

Wesleyan Theological Journal

Publication of the
Wesleyan Theological Society

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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 CHP (Christian Holiness Partnership) seminars; to stimulate scholarship among younger theologians and pastors; and to publish a scholarly journal.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

There clearly is an historic relationship between the Wesleyan/Holiness and Pentecostal traditions in North America. Whether the former birthed the latter or the relationship is more that of siblings than parent-child is a matter of some historical debate. What is clear is that both traditions have a strong Spirit-centeredness that is understood to be Bible-based and wonderfully confirmed in a rich and presently available life in the Spirit. This issue of the *Journal* highlights and probes this focus on life in the Spirit, growing in part out of an historically significant occasion. The article by Elizabeth Mellen celebrates the growing relationship between the Wesleyan/Holiness and related traditions and asks if there is not a crucial ecumenical vocation to be pursued even further.

In 1993 two Christian leaders, one from each of these traditions, met in an ecumenical gathering in Spain. Cheryl Bridges Johns was then president of the Society of Pentecostal Studies and Susie Stanley was president of the Wesleyan Theological Society. From their new acquaintance and openness to the moving of God and from the crucial work and relationships of D. William Faupel, there emerged the proposal for a joint meeting of these two academic societies. Such a meeting could explore questions of history and theology. It also could address constructively the considerable divide that had come to exist between these two traditions with so much in common. There surely would be some fresh wisdom coming from a planned time of intentional and thoughtful togetherness.

The historic meeting convened in March, 1998, on the campus of the Church of God Theological Seminary in Cleveland, Tennessee. The extensive program, developed jointly by the two Societies, had the theme "Purity and Power: Revisioning the Holiness & Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements for the Twenty-First Century." As a concrete symbol of the goal of this gathering, the editors of the academic journals of the Societies (this one and *Pneuma*) agreed that their Spring 1999 issues would carry in common several of the outstanding papers from the Cleveland gathering. Included here, therefore, are papers by Cheryl Bridges Johns, Steven J. Land, and Laurence W. Wood. Also included in both journals are other select articles and the tributes to David A. Seamands and R. Hollis Gause, each receiving lifetime achievement awards from his respective academic society—and being celebrated by the other. These men have been prophetic bridge-builders for decades, embodiments of the vision of the 1998 joint meeting.

What is the Spirit saying to the churches? Beyond the several answers given in the plenary papers noted above, Robert Wall listens again to the Book of Acts and Richard Thompson looks to the immediacy of the Spirit's inspiring of Scripture in the reading process. David Whitelaw probes the special resources available in ancient church tradition, especially Irenaeus, while J. Steven O'Malley revisits nineteenth-century German Pietism. Howard Snyder, Steven Ware, and Elizabeth Mellen recall helpfully one key leader, B. T. Roberts, the phenomenon of restorationism (one crucial movement among many Wesleyan/Holiness and Pentecostal people), and the issue of ecumenical vocation for the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. Apparently the Spirit is saying that there is wisdom available from the biblical text and the church's past for the considerable challenges now before God's people. Above all, God's Spirit was and always is the divine enabler, the supreme source of wisdom, the One who defines and makes possible the purity and power essential for the work of God in the world.

A word of congratulations is in order. The Fall of 1998 saw the appearance of the first issue of a new journal, *Word & Deed: A Journal of Salvation Army Theology and Ministry* (for detail, see the ad near the end of this issue). May it be a new vehicle for the work of the Spirit of God today.

Barry L. Callen, Editor
Anderson, Indiana
April, 1999

PARTNERS IN SCANDAL: WESLEYAN AND PENTECOSTAL SCHOLARSHIP

by

Cheryl Bridges Johns

I have in my possession a treasured family picture taken around 1910 of my great-grandparents, John and Sarah McNeely, their children and grandchildren. The eleven sons and daughters and their spouses and children have on their Sunday best, high collar shirts, starched dresses, shined shoes, large hair bows for the girls and knickers for the boys. The picture would be “perfect” except for the presence of one person, my great-uncle Harvey. As the story goes, he arrived from hunting just as the picture was being snapped and “had to be included.” On the left side of the picture stands “Harv,” leaning on his gun, wearing overalls, with dead rabbits hanging from a leather belt strapped around his waist. His wife, Great-aunt Agnes, stands just behind him, her lips pressed into a resolute grimace. The story of this picture always included an explanation that Uncle Harv was somewhat different. Somehow the shame associated with this day has survived generations. The photo has been copied by numerous cousins of my generation. Even today we feel obligated to explain Harv’s unusual attire.

Every family system has its embarrassments, those relatives to whom you “forget” to send wedding and graduation invitations. Yet, these relatives have the uncanny knack of showing up just when you are trying hard to impress others with your refined identity. They have ways of reminding you of your roots when you would rather have them remain hidden. Those of us from the Holiness and Pentecostal traditions have the

dubious distinction of being the “embarrassing relatives” in the “Evangelical clan.” For better or worse, we share a marginal or fringe identity with those who position themselves as centrist. In the 1990’s two books have been published which are good examples of this perspective. They are Richard Kyle’s *The Religious Fringe: A History of Alternative Religions in America* and Mark Noll’s *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*.¹

Kyle places the Holiness Movement and Pentecostalism in the category of “Christian related bodies.” He sees the two traditions as examples of “fringe religions” which arose during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. According to Kyle, the Holiness Movement spawned a “bewildering profusion of sectarian organizations” and other offshoots such as Pentecostalism. While the Holiness Movement itself could not be labeled cultic, it proved to be the fertile soil for many cultic groups. Regarding Pentecostalism, Kyle follows the standard social deprivation-dislocation thesis, noting that the movement made its strongest appeal to those who had difficulty coping with the massive changes brought on by modernity. The shift into the modern urban-industrial capitalistic society was especially difficult for individuals in the lower echelons of society. Kyle asserts: “These people were disappointed; their worldly hopes had repeatedly been frustrated. Pentecostal meetings which were charged with emotion provided a real sense of relief from oppressive, frustrating and even bewildering circumstances.” The bizarre practices found in Pentecostalism, such as speaking in tongues, the holy laugh, the holy dance, and on occasions snake handling, marked the movement as fringe to the mainstream of Christianity.

Most of us are more familiar with Mark Noll’s book, which laments the state of Evangelical scholarship. It is Noll’s belief that the sorry condition of the Evangelical “mind” is largely the fault of those in the Holiness, Pentecostal, and Fundamentalist traditions. For Noll, the “scandal of the evangelical mind seems to be that no mind arises from evangelicalism.” The anti-intellectualism of revivalism coupled with Scottish common sense philosophy has undermined any earlier attempt made by Evangelicals to think Christianly about science, art, culture and history.

The dominant narrative which guides Noll’s criticism is that of post-Enlightenment scientific reasoning as mediated in and through the univer-

¹Richard Kyle, *The Religious Fringe: A History of Alternative Religions in America* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993); Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

sities. Quoting a section from orthodox scholar Charles Malik's address at the dedication of the Billy Graham center, the ringing challenge of the book is the following:

Who among the evangelicals can stand up to the great secular or naturalistic or atheistic scholars on their own terms of scholarship and research? Who among the evangelical scholars is quoted as a normative source by the greatest secular authorities on history or philosophy or psychology or sociology or politics? Does your mode of thinking have the slightest chance of becoming the dominant mode of thinking in the great universities of Europe or America which stamp your entire civilization with their own spirit and ideas? . . . Even if you start now on a crash program in this and other domains, it will be a century at least before you catch up with the Harvards and Tubingens and the Sorbonnes.

Noll confesses that Evangelicals were taken to the wood-shed by Malik. So, standing out in the wood-shed is a wounded and shamed Noll. Having already internalized the narrative described by Malik, his humiliation is deep. Looking around for someone to blame for the spanking, he turns to the embarrassing relatives and attempts to take them out to the wood-shed for a thorough going over. The shame is not relieved, but surely he must feel better.

The Wesleyan Theological Society made *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* a subject for discussion at its 1996 annual meeting. Three of the presentations from this meeting were later published in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*.² Each of the reviewers of Noll's book pointed out the hermeneutical errors found in Noll's interpretation of the three movements blamed for the scandal. However, outside of a few places such as the WTS, Noll's *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* received positive, if not rave reviews. Those of us in the Wesleyan/Holiness or Pentecostal traditions were again marginalized by reviewers who felt little need to defend their embarrassing relatives.

Perhaps the most disturbing to me was a review in *Prism*, the magazine published by Evangelicals for Social Action. Surely this group of

²See David Bundy, "Blaming the Victim: The Wesleyan/Holiness Movement in American Culture;" Henry H. Knight, "John Wesley: Mentor For An Evangelical Revival;" William Kostleby, "The Dispensationalists: Embarrassing Relatives or Prophets Without Honor: Reflections on Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* ; *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 32:1 (Spring 1997).

people, defenders of the marginalized, would offer a rebuttal to the scandalizing of some of the very people who make up the editorial board of *Prism*! However, the editors of *Prism* chose David A. Hoekema, Academic Dean and Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, to review Noll's book. Needless to say, the review offers no challenge to the basic thesis. Although Hoekema acknowledges that "Noll's characterization of recent evangelical scholarship will strike some readers as dismissive and unfair," he fails in any way to defend those who are slandered by Noll. The review ends with the observation that the Evangelical community "has been enriched and strengthened by this broadside against it."³

Two Approaches to Our Scandal

The works by Kyle and Noll are but two recent examples of how our movements are marginalized. Like it or not we are the embarrassing relatives. There are at least two approaches we can take to our common scandalized identity. One, we can continue to internalize our oppressors, offering a form of apologetics that attempts to prove that we are not marginal. This approach accepts the so-called centrist reading on reality and offers explanation after explanation, rebuttal after rebuttal, with the hope of convincing critics that we are more like them than they realize. "Yes, we do have a mind," we could counter, "just look at all of our educational institutions." "No, we don't handle snakes. Our denomination never did." "Our worship is not that much different from yours." "If you let us participate in your projects, we promise that we will try hard not to embarrass you." Like abused children, we keep submitting to the beating in the wood-shed, actually believing that if we become "good enough" the abuse will stop.

In addition, our shame has caused us to believe the dominant narrative which marginalizes us. As in the case of Noll's work, many from our movements, in order to receive a higher education, internalized the Enlightenment myth of scientific reasoning to the degree that they achieved a comfortable, critical distancing from the traditions of their origin. They became some of our more severe critics, applying with zeal the tools of analysis learned in the universities. It has been difficult to have the Enlightenment mind and the Holiness or Pentecostal faith. Like oil and water, they don't

³David A. Hoekema, "The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind," *Prism*, May/June 1995.

mix. Therefore, many in previous generations had to choose between criticism and faith, between acceptance and rejection. Their choices were difficult, and the consequences created many broken relationships.

It is also the case that victims who internalize the oppressors have a way of turning on each other. We resent being lumped into the same category with those we consider more marginal than we. Thus, our attacks on our “inferiors” often prove to be more vicious than those from the center. As a result, we focus on our differences rather than on our common heritage, and we scandalize our closest relatives. Pentecostals are an embarrassment to many in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. Oneness Pentecostals are an embarrassment to the rest the movement. And we all are scandalized by those snake handlers who continue to be objects of fascination and inquiry.

The second approach to our scandalized identity can be illustrated by a snake handling story. Bill Leonard, a Southern Baptist historian, is a regular faculty member of Appalachian Ministries Resource Center (AMERC). As part of his course on Appalachian religion and culture Leonard would take seminary students to a snake handling service.⁴ A few summers ago, during the time of the SBC’s most vicious fighting, Leonard, after attending the Southern Baptist Convention, found himself deeply wounded by his denomination’s division. He recalls that he began his AMERC teaching drained and spiritually depleted. When he arrived at the snake handling service (which was held outdoors) Leonard approached the pastor and asked permission to once again observe the service. “Brother Bob,” the pastor, grabbed Leonard in a huge bear hug and said, “Brother Bill. Wherever I am you are welcome.” These words and the embrace by the pastor had a dramatic effect on Leonard. He notes that he was “saved” at that moment, meaning that he received a deep healing from his wounds and received a renewed faith in Christ.

Bill Leonard allowed the shameful to embrace him, and in doing so he found salvation and healing. His response is the key to the second approach to marginalization. Rather than internalizing that which marginalizes, participating in further shaming or blaming the victims, the second approach calls for embracing the scandal. It calls for pushing into the embarrassing and not standing back at a critical distance.

⁴Leonard had to stop taking students to snake handling services because of AMERC’s insurance requirements and it is now illegal in Kentucky to handle snakes.

There is a biblical precedent for the second approach. For at the very point of scandal is salvation. This is the mystery of the scandal of the cross, and it is the mystery of the scandal of our calling and identity. The very symbol of our shame becomes the way of overcoming our shame. To embrace the cross is to be overtaken by the very thing which embarrasses us. The second approach is a way of celebrating marginality rather than worshiping an elusive center. It is a form of apologetics which, instead of internalizing a totalizing meta-narrative, offers its own testimony without apology into a discourse of narratives.

A Postmodern Opportunity

The dawning of the postmodern era has opened a door for the logic of the second approach. Gone is the understanding of the “mind” as the seat of humanity which guides history apart from any contextual construction. This dualism, which has been the central mark of modernity, effectively scandalized all forms of knowing which did not submit to its standards. It put both liberals and Evangelicals into “epistemological straight jackets,” in which the Christian mind had to submit to the demands of decontextualized abstract propositions. But now, with the demise of the Enlightenment mind, the straight jacket has been removed, allowing the insanity it contained to turn on itself. It is a “mind” which is now being scandalized by its own critical power.

All knowledge is now viewed as being historically conditioned, and there is an abiding suspicion regarding any claim to truth. What was once seen as science is now to be regarded as one more tribal tradition or a set of tribal traditions. Such an epistemological landscape is fraught with dangers and despair; however, it does open a door for those marginalized by the metanarratives of modernity to speak on their own terms.

Returning to Noll’s analysis of the Evangelical mind, we must ask, “just what particular, historically conditioned mind is being scandalized?” According to Noll, the collapse of Evangelicalism’s synthesis of American ideals and common-sense Baconian science into a populist style of reasoning (mediated in Fundamentalism, the Holiness Movement and Pentecostalism), effectively abandoned the “mind” to the secular realm. What these three movements did was to empty Evangelicalism of the little bit of intellectual capacity it had before the Civil War. What is left are forms of mind such as Creation Science, which Noll calls “a misguided Baconianism.” The Creationists are criticized for undermining a true

Christian investigation of the world and being locked in history with a particular historical form of science.

However, Noll fails to acknowledge that he is utilizing one historically conditioned form of mind to criticize another historically conditioned mind. Failing to criticize the mind which guides his analysis or to even acknowledge that it is only one form of Christian mind, he offers it as an “objective critic.” Noll defines his mind as the ability “to think within a specifically Christian framework across the whole spectrum of modern learning.” It is “to think like a Christian about the nature and workings of the physical world, the character of human social structures like government and the economy, the meaning of the past, the nature of artistic creation, and the circumstances attending our perception of the world outside ourselves.”⁵

“To think like a Christian” is given a generic quality throughout most of the book, without any attempt to define the particular brand of Christian. We are told, however, what it is not. To think like a Christian, to praise God with the mind, is not to think like a Wesleyan/Holiness person. To think like a Christian is not to think like a Pentecostal. To think like a Christian is not to think like a Fundamentalist.

Finally, toward the end of his book Noll comes clean regarding the ideological assumptions which define a good Evangelical “Christian mind.” He sees signs of an awakening of the Evangelical mind in forms of post fundamentalism as evidenced in the thinking of Harold John Ockenga, Edward John Carnell and Carl F. H. Henry. Furthermore, Noll cites the establishment of an Evangelical intellectual network with certain well-fixed reference points in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and other parts of the world:

The extended connections of British Inter Varsity, the insights of Dutch Reformed confessionals, ethical prodding from the Mennonites, literary stimulation from the Anglicans like C. S. Lewis and Dorothy Sayers, a common valuing of the classical Protestant heritage, and an ingrained respect for an even broader range of historic Christian expressions have all improved the quality of evangelical intellectual life over the last five decades.⁶

⁵Noll, *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 7.

⁶Noll, *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 219.

So the Christian mind is a particular form of mind. The “acceptable” Evangelical Christian mind contains particular, historically conditioned frames of reference. Those of us left out of the landscape should note that Noll is offering only one form, a tribal form of the Christian Evangelical mind. It is his tribe, his narrative, his language, and it is just a mind among many minds which may call themselves Evangelical. It may be scandalized by some, and it may be a scandal to others. In the most despairing of postmodern thought, Noll’s version of mind is but a text which victimizes some and is victimized by others.⁷

Rather than victimizing or attempting to scandalize Noll’s version of mind, we do have the opportunity to allow the minds scandalized by Noll to speak for themselves on their own terms. In order to do so we must push into the embarrassing rather than pull away in shame. Time limits me from fully exploring the Wesleyan/Holiness and Pentecostal minds. However, I would like to begin a discussion by offering brief reflection on two of Noll’s criticisms which seem to reflect the heart of his embarrassment with us. Here are his criticisms:

In my case, as one who does not believe that the distinctive teachings of dispensationalism, the Holiness movement, or Pentecostalism are essential to the Christian faith, it is not surprising that I find the intellectual consequences of these theologies damaging. . . . With respect to Holiness theology, I believe that Christians grow in grace through following God into the world, embracing their vocations as gifts from God, and not by “letting go and letting God.” . . . With respect to Pentecostalism, I believe that every believer, as an essential element of being a Christian, is baptized with the Holy Spirit and that it is not necessary for believers to seek the extraordinary sign gifts.⁸

“Let Go and Let God”

For Noll, it is the responsibility of the Christian to follow God into the world as a historical subject. The Holiness Movement’s belief that Christians should “let go and let God” or “lay all on the altar,” and the admonition to be “clay in the potter’s hand,” appear to Noll to reflect a flight from this responsibility. Just what were the Holiness believers

⁷See Mark Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁸Noll, *Scandal*, 142.

meaning with these phrases? What do they reflect regarding belief about selfhood and the Christian's vocation in the world?

The meaning of selfhood as it came to be defined following the Enlightenment was that of the human as a self-grounded subject over an object-manipulative world. This is reflected in Decartes' dictum "I think, therefore I am." The human came to be understood as possessing a "consciousness deceptively pure and an identity deceptively secure."⁹ It was within the power of human reason to control history. The human was thus grounded in its own self-presence that needs no other foundation for identity.

Those within the Holiness movement, as they critically reflected on the status of humankind, came to realize that the pretensions of these foundationalists were deceptive. They came to understand that human subjects are incapable of fulfilling their historical vocations apart from a re-grounding. Humankind would never achieve the totality for which it grasps.

Alongside of the Holiness revival came radical social critiques. These critiques were grounded in an understanding that social injustice could only be overcome through radical re-orientation. For Phoebe Palmer it was the power of Pentecost which enabled women and men to be equal. For Luther Lee it was the radical reformatory nature of the gospel which declared the "supremacy of the Divine Law over against human law." To "let go and let God" was therefore a statement announcing the death of the subject. If death is too strong a word, perhaps we could say that the statement called for the de-centering of the subject. "To be clay in the potter's hand" was to acknowledge that humans are incapable of making their own history. It did in no way imply a disregard for the historical vocation of the Christian. Rather, it called for a yielding, an eclipse of the human will for that of the Divine.

Also, unlike the self of modernity, what is primary regarding historical action is not the critical side but the participatory side, "the taste of the good that is also the goal." According to Paul Valliere, in his analysis of the meaning of Pentecost, the primacy of participation "allows for the structuring of action in a way that transcends the ethics of means and ends more or less alienated from each other for an ethic based on free partici-

⁹David Tracy, "Literary Theory and Return of the Forms for Naming and Thinking God in Theology," *Journal of Religion*, 74:302-129.

pation in the Spirit.”¹⁰ To let go and let God is therefore to participate in the righteous transformation of self and world. Such a call is indeed a scandal in modernity’s eyes. It means that we acknowledge that our human “minds,” however sharp and critically astute, are not capable of objectifying reality in order to know it. The subjective is always present, getting in the way, creating desire for totality and power. The holiness folk knew that knowledge reflects power-based interests. One had to give up this desire for totality and power in order to truly know the world.

The call to “let go and let God” is not only a call from the past. It is a call for the emerging postmodern era. While in today’s world the self has been de-centered or the subject has been slain, there is no place for it to go. Released from its own self grounding, it is nomadic, ever wandering in search of an identity. Ours is a world in which people have been forced to release control of history. As a result, we humans feel out of control. Knowledge is no longer power. It is powerlessness. Thus, to “let God” is a call to re-center, to re-gain a sense of vocation and calling. It is a call to receive an identity that is grounded in something more than an image or a sign system. It is to find a home for the homeless mind.

Therefore, it is my contention that the scandal of letting go and letting God is the most intellectually respectable position available. It is to acknowledge the pretentiousness of the critical scientific mind, the despair of the postmodern “Protean mind,” and to call for the participatory mind. This mind, participating with the good that is also the goal is free to be even more critical because it allows self-criticism. It is even more free to explore all areas of human existence. The participatory mind is a form of the Christian mind able to take us into the next century, a time in which we will be called upon to discern the truth and test the spirits.

“Be Filled With the Spirit”

For Noll, “it is not necessary to seek the extraordinary sign gifts.” Who needs extraordinary signs of the Spirit’s presence? Kyle’s analysis of the religious fringe supplies the answer given by centrist Evangelicals: “These people were disappointed; their worldly hopes had repeatedly been frustrated. Pentecostal meetings which were charged with emotion, provided a real sense of relief from oppressive, frustrating and even bewildering circumstances.”

¹⁰Paul Vallarie, *Holy War and Pentecostal Peace* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983), 25.

Apparently those people who are not oppressed, frustrated, and bewildered can do well without the bizarre demonstrations of the Holy Spirit. However, for those people who are unable to control their lives as historical beings, the extraordinary sign gifts provide some form of relief and escape.

Certainly there has been much about Pentecostalism to cause concern. In an age which valued reason and control, in which Protestant worship and ministry were characterized by order and reasoned discourse, Pentecostal worship was known for promoting chaos. The movement's radicalization of "letting go and letting God" and "laying all on the altar" became an affront to decent, controlled people. Pentecostalism is by its very nature a disturbing movement, even to those within its ranks. There are mysterious complexities and frightening paradoxes of our spirituality which even those of us within Pentecostalism are afraid to analyze. Sometimes we are a scandal to ourselves. We find ourselves behaving in scandalous ways, even when we don't intend to.

Given the brief nature of this essay, I will explore only one of the aspects of our scandal, namely its radically deconstructive nature. This side to our movement is that which is most frightening and disturbing to the modern mind. There have been few theological constructs available to interpret its meaning. Some of us have dialogued with liberation theology, with its radical challenges to the power interests of modern theology, but have found that its language is inadequate; it leaves intact the human subject and its power to name the world. Pentecostalism leaves nothing intact.

Surprisingly, I have found the deconstructionists to be helpful dialogue partners in exploring the *via negativa* of Pentecost. Their assessments of the nature of knowledge and human discourse parallel in a remarkable manner the critiques inherent in Pentecostalism regarding the modern project. Both deconstructionism and Pentecostalism are consummatory, apocalyptic movements which dismantle the "cathedral of modern intellect" and mock all forms of anthropological reductionism.¹¹ Both mock the modernist conceit that humanity can construct a livable habitation utilizing the skill of rational analysis and problem solving.

¹¹Carl A. Raschke describes deconstruction as a "consummatory, apocalyptic movement inside Western thought and discourse" which "is the revelation of the inner vacuity of the much touted 'modern outlook.'" See his "The Deconstruction of God," in Thomas J. J. Altizer, Max Myers, Carl Raschke, *Deconstruction and Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

For the most radical of the deconstructionists, such as Mark Taylor, reality is nothing more than a “festival of cruelty.” Within the landscape of multiple discourses, multiple meanings, multiple texts, we find the act of interpretation becoming a dangerous game in which there is no longer spectator or spectacle, but festival. In the space of festival, distance between the subject and object is closed. A person becomes both actor and spectator, both the object and subject and loses all sense of individuality. The subject/object thus becomes a clown whose “motley dress and shifting masks create a constantly changing play of forms that borders on the utter chaos of formlessness.”¹²

For Taylor, the self is empty of everything except its own material presence. Furthermore, Taylor notes that the “book” that is the modern age, with its ordered narrative and sense of history, has been turned into an endless labyrinth. Like a carnival fun house, it is haunted by uncanny sounds, senseless cacophonies, verbal jumbles, incoherencies. The labyrinth is filled with countless mirrors, whose play is without end, reflecting an infinity of signifiers. At the carnival we are left without a book, a narrative or canon to guide us through the maze. The only alternative is to wander and play. The self becomes nomadic, in search of a presence that saves. In such a situation, the wilderness becomes, in the words of J. J. Altizer, a way of “mazing grace.”¹³

In many ways, Pentecostalism acknowledges the reality of the “festival of cruelty.” It is a movement which has arisen and continues to grow among the victims of the festival, whose reality is nothing more than an endless labyrinth. It takes seriously the fact that persons are often victimized as objects in someone’s historical process. It affirms the need for a presence that saves. Pentecostalism speaks into the festival of cruelty, offering the festival of Pentecost as an alternative.¹⁴ Furthermore, Pentecost provides a way out of the maze of endless wanderings by providing a way toward the Free City. It is a festival which announces God’s saving presence. But beware of this presence! It is a presence which overwhelms

¹²Taylor, *Erring*, 165.

¹³J. J. Altizer, “Eternal Recurrence and the Kingdom of God,” in D. B. Allison, ed., *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation* (New York: Delta, 1979), 245.

¹⁴It should be noted that Pentecostalism does not represent the full measure of the meaning of Pentecost. Rather, I see the movement as possessing “signs of Pentecost.” The gifts and calling of Pentecostalism are best seen as an offering to the whole church of these signs of Pentecost festival.

and negates the presentness of the modern project. It radicalizes the call to “let go and let God” to the degree that it deconstructs the self, leaving little intact.

Within the festival of Pentecost, the existence of the self, as it is de-centered, is tapped into the continual flow or source of life which springs from the depths of the mystery of God. At times the self is characterized by tears and groaning, having been overwhelmed by the pathos of the Spirit. At other times the self laughs hysterically, seemingly overcome by a continual flow of joy. Within the space of worship the self becomes an “eschatological self” whose “place” is transported into the eternal space of God’s presence.¹⁵

As the self is de-centered, as it relinquishes the desire for totality, it becomes a newly constituted self, one which has been resurrected from its own deconstruction into a newly configured “I am” found within a matrix of relationships in Trinitarian fellowship. The reconstructed self has a newly formed sense of identity. It is no longer a passive victim of destructive and manipulative forces. As a reconstituted agent the subject/object becomes a historical actor whose identity is fused with the Spirit in a holy passion for the kingdom. The mind which arises from such an experience is one which participates in the passion of God for the world. The reconstructed self is not the self in the modernist sense of making its own history. Neither is it the nomadic wanderings in the festival of cruelty. Rather, for the self of Pentecost, history becomes mission.¹⁶ Persons are thrust on “an-mazing journey” of walking in the light of the Holy Spirit who guides them through the maze. As “selves on the way,” persons participate in holy anarchy, celebrating the coming of the Free City.

The aspect of Pentecostalism which has been the most disturbing to the modern mind is its subversion of language. The speech of Pentecost is that which signifies the presence of “theos” within “logos.” As Frank Macchia observes, in Pentecost language becomes a *prodigium*, “an outstanding sign.”¹⁷ This “outstanding sign” can be most profoundly seen among those whose speech has been silenced by the modern logos. It is speech which “speaks God,” closing the gaps between the sign and the

¹⁵See Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁷Frank Macchia, “Sighs Too Deep for Words,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 1:47-73 (1992).

signifier. In its most mystical and radically deconstructive form, Pentecost speech becomes glossolalia. It is this deconstructive power which Walter Hollenweger describes as “defying the tyranny of words” in worship and dismantling the privileges of the educated and the literate, allowing the poor and the uneducated to have a voice.”¹⁸ Macchia points out that “in glossolalia is a hidden protest against any attempt to define, manipulate or oppress humanity.”¹⁹ Pentecost speech thus becomes a “cathedral of the poor,” providing a world fit for the habitation of God among people.

Glossolalia is an unclassifiable free speech in response to an unclassifiable free God. Such language is described by Macchia as *Doram Deo*. In the face of God language breaks down. There are gaps too large for language to bridge and depths too deep for words. Tongues indicate what the postmoderns have aptly noted, namely that the discovery of meaning is often found in the gaps of the unconscious that language hides as much as it reveals.

The “Pentecostal mind,” with its call to a radical “letting go and letting God,” is indeed a scandalous mind. It is a mind which arises from among the victims of the festival of cruelty, giving them hope for a way out of the maze. While it has traditionally been understood that this mind appealed only the poor and socially deprived, what we are now realizing is that the “homeless mind” is present everywhere. As Harvey Cox has aptly noted, “Whether middle class or poor, by the last decade of the twentieth century more and more people in every part of the world felt uprooted and spiritually homeless. Whether it was poverty or geographical dislocation or cultural chaos that caused it, all sensed the loss of a secure place in a world where whirl was king.”²⁰ For Cox, Pentecostals are only the visible crest of a very large wave of post-industrial spirituality.

The mind which so scandalizes Noll now represents over 400 million Christians. In a strange way it turns on its heels the criticisms of Malik which Noll echos: “Does your mode of thinking have the slightest chance of becoming the dominant mode of thinking in the great universities of Europe of America which stamp your entire civilization with their

¹⁸Walter Hollenweger, *Geist und Materie, Interkulturelle Theologie*, Vol. III, Munich, 1988, 31-45.

¹⁹Macchia, “Sighs Too Deep,” 61.

²⁰Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 107.

own spirit and ideas? . . . Even if you start now on a crash program in this and other domains, it will be a century at least before you catch up with the Harvards and Tübingens and the Sorbonnes.” There indeed may be a lot of catching up to do, but it may not be from the Holiness/Pentecostal side. No, the Pentecostal mind is not the mind at Harvard, Tübingen or Sorbonne. It still is found most often among the uneducated. Yet, it remains to be seen as to its full import for civilization. This relatively new religious movement, “spawned” out of the Holiness tradition, is leaving its own stamp on entire cultures with its spirit and ideas.²¹

An Appeal for Love’s Knowledge

I wish to end this essay with an appeal to those of us in both the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition and the Pentecostal tradition to embrace the heart of both of our movements, namely the quest for love’s knowledge. We are known as a people of experiential religion. The deep heart of our traditions is a passion for God. It is a knowing best characterized as love’s knowledge.

In an address to the 40th Biennial Meeting of the Association of Theological Schools, Craig Dykstra called for theological education to be grounded in “love’s knowledge.” Dykstra borrowed the term “love’s knowledge” from a collection of essays by Martha Nussbaum, a professor at the University of Chicago.²² Nussbaum suggests the idea that “knowledge might be something other than intellectual grasping—might be an emotional response, or . . . even a complex form of life.”²³ Building on Nussbaum’s definition, Dykstra notes that “love’s knowledge is both the presupposition for and the fundamental content and substance of theological education.” In assessing the situation he observes the following:

The loss of love’s knowledge is the root cause, I think, of theological teaching that connects with no one’s life and of research efforts whose only point is the professional advancement of the researcher. How much is that happening? Bad preaching. Liturgies eviscerated by the clouded eyes and per-

²¹For an analysis of the power of Pentecostalism to transform culture see David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990).

²²Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

²³*Ibid.*, 283.

functory gestures of presiders who communicate all too clearly through their bodies that they do not know or do not believe what they are doing. Complacency before injustice. Fear of taking initiative until success is all but assured. These are all signs and symptoms of the loss of love's knowledge.²⁴

In spite of all the signs and symptoms of the loss of love's knowledge, Dkystra observes a "great hunger in the larger culture, in the churches, and in the schools for love's knowledge itself." He notes that we are in a place of readiness, "Hungry, but not well fed. Eager, perhaps, but also nervous. In our particular arena of responsibility, at least this is getting clearer: without love's knowledge, theological education is loosed from its moorings and is set adrift."

Love's knowledge, a form of knowledge that is received as a gift, that is a response, that involves a complex form of life, was the quest of John Wesley. He understood love as the unifying force and life-giving energy of the Christian life. In her marvelous book, *A Theology of Love*, Mildred Wynkoop describes love as the dynamic of Wesleyanism. She develops a "theology of love" which was based on a relational epistemology. The heart of the Wesleyan faith is a knowledge of God which is grounded in love of God and humanity. Made in the image of God, humankind is first and foremost relational. For Wynkoop, it is not just the "mind" which defines us as human, it is our identity *before God* and the communication between God and us, "the mutual response, the relation of one to the other, the mirroring of one in the other that points to the meaning."²⁵

All knowledge is thus relational. And all knowledge is power. It is power to heal or to destroy, to build up or to tear down, to bring life or death. The Enlightenment mind reduces the world to the status of the object-manipulative: facts, theories, proofs. The postmodern mind, in its best light views knowledge as temporary constructions of meaning. In its worst form it reduces knowledge to power games on an open field of play. In all of this there is the abiding hunger for love's knowledge. I would agree with Dykstra that the world is hungry for love's knowledge, what

²⁴Craig Dykstra, "Love's Knowledge: Theological Education in the Future of the Church and Culture," address to the joint plenary of the Association of Theological Schools and the American Theological Library Association, June 22, 1996, Denver, Colorado.

²⁵Mildred Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 105.

Nussbaum describes as “a seeing in . . . the great charity in the heart (that) nourishes a generous construal of the world.”²⁶

We have the opportunity to manifest the scandal of love’s knowledge, a knowing which is not a grasping but a letting go. A knowing which is not grounded in its own self presence but in the presence of the source of all knowing. Thus, knowledge is seen as a gift. Our scholarship is guided by the participatory mind which is deeply rooted in a knowledge of God, not just a knowledge about God. Let those of us who are the “embarrassing relatives” exhibit love’s knowledge toward one another. May our knowing of each other be characterized by a generous construal. Our scholarship can only be mutually enriched by continued dialogue and sharing. Let us open the doors of our educational institutions to each other. Those of us at the Church of God Theological Seminary need the help and the input from our Wesleyan sisters and brothers. We are not whole without you.²⁷

²⁶Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 38.

²⁷Since this paper was delivered at the joint SPS/WTS meeting in March, 1998, the Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City hosted a student from the Church of God Theological Seminary for a short summer course. The student was graciously received and made to feel very much at home. In particular, thanks to Al and Esther Truesdale for exhibiting love’s knowledge in the form of warm hospitality.

PENTECOSTAL SANCTIFICATION IN WESLEY AND EARLY METHODISM

by

Laurence W. Wood

“But the Holy Ghost was not yet given in His sanctifying graces, as he was after Jesus was glorified. . . . And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, then first it was, that they who ‘waited for the promise of the Father’ were made more than conquerors over sin by the Holy Ghost given unto them. That this great salvation from sin was not given till Jesus was glorified, St. Peter also plainly testifies.”—Sermon on “Christian Perfection” by Wesley.

“God *may*, and. . . *does*, *instantaneously* so baptize a soul with the Holy Ghost and with fire, as to purify it from all dross, and refine it like gold, so that it is *renewed in love*, in *pure* and *perfect* love.”—From an essay on Christian perfection by Joseph Benson and published by John Wesley in *The Arminian Magazine*, 1781.

“John baptized with water, which was a sign of penitence, in reference to the remission of sin; but Christ baptizes with the Holy Ghost, for the destruction of sin [=entire sanctification].”—Adam Clarke in his *Commentary on the Book of Acts*.

¹In a letter to Charles Wesley (July 4, 1774), contained in the Fletcher archival collection in The John Ryland Library of Manchester University. Cf. Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. De La Flechere*, 166.

“Christian perfection is nothing but the full kingdom in the Holy Ghost.” Charles Wesley to John Fletcher (1774).¹

“To *wash, cleanse, baptize with the Holy Ghost, and sanctify* are commonly synonymous in Scripture; hence the phrase of *being baptized with the Holy Ghost*, which is elsewhere called being baptized with fire, to signify . . . perfect purity.”
—Thomas Coke in his *Commentary on the Book of Acts*.

August 7, 1770, was a monumental day for Methodism. On that day John Wesley, at the age of 67 years, gathered his preachers together in London for their annual conference. Wesley asked what could be done to revive the work of God. Their tersely worded answer was that “they had leaned too much toward Calvinism.” Wesley believed that Calvinism led to spiritual mediocrity because it was fixated on justification by faith, although Wesley certainly believed that the doctrine of justification was important. Wesley and his preachers agreed that they should once again promote the message of Christian perfection. They especially agreed that they would stress the *instantaneous moment* when the justified believer could be made perfect in love.² This agreement provoked a highly publicized controversy initiated by the Calvinist Methodists and led by the Countess of Huntingdon. This uproar made it difficult for Wesley’s friend, John Fletcher, who was the founding president of her new school, Trevecca College.³ Fletcher was also the vicar of the Church of England at Madeley, in Shropshire. Based on Wesley’s special recommendation, the Countess had also hired Wesley’s premier young scholar, Joseph Benson, to be the principal.⁴ The forty-year-old Fletcher and the twenty-one-year-old Benson were immediately bonded as dear friends when they came together at Trevecca in 1769.⁵

Fletcher’s influence with the students at Trevecca was enormous. On the days when he was on campus, Fletcher would preach as well as teach. His usual theme was to encourage the students to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Although Fletcher also insisted on high academic standards for Methodist preachers, he insisted that the baptism with the Spirit was a

²*Minutes of the Methodist Conferences*, 95.

³Joseph Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. De La Flechere* (London: John Mason, 1838), second edition, 145.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, 144.

more important qualification for ministry than all the book learning in the world. He often invited the students to follow him into another room at the close of the service to pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit.⁶

Suddenly, like the sound of a mighty rushing wind, a storm of controversy cut loose. It blew away the spirit of cooperation between Wesley and the Countess when Wesley and his preachers resolved that they had “leaned too much toward Calvinism” by not giving enough attention to full sanctification. Wesley’s Calvinist Methodist friends at Trevecca accused him of embracing the Roman Catholic doctrine of good works and of abandoning the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith. The Countess swiftly banned her longtime friend from all her preaching chapels.⁷ She further canceled her plans to join Wesley in a previously scheduled preaching tour. In January, 1771, she also dismissed Benson because he supported Wesley’s holiness “heresy.”⁸ The evidence used against Benson was that he had written an essay on Wesley’s view of holiness under the disguise of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. On January 7, 1771, Fletcher resigned on the grounds that a spirit of toleration had ceased to exist at Trevecca.⁹

Fletcher’s Evolving Concept of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit

Previous to this controversy, Fletcher and Benson had hoped that the Calvinists would have been more open to receive Wesley’s doctrine of holiness if it was explained as the same in meaning as being baptized with the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the Calvinist Methodists interpreted Wesley’s view of holiness to mean sinless perfection, but Fletcher and Benson hope to communicate a better understanding through using the relational language of love being perfected through the indwelling Spirit. After the controversy erupted, Fletcher told the Countess that Wesley’s doctrine of perfection was essentially what she believed herself by her own use of the phrase “baptism with the Holy Ghost.”¹¹

⁶Ibid., 146.

⁷Tyerman, *Wesley’s Designated Successor* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), 171.

⁸Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. De La Flechere*, 150.

⁹Ibid., 152.

¹⁰Ibid., 153.

¹¹Published for the first time in Tyerman, *Wesley’s Designated Successor*, 182-183.

Even before he became the president of Trevecca College, Fletcher had been using the event of Pentecost as the pattern of Christian experience. For example, in one of his sermons in the early 1760s after he had become vicar of Madeley, he equated the baptism with the Holy Spirit and perfect love. Fletcher wrote:

There is a day of pentecost for believers; a time when the Holy Ghost descends abundantly. Happy they who receive most of this perfect love, and of that establishing grace, which may preserve them from such falls and decays as they were before liable to.¹²

In a letter to Miss Hatton (November 1, 1762), Fletcher made the distinction between justifying faith and being “sealed by the Spirit” (or “the abiding witness of the Spirit”) when “they are fully assured of that justification” (=Christian perfection). Fletcher noted that most believers experience these two events separately, citing the Samaritans (Acts 8) as an example of those who received the seal of the Spirit after their justification.¹³ In another letter to Miss Hatton (August 8, 1765), Fletcher also defined Christian perfection in terms of such biblical references as “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” and “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”¹⁴ At this early stage of his preaching and writing, Fletcher had not yet developed his doctrine of the multiple stages of grace into a full-blown, self-conscious theology of dispensations. This was first fully developed in his *Third Check to Antinomianism*, though he did previously speak of Christian perfection in terms of Pentecost.¹⁵ Fletcher believed he was only following the example of Wesley in making this connection.

¹²Fletcher, *Works*, 4:270, “The Test of a New Creature.” This sermon is found in a bound book of pages in Fletcher’s own handwriting in the Fletcher archival collection in the John Rylands Library of Manchester (Box 18, Misc. Manuscripts). The booklet opens with these comments to the reader: “Reader. Grant these sheets an impartial perusal, they contain an account of the Doctrine of Salvation by Faith alone, as it is preached in Madeley Church. They will (it is hoped) answer the objections that are made against this important doctrine” Melville Horne believes these were written during the first few years of his ministry, Fletcher, *Works*, 4:18, “Mr. Horne’s Preface.”

¹³*Posthumous Pieces of The Reverend John William de la Flechere*, ed. Melville Horne (Philadelphia: Parry Hall, 1793), 100-101.

¹⁴Cited in *The Arminian Magazine* 18 (May 1795): 258, “Mr. Fletcher’s Letters (to Miss Hatton, August 8, 1765).”

¹⁵*Ibid.* Cf. Fletcher, *Works* 1:453n, where Fletcher admits that he had not yet developed his doctrine of dispensations during the early years of his ministry.

Wesley's critics as early as 1742 also understood Wesley to equate "the indwelling of the Spirit" with full sanctification. In "The Principles of a Methodist" (1742), Wesley answered one of his critics by noting: "I desire not a more consistent account of my principles than he has himself given in the following words" that a justified believer "hath not yet, in the full and proper sense, a *new* and *clean heart*, or the *indwelling* of the Spirit." One who was sanctified was described as one who had attained "the last and highest state of *perfection* in this life. For then are the faithful born again in the full and perfect sense. Then have they the indwelling of the Spirit."¹⁶ If Wesley's critics understood Wesley to make a special connection between the indwelling of the Spirit and Christian perfection, it is not surprising that his two main leaders did so as well.¹⁷ However,

¹⁶John Wesley, *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, ed. Rupert E. Davies, 9:64-65, "The Principles of a Methodist."

¹⁷What is surprising is that some recent followers of Wesley could misinterpret Wesley at this very point. Cf. Herbert McGonigle, "Pneumatological Nomenclature in Early Methodism," *The Wesleyan Theological Journal* 8 (Spring 1973). This author maintained that in Wesley "there is an absence of anything like even an attempt to expound the ministry of the Spirit in the sanctified life." He further said that in Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* there is "not one . . . reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in the experience of the believer." I personally counted over 60 references to the work of the Holy Spirit in *The Plain Account of Christian Perfection* alone, including the phrase "full of his Spirit" (point 19), "seal of the Spirit" (point 25), "fruit of the Spirit" (point 25), "sealed with the Spirit of Promise" (point 25), "fulness of . . . the blessed Spirit" (point 15), and the continual witness of the Spirit (point 13). Wesley also specifically in this work identified Pentecost as the basis of attaining Christian perfection. He noted that this "great salvation of God is now brought to men by the revelation of Jesus Christ" because "the fulness of time is now come; the Holy Ghost is now given" (point 2). For those who deny "perfection attainable in this life," Wesley asked: "Has there not been a larger measure of the Holy Spirit given under the Gospel than under the Jewish dispensation? If not, in what sense was the Spirit not given before Christ was glorified? (John vi: 39)" (point 23). In the last paragraph in *The Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley says that "we expect to be sanctified wholly through his Spirit" and that through "the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" one is enabled to love God perfectly.

Another inaccurate statement which this author made was: "John Fletcher did not say much about the baptism of the Holy Spirit," when in point of fact this was the dominant motif of Fletcher in speaking of Christian perfection. Not only was this the dominant motif of John Fletcher, but it was the dominant motif in the writings and preaching of his wife, Mary Bosanquet Fletcher. She was like John Wesley's own daughter and she was present at Wesley's bedside when he died. She also had the honor of being, if not the first, one of the first women Methodist preachers who often traveled and preached with Wesley after the death of her husband.

Benson's and Fletcher's attempt to explain holiness at Trevecca through the use of Pentecost phrases became impossible because of the open attack on Calvinism in the 1770 London "Declaration."

This author also claimed that pneumatological nomenclature is not found in the early Methodist preachers, despite the fact that it is found in Wesley's leading preachers, including John Pawson, James Rogers, Joseph Pilmore, Thomas Coke, Henry Moore, and Adam Clarke, to name only a few.

What is noticeably deficient about this article is that the author did not understand the progressive historical development in Wesley's thinking. Wesley's earlier stage in the order of salvation assumed that a Christian was one who was entirely free from sin. He came to see in 1737 that one is justified before one is sanctified. After his Aldersgate conversion in 1738, Wesley slowly over the years developed his order of salvation. In his earlier sermons, such as "Scriptural Christianity" and "Christian Perfection," Wesley defined a Christian as one perfected in love. By 1760, he had carefully developed a consistent view concerning the subsequent nature of full sanctification. In 1770 Wesley entered a new phase of his thinking, although not different from his earlier thought, yet adding new nuances to his theology. This date represents the beginning of what is called the later Wesley—the Wesley whom American Methodists were acquainted with. This is the Wesley who wrote over 78 sermons, which he began to publish in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1781. This is the Wesley who shared his leadership of the Methodists with John Fletcher, whose writings received Wesley's imprimatur as he became the official interpreter of Wesley's theology. This is the Wesley whose sermons highlighted Pentecost in a self-conscious way as the foundation of Christian perfection. This is the Wesley who endorsed the Pentecostalism of John Fletcher. This is the Wesley that was forgotten after the end of the nineteenth century as the emerging concerns of theological liberalism pushed Wesley to the sidelines. This later Wesley is the Wesley that is yet to be rediscovered in contemporary Wesley studies.

If this later Wesley were understood, then the rumors widely circulating which claim that Wesley disconnected Pentecost and Christian perfection would cease. I am certainly not blaming the author of the article on "Pneumatological Nomenclature in Early Methodism" for the success of this rumor. He has had considerable help from others. I suppose his major ally has been Donald Dayton's *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*. Dayton's work has made a significant contribution to understanding the shared heritage of the Wesleyan-Holiness and Pentecostal traditions. Yet Dayton stopped short of showing that the roots of a Pentecostal interpretation of the Christian life is in Wesley himself. He somewhat tentatively claims that the first self-conscious link between Pentecost and Christian perfection is found in Phoebe Palmer. Dayton writes: "The first books to develop a full and self-conscious doctrine of Pentecostal sanctification apparently appeared in the wake of the revival of 1857-58. Phoebe Palmer . . . seems to have moved in this direction just before the revival." Cf. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 87. Dayton allows that John Fletcher is the indirect source of her theology, but he largely marginalizes the influence of Fletcher, as if his official status as Wesley's interpreter did not really exist. Dayton also polarizes the Christological and pneumatological aspects in Wesley's thinking, as if Wesley had more in common with the Continental Reformers than the English Reformers. I judge that this thesis cannot be sustained from the evidence.

It is not surprising that Wesley made a close connection between full sanctification and the work of the Holy Spirit because he was influenced by the Early Church Fathers who explicitly linked “the indwelling of the Spirit” with “perfection.” This is especially true of Macarius whom Wesley particularly liked and even translated and abridged the *Homilies* of Macarius into English for the benefit of his Methodist readers. There is a recent English translation (1992) with an introduction by George Maloney, a Roman Catholic Jesuit, and a preface by Kallistos Ware, a Greek Orthodox archbishop. Both of these recent scholars highlight the fact that Macarius linked the baptism with the Holy Spirit to perfection and cleansing from all sin. They also make a connection between Macarius and Wesley. John Fletcher also cited Macarius to show that the equation between a Pentecostal baptism with the Spirit and being made perfect in love was characteristic of the early Church Fathers, especially the Cappadocian Fathers.¹⁸

It is doubtful that Fletcher and Benson were intentionally trying to enforce the London “Declaration” since they had been preaching and teaching on the subject of “receiving the Holy Spirit” and being “baptized with the Spirit” before the London Conference was even convened. Shirley’s sudden complaint caught Benson and Fletcher by surprise. Fletcher noted that Whitefield himself often called believers to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit¹⁹ and that the Countess herself had often spoken favorably of this need.²⁰

¹⁸John Fletcher: “The Doctrine of the New Birth, as it is stated in these sheets, is directly or indirectly maintained by the most spiritual divines, especially in their sacred poems.” An unpublished essay written in late 1775 or early 1776 by John Fletcher in his own handwriting, circulated among Fletcher’s friends (especially Mary Bosanquet and Thomas Coke), and overlooked by subsequent historians (including Luke Tyerman and J. F. Hurst), which I discovered in a box of miscellaneous materials written by Fletcher. These materials are contained in the Fletcher archival collection as part of the Methodist Archives in the John Rylands Library of Manchester University, England. Several of these manuscripts are to be published in *The Asbury Theological Journal* (Spring 1998) by permission of the John Rylands Library and the British Methodist Archives Committee.

¹⁹Fletcher, *Works*, 1:588, “Essay on Truth.”

²⁰Cf. Fletcher’s letter to the Countess, published in Tyerman, *Wesley’s Designated Successor*, 182.

The Troublesome Issue for the Countess Was Sanctification, Not “The Baptism with the Spirit”

Fletcher was right that there was really nothing new about the idea of a post-justification experience of the Holy Spirit. He (as well as Wesley) recognized that the Puritans in the previous century, especially Richard Baxter and John Goodwin, had connected the full assurance of faith with a Pentecost-like reception of the Holy Spirit, a baptism with the Holy Spirit, subsequent in time to one's justification by faith.²¹ John Goodwin, an Arminian Puritan in the seventeenth century, wrote a book called *A Being Filled with the Spirit*, a summons for justified believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Goodwin says that this fullness of the Spirit would grant to each believer the full assurance of their faith and their hearts would be made perfect in love.²² Goodwin was called a “Methodist” nearly an hundred years before Wesley because he also taught that the believer could really be made righteous through the infilling of the Holy Spirit.²³ It is thus understandable that Fletcher would call John Wesley “the John Goodwin of the age.”²⁴ Albert Outler also has noted the similarities between Goodwin and Wesley. Outler also noted that Wesley was preeminently a theologian of the Spirit because he emphasized imparted righteousness in contrast to the Christomonism of the Continental reformers like John Calvin who emphasized imputed righteousness and who lacked an adequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit.²⁵

That the idea of a post-justification experience of the Holy Spirit was not new to the Countess and her Church of England associates can also be seen in the Anglican rite of confirmation. Fletcher believed that one of the advantages of equating a Pentecost-like reception of the Spirit with full sanctification was that the Calvinist Methodists were already

²¹Cf. Wesley's special edition of Fletcher, *An Equal Check*, 156. Cf. *Works* (Jackson) 8:291, “Conversation IV.”

²²*A Being Filled with the Holy Spirit* (London: 1670; reprinted, Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1867). Cf. Thomas Jackson, *The Life of John Goodwin* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1872), 394-398.

²³Cf. Albert Outler, *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 123, 147.

²⁴Fletcher, *Works*, 1:29, “First Check to Antinomianism.”

²⁵Outler, *John Wesley*, in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 107-108.

predisposed to it.²⁶ Though the Countess of Huntingdon used this phrase herself, along with other Calvinist Methodists like John Berridge, in speaking of a greater degree of grace bestowed upon a believer, she believed that its purpose was to stabilize and strengthen a believer in the Christian walk, rather than “cleansing them from all sin.”²⁷

Wesley had warned Benson in a letter of December 26, 1769, that the Countess was strongly opposed to “perfection.” Wesley quoted her as having said: “I will suffer no one in *my* society that even *thinks* of perfection.”²⁸ Given her bias against “perfection,” it is understandable that Fletcher thought that highlighting the connection between Pentecost and full sanctification was an appropriate way to win over the Calvinist Methodists. Fletcher noted in a letter to Wesley (March 18, 1771) that at Trevecca, when he had been there before the London Conference had convened, he had enjoyed “some success” in explaining the connection between Pentecost and perfection. Fletcher had come to realize that it would now no longer be possible to carry on with this mission of explaining perfection to the Calvinists in terms of a Pentecostal baptism, and so he told Wesley that is why he resigned.

Here is where the plot of the story thickens. Wesley now found himself locked in another conflict involving his closest associates. The situation could hardly have been more disastrous for Wesley. At the very moment that Wesley was alienated from the Calvinists, he almost became alienated from his two main leaders, Benson and Fletcher—and both conflicts were over the issue of sanctification. Wesley was not about to back down, even if he had to stand against his most promising protégés. Several letters, along with a recently discovered document in Wesley’s handwriting, show that the conflict was based on a misunderstanding. It will be helpful to present this material in chronological order so one can see the unfolding of the misunderstanding.

²⁶In a manuscript entitled “The Language of the Dispensation of the Father,” probably written around 1776 (contained in Box 18 of the Fletcher archival collection in the John Rylands Library), Fletcher maintains that his doctrine of dispensations, which explained Christian perfection in terms of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, would convince Calvinists—if they were to give it serious consideration. He wrote: “If *pious* Calvinists in particular looked at the doctrine of Perfection thro’ the scripture-glass, which these sheets contain, their prejudice would probably abate, if it did not entirely subside.” This will be published for the first time in *The Asbury Theological Journal* (Spring 1998) by permission from the John Rylands Library and the British Methodist Archives Committee.

²⁷*Lady Huntington and Her Friends*, compiled by Mrs. Helen C. Knight (New York: The American Tract Society), 169-170.

²⁸Telford, *Letters*, 5:166 (to Joseph Benson, December 26, 1769).

Benson Sends Wesley His Essay on “The Baptism with the Holy Spirit”

Wesley wrote the young Benson a letter on November 30, 1770, explaining his dispute with the Countess. Benson was still the headmaster of Trevecca College when he got this letter. Benson then sent a letter to Wesley, explaining the nature of the conflict at Trevecca. He apparently enclosed a copy of his essay on the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which was used against him as proof that he promoted Wesley’s view of sanctification.

There are two reasons why it appears that Benson sent this essay to Wesley. First, we know that such a manuscript existed because Fletcher mentioned it in a letter to Benson explaining why the Countess dismissed him.²⁹ Since this manuscript was the evidence used against Benson, it would be normal for Benson to send it to Wesley for his evaluation. The second reason why it is apparent that Benson sent this essay to Wesley is because of a two-sided, undated page (in fragment form) preserved in the Manuscript Department of William R. Perkins, Duke University, written in Wesley’s own handwriting.³⁰ This fragment contains Wesley’s critique of a manuscript like the one Fletcher had mentioned in his letter to Benson. There can be little doubt that this fragment was a critique of Benson’s manuscript because it refers to ideas which later became central to Fletcher’s theology, especially his trinitarian doctrine of dispensations.

Apparently Benson had used some of Fletcher’s undeveloped ideas about this subject.³¹ This undated fragment particularly mentioned the

²⁹Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. De La Flechere*, 153; cf. Fletcher’s letter to Benson, March 22, 1771, in James MacDonald, *Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Benson*, 20.

³⁰A transcription of this fragment is in M. Robert Fraser, “Strains in the Understandings of Christian Perfection in Early British Methodism,” *Vanderbilt University, diss.*, Vanderbilt, 1988 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1989), 490-492. Cited hereafter as *Fraser’s Doctoral Dissertation*.

³¹We know that Fletcher’s ideas on this subject did undergo some development. For example, three years later he said to Benson in a letter (March 20, 1774) that his *Essay on Truth* had developed a more consistent understanding of the doctrine of the Pentecostal baptism. Fletcher wanted Benson to know that his ideas had undergone further refinement, and he wanted to protect Benson from his earlier mistake. He wrote: “You will see my latest views of that important subject. My apprehensions of things have not changed since I saw you last; save that in one thing I have seen my error. An over-eager attention to the doctrine of the Spirit has made me, in some degree, overlook the medium by which the Spirit works, I mean the *Word of Truth* [italics mine], which is the word by which the heavenly fire warms us. I rather expected lightning, than a steady fire by means of fuel. I mention my error to you, lest you should be involved therein” (Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. De La Flechere*, 166).

phrases “receiving the Holy Spirit” and “the assurance of salvation” in a way disapproved of by Wesley. It caused Wesley great anxiety regarding Benson and Fletcher. Wesley scribbled in his notations that “we can sufficiently prove our whole Doctrine, without laying any stress on those metaphorical Expressions” such as “the baptism with the Holy Ghost.” This was an obvious reference to Benson’s claim that he and Fletcher were trying to prove Wesley’s doctrine of holiness to the Calvinists through use of the phrase “baptism with the Holy Ghost.” Wesley referred to this “sentiment” as being “utterly new.”³² In this critique of Benson’s essay on the baptism with the Holy Spirit, Wesley said that the meaning of receiving the Holy Spirit was to receive the *witness* of one’s justification by faith.³³ This understanding of receiving the Spirit represented Wesley’s deepest concern about Benson and Fletcher. He thought that they were saying only the fully sanctified had the witness of the Spirit because they were identifying the phrase “receiving the Spirit” with full sanctification.

This undated fragment also mentions briefly the doctrine of dispensations, which Wesley disliked as it was then formulated in Benson’s essay. This again shows Fletcher’s influence on the much younger Benson. Fletcher later developed a theology of the multiple stages of grace which he called the doctrine of dispensations. His intention was to give consistency to Wesley’s order of salvation. He explained that there are progressive stages along the pilgrimage of grace, leading from the kind of experiences similar to Noah (righteous pagans), then Moses (Jews), then John the Baptist (and Jesus’ disciples before Pentecost who through water baptism had received forgiveness of sins and justifying faith), and finally the highest stage represented in the Pentecostal fulfillment of salvation history, which is the basis for Christian perfection. Wesley was later to praise Fletcher’s doctrine of dispensations as the best interpretation of salvation history which had ever been given in the history of Christian thought since the days of the apostles.³⁴ Yet in this early, undated fragment, where Wesley was critically evaluating Benson’s essay on this subject, Wesley was not happy with Benson’s understanding.

³²A transcription in *Fraser’s Doctoral Dissertation*, 491.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 6:137 (to Elizabeth Ritchie, January 17, 1775).

Wesley Instructs Benson to Affirm that “Babes in Christ” Have the Witness of the Spirit

After reviewing this essay, Wesley wrote Benson on December 28, 1770, to express his concern about the way that he was equating the witness of the Spirit (“receiving the Spirit”) with Christian perfection.³⁵ Wesley’s opening comment in this letter reveals his anxiety: “What a blessing it is that we can speak freely to each other without either disguise or reserve! So long as we are able to do this we may grow wiser and better every day.” His very next comment shows the depth of his anxiety: “One point I advise you to hold fast, and let neither men nor devils tear it from you. You are a child of God; you are justified freely. . . . Cast not away that confidence.” Apparently Wesley thought that Benson and Fletcher had adopted the teaching of Zinzendorf.

In the midst of this conflict with Benson (and Fletcher), Wesley wrote a letter on May 27, 1771, to Mary Bishop, explaining to her that Benson and Fletcher had fallen into the “error” of Zinzendorf. She was one of Wesley’s women class leaders and one of Fletcher’s good friends. Wesley specifically warned her, telling her that Joseph Benson had fallen into this error. Here is part of what Wesley wrote to her:

Joseph Benson is a good man and a good preacher. But he is by no means clear in his judgement. The imagination which he has borrowed from another good man [John Fletcher], “that he is not a believer who has any sin remaining in him,” is not only an error, but a very dangerous one, of which I have seen fatal effects. Herein we divided from the Germans near thirty years ago; and the falseness and absurdity of it is shown in the Second Journal and in my sermon on that subject [see Wesley’s sermon, *The Lord Our Righteousness*].³⁶

From this letter to Mary Bishop, we know that Wesley worried that Benson did not consider himself a believer if he did not have the full assurance of his entire sanctification. Wesley had many years earlier stood against Zinzendorf’s Moravian followers because they “damp the zeal of babes in Christ” and because they say that anyone who “felt any doubt or fear . . . had no faith at all.”³⁷ Concerned that Benson had embraced

³⁵Telford, *Letters* 5:215 (to Joseph Benson, December 28, 1770).

³⁶Telford, *Letters* 5:252 (to Mary Bishop, May 27, 1771).

³⁷Outler, *John Wesley*, 69, 376.

Zinzendorf's ideas, Wesley insisted that this "one point" Benson must maintain: "You are a child of God. . . . Your sins are forgiven! Cast not away that confidence." Wesley was determined not to allow that error to creep back into his societies. This is why he used these severe words: "Let neither men nor devils tear it from you. You are a child of God."

In his letter to Benson on December 28, 1770, Wesley engaged in a detailed discussion of the meaning of full sanctification. He makes clear to Benson that full sanctification is subsequent to being justified by faith. Wesley then tells Benson to do two things: (1) "confirm the brethren" in the faith assuring them that they have "attained . . . the remission of all their sins," and (2) encourage them "in expecting a second change, whereby they shall be saved from all sin and perfected in love." Again, to emphasize this "point" which Wesley was offering in the way of "advise" to Benson, he says that if you want to say that those perfected in love are "receiving the Holy Spirit" you must know this is unscriptural language because every believer has received the [witness of] the Spirit and yet not every believer is perfected in love. Wesley then closed his letter with this advise to Benson: "O Joseph, keep close to the Bible both as to sentiment and expressions! Then there will never be any material difference between you and your affectionate brother, John Wesley."

Finally, to make the "one point" clear which Wesley "advised" Benson about in the opening part of his letter, he once again reminded Benson that justified believers who are not yet free from indwelling sin nonetheless enjoy the witness of the Spirit. As a postscript to this letter, Wesley uses Lady Huntingdon as an example of one who refused his advice after he had spoken the truth in love to her, and her resentment revealed that "her grace can be but small!" Needless to say, Wesley was a master of psychology, suggesting to Benson that he ought to listen to Wesley's advice!

The deepest concern of Wesley in this letter was that Benson's essay which he had apparently sent to Wesley seemed to be denying that justified believers had received the witness of the Spirit. That is why Wesley said that this is "the experience of a thousand believers beside, who yet are sure of God's favour." Wesley recommended that Benson read again his sermons "On Sin in Believers" and "the Repentance of Believers." Wesley believed these sermons would help him to see that justified believers still have sin remaining in their hearts although they still enjoy the *witness* of God's Spirit that there are children of God. Wesley had

refuted Zinzendorf by name in his sermon on "Sin in Believers." There Wesley writes: "The contrary doctrine is wholly *new*; never heard of in the church of Christ from the time of His coming into the world till the time of Count Zinzendorf. And it is attended with the most fatal consequences."³⁸

"Mr. Fletcher's Late Discovery"

In subsequent correspondence with Wesley, Benson mentioned again his ideas about the doctrine of dispensations as well as some thoughts he had about the possibility that everyone might finally be saved. Wesley was not pleased with Benson's continued interest in these ideas. In a blunt and brief letter of March 9, 1771, Wesley severely censured Benson: "Read the *Minutes* of the Conference, and see whether you can conform thereto. Likewise think whether you can abstain from speaking of Universal Salvation and Mr. Fletcher's late discovery. The Methodists in general could not bear this. It would create huge debate and confusion." The conference minutes contained the discipline and teaching of Methodism, and every preacher was required to follow them. These were the same minutes which eventually were to make John Fletcher famous as he was to become the champion of Wesley's teachings once this dispute was resolved.

It is clear that Wesley's comment about "Mr. Fletcher's late discovery" referred to "receiving the Spirit" (as Telford also reports),³⁹ but for Wesley this phrase meant receiving the witness of the Spirit. Wesley thought Fletcher had become confused with Zinzendorf's "error." In the undated fragment where Wesley criticized Fletcher's idea of the baptism with the Spirit, he called it "a sentiment" which is "utterly new." Now he bluntly tells Benson to disregard Fletcher's "late discovery."

Wesley then asked (or required) Benson in this letter to read again the sermon on "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," where Wesley clarifies that the wicked will be eternally lost and where there is also a distinction between justified and sanctified believers. Wesley's concern that Benson's and Fletcher's ideas would create huge debate and confusion seemed equally directed at Benson's attraction to universalism as well as to Fletcher's so-called "late discovery." Actually, Fletcher's doctrine of the multiple stages of grace and "universalism" could easily be misconstrued.

³⁸*The Works of John Wesley, Sermons*, ed. Albert C. Outler, 1:333, "On Sin in Believers."

³⁹Telford, *Letters*, 5:228.

Wesley concluded this letter of March 9, 1771, to Benson with the Latin verse, “I found thee simple in heart, but troubled in your ideas.” Wesley was clearly irked about this dispute. It was as if his dispute with Countess Huntingdon had been overshadowed by the dispute with his closest associates.

Benson and Fletcher Agree Together Against Wesley’s View

Wesley’s letter shocked Benson, only twenty-three years old. He well understood that these comments meant Wesley considered his views heretical. The young Benson thus wrote John Fletcher, informing him of his dispute with Wesley. Fletcher replied in a lengthy letter of March 22, 1771. This letter shows that he and Benson understood their disagreement to be over the question of the witness of the Spirit. Here is what Fletcher said about their dispute: “Now with respect to Mr. Wesley’s letter to you, I would have you preach the *seal of the Spirit the witness of the Spirit*, or as he [Wesley] properly calls it *the Spirit of Adoption*: none can have it (for a *constancy*) but the *baptized* [with the Spirit]; that you know, whether he assents to it or not.” Fletcher then requested Benson to keep this part of his letter private about their disagreement with Wesley, except that he would allow Charles Wesley to read it. Charles Wesley and Fletcher had already developed a close friendship and he considered Charles a highly respected personal “advisor.” We know that Benson respected Fletcher’s wishes because, when he made this letter public after Fletcher’s death, this confidential part was omitted, and it has not been made public until recently.⁴⁰

Benson followed up Wesley’s letter with a question about his prospects of being brought into the conference. Benson was naturally disturbed and puzzled by Wesley’s caustic reply. At this time the young Benson had not joined the Methodist conference. So he pointedly asked if Wesley had disqualified him from becoming a Methodist preacher. Wesley quickly responded with another letter reassuring Benson of his deepest love and concern. Wesley certainly did not want to lose so promising a young man as a future leader of Methodists (which Benson was destined to become as a two-time president of the Methodist Conference and editor of the *Arminian Magazine* for over 20 years).⁴¹

⁴⁰Cf. *Fraser’s Doctoral Dissertation*, 489.

⁴¹*Minutes of the Conference*, 4:524; 5:201.

Chester, March 16, 1771.

Dear Joseph, —No, I do not forbid your being connected with us. I believe Providence calls you to it. I only warn you of what would lessen your usefulness. On that subject I never suffer myself to *reason*. I should quickly reason myself into a Deist, perhaps an Atheist. I am glad you do not lay stress upon it. We have better matters to employ our thoughts.

A *babe* in Christ (of whom I know thousands) has the witness *sometimes*. A young man (in St. John's sense) has it continually. I believe one that is *perfected in love*, or *filled with the Holy Ghost*, may be properly termed a father. This we must press both babes and young men to aspire after—yea, to expect. And why not now? I wish you would give another reading to the *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*.—I am, dear Joseph,

Your affectionate brother.

PS.—While I am in Ireland you need only direct to Dublin. I am afraid that smooth words have prevailed over Mr. Fletcher and persuaded him all the fault was on your side. He promised to write to me from Wales, but I have not had one line. [Actually Wesley did not know that Benson and Fletcher were in touch with each other and were perplexed over what seemed to be a major difference of opinion between them].

The Heart of Wesley's Concern

This letter of March 16, 1771, shows that Wesley continued to think that Benson and Fletcher were misguided in their understanding of Christian perfection. That is why he recommended that Benson read again his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Wesley says the basic meaning of the phrase “receive the Spirit” is the witness of the Spirit: “The Apostle [John] says, ‘We receive the Spirit’ for this very end, ‘that we may know the things which are thus freely given us.’”⁴² This letter shows, however, that Wesley and his protégés actually were in agreement—contrary to what Wesley imagined. For both Benson and Fletcher believed every child of God may have the witness of the Spirit, but their use of “receiving the Spirit” made Wesley think they agreed with Zinzendorf. The mis-

⁴²Wesley, *Works* (Jackson), 11:421, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.”

understanding centered around the use of the phrases, “Receive the Spirit,” “baptized with the Spirit,” and “filled with the Spirit.”

For Wesley, the phrase “baptize with the Spirit” was a metaphor for water baptism, the phrase “receive the Spirit” meant to receive the witness of the Spirit, and the phrase “filled with the Spirit” meant to be made perfect in love. Wesley had often used the phrase “filled with the Spirit” to denote Christian perfection, as Fletcher often pointed out in his writings. Wesley had done so in his sermon “Scriptural Christianity” (1744),⁴³ in his essay “A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion” (1745),⁴⁴ and in his *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1767).⁴⁵ In his sermon “On Christian Perfection” (1741) Wesley specifically said that the first time anyone had ever been fully sanctified in the history of salvation occurred on the day of Pentecost.⁴⁶ In his celebrated debate with Zinzendorf in 1741,⁴⁷ Wesley had pointed out that the disciples were “justified” before Pentecost and as a result of being filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost they were made “more holy.” The point of Wesley’s debate with Zinzendorf was to show that entire sanctification comes after justifying faith, and Wesley used the Pentecostal fullness of the Spirit as proof of this subsequent experience of holiness.

So Wesley would hardly have been upset that Benson and Fletcher were arguing at Trevecca for the Pentecostal basis of Christian perfection. Rather, Wesley’s only concern was that they might have fallen into

⁴³Fletcher noted that this particular sermon on “Scriptural Christianity,” based on Acts 4:31—“Be filled with the Spirit”—was a sermon on Christian perfection (Fletcher *Works*, 1:591n., “An Equal Check”). Cf. *The Works of John Wesley, Sermons*, ed. Outler, 1:160, 172ff.

⁴⁴Cf. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley, The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*, ed. Gerald R. Cragg (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) 11:261, “A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion.” Wesley writes: “When ye were zealous of every good word and work, and abstained from all appearance of evil; when it was hereby shown that you were filled with the Holy Ghost and delivered from all unholy tempers; when ye were all ‘unblameable and unrebukeable, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such things’, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, showing forth to all Jews, infidels and heretics, by your active, patient, spotless love of God and man.” Here it is evident that Wesley equates “filled with the Spirit” with sanctification described as “spotless love of God and man” and “delivered from all unholy tempers.”

⁴⁵Wesley, *Works* 11:473, 509, “Plain Account of Christian Perfection.”

⁴⁶*Works of John Wesley, Sermons*, ed. Outler, 2:110, “Christian Perfection.”

⁴⁷Outler, *John Wesley*, 367ff.

Zinzendorf's "error" which made no distinction between a justified believer and a sanctified believer who was made perfect in love. But for Fletcher and Benson, all these Pentecostal phrases were used interchangeably (including "receiving the Spirit"), and these phrases were used primarily to denote Christian perfection. Though Wesley had equated "filled with the Spirit" and Christian perfection and though he located the possibility of full sanctification in Pentecost, Wesley often used the phrase "receive the Spirit" to mean the witness of one's acceptance with God in justifying faith. Wesley was not conceding anything to Benson when, in this letter of March 16, 1771, he equated being filled with the Spirit and being made perfect in love. For he had always affirmed that believers perfected in love had received a higher degree of the Spirit, and he spoke of full sanctification in terms of the coming of "His Son and His blessed Spirit, fixing his abode" in the believer's heart.⁴⁸ Wesley believed that the abiding and full assurance of faith was the privilege of "fathers in Christ," who were perfected in love.

While Wesley's use of the phrase "receive the Spirit" often meant *receiving the witness of the Spirit*, he also thought that it could include the meaning of "sanctifying grace" as well.⁴⁹ This second meaning of "receiving the Spirit" was the definition which Benson and Fletcher were giving to it, but this confused Wesley's perception of what they were saying because he normally thought of it as receiving the witness of the Spirit. However, his use of the phrase "baptism with the Spirit" was less precise and rarely used. In 1745, in his essay "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," Wesley had spoken of the baptism with the Holy

⁴⁸Wesley, *Works* (Jackson), 11:381, 424, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection."

⁴⁹Cf. Wesley, *Works* (Jackson) 11:420-421, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection." Here Wesley defined "receiving the Spirit" as the assurance of one's forgiveness of sins. In his *Explanatory Notes* on Acts 8:17, Wesley also allowed the phrase to mean "sanctifying grace" as well, as Fletcher noted. Fletcher believed the implication of Wesley's use of this phrase meant full sanctifying grace. Fletcher wrote: "Accordingly Mr. Wesley does not scruple to intimate in his Note on Acts viii.15, that the believers of Samaria, who *had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus* had not yet received the Holy Ghost either "*in his miraculous gifts or his [full] sanctifying graces*":—those full and ripe ~~perfect~~ graces, which distinguish the ~~perfect believers~~ the believers, who have been baptized with the Holy Ghost, from those who have not." Cited from his unpublished and unfinished draft of a widely circulated essay, entitled "The doctrine of the new birth, as it is stated in these sheets, is directly or indirectly maintained by the most spiritual divines, especially in their sacred poems," Fletcher, *New Birth*.

Spirit as the “inward baptism” which had a deeper meaning than “water baptism.” In that essay, he seemed to link it to Christian perfection. He wrote: “Would to God that ye would . . . ‘repent and believe the gospel!’ Not repent alone (for then you know only the baptism of John), but believe and be ‘baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.’ . . . May the Lord constrain you to cry out, ‘How am I straitened till it be accomplished!’ even till the love of God inflame your heart, and consume all your vile affections!” Wesley then says that whatever differences exist between him and the Quakers, they are in agreement on this point. He says that this inward baptism with the Spirit means “that we are all to be taught of God, and to be ‘led by his Spirit;’ that the Spirit alone reveals all truth, and inspires all holiness; that by his inspiration men attain perfect love.”⁵⁰ Yet in the undated fragment (1769?) recording his comments about Benson’s essay on the baptism with the Holy Spirit, Wesley interpreted that phrase as a metaphor for water baptism and specifically rejected it as an encoded phrase for Christian perfection.

In this last letter of March 16, 1771, Benson must have surely thought that Wesley had indeed conceded every point—except universal salvation. First, Wesley specifically softened his emphasis on the witness of the Spirit given to justified believers. Wesley said that they may have the witness “sometimes.” He then allowed that “young men” have it “continually,” and “Fathers” are “filled with the Spirit” and made perfect in love. The views which Wesley expressed here represented exactly what Benson and Fletcher believed, and what they thought Wesley had always believed. This letter was written in a more gentle fashion than Wesley’s earlier one. Yet Wesley continued his rebuke of Benson’s idea of universal salvation. Wesley was pleased that Benson said he did not stress the idea of universalism, and Wesley warned that “on that subject [of ultimate universal salvation] I never suffer myself to *reason*. I should easily reason myself into a Deist, perhaps into an Atheist.”

It should be noted here that Benson did not ever come to embrace universalism, as his later sermons indicate.⁵¹ Wesley also indicates in a letter to Benson of September 10, 1773, that Benson had dropped this idea of universal salvation. He reminded Benson that he was at that time

⁵⁰*The Works of John Wesley, The Appeals*, ed. Cragg, 11:253, “A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part II.”

⁵¹“Mr. Benson’s Sermon,” *The Arminian Magazine* 17 (January 1799): 14-15.

“a little warped” from “the plain, old Methodist doctrine laid down in the Minutes of the Conference,” “but it was a right hand error.”⁵² Yet later on we know that Wesley had no quarrel with Benson about his linking the baptism with the Holy Spirit and Christian perfection because Benson continued to use it in sermons, letters, and even in articles which Wesley himself published in *The Arminian Magazine*.

Fletcher Exonerated and All Controversy Ceased

Why did the disagreement just disappear? Was it because Wesley was weary of controversy? By no means. Wesley never backed down on ideas which he felt were central to the cause of Methodism. The controversy ended abruptly because Wesley must have seen that all three of them agreed over the issue of the witness of the Spirit. Further, he was satisfied that Benson was not a universalist. Third, Wesley slightly adjusted his understanding on Pentecost and brought it into full agreement with Fletcher’s doctrine of dispensations. Wesley’s first awareness of Fletcher’s doctrine of dispensations was probably from Benson’s essay which ostensibly was the reason why he was dismissed from Trevecca. In that critique, Wesley had rejected the idea of dispensations, but he changed his mind and later endorsed Fletcher’s doctrine. This is why he said on January 17, 1775, to a very close friend: “Mr. Fletcher has given us a wonderful view of the different dispensations which we are under. I believe that difficult subject was never placed in so clear a light before. It seems God has raised him up for this very thing.”⁵³

The subsequent events show that Wesley, Benson, and Fletcher were in complete agreement. We know that Wesley’s main worry focused on Zinzendorf’s error and not the phrases, “Baptism with the Spirit,” because Benson and Fletcher continued to preach on the baptism with the Holy Spirit as the basis for perfection with not a word of censure from Wesley. As it will be pointed out, Fletcher’s writings, which Wesley edited, revised, and published freely, used the baptism with the Holy Spirit interchangeably with Christian perfection.

In a letter to John Pawson, April 27, 1780, we can see that Benson did in fact agree with Wesley about the witness of the Spirit being given to babes in Christ. In this letter he spoke about setting the doctrine of jus-

⁵²Telford, *Letters* 6:40 (to Joseph Benson, September 10, 1773).

⁵³Telford, *Letters*, 6:137 (to Elizabeth Ritchie, January 17, 1775).

tification “too low” to deny that babes in Christ possess the witness of the Spirit.⁵⁴ Yet Benson also continued to use the “baptism with the Holy Ghost” as a description of Christian perfection. In his journal entry for December 4, 1777, Benson said: “I have read, with prayer, the first eight chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. . . . O let me . . . become full of faith and the Holy Ghost. . . . I longed for the baptism of the Holy Ghost.”⁵⁵ On December 30, 1777, Benson preached at the New Chapel in Lowgate, Hull, alluding to Fletcher’s doctrine of dispensations as the best explanation of the Christian life,⁵⁶ and describing full sanctification as being received through the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Wesley published in *The Arminian Magazine* an essay by Benson which prominently featured the baptism with the Holy Spirit as the basis of full sanctification: “God may, and . . . does, *instantaneously* so baptize a soul with the Holy Ghost and with fire, as to purify it from all dross, and refine it like gold, so that it is *renewed in love*, in *pure and perfect* love.”⁵⁷ And in his treatise on sanctification written about a year later, Benson continued to link Pentecostal fullness of the Spirit with Christian perfection.⁵⁸ In a subsequent edition of his *Life of John Fletcher* (which went through twenty seven imprints throughout the nineteenth century), Benson added an appendix to answer the charge of Fletcher’s critics that his view of the baptism with the Holy Spirit was not a practical experience for Christians and that he himself did not profess to experience it. Benson’s response was to show that Fletcher was not a fanatic and that he did experience the baptism of the Spirit in a personal way.⁵⁹

In 1776, when Wesley and Fletcher were writing political treatises, Benson complained against them in a letter to a friend that “the principal thing to be thought, talked, and wrote about, is *the baptism of the Spirit*, or the *inward kingdom of God* [italics Benson’s]. Oh! my friend, this is

⁵⁴ MacDonald, *Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Benson*, 80-81.

⁵⁵ MacDonald notes: “This language . . . is that of a soul pressing on to perfection,” *Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Benson*, 52.

⁵⁶ Benson, “Two Sermons on the Nature and Design of the Gospel of Christ,” (printed by G. Prince, Hull), 14-16.

⁵⁷ Joseph Benson, *Two Sermons on Sanctification* (Leeds, 1782), 29.

⁵⁸ Joseph Benson, “Thoughts on Perfection,” *The Arminian Magazine* 4(October 1781), 553.

⁵⁹ Cf. Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. De La Flechere*, 391-401.

⁶⁰ In a letter of May 21, 1776, first published by Luke Tyerman, *Wesley’s Designated Successor*, 358.

but little known among us!”⁶⁰ Part of the significance of this letter is that it shows that the phrase “the baptism of the Holy Ghost” had become a well-established encoded phrase for Christian perfection. It further shows that Benson assumed that this was a preaching theme of both Wesley and Fletcher.

There are numerous letters of Fletcher printed in the *Arminian Magazine*, many of which highlight the connection between Pentecost and perfection. In one year alone *The Arminian Magazine* carried over 45 personal letters of Fletcher which had been written to different Methodists encouraging them in the faith and urging them to press on to perfection through receiving the “Promise of the Father” and “power from on high.” Wesley included many testimonies in *The Arminian Magazine* that used Pentecost phrases as a description of perfect love, especially the encoded phrase “the kingdom within, of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”⁶¹ Wesley often used Pentecostal phrases to describe Christian perfection.⁶² So Wesley’s main concern about Benson and Fletcher during their dispute in 1771 was not over the connection between sanctification and Pentecost.

It is interesting that Benson himself used the pejorative phrase “a late discovery” to discredit the Socinianism of Dr. Priestley. Fletcher had begun an essay on this subject without completing it before his untimely death. Fletcher’s wife requested Benson to finish this project. Because Socinianism denied the inspiration of Scripture, Benson called this idea “the late discovery” of Dr. Priestly which was lacking in “common sense.”⁶³ Ironically, he used the inflammatory phrase “the late discovery” in the same sense in which Wesley had used it in reference to Fletcher. We will see that Wesley withdrew this negative judgment and began to promote Fletcher as “Mr. Wesley’s Vindicator.”⁶⁴

Fletcher Defends Wesley As The Trevecca Debate Worsens

Wesley’s worry about Fletcher ceased shortly after he received a letter from him on June 24, 1771. Fletcher informed him that Walter Shirley

⁶¹“Account of the Rev. J. Creighton,” *The Arminian Magazine* 8 (January 1785): 402. He was deeply influenced by reading Fletcher. Telford, *Letters* 6:28 (to James Creighton, May 24, 1773).

⁶²Cf. Telford, *Letters* 6:94 (to Miss Elizabeth Ritchie, June 23, 1774).

⁶³Fletcher, *Works*, 3:505, “Socinianism Unscriptural.”

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

and the Trevecca Calvinists had sent out a circular letter calling for a public meeting with Wesley and his preachers at their next annual Conference in Bristol on August 6, 1771. The purpose of this meeting was to face down Wesley over the 1770 London "Declaration." In his letter, Fletcher told Wesley: "I think it my duty, dear Sir, to give you the earliest intelligence of this bold onset, and to assure you that, upon the evangelical principles mentioned in your last letter to me, I, for one, shall be glad to stand by you and your doctrine to the last."⁶⁵

Apparently reassured about Fletcher's faithfulness to Methodist doctrine, Wesley welcomed Fletcher's offer to write a defense of his theology. Fletcher called his defense, *Checks to Antinomianism*. His *First Check to Antinomianism* was finished by July 29, 1771, and he presented himself in it as Wesley's "Vindicator." This came only two months after Wesley warned Mary Bishop about Benson's and Fletcher's "dangerous" error. Obviously Wesley no longer considered Fletcher a threat, but an able defender of Methodist doctrine. In this *First Check*, Fletcher briefly alludes to his doctrine of dispensations (Noah, Moses, John the Baptist, and Christ glorified).⁶⁶ He connects Wesley's doctrine of perfection with Pentecost, pointing out that Wesley believes "that God can so 'shed abroad his love in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us,' as to 'sanctify us wholly, soul, body, and spirit.'"⁶⁷

Wesley made a special trip to Madeley to visit Fletcher on July 26-28, 1771.⁶⁸ He spent three days in personal consultation with Fletcher as Fletcher put his finishing touches on this manuscript.⁶⁹ There could be no doubt now in Wesley's mind about his 41-year-old friend, John Fletcher. Fletcher brilliantly defended Wesley's doctrine of holiness, noting the distinction between "holiness begun" in the hearts of justified believers and "finished holiness" in the hearts of the sanctified believers.⁷⁰ This was the very theological distinction which had worried Wesley when Benson had identified "receiving the Spirit" with entire sanctification. Wesley no longer had any reason to object to Fletcher's understanding of Methodist doctrine, and whatever misunderstanding existed between them was

⁶⁵Published by Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, 189.

⁶⁶Fletcher, *Works*, 1:41, "First Check to Antinomianism."

⁶⁷Fletcher, *Works*, 1:14, "First Check to Antinomianism."

⁶⁸*The Works of John Wesley* (Jackson), 3:440.

⁶⁹Cf. Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, 191.

⁷⁰Fletcher, *Works*, 1:13, "First Check to Antinomianism."

resolved completely, as is demonstrated by Wesley's subsequent admiration and promotion of Fletcher as his interpreter.

One thing is sure. Wesley no longer believed that Fletcher had made a "late discovery . . . which would divide the Methodists and create huge debate." Indeed, Wesley perceived Fletcher to be the very one who could bring the Methodists together in unity. Wesley was exceedingly impressed with Fletcher's vindication of his theology. He was so impressed that when the Trevecca Calvinists had convinced Fletcher to withdraw his manuscript on *The First Check to Antinomianism* before it was ever published in order to avoid an embarrassing public dispute, Wesley refused to cooperate. Wesley, in spite of the pleading and protests from one of Fletcher's dearest friends (Mr. Ireland), published Fletcher's *First Check to Antinomianism* in August, 1771. Fletcher's *Second Check to Antinomianism* was finished September 11, 1771. Wesley also immediately published it.⁷¹

If it had not been for Wesley's insistence on the significance of Fletcher's writings in the first place, causing him to publish the *First Check* while rebuffing the reconciling efforts of his Trevecca friends, Fletcher's *Checks to Antinomianism* may never have seen the light of day. Wesley acknowledged that the "bitter Circular Letter" which had been sent out in opposition to the Minutes of the 1770 Conference was an act of providence. Wesley wrote: "For I now clearly discern the hand of God throughout that whole affair" because it led to the publishing of John Fletcher's *Checks*.⁷² It was Fletcher's Pentecostal theology which shaped the way Methodists understood the teachings of John Wesley, which in turn gave birth to the emphasis on a Pentecostal understanding of theology in the twentieth century.

The "Baptism with the Holy Spirit" Became an Encoded Phrase for Christian Perfection

Despite opposition by a few of Wesley's preachers who eventually withdrew from the Methodist connection (such as John Hilton),⁷³ Fletcher's concept of dispensations and his Pentecostal highlighting of the doc-

⁷¹Fletcher, *Works* 1:69, "Preface to Second Check."

⁷²Benson, *The Life of the Rev. John W. De La Flechere*, 156.

⁷³A letter from John Fletcher to Charles Wesley (August 14, 1774), contained in the Fletcher archival collection in the John Rylands Library of Manchester University. Cf. *The Asbury Theological Journal* (Spring 1998) for the full text of the letter.

trine of Christian perfection became a common understanding among all Methodists. The first, official act on the part of Wesley to promote Fletcher's interpretation of his own theology was to endorse Fletcher's *Checks to Antinomianism* as "A Vindication of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Minutes" (appeared on the title page). In a letter from John Wesley to Fletcher, dated October 11, 1783, Wesley wrote: "I am quite satisfied about your motives and you had from the beginning my Imprimatur."⁷⁴ This term, "Imprimatur," comes from the New Latin *imprimatur* which means "let it be printed." It is a technical term used to show official approval and a license to print, especially under conditions of censorship. It implies that what is printed is by the directive of the highest officials. This is the most absolute term which Wesley could have used to show his complete and unqualified approval of Fletcher's writings. The term indicates Fletcher's official status as speaking for Wesley and with Wesley's sanction.

John Wesley believed that God providentially assigned Fletcher the task of developing his doctrine of dispensations. Wesley believed that no one had so clearly shown how the different epochs of salvation history had led to its culmination in the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵ John Fletcher (whom everyone recognized as a humble, saintly person) considered his own contribution to be as much of a radical rediscovery of the church's doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the doctrine of justification was for the Protestant Reformers.⁷⁶

There was one of Fletcher's books in particular which Wesley liked, *The Equal Check to Antinomianism and Pharisaism*. This book was first published in 1774, but Wesley shortened, published, and promoted it with his *Imprimatur*. In fact, Wesley's abridged version went through two printings in 1774.⁷⁷ It was also reprinted in 1795, almost four years after

⁷⁴A letter loosely contained in and bound up in a large volume (or folio) in John Rylands Library, entitled, *Letters Relating to the Wesley Family*.

⁷⁵*The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford, 6:137 (to Elizabeth Ritchie, January 17, 1775).

⁷⁶Cf. Fletcher's letter to Mary Bosanquet, March 7, 1778, first published in Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, 412.

⁷⁷I am indebted to the curator of the City-Road Methodist Chapel and home of John Wesley for providing me with a xerox copy of this special edition, entitled, *The First Part of An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism*, second edition (Bristol: Printed by W. Pine, 1774). It is possible that this "second edition" was really the first edition of Wesley's special abridgement and published as the second edition following the initial publication of Fletcher's larger work, *An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism*. Otherwise, it is likely that a copy of the "first edition" would have been in Wesley's personal library at his City Road home.

Wesley's death. Throughout this special edition Wesley shows his complete agreement with Fletcher's interpretation of his own theology. This edition shows that Fletcher's writings were more than just another book recommended by Wesley. It shows concretely that Fletcher had Wesley's "*Imprimatur*." It not only shows that Fletcher literally spoke for Wesley almost as an amanuensis, but it shows the things which Wesley wanted to emphasize. Wesley's motivation for publishing this book was to teach and to inform Methodists about what their doctrines were. Since his conference minutes required his preachers to read "Mr. Fletcher's tracts,"⁷⁸ a requirement which comes after the Wesley-Fletcher misunderstanding in 1771 had been resolved, this edition with Wesley's *Imprimatur* would have carried special significance.

Wesley's *Imprimatur* can be seen at the end of Fletcher's "Preface" where Wesley writes this footnote: "**N. B.** *I have considerably shortened the following tracts; and marked the most useful parts of them with a *. J. W.*" The parts of this special edition so marked reveal Wesley's special interests. One reason why Wesley published this shortened edition was because he thought that Fletcher's writings were too lengthy to attract some people, and he wanted to get them into the hands of all his Methodist readers so that they would understand true Methodist doctrines.

The theme of this special edition was holiness. Though Wesley was pleased with Fletcher's talent for writing against absolute predestination, he was even more impressed with Fletcher's defense of the Methodist doctrine of holiness. This is why he chose to shorten Fletcher's *Equal Check* which discussed faith, good works, and sanctification. The most significant of the "tracts" in this special edition was *An Essay on Truth* which was Fletcher's most important statement on Christian perfection, except for his posthumous work, *The Portrait of St. Paul. An Essay on Truth* is where Fletcher developed in full detail his doctrine of dispensations. It is saturated with Pentecostal terms, such as "the baptism with the Spirit," as expressing the meaning of holiness. Fletcher described his interpretation of Wesley as a "new step." Fletcher was aware that some would not like his interpretation. However, this special edition removes any doubt about Wesley's approval. Wesley fully endorsed Fletcher's creative synthesis and affirmed his use of Pentecostal terms, such as the "baptism with the Holy Spirit," as a designation for full sanctification.

⁷⁸Wesley, *Works* 8:395, "Minutes of Several Conversations."

Wesley's very first "*" marks the place where Fletcher says that full sanctification through the baptism with the Holy Spirit agrees with the teachings of the Church of England and with the faith of Wesley's "approved gospel-ministers."

In this same paragraph highlighted by Wesley, Fletcher says the *abiding* witness of the Spirit that one's sins are forgiven and that one enjoys peace and joy in the Holy Ghost is reserved only for those who have experienced the Pentecostal baptism. Speaking of the "glorious baptism on the day of Pentecost" which makes Christian perfection available to all believers, Fletcher makes this observation (with Wesley's full agreement as indicated by the "*"): "This is a most important truth, derided indeed by fallen churchmen, and denied by Laodicean dissenters; but of late years gloriously revived by Mr. Wesley and the ministers connected with him."⁷⁹ Throughout this essay, Fletcher insists that his doctrine of dispensations is nothing more than a restatement of Wesley's own ideas especially found in "Salvation by Faith" and "Christian Perfection." Fletcher cites considerably from Wesley's exposition on Pentecost as that which makes entire sanctification possible.⁸⁰ Toward the end of his essay, Fletcher concludes his exposition of dispensations with this comment: "From these excellent quotations [from Mr. Wesley], therefore, it appears, that you do me an honour altogether undeserved, if you suppose, that I first set forth the doctrine of the dispensations."⁸¹

Significantly, this particular edition by Wesley was included in the American edition of *The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher*, containing Wesley's special "*" highlighting. For example, the second American edition of Fletcher's *Works* was printed in 1809, containing Wesley's special "*" highlighting.⁸² Fletcher's complete *Works* were printed five times in America before Wesley's *Works* were printed the first time in 1826. These works were required reading of all American Methodist preachers, and this shows that they read the special edition in which Wesley specifically noted his full agreement with Fletcher concerning the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This also shows that these early American preachers depended on Fletcher for their interpretation of Wesley. Only in the 1970s

⁷⁹Wesley's abridged edition of *An Equal Check*, vii-viii.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 167ff.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 167ff.

⁸²*The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher*, 2nd American edition, 3 (New York: J. C. Totten, 1809).

was the now well-known myth popularized that there was a fundamental difference between Wesley and Fletcher.⁸³

I have recently finished a large manuscript documenting the extensive use of Pentecostal phrases as encoded nomenclature for Christian perfection which were universally used by the early Methodists, including Wesley, his leading preachers and assistants. I will give a few instances here. First, Wesley's later sermons were published in *The Arminian Magazine* (beginning in 1781)⁸⁴ and were well known to the early Methodists. Wesley published many of them in 1788 under the title, *Sermons on Several Occasions*. These later sermons also explain why the early Methodists did not perceive any fundamental difference in Fletcher's concept of holiness and Wesley's. Today these later sermons are largely unknown and unread even by Wesley scholars, as Outler has noted.⁸⁵ A disadvantage of reading Wesley's later sermons contained in his collected works is that the reader does not have the full context of *The Arminian Magazine* where they were originally published. The many articles featured in *The Arminian Magazine* supplement the larger understanding assumed in Wesley's sermons, especially the articles and testimonies which highlight the connection between Pentecost and Christian perfection.

A typical trait in Wesley's later sermons was to highlight the Methodist phenomenon as restoring a "Pentecost Church" in the world. Wesley's emphasis shows here that his and Fletcher's "flow of thought" were exactly the same. Reading the published letters of Fletcher, along with essays by Benson, alongside Wesley sermons in *The Arminian Magazine* could only be interpreted by readers as agreement on this very topic. To be sure, Fletcher favored the use of the term "baptism with the Holy Spirit" and Wesley more often used other pneumatological terms, such as "the seal of the Spirit," but Wesley himself perceived no difference in their understanding, as he frankly said in his letter to Fletcher after he had corrected his *Last Check*—where the baptism with the Holy

⁸³Not even James Mudge suggested such a rift between Wesley and Fletcher, even though he quoted out of context the well-known statement to Benson that all who are babes in Christ have received the Spirit. Cf. *Growth in Holiness Toward Perfection or Progressive Sanctification* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1895), 256-257.

⁸⁴"The Preface," *Arminian Magazine* 4 (January 1781): v.

⁸⁵*The Works of John Wesley, Sermons*, ed. Outler, 1:54-55, "Introduction."

Spirit is directly mentioned on five different occasions.⁸⁶ Wesley's explicit portrayal of Pentecost as the source of the fully sanctified life in his later sermons reveals this agreement. For example, in his sermon "On Zeal" (May 6, 1781), he writes: "In a Christian believer *love* sits upon the throne, which is erected in the inmost soul; namely, love of God and man which fills the whole heart and reigns without a rival. . . . This is that religion which our Lord has established upon earth, ever since the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. . . .love enthroned in the heart."⁸⁷

In the same volume of *The Arminian Magazine* in which this sermon appeared,⁸⁸ Wesley published an essay by Joseph Benson who said that "God *may*, and . . . *does*, *instantaneously* so baptize a soul with the Holy Ghost and with fire, as to purify it from all dross, and refine it like gold, so that it is *renewed in love*, in *pure* and *perfect* love."⁸⁹ It is clear that if Wesley himself linked Pentecost and perfection in this sermon "On Zeal," and it is clear that if he published Benson's essay on Christian perfection

⁸⁶*The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford, 6:174-175 (to John Fletcher, August 18, 1775). This *Last Check* was also published separately on occasions as a distinctive book of its own. For example, I located a copy of it entitled *Perfect Love* by John Fletcher. It was published in London by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office in 1867. Wesley had earlier said in a letter to Fletcher on March 22, 1775, that there was a "slight difference" between them concerning the meaning of the phrase "receiving the Holy Spirit," which Wesley said meant to have "the witness of the Spirit." Wesley wanted to ensure that Fletcher included the ideal that "babes in Christ" have the witness of the Spirit to their justification by faith (Telford, *Letters* 6:174). Wesley then published it in December, 1775. This *Last Check* prominently highlighted a Pentecostal interpretation of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection, and Fletcher interlaced his interpretation with extensive quotations from Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. This March 22 letter is the only time I have found where Wesley ever disagreed with Fletcher after he began writing his *Checks*, and in this particular instance Wesley said there were no longer any differences between them. If Wesley disagreed with the link between Pentecost and full sanctification, if Wesley disagreed with the use of the "baptism with the Holy Spirit," if Wesley thought that Fletcher had misinterpreted his own writings by quoting them to support a Pentecostal view of sanctification, then clearly Wesley would have said so, even as he had asked Fletcher to readjust his comments on "babes in Christ." Any Wesley scholar knows that Wesley would not permit a misunderstanding of Christian perfection among his preachers, especially with one so highly influential as Fletcher.

⁸⁷*The Works of John Wesley, Sermons*, ed. Outler, 3:313-314, "On Zeal."

⁸⁸ Cf. *Arminian Magazine* 4 (September and October, 1781): 463-469, 520-525.

⁸⁹J.[oseph] B.[enson], "Thoughts on Perfection," *The Arminian Magazine*, 4 (October, 1781): 553.

which linked the Pentecostal baptism with the Spirit and perfect love, he must have agreed with it as well. Surely it must have appeared obvious to his readers that Wesley agreed with Benson since Wesley too linked Pentecost and perfection in his sermon "On Zeal."

In his sermon "On the Church" (Sept. 28, 1785), Wesley makes a clear distinction between water baptism and the baptism with the Spirit, noting that all justified believers have the Spirit in a "lower sense," implying that the baptism with the Spirit is for fully sanctified believers. Wesley writes: "Some indeed have been inclined to interpret this [water baptism] in a figurative sense, as if it referred to that baptism of the Holy Ghost which the apostles received at the day of Pentecost, and which *in a lower degree* [italics mine] is given to all believers."⁹⁰ As Wesley scholars know, "in a lower degree" is Wesley's usual way of speaking of a believer who is not perfected in love.

Wesley had a rich variety of terms for perfection, and he more often used these as metaphors to speak of full sanctification than he laboriously used the technical, abstract terms of entire sanctification and Christian perfection. Some of the metaphors include "the image of God," "love enthroned," "gladness and singleness of heart," "all of one heart and of one soul," "the mind of Christ," "the kingdom of God within," and "glorious liberty," to name only a few expressions. What is particularly noticeable about Wesley's later sermons is that he self-consciously embraced Fletcher's emphasis on a personal Pentecost as the basis of Christian perfection. What is also noticeable is that Fletcher's emphasis on the coming worldwide Pentecostal display of the Spirit in the millenium became a theme in Wesley's later sermons, such as "The General Spread of the Gospel."⁹¹ The preaching of Mary Bosanquet Fletcher (who often

⁹⁰*The Works of John Wesley, Sermons*, ed. Outler, 3:45, "On the Church." There are two other places where Wesley used the specific phrase "baptism with the Spirit" in his sermons which have been already described above. The first reference could have been interpreted to mean that he was describing it as a reference to perfect love; in the second reference he said it was a metaphor for water baptism. It was not unusual for Wesley to use some phrases differently at times to denote different meanings. Here in the sermon "On the Church" Wesley says clearly that water baptism and baptism with the Spirit are different in meaning, as his first reference to this phrase also maintained (in 1744), as opposed to his second use of this phrase in the undated fragment (1769) noted above. This latest use of the phrase comes after Fletcher had encoded it as a phrase for Christian perfection.

⁹¹*The Arminian Magazine* 6 (August 1783): 403.

“preached” with Wesley and who was like his daughter) also confirms that Methodism highlighted the coming millenium as a time when the “baptism of the Spirit, to which every believer is expressly called,” would “overspread the earth” with righteousness.⁹² A book of her life and diaries was published by Henry Moore, and was a prominent piece of devotional literature throughout the nineteenth century in America. It was published fifteen different times in America from 1800 to 1850 and then was published another three times after that with 1883 being the last time by Thomas O. Summer and the Southern Methodist Publishing House. She as much as any writer is responsible for promoting the language of the baptism with the Spirit as a designation for Christian perfection (rather than Phoebe Palmer). No writer used the phrase “the baptism with the Spirit” more often and more self-consciously than Mary Bosanquet Fletcher. And no biography next to Wesley’s and Benson’s biography of John Fletcher saturated the conscience of American Methodists like Moore’s biography of Mary Fletcher. And no book so much highlighted the link between the coming millenium and the Pentecostal sanctification, which she derived from John Fletcher and Wesley.

That Wesley was particularly influenced by Fletcher’s theology can be seen in his sermon “On Faith” (1788) where he borrowed Fletcher’s doctrine of dispensations as the category for explaining his order of salvation.⁹³ Another sermon reflecting this same theme is “God’s Love to Fallen Man” (1782). Wesley distinguished three kinds of faith—“Faith in God,” “Faith in Christ,” and “Faith in the Spirit of God, as renewing the image of God in our hearts, as raising us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness.” Wesley further defined God as the Father and Creator of the world; he defined God the Son as the redeemer though his death and the power of his resurrection (Easter); he defined God the Holy Spirit (Pentecost)⁹⁴ “as revealing to us the Father and the Son; as opening the eyes of our understanding; bringing us out of darkness into his mar-

⁹²Henry Moore, *The Life of Mrs. Mary Fletcher* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 188?), 398.

⁹³*The Works of John Wesley, Sermons*, ed. Outler, 3:492-501, “On Faith.”

⁹⁴I here mention Pentecost to call attention to the fact all references to the Spirit in the New Testament are to the Holy Spirit whose identity was revealed as the Third Person of the Trinity on the day of Pentecost and whose power purifies and fully restores the believer to the image of God. This is why the “kingdom of God within” is frequently linked with Christian perfection.

velous light; renewing the image of God in our soul, and sealing us unto the day of redemption.”⁹⁵ This “renewing the image of God in our soul, and sealing us unto the day of redemption” are two encoded phrases most often used in Wesley to designate Christian perfection.

In his sermon “The Mystery of Iniquity,” Wesley noted that Peter and all the disciples forsook Jesus before Pentecost. Wesley points out that this was “a plain proof that the sanctifying Spirit was not then given, because ‘Jesus was not glorified.’”⁹⁶ Here in this sermon (1783) Wesley is repeating the same point Fletcher made in his *Essay on Truth* (1774) that the Pentecostal baptism with the Spirit is what made a difference in the lives of the disciples. The day of Pentecost was their moment of Christian perfection.⁹⁷

Joseph Pilmore, whom Wesley appointed as the first preacher to America along with Richard Boardman, in 1770 preached on the baptism with the Holy Spirit in America,⁹⁸ along with his close friend and preaching partner, Captain Webb.⁹⁹ Both Pilmore¹⁰⁰ and Webb¹⁰¹ were close friends of Fletcher. Henry Moore was also greatly influenced by Fletcher and linked Christian perfection and Pentecost.¹⁰² Fletcher specifically cited “the pious & learned Dr. Henry Moore” as one who specifically affirmed the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰³ Wesley’s closest associate and foremost leader among the Methodist preachers was Thomas Coke.¹⁰⁴ He had graduated from Oxford University and was an ordained presbyter¹⁰⁵

⁹⁵Ibid., 2:426-427.

⁹⁶*The Works of John Wesley, Sermons*, ed. Outler, 2:454.

⁹⁷Fletcher, *Works* 1:572, “Essay on Truth.” Cf. Ibid., 2:648, “Last Check to Antinomianism.”

⁹⁸*The Journal of Joseph Pilmore*, 46.

⁹⁹Cf. Hurst, *History of Methodism* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1902), 3:1252.

¹⁰⁰See Frank Stanger, “Biographical Sketch of Joseph Pilmore,” in *The Diaries of Joseph Pilmore*, 236

¹⁰¹Telford, *Letters*, 6:20 (see Telford’s comments on a letter to Joseph Benson, March 2, 1773).

¹⁰²Ibid., 12.

¹⁰³Fletcher, *New Birth*.

¹⁰⁴Wesley’s many references to Coke and his dependence on Coke who travelled widely both in America and in Britain are indicated in Wesley’s Journals. Cf. Warren A. Chandler, *Life of Thomas Coke* (Nashville, TN: Publishing House of M. E. Church, South, 1923), 3.

¹⁰⁵Cf. Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: G. Lane and C. B. Tippet, 1845) 1:155.

in the Church of England and became a curate at South Petherton, England, at the age of 28.¹⁰⁶ While curate, he heard about Fletcher and began to read his *Checks*. On August 28, 1775, Coke wrote Fletcher a year before he met John Wesley, saying he was particularly impressed with Fletcher's "Essay on Truth," which was Fletcher's main statement on the baptism with the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁷ Coke later noted that reading Fletcher was "the blessed means of bringing me among that despised people called Methodists, with whom, God being my helper, I am determined to live and die."¹⁰⁸ Coke was destined to become one of the most important leaders of Methodism whom Wesley seemed to have valued next to Fletcher. Coke (the first bishop of American Methodism with Francis Asbury) explicitly linked the baptism with the Holy Spirit and Christian perfection in his writings.¹⁰⁹ Fletcher also knew and corresponded frequently with Ann Loxdale who was to become the wife of Coke. This correspondence also shows that the connection between Pentecost and holiness was a common theme for them.¹¹⁰

When the annual conference met at Leeds in 1781, Fletcher preached in one of the services at 5:00 in the morning with 2,000 people present. His theme was on "exceeding great and precious promises."¹¹¹ We do not have many sermons which the early Methodists preached because they believed that preaching in the power and demonstration of

¹⁰⁶Cf. Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, 330. Hurst, *History of Methodism*, 938.

¹⁰⁷Copied from the original letter in the Wesleyan Mission House collection, Bishopsgate Street, London, by Luke Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, 331.

¹⁰⁸Cited by John Vickers, *Thomas Coke, Apostle of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1969). Cf. Warren A. Candler, *Life of Thomas Coke* (Nashville: Publishing House M.E. Church, South, 1923), 11.

¹⁰⁹Coke, *A Commentary on the New Testament* (London: G. Whitfield, 1803), 2:952.

¹¹⁰Fletcher, *Works*, 4:385, A letter to Miss Loxdale, June 22, 1781. Fletcher explained later to her what he meant by "prophecy" according to the diary notes of Hester Ann Rogers: "To 'prophecy,' in the sense *he* meant, was to magnify God with the *new heart* of love and the *new tongue* of praise, as they did who on the day of Pentecost were filled with the Holy Ghost! and he insisted that believers are now called to make the same confession, seeing we may all prove the same baptismal fire." Cited in "Profession of Faith," *The Guide to Christian Perfection* 7 (August 1845): 91.

¹¹¹Henry Turner, "Mr. Fletcher's Preaching," *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* 8 (August 1829): 528.

the Spirit meant extemporaneous preaching based on proper study and preparation before the service. Fletcher particularly modeled and emphasized this style of inspired preaching. Yet we know Fletcher's topic and the points in this particular sermon because one of Wesley's preachers, Joseph Pescod, reported it to his wife in a letter. Fletcher's second point in this message was "the promise of the Holy Ghost, whom our Lord told His disciples He would send after His ascension. The dispensation of the Spirit is to renew us after the image of God; which implies light, and power, and love. . . . I think I never heard a sermon to be compared with it. I wish I could tell you every word." Pescod added this comment to his wife: "I had, also, the happiness to receive from his hand the bread in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The ordinance was administered in the old church, by Mr. Wesley, Mr. Fletcher, and nine other Clergymen."¹¹² Commenting on this sermon by Fletcher on the promise and dispensation of the Spirit, in his journal on Wednesday, August 8, 1781, Wesley wrote: "I desired Mr. Fletcher to preach. I do not wonder he should be so popular; not only because he preaches with all his might, but because the power of God attends both his preaching and prayer."¹¹³

According to Adam Clarke's autobiography, while he was attending the Bristol conference, early in the morning on August 3, 1783, he heard "Mr. Bradburn preach on Christian perfection, from I John iv.19." It should be noted that Bradburn felt especially indebted to John Fletcher, and he too equated Pentecost with Christian perfection.¹¹⁴ Then at 10:00 a.m. Clarke heard Wesley preach on the text Acts. 1:5, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Later on during the day, he heard Wesley preach on the text, "Let us go on to perfection," (Heb. 6:1).¹¹⁵ Clarke also noted that when Wesley came into his district of Norwich in October, 1783, he heard Wesley preach a sermon on the text, "They were all baptized with the Holy Ghost."¹¹⁶ *Within the space of one month, Clarke*

¹¹²Cited by Henry Turner, "Mr. Fletcher's Preaching," *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, A Continuation of the Arminian or Methodist Magazine* 8 (August 1829): 527-528.

¹¹³Wesley, *Works* (Jackson), 4:213, Journal (August 8, 1781).

¹¹⁴Cf. Bradburn, *God Shining Forth, from Between the Cherubim* (Bolton: T. Garner, at the Minerva Printing Office, 1805), iv, 43.

¹¹⁵Adam Clarke's autobiography, *An Account of the Religious and Literary Life of Adam Clarke* (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1837), 162.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 171.

heard Wesley preach two sermons on the baptism with the Holy Ghost. This occurred well after Pentecostal nomenclature had been self-consciously developed for Christian perfection. Certainly with the well-known usage of baptism-with-the-Holy-Spirit language among the Methodists after Fletcher had established it as an encoded phrase for Christian perfection, Wesley's preaching on the baptism with the Spirit would have corresponded with this general understanding.

Richard Treffry, who was admitted into full connection in 1792 in British Methodism and who became one of its Conference president,¹¹⁷ was a frequent spokesman for Christian perfection, equating it with the baptism with the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁸ We do not have actual content of the preaching of Francis Asbury, but in his diaries he noted the profound influence which Fletcher exerted on his own thinking, especially in regard to holiness.¹¹⁹ We know from the "reminiscences" of Henry Boehm, the traveling companion of Francis Asbury, that the "fullness" and "baptism" of the Spirit was a common expression for Christian perfection.¹²⁰ We also know from his journal that Asbury used "filled with the Spirit" to designate his own experience of the fullness of divine love.¹²¹ Asbury insured that his American preachers read and knew Fletcher.¹²² Fletcher's writings formed the core of the conference course of study for all American preachers until the end of the nineteenth century.¹²³ It is thus understandable that Asbury's preachers used the fullness and baptism of the Holy Spirit in their preaching (such as Elijah R. Sabin who was admitted into the conference "on trial" in 1799 and brought into the conference in "full connection" in 1801).¹²⁴ Sabin published one of his sermons on Christian perfection (linking it to Pentecost and the fullness of the Holy

¹¹⁷Cf. Richard Treffry, *A Treatise on Christian Perfection* (Boston: McDon-ald, Gill, & Co., 1888), 5. Cf. John Fletcher Hurst, *History of Methodism* 3:1325.

¹¹⁸*The Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* 27 (July, 1835): 287-288, 296.

¹¹⁹Francis Asbury, *Journal* 2:92 (June 12, 1808).

¹²⁰Henry Boehm, *Reminiscences, Historical and Biographical* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1866), 151.

¹²¹*The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury in Three Volumes*, ed. Elmer T. Clarke (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), 1:281 (September 24, 1778).

¹²²*Ibid.*, 440-441.

¹²³Hurst, *History of Methodism* 2:868.

¹²⁴Cf. *Minutes Taken at the Several Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 83, 96.

Spirit), a sermon which he preached at Warwick, Rhode Island, September 13, 1807.¹²⁵

The histories of Methodism written by Jesse Lee¹²⁶ and Nathan Bangs¹²⁷ show that the baptism with the Holy Spirit was a common theme in early Methodism. Some other leading American Methodists in the early 1800s who specifically equated the baptism with the Holy Spirit and Christian perfection include Timothy Merritt and Wilbur Fisk. Fisk professed to be fully sanctified after hearing Timothy Merritt preach a sermon on the “baptism with the Holy Spirit” in 1818.¹²⁸

Browsing through the issues of *The Arminian Magazine* will produce testimonies of those like Mrs. Elizabeth Keagey of Pennsylvania who in 1811 was “filled with the Spirit and. . .made perfect in love” as a result of becoming a Methodist and hearing her minister preach on this theme.¹²⁹ These reports are typical and can be easily found. For example, the memoir of Miss Eliza Higgins in the American edition of *The Arminian Magazine* in 1822 contains references to being “perfected in love” through “the blessed Comforter [who will] descend, that sweet messenger of rest, and make his continual abode in your heart.”¹³⁰ A sermon on Christian perfection in the same issue specifically quotes John Fletcher and identified the giving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost with entire sanctification.¹³¹ Numerous letters, sermons, and other writings of John Fletcher were included in *The Arminian Magazine* throughout the nineteenth century.

If Phoebe Palmer was to become a significant spokesperson for the baptism with the Holy Spirit beginning around 1837, it was only because she was representing what she had learned as part of her Methodist her-

¹²⁵Elijah R. Sabin, *Christian Perfection Displayed and the Objections Obviated: Being the Substance of Two Discourses Delivered at Warwick, Rhode Island, September 13, 1807* (Providence, RI: Jones and Wheeler, 1807), 14-15.

¹²⁶Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the the Methodists, in the United States of America; Beginning in 1766, and Continued till 1809* (Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810), 57.

¹²⁷Nathan Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 2:75.

¹²⁸Joseph Holdich, *The Life of Willbur Fisk* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1842), 72.

¹²⁹*The Methodist Magazine* 6 (1823): 258.

¹³⁰“Memoir of Miss Eliza Higgins,” *The Arminian Magazine* 5 (July, 1822), 259.

¹³¹Treffry, “A Sermon on Christian Perfection, *The Arminian Magazine* 5 (March- April, 1822), 124-126.

itage. Bangs was Palmer's first theology teacher.¹³² Bangs' biographer, Abel Stevens, points out that "the doctrine of sanctification, as taught by Paul and expounded by Wesley and Fletcher, was a favorite theme in the conversations" of him and his friends.¹³³

If there was an increase in the number of references to the baptism with the Holy Spirit around 1850, population demographics would largely account for it. In 1800, there were 64,894 Methodists; in 1850 there were 1,284,705 Methodists; in 1906 there were 4,803,178 Methodists.¹³⁴ If anything, as Methodism grew numerically there was less of an emphasis on Pentecostal sanctification. At least prior to 1850, all the Methodist theologians and bishops linked Pentecost and perfection. That trend continued until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, especially when James Mudge rejected Christian perfection as attainable in this life and consequently linked Pentecost to justifying faith.¹³⁵

Rediscovering Fletcher Means Rediscovering Original Methodism

After theological liberalism had swept through Methodism during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Wesley and Fletcher were placed on the sidelines as historical figures of the past. The recovery of the real Wesley was initiated in 1935 with George Craft Cell in his book, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley*. The ensuing years have multiplied the number of studies in the writings of John Wesley, including the Oxford/ Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's *Works*. But Outler has noted that Wesley Studies "is sorely ignorant" about the last 20 years of Wesley's thinking. Yet this was in many ways the most productive years in Wesley's life. This was the Wesley which was understood and preached by the early Methodists until the end of the nineteenth century. This was the Wesley which the early Methodists learned about through reading the *Arminian Magazine*. This was the Wesley which Fletcher helped to nuance in his *Checks to Antinomianism*. In my recently completed manuscript, I have shown this is "the Pentecostal Wesley." Simply relying on Wesley's *Standard Sermons* will

¹³²Abel Stevens, *Life and Times of Nathan Bangs*, 350.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 52.

¹³⁴*Methodism*, ed. William K. Anderson (New York: The Methodist Publishing House, 1947), 68.

¹³⁵Mudge says Christian perfection "is always something to be accomplished in the future, never a work accomplished in the past." Cf. Mudge, *Growth in Holiness Toward Perfection or Progressive Sanctification* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1895), 242.

not provide for the larger understanding of Wesley's theology. His later sermons, *The Arminian Magazine* which was begun in 1778, the writings of John Fletcher which were published after 1771, the close personal partnership between Wesley and Fletcher in forming the ideas of their preachers as they traveled and preached together at Methodist preaching houses and in the annual conferences, and the preaching and writings of his key preachers and assistants must all be brought together into a single puzzle if a true picture of Methodism is to be seen. Only in this way can a reliable, historical explanation of original Methodism be achieved. What will be seen through this historiographical reconstruction of the later Wesley will be that one of the distinctive and lasting contributions of early Methodism was its emphasis on the suddenness of a Pentecostal experience of sanctifying grace in the life of a justified believer.

John Fletcher Hurst was one of most brilliant minds in Methodism at the end of the nineteenth century. He became president of Drew University in 1873 and the thirty-second bishop in 1880. He said that Fletcher's writings "constitute the greatest prose contribution to the literature of the Methodist awakening as do Charles Wesley's hymns to its poetry."¹³⁶ John Wesley's sermons, Charles Wesley's hymns, and John Fletcher's theology shaped the matrix of early Methodism.

If John Fletcher was the first theologian of Methodism, then Richard Watson was its first systematic theologian. This is because his *Theological Institutes* formalized Methodist doctrine into a textbook of distinct topics and explained their connection with logical precision. Watson was a great admirer of John Fletcher. In his biography of Watson, Thomas Jackson writes: "On the subject of entire sanctification, his views accord with those of Messrs. Wesley and Fletcher."¹³⁷ One of Watson's concerns toward the end of his life was that the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness must be maintained and promoted in the Methodist Church. He said: "If the doctrine of Christian perfection, as taught by Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher, be true, as we all believe it is, I fear we do not give that prominence to it in our preaching which we ought to do: and that some of us do not seek to realize it in our own experience, as it is our privilege and duty."¹³⁸

¹³⁶John Fletcher Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1903), 204-205.

¹³⁷*Memoirs of The Life and Writings of The Rev. Richard Watson*, ed. Thomas Jackson (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1836), 470.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 424.

In a letter addressed to his dying father on November 12, 1812, Watson revealed just how deeply he felt about Fletcher's Pentecostal rendering of Wesley's doctrine of full sanctification. It shows his concern that his father experience the full assurance of sanctifying grace through the suddenness of a personal Pentecostal experience. Watson was himself in ill health and unable to go see his father. Here are the words of the first Methodist systematic theologian to his dying father.

Wakefield, Nov. 12, 1812

My Dearest Father,

After having had many anxious thoughts concerning you, I was just sitting down to write you when I received my sister's letter. I notice in it you desire to see me; and be assured that I am anxious also to see you. . . .

I trust that you are satisfied as to your acceptance with God; nay, that you can rejoice in the full assurance of his love revealed to you by his Holy Spirit. Be determined to obtain this; for there is no other ground of safety and happiness than an application of the blood of atonement to our consciences, taking away the guilt of sin, and the condemning power of the law. It is to be received by an act of faith. Be persuaded that Christ is able to bless you with this full and glorious comfort *now*, and venture your whole upon him; wait every moment for the evidence that the work is done, till faith, and joy, and praise spring up in your heart. This would be necessary, were you in health; but now the time is short, and more than commonly uncertain. O wrestle like Jacob, till you obtain the blessing.

In like manner proceed to obtain the full sanctification of your nature. It is not death, but grace, that must destroy our sin, and make us meet for heaven. Have faith in the promise of the Father to send the Holy Spirit in all the power he exerted in the day of Pentecost, to burn up the very root of corruption, and fill you in a moment with all the love and power of God, making you one with Christ, and an entirely new creature. . . .¹³⁹

I am your affectionate son,

R. Watson

In summary, I have shown through eight lines of argument that Wesley affirmed the connection between Pentecost and full sanctification after

¹³⁹Ibid., 96s.

1771. Some of these arguments are derived from more implicit evidence and others are based explicitly on facts. Taken together, they constitute a substantial body of evidence. In brief, they are: (1) Wesley included Fletcher as the only other source of Methodist doctrine in the minutes of the Conference (The Large Minutes), showing that Wesley no longer feared that Fletcher's view of the Holy Spirit would "create huge debate and divide the Methodists," and thus implicitly approving Fletcher's link between entire sanctification and Pentecost, since that was a prominent feature; (2) Wesley published a special edition of Fletcher's *Equal Check* in which Wesley himself highlighted Fletcher's Pentecostal terminology as the distinctive emphasis of Methodism; (3) Wesley himself preached on the baptism with the Holy Ghost according to Adam Clarke after this phrase was universally encoded in Methodism as a term for Christian perfection; (4) Wesley published articles in the *Arminian Magazine* which highlighted the baptism with the Holy Ghost as the meaning of Christian perfection; (5) Wesley's later sermons (published after 1781) explicitly link Pentecost and full sanctification; (6) Wesley said in 1775 in reference to Fletcher's *The Last Check to Antinomianism* that there was no difference between him and Fletcher over the meaning of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, and in this work Fletcher frequently equated the baptism with the Spirit and Christian perfection; (7) Wesley's closest friends and leaders equated baptism with the Spirit and Christian perfection, something extremely unlikely unless Wesley did as well; and (8) Wesley praised Fletcher's doctrine of dispensations as the best explanation of the different stages of grace since the Apostles, noting also that this explanation was the very reason why God had raised him up. The primary emphasis in Fletcher's doctrine of dispensations was to chart the progress which a believer makes toward experiencing the baptism with the Holy Spirit which perfects a believer in love.

Surely no Wesley scholar would challenge the sincerity of Wesley's appraisal of Fletcher as having been brought by God into connection with Methodism to develop his Pentecostal doctrine of dispensations. At least, no one ever did in Methodist history until some began doing so in the Wesleyan Theological Society in the 1970s. The Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection will continue to sink into neglect until its relationship to Pentecost is once again restored.

“PURITY AND POWER” ACCORDING TO THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

by

Robert W. Wall

The purpose of this article is to explore the subjects of purity and power within a single biblical writing, *The Acts of the Apostles*. All such explorations carry cargo consisting of specific methodological interests and critical assumptions. In brief, I will approach Acts as a biblical (rather than Lukan) writing and assume that its intended aim is theological understanding, the means to which is text-centered exegesis.¹

Christian theological understanding takes shape within the religious locations of Scripture's current readers. Few stops in the *Wirkensgeschichte* of Acts are as provocative and productive as those of the Wesleyan and especially Pentecostal communities of interpretation. In these locations, Acts is interpreted by a pattern of salvation that has taken shape over generations of shared experiences and traditions, where the deeper logic of the Christian gospel coheres around the witness and role of the

¹I have defined and developed the methodological interests of a “canonical approach” to NT exegesis in a series of articles, several of which appear in R. W. Wall and E. E. Lemcio, *The New Testament as Canon: A Reader in Canonical Criticism* (JSNT Sup 76, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992). While admitting substantial literary and (less so) theological continuities between Luke and Acts, my reading of Acts treats its theological subject matter as an integral whole, with its own distinctive contribution to make to biblical theology independent of Luke's gospel. See R. W. Wall, “The Acts of the Apostles in Canonical Context,” *BTB* 18 (1988), 15-24. For a recent challenge to the modern reading of Acts and Luke together, see M. C. Parsons and R. I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

Holy Spirit for empowering the church’s evangelical mission. Wesleyans and Pentecostal believers find their own stories in this biblical narrative, which both confirms and constitutes us as God’s people.

As a work of immense literary art, Acts is roughly ‘aggadic midrash,² a narrative commentary on related biblical texts, namely Joel 3:1-5 (LXX; cf. Acts 2:17-21) and Amos 9:11-12 (LXX, cf. Acts 15:16-18). According to its literary design, the first half of Acts (ending with 15:12, par. 2:22) is a narrative commentary on Joel’s prophecy, cited by the Peter of Acts to interpret the pentecostal founding of the church. Moving from Jerusalem back to Jerusalem, the action of Acts is plotted by the repeated use of the “signs and wonders” formula of the Joel text, which interprets the prophetic “Day of the Lord” as having dawned, fulfilling the promise that “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” In this sense, the sequence of conversion stories that unfolds from Pentecost to the Jerusalem Council narrates the genesis of this age of fulfillment.

The second half of Acts (ending with 28:28, par. 15:13) is a travel-narrative commentary of the Amos prophecy, cited by James in Acts 15:16-18 to interpret the controversial inclusion of gentiles into eschatological Israel. This portion of Acts narrates the fulfillment of Amos’ prophecy of a rebuilt “tent of David,” tells the story of that “tent-maker” (so 18:3) Paul, whose divinely superintended journey/pilgrimage from Jerusalem (Acts 15) to Rome (Acts 28), in compliance to Christ’s commission (1:8), proves him a missionary who enjoys the favor of God.

Especially important within the context of the NT is the interplay between “calling upon the name of the Lord” and the Lord calling people to himself in Acts and the use of *epi-kaleo* in Romans 9-11, which links together (if not also historically) the theological crisis to which both texts continue to respond as Scripture. The definition of Israel, which centers the controversy of the Gentile mission, is about the conversion of Gentiles—how they call upon the Lord in a way that is heard, and about the election of Gentiles—how God is faithful to the biblical promise of uni-

²The more technical aspects of this idea follow the lead of D. Boyarin, *The Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990). See also the collection of fluent essays by C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders, *Luke and Scripture* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). For a more popular discussion of “Christian Haggadah” defined against the background of Jewish exegesis, see H. S. Shoemaker, *Godstories* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1998), xiii-xxvi, especially in relationship to Acts, 292-303.

versal salvation. This literary interplay between God's "call" and the convert's call upon the Lord who is the risen Jesus (so 2:36), concentrates the narrative action of Acts and supplies the unifying subtext of its every thematic, including those developed for this paper.³

The Spirit of God "Spirit"

As a Narrative Norm. According to Acts, both "purity and power" are concrete experiences of the post-Pentecost community of believers who now live within the realm of the Spirit (2:38). No definition of "purity and power" can be advanced from Acts apart from a prior understanding first of the Spirit and then of its community as exegetical presumptions of normative importance.

According to the final form of the NT, the shift from fourfold Gospel to Acts envisages a shift in narrative thematic and theological interest from Jesus (Gospel) to Spirit (Acts).⁴ Messiah, who is empowered by the Spirit for his earthly mission, becomes the heavenly baptizer by whose Spirit his successors on earth are now empowered to continue his ministry. This critical shift marks out the programmatic historical problem facing the community of Christ's disciples: will they be able to survive his physical departure from them? The theological problem that Acts considers is this: what form of life does Israel take in its post-Jesus era? The succession from a messianic movement to an apostolic community and the continuity of Messiah's role to do what he began (1:1) is the central thematic of the entire narrative. Sharply put, the succession of eras in the

³For a fuller development of this thesis, see R. W. Wall, "Israel and the Gentile Mission in Acts and Paul," in *Witness to the Gospel: the Theology of Acts* (I. H. Marshall and D. Peterson, eds., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 437-457.

⁴A simple concordance search envisages this thematic shift in the biblical narrative: Acts refers to the Spirit's work more frequently than does the fourfold Gospel. In this regard, Jesus' reference to the promised Spirit in Acts 1:5-8 is unintelligible in isolation from the OT witness. Further, the historical-critical interest in reading Acts according to the theological idiom of Luke's Gospel fails to supply a sufficiently robust conception of the Spirit to make sense of Jesus' departing words in Acts. From a canonical perspective, however, this thematic shift from Jesus to Spirit is made more coherent because the concluding point made by the fourfold Gospel about the Spirit's role after Jesus' departure is sounded by John, not by Luke. The importance of the Spirit promised by Jesus in Acts 1 is made more coherent by the Spirit promised by Jesus in John 20:14-16. Indeed, the "Johannine pentecost" (20:22) only serves as the canonical prolepsis for Scripture's subsequent and fuller narrative of the Spirit's arrival in Acts 2.

history of God’s salvation from messianic to apostolic, as well as the continuity of their respective missions, are marked off and facilitated by the Spirit of God—by whom all things that happen during Messiah’s earthly ministry and his apostolic successors fulfill God’s prophesied (= ordained) plan (cf. 1:16, 22; 2:23; 3:21; 4:28; 10:42).

With the departure of Jesus, the Spirit replaces him as the principal agent of God’s salvation and revelation within the faith community (cf. John 14:16-7, 25-6). By the Spirit the apostles and other ministers of the Word are empowered to witness to the risen Jesus (4:28-31, et. al.) and by whom the word of God “increases” (6:7) to the “end of the earth.” This connection of Spirit with the Word of God and its various carriers is essentially prophetic; thus, the Spirit is primarily a “spirit of prophecy” in continuity with Jesus (2:33) and the OT prophets (2:17-21). The Spirit is therefore understood within the plan of God’s salvation as the One who discloses this plan through Scripture (2:23; 4:28-31) and human witness (1:8), and by whom this biblical plan is now being fulfilled.

Even more strategically for Acts, it is by the Spirit that the faith community is healed and transformed (or re-created) into a suffering people faithful to God within an anti-God world (2:46-47; 5:40-42; 7:51-59; 9:15-17; 20:19-24; 21:11-14). It is by the Spirit that the suffering Jesus is “present” within the community and it is the Spirit who is empowered to bear witness to Jesus. In this sense, the baptism with the Spirit is a rite of initiation into a cruciform life (= Pentecost).

This more full-bodied idea of Spirit in Acts, which combines the roles of witness and power of God with the role as divine agent of personal and communal transformation, prepares the reader for the Pauline letters. The explicit control the Spirit exerts over the faith community reminds one of Paul’s difficult statement in 2 Cor. 3:17, “Now the Lord is the Spirit.”

Toward a Theology of the Spirit According to Acts. The theological conception of Acts is not yet fully trinitarian; it is rather more theocentric. The Spirit is depicted in Acts as an agent of God, who is an active and concrete force in the history of God’s people. Messiah’s earthly ministry follows God’s plan (2:22-23), and it is God who “makes him Lord and Christ” (2:36). Thus, the Holy Spirit is God’s Spirit (however, 16:7), who is always given to Israel as agent of the salvation God promises to work out within Israel’s history according to its Scriptures. The Spirit of

Acts is not a new reality: this is the same Spirit who in the beginning is agent of creation; this is the same Spirit who inspired Israel's prophets to predict the coming of a new creation to replace the one bruised and battered by humanity's sin; this is then the same Spirit of a new creation, given to Messiah at his baptism to identify him as Savior and empower him to deliver all things from sin and death. The pentecostal parousia of the Spirit is rather a "re-new-al" of the Spirit's presence within Israel in order to continue what saving work Messiah has begun to teach and to do (1:1).⁵ The theology of Spirit in Acts is derived from the antecedent biblical tradition and is not an innovation on Luke's part.

The programmatic importance of the Joel prophecy for Acts has already been noted above. In near context, Peter cites Joel to interpret the pentecostal phenomenon to those Jewish pilgrims who witnessed it in Jerusalem (2:1-13) as the inaugural of "the last days" (2:17) and herald of the "Day of the Lord" (2:20). The prophecy also supplies the biblical-theological context within which all subsequent activity of the Spirit of Acts, and specifically its "power" (1:8), is understood by its readers. The Spirit of God is the agent of power (par. OT) by whom God "speaks" in Scripture about the plan and history of salvation (1:16; 4:25; 28:25); by whom the teachers of Israel (apostles, Stephen, Philip, Paul) now can interpret the fulfillment of Scripture in "the events that have occurred among us" (Luke 1:1; Acts 4:8); by whom the entire faith community, led by these Spirit-filled interpreters of Scripture, is transformed to bear witness to God by word and deed (2:37-47).

The theological problem considered by Acts may be restated as follows: To which Israel does God give the Spirit as the mark (or "gift") that God's promised salvation has now been fulfilled? Already in the gospel, Messiah's ministry has resulted in a divided Israel, not only between messianic and non-messianic Israel, but within messianic Israel between the followers of Jesus, who they claim is Messiah, and his various enemies, Jewish and Roman.

⁵I suspect that Joel's notion of Spirit as the community's eschatological sign, whose coming awakens the community to worship and obedience for its salvation, is the most mature within the OT. Clearly, however, the Spirit's role in empowering individual agents to work on God's behalf within Israel, certainly a narrative thematic of the former prophets, is also found in Acts. The theology of Spirit in Acts is derived from the antecedent biblical tradition and is not an innovation on Luke's part.

This same variegated conflict continues and is even expanded (especially during Paul’s Gentile mission) in the ministry of Jesus’ apostolic successors. The pentecostal parousia of the Spirit of God defines, then, which Israel is truly God’s Israel, in whose history, then, God’s prophesied salvation will be experienced. Not only are the twelve “apostolic successors” to Messiah baptized with the Spirit, but all members of the community receive the Spirit as the “gift” (2:38) and mark of God’s salvation. Even Jewish outcasts (Acts 8) and Gentile converts receive the Spirit, extending the boundaries of true Israel.

The Community of the Spirit

“Community” as a Narrative Norm. The arrangement of NT narrative, which begins with the Gospel and continues with Acts, suggests that the story of Jesus is incomplete without the story of the church: the narrative of Jesus’ earthly ministry tells but “the beginning of the gospel” (Mark 1:1; Acts 1:1) that his successors must then continue in his absence (cf. Matt. 28:16–20 par.). Of course, it is the fourfold gospel that supplies the rule of faith, who is Jesus, as well as proper incentive to continue his mission on earth, which is his resurrection and promise of his return. Yet, for all its weaknesses, Conzelmann’s thesis still has the ring of truth. The evident delay of the Lord’s parousia necessitates a shift in the narrative thematic in Acts from the parousia of Messiah at the end of history to the parousia of the Spirit who empowers the community’s witness within current history to bridge the historical gap until Messiah’s return. Clearly, according to Acts, the Spirit of God “as the distinguishing mark of the people of God permeates the whole of Acts.”⁶

The term “people of God,” which is featured so prominently in the theology of Acts, is the most basic biblical term to describe Israel’s covenantal relationship to God. As in Acts, it often functions in the OT as an idiom of prophetic speech to orient an audience to the word of the Lord. In this sense, the tacit appeal to a special or covenantal relationship presumes the obedience of the people to God as well as the repudiation of all false claims and immoral acts which might undermine Israel’s relationship with God. Even though the term is important in Deuteronomy, a text frequently alluded to in both Luke and Acts, the primary context for

⁶J. Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 45.

understanding the use of *laos* in Acts is prophetic where it conveys the eschatological hope for the people of God. Although obedience to God is the expected response of God's people, the point scored by the prophetic tradition has more to do with Israel's identity as God's people and with God's faithfulness to the promise of a restored Israel than with the special prerogatives or responsibilities of being God's people. This emphasis continues in Acts where the theological crisis has to do more often than not with the community's identity: what does it mean to be Israel and to do as Israel ought?

The central theological crisis of Acts is that of a divided people of God (cf. Luke 2:34-35).⁷ What makes this crisis so profound and urgent is that it occurs during "the last days" (so 2:17) of Israel's history after the Messiah has arrived to heal a broken people (2:20-21). The narrative irony of Acts, of course, is that the division within the house of Israel concerns this same Messiah, whom believers contend God raised from the dead to make him Lord and Christ even though many (although surely not all) in Israel have rejected him (2:22-36).

But more precisely according to Acts, this conflict within religious Israel turns on biblical interpretation, whether Scripture prophesies a *risen* Messiah and whether the identity of this Messiah then is the man, Jesus from Nazareth. The salvation of Israel is at stake when the Scripture is misunderstood.⁸ The disobedience of Scripture's word, which is the same as disobedience to the Spirit who spoke this word into existence, is in actuality a rejection of a particular interpretation of Scripture. In Acts, the evidence supplied for this reading of Scripture is religious experience: experience always precedes and determines the prophetic reading of Scripture. Most critical is the apostle's witness to the resurrection of Jesus—not to the event itself to which no one was witness, but of the risen Messiah himself. Yet, the church's witness to the Spirit (Pentecost, inspired speech, et. al.) and to the conversions that resulted when "every-one who called upon the name of the Lord (= risen Jesus) will be saved" (= healed, forgiven, restored, transformed) are all experiences of fulfilled prophecy, the proof of which confirms the community's reading of Scripture.

⁷Cf. D. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

⁸Jervell, 68.

Toward a Theology of Community According to Acts. The baptism with the Spirit marks the faith community as the eschatological people of God: to them belongs God’s promise of the Spirit (1:4) and its fulfillment as the Spirit is received by baptism as a “gift” (2:38). This radical Pentecostalism, then, overturns prevailing ethnocentric or nationalistic definitions of God’s Israel. The baptism of the Spirit upon the renegade Samaritans (8:4-25), then proselyte foreigners including their eunuchs (8:26-40; cf. Isa 56), and even upon the Gentiles (10:44—11:15; 15:6-11) clearly indicates that God’s salvation is universally available to those who believe that Jesus is Messiah. The “everyone” of Joel’s prophecy is now interpreted by a narrative of conversion that posits the “gift of the Spirit” in an Israel reconstituted by God to relativize “every tribe, tongue, people and nation” and rather to identify by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

In the lives of all those who belong to that community of the Spirit, the substance and power of God’s reign is publicly observed (2:47). Since the sociology of God’s new creation, formed by the activities of the Spirit, features the arrival of God’s eschatological Jubilee,⁹ a wide range of noteworthy effects result, from the end of class conflict (2:43-46; 4:32-37) to spiritual/physical healing (3:1-8). Likewise, the denial of the Spirit provokes God’s judgment, which again is publicly observed as death rather than new life (5:1-11; cf. 1:15-21).

Acts connects the Spirit’s activity with the community’s mission: the power of the Spirit empowers witness (1:8). Even the sociopolitical transformation of the community’s life under the aegis of the Spirit serves a missiological end (e.g., 2:47; 5:11). More explicitly, however, the community’s witness to the risen Messiah is influenced by the Spirit in two ways. (1) Through the agency of the Spirit, God directly guides and even controls the missionary’s evangelical ministry through visions, voices, prophecies and the like. (2) There is a close connection in Acts between the Spirit and proclamation. The competency and character of the successful missionary is a gift of the Spirit. The content of what is preached (“kerygma”), while certainly christological, is informed and proven by Scripture as given and interpreted by the Spirit of prophecy.

⁹Cf. S. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee* (OBT, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); J. A. Sanders, “Sins, Debts, and Jubilee Release,” in *Luke and Scripture*, 84-92.

The Power of the Spirit in the Community

“Power” as Narrative Thematic. The narrative thematic of “power” constitutes a twofold problem for the interpreter. First is the problem of definition: in what sort of “power” is this or any other study interested? While a sociological treatment of personal and corporate power or of “power relationships” according to Acts is useful, a text-centered approach to Acts is more interested in its use of power as a narrative thematic: how does Acts narrate or envisage power, its source, its character and consequences?

Of equal importance to this study is the distinctive connection of the power thematic of Acts to the Spirit of the risen Jesus. While there is some evidence of the connection of Spirit and power in biblical (especially prophetic texts) and contemporary Jewish literature, it is not a significant emphasis. This relative silence might anticipate its resounding emphasis in Acts, since there is also no antecedent notion of a Jewish mission in either the OT or Jesus tradition, certainly to non-Jews, to which Acts typically refers when employing its power thematic. This orientation to the Spirit’s role as agent of power for Israel’s mission, then, is distinctively a “Christian” one, and seems to have its source in the Jesus tradition (cf. Acts 1:8) rather than in the OT or related Jewish commentaries.

Following Louw/Nida lexicon,¹⁰ the semantic domain for “power, force” (680-83) comprises a vocabulary of 27 words. No composition in the NT utilizes this vocabulary of power more completely and strategically than does Acts, whose God is sovereign Lord and empowers tasks to be performed according to prophesied plan. Clearly, “power” is a narrative thematic of importance serving both the theological and rhetorical roles Acts performs within the NT.

The most important of these words, *dynamis*, is used ten times in Acts, all but one (19:11) in the first half of Acts (1:8; 2:22; 3:12; 4:7, 33; 6:8; 8:10, 13; 10:38), typically in reference to the power brought by the Pentecost of the Holy Spirit—a power according to its programmatic statement in 1:8 that empowers the community’s witness to the resurrection of Jesus. In addition, the family of *mega*-words, which may function as a gloss on the Joel prophecy (see *megas* in 2:20), is also important to

¹⁰J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 680-683.

Acts: *megaleia* (2:11), *megaleiotes* (19:27) and *megas* when used to intensify *dynamis* (4:33; 6:8; 8:10, 13). The meaning of this dynamic power which the Spirit brings into the life of the witnessing community will be explored below.

From the vocabulary of “mighty” words, Acts employs *ischuo* to narrate the “conflict” thematic, drawing the contrast between the “word of the Lord” which “prevails” (19:20) over its demonic (19:16) and human (6:10; 15:10) opponents. In this same regard, Gamaliel’s concluding point, scored with tragic irony, contrasts a “plan” (*boule*) of human design, which will surely “be overthrown” (*kataluo*) by God (5:38), with God’s plan which human opposition cannot “overthrow” (5:39). On this basis the apostles were “set free” (*apoluo*, 5:40) to preach that Jesus is the Christ (5:42).

The word *cheir*, “hand,” is a metaphor of the active power of God (4:28; 7:25, 50; 11:21; 13:11) or the power of God’s agents whether angelic (7:35) or human (14:3; et. al.). Likewise, *dexios*, “right hand,” is used as a metaphor of divine power in Acts 2:33 and 5:31, and of apostolic power in 3:7. Less common (*brachion*, 13:17) or more subtle words (*doxa*, 22:11) for power used in Acts are mostly of divine power. Together this vocabulary portrays the God of Acts as a powerful force who breaks into history via the Spirit to fulfill the plan of salvation as prophesied by Scripture. No human power in opposition to the community of the Spirit can stand against this demonstration of divine power, whether by human or angelic agency.

Finally, the language of “authority” (*exousia*) refers to those whose high office or political status gives them power over others. Thus, in the programmatic statement of this notion of power in Acts, God’s status as *Kosmokrater* alone assigns dates to the plan of Israel’s restoration. The conversion of *Goyim* is understood as a shift of loyalties from Satan to God (26:18), even as Saul’s authority to persecute the church is superseded by the authority of Jesus who commissions him as a missionary for and of the church (9:14; 26:10-12). Finally, God grants the apostles authority to bestow the Spirit of God upon the converted in identification of their membership in the eschatological Israel—a political power that cannot be purchased by money as Simon finds out (8:19).

Power as an Idiom of the Spirit. According to Acts, the power thematic is cast as an idiom of the Holy Spirit’s activity: the power granted to

the community “begins” at Pentecost with the baptism of the Spirit of God. The coming of the Spirit assures continuity with the ministry of Jesus, so that what he “began to do and to say” (1:1) will continue to be done and said in the ministry of his apostolic successors (and all their legitimate successors). As is true for the messianic Spirit, the pentecostal Spirit empowers the community to whom it has been given as “gift” to bear a bold witness to what God has done and is now doing in the history of God’s people. Sharply put, then, *the power of the Spirit empowers the ongoing witness of the true Israel.*

If the power of the Spirit assures continuity with Jesus’ earthly ministry—what “he began to do and to say” (1:1), then the demonstration of this power can be organized in terms of what the community does (miracles, prophecy, other “signs and wonders” of the Spirit according to Joel’s prophecy) and what is said (proclamation and teaching of the word). Further, what is said and done bears witness to the reign of a merciful (= forgiving, healing) God who has drawn close in Messiah and now again in his apostolic successors.

The subject matter of both the miracles of the community of the Spirit and its proclamation are theocentric and in accordance with the community’s Scripture. While the central topic of this witness is the resurrection of Jesus, whom God has made, according to prophesied plan, “both Lord and Christ” (2:36), the meaning of the resurrection is that God’s promised reign is now reestablished within the a reconstituted Israel. The source of this power is the Spirit of God and intends to empower the community’s witness to the same God who has already testified to the fulfillment of Israel’s promised salvation by the resurrection of Jesus. This is the essential point made in a variety of ways, by the word preached and enacted under the aegis of the Spirit by the missionary community of Acts.

Further, the Spirit enables the apostolic community to bear witness to Jesus’ resurrection (1:22) from Jerusalem (i.e., the center of the sacred universe) to the “end of the earth” (i.e., Rome, the center of the secular universe). The commission in Acts linking this theological definition of power to a geographical index, roughly approximate to the narration of the church’s mission in Acts, orients its reader to the profoundly *dynamic* movement of the Spirit’s power within the history of the missionary community.

This dynamic movement of power as expressed by and within the community of the Spirit breaks down ethnic and gender barriers as well as

cultic restrictions; that is, it is a form of power that results in the realization of God’s promise of a *universal* salvation. In this sense, it is a power of change aimed at the status quo; therefore, the reality produced conflicts with the status quo. Yet, nothing can stop the power surge to the end of the earth—not all the controversies incited, the suffering caused, the intramural conflict provoked. Nothing can deter the movement of the Spirit’s power be deterred and the witness it empowers by side-tracking it from reaching its ordained and prophesied destiny.

Since power is of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is a gift to God’s people to empower their life and witness, the idea of power in Acts is never associated with any person or institution outside of the faith community. According to Acts, then, the non-believer responds freely to the proclaimed word without the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit.

Spirit Power and Secular Power. Competing sources of power constantly threaten but never undermine this Spirit-empowered witness. The religious authority of “official” Judaism and the political authority of Rome react at best with disinterested neutrality (esp. Rome) toward the community’s mission. Those vested with magical (Simon, Elymas) or demonic (Philippian demoniac, sons of Sceva) powers, even Jewish sources of power within the church itself (James?, see 21:17-26; note also the absence of any support from the Jewish church in the narrative of Paul’s trials), continually challenge the gospel, all without success. Because the narrative of power follows the plan of God’s salvation as prophesied by Scripture, its triumph is inevitable.

I am not as optimistic as some about the support of Rome to Paul’s mission, which may explain why he never appeals to his Roman citizenship in his letters. While the Paul of Acts appeals to his Roman citizenship on occasion and always in strategic ways, it clearly is not his primary identity (observant Jew, prophet of God, teacher of Israel, all understood within a symbolic world constructed by Jewish Scripture, and *not* by Greco-Roman sociopolitical conventions). Neither is the support of Rome unequivocal; it is at best ambivalent and always (in my opinion) self-interested.

The nature of conflict within Acts is always religious, typically centered on the multivalent idea of “resurrection” within Judaism (of eschatological Israel, of Messiah), and not political. Political disguises are used by the church’s enemies in solicitation of Rome; but these are always figured out by Roman officials (see the narrative of Paul’s trials where this

point is made repeatedly). In this sense, again, the proper definition of the idea of “power” in Acts is religious and not political.

Power from the Spirit as a Community “Gift.” Is the performance of the Spirit’s power within the faith community parallel to the Pauline notion of spiritual gifts (*charismata/pneumatika*, 1 Cor. 12)? Acts uses a different word than Paul when speaking of “the gift (*dorea*, not *charisma*) of the Holy Spirit” (2:38; 10:45; 11:17; cf. 1 Cor. 12:4). Significantly, Paul understands the intent of *charismata* as enabling a ministry of love within the congregation rather than to enable a prophetic ministry of repentance among non-believers. Note, for example, the contrast between the purpose and audience of the *xenolalia* of the Spirit according to Acts 2:5-13 and the *glossalalia* of the Spirit according to 1 Cor. 14:20-25.

However, in agreement with Paul, Acts views the power of the Spirit as *intrinsic* to the community’s life, not only by enabling them to preach and work “signs and wonders” in the name of Jesus, but also by transforming how believers live together in collective witness to the eschatological Jubilee of God (2:43-47). This intrinsic feature of the Spirit’s power may also be reflected in the characterization of the competent missionary in Acts, especially Paul. Both his personal virtue and rhetorical skill, which make him an able missionary so to suffer with Christ (9:15-16), are the anticipated results of the Holy Spirit’s in-filling (9:17-18).

The Purity of the Community in the Spirit

Purity as a Narrative Thematic. The purification of Israel, whether by efficacy of a prescribed cultic rite or by obedient response to the prophetic word, is certainly a more prominent narrative thematic of the OT narrative than of the NT.¹¹ Especially in Acts, which is profoundly ambivalent toward the Temple and its purification routines, the reader notes the lack of a more technical OT vocabulary for purification (see 21:24, 26; 24:18; cf. 18:20; 15:20). Acts is more interested in depicting the church’s prophetic ministry in keeping with the *topos* of Messiah’s word. Purification then is the inward result of conversion which results from repentance and faith in the preached gospel.

Nevertheless, the perceived impurity of Paul, the assumed result of his Gentile mission in the Diaspora, provokes a Jewish protest in Jerusa-

¹¹For this point, see C. Keener, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 6-48.

lem that leads to his arrest and several years of legal entanglements. I insist that the issue of Paul’s purity is an important subtext of the second half of Acts, even as the convert’s spiritual purification, the result of divine forgiveness, is an important thematic of the first half of Acts.

Forgiveness from Sins and Purity of the Heart. The first half of Acts is a narrative commentary on the prophecy of Joel (LXX, 3:1-5) which claims that salvation will result to any who call upon the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21). In the signs and wonders of the Spirit and the subsequent conversion experiences of new believers, Acts 1-15 testifies to the fulfillment of this prophecy. Sharply put, the eschatological announcement of salvation in Acts is for the experience of spiritual and physical healing (2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38). In particular, the forgiveness from sin is a “thick” experience in Acts. In covenantal terms, forgiveness fulfills God’s promise to a restored Israel in response to its obedience of faith (i.e., the converting act of “repentance”; cf. 5:31-2). At its essence forgiveness results in the purifying work of God, who “right-wises” the newly converted (so 13:38-39) thereby liberating them from “all things,” especially from the threat of imminent judgment (2:40; cf. LXX Joel 3:1-5). This idea is formally introduced into Acts by Peter’s programmatic call to conversion that links forgiveness with baptism (2:38), which I take in Acts to be a metaphor of inward purification (cf. 22:16).¹²

Certainly the connection of salvation with healing miracles (e.g., 3:1-8) resists any attempt to separate the spiritual from the physical results of God’s forgiving grace (so Peter’s interpretation of healing, 4:8-12). Forgiveness is a healing experience. Nor does Acts separate a personal experience of forgiveness from its corporate result. Thus, for example, forgiveness from sin and baptism prepare converts to live in the realm of a *holy* Spirit (2:38; 5:31-32; 10:43-44) who transforms community life according to the pattern of God’s salvation (so 2:42-47; cf. Luke 4:16-18) which is *contretemps* from the world order, pure from profane.

Other points to score in this regard are more implicit. For instance, it is a remarkable feature of this vocabulary of forgiveness in Acts that it appears in missionary speeches, which “awaken” a need for forgiveness

¹²The debate over the meaning of *eis* in 2:38 is well known and difficult to resolve. Rather than trying to connect forgiveness and baptism in a logical way, whether one is the purpose or the cause of the other, I prefer to understand “baptism” as a metaphor of divine cleansing that is currently mediated by the Spirit of the risen Jesus.

both by christological proofs-from-prophecy (specifically for his resurrection) and by an implicit threat of divine judgment leading people to repent from sin and to trust in the results of Jesus' messianic mission. There is also a significant intratext in Acts between Paul, who in concluding his farewell speech at Miletus, commends the Ephesian elders to nurture "those who have been made holy" (20:32; *en tois hegiasmenois*); and Jesus, who commissions Paul to evangelize the Gentiles so that they may be made holy (*en tois hegiasmenois*) by their faith in him (26:18; cf. 15:9-11!).¹³ The rhetorical impression made is to form an *inclusio* within which to interpret the real purpose of Paul's mission according to Acts which is to make the unclean people (the *Goyim*) clean according to God's redemptive plans.

"Let them tell you what impurity (*adikema*) they have found" (24:20). In my reading of the second half of Acts (15:13-28), the narrative of Paul's mission unfolds according to the results of the Jerusalem Council (15:1-21) and in particular James' midrash on LXX Amos 9:11-12 (see Acts 15:19-21). According to James' interpretation of Amos, informed by the robust experience of Gentile conversion (15:6-12), the restoration of Israel planned by God must include a law-free Gentile mission (15:19) in addition to a Jewish mission (15:21). But James is profoundly alert to the practical problems of a Jerusalem-sponsored Gentile mission in the Diaspora, which until now had never been attempted even by Jesus and had only recently been introduced into the narrative by Peter's visionary commission to convert Cornelius (Acts 10).¹⁴ The clean (Jew) could now intermingle freely and with spiritual intent with the unclean (Gentile). Sharply put, Paul's Gentile mission constitutes a real threat to Jewish laws of purity; and no one knows this better than the Paul of Acts who remains a Pharisaic messianic Jew.

The radical solution proposed by James stands as the centerpiece of his midrash. To eliminate circumcision and law from the pattern of Gen-

¹³The shift in Luke's third telling of Paul's commission in the aftermath of his Damascus Road christophany to Jesus' direct (rather than mediated) address merely underscores its importance for Acts. We get directly from Jesus the real intent of Paul's mission all along, which is to make the unclean *Goyim* pure again—of course, in fulfillment of the biblical prophecy of God's universal salvation.

¹⁴Cf. R. W. Wall, "Peter, 'Son of Jonah': The Conversion of Cornelius in the Context of Canon," *JSNT* 29 (1987), 79-90.

tile salvation does not exempt Gentile converts from maintaining, at least in a minimal (i.e., Noahic) sense, Torah’s code of purity (15:20). The prophetic mission of Israel as light to the nations requires that this more external or sociological form of purity be maintained between the two discrete groups.

It is against the backdrop of this midrash on Amos that the rest of Acts is glossed and more fully understood. The Jewish Christian problem with Paul, according to Acts, now shifts from a protocol for converting Gentiles. The Jerusalem Council settled that issue. The concern of the second half of Acts has now become the relationship of believing Gentiles among believing Jews, and, in particular, with Paul’s own purity, whether his mission among the *Goyim* has contaminated him. The Paul of Acts seems well aware of this problem during his third mission, since it is “bracketed” by references to him keeping vows of purification (so 18:20; 21:26).

The importance of this point for the *Paulusbild* of Acts seems underscored at the climax of the narrative’s only “official” trial, when he protests Jewish accusations of his religious impurity (24:20; cf. 24:6; 21:28). Evidently, Paul subscribes to the code of purity by which the observant Jew maintains membership within the worshiping community. These are very serious charges against Paul, which seem also to have been made by the Jewish church (21:17-26) and provide the subtext for his prolonged defense in Acts.

This narrative thematic of social purity, which requires the sacred to remain separate from the profane in maintaining relationships with God and one another, actually continues the interest of Acts in the Spirit’s shaping of the community’s life in relationship with the surrounding social order. Nowhere in Acts do we find a privatized salvation, where the results of God’s grace are merely inward and individual. Everywhere in Acts we find a tension existing even in the most ideal situations, when the more sectarian, exclusive prerogatives of the faith community clash with the more inclusive, public demands of its mission to the end of the earth. In part the purpose of Paul’s portrait in Acts is to personalize that very tension. Maintaining his purity by observing the Jewish laws of purity, Paul recognizes the importance of cleansing himself from the pollutants of one’s public life, where clean and unclean intermingle, if only uneasily. This is to remind us of the costs of one’s discipleship. At the same time, Paul is obedient to our Lord’s command to carry the word into the

unclean marketplaces and town-squares of public life. Perhaps in a tacit way the baptism of the Spirit which enables mission to the outsider and God's grace which purifies us within form an integral whole in Acts.

Conclusions

1. To read Acts as Scripture aims at theological understanding that is relevant and explicable for its contemporary readers. When it comes to assessing the contemporary significance of Acts, its literary genre is both a bane and blessing. On the one hand, Acts is great story-telling; not only is it a delight to read, but its stories never seem distant or detached from its readers. On the other hand, the theological substance of biblical narrative is recovered at a different level than, say, the letters of Paul which have greater theological density.

2. The Acts of Scripture makes its own contribution to a fully biblical understanding of the Spirit of God. If the notion of God in Acts is as Lord over history, whose plan for the salvation of the nations will be executed in spite of Israel's obduracy, then *the Spirit who is the agent of this same God supplies history with its creative and life-giving force in fulfilling the biblical promise of universal salvation.*

In particular, the Spirit is a gift to the people of God. The Spirit is both their identifying mark and source of their transforming power. The Spirit of God guides the people of God to obey God's call. The presence of the Spirit within the community of believers insures that what it says and does are in continuity with its risen Lord. The Spirit by whom God reconstitutes and heals Israel is the same Spirit by whom God directed Jesus on his messianic way. By their collective ministry, history moves toward its destiny, the establishment of God's reign within history.

Unlike Scripture's non-Pauline letters whose own witness to the Spirit's role lacks detail and depth, Acts narrates the history of the community as a history of the Spirit of God. The result is a considerably more robust understanding of the importance of the Holy Spirit in the formation of God's people. Paul is interested in the Spirit's work as intrinsic to the faith community, bringing the believer to maturity of faith. Acts, on the other hand, is more interested in showing how the activity and presence of the Holy Spirit empowers the witness of a missionary community to its risen Lord, primarily by its proclamation of the gospel.

3. Acts narrates the pattern of the *faith community's vocation, which is missiological.* This urgent sense of destiny and mission is the church's

“orienting concern” according to Acts: to continue what Jesus did and said in witness to God’s reign, under the aegis of the Holy Spirit, until Jesus “will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (1:11).

The community of believers is the reconstituted Israel of biblical prophecy, whose history and salvation accord with Jewish Scripture. In fact, Acts addresses a church that lives in the “last days” during which the promises of God are being actively fulfilled within its history by the Spirit. Clearly, the community’s vocation in the last days is not as survivalists or separatists; rather, it is to announce the arrival of the risen Lord and the triumph of God’s reign to the “end of the earth.” As the special creation of God, the church is transformed and empowered by the Spirit of God to be witnesses to God’s triumph over sin and death, both by what it says and by how it lives together.

The church’s mission is to the nations: God’s promise is for a universal salvation. That is, all social, ethnic, cultic, nationalistic barriers are dismantled. The community of promise includes “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord.” The liberating word of the gospel is especially for the spiritually marginal—those who have need for God.¹⁵

4. Consistent with the role of the Spirit and vocation of the faith community, the notion of power in Acts is empowerment to bear witness to the meaning and destiny of Messiah’s resurrection. Power is evangelical and eschatological power, the power to preach, to live and even die in the process of making clear the triumph of God’s reign already testified to in the resurrection of Jesus.

5. Purity of heart in Acts results from divine forgiveness. It is an inward healing of believers who now constitute a purified community where the Spirit now resides in power. The sanctified community’s witness to its holy Lord is demonstrated by its public preaching and by its life together, which evinces the salvation of God in sociological, political, and economic terms that are *contretemps* from the social order. Yet, it is also true that the community’s Spirit-enabled mission in the world places it in daily contact with the “impure” and “unclean,” requiring its regular cleansing—in the case of Acts, cleansing that is mediated through formal and institutionalized protocol.

¹⁵I note only in passing the contrast in social class between the portrait of Jewish women in the gospels, who are marginal, and Gentile women in Acts, who are middle-class. In Acts, they represent a spiritual poverty—a life without the riches of faith—which knows no class distinction.

6. Finally, a reading strategy that approaches Acts as Scripture presumes that its contemporary audience is “located” in particular ways; that is, the multivalence of Acts insures (or has the inherent potential) that its theology will be made relevant and explicable in different ways by different interpreters for different congregations of readers. Among its various dimensions of meaning is that which relates its message to a particular religious location. Whether in prophetic or in pastoral ways, the Wesleyan or Pentecostal interpreter of Acts is obliged to relate its theology to a Wesleyan or Pentecostal community of believers—in light of its faith tradition, current crises, and future witness to and for the church, holy and catholic.

The final interpretive question, then, to pose is this. How does the transforming power of the Spirit and the resulting purity of the faith community, according to the Acts of the Apostles, define a Wesleyan and/or Pentecostal witness for today?

THE TRIUNE CENTER: WESLEYANS AND PENTECOSTALS TOGETHER IN MISSION

by

Steven J. Land

Melvin Dieter establishes well the general perspective that is the beginning context for this exploration of the bases of collaboration and theological vision shared by the Wesleyan and Pentecostal traditions.

The tendency of these movements [Wesleyan-Holiness and Pentecostal] to finally relate the movements of the Spirit in which they felt they were participating with the consummation of history shaped every aspect of their thinking, especially their concept of the church and its mission. It is not surprising then that John Fletcher, the intimate of Wesley and the first systematic theologian of the Wesleyan Movement, should turn to a Trinitarian dispensationalism similar to that of the Cappadocians and Joachim to develop his hermeneutic of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection centered as it was on the Pentecost event and the age of the Spirit. Nor is it surprising that John Fletcher's identification of the experience of entire sanctification as Wesley taught it with the "baptism of the Holy Ghost" should have become the dominant motif for understanding and proclaiming the doctrine at the time that the Holiness churches were seeking to formulate an understanding of the nature and mission of the church. . . . The millennial ethos which was woven and interwoven in all aspects of American culture and politics in the nineteenth century merely encouraged this emphasis upon the "age of the Spirit" which was to usher it in.¹

¹Melvin Dieter, "The Development of Nineteenth Century Holiness Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20:1 (Spring 1985).

As I was finishing my doctoral seminars at Emory University in the early 1980s I met and came under the influence of Jürgen Moltmann and Melvin Dieter, both of whom made a lasting impression on me, as anyone can attest who has read my *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*.² The trinitarian “dispensationalism” which Dieter and now Laurence Wood,³ interpreting John Fletcher, invite us to consider significantly shaped my revisioning of Holiness/Pentecostal theology, especially in chapter four of my book. The above quote joins eschatology, church, mission and Christian experience in ways which are distinctively Wesleyan and, I would suggest, Holiness/Pentecostal. These convergences suggest that the two movements have significant similarities.

Common Concerns

By now we are almost tired of hearing “the challenge of the twenty-first century.” Nevertheless, in light of the increasing end-time speculations and the continued marketing of every sort of experience by all kinds of religions, it behooves those of us who are often accused of “experientialism” to continually consider how to press our claims for biblical Christianity with sufficient integrity, passion, and power to face the seemingly overwhelming contemporary challenges to the church and its mission.

We need to address certain common concerns: where is the rationale for a restorationism which seems to magnify justification (Luther), then sanctification (Wesley and the nineteenth century Holiness Movement), and also Spirit baptism (Pentecostalism) as central to the fullness of the Gospel and the Christian life? How can we make a theologically coherent case for the normativity of certain specific experiences for the Christian life of every believer? How can we avoid the danger of “terminal experientialism” which tends to divorce our Christian experiences from the whole of Christian theology and mission? How can we avoid the inherent elitism in claims to stages of the Christian life, with our respective movement claiming to have reached a higher stage than most other Christians?

While we cannot answer all of these questions in this essay, it is important to note that Wesleyans and Pentecostals share, or should share,

²Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993; cf. especially chapter 4, “Pentecostal Spirituality on Trinitarian Transformation: A Theological Revision,” 182-219.

³Laurence W. Wood, “The Rediscovery of Pentecost in Methodism,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* (Spring, 1998, 53:1), 7-34.

these common concerns. And we share these problems because we have a common theological heritage. Others have suggested, and I am strongly urging, that those of the Wesleyan-Holiness and the Holiness/Pentecostal movements should now collaborate in developing a distinctive theology of the church, salvation, and mission which will serve a world church facing the horizon of the end of history—God.

Perhaps the way forward is in the development of a trinitarian dispensationalism which draws on the insights of the Cappadocians, Joachim of Fiore, John Wesley, John Fletcher, and Jürgen Moltmann. Recently Laurence Wood has pressed the “trinitarian dispensational” scheme of Fletcher, whom Wood sees as the earliest and most able systematic expositor of Wesley, and the one having Wesley’s own seal of approval. In early 1980 I ran across Fletcher’s *The Portrait of St. Paul*, and the writings of Jürgen Moltmann at about the same time. In conversations with Melvin Dieter, Hal Knight, and others, I became convinced of the “fit” or usefulness of these theological developments in the construction and revisioning of Holiness/Pentecostal theology. I was further convinced that the past intense conflict between the Holiness and Pentecostal churches was to a large extent a family dispute between fraternal, if not identical, twins. Dr. Dieter concluded, and I heartily agreed, that even the largest and more “baptistic” Holiness/Pentecostal body, the Assemblies of God, has a spiritual dynamic that is “at least equally or even more strongly derived from the historical camp-meeting perfectionism as it is from any classical Reformed categories.” Dieter further explained:

The theological and experiential wineskins of the Keswick low-church Anglicans and others through whom the higher-life message came back to its American home have . . . been hard put to contain the holiness wine. To use another metaphor, the dominant genes of the vigorous Christocentric pneumatology residing in our common parent, the holiness revival, have left on all the progeny such a unified imprint of spirituality and experience that each of us will be the loser if we fail to recognize. . . . The ultimate charge that Warfield and his friends leveled against the movement [New School revivalism of Finney, Mahan, *et al.*] was that it was really “Methodist.” The holiness connection is important for Pentecostals because it carries with it the nineteenth century concern for abolition, prohibition, women’s rights, and the reform of society according to the righteous standards of God. When Pentecostalism

and the holiness churches were impacted by the aftermath of the Civil War, Reconstruction, the new higher criticism of the Bible, the “liberal” social gospel and the increasing “embourgeoisement” of Methodism, they were forced to choose between fundamentalism and modernism. By choosing fundamentalism the Wesleyan agenda for “spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land” was reduced to rescue missions, storefront churches, soup kitchens and other kinds of person-to-person involvement. A further result of this alliance has been the presence of both movements at the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals in the 1940s, in spite of the fact that the word “evangelical” in North America usually excludes or redefines the holiness Pentecostal paradigm in favor of the more Presbyterian-fundamentalist paradigm. This drew both movements into battles concerning inerrancy and drew them away from rethinking and further application of their fundamentally transformationalist heritage.⁴

This historical perspective highlights the commonalities of spirituality, experience, holiness, rejection of nineteenth-century liberalism, aversion to fundamentalist interpretations of Scripture, and uneasiness with the Reformed fundamentalist paradigm as a way of explaining both movements. The Wesleyan and Pentecostal movements have each been centered on Jesus Christ and a kind of functional Christology which emphasizes the present power of Christ to save, sanctify, heal, empower, direct, and enable the believer to participate in mission. Both movements share an Arminian position with regard to the possibility of apostasy, the correlative need for perseverance, and a salvation which is a responsive participation in the life of God.

What follows, then, is a Wesleyan-Pentecostal suggestion as to the direction a further collaboration might take in producing a Christocentric missionary theology with a pneumatological starting point (as opposed to starting with the human spirit or human reason). The result will be appropriately eschatological and thoroughly trinitarian.

⁴Dieter, op. cit., 61-77. See also Dieter’s *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980) and “The Wesleyan-Holiness and Pentecostal Movements: Commonalities, Confrontation and Dialogue” (unpublished paper, Society for Pentecostal Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, 1988).

Elements of Trinitarian Integration

Theology is a discerning reflection by the eschatological missionary community on the living reality of God with us. The starting point for theology is the Holy Spirit rather than the human spirit (liberalism) or human reason (fundamentalism). The story and testimony of this community lives by the power of the Spirit within and all around the believer. The Spirit of the end groans, sighs, and presses within in order to drive out toward the world in witness and toward God in worship. Prayer is the first act of discerning reflection, engaging the whole person and involving the whole community as context and example of what it means to do authentic theology. The living reality of God calls forth a holistic response which in turn leads to deeper reflection and further response.

The spirituality of the community, as an integration of beliefs, practices, and affections, is the precondition and ongoing result of this discerning reflection. When the integration begins to fragment there are intellectual struggles, affective distortions and practical dilemmas which cry out not merely to be solved one at a time, but also to be interpreted as symptomatic of a deeper need. The proper already-not-yet tension evident in a biblically responsible apocalyptic missionary movement must be maintained in order to avoid an overly realized optimism or a passively disengaged pessimism. Theology is fundamentally concerned with the relation between God and creation. That relation is a living dynamic, requiring discerning, discursive reflection that is gifted by and attuned to the things of the Spirit. A church that is teleologically oriented and therefore an apocalyptic movement of the Spirit will want to have the eschatological context and horizon prominently displayed in its approach. In this sense theologizing is not only a reflection *on* but also a reflection *of* and *within* reality. The time of the church's mission is eschatological time; that is, it is time oriented toward the end which functions as a limit and a lure.

Given these preliminary observations concerning theological task, this question follows. What shape might the doctrines of God, history, the church, salvation, and mission take in the development of a theology that begins with the Spirit and has a triune integrating center?

1. God. In keeping with the suggestion of John Fletcher, an eschatological trinitarianism will place God at the center of our theology. This God at the center is the "last thing" and a passion for this God is a passion

for the presence and fullness of God's reign. Therefore, the focus of our theological efforts should be on an understanding of God as the *eschatological trinitarian presence* and not on speculative end-time sequences.⁵

There is one presence but three persons whose unity and identity consists and is given in perichoretic interrelatedness, in which each person fully participates in the life of the others. The unity is in the community, but the distinctiveness is seen in the appropriation of certain works to each, though all by virtue of their coinherence are involved in each work. Thus, the work of creation is sovereignly appropriated to the Father; the work of reconciliation to the Son; and the work of sustaining and unification unto glory to the Spirit.

Appropriation and perichoresis are ancient doctrines of the church which were formulated to be faithful to the biblical narratives and the lived reality of the redeemed. Today they may serve well the task of re-visioning a Holiness/Pentecostal spirituality. Here is the way to guarantee the unity and diversity of the church, the crisis-development of soteriological transformation, and the recognition of the eventfulness of the one redemptive work of God in creation revealed from Eden to the end.

To live in the presence of the God of redemption is to live as a participant in the divine drama. To be created in God's image is to be made for love and fellowship with God and each other. God is a communion who creates us for communion and moves us toward full participation in the divine life. Heaven is theocentric and therefore social; that is, heaven is home, reunion and family celebration with all the redeemed around God's throne.

2. History. The divine revelation is not the sharing of some idea or static reality; it is a revelation (like the last book of the Bible) of the God who speaks to the churches, works in all things, and finally brings all things before God's throne. History, then, is *eschatological trinitarian process*. It is missionary history.

⁵In addition to my previous noting of indebtedness to Melvin Dieter, the trinitarian perspective of this article emerged during the last ten years of teaching with my colleague, R. H. Gause at the Church of God Theological Seminary in Cleveland, Tennessee. It has been deepened and extended by the following: J. Moltmann, "The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit—A Trinitarian Pneumatology," *SJT* 37 (1984), 287-300; P. Hocken, "The Meaning and Purpose of 'Baptism in the Spirit,'" *Pneuma* 7.2 (Fall, 1985), 125-34; D. A. Dorman, "The Purpose of Empowerment in the Christian Life," *Pneuma* (Fall, 1985), 147-65; M. Duggan, "The Cross and the Holy Spirit in Paul: Implications for Baptism in the Holy Spirit," *Pneuma* 7.2 (Fall, 1985), 135-46.

This does not mean that God, in Hegelian fashion, is dissolved into history; it means that history is in God. God works in history and in the world for the good of those called according to the divine purpose. As God is the eschatological trinitarian presence who is the goal and limit of all things, so history, as God's great theater, moves by God, in God, to God. A "dispensational" understanding of history like that of Joachim of Fiore,⁶ the Cappadocians, John Fletcher, and Jürgen Moltmann is more compatible with and suitable for Holiness/Pentecostal theologizing and spiritual formation than the seemingly hermetically sealed dispensational categories typical in much of Protestant fundamentalism.⁷

It is fascinating to find an association of Trinitarian "deepening" (revelation) with Spirit baptism in the early Holiness/Pentecostal writers B. H. Irwin (1896), D. Wesley Myland (1906), and Bishop J. H. King (1914). Irwin testified that the "blessed baptism [of the Holy Spirit and fire] deepens and intensifies our love toward God and . . . gives us a clearer insight into the nature of the adorable Trinity."⁸ Myland showed perichorietic sensibilities when he exhorted believers:

Do not think that all these displays are of the Spirit alone; the Father is there, the Son is there, and the Holy Spirit is there. Whenever God has come to anyone, the whole Godhead is manifested therein; it is the dynamic of the Godhead; the things of the Spirit are displayed in His sovereign working. This movement must be saved from saying that there is never

⁶For accessible primary source reading in Joachim of Fiore, see B. McGinn (ed.), *Apocalyptic Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979). Joachim has proven suggestive to Jürgen Moltmann and his "constantly present interacting strata" approach to the trinitarian dispensations. Melvin Dieter relates Moltmann and Joachim to John Fletcher, "Wesley's early systematizer," and Fletcher's dispensational development of sanctification as baptism in the Holy Spirit. See Dieter's excellent article, "The Development of Nineteenth Century Holiness Theology." Dieter goes to the heart of the theological predispositions and hermeneutics separating the more Reformed understandings of history and pneumatology from that of Holiness and Pentecostal approaches.

⁷Dieter, "Holiness Theology."

⁸Critics are quick to point out Irwin's theological eccentricities and later moral failure ("open and gross sin"), but his creativity and early leadership led eventually to the formation of the Pentecostal Holiness Church under his assistant, J. H. King. See B. H. Irwin, "Pyrophobia," *The Way of Faith* (28 October 1896), 2; and H. V. Synan, "Benjamin Hardin Irwin," *DPCM*, 471-72.

any Spirit until there is Pentecostal fullness, and also after we get Pentecost, from saying it is the Spirit only. It is God! The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁹

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was a decisive revelation of the Trinity according to Bishop J. H. King of the Pentecostal Holiness Church. This revelation he took to be essential for the church's message and self-understanding. His personal Pentecost was an "*inward*" revelation of the Trinity which was unknowable to anyone outside of the Holiness/Pentecostal experience. . . . This knowledge of the Trinity was essential, in order for the Church as a whole and the believer in particular, to be truly apostolic."¹⁰

God acts in and is affected by history. Jesus and the Spirit "sigh and groan" as do creation and the believer who share in the eschatological Trinitarian process. God creates, gathers in Christ, and leads forward in a process that is a procession into the new heaven and new earth. Holiness/Pentecostal spirituality narrates this journey and acts in God in the light of the goal of the consummated kingdom reign begun in Jesus and carried forward in the Spirit. This procession

has two sources: the "Jesus Event" and the experience of the Spirit—Easter and Pentecost. The two events are intimately bound-up in one another, but neither can absorb or reduce the other. . . . There was one Easter; there are millions of Pentecosts.¹¹

⁹D. W. Myland, "The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power," in *Three Early Pentecostal Tracts* (The Higher Life Series; New York: Garland Publishing) is cited in Hocken, " 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit.' "

¹⁰D. A. Alexander, "Bishop J. H. King and the Emergency of Holiness Pentecostalism," *Pneuma* 8.2 (Fall, 1986), 159-83. More work needs to be done on King's integration. My work represents a step in that direction. See also H. V. Synan, "Joseph Hillery King," *DPCM*, 520-21. H. A. Snyder (*The Divided Flame* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986]) is coming at the Holiness-Pentecostal construction from the Holiness side. In my opinion, we are not that far apart. Snyder's work is all the more important since he too seeks to correlate soteriology with ecclesiology and missiology. Our only difference may be in the nuancing of eschatology.

¹¹The most creative recent Roman Catholic appreciation of the positive theological and pastoral benefits of Pentecostalism is José Comblin's, *The Holy Spirit and Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989). Although there will still be differences over the Marian and ecclesiological views, there is much agreement on the importance of pneumatology, spirituality and experience for the life and mission of the church. For creative interactions from the Pentecostal side

Thus, salvation history is a progression from the Father through the Son in the Spirit, then in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. Moltmann calls the three movements the monarchical, eucharistic, and doxological respectively; all refer to God as the Trinitarian origin, presence, and goal of Christian existence. This is no modalistic interpretation of history because the kingdom sovereignty of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are “continually present strata and transitions in the kingdom’s history.”¹²

Fletcher applied this trinitarian dispensationalism to his understanding of Wesley’s theology. He noted that even as natural birth is preceded and followed by gradual growth,

so it is in every spiritual change we undergo. Our entering into the dispensation of the Son, or that of the Holy Ghost, is instantaneous: for there is a moment, in which it can be said, Such a man has not received Christ since he was convinced of sin—such a woman has not yet received the Holy Ghost since she believed: and there is a happy moment when it can be said, Such a man has received Christ by faith since he repented: Such a woman has received the Holy Ghost by faith since she believed: But in both cases, when there is no miscarriage, and all goes well, the spiritual birth is preceded by a growing conviction of the importance of the blessing which we want, and followed by a growing acquaintance with the blessing, which we have received, till our whole soul is tinctured with it, and we are ready for a higher dispensation.¹³

It means that in the progressive revelation of God revealed in the economy of salvation from Genesis to Revelation, there is a developmental,

with liberation perspectives see *Pastoralia* 7.15 (December, 1985), 55-68, articles resulting from a consultation held in Puerto Rico in 1984. See especially the articles by Hector Comacho, Aida Gaetan, Rudolfo Giron and Ricardo Waldrop. The conclusions are preserved in this issue of *Pastoralia* in the “Declaracion de la consulta de lideres educacionales de la iglesia de Dios: Desarrollo de un modelo pastoral pentecostal frente a la teología de la liberación,” 99-106. See also the brief suggestive analysis by D. W. Dayton in “Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal and Social Change: A Western Perspective,” *Transformation* 5.4 (October/December, 1988), 7-13. Miroslav Volf has compared Pentecostal and Liberation approaches to salvation to find some surprising commonalities as points for further development in “Materiality of Salvation: An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies,” *JES* 26.3 (Summer, 1989), 447-67.

¹²See Moltmann, *Trinity and Kingdom*, 208.

¹³John Fletcher, “The Language of the Father’s Dispensation,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* (Spring, 1998, 53:1), 69.

pedagogical process. The purpose of this process is not only individual salvation but the formation of a people who can participate in the salvation history of God as witnesses in word, character, and deed to the mysterious reality of a gracious God. If the righteousness of God is misunderstood in some aspect, then perhaps it will take a Luther to restore such an understanding. But it will also perhaps take a John Wesley to further that understanding of righteousness and of the faith which works through *love*. It may further be that Holiness/Pentecostals may be used to disclose the category of the power of the Spirit to bear witness to Jesus Christ with apostolic signs and wonders following the proclamation of the Gospel.

To be sure, righteousness, love, and power are perfectly integrated in the simplicity of the being of God, but in salvation history and in individual believers in different ages and for different reasons, there can be a misunderstanding, a fragmentary realization, or a loss of clear focus which God clarify in order to further the divine mission. These movements, then, may point to something of the fullness of the Gospel, the fullness of the revelation of God in history. But since all movements and every believer is a fragmentary realization of the fullness of God, it would be necessary for the church to be continually reformed and open to new movements and initiatives with discerning care for biblical revelation and missionary relevance. Movements may be used to diagnose as well as prescribe a regimen for the body of Christ. Holiness/Pentecostal movements afford a way of looking at the whole of biblical revelation, but do not claim to embody that whole. In this way, these so-called marginal movements preserve the inner dynamic of the faith, that is, the mission of God in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This means that the Spirit is not limited to the inspiration of Scripture and the illumination and empowerment of the believer. The Bible becomes the Spirit-Word of God, which requires God the Spirit for the illumination, transformation, and empowerment needed to walk in the light of that Word. The Spirit is also creator and is intimately involved in all things, providentially sustaining and directing them toward their goal in God. The goal of creation is not annihilation but transformation, just as the goal for humans is new creation.¹⁴ Care for the body and care for the

¹⁴M. Volf in "On Loving with Hope: Eschatology and Social Responsibility," *Transformation* 7/3 (July-September, 1990), 28-31, urges Pentecostals to keep the hope in love by remembering that creation is to be transformed, not annihilated, by the Spirit. His article show how works are significant in the kingdom without sacrificing the sovereignty of God.

earth are equally part of the proper stewardship entrusted to believers. By the Spirit the creative intention of the Father and the redeeming passion of the Son are communicated to all creation in a prevenient grace which is the source of all that is good and true and beautiful.

Wesleyans and Pentecostals have spoken of a restoration of apostolic faith. This approach acknowledges that through Luther, Wesley, and then the Pentecostal movement, things vital and good were restored to the church. But this process of restoration is part of the larger restoration of all things which will finally issue in that which is greater than the initial creation. It will be a “restoration plus,” for God will be “all in all.”

According to this understanding of history as eschatological trinitarian process, all of history is missionary history centered in the cross of Christ. To become a Spirit-filled Christian is to become a part of the teleological process of suffering, healing, hope, and victory through the church which presses toward the kingdom.

3. The Church. The church is a communion of diversity and unity in the Spirit. Just as God is one in three, so the church is one and many in God. The church as *eschatological trinitarian fellowship* is a communion in God—a people of God, a body of Christ and thus a communion in the Holy Spirit. What is fellowship but participation? In this fellowship gifts and office coincide and theology is the discerning reflection of the whole as each offers his or her gift, recognizes the other’s gifts and is built up to disciple and love the neighbor.

The fruit of the Spirit is one because the Spirit is the sole source and the fruit is the character of God. But the church is the milieu or garden for that cultivation. The fruit is cultivated by the Spirit so that the church as a whole and each believer may be witnesses who represent something of the divine character and care of God in the world. The gifts are diverse, differently applied, sovereignly distributed (not “discovered” or “cultivated” or “operated at will”), and different in each manifestation. But the gifts are for the whole body which is for the kingdom. Thus the gifts simultaneously serve an “inner” edification function and an “outer” evangelistic one.

The church that is caught up in the divine fellowship is one because of the same divine presence from whom it lives; the church is holy because that presence is the holy and only presence which sanctifies. To be set apart unto God, for believer and church, is to be set apart for union,

because that which is joined to God is holy. To treat the church anywhere as profane is to profane the church everywhere. The holiness of the church demands unity. All who pray to and in the same divine presence are one, are holy, and thus should strive to show the world how they love one another. This church that is one in the divine presence and holy in divine union is apostolic and catholic in its power and universal mandate. The church in the trinitarian eschatological presence of God moves into all the world in the power of the Spirit who is moving all the world toward the end. The Spirit provides the authority and strength to proclaim the one gospel in word and demonstration of the Spirit.

All believers are part of one another as they are part of Christ's body. They coinhere as children of God. God is the divine mother who has begotten them and brought them forth as dear children in the same family by creation and redemption and destination.¹⁵ The church lives from God through Christ in the Spirit, and in the Spirit exalts Christ to the glory of the Father.

4. Salvation. Even as history may be characterized in terms of a kind of crisis-development eventfulness in which new possibilities are created by God, so also the individual Christian life is a crisis-development process which moves forward, not passively but passionately.

Eschatological salvation as participation in the divine life of historical mission requires affective transformation. Salvation is not fundamentally an accomplished event, although it is grounded in what God has done for us. But the "for us" is grounded in the "in himself." Because God is triune eschatological presence in history, and because humans are made for love and fellowship with God and each other, what God has done *for us* in Christ he accomplishes *in us* through Christ in the Spirit. Salvation is a passion for the God who is at work in all things to move history toward the consummation.

The holiness of God speaks of the fact that God's presence is like no other in that God alone is the source of the divine order, the divine unity, and the divine power to reveal and implement, both in creation and redemption. Therefore, the *structure of holiness* is righteousness, the *content of holiness* is love, and the *dynamic of holiness* is the power of the Spirit who enables the giving of one's self to justice and love in the world. To be filled with the Spirit is to delight in the will, love, and service of

¹⁵See Moltmann, "The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit."

God. Thus, the holiness of God is the effective center of Holiness/Pentecostal theology.

This salvation means first of all the giving and the ordering of life. The resurrection of Jesus was the justification of the life of Christ and thus the world of sinners. This was the vindication of the life, teaching, and death of Christ and the setting right of human life. To be born anew is to live from this new source of life which has overcome sin, death, and hell. God declares righteous those who turn and acknowledge by grace the lordship of Christ so that they may become the righteousness of God in him. To receive a declaration *of* righteousness requires a declaration *for* righteousness. Since the Spirit is at work ordering all things according to this word of righteousness and moving all things in judgment and grace toward the end, to be saved is to receive the Spirit of righteousness and to be led into all truth as it comes to be unto the end.

But to be saved is also to love. This is the integrating center because salvation as participation requires that all be done in love or it profits nothing. Love is the center of affective transformation. There is no question of eradication of an evil substance, no question that the sentence of death remains in effect because of the Fall and fallenness of humanity. But love as union means all will die *in God* and therefore live; as one lives, one dies. Death is the final and irreversible validation of the direction of a life. It is the acknowledgment of solidarity with all creation under the curse; but, because it is also solidarity with Christ in the Spirit who groans, it is a filling up of what remains of Christ's suffering.

The question of entire sanctification, then, is not so much a question of subsequence or eradication. Rather, it becomes a question of the kind or measure of love appropriate for the one who "so loved" the world. Nothing but a wholehearted love is adequate for this. Resistances, seen in this light, are confessed as they come into consciousness. The "flesh" is mortified as thoughts and desires are revealed in a participatory following of Christ and are renounced as "not I" but the "old I," which found its integrating center in the "flesh" and not the Spirit.¹⁶ In this sense Wesley's instinct was correct. If God is love, the love of the Christ who "so loved," then the fulfillment of the Law and all righteousness in Christ is unto holiness, which is in this life essentially wholehearted devotion to God and one's neighbor.

¹⁶See Mt. 16.24; Lk. 14.26, 27, 33; Jn. 8.31; Phil. 2.12, 13; Gal. 2.20; 5.16-24.

This requires an affective transformation. Without this, the righteousness received and declared will be resisted and the unrighteousness will not be fully and deeply repented since love wounds and heals. Sin in the believer is not, in its most serious guise, some lack of perfect conformity to all the will of God as God knows and acts. That is the ultimate goal. But, penultimately, sin is a betrayal, a willful resistance to that purpose for which we were called. The passion of Christ on the cross is finished; the passion of the believer and the church in Christ is not. In the believer passion becomes compassion, a wholehearted longing to see all and everyone redeemed, and a pursuit of peace and holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

To speak of power without the integrating center of love is to run the risk of becoming a “sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal”; or worse, it is to pursue justice to the letter while excluding mercy and humility born of wholeheartedness toward God. Wholeheartedness as simplicity of intention and desire will direct power toward self-offering witness rather than domination or presumption.¹⁷

The power of Pentecost should be seen as historical, existential, habitual, and extraordinary. The power of the Spirit forms a life for God as Christ was formed in Mary’s womb. This power is a person, the Holy Spirit who must be existentially invoked, received, and welcomed. To receive the Spirit is to receive the Spirit’s witness and accede to the Spirit’s leading, fruit-production, and empowering for witness. The Spirit’s filling must be invoked daily because the point is to live out of the Spirit’s fullness and by the Spirit’s direction and not that of the world, the flesh, or the devil. The Spirit’s continual filling is a penultimate and prophetic realization of the filling of all things when one day all confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. This filling means that the Spirit’s life, power, and fruit unto holiness are decisive. One is filled with the Spirit, not with fear, lust or greed. Extraordinary filling is analogous to the Gethsemane crisis of Jesus’ life. He who had the Spirit without measure cried out for strength to offer himself as he struggled and suffered. So there are extraordinary times of suffering, which many Pentecostals have had to endure, when an extraordinary filling and enabling of the Spirit is necessary to make an offering of one’s self. This is the gift and witness of martyrdom.

¹⁷Heb. 9.14.

For new converts in Holiness/Pentecostal churches, perhaps this view of salvation as *eschatological trinitarian passion* could be thought of simply as a developmental process with three dimensions. Each of the three may become a moment of crisis or be a source of continuing direction and inspiration or judgment, depending on one's background, knowledge, and present spiritual condition.

The new believer or child is received into the community and belongs to God and the family of God. Whether baptism or dedication is used to indicate this reception and claiming of the young child and God's reception and claiming of him or her, it is still a time that looks forward to an existential saying of "yes," and turning toward God in repentance and love with full assurance of forgiveness of sins. But as the new believer grows or the child enters adolescence, new situations and temptations present themselves. A new awareness of self and the world, coupled with, in the new believer, an acknowledgment perhaps of known hold-outs or resistances to the love and will of God, call for the internalization of the righteousness by which one was received and in which one has been directed. Now is the time to become affectively, wholeheartedly identified with Christ and the mission of the spiritual community. Moral integration will be ongoing, a daily gift of grace through all the means of grace (prayer, Scripture, worship, fellowship, counsel, confession, Lord's Supper, footwashing, and so on). It is this abiding in Christ wholeheartedly in love that is the core of the spirituality.

But, if the righteous path toward the kingdom is to be followed in love in the world, one must be empowered daily not only to will and to walk, but also to wage war against the principalities and powers. Pentecostals desire the filling of the Spirit because they understand the present age or world to be under the spell of evil. The demon spirits must be fought with spiritual weapons, spiritual strategy, and in spiritual might and power. In order to fill the earth with the gospel, in order to do justice in order to love and defend others, believers need the continual filling of the Spirit. As they speak in tongues in the eschatological missionary fellowship, the praise of the kingdom that has come joins with that which is coming in a proleptic celebration of God's victorious grace. But, and this is equally as spiritual, one will also sigh, cry, and groan as that very joy and victory makes the lostness and need of the world stand out in bolder relief.

This development is a progression from *belonging* to a community ordered by and for righteousness to *being identified* with Christ whole-

heartedly in order to fulfill all righteousness, to *being empowered* to actualize the missionary purpose of God in the world as led and filled by the Holy Spirit who gives his fruit (character of the witness) and gifts (special equipment for the witness). This is a movement which emphasizes the new people of covenant righteousness by grace through faith, the new heart of wholehearted integration by grace through faith, and the new vocation as witness by grace through faith.

These three dimensions of salvation are constantly present and inter-related in a way analogous to the perichoretic trinitarian relations. These dimensions correspond to the resurrection, the cross, and Pentecost. Just as these are central events of continuing significance, so also these dimensions of salvation are ongoing crises or landmarks of the faith development of Holiness/Pentecostal believers. Since Calvary is central to salvation history, moral integration or wholehearted love is central to personal salvation in the form of participation in the divine life.¹⁸

5. Mission. The mission of the church, therefore, is *eschatological trinitarian transformation*. The church is being transformed by and for God and thus bears witness in what it is and what it does in the kingdom. The mission is to love mercy and justice and to walk humbly with God. The church is to recognize the divine presence at work in creation and providence, as well as in the more immediate soteriological dimensions. This means that the sanctification of the believer and of the church is to be the motive and the analog for the sanctification of the world, not by dissolving the church into the world but by calling the world to repentance and to righteousness. The church, where possible, must work to make structures more adequate to the life as righteously ordered and intended by God. Structures cannot be sanctified in the same way as individuals, but, since the Spirit is at work in all creation, discerning action of the church can bear witness to and participate in those activities which more nearly embody righteousness, dignity, and love for people.

Defense of the weak and prophetic denunciation of sin and oppression are part of the church's mission to love the neighbor. There is no dichotomy between the command to love one's neighbor and the Great

¹⁸1 Cor.13, is the model of integration for spirituality. Beliefs and practices express, shape, strengthen and are rooted in the love which is the integrating core of Christian spirituality. Entire sanctification as wholeheartedness is the only appropriate response to One who so loves (John 3:16).

Commission to disciple the nations. These commands are to be neither confounded nor dichotomized, because love is the character of God and of the Christian in God. On the other hand, to refuse the mandate to disciple is to hate, or worse, to be indifferent. To seek to disciple only those who seem to be likely candidates for church membership is to deny the global care and providence of the Spirit. In this regard also, the Spirit is not to be grieved or quenched. The personal, social, and cosmic implications of Pentecost are only now beginning to be grasped, especially in the Third World.¹⁹

The love which pursues righteousness and faithfully presses the demands of God on all structures and people is the love which, full of hope, seeks to liberate the captives because the Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon the church. Thus, Holiness/Pentecostal liberation brings great joy because peace, not violent coercive manipulation, is the means and the goal as fruit and gift of the Spirit.²⁰ The vast needs of believers should stagger the church to its knees, much less the affliction, hatred, and bondage of millions of others. The original vision of unity through sanctified hearts for last-days mission in the power of the Spirit is still valid. The end is always near, as near as God; it is as urgent as God's passion.

Conclusion

Wesleyans and Pentecostals share a theological heritage and ethos which emphasizes testimony, salvation as spiritual journey, Christian

¹⁹Pentecostalism represents a major new approach in Christianity which is both supplementary and complementary. It is an indigenized folk religion which overwhelmingly has a black and brown majority in its constituency. Although there are theological, ethical and political differences I have argued that there is a core, a spiritual fundament present in the first part of the century with roots in the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries and, through Wesley, all the way back through eastern and western sources to the early church. This is an important point which an exclusive focus on phenomenological or external similarities may obscure. It is also important for the theological revisioning and cooperative praxis—a simultaneous operation—of the future. See Walter Hollenweger's foreword, pp. vii and viii to C. E. Jones, *A Guide to the Study of the Pentecostal Movement* (2 vols; Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1983), vii, viii. See Valliere, *Holy War*; J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 289-336.

²⁰Note R. J. Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988). It is this countercultural, potentially transformative, leavening influence that Pentecostals and others are just beginning to see and work out in terms of political and missionary implications.

affections, crisis-development transformation, and urgent mission. Seeing the Triune God as the ground and organizing principle for our theological enterprise affords a creative, biblical way to collaborate in envisioning our mission, unifying salvation experiences, and offering a fresh theological vision. At the center of our theologizing and piety will be a holiness hermeneutic of the God who is *the last thing* and the only hope which will preserve love from mere sentimentality and faith from slipping into despair. Perhaps now is the time for the heirs of Wesley and Fletcher to partner in offering a new paradigm for evangelicalism. In the midst of ecumenical winter, a springtime of fresh alternatives should be offered which presses the transformationist mission of the church of Jesus Christ with biblical integrity and urgent relevance.

AN ECUMENICAL VOCATION FOR THE WESLEYAN/HOLINESS TRADITION?

by

Elizabeth H. Mellen

The ecumenical movement has long understood Christian unity as something which confronts us as both “gift and task.” This is a Biblically grounded thought which has been expressed helpfully and quite eloquently by two holiness writers, James Earl Massey and Barry L. Callen, both of the Church of God (Anderson). Massey wrote, “Unity is given, but our experience of it must be gained.”¹ Callen put it that “While Christian unity is a gift from God through the Spirit, it is realized only as Christians intentionally open themselves to be in community with other believers.” I have discovered that Christians in the American-born Wesleyan/Holiness tradition have been gaining significant and fairly extensive experience of Christian unity through “intentionally opening themselves to be in community with other believers.”² This paper seeks to tell the story of this explicit reaching out by Holiness people to other Christians within and beyond their own circles, certainly to make it more widely known and appreciated, but also to make it possible to look at this experience, to study and assess it, and reflect on its meaning and implications

¹James Earl Massey, *Concerning Christian Unity* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1979), 11.

²Barry L. Callen, Appendix F, “Excerpt from *Contours of a Cause: The Theological Vision of the Church of God Movement (Anderson)* in Barry L. Callen and James B. North, *Coming Together in Christ: Pioneering a New Testament Way to Christian Unity* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1997). The Biblical understanding eloquently expressed here is foundational in the ecumenical movement.

for the future direction of Wesleyan/Holiness interaction and on behalf of Christian unity itself.

Some key questions are: Does the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition actually have a calling along these lines—something that could be called an ecumenical vocation? Does such a vocation come naturally to the tradition? That is, is there an imperative to be found, or at least strong grounds for such a vocation in the Wesleyan/Holiness theological heritage and understanding of Christian faith and church mission—a kind of orientation which has been grounding its moves all the while? Most important, could and should such relational work—the reaching for the experience of Christian unity—be taken on more consciously as a Christian calling by those in the tradition? It is interesting to speculate—if the tradition can be said to have this calling, and those within it are willing to take responsibility for it—about the shape that calling might take. Three factors would seem likely to influence the shape and character of things to come: (1) the experience of Christian unity already gained in Wesleyan/Holiness circles (now actually a tradition to build upon, if the story here counts for evidence); (2) the degree to which an ecumenical vocation is seen as organic to the tradition, theologically, missionally, and morally; and finally, (3) the particular location of the Wesleyan/Holiness churches both in their immediate context and in the wider ecclesial terrain.

I have engaged with this question of the ecumenical experience and calling of Holiness people as a fellow Christian in another tradition, and also as a member of the staff of the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute, where my assignment at the Desk for Evangelical and Free Churches is relations with churches not self-defined as part of the “ecumenical movement,” and with Anabaptists and other Believers Church traditions, whether or not they fall under this first rubric.³ I came to the Institute from work as Associate in the Faith and Order Studies office of the NCC.

This paper has engaged me in a special way because, although I am now an Episcopalian, I had the good fortune to have been raised in the Wesleyan tradition. My father’s parents, active at the turn of the century

³The Institute is a ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, an American Roman Catholic order with a charism for work toward Christian unity. The experience of participating in a National Council of Churches’ consultation with Pentecostals held at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1987 may have been what inspired its Director, Fr. Elias Mallon, to develop this desk.

in student YMCA and YWCA work at the University of Kansas, served as Methodist (M. E.) missionaries in China for 50 years. My father himself was ordained a Methodist elder and served as a missionary abroad and as a pastor in the U. S. The families of both of my mother's parents were interwoven with the life of Lecompton, Kansas, where from 1870-1900 the United Brethren were the dominant church, and the small college they established there the town's chief enterprise. The decision taken by the United Brethren in York, Pennsylvania, in 1889 to revise its constitution and thus allow participation in "secret societies" (e.g., Masonic groups), and the subsequent split in the denomination had aftershocks in Lecompton which affected these families deeply. Radicals all—as they had been for the abolitionist cause a generation before—they walked out of the church and became the backbone in that place of the new Old Constitution United Brethren Church, although later my grandparents moved back to the regular United Brethren Church. I value my Wesleyan heritage. I have loved coming to annual meetings of the Wesleyan Theological Society, both to learn from its fresh scholarly explorations of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition and of American religious history and to deepen my grasp of the heritage generally. This article expresses both my appreciation for the fellowship and my hope for serious engagement on the part of WTS scholars with the question of the unity of the church.

I. Organizational Means of Building Christian Community

The Christian Holiness Partnership in its early form as the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness was organized in 1867 as a means for bringing together those of like holiness persuasion, activity and purpose. It has persisted as a fellowship and serves today as the chief organizational expression of the Wesleyan/Holiness interest in building and keeping community with other believers beyond the denominational level. It is a venerable fellowship of denominations and related schools, missionary agencies, camp meeting associations, and individuals for whom the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition is a living and lived heritage.⁴

⁴The CHP has twenty member denominations, many of them relatively small. The five largest are the Church of God (Anderson), Free Methodist Church of North America, Church of the Nazarene, Salvation Army (USA and Canada/Bermuda), and the Wesleyan Church. Some others are the Methodist Evangelical Church, Evangelical Friends, Brethren in Christ, and Missionary Church (north central district).

A recent change of name from Christian Holiness “Association” to “Partnership” was made to show even more clearly the cooperative relations and collective intent of its member denominations and organizations. The opening speaker at a recent annual meeting of the CHP (April 1997), which I visited, sounded this note: Sanctification is about breathing in grace and breathing out love. In a later address, David Gyertson, President of Asbury College, applied this understanding of the practice of holiness ecumenically—that is, to church relations. He testified to having met many Spirit-filled Christians outside of Holiness circles, feeling discomfited because of their ignorance of the Holiness tradition, yet being more affected by their not requiring him “to embrace all they believed and practiced in order to be embraced by them.” He said he was concerned about “an increased spirit of separatism and animosity towards those outside our tradition. . . .a holding on to our holiness distinctives. . .[and] unprecedented erosion of the theology of sanctification.” He was critical of a Holiness “fortress mentality” and the use of “sarcasm and put-down humor.” He lifted up the “cornerstone of fellowship wrapped up in Mr. Wesley’s words, “If your heart is warm, give me your hand!” and spoke of the need for “a fresh baptism of the ability to speak the truth in love.”⁵ This note connecting holiness to relationality, love and reconciliation held through the whole CHP meeting.

The Wesleyan Theological Society (WTS) is not a free-floating academic or intellectual society, but an ecclesially grounded one. It came into being in the CHP matrix, and it keeps faith and fellowship with it as an active Commission of the Partnership.⁶ At the same time, the Society opens its membership to individual United Methodists, Pentecostals, Adventists, and others who claim the Wesleyan/Holiness heritage but whose own churches do not belong to CHP. In addition, a recent change permits other Christians who may not wish to subscribe to the Holiness-specific doctrinal basis to be affiliate members. Solidly grounded in its tradition, and organizationally tied to holiness churches, the WTS stance is hospitable and relational.

⁵David J. Gyertson, “The Practice of Holiness: Testing God’s Worth.” The address was published in *Ecumenical Trends* 27:4 (April 1998), 49-56.

⁶See “Purpose and Doctrinal Basis” from the Wesleyan Theological Society Bylaws, printed in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, and William Kostlevy, “An Historical Overview” and Leo Cox, “The First Decade” in “Thirtieth Anniversary of the Wesleyan Theological Society,” *WTJ* 30:1 (Spring 1995), 212-221.

That the majority of Holiness churches and church people continue in close association through the Christian Holiness Partnership raises an interesting question. Various confessional movements in the latter part of the nineteenth century sought to bring churches in the same theological tradition into fellowship internationally. The Seventh Day Adventists held a world conference in 1863; the first Lambeth Conference (Anglican) was in 1867; the World Alliance of Reformed Churches was started 1875; the World Methodist Council convened in an early form in 1881; the Baptist World Alliance met in 1905; Lutherans began consulting in 1923. There are now nineteen self-identified "Christian World Communions" which include the Salvation Army, the Catholic Church (since 1968), and most recently the Pentecostal World Fellowship. The secretaries of these diverse bodies have met annually since 1957. Although independent of it, the "world communions" do confer with the World Council of Churches (WCC) about their role in the quest for unity. In addition, they have themselves become avenues for international interconfessional dialogues. There is now quite a significant network and record of bi-lateral conversations.⁷

The early and continuing CHP fellowship "for the Promoting of Holiness" could certainly be thought of in terms of a confessional movement. During a sabbatical exploration at WCC offices in Geneva, Donald Dayton learned about the Christian World Communions and asked, "Where is the Christian Holiness Association?" He learned that this body "apparently qualified but that no one had ever heard of it." Then he asked members of the CHP Board of Administration "why we are not represented and was told that no one had heard of World Christian Communions." No action was taken by the Board, but Dayton found the members open to the idea of such representation.⁸

Each of these world communions brings Christians together. One of the them, the World Methodist Council (WMC), counts the Wesleyan

⁷See "Christian World Communions" in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1991); *World Council of Churches Yearbook 1997* (Geneva: WCC). Among the better known dialogues are: the long term Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue with its recent "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification"; Lutheran-Anglican dialogue, discovering such deep consensus that in many regions of the world the two churches are declaring themselves to be "in full communion," i.e., clergy permitted to serve congregations of the other church and closer collaboration in mission and witness.

⁸Donald W. Dayton, "The Holiness Witness in the Ecumenical Church," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23:1-2 (1988), 102.

Church, the Free Methodist Church, and the Church of the Nazarene among participants in the heritage it represents.⁹ Two holiness bodies, the Wesleyan Church and the Free Methodist Church of North America, are actually members of the WMC; the Nazarenes and Salvation Army participate in WMC activities.¹⁰ Among Nazarenes there is some current interest in joining. Clearly the historic relationship to Methodism needs to be claimed publicly and such common interests as Wesley studies owned—this has been taking place.¹¹ It remains to be seen, however, whether the CHP will take its place among this world family of traditions and there represent the nineteenth-century Wesleyan/Holiness movement, now spread worldwide, in a more precise and inclusive way than the World Methodist Council has, and in a fuller and broader way than the Salvationists can do alone.¹² If it does so, it may also consider initiating theological dialogue at the international level, thus introducing its Christian testimony and heritage into this wide ecumenical arena.

Beyond the CHP, the most significant expression of the desire to relate organizationally is the membership of over half the Christian Holiness Partnership churches (13 out of 20, including five of the six largest) in the National Association of Evangelicals. The Church of God (Anderson) is a notable exception.¹³ These Holiness bodies participate in the fel-

⁹Cf. *World Parish* (International Organ of the World Methodist Council), 36:1 (January/February 1996). The issue looked forward to the first WMC meeting to be held in Latin America and lifted up the number of "Methodists" in each Latin American country. The number was the sum of Methodists, Free Methodists, Wesleyans, and Nazarenes in each place, with a note that all were WMC members.

¹⁰*World Methodist Council Handbook of Information 1997-2000* (Lake Junaluska, NC: WMC); conversation with WMC staff, Lake Junaluska, November, 1997.

¹¹Howard Snyder, "Wesleyan Theological Society: The Third Decade (1985-1984)," in "Thirtieth Anniversary of the Wesleyan Theological Society," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30:1 (Spring 1995), 228-229; Donald W. Dayton, "The Holiness Witness in the Ecumenical Church," *WTJ* 23:12 (1988), 104-105. Both of these call attention to Holiness scholars' participation in the WMC-sponsored Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies.

¹²Donald Dayton has suggested it ("The Holiness Witness," 102), and, aside from possible monetary constraints, thought there could be no objections.

¹³This body has not been a "joiner," but nonetheless carries a strong burden for Christian unity. Certain of its leaders are very active ecumenically—Edward Foggs with the National Association of Evangelicals, Gilbert Stafford with the Faith and Order movement, and Barry Callen as Editor of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*. In 1975, its General Assembly in North America formed a "Commis-

lowship and opportunities for broad consultation and common endeavor which that organization, in its commitment to Christian unity, provides.¹⁴

Generally speaking, Holiness denominations have not connected with the conciliar movement and instead have kept an intentional distance from the expressions and instruments of the “Ecumenical Movement,” a stance they share with others involved in the twentieth-century neo-evangelical movement and church culture. Interestingly, examples can be found nonetheless of involvement on the part of Holiness denominations with one or more aspects of National Council church work in the U. S. (e.g., mission and stewardship education, religious liberty, religious statistics, and communications.)¹⁵ In addition, Holiness congregations can quite often be found as members of local councils of churches (as distinct from ministerial associations).

II. Relating Through Dialogue

Beyond these organizational means one also finds the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition gaining experience in Christian unity through theological conversation with Christians in other traditions. One of the more important arenas historically for multi-lateral scholarly work on issues of Christian division and unity is the Faith and Order movement, which predates the World Council of Churches. While it became an integral part of the World Council in 1948, it is open to and has always included the participation of representatives of churches or traditions which are not WCC members and so retains its distinctive “movement” character.

Although the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition was represented at the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in 1993 by a WTS scholar, it

sion on Christian Unity” because “the need and responsibility for unity and cooperative work among Christians is so strategic to Christian witness and world evangelism and the Church of God continues to need a representative group to make contacts, hold conversations, and develop lines of cooperation with other church bodies of similar spirit and concern” (as in Barry L. Callen, compiler and editor, *Journeying Together: A Documentary History of the Corporate Life of the Church of God Movement [Anderson]* (Anderson, IN: The Leadership Council of the Church of God, 1996, 27). *Editor’s note:* Dr. Stafford’s involvement with Faith and Order has been through appointment by this Commission on Christian Unity.

¹⁴*National Evangelical Directory, 1997-1998* (Carol Stream, IL: National Association of Evangelicals).

¹⁵Conversations with Sarah Vilanculu of the NCCC/USA Office of Communications and with David Cubie, Mount Vernon (Ohio) Nazarene College.

has not otherwise been active in international Faith and Order studies.¹⁶ It has been very active, however, in the U. S. Faith and Order work carried on under the auspices of the NCCC/USA. The Church of God (Anderson) has been represented ever since 1957, when the inaugural “North American Conference on Faith and Order” was convened at Oberlin, Ohio. John W. V. Smith attended from Anderson University School of Theology and came thereafter to the ongoing meetings until his death in 1984; Gilbert Stafford has attended since 1984. His recent interpretive essay, “The Faith and Order Movement: Holiness Church Participation” offers an introduction to Faith and Order work for a Wesleyan/Holiness (or a general evangelical) audience, touching on its aims and methodology. Stafford provides some little-known history of Holiness involvement, an account of his own experience in Faith and Order meetings, and the benefits to be gained through participation.¹⁷ The Wesleyan Theological Society itself decided in the early 1980s to choose and send not one but two of its scholars to the twice yearly meetings.¹⁸ David Cubie, Donald Dayton, and Paul Bassett have served as faithful, able, and imaginative contributors.

The 1980s and early 1990s were a creative time for U. S. Faith and Order studies. It was “the special contribution of its director Jeff Gros during this period to make this [Faith and Order] working group one of the most diverse and representative theological arenas in the ecumenical

¹⁶During his 1986 sabbatical at the WCC, Donald Dayton was placed as informal consultant with its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism; he had assumed that as a theologian he would be assigned to Faith and Order. WCC General Secretary Emilio Castro had an interest at that time in introducing WCC member churches to some non-member churches. Articles were written anonymously by members of the latter churches, and published with the approval of their respective bodies in *Ecumenical Review*: some in 19:1 (January 1967); some in 23:3 (July 1971), including Church of God (Anderson) and the Church of the Nazarene; still others in 24:2 (April 1972); and the last in 28:4 (October 1976), including the Wesleyan Church—the latter by Dayton.

¹⁷Gilbert W. Stafford, “The Faith and Order Movement: Holiness Church Participation,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 32:1 (Spring 1997); also published as Appendix H in Barry L. Callen and James B. North, *Coming Together in Christ: Pioneering a New Testament Way to Christian Unity* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1997). Stafford’s own contributions to Faith and Order work are listed here as well.

¹⁸The story of this development and his judgment that “this decision was one of the most visionary and important that we have ever undertaken as a society” is related in Dayton, “The Holiness Witness,” 93.

world.”¹⁹ American church scholars, from the oldest of traditions to the newest, from Orthodox to Pentecostal, with roots in other parts of the world or of American origin, committed themselves to making a “distinctive contribution” to ecumenical studies precisely out of the eclectic North American ecclesial context. They hoped to move beyond what seemed at times, as WTS representative Donald Dayton put it, to have “become something of a pale, North American imitation of the work being coordinated out of Geneva.”²⁰ The histories and critical questions that representatives of Holiness, Pentecostal, Adventist, American Restorationist, Southern Baptist, and African American church traditions brought to the mix enabled fresh considerations of how to live into our unity as Christians. In 1982 the WCC’s Commission on Faith and Order initiated the study program “Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today.”²¹ The amazing proliferation of new churches in North America from the nineteenth century forward could be viewed with dismay “as a final playing out of the unfortunate Protestant tendency to endless splitting and fragmentation,” and a betrayal of any notion of a common apostolic faith, or as “an amazing flowering of new forms of Christianity that deserve sympathetic exploration for the insights that they might bring to ecumenical discussion.”²² The American Faith and Order Commission chose, at the risk of further complicating an already complex ecumenical discussion, to see it as a flowering. Noting that all churches explain and

¹⁹Donald W. Dayton, “Introduction: American-Born Churches Consultation” (written for Faith and Order NCCC/USA consultation held in Dallas, TX, March 13-14, 1991, unpublished).

²⁰Donald W. Dayton, “The Holiness Witness in the Ecumenical Church,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23:1-2 (1988), 103.

²¹A common understanding and confession of faith, the mutual recognition of baptism, eucharist and ministry, and common processes for decision making and teaching have for some time been recognized as at least three basic marks of a true fellowship of churches, marks that would make their unity visible. These studies relate to the first of these. Cf. Hans-Georg Link, ed., *The Apostolic Faith Today*, Faith and Order Paper No. 124 (Geneva: WCC, 1985); Hans-Georg Link, ed., *The Roots of Our Common Faith: Faith in the Scriptures and in the Early Church*, Faith and Order Paper No. 119 (Geneva: WCC, 1984); *Confessing the One Faith: An ecumenical explication of the apostolic faith as it is confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*, Faith and Order Paper no. 153 (Geneva: WCC, 1996); George Vandervelde, “The Meaning of ‘Apostolic Faith’ in World Council of Churches’ Documents,” in Thaddeus D. Horgan, ed., *Apostolic Faith in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988).

²²Donald Dayton, “Introduction: American-Born Churches Consultation.”

understand themselves as “apostolic,” it recognized each tradition as having emerged from its own struggle to achieve a lived fidelity in continuity with the faith of the apostles, and each as showing forth “dimensions” of the Apostolic Faith.²³

In this spirit, a number of specific studies and consultations went forward, involving an array of traditions in different ways. A persistent interest throughout was in challenging the witness of church history to reveal more fully the catholicity of the church, and pressing for the expansion of the ecumenical imagination into a less limited version of the ecumenical task.²⁴ Although papers from the “American Born Churches Consultation” held in Texas in 1991, where Donald Dayton (Wesleyan Church), Paul Bassett (Church of the Nazarene), and Russell Staples (Seventh Day Adventist) of the WTS were presenters, were not finally published, the work done there is surfacing in other contexts. The strong contribution of Wesleyan/Holiness scholars—there were always three represented—in conceptualizing and carrying out these U. S. ecumenical studies can hardly be overemphasized.²⁵

John W. V. Smith played a pivotal role in productively involving an array of American churches in Faith and Order work. His own Church of God (Anderson) is a movement which, along with its holiness heritage, has a foundational understanding that baptism properly follows a decisional response of faith. It has been a strong participant in the series of Believers Church Conferences from their beginning in the U. S. in 1967. When the WCC’s Faith and Order Commission initiated the Apostolic Faith Study, it also concluded a long study by the churches of the issues of Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, published the famous BEM document,²⁶ and began the process of eliciting responses to it from hundreds of churches around

²³Thaddeus D. Horgan, ed., *Apostolic Faith in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988).

²⁴Timothy J. Wengert and Charles W. Brockwell, Jr., *Telling the Churches’ Stories: Ecumenical Perspectives on Writing Christian History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995) is the fine volume that came out of this concern.

²⁵Two published U. S. Faith and Order papers by Donald Dayton not cited above: “Reflections on Apostolicity in the North American Context” in Horgan, ed., *Apostolic Faith in America*; and “Pneumatological Issues in the Holiness Movement,” in Theodore Stylianopoulos and S. Mark Heim, eds., *Spirit of Truth: Ecumenical Perspectives on the Holy Spirit* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1986).

²⁶*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

the world. John Howard Yoder noted later that it was Smith who saw the pertinence to the Believers Church Conferences of the WCC Faith and Order Commission's BEM statement.²⁷ It was his initiative that led to the addressing of the three concerns of the convergence document in three separate Believers Church Conferences (1984, 1987 and 1994), each involving not only Believers traditions, but also Faith and Order spokespersons and participants from other church traditions. The first, on Baptism, was held at Anderson, Indiana; the collection of papers from it, which Smith had been editing when he died, was dedicated to his memory.²⁸

One more Wesleyan/Holiness contribution to Faith and Order work should be mentioned. In the U. S., a Faith and Order study group explored resources in various traditions for developing an approach for Christians to use in facing religious pluralism and interfaith relations. Floyd T. Cunningham (Church of the Nazarene) made a valuable contribution in his look at the Wesleyan heritage; his insights and conclusions were remarkably close to those of a Methodist who also presented.²⁹

Since the early 1980s the WTS has made itself into an arena for dialogue, through presentations at its meetings by persons from beyond the Wesleyan/Holiness circle (Anabaptist, United Methodist, Anglican, Adventist, and Dispensationalist), many by special invitation.³⁰ Recently,

²⁷John Howard Yoder, Introduction to Merle D. Strege, ed., *Baptism and Church: A Believers' Church Vision* [papers on the theme "Believers' Baptism and the Meaning of Church Membership: Concepts and Practices in an Ecumenical Context" presented at the 7th Conference on the Believers Church," Anderson, Indiana, June 1984] (Grand Rapids, MI: Sagamore Books, 1986), 6.

²⁸The two besides *Baptism and Church* were: David B. Eller, ed., *Servants of the Word: Ministry in the Believers' Church* [papers from the 8th Believers Church Conference, Bethany Theological Seminary, Oak Brook, IL, September 1987] (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1990); Dale R. Stoffer, ed., *The Lord's Supper: Believers Church Perspectives* [papers from the 11th Believers Church Conference, Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, OH, June 1994] (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1997).

²⁹Floyd T. Cunningham, "Interreligious Dialogue: A Wesleyan Holiness Perspective," in Mark Heim, ed., *Grounds for Discussion: Ecumenical Resources for Responses to Religious Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998). The writer takes credit for Cunningham's participation. They met at a World Evangelical Fellowship/Theological Commission meeting in the Philippines and again at a WTS meeting.

³⁰William Kostlevy, "An Historical Overview," in "Thirtieth Anniversary of the Wesleyan Theological Society," *WTJ* 30:1 (Spring 1995), 214; John G. Merritt, "Fellowship in Ferment: A History of the Wesleyan Theological Society, 1965-1984," *WTJ* 21:1-2 (1986), 185-203.

the WTS became an agency for of dialogue in another way, as the partner in planning an historic joint meeting with the Society for Pentecostal Studies held March, 1998, in Cleveland, Tennessee. The proposal came in 1993 from Cheryl Bridges Johns (Church of God/Cleveland) and Susie Stanley (Church of God/Anderson), then presidents respectively of the SPS and WTS, who had become acquainted that year at the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in Spain.³¹ But earlier developments had prepared the way for the formal proposal. Groundbreaking work by Vinson Synan and Donald Dayton had shown the close relationship between the Wesleyan/Holiness churches and Pentecostalism, "to the great discomfort of both groups," as David Bundy put it.³² The related question about whether Wesley and early Methodism made use of pneumatological (Pentecostal) language in relation to entire sanctification or whether that was a 19th-century development was widely researched and debated in the WTS from 1973-1980.³³ With the recognition of the theological and historical ties connecting the two movements, the way was open to ask whether the historic tensions between the two, which included official positions taken by some Holiness bodies against Pentecostalism, might redemptively be revisited.³⁴ In 1987, the year his significant monograph *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* was published,³⁵ Donald Dayton was vice president and program chair of the Society for Pentecostal Studies. He arranged for that Society to meet on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. The program included exchange with Wes-

³¹Susie Stanley was the delegate from the Wesleyan Theological Society; Johns was sent by her denomination.

³²David Bundy, "The Historiography of the Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30:1 (Spring 1995), 63, 67.

³³John G. Merritt, "Fellowship in Ferment: a History of the Wesleyan Theological Society, 1965-1984," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 21:1-2 (1986), 197-199. *Editor's note:* This subject was reopened in the March 1998 joint meeting of WTS/SPS by the provocative paper of Laurence Wood that is published in this journal issue.

³⁴Work along this line is seen in various sources: Melvin E. Dieter, "The Development of Nineteenth Century Holiness Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20:1 (Spring 1985), 61-77; Howard A. Snyder with Daniel V. Runyon, *The Divided Flame* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1986); and Dieter review in *WTJ* 22:2 (1987), 126-7; Melvin E. Dieter, review of W. T. Purkiser, *Called Unto Holiness*, Vol. 2, *The Story of the Nazarenes, the Second Twenty-Five Years, 1933-1958* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1983), in *WTJ* 20:1 (1985), 155-161.

³⁵Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan (Francis Asbury Press), 1987.

leyan/Holiness scholars.³⁶ These Holiness—Pentecostal relations, developed first in a tentative way, but now are becoming a solid reality with great promise for on-going fellowship and shared reflection of a sort that few could have anticipated.

III. The Work of Individuals

There are more than a few individual Wesleyan/Holiness leaders and scholars whose work would need to be lifted up in any comprehensive study of developing Wesleyan/Holiness ecumenical interest and activity. Only three will receive attention here. The first is Barry L. Callen, who has explored at length the special legacy of concern for Christian unity in the Church of God (Anderson) tradition, following its primary pioneer, Daniel S. Warner (1842-1895). Warner understood holiness to apply not only to an experience of individual believers but also to the church itself and so joined together “the passion for Christian holiness, the dream of [visible] Christian unity, and the belief that the first enables the second.”³⁷ Callen demonstrated the theological link between Warner’s passionate conviction about visible unity and his “come outer” activity and has provided a valuable listing of works by other scholars on this heritage and its relevance to the larger church’s quest for Christian unity today.³⁸

More recently Callen has co-authored *Coming Together in Christ: Pioneering a New Testament Way to Christian Unity* with James North of the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ tradition,³⁹ a work documenting a ground-breaking dialogue between their traditions, both of which, from their founding days, have had a strong calling in relation to Christian unity.⁴⁰ In 1988, the Independent Christian Churches were convicted by ecumenical scholar Michael Kinnamon (Christian Church/Disciples) of

³⁶Donald W. Dayton, “The Holiness Witness in the Ecumenical Church,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23:1-2 (1988), 105-106.

³⁷Barry L. Callen, “Daniel Snyder Warner: Joining Holiness and All Truth,” *WTJ* 30:1 (Spring 1995) 92-110. Quote, p. 103. On p. 98 Callen notes and quotes Melvin Dieter’s earlier recognition of this theological insight of Warner’s (in *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980).

³⁸Callen, “Daniel Snyder Warner,” 108.

³⁹One of the three major groupings of churches in the Stone-Campbell Restorationist tradition.

⁴⁰Barry L. Callen and James B. North, *Coming Together in Christ: Pioneering a New Testament Way to Christian Unity* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1997).

the sin of doing little or nothing of substance about that calling.⁴¹ Largely as a result of this, a dialogue relationship was sought with the Anderson church, a tradition also known to be restorationist in theology and tending to stand apart from rather than affiliate with others, out of a particular ecclesiological understanding.⁴² The authors report in moving fashion the ensuing process of the two bodies' intentionally getting acquainted over several years, how they engaged in mutual study and reflection, what the two traditions (one Holiness, one not) have learned together about themselves and each other, and finally some recent steps taken toward practical cooperation in the mission of the church.

A strength of the volume is the authors' putting this dialogue in wider historical context, situating it in three ways: within their own traditions' histories and theological self-understandings,⁴³ within the on-going concern for unity in the long history of the Christian church, and within 20th-century developments—the ecumenical movement and the movement for greater unity among evangelicals who often stand apart from the formalized ecumenical movement. Their hope is to encourage other conservative churches to address the unity issue seriously. The book and the dialogue reports are animated by the scriptural understanding that being “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3-14) means to be caught up in God's larger purpose of bringing all things together and becoming part of “a unique and visible togetherness of all who are His . . . a divinely enabled togetherness . . . the church, the new community brought into being by the received grace of Christ,” intended as “a hopeful witness to a divided world.”⁴⁴

Another and potentially divisive perspective, however, is also present. This may be because the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ separated from the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in 1926, during and in relation to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy (though other

⁴¹Kinnamon's address appears as Appendix D in the Callen/North volume.

⁴²Between 1987 and 1994, the Church of God (Anderson) invited critique of its own “stand apart” history. Among those who addressed its General Assembly were three leaders in Christian Holiness Partnership churches. See Callen and North, 106-111.

⁴³An illuminating selection of excerpts of writings, historic and current, from both of these traditions appears in the appendices to the book.

⁴⁴Callen and North, 9-10. Callen's own convictions and their grounding in the Anderson Church of God tradition are apparent here. Cf. Appendix F, excerpted from Callen's *Contours of a Cause: The Theological Vision of the Church of God Movement (Anderson)*.

issues were involved), and are concerned with issues related to that historic impasse in Christian relations—though that concern is hardly limited to them! Whatever the reason, the authors early on report with care the existence in evangelical circles of sentiments against the ecumenical movement—the generally suspicious and negative depictions, the typical accusations—with apt quotes from various writers past and present to illustrate. These are always spoken of as what evangelicals or conservatives think, not necessarily as the authors' own sentiments.⁴⁵ Yet because the authors do not clearly take issue with them, even in the case of the most flagrantly irresponsible statements, the stance seems ultimately to be that the authors are in some sympathy with them. Indeed, they posit a distance-keeping premise that there are two worlds of church—"evangelical," and "liberal" (the historically "ecumenical" belonging to the latter)—one of which is safe and takes truth seriously and one which does not.

In the chapter "Testing the Evangelical Alternative," Callen and North aver that their multi-year dialogue "has been rooted in a commitment that the Scriptures are authoritative and should guide all approaches to doctrinal issues and Christian unity efforts," whereas "religious 'liberals' can carry on ecumenical dialogues with a greater sense of negotiability." Denominations may reflect together in dialogue on their traditions, as they themselves have done, yet:

. . . if the presupposition is that such traditions are conditioned only by history and circumstances, then there is considerable flexibility when it comes to harmonizing differing views. But conservatives generally choose against this broad kind of flexibility. There is thought to be no room for negotiating what is judged to be truly divine revelation. Understanding Scriptural teaching may change, but in the final analysis changes in belief between dialoguing groups should occur only when all involved believers are convinced that the teaching perspective in question is in harmony with Scripture. This understanding of biblical boundaries is crucial and places some restrictions on "conservative" doctrinal dialogues that religious liberals do not normally worry about.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Cf. Callen and North, 26 and elsewhere.

⁴⁶Callen and North, 90.

Thus Callen and North seek an “evangelical alternative” to dialogue where more “flexible” standards prevail, hoping their dialogue can represent an emerging “conservative paradigm,” allaying evangelical fears about dialogue and serving as “a challenge to other conservative/evangelical groups” to join the larger discussion, since “ecumenical endeavors need not be the private preserve of the liberal denominations.”⁴⁷

Certainly the ecumenical movement is broader than and not to be equated with any particular ecumenical effort, instrument, organization, or dialogue, which has recognized and seeks to serve the unity of the church, and ecumenical concern/activity is certainly not a private preserve. To suggest, however, that there can be segregated (quarantined?) dialogue arenas seems not to follow. Nor is the idea supportable if there is only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. No such understanding informed either John W. V. Smith or Gilbert Stafford of the Church of God (Anderson) as they entered conversations in multilateral settings.

The authors could assess the quality of other bi-lateral dialogues—not one was cited—to establish for themselves just who pursues a “liberal” line: Eastern Orthodox in conversation with Roman Catholics? Roman Catholics with Lutherans? Moravians with Anglicans? Pentecostals with Reformed churches in a developing new international dialogue? And who fails to treat Scripture as authoritative, or abandons beliefs for the sake of “harmonizing” because they see them as conditioned by history and circumstance. They would discover, I think, that their dialogue, with its skillful, sensitive delineation of theological differences in the two traditions and an agreement reached on baptism, does not differ in kind, and is neither more nor less faithful to the faith once delivered to the saints than other Christian dialogues pursued in the quest for deepened fellowship; and that the joy and refreshment they found in the process has been shared by many others.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Callen and North, 101. Cf. all of chapter 5, “Doctrine: Testing the Evangelical Alternative” and chapter 6, “Joining the Larger Discussion.”

⁴⁸Callen and North, 101. If and when other dialogues are or appear to be less faithful to the truth, we should take heed; we should after all “normally worry” about the same things, if that truth is one. If we don’t, we should question each other about our ways of proceeding, our warrants and methodologies and address differences forthrightly and together, taking others’ claims seriously and allowing ourselves to be questioned critically, but yielding no understanding or conviction that grounds us.

Proceeding into ecumenical exploration, yet with this deference and healthy respect for that particularly intimidating chasm of division that is our inheritance from the fundamentalist-modernist controversies, Callen and North remind us that those tensions are there and that there are particular risks involved in reaching in some directions to deepen that fellowship given us in Christ. The happy implication of their firm faith that we are brought together in Christ, however, is that even this divide must be understood as a brokenness not beyond the reach of God's reconciling power in Christ.

Coming Together In Christ is a significant volume. The experience gained in the COG-CC/CC dialogue, the theological vision which undergirds it, including understandings of the nature of Christian truth and its pursuit, and its understanding of the movement of the Spirit and depiction of the church as "divinely enabled togetherness" are important. The book and the dialogue involving a prominent Holiness church are milestones in a developing reflection by Wesleyan/Holiness scholars on the unity of the church.

Nazarene historian and theologian David Cubie is another major thinker in relation to the Wesleyan/Holiness ecumenical calling. Stimulated by participation in the Faith and Order arena in the 1980s, he wrote papers now recently gathered and published under the title "A Wesleyan Perspective on Christian Unity."⁴⁹ Cubie looks at John Wesley's writings on the unity of the church and on the central importance of realizing the fellowship offered and made possible in Christ, and seeks to relate these to Wesley's understanding of the gospel, the role of love, his own mission and that of the "Methodists" in general—who both served and later pulled away from the Church of England. Cubie brings to light some rich tendencies-in-tension, especially regarding the nature of the church and therefore of church unity. There are passages showing that Wesley saw the unity of the church expressed as much in the quality of the fellowship and Christian life within the church as in a state of formal undividedness, with this implication: that an undivided church might appropriately be designated "sectarian" if it were not the Spirit-filled communion it was intended to be.

Cubie then investigates the history of the Holiness denominations in the U. S. emerging in various ways and times out of Methodism, examin-

⁴⁹David L. Cubie, "A Wesleyan Perspective on Christian Unity," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33:2 (Fall 1998), 198-229.

ing pivotal events, written evidence of leaders' convictions and thinking, and the patterns of institutional change within individual Holiness denominations which reveal Wesleyan/Holiness understandings of church division and church unity. Among his findings is a decisive tendency in Holiness denominations toward a congregational understanding of the church which does not preclude concern for the church universal. Cubie concludes by laying out principles drawn from this Wesleyan evangelical tradition which in his view must be the basis for authentic Wesleyan/Holiness participation in dialogue. With special eloquence he explicates the last, that "the unity of the Church must first of all be understood as a unity of love." One anticipates thoughtful response by other scholars in the tradition to this foundational study, and Cubie's own affirmation: "The Christian church exists both to be one and to participate in God's work of making all one."

Finally, no survey of ways Wesleyan/Holiness people have opened themselves to community with other believers can omit mention of the contribution of Donald Dayton of the Wesleyan Church. A collector and bibliographer of a wide range of English-language materials documenting developments in 19th and 20th-century popular Christianity, Dayton has helped build a basis for a more catholic appreciation of the church today. As historical theologian, he has contributed to new understanding of the relationship of Holiness and Pentecostal traditions⁵⁰ and challenged characterizations of evangelical Christianity which in his view defy the historical record.⁵¹ As part of a scholarly debate, he has taken the position that the various ecclesial/theological traditions within "the evangelical big tent" are the basic carriers of Christian faith, and that their shape and logic and sense of church must ultimately be more determinative in people's faith lives than their "evangelicalism."⁵² Along with others, Dayton has encouraged creative debate in the WTS, much of it in the interest of

⁵⁰See report and notes above on the Holiness-Pentecostal rapprochement.

⁵¹He did this to greatest effect in evangelical circles with his *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, c1976, 1988, reprinted with new preface), which countered the prevailing conservative account of what was evangelically correct behavior with a tradition of evangelical social concern. In his "Yet Another Layer of the Onion; Or Opening the Ecumenical Door to Let the Riffraff In" (*Ecumenical Review* 40:1, 1988, 87-110) he raises broader questions of historiography.

⁵²Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds., *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

and with implications for inter-church relations. He has been a significant participant in U. S. Faith and Order work. Ecumenical emissary as well as thinker, he plays a remarkable role as as a Wesleyan/Holiness ecclesial visitor and ecumenical explorer and apologist. A compelling account of this work, combined with careful reflection on the question of Wesleyan/Holiness churches and their relationship to the ecumenical movement, can be found in his "The Holiness Witness in the Ecumenical Church," presented to the WTS in 1987.⁵³

This overview, concluding with a look at three ecumenically minded individual scholars, indicates that there is a strong, serviceable record of Wesleyan/Holiness interest in the intentional deepening of Christian fellowship in a variety of directions and a maturing theological reflection drawn from the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition accompanying the activity. There almost seems to be an ecumenical calling already recognized that is being attended to, and certainly a developing ecumenical praxis. The primary question, then, may be: To what extent will Wesleyan/Holiness church people own this vocation even more self-consciously and more corporately in the context and terms of their ecclesial situation and theological tradition? That is a question, of course, not for Wesleyan/Holiness church people only, but worthy of address by churches and church people in all traditions.

IV. Location as Vocation

The biblical witness concerning the unity of the church comes not as a worked out theory, rule or guideline, but largely in the form of exhortations and challenges addressed to early Christian communities whose internal unity and bonds of fellowship were strained or threatened. We also have the creeds—the Apostles and the Nicene—but even the assertions here about the nature of the church (as one and holy, catholic and apostolic) were evolved in the thick of lived Christian life and problems, and are an application and distillation of Scriptural wisdom in later situations where the nature and quality of Christian fellowship needed to be lifted up. In a similar way, our own calls to work for reconciliation and the unity or deeper fellowship of the church come in our particular personal, social, national, and ecclesial contexts, and require of us some serious thought about the strained places in those given relations. In his "The

⁵³Donald W. Dayton, "The Holiness Witness in the Ecumenical Church," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23:1-2 (1988).

Holiness Witness in the Ecumenical Church” Donald Dayton takes such a contextual, historical approach, assuming that the relations and connections integrally a part of Wesleyan/Holiness history and institutional terrain are the appropriate place to begin in thinking about a Wesleyan/Holiness ecumenical agenda.⁵⁴

Following that approach here, we can think about Wesleyan/Holiness relationship seeking efforts—both those already undertaken and those that could be—from the perspective of the various places the tradition is located. Ecumenical attention could thus continue in relation to or could intentionally be given: (1) to those in the immediate vicinity, that is, to other Wesleyan/Holiness bodies, both those which have sought each other out in the Christian Holiness Partnership and the more conservative (or more radical) who out of conviction have declined that fellowship;⁵⁵ (2) to the Methodist family (matrix of the Holiness movement) and specifically in the U. S. to the historic Black Methodist bodies and to the United Methodists;⁵⁶ (3) to Pentecostalism, Holiness offspring and/or sibling; (4) to other 19th-century revivalist movement churches and traditions; (5) to the on-going opportunities for dialogue available in Faith and Order studies in North America and internationally; (6) to the neo-evangelical Christian community and culture (the “evangelical big tent”); (7) to the ecumenical community—those who have understood themselves to be part of the ecumenical movement, and the instruments of the movement, e.g., conciliar agencies; and (8) to other traditions within the Christian church. Bi-lateral conversations, of which the dialogue of the Church of God (Anderson) with the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, and the burgeoning WTS academic exchange with the Society for Pentecostal

⁵⁴Dayton, “The Holiness Witness.”

⁵⁵Dayton, “The Holiness Witness,” 104; Wallace Thornton, Jr., “Sweet Radical Holiness”: Behavioral Standards, Embourgeoisement, and the Formation of the Conservative Holiness Movement,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33:2 (Fall 1998), 172-197.

⁵⁶There has been little official communication between United Methodists and the descendants of Holiness groups who arose in and left the Methodist Episcopal Church, despite some important linking occurring within the World Methodist Council. Many if not most Methodists know little or nothing about Holiness denominations, and/or do not take them in as part of Methodist history and so as “relatives.” Connections have been severed too completely for too long. Methodist interest in dialogue has been focused elsewhere. It would seem obvious to start a process of becoming acquainted today and reconnecting with a history that WTS scholars are helping to recover.

Studies, and the various discussions among Holiness denominations regarding mergers (achieved or not), are interesting and varied examples that can be an important means of relating in any of the context. They could be explored with other traditions nationally or internationally and either by individual Holiness denominations or by the Christian Holiness Partnership/WTS. The tradition is well poised to do constructive relational work in many directions.

In closing, we will take special note of the distinctive and creative role this tradition is already playing in relation to the evangelical and ecumenical arenas, looked at together as one area of common tension and historic Christian division. In the late 1980s ecumenist Alan Falconer, reflecting on the situation in Northern Ireland in an essay titled "From Theologies-in-Opposition Towards a Theology-of-Interdependence,"⁵⁷ asserted that "the role of religion in the shaping of the identity of the different communities has been fundamental." He suggested that the ecclesial traditions themselves, Catholic and Protestant, have contributed to the cohesion of the separated communities by countenancing the development of "theologies-in-opposition," theological frameworks bolstering the differentiation in identity of the two communities, thus helping the churches to play "chaplain" to continuing division. These clarify the identity of each community as a community-in-opposition, providing theological support for continually reiterated versions of history that keep them differentiated and their hostility alive. The "theologies-in-opposition" are exquisitely interdependent: "Your" identity has been phrased in terms of "our" actions; "our" identity has been cast in terms of "your" actions.

Though our context is quite different, I have wondered about the applicability of Falconer's analysis to the U. S. situation, a church environment still affected and shaped by the fundamentalist-modernist debate that reached a nationally politicized fever pitch seventy years ago, pulled Protestant Christians in the U. S. apart, and still provides terms for our

⁵⁷Alan D. Falconer, "From Theologies-in-Opposition Towards a Theology-of-Interdependence," *Life and Peace Review*, vol. 4, 1990. Falconer is current Director of Faith and Order studies, World Council of Churches. A Scotsman and Presbyterian, his thoughts about Christian unity were honed during years of work in Ireland. See Falconer, ed., *Reconciling Memories* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1988) for an elaboration of the theme. Also Falconer, "Towards Unity through Diversity: Bilateral and Multilateral Dialogues," *One in Christ* 29:4 (1993), 279-287.

thinking and behavior.⁵⁸ Developing opposing characterizations of each other, were we also caught up in a system of theologies-in-opposition? Have we been serving in our church communities as chaplains to division?

This thought shed light on the stubborn operative negativity I discovered in myself when I set out eagerly on my ecumenical assignment to relate to evangelicals. I had a kind of supercilious attitude deposited in my own thinking that was difficult to let go. Falconer's essay suggested to me that I was wrestling with the compelling, even coercive power that mutually interdependent patterns of negative categorizing can have when internalized as part of our self-understanding *as Christians* and inherited as part of our faith identity, so that to abandon them is to risk being unfaithful, or disloyal, in our own eyes.

We know in my sector of the church world that as ecumenically identified Protestants we are ecumenical, relational, and open and these others have always stirred up trouble and been divisive. It would be a virtual heresy—since we are so tied to the understanding that we are not like them—to imagine that our community may have been caught up in the creation and may now be a perpetuator of a mutually dependent hostility-in-opposition. It is hard to recognize that our judgmental dismissal of or our applying the blobby category “fundamentalism” to some group of people out there, culturally despicable, irritating, even dangerous,⁵⁹ is hostile language towards real people and fellow Christians with whom we have a common heritage and hope. But in doing this, mainline church people in “ecumenical” churches match the equally tragic lack of concern or interest in and the stereotyping of ecumenical churches on the part of many evangelicals.

Falconer, of course, has a “resource” to suggest to the Irish churches—the possibility through God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit of remembering Jesus of Nazareth, “the discoverer of the role of forgiveness

⁵⁸Cf. Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion: The Irony of It All, 1893-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986); George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (NY: Oxford, 1980).

⁵⁹A recent example is Episcopalian Bruce Bawer's *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1997). Bawer has done some research and learned some facts and history, but, as he operates within a basic oppositional construct, it is difficult to class his work as real inquiry or exploration.

in human affairs,”⁶⁰ and of repenting, forgiving, and re-membering themselves as members one of another. It is our resource, too. We can assume responsibility for our part in this status quo and be brought to a place beyond the knee-jerk responses of Christian “parties” mired in dysfunctional interdependence, and, as Christians, pursue closer acquaintance and interdependence in the constructive sense. At the least, we could acknowledge that we may be wed more deeply and more “religiously” than we know to a well constructed mutual antipathy.

In their own way, from the evangelical side, Wesleyan/Holiness Christians have been challenging this state of tension and some of its premises. With a ripple effect, careful questions they raise about their own identity generate questions in and for the wider arena. For example, the tradition has noted at least three ways in which it does not fit the standard profile of evangelicalism.

First, the Anglican/Wesleyan/Holiness theological heritage has been in implicit dialogue with the 18th-century common sense Scottish enlightenment views of Scripture which have largely defined neo-evangelicalism. It brings an understanding (and large but understated claim) regarding the Scriptures’ sufficiency in matters pertaining to salvation which does not require an additional faith stance about the “inerrant” authority of the Bible in all matters, including those scientific and historical.⁶¹ At least as important, and perhaps more so, when that dialogue has become explicit, the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition has shown a capacity to negotiate stormy waters of debate about inerrancy in deft, gentle, and civil ways rather than confrontationally and to divisive effect; and also, when the dialogue is implicit, the tradition has shown a capacity to forbear and live with some ambiguity. Note Paul Bassett’s account of a discussion and its outcome among the Nazarenes⁶² and the story of the WTS itself moving away from the inerrancy language of its first faith statement. Of the latter,

⁶⁰Falconer cites Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 1958), 236-247, and quotes Donald Shriver: “To remember Jesus of Nazareth is to participate in ‘realized forgiveness’” (in “Justice and Reconciliation: Forgiveness and the American Blacks,” *Studies* 78(3), 89 no. 310, pp. 136-150).

⁶¹Paul Merritt Bassett, “The Theological Identity of the North American Holiness Movement: Its Understanding of the Nature and Role of the Bible,” in *The Variety of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

⁶²Paul Merritt Bassett, “The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement: 1914- 1940,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (1978), 65-91.

Leo Cox recalls how “After some rather heated discussions . . . during those early years, Dr. Ralph Thompson, in his report . . . 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 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.⁶³

Second, as Wesleyan/Holiness scholars have been at pains to point out, the Holiness Movement and the precipitation of new denominations primarily from Methodism which followed occurred earlier and around different issues than those of the fundamentalist-modernist clash which tore at the Presbyterian and Baptist fellowships. Thus, even though some of its key alliances and affiliations were developed in the context of the fundamentalist/modernist controversy and even more so in the post World War II neo-evangelical movement, it carries within itself another logic and memory.

Third, a piece of the self-understanding of Holiness Movement churches was and is that it is right and good to confer ministerial orders on women with a recognized call to ministry.⁶⁴ Insofar as evangelicalism is associated with patriarchal norms and claims, the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition provides a telling contrast. In this way again it suggests the

⁶³As quoted in Leo Cox, “Wesleyan Theological Society: The First Decade,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30:1 (Spring 1995), 220-221.

⁶⁴The celebration and strengthening of this heritage by the hundreds of women in attendance at the recent Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy conferences (1994, 1996 and 1998), developed by clergy women with the support of Christian Holiness Partnership denominations, means that it is less likely ever again to be as undercelebrated as it was in the period of “fundamentalist leavening.”

desirability and the possibility of developing a more complex notion of evangelicalism than has served in the past.

In addition, the stated basis for fellowship among evangelicals has been assent to the “fundamentals.” Differences among traditions who may be “free” (i.e., Baptist, Mennonite, Wesleyan/Holiness, Pentecostal, etc.) are generously tolerated as “distinctives” for the sake of evangelical unity, fellowship, and the making of common cause within the big tent. Along with others, the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition raises questions about whether such tolerance does justice to significant theological difference and whether presumed or apparent agreement around fundamentals represents a philosophic/theological methodology or commitment of only some voices/traditions within the evangelical big tent.⁶⁵ In due course, thanks to the Wesleyan/Holiness presence, these questions may be raised within the National Association of Evangelicals itself.

Holiness denominations are part of the evangelical culture and fellowship. They come, pay, agree to the terms, participate and contribute significant leadership within the National Association of Evangelicals fellowship and in associated networks and agencies (e.g., the Coalition for Christian Colleges and Universities where the Holiness schools are an important component). It is unlikely that the ecumenical calling of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition will be played out apart from these developed relationships of accountability and ties of affection within evangelicalism generally. Indeed, it is in this context, I would suggest, that its special ecumenical genius may be discovered and played out. Its “differing” in some matters with other evangelicals is likely to be done in a transformative rather than in a divisive way, so as to open up discourse rather than close off conversation, even as it continues to be interested in fellowship beyond evangelical circles. Raising questions while keeping and building fellowship, Wesleyan/Holiness leaders may quietly and creatively decline to play the role of chaplain to division in the body of Christ, keeping as their focus the holiness which “is about breathing in grace and breathing out love.”

⁶⁵Baconian/Scottish enlightenment thought has been a pervasive presence in American religious thought and played a part in the development of 19th-century Holiness theology. Cf. Paul Merritt Bassett, “The Theological Identity of the North American Holiness Movement” and Al Truesdale, “Reification of the Experience of Entire Sanctification,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31:2 (Fall 1996), 95-119. It is not inherently “fundamentalist.” We are speaking here of the concern of some in evangelical circles that this approach should have such preponderant and constraining authority.

GERMAN PIETISM IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA VIA A MISSIONARY PERIODICAL¹

by

J. Steven O'Malley

It has been recognized that there are significant missiological implications in the message and program of the German Pietists. Ernest Stoeffler, the dean of American Pietist scholars, has acknowledged this fact in his seminal works,² and the Anglican historian Stephen Neill recognized the pivotal role of Pietism in the development of the modern ecumenical movement (that to a large extent had its origin in missionary movements of the early twentieth century which were, in turn, fed by Pietist currents).³ What has been lacking is a sustained analysis of how specific Pietistic theological motifs have influenced the missionary outlook of American denominations. It is the task of this paper to address that need.

¹This article was originally presented in March, 1998, to a Consultation at Fuller Theological Seminary organized by the North Atlantic Missiology Project, coordinated by the University of Cambridge and funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts. It also was presented at the American Historical Association/American Association of Church History convened in Washington, D. C., January 10, 1999.

²F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), Part 1, and also his *German Pietism in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), Part 1. For a summation of continental scholarship on Pietism that highlights that dimension, see J. Wallmann, *Der Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1990). Stoeffler broadly defines Pietism as encompassing those streams of experiential Christianity that appeared in continental Protestantism after the Reformation (ch. 1).

³Ruth Rouse (author) and Stephen Neill (editor), *The History of the Ecumenical Movement* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967).

The pervasive influence of Pietism on the former Evangelical United Brethren Church (since 1968 a part of the United Methodist Church) and its predecessor bodies, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association (known after 1922 as the Evangelical Church), qualifies this body to represent a German Pietist-oriented American denomination that also exhibited a significant and arguably distinctive missionary outlook. There has been relatively little effort to examine the nature of that influence as it is significantly reflected in the official German-language periodical of the former Evangelical Association, called *Der Christliche Botschafter* (abbreviated hereafter as the CB). It is our intent to provide an introduction to such an examination.

First, we begin with a brief review of the Pietist background to early German-American evangelicalism. Second, it will be necessary to identify and evaluate the major Pietist theological motifs that had a missiological bearing and to examine their usage within the CB. It will be evident that the early issues (1836 to ca. 1842) reflect a more explicit reference to Pietist authors, and that the later issues (through ca. 1900) reflect a continued use of Pietist motifs, but now increasingly are intermingled with those emanating from “mainstream” American revivalism, Wesleyanism, and also from American socio-political themes, such as antislavery and temperance.

Pietism and the Rise of German-American Evangelicalism

The central message of German Pietism, which concerned the “new birth,” was promoted by the representatives of Pietism through a program which invariably gave emphasis to reclaiming the apostolic mandate that issued from Jesus’ final commission to His disciples. As such, Pietism is a preeminent example of the way in which a cluster of ideas associated with personal religious rebirth, an emphasis on the emotional experience of piety, and a concern for personal over ecclesial or sacramental mission have become recognizable and have attached themselves to an enduring variety of vehicles.⁴ The early Pietist centers in Germany, such as Francke’s Halle and Zinzendorf’s Herrnhut and the Otterbeins’ Herborn, envisioned a world mission for the gospel. The concrete steps these centers took to actualize that mission propelled them into the forefront of

⁴This insight was given by Dr. Jon Miller, Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California in his response to this paper at the Fuller Consultation.

commissioning missionaries to unchurched lands beyond Europe. Their mission emphasis was a plausible corollary to their conviction that genuine Christianity consists not in birthright ecclesial identity but in conscious, heartfelt conversion and a life of intentional discipleship, and that persons who lack the signs of such a vital, experimental Christianity are lost, irrespective of their formal ecclesial affiliations. The Pietists' program was informed and energized by a pronounced eschatological expectancy, that had its roots in the buoyant hope of Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705) for "better times for the church"⁵—certainly it was to be better than European Protestantism had known in the acrimonious days of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), a savage, protracted struggle among the competing European powers that was waged with religious pretexts.

It was the devastating aftermath of that struggle, and also the continuing incursions of French Bourbons into the lands of the Empire, that helped propel German colonization into the American Middle Colonies. That movement emerged first as a trickle and then became a torrent, with tens of thousands of German-speaking immigrants reaching American shores by 1789 and then over six million more in the nineteenth century, to make them the largest non-English ethnic group within the United States at the time. The earliest German immigrants had come as persecuted religious minorities, such as the Dunkers and Mennonites, while their successors largely came from the more nominal ranks of the great German *Landeskirchen* (including Lutherans, Reformed, and Catholics), as well as from the ranks of liberal revolutionaries following the crushing of the anti-Imperial revolutions of 1830 and 1848.

When the fires of religious awakening began to sweep out of the English colonies into the German heartland of the Middle Colonies, the result was a new breed of German-American revivalism that gave rise to what Don Yoder has aptly termed the threefold division of the "church Dutch"⁶ (Lutherans, Reformed, and Catholics), the "plain Dutch" (Mennonites, Dunkers, Amish), and the so-called "bush meeting Dutch" (primarily represented by the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association). This revival among the Germans began with the Otterbein-

⁵For an excellent assessment of Spener's eschatological hope, see K. James Stein, *Philipp Jacob Spener, Pietist Patriarch* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1986).

⁶"Dutch" here refers to "Deutsch," which is to be distinguished from the Dutch (Hollanders) of New York and New Jersey. See Don Yoder, *Pennsylvania Spirituals* (Lancaster, Pa: Pa. Folklife Society, 1961).

Boehm movement in the 1760s and 1770s, and it reached its crescendo with the flourishing of the German-American revivalist denominations of the nineteenth century.

This context provides the setting for the emergence of the Evangelical Association that had its beginnings with the evangelistic mission of a self-appointed Pennsylvania-German Lutheran named Jacob Albright (1759-1809). After being converted to a non-sectarian form of evangelical religion, partly under the influence of Methodist circuit preachers, Albright began, at first reluctantly, to preach the urgent message of the new birth in German communities of Southeastern Pennsylvania. Formal organization of his work was accomplished by his chief converts following Albright's death. Theirs was a movement that combined Methodist discipline and missionary urgency with a message cast in the genre of Pietist theological motifs. They eschewed the use of ecclesial titles for themselves and their movement, preferring instead to be called a "Gemeinschaft" or an "unpartisan" fellowship of like-hearted believers whose mission was to impact the German-American community with the Kingdom claims of their gospel mission.⁷ For many years the ordination of their preachers was not recognized by the "historic" (or "church Dutch") bodies, since their founder lacked regular ecclesial orders. Albright had been "ordained" by his lay assistants upon their acknowledging him to be "a truly evangelical minister in word and truth"—a wholly pragmatic and pneumatic and not a formal or theoretical basis for ministry. At their heart, they were organized as a gospel mission to the nominal adherents of Old World ecclesial bodies and also to the non-observant, secularized Germans of the American frontier.

Pietist Themes Within the Missiological Outlook of the Evangelical Association

In my work with Pietist texts and the early literature of the Evangelical Association, I have noticed an unmistakable congruence in terminology and theological motifs between these two traditions.⁸ This observa-

⁷This contrasts with Wesley and the Methodists, and Otterbein and the United Brethren, both of whom could appeal to regular ecclesial ordination and continuity with historic church bodies in their ministries (Wesley with the Church of England and Otterbein with the German Reformed Church).

⁸See J. Steven O'Malley, *Theology and German-American Evangelicalism* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1995).

tion should not obscure the fact that there was a vast difference in the social and cultural setting of Germany and the American context of the early "Albright brethren" or the Evangelical Association.⁹ The former was typically developed within the urban and academic context—Spener's Frankfurt and Berlin, Francke's Halle, Bengel's Tübingen, and the cities of the German Rhineland where the Reformed Pietist circles were nurtured. The Evangelical Association (abbreviated hereafter as the "EA") emerged in the rural frontier of the Middle States and the old Northwest Territory, among immigrant farmers and craftsmen and their descendants, who had been distanced from their ecclesial traditions and from most opportunities for formal education. However, these immigrants had brought with them the classics of German Pietism, which they often treasured alongside their Luther Bibles. In fact, the earliest German-language printing presses in America, which were heavily involved in reprinting those works, included the eighteenth-century press of Christopher Sauer in Lancaster and the printing press of the fledgling EA, established at New Berlin, Pennsylvania, in 1817.¹⁰

The New Berlin publishing house was discontinued after three years due in part to the depression caused by the War of 1812 and in part to its overly ambitious program of reprinting major Pietist works for American readers, such as Francke's *Menschenfurcht* (1818). However, the press was reopened in 1836 for the purpose of launching the *Christliche Botschafter* (hereafter cited as the CB), which continued to be published until 1946, making it the longest continuing German-language religious publication in American history. Its English-language counterpart, *The Evangelical Messenger*, was begun in 1848. The number of subscribers to the German paper increased from 700 in 1836 to 1500 in 1838 (then one-fifth of the denominational membership) to more than 25,000 subscribers by the 1890s.¹¹

A synopsis of the basic Pietist theological motifs can be readily given. They concern the new birth as the basis for Christian identity,¹² and

⁹Even Zinzendorf's rural Herrnhut was initially inspired by his formative experiences as a student of Francke at Halle.

¹⁰For Sauer's contributions, see F. E. Stoeffler, *Mysticism in the Devotional Literature of Colonial Pennsylvania* (Lancaster, Pa.: German Folklore Society, 1949); for a list of Pietist imprints that issued from the New Berlin press, see Raymond W. Albright, *The History of the Evangelical Church* (Harrisburg: Evangelical Press, 1942), Appendix G, 464-493.

¹¹Albright, *History*, 203, 206.

¹²See Stoeffler, *The Rise of . . .*, chapter one.

with cultivation of the disciplines of the godly life in anticipation of the coming transformation of history by the impending arrival of God's kingdom. This outlook characterized the *raison d'être* of the EA and it became the guiding impulse for its mission.¹³ Within the first half-century of the denomination's existence, there was little or no distinction between home and foreign missions, and the mandate to function as a witness to Christ in every setting of life was to be shared by preacher and laity alike. Their field was primarily the far-flung German-American settlements of the Middle states (where they remained concentrated) and then of the Midwestern and Plains states, until finally their mission reached the Pacific shores and the Canadian provinces by the mid-nineteenth century. Their mission outlook led their leaders alternately to advocate either the renewal of existing churches or to distance themselves from those structures, as in the case of the radical Pietists.

What is distinctive about the EA mission is the manner in which it integrated Methodist patterns of church order and mission strategy, including circuit preachers, camp meetings, classes, and quarterly, annual, and general conferences, with a message of full salvation that was deeply imprinted by a German Pietist theological idiom. Previous historians have recognized this Pietist influence,¹⁴ but what has been lacking is a sustained analysis of the nature of that influence, especially with regard to theological motifs. I have elsewhere probed the Pietist influences on the Articles of Faith of the EA's book of *Doctrines and Discipline* (1809) that was translated and adapted into the German from the English Methodist *Book of Discipline*.¹⁵ However, as Norwood has argued,¹⁶ denominational periodicals such as the CB typically served as primary vehicles for setting values and strategy in the church life of nineteenth-century America.

¹³For a discussion of mission history in both the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren in Christ, see J. Steven O'Malley, "The Vision of German-American Evangelicalism: The Central Role of Missions in the former Evangelical United Brethren Church," *Methodist History* (April, 1996), 148-172.

¹⁴See James Bemesderfer, *Pietism and its Influence upon the Evangelical United Brethren Church* (Harrisburg: The Evangelical Press, 1966).

¹⁵A fuller discussion of this aspect is found in J. Steven O'Malley, "The Distinctive Witness of the Evangelical United Brethren Confession of Faith in Comparison with the Methodist Articles of Religion" (unpublished paper presented at the Duke Conference on Methodism in American Society, 1995).

¹⁶Frederick Norwood, *The Story of Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 216-218.

The distinctive aspects of the German Pietist theological idiom that formed the basis for mission strategy in the EA are to be identified in terms of (a) their geographical origin, (b) the significant Pietist authors who are cited in the CB, and (c) the frequency of the occurrence of Pietist themes in the CB.

Der Christliche Botschafter (CB)

A. Geographical Origins. In identifying the theological orientation of the Pietist motifs that appear in the early issues of the CB, it would best be described as bearing the imprimatur of Rhineland Reformed Spirituality. This tradition, indigenous to the German Rhineland, had its inception in the Dominican mysticism of Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso beginning in the thirteenth century. According to Ernst Benz,¹⁷ Eckhart was the first preacher to use German, and he coined distinctive theological terms that would reappear in this locality during the era of German Pietism, particularly in the writings of Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769). With the advent of federal (or covenantal) theology in this locality, rooted in Olevianus (1536-1587) at the Herborn Academy, and systematically developed by Cocceius (1603-1669), new *heilsgeschichtlich* motifs were interwoven with the older Dominican mystical themes. The leading exponents of this pietistic federalism included F. A. Lampe (1683-1729), Tersteegen, and also the great hymn writer, J. Neander (1650-1680), author of "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." The Rhineland center for this Pietist tradition was at the Herborn Academy, where Otterbein was educated. He was the undisputed leader of the awakening among the German Reformed in America in the colonial era. The impact of this Rhineland Pietism was also felt at the early Lutheran Pietist mission center at Halle, and especially in the work of the Lutheran Neo-Pietist, J. J. Rambach (1693-1735) whose work was to be reprinted by the EA in the CB.

The early EA, as well as the United Brethren, were also indebted to the sterner witness of the radical Pietists. The Rhineland states were also the center for this movement, which, like the Anabaptists that preceded it, separated from the *Landeskirche* (the Rhineland state church), with judgmental declamations of its irreparable apostasy. They were no longer interested in reforming that so-called *corpus Christianum*, but in fashion-

¹⁷Ernst, Benz, *The Sources of German Romantic Philosophy* (Aliso Park, Pa.: Pickwick Publications, 1983), 10-25.

ing millennial end-time communities of an elect remnant who would live in anticipation of an imminent eschaton. However, unlike earlier Anabaptists, they were motivated less by a backward-looking restitutionism than by a forward-looking reconfiguration of the true, visible church as an “unpartisan” fellowship, wherein the barriers erected by confessional partisanship would be transcended. This transformationist outlook places the radical Pietists in some measure of continuity with church Pietists of the Reformed tradition. Both reflect the federalist transformationist view of history, although the latter would eschew all tendencies toward separatism. The radical Pietist interpretation of history was articulated by Gottfried Arnold at Giessen, and its chief communities were found among the Labadists, especially in the radical haven of Berleburg in Wittgenstein where the radical Bible commentary, known as the *Berleburger Bible*, was edited by Johann Rock (1678-1749) from 1730 to 1744. This work was found in the libraries of early EA leaders, like John Seybert, who helped shape the direction of the CB.¹⁸

A survey of the titles printed at the New Berlin press during the first half of the nineteenth century indicates the extensive number of Pietist works from the Rhineland that were reprinted for the use of the members of the EA.¹⁹

¹⁸This author located a set of the Berleburg Bible in the library of John Seybert (1791-1860), the first consitutional bishop of the EA, in the library of the Evangelical School of Theology, Myerstown, Pa. It was also found in the library of Philip William Otterbein (1726-1813), co-founder of the United Brethren in Christ, as cited by A. W. Drury, *Life of Otterbein* (Dayton: UB Pub. House, 1883), 353.

¹⁹The New Berlin press published German translations of Thomas (with an introduction by Gerhard Tersteegen, works by Neo-Pietists P. Hackenberg and J. J. Rambach, and numerous works by Evangelical authors patterned after Pietist prototypes, including D. Diefenbach, *Der Sieg Jesu, in einer Erklärung über das Göttliche Geheimnis der Erlösung* (1840), J. G. Holman, *Lang Verborgenen Freund* (1843), G. Miller, *Kurze und deutliche Lehren zum Wahren und Thätigen Christenthum* (1844), J. Miller, *Das Verborgene Arzt oder Nützliche Hausfreund* (1830), S. Miller, *Das Kernwesen oder der* (1836), and *Anfang und Wachstum in wahren Christenthum* (1836). Another primary source of Pietist influence is to be found in the early German hymnals of the EA, including the early collection by J. Walter (1810) and the later editions, published at New Berlin, of *Das Geistliche Saitenspiel* (1817 ff) and the *Geistliche Viole* (1818 ff), which contain numerous indigenous hymns composed by Evangelical poets, as those of European origin.

B. Pietist Authors Cited in the *Christliche Botschafter*. A review of the issues from the first number in 1836 through the 1860s yields a number of references to classical German Pietist authors. These referenced authors may be listed in terms of the types of Pietism they represent.

1. Roman Catholic spiritual writers who may be viewed either as precursors or compatriots of Pietism, including Thomas á Kempis (1380-1471) and the French Catholic Quietist, Francis Fenelon (1651-1715). An extract from a Thomas' *Imitatio Christi*, that appeared in 1837 speaks in affective terms of the living flame of divine love that is to become a burning desire of the soul for its God.²⁰ A selection from Fenelon that appeared in 1841 admonishes readers that "It is a matter of erring against the deepest ground of the heart not to accede then and there to His summons."²¹

2. Precursors of Pietism from the ranks of the evangelical spiritual theologians from the Radical Reformation of the sixteenth century, including Caspar Schwenkfeld (1489-1561), whose homilies "Concerning the Love of the World" and "Testing the Spirits" reflect the quietist outlook of that great Silesian spiritual reformer. Another precursor of Pietism comes from the field of English Puritan devotional literature, Richard Baxter (1615-1691). Selections from his *Reformed Pastor*, that instructs ministers in the conduct of their office, appear in the German text of the CB.²²

3. A modest representation of the Spener-Halle school of Lutheran Pietism include an essay from P. J. Spener (1635-1705), the father of Lutheran Pietism, entitled "The Great Struggle." It depicts the spiritual conflict between the forces of light represented by Christ and His church and those of Satanic darkness, that are besetting history in its approaching latter stages.²³ There is also an essay from Spener's great disciple, A. H. Francke (1663-1727), that highlights his soteriological emphasis on the "penitential struggle" and its outcome in "conversion"²⁴—terms that are

²⁰Thomas von Kempen, "Die Liebe," CB (December, 1837), 94

²¹Francis Fenelon, "Rückkehr zu Gott," CB (1 March, 1841), 34.

²²Richard Baxter, "Wie das geistliche Amt gefuhrt werden muß," CB (15 November, 1842), 174-5; and Baxter, "Habt Acht auf Euch selbst," CB (2 November, 1841), 25-26.

²³P. J. Spener, "Der große Kampf," CB (2 November, 1841), 168.

²⁴A. H. Francke, "Von dem Weg der Buße zu Gott . . .," CB (15 June, 1849), 89-90.

commonly used in the descriptions of German camp meetings by Bishop Seybert and others.²⁵

4. There is a small influence from the Radical Pietists in the CB, as represented by an 1861 essay containing excerpts from the life of Gottfried Arnold, the father of Radical Pietist historiography, that includes his deathbed testimony.²⁶ The Radicals' emphasis on the alien nature of this world for the pilgrim found a reception in the CB. A similar article describing Zinzendorf's "homegoing" appeared in 1860, on the centennial of the Moravian leader's death at Herrnhut.²⁷

5. The most numerous Pietist citations in the CB clearly come from the camp of the Rhineland Reformed Pietists. They came to focus on the federalist theological school of Johannes Cocceius, as integrated with the "precisionism" of Gisbert Voetius, a Dutch scholastic theologian.²⁸ This tradition heightens the dynamic, transformationist theme that energized the mission of the early Evangelicals. Representatives of this school that can be found in the CB include Conrad Mel, who was mentor to the leading German Reformed Pietist theologian of the eighteenth century, F. A. Lampe (1683-1729),²⁹ as well as an essay that was apparently drawn from Lampe's major work, *Das Geheimnis des Gnadenbundes*.³⁰

By far the most numerous citations from any Pietist figure in the CB are those from the widely venerated German devotional writer of the eighteenth century, Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1763), who was nurtured within the milieu of German Reformed Pietism at Mühlheim a.d. Ruhr, and whose three-hundredth birthdate was celebrated at his birthplace of Moers in November, 1997. As an independent-minded layman, he is often

²⁵See J. Steven O'Malley, *Touched by Godliness; Bishop John Seybert and the Evangelical Heritage* (Topeka, Ks.: Granite Press, 1986), ch. 5.

²⁶"Gottfried Arnold," CB (16 November, 1861), 196.

²⁷"Zinzendorf" Heimgang," CB (2 February, 1861), 18. The Moravians are generally categorized among the Radical Pietists; see Stoeffler, *The Rise of German Pietism in the Eighteenth Century*.

²⁸For the manner in which German federalists interpreted Cocceius' and Voetius' thought, see J. Steven O'Malley, *Pilgrimage of Faith: The Legacy of the Otterbeins* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1973), Part 2.

²⁹Konrad Mel, "Die Fünf Himmel," CB(2 February, 1861), 17. In this homily, Mel contrasts the true heaven, as known to genuine Christian pilgrims, with the "false" heaven, as known to the "children of the world, by Papists, and by Jews."

³⁰CB (15 June, 1836), 54. Although no explicit reference to Lampe is given, there is an unmistakable reference to his leading dogmatic theme in soteriology, with the statement that "this life is a pilgrim's stand," signed only with the initial "L." Lampe's best-known hymn is entitled "Mein Leben ist ein Pilgersstand." See O'Malley, *Pilgrimage of Faith*, Part 2.

placed within the category of the Radical Pietists, although he clearly refrains from the militant disdain of historic Christianity that marked the Radicals. According to Stoeffler, Tersteegen's works were reprinted in colonial Pennsylvania more frequently than those of any other Pietist, save Johann Arndt.³¹ Further, these are represented in the hymnals and libraries of virtually every German religious group in North America. This author has located an annotated copy of Tersteegen's "Letters of Spiritual Counsel" in the personal library of the first Evangelical bishop, John Seybert.³² A listing of poems on and articles by and on Tersteegen will indicate the range and depth of interest in this irenic figure by the readers of the CB. Of the eight Tersteegen selections located in the CB from 1836 to 1861, three are poems, two are sermons, one is an extended essay on the conditions of the church and society of his day, one is an advertisement of a Tersteegen reprint published by the EA, and the last is an extended biographical essay on Tersteegen containing extracts from his writings.³³ At least one of these selections contains rarely-found prophetic

³¹See F. E. Stoeffler, *Mysticism in the Devotional Literature of Colonial Pennsylvania* (Allentown, Pa., 1950), Chapter 1.

³²Gerhard Tersteegen, *Geistliche Schriften* (with the signature of John Seybert).

³³In its first year of publication, the CB printed Tersteegen's "Christliche Herbst Gekanken," a meditation on the autumn of a Christian's life, where the reader is reminded to "Notice what bare trees teach, that stand in autumn upon the cold field; Be not deceived by appearance and dreams, for nothing lasts in this world; Seek plainly an eternal, heavenly life, that only Jesus' influence can provide" (G. T., "Christliche Herbst Gekanken," CB, November, 1836, 88). In 1841, a group of selections appeared under the heading "cross bearing" that included meditations from Thomas á Kempis, Arndt, and then concluded with a Tersteegen verse on the refining virtues of Christian suffering (GT, 1 November, 1841, 176). Then, in 1873, the CB printed the full text of Tersteegen's renowned hymn "Siegesfurst und Ehrenkönig" that appeared under the heading "Christ's Ascension" (CB, 14 May, 1873, 153). In its first year, the CB printed what it termed an "address" by Tersteegen on the theme of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (CB, November, 1836, 78-79). Herein he reiterates the theme of the Heidelberg Catechism (Q. 1) that we are no longer our own, but God's, through Christ's atoning purchase and—the Pietist emphasis—through the complete consecration of ourselves to Him. A selection from his homily on "True Godliness" appeared in 1861, which defined this phrase in terms of the life that is continuously lived in the presence of God within the soul (CB, 5 January, 1861, 2-3). In an essay entitled "A Word of the Blessed Tersteegen Concerning His Times" (CB, 26 October, 1861, 170-1), the anonymous author notes that "The name of Tersteegen is well known to every believer, who was one of the noblest and most sensitive children of God who has ever lived. . . . Hundreds and thousands sojourned to him from near and far, in order to access his spiritual counsel and encouragement. . . . Although outwardly he belonged to the Reformed Church, inwardly he was indifferent to it, without actually separating from it."

comments by the author that undoubtedly helped to define the missiologically perspective for the EA. "We are experiencing peculiar days," he began.

These are days in which the kingdom of light and darkness, the kingdom of Jesus Christ and that of the Antichrist are showing their ever more intense powers of confrontation against one another, until finally these labor pains will be finished and the Unrighteous One will be destroyed through the Spirit of the Lord, and the long-awaited extension of the Kingdom of God (which dwells inwardly within us) will be revealed upon earth.³⁴

The copious citations from Tersteegen assisted the EA in defining its outlook on the world and the activity of God in history, which also served to define its parameters for missionary activity. He explains that the outer powers of darkness are not only manifested through blatantly evil events, but also and more subtly, through evil masquerading as the good that will try to widen the narrow way to life eternal (the delusion mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:11). At the same time, he sees his day as a time of deep inward "homesickness" for God, manifested in spiritual restlessness. It is a time in which the Lord Jesus is disposed to grant to a nation, a place, or to a particular person a readiness for a deeper measure of grace, "for . . . the Temple is then opened, and the Kingdom of God has drawn nigh."³⁵

6. The final group of Pietists cited in the CB represent the school of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Neo Pietists, who reflected a convergence of themes from classical Pietism (both church and radical traditions) and German Romanticism. Representing this group are articles from Heinrich Jung Stilling (1740-1827), J. C. Lavater (1741-1801), Ludwig Hofacker (1798-1872), and F. W. Krummacher (1796-1879).³⁶ It was Lavater who first introduced the idealism and naiveté of the "Sturm und Drang" movement, headed by Goethe, within later German Pietism. Stoefler notes that this influence exalted passion over reason, and it regarded the

³⁴"Ein Wort des seeligen Tersteegen über seiner Zeit," CB (26 October, 1861), 170-171.

³⁵Loc. cit.

³⁶See H. Jung Stilling, "Heimweh," CB (2 July, 1849), 97; H. Lavater, "Selbstprüfung bei Betrachtung des Todes," CB (2 August, 1841), 120; W. G. L. Hofacker, "Was wir aus dem Leiden Christi lernen mögen," CB (2 April, 1849), 49-50; H. Krummacher, "Wie lange hinket ihr auf beiden Seiten?" CB (March, 1838), 23.

demands of friendship as having priority over the criterion of truth.³⁷ Lavater manifested a Kantian sense of moral perfectibility, and he based his sense of right on the leading of conscience, which happened to be largely informed by the values of classical Pietism and its love for God and humanity.³⁸ Hence, he tends to reinforce the virtues of the older Pietism for the readers of the CB, but he does so by introducing new moralistic emphases and outlooks that have significantly recontextualized that tradition.

C. Major Missiological Motifs Highlighted in CB. The era from the founding of the CB (1836) to the death of its second generation of leaders (bishops John Seybert, 1860, and Joseph Long, 1869), represented the formative era marked by explicit linkage to Pietist sources.

In their opening letter to their readers, Adam Ettinger and Georg Miller, the founding editors of the CB, introduced a rationale for the need of an official organ that would articulate the missionary goals of the EA. They envisioned the linking of “salvation-seeking readers” who were scattered over a vast American frontier, and who would collectively form a vital fellowship of the godly, advancing toward their pilgrim’s rest.³⁹ Their periodical would provide the context for strategizing and implementing the mission of the Association as a whole. In the service of that goal, a number of Pietist motifs were utilized by the editors in this letter:

First, there is the optimistic historical outlook that looks toward a new inbreaking of divine light and knowledge in the last days, as an anticipation of the approaching eschaton. They refer to the goal of the EA to manifest and extend God’s “light and knowledge within the dark world.” Similarly, P. J. Spener, the father of Lutheran Pietism, had written in post-millennial fashion of his hope for a “better time for the church,” and P. W. Otterbein, the early German Reformed leader of the United Brethren in Christ, had referred to his anticipation of “a more glorious state of the church on earth” that would come from obedience to the apostolic commission given to the church.⁴⁰ Second, the editors speak of the restoration

³⁷F. E. Stoeffler, *German Pietism and the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 253-256.

³⁸Lavater, “Selbstprüfung bei Betrachtung des Todes,” CB (2 August, 1841), 120.

³⁹A. Ettinger and G. Miller, “An Unsere Patronen,” CB (February, 1836), 127.

⁴⁰Ibid.; see also K. J. Stein, *Philip Jacob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* (Elgin, IL: Covenant Press, 1986), and A. Core, *Philip William Otterbein: Pastor, Ecumenist* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 102.

of human nature to the standard of the divine image, by means of a step-wise progression toward actualizing the divine nature in the character of human souls.⁴¹ Here is the *raison d'être* of the mission of the EA. The Reformed Pietists, following the schema of their Heidelberg Catechism, had described soteriology as an ascent of the divine "Heilsordnung" that proceeds from a recognition of sin, through the appropriation of the benefits of saving grace in Christ, to manifesting the Christian life as an expression of gratitude for grace, made visible in good works.⁴² Third, the editors appeal to an "unpartisan" use of Scripture, so that its "pure" and "unsectarian" meaning might be discerned and followed, which would also enhance the use of the Bible by the EA as a tool for mission among frontier persons who were detached from Old World ecclesial traditions. Their use of the term "unpartisan" can be traced to the ecclesiology of the radical Pietist Gottfried Arnold's work entitled *Die Unparteiische Kirche und Ketzer Historie* (1699).⁴³ Arnold had advocated an "unpartisan" view of church history in which dogmatic considerations would be subsumed under the witness of the Spirit among oppressed remnants, in every generation of the history of the church. This approach turned the tables on the "orthodox" view of Christian truth, that had been allied to state church interests since the time of Constantine.

Another Pietist motif in this introductory letter was the concept of an ever-growing community of the godly that would be the locus of the sacred within a secular milieu. In brief, the "communio sanctorum" is no longer identified with the offices of preaching or sacraments, nor with clerical authority, but with the "circle in which godly truths are to be found in creation," which is itself "a great and extended field of clear revelation" that the godly are being called upon to extend.⁴⁴ To that end, the godly are exhorted to be attentive to "true testimonies concerning those significant

⁴¹"... wird die Menschen in den Stand gesetzt einen ruhmlichen Rang unter den Stufen denkenden wesen einzunehmen," CB (February, 1836), 127.

⁴²See *The Heidelberg Catechism* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1963), Qs. 1-3; also J. S. O'Malley, *Pilgrimage of Faith; the Legacy of the Otterbeins* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1973), Part I.

⁴³Gottfried Arnold, *Unparteiische Kirche und Ketzer Historie, von Anfang des Neuen Testament bis auf das Jahr Christi 1688* (Franckfurt am Mayn: Thomas Fritsch, 1699).

⁴⁴"Denn der Kreis worinnen die gottlichen Wahrheiten liegen, ist ein solch gross und weites Feld von deutlicher Offenbarung . . ." CB (February, 1836), 127.

events that herald the approaching age of the Kingdom,”⁴⁵ eschatological themes that would resonate with the prophetic theology of such Pietists as Vitringa, Lampe, or Bengel.⁴⁶ The editors promise to offer their readers an “unpartisan” account of awakenings and conversions that have occurred within the different segments of Christendom, as well as edifying reports from science and natural history that bear testimony to the providential and transforming activity of the Creator.⁴⁷ Finally, their letter uplifts the affective dimension in Christian faith. The pages of the CB are to be a living chronicle of heartfelt testimonies, and readers are admonished to refrain from disposing of any of the issues—they are to be reread, meditated upon, and utilized as a spiritual legacy for future generations.⁴⁸

In the early decades of the CB, the missionary goals of the EA were articulated through a many-faceted approach that included articles which (1) evoked the burden of the founders, (2) addressed key doctrinal themes bearing upon missions, including anthropology, biblical interpretation (or hermeneutics), and soteriology (focusing on the new birth), and (3) struggled with matters of practical Christian ethics, including the issue of restoring a genuine sense of the sacred in the midst of what was perceived to be an American ethos that was hostile to their message of an inward religion of the heart. In each of these concerns, the influence of Pietist motifs becomes apparent.

1. Burden of the Founders. The early issues of the CB devoted space to acquainting readers with the lives and testimonies of the founders, especially Jacob Albright (1759-1808) whose legacy is uplifted as a normative guide for every earnest Evangelical who is seeking to know the “holy results of the influence of godly truths in their souls.”⁴⁹ An important Pietist motif cited in this discussion is the assertion that mere religious observance does not approximate true Christianity, and so it is not critical “whether one adheres to the Lutheran or Reformed, to the

⁴⁵“... welche treue Nachrichten von dem in dem reiche Christi vorfallenden Begebenheiten mit sich bringen . . .” loc. cit.

⁴⁶See F. A. Lampe, *Geheimnis des Gnadenbundes* (Bremen, 1712-29), and J. A. Bengel, *Gnomon* . . . (Tübingen, 1742).

⁴⁷“Nützliche und erbauliche Natur-Geschichten, welche uns die Allmacht und Grösse des Schöpfers nebst unsrerer eigenen Nichtigkeit vorstellen, und. . . mit dem Zustand der Kirche überhaupt.” Ibid.

⁴⁸“Dieses . . . soll noch in der Zukunft wirken.” Ibid.

⁴⁹“Die Evangelische Gemeinschaft,” CB (February, 1836), 2.

Episcopal or the Presbyterian churches, or whether one is an independent, an Anabaptist or Mennonite, or whether one listens to an organ or to none, or whether they bow before the Lord's Supper or stand or sit." What *is* critical is "whether such a person has the life of religion within himself/herself." This quality of life is what is seen in the testimony of the founders, like Albright, and the ongoing quest to communicate this inward life of Christ in the soul becomes the mission focus of his spiritual heirs.⁵⁰

2. Missions-Related Doctrinal Themes. It is noteworthy that the first major doctrinal discussion in the CB is not concerned with Christology, soteriology, nor ecclesiology, but rather with the doctrine of the human fall.⁵¹ Their perceived mission to evangelize the German-American frontier areas was dependent on their clarity in articulating the human dilemma. In the early doctrinal standards of Evangelicals and United Brethren, the "ordo salutis" really begins not with redemption but with the fall. In accordance with the Heidelberg Catechism of the German Reformed, which was the base from which Otterbein developed the earliest Confession of Faith for the United Brethren,⁵² the starting point is the recognition of human misery apart from Christ. Likewise, for the Confession of Faith, the mission of the United Brethren was to announce the gospel concerning "the fall of man and of his redemption in Christ."⁵³ Similarly, the CB article expounds the fall in terms of the double covenant doctrine of the Rhineland federal theologians (Cocceius and Lampe): the original covenant with Adam in paradise was abrogated and had to be renegotiated as a covenant of grace after the fall.⁵⁴ This discussion also identifies the problem of the fall—in a way that is reminiscent of Irenaeus—as a false, self-centered acceleration of Adam's quest for perfection on his own terms, rather than the covenantal unfolding of the "Heilsgeschichte." Hence, the inversion of this ordo becomes the proper way to

⁵⁰"... es wird eine Seele dem Bilde seines Heilandes ähnlich machen," from "In Begriff der wahren Religion" (February, 1836, 2).

⁵¹"Fall der Menschen," CB (February, 1836), 1.

⁵²The United Brethren Confession of Faith, 1814; see A. W. Drury, *Doctrines and Disciplines of the United Brethren in Christ* (1814-41) (Dayton: United Brethren Publishing House, 1895).

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴"hiedurch die Bedingung des Bundes gebrochen wurde . . ." CB (February, 1836), 1.

seek true perfection in holiness. Humanity tends to be divided into two classes, those who, being unborn in Christ, are driven by a “Neigung” (inclination) to evil, and those led by the “Neigung” of grace.

Another group of doctrinal articles in the early issues of the CB which shed light on missiological concerns featured “Instructions on How the Bible is to be Read.”⁵⁵ Here was underscored a primary tenet of the founding editors that the Bible be viewed not only in terms of its sacred content, but also in its cumulative spiritual effects on persons over the course of generations.⁵⁶ Reflecting their status as a church of immigrants and of immigrants’ children, there is critical comment directed against the polemicism within the European state churches, where “State is against state, Christian against Christian,” and “Bible is set against Bible, songbook against songbook, and people no longer look upon one another as members of one family.”⁵⁷ By contrast, the “truths” of the Bible are to be grasped by those who are “unpartisan” in their search for godliness.⁵⁸ Here is an implicit appeal to an emerging “*communio sanctorum*” of reborn disciples of the Word, who are being gathered from all parts of the earth.⁵⁹

The most basic Pietist theme that defined the mission of the EA was the new birth and the attendant concerns of holy living and holy dying that define one’s spiritual authenticity. The largest block of doctrinal articles in the CB addressed this theme, which includes not only articles offering doctrinal instruction on the new birth, but also obituaries, which became a major source of theological reflection on the nature of the regenerated life, and reports of the German camp meetings, where the morphology of conversion in numerous case studies is graphically

⁵⁵“Anweisung, wie die Bibel zu lesen,” CB (January, 1836), 1.

⁵⁶“Tausende wurden da durch von einer laßten und sundhaften Leben zur Tugend und Frommigkeit geleitet,” CB (January, 1836), 3.

⁵⁷“Ein Blick auf die Zeichen der Zeit,” CB (January, 1836), 4.

⁵⁸“Anweisung wie die Bibel zu lesen,” CB (January, 1836), 1.

⁵⁹This line of thought also implicitly reflects Q. 54 of the Heidelberg Catechism, “What do you believe concerning the ‘Holy Catholic Church’? A: I believe that, from the beginning to the end of the world, and from among the whole human race, the Son of God, by his Spirit and his Word, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself, in the unity of the true faith, a congregation chosen for eternal life. Moreover, I believe that I am and will continue to remain a living member of it”—*The Heidelberg Catechism* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1963), 97f.

recounted.⁶⁰ Such meetings represented the heart of the struggle for souls that lay at the bottom of the mission of the EA on the American frontier. As Bishop John Seybert reported to the CB, in such meetings, penitential altars became the scenes of deep searching for saving grace, that was accompanied by a preliminary penitential struggle” that led to a decisive moment of breakthrough into conscious salvation in Christ. This morphology, which is also reminiscent of the Hallensian Pietism of Francke,⁶¹ is reflected in Seybert’s comments on the progress of the meetings.⁶² All such gospel work was to be bathed in prayer, which was understood in the Pietist sense of heartfelt adoration and petition unto God for the fulfillment of His redemptive purposes among them.⁶³ A closer examination of the terminology used in the CB to describe the new birth shows a heavy reliance upon the Pietist-baptized term “Seelengrund,” or the ground of the soul, as the locus of God’s most penetrating salvific work in the soul. This frequently cited term, which indicates indebtedness to the Rhineland Pietist Gerhard Tersteegen (d. 1769), helps us to explain why it is that evangelism that is influenced by German Pietism has been referred to as focusing upon the depth dimension of regeneration, whereas the Anglo-American variety (at least from the perspective of the Pietist) features organizational success and numerical growth.⁶⁴

⁶⁰See the reports of John Seybert, an early itinerant preacher and later Evangelical bishop, of camp meetings he conducted, in CB (February, 1836), 30 and (May, 1836), 35.

⁶¹On the Lutheran Pietist August Hermann Francke (d. 1727), see F. E. Stoefler, *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 1-38.

⁶²“Already in the first evening conversions began to occur, and immediately at the close of the sermon penitent souls came forward until the end of the meeting, whereupon many earnestly sought out grace”—John Seybert’s report from the field, CB (February, 1836), 30.

⁶³One writer spoke of prayer as a “fire” and said that “he who keeps himself distant from it falls into coldness”—“Das Gebet ist ein Feuer,” CB (May, 1836), 39.

⁶⁴While this generalization may be broad and self serving, it reflects the sentiment of leaders of the EA in the nineteenth century who feared that the decline in the number and intensity of “deep conversions” would spell the demise of the mission of the EA. See the testimony of John Seybert, as discussed in J. S. O’Malley, *Touched by Godliness: Bishop John Seybert and the Evangelical Heritage* (Topeka, Ka.: Granite, 1986), 249-251. It may also be noted that the terminology of the Anglo-American segments of the holiness movement would speak of the “higher life” movement, whereas revivalists rooted in German Pietism preferred to speak of the “deeper” work of grace.

References can be found to this distinctive Pietist term as it was used in various pastoral contexts in the CB, that also may help us explain more precisely the Pietist contribution to missiology within the American historical context. The problem of fallen humanity lies in the fact that they are grounded in the love of self, which leads to sin and death, and the mission of the gospel is to awaken persons to Him who is to be the true ground of their souls and of their hope for the future. Here is how this plays out in the language of the writers of the CB. First, the work of Christ in the depth of the soul (the “Seelengrund”) is predicated on the prior, objective grounding of salvation in the historical work of Christ on earth. Flowing from this objectively grounded work of God in Christ, there issues the inner work of grace in the soul, or, in the words of one Evangelical poet, cited in the CB:

Im innern Grund der Seele
Verspur ich eine Gluth . . .
Du klare Himmelssonne,
Strahlst mir so sanft und mild
Ins Innre meine Seele
Mit deiner Liebesgluth.

(In the inner ground of the soul
I trace a glow,
Thou clear, heavenly Son
Shine sweetly upon me
In the innards of my soul
With your loving glow.)⁶⁵

In such passages, the implication is strong that the central mission of the EA is for its members to serve as conduits for the transmission of this soul (and life) transforming movement of the Spirit of the Resurrected Christ. It is a movement that must begin with the response of each awakened believer through whom this indwelling Christ becomes transparent to others. In that sense, another poem petitions God to “Plant the palm tree of faith deep within the ground of my soul, where blossoms may ripen into fruit.”⁶⁶

⁶⁵“Freude in Christo,” CB (15 July, 1850), 112. Anonymous author, reflecting Tersteegen’s influence, translation mine.

⁶⁶A soul so grounded in Christ cannot fail to produce the fruit of the Spirit in the upper regions of the soul, which, in Rhineland Pietist anthropology, is called the region of the “Gemüthe.” Hence: “Frieden und Ruh./ Siegende Hoffnung dazu./ Lass dem Gemüthe nicht fehlen!” (“Peace and rest, Victorious hope thereto./ Keeps our judgments from error!”)—“Christtags Lied,” CB (16 December, 1850), 183.

The editors of the CB frequently assumed the role of Christian apologists in their mission to plead for the message of full salvation in Christ, as mediated through the Pietist genre. To that end, Editor C. G. Koch made use of the "Seelengrund" theme in his effort to defend the faith against a rationalist skeptic. Citing the witness of 2 Corinthians 5:18 ("That through Christ, God reconciled us to himself"), Koch commented that "Whoever does not carry this ground inwardly into his soul, sinks eternally hopeless."⁶⁷ Koch also utilized this theme in repristinating the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection, whose dissemination stood at the heart of the mission of the EA:

We want to earnestly reach our hands to one another in brotherly faithfulness and with a resolution that is unmovably grounded upon God's unshakable faithfulness to His promise that *penetrates to the ground of the soul*: consecrate body and soul to the Lord, so that His grace may sanctify us from all in, and may at last assist us to attain His eternal kingdom through Jesus Christ.⁶⁸

The CB integrates within the motifs of the new birth and sanctification the Pietist (especially the Rhineland Reformed Pietist) emphasis on the pilgrim motif, which provides an unmistakable eschatological dynamic for the missionary thrust of the EA. One CB article declared that the mission of the denomination was to make clear to all hearers that they are "born for eternity, destined for a better world" and that they are "too large for this age" since "their destiny is immortal."⁶⁹ Inherent in this anthropology is the radical contrast between a lost ideal humanity and the present bondage to sin, flesh, and the devil, and also the coming transformation of the self in the eschaton that is already anticipated in the life of the reborn pilgrims and their community on earth. The possibility of already experiencing the fruit of the renewed *imago Dei* in the regenerate life lived amid a fallen world is discussed under such headings as "A Pure Heart," which is the subject of numerous essays.⁷⁰ Here, the Pietist out-

⁶⁷CB (1 May, 1851), 66.

⁶⁸C. Koch, "Ihr Feld das Licht der Welt," (Matthew 5:14), CB, (1 July, 1851), 99.

⁶⁹"Der sich selbst erniedriget . . . der wird erhöht werden" (Luke 18:14), CB (1 April, 1841), 60.

⁷⁰See, for example, "Ein reines Herz," CB (1 March, 1843), 132.

look of the CB is joined to the side of Christian orthodoxy, with its realistic assessment of human depravity, over against the more optimistic assessments of human nature and its perfectibility as found within the Enlightenment and liberal Protestantism.

3. Practical Christian Ethics. The mission of repristinating the godly life is also explicated in essay after essay focusing on the practical dimensions of Christian living. Here the line of demarcation between a Pietist and a Wesleyan influence is mainly to be found in the use of typically Pietist phrases in the German script. For example, “self-denial” is spoken of as the “ground for personal obedience to Christ.” Self-denial is not delineated in terms of the structures of church and sacramental observance, as in the magisterial Christian traditions, but rather in terms of the pilgrim’s personal, heavenly goal, that is pursued in faithful discipleship.⁷¹ Other essays feature aspects of this pilgrim life, in terms of “Gleichmuth” (self control),⁷² modest apparel,⁷³ and the virtues of simplicity.⁷⁴

Transmutation of Pietist Themes in the Late Nineteenth Century

After the Civil War, the CB had begun to refocus its mission by virtue of its participation in the broader Wesleyan/Holiness movement that had arisen within the milieu of American Methodism.⁷⁵ It increasingly began to share the program and goals of this movement, especially through the active participation of Evangelicals in the National Holiness Association.⁷⁶ The shift from a discussion of the issues of Christian perfection in terms of the categories of Rhineland Reformed Pietism to a discussion that was consciously influenced by the post Civil War doctrinal phase of the Holiness movement is indicated by a series of articles from the 1860s and 1870s. This shift is illustrated by such titles as “Entire

⁷¹See art. “Selbstverleugnung,” CB (1 March, 1843), 132.

⁷²“Gleichmuth,” CB (15 September, 1843), 137.

⁷³“Über Kleidung,” CB (15 September, 1843), 137-138.

⁷⁴“Geschichte eines einfachen Mann,” CB (15 December, 1843), 185.

⁷⁵For a definitive treatment, see Melvin Dieter, *The History and Thought of the Holiness Movement of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1973).

⁷⁶Evangelicals were among the major denominational groups represented at the 1868 national holiness camp meeting that was held in Manheim, Pa., near the birthplace of the ministry of Jacob Albright.

Sanctification as an Experience to be Distinguished from Justification,”⁷⁷ and “Is the Entire Sanctification of the Reborn Necessary?”⁷⁸ It may be argued that the participation of Evangelicals in the Holiness movement served as a bridge to its broader participation in the life, work, faith, and order aspects of the ecumenical movement in the early twentieth century. In that connection, the EA was actually the first denomination to officially join the World Council of Churches at the time of its organization in 1938.⁷⁹

The self-understanding of the EA also shows a clear development from frontier movement to ecumenical denomination, which is indicated by articles that deal either directly or indirectly with the issues of ecclesiology. Throughout the nineteenth century, they rejected the title “Kirche” (church) in preference for the term “Gemeinschaft” (Association), indicating their identification of “church” with the flawed state churches of Germany, against which the early founders were reacting. The term “Gemeinschaft” recalls the concept of the “ecclesiola in ecclesia,” now divorced from its state church moorings. In addition, the fact that the ordained ministry among Evangelicals was rooted in Jacob Albright’s “irregular” ordination (by state church standards) at the hands of his lay followers further retarded the full ecclesial recognition of Evangelical preachers by the clergy of other more “mainline” denominations. It was not until 1880 that a definitive article appeared in the English-language paper, the *Evangelical Messenger*, that declared unequivocally that the EA was a true church in the same sense as were other American denominations.⁸⁰ In the earlier issues of the CB, the most distinct ecclesial term employed to describe the character of the EA was the radical Pietist term “Unparteilichkeit” (unpartisanship), that recalls the title of Arnold’s radical Pietist interpretation of church history.⁸¹ This term is defined in the paper as universal love that extols the bonds of spiritual fellowship of the

⁷⁷“Gänzliche Heiligung eine von der Rechtfertigung zu unterscheidende Erfahrung,” CB (21 July, 1860), 113, tr. from *The Guide to Holiness* by L. B. Dom.

⁷⁸“Is gänzliche heiligung erreichbar in diesem Leben?” CB (28 June, 1871), 201.

⁷⁹Albright, *History of the Evangelical Church*, 389.

⁸⁰Cited by Albright, 73.

⁸¹G. Arnold, *Die Unparteiische Kirche und Ketzer Historie* (1699); see also J. S. O’Malley, *Early German-American Evangelism*, 89, n. 37.

reborn in Christ as the most essential structure of unity for the EA. Hence, the bonds of brotherhood among members and preachers were valued more highly than any symbols of recognition conferred by formal ecclesial confirmation and ordination.⁸²

All missiological discussions in the CB tend to find their focus in the believer-pilgrim's anticipation of the coming eschatological return of Christ and the triumph of His Kingdom upon earth. To that end, the CB devoted an extended essay in 1843 to an exegetical treatment of the coming "Fulfillment of Messianic Prophecies." Here the anonymous writer employs the symbolic-prophetic exegetical method that stemmed from the federal theology of the Rhineland Reformed Pietists, especially Lampe and Vtringa, as well as the Württemberger Bengel and the Lutheran Neo-Pietist, J. J. Rambach.⁸³

In its treatment of these missiological issues, the CB has stayed a course that articulates a distinctly Pietistic regard for the experiential and affective benefits of the matter at hand. All issues are ultimately evaluated in light of their significance for the increase of the life of Christ in the soul and the actualization of His reign within history.

Epilogue

Three factors may be cited that contributed to a transformation in the way that Pietist sources were utilized by the CB after the mid-nineteenth century. First, there was the growing prominence of indigenous authors from within the ranks of the EA, whose published writings bear resemblance to the German Pietist father whose works they were emulating. For example, John Seybert, in the year before he was elected as the first bishop, contributed a major article on the "Way to Truth" that restates the

⁸²As for the sacraments, the CB devoted little space to a theological or practical analysis of their meaning and usage. However, in 1842, an extended essay appeared that was entitled "Observations Concerning Baptism and the Lord's Supper," that gave emphasis to the proper use of the sacrament of the Table for converted believers. Likewise, in an article from 1861 on "How Should the Baptism of Children be Regarded?" the author defends its usage as biblical while underscoring the centrality of personal regeneration subsequent to baptism as the necessary validation of its efficacy. See "Betrachtung ihrer Taufe und Abendmahl," CB (15 August, 1842), 121-122, and (1 September, 1842), 129; also "Wie verhAlt es sich mit der Kindertaufe?" CB (5 January, 1861), 2.

⁸³See "Geb uns Barabbam los!" CB (March, 1837), 17, and "Sehet, welch ein Mensch!" CB (January, 1837), 3.

title of one of Tersteegen's chief works.⁸⁴ This tendency only increased after mid-century.⁸⁵

Second, the EA underwent a significant socio-cultural reorientation by the mid nineteenth-century, as it increasingly reflected the prerogatives of mainline American evangelical Protestantism.⁸⁶ There was the increasing tendency to interpret the doctrine of entire sanctification from the perspective of the nineteenth-century Wesleyan/Holiness movement, with its emphasis on the immediacy of the "second blessing." The CB also reflected the social reform agenda of the nineteenth-century holiness advocates, especially their ardent abolitionism. An essay tracing the historical development of slavery in the United States, together with a scathing denunciation of its incompatibility with the gospel, appeared in 1849, during the peak of activity by the holiness-based American Antislavery Society.⁸⁷ This piece appeared five years after the division of American Methodism over the slavery issue, and it reflects Evangelicals' increasing involvement in the American national debate on this issue that would soon result in civil conflict.

Third, by mid century the EA had organized its first Missionary Society, for the chief purpose of taking its message back to the German fatherland, from whence its members or their forebears had come. The missionaries who arrived in Württemberg, beginning in 1848, soon came into contact with living expressions of German Neo Pietism, especially with the Hahn fellowships (led by Michael Hahn, a follower of Bengel and Oetinger) and also the Tersteegen circles that persisted in the

⁸⁴J. Seybert, "Der nächste Weg zur Wahrheit," CB (March, 1838), 23. Another preacher-poet who reflected the Tersteegen motifs was Samuel Dickover of the Illinois Conference.

⁸⁵We may cite the published works of W. W. Orwig and J. J. Esher that reflect a convergence of other Pietist themes with impulses from the Wesleyan/Holiness movement that became influential within the EA after the Mannheim (Pa.) meeting of the National Holiness Association.

⁸⁶For an elaboration of this concept, see Sidney Ahlstrom, *The Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 429-471.

⁸⁷"Sklaverei ein Übel," CB (15 January, 1849), 11. This reflects the writings of Luther Lee, a prominent holiness leader of the American Antislavery Association. See Melvin Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976), chapter 2.

Rhineland.⁸⁸ Reports of these activities began to filter back to the CB, as missionaries such as J. G. Wollpert described their work to their supporters within the American mother church.⁸⁹ The organ of the European missionary branch of the EA, *Die Evangelische Botschafter*, began in 1868 to reprint numerous poems and essays from Pietist authors, with Tersteegen being the figure most frequently cited.⁹⁰

We conclude by noting a major interpretative essay on "The Pietists in Germany" ("Die Pietisten in Deutschland") appearing in the CB early in 1837. It explicitly links that tradition to the EA, and even goes so far as to link the mission of the young denomination to the propagation of the then-faltering program of classical Pietism.⁹¹ The article is signed "JD", which is a probable reference to Johann Dreisbach, the first Presiding Elder of the Association and its chief spiritual and administrative leader before the emergence of John Seybert to the episcopate in 1839. Dreisbach lists few names, but in his extensive seven-column essay he extols the contributions of the Pietists as the legacy whose mantel Evangelicals are to receive. In a concluding warning against the encroachments of universalism in Philadelphia, he appeals to the authority of "my beloved Pietists in Germany, since I must conclude that they seek, wherever they are able, to raise up bulwarks against the devil."⁹² In brief, the legacy of the Pietists counted for more than their attention to the devotional life. In defining the mission of the EA in mid-nineteenth century America, that legacy also prescribed for them a program of wayfaring toward the Kingdom of God on earth and of warfaring against its detractors. It was a durable legacy that provided vision and stamina for the growing numbers of German-American Evangelicals.

⁸⁸See Reinhold Kücklich, *Die Evangelische Gemeinschaft in Europa (1850-1925)* (Stuttgart: Chr. Vlgshs., 1925), 20; and K. Steckel, *Geschichte der Evangelische-methodistische Kirche* (Stuttgart: Chrs. Vlgshs, 1982), 168.

⁸⁹J. G. Wollpert, "Über die Auferstehung," CB (15 April, 1848), 57; and J. G. Wollpert, "Abschiedsbrief eines jungen, früh heimgegangenen Würtemb. Lehrers an Seinen Bruder," CB (5 January, 1861), 1.

⁹⁰See J. S. O'Malley and Thomas Lessmann, *Gesungenes Heil: Untersuchungen zum Einfluß der Heiligungsbewegung auf das methodische Liedgut des 19. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel von Gottlieb Fülle und Ernst Gebhardt* (Stuttgart: Christliches Vlgshs, 1994).

⁹¹"Die Pietisten in Deutschland," CB (March, 1837), 18-20.

⁹²Ibid.

INSPIRED IMAGINATION: JOHN WESLEY'S CONCEPT OF BIBLICAL INSPIRATION AND LITERARY-CRITICAL STUDIES

by

Richard P. Thompson

The undergraduate class that I was leading on the synoptic gospels was using Mary Ann Tolbert's work *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* as one of its textbooks.¹ Admittedly, some students were having difficulty with the introductory concepts found there. The following statement, however, provoked more than a few questions and even hostile reactions: "Literary criticism understands the biblical text as *fiction*, the result of literary imagination, not of photographic recall."² After the smoke from the ensuing vigorous debate had cleared, it was quite apparent that, in the minds of some of these young women and men, a literary-critical approach to Scripture is incompatible with the understanding(s)³ of Scripture that their Wesleyan-Holiness upbringing had instilled in them.⁴

¹Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989).

²Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 25.

³The reference to "understanding(s)" is an assumption based on my observation that a univocal understanding or view of the Bible for the Wesleyan-Holiness movement does not exist.

⁴See Paul M. Bassett, "The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement, 1914-1940. The Church of the Nazarene: A Case Study," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (Spring 1978), 65-91. His argument identifies a "fundamentalist leavening" within Wesleyan-Holiness circles. This fundamentalist element may be a primary factor in such student reactions, but the identification of such influences is not the focus of this paper.

The question that inquires about the compatibility of certain methodological approaches in biblical studies with Wesleyan conceptions of Scripture is an appropriate one. Many, among them pastors and scholars, have raised such questions about other recent trends in biblical studies; a few have even sought (either directly or indirectly) to answer them!⁵ As scholars increasingly appropriate interdisciplinary methods in working with biblical texts, new questions naturally arise concerning such trends and their potential impact on biblical studies. Literary-critical approaches⁶ are, because of their recent emergence within biblical studies, among the adolescents⁷ within the methodological family of biblical studies. Like adolescents, they are often misunderstood by the older, wiser members of that family, and yet have unique and potentially significant contributions to make to that family. Thus, just as scholars have deliberated about the potential role that literary-critical methods may have in biblical studies,⁸ such inquiry and dialogue, particularly from a Wesleyan perspective, are natural and necessary developments as persons within the Wesleyan tradition seek, with John Wesley, to affirm Scripture as the primary source of authority for the church.⁹

⁵See, e.g., George Lyons, "Hermeneutical Bases for Theology: Higher Criticism and the Wesleyan Interpreter," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18 (Spring 1983), 63-78; Frank A. Spina, "Wesleyan Faith Seeking Biblical Understanding," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30 (Fall 1995), 26-49; and Robert W. Wall, "Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic of Scripture," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30 (Fall 1995), 50-67.

⁶"Literary-critical approaches" refers very generally here to those methods of biblical study that focus on the rhetorical and affective features of the literary text and/or the reading process in the interpretation of the biblical text. Such a reference includes, for instance, narrative criticism and reader-response criticism.

⁷Another recent, developing approach to biblical studies that has yielded fruitful results appropriates social-scientific models and principles in working with the biblical texts.

⁸See, e.g., John R. Donahue, "The Changing Shape of New Testament Theology," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989), 314-335; and PHEME PERKINS, "Crisis in Jerusalem? Narrative Criticism in New Testament Studies," *Theological Studies* 50 (June 1989): 296-313.

⁹See Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 71: "If one insists on choosing a geometric figure as a paradigm for Wesley . . . a tetrahedral pyramid . . . would be more appropriate. Scripture would serve as the foundation of the pyramid, with the three sides labeled tradition, reason, and experience as complementarity but not primary sources of religious authority." See also Timothy L. Smith, "John Wesley and the Wholeness of Scripture," *Interpretation* 39 (July 1985): 248, who suggests that Scripture provided the "solid foundation" for a hermeneutical "three-legged stool" of experience, reason, and Christian faith.

Thus, the purpose of this essay is to explore the plausible contributions of literary-critical methodology to biblical studies in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. What is posited for consideration is the hypothesis that John Wesley's views concerning inspiration may provide a conceptual link between the Wesleyan tradition and the appropriation of literary-critical methodology in biblical interpretation. This essay consists of three parts. First, the writings of John Wesley and his interpreters are examined to delineate Wesley's concept of inspiration. Second, basic issues in the use of literary-critical methods in biblical studies are considered, with particular attention to two general issues that relate to Wesley's concept of inspiration. Third, the idea of "inspired imagination"¹⁰ is offered as one vital point of compatibility and intersection between the Wesleyan tradition and literary-critical approaches to Scripture.

John Wesley's Concept of Inspiration

John Wesley regarded the Bible as the primary authoritative source for Christian teachings and doctrine. He stated: "The written Word is the whole and sole rule of their [the Protestants'] faith, as well as practice."¹¹ Such confidence in the sufficiency of the Bible in these matters came from Wesley's views on divine inspiration of the Bible. The problems do not arise, however, in the identification of Wesley's view that the writing of the biblical texts was, in some way, divinely inspired. Rather, the problems arise in sorting out Wesley's scattered comments about the Bible and inspiration, since his pastoral concern did not lend itself to a systematic

¹⁰I am indebted to my colleague, Prof. Russell Lovett, who suggested "inspired imagination" as a possible designation for my initial observations about the possible correlation of divine inspiration and literary imagination/creativity in the Wesleyan tradition.

¹¹Wesley, "On Faith (Hebrews 11:6)," in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker, 35 vols. (projected) (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984ff [Volumes 7, 11, 25, and 26 originally appeared as the *Oxford Edition of The Works of John Wesley*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975-1983]), 3:496. Hereinafter this work is abbreviated as *Works*. See also Wesley, "Preface" to *Sermons*, in *Works*, 1:105, where the famous "man of one book" statement is found: "O give me that book! . . . let me be homo unius libri . . ."; and Wesley, "Popery Calmly Considered," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872; reprint, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958-1959), 10:141. Hereinafter this work is abbreviated as *Works* (Jackson).

presentation of his theological views.¹² However, by examining what Wesley stated throughout his writings, three emphases may be highlighted as particularly significant to his concept of inspiration.

1. Product of Divine Inspiration. One emphasis in Wesley's writings is that the Bible is the product of the inspiration or "assistance"¹³ of the Holy Spirit that occurred when the human authors wrote the respective texts.¹⁴ He stated: "The Scripture, therefore, being delivered by men divinely inspired, is a rule sufficient of itself."¹⁵ Wesley recognized the human participation in the writing of the respective texts; however, he identified Scripture as teachings or words that had come directly from God. Two prefatory remarks for different publications both reflect Wesley's conviction. In the preface to *Sermons*, he wrote: "I want to know one thing, the way to heaven. . . . [God] hath written it down in a book."¹⁶ Wesley also wrote the following, in the preface to *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*:

In the language of the sacred writings we may observe the utmost depth, together with the utmost ease. All the elegancies of human composures sink into nothing before it: God speaks,

¹²See Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), who identifies the pastoral concern of being responsive to the grace of God. Cf. Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 77, who states: "Although he sensed the need to elaborate on his view, Wesley generally cared less about the theory of divine inspiration than he cared about the content of the gospel message concerning salvation and how that message might best be experienced and communicated." Cf. also Scott J. Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995), 17, who also notes that Wesley would have been aware of prior discussions concerning the Bible within Protestant theology, and so he does not repeat it; and R. Larry Shelton, "John Wesley's Approach to Scripture in Historical Perspective," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16 (Spring 1981), 23-50. It should be noted that Wesley did focus on the issue of divine inspiration and the Bible in "A Clear and Concise Demonstration of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures" (*Works* [Jackson], 11:484), but this is merely a brief statement that adds little to our understanding of his views.

¹³See Wesley, "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," in *Works*, 11:171-172, where he defined inspiration as the "immediate assistance" of the Holy Spirit, which he also equates with what "the apostles felt when they were first 'filled with the Holy Ghost.'"

¹⁴See Wesley's frequently cited statement on 2 Tim. 3:16 in *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 794.

¹⁵Wesley, "Popery Calmly Considered," in *Works* (Jackson), 10:141.

¹⁶Wesley, "Preface" to *Sermons*, in *Works*, 1:105.

not as man, but as God. His thoughts are very deep, and thence His words are of inexhaustible virtue. And the language of His messengers, also, is exact in the highest degree: for the words which were given them accurately answered the impression made upon their minds.¹⁷

Wesley identified God as the source for all that the Bible contains, so that the entire collection of biblical texts *together* provides God's revelation for humanity.¹⁸ Thus, he stated:

Concerning the Scriptures in general, it may be observed, the word of the living God, which directed the first patriarchs also, was, in the time of Moses, committed to writing. To this were added, in several succeeding generations, the inspired writings of the other prophets. Afterwards, what the Son of God preached, and the Holy Ghost spake by the apostles, the apostles and evangelists wrote. . . . The Scripture, therefore, of the Old and New Testament is a most solid and precious system of divine truth. Every part thereof is worthy of God; and all together are one entire body, wherein is no defect, no excess.¹⁹

Other references make it clear that Wesley understood the Bible as the direct words of God that, although given to human beings as conduits of his message, were faithfully transmitted by those writers.²⁰ Thus, Wesley's understanding of the divine participation in the writing of the biblical texts, not matters of inerrancy, is the point of emphasis in his assertion that, "if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may as well be a thou-

¹⁷Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 9. See also "A Clear and Concise Demonstration of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scripture," in *Works* (Jackson), 11:484, where Wesley sought to prove that "[the] Bible must be the invention either of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God."

¹⁸Thus, Wesley consistently interpreted one biblical text in light of other similar texts or the "whole of Scripture," which he understood to be unified by the "analogy of faith." Wesley asked, "Have I a full and clear view of the analogy of faith, which is the clue to guide me through the whole?" ("An Address to the Clergy," in *Works* [Jackson], 10:490). See Smith, "John Wesley and the Wholeness of Scripture," 246-262; Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*, 43-53; and Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 38-39.

¹⁹Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 8-9.

²⁰Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*, 18. See Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 938-939 (Rev. 1:11), 942 (Rev. 1:20).

sand. If there is one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth.”²¹ It should be cautioned, then, that these matters of inerrancy must not be read in light of contemporary inerrancy debates within fundamentalist circles.²² Rather, one should keep in focus the primary emphasis of Wesley himself—that God reveals his will through the Bible.

While Wesley underscored the divine element of inspiration in his comments on the Bible, he did not ignore the human side of the equation. Comments reflecting some of Wesley’s thoughts about the role of the human author provide some degree of balance to his statements about God’s “dictation” to those writers. In his notes on 1 Corinthians 7:25, Wesley distinguished between two texts stimulated by divine inspiration: that which was written because of “a particular revelation” from God, and that which was written “from the divine light which abode with them, the standing treasure of the Spirit of God.”²³ While Wesley suggested that, through the inspiration of the biblical writers, “their knowledge transcended what could be known by empirical experience or inference alone,”²⁴ he also affirmed that normal human judgments were left intact.²⁵ Wesley noted in his comments on 1 Corinthians 14:32 that the inspired person was left to employ personal judgment in matters such as when, what, and how long to speak, as well as how best to communicate that message.²⁶ That is to say, there was nothing inconsistent or incompatible, in Wesley’s mind, between divine inspiration and the appropriation of

²¹Wesley, *Journal* (24 July 1776), in *Works* 23:25. See Troy W. Martin, “John Wesley’s Exegetical Orientation: East or West?” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 26 (Spring 1991), 114, 131 n57.

²²Cf. Shelton, “John Wesley’s Approach to Scripture,” 36-40; Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 269 n96; and Rob L. Staples, “John Wesley’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 21 (Spring-Fall 1986), 98-99.

²³Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 605. It should be noted that Wesley emphatically states here that “the apostles wrote *nothing* [emphasis added] which was not divinely inspired” before making this distinction. See Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, 19.

²⁴Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 31.

²⁵Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, 20-21.

²⁶Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 631: “The impulses of the Holy Spirit, even in men really inspired, so suit themselves to their rational faculties, as not to divest them of the government of themselves. . . . But the Spirit of God left His prophets the clear use of their judgment, when, and how long, it was fit for them to speak, and never hurried them into any improprieties either as to the matter, manner, or time of their speaking.” See Jones, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, 20.

human judgment; the message came from God, but its expression often came from the inspired person's discernment and creativity.²⁷

One comment in particular highlights what seems to be Wesley's perception of both the divine and human elements in the inspired writing of the biblical texts. In the preface to *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, Wesley stated:

These books [Joshua to Esther] . . . [were written] by prophets, men divinely inspired. Indeed it is probable they were collectors of the authentic records of the nation, which some of the prophets were divinely directed and assisted to put together. It seems the substance of several histories was written under divine direction, when the events had just happened, and long after put into the form wherein they stand now, perhaps all by the same hand.²⁸

Here Wesley identifies the role of divine inspiration or direction in more than one level of the writing process. That is to say, Wesley did not limit his understanding of inspiration to verbal dictation.²⁹ He recognized that the biblical texts were products of collaboration by both God and the human authors. As a result, Wesley perceived Scripture as the accurate communication of the message of God; the written text both reveals that inspired message and reflects the judgments and expressions of the human author.³⁰

2. Writing and Reading Events. A second emphasis in Wesley's writings was that inspiration included not only the "writing event" of the biblical texts but also the "reading event" of those texts. Wesley stressed that the inspiring activity of the Spirit was not limited to the time of writing; the Spirit was also active to inspire the believer's reading of the Bible.³¹ His comment on 2 Timothy 3:16 in *Explanatory Notes upon the*

²⁷Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 269 n95, cites several of Wesley's notes in *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* as indicating this human participation: Matt 1:1 (15), 2:6 (19); John 19:24 (383); and Acts 15:7 (453).

²⁸John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, 3 vols. (Bristol: William Pine, 1765), 1:701.

²⁹See John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 172.

³⁰Cf. Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*, 21.

³¹Cf. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 119-140, who thoroughly articulates Wesley's view of the Holy Spirit and, more specifically, Wesley's concept of "inspiration" by defining it broadly as "the restored influence of the Holy Spirit that enables persons to love and serve God" (121).

New Testament provides the most explicit statement of this dual understanding of inspiration: “The Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, *those that read it with earnest prayer* [emphasis added].”³² This inspiring activity of the Holy Spirit was not for Wesley an optional element in the task of biblical interpretation. He stressed that the reader could only interpret the divinely inspired message of the biblical text through the continuing inspirational activity of the Holy Spirit. Wesley insisted that readers “need the same Spirit to *understand* the Scripture which enabled the holy men of old to *write* it.”³³

In Wesley’s opinion, the inspiring work of the Spirit was essential for one to read and understand Scripture, and it was unprofitable for one to read or listen to those texts without that work.³⁴ His rationale was that one could not discern spiritual or divine matters only with one’s “natural” senses; rather, Wesley concluded that one must also possess “spiritual”

³²Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 794. See also the following hymn (number 247) in *Works*, 7:388-389 (also quoted by Staples, “John Wesley’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” 99):

Spirit of Truth, essential God,
Who didst thy ancient saints inspire,
Shed in their hearts thy love abroad,
And touch their hallowed lips with fire;
Our God from all eternity,
World without end, we worship thee.

Still we believe, almighty Lord,
Whose presence fills both earth and heaven,
The meaning of the written Word
Is by thy inspiration given;
Thou only dost thyself explain
The secret mind of God to man.

Come then, divine Interpreter,
The scriptures to our hearts apply;
And taught by Thee we God revere,
Him in Three Persons magnify;
In each the Triune God adore,
Who was, and is for evermore.

³³Wesley, “A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Gloucester,” in *Works*, 11:509. See also *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, 1:ix.

³⁴Wesley, “The Means of Grace,” in *Works*, 1:382. Cf. Staples, “John Wesley’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” 99.

senses so that one has "the *hearing* ear and the *seeing* eye."³⁵ Of course, this understanding of inspiration was no substitute for one's reasoning capabilities.³⁶ Wesley contended that the Spirit's inspiring activity complemented or enlightened one's rational capacities, so that the reader, through the Spirit's inspiring assistance in the reading process, could explore and understand in some measure "the deep things of God."³⁷ Thus, as Randy Maddox states: ". . . [T]he definitive revelation of God may come to us through Scripture but still be immediate because the Spirit who originally addressed the spiritual senses of the writers will also open our spiritual senses to perceive and attest to the truth they expressed."³⁸

This conception of the Spirit's activity of inspiration in the reading process suggests that, in Wesley's mind, the biblical text *alone* does not convey the message of God that the human reader can fully comprehend. What is required is the inspiration of the Spirit of God, an activity that stimulates the capacities of human reason to think about the will of God as revealed through the Bible.³⁹ The reader, in this understanding, does not participate passively in the reading event by functioning as a sponge that merely soaks up the words and "facts" of the biblical texts. Nor did Wesley believe that the biblical texts alone could dictate the response of its readers. Wesley stated: "We know there is no inherent power in the words that are spoken in prayer, in the letter of Scripture read, the sound thereof heard . . . but that it is God alone who is the giver of every good gift, the author of all grace."⁴⁰ Rather, the faithful reader intersects with

³⁵Wesley, "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," in *Works*, 11:56-57.

³⁶See Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*, 106-108, who argues that, although Wesley's insistence on the inspiration of the Spirit for proper biblical interpretation draws on the Reformed tradition, Wesley's unique contribution was his understanding of the Spirit's influence on human reasoning powers.

³⁷Wesley, "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," in *Works*, 11:57. See also Wesley, "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered," in *Works*, 2:592.

³⁸Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 31.

³⁹See Wesley, "Letter to Miss March" (July 5, 1768), in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 5:96, where he states: "By enlightening our reason to see the meaning of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit makes our way plain before us."

⁴⁰Wesley, "The Means of Grace," in *Works*, 1:382. Cf. Shelton, "John Wesley's Approach to Scripture in Historical Perspective," 39.

the biblical text as enabled by the Spirit, thus discovering the potential message of that text.⁴¹ Wesley's prefatory comment to his *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament* implies such an understanding: "But it is not part of my design, to save either learned or unlearned men from the trouble of thinking. . . . On the contrary, my intention is, to make them think, and assist them in thinking. This is the way to understand the things of God."⁴² Thus, Wesley clearly emphasized the necessity of the Spirit's activity of inspiration in reading the Bible, but understood that activity as the potential inducement of the faithful reader to discover the will of God through the biblical texts.

3. The Salvation Purpose. A third emphasis in Wesley's writings concerning inspiration and Scripture focused on the purpose of these texts. Wesley understood Scripture to have a soteriological purpose, as scholars within the Wesleyan tradition have already noted.⁴³ Wesley stated simply: "In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end to find the way to heaven."⁴⁴ He considered faith and salvation as the substance or "the marrow . . . of the whole Scripture."⁴⁵ Wesley's comments throughout *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* reveal his confidence in the soteriological purpose of the biblical texts.⁴⁶ This purpose depended on the response of the reader to the grace mediated by God through the biblical text. The focus of Wesley's thoughts was on the "spiritually transforming intent"⁴⁷ of Scripture, which he understood both as trust in God and as ethical living.⁴⁸

⁴¹The "faithful reader" is not a specific designation by Wesley, but is an attempt to refer to the interpreter who seeks to apply what the text reveals to one's life. See Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 332: "He that is *thoroughly willing* to do it, shall certainly know what the will of God is" [emphasis added].

⁴²Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, 1:ix.

⁴³See, e.g., Lyons, "Hermeneutical Bases for Theology," 71; Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 15-25; Martin, "John Wesley's Exegetical Orientation," 112; and Shelton, "John Wesley's Approach to Scripture in Historical Perspective," 38-39.

⁴⁴Wesley, "Preface" to *Sermons*, in *Works*, 1:105.

⁴⁵Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *Works*, 2:156.

⁴⁶See, e.g., Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 368 (John 15:3), 420-421 (Acts 7:38), and 819 (Heb. 4:12).

⁴⁷Lyons, "Hermeneutical Bases for Theology," 71.

⁴⁸See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 230-253, who stresses the role of ethics in Wesley's eschatology.

The assumed soteriological purpose of Scripture framed Wesley's approach to other questions that might be raised about theology or the biblical message. In Wesley's mind, other matters were of lesser importance. Thus, as Maddox notes, "When Wesley took up questions in Christology, his focus was definitely not on the 'Jesus of history.' . . . It was in Jesus as the Christ, the Saviour of the world."⁴⁹ Answers to questions about science and the physical world, which were of interest to Wesley, were not sought from the biblical texts.⁵⁰ Answering theological questions on the basis of biblical texts was not as significant to Wesley as his concern about salvation.⁵¹ Even in noting the discrepancies between the genealogies found in Matthew and Luke, Wesley emphasized the respective purpose of those accounts rather than the potential problems of historical accuracy. He stated:

If there were any difficulties in this genealogy, or that given by St. Luke, which would not easily be removed, they would rather affect the Jewish table than the credit of the evangelists; for they act only as historians, setting down these genealogies as they stood in those public and allowed records. Therefore they were to take them as they found them. Nor was it needful they should correct the mistakes, if there were any. For these accounts sufficiently answer the end for which they are recited. They unquestionably prove the grand point in view, that Jesus was of the family from which the promised Seed was to come. And they had more weight with the Jews for this purpose than if alterations had been made by inspiration itself.⁵²

To be sure, Wesley's words here reflect some degree of uncertainty in his dealing with these passages. Nonetheless, this perspective of Scripture's saving purpose, which Wesley understood had come from the inspiration

⁴⁹Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 94-95. Cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 133: ". . . Christian faith has never—either at the start or now—been based on historical reconstructions of Jesus, even though Christian faith has always involved some historical claims concerning Jesus. Rather, Christian faith (then and now) is based on religious claims concerning the present power of Jesus."

⁵⁰Martin, "John Wesley's Exegetical Orientation," 112; and Shelton, "John Wesley's Approach to Scripture," 39.

⁵¹Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 15, 19, usefully orients his articulation of Wesley's thought around the concept of "responsible grace."

⁵²Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 15.

of the Spirit, provided him with the conceptual foundation by which to interpret such problematic texts and issues.

Although Wesley did not articulate a systematic understanding of inspiration, his scattered comments and statements suggest that the three emphases included here were central to his understanding of inspiration. These three emphases concerning inspiration—on the writing process, in the reading process, and for the purpose of salvific response—provide some potentially useful points of congruence with literary approaches to Scripture—points of congruence to which we will return shortly.

Two General Issues in the Use of Literary-Critical Approaches to Scripture

Many questions that have surrounded the emergence of literary-critical studies of the Bible are related, at least in part, to a difference in what one identifies as the focus of one's study. Historical-critical methods have concentrated largely on "the world behind the text;"⁵³ literary-critical methods, however, while not ignoring historical concerns, focus on "the world within the text" and/or "the world in front of the text."⁵⁴ With this significant shift in the study of biblical texts, one must reappraise methodological approaches to this field of study, not only considering established practices but also considering one's theological tradition. Since one's critical study of Scripture and one's faith affirmations relating to Scripture are overlapping categories, an appraisal of methodological issues becomes still more crucial. Thus, for present purposes, two crucial foci will be delineated for approaching the Bible and, more specifically, New Testament narratives from a literary-critical perspective.⁵⁵ These two

⁵³"Text" refers to the complete work or biblical book, not merely the isolated passage.

⁵⁴For a useful but concise treatment of these issues for a general audience, see David L. Barr, *New Testament Story: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), 1-18. See also Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985), 1-23, who distinguishes between "source-oriented inquiry" (i.e., historical-critical approaches) and "discourse-oriented approaches."

⁵⁵Many different approaches to biblical studies may be described as "literary" approaches. The purpose here is not to present one type of literary approach as the model of choice, but merely to deal with the significant issues in the general field of literary studies of the Bible. For an assessment of the general field of literary studies of the Bible, see Mark Allan Powell, Cecile G. Gray, and Melissa C. Curtis, *The Bible and Modern Literary Criticism: A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992).

foci—the literary text, and the audience or reader of that text⁵⁶—represent two of the three basic elements of the communicative act that are particularly relevant to literary criticism and have some congruence with Wesley's thought.⁵⁷

As the designation “literary criticism” implies, the biblical text itself is the focus of critical reflection and analysis as a *literary* text.⁵⁸ Historical criticism has tended to fragment the text and thereby violate the integrity of the whole literary composition.⁵⁹ Often, historical-critical approaches have attempted to extract theology from texts such as the gospels and Acts, and have not adequately considered these as *narrative* texts.⁶⁰ To approach the biblical text from a literary perspective, however, is to perceive the text both as a creation of some author and as a means of communication between that author and some reader. Thus, literary criticism recognizes that all texts function rhetorically, and that even the historical narrative text is composed with the purpose of effecting its audience or readers.⁶¹ One identifies the different gospels as narrative texts with different rhetorical aims. Literary criticism, then, examines not

⁵⁶Whether one should identify the recipient as a reader or an audience is an important critical issue, but need not be sharply distinguished here. The original recipients were most likely “hearers” and not readers (i.e., an “audience”). However, “reader” will be used here to denote the activity of the one who seeks to understand a text.

⁵⁷The third element of any communicative act is, of course, the sender/author. See John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts*, *Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 16, who suggests: “What distinguishes literary theories from one another is how they define and address fundamental issues like the status of the text, the roles of author, audience, and critic in the production of meaning, the nature of reading and interpretation, and whether (or to what extent) cultural context controls the way we process a piece of literature.” See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.3.1; and Longinus, *On the Sublime* 8.1, 4.

⁵⁸The description “literary text” is, of course, redundant, since the written *text* has survived as a *literary* document. However, the description reminds us that approaching the biblical text as *literature* is not a peculiar idea.

⁵⁹Cf. Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 23-27.

⁶⁰See Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading,” *Interpretation* 42 (1988), 146-157.

⁶¹See, e.g., Richard P. Thompson, “Christian Community and Characterization in the Book of Acts: A Literary Study of the Lukan Concept of the Church” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1996), 24-94; Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 15; and Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 31.

merely *what* the biblical text seems to convey (or its content, i.e., the *story*), but *how* the composed text conveys that story (i.e., its *discourse*) and *how* the whole text, with its various textual elements, may be interpreted or experienced in light of such rhetorical possibilities.⁶²

Literary-critical approaches to biblical studies recognize that the narrative text is the product of the creative work of the author. The narrative text does not merely describe or tell what happened. Rather, one may identify the role of literary imagination in a number of important literary elements, including the plot, point(s) of view, selection, arrangement, and composition.⁶³ What the biblical narrative presents, then, is an “imaginary” world; the narrative is composed creatively and presented so that its readers may be able to imagine that world as though they are a part of it: to “see” the characters, to “hear” the dialogue, to become so involved that even their emotions may be stirred. In no sense should one perceive the identified role of creativity or imagination as undermining the historical integrity of these biblical narrative texts; ancient and modern critics alike have noted that all writing includes, to varying degrees, the imaginative or creative contributions of the author.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, the reader is invited into *that* narrative world and not another, and has access to it only through the creative presentation of the narrative text. These imaginative elements, taken *together* to make up the whole narrative text, potentially guide the reader toward response.

⁶²See Seymour B. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), an influential work in narrative-critical approaches to New Testament texts. One should note, however, that the story/discourse distinction is an artificial one, since one only has access to story through discourse. The distinction is helpful in identifying different rhetorical means by which the story is presented.

⁶³Cf. Gaventa, “Toward a Theology of Acts,” 152: “As we read and reread ‘the narrative itself,’ we ask of what the narrative consists. What world does it create for the reader? What are its crises, its catharses, its developments? What connects various events and persons? What does the narrative repeat and what does it omit? . . . What kinds of characters occupy this story?”

⁶⁴Cf., e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Literary Composition*; Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 68: “It should be unnecessary here to show that no author can attain to this kind of objectivity” [neutrality toward all things]; and Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 35. On the perceived tension between literary creativity and historical accuracy in ancient historiography, see Thompson, “Christian Community and Characterization in the Book of Acts,” 58-94.

Behind the argument that the biblical narrative text presents an imaginative world which would potentially create responses in its readers is the assumption that there were readers or an audience, at least ideally, who would have the necessary concepts, knowledge, and perceptive abilities to interpret the various elements of the text. Literary critics identify such persons as the "implied audience" or "implied readers."⁶⁵ In contrast, historical criticism has attempted to identify the historical audience or community to which a specific biblical writer wrote. Since a narrative text does not directly address the world of its readers but creates an imaginative world in which they may participate, it is doubtful that one can paint an adequate picture of the original addressees of any New Testament narrative.⁶⁶ However, the text does imply much of what the readers would need to know if they were to make sense of that narrative. Although the precise definition of "implied reader" varies,⁶⁷ critics recognize that implicit expectations of the readers are embedded in the text, often including knowledge of Scripture,⁶⁸ geography, cultural ideals, religious customs, etc.⁶⁹ Thus, narrative criticism attempts to enable readers to

⁶⁵The idea of "implied reader" correlates with the idea of "implied author." However, only the implied reader will be considered here. Nor will this essay attempt to deal with other distinctions that relate to the implied reader such as "narratee," "ideal reader," or "critic." On these matters, see, e.g., Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 25-40.

⁶⁶Cf. Tannehill, *Luke*, 24. See the conspicuous absence of any discussion concerning audience in Luke T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina 5 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992).

⁶⁷See, e.g., Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 138: "The author creates . . . an image of himself and another image of his [implied] reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement"; and Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 34: "He embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect—predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself. Consequently, the implied reader as a concept has his roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader."

⁶⁸"Scripture" refers to those texts that would have been accepted and used by the earliest Christian groups. There is no need to distinguish here between the Septuagint and the Hebrew Scriptures.

⁶⁹See Mark Allan Powell, "Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew," *Asbury Theological Journal* 48 (Fall 1993), 31-51, who distinguishes between four types of assumed knowledge for Matthew's implied reader. See also Joseph B. Tyson, *Images of Judaism in Luke-Acts* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 19-41, who discusses the matter of the implied reader in Luke-Acts.

experience these imaginative texts in ways that are consistent with the textually-embedded expectations of the implied reader.⁷⁰

What should be readily apparent at this point is that an inseparable link exists between the literary text as one element of the communicative act and the reader of that text. While the mention of the reader should not be a disconcerting matter, one critic has rightly noted that the role or place of the reader has been more of a “repressed reader” in traditional gospel scholarship, where “criticism is an institution to which real readers need not apply.”⁷¹ One reason for the repression of the reader may be found in the historical development of literacy, in which: (1) the written text became divorced from the speech act; (2) the evolving uniformity of printed language potentially led to the perception that language was something like a container that held meaning within it; and (3) the meaning or content of the text was identified as that which could be extracted from that literary container.⁷² In this historical process, readers became unimportant to the objectified, static text. One of the significant contributions of literary criticism and, more specifically, reader-response criticism has been the reinstatement of the reader to the study of biblical texts. The “return of the reader”⁷³ has reintroduced the reading of the text as a temporal experience in which meaning emerges in the convergence of text and reader.⁷⁴ Some surviving texts on the subject of ancient literary thought reflected an understanding of this experience as that which created an effect and

⁷⁰Cf., Darr, *On Character Building*, 21; Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 152; Thompson, “Christian Community and Characterization in the Book of Acts,” 146-147; and Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 54. Contrary to the complaints of some, literary-critical approaches to biblical studies do take seriously the historical elements of the text!

⁷¹Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 106.

⁷²Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 43-44, draws on the work of noted orality/literacy scholar Walter J. Ong, especially *Rhetoric, Roman, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), and *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982).

⁷³See this emphasis within modern literary criticism in the title of Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism* (New York: Methuen, 1987). For a collection of essays on reader-response criticism from a variety of perspectives, see Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, ed., *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

⁷⁴Cf. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 41-58.

response—often a response of action.⁷⁵ Thus, a reader does not have a passive or nonexistent role in literary-critical approaches to the Bible; rather, this methodological family focuses both on the literary aspects of the biblical text and on the interaction of biblical text and reader.

The return of the reader has corresponded to the growing recognition in literary studies that all texts, including the biblical texts, require a reader for the text to come alive. Once the author hands over the text, it is dependent on its readers for its very life and significance. Both ancient and modern understandings of narrative texts identify the audience or reader as a key component in the realization of the text's potential purposes.⁷⁶ One aspect of the reader's contribution to the reading process is in the anticipation and retrospection that accompany that process. A reader progressing through a narrative looks forward and backward, both making judgments concerning what has been read and then revising them based on what is encountered subsequently in the text.⁷⁷ Another aspect of the reader's contribution in the reading process is the filling in of both the "gaps" and the "blanks" that arise in the reading of the text, since *all* the information necessary for the realization of a text is never provided.⁷⁸ These gaps and other ambiguities function as stimuli to the imagination of the reader in grappling with what the text does *not* state, yet the same text also constrains the reader to fill in what is lacking in a way that is consistent with what *is* stated.⁷⁹ Both aspects of the reader's contribution to the reading process are required, if indeed one seeks to fulfill the role of the implied reader.⁸⁰ This imaginative activity occurs in the reading event

⁷⁵See, e.g., Aristotle, *Poetics* 6; Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.5.14; and Longinus, *On the Sublime* 7.3.

⁷⁶See, e.g., Aristotle, *Poetics* 6; Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.1.1-9; and Longinus, *On the Sublime* 1.4.

⁷⁷Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 275, 288. Cf. Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 112.

⁷⁸For our purposes, let it suffice to say the following: that which is left unanswered is found both within the elements of the text and between the text and the reader.

⁷⁹Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 163-231; Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 45-46; and Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 235-237.

⁸⁰I.e., since the implied reader/audience also needed to make similar judgments and contributions to the reading process, the real reader who sought to read "in a manner expected of . . . the reader presupposed by the narrative" (Powell, "Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew," 32) would also need to read the text in this creative manner. Cf. Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 34-35.

when the literary text and the reader converge. According to Wolfgang Iser, that convergence “brings the literary work into existence.”⁸¹ This understanding of the reading event corresponds to the ancient understanding of rhetoric and literature as having social, affective purposes.⁸²

Although this convergence of the biblical text and the reader in the reading process brings the dead letters of that text to life, neither the text nor its author can control the process of interpretation. While the text does guide the reader’s imagination by its various literary elements (such as textual codes, direct statements by the narrator, repetitious themes, allusions, etc.), both those members of the first-century audience and those among the twentieth-century readers may come to a variety of conclusions about the text’s meaning and the appropriate accompanying response. Literary-critical approaches to the Bible recognize what one finds both in meetings of professional biblical scholars and most Bible study settings of laypersons in local churches: different readers often produce different readings, since they will inevitably emphasize different elements of the biblical text or will fill in the “gaps” and “blanks” differently as they attempt to make sense of the whole.⁸³ Many are reticent to call these different readings anything but *misreadings*, for the perception is that one is merely making the text say what one wants.⁸⁴ Robert Tannehill has suggested, however, that the occurrence of different readings correlates with the possibility of different readings or interpretations by an implied audience of Luke’s gospel. These different readings may occur, according to Tannehill, because of the different perspectives that probably existed in such a group, which he identifies as being of diverse social composition.⁸⁵ Such useful insights into the potential readings of these biblical texts suggest that one need not limit a reading as the implied reader to one interpretation, effect, or response, pro-

⁸¹Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 275.

⁸²See Thompson, “Christian Community and Characterization in the Book of Acts,” 24-57.

⁸³Cf. Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 7, 26; Iser, *The Implied Reader*, 281; and Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 34-38.

⁸⁴The frequently voiced concern that acknowledging the potential for different readings may give a reader the license to make the text say whatever is wanted really proves the point most resisted, since such a “reading” of this acknowledgment shows how multiple readings can and do occur in any mode of communication, including a textual mode.

⁸⁵See Robert C. Tannehill, “‘Cornelius’ and ‘Tabitha’ Encounter Luke’s Jesus,” *Interpretation* 48 (1994), 347-356; and Tannehill, *Luke*, 24-27.

vided that one's reading makes sense of the whole text.⁸⁶ Rather, literary-critical methods have opened the possibility for multiple interpretations of a biblical text. This opening accounts for the imaginative contributions of the reader—interpretations that are products of the convergence of the literary text and different readers.⁸⁷

A literary approach to Scripture, therefore, considers both the features of the literary text and its readers as contributors to the reading process. The narrative text provides guidance for the reader through a variety of literary elements, thereby enabling the reader who seeks to fulfill the role of the implied reader to imagine the described narrative world. Nonetheless, this encounter with the biblical text leaves much to the reader's imagination that is provoked at that moment. Thus, the text does not and cannot control interpretation; with reading comes *both* freedom *and* responsibility for those interpretive responses.⁸⁸

“Inspired Imagination” as an Intersection Between Wesley and Literary-Critical Approaches to Scripture

The previous two parts of this paper have focused on selected emphases in Wesley's concept of inspiration and on general issues in the use of literary-critical approaches to biblical studies. While the contention here is *not* that Wesley's concept of inspiration provided the conceptual framework for his thought and writings, one might argue that this concept provides a plausible starting point in exploring potential areas of compatibility and intersection between Wesley's understanding of Scripture and the emerging contributions of literary-critical methodology.

⁸⁶Contra Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 38; and Powell, “Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew,” 32, both of whom seem to suggest that the Gospel of Matthew guides toward only one possible effect.

⁸⁷Readers also bring presuppositions with them about how to analyze the text. These presuppositions come, according to Stanley Fish, from the “interpretive community” in which the reading occurs. See Stanley E. Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1989); and Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*, 35-36.

⁸⁸See Robert C. Tannehill, “Freedom and Responsibility in Scripture Interpretation, with Application to Luke,” in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts*, eds. Richard P. Thompson and Thomas E. Phillips (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998), 265-278.

To be Wesleyan is to identify with John Wesley's ideals and emphases, which also opened windows and doors through which the freshness of new approaches may be appropriated. What one means by being identified as Wesleyan, however, need not be limited to what Wesley did or to exactly what he stated about the Bible. Some have suggested that canonical criticism best reflects Wesley's dominant concern to understand a passage within "the whole of Scripture."⁸⁹ However, this author is not willing to grant that the Wesleyan tradition must attempt to become something like a modern mimic of an eighteenth-century Wesley.⁹⁰ George Lyons says: "Both the opponents and the partisans of complicated people like [Wesley] tend to deal with them by flattening them out, reducing them to one-dimensional figures. It is in fact easier to deal with a one-dimensional [Wesley], easier to put him in his place and keep him there, under control."⁹¹ To identify ourselves as part of the Wesleyan tradition does not require that, if Wesley said or did it, we must believe it, and that settles it.⁹² Nor must we conclude that Wesley has nothing to say to us as a new millennium lurks on the horizon. Both extremes—making Wesley out to be a "sacred cow" or a "white elephant"—are problematic.⁹³ However, other concepts and concerns in Wesley's thought do open other possibilities of congruence with recent methodological developments in biblical studies, such as one finds in literary criticism.

Basic correlations between Wesley's concept of inspiration and literary-critical approaches to Scripture are apparent in what has been exam-

⁸⁹See, e.g., Spina, "Wesleyan Faith Seeking Biblical Understanding," 26-49; and Wall, "Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic of Scripture," 50-67.

⁹⁰While a critique of canonical criticism is not the purpose of this essay, it is most difficult to reconcile the assumptions of that approach to current studies in the New Testament that focus on the integrity of the *single* text and examine matters of theology *primarily* in that single context. In addition, one should consider that Wesley also accepted the apocryphal writings as canonical (Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*, 140-143). See also Lyons, "Hermeneutical Bases for Theology," 69, who states concerns about canonical criticism.

⁹¹George Lyons, "Biblical Theology and Wesleyan Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30 (Fall 1995), 24-25, who adapts what was said of the Apostle Paul by Victor Paul Furnish, "On Putting Paul in His Place," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (1994), 4.

⁹²Cf. Lyons, "Biblical Theology and Wesleyan Theology," 25.

⁹³The "sacred cow" and "white elephant" analogies with reference to the Apostle Paul's ethical teachings are found in Victor Paul Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, revised ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 11-28.

ined above. To be sure, Wesley was not a literary critic, and neither his hermeneutic nor his use of Scripture reflects many of the concerns of a literary approach.⁹⁴ No attempts should be undertaken to dress Wesley in the garb of twentieth-century literary theory and methods. Nevertheless, one may identify three basic areas of correlation, all of which are found in the reading process emphasized by literary critics.

One commonality lies in the nature of the biblical text. Both Wesley and literary critics recognize the rhetorical purposes of such texts. These writings do not merely convey information; these texts potentially guide the reader to a response. A second commonality lies in the role of the reader. Wesley and literary critics alike recognize both that the biblical text has no affective value unless a reader is involved, and that the reader's contributions to this reading process cannot be ignored. A third commonality lies in the recognition that the biblical texts do not *contain* meaning, but that they *become* meaningful as the reader actively "engages" those texts.⁹⁵ These stated correlations do not exhaust other possible links between Wesley's concept of inspiration and literary-critical approaches to the Bible. Nonetheless, these connections provide a general guide in considering more closely the potential contributions of such biblical approaches in a Wesleyan context.

Let us begin by considering the biblical texts themselves. Wesley might well have asked, "What is it that 'speaks' to the reader of the Bible?" What often becomes the focus is the historical accuracy of the Scriptures. More than a small percentage of persons within the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition pinpoint the evidence for divine inspiration in the historical reliability of the Bible. To be sure, Wesley's pre-critical statements about the Bible as free from error have been transported across the centuries and thereby misunderstood.⁹⁶ However, Wesley's greater concern was for the purpose of these writings, and this concern provided the focus as he expressed his thoughts on matters like inspiration. There is nothing inherently anti-Wesleyan in the acknowledgment of the rhetorical

⁹⁴See Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*, who divides his work into two parts, thereby assessing not only what Wesley *stated* about Scripture but also how Wesley *used* Scripture. Jones concludes that Wesley was not particularly successful in following some of his own suggestions and thoughts about Scripture.

⁹⁵This expression is borrowed from Russell Pregeant, *Engaging the New Testament: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

⁹⁶See note 22 above.

nature of the biblical texts. What we may recognize, with Wesley, is that historical fact alone has no inherent power to convince the reader of *anything*. The story level of the writing as historically accurate information does not convince the reader of its validity, nor does it provide evidence of divine inspiration in the compositional process.

Three points substantiate this claim. First, one may assume that there were probably those who witnessed the events in Jesus' life who could have and perhaps did write "accurate" accounts about him, yet these texts were not affirmed (for whatever reasons) as products of divine inspiration.⁹⁷ Second, the mixed response of those confronted by Jesus and others as presented in the gospels and Acts suggests that even firsthand access to historical facts did not have the power to create a positive response from all members of the audience. Third, the inclusion of four different gospels in the New Testament suggests that these texts "were treasured for something other than their ability to render a historically accurate Jesus."⁹⁸ The unavoidable conclusion, therefore, is that the biblical texts do not "speak" to the reader *simply* because of historically accurate presentations of events and persons.⁹⁹

What, then, may one from the Wesleyan tradition identify in the biblical text as that which enables it to "speak" to its readers? What does one find that expresses the message of God that was divinely inspired? What may be offered as the most likely answer to this question is that the *discourse* level, not the *story* level, reflects the affective and rhetorical elements of the biblical text. That is to say, *how* the text presents something is crucial in *how* it may potentially affect its readers. This aspect of the text reflects the creative or imaginative contributions of the author.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, it is precisely here in the *creative or imaginative composi-*

⁹⁷E.g., if there really was a "Q" document, why did it not survive? Why was "Q" not preserved, if it was a collection of the sayings of Jesus?

⁹⁸Johnson, *The Real Jesus*, 147.

⁹⁹This statement reflects an understanding of historical narratives that is consistent with ancient historiographical concerns. See Thompson, "Christian Community and Characterization in the Book of Acts," 58-94.

¹⁰⁰See Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 436: ". . . [T]he author's single most important creative act is to invent what Aristotle calls the 'synthesis of incidents,' the *ëplot'* in the sense of the plotted narrative line. . . . It is always to some degree a doctoring of the raw chronology of events with a quite different chronology of telling. And it is always . . . ordered toward some powerful effect inherent in our picture of *these events happening to these characters, as perceived in the transforming vision of this storyteller.*"

tion of the biblical text where one may well find indications of the role of divine inspiration, as understood by Wesley. The gospel writers, for instance, did more than gather collections of haphazard, colorless stories. Rather, these authors recognized God at work in the events and life of Jesus, and then imaginatively presented a selection of events in narrative form that would potentially guide an implied audience to make similar conclusions and to respond to what they had experienced. If the divine inspiration of the biblical writers involves the revelation of God through the text, then that element of inspiration will be found in the *imaginative* elements of that text. This convergence of divine inspiration and human imagination in the writing of what would eventually become part of the Christian Bible may be designated "inspired imagination." If inspired imagination is a plausible concept that is consistent with the Wesleyan heritage, then literary-critical approaches provide particularly useful methodological means by which to read and appropriate the biblical texts.

A limitation of inspired imagination to the writing process and the written text, however, would not only present a partial understanding of Wesley's concept of inspiration, but would also ignore the role of the reader that both Wesley and literary critics recognize. While the biblical text, as a product of inspired imagination, guides and calls the reader into a particular narrative world, the reading process is not controlled by that text.¹⁰¹ The contribution of the reader does, in fact, figure significantly in what one experiences and discerns through that process. This contribution is created as the imagination *of the reader* is provoked by the imaginative elements *of the writing*. Nonetheless, no text can dictate to the reader how to fill in *all* textual indeterminacies that arise from a particular reading, nor can that text prescribe a response for that reader. The real reader, even though taking on the role of the implied reader with its accompanying expectations for making sense of the biblical text, still must and does make judgments that imaginatively provide coherence to what the text does not state.

It is precisely here—in this imaginative activity that occurs in the reading process—where one may well find what Wesley stressed as the inspiration of the reader of Scripture. Such an element of inspiration in

¹⁰¹Contra Lyons, "Biblical Theology and Wesleyan Theology," 11, who seems to hold a view that emphasizes textual determinacy and minimizes textual indeterminacy.

the reading process would contribute to the imaginative activity of the reader in attempting to create coherence of a biblical text.¹⁰² To locate an aspect of inspiration here does not negate other contributions of the reader.¹⁰³ For instance, one should note here that the *possibility* for inspiration to work with the reader's imagination in reading the biblical text is also dependent upon the reader—a dependence which Wesley himself acknowledged.¹⁰⁴ The potential of multiple readings still exists. Nonetheless, a Wesleyan understanding of inspiration *in the reading process* would be consistent with the recognition of literary critics that the biblical text alone does not control that process—that something occurs within the reader as the text is encountered. The identification of inspired imagination *within the reader*, therefore, enables those in the Wesleyan tradition to perceive this convergence of biblical text and reader as something more than merely reading the Bible “as literature.”¹⁰⁵ If we recognize the Bible as a collection of texts that reveal the salvific will of God, as Wesley stressed, then the inspired imagination of the *reader* will potentially be stimulated to read and respond appropriately.¹⁰⁶ Since this imaginative activity occurs in the interaction between the biblical text and the reader, we find neither the reader's manipulation of the text nor the textual control of its reader. Rather, the work of the reader's inspired imagination will seek coherence in a biblical text that is *itself* a product of inspired imagination on a different level.

The recognition of the role of inspired imagination in both the writing and reading processes coincides with Wesley's dual emphasis on the divine inspiration of Scripture. Wesley's insistence that readers “need the

¹⁰²See William S. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 31, who speaks of the reader, not the author, as creating the narrative in the reading process.

¹⁰³Cf. Michael Lodahl, *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1994), 40-48.

¹⁰⁴See notes 32 and 41 above.

¹⁰⁵See Spina, “Wesleyan Faith Seeking Biblical Understanding,” 37-38, whose argument seems to downplay and misinterpret much of what literary criticism emphasizes when he states that “it is highly doubtful that appreciating the Bible's literary dimension takes serious enough the fact that in theological terms the Bible is more than a literary classic and must be read first and foremost as the church's Scripture.” One should note, however, that the Greek word translated “Scripture” does literally mean “writing” or “literature,” so one must use caution in making such a distinction between Scripture and literature.

¹⁰⁶Cf. Lyons, “Biblical Theology and Wesleyan Theology,” 12, 17.

same Spirit to *understand* the Scripture which enabled the holy men of old to *write* it"¹⁰⁷ would not find substantially divergent emphases in the idea presented here as inspired imagination. This idea does not insist that one aspect of inspired imagination controls or dominates the reading process.¹⁰⁸ But, with Wesley, we may affirm that, if these texts reveal God's purposes of salvation for humanity, the Spirit who inspired the writing may also inspire those who read to experience and perceive those purposes, and potentially to respond in ways appropriate to those readings. Literary approaches to Scripture may assist us in such readings—readings that are done within the communities of believers in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition.

As we are approaching a new millennium, it is not surprising that questions are raised about our identity and distinctiveness as members of what we call the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition of Christianity. Often, we seek to highlight our distinctive doctrines, our distinctive hermeneutic, and/or our distinctive rituals and practices. Sometimes, we even seek to find a distinctively Wesleyan reading of Scripture. But could it be that, in our attempts to define what makes us distinctive, we negate what truly *is* distinctive about us as Wesleyans? By attempting to limit our reading of Scripture to Wesley's methods or to a specific approach to Scripture, are we following the *letter* of Wesley but not his *spirit*? This essay has attempted to show that the intersection of Wesley's concept of inspiration and literary-critical approaches to Scripture—this idea of inspired imagination—may well cause us to reassess such ventures.¹⁰⁹ It may be that

¹⁰⁷Wesley, "A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Gloucester," in *Works*, 11:509.

¹⁰⁸Cf. Staples, "John Wesley's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," 100: ". . . John Wesley had a clear understanding of the bi-unity of Word and Spirit and that he held the two in proper balance, neither merging Spirit into Word so that the former is imprisoned in the latter, nor separating them to the extent that there are two separate sources of revelation. Word does not work automatically, and Spirit does not work autonomously."

¹⁰⁹See Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*, 159: "In short, a Wesleyan theology for today will draw from Wesley positively but only that which makes sense in terms of current understandings of the Bible and our own living experience. It will discriminate among elements of our own experience those that derive from more accurate understanding of the Bible and new knowledge gained from many sources, on the one hand, and those that express our confusion, our loss of zeal, our new idolatries, and our general sinfulness, on the other. In making these discriminations, it will be informed by the Bible as mediated by Wesley and as understood today on the basis of continuing Biblical scholarship."

what is distinctive to the Wesleyan context and its understanding of Scripture—inspired imagination—may also include the richness of multiple readings of biblical texts that will provoke creative dialogue within the community of faith. Readings from this context will acknowledge the inspiring role of the Spirit of God, and will result in a variety of possible responses to the salvific will of God. Thus, neither the questioning students nor we need to fear what literary-critical approaches to Scripture may do to our Wesleyan views concerning Scripture. Rather, such approaches may more adequately expose us as readers to what God, through those texts, seeks to do *in us*.

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES ON B. T. ROBERTS: ABOLITIONISM, REVIVALISM, PERFECTIONISM

by

Howard A. Snyder

In historical research, much can be learned by paying attention to dates. Nowhere is this more true than for the years in American history from roughly 1820 to 1860, a dynamic period when a great deal was happening simultaneously and interrelatedly in religion, politics, commerce, trade, and popular culture. A particularly dynamic area during this period was New York State, ranging from the burgeoning, increasingly influential, culture-shaping metropolis of New York City to the “Burned-over District”¹ of upstate and western New York. This is the space-time background for the focus of this paper: Benjamin Titus Roberts (1823-1893) who in 1860 became the principal founder of the Free Methodist Church and who was for three decades the influential editor of *The Earnest Christian*.²

¹Garth Rosell and Richard A. G. Dupuis, ed., *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney: The Complete Restored Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 78; Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Cornell University Press, 1950; Harper Torchbooks, 1965).

²The most significant primary sources on B. T. and Ellen Roberts are their letters, diaries, and other miscellaneous documents, and B. T. Roberts’ published writings. A large quantity of diaries, letters, and other documents are now in the Library of Congress, but Roberts Wesleyan College, Asbury Theological Seminary, and the Marston Memorial Historical Center, Free Methodist Church of North America, have microfilm copies of this material (34 reels). In addition, the Roberts Wesleyan College library has a considerable amount of primary material, including diaries of Ellen Roberts not found in the Library of Congress collection. (Note cont. next page.)

This paper seeks to illuminate the major contextual factors that shaped B. T. Roberts and thus, indirectly, the Free Methodist Church. It focuses on the early period of Roberts' life, particularly the twenty years from 1830 to 1850 when Roberts, moving from a child of seven to a man of twenty-seven, was converted, formed his fundamental theology, and became in several senses a "radical" reformer.³ These formative influences are symbolized in three events of the early 1830s:

October 23, 1830. The New York Evangelist begins reporting Charles Finney's revival in Rochester, New York. The influence of Finney and his associates grows as more and more revivals are held in upstate and western New York. B. T. Roberts is seven years old.

December 4, 1833. The American Anti-Slavery Society is organized in Philadelphia. B. T. Roberts is ten years old.

May 21, 1835. Methodist Sarah Worrall Lankford, Phoebe Palmer's older sister, is sanctified in New York City at the age of twenty-nine. B. T. Roberts is eleven. Several months later (February, 1836) Sarah holds the first Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness, often seen as the birth of the Holiness Movement. About a year and a half later Sarah's sister, Phoebe Palmer, is sanctified (also at the age of twenty-nine) and eventually becomes the principal leader of the Tuesday Meetings and leading spokesperson of the Holiness Movement.

Thus, within a period of five years three movements emerged which were strongly to influence B. T. Roberts: Finneyite revivalism, abolitionism,

Biographical studies are Benson Howard Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts, Late General Superintendent of the Free Methodist Church: A Biography* (North Chili, NY: "The Earnest Christian" Office, 1900), Clarence Howard Zahniser, *Earnest Christian: Life and Works of Benjamin Titus Roberts* (Circleville, OH: Advocate Publishing House, 1957), and Esther M. Roberts, *The Bishop and His Lady* (Winona Lake, IN: 1962), written for children. Adella P. Carpenter wrote *Ellen Lois Roberts: Life and Writings* (Chicago: Woman's Missionary Society, Free Methodist Church, 1926). Kenneth Kysor, a local historian, published in 1976 a biographical booklet which, although containing a number of errors, gives several significant leads concerning original sources (Kenneth Kysor, *At Evening It Shall be Light: Benjamin Titus Roberts and the Free Methodist Church*, Cattaugaus, NY: by the author, 48 pp.).

³This paper is part of a larger biography project treating both B. T. and Ellen Roberts. The focus here is more on contextual factors than on the internal spiritual development of B. T. Roberts. The spiritual development will be covered in the book.

and Palmerite perfectionism. These are distinct movements, yet in some respects they are so interrelated that it takes careful nuancing to sort them out and identify their significance.

The three dates listed above represent a whole cluster of developments during the early to mid-1830s that were to shape religious, social, and even political events for the next several decades. For instance:

The *revival movement* grew in intensity, giving impetus to several reform movements, but then peaked about 1835. Most of these reforming movements had actually begun in the decades prior to Finney's revivals and were in fact the outgrowth, in part, of the earlier "Second Great Awakening" revivals beginning just before 1800.

The *Holiness Movement* grew and spread over the next several decades, passed through several stages, and eventually led to the founding of such educational institutions as Taylor University and Asbury College, the Church of the Nazarene and the Pilgrim Holiness Church, mission agencies such as the Oriental Missionary Society, and the birth of modern Pentecostalism.

The *antislavery movement* grew dramatically during the 1830s as in essence an abolitionist revival. It then split over issues of political involvement and the role of women, radicalized the national debate over slavery in ways that may have hastened or provoked the Civil War, and then quickly dissipated. Some of its energies were channeled into the temperance, missionary, and women's movements. As the Holiness Movement was emerging in New York City and its environs, the abolitionist movement was gaining momentum 350 miles away, on New York State's western frontier.⁴

Benjamin T. Roberts' religious life and early ministry were formed in the vortex of these sometimes mutually-reinforcing, sometimes conflicting currents. The main thesis of this paper is that this matrix of currents provides key insights concerning the directions which the later life and ministry of Roberts took. We can examine this thesis by seeking answers to four questions:

⁴Much of the organizational coordination of abolitionism was, of course, in the East (New York City, Boston, Philadelphia), but the real energy of the movement was building further west.

1. How was B. T. Roberts touched by the revivalism of the 1830s and 1840s?
2. In what ways was he influenced by the abolitionist movement?
3. To what extent was he influenced by the Holiness Movement arising from Phoebe Palmer's ministry?
4. How did these influences converge in the life and ministry of B. T. Roberts?

Biographical Summary

Benjamin Titus Roberts was born on July 25, 1823,⁵ in or near Forestville, Chautauqua County, New York. About 1827 the family moved to Lodi (later Gowanda),⁶ Cattaraugus County, New York.⁷ He was the first child of Titus and Sally (Ellis) Roberts. Titus and Sally later had two daughters, Florilla and Caroline. Gowanda lies at the far western edge of the burned-over district. "In the uplands of Cattaraugus county, among the hills of Western New York,"⁸ Gowanda is just 15 miles from the eastern shores of Lake Erie and about 30 miles directly south of what was then the small town of Buffalo. Today in driving west from Gowanda, one can catch glimpses of the Buffalo skyline, but in the 1820s and 1830s a trip to Buffalo was a major undertaking. Buffalo was the western terminus of the Erie Canal, completed just two years after B. T. Roberts' birth.

Young Benjamin grew up in the days of repeated waves of burned-over district revivals. His father was converted in a significant revival about 1834, when B. T. was about eleven. Titus Roberts, Benjamin's father, was an enterprising man who for a number of years ran a store in Gowanda, farmed, bought and sold property, and was a Methodist loca

⁵Roberts' grave marker in North Chili, NY, incorrectly has July 25, 1824. The birth year 1823 is well attested in the sources.

⁶The name was changed to Gowanda in 1848 because there was another Lodi in the state.

⁷Gowanda (Lodi) lies on both sides of the Cattaraugus/Erie county line, but the Roberts family lived on the Cattaraugus County side of the village of Lodi (Town[ship] of Persia). The B. H. Roberts and Zahniser biographies give Cattaraugus County as the birthplace, but census and other records indicate that the family did not move across the line into Cattaraugus County until a few years after B. T.'s birth.

⁸Benson Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, 1.

preacher.⁹ At the time of the birth of Benjamin, the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States was scarcely 40 years old. Roberts grew up during the period of rapid Methodist expansion, which was also the period of a growing socio-economic rift between multiplying frontier Methodists and prospering city congregations. More immediately volatile was the dispute over slavery and slave-holding. From early on Roberts' sympathies were with the abolitionists and with revivalistic Christianity.

Roberts' early education was in Lodi where he "mastered such books as were taught in the district school."¹⁰ His son Benson writes that Roberts began studying Latin "without a teacher,"¹¹ but the family lore in Gowanda is that he studied Latin under the local Presbyterian minister.¹² This seems plausible, for Roberts was acquainted with the minister, who reportedly taught classes. The Presbyterian Church in Lodi was organized in 1828, and the Presbyterians (as was typical throughout this region) seem to have been the first to organize a Sunday school, probably interdenominational in character. The Rev. John B. Preston was reportedly the first installed Presbyterian pastor in Lodi, beginning June 28, 1835, and during his pastorate "taught a flourishing school" in the basement of the Presbyterian Church building.¹³

Preston may well have been the Presbyterian minister who especially influenced the young Roberts. B. T. later wrote, "A Presbyterian

⁹A strong entrepreneurial strain runs through the Roberts generations—from B. T. Roberts' great-great-grandfather Benjamin Roberts (1698-1774), a Connecticut landowner and merchant who owned several small ships trading between Connecticut and the West Indies, to his father Titus, involved in several enterprises and land deals, to B. T.'s sons Benson (founder of a school for girls in 1920) and George Lane (attorney and businessman). See E[li]mer S. Smail, *Forbears of Some Roberts Cousins* (mimeographed; n.p., 1959), 5-8.

¹⁰Benson Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, 2.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Interview with Mrs. Bula Lincoln Palcic, B. T. Roberts' great-grand-niece, April 22, 1997.

¹³I. R. Leonard, comp., *Historical Sketch of the Village of Gowanda, N.Y. in Commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of its Incorporation* (Buffalo, NY, 1898). Another source says, "The First Presbyterian church of Gowanda had its inception in services of that denomination held as early as 1826 by Joseph Plumb, who organized a Sunday school that year. The Presbyterian Society of Lodi was organized April 8, 1828, by Rev. M. P. Squire, with eleven members, over whom the first pastor was Rev. E. J. Gillett." William Adams, ed., *Historical Gazetteer and Biographical Memorial of Cattaraugus County, N.Y.* (Syracuse, NY: Lyman, Horton & Co., 1883), 982. John B. Preston was actually a missionary periodically under appointment by the American Home Missionary Society (*The Home Missionary* [January, 1835], 159; [February 1, 1836], 180). The January 1835 *Home Missionary* contains a report "From the Rev. J. B. Preston, Lodi, Erie County, N.Y." (p. 157). The Presbyterian church building was on the Erie County side of the county line.

minister came to me one day when a boy, and invited me to go to Sabbath-school. I went. I committed many chapters of the Bible to memory.”¹⁴ Roberts felt this gave him an important initial grounding in Scripture.¹⁵ Later the Presbyterian minister offered to educate Roberts for his church’s ministry, to which the youth replied, “I cannot accept it, as I have not yet been converted.”¹⁶ Presumably this would have been around 1837. Preston (assuming he was the Presbyterian minister in this case) very likely was an ardent abolitionist; we know at least that several leading members in the Lodi Presbyterian Church were, as will be noted later.

The young Roberts served as a schoolmaster for awhile, then began the study of law. His legal training included a little over two years of study with the attorney Henry Link in Little Falls, New York (near Utica), April 1842 to May, 1844,¹⁷ and then briefly with attorney Chester Howe of Gowanda.¹⁸ Henry Link (1811-1891) was a prominent Little Falls citizen of German ancestry and was active in local Democratic politics.¹⁹

Roberts was converted in July, 1844, shortly after his return to Lodi from Little Falls, and around the time of his twenty-first birthday. Following his conversion Roberts completed two terms at Genesee Wesleyan Seminary in Lima, New York, preparatory to entering Wesleyan University in the fall of 1845.²⁰ He was licensed as a Methodist exhorter on June 16, 1845,²¹ less than a year after his conversion.

¹⁴Benson Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, 2.

¹⁵B. T. Roberts, *The Earnest Christian* (January, 1865), 5, cited in Zahniser, 14, and Benson Roberts, 2.

¹⁶Benson Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, 3.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁸Howe was the Whig candidate for county judge in 1851.

¹⁹Information provided by the Little Falls Historical Society and the Little Falls Public Library. Link “was twice elected president of the village of Little Falls, and in 1871 ran on the Democratic ticket for county judge but was defeated by Judge Amos H. Prescott.” Source: George A. Hardin, *History of Herkimer County, N.Y.* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1893), 151.

²⁰Benson Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, 6. The Methodist seminary (i.e., preparatory school) at Lima was established by action of the Genesee Conference at its 1830 and 1831 sessions, a step prompted by the formation of the Oneida Conference from the eastern portion of the Genesee Conference in 1828 which left the Genesee Conference without such a school. See: F. W. Conable, *History of the Genesee Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, from its Organization . . . in 1810, to the Year 1872* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1876), 311, 323, 331.

²¹Benson Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, 6.

Roberts spent three years at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut (1845-48). There he came under the influence of Wesleyan's president, the scholar and powerful preacher Stephen Olin, and of the somewhat eccentric Methodist revivalist John Wesley Redfield, who conducted a stirring revival in Middletown in February, 1846. Though temperamentally and culturally poles apart, Olin and Redfield were agreed on the need to maintain old-time Methodism with its emphasis on holiness and the gospel to the poor. In some ways Redfield and Olin represent two sides of B. T. Roberts' own personality, Redfield the "radical" revivalist and Olin the scholarly leader and educator. At Wesleyan University, "the flagship Methodist institution" of the time according to historian Russell Richey, Roberts continued his intellectual and spiritual development and worked on the side as a school teacher and a Sunday school teacher in a black church. One of Roberts' classmates was Daniel Steele, later a prominent holiness author.²²

At Middletown B. T. met Ellen Stowe (1825-1908), the niece of the Methodist book agent (i.e., publisher), George Lane. Ellen at this time was living with the Lanes in New York City, but occasionally made visits to Middletown to get away from the city and to visit her cousin, Professor Harvey Lane, and other friends. Benjamin and Ellen courted by letter over several months. They were married in New York City in May, 1849, at the Lane home, during Benjamin's first year of pastoral ministry.²³

Roberts began his pastoral ministry at Caryville, New York, in September, 1848. This was a key time of transition in the Methodist Episcopal denomination. Methodism was undergoing dramatic changes. From being a dynamic movement mainly of the common people, it was becoming, especially in the growing cities, a church of the newly prosperous and influential. From being a small minority, Methodism was becoming the

²²Ralph Waldo Emerson had been the commencement speaker at Wesleyan University the year before Roberts enrolled there. See William Gravely, *Gilbert Haven, Methodist Abolitionist: A Study in Race, Religion, and Reform, 1850-1880* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1973), 22.

²³Ellen Stowe's home was Windsor, near Binghamton, NY. Windsor was also the hometown of her uncle, George Lane, who after several years as an itinerating preacher moved to New York City where he served as assistant book agent (1836-41) and book agent (1841-52) of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Ellen went to live with her uncle in New York when she was fourteen, and lived there until her marriage. She seems to have been a distant cousin of Calvin Ellis Stowe, the husband of Harriet Beecher Stowe (author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*).

largest Protestant denomination. In the cities, ornate stone and brick edifices were rising, prompting more formal and professionalized worship styles and new fund-raising techniques like pew auctions and pew rental. Some of the more prominent pastors were becoming Masons or Odd Fellows. Yet the majority of Methodists in city, town, country, and on the frontier were comparatively poor. Thus divisions arose over the very nature and identity of Methodism and its theological core. Further agitating this picture was the unresolved issue of slavery and slave-holding.

The crisis was particularly acute in the Genesee Conference as Buffalo's growing prominence and affluence contrasted with much of the rest of the area. In the 1840s and 1850s a lively debate swirled around several interrelated issues: pew rental, simplicity versus formalism in worship, secret societies (Masons and Odd Fellows), slavery, ostentatious wealth versus frugality, and the very nature of conversion and sanctification. This context was to shape the first ten years of B. T. Roberts' pastoral ministry.

Benjamin's and Ellen's diaries give an intimate picture of their largely successful decade of pastoral ministry during this period. Pastoring at Caryville, Pike (two years), Rushford, Buffalo Niagara St., Brockport (two years), Albion (two years), and Pekin, the Robertses devoted themselves wholeheartedly to pastoral ministry, with a strong emphasis on revivals and camp meetings. During this time Roberts read widely and began writing articles, publishing his seminal "New School Methodism" in *The Northern Independent*. Five children were born to B. T. and Ellen during these years, two of whom died within a year of birth, including their firstborn (William Titus) and their only daughter, Sarah.²⁴

Appointed to the prominent Niagara Street Methodist Church, Buffalo, in 1852, where pew-renting was already in effect, Roberts began to work against the system both locally and in the conference. He wrote in the *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, "Is there any good reason for renting pews in churches? It tends to debase the poor. . . . It exalts the rich. . . . Renting pews is saying, in substance, we want none in our congregation but those who are able to move in fashionable circles, and can pay ten, twenty, fifty or one hundred dollars a year for a pew."²⁵

²⁴William and Sarah were buried in the Presbyterian cemetery in Gowanda in what are now unmarked graves.

²⁵Quoted in James Arnold Reinhard, "Personal and Sociological Factors in the Formation of the Free Methodist Church, 1852-1860" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Iowa, 1971), 93.

Through writings like these, Roberts became identified with the revivalistic reform element within the Genesee Conference of the M. E. Church. The writing which led most directly to Roberts' separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church was his article "New School Methodism," published in the newly-founded Methodist antislavery and reform paper, the *Northern Independent*, in 1857.²⁶ The article attacked pew rental and other departures from "Old School Methodism," including the identification of sanctification with justification. Mainly as a result of publishing this article, Roberts was tried before the Genesee Conference and eventually expelled from the church in 1858. Subsequently, he founded the periodical *The Earnest Christian* and was instrumental in the founding of the Free Methodist Church in 1860. From then until his death in 1893 he served as general superintendent of the new denomination and as editor of *The Earnest Christian*. Ellen assisted him in his work, particularly in ministry among the poor in Buffalo and later in the early years of Chili Seminary (now Roberts Wesleyan College) near Rochester, New York.

Benjamin Roberts was, he felt, a radical in the best sense. He wanted to see thorough renewal of the church and fundamental reform in society. This meant he was often in the minority. In almost every context and situation he advocated the unpopular cause, for the sake of the right and the just as he understood it. Even at his death he was in the minority within his own denomination in calling for women's ordination and in taking the gospel to the cities and the poor. Where did this radicalism come from? Was it a personality quirk? Probably not; Roberts was known for his even-tempereness and his patience. Was it an expression of frontier independence and exuberance? Certainly Lodi, only about 100 miles from Ohio, was frontier territory in the 1820s, and this had an influence. Yet Roberts' radicalism was untypical even in his home town. Something else was at work.

The story of the "radicalizing" of B. T. Roberts can be explained in terms of three converging streams, each explored in what follows.

²⁶The *Northern Independent* was established in late 1856 by William Hosmer, who had previously edited the *Northern Christian Advocate*. Roberts was a contributing editor. Reinhard notes, "What Hosmer had done in the *Northern Christian Advocate*, he did even more ardently in his new business venture, the *Northern Independent*. Readers, disappointed with the conciliating denominational papers, rejoiced at Hosmer's return to antislaveryism" (Reinhard, 108). "New School Methodism" was of course an echo of the earlier "New School"/"Old School" controversy in the Presbyterian Church.

First Stream: Revivalism

By 1834, the first wave of Charles Finney's revivals had passed.²⁷ Nonetheless, waves of revival continued in western New York, some of them led by itinerating evangelists converted under or influenced by Finney. A loose-knit group of associates of Finney carried on a zealous form of revivalism beginning in late 1826 and collectively were known as Finney's "Holy Band."²⁸ Much revival and church-planting work was carried out by Presbyterian/Congregational missionaries appointed by the American Home Missionary Society as well as by Methodist itinerants and Baptist preachers. Revivals continued throughout the burned-over district, including many in and around Lodi.

James H. Hotchkiss in his 1848 history of the Presbyterian Church in western New York reported that "The year 1833 was more distinguished by revivals in the churches" than the previous year and adds, "During the year 1834, the work of the Spirit, in a considerable degree, was continued." He notes specifically that in the fall of 1835 "The Presbytery of Buffalo [which included Lodi] record that four of their churches had enjoyed, during the year, extensive revivals, in which about two hundred and fifty individuals were believed to have been converted unto God."²⁹

B. T. Roberts reports that his father, Titus Roberts, was converted around 1834. Benjamin at this time would have been a boy of about ten—old enough to remember and be marked by the event.³⁰ When B. T. put a notice of his father's death in *The Earnest Christian* in April, 1881, he wrote:

²⁷James Bratt argues that in fact the great period of Anglo-American revivals was 1735-1835 and that widespread revivals largely ceased after 1835 (the 1857-58 revival being a limited exception)—and that in general revivalism failed to achieve its objectives. James D. Bratt, "The Reorientation of American Protestantism, 1835-1845," *Church History* 67:1 (March, 1998), 52-82. "While Presbyterian and Congregational revivals dropped off after 1835, the Methodists' [revivals] did not flag for another ten years" (p. 64).

²⁸Keith Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 460f.

²⁹James H. Hotchkiss, *A History of the Purchase and Settlement of Western New York and of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Presbyterian Church in That Section* (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1848), 152.

³⁰One source says Titus Roberts, B. T.'s father, "was converted at the age of 31 and soon felt that he should preach the Gospel." Smail, *Forbears of Some Roberts Cousins*, 11.

My father was converted to God while engaged in the mercantile business. It was in a meeting held by evangelists who had been raised up under Mr. Finney's labors. The revivals which these men promoted were much more thorough than the popular revivals of the day. The preachers did not hesitate to attack prevailing sins. In the village referred to [Lodi] every merchant in the village—some half dozen or more—and most of the leading men were converted. There was in them an immediate, striking and permanent change.

A few years after his conversion, my father sold out his business, joined the Genesee Conference of the M. E. Church and preached for one year. But his business coming into his hands again, he left the Conference, and from that time labored till near the close of his life as a Local Preacher.³¹

Sally, Titus' wife, may have been converted about the same time, and throughout their long marriage she was a partner with him in his earnest faith.

If Titus Roberts was converted in a Finneyite revival at the age of thirty-one, presumably this was a local revival in the Lodi area between June 1834 and July 1835, since Titus turned thirty-one on June 14, 1834. Whether the revival was under Presbyterian or Methodist auspices, or was some sort of union meeting, is not clear, but B. T. explicitly connects the revival to Finney and his associates. And it appears that Titus Roberts soon became a Methodist.

Titus Roberts' conversion seems to have been a dramatic about-face. There is no evidence that he had any religious interest prior to this time. Like many western New York settlers, his family came from Connecticut and likely was nominally Congregationalist.³² His wife's parents, Elnathan and Hannah Ellis, were charter members of the Forestville Baptist Church when it was organized in 1817,³³ so it is understandable that the marriage of Titus Roberts and Sally Ellis was performed by the Rev.

³¹*The Earnest Christian* 41:4 (April, 1881), 130.

³²According to Smail, Titus Roberts' father, Benjamin Roberts, was born in East Hartford, CN, on November 25, 1771, and migrated to Madison County, New York, near Syracuse, in 1800 and then on to Sheridan (west of Lodi near Lake Erie) in 1811. Smail, 8.

³³Obed Edson, *History of Chautauqua County, New York* (Boston, MA: W. A. Fergusson, 1894), 664; see Elizabeth L. Crocker, *Yesterdays in and around Pomfret, N.Y.* Book I (Fredonia, NY: n.p., 1960), 15.

James Bennett, the first pastor of this church.³⁴ It may or may not be significant that Titus and Sally were married just a few weeks before B. T. was born.³⁵ But one gets no sense of any spiritual concern or attachment on Titus' part prior to the 1834 (approx.) revival.

The picture that emerges from this account, then, is that Benjamin, growing up in the small town of Lodi, some time after his eleventh birthday witnessed a sweeping revival and the dramatic, life-changing conversion of his father (and perhaps his mother). Although B. T.'s own conversion would not occur for another ten years, his life and certainly his conception of revivals was marked by this burned-over district revival of 1834 or 1835.³⁶

Revival, and specifically the holding of revivals and revivalistic camp meetings, was the main thrust of Roberts' pastoral ministry in the 1850s (although he was diligent also in study, preaching, and pastoral visitation). Often the revival meetings were effective and highly emotional. It seems clear that Roberts' model for revivalism derives from what he himself witnessed as a boy.³⁷ Thus B. T. Roberts entered pastoral ministry with a view of the normative role of revival that derived from the Finneyite revivalism of the western New York frontier. It appears that revival, flavored by the distinctive Methodist emphasis on Christian perfection, remained Roberts' primary model of normal church life throughout his ministry.

Second Stream: Abolitionism

The rise of abolitionism in the 1830s owed much to the revivalism of the 1820s, as a number of historians have pointed out. Two of the key fig-

³⁴Marriage notice in the *New York Censor* [later the *Fredonia Censor*], July 9, 1823. Titus and Sally would have been twenty and nineteen at the time.

³⁵The marriage notice does not give the actual date of marriage, but presumably it would have been within the previous week or two as the *Censor* was a weekly paper. Smail says Titus and Sally were married "in a log cabin on [the] farm" near Forestville belonging to her parents. The Forestville Baptist Church did not have a church building until 1825: "Their first church building, being the first church edifice in Forestville, was dedicated in 1825" (Edson, 644).

³⁶The *New York Evangelist* reports several revivals in Cattaraugus County and the surrounding area, and one specifically in Lodi, in 1834. *New York Evangelist* (May 17, 1834), 79; (Nov. 8, 1834), 179; (Dec. 27, 1834).

³⁷The description George Gale gave of the practices of members of Finney's "Holy Band" reads very much like accounts of revivals held by Roberts and other Methodists in the 1850s. See Hardman, 460f.

ures here were Charles Stuart and Theodore Dwight Weld, early converts of Finney who were soon to become leaders in the “immediate abolitionism” of the 1830s.³⁸

The revivalism of the 1820s and earlier, partly grounded in and partly productive of broader expectations for the reform and perfecting of society, was thus a key catalyst in the rise of the abolitionist movement beginning in 1831. But there were other contributing causes—particularly the British antislavery movement and England’s abolishing of slavery in the West Indies in 1833. From 1831 on, American abolitionism was a distinct and growing movement.³⁹

B. T. Roberts was early touched by the abolitionist fervor. He was raised in an environment of aggressive, revivalistic abolitionist activity that directly touched his home town. Sometime between 1837 and 1844, during B. T.’s late teen years, he became committed to abolitionism (as well as to the other great reform of the time, temperance). Zahniser writes that during the period of B. T.’s law study,

he began to champion the temperance cause. He early became a speaker at temperance meetings. One of his first speeches as a law student was an abolition speech; that too at a time when the word abolition was a term of severe reproach, a verbal stigma, and in many communities a precursor to physical persecution.⁴⁰

Perhaps the strongest evidence of Roberts’ early abolitionist sentiment is a poem he wrote to his sister Florilla on March 20, 1845:

To my dear Sister
The voice of a Female Slave
Am I not a woman and a sister?

³⁸See especially Benjamin P. Thomas, *Theodore Weld, Crusader for Freedom* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1950; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1973); and Robert H. Abzug, *Passionate Liberator: Theodore Dwight Weld and the Dilemma of Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

³⁹William Lloyd Garrison published the first issue of *The Liberator* in January, 1831. Finney denounced slavery as “a great national sin” in the early 1830s. The New England Anti-Slavery Society was organized in January, 1832, and the American Anti-Slavery Society was founded in December, 1833 (as previously noted).

⁴⁰Zahniser, 13. It is not clear what Zahniser’s source here is.

Though curly locks my head adorn,
Though darkly sable be my face,
 Yet courses not within my veins
 The purple blood of Adams race?

Though with the invader's ruthless hand,
From friends and home I'm torn away,
 To be a slave in Christian's land,
 Deprived of Freedom's genial ray;

Though Master's whip hath torn my back,
And made the crimson current flow,
 In torrents down my quivering flesh,
 Till Death had almost eased my wo;

Though Tyrant's galling chains enclose
My mangled limbs in dire embrace,
 Though marks of bruises, and of blows,
 Eternity can ne'er efface;

Yet have I not that form divine
Which God to all mankind hath given?
 Is not that soul immortal mine
 Which e'er must dwell in hell or Heaven?

Abides there not within my breast
Devotion pure, Affection deep?
 Oppression's rod can ne'er arrest
 Those powers of soul that never sleep.

As then if you were made a slave
You'd others have to feel for you,
 Deeply within your heart engrave,
 For me such feeling deep and true.

Dear Sister keep the [sic] within as an *amulet* for
the repulsion of that evil Spirit the Genius of Slavery.

Your affectionate brother
 B. T. Roberts
Lodi, March 20th, 1845⁴¹

⁴¹The original manuscript is in the possession of Mrs. Bula Palcic, Gowanda, NY. The poem appears to be an original composition of Benjamin's, though it is possible that it was copied from another source. B. T. often wrote poetry during these years, and with this poem is another written by B. T. to his sisters Florilla and Caroline on June 18, 1844.

Glued to the paper on which this poem appears is a 1¹/₈-inch abolitionist coin or medal with the inscription, "Am I not a woman and a sister" and the date 1838, and on the other side, "United States of America" and "Liberty."⁴² This poem is remarkable on several accounts—its passion and strong sentiment, its forthright identification with the abolitionist cause and, not incidentally in the light of Roberts' later concerns, its implicitly feminist tone.

Roberts' Christian conversion came in July, 1844, in Lodi. Through the witness of "a pious, but illiterate cooper," B. T. came under conviction and gave up all to follow Christ. There was no special revival at the time, he said; he simply "felt that it was my duty to become a Christian."⁴³ He immediately abandoned his legal apprenticeship and began training for the Methodist ministry. Ever after his life and ministry would be marked by these two traits: dedication to duty and a commitment to and expectation of revival.

The record suggests that B. T. was "converted" to abolitionism before or about the time of his conversion to Christ. These two conversions occurred so closely together in time and in his experience that the one probably colored the other. Just as abolitionism meant no compromise with the culturally-dominant view that tolerated slavery, so Christian discipleship meant no compromise with sin of any form in society or in the church. Combining this with the revivalist impulse, one can see that for Roberts (as for many abolitionists at the time) abolitionism and revivalism were twin crusades.

Roberts probably adopted abolitionist sentiments well before his 1844 conversion. The high point of abolitionist activity in western New

⁴²This was a version of the antislavery medals used first in England and later in the U. S. to promote abolitionism. An "Emancipation Jubilee Medal" bearing the date of August 1, 1834, was struck in Birmingham, England, for distribution in the U. S. bearing the inscriptions "Am I Not a Man and a Brother" and "A Voice from Great Britain to America." These metal tokens were distributed through the Anti-Slavery Office, 130 Nassau Street, New York, for 25 cents each (*New York Evangelist* 6:1 [January 3, 1835], 1). In this case the 1838 "Liberty" medal may suggest that Roberts had some affinity with the "Liberty Men" who founded the Liberty Party in April, 1840. The Liberty Party garnered only 15 of 194 total votes cast in the Town of Persia (which included Lodi) in the presidential election of 1844 (Strong, 345). The year 1838 may commemorate the burning of Liberty Hall in Philadelphia by an antiabolitionist mob in May of that year (see Vernon L. Volpe, *Forlorn Hope of Freedom: The Liberty Party in the Old Northwest, 1838-1848* [Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990], 24).

⁴³Benson Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, 4.

York (and throughout much of the North) was in the late 1830s. Theodore Weld trained “The Seventy,” activist agents of the American Anti-Slavery Society, in New York City in November, 1836. These firebrands fanned out across the North in late 1836 and during 1837.⁴⁴ At least two of these were active in far western New York State.

The annual reports of the American Anti-Slavery Society show that an antislavery society was organized in Lodi, New York, in February, 1837, with 112 members, and a juvenile antislavery society in December of the same year with 123 members.⁴⁵ Thus, in his home town Roberts must have witnessed this abolitionist activity when he was about fifteen. He may well have been involved in the activities of these societies.⁴⁶ The listed secretary of the Lodi Anti-Slavery Society in 1838 was Halsey Stearns who a couple of years earlier had been married by the Presbyterian minister, John B. Preston, to Mary Plumb, daughter of Joseph Plumb, a prominent Lodi businessman and abolitionist who had been instrumental in the founding of the Lodi Presbyterian Church in 1826.⁴⁷

Since B. T. Roberts clearly was an abolitionist from at least 1845 on, and probably earlier, the connection between revivalism and the rise of “immediate” abolitionism after 1830 is significant for understanding the “radical” nature of Roberts’ formation as an older child, teen, and young adult (roughly from 1830 to 1848). It seems clear that abolitionism had a radicalizing effect on Roberts (or reinforced tendencies already present) and intensified his determination to take the side of the oppressed, the downtrodden, and those most in need of God’s mercy and grace. Together with Finneyite revivalism, abolitionism was a force that helped shape Roberts’ life-long views concerning the Gospel, pastoral ministry, and the role of the church in society.

⁴⁴John Lytle Myers, “The Agency System of the Anti-Slavery Movement, 1832-1837, and Its Antecedents in Other Benevolent and Reform Societies” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Michigan, 1960). Myers lists the names of “The Seventy” (actually 65), 401-02. The list includes James Birney, Charles Stuart, Orange Scott, and, of course, Weld himself.

⁴⁵*Fourth Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society* (New York: William Dorr, 1838), 132; *Fifth Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society* (New York: William Dorr, 1837), 141.

⁴⁶I have been unable to discover any of the records of these societies.

⁴⁷Marriage notice in the *Fredonia Censor*, April 8, 1835.

Third Stream: Perfectionism

Perfectionism in ante-bellum America was a current much broader than the Wesleyan concern with holiness and entire sanctification. Many writers have argued that a common perfectionist impulse underlay the revival and reform movements of the first half of the nineteenth century, and there is considerable evidence for this. Promoters of revival often saw themselves as cleansing the social order in a way that would hasten the Millennium. A writer in the *New York Evangelist* in 1830, commenting on “The Late [Presbyterian] General Assembly,” counted himself among those “who believe that the kingdom of Christ can never come with power and glory, but by the succession of powerful revivals of religion.” He added:

A great revolution is taking place in the Presbyterian church. A new race of men are evidently coming forward, an ardent, active, practical set. They have by some been well denominated *Evangelical*, and readily unite with brethren of kindred spirit at the North and East. . . . [They] go into the field, and carry into vigorous execution the noble plans which their benevolence and zeal has [sic] originated. They seem *really* to believe what God has declared in his word that, “he that winneth souls is wise.” They “expect great things.” They aim at nothing less than the conversion of the world. . . .

These evangelical men know that the gospel tends to make men holy and happy—and they think they ought to *do* all in their power to save men from sin: they go amongst them, and not only preach to them, but make other personal exertions to “pull them out of the fire.”

These are the *real working men*, and such are the men that will be instrumental in saving the world, if it is ever converted.⁴⁸

The writer goes on to allege that “more has been done the last thirty years to promote the good cause [of Christian benevolence] than for 300 years before.” He commends such “noble institutions” as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Bible Society, the American Education Society, the American Tract Society, “and many others of kindred spirit!”⁴⁹

⁴⁸Unsigned article, “The Late General Assembly,” *New York Evangelist* 1:13 (June 26, 1830), 1.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

Douglas Strong has traced these revival and reform currents in western New York particularly, analyzing connections between revivalism, entire sanctification, abolitionism, and the rise of the Liberty Party in the 1840s.⁵⁰ He notes that “During the first half of the 1840s, there were high hopes among burned-over district reformers that the moral government of God would soon be established on earth, due to the formation of perfected religious and political organizations.”⁵¹ He focuses particularly on the 1840s and shows how the Liberty Party became the political expression of 1830s abolitionism. Strong notes:

From 1841 to 1844, a general revival swept over much of New York state’s religious community. The revival was especially evident among abolitionist Christians, who were anticipating the inauguration of the perfect state of society. In 1841 and ’42, for instance, Finney conducted a series of large revival meetings in western New York for those “deeply interested in the doctrine of Entire Sanctification in this life.” Many anti-slavery perfectionist congregations began as a result of these meetings.⁵²

In the case of B. T. Roberts, perfectionism in this broader sense may have underlain to some degree his revivalistic and abolitionist sentiments. But since B. T. (following his father’s lead) allied himself with the Methodists, Christian experience and the role of the gospel in society came to be understood according to the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection: holiness and the experience of entire sanctification. After 1840, the major resurgence of the sanctification emphasis within Methodism (and beyond) flowed from the ministry and influence of Phoebe Palmer.

Clearly Roberts (as well as his wife Ellen) were touched by the Methodist Holiness Movement that arose under the leadership of Phoebe Palmer in the 1840s and 1850s. Ellen, in fact, as a young woman came under the influence of Phoebe Palmer and her husband Walter at the Allen

⁵⁰Douglas M. Strong, “Organized Liberty: Evangelical Perfectionism, Political Abolitionism, and Ecclesiastical Reform in the Burned-Over District” (Ph.D. Diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1990); Douglas M. Strong, “‘The Application of Perfectionism to Politics’: Political and Ecclesiastical Abolitionism in the Burned-Over District,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Spring 1990), 25:1, 21-41.

⁵¹Strong, “Organized Liberty,” 263.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 266-67.

St. Methodist Church in New York City. The Palmers were for a time her class leaders.⁵³ B. T. Roberts later gave explicit testimony to the influence of Phoebe Palmer in his life. When George Hughes in 1886 put together his book *Fragrant Memories of The Tuesday Meeting and The Guide to Holiness, and their Fifty Years' Work for Jesus*, he apparently solicited testimonials from Roberts and many others. Hughes included this comment:

Rev. B. T. Roberts, superintendent of the Free Methodist Church, gives this good testimony:

We feel life-long obligations to Dr. and Mrs. Palmer, and hold their memories in the highest veneration. In the year 1849, the second year of my ministry, I experienced the blessing of holiness through the labors of Mrs. Palmer, at a camp-meeting held in Collins, Erie Co., N.Y. Mrs. Roberts, before she was married, was for four or five years a member of Dr. Palmer's class in the old Allen Street Church, New York, and he was instrumental in leading her to full salvation.⁵⁴

This statement of B. T., however, needs to be set in its full context. He did in fact attend a Methodist camp meeting at Collins, New York, just a few miles from Gowanda, in his second year of pastoral ministry. Ellen Roberts' diary shows, however, that this was in August, 1850, not in 1849. She writes, "August—I spent a week with Florilla [B. T.'s sister, presumably in Gowanda] while Mr. Roberts attended a camp meeting not far off [presumably at Collins]. He was greatly blessed while there."⁵⁵ Roberts' fuller account of his experience at the Collins camp meeting runs as follows:

The subject of holiness received special attention. Rev. Eleazar Thomas, presiding elder of the district, was then a flame of fire. Mrs. Palmer attended the meeting, and labored for the promotion of holiness with great zeal and success. While I was at [Wesleyan University in] Middletown, Dr. [John Wes-

⁵³Ellen Stowe's diaries for the 1840s contain numerous references to the Palmers.

⁵⁴George Hughes, *Fragrant Memories of The Tuesday Meeting and The Guide to Holiness, and their Fifty Years' Work for Jesus* (New York: Palmer & Hughes, 1886), 147.

⁵⁵Diary of Ellen Roberts for 1850.

ley] Redfield held a protracted meeting in the Methodist church. Such scenes of spiritual power I never had witnessed. The convictions I there received never left me. At the camp-meeting they were greatly increased. Two paths were distinctly marked out before me. I saw that I might be a popular preacher, gain applause, do but little good in reality, and at last lose my soul; or, I saw that I might take the narrow way, declare the whole truth as it is in Jesus, meet with persecution and opposition, but see a thorough work of grace go on and gain heaven. Grace was given to make the better choice. I deliberately gave myself anew to the Lord, to declare the whole truth as it is in Jesus, and to take the narrow way. The blessing came. The spirit fell upon me in an overwhelming degree. I received a power to labor such as I had never possessed before. This consecration has never been taken back. I have many times had to humble myself before the Lord for having grieved His Spirit. I have been but an unprofitable servant. It is by grace alone that I am saved. Yet the determination is fixed to obey the Lord and take the narrow way, come what will.⁵⁶

While Roberts here mentions Palmer, it is significant that he gives equal credit to Eleazar Thomas, his presiding elder at the time, and the fiery John Wesley Redfield.⁵⁷ As a pastor Roberts would from time to time call in Redfield for revivalistic work, and the connection between Redfield's revivals in the 1850s and the formation of Free Methodist congregations after 1860 is so strong that Redfield was virtually the co-founder of the new denomination. Redfield was strongly abolitionist and as a revivalist was closer to the frontier revivalism of Finney's associates than to the more cultured revivalism of Phoebe Palmer.

These considerations suggest that although there certainly was a Palmer influence on Roberts, his basic understanding of entire sanctification and of its relationship to abolitionism, preaching the gospel to the poor, and a range of social issues was influenced more by his upbringing and experiences prior to the encounter with Phoebe Palmer than by Palmer herself. The Palmers' influence on Ellen was more direct and per-

⁵⁶Benson Roberts, *Benjamin Titus Roberts*, 50-51.

⁵⁷On Redfield, a very significant character in Roberts' life, see Joseph Goodwin Terrill, *The Life of Rev. John Wesley Redfield, M.D.* (Chicago: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1889, 1912).

haps more formative, but it is clear from Ellen's diaries that she was strongly influenced also by her uncle George Lane (with whom she lived in New York) and by his wife Lydia's extensive ministry among the poor of the city.

A major emphasis of Roberts and a key part of his theology was his concern with "preaching the Gospel to the poor."⁵⁸ While this concern came from several sources—it was, after all, a major theme of Methodism from Wesley to early American Methodism—it is of a piece with Roberts' abolitionism and his views on revivalism. For Roberts, holiness meant a costly "narrow way" following of Jesus, and Jesus by precept and example gave the commission to preach the Gospel to the poor. Perhaps it was Roberts' early exposure to Finneyite revivalism and "immediate" abolitionism that enabled him to identify more radically with Wesley's emphasis on the gospel to the poor than did Phoebe Palmer and the later Holiness Movement.

Conclusion: The Interplay of Revivalism, Abolitionism, and Perfectionism

As already acknowledged, Finneyite revivalism, the antislavery crusade, and holiness perfectionism were interrelated currents. I have sought here to sort them out in the experience of B. T. Roberts, but also to show their interplay. These currents helped shaped Roberts' ministry and later life, including his role in the birth and initial growth of the Free Methodist Church.

Beginning in the late 1830s, three key issues arose within Evangelical reform circles in the United States involving mission and strategy, particularly with regard to abolitionism. The first concerned the relationship between revivalism and abolitionism. Some argued for the primacy of revival work; others for the priority of the abolition crusade, given the pressing issue of slavery. Finney, a convinced abolitionist, became concerned that Theodore Weld and others were neglecting revival in the churches to focus on abolitionism, while Weld countered, based on Ephesians 4:11, that not everyone was called to the same task.⁵⁹ This was an 1830s version of the evangelism versus social action debate.

⁵⁸See Howard A. Snyder, "'To Preach the Gospel to the Poor': Missional Self-Understanding in Early Free Methodism, 1860-90," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Spring, 1996), 7-39.

⁵⁹Abzug, 155-57; Thomas, 109.

The second question concerned the emerging issue of women's rights. As female advocates of immediate abolition such as the Grimké sisters spoke out publicly—and were criticized for doing so—the question arose whether women's rights should be added to the reform agenda and made a part of the abolitionist crusade. One side argued that moral consistency demanded speaking in defense of both slaves and oppressed women; the other, that the strategic urgency of antislavery required maintaining the narrower abolitionist focus. Theodore Weld and Angelina Grimké before their marriage carried on a lively letter debate on this question. The conflict was eventually to split the American Anti-Slavery Society, leading to the formation in 1840 of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society which insisted on the narrower focus and restricted the roles of women.⁶⁰

Third was the issue of political action. Most of the early abolitionists, perhaps reflecting their roots in revivalism, saw abolitionism as a great moral crusade, a question of right and truth addressed to the minds and consciences of the public and calling for, in effect, conversion to immediate abolitionism (i.e., in effect, immediate conversion to abolitionism). But should abolitionists pursue their cause also by political means? Some said yes, particularly as abolitionism itself became increasingly and inevitably a political issue—since slavery was, of course, a major political question. Others saw political involvement as diversion from the primary focus and as compromising the moral integrity of the abolitionist crusade. People's hearts needed to change on this issue; given that, the necessary political action would follow. This debate had a significantly divisive effect on the reform movement. It also affected the American political scene, giving rise to (among other things) the formation of the Liberty Party which ran the abolitionist James G. Birney for President in 1840 and 1844.⁶¹

Where did Roberts come down on these issues? To the degree that he confronted them, it was not in the 1830s, but later, in the 1840s and especially 1850s. By then the debate had shifted. Still, it is useful to raise these questions in seeking to understand Roberts. Roberts continued to be a fervent abolitionist up to and through the Civil War, and would allow no

⁶⁰Abzug, 179; Thomas, 131ff.

⁶¹James Bratt argues that such developments signaled deeper changes in American society and (partly in response) in Protestant theology. Bratt, 52ff.

compromise here. Yet his primary focus was on holiness revivalism: Reviving the church that it might fulfill its role before God and in society. For Roberts, a holy, sanctified church was an antislavery church.

Regarding the role of women, Roberts was firmly on the side of those who insisted that women be given equal roles with men in society and in the church. Though he did not become directly involved in the debate over the comparative priority of abolitionism and women's rights, he affirmed both. Since the major portion of his ministry fell after the Civil War when abolitionism had passed as an issue, abolitionism largely disappeared from Roberts' concern. But he increasingly argued for women's rights. In 1891 he published his book *Ordaining Women*, and long before that he advocated an equal role for women in the church. In 1872 he published a 24-page booklet, *The Right of Women to Preach the Gospel*.

On the issue of political activism, Roberts maintained something of a both/and position. Though his major efforts went into building and extending the church, he saw a place for political involvement of various sorts. He called for national economic reform, particularly in light of the disputed monetary question and the amassing of huge sums of capital and political influence by rich businessmen in the post-Civil War economic boom. His 1886 book *First Lessons on Money* is partly an explanation of basic monetary economics and partly a call for fundamental economic reform. He argued that "The people should see to it that their representatives in Congress pass laws in their interest, and not in favor of the moneyed class and rich corporations in the injury of community generally."⁶²

In conclusion, the record of B. T. Roberts' early years shows clearly that revivalism, abolitionism, and holiness perfectionism were shaping influences in his life. In each case Roberts passed through key experiences that must have left life-long indelible impressions on his mind and spirit. All these considerations reinforce the thesis that the revivalism, abolitionism, and perfectionism of the 1830s and 1840s were formative influences on B. T. Roberts and that, under God, they largely shaped the direction that his life and ministry later took.

⁶²B. T. Roberts, *First Lessons on Money* (Rochester, NY: B. T. Roberts, 1886), 160.

RESTORATIONISM IN THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT, LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES¹

by

Steven Ware

Phineas F. Bresee asserted rather confidently of the Church of the Nazarene in 1909:

We would be glad to have it known that this church is no new or vague line, but is the *Way* the apostles led and the fathers trod. . . . We feel ourselves a part of that body of believers raised up to spread sanctified holiness over these lands, and thus that we are a part of that company who are the real successors of John Wesley and the early Methodists.²

Four years later Herbert M. Riggle of the Church of God reformation movement (Anderson) preached his sermon *The True Standard* with equal confidence when he stated: “The Methodists say that John Wesley set the standard. We go beyond Wesley; we go back to Christ and the apostles, to the days of pure primitive Christianity, to the inspired Word of truth.”³

¹This article is a summarization of the author’s Ph.D. dissertation which was completed at Drew University in 1998. The article was presented at the joint Spring Meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society and the Society for Pentecostal Studies at Cleveland, Tennessee, in March, 1998.

²Phineas F. Bresee, “Editorial,” *Nazarene Messenger* 14, No. 3 (July 15, 1909), 6.

³Herbert M. Riggle, sermon preached at the national Camp Meeting of the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana, June, 1913. Cited from Barry L. Callen, *Contours of a Cause: The Theological Vision of the Church of God Movement (Anderson, Indiana)* (Anderson, IN: Anderson University School of Theology, 1995), 184.

What was in the minds of these and other radical⁴ holiness leaders when they made such statements? What mental image of the Christian church, its history, and its destiny, was in their minds? While a sufficient answer to those questions requires more space than is available to us here, we can at least begin to answer with a brief review of *Restorationism* as it existed in the radical holiness movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during the decades of its primary theological and ecclesiastical formation. Placing it in the context of the popular restorationist ideology which was received from the American evangelical and revivalistic milieu, and more specifically from its roots in Methodism, we shall see that restorationism was an interpretive framework commonly used by radical holiness leaders to understand the history and destiny of the Christian church, even though it usually operated in an implicit fashion. Furthermore, it will be asserted that the unique contribution of radical holiness restorationism was that it wedded restorationism to the experience of entire sanctification, and in so doing set the stage for the more explicit restorationism of pentecostalism as it developed in the early twentieth century.

The Popularity of Restorationist Ideas

In just the last twenty years restorationism has attracted the widespread attention of scholars of American religious history. Perhaps the most visible manifestations of this growing interest have been the two collaborative works edited by Richard T. Hughes which resulted from two scholarly conferences on the topic of restorationism.⁵ Attention has been

⁴The adjective "radical" is used here to describe those holiness groups which, through one means or another, departed from the Methodist and other churches of their upbringing in the late nineteenth century, usually because of their strict adherence to the centrality of the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification. There were numerous other individuals in the Methodist and other established churches of the era who had experienced entire sanctification and felt it very central to their spirituality, but who did not separate from their ecclesiastical communions as a result of its importance to them.

⁵Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1988) and Hughes, ed., *The Primitive Church in the Modern World* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1995). Further exploration of restorationism within pentecostalism is found in the writings of Edith Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), Grant Wacker, "Bibliography and Historiography of Pentecostalism [U.S.]," Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 65-76. Both Blumhofer and
(Note cont. next page)

correctly given to such groups as the Puritans, Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Mormons, and Pentecostals. Yet relatively little attention has been given to restorationism as it operated in the Holiness Movement.⁶ Hence the present essay.

What exactly is *restorationism* or *primitivism* as it is sometimes called? Grant Wacker describes it broadly as “any effort to deny history, or to deny the contingencies of historical existence, by returning to the time before time, to the golden age that preceded the corruptions of life in history.”⁷ For the purposes of this essay, restorationism may be viewed primarily as an interpretive framework used to varying degrees by nearly every Protestant group. Stated bluntly, there was a widespread but not always consciously articulated perception among early radical holiness leaders (as well as among many other Protestants) that something went very wrong early in the history of the church. Following the apostolic era of the first century, during which time the church was marked by the purity of apostolic teaching, the exemplary character of sanctified lives, and the power of the Holy Spirit’s demonstrations among them, the

Wacker, however, seem to slight the holiness contribution to the theological, ecclesiastical, and experiential formation of pentecostalism and place more emphasis on the contributions of non-holiness Reformed evangelicals of the same era. For instance, Blumhofer features well-known leaders such as Dwight L. Moody, Reuben A. Torrey, and J. Wilbur Chapman, who often encouraged their audiences and readers to seek the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” in the same manner as the holiness preachers and authors mentioned herein, even while they disagreed with the common holiness soteriological framework. See Blumhofer, 25, 29ff.

⁶The beginnings of exploration into holiness restorationism can be seen in Melvin E. Dieter, “Primitivism in the American Holiness Tradition,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30, No. 1 (Spring 1995): 78-91; Susie C. Stanley, “Bumping into Modernity: Primitive/Modern Tensions in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement,” Richard Hughes, ed., *The Primitive Church in the Modern World*, 121-138. Hughes discusses the holiness movement briefly in “Christian Primitivism as Pefectionism,” Stanley M. Burgess, ed., *Reaching Beyond: Chapters in the History of Perfectionism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 239. Restorationism also forms some of the ideological backdrop of Donald W. Dayton’s *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), but is not one of his prime operative categories.

⁷Grant Wacker, “Playing for Keeps: The Primitivist Impulse in Early Pentecostalism,” Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1988), 197-200, 207. Wacker goes on to distinguish three kinds of primitivism which were operative in early pentecostalism: “philosophical” primitivism (exemplified by the belief that the Bible had dropped straight from the hands of God to earth); “historical” primitivism (the belief that their movement had re-created apostolic Christianity); and “ethical” primitivism (the compulsion to repeat forms and practices of the New Testament church).

church slowly sank into corruption. Over the next few centuries pure apostolic Christianity was corrupted through the development of ecclesiastical hierarchies, the addition of pomp and splendor to worship, and the wide acceptance of Platonic philosophy.⁸ The result was a medieval Roman Catholicism which was marked by moral laxity, persecution of non-conformists, and continual dissension with kings and emperors in a struggle for political power. The church became a religious system in which, as viewed by restorationists, much of the truth of Christianity is “buried beneath the rubbish,” buried so deep that it has been “scarce seen or heard of for a thousand years.”⁹

The restoration of the church to apostolic norms is taught as having begun with the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Radical holiness leaders showed much ambivalence, however, toward the historic churches of the Reformation. Institutional Protestantism received a stinging rebuke from radical holiness leaders which, although not always as harsh as that given to Catholicism, sometimes carried the bitter aftertaste of personal disappointment and alienation. Described by Daniel Warner and Herbert Riggle as Ezekiel’s “cloudy day” (34:12), Protestantism was viewed not only as the divine corrective to medieval Catholicism, but as being substantially corrupt itself. The sixteenth-century Reformation was, therefore, the predecessor of the now ever brighter “evening light” which was to shine forth just prior to Christ’s return.¹⁰

In his interpretation of the divine hand in human history, Riggle stated in 1899 his belief that the holiness movement, and especially his own Church of God reformation movement, had restored true New Testament Christianity. Therefore, God had nearly finished his work with the church:

⁸John P. Brooks, *The Divine Church* (Columbia, MO: Herald, 1891), 34-38. A concise description of this apostasy of the church and its gradual restoration to New Testament standards is found in pentecostal evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson’s 1917 sermon *Lost and Restored*. See *Lost and Restored, and Other Sermons* (Los Angeles: Foursquare Publications, 1989), 7ff. A more detailed description of the same by holiness authors, complete with charts, is found in Daniel Warner and Herbert Riggle’s *The Cleansing of the Sanctuary* (Moundsville, WV: Gospel Trumpet Co., 1903), 280ff.

⁹Arthur M. Kiergan, *Historical Sketches of the Revival of True Holiness and Local Church Polity, 1865-1916* (Overland Park, KS: Board of Publication of the *Church Advocate and Good Way*, 1972), 1; Bresee, “Editorial,” *Nazarene Messenger* 8, No. 16 (October 15, 1903): 2.

¹⁰Warner and Riggle, 442-443.

[I]n these last days . . . the house of God, which was so crushed and scattered during the great apostasy, is again being built up and cleansed by the burning Spirit of God with the blood of Christ, and thus restored to its primitive glory and power. Thank God we have reached that time.¹¹

Statements such as this and the earlier statements by Riggle and Bree see are actually some of the relatively few explicitly restorationist statements by radical holiness leaders. This is not to say, however, that such sentiments were rare among holiness adherents. On the contrary, I would argue along with Hughes and Allen that the holiness movement is indicative of numerous groups in (especially) American religious history in which restorationism “was central, even pivotal,” despite the fact that “it was seldom argued or defended in a programmatic way”; that the restoration of the New Testament church was viewed as “a fundamental assumption, a given that required no definitions or elaboration since everybody already understood its logic and importance.”¹²

This kind of *implicit* restorationism was picked up by the early radical holiness leaders from two main sources which were interconnected. First, it came to them as part of the warp and woof of popular Protestantism in nineteenth-century America. Secondly, for many of them it came more specifically from their largely Methodist upbringing. Evidences of restorationist thinking can be found in the works of numerous evangelical Protestant authors of the nineteenth century. For example, in 1849 Methodist clergyman Seth Williston voiced a common belief when he stated that “the glorious Reformation of the sixteenth century . . . after a long night of darkness suddenly burst forth upon the church.” Furthermore, in speaking of what is to happen to the church before the beginning of what he viewed as the imminent millennium, he further stated that “Christendom is to be re-Christianized. Babylon, which is the scriptural name for the papal church, is doomed to fall, and rise no more.” He then went on to connect the prophecies of the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation in the common Protestant historicist scheme of interpretation,

¹¹Herbert M. Riggle, *The Kingdom of God and the One Thousand Years' Reign* (Moundsville, WV: Gospel Trumpet Co., 1899), 259-260.

¹²Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), xiv.

proclaiming divine judgment upon corrupt Roman Catholicism and Christ's reign on earth through a purified church.¹³

Two popular books published in the 1850s each used restorationist assumptions to make their case in favor of entire sanctification, the "higher Christian life," or a "deeper walk" with God. The first was Henry Fish's *Primitive Piety Revived* (1855), which was primarily a prognosis of what he considered to be the insufficient spirituality in the churches of his age.¹⁴ The second was William E. Boardman's *The Higher Christian Life* (1858), which may be described as a Presbyterian approach to the Methodist doctrine of entire sanctification.¹⁵ An undercurrent of anti-Catholicism is evident in both works, skipping noticeably from the apostolic age to the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation when speaking of periods of revival in church history.

Restorationism was present in early Methodism as well. Wesley's "biblical primitivism," to use the words of Albert Outler, is noticeable in "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists" (1748) when he notes that they "had copied after the primitive church."¹⁶ Luke Keefer notes that Wesley's primitivism comes out more clearly in a series of four sermons which he wrote late in life, in which he repeats the common Protestant belief in medieval apostasy and gradual restoration since the Reformation.¹⁷ Perhaps nowhere is Methodist restorationism more evident than in the "Valedictory Address" of Francis Asbury (1813), in which he claimed that the Protestant Reformation "only beat off part of the rubbish" of accumulated medieval corruption, and that an apostolic form of the church had been established at the first General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States in 1784.¹⁸

¹³Seth Williston, *Millennial Discourses; or a Series of Sermons Designed to Prove that There Will Be a Millennium of Peace and Holiness* (Utica, NY: Roberts and Sherman, 1849), 223ff.

¹⁴Henry C. Fish, *Primitive Piety Revived, or the Aggressive Power of the Christian Church* (Harrisonburg, VA: Gano, 1987 [1855]).

¹⁵William E. Boardman, *The Higher Christian Life* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1858).

¹⁶John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958 [1872]), VIII, 263; Albert C. Outler, "Biblical Primitivism in Early American Methodism," Richard Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, 134.

¹⁷Luke L. Keefer, "John Wesley: Disciple of Early Christianity" (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1982), 645-650.

¹⁸Francis Asbury, "Valedictory Address," *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, J. Manning Potts, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958), III, 475-476, 479.

A natural corollary to the popularity of restorationist attitudes toward the church was the widespread assumption of a close relationship between evangelical Protestant Christianity and the surrounding American culture. The assumption was that the United States held a special place in God's redemptive plan for humanity. This attitude is seen in Lyman Beecher's *A Plea for the West* in 1835, when he deliberately echoed the perception of Jonathan Edwards that the latter-day work of God was to "begin in America." Beecher stated that "[I]f this nation is, in the providence of God, destined to lead the way in the moral and political emancipation of the world, it is time she understood her high calling, and were harnessed for the work."¹⁹ Methodist bishop Warren Candler again voiced at least a mild anti-Catholic sentiment when he maintained that "Romanism has made South America and Southern Europe what they are, and Protestantism has made England, Germany, Holland, and North America what they are."²⁰

Types of Restorationism in the Radical Holiness Movement

Radical holiness preachers and writers were therefore only following a long-standing Protestant tradition when they spoke of Roman Catholicism as an "apostate church" and tended to view their own movement as the most complete restoration of apostolic Christianity.²¹ As the loyalties of holiness adherents shifted toward their informal associations and they gradually became the "come-outers" and "put-outers" from Methodism and other established communions in the late nineteenth century, they perceived themselves as defending and preserving the all-important doctrine of entire sanctification from a liberalism which was accommodating the church to the norms of a sinful human culture rather than converting the culture to the lifestyle of holiness. Perhaps the best-known example of confrontation between the proponents of holiness and ecclesiastical hierarchies was that of Henry Clay Morrison, later president of Asbury College and Asbury Theological Seminary, who was stripped of his minister-

¹⁹Lyman Beecher, "A Plea for the West," Conrad Cherry, ed., *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 120. Cf. Jonathan Edwards, "Some Thoughts on the Present Revival of Religion in New England," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1974), I, 381.

²⁰Warren A. Candler, *Great Revivals and the Great Republic* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1904), 12, 18.

²¹Reprint from *Union Advocate, Banner of Holiness* 1, No. 6 (November 9, 1872), 5; Bresee, "Editorial," *Nazarene Messenger* 8, No. 16 (October 15, 1903), 2.

ial credentials with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South after he conducted a holiness revival in Texas in 1896, apparently against the wishes of the local Methodist elder. He was reinstated in 1897, but gave up his credentials voluntarily in 1898 so that he could be free to speak wherever he was invited and not be hampered by human regulations. Daniel Warner had undergone a similar experience with another church some years earlier. Thus began the *radical* holiness movement, which sometimes included a call to leave the established denominations for the sake of preserving the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification.²²

In the process of their departure from the established denominations, many holiness leaders give evidence of a kind of remnant mentality, yet at the same time they rejoiced at the growth in numbers which was taking place in their movement. From their viewpoint, God was bringing to completion his work of restoring the church to apostolic norms, and was doing so specifically in the context of their movement. This is seen in Riggle's historicist interpretation of Zechariah 14:6-7: "And it shall come to pass in that day [gospel day] that there shall be no light [the dark day of Romanism] and there shall be for one day cold and frost, and that day shall be known to the Lord, and it shall not be day nor night [the cloudy day of Protestantism—Ezekiel 34:12—a time of mixture of truth and error, light and darkness], but *towards evening it shall be light.*"²³

Vinson Synan has noted that many of the holiness (and later pentecostal) groups which formed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries chose the name *Church of God*, feeling that it was the only scripturally justified name for the church. He further noted that the Church of God groups formed before 1894 stayed in the holiness camp, whereas most, but not all, of those formed after 1894 later became pente-

²²See Percival A. Wesche, *H. C. Morrison: Crusader Saint* (Wilmore, KY: Asbury Theological Seminary, 1963), 59ff. An examination and refutation of the charges against Morrison are found in William Erastus Arnold, *The H. C. Morrison Case: A Statement of the Facts and Investigation of the Law* (Louisville: Kentucky Methodist, 1897). For the earlier Warner experience, see Barry Callen, *It's God's Church! The Life and Legacy of Daniel Sidney Warner* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1995), 73-84.

²³H. M. Riggle, *The Kingdom of God and the One Thousand Years' Reign*, 260.

costal.²⁴ A close inspection of the writings of radical holiness leaders of this era also reveals two different, but related strands of restorationist thought. The first and most popular strand is what I choose to call *spiritual* restorationism, which focused on matters of piety, faith, and doctrine. The second and smaller strand, which arose out of the first, is *ecclesiastical* restorationism, which focused rather on issues of church polity, ordinances, and offices. An examination of these two lines of restorationist thought reveals not only many commonalities, but some interesting contrasts as well.

Spiritual Restorationism

The vast majority of the adherents of the radical holiness movement (those who left the established denominations) focused their restorationist aspirations on matters of spirituality, piety, and faith, although there were certainly many points of overlap with the ideas and concerns of the ecclesiastical restorationists and with the later pentecostals as well. The church bodies which arose from spiritual restorationism took longer to form because they were generally more determined to remain faithful to their largely Methodist roots. So while spiritual restorationism may be viewed as the original and more general stance of the holiness movement, out of which ecclesiastical restorationism arose, the church bodies which resulted from ecclesiastical restorationism were in fact organized before those of the strictly spiritual restorationist camp. The church bodies most associated with spiritual restorationism are those which formed the Church of the Nazarene and the Pilgrim Holiness Church.²⁵ The Christian

²⁴Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 78. This tendency described by Synan paralleled the decisions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South to (1) deny the request of numerous holiness evangelists in their midst to create a separate office of *evangelist* which would have freed some of them from local parish duties to pursue their evangelistic work on a full-time basis (1894), and (2) to require the consent of the local ordained elder for any evangelistic campmeetings to be held within their assigned territory (1898). These two decisions led to accusations and ecclesiastical trials for individuals such as Morrison, as already mentioned, and motivated numerous holiness-oriented Methodists to leave and form separate communions.

²⁵For a discussion of the formation of the major holiness church bodies, see Charles Edwin Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867-1936* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1974), chapter eleven, "Home."

and Missionary Alliance largely falls into the camp of spiritual restorationism, although they had some affinities for the teachings of the ecclesiastical restorationists discussed in the next section. They are perhaps best described as a proto-pentecostal holiness group.²⁶ The Church of God reformation movement (Anderson, Indiana) and the Church of God (Holiness) also shared many of the same attitudes and teachings, although their ecclesiology set them apart from the rest of the holiness movement, and thus merits special consideration under the next section.

Although not always explicitly stated, these “spiritual restorationists” viewed the experience of entire sanctification as a mark of the restoration of apostolic Christianity, much as the later pentecostals viewed the occurrences of miracles and ecstatic spiritual gifts. For example, Alma White proclaimed in 1921 that, “we were now in true apostolic succession” because of their congregational polity and worship in the freedom of the Holy Spirit. A. B. Simpson declared thirty-one years earlier that the revival of the doctrine of holiness was a sure sign that “the bridegroom is at hand.”²⁷

Two important corollaries of spiritual restorationism were evidenced in an early statement by Edgar M. Levy. Speaking at a camp meeting in 1873, he stated:

[A]t last we have discovered the basis for Christian unity. The sanctification of believers of every name creates unity in the great Christian brotherhood such as no creed has ever been able to accomplish. . . . A unity not in ordinances; a unity not in church government; a unity not in forms of worship; a unity not in mere letter of creed—but in . . . the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. As it is the nature of sin to separate, disintegrate, and repel, it is the nature of holiness to unite and adjust and harmonize.²⁸

²⁶See Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 175-176. The proto-pentecostal or pre-pentecostal nature of the Christian and Missionary Alliance is the major theme of Charles W. Nienkirchen’s *A. B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992).

²⁷Alma White, *The Story of My Life and the Pillar of Fire* (Zarephath, NJ: Pillar of Fire, 1938), V, 12; Albert Benjamin Simpson, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (New York: Christian Alliance, 1890), 24.

²⁸Adam Wallace, ed., *A Modern Pentecost: Embracing a Record of the Sixteenth Camp Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness Held at Landisville, Pennsylvania, July 23 to August 1, 1873* (Philadelphia: Methodist Home Journal, 1873), 144. Cited from Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1980), 240-241.

Corollary One. The first important corollary of spiritual restorationism to note in Levy's statement is the change of terminology which was beginning to take place among holiness adherents in the late nineteenth century. Begun by the earlier generation of holiness leaders such as Phoebe Palmer and Asa Mahan,²⁹ an increased use of pentecostal phraseology made itself evident in holiness publications. For instance, in 1897 the *Guide to Holiness and Revival Miscellany* changed its name to *Guide to Holiness and Pentecostal Life*. Editor George Hughes explained that the name change was a response to the "signs of the times, which indicate inquiry, research, and ardent pursuit of the gifts, graces, and power of the Holy Spirit." He further voiced his hope that the journal "will contribute something to a better understanding of the fact—that this is THE DISPENSATION OF THE HOLY GHOST."³⁰

Examination of the titles of numerous articles, sermons, and departments of this and other holiness journals of the period, such as *Nazarene Messenger* and *Gospel Trumpet*, gives ample witness to this interest in the activity of the Holy Spirit.³¹ The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer was emphasized as well in many of the popular songs of the period. A prime example is J. Montgomery's *Lord God, the Holy Ghost*:

Lord God the Holy Ghost!
In this accepted hour,
As on the day of Pentecost,
Descend in all Thy power.³²

²⁹See Phoebe Palmer, *Tongue of Fire on the Daughters of the Lord* (New York: Walter C. Palmer, 1869). This work was originally published in a larger format as *The Promise of the Father* in 1859. Note also the change in language used by Asa Mahan to speak of entire sanctification in his *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* (New York: Palmer and Hughes, 1870), as opposed to his earlier work *The Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (Boston: D. S. King, 1839). A good treatment of both Palmer and Mahan with regard to this shift in terminology, as well as other contributors to *Guide to Holiness*, a popular periodical of the era, is given by Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 87-90.

³⁰George Hughes, "Editor's Cabinet," *Guide to Holiness* 59, No. 1 (January 1897), 37.

³¹For example, see C. W. Ruth, "The Pentecostal Experience," *Nazarene Messenger* 8, No. 4 (July 23, 1903), 4; Charles V. LaFontaine, "Pentecostal Evangelism," 8, No. 50 (June 16, 1904), 2; H. R. Jeffrey, "The Leading of the Spirit," *Gospel Trumpet* 4, No. 13 (July 1, 1881), 1; Mrs. B. M. Isham, "The Pentecostal Fire," 8, No. 1 (March 15, 1886), 1; J. M. Roy, "Be Filled with the Spirit," 26, No. 46 (November 22, 1906), 1.

³²J. Montgomery, "Lord God, the Holy Ghost," R. Kelso Carter and A. B. Simpson, eds., *Hymns of the Christian Life* (New York: Christian Alliance, 1891), No. 8.

As Dayton has demonstrated, this increased attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in the sanctified believer's life, the Spirit's role in the process and event of sanctification, and the consequent power for unity and service gradually overshadowed the earlier emphasis on purity of life among some holiness groups, especially those from Reformed or non-Methodist backgrounds. This set the stage for seeking the scripturally mandated initial physical evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the arena of supernatural spiritual manifestations rather than in that of holy living.³³ Furthermore, by associating the experience of entire sanctification with the biblical image of Pentecost they gave it new meaning as an experience of restoration to apostolic standards.

Corollary Two. The second corollary of spiritual restorationism which is evident in Levy's statement is that of ecumenism. In a manner similar to that of Thomas Campbell in his *Declaration and Address* (1809), holiness leaders felt that a restoration of true Christianity was at hand, a restoration which would wipe away all divisive denominational distinctions and unify all true believers. They even went a step farther than Campbell in believing that they had discovered the key to unlocking the door to unity, and that key was the experience of entire sanctification, through which all desires to do or be anything other than a follower of Jesus Christ were obliterated and replaced with the fullness of the Holy Spirit's presence.³⁴ This sentiment was echoed by George Hughes when he bemoaned the competing claims of denominations and stated that if Christians had simply claimed and acted upon the promises of God, the human race would have been converted long ago.³⁵

Ecclesiastical Restorationism

As stated earlier, ecclesiastical restorationism may be viewed as a sub-category or specialty within spiritual restorationism. Ecclesiastical

³³See Dayton, *Theological Roots*, chapter four, "The Triumph of the Doctrine of Pentecostal Spirit Baptism."

³⁴For comparison of the similarities and differences between the restorationist visions of the Christian Churches tradition (Campbell) and the Church of God (Anderson), see Barry Callen and James North, *Coming Together In Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1997). This book carries a set of appendixes that reproduce key documents from the history of these two traditions, one holiness, one not.

³⁵Hughes, "Editor's Cabinet," *Guide to Holiness* 59, No. 2 (February 1897), 72.

restorationists believed and practiced many of the same things, but also going a step farther in their beliefs of how the church should be structured in light of the prominence of the holiness message. From the early 1880s through the end of the nineteenth century a lengthy argument raged between those who believed that separate holiness denominations were necessary and those who relied on associations to carry on the work. Points of contention and the strong emotions involved stemmed from the churches' experiences with "come-outism," the claim made by some that the work of holiness could thrive only outside the established denominational structures.³⁶ Although the early "come-outers," or ecclesiastical restorationists, certainly agreed with the spiritual restorationists in their emphases on matters of piety, faith, and doctrine, they also went a step farther in giving equal emphasis to matters of polity, ordinances, and offices.

Come-outism and its related teachings were developed primarily by two holiness groups which arose and separated from their parent church bodies in the 1880s. The first of these is the *Church of God reformation movement*, led in its formative years by Daniel Sidney Warner (1842-1895) and known today as the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). Born and raised in Ohio, Warner was a minister with the General Eldership of the Churches of God in North America during the years 1867-1878. While serving several appointments with the Churches of God, Warner gradually developed an intense interest in the holiness doctrine of entire sanctification, reportedly receiving the experience on July 7, 1877. He immediately made it a major emphasis in his preaching.³⁷

Warner's emphasis on holiness brought some resistance from his church. He felt that God was calling him into full-time evangelistic work, so he resigned his charge in late 1877 and was expelled from the Eldership in January, 1878. Although he soon became affiliated with the Northern Indiana Eldership of the Churches of God, a group which had sepa-

³⁶John W. V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity: A Centennial History of the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1980), 35.

³⁷For further discussion of Warner's spiritual development and relationship to the Winebrennerian Church of God, see John W. V. Smith, chapter three, "Sorting Out the Issues, 1880-1890" and Barry Callen, *It's God's Church!*, chapters 4-8. One of the unresolved issues of holiness historiography is the relationship of the Church of God reformation movement to the rest of the holiness movement. The spiritual lineage of the Church of God movement is slightly different from those of the other holiness groups, having a slightly more Reformed and Anabaptist flavor than the predominantly Methodist background of other holiness groups.

rated from the same church body, Warner was still vexed with what he viewed as the evil of sectarian division in the church.

The time of decision for Warner came at two camp meetings at which he preached in October 1881, the first in Indiana and the second in Michigan. At both of these camp meetings he publicly declared his freedom from human ecclesiastical systems and invited others to stand with him in this freedom, understanding themselves as simply *the Church of God*. Although the majority of those present at both of these meetings did not stand with Warner, those who did provided the nuclei for local congregations, and thus began the Church of God reformation movement.³⁸ Meanwhile, Warner made his views on this subject known through his first book, *Bible Proofs of the Second Work of Grace*, published in 1880 under Mennonite auspices. While the bulk of the work was, as the title suggests, a defense of entire sanctification as a distinct second work of grace, Warner also contended that truly sanctified people needed to be “saved” from their churches and that the work of holiness must go outside the boundaries of established denominations:

It is indeed my honest conviction that the great holiness reform cannot go forward with the sweeping power and permanent triumph that God designs it should, until the Gospel be so preached and consecration be so thorough, that the blood of Christ may reach and wash away every vestige of denominational distinction, and “perfect into one”—yea, one in deed and in truth—all the sanctified.³⁹

³⁸Andrew L. Byers, *Birth of a Reformation, or the Life and Labors of Daniel S. Warner* (Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet, 1921), 194f, 275. In the Spring of 1881 Warner sponsored a resolution at the meeting of the Indiana State Holiness Association which was designed to remove the requirement that every member of the Association also be a member in good standing of a recognized church body, which Warner viewed as endorsing “sectism.” The resolution failed, and consequently Warner left the organization and 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.” For the fuller story, see Barry Callen, *It’s God’s Church! Life and Legacy of Daniel Sidney Warner* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1995), chapter 3 titled “The Year of Decision” (1881).

³⁹Warner, *Bible Proofs of the Second Work of Grace* (Goshen, IN: E. U. Mennonite Publication Society, 1880), 436, 416. Warner’s thoughts on church establishments come through most clearly in his small tract *The Church of God*, wherein he stated that Christ established the church, but not sects. Because of this, no established religious body can claim to be the Church of God, because their human machinery precludes such a possibility. See *The Church of God* (Grand Junction, MI: Gospel Trumpet Co., n. d.), 3, 8, 23f.

The second very noticeable come-outist group of the 1880s which focused its restorationist rhetoric around matters of polity, ordinances, and offices was the Church of God (Holiness). Centered in Northern Missouri, Iowa, and Eastern Kansas, its roots were in the Southwestern Association for the Promotion of Holiness. Formed at the Bismarck Grove Camp Meeting near Lawrence, Kansas in June 1879, the Southwestern Association was like many holiness associations in that it required its members to also be members in good standing of an organized church body. The Association did not retain its denominational membership requirement for long, however. At a meeting in Centralia, Missouri, in June, 1882 that requirement was taken out of the constitution, primarily because “we were done allowing the sect, holiness fighting churches to in any way dictate or influence the condition of membership in the association.” At the same meeting they recommended that the holiness bands which were affiliated with them begin seeking to purchase their own property for use in worship and to call their own ministers.⁴⁰

Nearly a year later, another meeting at Centralia was to prove decisive for the formation of this church body, although at the time it was viewed as anything but such a formation. At the meeting of May 2-3, 1883 the congregation was “set in order,” which meant they declared themselves to be nothing more than the *Church of God*, independent of any humanly organized “sect.” At this meeting they also ordained several ministers and recognized the credentials of some ministers from other church bodies. The ministers at this meeting soon withdrew from their former communions and took their holiness bands with them to form new independent holiness congregations.⁴¹ This was not just the formation of another holiness-oriented church body, however, at least not in the minds of the leaders. They declared themselves free from any human organization, since they were convinced that human organizations inevitably opposed the work of Scriptural holiness. The resolutions passed at their first convention at Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1888 were declared to be merely descriptive of majority practice, not prescriptive for all bands or congregations.⁴²

The true theologian of this group, who wrote the textbook of come-outism, *The Divine Church*, was John P. Brooks. While an ordained elder

⁴⁰Arthur Kiergan, 37; Clarence Eugene Cowen, *A History of the Church of God (Holiness)* (Overland Park, KS: Herald and Banner, 1949), 18f.

⁴¹Kiergan, 44f, Cowen, 19.

⁴²Kiergan, 44.

in the Illinois Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Brooks was a recognized leader in the Western Holiness Association, formed in 1871, and became editor of the paper *Banner of Holiness* from its inception in 1872. Although Brooks was nominally faithful to his Methodist roots, the publication of numerous articles attacking “evils” such as dancing, expensive clothing, choirs, and organs in churches shows his increasing disaffection with the acculturated Methodism of the late nineteenth century.⁴³ After the financial collapse of the *Banner* in 1883, Brooks moved to Missouri. When his *The Divine Church* rolled off the presses in 1891 it was clear that his views had taken a radical turn, much like those of Daniel Warner. By this time he was opposed to any kind of church organization beyond the congregational level. Calling all visible human organizations of Christianity *The Church of Sect*, Brooks argued against the episcopal polity of his Methodist background. He argued that Christ is the only ruler of the church and that he has not left it to human rule. An important point for Brooks was the fact of the “Anti-Holiness Character of the Church of Sect.” Like Warner, Brooks believed that the spirit of holiness and the spirit of sect were opposites because the spirit of sect naturally tends toward self-aggrandizement. Hence, every revival of Christian piety has been opposed by the churches of sect, or denominations. He thus concluded his work with a stirring call for all sanctified Christians to leave their denominations and declare themselves for the truth alone.⁴⁴

It should come as no surprise, then, that radical holiness leaders viewed their movement as being on the crest of the wave of God’s redemptive and eschatological plan for humanity. As Riggle stated, “We are now taking part in the last great reformation this side the coming of Christ. . . . The glorious light of God’s truth is sending its last rays over

⁴³Charles G. Finney, “Worldly Amusements,” *Banner of Holiness* 1, No. 19 (February 8, 1873), 1; “The Devil as Church Architect,” 1, No. 12 (December 21, 1872), 6.

⁴⁴John P. Brooks, *The Divine Church* (Columbia, MO: Herald, 1891), 39, 235-237, 283. Given the similarity of Brooks’ arguments to those preached earlier by Warner, Melvin Dieter suggests that Warner’s ideas were influential in Brooks’ thought, but that Brooks gave no credit to Warner because they were competitors working in the same area of the country. See Dieter, 253-263.

this darkened world. . . . This reformation is a revival of the whole truth. Hence it is the pure light.”⁴⁵

Preparation for Pentecostalism

Charles Nienkirchen has described A. B. Simpson of the Christian and Missionary Alliance as a “Pentecostal Forerunner” because of the many instances of his use of pentecostal ideas and language.⁴⁶ Perhaps this is most visible in the transformation of Simpson’s *Four Fold Gospel*⁴⁷ into the *Foursquare Gospel* of Aimee Semple McPherson. Similarly, Donald Dayton has shown that “one can find in late nineteenth century holiness thought and life every significant feature of pentecostalism,”⁴⁸ with the exception of identifying tongues as the initial physical evidence of reception of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

This is certainly the case when we consider the development of pentecostal restorationism in the early decades of the twentieth century. For the most part, pentecostals received the mental constructs by which they chose to describe their experiences from the holiness movement immediately before them. Their interpretive schemes for understanding the history of the church, their choice of language, and their use of the Bible were all gained largely from their forebears in the holiness movement.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Herbert M. Riggle, “Light,” *Gospel Trumpet* 15, No. 49 (December 12, 1895), 1. This same issue of the *Gospel Trumpet* carried the unwelcome news of the death of Daniel Warner, who died during the night of this same date while the journal was going to press. From this and other statements by Riggle and Warner, it can be inferred that their use of “evening light” and “last great reformation” applied only to their particular movement, and not the holiness movement in general. While this was undoubtedly true for Byers, writing in 1921, in his interpretation of Warner’s life and ministry (Byers, 125, 127-128, 131, 134, 291), it is less clear in the writings of Riggle and especially of Warner. Or if this was a slowly developing idea in the minds of Church of God leaders, it is not yet clear how they regarded other holiness groups who also eventually separated from their parent church bodies.

⁴⁶Nienkirchen, chapter three, “Simpson as Pentecostal Forerunner.”

⁴⁷Simpson, *The Four Fold Gospel* (New York: Christian Alliance, 1890).

⁴⁸Dayton, “From ‘Christian Perfection’ to the ‘Baptism of the Holy Ghost,’” Synan, ed., *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1975), 51.

⁴⁹This is argued in more detail in Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, chapter four, “The Triumph of the Doctrine of Pentecostal Spirit Baptism.”

This connection is seen primarily in the ideological overlap between the two movements. For example, Warner's popularization of the *evening light* image of the Holiness Movement as the final act of God in restoring the church to apostolic status just before the return of Christ was repeated by pentecostal leader A. J. Tomlinson when he initiated a new periodical in 1910.⁵⁰

The more common pentecostal terminology for describing their movement, however, was *latter rain*, borrowing the language of the prophet Joel. Given its definitive articulation by D. Wesley Myland in his *The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power* (1910), the latter rain ideology contended that the history of the church was analogous to the rainfall patterns in Palestine, with most of the rain and growth taking place at the beginning and end of the season.⁵¹ It is important to note, however, that the latter rain terminology was anticipated by at least two radical holiness authors. George D. Watson claimed that "the holiness movement is emphatically the latter rain of the outpoured Holy Spirit, which is designed to call forth the elect from the nominal believers, and to rapidly transform and ripen them for the harvest of the coming of Jesus."⁵² Likewise, A. B. Simpson wrote in his *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (1890) that

Another sign of the close of the age is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the world, and the conversion of great multitudes to God. This is called the latter rain. The day of Pentecost was the early rain. But it is in "the last days" that the Spirit is to be poured out upon all flesh in such profusion that "whosoever shall call upon the Lord shall be saved." Are

⁵⁰A. J. Tomlinson, "Apology for Above Title," *Evening Light and Church of God Evangel* 1, No. 1 (March 1910), 1. Cf. Daniel S. Warner, "The Evening Light," *Gospel Trumpet* 15, No. 29 (October 25, 1895), 1; Herbert M. Riggle, *The Kingdom of God and the One Thousand Years' Reign* (Moundsville, WV: Gospel Trumpet Co., 1899), 259-260.

⁵¹D. Wesley Myland, *The Latter Rain Covenant and Pentecostal Power* (Chicago: Evangel, 1910). See also George F. Taylor, *The Spirit and the Bride* (Falcon, NC: privately printed, 1907), 90; Bennett Freeman Lawrence, *The Apostolic Faith Restored* (St. Louis: Gospel, 1916). These three volumes have been reprinted in the "Higher Christian Life" series (New York: Garland, 1985).

⁵²George D. Watson, *Types of the Holy Spirit* (Dallas: Evangel, n.d.), 70.

we not seeing such great awakenings, during the past half century, both in the home and foreign fields?⁵³

In fact, early pentecostal leaders often went farther than had their holiness counterparts before them. While most holiness leaders readily admitted their origins in Methodism and other established communions, early pentecostals viewed their movement as having no relation at all to any church bodies or movements which preceded them other than the apostolic church of the first century. As Lawrence contended, “the Pentecostal movement has no such history; it leaps the intervening years crying, ‘Back to Pentecost.’ ”⁵⁴

The connection between the holiness and pentecostal movements can be viewed also from the perspective of the many persons who became pentecostal after prior experience in the holiness movement. As Nienkirchen has noted, numerous early pentecostal leaders were personally influenced by the ministry of Simpson, and some of them were even leaders in the Christian and Missionary Alliance before departing in favor of pentecostalism. Furthermore, former Alliance leaders played key roles in two early doctrinal controversies in the Assemblies of God, which soon grew to become one of the largest of the pentecostal bodies.⁵⁵

Awareness of the spiritual pilgrimages of numerous individuals who came to pentecostalism through prior experience in the radical holiness movement is all the more significant when one observes that the early pentecostal leaders who wrote about the movement most notably in restorationist terms (Myland, Taylor, Tomlinson, and Frank Bartleman⁵⁶)

⁵³Simpson, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (New York: Christian Alliance, 1890), 214. Simpson made further use of this terminology in numerous articles during the first decade of the twentieth century, at the same time it came into popular usage among pentecostals. See Nienkirchen, 65-66.

⁵⁴Lawrence, 12. Dayton has noted that the genius of the latter rain apologetic for pentecostalism is that it effectively ties together the pentecostal *gestalt* of Christ as Savior, Baptizer in the Spirit, Healer, and Coming King. It also explains why pentecostalism seems so discontinuous with other revival movements which preceded it. See Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 28; “The Limits of Evangelicalism: The Pentecostal Tradition,” *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds., (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 47.

⁵⁵Nienkirchen, chapter two, “The Pentecostal ‘Debt’ to Simpson and the Early Alliance;” Robert M. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford, 1979), 172-173, 182-185.

⁵⁶Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Frank Bartleman, 1925), 67, 89

all came from holiness backgrounds. While it certainly cannot be denied that elements of restorationism were common in the thought of conservative evangelicals outside the holiness ranks, and that the restorationist ideology of early pentecostals could possibly have come from these and other sources, it is impossible to conclude otherwise than that the most obvious and immediate source for pentecostal restorationism is holiness restorationism. Furthermore, the heightened significance of the latter rain ideology for pentecostals caused their restorationism to be more explicit in nature than the usually implicit restorationism found in the Holiness Movement.

With the separation of the holiness and pentecostal adherents into separate and sometimes exclusivist camps in the first two decades of the twentieth century, much of the restorationist and pentecostal rhetoric of the radical holiness movement was dropped as they reacted to what they perceived as the excesses of pentecostalism. That does nothing, however, to diminish the belief of the first generation of radical holiness leaders that they were witnessing in the context of their movement the complete restoration of the New Testament church.

A FORWARD TRAJECTORY: IRENÆUS AS GUARDIAN AND PATHFINDER

by

David P. Whitelaw

The aim of this paper is to look into the past in order to gain bearings in the present for a theological trajectory that can enable the Wesleyan tradition to move more surely into the future. My thesis is that if we look deeply enough into our own past (beyond the nineteenth-century Holiness Movement and the eighteenth-century revival of the Wesleys and Whitefield) we shall find authentic theological resources in Irenaeus to walk backward into the future, as it were. This ancient trajectory may be characterized as a movement towards a particular, practical, and public theology. Irenaeus provides a model of departure to enable important new readings of liturgics, hermeneutics, dogmatics, and ecumenics that can enrich Wesleyan-Holiness theological resources in the twenty-first century. Bearings taken on contemporary theologians David Tracy and Stanley Hauerwas enable a course to be charted between the extremes of a “sectarian public theology” and a “philosophical, universalist public theology.” Such a course allows a moving forward on a trajectory patterned after Irenaeus.

Wesleyan believers today are troubled about their past. Having been born as a public movement of personal piety, we are burdened by unresolved and unrealistic expectations in these spheres. We have focused on evangelism and mission in public places and on revivalistic religion in ecclesial settings. We have frequently operated with unstated and unscrutinized institutional strategies, unless they have been focused on evange-

lism and mission strategies of a very specific nature. The effect has been that we have uncritically adopted practices of personal piety and public privatism. That is to say, we have worked hard at remaining invisible in the public square, while vigorously pursuing denominational goals, much like the Lutherans.⁴ That is also to say, we have projected the idea that salvation is an individual commodity and the church (especially our church) has franchise rights on access. Further, the church as an institution does not stand in need of redemption; only individuals do.

Wesleyan believers are confused in the present. Their posture and strategies betray either a defensive retreat into wooden traditionalisms or uncritical and eager adoption of generic evangelical growth goals and methods. Thomas Oden, Billy Graham, Bill Hybels, John Maxwell, James Dobson, Bill McCartney, Robert Schuller, and Charles Swindoll are much more likely to function as role models than are theologians like David Tracy or Stanley Hauerwas.² Since one of the characteristics of Wesleyan theology (by contrast with reformation movements of evangelicalism) is its continuity with the past, we should look to our roots for a valid mentor.³ I suggest that for this role Irenaeus is a more helpful guide than Augustine, for example. Therefore, I propose that we orient ourselves with respect to Irenaeus and the contemporary theologies of Tracy and Hauerwas in order to project a trajectory for the Wesleyan-Holiness movement into the twenty-first century. Tracy and Hauerwas represent two opposing poles between which we find ourselves at present.

To look backward is essential to move forward. Several of the more important movements of the twentieth-century history and theology of the church (liturgical, ecumenical, dogmatic, and hermeneutic renewal) have

¹See, for example, Christa Klein: "The private practice of denominational history among Lutherans suggests that Lutheranism is a tradition that does not take its American embodiment seriously and thus tends to make Lutheranism invisible to others" ("Denominational History as Public History: The Lutheran Case," in R. B. Mullin & Russell E. Richey, *Re-imagining Denominationalism*, N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 1994, 315).

²Hendrik Pieterse, former student at Nazarene Theological College, South Africa, completed his Ph.D. under Wentzel van Huysteen (now at Princeton Theological Seminary) at the University of Port Elizabeth on the theology of David Tracy. John W. Wright, Ph.D. (Notre Dame), currently teaching at Point Loma Nazarene College, San Diego, is a strong protagonist of Stanley Hauerwas's theology.

³Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, "Theological Roots of the Wesleyan Understanding of the Holy Spirit," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14:1(1979), 77-98.

looked toward the past in order to gain their bearings in the present. Geoffrey Wainwright proposes that we need to continue to look back with and through these movements into the full depth of God's history with the church if their rich benefits are to be drawn in the twenty-first century.⁴ The motifs of *guardian* (of the "goods" in our past) and *pathfinder* (for the public good in the future) are accurate descriptors of Irenaeus and appropriate in considering models for practical theology in the future.

Why Look To Irenaeus?

If we look back far enough, Irenaeus comes into view as a prominent second-century pastoral or practical theologian with valuable resources.⁵ Irenaeus' struggle against heresy and his pastoral concern to strengthen and guard the faith of Christians is what made him of great importance for the history of Christian thought. My proposal is that we look back to "the first great Catholic theologian"⁶ without trying to make him an "unwilling and reluctant Anglican"⁷ or a Wesleyan/Methodist. His primary conflict was with heretics who separated the gospel of Christ from creation. This dualism was a prominent feature in second-century Gnosticism. Gnosticism was (and is) a kind of "information theory." Today's "American Religion manifests itself as a kind of information anxiety" where even secularists are "more Gnostic than humanist in their ultimate presuppositions."⁸ Various voices as well as the times in which we live impel us to take a closer look at Irenaeus.⁹

⁴Geoffrey Wainwright, "Back to the Future," *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann*, eds. Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, and Thomas Kucharz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 89-97.

⁵Justo L. González, *Christian Thought Revisited: Three Types of Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989:31. See also his chapter on Irenaeus in *A History of Christian Thought, Revised Edition*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992 [1970]: 157-170) which references a valuable bibliography of Irenaeus' works by Albert Houssiau, *La christologie de saint Irenée* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1955:3-5).

⁶F. L. Cross, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, second revised edition (New York, 1983).

⁷Quoted by Denis Minns in one of the most recent monographs on the bishop, *Irenaeus* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown U Press, 1994), Preface, viii.

⁸Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 22, 30-31.

⁹John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), 3-4.

Further, the recent revival of Gnostic studies removes the option of avoiding this closer look. Michael Allen Williams has produced a landmark study entitled *Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*.¹⁰ Irenaeus' catalog has served as the ultimate inspiration for the modern construction of Gnosticism as a category. He was one of the first church fathers who dedicated himself to the conflict with those whom he deemed "not of the Truth" and therefore his writings are of special importance. His *Adversus Haereses* is one of the more comprehensive and authoritative anti-heretical and anti-Gnostic documents from the second half of the second century.¹¹

Finally, one of the more convincing arguments for examining Irenaeus more closely comes from the Scandinavian, Gustav Wingren. Wingren writes: "If a young theologian would search through the historical sources from the beginning of church history to the present for those authors who have with the greatest intensity and force set forth the meaning of faith in Creation, authors who have been able to integrate that faith with the message of salvation in Christ, he would have to choose Irenaeus and Luther, for they stressed the doctrine of Creation as do no other theologians."¹² Wingren claims that the church today is closer to the third century than to any later time and that the "law-gospel" polar pair is better stated in Irenaeus' "death-resurrection" distinction than in other alternatives. Further, Wingren's "Theology of Creation-Faith" offers a viable third alternative to the either/or of "Natural law" or "Christo-centrism." These are strong reasons to take a closer look at the second century bishop. Irenaeus should be read not simply as a polemicist who took his enemies to task apologetically as a heresiologist, but also as one of the first true Church Fathers of the "Great Church."

Irenaeus—Practical Theologian

A contemporary scholar with singular competence in early Christian studies, Robert M. Grant of the University of Chicago, claims that "Ire-

¹⁰Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996. This book was completed for the publishers in the fiftieth anniversary year of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Coptic codices in December, 1945, in Upper Egypt.

¹¹Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, translation of second revised and expanded German edition, edited by Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987, 1977, German), 11.

¹²Gustav Wingren, *Creation and Gospel* (N. Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1979), 6.

naeus of Lyons was the most important controversialist and theologian between the apostles and the third-century genius Origen.”¹³ Another prominent scholar, Jaroslav Pelikan, underlines the claim that Irenaeus was the great clarifier and champion of the schema of authority in orthodoxy. It rested on a tripartite foundation of the apostolic canon of Scripture, the apostolic creed, or normative rule of faith, and the apostolic episcopate functioning “as the guardian and repository by which apostolic Scripture and apostolic rule of faith could be recognized.”¹⁴ Justo González, however, sees him pre-eminently as a pastoral and practical theologian. One must distinguish between *pastoral* or *practical* theology in the Schleiermacherian schema (a movement from philosophical and historical to practical theology, 1830) and that proposed by Don S. Browning, where theology is “practical through and through and at its very heart” (not a theory-to-practice model). According to Browning, this will require taking note of the recent rebirth of practical philosophies (associated with Aristotle, William James, John Dewey, Richard Rorty, and Alasdair MacIntyre—to name a few).¹⁵ It would be an injustice to impose twentieth-century categories on the second-century apologist, Irenaeus, but Gonzalez is justified in identifying him as primarily a pastoral, practical theologian (meaning “not primarily speculative”).¹⁶ It is necessary, therefore, to clarify the term *practical* and the sense in which it is used in examining Irenaeus’ writings so as to read him on his own terms.

The word *practical* should be distinguished from the contemporary meaning of “pragmatic, utilitarian usefulness” or “concerned with actual, not theoretical use.” My use of the word is based on the Wesleyan understanding of “practical divinity” and “practical theology” where practical

¹³Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1.

¹⁴Jaroslav Pelikan, “Authority,” in *The Melody of Theology: A Philosophical Dictionary* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 18-19.

¹⁵See Justo L. González, 1989: 31, 45, etc. The definition used here for “pastoral” and “practical” is that proposed by Don S. Browning in his *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 2-8. Note also that Arminius conceived of theology as a “practical” discipline (Richard A. Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991, 55). He concludes that the theology which belongs to this world is practical, through faith. Theoretical theology belongs to the other world and consists of pure and unclouded vision. For this reason “we must clothe the object of our theology in such a way that it inclines and persuades us to worship God” (*De obiecto*: 30, *Works*, I: 328).

¹⁶Gonzalez, 1989, 45.

means “useful” in a very specific dimension or ethos, that of nurturing and shaping the world-view that frames the temperament and practice of believers’ lives in the world. Therefore, practical theology is used in the sense of reflection on cruciform practice or kingdom praxis. It is a “basic orienting perspective or metaphor that guides theological reflection on practice.”¹⁷ The trajectory explored here, therefore, is the movement in the direction of a practical theology in the above sense, rooted in congregations which are being shaped towards Christlikeness in both private and public spheres.

The objective is to examine Irenaeus in his own congregational and socio-political context, and ask the questions, How did Irenaeus know what to say to his parishioners and opponents? and, To what did he appeal for authority?¹⁸ Irenaeus has one all-embracing, all-controlling message. There is only one God, only one creation, and only one purpose of God in creating and saving it. God is revealed in the creature he has fashioned from mud, and humanity finds in the Incarnation of Jesus the model and glory of what we are intended to become. We are earth creatures, and original grace is more determinative of our destiny than original sin. There is only one Creator-Redeemer and Jesus is that which is visible, tangible, audible of God, the one in whom God has become limited so that we may have unlimited access to God’s salvation. This is not a hidden secret gnosis to be discovered in oneself, but an unending upward journey to be

¹⁷Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, Kingswood Books, 1994), 17-18. Also note his statement on *practical theology*: “It is hard to imagine a topic of theological methodology that is receiving more attention at the moment than that of the nature and task of the specialty-discipline, Practical Theology! Discussion of this issue has taken on ecumenical and international scope over the last twenty-five years. . . . For the earliest Christian setting, the term ‘practical theology’ is most appropriately a characterization of the genre of theology as a whole, not the name for some distinct element/discipline in it” (in “Practical Theology: A Discipline in Search of a Definition,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 1991, 18:159). See also his “The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline” in *Theological Studies* 1990, 51:650-672 and (unpublished) “An Untapped Inheritance: American Methodism and Wesley’s Practical Theology.”

¹⁸Philip Hefner, “Theological Methodology and Irenaeus,” in *Journal of Religion* 1964, 44: 294(-309).

explored through obedience, which is God's purpose for us all. Those who do not practice this obedience end up in endless cul-de-sacs.¹⁹

Irenaeus considers the Gnostics heretics and enemies of the church.²⁰ Philip Hefner sees him posing his own "hypothesis of the faith" against their "total scheme, hypothesis, or system," which Irenaeus declares a patchwork of errors: "They contradict the order and the continuity of the scriptures, and, as best they can, dissolve the members of the truth. They transfer and transform, making one thing out of another, and thus lead many astray by the badly constructed phantom they make out of the Lord's words they adjust."²¹

A paragraph which virtually recapitulates Irenaeus' whole argument and provides a metaphor of his theological method is his description of their work as analogous to an artist's rearranging of a mosaic of the representation of a king into a fox:

It is as if someone destroyed the figure of a man in the authentic portrait of a king, carefully created by a skillful artist out of precious stones, and rearranged the stones to make the image of a dog or fox, declaring that this badly composed image is that good image of the king made by the skillful artist. He shows the stones arranged by the first artist for the image of the king but badly transferred by the later one into the image of a dog, and by the appearance of the stones deceives the simple, that is, those ignorant of the king's image, and persuades them that this ugly image of a fox is the good image of a king. In the same way these people compile old wives' tales and then, transferring sayings and words and parables, want to accommodate the words of God to their fables.²²

¹⁹The Works of Irenaeus include as the two primary sources, *Against Heresies: On the Detection and Refutation of Knowledge Falsely So Called* and *The Proof of the Apostolic Preaching (Demonstratio apostolicae praedictionis)*. The writings of Irenaeus exist as a whole only in Latin and Armenian. The first printed edition of *Against Heresies* was that published by Erasmus at Basle in 1526. The most recent is that published in the series *Sources Chretiennes* (SC) between 1952 and 1982.

²⁰Jaroslav Pelikan provides one of the more concise definitions of gnosticism as a system which taught "the cosmic redemption of the spirit through knowledge," in *The Christian Tradition* Vol. 1 (1971:82).

²¹Hefner, op. cit.: 297 and Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I.8.1 (Grant's translation).

²²*Against Heresies*, I.8.1.

I contend that the authority by which Irenaeus spoke was no simple biblicism (Scripture as sole authority) or traditionalism (tradition over Scripture) or creedalism (doctrinal formula over living faith), but a “normative hypothesis” which is ultimate and known only through the mediating authorities of Scripture, tradition, magisterium, and symbol. These form an “orienting concern” which, when woven together, form a tapestry of authority. Irenaeus offers a parallel in Homeric study and writes:

After collecting scattered texts and names they transfer them, as we said before, out of their natural meaning to a meaning contrary to nature, acting like those who propose random hypotheses for themselves and try to repeat them from the Homeric verses, so that the untutored may suppose that Homer composed verses on this completely novel subject and that many readers may be led astray. What simpleton would be taken in by these verses to suppose that Homer composed them in this way? One who knows Homer will recognize the verses but not the subject matter. And thus, whoever keeps the rule of truth, which he received through baptism, unchanged within himself, knows these names, phrases, and parables from the scriptures but does not recognize their blasphemous system. If he recognizes the stones [of the mosaic] he will not take the fox for the royal image. Setting each word in its context and adjusting it to the body of truth, he will strip it of their fiction and show their inconsistency.²³

According to Irenaeus, the heretics are distorting God’s revelation, particularly as it appears in Scripture, and they are destroying the faith of the pious by their practice of fitting the scriptural passages which record that revelation into an improper system or hypothesis. For Irenaeus, the proper hypothesis originates in Christ. It is the only true key for interpreting the revelation in Scripture. He seems to say that the function of tradition is to assure continuity with the revelation which comprises the “hypothesis” or system of truth which can alone serve as the hermeneutical principle for the exegesis of Scripture.

Irenaeus is a polemicist. He remorselessly uses rhetoric (in quite a sophisticated sense for his time). He thrusts and parries like a swordsman. He strikes for the soft underbelly of his opponents. He employs sarcasm, biting irony, sharp critique, and shameless labeling which he justifies by

²³Hefner, op. cit.: 303 (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I.9.4).

the defence that he “who wants to learn that sea water is salt doesn’t need to drink up the whole ocean!”²⁴ He is guardian of a flock which is being attacked and confused and scattered. Friedrich Loofs wrote him off as a “muddle-headed anthologist,” but we are well-advised to take him more seriously as a craftsman theologian who was constructing a theological shelter against a storm of heresy.²⁵ *Adversus Haereses* was written out of a pressing sense of pastoral need. Irenaeus was first and foremost a pastoral, practical theologian.

Irenaeus’ Practical Theology

Damien van den Eynde speaks about a simple “theology of faith” in the early church as an expression of the common life of faith within the local congregations.²⁶ Irenaeus, he avers, belongs to this less intellectualized theology present and functioning within congregations not strongly influenced by the theology of Alexandria. This is reminiscent of Don Browning’s “communities of *phronesis* or practical reason.” The shaping force here is more a “way of looking at things” than a “scholarly or contemplative grasp of the historical message of Scripture.”²⁷ Far from simply being “the first great representative of Biblicism,” which he no doubt was, Irenaeus’ theology was woven from many strands and formed a multicolored tapestry.²⁸ Many strains go to make up the *Living Voice* of the church, and it might be better to characterize his theology as that of the “Living Voice” rather than simply that of the “Written Word.”²⁹

One can conceive of Irenaeus’ theology as that of a vast construction project, requiring beams that will hold the concerns of the cosmos as well

²⁴*Against Heresies*, II.19.8. See Robert M Grant, “Irenaeus and Hellenistic Culture,” in *Harvard Theological Review*, 1949, 42: 50(41-51).

²⁵Friedrich Loofs, *Theophilus von Antionchien Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus* (Texte und Untersuchungen 46.2; 1930: 432), quoted by Denis Minns, *Irenaeus* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Univ. Press, 1994), ix.

²⁶Damien van den Eynde, *Les Normes de l’enseignement chretien dans la litterature patristique des trois premiers siecles* (Gembloux and Paris, 1933:132-41), quoted by Wingren (1959), op. cit.: 9.

²⁷John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of St Irenaeus* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), 116-117.

²⁸Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, Bd I. Zweite Verlag* (Leipzig, 1908), 290.

²⁹Lawson, op. cit., 115, 116.

as that of the congregation. There are key words borrowed from rhetoric in his theology.³⁰ *Hypothesis* is one of these. It signifies the presentation (in a summary) of a plot or structure intended by an author such as Homer. *Oikonomia* is another, the “arrangement of a poem or the purpose and direction of the plot.” *Anakephalaiosis* is the third and perhaps the most important and well-remembered in connection with Irenaeus, meaning the concluding summary or recapitulation of a narrative, a re-enactment. These terms serve as the structural beams in his theological thought. He was treating the *hypothesis* as the plot of the whole sacred story from creation to the coming of God’s kingdom, while his *oikonomiai* are the subplots (or chapters) included in the plot as a whole. Finally, *anakephalaiosis* explains why events appear to repeat one another, as well as why the story involves not only progress but also restoration. It is always going back as well as forward. Like the *heilsgeschichte* of half a century ago, it offers the prospect of fresh insights into the biblical story from the creation to redemption and the new creation.³¹

The theology of Irenaeus is “a theology of history built upon the belief that it is the God-given destiny of humankind to grow to perfection by gradual stages, and that God guides this development in a loving, infinitely patient, ever-vigilant, and non-coercive manner.”³² The gnostic theology that confronted Irenaeus was twin-pronged. On the one side was oriental despair of the material world; on the other was Greek philosophical speculation. To this Irenaeus opposed his thoroughly Hebraic understanding of God. There is “One Creator God.” “This God, the Creator, who formed the world, is the only God, and there is no other beside him.”³³ Irenaeus expresses his doctrine of “The Two Hands of God” as a way of speaking of an immediately present and active God.

It was not angels, therefore, who made us, nor who formed us. For God did not stand in need of these, in order to be about the accomplishing of what he had himself determined within himself beforehand should be done, as if he did not possess his own hands. For with him were always present the Word and

³⁰See “Rhetoric in Theology,” in Grant, op. cit., 46-54.

³¹Ibid.

³²Minns, op. cit., 56.

³³Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, II.16.3, etc.

the Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, he made all things.³⁴

Lawson draws the conclusion: “The Two Hands of God” is an expression of the immediacy of creation to the Creator, not of its mediacy. It is an unfolding of the implications of the phrase, “One Creator God.” It justifies the claim that Irenaeus taught the doctrine of creation by the whole Trinity.³⁵ Irenaeus’ theology, like his doctrine of God and creation, is a “hands-on” practical theology worked out in the dirt and mud of history and in the trenches of warfare against the “spiritual” gnostics, who were dualistic dilettantes in his view.

Irenaeus’ Theology of Particularity

The scandal of Christianity is its particularity, that a marginal Jew of Palestine named Jesus is claimed to be the Son of God. The scandal of Israel lay in the singular particularity of her call and covenant. To embrace the Christian faith is to embrace the scandal of its particularity. Believers claim to hold “the only true and living faith.” Irenaeus’ theology resonates with this uncompromising particularity. He claims to give:

a complete argument against all the heretics and you will be able faithfully to contend against them for the sake of the only true and life-giving faith, which the church received from the apostles and hands on to her children.³⁶

One needs to examine such a claim against the backdrop of diversity and plurality of views which existed in the church of his time. Was any “choice” (“heresy” is a word derived from a Greek word meaning “choice”) possible within the bounds of orthodoxy, then or now? Is orthodoxy identical with the majority opinion? What are we to make of the historical evidence which suggests that the orthodox consensus was only coming into existence in the time of Irenaeus, and that he in fact represents it? Was he therefore the “first catholic theologian”? How is one to embrace the scandal of one’s particularity fully (the particular strand of tradition in which one is being formed) and at the same time be held fully

³⁴Ibid., IV.20.1.

³⁵Lawson, op cit: 125.

³⁶Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III.Preface.

in the embrace of the ecumenical church in the whole world?³⁷ Irenaeus is bold and unequivocal about how he knows what to say: There is One God, Creator of all that is, and we are all in his hands. There are not two truths, only one, and that is the living faith which he declared. There is only one true church, and his theology is rooted in it. He wrote:

The church, having received this preaching and this faith . . . though dispersed in the whole world, diligently guards them as living in one house, believes them as having one soul and one heart (Acts 4:32), and consistently preaches, teaches, and hands them down as having one mouth. For if the languages in the world are dissimilar, the power of the tradition is one and the same. The churches founded in Germany believe and hand down no differently, nor do those among the Iberians, among the Celts, in the Orient, in Egypt, or in Libya, or those established in the middle of the world. As the sun, God's creature, is one and the same in the whole world, so the light, the preaching of the truth, shines everywhere and illuminates all men who wish to come to the knowledge of the truth. And none of the rulers of the churches . . . will say anything different—for no one is above the Master (Matt. 10:24). . . . Since

³⁷A formidable twentieth-century theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar (d. 1996) leans heavily on Irenaeus, particularly in distinguishing mysticism from worldly wisdom and from Gnosis. Balthasar affirms that philosophy generalizes, while theology is concerned with the particular. For him, Jesus Christ is the "concrete universal." In Him both universality and particularity meet in a single individual, the fragment containing the whole. The church is the living body of that living person, because the "truth of a living being always lies in its wholeness." Therefore, Balthasar can say: "Not every one who writes a dogmatics need write an entire dogmatics: but he must preserve the totality, the catholicity of the truth in every feature of his thought." Furthermore, mythical thinking is grounded in particularity, which Balthasar habitually contrasts with Gnosis that raises essentially universal claims. "Other religions seek a cosmic way to God: the Christians seek the way in the neighbour." So myth does better than philosophy and mystical religion, for all myth is essentially dialogical. The Cross is what happens when the world is embraced and included in the Son's obedience. Trinitarian fullness is encountered in the particularity of living encounter with the living One, the Son, and the response is to embrace the obedience of love to God and neighbour. Here von Balthasar embraces and extends Irenaeus' theology of particularity. See Raymond Gawronski, SJ, in *Word and Silence: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter Between East and West*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 92, 106, etc.

the faith is one and the same, he who can say much about it does not add to it nor does he who says little diminish it.³⁸

Various loci of authority in Irenaeus' theology have been identified.³⁹ These include Scripture (canon), tradition, ecclesiastical hierarchy (or magisterium), the rule of faith (*regula veritatis*), revelation, bishop, and creed. Hefner surveys the results of work by Damien van den Ende, John Lawson, Andre Benoit, E Flesseman-van Leer, and Bengt Haegglund who each identify a different strand or locus of primary authority in Irenaeus. The common denominator is the context of the church. Hefner proposes, and I concur, that preoccupation with the detail of these strands of authority blurs our vision and distorts our picture of Irenaeus. Lifting one's attention to the larger question of what gives the theologian the substance and confidence of declaration, a different Irenaeus emerges. Paraphrasing Hefner: *The one highest authority for Irenaeus is the orienting concern, the guiding metaphor, the trajectory of the living faith which gives shape and character to the congregation of faith and which directs it as God's servant for the public good of all humanity.*⁴⁰ Irenaeus employs a variety of significant terms which give both fluidity and substance to his view of authority. These include the most frequently used *hypothesis*, *regula*, and *argumentum*. *Hypothesis* is the presupposition of a thing without which it cannot exist; *regula* is defined as a carpenter's or weaver's rule, a model, or pattern; *argumentum* is "the means by which an assertion or assumption may be made clear."

Like John Wesley, for whom the orienting concern was *responsible grace* according to Maddox,⁴¹ the *hypothesis* or controlling and normative vision for Irenaeus was "One Creator-Redeemer God whose truth is both mediate and immediate," that is: "All existing things, instead of occupying different grades in a hierarchy or chain of being, are immediately present to the God who creates them, that is to say, they are "in his hands." Just because God's transcendence over creation is absolute (God and our world do not belong to the same continuum), God is immediately present to the creation in a manner impossible to the Gnostics. That is, our particularity is a given, a gift of constantly being created and moved

³⁸*Against Heresies*, I.10.2 (Grant).

³⁹Hefner, op. cit., 294 ff.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 295.

⁴¹Maddox, op. cit., 18.

towards the completion of God's *oikonomia* or plan. Therefore we must consider the expansion of the sacramental presence of grace beyond the boundaries of the congregation into the whole world. Sacramental grace is both mediated and immediate to humankind in church and world. Rooted firmly and unequivocally in the church, Irenaeus is equally an "earth creature" rooted in the common ground of a shared humanity.

Some highly intriguing and significant implications emerge from Irenaeus' theological anthropology. First, Irenaeus' particular hold on "catholic faith" enabled him to grasp and articulate a remarkably different orthodoxy than that which emerged later under Augustine. "Ironically," says Minns, "the great defender of orthodoxy and unchanging tradition, allows us to see that orthodoxy is not monolithic, that before Augustine there was a fully articulated orthodox theology suffused with an optimism and a confidence which have since largely disappeared from the Western tradition."⁴² This optimism is founded on the conviction that God is one, and has only one purpose for the creature formed from mud. Adam and Eve began as infants, immature and prone to "mess up" as infants do. This disobedience was an interruption on the upward path to perfection. It was not an irredeemable tragedy so much as an obstacle and interruption on the journey of obedience. Sin is disobedience, the desire to take one's development into one's own hands. The goal of creation is that the earth creature should be fashioned by the hands of God after the image and likeness of God. What the earth creature needs to do is to learn above all to relax in the hands of God, to let God be the creator—responsive to the gentle, non-coercive touch of God's creative fingers.⁴³

In part, embrace of one's particularity is the full acceptance of one's embodied humanity, one's rootedness in place and in human community. This embrace of particularity will set one free to create and shape a strand of particularity in the Great Tradition. Also, the embrace of one's particularity in the Irenaean sense sets one free to engage fully in what I shall call a *correlational public theology*.⁴⁴

Irenaeus' Public Theology

Particularity begins with the hearty acceptance of the brute fact that the body is not incidental to the business of being human. It is almost as if

⁴²Minns, op. cit., 135.

⁴³Ibid., 63-4.

⁴⁴See Browning, 44-47.

Irenaeus was tempted to say that “flesh and blood *shall* inherit the kingdom of heaven!” His enthusiastic rejection of views that dismissed or denigrated bodily existence extended to a frank and cheerful acceptance both of the necessity of the body and of the fact that human beings are social animals. He had positive things to say about fellow citizens who were not Christians. But heretics, he says, “behave in ways that it is not lawful to hear about, that one could not imagine, that one would not believe were it alleged of people dwelling in our own cities.”⁴⁵

From the central importance of the body in the divine economy Irenaeus draws the logical conclusion that the promised reign and rule of God will be a socio-political reality. His own millenarian writings were suppressed as being a too literal interpretation of the Book of Revelation. Some of his ideas may have been naive and quaint, if not dangerous. But his ruling hypothesis of *living faith* compels us to take seriously his rationale for public faith and theology. Irenaeus could say of the Romans that “the world is at peace because of them, and we can walk in the streets without fear and travel by sea wherever we will,” in spite of the severe persecutions which had touched his own life and work so closely.⁴⁶

Douglas Jay sees in Wingren’s “Theology of Creation Faith” a new foundation for contemporary Christian ethics. This is rooted in a recovery of Irenaeus’ teaching on Creation and Gospel, and offers an alternative to the current public theologies which seem caught between two unacceptable options: a “natural law” ethic (Aquinas) and a “christocentric ethic” (reformed Calvinism, for example).⁴⁷ Between these two, Irenaeus offers a “trinitarian, theocentric model” for public theology.

My purpose now is to identify a trajectory for the future which is informed and energized by this encounter with Irenaeus. I do not hold him responsible for the description of the course to be charted, but I do claim that it is valid to project these ideas from the launching pad of his pastoral experience. I briefly examine the options for public theology in the future, steering between the perceived markers set up by the contemporary theologies of David Tracy, “the Christian is *released from* the world *for* the world” and Stanley Hauerwas, “No Enemy, No Christianity” and “*to be a Christian is to be made part of an army against armies.*”

⁴⁵Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I.25.4.

⁴⁶Minns, *op. cit.*, 138.

⁴⁷Douglas Jay, *Preface* to Wingren, *Creation and Gospel*, vi.

What are possibilities for a public agenda for the church between such poles of *serving* the world and *opposing* the world? Timothy George reminds that the options for contemporary Christians concerned with influencing public policy are “evangelism, coercion, and the quest for common ground in the interests of a shared agenda.”⁴⁸ He then offers a fourth, “the option of an intentional community of faith set over against its environing culture, a company of men and women who bear faithful witness in the name of him whose crown rights can never be assimilated to the kingdoms and societies of this world.”

I offer, in addition, the concept of *nascent neighborhoods of the kin—dom of God*⁴⁹ as a means of conceiving an expanded sacramental presence of the church in the world,⁵⁰ and an expanded christology along the lines of Irenaeus’ model. For Irenaeus, God was present in the creation “with both hands” (the *Logos*, and *Sophia*; the Son and the Spirit). Susan Schreiner’s excellent book *The Theater of His Glory: John Calvin and the Natural Order* (Labyrinth Press, reprinted by Baker Book House, 1996) deals with God’s governance of the cosmos and guidance in human history and society. She speaks of Calvin’s God, like Irenaeus’, being an “interventionist God who doesn’t mind getting his hands dirty in the daily operation of the cosmos.”⁵¹ On-going creation is happening in the mud and muddle of life, and a lively experiment is in progress, where grace as natural law functions as a “bridle” to restrain and constrict destructive chaos in the world. Public theology then requires that the church recognize and respect this as activity in the body politic which is not its prerogative to manage or control; but neither does the church need to go to war with those who, though unbelievers, still find a profound and persuasive echo in their hearts of the voice of the Creator-Redeemer. Pope John Paul II, in *Evangelium Vitae*, expresses it in these terms:

⁴⁸“Calvin’s Use of Natural Law,” in Michael Cromartie, ed., *A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, and Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center), 82-3.

⁴⁹This word “kin—dom” and the insight it suggests are borrowed from Denise Ackerman, a former colleague at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, now at the University of Cape Town, who expresses by this means the essential nature of the kingdom as a “neighborhood of kinship” with every human being.

⁵⁰Raymond Gawronski, *Word and Silence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 192. Sacramental presence for von Balthasar is expressed in “apostolically active individual acts on behalf of one’s neighbour.”

⁵¹Timothy George discusses Schreiner’s dynamism of God’s providential activity and describes this in “A Response,” in Cromartie, 81.

The church knows that this Gospel of Life, which she has received from her Lord, has a profound and persuasive echo in the heart of every person—believer and non-believer alike—because it marvelously fulfills all the heart’s expectations while infinitely surpassing them. Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart the sacred value of human life from its very beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree.⁵²

This intervention and response is discussed here in “natural law” categories. A Reformed believer would draw back from “the Pelagian principle.” I propose that Irenaeus offers us an alternative to a simple natural law-christocentrism dichotomy without collapsing into an incipient Pelagianism. The Wesleyan believer is more prone to respond positively to an interventionism of grace in public life than a Barthian or Protestant theologian would. Schreiner seems to argue that Calvin himself does also, if carefully interpreted in his own context.

Here I pursue this trajectory—Irenaeus-Calvin-Wesley—rather than Augustine-Calvin-Barth in proposing that “nascent neighborhoods of the kingdom” suggest an alternative presence of the church which is not *ecclesiocentric* while remaining *ecstatically christocentric* and *trinitarian*. The work of Luis Lugo in critiquing Calvin’s failure to sufficiently differentiate the “civic community” and the “believing community” opens up a way to think of the civic community as grounded in God’s covenantal relationship with creation rather than in the exclusive nature of the believing community in the Abrahamic covenant.⁵³ The point is that the expansion of the sacramental presence of the eucharist, in terms of the body of Christ in its ministry as a “public servant” in the world, makes possible the emergence of new orders of the kingdom in the world where the body politic is not expected to order society Christianly, but where the church becomes the catalyst towards persuasive alternatives to “the way things are in the world.” The church is stretched eschatologically beyond its ecclesial center to become “ecstatically present” in the world. She

⁵²Quoted by Robert George, in Cromartie, op. cit., 95.

⁵³Luis Lugo, “Comments” on Susan E. Schreiner, “Calvin’s Use of Natural Law,” in Cromartie, op. cit., 90.

stands beside herself and outside the domain of her own power to be a minister in the world, donning the garment of a servant in society, not adopting the stance of a coercive opponent of “this present evil world.” Here everyone is the Christian’s neighbor (everyone is considered a “nascent” or coming- to-birth member of the kingdom), not only the believers of the “family of God.” If they do not, in fact, choose to become so identified, they end up in the hopeless cul-de-sacs of which Irenaeus spoke. But they are not condemned by the judgment of the church; the condemnation is by their own rejection of the interior voice which calls them.

Joseph Sittler has argued powerfully for such an expansive Christology. His central thrust may be stated in his own words:

The way forward is from Christology expanded to its cosmic dimensions, made passionate by this threatened earth, and made ethical by the love and the wrath of God. The care of the earth, the realm of nature as a theater of grace, the ordering of the thick, material procedures that make available to or deprive men of bread and peace—these are Christological obediences before they are practical necessities.⁵⁴

Therefore, God’s grace should not be restricted to the private and the ecclesial realm of redemption, but expanded to recognize that the realm of creation is the prior and legitimate theater for an encounter with grace. The way to overcome a constrictive understanding of grace for Sittler is by a return to the Christology of the Eastern Church, by inquiry into the work of Gregory of Nyssa, Irenaeus, Cyril, and other Eastern Fathers. We need to re-discover the “christological momentum” which the literature of the New Testament discloses.⁵⁵ We may formulate a typology of rhetoric that illustrates this process: the rhetoric of recollection, participation, and re-enactment. Irenaeus is presented as an embodiment of such rhetoric:

Perhaps because Irenaeus was a bishop, pastor, preacher, but more certainly because the concreteness of his theological formulations were forged out of the vivid episodic speech of the Scriptures, his writing has an earthy and dramatic character. Force impacts against force, direction is violently reversed by a

⁵⁴Joseph Sittler, *Essays on Nature and Grace* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 8.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 29.

power turning it, images clash in surprising juxtaposition. The Adam of the Garden of Eden is recapitulated by the second Adam of the garden of Gethsemane; a garden-rebellion is reenacted to redemption by a garden-obedience. The first Eve who stood straight in autonomy is recapitulated by the second—the bowed and rapt theonomous Eve of the Magnificat.⁵⁶

Such is the cosmic Christology of Irenaeus who has recapitulated all the ages and spaces of human life and the cosmos by the two outstretched, crucified arms of Jesus, spread wide to include the whole inhabited earth, and indeed, the far-flung galaxies of the multi-universes of space.⁵⁷ Irenaeus regards all life—human life in solitude and in fellowship, in the church, and in the marketplace, in the school and in the home, in the workplace and in the public ecclesia or body politic, in history and in the life of nature—as in the hands of God. This is the basis for claiming that he is a model for *public theology*.

Stanley Hauerwas, David Tracy, and Irenaeus

It is necessary to examine the Tracy-Hauerwas polarity more thoroughly and fairly than can be done here. For now, we can assume that these theologies do in fact offer valid but opposing public theologies which are vastly different in their function and implication for Wesleyan believers. Note:

More recent theologians—from Barth to Tillich, from a political theologian such as Johann Baptist Metz to a liberation theologian such as Jose Miguez Bonino, or from sectarian theologians such as Stanley Hauerwas to a public and philosophical theologian such as David Tracy—are much more likely to see theology as systematic reflection on the historical self-understanding of a particular religious tradition.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Ibid., 62-3.

⁵⁷Sittler selects Irenaeus as one of his “crucial moments in ecumenical Christology” for three reasons: (1) of all the early theologians he most fully worked out a systematic, biblically derived exposition of God’s grace and human experience of the world-as-nature; (2) his christological images were fashioned in opposition to gnostic dualism, of which ever-renewed forms of that heresy have been a steady accompaniment to the course of catholic Christology; (3) his doctrine of grace offers a place to stand where the reality of God’s grace may be discerned and celebrated within a desacralized culture (Ibid., 56, 61).

⁵⁸Browning 1991, op. cit., 5.

Therefore, what is clear is that both Tracy and Hauerwas may be identified as *particular, public theologians*.

Hauerwas's argument locates the self firmly within a community, shaped in its freedom by the language and practices of that community, learning how to follow Jesus by continued schooling in that community's response. Writes David Burrell, ". . . an attempt at a summary distorts my basic understanding of theology. Theology cannot be construed by one overarching doctrine or principle. As I try to show, theology's inherently practical character, its unmistakable status as a pastoral discipline, simply defies strong systematization."⁵⁹ Hauerwas may therefore be described as a sectarian, catholic, evangelical, public theologian.

Would that not be an apt description for Irenaeus in his own time? I would argue against this conclusion on the grounds of his Creation-Gospel theological anthropology. He regarded the whole of humanity as *naturally* graced through the creative act of the one Creator of all human beings. He held to an *immediate* presence of divine grace and activity in the *oikonomia* of God. God's grace is *mediated* through the structures and sacraments of the one church. But no human being is cut off from immediate access to God's activity in the world.

Tracy writes: "Whatever the social location of a particular theology, their common commitment to genuine public discourse, to authentic publicness, calls for the attempt to speak from a particular social locus in such a manner that one also speaks across the range of all three 'publics': the wider society, the church, the academy." This serves to identify him as a philosophical, correlational, public theologian. This is more carefully defined in an engagement of the Christian faith with the interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary situation.⁶⁰ Again: "At the center of Christianity stands not a timeless truth, nor a principle, nor even a cause, but an event and a person — Jesus of Nazareth experienced and confessed as the Christ." But Tracy can also assert that the experience of an "authentically Christian ecumenical consciousness discloses that the diverse ways of being Christian represented in different church traditions is also grounded in the New Testament and enriches all who will allow it to the fuller reality of Christian life and tradition." Perhaps Irenaeus could

⁵⁹Burrell in Hauerwas, 1983, Preface, ix, xvi.

⁶⁰Tracy, "Foundations of Practical Theology," in *Practical Theology*, ed. Donald Browning (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 61-82 (76).

affirm with Tracy: “The particular focus chosen to understand God and the self is [a] central clue to which some particular aspect of the world would be emphasized in a particular theology.” Those with a “sense for radical giftedness and thereby of God’s radical, always-already, loving immanence in all reality, will be open to a pervasive sense of grace. Nature and body, not only history and spirit, will be felt as graced and thus interpreted in theologies of creation, incarnation, and sacrament.”⁶¹

Irenaeus As Pathfinder and Guardian

Irenaeus’ practice poses practical questions: Was his stance towards the culture of his time *confessional* (there is evidence to support this), *apologetic* (clear evidence to support this), or *critically correlational* (there also is evidence to support this). Browning speaks of “practical theology” and ‘thick description’ of a congregation. What begins to emerge in the life and leadership of the congregations at Vienne and Lyons in Gaul in the late second century is such a “thick description,” a multi-layered unfolding of a rich tapestry of practice and teaching. Irenaeus may have been an ordained bishop, but he certainly was a “reflective practitioner,” the essence of being a practical theologian.

The question must also be asked of communities of practical reason such as these congregations: in what way do such religious communities make sense? Are these communities of memory and tradition also communities of practical reason and practical wisdom?⁶² Irenaeus’ *hypothesis* compares favorably to Browning’s *envelope* of practical reason. *That* is what he had to say to his congregation. His dialogue with the Gnostics may be described as the *inner core* of the functioning practical reason of his believing congregation. *That* is what he had to say to the Gnostics. In Christianity,

. . . the religious tradition shapes this core of practical reason in various specific ways. The inner core may (however) be distinguished from the outer narrative envelope of the tradition. The inner core functions within a narrative about God’s creation, governance, and redemption of the world. It also functions within a narrative that tells how the life and death of

⁶¹David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 5, 252, 317, 436.

⁶²Browning, op. cit., 2.

Jesus Christ further God's plans for the world. This narrative is the outer envelope of that tradition.⁶³

Conclusion

I propose that to move ahead into the twenty-first century, Wesleyans doing theology should consider and act on the following specifics. In doing so I do not claim that Irenaeus can be made the "grandfather" of these steps, but that as one who embraces the particularity of his own tradition and person, these are suggested by the rediscovery of Irenaeus as a practical theologian in his own context:

- Since the Eastern Church has tended to be Johannine, a church of vision and of worship in wonder and silence, while the West has tended to be Synoptic, Pauline, a church of hearing the Word and more often of speaking, proclamation, and action, we should add to our vocal Western practicalities the practice and value of silence. Retreats of "stillness" (not "quietism") may enable a new "seeing and hearing" the Word made flesh on the Cross. A drop of blood falling in soundless silence may speak more powerfully than many words. By this means we might discover the alternative of becoming "an emergent order of holy living" where there emerges the practicality of saints becoming neighbors to those met everyday in the world.
- Embrace an Irenaeian understanding of *original and transforming grace* as a conscious counter to the later Augustinian stance of *original sin* as the primary determinative of the human condition of being created in the image of God.
- Examine the options of generating strategies of establishing *nascent neighborhoods of the kingdom* in our communities where the church surrenders ecclesiastical control and management of neighborhood spaces so that these might become shared kingdom spaces in which everyone is welcomed and served through "apostolically active individual acts on behalf of one's neighbor."⁶⁴

⁶³Ibid., 11.

⁶⁴Sittler, op. cit., 107. Quoting Haroutunian: "We have to do, not with universals, but with our neighbors, not with particulars, but with particular fellow [human beings]."

- Make an intentional recovery of our roots and heritage in wholeheartedly embracing a *critical practical theology* in the tradition of Wesley's *practical divinity* within congregations whose orienting concern is the mutual accountability of *responsible grace* (the energy of love let loose in the world by faith).
- Make explicit the *inner core* and *outer envelope* of practical reason resident in the Wesleyan tradition (Browning).
- Make considered choices between the contemporary options in the field: Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic" approach; a re-traditioning of Irenaeus' "confessional/apologetic" approach; and Tracy's "critical correlational" approach.⁶⁵
- Take a new look at Irenaeus as *pathfinder* for and *guardian* of the Christian Tradition, being willing to fully embrace the scandal of our own particularity (personally and corporately) within that Great Tradition.⁶⁶
- Take seriously the critical default in the Holiness Movement of attending to discipline in such a manner as to exclude the world of entertainment and the arts from the arena of Christian vocation and mission. Artists in our midst have labored under the debilitating awareness that we have either indifferently regarded or negatively assessed the artistic communities and the guild of the arts in our society, with the result that now the primary complaint about how the "media" have ill served us is generally heard.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Ibid., 44-5.

⁶⁶Grant, op. cit., 121 (*Against Heresies*, II,32.2)

⁶⁷Sittler writes: "Additional data for insight into the expansion of the realm of grace can be derived from the words and works of the artistic community. Why is it that American artists are, for the most part, alienated from the terms, concepts, episodes, and symbols that set forth the Christian story?" (op. cit., 71-72).

STUDYING TEXT IN A WESLEYAN “CONTEXT”: RESPONSE TO ROBERT WALL AND JOEL GREEN

by

Russell Morton

Recently, two articles in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* focused on the future of biblical studies in the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition.¹ In the first, R. W. Wall proposed that:

If the scholar allows that *Scripture is the church's normative rule of faith (or "canon"), whose subject matter is God and whose performance aims at Christian formation*, then the approach to Scripture will not presume it to be merely an anthology of ancient literary art, a record of historical events, or a depository of universal wisdom. Rather, the strong interpreter will approach the biblical text at its current address . . . and do so in light of its current ecclesial role . . . to bear witness to God's word and work in history and so to form the theological understanding of those who in faith submit to Scripture as "the word of the Lord Almighty" for today.²

¹R. W. Wall, "The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 33:2 (Fall, 1998), 101-115; J. B. Green, "Reading the Bible as Wesleyans: A Response to Robert Wall," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33:2 (Fall, 1998), 116-129. Similar concerns, but developed in relationship with the Augustinian tradition are found in C. C. Black, "Serving the Food of Full-Grown Adults: Augustine's Interpretation of Scripture and the Nurture of Christians," *Int.* 52 (1998), 341-353.

²Wall, "The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies," 104.

Four implications are noted: (1) a biblical text is the property of the church, rather than its author; (2) the Bible's authority within the church is at peril when believers find Scripture irrelevant or incomprehensible; (3) The discipline of biblical studies depends on sound decisions made by the "talented interpreter"; and (4) the revitalization of theological education will stand against the methodological relativism which currently afflicts the academy.³

In response, J. B. Green cites Scott Jones's work, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scriptures*, where Wesley's high view of Scripture is noted.⁴ Green also suggests four proposals to facilitate a Wesleyan reading of Scripture that is both theologically and spiritually satisfying, as well as being critically valid. First, it is pointed out that Wesleyans cannot simply adopt pre-critical readings of Scripture. At the same time, we must recognize the Bible's unique role as Scripture.⁵ Second, a proper understanding of Wesley's concern for the "plain literal meaning" of Scripture means that the Bible is allowed to make its demands on the lives of readers, while at the same time it permits a diversity of reading strategies.⁶ Third, the Wesleyan reading of Scripture is always cognizant of its soteriological aims.⁷ Finally, Wesleyan biblical studies must be interdisciplinary, integrating biblical studies with theology, ethics, and the other disciplines of theology.⁸

Wall and Green have issued important challenges to Wesleyan biblical scholars. Yet, neither has contextualized the discussion by providing concrete examples illustrating our current crisis in biblical studies. Nor do we see any examples from the writings of Wesley or other early Methodists which put lie to the concern about "whether there is something deep within the Wesleyan tradition . . . that actually works against biblical studies."⁹ In short, despite its excesses, critical scholarship can be a valuable handmaiden of the church, if it is conducted within an atmos-

³Ibid., 104-108.

⁴J. B. Green, "Reading the Bible as Wesleyans," 116.

⁵Ibid., 119-121.

⁶Ibid., 121-124.

⁷Ibid., 124-127.

⁸Ibid., 127-128. In this last point, in particular, Green demonstrates agreement with Wall. See Wall, "The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies," 115.

⁹Wall, "The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies," 110. See also, R. W. Wall, "Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic of Scripture," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30:2 (Fall 1995), 50-51.

phere of accountability both to Scripture and to one's theological tradition, in our case the Wesleyan heritage. It is my hope in the following pages in some small way to provide a paradigm of critical scholarship that can work in the service of the church. To accomplish this, the first task will be to illustrate the dangers that ensue when scholars isolate themselves from the life of the church by providing some extreme examples of current excesses in biblical studies. The second task will be to look at the biblical exegesis of John Wesley and Adam Clarke to see if these two individuals provide a model for us today, particularly as it relates to Green's first point of a biblical scholarship that is both critically sensitive and accountable to the church. Finally, there will be some additional suggestions as to where the path, so excellently plotted out for us by Wall and Green, may lead Wesleyan biblical scholars in their effort to both advance their discipline and serve their theological tradition.

Examples Symptomatic of the Current Problem¹⁰

Perhaps the leading contribution to the current malaise in biblical studies has been the adoption by America's seminaries of the university department of religious studies as the pattern for theological education in general, and biblical education in particular. While scholarship within this environment has contributed much to our understanding of Scripture and the world of the Bible, it ultimately is antithetical to the needs and interests of theological education in service of the church. In the first place, the emphasis on hyper-specialization negates the kind of interdisciplinary dialogue which both Wall and Green indicate as necessary for constructing the new framework for future Wesleyan biblical studies. Rather, individuals who may not have earned the first theological degree (M. Div.), but possess M.A.'s and Ph. D.'s from major universities, are appointed to teach Bible at many seminaries and undergraduate institutions. Although specialty degrees are necessary, the lack of preliminary broad-based theological education leads to atomization and narrowing of focus. Thus, pro-

¹⁰The examples included here are meant to be illustrative, rather than definitive, of what Wall notes in "The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies," 102, n.4, where M. Marty and J. Neusner (*Religious Studies News* 12/3 [September, 1997], 20-21, 48) champion academic religious studies to serve the "secular interests of a pluralistic culture." Such an approach, in our opinion, leads not only to the abuses listed here, but also to a paradigm of reading hostile to the concerns of locating biblical studies in an ecclesial context, as discussed by both Wall and Green.

fessors are often not prepared or able to interact in the broader disciplines of theology, and may be quite content throughout their careers to focus on further refinement of narrowly defined academic topics, chosen originally for their dissertations.¹¹

Yet, even more destructive than the lack of preliminary broad-based theological education may be what accompanies it. With the secularization of the academy has risen the “hermeneutics of suspicion,” which regards both sacred texts and church traditions with hostility.¹² Thus, we have the problem of biblical studies utilizing a paradigm which is hostile to both the mission and interest of the church, and which considers such hostility as virtuous. The results have sometimes been tragic, sometimes laughable. The product too often is further alienation of the church from the guild of biblical scholars.

The excesses of the Jesus Seminar, for instance, have been addressed elsewhere and in far more detail than can be done here.¹³ Rather, we will confine ourselves to examples from two areas, social science criticism and feminist biblical studies. Let us begin by expressing deep appreciation for the positive contributions of both these methodologies. While not always agreeing in all details with the work of individuals such as E. Schüssler-Fiorenza¹⁴ and R. Radford Ruether,¹⁵ they and other feminist scholars have made an enormous contribution to our understanding of the roles of women in the early church, Israel, and the ancient Mediterranean, as well as sensitizing us to important issues and concerns of gender studies. In particular, their labors have been invaluable in demonstrating that

¹¹In contrast to Green’s concerns in “Reading the Bible as Wesleyans,” 127-128, where he points out that “Wesleyans can no longer allow for the invidious divisions that have determined our theological map; divisions between biblical studies and systematic theology . . . and so on” (127).

¹²For a detailed discussion on the development of some of the tensions which have evolved in departments of religious studies in American universities, especially in light of the methodological conflict between social sciences and humanities, see, D. G. Hart, “American Learning and the Problem of Religious Studies,” in *The Secularization of the Academy*, edited by G. M. Marsden and B. J. Longfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 195-233; R. L. Wilkin, “Who Will Speak for Religious Traditions?” *Remembering the Christian Past* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 21-23.

¹³See, B. Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 1995.

¹⁴E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

¹⁵R. Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983).

women such as Phoebe in Rom. 16:1 and Euodia and Syntyche in Phil. 4:2 were important leaders in the apostolic age. Likewise, one may note the long overdue correction in English translations of the masculine misspelling of the feminine Junia in Rom. 16:7, a text indicating that a woman was, indeed, referred to as an apostle in the early church. Nevertheless, one can go too far. When combined with the "hermeneutics of suspicion," some results have been, at best, marginal for the church.

One example comes from the 1994 SBL presidential address by Phyllis Trible. She attempted to make Jezebel the hero and Elijah the villain of the Elijah narratives.¹⁶ Jezebel's plot to murder Naboth so Ahab could acquire a disputed vineyard makes her the good wife of Prov. 31:11, 12, 15-16.¹⁷ Her crimes are considered temporary and minor compared to the misogyny and xenophobia of the deuteronomists, which have continuing existence.¹⁸ Thus, the deuteronomists, through their account of Elijah, stand condemned because they do not share the academy's current values of inclusiveness. Yet, this inclusiveness is itself very exclusive, for there appears to be no place for the unique demands of the God of Israel upon the nation.

Even more disturbing has been D. N. Fewell and D. M. Gunn's analysis of M. Sternberg's reading of Gen. 34:1-39,¹⁹ which provoked a response by Sternberg.²⁰ In contrast to Sternberg's analysis,²¹ which sees the behavior of Simeon and Levi as admirable, Fewell and Gunn conclude: "our reader sees culpable neglect of responsibility."²² For Fewell

¹⁶P. Trible, "Exegesis for Storytellers and Other Strangers," *JBL* 114 (1995), 3-19.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁹D. N. Fewell and D. M. Gunn, "Tipping the Balance: Sternberg's Reader and the Rape of Dinah," *JBL* 110 (1992), 193-211.

²⁰M. Sternberg, "Biblical Poetics and Sexual Politics: From Reading to Counter-Reading," *JBL* 110 (1992), 463-488.

²¹M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana Literary Biblical Series; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

²²Fewell and Gunn, "Tipping the Balance," 211. They go on to state, "If Simeon and Levi are Sternberg's heroes, they are certainly not ours" (*ibid.*). The more important question, however, is, are they the heroes of the story. Perhaps we see here one of the greatest difficulties in integrating a reader response methodology into the principles Wall and Green propose, for the reader, not the text, seems to be the ultimate authority in reader response methodology. This is in diametric opposition to reading the text as authoritative.

and Gunn, Jacob, Hamor, and Shechem are seen as complex characters who are “making the best of a flawed world,” as opposed to Sternberg’s reading, which is said to express contempt for these three individuals. Furthermore, it is claimed that Dinah is a woman who can and does make her own decisions in contrast to being a weak and helpless individual.²³ To arrive at these conclusions, however, questionable logic and dubious exegesis are employed.

Although the goals of Fewell and Gunn, to liberate the text from patriarchy, are admirable, exegetical competence is necessary. It is, however, sorely lacking in their exercise. As Sternberg points out, “by the standards to which it aspires, this performance will hardly qualify as competent. It has no poetics to offer, no theory of reading, no coherent enterprise or argument, no sense of history, cultural norms, and the difference they make to understanding, no eye for detail, not even linguistic expertise worthy of the Bible’s art—only a cause that serves it ill and it serves ill.”²⁴ Such an approach, dominated by ideology, even if it is a Wesleyan ideology, does not correspond to the paradigm Wall and Green call us to consider.

Yet, if the current state of biblical studies is sometimes dominated by ideological considerations, another problem, equally troubling, is the desire to manipulate the text into something almost unrecognizable. This phenomenon may reflect the requirement that professors publish, even if the result is less than helpful. Thus, the biblical text is regarded primarily as the testing grounds for new hypotheses, no matter how tenuous. A grotesque example of this phenomenon is B. Malina’s *On the Genre of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Stories*.²⁵ This treatment of the Apocalypse attempts what I have called a “thoroughgoing astrological” interpretation of the Book of Revelation.²⁶ Not only do images such as the twenty four elders and four living creatures of Revelation 4-5 derive from astrological speculation, so does the figure of the slain Lamb, which is said to be dependent on the image of the constellation Aries. The seven seals, trumpets, and bowls are said to represent comets. In an effort to move beyond “churchy” language, the word *angelos* is translated consistently

²³Ibid.

²⁴Sternberg, “Biblical Poetics and Sexual Politics,” 488.

²⁵Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.

²⁶R. Morton. Review of Bruce J. Malina, “On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys,” *CBQ* 59 (1997), 165-167.

not as "messenger," but as "sky servant."²⁷ Thus, even translation is subject to preconceived theory to advance a questionable hypothesis. In this instance, Scripture, far from being the living message of God to the church, is seen as a means to advance an agenda or a theory with regarding Christian origins. While we constantly need to re-evaluate our understanding of the early church, that enterprise differs greatly from attempting to force the evidence into a Procrustean bed. We need to pay heed to Wall's second point, that the Bible's authority within the church is imperiled when Scripture becomes both irrelevant and incomprehensible.²⁸

If the above examples demonstrate the dangers of neglecting the concerns expressed by Wall and Green, is there a paradigm which we as Wesleyans can apply? I argue in the affirmative. In particular, we should note Wall's observation that "*Scripture is the church's normative rule of faith, whose subject matter is God and whose performance aims at Christian formation.*"²⁹ In short, the above examples fail because they do not see Scripture as normative, fail to understand that the ultimate subject matter is God, and lack any apparent concern for Christian maturity.

In contrast, we should ask if an alternate methodology can be found within the context of the Wesleyan/Holiness heritage which demonstrates the attempt to make available to the church the best biblical scholarship of its day for the edification of the people of God. We argue that there is, in John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* and Adam Clarke's *Commentaries*. While we would not wish to imply that the results of these now dated works are authoritative,³⁰ what they both attempted and accomplished provide us with a model of how we may wish to integrate our work into the service and edification of God's community.

In short, the paradigm proposed here is one of engaging in dialogue with the best and most responsible critical scholarship, but doing so self consciously as a servant of and accountable to the church and Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. At the same time, while we subject Scripture to the rigors of critical scholarship, we recognize that we are under the authority

²⁷Ibid., 166.

²⁸Wall, "The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies," 106.

²⁹Ibid., 104.

³⁰See *ibid.*, 114, "When I speak of a Wesleyan reading of Scripture, then, I do not mean that Wesleyans simply adopt as normative Wesley's particular reading of Scripture or return to a crude, uncritical version of proof texting."

of Scripture and answerable to God for our faithful interpretation of the sacred text. In order to fulfill the first criterion, our dialogue should not be only with ourselves and other scholars, but with the broader Wesleyan/Holiness community. To accomplish this goal, we should direct the focus of our writing away from academic treatises aimed at the professional guild and to a more general audience of educated laity and clergy, along the lines of both Wesley and Clarke.³¹ With regard to the second criterion, we should recover a sense of urgency in proclamation, recognizing that the saving purpose of Scripture is fulfilled when the *kerygma* of God's work is announced effectively.³² The products of such endeavors must be critically sound, but at the same time they have as their main goal Christian formation within the Wesleyan community. In short, we are speaking of a major shift away from elitism and toward service in the best traditions of our heritage, where Wesleyan interpreters "seek to make Scripture's message intelligible for its new readers in light of their current experiences."³³ Such an approach is, in our view, both valid and Wesleyan in that it embodies the best aspects of Wesley's concern for communicating "plain truth for plain people."³⁴

³¹Corresponding to Wall's first point, that Scripture is the property of the church and, "The hegemony of the 'ecritical' approach to biblical interpretation within the modern guild of scholars, which tends to hold Scripture captive to serve an 'academic' rather than sacred end, has greatly hindered the Bible's formative influence among contemporary believers as their rule of faith" (ibid., 104-105).

³²Thus incorporating "Wesley's understanding of Scripture as a sacrament of divine grace" (ibid., 114).

³³Ibid., 113.

³⁴While not wishing to beg the question, I leave the precise logistics of how to accomplish this task to others. It is clear that major universities are not open to the paradigm suggested here. Whether we wish to locate scholars within smaller liberal arts colleges and universities within the Wesleyan/Holiness movement (thus preserving a commitment to the church), or go so far as establishing positions of "scholars in residence" at major churches, corresponding to the model of N. T. Wright, who works as a scholar and as dean of Lichfield Cathedral, is another matter. One of the problems with the latter model is supplying such "scholars in residence" with adequate library resources, especially since theological libraries, next to medical libraries, are the second most expensive libraries to support. The fact that the United States does not have a national library, following the model of the British Library, exacerbates the problem. For the time being, the proposal that theological scholars may find all they need via the internet is, in my opinion, not realistic for numerous reasons, including restrictions of copyright legislation as well as issues relating to the costs of access to many e-journals. Furthermore, the very nature of computer technology militates against creating the kind of stable format needed in the humanities.

The Model of Wesley and Clarke

The Methodist movement did not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, it was part of the international phenomenon of Pietism which developed in several Protestant countries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁵ With roots in English Puritanism,³⁶ the movement spread to the continent and came to have significant influence on Anglican, Reformed, and Lutheran traditions. What is important for our consideration is that a number of leading figures in Pietism, including John Arndt and Philip Jakob Spener, were university-educated, yet also dedicated to pursuing the higher Christian life and the renewal of the church. In addition, Pietism, while emphasizing the importance of Christian practice over mere dogmatic confession, did not neglect higher learning. For example, Spener played an influential role in the founding of the University of Halle.³⁷

It was after a visit to Halle that Johann A. Bengel was inspired "with zeal for practical religion."³⁸ Bengel's importance both as a precursor to historical and textual criticism³⁹ and for his influence on Wesley are well known and need not be examined in detail here. What we wish to observe is Wesley's specific reference in his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* to Bengel's *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*. In the "Preface" to the *Explanatory Notes*, Wesley states: "Many of his excellent notes I have therefore translated, many more I have abridged."⁴⁰ In addition, Wesley cites the influence of Heylyn's *Theological Lectures*, Guyse's *Family Expositor*, and the works of Philip Doddridge.⁴¹

In utilizing the works of scholars, such as Bengel, Wesley explains that his purpose for the notes is "for plain, unlettered men [sic.], who understand only their mother tongue, and yet reverence and love the word

³⁵See F. E. Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Studies in the History of Religion; Leiden: Brill, 1971).

³⁶*Ibid.*, 24-108.

³⁷N. Sykes, "The Religion of the Protestants," *Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3: *The West From the Reformation to the Present Day*, ed. S. L. Greenslade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 191-2.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 192.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1941), 7.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 8.

of God, and have a desire to save souls.”⁴² At the same time, although Wesley is not writing extensive commentaries for the benefit of scholars, he mentions his own forays into translation and textual criticism, possibly dependent on the work of Bengel:

First, to set down the text itself, for the most part, in the common English translation, which is, in general, so far as I can judge, abundantly the best that I have seen. Yet I do not say it is incapable of being brought, in several places, nearer to the original. Neither will I affirm that the Greek copies from which this translation is made are always the most correct: and therefore I shall take the liberty, as occasion may require, to make here and there a small alteration.⁴³

In addition to Wesley’s textual concerns, the notes themselves sometimes demonstrate a degree of critical judgment which would not necessarily have been expected. While he is certainly pre-critical in the sense that he does not apply current canons of tradition and historical criticism,⁴⁴ he is not a-critical.⁴⁵ For example, Wesley is not necessarily a harmonizer. Note his comments on Mt. 1:1, when he compares the genealogy of Matthew with Luke’s account.

If there were any difficulties in this genealogy, or that given by St. Luke, which could not easily be removed, they would rather affect the Jewish Tables, than the credit of the evangelists: for they act only as historians, setting down these genealogies, as they stood in those public and allowed records.

⁴²Ibid., 6. We see here another example of how a Wesleyan reading is “characterized by soteriological aims” (Green, “Reading the Bible as Wesleyans, 125), with constant attention paid to the “scripture way of salvation” (Ibid., 127). In short, Wesley’s purpose in writing his *Explanatory Notes* was to provide Methodist preachers with the tools to proclaim more effectively the gospel of salvation.

⁴³Wesley, *Explanatory Notes*, 6.

⁴⁴“Pre-critical” in the sense of historical-critical. Green’s critique that (1) it is anachronistic to apply the term “pre-critical” to Wesley since it assumes only our methods are correct and (2) that Wesley was much more a participant in the Enlightenment than is often noted are accurate. Thus, I differentiate between being “pre-critical” and “a-critical.” I agree with Green that underlying the disparagement of Wesley’s understanding and use of Scripture is “the fallacy of presentism, the erroneous assumption that our methods and state of knowledge always evolve into higher forms.” See “Reading the Bible as Wesleyans,” 120.

⁴⁵Ibid., 121.

Nor was it needful they should correct the mistakes, if there were any. For these accounts sufficiently answer the end for which they are recited.⁴⁶

Thus, we find no speculation about whether Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, while Luke gives that of Mary's family. Rather, the possibility of a mistake is acknowledged, although it is not laid at the hands of the evangelists. The word of God, however, is not threatened if, in this instance, Matthew and Luke were dependent on sources and copied down the mistakes before them.

While Wesley could show remarkably good critical judgment in some instances, in others his notes are inadequate. One of the more unfortunate results of Wesley's reliance on Bengel is found in his treatment of the Apocalypse. Here, Wesley admits to special dependence on the German scholar,⁴⁷ whose comments on Revelation are, perhaps, among the most eccentric in the history of exegesis.⁴⁸ Wesley seems unaware, perhaps as a result of the haste in which he produced his *Explanatory Notes*,⁴⁹ of the work of seventeenth century Spanish Jesuits, particularly Luis de Alcazar, who pioneered critical understanding of Revelation.⁵⁰ Yet, despite its weaknesses, Wesley's *Explanatory Notes* made some of the best of pietistic scholarship available to a general public, albeit in condensed format.

Even more significant than Wesley, however, is the Methodist biblical commentator Adam Clarke. Again, from the perspective of historical criticism, Clarke is a pre-critical figure whose work has been largely superseded. Nevertheless, Wesleyan biblical scholars of today may find a worthy paradigm in his approach. Clarke was highly learned for his day, knowing some twenty languages and dialects. He was especially adept in the use of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew and was an early specialist in Arabic. He also translated an obscure Coptic inscription from the Rosetta Stone.⁵¹

⁴⁶Wesley, *Explanatory Notes*, 15.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 932.

⁴⁸See W. Bousset, *Offenbarung Johannis*, 2nd ed. (KEK 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906), 101; A. W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 79-80.

⁴⁹T. L. Smith, "Notes on the Exegesis of John Wesley's 'Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament,'" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16:1 (1981), 107.

⁵⁰Bousset, *Offenbarung Johannis*, 93-94; Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 63.

⁵¹F. Jeffrey, "Clarke, Adam," *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974), 1:517.

Yet, the primary focus of his *Commentary and Critical Notes* emerged out of his own concerns as a preacher and evangelist, and was to provide a useful tool for Methodist clergy, as he himself stated in his preface:

My tide is turned; life is fast ebbing out. . . . I wish to assist my fellow labourers in the vineyard to lead men [sic.] to HIM who is the Fountain of all excellence, goodness, truth and happiness; to magnify His law and make it honourable; to show wonderful provision made in His gospel for the recovery of salvation to a sinful world.⁵²

That he succeeded is seen in the fact that Clarke's *Commentary* was a standard work for Methodists for about a century.

Although he was naturally unaware of the critical developments that would occur in the nineteenth century, and was unable to utilize archaeological discoveries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Clarke endeavored to employ the best resources available to him. This fact is evidenced in his preface, where he makes reference to Jewish, Catholic, and Unitarian resources, as well as Bengel and other standard pietistic works.⁵³ He was willing to make bold assertions, based on his understanding of both the biblical text and cognate studies, unbound by tradition. One example is found in his interpretation of the "serpent" of Gen. 3. Clarke is not sensitive to the role of talking animals in folklore,⁵⁴ and is overly literal in his interpretation of the serpent's upright stance. The result is that, through alleged parallels with Arabic, Clarke deduces that the animal in Gen. 3 is actually an orangutan.⁵⁵ While we do not agree with his conclusion, Clarke demonstrates a willingness to engage in bold, critical judgment in the attempt to shed new light on a well-known Scripture text.

A more satisfactory analysis is found in Clarke's exegesis of the Song of Solomon. He rejects an allegorical interpretation, which sees the book as symbolic of God or Christ's love for the church. Rather, Clarke interprets it as a Hebrew ode, with no reference to Christ and the church.⁵⁶ Attempts to transform the poem into an allegory of Christ and

⁵²A. Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . With a Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1824), 1:15.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 1:4-12.

⁵⁴C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 237-239.

⁵⁵A. Clarke, *Commentary*, 1:47-50.

⁵⁶Clarke, *Commentary* 3:844.

the church are rejected as Origenist.⁵⁷ While most scholars today would agree with Clarke's decision, in the early nineteenth century this conclusion would have been somewhat controversial.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Clarke does not refrain from critical, even controversial judgment. A further example of Clarke's critical analysis is found in his comments on 2 Kgs. 24:8, which states that Jehoiachin was eighteen at the beginning of his reign. In 2 Chron. 26:9, he is only eight. Clarke unequivocally states that the text of Chronicles is mistaken.⁵⁹ Again, as in Wesley's comments on the genealogies of Matthew and Luke, we see no effort to harmonize contradictory accounts.

Yet, if Clarke could be daring, if eccentric, in his interpretation of Gen. 3 and show good judgment regarding the Song of Solomon and 2 Kgs. 24:8 and 2 Chron. 26:9, his interpretation of Rom. 7 truly foreshadows later critical judgments of the twentieth century. Clarke recognizes that Rom. 7:7-25 comment on the state of humanity described in Rom. 7:5, while Rom. 8:1 picks up the argument found in 7:6.⁶⁰ Thus, Rom. 7:7-25 does not describe the Christian's condition. Here, Clarke anticipates W. G. Kummel's groundbreaking work,⁶¹ although, unlike Kummel, Clarke sees Rom. 7:7-25 as autobiographical of Paul's pre-Christian state.⁶²

Conclusions

From the above analysis, what may we conclude regarding the significance of the examples of Wesley and Clarke for contemporary Wesleyan biblical scholars? Perhaps the most important conclusion is the way they illustrate Wall's concern that we interpret Scripture "in light of its current ecclesial role," which bears witness to God's word and work in history and so intends to form "the theological understanding of those

⁵⁷Ibid., 845.

⁵⁸See Clarke's reference in *Commentary* 1:6, where he refers to the dependence of "modern" exegetical works on the Song of Solomon upon Apponius and his predecessors. In opposition to the consensus of his time (ibid., 3:843), Clarke adopts the more correct view that the Song of Solomon is an Ode (ibid., 844).

⁵⁹Ibid., 2:567.

⁶⁰Ibid., 6:82, 93.

⁶¹*Römer 7 und die Bekhrung des Paulus* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1929).

⁶²A view similar to Clarke's, it should be noted, is accepted by G. Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 177-265.

who in faith submit to Scripture as ‘the Word of the Lord Almighty’ for today.”⁶³ In Wesley and Clarke we see two individuals with deep evangelistic and pastoral concern who, nevertheless, attempt and desire to make the results of the best of biblical scholarship available to the church in a manner which would both educate and edify believers.⁶⁴ In short, we see church people employing biblical scholarship in service to the church. Academic biblical studies did not constitute a world divorced from the church, answerable only to the guild of scholars, with little or no concern for the life of the believing community. At the same time, there was a willingness to present honest, critical judgments. Critical scholarship does not require either hostility between the church and biblical specialists or the former being patronized by the latter.

We are, therefore, presented with a paradigm in which the church and biblical scholarship reinforce and nurture one another. Today, the same goal may be accomplished through the employment of various tools, including Wall’s adaptation of Sanders’ “tool of the triangle.”⁶⁵ When scholars recognize that they are members of a larger community, and that the church has legitimate concerns in the interpretation of its sacred text, biblical studies become an extremely practical and exciting field of study. Such an approach requires a serious shift away from the historicism that views, for example, New Testament theology as fundamentally a descriptive and historical discipline.⁶⁶ Instead, we need to consider full implementation of Green’s concern for an interdisciplinary dialogue which integrates fully the soteriological aims of the canon as a whole, thereby

⁶³Wall, “The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies,” 104.

⁶⁴Thereby exemplifying Wall’s criteria for the “strong interpreter,” i.e., the person who is both academically trained and competent, as well as spiritually mature (see *ibid.*, 107).

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 111-114.

⁶⁶As expressed in W. Wrede’s classic essay, “The Task and Methods of ‘New Testament Theology,’” in *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, edited by R. Morgan (SBT 2nd series, 25; Naperville, Ill. Alec R. Allenson, 1973), 68-116. Indeed, Wall’s concern for “*text centered exegetical strategies* that seek to describe with critical precision the theological subject material of the biblical text in its final (i.e., canonical) form,” (“The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies,” 108), as well as his criticism of the academy’s neglect of biblical theology (*ibid.*, 109), are precisely the opposite of Wrede’s agenda, which sought to “liberate” New Testament studies from a concentration on the canon, and to study the New Testament documents as only a portion of the phenomenon known as “early Christianity.”

affirming the unified message and aim of Scripture.⁶⁷ The final result would be that biblical studies is no longer an academic exercise employed for the sake of career advancement. Rather, it becomes an integral part of working within the church as manifested by the Wesleyan tradition.

At the same time, scholars receive the credibility needed to legitimate a role as prophetic witnesses to the tradition.⁶⁸ When we read the prophets Amos, Micah, and even Jeremiah, what is striking is not that they stand outside the tradition, but within it, calling the people back to faithfulness to God. So it should be with biblical scholars. If we are to be viable prophetic witnesses in our day, we must stand in our tradition, not outside of it. Thus, through the insights provided by critical scholarship, we can indicate how these findings were presupposed and embodied in B. T. Roberts' advocacy of women's ordination,⁶⁹ as well as the examples of Catherine Booth and her daughters as nineteenth-century Christian feminist leaders.⁷⁰ Reinforcing the concerns of earlier holiness leaders regarding both social and spiritual ministry to the poor is another area in which Wesleyan biblical scholars may play an important role.⁷¹ Again, it is only as we work within and for the church that we will have credibility. To do so requires a reverential as well as a critical handling of Scripture. When both are combined, we can make a contribution to the church's understanding of the "living Word of God" for our time. When one or the other is neglected, however, both Scripture and biblical studies become in danger of neglect and perceived irrelevancy.⁷²

⁶⁷See Green, "Reading the Bible as Wesleyans," 127-128.

⁶⁸This concern appears to me to be expressed in different terms in Green, "Reading the Bible as Wesleyans," 121-124, especially when he points out that, "For Christians, Scripture has its primary referent *not* to 'the world of events behind the text' . . . but the nature of God and life before God" (123). Likewise, see Wall's statement that "the orienting concern of Wesleyan biblical studies should aim at nurturing an understanding of what Scripture teaches us about being Wesleyan and doing what Wesleyans ought" ("The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies," 115).

⁶⁹B. T. Roberts, *Ordaining Women* (Rochester, NY: Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1891).

⁷⁰D. W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 94-95.

⁷¹See Wall, "The Future of Wesleyan Biblical Studies," 114.

⁷²I would like to thank R. W. Wall and J. B. Green for their comments that have helped in the preparation of this response. Of course, any errors or inadequacies are my responsibility alone.



Dr. R. Hollis Gause

TRIBUTE TO DR. R. HOLLIS GAUSE¹

by

Steven J. Land

I know of no one who has for so many years more faithfully embodied in his person and work the theme of this historic joint session of the Wesleyan Theological Society and the Society for Pentecostal Studies—"Purity and Power: Revisioning the Holiness and Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements for the Twenty-First Century"—than R. Hollis Gause. Like John Wes-

¹This tribute was delivered on the occasion of the presentation to R. Hollis Gause of the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Society for Pentecostal Studies at the joint meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies and the Wesleyan Theological Society, Thursday, March 12, 1998, Cleveland, Tennessee.

ley, he has been *homo unius libris*, a man of one book. For both of these men the center of the Bible is the person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Gause has been Wesleyan in his long-time work on a polity of participation and formation of the whole people of God (see *Church of God Polity*, Pathway Press, 1958; revised, 1973). When he was asked to contribute a chapter to the book *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism* (Russell P. Spittler, ed., Baker, 1976), he focused on the need for purity of heart and life. From his emphasis on the ministry of women (*The Place of Women in the Body of Christ*, co-authored with his wife, Beulah, Pathway Press, 1983) to his decidedly Wesleyan-Pentecostal (non-dispensational) reading of the books of Revelation and Romans (*Revelation: God's Stamp of Sovereignty on History*, Pathway Press, 1982; *The Preaching of Paul, A Commentary on Romans*, Pathway Press, 1986), he has powerfully demonstrated the hermeneutical and ministerial effects of the confluence of the Holiness and Pentecostal streams of Christianity. He has given this gift to generations of students in hundreds of popular and scholarly articles, a collection of doctrinal meditations (*The Heritage Papers*, edited with Steven J. Land, Pathway Press, 1989), the outstanding Pentecostal work on soteriology (*Living in the Spirit: The Way of Salvation*, Pathway Press, 1980), and scores of Sunday School lessons over twenty years (1952-72) in the Adult Quarterly and Adult Teacher's Quarterly, which he and his wife produced.

Hollis Gause is the son of godly parents, Rev. and Mrs. R. Hollis Gause, Sr., who served faithfully for many years in the Pentecostal Holiness Church. While a teenager he followed his parents in transferring to the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee). One of his Pentecostal-Holiness aunts said to him, "I'd rather they brought you in a corpse!" Although transferring from the PH Church, as it was known then, he never lost the dual emphases of the title in his preaching, teaching, and writing.

On April 30, 1948, Hollis married Beulah Hunt and they later had a son, Valdane (Val). A devoted husband and father, the three of them are close to this day, although Beulah now has Alzheimer's disease. Hollis and Beulah ministered together in Lee College, the Church of God School of Theology (now the Church of God Theological Seminary), the local pastorate, and they co-authored a book and hundreds of Sunday School lessons.

Dr. Gause's educational background is an interesting theological mix of Reformed, Wesleyan, and mainline liberal Protestant influences. He graduated in 1942 from high school in Clinton, South Carolina, and in 1944 from Emmanuel College (then a junior college). He completed his undergraduate studies at Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina (1945) and then attended Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, graduating

with a B. D. in 1949 (this was changed to the M. Div. in 1971). He received his Ph.D. in New Testament from Emory University, where he wrote his dissertation on *The Lukan Transfiguration Account* (University Microfilms, 1975). Dr. Gause is known everywhere for his delightful and sometimes acerbic humor. When meeting with his dissertation committee he was asked if he realized that accepting his thesis would upset much of a received critical scholarship on this text. He replied, "That's O.K. with me!" He passed with high marks and the respect of those with whom he often differed theologically.

The Church of God ministry of Dr. Gause began in 1943, and he passed through the examinations and ranks to receive his ordained (third order in the Church of God) status in 1954. In addition to serving as the chief parliamentarian for the biannual general assemblies of the denomination for decades, he is informally recognized as the leading doctrinal authority in the church. But the focus of his professional ministry has been teaching, and thirty years of this has been invested at Lee College in Cleveland, Tennessee (1947-1975; 1982-1984), where he has served as instructor, Dean of the Bible Division, Registrar, Dean of the Division of Religion, Dean of the College, Department Chair and Professor. In 1975 he became the first Dean and Director of the Church of God School of Theology, having lobbied and worked behind the scenes for a long time to establish a seminary for the denomination. He served the Seminary as Dean from 1978 to 1980, was sent away to Warren, Michigan, to serve as Pastor and District Overseer from 1980-1982, and returned to the Seminary where he has served as Professor of Theological and New Testament Studies from 1982 to the present.

In his teaching and preaching in schools and revivals, in both national and international settings, he has consistently maintained a Wesleyan-Pentecostal stance and outlook on life and ministry. He has also done this in SPS where he was selected Vice President at the founding of the Society and became President the next year. A teacher and scholar with a self-deprecating sense of humor borne of true humility, he is a formidable test-giver known for his multiple-choice exams. If I wrote such a question concerning who he is, it might look like the following. The question: Dr. Hollis Gause is . . .

- A. Loving husband and father.
- B. Careful research scholar and creative writer.
- C. Demanding, engaging teacher.
- D. Powerful preacher of the Cross.
- E. All of the above.

The answer, of course, is “E.” He is stern, sturdy, and forgiving. He is a faithful friend, scholarly colleague, and father to many “sons and daughters in Zion” through whom he will bless the body of Christ until Jesus returns.

I close this tribute with a personal incident which reveals what is deepest in the motive and mission of this year’s recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. At a recent celebration of Dr. and Mrs. Gause’s fiftieth wedding anniversary, Sister Gause sat for most of the afternoon with her eyes fixed, head bowed in her wheel chair, apparently oblivious to all that was occurring around her. Near the end of the event, Dr. Gause asked me to read a love poem he had written to honor her and their marriage. It was so overwhelmingly personal and moving that he could not read it, and I could scarcely get it out myself. As I came to the concluding sentence, my voice broke and I paused, whereupon Sister Gause, having been moved upon by the Holy Spirit in the secret places known only to Him, lifted her head and began to sing, “The Way of the Cross Leads Home.” The Holy Spirit swept over and pierced through all of us as we were reminded that the deep resonances of Calvary and Pentecost will be sung in final everlasting resolution at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. May our hearts, along with Hollis and Beulah, remain in tune for that final harmonious celebration and may the Wesleyan and Pentecostal traditions be one. What God has joined together let no one put asunder!



Dr. David A. Seamands

TRIBUTE TO DR. DAVID A. SEAMANDS¹

by

Stephen A. Seamands

There are many reasons why we could pay tribute this evening to my father, Dr. David Seamands. Indeed he has been honored in many different settings for many different aspects of his life and ministry. But we are here this evening to pay tribute to him for being a reconciler, a bridge-builder between two members of the same family, two sisters who unfor-

¹This tribute was delivered on the occasion of the presentation to David Seamands of the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Wesleyan Theological Society at the joint meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies and the Wesleyan Theological Society, Thursday, March 12, 1998, Cleveland, Tennessee.

tunately had a rather nasty falling out with each other during the first decade of the twentieth century. We the members of the Society of Pentecostal Studies and the Wesleyan Theological Society are their children and grandchildren of those sisters.

Being a bridge-builder is not so difficult when people want bridges to be built. In fact, being a reconciler is fulfilling if you are working with two parties who desire reconciliation. But in 1962, when my father became the pastor of the Methodist Church in the Wesleyan-Holiness “Mecca” of Wilmore, Kentucky, the two sisters were just beginning to speak to each other again. Many of their children were not particularly happy about the new conversation. They were still determined to build walls, not bridges.

Being a bridge-builder, then, during those days in Wilmore—in the community, the church, at Asbury College and Seminary—was often to find oneself moving against the stream. To advocate holding out an olive branch to Pentecostals and Charismatics, and to go even further by suggesting that we Wesleyan-Holiness folks had something to learn from them, was not the way to get people to wave palm branches on your behalf. Thorn branches—yes. But not palm branches.

As a high school kid living in the parsonage, I sometimes watched my dad take the heat for what he was doing. At the time I had no idea how courageous he was and what, at least in our context, a pioneer he was. In February, 1966, he preached a sermon on a Sunday evening called “The Holy Spirit and the Healing of Our Damaged Emotions.” What he said that night about “damaged emotions” and “the healing of memories” (a phrase that he had first run across in the writings of Episcopalian charismatic, Agnes Sanford), is now old hat. But it wasn’t then.

When he got up to preach, sitting there in the congregation was an old holiness evangelist. We will call him Dr. Smith, not his real name. Dad had known him most of his life. In fact, when Dad was a boy growing up in Wilmore, Dr. Smith had nearly scared the life out of him with his preaching. And so Dad writes:

When I saw him in the congregation that evening, my heart sank. But I went ahead and preached the message that I felt God had given me. After the service, which was followed by a very wonderful time for many at the prayer altar, Dr. Smith remained seated in the congregation. I was busy praying with people at the altar, somewhere back in my mind, I was also

praying that he would leave. He didn't. Finally, he came up to the altar; and in his own inimitably gruff way, he said, "David, may I see you in your office?" All those images from the past arose and the frightened little boy inside of me followed the old man. As I sat down in my office, I felt somewhat like Moses must have before the fire and smoke of Sinai.

But much to my father's amazement, there was no fiery furnace that night. Instead, the old man spoke words of encouragement. "There were people in my ministry who I could never seem to help," he said. "They were sincere. Many of them were Spirit-filled. But they had problems. And no amount of advice or scripture or prayer seemed to set them free. David, I think you're on to something. Work on it. Develop it. Please keep preaching it!" He certainly did. And one of the eventual results was a book published in 1981 called *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, which now has sold over a million copies and has been translated into seventeen different languages.

I share this story because it gives a sense of the courage it took for my father to do some of the things he did. In 1972, as the charismatic movement was in full swing, my father self-published a little book based on some sermons he had preached called *Tongues: Psychic and Authentic*. Again, the middle way he sought to chart between charisphobia and charismania seems quite appropriate now, but it was quite radical then—at least in Wilmore. Throughout the book he praised God for what God was doing through this new movement: "There is no question that this [the new charismatic movement] is the most significant religious movement in America today. Every Spirit-filled Christian can do nothing but praise God for this gracious outpouring and pray that it will save both the church and the nation." He also chided his own Wesleyan-Holiness tradition by suggesting that these new movements of the Spirit were an indictment on it:

Do you know why we are having such a great interest in tongues in our particular evangelical circle? Because long ago we ceased being a real movement of the Holy Spirit and became rather a kind of mausoleum to preserve a particular doctrinal interpretation. . . . We have gone overboard on doctrinal correctness and intellectual accuracy and liturgical precision. We have so proscribed and proscribed the Holy Spirit and we are so sure of exactly how He does things and the

exact standards and convictions a man must have if he is to be filled with the Spirit, that we've lost the creative power of the Holy Spirit from our midst. Instead of creators, we are now curators. So God has allowed the neo-Pentecostals and the charismatics to come along in judgment upon us.

However, this 1972 volume was not a book in which the sword only cut one way. It was also full of cautions and warnings to charismatics. For instance:

As is often the case with a flood, there is driftwood afloat in the stream of the Spirit. Ninety-day wonders and new teachers seem to arise every day, giving new interpretations of the infilling Baptism of the Spirit and the imparting of his gifts. Enthusiasm and individual experience have become the criteria for truth. . . . Many charismatics, particularly in the early stages of their joyous experience, tend to overrate the gift of tongues and get it all out of proportion to the other more important gifts of the Spirit. They then tend to become spiritual prima donnas, upstaging everyone else and forgetting that they are but one member of the cast. . . . Have you received an authentic gift of tongues? We rejoice with you. But don't get clear out of balance. Stop making it paramount. You will discover after awhile that it is not the cure-all for everything in your life.... Paul infers in 1 Corinthians 13 that you are not to childishly overemphasize this blessing but are to keep growing and maturing in the things of the Spirit, making sure your overall motivation is love. It is unscriptural to overemphasize tongues and to make it the great yardstick of a person's spiritual life. This is what many of our charismatic friends do and it is causing great damage to the Body of Christ.

Throughout his ministry as pastor of the Wilmore United Methodist Church, Dad sought to create a community where the Wesleyan-Holiness and Pentecostal streams could flow together. There were times, especially during the early 1970s, when Asbury College and Asbury Theological Seminary were not exactly safe places for the growing number of charismatics who were showing up in Wilmore. In the Wilmore United Methodist Church they found a city of refuge. They felt welcomed there. The ceiling fans weren't lowered when they raised their hands in worship! Yet they also knew that they were going to be challenged, like everyone else, to grow up in Christ. One time Dad preached a sermon titled "My Lover's Quarrel with

the Charismatics” where he encouraged his charismatic friends to balance Word and Spirit, to learn to appreciate the natural as well as the supernatural, to desire the fruit of the Spirit as much as they desired spiritual gifts.

Outside of the Wilmore context, Dad frequently ministered with well-known charismatics like the Roman Catholic, Francis MacNutt. In the late 1960s he became acquainted with Oral Roberts. On more than one occasion he was a speaker at the newly formed Oral Roberts University. He was also a frequent speaker at Faith at Work meetings where the majority in attendance were charismatics. Throughout the decade of the 1970s Dad also spoke at numerous conferences on the Holy Spirit where he was one speaker among several who represented different perspectives. At one such conference in Georgia, he and Ralph Wilkerson, the brother of David Wilkerson and founder of Melodyland Christian Center, were the principal speakers. It was at that conference that a desperate, worn out, and at times even suicidal Methodist pastor named Mark Rutland was profoundly filled and empowered with the Holy Spirit. Later Mark would become a full-time evangelist and continues to minister all over the world. Whenever he speaks of that life-changing experience, Mark always says he is thankful that it happened at a conference where the two streams, Pentecostal and Holiness represented by Ralph Wilkerson and David Seamands, came together. That’s the way it should be, he says. Perhaps that’s why one of his books, *The Finger of God*, has as a subtitle, “Reuniting Power and Holiness in the Church.”

That brings us to this historic joint meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies and the Wesleyan Theological Society with its theme, “Purity and Power: Revisioning the Holiness and Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements for the Twenty-First Century.” It sounds very much like Mark Rutland’s subtitle, “Reuniting Power and Holiness in the Church.” And it makes us realize that, because of pioneer bridge-builders like you, Dad, we are finally able to have this meeting. The two sisters are doing more than just talking to each other or even tolerating each other. They are beginning to enjoy each other’s company, to realize they need each other, and, most importantly, how much the church and the world need their combined message of the Spirit-filled life. Praise God for that!

Let me conclude on a personal note. In the sixty-first Psalm, David praises God: “You have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.” I too am profoundly grateful for a father through whom God has given me that kind of a heritage.

Recently I was attending a conference in Kansas City when one of the speakers recognized his father who was in the audience and said of him, “It’s an awesome thing to have a father who is a man of God!” And as he said it to us that day about his father, this evening I want to say it to you about mine. It *is* an awesome thing to have a father who is a man of God. It surely is!

BOOK REVIEWS

Sherry Sherrod DuPree, *African-American Holiness Pentecostal Movement: An Annotated Bibliography*. Preface by Samuel S. Hill (New York: Garland Publishing House, 1996). 650 pps.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Associate Professor of Church History, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Until the work of Sherry DuPree, African-American Holiness Pentecostalism remained a bibliographic and prosopographical wasteland, even for those scholars who recognized the contributions of this tradition to the larger contexts of American Pentecostalism and to the expressions of Pentecostalism around the world. Both the documents and the people who constructed them did not enter the purview of academic or state institutions. The churches and denominational centers were too tentatively fixed on the American landscape to be afforded the luxury of documenting their lives and ministries so as to inform later generations. The stories of the vital and strategic roles of African-American Holiness denominations in American religion are only now being made available to scholars, due in no small part to the work of DuPree. Her first contribution was the important *Bibliographical Dictionary of African-American Holiness Pentecostals, 1880-1990* (Washington, D.C.: Middle Atlantic Regional Press, 1989). There she provided, frequently for the first time, prosopographical information on major figures of African-American Holiness Pentecostalism gleaned from official documents, obituaries, oral history interviews, and occasional printed sources. DuPree's publications significantly complement the quite different work of Charles E. Jones, *Black Holiness: A Guide to the Study of the Black Participation in Wesleyan Perfectionistic and Glossolalic Pentecostal Movements* (ATLA Bibliographic Series, Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1987).

The present volume constitutes an effort to provide a selective bibliographic introduction to the phenomenon. Anyone expecting a complete bibliography on African-American Holiness Pentecostalism will be disappointed. The 3,027 items chosen for annotations do not include many items that are widely known. For example, no books of theologians such as G. T. Haywood and Charles Sims are cited. Few religious education materials are cited despite the importance of these in the intellectual formation of the tradition. However, the volume provides access to selected material in a variety of genre: books, periodicals, dissertations, theses, phonograph records, audio tapes, music books, religious plays, films, television programs and archival resources. There are lists of references in Workers' Progress Administration Reports (Depression-era work for unemployed academics!), lists of materials from declassified FBI reports on African-American Pentecostal leaders (including C. H. Mason), and newspaper articles. It is clear that the scholar of African-American Holiness Pentecostalism must live by more than books! It is also clear, from the partial list of relevant repositories (pps. lvii-lvix), that one who would research this tradition must be prepared to travel.

From an examination of this massive compilation emerges both a sense of amazement at the extensive resources documentary of this religious tradition and an awareness of the gaps in our resources. A tradition that was thought to be undocumented has been proven otherwise. However, when one divides the 475 organizations listed (pps. 547-567) into the 3,027 entries, it is clear that even this massive assemblage of material gives but modest access to a very complex tradition. Not all of the denominations mentioned are African-American, but every major metropolitan area in the U.S.A. has dozens if not hundreds of independent African-American congregations and fledgling denominations of 5-50 congregations which are not included here. As well, most of the periodicals appear not to have survived. Even the early periodical publication of G. T. Haywood, *Voice in the Wilderness*, appears to have largely disappeared. Many local radio and television programs have not been archived.

The annotations vary significantly in both length and adequacy. However, the overall result provides unparalleled access to the African-American Holiness Pentecostal churches. The volume will long be a standard research tool for scholars of the Holiness and Pentecostal movements in the U.S.A. The gaps mentioned above do not detract in any way from DuPree's achievement, but are suggestions for further research, preservation, and expansion of the project of documenting the heritage of this important segment of the Christian community.

Paul James, *A Man on Fire: The Story of Maynard James* (Ikklestone, Derbyshire: Moorley's Print and Publishing, 1993). ISBN 0-86071-421-7. 190 pps.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Associate Professor of Church History, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Maynard James is a figure of mythical proportions among British Holiness and Pentecostal people. His career as a church leader and holiness ecumenist spans the greater part of the twentieth century. Born 17 April, 1902 at Bargoed, Wales, he died on 21 May, 1988. The years in between were largely devoted to the practices of radical holiness evangelism throughout Great Britain. His story is integrally tied in with the Church of the Nazarene in Britain, as can be seen by browsing in the volume by James' friend, Jack Ford, *In the Steps of John Wesley: The Church of the Nazarene in Britain* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1968). Ford's book is essential for understanding the context of James' life and ministry, especially as it evolved somewhat in tension with the North American Church of the Nazarene which worked to restrict his evangelism and his ecumenical contacts. The volume by Paul James might be read with some degree of doubt, given the long term anti-Pentecostal stance of the North American Church of the Nazarene, without the volume of Ford nearby. Ford provides the official documentation for much of the Maynard James story.

The stories of the North American Church of the Nazarene and the movements in Britain which would later merge with the U.S. denomination were significantly influenced through contact with the Pentecostal movement. The initial reaction in Britain as in the United States was to shun the new movement, declare it unscriptural, and hope that it would disappear. In Britain, however, a different approach came to be taken after 1934 by a group of young radical holiness evangelists who understood the significance of the recognition of spiritual gifts, including glossolalia, for effective evangelism. Jack Ford, Maynard James, Leonard Ravenhill, and Clifford Filer were initially celebrated for their effective evangelism, and then forced to choose between openness to spiritual gifts and remaining in the International Holiness Mission. They chose to withdraw and form the Calvary Holiness Church. The deprivations of the war years and the decimation of the youth of Britain in the war, as well as the general turn from religion in Europe during and after the war, made life difficult for the small twenty-seven congregation holiness denomination. In 1950 discussions began with the Church of the Nazarene and the International Holi-

ness Mission. In the negotiation with the American denomination, permission was given to continue the exercise of spiritual gifts as encouraged within the Calvary Holiness Church (see Ford, 171-174, *et passim*). Paul James provides additional documentation and describes the role of his father in the events as described by Ford.

The “rest of the story” evolves in the passionate but sober narrative of the post-1968 years. It was the rise of the charismatic movement which provoked the next crisis. Most of the British Nazarenes were initially loath to treat the new Pentecostal expression of Christian spirituality the way they had treated the earlier revivals. The earlier attitudes had left the holiness churches small and generally irrelevant in the larger British and global revival of the first third of the century. However, the American Church of the Nazarene had no such hesitations and forced the British church to accept the North American anti-Pentecostal, anti-Charismatic position (pps. 143-150 *et passim*). Unbowed, James wrote in November 1976, “Injunctions to forbid any form of tongues-speaking and praying, whether in private or public, are bound to grieve the Holy Spirit” (p. 150). Maynard James and Samuel Chadwick [through his 1932 book, *The Way to Pentecost*] were significant Wesleyan/Holiness influences in the early evolution of the Charismatic movement in Britain. The *World Christian Encyclopedia* (1980) states that there were 7,926 Nazarenes in the United Kingdom and about 160,000 Pentecostals. Developments since that time have been even more dramatic. Recent statistics suggest there may be as many as one million Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians in Britain and Ireland. While numbers alone do not validate or invalidate a tradition, they do, taken within the framework of the narrative of James’ life and ministry, pose serious questions of missiology, ecclesiology, and theology.

For these reasons, the biography of Maynard James is an important book for all Wesleyan/Holiness scholars interested in mission, church growth, and the intercultural transmission of ideas. There are lots of unanswered questions in the text, particularly with regard to the relationship of James, Ravenhill, and other holiness radicals to the healing and evangelism campaigns of George and Stephen Jeffreys, and the role of Cliff College on the evolution of James’ thought. One also wonders if the diaries and contributions to various Holiness and Charismatic periodicals would sustain reflection on the larger parameters of James’ theology and understanding of mission and evangelism. To note that these issues are not undertaken in the present volume is not to level criticism, but to suggest additional avenues of inquiry into the life and ministry of a remarkable person.

Theodore Runyon. 1998. *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 270 pp. ISBN 0-687-09602-2

Reviewed by Henry H. Knight III, Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri.

In this comprehensive and readable study of the theology of John Wesley, Theodore Runyon not only provides a thorough introduction to Wesley's theology, but utilizes the theme of "new creation" to shed fresh light on the inner logic of Wesley's thought. In the process, he makes several highly significant contributions to our understanding of Wesley's theology.

Runyon's approach to Wesley developed as he investigated the origins of Wesleyan social witness. What he discovered is that social action could not be understood apart from Wesley's theological vision of a new creation, in which God transforms human life in all its personal and social dimensions. While cosmic in scope, the soteriological focus of this new creation is the restoration of the *imago Dei* through the sanctifying grace of God. This he discusses in the introduction to the book.

Within this creation-to-eschaton framework Runyon provides three chapters which trace Wesley's way of salvation. He devotes one chapter to the renewal of the image of God and original sin, then in the next two moves from prevenient grace to Christian perfection. Rather than devote separate chapters to Wesley's understanding of creation, Trinity, Christ, and Spirit, Runyon discusses these topics as he unfolds the way of salvation. These chapters are followed by one on the means of grace, including extensive treatment of societies, classes, bands, the discipline, and the sacraments. There are then separate chapters on religious experience ("orthopathy"), ecumenism and social witness, and rethinking sanctification.

This book makes at least three major contributions to Wesleyan studies. The first is Runyon's extensive discussion of faith as a "spiritual sense." Describing justification and regeneration as "an *epistemological* event that opens up a new way of knowing" (p. 80), Runyon shows how Wesley modifies Locke's empiricist epistemology to serve his theological purposes. While Wesley's spiritual sense epistemology has been recognized, Runyon's discussion considerably deepens our understanding of it.

Second is the morphology of religious experience provided in the chapter on orthopathy. Arguing that nineteenth-century Methodism lost both the source and aim of experience by reducing it to subjectivity, Run-

yon sees Wesley as adopting a sacramental model in which, through the spiritual senses, one experiences God as one participates in the means of grace. He provides six marks of orthopathic Christian experience: “it must *transcend subjectivism*,” that is, it “must have its source in God” (p. 161); it “is *inevitably transforming*” (p. 162); it is *social, rational, sacramental, and teleological*.

A third contribution is Runyon’s analysis of the implications of Wesley’s theology for today. Here he examines the contemporary issues of human rights, poverty, rights of women, the environment, ecumenism, and religious pluralism from a Wesleyan standpoint. The section on ecumenism includes a helpful survey of the diverse traditions which influenced Wesley. While the first three issues draw upon Wesley’s explicit views in the eighteenth century, Runyon creatively applies Wesley’s thought to the environment and religious pluralism, demonstrating its usefulness in addressing concerns that have arisen in our own century.

It is on the topic of Christian perfection that Runyon seems most uncomfortable with Wesley’s formulations. Fearing that Wesley’s use of substantive language undercuts the fundamentally relational nature of salvation, he proposes to rethink Christian perfection as participating in and reflecting in our own lives the perfect love we receive from God. This shifts the emphasis from self to God, and from a quality we possess to a relationship we have. Such love, reflected into the world, necessarily serves as a critical principle which identifies and seeks to combat injustice. This implies a perfection that is always growing. What keeps this relationship “perfect” is not the elimination of some substance—an “evil root”—but a covenant commitment analogous to a marriage covenant. Envisioned in this manner, Christian perfection is an imparted righteousness without the misunderstandings associated with an instantaneous eradication of something in the soul.

This is an intriguing proposal. It certainly retains the heart and goal of Wesley’s soteriology, which Runyon sees as a significant contribution to the church. It will, of course, be controversial. Let me note several avenues of further discussion.

First, Runyon suggests covenant commitment as a way to maintain this perfect/perfecting relationship. How is this like or unlike the entire consecration which is the initial step in Phoebe Palmer’s theology of sanctification? While clearly not endorsing her “shorter way,” Runyon here may be proposing a parallel insight.

Second, what Runyon describes as Christian perfection seems much like what Wesley would call growing in perfection, the gradual growth which follows entire sanctification. How then does one move from growth in sanctification to growth in perfection without some sort of turning point from one to the other? Is covenant commitment on our part that turning point? Or does it require divine action?

Finally, Runyon seeks to avoid Wesley's language of "holy tempers" because he doesn't see them as relational (p. 223). This is at odds with the contemporary appropriation of the language of affections/tempers by many Wesley scholars as a key to understanding Wesleyan sanctification. One central insight of this reading of Wesley is that tempers are both dispositions of the heart and yet necessarily relational—that is, they are somewhat like virtues "possessed" by one's character, but only insofar as one participates in a relationship with God. The language of tempers as used by Wesley, rather than drawing us away from relationship, may presuppose it..

The issues raised by Runyon only enhance the value of his compelling interpretation of Wesley's theology. The vitality and dynamism of this work are themselves the best arguments for the Wesleyan tradition. It will enable a new generation of Wesleyan students, pastors, and scholars to think faithfully and creatively about the issues of today, and to deepen their appreciation for the theological insights of John Wesley.

Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (2nd edition; Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), xi, 340 pps.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Associate Professor of Church History, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Vinson Synan, Dean of the School of Divinity at Regent University (Virginia Beach, Virginia) has during the past three decades made crucial contributions to the study of the Wesleyan/Holiness and Pentecostal movements. These have included the first edition of the present volume published in 1971, being an organizer of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, and being the first Pentecostal to be invited to lecture at Asbury Theological Seminary—albeit by the editor of the student newspaper! His restatement and refining of the thesis first argued by Paul Fleisch [*Die Moderne Gemeinschaftsbewegung in Deutschland, Band 3: Die Geschichte der deutschen Gemeinschaftsbewegung bis zum Auftreten des Zungenredens (1875-1907)*] (Leipzig: H. G. Wallman, 1912, reprinted New York: Garland, 1985)] that the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition evolved out of Methodism and that Pentecostalism evolved out of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement has had an enduring value. Others on both the Holiness and Pentecostal sides have attempted for various reasons either deny or ignore this thesis, but its has been sustained. Synan's own denomination, the Pentecostal Holiness Church gave him first-hand experience in the life, spirituality, and ethos of the sister traditions.

To label this volume a second edition is a bit of an understatement. In a period when authors and publishers often foist off old material dressed up only by a new title or a new preface, Synan has made the effort to radically rewrite this volume. Within the chapters revised from the first edition, many of the changes are in the notes and documentation, but there are also changes in the text. It is truly a second edition and a necessary complement to the older work.

Synan traces the evolution of early American Methodism, the development of the National Holiness Association, the rise of the Fire-Baptized groups on the radical edge of the tradition as well as the Pentecostal Churches of God. The move toward the American South is described in Chapter six. The discussion of Pentecostal missions, "Missionaries of the One Way Ticket," is completely new. The same is true for most of the chapter entitled "Pentecostals in Society" which often now breaks the bounds of the self-imposed 1901-1960 limit. Of particular significance are the chapters on the "Neo-Pentecostal Movement," the "Catholic Charismatic Movement" and "The Charismatic Explosion." The

chapters dealing with the events after 1970 are all the more interesting because of the personal involvement of Synan in many of them. The interaction with selected scholarly literature about the period aides in the retention of objectivity, although most readers will find this quite an optimistic treatment of the period.

It is indeed an act of courage to write a single volume about a tradition that includes about 450 million adherents, in nearly every nation, with differing traditions and complex histories. Synan makes an effort at global awareness, but the volume should probably include the limitation "in the United States" as part of the title. I think that a volume that takes seriously the development of Pentecostalism in Asia, Europe, and especially Latin America and Africa would have quite different contours.

Another issue relates not only to the present volume, but is a problem when the Fleisch thesis is presented. It is as though the Wesleyan/Holiness movement went out of business in 1906! There is sparse mention and no treatment of the rise of Wesleyan/Holiness denominations that did not become Pentecostal or of their ongoing ministries around the world. For example, in the chapter on the Churches of God, the movement with general offices in Anderson, Indiana, is not even mentioned. The influence of the Wesleyan/Holiness movement within Catholicism, Methodism, and "Evangelicalism," as well as among Baptists, Unitarians, Mormons, Mennonites, Quakers, Presbyterians, and other denominations is also not mentioned.

Another conundrum facing anyone writing such a history is the history of missions. The chapter mentions aspects of the arrival of Pentecostalism in various countries, but does not look at the *Vorlage* in the various contexts which facilitated the arrival of Pentecostalism. There is no explication of the theoretical structures which undergirded the Pentecostal and Wesleyan/Holiness missions before the development of the large, well-funded Board of the United States after the World War II imperial era.

These historiographical musing are not meant to detract from the remarkable book at hand. It is by far the best survey of the history and theology of the Holiness, Pentecostal, and Charismatic movements. It also has the virtue of being readable for those outside the tradition. There is sufficient detail, a high degree of accuracy, and good recommendations of bibliography. However, the book highlights the problems inherent in writing about a global, multi-cultural, diverse tradition. Whenever some Holiness/Pentecostal/Charismatic xenophile attempts to write the larger story of the advance of this tradition, that writer will be wise to begin with this volume! In the meantime, we are in the debt of Synan for this remarkable achievement.

John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. 269 pp.

Reviewed by Joe L. Coker, Princeton Theological Seminary

The latest title in the “Religion in America Series” of Oxford University Press explores the phenomenal growth enjoyed by American Methodism during the half-century following the Revolutionary War. John Wigger seeks to explain how unique characteristics of American Methodism allowed it to thrive amidst the cultural upheaval of the post-Revolution era and to become the most influential popular religious movement of the early Republic. He uses as his starting point the thesis of Nathan Hatch that popular religious movements were key agents in the formation of early American democratic culture. Wigger goes a step further and argues that Methodism was the single most significant popular religious force during the formative years of the Republic, doing more than any other group or movement to shape popular culture in early America.

Wigger notes that Methodism’s early expansion stemmed in part from changes taking place in early American society that benefited many popular religious movements of the time. But he also argues that certain elements of Methodist faith and practice made it uniquely suited to tap into and release “elements of popular religious enthusiasm long latent in American Christianity” (105). Key among these elements were the itinerant system, the class meeting, the love feast, and the quarterly meeting. During the post-Revolutionary era common folk experienced unprecedented mobility, both geographic and social. Wigger argues that the itinerant Methodist preacher, hailing from the artisan class and ever on the move, had a unique appeal to the masses in early America.

Wigger also seeks to dispel the common perception that camp meetings were the key to early Methodist growth, arguing that Methodism’s grassroots popularity predated the camp meeting and owes much more to the class meeting and the quarterly meeting. These events allowed for control of the church by local laypersons and gave Methodism its “communal character” (85). These local meetings also allowed Methodists to experience unprecedented outpourings of spiritual emotion. Wigger believes that this freedom of ecstatic spiritual expression, along with Methodism’s deep commitment to the idea of supernatural intervention in

daily life, are important but frequently overlooked keys to understanding the broad popular appeal of early Methodism.

Wigger devotes two chapters to another source of Methodism's popular appeal, its acceptance of African-Americans and women. While most denominations in the post-Revolutionary era treated women and blacks as second-class citizens even within the church, Methodism welcomed them into the fold as spiritual equals, often affording them opportunities that the larger society denied them. African-Americans became Methodist exhorters and preachers and did much to shape the worship of early Methodists, both black and white. Likewise, many women found in Methodism their first opportunity to gain a voice in society as exhorters and class leaders. According to Wigger, it was women who formed the backbone of Methodism's community networks, providing the lodging and hospitality without which the itinerant system could not have functioned.

Though Methodism continued to grow in the years following 1820, Wigger discerns a fundamental change in the denomination's character after that date. As the social status of American Methodism began to increase in the early nineteenth century, the denomination's egalitarian attitude towards having women and blacks in leadership roles began to decrease. Likewise Methodists in the 1820s and after began to emphasize less and less those elements that Wigger believes had been the source of their early popular appeal, i.e. class meetings, quarterly meetings, love feasts, and the itinerant system. Wigger's work chronicles not only the rise of Methodism as a popular religious movement, but also its decline as one.

Wigger's book provides both a useful overview of the character and vitality of early American Methodism and a valuable contribution to scholarly understanding of the interconnectedness of Methodism and American culture in the early Republic. His work is filled with the voices of early Methodists, male and female, black and white, lay and clergy. The ensemble cast allows the reader to get a taste of the powerful popular appeal Methodism had to common people in the early Republic. As a contribution to the scholarly understanding of the interplay between religion and culture, Wigger's work offers significant evidence to demonstrate that Methodism was not only shaped by the emerging culture of the young Republic, but that Methodism played a key role in shaping that culture.

Announcing the . . .

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ENDOWMENT FUND**

Established by the Society, November, 1995

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2. The Executive Committee of the Wesleyan Theological Society oversees the endowment fund, which is managed by the Secretary-Treasurer of the Society.

3. The principal of the endowment fund shall at all times be kept intact. The interest income from the principal is to be disbursed annually as follows: Up to ninety percent of the annual interest income may be used to supplement the general operating budget of the Society; and at least ten percent of the annual interest income is used to increase the principal of the fund.

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5. If the Wesleyan Theological Society should be disbanded, the Executive Committee will decide how the remaining endowment fund assets should be disbursed for the purpose of enhancing scholarship among the Wesleyan/Holiness traditions.

Contributions should be directed to: the Society's Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. William Kostlevy, c/o Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky 40390. For further information, call Dr. Kostlevy at 606-858-2235 or email him at this address: bill_kostlevy@ats.wilmore.ky.us

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