the Christian Holiness Association convened in Nashville, Tenn., April, 1994. Dr. Lyons was then WTS president.

exist as a contrasting community over against the mores of society, but often it baptizes and incorporates into its existence behaviors that are blatantly opposed to the sanctified life in Jesus Christ. It is far from incidental that Paul's exhortations have as one of their goals "that you may command the respect of outsiders" (1 Thess. 4:12). One can hardly witness the life-giving power of the gospel if one's behavior is as scandalous, or even more scandalous, than those who worship idols.²

As Wesleyan pastors and teachers, we find ourselves increasingly in the position of the first-century apostles. Our task is not only to convert pagans and indoctrinate converts. It also is to Christianize the church. For those of us who take seriously our Wesleyan-Holiness heritage, orthodoxy is not enough. We cannot justify our theological existence unless we actively promote "holiness of heart and life."

But how are we to engender truly Christian living where there is no preparation and few or inadequate contemporary precedents? Where do we begin? What can we learn from the pattern of the apostles? How did Paul nurture converts into mature Christians? First Thessalonians, his earliest surviving letter and probably the oldest Christian literature in existence, would seem to be an appropriate place to begin our investigation.

If vocabulary demonstrates anything, 1 Thessalonians must be a crucial document in any account of the Apostle's understanding of holiness. The frequent utilization of explicit holiness terminology in this brief letter is particularly noteworthy.³ Paul's benedictory prayer in

²Karl Donfried, "The Theology of I Thessalonians," *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters*, New Testament Theology, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 76. The British spellings follow the original.

³1 Thess. has a higher density of explicit holiness terms than any other Pauline letter. With 1,482 words in the Greek text (Nestle-Aland 26), 1 Thess. makes up only 4.6% of the total words in the Pauline corpus (32,440). Yet its percentage of explicit holiness words is more than twice the corpus average (.675 compared to .327). By "explicit holiness terminology" I refer to the cognate group derived from the Greek roots *ἀγι-* and *ἁγν-*, which include *ἀγιάζω* ("I sanctify"—5:23), *ἁγιασμός* ("sanctification"—4:3, 4, 7), *ἅγιος* ("holy"—1:5, 6; 3:13; 4:8; 5:26), *ἁγιότης* ("holiness"), *ἁγιωσύνη* ("holiness"—3:13), *ἁγνεία* ("purity"), *ἁγνίζω* ("I purify"), *ἁγνισμός* ("purification"), *ἁγρός* ("pure"), *ἁγιότης* ("purity"), and *ἁγνώς* ("purely"). In addition to these, 1 Thess. 2:10 contains the N.T.'s only example of the adverb *ὁσίως* ("holily"). These statistics are based on *Gramcord*.

5:23⁴ witnesses to the centrality of holiness in 1 Thess. Significantly, this verse contains the New Testament's only explicit reference to *entire* sanctification: "May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ."⁵

Despite the Old Testament's characteristic use of holiness terminology in a largely cultic sense, Paul's concern in 1 Thess., as elsewhere, is almost exclusively "ethical." Admittedly, neither of the Greek words underlying the English term "ethics" appears in 1 Thess.⁶ Paul's letters are not concerned with "ethics" in the technical theological or philosophical sense of systematic reflection on the nature of the good or the right. They do, however, presuppose certain ideas about what is right and wrong, good and bad. Paul's "ethical" exhortations and instructions have as their fundamental concern not the principles, but the practice of ethics, what is more accurately called "ethos." Paul's concern is with the actual lifestyle of Christians, with behavior as opposed to theory. Thus, he begins, not with abstractions, but with examples to be emulated and divine commands to be obeyed.⁷

Paul's letter known to us as 1 Thess. exists because the Apostle was forced to leave prematurely his church of newly converted pagans. Fears

⁴This presumes that the letter's conclusion (*peroratio* in classical rhetoric) in 5:23-28, as usual, summarizes its major themes. See the rhetorical analyses of Robert Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety*, Foundations and Facets (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 76; and Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 205.

⁵All translations in this paper are my own unless otherwise indicated. The Greek word *ὁλοτελής* is translated "entirely" in the NASB, TLB, and NRSV; "wholly" in the KJV, ASV, and RSV; "completely" in the NKJV; and "perfectly" in the NAB. These translations refer to a thorough, comprehensive, and accomplished sanctification. In the tradition of the Luther Bible (*durch und durch*), the NIV translates it "through and through," a sanctification that affects every part of believer's person. The TEV renders it "in every way," a sanctification that affects every dimension of life.

⁶They are *ἔθος* and *ἦθος*. The first never appears in Paul's letters; the second, only in I Cor. 15:33 in the proverbial quotation from Menander: "Bad company ruins good morals [*ἦθος*]" (RSV).

⁷On the question of Paul's "ethics" see Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), esp. 208-241; and Stephen C. Mott, "Ethics," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 269-275.

that they might succumb to the persecutions their newfound faith brought them led Paul to send Timothy to Thessalonica to encourage them to remain faithful (3:1-5; cf. Acts 17:10-15; 18:5). The specific occasion of the letter is the “good news” of Timothy’s report of their Christian progress (3:6-10). First Thessalonians appears to offer pastoral care by the correspondence-school method (see Acts 17:1-9; 1 Thess. 2:17—3:13). In fact, the letter is a written reminder of what Paul had earlier taught in person by word and example during his all-too-brief stay with the Thessalonians. It was intended to serve as a substitute for his personal presence among them. For, as the letter makes clear, there is no substitute for incarnational Christianity. Perhaps the only Christians they knew, Paul and his missionary party, served as models for the Thessalonian believers. Paul did not send his converts an overhead projector and a packet of praise-choruses on transparencies. He did not even send them devotional guides or Bible-studies. Instead, he reminded them of how his life and ministry modeled the Christian faith and the holiness ethos.

The first three chapters of 1 Thessalonians are autobiographical discussions of Paul’s “past, present and future relations with the Thessalonians.”⁸ This autobiographical section consists of two major divisions. The concern of the first, 1:2-2:16, is the past, beginning with the relationship of friendship established between Paul and the Thessalonians during his founding visit.⁹ The second, 2:17-3:13, concerns their present relationship, beginning with Paul’s departure from Thessalonica and their separation. Paul and the Thessalonians are true friends. Though they are separated in person, they are not separated in heart (2:17; 3:10).¹⁰ Chapters four and five represent the advice Paul would have given these friends if he had been able to visit them in person. As in the first part of the letter,

⁸Best, 27.

⁹For a discussion of the critical issues involved in this approach to the letter, see the Appendix to this essay.

¹⁰Only Philipians approaches 1 Thess. in its emphasis upon Paul’s friendship with his hearers. True friendship is possible only on the basis of equality, unanimity, likeness, reciprocity, frankness, and constancy—all qualities explicitly mentioned as characterizing the relationship between Paul and his Thessalonian converts. See Hans Dieter Betz (*Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 220-37) for a discussion of the characteristics of true friendship suggested by writers of antiquity, most notably Cicero and Plutarch. Betz notes that “true friendship does not change even when the friends are separated” (p. 232, paraphrasing Plutarch’s “How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend” in *Moralia*, 97B).

he reminds the Thessalonians of his earlier teaching (4:1, 2, 6, 11) and of his exemplary life among them. He encourages (4:18; 5:11) them to remain faithful (4:1, 10; 5:11) to God as they await the consummation (5:23-24). The letter itself serves as a stopgap measure to overcome the severest test of friendship—physical and temporal separation (see 2:17—3:13). Even death does not separate believers from one another or from their Lord (4:13-18; 5:10-11).

Paul's Exemplary Life and Ministry

There is said to be a striking parallel between Paul's description of God's power in the proclaimer and proclamation (in 1:9; 2:1, 13) and Paul and his converts. Paul is an incarnation of the gospel and his converts' ethos is an imitation of his own (1:5-10). Paul embodies the gospel he preaches. The word of God, which he preaches and the Thessalonians accepted, is "at work in [those] who believe" (2:13). They are representatives of the gospel. Both Paul's ethos and theirs demonstrate the truth of the divine "word."¹¹ Both 1:5-10 and 2:13-16 contain the same "sequence of thoughts: the word coming from Paul, the divine working, the imitation."¹² God is responsible for the exemplary behavior of both the Thessalonians and Paul.

Paul proceeds from the theological assumption that the character of Christians is fundamentally different from that of pagans because of the

¹¹Greek: *ἄγγελος*, "message." For the exegetical arguments justifying the approach developed here, see George Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, 73. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), ch. 3.

¹²Willis Peter de Boer, *The Imitation of Paul: An Exegetical Study* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1962), 113. Nearly all commentators agree that the virtue remains the same although the model changes. See e.g., Frame, 82-83; Beda Rigaux, *Saint Paul: Les Epîtres aux Thessaloniens*, *Etudes bibliques* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre: J. Duculot, 1956), 380-81, 441; Gottlieb Lünemann, "Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Thessalonians," trans. Paton J. Gloag, *Meyer's Critical and Exegetical Handbook*, vol. 8 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1889), 453; George Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians* (London: Macmillan, 1908), 10; Best, 77; Furnish, 221; D. M. Stanley, "'Become Imitators of Me': The Pauline Conception of Apostolic Tradition," *Biblica* 40 (1959): 865 and 868.

It is of interest that the two "biographies" and the "autobiography" each occupies thirty lines of the Greek text. Paul balances his autobiographical remarks with comparable praise of his audience and others whose aims and actions were similar to his own.

character of their God. Pagans behave as they do because they do “not know God” (4:5; cf. 2 Thess. 1:8; Gal. 4:9). Paul characterizes his moral teaching to the Thessalonians as an exhortation “to live a life worthy of the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory” (2:11-12). This “God has not called us *to uncleanness*,¹³ but *to holiness*”¹⁴ What God wants is “your sanctification¹⁵—that you abstain from sexual immorality” (4:3). The God who calls you to entire sanctification “is faithful, and he will do it,” namely, sanctify you (5:23-24; cf. 1 Pet. 1:14-16). In 2 Thess 1:11 Paul insists that it was God who made Christians worthy of his call and who enables them to fulfill every good resolve.

The Holy Spirit is the divine agent in effecting sanctification (1 Thess. 4:8; 2 Thess. 2:13). But the Spirit does not operate without human cooperation, as Paul’s exhortations to holy living implicitly argue.¹⁶ He explicitly mentions that God’s call to holiness can be rejected (4:8). The Spirit cleanses, inspires, motivates, and enables holy living, but human participation is always presupposed. Paul’s references to God’s call of the Thessalonian believers are not veiled threats to live up to divine expectations or else. They rather are hopeful assurances of the effectiveness of God’s intentions on their behalf and reminders of the ethical conduct appropriate to their calling.¹⁷

But how are young Christians, recent converts from paganism, to know what constitutes moral conduct appropriate to God’s call to holiness? Paul’s answer, at least in part, is found in 4:1—“You received from me the example of how it is necessary to live morally and to please God.”¹⁸ Paul’s gospel and person are inseparable. This is first emphasized in 1:5: “My gospel did not come¹⁹ to you with words only, but also with power, and with the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction, as you know what kind of person I was²⁰ among you for your sake.” The Thessalonians

¹³Greek: ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσία. Italics added.

¹⁴Greek: ἐν ἀγιασμῷ. Italics added.

¹⁵Greek: ἀγιασμός.

¹⁶Note also his plea not to quench the Spirit in 1 Thess. 5:19.

¹⁷See Best, 107-108.

¹⁸I have self-consciously changed the first person plural pronoun “us” to “me” (which, strictly speaking, appears only in 3:5 and 5:27), since the primary reference is primarily to Paul. The full defense for this interpretation may be found in my dissertation.

¹⁹Greek: ἐγενήθη.

²⁰Greek: ἐγενήθημεν. Italics added.

know Paul's character and he knows the genuineness of their divine election (1:4), because they "*became*²¹ imitators" of Paul and his colleagues and of the Lord (1:6). To a remarkable extent Paul's explicit ethical appeals in 1 Thess. 4 and 5 are paralleled by references to his personal example in chapters 1—3. He asks nothing of his converts that he does not himself model. He embodies the holiness ethos he recommends.

The character of Christians is fundamentally different from that of pagans, not only because of the character of their God, but also because of the character of Christian preachers and the message they preach. The influence of the character of the founder of a community on the ethos of that community can scarcely be overestimated.²² While Paul is willing to be a role-model, he refuses to be an idol. The two "biographical" sections, 1:5-10 and 2:13-16, which focus more directly on Paul's Thessalonian "imitators" than on him, are nearly identical in length to the autobiographical description of the "model," of Paul in 2:1-12. Throughout I Thess. Paul balances his exemplary status with a remarkable emphasis upon the equality, mutuality, and reciprocity of his relationship with his converts. Paul acknowledges that, unlike himself, they were converts from idolatry (see 1:9; 2:1-2), but he emphasizes even in this what they have in common.

In 2:1-12 Paul elaborates on the first proof confirming the Thessalonians' divine election (1:4). It is his ethos as a preacher of the gospel (1:5). The second proof, their perseverance in persecution (1:6-10), is reiterated in 2:13-16.²³ These two sections share numerous common terminological features, including their mutual knowledge and memory²⁴ of each

²¹Greek: ἐγενήθητε. Italics added. Note the repetition of the same verb roots underlying the different English verbs in nn. 30, 31, and 32.

²²This is the thesis of Ernst von Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church*, trans. George Bemner, ed. W. D. Morrison (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1904). He considers this far more determinative than the pre-Christian situation of the converts.

²³This analysis is shared by numerous commentators. See e.g., J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul*, ed. J. R. Harmer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980, reprint of 1895 ed.), 18; and Best, 88. The connection between 1:2-10 and 2:1-12 is provided by the conjunction γὰρ, "for" (Best, 89).

²⁴Cf. "we know" in 1:4 and "you know" in 1:5; 2:1, 2, 5, and 11. Cf. "we remember" in 1:3 and "you remember" in 2:9.

other's behavior and Christian labors²⁵ as a result of Paul's missionary visit.²⁶ Paul begins the autobiographical section in 2:1-12 by referring to his example of suffering (v. 2). Both he and they suffer for their Christian faith. The underlying relationship between Paul's description of the Thessalonians' ethos and his own is the correlation of imitators to model.

Paul was not unique among thinkers in Greco-Roman antiquity in the view that models²⁷ are more helpful and easier to follow than precepts.²⁸ Seneca held that the best models are those "who teach us by their lives . . . who tell us what we ought to do . . . and then prove it by their practice."²⁹ The Christian distinctive in Paul's use of personal example in moral instruction is found both in the specific moral values he models and in the motivation for his behavior. Importantly, Paul insists that his model is not apostolic, but merely that of a Christian. As "one approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel," Paul's preaching and practice were motivated by a magnificent obsession to please God, not people (2:4). His highest values were succinctly expressed in the familiar triad consisting of faith, hope, and love (1:3; 5:8; cf. 1 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 1:3-23; Col. 1:4-5; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:10; Heb. 10:22-24; Epistle of Barnabas 1:6). For Paul these are not mere abstractions, but characterize the Christian's walk—a moral life marked by faithfulness to God, hopeful expectation of final salvation, and fraternal love in the meantime.

Four Practical Expressions

In 2:1-12 Paul identifies four practical expressions of faith, hope, and love. They are: 1) Boldness inspired by God (2:1-2)—perseverance in the face of persecution; 2) Responsibility to God alone (2:3-4)—living lives that are morally pleasing to God; 3) Gentleness inspired by love (2:5-8)—authentic and selfless living in relation to others; and 4) Living worthy of God (2:9-12)—not burdening others, but rather encouraging them to holy living.

²⁵Note the mention of the "work" of the Thessalonians in 1:5 and of Paul in 2:9.

²⁶Compare the reference to Paul's founding "visit" from the perspective of the Macedonians and Achaians in 1:9 and of Paul and the Thessalonians in 2:1; see 1:5.

²⁷Latin: *exempla*.

²⁸Latin: *praecepta*. So Seneca, *Epistles* 6:5f.; 75:1ff.; 40:1.

²⁹*Epistle* 52:8. Loeb Classical Library.

1. *Boldness Inspired by God* (2:1-2). In 2:1-2 Paul denies that his founding visit to Thessalonica had proven to be “empty.” But this negative claim is ambiguous apart from its corresponding positive affirmation. The Greek adjective translated “empty”³⁰ might have the force “empty of truth,” and so, “false.” This would then anticipate the point of 2:3-8,³¹ where Paul denies that his “appeal” was false (2:3). In 2:1, however, Paul refers to his “visit” (2:1), for which “false” hardly seems an appropriate translation.³² Perhaps Paul implied that his visit was not “empty of results,” and so “wasted” or “fruitless.” This would emphasize again the genuine conversion and subsequent perseverance of the Thessalonians.³³ But the response of his converts to his preaching does not seem to be the concern of 2:1-12, as it is in 1:6-10 and 2:13-16. Here, his attention is directed to the influence of his character on the character of his converts.³⁴

The force of “empty” that best matches the positive affirmation is “empty of power,” “powerless.” Thus, it repeats the point of 1:5 and anticipates the point of 2:13.³⁵ Paul implies, “Our visit to you was not unaccompanied by the manifestation of the power of God.” He contrasts the powerful activity of the one true God in his mission with the powerlessness of the idols to which his converts had once been committed (1:8-10). Dumb idols were unable to inspire the boldness that enabled him to proclaim the gospel in the face of opposition (2:1-2).³⁶

It was Paul’s perseverance despite suffering and insult (2:2) that provided the pattern for the Thessalonians’ Spirit-inspired joy under similar circumstances (1:6). Paul contrasts a powerless versus a God-inspired and God-empowered mission. This best accounts for the continuation of his autobiographical remarks in 2:3-12. He recognizes God as the source

³⁰κενός.

³¹So, e.g., D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 40; see Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed., trans. and ed. William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), s.v. κενός 2a.

³²Best, 89.

³³So, e.g., Bauer, s.v. κενός 2 A b; Best, 89-90; Wanamaker, 92.

³⁴So, e.g., Lightfoot, 18.

³⁵So, e.g., Frame, 91.

³⁶In Jewish thought an idol was “a vain thing” (see Jer. 18:15). Compare the claim in Jer. 10:14-15, that these “non-entities” are “false” and lack “spirit” and “strength” with Paul’s opposite claims for his message of the one true God in 1:5.

of his gospel and his bold preaching of it. This recognition and the antithetical formulation of this claim make it clear that these autobiographical remarks are not self-praise.³⁷

2. *Responsibility to God Alone* (2:3–4). The initial description of Paul's ethos in 2:1–2 is explained more fully in 2:3–12.³⁸ Had his message been merely a human word and his visit devoid of divine power, Paul would never have come to Thessalonica or, once there, would have succumbed in the struggle. His perseverance in preaching the gospel is evidence enough that he has been entrusted with his message by God. Thus, it is to God alone that he is responsible. The goal of Paul's "evangelistic preaching"³⁹ was to win converts from the delusion of idolatry to the one true God.⁴⁰ Even noble ends do not give license to use underhanded means, "trickery or deception,"⁴¹ to achieve them.

³⁷Once again there is proof that Paul's antithetical formulation had an ethical rather than an apologetic origin or end. It is unthinkable that anyone should have accused the monotheistic apostle of deriving his boldness from idols. If the formulation is polemical, it is a preemptive attack on idolatry and idolaters, not a response to Jewish or Christian opponents.

³⁸As the conjunction γάρ, "for," demonstrates.

³⁹Greek: *παράκλησις*, "appeal." Cf. Paul's use of the cognate verb *παρακαλέω* in 2 Cor. 5:20–6:1. In 1 Thess. 2:12; 3:2; 4:1, 10; and 5:14 the verb *παρακαλέω* appears to have the more restricted sense of ethical exhortation. See Carl J. Bjerkelund, *Parakaló: Form, Funktion und Sinn der parakaló-Sätze in den paulinischen Briefen*, Bibliotheca Theologica Norvegica, no. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1967), 125–40; Frame, 94; Best, 93.

⁴⁰Cf. 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:11–12; Rom. 1:27. See Herbert Braun, "*πλάνω*," *TDNT* 6:230–51; contra Schmithals, 143–44; and Bauer, s.v. *πλάνη*, "delusion." Chaps. 11–15 of the Wisdom of Solomon contain one of the Greek OT's most severe indictments of idolatry as a "delusion" (see 11:15; 12:24; 14:22). Wis. 14:22 is also formulated antithetically. Perhaps Paul alludes to it later in 1 Thess. 5:3: "Afterward it is not enough for them to err about the knowledge of God, but they . . . call such great evils peace" (Wis. 14:22, RSV).

⁴¹Bauer, s.v. *δύλος*. In Jewish-Christian opinion this was the normal practice of pagan idolatry (cf. Rom. 1:29). Idolatry and deception are treated as synonymous in Wis. 14:20. In Wis. 14:22–26 as in 1 Thess. 2:3 these words appear together in the same vice lists. The word *δύλος*, "trickery" (NRSV), appears only three times in the Pauline corpus (Rom. 1:29; 1 Thess. 2:3; and 2 Cor. 12:16). In the latter passage it probably refers to financial fraud. The cognate verb in 2 Cor. 4:1–2 appears in an antithetical formulation which is conceptually similar to 1 Thess. 2:1–2. On the use of *δύλος* as a technical term for fraud, see J. Paul Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 93–94 and the accompanying notes.

Paul intentionally correlates the autobiographic and parenetic sections of the letter, presenting his ethos as the implicit model for the continued imitation of his converts.⁴² Paul the preacher is not guilty of “uncleanness”⁴³ (2:3). The term may refer to “immorality” of any kind. But here, as elsewhere in Paul’s letters, it seems to refer primarily to sexual sins.⁴⁴ The parenesis in 1 Thess. 4:1-8 explicitly repeats Paul’s earlier advice concerning sexual morality. Christians—including Paul—must abstain from “immorality” (v. 3).⁴⁵ This is what pleases God (v. 1).

⁴²Cf., e.g., the references to (1) the Spirit’s activity in Paul’s gospel (1:5) and the Thessalonians’ joyful endurance of affliction (1:6) with 4:8; (2) the “human—God” contrast (cf. 2:1-2, 4, 13; and 4:8 and 5:19; cf. also 2 Thess. 2:13-15); (3) Paul’s example of avoiding “uncleanness” (cf. 2:3 and 4:1, 7); (4) Paul’s “appeal”; (5) the Thessalonian’s call (cf. 1:4; 2:12; and 4:7).

Interpreters who argue that this sense of “uncleanness” does not fit the context of Paul’s autobiographical statements in 2:1-12 do so on the basis of “mirror reading.” They assume that his denials reply to actual accusations. And, as Walter Schmithals correctly observes, “That anyone ever should have seriously charged Paul with sexual license is . . . incredible” (145); cf. *Gnosticism in Corinth*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 164-66. Thus, Schmithals and others who follow this line of reasoning (see Schmithals, *Gnostics*, 145 n. 67 for further references) fail to see that Paul is not denying charges. He is, rather, clarifying his ethos and the character of the gospel of the true and living God in contrast to the character of paganism from which the Thessalonians had only recently been converted. See Lightfoot, 20-21; and Frame, 95-96. This contrast may also help account for Paul’s use in 1 Thessalonians of uncharacteristic soteriological language.

⁴³Greek: ἀκαθαρσία.

⁴⁴See Bauer, s.v. ἀκαθαρσία; and Friedrich Hauck, “ἀκαθαρσία,” *TDNT* 3:427-29. Had Paul intended to limit his reference only to sexual immorality, he could have chosen the term πορνεία. See Best, 94. Still, it is questionable whether the NRSV translation of the term as “impure motives” adequately recognizes the term’s usual sexual connotations.

In its only other appearance in 1 Thessalonians, ἀκαθαρσία is associated with the behavior of “pagans who do not know God” (4:5 and 7; cf. Gal. 4:8-9; Rom. 1:21), and again contrasted with the example and instruction of Paul (4:1). Paul apparently shared the view of Hellenistic Judaism that describes “uncleanness” as the inevitable consequence of idolatry (cf. Rom. 1:24 ff.). See Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 36-52. Several traditional vice lists in the Pauline corpus (Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 3:5; Eph. 5:3-6) associate idolatry and uncleanness with πορνεία, “illicit sexual activities.” This association appears in Wis. 14:12—“For the making of idols was the beginning of fornication.” Pagans “no longer keep their lives or their marriages pure, but they . . . grieve one another by adultery. . . . For the worship of idols . . . is the beginning and cause and end of every evil” (Wis. 14:24 and 27; RSV).

This is what God wants (v. 3). This is the motive of God's call to sanctification (v. 7; cf. v. 3 and 5:23-24). Violators are doubly warned: "The Lord is an avenger in all these things" (v. 6b; RSV); "Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you" (v. 8; RSV).

Paul's work was "not self-appointed but a sacred trust" for which he was responsible to God.⁴⁶ What he preached were not his own words, but God's. He did not preach for his own advantage nor of his own volition (cf. 1 Cor. 9:15-18). He insists that his appeal is not like that of paganism; rather it originates with God (2:3-4a). Paul did not preach to please humans—as pagans do—but to please God (2:4b).⁴⁷

3. *Gentleness Inspired by Love* (2:5-8). Paul's self-description in 2:5-8 specifically identifies his behavior during his founding visit to Thessalonica.⁴⁸ In 2:5-8 Paul subtly shifts from a discussion of the character of his "appeal" (2:2-4) to the appeal of his character.⁴⁹ In 1:5 Paul closely connects his person and message. A similar claim is made in 2:8b, "We were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also

⁴⁵Greek: *πορνεία*.

⁴⁶Moffatt, 26.

⁴⁷The terminology and the antithetical parallelism by which Hellenistic Judaism expressed its abhorrence of Gentile idolatry in Wisdom of Solomon 11-15 was more likely a direct influence on Paul's formulation of 2:1-4 than Cynic preaching. This is in opposition to Malherbe, "Gentle as a Nurse," pp. 206, 214-16. The negative description of Paul's character in 1 Thess. 2:5-8 seems to be more at home in the Hellenistic world of political rhetoric and demagoguery. See Albert-Marie Denis, "L'Apôtre Paul, prophète 'messianique' des Gentils, Etude Thematique de 1 Thess. 11:1-6," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 33 (1957): 287ff.

Paul employs antitheses in order to speak emphatically and with clarity. In this way his self-description also serves the parenetic purpose of identifying both virtues to pursue and vices to avoid. It is suspect, or at least superfluous, to assume that Paul's antithetical formulations were intended only to defend himself against the charges of his opponents. If anything, he levels charges at debased pagans. He is certainly not responding to charges of disgruntled Jewish-Christian opponents.

⁴⁸Several features suggest this: 1) The temporal particle *ποτε* ("then") in v. 5; 2) the shift from the customary present tense of vv. 3-4 to the past tenses of vv. 5-8; 3) Paul's appeal to the Thessalonians' knowledge in v. 5; and 4) mention of his presence with them in v. 7.

⁴⁹Note the twice repeated verb *ἐγενήθμεν*, "we were," (vv. 5 and 7; cf. 1:5; 2:10).

our very selves.” As a good “philosopher,” Paul’s word and deed fully correspond, a fact that validates the truth of his philosophy. Itinerant street philosophers and preachers in the Hellenistic world of Paul’s day were viewed with suspicion. By his denials Paul distinguishes himself from the typical, selfishly-motivated charlatan.⁵⁰

The point of 2:5-8 is to demonstrate that Paul was not selfish, but rather selfless. In rejecting the practices of other preachers, including not only pagans but also so-called Christians (cf. 2 Cor. 2:17; Phil. 3:17-21), he reaffirms his deep affection and self-effacing love for his converts (2:8). Paul’s concern in 2:5-8 is to maintain in proper balance his emphasis on pleasing God, not people (see 2:4), and his concern to present himself as a true friend to the Thessalonians. He does not allow pleasing people to compromise the higher priority of pleasing God. But neither does he permit selfish concerns to deter him from properly serving his converts.⁵¹ Although he preached the gospel with boldness (2:2), he was at the same time “gentle” (2:7).⁵²

Many itinerant preachers of Paul’s day made their living by means of “flattery.”⁵³ Others, especially Cynics, overreacting to the ploys of flat-

⁵⁰He does so not to defend himself against specific charges, but to edify and educate his readers and, perhaps, to attack the sophistry of false preachers (see Dibelius, “Thessalonicher,” 7-10).

⁵¹See the discussion of the dialectic of pleasing God vs. pleasing people vs. pleasing self in my dissertation (139-141). In 1 Thessalonians ἀρεσκεῖν, “to please,” appears exclusively in contexts referring to Paul’s exemplary behavior (see 2:4, 15; and 4:1). In 2:15-16 Paul’s Jewish opponents do not please God because they prevent Paul from doing what pleases God and what he has been called to do—preach the gospel to the Gentiles that they may be saved.

⁵²Or “childlike.” The words “gentle” and “childlike” translate two different, but similar Greek words, both of which appear in the textual tradition of 1 Thess. 2:7—ἡπιιοι and νήπιοι respectively. Against the preferences of most recent translations and commentators, Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland (*The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 283-285) defend νήπιοι (“child-like”) as the more probable reading. Bruce M. Metzger, however, contends that the weight of external evidence favoring the former is balanced by the internal evidence favoring the latter reading (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [London: United Bible Societies, 1971], 629-30).

⁵³Plutarch’s moral essay, “How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend,” describes “boldness” or “freedom of speech” as the opposite of flattery and the language of true friendship. Plutarch *Moralia* 48E-74E.

terers, were noted not so much for their “frankness” as for their excess of it. They confused the necessary bold confrontation of their audiences’ shortcomings with reviling, berating, and insolence. In response to such abuses, serious preachers emphasized their understanding, gentleness, and authentic friendship.⁵⁴

Paul refused to resort to “flattering speech” (2:5a). Flattery is the insincere, manipulative, exploitive, self-serving words of an orator bent on favorably impressing and persuading the audience at any cost.⁵⁵ Paul calls upon God to witness to his true motivation (2:5b). He never disregarded the rights of others in his efforts to win converts.⁵⁶ Paul does not appeal to God because his motives had been challenged. It is because, although the Thessalonians could vouch for Paul’s behavior, only God could know his motives.

Paul also refused to make pleasing people his first priority, much less pleasing himself. He “never sought glory from people” (2:6a).⁵⁷ His personal reputation did not matter (cf. Phil. 1:15-18). He refused to usurp the rights of others in the exercise of his own, relinquishing instead his apostolic prerogatives of respect, authority, and financial support (2:6b). Paul provides a visible model of the love that he prays God will cause to increase among the Thessalonians (3:12). But God is also the teacher: “You have been taught by God to love one another” (4:9; cf. 1 John 4:7-12, 19).

⁵⁴Paul’s emphasis here does not imply that his intent was to combat opponents who claimed he was either a flatterer or unfeelingly harsh. What he does is distinguish himself from unworthy counterparts. See Malherbe, “Gentle as a Nurse,” 208-11; and Stanley B. Marrow, “*Parrhesia* and the New Testament,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 435-36.

⁵⁵See Johannes Schneider, “*κολακεία*,” *TDNT* 3:817-18, and the literature cited in Betz, *Galatians*, 55 nn. 105-14, which is more relevant here than Betz’s application of it to Gal. 1:10.

⁵⁶The denied behavior, *πλεονεξία*, has a broader connotation than avarice, covetousness, or greediness. J. B. Lightfoot suggests in his comment on Col. 3:5 that the word refers to the “entire disregard for the rights of others” (*Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959 [reprint of the 1879 ed.], 212).

⁵⁷Perhaps implicit in the denial of seeking *δόξα*, “glory,” from humans is Paul’s hope of sharing instead the glory of God (see 2:12 and 20). That the reference to “people” is emphatic is borne out by its elaboration in 2:6b—“neither from you nor from other people.”

Paul emphasizes the mutuality and equality of his relationship with the Thessalonians.⁵⁸ His claim is simply, “We were gentle among you” (2:7b). The adjective “gentle”⁵⁹ is filled with content by the simile that compares Paul’s self-giving ministry among the Thessalonians (2:8) to the loving care of a nursing mother for her own children.⁶⁰ Here Paul emphasizes his longing to be with and his affection for his converts.

Because of his authentic friendship with the Thessalonians, Paul considers it a pleasure to share with them not only the gospel of God, but himself as well. His behavior was inspired by his love for his converts.⁶¹ He again reminds them of his model of self-giving love in the prayer closing the autobiographical section of the letter, “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you” (3:12 RSV). In the parenetic section Paul expresses his satisfaction with the Thessalonians’ mutual love, and yet encourages continued progress—“do so more and more” (4:9-10).

4. *Living Worthy of God* (2:9-12). First Thessalonians 2:9-12 validates and illustrates Paul’s claim of unselfish love for the Thessalonians in 2:5-8.⁶² The focus is still on the sort of person Paul was among them (cf. 2:10, 5, 7), but the emphasis is less on his character than on his moral purpose and motives.

The first validation of Paul’s claim in 2:5-8 was his “labor of love” among the Thessalonians.⁶³ In 2:6 Paul claims not to have “burdened” the Thessalonians financially, as he might have as an apostle. In v. 9 he explains the motives underlying this behavior: “For you remember, brothers and sisters, our labor and toil. We preached to you the gospel of God while we worked night and day so as not to be a burden on any one of you.”

It appears that in both Corinth and Thessalonica, Paul waived his apostolic right to financial support and preached the gospel free of charge,

⁵⁸See “among you/in your midst” in 2:7a. Lightfoot, *Notes*, p. 25. This is true whether the original reading in 2:7 is *νήπιοι*, “babies,” or *ἡπιοι*, “gentle.”

⁵⁹Or the predicate nominative “infants,” if the other textual tradition is correct.

⁶⁰The simile, “gentle . . . as a nurse,” was used also in the self-descriptions of Cynic philosophers. Malherbe, “Gentle as a Nurse,” 211.

⁶¹“Because you became beloved to us” (2:8).

⁶²Verse 9 is introduced by the conjunction *γάρ*, “for,” the connective word also in 2:1, 3, and 5.

⁶³Frame, 102. This concern is repeated in three different Greek words referring to work in v. 9—*κόπον*, *μόχθον*, and *ἐργαζόμενοι*.

instead plying a trade to earn his livelihood.⁶⁴ If the “burden” he refused to place on them was financial in nature, his “labor” among them does not refer primarily to his preaching activity.⁶⁵ Rather, Paul’s manual labor serves as the model for his explicit parenesis on work in 4:11. Furthermore, in both 2:6-9 and 4:11-12 not burdening others is noted as a tangible expression of brotherly love (cf. 2:8 and 4:9; 2:9 and 4:12),⁶⁶ for which Paul also provides the model (see 2:5-8, 17-18; 3:6, 10, and 12).

The second validation of Paul’s claim in 2:5-8 to gentle concern for his converts is his irreproachable moral conduct and the motives in 2:10-12. “You are witnesses, and God is also, that our behavior toward you believers was holy and righteous and blameless” (2:10; cf. 1 Thess. 4:9-12).⁶⁷

In 2:11-12 Paul turns from a discussion of his exemplary behavior to the model of his fatherly advice,⁶⁸ “. . . We exhorted. . . and encouraged . . . and charged you to lead a life⁶⁹ worthy of God.” Both Paul’s deed and

⁶⁴See 1 Cor. 9:1-18; 2 Thess. 3:6-12; Phil. 4:16; 2 Cor. 11:8-10; 12:13-14. See David L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul: The Use of the Synoptic Tradition in the Regulation of Early Church Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); and Sampley, 81-87, on “Paul’s Personal and Public Finances.”

⁶⁵Best, 103. See John G. Strelan’s survey of the βῆρος (“burden”) word-group in Pauline usage in “Burden-bearing and the Law of Christ: A Reexamination of Galatians 6:2,” *JBL* 94 (1975): 266-76. Rigaux (*Thessaloniciens*, 417) understands the connotation of βῆρος in both 2:7 and 9 to be that of the moral weight of apostolic authority.

⁶⁶Ronald Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 48 and 91-92 nn. 199-203.

⁶⁷“There is no implicit contrast here between those who believe and those who do not, as if Paul’s conduct varied towards different groups; he is merely directing attention to his behavior as they knew it as members of the Christian community” (Best, 105). Cf. Gal. 6:10.

⁶⁸The metaphor in 2:11-12 of a father instructing his children is a familiar one in parenetic literature. In 1 Cor. 4:14-16 it provides the rationale for Paul’s appeal, “Be imitators of me” (4:6). The advice given by a father to his son may have been the original *Sitz im Leben* (German: “setting in life,” i.e., social setting) of parenesis (Malherbe, “1 Thessalonians,” 4). In the OT book of Proverbs (see, e.g., Prov. 6:20; 13:1) as in numerous examples of Hellenistic moral literature (see Malherbe, 4-5 and 21 n. 20; and *Social Aspects*, 28), the saga exhorts disciples as a father addressing his children.

⁶⁹Περιπατεῖν means literally “to walk.” But in Paul’s letters it characteristically has the same force as the Hebrew term *halakah*, “walk,” referring not to foot transportation but to deportment, i.e., moral behavior. See 4:1.

word were motivated by one purpose—a concern that the Thessalonians should conduct themselves in a morally holy manner. Only a life of holiness (4:1-8) was consistent with their status as people called to participate in God’s own kingdom and glory (v. 12). God’s call to live the life of holiness (4:7) was not the condition for becoming the “children of light and children of the day” (5:5) or people “destined . . . for salvation” (5:9). The gift of the Holy Spirit (4:8) both demanded and enabled the Thessalonians to live in a manner consistent with the divine call. God’s election-call had this purpose: that they should live like Christians, that they should live genuinely holy lives.⁷⁰

Paul’s intercessory prayers at the close of the autobiographic and parenetic sections again express the concern that the Thessalonians’ moral behavior might, like his own, be blameless and pleasing to God (3:11-13 and 5:23-24). Between these prayers, Paul exhorts them to the moral conduct he consistently modeled and taught while he was with them.⁷¹ His call to remember his model and his fatherly instruction in 2:9-12 is an implicit call for them to continue to imitate⁷² his example of fraternal

⁷⁰The adverb ἀξίως, “worthy” does not suggest that Paul considered good morals a means of “deserving” God’s call. It is rather a recognition that God’s call to future salvation makes certain behaviors “appropriate” in the present. A holy God demands a holy people (cf. 1 Pet. 1:13-16). Notice the close connection between Paul’s concern for holiness, and not only sexual morality (4:1-8), but also with love for one another and hard work (4:9-12; cf. 1 Pet. 2:22). This too was a feature of his example (2:9-11).

⁷¹See 4:1: “. . . As you learned from us how you ought to lead your lives and to please God, so live, in order that you may do even more.” Note also Paul’s exhortation in 4:11-12 that they should conduct themselves respectably toward outsiders, live quietly, and mind their own business (see Käsemann’s discussion on a similar parenesis in Rom. 13:11-14 [p. 363]).

⁷²Malherbe, “1 Thessalonians,” p. 4. Seneca suggests that the best models are men “who teach us by their lives, men who tell us what we ought to do . . . and then prove it by their practice” (*Ad Lucilium epistulae Morales* 52:8 (Malherbe, “1 Thessalonians,” p. 6). Earlier Xenophon wrote of Socrates, “The very recollection of him in absence brought no small good to his constant companions and followers” (*Memorabilia* 4. 1. 1; trans. E. C. Marchant [LCL]). Pliny emphasizes the reciprocal value of referring to one’s own example: “I mention this, not only to enforce my advice by example . . . , but also that this letter may be a sort of pledge binding me to persevere in the same abstinence in the future” (*Ad Lucilium epistulae morales* 7. 1. 7; cf. 2. 6. 6; cited in Malherbe, “1 Thessalonians,” p. 6). Reminders of the example of one’s parents in parenetic settings serve as implicit calls “to conduct oneself as a mimites of the model” (Malherbe, pp. 4 and 14, who cites several apropos ancient examples).

love, hard work, morally pure behavior, and mutual encouragement and upbuilding.⁷³ “As Paul has encouraged, exhorted and cared for the Thessalonian Christians, so they must care for one another. . . . To ‘build up’ the church is for the believers to encourage one another to grow in sanctification, i.e., to produce spiritual maturity and stability.”⁷⁴ Mature Christians should reflect the holiness ethos.

In a letter in which hope is a major concern and the imminent parousia a reminder of the need for ethical seriousness (see 1:10; 2:12, 19-20; 3:12-13; 4:13-18; 5:5-11, 23-24), Paul’s exemplary behavior also gives his readers hope that the moral end to which God has called them could be achieved. The Thessalonians’ hardships need not deter them; Paul’s had not deterred him.⁷⁵

Summary

What have we learned from the Apostle about teaching converted pagans to live holy lives? Paul’s approach was, first, to praise his converts for the changes God had already effected in their lives. He emphasized the genuineness of their conversions and expressed his essential satisfaction with their progress as Christians. But he did not hesitate to challenge them to further progress or to offer explicit paradigms for the life of holiness.⁷⁶

Second, Paul used personal illustrations—biographical and autobiographical reminders—in order at once to praise his hearers and to prod them on. Examples that may be emulated are still more persuasive than abstractions that are merely postulated. What Paul praised was specifically the Thessalonians’ perseverance in the Christian faith and lifestyle. They were already doing well; he encouraged them only to do so more and more. Yet for such recent converts from pagan idolatry and its

⁷³We have already noted the parenetic employment of the first three models. The fourth may be seen in the verbal connections between such passages as 2:11; 3:2, 7; 4:1 and 10 of Paul; and 4:18; 5:11 and 14 of the Thessalonians. Note esp. 5:11: “Exhort one another and edify one another, as indeed you are doing.”

⁷⁴Donfried, 61.

⁷⁵Furthermore, the decidedly parenetic function of his autobiographical remarks challenges the assumption that they arise apologetically in response to accusations.

⁷⁶Thanksgiving, which dominates the first three chapters of the letter, is an epideictic form, that is, a rhetorical tactic that uses the pedagogy of praise.

immoral ethos, ethical reminders, encouragement, and examples are hardly perfunctory.

Third, by means of encouragement and example, Paul educated his converts. In 1 Thessalonians the intellectual⁷⁷ aspect of edification is emphasized rather than the volitional. That is, Paul explained to his converts what was right and wrong and why. He did not explicitly exhort them to do the right and shun the wrong. Education and deepened adherence to communally shared values are the normal goals of epideictic rhetoric.⁷⁸ Preachers who lack the courage or conviction to identify virtues and vices by name can only expect a harvest of moral drift among their converts.

Fourth, Paul emphasized his equality with his converts. What was good for the people was good for the preacher. The autobiographical remarks in 1 Thess. function parenetically to remind Paul's converts of the Christian ethical values they share, as embodied in the ethos of their "model."⁷⁹ They were his imitators and themselves examples (1:6-7). They were his "crown of boasting," his "glory," his "joy" (2:19-20). Their relationship was one of mutuality and reciprocity. By praising his own exemplary ethos, as over against the immorality of paganism, Paul was at the same time praising and educating the Thessalonians. But his praise was ultimately directed toward God, who enabled both Paul and the Thessalonians to live lives that were pleasing to God (2:4; 4:1) and worthy of him (2:12). Paul did not consider the life of holiness a new scheme of self-salvation. Both he and they were equally recipients of divine grace.

Fifth, Paul prayed that these exemplary converts might experience the grace of entire sanctification (3:13; 5:23). The holiness to which Paul pointed the Thessalonians (4:3, 7) was not merely a religious experience, but an ethos consistent with the character of God. If Christians are called upon to live lives worthy of a holy God, "theology" is not a luxury but a necessity. An adequate understanding of God is essential to the intelligent proclamation of holiness. The first lessons pagans are likely to learn about the character of God are to be found in the lives of God's people, not on

⁷⁷Note the numerous references to "knowing" and "remembering" throughout the letter. See 1:2, 3, 4, 5; 2:1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 17; 3:3, 4, 6; 4:2, 4, 5; 5:2, 12.

⁷⁸Wilhelm Wuellner, "Paul's Rhetoric of Argumentation in Romans: An Alternative to the Donfried-Karris Debate over Romans." *CBQ* 38 (1976): 343.

⁷⁹Greek: *τύπος*.

the pages of Scripture or a catechism, much less in a volume on systematic theology or in an exegetical commentary.

A Role Model By Grace

Paul was not reluctant to put himself and his colleagues forward as witnesses to the powerful effectiveness of divine grace in human lives. As he wrote in 1 Cor. 15:10, “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace was not *ineffective*⁸⁰ in me.” Modern Christians, whose modesty makes them reluctant to accept their roles as models of the holiness ethos, inadvertently suggest that God’s call to holiness is an empty dream. Paul, however, was guilty of neither immodesty nor of failing to witness to the reality of God’s sanctifying grace.

Paul closes his letter to the Thessalonians with a prayer that the God who called them to holiness (see 4:7) would make their sanctification complete (5:23). That is, he prayed that they might be kept sound and blameless for the parousia. He followed this prayer with an expression of confidence, “He who called you is faithful, and he will do it” (5:24 RSV), and with this request, “Brothers and sisters, pray for me” (5:25). In calling upon the Thessalonians to pray that he, too, would persevere faithfully to the end, Paul once again emphasized the equality and reciprocity characterizing his friendship with his converts.

Unlike many prominent movie and sports figures today, Paul was not unwilling to accept his responsibility as a role model. But he did so, not by placing himself upon a pedestal as a super-hero, but by placing himself squarely among his converts as one without authority, as a fellow-recipient of grace, and as one in need of the prayers of others. There is still no substitute for incarnational Christianity. Like Paul, we must embody our message. To be credible witnesses, we too must practice what we preach.

⁸⁰Greek: *κενή*. Italics added. Note that this is the same word that Paul used in 1 Thess. 2:1.

Appendix

Critical and Contextual Issues. Despite striking differences from Paul's later letters,⁸¹ no serious contemporary New Testament scholar disputes the traditional Pauline authorship of 1 Thessalonians.⁸² Although the letter apparently lacks a "body" that is formally distinct from the thanksgiving period, it otherwise resembles Paul's letters that conclude with a distinct parenetic section (cf. Rom 12:1—15:13; Eph 4:1—6:20). The transition from 3:13 to 4:1 is almost uniformly recognized as the major break in the logical structure of the letter. Both halves of the letter conclude with intercessory prayers that are similar in both form and content (3:10-13 and 5:23-24).⁸³ A consensus of scholars agree that the first section is essentially autobiographical and the second parenetic.⁸⁴

A number of commentators consider 1 Thess 1:2—2:16 a "defense of his life and work"⁸⁵ and 2:17—3:13 a "defense of his absence."⁸⁶ They presume that the first three chapters autobiographical chapters are Paul's

⁸¹See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 256.

⁸²See Werner Georg Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, rev. ed., trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), pp. 260-62; and in greater detail "Das literarische und geschichtliche Problem des ersten Thessalonicherbriefes," *Neotestamentica et Patristica*, NovTSup, no. 6, ed. W. C. van Unnik (Leiden: Brill, 1962), pp 213-27. (All abbreviations of scholarly journals and monograph series are those of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*.)

⁸³See George P. Wiles, *Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of St. Paul*, SNTSMS, no. 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1974), pp. 63-71.

⁸⁴Abraham J. Malherbe, "First Thessalonians as a Paraenetic Letter," paper presented at the SBL annual meeting, 1972, pp. 1-15. That chs. 1—3 are autobiographical need not imply that they are not also parenetic. Malherbe demonstrates that the distinctive features of the autobiographical section in 1 Thessalonians are just as characteristic of a parenetic letter as are the generally recognized parenetic section. "The descriptions of the readers as [imitators], the theme of remembrance of what is already known, . . . the description of Paul in antithetic manner, the theme of philophroneis [ie., friendship], all contribute to this conclusion." Malherbe, "First Thessalonians," pp. 16-17. Virtually all scholars during the past century agree that chapters 1—3 constitute the first major section of the letter. For the basis for the conclusion that 1 Thessalonians 4—5 is parenesis, see Otto Merk, *Handeln aus Glauben. Die Motivierungen der paulinischen Ethik* (Marburg: Elwert, 1968), pp. 45-58.

⁸⁵Latin: *apologia pro vita et labore suo*.

⁸⁶Latin: *apologia pro absentia sua*.

apologetic response to charges and insinuations against his character or apostolic office.⁸⁷ Despite the widely accepted view that Paul apologetically responds to concrete accusations by opponents,⁸⁸ there is no clear consensus as to the identity of his presumed opponents or the specific nature of their supposed charges.⁸⁹ The existence of opponents and charges is simply postulated and has never been demonstrated. The supposed opponents' charges in I Thessalonians are characteristically reconstructed by appeal to a "mirror reading" of selected antithetical formulations.⁹⁰ "Mirror reading" presumes that "we may infer from some of Paul's strongest affirmations, and most emphatic denials when in controversy with opponents, that the opposite of what Paul is saying had been argued by these opponents."⁹¹ An interpreter's selection of the antithetical constructions he mirror-reads seems to arise arbitrarily from his

⁸⁷So e.g. James Moffatt, "The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians," *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 5 vols., ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897-1910), 4:26 and 29; James Everett Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), pp. 14, 17, 140, passim; Theodor von Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 3 vols., trans. Melancthon Williams Jacobus, et al. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1909), 1:215-16; Morris, pp. 18 and 42; Bailey, p. 251.

⁸⁸Schmithals claims that "on this point the exegetes from the time of the Fathers down to the last century have never been in doubt (*Paul and the Gnostics*, trans. John E. Steely [Nashville: Abingdon, 1972], p. 151; cf. 137 n. 36). I have doubts, as the subsequent discussion will demonstrate.

⁸⁹See the survey in Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, HNTC (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 17-22.

⁹⁰"Not this, but that" type formulations. For examples, see esp., Charles Augustus Auberlen and C. J. Riggenbach, "The First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians," trans. John Lillie, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 12 vols., ed. John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960; reprint of 1860ff. ed.), p. 18; John W. Bailey, "The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians," *The Interpreter's Bible*, 12 vols., ed. George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon, 1951-57), p. 256; Schmithals, p. 137; Robert Jewett, "Enthusiastic Radicalism and the Thessalonian Correspondence" (paper presented at the SBL Paul Seminar, 1972), pp. 20, 23. See also n. 15.

⁹¹C. L. Mearns, "Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of I and II Thessalonians," *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 145. Ch. 2 of my doctoral dissertation is a sustained attack on this methodology. See George Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding*, SBLDS, 73 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 96-112.

historical reconstruction of the situation rather than from literary and/or rhetorical necessity. The text itself takes a back seat to an externally imposed theory. Antithetical constructions were far too common in the normal synagogue preaching of Hellenistic Judaism and in the moral discourses of itinerant Cynic and Stoic philosophers (even in clearly non-polemical settings) to assume, as many New Testament scholars do, that Paul's antithetical constructions must respond to opposing charges.⁹²

First Thessalonians 2:1-12 highlights Paul's characteristic way of living, not because his character had been maligned, but because he wanted to demonstrate that he embodied his message—he practiced what he preached. His concern in this section of the letter was not to defend his authority but to demonstrate his ethos—his characteristic way of living. His rhetorical goal was not apology but parenesis—ethical advice. His exemplary behavior was to serve as a model for his hearers to emulate. The truth of his “philosophy”—the gospel—was validated by the consistency between his theory and practice.

There are numerous explicit inner-connections between the autobiographical and parenetic sections of 1 Thessalonians. Paul's advice probably tells us more about his ethical concerns than about his audience's ethical deficiencies. Mirror reading is as inappropriate applied to parenesis as to autobiography. It is perverse to assume that Paul's readers were doing nothing he recommended and everything he prohibited. Parenesis thrives in an atmosphere of shared values and convictions. Paul was able to recommend the behavior he did because he was confident that the Thessalonians were already living essentially as he had taught them earlier. Epideictic parenesis intends to reinforce rather than reverse its recipient's existing lifestyle. Thus, it was not flattery but sincerity that led Paul to say, “Continue living as you already are, only more so” (see 4:1, 9-10).

⁹²It has long been recognized that the formulation of Paul's “apology” in 1 Thessalonians is similar to those of certain Cynic philosophers, which arose not in response to contrary charges but from the need to distinguish themselves from charlatans; see Frame, p. 10; Martin Dibelius, *An die Thessalonicher I II. An die Philipper*, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, no. 11, 3rd ed. (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1937), pp. 7-11. Malherbe's comparison of the Cynic parallels and 1 Thess 2:1-12 demonstrates the impossibility of reconstructing charges on the basis of antithetical formulations (“‘Gentle as a Nurse,’ The Cynic Background to 1 Thess ii,” *NovT* 12 (1970): 203-17; cf. idem, “1 Thessalonians”). The parallels in non-Cynic autobiographers illustrate that the Cynics did not have a corner on the form.

First Thessalonians 2:1-12 is formally a part of the letter's unusually lengthy thanksgiving, which begins in 1:2.⁹³ Whether "thanksgiving"

⁹³The possibility of describing 1 Thessalonians as a letter of thanksgiving was first suggested by von Dubschutz and accepted by Paul Schubert in his important study, *Form and Function of the Pauline Thanksgiving*. Schubert, pp. 7 and 26; Dobschutz, p. 62.

Jewett (*Thessalonian Correspondence*, 68-78) identifies 1:1-5 as the letter's *exordium*, which announces thanksgiving as its theme, and 1:6-3:10 as the *narratio*, in which Paul narrates the reasons for his thanksgiving. Wanamaker (pp. 72-139) identifies 1:2-10 as the rhetorical *exordium*/epistolary "thanksgiving" and 2:1—3:10 as the *narratio*. Both agree that the *narratio* is concluded and summarized and the *probatio* ("proof" section in 4:1—5:22) introduced by means of the intercessory prayer in 3:11-13 (rhetorically the *transitus*—Jewett, pp. 77-78; Wanamaker, pp. 140-145).

Where the thanksgiving period ends has been a matter of considerable scholarly debate. See the discussion in Boers, "Form Critical," pp. 149-52. The repeated references to thanks in 2:13 and 3:9 suggest that thanksgiving is a major theme through 3:13. It is true that such repeated or prolonged emphasis on thanksgiving is formally unparalleled in Paul's letters. Schubert, whose 1939 study provided the early impetus for recent form critical studies of Paul's letters, identifies the thanksgiving period as "an indivisible entity" comprising 1:2—3:13 (pp. 17-27, 21, 62, quotation from p. 20). Three apparently separate thanksgiving sections, 1:2-5; 2:13-14; and 3:9-13 are interrupted by "digressions," which "from the point of view of form, function and content are . . . fully legitimate and indeed constitutive elements of the general Pauline thanksgiving pattern" (p. 17). Schubert, nonetheless, found 2:13-16 "very peculiar as to both form and content" (p. 23). He notes, however, that the strikingly frequent use of *εὐχαριστέω* ("I give thanks") in 1:2—2:12, even when another verb might be expected, continues in 2:13-16 (pp. 19-20).

Jack T. Sanders ("The Transition from Opening Epistolary Thanksgiving to Body in the Letters of the Pauline Corpus," *JBL* 81 (1962): 348-62) identifies two thanksgiving periods, 1:2-10 and 2:13—3:13, interrupted by the body of the letter, 2:1-12 (p. 356; see pp. 348-56).

Other form critical studies have identified 1 Thess 1:2-10 alone as the thanksgiving; see Robert Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 269; "The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance," *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. by W. R. Farmer, C. F. C. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967), p. 254; John Lee White, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-Body in the Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle*, SBLDS, 2 (Missoula, MT: SBL, 1972), pp. 114-18; Boers, "Form Critical," p. 153.

Theodore C. Burgess describes the letter of thanksgiving as among the more common types of epideictic letters in antiquity ("Epideictic Literature," *University of Chicago Studies in Classical Philology* 3 (1900): 186-87. Epideictic identifies one of the three major rhetorical genres, the positive object of which is **praise**. Jewett (*Thessalonian Correspondence*, pp. 71-72) and Wanamaker (p. 47) concur with my earlier conclusion that 1 Thessalonians is an epideictic letter (Lyons, pp. 219-221). George Kennedy (*New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984], p. 142)

adequately describes 1 Thessalonians as a whole or only its autobiographical section, it is clear that, as in all Paul's letters, the important epistolary function of the extended thanksgiving is "explicitly or implicitly paraenetic."⁹⁴

A close inspection of the three references to thanksgiving in 1:2; 2:13; and 3:9-10 reveals both striking similarities and significant differences.⁹⁵ Paul's thanksgiving in 1:2-4 recalls the Thessalonians' tangible expressions of the familiar triad of Christian virtues: faith, hope, and love (1:3; see also 5:8). These demonstrate their divine election (1:5). In 1:5-10, he offers two further proofs of their election: first, the character of his proclamation of the gospel (1:5), and second, the character of their response to the gospel (1:6-10). In 2:1-16, he expands on these proofs in the same order this time giving more lengthy attention to his character (2:1-12) and referring more briefly to theirs (2:13-16).

categorizes it as an example of deliberative rhetoric. Thus, he considers Paul's goal to have been to **persuade** the Thessalonians to change their lifestyle.

Abraham J. Malherbe ("Exhortation in First Thessalonians," *NovT* 25 [1983]: 238-256), Stanley K. Stowers (*Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Library of Early Christianity, 5 [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986], pp. 94-106), and David E. Aune (*The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, Library of Early Christianity, 8 [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987], p. 206) identify 1 Thessalonians as a parenetic letter. This view essentially agrees with my analysis, except it does not clarify whether the letter intended to **correct** or **confirm** its readers' ethos. Mine, of course, is the latter view.

⁹⁴Schubert, *ibid.*, pp. 89 and 26. See also more recently Peter Thomas O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul*, *NovTSup*, no. 49 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), pp. 141-44, 165, 262-63.

⁹⁵In each (1) the personal object of the thanksgiving is the same, "you"—the Thessalonians; (2) "God" is one Paul thanks; and (3) his thanks is unending ("unceasingly" in 1:2 and 2:13; "night and day" in 3:10). Nevertheless, what Paul thanks God for in each instance is different. The differences suggest a logical progression. In the first, Paul's expression of thanks to God is based on his knowledge of their divine election—"God has chosen you" (1:4). In the second, the basis for thanks is identified as their response to the word of God—"You accepted it not as the word of men. but as it truly is, the word of God" (2:13). The third gives voice to Paul's relief and gratitude at the good news brought by Timothy of their perseverance in the faith despite their afflictions—"You stand firm in the Lord" (3:8). The progression (cf. 1:3) confirms that the extended thanksgiving is, as Paul's adverbs πάντοτε, ἀδιαλείπτως, and νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας—"unceasingly" and "night and day"—suggest, continual, not simply repeated.

WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW¹

by

William Kostlevy

Although not formally organized until 1965, the Wesleyan Theological Society is best understood as one of the more significant products of the evangelical “renaissance” of the 1940s and 1950s. Its founders included scholars of notable accomplishment who, in the two decades following WW2, had written a series of ground-breaking doctoral dissertations and had founded the first evangelical scholarly journal, the *Asbury Seminary*.

Particularly noteworthy in the beginning of the Society were a series of conferences in the early 1960s conducted at Wesleyan/Holiness colleges under the leadership of Kenneth Geiger, president of the National Holiness Association. Important papers from these conferences were published as *Insights into Holiness* (1963) and *Further Insights into Holiness* (1963).² These conferences culminated in the Winona Lake Study Conference on the Distinctives of Arminian-Wesleyan Theology, held in November, 1964, and sponsored by the NHA. Papers from this conference were published as *The Word and the Doctrine* in 1965.³ Dr. J. C. McPheeters,

¹This essay, originally appearing in the *Holiness Digest* (Spring 1993), is indebted to an article by John Merritt, “Fellowship in Ferment: A History of the Wesleyan Theological Society, 1965-1984,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 21 (Spring-Fall, 1986), 186-204.

²Both of these volumes were published by Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City.

³Kenneth Geiger, compiler, published by Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City, 1965.

the respected elder statesperson of the Holiness Movement, indicated that the Winona Lake conference “was perhaps the most significant event in our generation for the spread of Scriptural holiness.”⁴ It was this meeting which set the stage for the organization of the Wesleyan Theological Society at the April, 1965 NHA meeting in Detroit.

The stated purpose of the new organization was to encourage an exchange of ideas among Wesleyan/Holiness theologians, develop a source of papers for NHA seminars, stimulate scholarship among young theologians and pastors, and publish a journal containing significant contributions to Holiness Movement scholarship.⁵ Leo Cox of Marion College (now Indiana Wesleyan University) was elected president, with Merne Harris of Vennard College, secretary, and W. Ralph Thompson of Spring Arbor College, treasurer. Other early presidents of the WTS were Richard Taylor, William Arnett, Lowell Roberts, Merne Harris, Ralph Perry, George Blackstone, Robert Mattke, Delbert Rose, and Mildred Wynkoop. In November, 1965, the organization’s inaugural meeting at Spring Arbor College drew approximately sixty people. Reflecting the diversity of its parent body, the NHA, papers were presented by members of the Methodist Church, Church of the Nazarene, United Missionary Church, Free Methodist Church, Wesleyan Methodist Church, and the Salvation Army. In January, 1966, when the initial membership drive ended, the organization could claim ninety-two charter members. Since its inception the WTS has experienced steady membership growth (by 1970 286, increasing to 1,103 in 1982). Currently the number of members exceeds 1800.

Following the adoption of a constitution in 1969, an increased desire was expressed to establish formal ties to the NHA. At its 1970 annual meeting the WTS voted to become an official commission of the NHA.

The most noteworthy early achievement of the WTS was the establishment of a scholarly journal, the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*. Inaugurated in 1966, the journal’s first editor, Charles Carter (1965-1972), guided the periodical during its difficult formative years. Initially published annually, the *WTS Journal* has been published bi-annually since 1979.

One of the WTS’s most meaningful contributions to the broader Wesleyan/Holiness Movement has been the visibility it has afforded the

⁴Geiger, 1965, 5.

⁵The result, of course, is the present *Wesleyan Theological Journal*.

Holiness Movement in scholarly and ecumenical circles. The WTS, through its members, has made significant contributions at the Oxford Institute of Methodist Studies and the John Wesley Institute near Chicago. It also has had a presence at meetings of the American Academy of Religion and since the early 1980s has been represented in the discussions of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

In 1975, the Society's president, Eldon Fuhrman, suggested that it might be appropriate to include in WTS discussions individuals representing various theological views and traditions. Since 1983 outside representatives, including John Howard Yoder, Albert Outler, Mortimer Arias, Dale Brown, Thomas Oden, and Craig Blaising, have enriched theological discussion at the WTS's annual meetings. In 1980 the noted Methodist scholar Frank Baker expressed the view of many scholars when he noted that the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* was an important sign of the continued vitality of Wesleyan scholarship and that its articles for the most part were "well written and carefully documented" and occasionally were of major importance.

Indicative of the WTS's success is that its stated objectives have been largely realized. The organization has provided a forum for theological reflection in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, published significant scholarship in the tradition, and has encouraged a generation of young scholars. The encouragement and publication of the work of young scholars has been one of the most significant fruits of the Wesleyan Theological Society. Beginning with the presentation of papers by Kenneth Kinghorn, at the WTS's first conference, and by Jerry Mercer, at its second, the WTS has provided a continuous forum for young scholars.

The most important contribution of the Wesleyan Theological Society has been in the growing theological maturity of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement. Reflecting the Society's roots in neo-evangelicalism, the scholarly debate in the early years of the WTS was dominated by issues surrounding the Biblical basis of Christian perfection and the doctrine of inerrancy. By the mid-1970s the central concern of the Society was the doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Especially noteworthy was an important dialogue between Donald Dayton and Timothy Smith which has produced some of the most significant scholarship in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, and has helped to clarify important issues surrounding the origins and relationship of the Holiness Movement to Pentecostalism. Equally important has been an extended discussion, beginning at the Society's second annual conference, concerning personal

and social ethics in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. The Society's 1987, 1989, and 1991 annual meetings included important papers on the social views of the Wesleyan/ Holiness Movement.

This, I suspect, is merely the beginning of the story. The recent flowering of theological, philosophical, historical, ethical, and Biblical scholarship suggests that the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, the product of the NHA-sponsored camp meetings of the nineteenth century, has a important role to play in the academy of the twenty-first century.

WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY: THE FIRST DECADE

by

Leo G. Cox
First WTS President

Fortunately, I do have a few letters I wrote at the time the WTS began. One of these letters was written to Delbert Rose, then historian of the National Holiness Association (now the Christian Holiness Association), shortly after the first meeting of the WTS. In it, at his request, I gave an account of how the WTS came into being. I will depend much on the facts in this letter. Also I have as a resource the historical article by John J. Merritt of the Salvation Army.¹ I reflect on the basis of these sources and my personal memories.

During the years of 1955-59, I was in the State University of Iowa struggling to complete a master's thesis on "Wesley's Concept of Sin" and a doctoral dissertation on "Wesley's Concept of Perfection." My counselor was a Presbyterian and the Department of Religion head was a very liberal Methodist. He joked about Wesley's heart-warming as likely only a bout of indigestion. The other members of the committee were a Baptist, a Roman Catholic, a liberal Jew, and a Lutheran. The only one who had much of an idea about Christian perfection was the Roman Catholic.

At that time I was pastor of a Methodist Church and had little contact with any of my holiness colleagues. I tried to think through some of

¹John G. Merritt, "Fellowship in Ferment: A History of the Wesleyan Theological Society, 1965-1984," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 21:1/2 (Spring-Fall, 1986), 185-203.

the intellectual problems on my own, and often wished for access to a group of Wesleyan scholars. I needed to discuss with someone who knew the holiness message, and could help me in my struggle.

Following the completion of my doctoral degree, I attended some of the meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society. In these meetings I found some help, especially in regard to Biblical authority and the place of the Word for my theology. But I still needed more help than I found there. The ETS organizational plan did give me some idea of how one might form a society of Wesleyan scholars.

In the early 1960s I became closely associated with the NHA (now the CHA). Merne Harris of Vennard College was Dean of Seminars for the annual convention. He appointed me to be the seminar leader on doctrine. Here I met leaders of the Holiness Movement. The seminars I led were helpful to me, but most of the scholars were either leading other seminars or were back home teaching their classes. I still longed for an opportunity to discuss with a group of holiness scholars. During these years I hinted to several of my professional friends that there was need for a Wesleyan society. They agreed.

In the years 1961-1963 Kenneth Geiger, President of the NHA, organized a series of seminars on holiness and assigned topics to various scholars. These lectures were given on the campuses of seventeen seminaries and colleges. Usually a group of three or four went to each campus. I remember riding in a car to Canada with Dr. Geiger and Dr. Stanger for a seminar. What a discussion we had! These lectures resulted in the publication of two volumes entitled *Insights into Holiness* and *Further Insights into Holiness*.²

Then in 1964 Dr. Geiger planned and implemented in Winona Lake, Indiana, a study conference on the subject "Distinctives of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology." The book entitled *The Word and the Doctrine*³ came as a result of this conference. Here is a quote from the Preface:

The Winona Lake conference was attended by administrators and pastors and representatives from the academic communities of the several denominations and organizations which participate in the National Holiness Association. Invited observers from other evangelical groups were present. More

²Edited by Kenneth Geiger, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1962 and 1963 respectively.

³Kenneth Geiger, compiler, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1965.

than eighty individuals—uniquely representative, scholarly and objective—shared in this intensive three-day period.

It was in this conference that my wish of 1955-57 finally came to fruition. Here were able scholars meeting together and discussing the very problems I had experienced. I saw then that the only way to preserve such interchange would be in a society and a journal similar to ETS and what WTS is now. I had spoken to Dean Merne Harris on some earlier occasions about this possibility and did so again at this Study Conference. I approached him about the possibility of getting together and initiating a Wesleyan Theological Society. He was in full agreement with me on the proposal.

Following the Study Conference I sent to Merne Harris copies of the ETS constitution, some of its programs and application blanks, etc. I wrote a letter to him expressing some of the ideas I would like to have incorporated into such a society. Harris prepared an initial report and submitted it to the NHA Executive Board, which approved going ahead with the formation of such an organization.

Merne Harris proceeded with the outlining of the organizational ideas and asked to have an early meeting with me. On my way to Minneapolis on February 13, 1965, he was able to meet me at the O'Hare Airport. In a two-hour meeting we worked on the Prospectus, which he had already drawn up, and prepared it for presentation to the Executive Board of the NHA. This group approved the Prospectus at its meeting following its presentation by Merne Harris. It is easy, therefore, to understand why WTS is tied closely yet today to the CHA (NHA).

At the NHA convention in Detroit, April, 1965, the initial meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society was held in the Statler Hotel. About twenty men were present. The Prospectus was presented, slightly revised, and approved as the constitution of the new society. Then the group elected the officers who were to act between the NHA convention and the first annual meeting of the Society. These officers were: Leo G. Cox, president; Merne Harris, secretary; Ralph Thompson, treasurer; and Richard Taylor, president-elect. This new Executive Committee met to discuss the first annual meeting, set its place and date, and plan the program. The date was November 5 and 6, 1965, with the place being Spring Arbor College. Similar November dates have served the Society well for its first thirty years. Merne Harris worked hard in developing a mailing list, preparing the program, and writing to key leaders to prepare papers. Ralph Thompson worked hard in making the plans on the campus of

Spring Arbor College for the entertainment of the Society. They deserve considerable credit for the success of that first annual meeting. One item of interest is that the total cost per person of all the meals was \$3.10. Lunch was 40 cents and the banquet was \$1.50.

It was difficult to anticipate how many would be present for that first annual Society meeting. We had hoped that there would be at least thirty to forty. As it turned out, the number surpassed our hopes with about sixty present. The interest level was excellent. By then the membership was 49 and the door was left open until January 1, 1966, for other charter members. Ultimately there were 92 charter members. By 1972 there were about 400 members.

One item of interest is that the planners of that first annual meeting believed that the Friday night speaker after the banquet should be an inspirational preacher of holiness rather than a scholarly presentation, and that the service be public. This desire likely grew out of the practices of the NHA. For the first meeting Dr. J. Sutherland Logan, President of Vennard College, was chosen as the speaker. This practice continued for a few years, but soon that evening spot was assigned to the President of the WTS for a presidential address. We early presidents failed to get our special privilege!

As I remember, the first meeting went rather smoothly. One scholar by accident left his prepared paper at home, so fearfully put some ideas together and presented them from memory. His prepared copy was later published in the first *Journal*.⁴ The papers and discussions were excellent and all felt that it was time well spent. I was thrilled to think that now was happening what for years I had longed for. We who started this learned society wondered how it would sail. The results of these thirty years have been very satisfying.

One ideal in our minds for the Society was that young scholars could present their ideas for testing before a society of scholars who could discuss the concepts, the older helping to guide the younger. I am sure that this ideal is being carried out successfully. There are changes in approach and in terminology that sometimes stump us older minds, but we learn from these younger and brilliant men and women.

The matter of the relation of the WTS to the CHA was discussed at length during these early years. It was explained that there was no legal

⁴The first issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, was Spring, 1966.

relationship between them, but a very close relationship nonetheless. It was decided at the invitation of the CHA that the WTS be a commission of the CHA organization. The Society was asked to provide the speakers and program for the CHA annual convention. These developments were enacted at the Convention in Portland, Oregon, in 1972, and have continued since.

The publishing of a journal was proposed in the first meeting and an editorial committee was chosen. Dr. Charles Carter was editor from 1965 to 1972 and he set a high goal for the journal. He was assisted by an editorial committee who were authorized to edit and publish the papers. The financing of the journal was planned and the hope was expressed that the journal would become a vital function of the Society. Professor Robert Mattke, WTS president in 1971-72, stated: "The publication of an annual journal continues to be one of the more significant contributions of the WTS to the Holiness Movement."⁵ There was later a suggestion to have a quarterly publication in cooperation with holiness seminaries. An ad hoc committee worked on such for some time, but by 1975 the idea apparently had lost momentum and ceased as a possibility. The practice of publishing two issues of the journal a year came after the first decade.

The thematic tone struck in the first issue of the *WTJ* brought forward two theological points of tension that would occupy the WTS during its early years. These two doctrinal areas focused on the question of the "inerrancy" of Scripture and the baptism with the Holy Spirit in entire sanctification. The former was addressed especially in the first decade of the WTS, with the second more in the next decade. After some rather heated discussions on inerrancy during those early years, Dr. Ralph Thompson, in his report to the Society as secretary-treasurer in 1969, gave this conciliatory appeal:

Considerable discussion has taken place on the subject of Biblical inerrancy. Those who know me best know I tend to take a stand in favor of the doctrine. . . . Many of my brethren do not see the matter as I do; yet they appear to believe as strongly as I do in the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. . . . I wonder if a position we hold but cannot prove should debar from membership in this Society those whose minds do not operate exactly as ours. Let us be exceedingly

⁵As in the WTS president's report to the Christian Holiness Association board of administration, 104th annual meeting of the CHA, Indianapolis, Ind., April 4-7, 1972, 1.

careful lest we take any step that will weaken our position with respect to the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. But if a change in the wording in our doctrinal statement could be made that would protect our position and at the same time respect that of our brethren whose intellectual honesty will not allow them to subscribe to our statement, I recommend that such action be taken.

The matter of inerrancy was also discussed in CHA business meetings. However, the WTS was allowed to go ahead with the discussion and state the results as it saw best. The discussions were quite strong and feelings were high, but at no time was there any desire to lessen the emphasis on the infallibility of the Word (“infallibility” being a broader term not necessarily tied to certain implications of “inerrancy”). The real problem certain Society members had was in regard to the phrase “inerrant in the originals.” This they felt could not be proved and contained difficult implications. By 1969 that matter was resolved in a constitution where the wording is “we believe . . . in the plenary-dynamic and unique inspiration of the Bible as the divine Word of God, the only infallible, sufficient and authoritative rule of faith and practice.” It is well that, in the Spirit of Christ, this difference of opinion did not divide our Wesleyan theologians into two camps.

In conclusion, let me say that some of my intellectual perplexities have found a degree of satisfaction over the years. To be with students of like mind, seeking for answers, brings a great degree of stability in one’s pursuit of truth. But new questions still arise and the journey of one’s mind never ends. I thank God for the WTS and the godly thinkers who have touched my life.

Many questions still remain. My next big move will be to heaven where I believe we will be able to see with much clearer vision. Above all, the holy pursuit of knowing God in the divine fullness is our task here. May the Wesleyan Theological Society continue to guide young thinkers on the path to Glory, with a clear mind and hearts full of perfect love.

WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY: THE SECOND DECADE

by

Donald W. Dayton

I was elected promotional secretary of the Wesleyan Theological Society in 1975 and served in that office for eleven years. Fortunately, we have the help of John Merritt's history of the first two decades of the WTS (*WTJ*, 21:1-2, 1986). His regular citing of my annual reports frees me to explore broader questions of interpretation.

As I have reflected on this task, I have wondered if a theological society goes through stages of development parallel to those of a human being. If there is any parallel, the second decade of the WTS would encompass late childhood, puberty, and adolescence. The metaphor may finally fail, but it strikes me that such an image might well characterize the themes of these years of the second decade. They were awkward years of struggle toward maturity—toward an independent identity in a larger arena of theology and scholarship.

Let me illustrate these dynamics with three themes, all of which are introduced in Merritt's essay, but to which I would like to add additional details and nuance. I think that you will understand the first better if I indulge in a moment of personal autobiography that illumines a dimension of the development of the WTS.

I was born into the Wesleyan Church, one of the wings of the holiness movement most influenced by "fundamentalism"—to the extent of officially embracing the doctrine of the "inerrancy of the Scriptures" that was the identity marker of the "neo-evangelical" movement during the founding years of the WTS. It is no accident that the original organiz-

ing committee of the WTS was dominated by Wesleyans. Unfortunately, for a period of years I accepted the fundamentalist logic (that Christian faith is unthinkable without this doctrine) and was prevented from embracing Christianity, let alone Wesleyanism, until I was at Yale Divinity School and there became able to develop an authentically authoritative but non-inerrantist doctrine of Scripture.

During my sojourn at Yale I was invited to a meeting of graduate students that came to be known as the “Rye Conference,” even when in later years this meeting was held at Free Methodist headquarters in Winona Lake, Indiana. In its early years this meeting was somewhat secretly supported by sympathetic figures in Winona Lake who squeezed a little blood out of their budgetary turnips to enable these discussions. I will always honor these Free Methodist leaders for this creative project that was an extraordinary help to many of us struggling in graduate school. I will never forget one Rye paper by Frank Thompson of Greenville College, who wept as he agonized over the extent to which the early WTS commitments to the doctrine of inerrancy precluded his (and others!) participation in the theological society of his tradition. The members of the Rye Conference petitioned George Turner of Asbury Theological Seminary to carry to the next WTS meeting a request that this orientation be changed.

I, of course, was not present at the 1969 meeting in Marion, Indiana, and have never been sure whether the reports about this meeting (the tensions, tie votes, etc.) might be apocryphal. But the WTS articles of faith were modified sufficiently in the direction of a doctrine of “infallibility” that I and others took the changes as an invitation to join the Society in the following years. Without these changes I and many others would not be here today. When I reflect on this history I am astonished that I have had any role in the Society at all and how close the Society came to a very different history.

A crucial compromise of that Marion meeting quoted the Random House Dictionary definition of “infallibility”—citing the source as “RHD.” These cryptic initials raised many questions in the following years about the nature of this unidentified theological authority. It was not until the end of the seventies that the Society felt free to rid itself of this theological gaucherie, ostensibly for stylistic reasons, but more profoundly and courageously disassociating the Society and its theological tradition from fundamentalism. Melvin Dieter was the WTS president at the time and we debated the issue for some years before agreeing that the

executive committee would not make a formal recommendation, but that I could make a motion from the floor. We were all astonished when the motion provoked only minor discussion and only two negative votes.

But it was a second issue—the debates about the *Baptism of the Holy Spirit*—that dominated the middle decade of my assignment. This war was started with a 1972 shot fired across the Atlantic from Britain by Nazarene pastor Herbert McGonigle. He could not be present, but sent his paper “Pneumatological Nomenclature in Early Methodism” that puzzled over the lack of “pentecostal” vocabulary in the Wesleys (see *WTJ*, Spring, 1973). At the time I was working on nineteenth-century Oberlin Perfectionism in my doctoral studies at the University of Chicago. Prompted by McGonigle, I thought I had found the hinge of this transition in mid-19th century holiness currents. I presented my conclusions in my first WTS paper in 1973 on Asa Mahan of Oberlin College (*WTJ*, Spring, 1974).

With this essay, the “theology hit the fan” and created some explosions behind the scenes that occasionally broke into the open. The 1974 *WTJ* arrived in Taiwan where Charles Carter was reading the proofs of a book on the Holy Spirit that reflected the late nineteenth-century developments and had already been endorsed by the Christian Holiness Association. My essay was attacked in a two-page footnote added to the galleys and I felt compelled to respond in a review of Carter’s book in *Christianity Today*. About this time Timothy Smith joined the fray, and the war was on. Behind the scenes caucuses of CHA leadership and others raised the specter of church splits and the theological collapse of the tradition. The motives of scholars on both sides of the question were impugned, and many wondered if we could emerge from these debates unscathed. The issues came to a head in the 1977 and 1978 Society meetings, then soon subsided without any clear resolution.

I have always thought this debate very important in the life of our Society—completely apart from any resolution of the issues. To me it revealed the genius of the WTS and the importance of our continuing to do our work *together*. It has always seemed to me that the Nazarenes have done better leading us beyond the debates about the doctrine of Scripture than the often-paralyzed Wesleyans and Free Methodists. The Nazarene’s history of isolation from fundamentalism (perhaps from “sectarian” motives) allowed them to finesse the issues involved, while they found themselves more threatened by the “pneumatological nomenclature” debates that were not so threatening to the Wesleyans and Free Method-

ists, whose identities were less shaped by the late nineteenth-century developments.

More important, if I had any reason for pushing this debate, it was because of my intuition that it would advance our own theological maturity by raising questions from within rather than from without the tradition. This issue raised some very important questions that challenged our biblicism about these issues and raised significant questions about the development of doctrine. We are a movement with two generating moments—one in the Wesleyanism of the 18th century and one in the holiness movement of the 19th century. These are not entirely congruent, and our struggle with these differences may help free us to face the challenges of articulating the Wesleyan message into the 20th and 21st centuries. We cannot meet these challenges by repeating the clichés of either the 18th or 19th centuries.

A final issue may seem on the surface to be trivial, but I am convinced that it serves as a measure of our theological self-confidence and willingness to engage in wider dialogue. The issue arose in the midst of the battles over the “baptism with the Spirit.” Charles Carter returned from Taiwan. I proposed that he chair the nominating committee, and the report of his committee became a test of the future direction of the Society. In 1975, at the Society’s meeting on the campus of Circleville Bible College, we had some very tense votes. Their deeper significance was whether we would short-circuit the move away from fundamentalism or move back toward it. I remember discovering in that meeting that the Society sometimes would vote one direction on a secret ballot and another in a public voice vote or display of hands.

This became clear to me as we debated the question of whether to invite “outside speakers” to participate in our meetings. My memory is that it was by secret ballot that we accepted in principle an openness to the participation of leaders outside the Wesleyan tradition. In this meeting I made one of my most egregious miscalculations. It seemed to me that we might appropriately invite Vinson Synan of the Pentecostal Holiness Church to give a paper. He had been a member of the Society and had so admired the WTS that he used it in part as a model for the founding of the Society for Pentecostal Studies. I had underestimated the anti-pentecostal animus of the WTS and how it could (and did) create a backlash to this proposal. The negative response was so strong that it would be another eight years before the issue could be seriously broached again. In 1983, at the Society’s meeting on the campus of Anderson University, John

Howard Yoder became our first “outside speaker” by responding to a panel exploring the significance of the “restorationist” motif in the holiness movement. The next year we met at Emory University to celebrate the Methodist Bicentennial and heard Albert Outler reflect on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. Since then we have not always felt compelled to have these outside speakers, but we seem no longer threatened by their appearance—and a number of important scholars and theologians have participated in our work without derailing us.

Such developments seem to me to be signs of growing self-confidence and the maturing of identity in the late adolescence of the Wesleyan Theological Society. Now moving toward middle age, we can look back on this tumultuous WTS decade with more equanimity—but with the realization that it was a decade that set us on our current path. Only time will tell the wisdom of these implicit decisions, but I continue to be encouraged by our theological health and vigor. Sometimes, in the midst of the conflicts, it has been difficult to see our maturation and development—and to celebrate it. Even so, the Society has been precocious in its development—much more precocious than I would have perceived in the years of its childhood.

WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY: THE THIRD DECADE

by

Howard A. Snyder

The Wesleyan Theological Society never has existed in a vacuum. From its beginning it has reflected influences of the larger church and society. So it also has been during the Society's third decade. The Society's history continues to be marked by a variety of external and internal pressures. In these brief reminiscences of the last ten years I want to mention three transitions in the life of this theological community.

I. From Wesleyan-Arminian to Wesleyan-Holiness

The Wesleyan Theological Society was formed officially as "A fellowship of Wesleyan-Arminian scholars." Often the term was hyphenated "Wesleyan-Arminian," indicating a kind of equal weight between the two terms: To be Wesleyan was to be Arminian. In the last five years the Society increasingly has described itself as "Wesleyan/Holiness" or "Wesleyan Holiness" rather than "Wesleyan-Arminian." Why?

The change from "Wesleyan-Arminian" to "Wesleyan/Holiness" occurred officially with the constitutional revision adopted in 1991. Previously the first item of the Bylaws' "Purpose" section had read, "To encourage an exchange of ideas among Wesleyan-Arminian scholars. . . ." This was changed in 1991 to read, "To promote theological interchange among Wesleyan/holiness scholars. . . ." This change from "Wesleyan-Arminian" to "Wesleyan Holiness" has been reflected on the front of the annual program brochure since 1992.

What kind of shift in self-consciousness is suggested by this seemingly minor word change? It seems to signal two things. First, it is a shift

from a more theological to a more historical emphasis. Or, to use George Lyons' phrase, it is perhaps evidence that "We have become more descriptive than normative" in our theological work.¹

In the early days of WTS, the important thing was to understand, articulate, and defend a theological perspective (seen to be vital to the church's integrity and vitality). Increasingly the task is seen as describing historically and reviewing critically the Wesleyan theological tradition, especially in its North American embodiments, with some degree of interaction with other traditions and the various academic disciplines. Increasingly, Wesleyan scholars (at least those represented at WTS) see themselves more as heirs of a particular tradition (the nineteenth-century Holiness Movement) than as defenders of a particular theological system.

Second, and relatedly, the shift from "Arminian" to "Holiness" signals a growing theological and historical awareness that John Wesley's theology is not to be defined primarily in terms of an Arminian-Calvinist polarity, but in a much more multi-faceted way.² For most WTS members today, it seems, "Wesleyan-Arminian" has the feel of past controversies, while "Wesleyan Holiness" locates one better on today's ecclesiastical landscape.

II. From Exclusiveness to Inclusiveness

A second tendency discernible over the past decade has been a gradual move from exclusiveness to inclusiveness in certain areas. Since "exclusive" is often taken negatively and "inclusive" positively (or vice versa), I hasten to add that I am speaking descriptively, not evaluatively. This shift is, of course, related to the developments I mentioned above. It is easier to be inclusive if one is simply describing, not defending.

In its early years, WTS was almost exclusively composed of scholars, pastors, and denominational leaders representing the smaller Wesleyan Holiness denominations, plus United Methodists associated with Asbury Theological Seminary—all the direct heirs of the Holiness Movement. The doctrinal statement and membership requirements were more exclusive than they are now. The Society never met at United Methodist seminaries. In its thirty-year history WTS has, I believe, met only twice at any of the official United Methodist seminaries. Coincidentally, these exceptions occurred on the Society's twentieth and thirtieth anniversaries:

¹George Lyons, Presidential Address, WTS, November 4, 1994.

²Relatedly, there is, it seems, a greater recognition today that Arminius himself should not be seen as a polar opposite to Calvin or Calvinism.

at Emory University (Candler School of Theology) in 1984, and at United Theological Seminary in 1994.

In several respects WTS has become more inclusive over this past decade. The most obvious, and structurally the most significant sign of this shift was the Society's constitutional revision adopted in 1991.³ The key changes were (1) the adoption of the Christian Holiness Association's statement of faith, in place of the previous WTS Doctrinal Statement, (2) the addition of "Affiliate Member" and deletion of "Associate Member" categories, and (3) the discontinuation of the Membership Committee. The principal effects of these changes were (1) to open membership in the Society to those "who are interested in the work of the Society but do not wish to become full members," whether for doctrinal or other reasons, and (2) to make the level of membership more a matter of individual choice than of the Society's rules. More subtly, these changes also made membership in the Society more a matter of identification with a tradition than of creedal commitment.

The broadening of the Society during the past decade is seen also in the names of guest lecturers or presenters, including Mortimer Arias, Dale Brown, Theodore Jennings, Canon Alchin, and Craig Blaising.

Another significant example of increasing inclusiveness is the growing openness toward Pentecostal scholars. At one time, even to invite a Pentecostal to speak at WTS was highly controversial. Now a few Pentecostals are members of our Society, one of our members has served consecutively as president of the Society for Pentecostal Studies and president of WTS (Donald Dayton, 1988-90), and we are considering a possible joint meeting between WTS and SPS.

Thus the circles of WTS have widened in several respects. In part this reflects the broadening interests of WTS members. It also reflects the growing penetration of Wesleyan Holiness scholars into ecumenical and interdenominational forums. Included are the official or quasi-official involvement of WTS in the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies (1987 and 1992, and earlier), the WCC Faith and Order discussions (going back to the 1980s), the Wesleyan Holiness Women Clergy Conference (1994) and, more informally, the Society for Pentecostal Studies and the AAR/SBL in its Wesley Studies section. Obviously, to date this growing inclusiveness is not much reflected in the ethnic and gender composition of the Society.

³For comparison, see the WTS Bylaws in *WTJ*, 25:1 (Spring, 1990), 157-62, and 25:2 (Fall, 1990), 125-30.

III. From the Church to the Academy

A third trajectory of the Society seems to be from the church to the academy. WTS increasingly has become a creature of the academy, and less of the church. I do not mean that earlier leaders and participants in WTS were not scholars, nor that today's WTS scholars are not significantly church related. That would be untrue. I simply mean that the concerns, presentations, and even procedures of the Society are increasingly those of the academy—the secular academy, in fact—rather than of the church in its historic Wesleyan expressions. For example, it is curious how we can now speak of “the Christ event,” a passive construction, when referring to God's acts in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This is a sign of how modern and postmodern sensibilities creep into our language and thinking without our even being aware of it.

My impression also is that the content and methodological focus of WTS meetings increasingly reflect the concerns of the academy rather than those of the church. This is probably to be expected, and is not necessarily bad. But it does mean that the WTS runs the risk of overlooking or ignoring crucial issues of church life and experience. To give two examples:

1. With a few notable exceptions, WTS has never seriously and substantively addressed the subject of ecclesiology. For the most part the Society has bypassed both Biblical and Wesleyan understandings of the Church.⁴ This is especially true over the past ten years. Perhaps this tendency reflects the individualism of North American culture as much as it does the biases of the academy. Papers that deal with or mention sanctification assume that the discussion is about *individual believers*, not about Christian community and mutual accountability. We thus show ourselves to be the heirs of the nineteenth-century Holiness Movement more than of early Methodism.

2. With regard to the interpretation of Scripture, WTS has paid scant attention to Wesley's conception of the “analogy of faith.” Wesley neither developed “a canon within the canon” nor split up history and doctrine within Scripture. Wesley's use of “the analogy of faith” may be understood as interpreting all of Scripture in terms of the main historical story line of the redemption God has accomplished through Jesus Christ. We are to interpret Scripture according to “the analogy of faith” (Rom. 12:6),

⁴During the 1985-95 period, only seven of the articles in the *Journal* could be considered to be, in a broad sense, ecclesiological.

that is, “according to that grand scheme of doctrine which is delivered [in Scripture], touching original sin, justification by faith, and present, inward salvation. There is a wonderful analogy between all these; and a close and intimate connexion between the chief heads of that faith ‘which was once delivered to the saints.’ Every article, therefore, concerning which there is any question should be determined by this rule; every doubtful scripture interpreted according to the grand truths which run through the whole.”⁵

Clearly the agenda of our discussions has been and must be set in part by the issues of the day. But I raise these examples to highlight the question of whether we are responding to the issues of the academy or to those of the church, and how we negotiate between or integrate the two.

If there is in fact such a shift from the church to the academy, perhaps it is reflected in attendance at WTS gatherings. Though I have no confirming statistics, my impression is that a higher number of pastors and non-academic denominational leaders attended WTS meetings ten or fifteen years ago than is true today. WTS meetings were a place where pastors could get some theological updating and even some inspiration. This is still true to some extent, but the tendency appears to be to have more papers on increasingly technical subjects requiring academic expertise, with less time for informal discussion, worship, and singing.

In summary, the Wesleyan Theological Society over the past ten years has continued a gradual, perhaps inevitable transition. Partly it has been the continuation of developments in the earlier periods of the Society’s history; partly the transition has come in response to new challenges. The Society seems to be in a good position to enter its fourth decade and make a useful contribution to both the church and the larger academic community.

⁵*Explanatory Notes on the NT*, on Rom. 12:6.

BOOK REVIEWS

J. Lawrence Brasher. 1994. *The Sanctified South: John Lakin Brasher and the Holiness Movement*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Reviewed by William Kostlevy, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.

The publication of J. Lawrence Brasher's landmark biography and rhetoric analysis of his grandfather's (John Lakin Brasher) sermons is an event of considerable importance in the historiography of the Holiness Movement, evangelicalism, and Southern religion. In the first biography of a postbellum Wesleyan/Holiness figure published by a university press, Brasher skillfully, and with remarkable even-handedness, presents a portrait of an important Holiness evangelist who both shaped and was shaped by his place of birth and the Movement which he embraced in 1900. Because Brasher was one of the most thoughtful, observant, long living, and well documented Holiness Movement figures, his personal papers, housed at Duke University, are perhaps the single most important manuscript collection documenting any figure in the Holiness Movement. Further, his reflections on Holiness Movement personalities he had known, published as *Glimpses* (1954), is an invaluable source of information on many of the key Movement figures in the first five decades of the twentieth century.

Brasher, with considerable sensitivity, traces his grandfather's birth into a "Republican Methodist" (i.e., Methodist Episcopal Church) family struggling to survive and shape reconstruction in Northern Alabama. In subsequent chapters, he details Brasher's call to preach, the character of "popular perfectionism" in the late nineteenth century, his experience of

entire sanctification, preaching style, and the character and importance of the religious experience of “plain folks” as perpetuated and shaped by Brasher and the Holiness Movement. Left unexplained is Brasher’s career as an educator, itinerant evangelist, and camp meeting preacher—an omission that the author intends to rectify in a second volume.

As Lawrence Brasher explains in his preface, the underlying aim of this study is an examination of how the particular time and place in which John Brasher lived shaped his person and preaching. To the surprise of many students of American Christianity, although certainly not the readers of this journal, the “popular” image of Southern Holiness folks which emerges from Brasher’s study is not of the economically disinherited of Liston Pope, or improvised, uncivilized and psychologically impaired individuals such as described by W. J. Cash and Erskine Caldwell. Instead, Holiness folks are viewed as part of the “southern middle class” described in Frank Owsley’s *Plain Folk in the Old Southwest* (1949). As epitomized here, Southern Holiness folks emerge as non-sectarian, moderate, middle class people tied to Southern folkways. Of course, the case for moderation would be more difficult to sustain if Bud Robinson or W. B. Godbey were chosen as representatives of Southern Holiness religion.

Brasher’s discussion of popular perfectionism and the role and character of religious experience (chapter 8) in the Holiness Movement is particularly noteworthy. He says that “autobiography was inseparable from Methodism which grounded its theology in experience.” Equally instructive is the author’s discussion of humor in the experience of the sanctified. Although it confounds certain stereotypes, any movement spread by popular actor-preachers such as Beverly Carradine and Bud Robinson cannot be understood as lacking a sense of humor.

As in any academic work, scholars will not accept all of Brasher’s conclusions. It is certainly paradoxical to suggest that a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church with union sympathies who served as a president of an Iowa Holiness school typifies the Southern Holiness Movement. In fact, Brasher’s career and the trans-sectional ministries of many Holiness evangelists challenge the very existence of a distinctive Southern Holiness Movement.

Ironically, I believe Dr. Brasher could have strengthened greatly his case for a distinctive Southern Holiness Movement had he chosen to make race and racial attitudes a central consideration. Although acknowledging his grandfather’s paternalistic and segregationist attitudes, the

author misses an excellent opportunity to discuss the Holiness Movement's contradictory racial attitudes. In fact it was a rare product of the Southern Holiness Movement, for example an E. Stanley Jones, who challenged racial mores in the United States. And, incidentally, it was only after the infusion of Free Methodist faculty members (Northern Holiness folks) that Asbury Theological Seminary was willing to challenge the Jim Crow legislation which barred African-Americans from Kentucky's colleges and universities. Regardless, this is a work of mature scholarship that establishes Dr. Brasher as one of the more important interpreters of the Holiness Movement in our time. Students of American religious history will eagerly await his next volume.

W. Stephen Gunter. 1989. *The Limits of "Love Divine."* Nashville: Kingswood Books. 368 pp. ISBN 0-687-21856-X.

Reviewed by Kenneth J. Collins, Methodist College, Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Stephen Gunter's work, *The Limits of "Love Divine"* constitutes a significant attempt to break out of the alluring hagiographic molds which are rife in the secondary literature seeking to rediscover John Wesley, as the author puts it, "warts and all." Though the task of this work is formidable, the method to achieve it is fairly straightforward and easily tracked.

Gunter's focus involves a critical examination of the first fifty years of Methodist history, with an eye on two major elements: (1) the development of Methodist theology and (2) an assessment of that development in terms of its specific historical context. The first element, for the most part, devolves on John Wesley's theology; the thought of Charles Wesley, George Whitefield and John Fletcher is also considered, but with much less depth. The second explores the practical situations in the Methodist societies themselves. Put another way, the Methodist theological ideals are critically examined against the backdrop not only of their practical application, but also in terms of the critics.

From the perspective of its eighteenth-century detractors, Methodist theology and practice often appeared to be either a species of enthusiasm, so feared by that "enlightened" age, or else yet another version of the antinomianism which has troubled the church throughout the ages with its disruption of ecclesiastical and moral order. Not surprisingly, the principal charges which emerged out of these two perceptions, accurate or not, and which Gunter explores in some detail, are enthusiasm, anti-clericalism and doctrinal divergence—the last two being the forms that antinomianism often takes.

Though Gunter devotes an entire chapter to the charge of Methodist enthusiasm, and though this topic also appears in subsequent chapters, albeit in a more cursory fashion, he offers the reader little more than what is already present in the treatments of Cragg, Yates, Starkey, and Crow. What is more troubling, however, is the methodology utilized to assess the charge of enthusiasm itself. For instance, Gunter culls eight types of special workings of the Holy Spirit from Bishop Gibson's references to *George Whitefield's* journal, he reduces them to four (extraordinary communications, special vocation and spiritual accomplishments, unusual piety, and a new gospel message), but then applies them, in part, to *John Wesley* without any stated justification for this procedure.

On the other hand, the treatment of antinomianism, both ecclesiastical and moral, makes a much-needed contribution to the field and is sustained by considerable research, some of it heretofore unpublished archival material. Concerning ecclesiastical antinomianism in particular, Gunter offers considerable evidence why a more settled Anglican clergy looked upon Methodism with disfavor and, at times, with outright disdain. The practices of lay preaching, extemporary prayer, unrestricted parishes, “unlawful assemblies,” and maligning the clergy all undoubtedly roiled the mother church. Moreover, John Wesley’s habit of excoriating the Anglican clergy in his Oxford sermons (“Hypocrisy in Oxford,” “The Almost Christian,” and “Scriptural Christianity”), as well as the rantings from time to time of the likes of James Wheatley and Westley Hall, could only raise Anglican suspicion and resistance.

Though Gunter rightly notes that Wesley tried to maintain an ecclesiological dialectic by balancing the notions of the “church as an institution and as a saving witness” (p. 179), he marshals considerable material to suggest that this dialectic may have been unrealistic after all. Indeed, after a serious review of the evidence presented in *The Limits of “Love Divine,”* readers will realize why few Anglicans were surprised when British Methodism went its own way, even if they were yet unwilling to face the far more troubling prospect that the judgment of John and Charles Wesley about the compatibility of Methodism and Anglicanism, ecclesiastically speaking, may have been mistaken—as some Anglican clergy had claimed all along.

When the charge of moral antinomianism is considered, Gunter focuses on the pivotal issues of justification by faith and Christian perfection as preached by the Methodists but as understood by its detractors. Indeed, the problem with Methodist apologists in the past was that they often ignored, for the most part, the historical and theological setting of eighteenth century Anglicanism (or else painted it in especially dark tones), and they therefore were unable to comprehend why Anglican clerics took umbrage with two of their most cherished doctrines. Indeed, not every *theological* misunderstanding can be laid at the door of Anglican church decline. Gunter reminds the reader that when the Anglican church looked towards Methodism it did not merely see John Wesley standing alone, as apologists often do, but it also saw the antics and excesses of certain Methodist preachers, Bell and Hall among them. Simply put, the Anglican church responded to a movement, not merely to a man.

On Wesley's early preaching of the doctrine of justification by faith, Gunter suggests, and it is a remarkable suggestion, that Anglicans heard this preaching in the same way that Wesley heard the quietist Moravians Molther and Bray at the Fetter Lane Society. In both instances faith alone was interpreted as faith solely. "It does not seem to have occurred to Wesley," Gunter maintains, "that his rejection of quietism as antinomian was similar to the Anglican rejection of his *faith alone* preaching as antinomianism" (p. 270). On a more technical note, in exploring the role of faith and works in the Christian life, as Wesley taught it, Gunter appeals to Wesley's *via salutis*—a phrase substituted for Outler's preference of *ordo salutis*—but the usage is not consistent. That is, *via salutis* is used throughout the work until chapter 14 (Conditional Election), at which point, and for whatever reason, Gunter begins to use the phrase *ordo salutis* (cf. pp. 248, 251, 255, 261, 275).

In addition to the question of justification by faith, the doctrine which gave most pause to the critics of Methodism was, of course, Christian perfection. Gunter quite rightly suggests that the opposition which emerged to Wesley's preaching on this score was not simply a matter of misunderstanding. Clergy and laity alike were opposed to Wesley *precisely* because they understood what he had said. Wesley himself realized that his early language concerning Christian perfection was much too strong—"only the perfect are properly Christians"—and therefore had to be modified. After citing many of Wesley's retractions of his unguarded language, some of which were included in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Gunter then explores the doctrinal excesses of some of Wesley's more colorful and controversial perfectionist preachers, Bell and Maxfield in particular.

Beyond these considerations of content and method, given the subtitle of this work, "John Wesley's Response to Antinomianism and Enthusiasm," it is difficult to determine why the author includes a discussion of conditional election, the infamous Conference minutes of 1770, and the whole fray with the Calvinist Methodists, when the principal issue at stake was neither enthusiasm nor antinomianism, but legalism or what some preferred to call, Walter Shirley and Rowland Hill among them, "popery." But that, of course, is to view things from a Methodist perspective. If the antinomianism at issue here is not that of the Methodists but of the Calvinists with their doctrines of unconditional election, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints, then this marks a subtle, but no less important methodological shift from the earlier material

which, for the most part, had revolved around the responses of Wesley and the Methodists to the charges of enthusiasm and antinomianism leveled at *them*.

However, these minor criticisms do not detract from the overall value of this important book. Clearly, *The Limits of "Love Divine"* is an ambitious work; it deftly handles doctrinal accusation and controversy over a very broad period, and its well-crafted thesis is sustained by considerable and careful research. Second, it is a courageous work; its principal contribution to scholarship, no doubt, is the depiction of early British Methodism as viewed from the eyes of others. As such, it constitutes a significant attempt to break out of myopic and ethnocentric interpretations which have dimmed the eyes of Methodists in the past. And finally, *The Limits of "Love Divine"* is a well-written work. Gunter's style is both easy and enjoyable. It is hoped that this work will receive a broad reading among scholars and laypeople alike, among Methodists as well as among its critics.

Helmut Renders, *John Wesley als Apologet: Systematisch-theologische Hintergründe und Praxis Wesleyanischer Apologetik und ihre Missionarische Bedeutung* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Evangelisch-methodistischen Kirche, 38; Struttgart: Christliches Verlaghaus, 1990). 63 pp. No ISBN.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana.

This volume is less a completed study and more a carefully crafted prolegomena to a larger study, that of “the systematic theological background and praxis of Wesleyan apologetics and its significance for mission.” It is an initial exploration of a complex question. The question needs to be addressed not only by a study of Wesley, but also through an examination of how the wider Wesleyan tradition interacted with or withdrew from the larger cultural structures.

The first chapter briefly describes the definition and function of apologetics in the church, depending on the work of L. W. Barnard and Hans-Rudolf Müller-Schwefe. The second chapter seeks to establish Wesley’s credentials and identity as an apologist. Unfortunately there is no effort made to place John Wesley in the context of eighteenth century Anglican intellectual life. Such a placement would have significance for an analysis of the genre selected by Wesley as well as for his arguments. Wesley can be interpreted as an apologist, but such a designation makes sense only in the context of his intellectual and social structures.

Render distinguishes appropriately between apologetics (debate) conducted within the church or between churches (chapter three) and that directed to those outside the church (chapter four). In the third chapter is discussed the debates over ecclesiology, reflecting John Wesley’s complex roots in the free and established churches, the relations with the Catholic church, and his differences with the German Pietist “Herrnhut” tradition. The discussion of Wesley’s apologetic thrust outside the church explores issues of theology (nature of creation, original sin, prevenient grace), the style of presentation (charity, zeal for evangelism and good works), and the praxis of Christian virtues within the Methodist community. While it is appropriate to make distinctions between the audiences for apologetics, the distinction as defined by Renders is less than satisfactory. It would appear to this reviewer that all of the issues discussed in the fourth chapter relate to internal Anglican and British cultural and/or religious structures. Here one could have discussed Wesley’s understanding of non-Christian religions, his understandings of “heresies” within the early

Christian church, and his developing understanding of mission, including the debates over “universalism.”

The concluding chapter reflects upon the values promoted in Wesley’s apologetic as well as the social, intellectual, and spiritual dynamics of the arguments. Renders concludes that the apologetic of Wesley may have important implications for contemporary Methodist life and thought.

As a programatic essay, this small volume quite convincingly suggests that Wesley deserves serious attention as an apologist. To examine in careful detail Wesley’s use of apologetic modes borrowed from the Caroline revivals and inspired by early Christianity, and to reflect on the implications of such an approach for addressing missional concerns would appear to be a worthwhile endeavor. How could (should) Wesleyans interact with missional, ecclesial, and cultural issues in the Wesleyan spirit? How is mission to be understood in the Wesleyan tradition? How do Wesleyan theological commitments energize and/or limit the possible modes of mission and apologetics? Such a full-scale study would require a thorough re-thinking of Wesley’s thought in terms of missional issues. This volume is, therefore, perhaps a good research proposal. To fulfill the suggestion of the subtitle will require, however, significant effort, for which this tome is merely a beginning.

E. Morris Sider, editor. 1994. *Preaching the Word: Sermons by Brethren in Christ Ministers*. Grantham, PA: Brethren in Christ Historical Society. 180 pp. No ISBN.

Reviewed by Stephen J. Lennox, Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN.

At first glance one imagines this to be just a book of sermons intended to exhibit the best preaching of the Brethren in Christ denomination. A closer look, however, reveals this volume to be more than a show-piece. According to its editor, this book intends to offer “models for sermon-making” and samples for analysis. It proposes to help pastors (presumably BIC pastors) improve their preaching, rather than simply inspire.

Sixteen sermons on various topics are presented and then analyzed by John Yeatts, professor of Christian Education and Chair of the Biblical and Religious Studies Department at Messiah College. Two essays of a bibliographic nature conclude the work. Why these particular preachers are chosen is not made clear. Most are pastors, some are denominational leaders, and one is an Old Testament professor at Messiah College. Two of the sixteen preachers are women.

The table of contents identifies the topics for the first twelve sermons as: discipleship, devotional eschatology, peace, evangelism, holiness, healing, baptism, dedication of children, communion, funerals, and wedding ceremonies. The final four sermons deal with headship and head covering, community, unity, and forgiveness. Aside from wondering why the topics are presented in this particular order, we are left unsure why these topics and not others were chosen at all. Were they selected to describe BIC essentials, or to prescribe what should be emphasized but is being neglected among the Brethren?

Yeatts’ incisive essay gently yet candidly analyzes these sermons for their hermeneutical principles and homiletical practices. Using Martin Schrag’s identification of the elements of BIC preaching in the past, Yeatts sets out to demonstrate “to what extent modern Brethren in Christ preaching reflects the traditional hermeneutical understandings of the Brethren in Christ” (p. 141).

Comparing contemporary sermons with traditional hermeneutical elements represents a modest goal, but one which permits Yeatts to analyze the preaching in less threatening and non-pejorative ways. We are told that while modern BIC preaching continues to be Biblical and conservative, it has become more comfortable with Biblical scholarship and more Christocentric than was true in the past.

BIC preachers continue to emphasize piety and obedience, but seem less willing to call for separation from the world and more willing to accommodate to it. While peace continues to be emphasized, the focus is now on personal relationships rather than international ones. Yeatts judges that the meaning of holiness, as seen in these sermons, is ambiguous. It would appear that the BIC denomination, like so many in the holiness tradition, needs to rearticulate this doctrine for a new generation.

Highlighting a theme which occurs in many of these sermons, Yeatts applauds the emphasis on community in BIC preaching as a good corrective to North America's overemphasis on individualism. What is missing in these sermons, he laments, is prophetic concern. Yeatts identifies "the conflict between speaking prophetically on social issues and maintaining our emphasis on separation from the world as the "most important dilemma facing the Brethren in Christ homiletical practice at the end of the twentieth century" (p. 153).

The first bibliographic essay reviews six books on preaching. D. Ray Heisey, Professor and Director of the School of Speech Communication at Kent State University, chose these books to stretch the thinking of pastors on "what should be happening in the pulpit" (p. 155). The final chapter is an annotated bibliography on the subject of preaching.

It is a little surprising that a church which has "traditionally emphasized the authority of the Spirit" (p. 149) over reason, should take the rational approach to improving preaching which this book represents. What is even more surprising is that, in spite of the fact that "more attention to exegetical details would enrich the sermons" (p. 152), the suggested readings deal entirely with preaching rather than exegesis.

This book makes it clear that the BIC denomination wants stronger preaching. The intensity of their desire is evident both in the risky methodology which publicly critiques the sermons of its own preachers and in suggested readings that will certainly stretch the conservative pastor and church. The desire for a stronger ministry—which produced not only this work but also an earlier volume on pastoral ministry—is to be commended.

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II. 1. This Society shall be regarded as a Commission of the Christian Holiness Association and through its President shall submit a report of its activities to the Annual Convention of the CHA.

II. 2. Purposes

A. To promote theological interchange among Wesleyan/Holiness scholars and other persons interested in this area;

B. To provide theological leadership to the CHA, including offering a doctrinal seminar at its annual convention;

C. To stimulate scholarship among younger theologians and pastors;

D. To publish a journal consisting of significant contributions to Wesleyan/Holiness scholarship.

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The association believes that personal salvation includes both the new birth and the entire sanctification wrought by God in the heart by faith. Entire sanctification is the crisis experience subsequent to conversion that results in a heart cleansed from all sin and filled with the Holy Spirit. This grace is witnessed to by the Holy Spirit. It is maintained by that faith which expresses itself in constant obedience to God's revealed will and results in a moment-by-moment cleansing.

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