

# ***Wesleyan Theological Journal***

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

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

### Issue Overview

This journal issue can be approached by the reader noting a series of questions, each led by the last name of an author found herein who addresses the question at length.

- Warner: How might today's Christian mission be informed by the evangelistic witness of three women in the history of the Wesleyan tradition?
- Snyder: How and why did Pandita Ramabai's journey intersect with the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition?
- Collins: Is it time to explode a "myth" concerning John Wesley's soteriology?
- Guyette: Are you looking for a good restatement of the threefold office of Jesus Christ?
- Tyson: Might involvement of Christians in today's politics be enhanced with a better understanding of John Wesley's critique of "liberal democracy"?
- Ingersol: Do you agree that Nazarenes and fundamentalists are "strange bedfellows"?
- Strong: How did Henry Clay Morrison transform the holiness movement within Methodism?
- Dunning: Would the atonement be understood better through use of a more personal paradigm?
- Gallien: What about "Christian perfection" in revivals at Oberlin and Wheaton?
- King: Does a fresh perspective on glossolalia emerge from studying the stance of the early Christian and Missionary Alliance?
- Hamilton: How might a mere footnote in Methodist history, the "Eternal Sonship" controversy, inform theological dialogue today?
- Walker: How might the likenesses of fellow Anglicans John Wesley and T. S. Eliot be instructive?

### Meetings of the Wesleyan Theological Society

The 2005 annual meeting of the Society convened March 3-5 on the campus of Seattle Pacific University in Seattle, Washington. The 2006 annual meeting will convene on the campus of Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, March 2-4, 2006. Between these meetings there was convened in South Korea a significant international gathering co-sponsored by the WTS. Following is a brief report of this gathering.

## A Special Report

### A 2005 International Meeting: The Wesleyan Theological Society and Seoul Theological University

by William Kostlevy

“Wesley, Holiness and Culture: Trans-Pacific Perspectives for the Twenty-First Century” was the theme of a joint international conference of the Wesleyan Theological Society and Seoul Theological University (STU) in cooperation with Sungkyul University, Korean Nazarene University, and OMS, International. The WTS is particularly grateful for the financial support of the conference provided by the Korea Evangelical Holiness Church and the Korea Evangelical Holiness Church Historical Research Center directed by Dr. Myung Soo Park, STU.

Papers were presented by scholars from five countries, including Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, and the United States. Highlights of the conference included papers presented by Chongnahm (John) Cho, president emeritus of STU, internationally known Wesleyan scholar Donald W. Dayton, Myung Soo Park, Seung-an Im, president Korea Nazarene University, Lisa Dorsey, Shield of Faith Church, Altadena, CA, Donald Thorsen, and John Park, Azusa Pacific University, and Scott Kisker, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

Nearly half of the papers were presented by past and present students of Donald W. Dayton. The conference naturally explored and expanded on themes developed by Dayton, such as the four-fold gospel. Fittingly for a gathering in South Korea, many papers dealt with Korean and Asian themes, including comparative studies of Wesleyan and Confucian concepts.

Papers by Dawk-Mahn Bae, Bonjour Bay, and Moon-su Park introduced non-Koreans to the rich heritage of the evangelical Holiness Church. The role of the holiness rival in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Philippine Methodism was the theme of an important paper by Luther Oconer, Drew University.

Participants will long remember the tour of historic Korean church sites arranged and directed by Myung Soo Park that included visits to the burial grounds of early western missionaries, the Korea Christian Historical Museum, the historic first church of Korean Methodism, the Korean Salvation Army headquarters, and the Kilbourne Memorial Church located on the old campus of STU.

The hope is that one or more of the papers from this international conference will be published in a later issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*.

Barry L. Callen, Editor  
Anderson University,  
Fall 2005



# REDEMPTION AND RACE: THE EVANGELISTIC MINISTRY OF THREE WOMEN IN SOUTHERN METHODISM<sup>1</sup>

by

Lacey Warner

In a context of increasing secularization and congregational membership decline, the study of evangelism is a vital resource for the church. However, most studies related to the practice of evangelism have yet to give substantial attention to a group that forms over half the church's constituency.<sup>2</sup> Although women historically comprise the majority of church members and active participants in evangelistic ministries, their contributions are only beginning to be studied. One significant reason women are absent from categories of discourse related to evangelism stems from an understanding of evangelism as verbal proclamation, most often in the form of preaching—a practice to which women have had limited access.<sup>3</sup>

Reflection upon evangelistic practices of women contributes to the academic study of evangelism as well as the rediscovery of dimensions of ecclesial life within the Wesleyan tradition. The selected women in this

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<sup>1</sup>This research was made possible through the Lilly Theological Research Grants program and participation in the Summer Wesley Seminar, Duke Divinity School, May-June, 2004.

<sup>2</sup>Ann Braude, "Women's History *Is* American Religious History," *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 88–92.

<sup>3</sup>Dana Robert, ed., *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 20.

study—Dorothy Ripley (1767-1831), Belle Harris Bennett (1852-1922), and Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955)—contributed to evangelistic ministry within Southern Methodism during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A profound synthesis of verbal proclamation and compassionate ministries exemplified the good news in the ministries of these women. This article gives attention to the place of ministries of compassion, particularly efforts toward racial justice, among the evangelistic practices of each of these women.

Emphasized here is the need for the re-visioning of contemporary concepts of evangelism in light of these women's representative practices. First, the article will explore the truncated connotations of evangelism resulting in the bereavement of the term's full meaning. Second, a brief survey of literature in the academic study of evangelism will examine biblical foundations for the purpose of conceptualizing evangelism. Third, the article will demonstrate the significance of compassionate ministries, shaped either explicitly or implicitly by a Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification, to these women's evangelistic ministries, with a specific focus on those related to racial justice.

### Moving Beyond Evangelism's Bereavement

The use of the term "evangelism" has at times been estranged from its biblical foundations and employed in polemics. In contemporary usage, the language of evangelism can evoke images of massive religious gatherings orchestrated for the purpose of eliciting dramatic emotional responses or door-to-door visitation characterized by careful scripts composed to maximize the potential for persuasion and decision. As a result of such *techniques*, evangelism consistently has been narrowed to represent events of ecstatic climaxes or confrontational dialogues. While large revival gatherings and interpersonal communication may at times serve as effective means in the process of making disciples, such connotations of evangelism more often represent truncated understandings and practices when compared with the biblical and theological foundations that ideally form Christian ministry and life in the church.

The contemporary church tends to emphasize evangelism as verbal proclamation, a practice distinct from social reform.<sup>4</sup> A more nuanced

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<sup>4</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary* (second edition, 1989). According to the *OED*, although there was an early use (1600s) of a form of the term "evangelism," its broad usage seems demonstrable beginning in the nineteenth century.

theology and practice of evangelism is often not demonstrated by contemporary evangelistic ministries. One reason for this truncation is a shift away from theological reflection among those committed to practicing evangelistic ministry.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the language of evangelism throughout the Christian tradition has highlighted verbal proclamation. For example, in the English language, Wycliffe's second translation of the Bible in many cases replaced words beginning with *evangel* with terms related to preaching. In 1525, Tyndale retained terms related to preaching instead of terms related to evangelism. Tyndale's use of the term *preach* instead of *evangelize* was an effort to make the biblical text more accessible by using less scholarly and more vernacular language.<sup>6</sup> This practice continues to the present in many biblical translations.

The contemporary Protestant church in North America has inherited the sixteenth-century reformers' emphasis on proclamation.<sup>7</sup> In the eighteenth century, John Wesley used language related to the term evangelism to describe the ministries of verbal proclamation assumed by preachers, including women preachers. According to James Logan, "Wesley never employed the term 'evangelism' itself. This noun was simply not in currency in his day, though he did speak of his itinerant preachers as 'evangelists,' denoting their sole responsibility to preach."<sup>8</sup> Contemporary concepts of evangelism remain strongly rooted in the usage during the 1700s and 1800s, which focused on verbal proclamation.<sup>9</sup> The modern church's emphasis on verbal proclamation of the good news tends to conceptualize evangelism as a practice distinct from social reform and works of charity or mercy. This occurs in part as a result of the early twentieth-century Fundamentalist-Modernist polemic. However, Wesley's early Methodist movement and the ministries of many who followed in the nineteenth

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<sup>5</sup>William Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 9. John Wesley (1703-1791) and Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) are among the last strong theologians associated with the practice of evangelism. Although an astute thinker and significant contributor to evangelistic practice, Charles Finney's (1792-1875) impatience with the academy represents the beginning of a major shift from serious theological reflection on evangelism by practitioners.

<sup>6</sup>David Barrett, *Evangelize! An Historical Survey of the Concept* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1987), 22.

<sup>7</sup>Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, 92.

<sup>8</sup>James Logan, "Offering Christ: Wesleyan Evangelism Today," in *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998), 118.

<sup>9</sup>See Barrett, *Evangelize! An Historical Survey of the Concept*.

century assumed a variety of compassionate ministries in addition to verbal proclamation for the purpose of sharing the good news.

In addition to the emphasis on evangelism as verbal proclamation was the focus on the primacy of personal holiness within North American Protestantism during the middle and late nineteenth century. This myopic focus on personal holiness led to a common separation of social reform from evangelistic ministries as the Social Gospel and Fundamentalist movements grew more estranged from one another. The increasing separation culminated in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the early twentieth century. Despite limitations on their recognized social and ecclesiastic roles, the ministries of women and people of color—such as Ripley, Bennett, and McLeod<sup>10</sup>—exemplified greater wholeness leading up to and during the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in evangelistic social reform, contrasting with the general trend of fragmentation.<sup>11</sup>

Another dynamic resulting in the truncation of understandings and practices of evangelism is the exclusion of voices—such as women. One significant reason women are absent from categories of discourse related to evangelism stems from concepts of evangelism limited to verbal proclamation, most often in the form of preaching.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the Christian tradition, women's access to the role of preacher has been limited. Studies in the use of language related to the term evangelism emphasize the clear connection of evangelism with the practice of preaching the gospel.<sup>13</sup> However, biblical foundations such as Luke and Paul developed the term

<sup>10</sup>In following references to Mary McLeod Bethune, Bethune we will used to provide consistency within her biographical narrative.

<sup>11</sup>See Jean Miller Schmidt, "Reexamining the Public/Private Split: Reforming the Continent and Spreading Scriptural Holiness," in *Perspectives on American Methodism*, eds. Russell Richey, et. al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993); Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976), chapters 8-10; and Doug Strong's nuanced argument building on Dayton and others in "The Crusade for Women's Rights and the Formative Antecedents of the Holiness Movement," in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 27 (1992).

<sup>12</sup>See Robert, ed., *Gospel Bearers, Gender Barriers*, 20.

<sup>13</sup>Barrett, *Evangelize! An Historical Survey of the Concept*, 11. Although there is no Aramaic version of Jesus' commission to the disciples in the gospels, according to Barrett the Greek term *euangelion* was most likely translated from the Hebrew term *sabarta* meaning "good news," with the related verb *sabar* meaning "to tell good news." The Hebrew counterpart to is *basar* from the root *bsr*, which in Old Testament usage means "to proclaim good news."

*evangelizo* to explain the ministry *and* message of Jesus. Therefore, to focus too narrowly on evangelism as verbal proclamation rather than an all-inclusive description of Jesus' whole work of ministry is to neglect the biblical foundations for a theology and practice of evangelism.<sup>14</sup>

This bereavement has contributed to the characterization of evangelism as technique or strategy related to practices of verbal proclamation such as mass religious gatherings and door-to-door visitation. By arguing for a move beyond the bereavement of truncated contemporary concepts of evangelism as verbal proclamation alone, this study includes the embodiment of the gospel through holistic proclamation. While not arguing for an understanding of evangelism that neglects verbal proclamation, exploring the ministries of Ripley, Bennett, and McLeod as representative examples, women's practices of evangelism integrate ministries of compassion and verbal proclamation, thus broadening contemporary concepts.

The focus on practices of racial justice within these women's evangelistic ministries is also significant to the conversation regarding re-visioning evangelistic theology and practice. The academic study of evangelism tends not to consider: (1) the theological implications of black liberation and womanist theologies or (2) the practices of African-American practitioners, thus overlooking immense resources.<sup>15</sup> Recovering the history of women (among other disenfranchised communities) in evangelism both contributes missing voices to the chorus of Church history and also reclaims a lost harmony and biblical foundation muted by the solo of long-held, deeply entrenched but entirely insufficient concepts of evangelism. The ministry practices of these three women in southern Methodism provide a rich resource for such a conversation.

The remaining sections briefly survey literature in the academic study of evangelism, including an explanation of terms noting the increase in critical biblical and theological reflection. Then there is a sketching of the evangelistic ministry of each woman, focusing on ministries related to racial justice, noting the implications of sanctification for these practices.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 12. Barrett offers an example of a study too narrowly focused on verbal proclamation. Based on his research, he argues that the six closest English synonyms to the term "evangelize" are: preach, bring, tell, proclaim, announce, and declare, thus perpetuating the emphasis on verbal proclamation.

<sup>15</sup>See Lacey Warner, "Reconsidering Evangelism: Lessons from Black Liberation and Womanist Theologies," in *Living Stones in the Household of God: The Legacy and Future of Black Theology*, ed. Linda E. Thomas (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 71-82.

## Evangelism: A Brief Survey of the Literature

The lack of biblical and theological reflection related to evangelism has drastically minimized the foundation of the church's resources to shape its evangelistic understanding and practices. Critical reflection on the theology and practices of evangelism provides a vital resource for the church, particularly mainline Protestant traditions whose total memberships have suffered declines from the 1960s. The recent academic study of evangelism, grounded in the interaction among scholars and practitioners, has resulted in a more critical theological reflection.<sup>16</sup> However, there is still much work to do. Uncovering lost voices and paradigms among women and other marginalized communities further contributes to the important conversation related to the faithful and effective practices of evangelism for the contemporary church. The following is a brief survey of the literature in the academic study of evangelism, both biblical and theological, which includes a working concept of the term, to provide a background upon which to better understand the contributions of Ripley, Bennett, and McLeod.

Walter Klaiber, a bishop and scholar in the German Methodist Church, with others in the academic study of evangelism, reclaims the richness of the biblical concept of evangelism. This concept as found in the gospels is related to the Greek Septuagint term *euangelizesthai* used in the Old Testament meaning "to proclaim good tidings."<sup>17</sup> The term *euangelizesthai* was used in general reference when good tidings from God occurred. It also has a close connection to the announcement of God's salvific activity in Second and Third Isaiah. The related Greek term also found in the Old Testament, *evangelos*, has as its root *angelos* or "messen-

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<sup>16</sup>Abraham's text, *The Logic of Evangelism*, in many ways initiates the academic study of evangelism by providing a theological and philosophical framework for significant questions. Scott Jones, in *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), continues this trajectory building on Abraham's assertions. Walter Brueggemann, in *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993) and Walter Klaiber, in *Call and Response: Biblical Foundations of a Theology of Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), contribute to the shape of biblical foundations for evangelism. While Mortimer Arias in his texts *Announcing the Reign of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999) and with Alan Johnson, *The Great Commission* (Nashville: Abingdon 1992), as well as David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), explore theological implications for the church's ministry of evangelism.

<sup>17</sup>Klaiber, *Call and Response*, 24.

ger” and *angelo* or “to announce.” Significant to understanding these concepts of messenger and announcement is the notion that the message announced was not merely a verbal proclamation of information. Rather, the proclamation of salvation includes what brought about that salvation.<sup>18</sup> The message was made a present, tangible reality through its immediate embodiment, which invited participation in a tapestry of practices.

In the post-Easter situation, the terms related to evangelism are oriented toward the proclamation of that which God has done through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. An accepted translation of the Christian use of the term “evangelism” suggested by Klaiber is “to proclaim the message of salvation.” Klaiber unapologetically acknowledges that “evangelism as word event is the ‘heart’ of mission.”<sup>19</sup> However, he also carefully explains that evangelism “names what saves and liberates humankind and that from which the Christian community and its members live.”<sup>20</sup> Klaiber elaborates upon this nuance and evangelism’s origins: “This message and its orientation has a fundamental and elementary character. This means that its task involves more than the verbal mediation of its commission; rather it seeks communication with all dimensions of human life and human need.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, thus far, a working concept of evangelism informed by biblical foundations is “to proclaim the message of salvation in word and deed.”

A source of confusion and polarization related to the language of evangelism is its varied uses. The word “evangelize” is understood in two distinct senses. The first definition most often used by scholars reflects more closely the biblical meaning of the term: “to preach, bring, tell, proclaim, announce, declare (the gospel), whether people accept it or not...although this is the intent.”<sup>22</sup> The emphasis of this definition is the proclamation of the gospel, rather than the acceptance of the gospel or conversion of its hearers. The second definition of evangelism most often used by practitioners is: “not just to proclaim but to actually win or convert people to the Christian faith.”<sup>23</sup> David Barrett seems to make some effort not to bias either of the definitions. However, David Bosch, in his

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Barrett, *Evangelize! An Historical Survey of the Concept*, 51.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

monumental text *Transforming Mission*, explains that evangelism is “not a call to put something into effect, as if God’s reign would be inaugurated by our response or thwarted by the absence of such a response. . . . In light of this, evangelism cannot be defined in terms of its results or effectiveness, as though evangelism has only occurred where there are ‘converts.’”<sup>24</sup> Based on Bosch’s biblical and theological argument, evangelism does not expressly include in its meaning the conversion of individuals, although this is clearly the aim.

William Abraham holds together traditional understandings of “conversion” or “soul-winning” with the importance of nurturing discipleship, which both occur in response to the holistic proclamation of the message of salvation. Abraham (with Mortimer Arias and Scott Jones), based on the centrality of the kingdom of God in the gospel texts, proposes its significance for understanding the concept of evangelism.<sup>25</sup> For Abraham, evangelism is best conceived “as that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time.”<sup>26</sup> Jones builds on Abraham’s foundation, offering nuance and further reflection. He defines evangelism as “that set of loving, intentional activities governed by the goal of initiating persons into Christian discipleship in response to the reign of God.”<sup>27</sup>

The use of the term evangelism and its relation to mission also often lacks consistency. Evangelism and mission at times are used synonymously, and at other times a distinction is made between them. In the latter case, evangelism may be understood as an activity in a domestic context, for example one’s country, to those already baptized, but estranged from the church. Mission is then understood as preaching that usually is accompanied by outreach activities such as educational and medical assistance in urban or more often foreign contexts. Mission has its root in the Latin phrase *missio dei* or the mission of God. According to the commission text in the Gospel of John, the mission of God is to send Jesus Christ to the world, and with the Holy Spirit to send the church in mission to the world. A relatively recent, but important shift has occurred within the

<sup>24</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 412-413. Bosch continues his argument: “Even so, evangelism does aim at a response.”

<sup>25</sup>See Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism* and Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God*.

<sup>26</sup>Abraham, *Logic of Evangelism*, 95.

<sup>27</sup>Jones, *Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor*, 18.



church's self understanding, a moving from the church sending missions to the world to God sending the church in mission to the world.<sup>28</sup>

According to Bosch, mission includes evangelism as one of its essential dimensions.<sup>29</sup> This understanding of evangelism as an essential dimension of the total activity of the church offers an internal critique of John Stott's position articulated in the Lausanne Covenant. Stott claims that evangelism is one of two components of mission, with social action as the other component.<sup>30</sup> Separating the language of evangelism from social action is not consistent with biblical foundations. Bosch alternately defines evangelism as "the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin, and inviting them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>31</sup>

In order to reorient towards a more faithful understanding and practice of evangelism, Abraham raises the following point: "at issue is the appropriation of what evangelism has actually meant in the early church and in history, not judged by the etymology of the word *evangelism* and its rather occasional use in Scripture, but by what evangelists have actually done in both proclaiming the gospel and establishing new converts in the kingdom of God."<sup>32</sup> Thus, reclaiming the faithful and effective concepts and practices of evangelism throughout the tradition of the church, such as those of Ripley, Bennett, and McLeod, continues this important conversation of re-visioning the theology and practices of evangelism.

### **Redemption and Race: Re-visioning Evangelistic Theology and Practice**

We now focus on the ministries of the three selected women for the purpose of demonstrating the multi-dimensional character of their evangelistic practices, particularly focusing on their ministries of racial justice. Although linked when possible with preaching or other forms of verbal proclamation, women's ministries of evangelism in the Wesleyan tradition

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<sup>28</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 377-378.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 412. Bosch refers to the World Council of Churches statement on evangelism made at the 1954 gathering in Evanston, IL.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>32</sup>Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, 69.

have been associated more often with ministries of compassion as they sought to initiate and form disciples of Jesus Christ into the reign of God. As mentioned earlier, Dorothy Ripley, Belle Harris Bennett, and Mary McLeod Bethune included practices of racial justice as a component of redemption in their evangelistic ministries, which were often shaped by their experiences of sanctification.

**Dorothy Ripley.** Dorothy Ripley was born in Whitby, England, on April 24, 1767.<sup>33</sup> Her father, whom she greatly admired, was Rev. William Ripley, a Methodist preacher known for his hospitality to strangers and his compassion for the poor and outcast. After his death in her eighteenth year, Ripley described her father's ministry, which strongly influenced her own: "Believing it his duty, he fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and so increased his treasure above winning souls to God by the merchandise of his wisdom."<sup>34</sup> Like her father, Ripley embodied a ministry of evangelism, formed by the biblical foundation of Matthew 25.31-46, which did not neglect care for bodies and souls, but rather one that integrated multiple ministry practices.

Ripley experienced God's presence in a dramatic episode in 1797: "On 28<sup>th</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> month, 1797, entering my room to worship God, the power of God struck me to the earth where I lay as covered with his glorious majesty beholding as through his Spirit the riches of his kingdom 'which God hath prepared for them that love him' (1 Cor. 2:9)."<sup>35</sup> During this encounter, Ripley recorded "the Lord commanded me to 'go ten thousand miles,' to 'provide neither gold nor silver, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet a staff' (Matt. 10:9-10)."<sup>36</sup> Ripley remained faithful to this latter stipulation of her call, never permitting a collection to be taken on her behalf. Often destitute, she relied on the support of friends throughout her ministry.<sup>37</sup> She continued the description of God's commission for her ministry:

<sup>33</sup>Paul Chilcote, *John Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1991), 276. Ripley claimed April 24, 1767, as her birthdate in her text *The Extraordinary Conversion and Religious Experience of Dorothy Ripley* (New York: G. and R. Waite, 1810), 7.

<sup>34</sup>Dorothy Ripley, *The Extraordinary Conversion and Religious Experience of Dorothy Ripley* (New York: G. and R. Waite, 1810), 13, quoted in Paul Chilcote, *Her Own Story* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2002), 132.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 131.

Ethiopia's or Africa's children by oppressors were brought to till the ground for many of the American planters. Therefore was I led thither by the unsearchable wisdom of their Creator and mine to exhort them with tears to 'stretch out their hand unto the Lord' (cf. Ps. 68:31) that they might find redress from a gracious God, whose compassion fails not to any of the children of men.<sup>38</sup>

In 1801, Ripley answered this special call to minister among the African slaves in the new world. Charleston, South Carolina, later became her base. She wrote, "And it sufficeth me to believe that [God] will soon cause the oppressors to cease their oppression and reward with peace such who travail in spirit for the spread of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>39</sup> Ripley understood the good news of Christ to include the ceasing of oppression particularly in relation to the Africans in the American colonies.<sup>40</sup>

Ripley's experience of sanctification, firmly grounded in the teaching of John Wesley, provided a foundation for her ministry. "Before the Lord sent me forth to preach the gospel, he testified by his Spirit that he would keep me unto the day of redemption and gave me faith to believe that I should stand firm in Jesus Christ a new creature being clothed with his imparted righteousness, 'the saints' pure white linen' (cf. Rev. 15:6)."<sup>41</sup> She continued, "No words can express the eternal union which has taken place on earth, my heaven being already begun."<sup>42</sup> Ripley's soteriology provided a theological framework for her evangelistic ministry:

It is my choice to serve the eternal I AM because he is infinitely good and gracious, full of wisdom, and full of compassion to all nations without respect of persons if I believe "Jesus Christ tasted death for every man" (cf. Heb. 2:9). Sure I must believe this if I believe he died at all or died for me the chief of sinners. Did men consider that the very name and nature of God is love! Love to all the fallen race? This would prove an incitement to them to return to the great and glorious Parent.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 134.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 130-134.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

Ripley's doctrinal foundations informed her perception of humanity's depravity that helped to focus her vocation.

Going from city to city, from one nation to another, I have discovered the iniquity that lurks under the various masks of professing godliness, each different denomination thinking themselves the most sincere. But alas! When I seek for pious souls redeemed from the maxims and fashions of the present day, I almost seek in vain and ask if there are any who live now as Jesus Christ taught his followers in the days of his flesh, both by his example and precept?<sup>44</sup>

Ripley's evangelistic ministry took shape within a theological framework based on her experience of sanctification. As she grew in grace she recognized the need for cultivating others to receive the redemption of Jesus Christ and to live into an identity shaped by Christian discipleship.

Ripley's vocation to minister to the disenfranchised consistently addressed a union of spiritual and material brokenness. For example, on July 2, 1802, Ripley included in a written account a description of "five or six little wretched children, naked, from the age of two years up to nine."<sup>45</sup> According to Ripley's account, many questioned her response of affection to the children's plight. "Why do I? Because a gracious God leads me to feel for them—weep for them—and pray in faith also for them that they may be blessed with the same blessings which are poured down upon my head and others, who groan in spirit with me for their redemption from sin and [the] thralldom of the oppressors."<sup>46</sup> Ripley's response included her desire and efforts for their redemption from sin as well as from the oppression of material poverty and prejudice. Ripley ministered to slaves and slave-owners alike. She witnessed the promises of many youth, to free their parents' slaves upon inheritance so "that they might free themselves from the curse of their fathers."<sup>47</sup> Ripley secured an interview with President Jefferson in that same year [1801] to discuss the issue of slavery. In 1806 she received permission to preach before Congress.<sup>48</sup> She described her ministry in 1807: "Through the large cities

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 142.

<sup>48</sup>Chilcote refers to Ripley's address to Congress as "preaching," in *John Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism*, 277, 246 n27. However, it is unclear whether all constituencies understood Ripley's activity to be preaching rather than exhorting, etc.

of America, I went and proclaimed the joyful tidings of salvation, offering my life for theirs, who could not defend themselves, neither put forth an effort to deliver their seed from the base tyranny of such as had brought them into bondage.”<sup>49</sup>

Ripley’s evangelistic witness also included visiting the imprisoned. She offered a ministry of presence to at least one young African-American female slave sentenced to death. Rose Butler was convicted of the crime of arson that resulted in the destruction of her mistress’ house.<sup>50</sup> Ripley maintained consistent contact with Butler, engaging her in spiritual conversations. Although intent on securing Butler’s salvation through justification, Ripley also persistently advocated for the young woman’s humane treatment leading up to her death. Butler, arrested at seventeen years of age, died by hanging at the age of nineteen. Ripley accompanied Butler on the day of her death and remained with her body until it was laid to rest. She wrote, “I committed her body to the ground, by supplication, in faith and hope.”<sup>51</sup>

Ripley’s experience with Butler, informed by visitation of other prisoners, led her to compile a passionate piece arguing against capitol punishment. Her initial argument focused on the limits such a punishment often hastily executed placed upon the accused for reformation as well as salvation. “Numbers of subjects and citizens, hurried into eternity in the very bloom of life, with all their sins and imperfections on their heads; and cut off at once from all power of reformation; from all possibility of making amends to the *state* they have injured, to the *friends* they have distressed, and the *God* they have daringly offended.”<sup>52</sup> In her argument, Ripley turned to the biblical text demonstrating the lack of precedent for the punishment of death, beginning with Cain and including a discussion of the complexities of “the Laws of Moses” and the superceding example of Jesus Christ.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup>Dorothy Ripley, ed., *Letters Addressed to Dorothy Ripley from several Africans and Indians on Subjects of Christian Experience* (Chester: J. Hemingway, 1807), iii. Ripley stated that the profits from this publication would be distributed to the hungry and thirsty souls among the oppressed African race (v).

<sup>50</sup>Dorothy Ripley, *An Account of the Death of Rose Butler* (New York: John C. Totten, 1819), 3.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

Ripley labored diligently with and on behalf of the disenfranchised as a result of her vocation to care for the spiritually and materially destitute. Her vocation to minister to enslaved African Americans extended to other disenfranchised populations. For example, she ministered among the Native Americans before joining Lorenzo Dow for an evangelistic tour of England in 1818,<sup>54</sup> during which they both were imprisoned.<sup>55</sup>

Ripley's integration of verbal proclamation and practices of compassion provide an example of the interrelatedness of the care for the spiritual and physical well being of persons inherent to the gospel. Among the three selected women, Ripley's experience of sanctification as foundational for her evangelistic ministry is most explicit. Bennett and McLeod do not explicitly refer to the implications of sanctification for their evangelistic ministries, although they do claim the significance of their Christian faith for discipleship and evangelistic practices.

**Belle Harris Bennett.** Isabel Harris Bennett was born on December 3, 1852, in Kentucky to affluent parents. After returning from Lake Chautauqua, NY, in 1884, Bennett confided to a friend, "I have spent my life in frivolity and idleness. Now I mean to give it wholly to the Lord."<sup>56</sup> Bennett served the church in numerous capacities. She built schools such as the Scarritt Bible and Training School established in Kansas City in 1892 and the Sue Bennett School named in memory of her sister that opened in 1897 for the education of impoverished Kentucky mountain children.<sup>57</sup> Bennett advocated for the office of deaconess, which was authorized by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1902, and laity rights for women in the MECS, launching the campaign in 1910 and working until its conclusion in 1922.<sup>58</sup> She also labored for racial justice through her leadership as President of the MECS's Woman's Home Mis-

<sup>54</sup>Chilcote, *Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism*, 277.

<sup>55</sup>William Clowes, *The Journals of William Clowes* (London: Hallam and Holliday, 1844), 191.

<sup>56</sup>R.W. MacDonell, *Belle Harris Bennett: Her Life Work* (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1987), 38.

<sup>57</sup>Jean Miller Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 171-172

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 172.

sionary Society (1896-1910) and its successor organization the Woman's Missionary Council (1910-1922).<sup>59</sup>

Bennett's earliest endeavors, namely the establishment of the Scarritt Bible and Training School and the Sue Bennett School, demonstrate the significance to her vocation of education and the forming of Christian disciples. Scarritt prepared teachers for remote areas lacking educators. Bennett consistently emphasized the evangelistic influence of Christian education in such training programs.<sup>60</sup> The following statement appeared on the first page of *Our Homes*, the periodical of the WHMS, published in 1908 during Bennett's presidency. Although unsigned, its content resonates with Bennett's position on the evangelistic character of education. "In all missionary work that looks to the future while meeting present needs, education must go hand in hand with evangelization. The preaching of the gospel awakens the sinner, brings the consciousness of sin, and sows the seed of an eternal life."<sup>61</sup> The impetus for Bennett's evangelistic commitment was characteristic of her day—the building of God's kingdom on earth. A slogan Bennett used to describe her work was, "Eternal life for the individual, the kingdom of God for humanity." This slogan and Bennett's evangelistic ministry integrated the cultivation of personal piety with a subsequent Christian response addressing systemic social evils.

An important embodiment of Bennett's ministry was the establishment of Christian settlements for the disenfranchised, including immigrants and African Americans, respectively called Wesley Community Houses and Bethlehem Houses. The governing boards of the Bethlehem Houses in Nashville, TN, and Augusta, GA, were composed of both Euro-American and African-American representation.<sup>62</sup> Bennett and her colleagues did not perceive these efforts as sufficient, but a beginning. "It was establishing a point of contact for the Church with foreign-born peo-

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 171. See "The Legitimate Work of the W.H.M.S." *Our Homes* (August, 1908), 3. "This Society is first and always a *missionary* Society. Its purpose is missionary and its administration is on missionary lines. The idea involved in this use of the word "missions" is that of a Society seeking to raise funds and employ workers to establish institutions for the purpose of evangelizing, education, or reforming people who, on account of personal or local conditions, need this kind of work and are unable otherwise to obtain it."

<sup>60</sup>MacDonell, *Belle Harris Bennett: Her Life Work*, 80-81.

<sup>61</sup>"Education and Evangelization," *Our Homes* (August, 1908), 1.

<sup>62</sup>MacDonell, *Belle Harris Bennett: Her Life Work*, 129.

ple, or indifferent native Americans, or that hardest of all people to touch with social justice, ‘our brother in black.’”<sup>63</sup> Bennett’s ministry among African Americans began prior to her 1906 proposal for Bethlehem Houses.<sup>64</sup> Bennett’s first public service related to African Americans in the South was recorded in her journal on October 18, 1891. She traveled to Wilmington, NC to present the need for a missionary training school and spoke to Euro-American women in the afternoon and African-American women in the evening. She described her feelings at the time, “I was so cowardly about the latter.”<sup>65</sup> For the following decade she worked to overcome that fear. She continued teaching and speaking in congregations and charity associations within the African American community building many friendships.

According to her biographer, Bennett had been troubled from the late nineteenth century by the MECS’s reluctance to send missionaries to Africa. In response to an agonizing prayer on this subject, she felt God respond, “Why not do something for Africa at home in the meantime?”<sup>66</sup> Bennett promptly contacted an African American pastor with whom she was acquainted to inquire about how she could serve. A Bible study was organized for the next Sunday, which Bennett led for several years. After her death, numerous grateful and grieved persons offered their written tributes to Belle Harris Bennett. One tribute came from the superintendent of the Sunday school of this African Methodist Episcopal congregation describing the Bible study class. “Miss Bennett taught a Bible study class at St. Paul AME Church from 1900-1904 every Sunday at three o’clock. It was well attended, ranging from 200 to 500 members.”<sup>67</sup> Bennett’s ministry with African Americans extended beyond Christian education to various practices. She provided financial support through gifts and loans enabling congregations to maintain ownership of their facilities as well as ministering to the souls and bodies of African Americans through Bethlehem Houses and related projects.<sup>68</sup>

According to her biographer, the most vivid memory the women of the Board of Home Missions would carry of Bennett was from the Sun-

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 92.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 121.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 131-132.



day morning of May 5, 1901, at Old St. John's Southern Methodist Church. Bennett presented the need for organized women's work among African American women and girls. She felt that prejudice must diminish before such work was feasible. However, she was moved by the rebutting argument—prejudice would die sooner if somebody fought it.<sup>69</sup> Mrs. J. D. Hammond, described the effect of Bennett's words upon her hearers that morning: "The thing [Bennett] saw came clear to them—the oneness of the human race, of human need, of human obligation."<sup>70</sup> Bennett proposed that a girls' hall be built at Paine College, in Augusta, GA. She announced that \$5000 was needed for the project, and pledged \$500 of her own resources.<sup>71</sup> Bennett's proposal began a partnership with Paine College's President Dr. George Williams Walker that did not end until his death thirteen years later. Paine was at that time the only institution for African Americans supported by the MECS. Bennett thought it important to support this existing and often struggling institution rather than establish a new school.

The biblical foundation for Bennett's evangelistic ministry to the bodies and souls of African Americans in the South was John 13:34-35, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."<sup>72</sup> Bennett often motivated others to participate in evangelistic ministry. She asked, "Are you ready to go quickly to the more than 50 million unchurched, neglected, unsaved people of our land? Has the Holy Spirit taught you to look upon and love the dark-skinned people among whom you were born and reared as our brothers and sisters?"<sup>73</sup> In her presidential address to the WHMS in 1909, Bennett included the following remark demonstrating the evangelistic impetus of the organization's work: "Auxiliaries were organized and instructed in every possible pastoral charge. Prayer circles were formed, and through the programs which were carefully prepared

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 121.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 122.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid. Half of Bennett's pledge was given in memory of her nurse, "Mammy Ritter."

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 125. NRSV

<sup>73</sup>Ibid. Bennett argued in an address to a Preachers' Institute in 1910 that the mission of the Church to African Americans must begin with the preacher in the pulpit.

and sent out for use at every monthly meeting, God's plan for the redemption of the *whole* world, as set forth in his word, burned itself into the heart of the womanhood of the Church."<sup>74</sup>

Bennett is most often known for her work in expanding ecclesiastic rights and ministry opportunities for women in the MECS. However, her vocation was more comprehensive including Christian education and evangelism among numerous disenfranchised populations.<sup>75</sup> She not only acknowledged the social systems that oppressed African Americans in the South, but the MECS's complicity in those sins. Bennett called the MECS through the WHMS to respond to Jesus' commission to proclaim the message of salvation through compassion for the oppressed.

**Mary McLeod Bethune.** Mary McLeod Bethune was born in Mayesville, South Carolina, on July 10, 1875. Her parents were freed slaves and active participants in an African Methodist Episcopal congregation. Around her eighth or ninth birthday, McLeod became self-aware of a lack of opportunity, specifically education. She realized she would not receive an education like the Euro-American children with whom she played.<sup>76</sup> In answer to McLeod's persistent prayers, around 1884 the Presbyterian Board for Freedmen established a school in her hometown. McLeod, though the youngest, was the first in her family to receive an education and thus perceived that God had set her aside for a special purpose.<sup>77</sup> McLeod first glimpsed what that purpose might be in the role model of Miss Emma Wilson, the Presbyterian missionary sent to conduct the school. Wilson provided guidance for both McLeod's intellectual and spiritual growth grounded in the Golden Rule.<sup>78</sup>

At the age of twelve, McLeod felt a strong vocation to foreign mission work in Africa. She received a scholarship, which enabled her to attend Scotia Seminary in Concord, North Carolina, to prepare for this

<sup>74</sup>Belle Harris Bennett, "The Presidential Address," *Our Homes* (December, 1909), 7.

<sup>75</sup>These included schools and missions among Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Japanese, Korean, Mexican, Cuban immigrants, as well as among rural poor. See, for example, *Our Homes* (August, 1908), 11, 24.

<sup>76</sup>Clarence G. Newsome, "Mary McLeod Bethune as Religionist," in *Women and New Worlds*, Hilah F. Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 105.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

calling.<sup>79</sup> Upon graduation from Scotia in 1894, she became the first African American to enroll in Moody Bible Institute.<sup>80</sup> However, upon completion of her evangelistic training at Moody in 1895, her application to the Presbyterian Board of Mission was refused. The explanation given was that there were “no vacancies at that time for colored missionaries.”<sup>81</sup> Although disappointed, she would not have the opportunity to introduce the people of her homeland to Christianity, she returned south to assume a teaching position, eventually realizing a clarification of her call to serve among persons of African descent in the American South.<sup>82</sup>

This vocation developed into a desire to establish a school for African-American girls, which McLeod brought to fruition in Daytona, Florida, on October 3, 1904.<sup>83</sup> She envisioned the *Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls* as a response to the spiritual, intellectual, and cultural barrenness that had not improved substantially since the days of slavery.<sup>84</sup> Although opened with no sponsorship, McLeod nurtured the school into a junior college by 1924. At this point she decided to seek denominational support. The Methodist Episcopal Church responded first to McLeod’s request. With sponsorship, the MEC proposed a merger with Cookman Institute, a Methodist co-educational school. Although reluctant to consider such a merger, McLeod accepted the proposal and the invitation to serve as president of the new institution.<sup>85</sup>

Mary McLeod Bethune achieved a staggering amount in her lifetime. She was the first African-American woman to establish a four-year institution of higher learning,<sup>86</sup> to found a national organization to lobby the federal government,<sup>87</sup> and the first African American to hold such a high-level government appointment as Director of the Negro Division of

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<sup>79</sup>Clarence G. Newsome, “Mary McLeod Bethune and the Methodist Episcopal Church North: In but Out,” in *This Far By Faith*, Judith Weisenfeld and Richard Newman, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 127.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup>Quoted in Newsome, “Mary McLeod Bethune as Religionist,” 106.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>86</sup>Bethune-Cookman College

<sup>87</sup>The National Council of Negro Women lobbied primarily on behalf of African American women and children.

the National Youth Administration.<sup>88</sup> She advised three presidents and received numerous awards.<sup>89</sup> Between 1933 and 1945, McLeod was arguably the most powerful African American *person* in the country.<sup>90</sup> According to McLeod, this was largely due “to the exercise of her religious faith.”<sup>91</sup>

In addition to her public leadership roles, within five years of her joining the MEC she was elected as a delegate to General Conference, the denomination’s national policy-making body.<sup>92</sup> Between 1928 and 1952 she served as a delegate to each General Conference and as a delegate to each Annual and Jurisdictional Conference from 1924 until her death in 1955.<sup>93</sup> In 1938 preparations were in process for the reunification of several Methodist denominations. At the 1938 Methodist Episcopal General Conference, 250 African-American leaders met to protest the provisions for segregation and creation of a Central Jurisdiction that were a major part of the 1939 merger. Bishop Robert E. Jones, Bishop Matthew W. Clair, and Mary McLeod Bethune voiced opposition to this plan for segregation.<sup>94</sup>

At seventy-one years of age, McLeod composed a “Spiritual Autobiography.” This manuscript demonstrates the spiritual foundation for her life and work. Although an educator and public figure active in policy making and social issues, McLeod’s reflections in “Spiritual Autobiography” confirm her faith as the primary influence upon her vocational trajectory. “My birth into wisdom and spiritual acceptance is a very real fact to me. Out of the womb of salvation and truth my new life was born, and

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<sup>88</sup>This post was held during the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

<sup>89</sup>Herbert Hoover, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. See Newsome, “Mary McLeod Bethune and the Methodist Episcopal Church North: In but Out,” 124.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.* According to Newsome, “During this time she also served on a number of important committees that addressed such issues as education, federation, books, episcopacy, foreign missions, hospitals and homes, itinerancy, pensions and relief, state of the church, temperance, prohibition, public morals, and temporal economy.”

<sup>94</sup>Alice Knotts, *Fellowship of Love* (Nashville: Kingswood Press, 1996), 135.

it is in that life that I live and move and have my being.”<sup>95</sup> As a child McLeod’s mother taught her to hold the Bible and “to sit quietly in communion with it and God, even before I could read.”<sup>96</sup> McLeod learned scripture passages, so that before literacy she was formed in the Christian faith. “The Word has been hidden in my heart by that knowing which is not literacy, but which is so basic to literacy. As we sing the beautiful spirituals and remember that they flowed from unlettered hearts, we can appreciate more deeply how their social significance is interwoven with their spiritual understandings.”<sup>97</sup> McLeod’s faith, formed by scripture from early childhood, in adulthood responded to the complexities of sinful social systems, particularly racism.

Like Bennett, McLeod’s references to sanctification are less explicit than Ripley’s, yet she expressed awareness of God working within her. “I feel Him working in and through me, and I have learned to give myself—freely, unreservedly to the guidance of the inner voice in me.”<sup>98</sup> She described knowing “what it meant to absorb my will into the will of God” and “His spirit could dwell in me and go with me and never leave me to my own devices.”<sup>99</sup> From McLeod’s desire to know God working within her she recounted as follows the role model of her mother:

I knew the form kneeling in the moonlight which poured in upon her, sometimes beside her bed, sometimes beside a chair. She would ask God for faith, for strength, for love, for forgiveness, for knowledge, for food and clothing—not for herself but for her children and for all the poor people. . . . I thank my mother and heavenly Father for imparting to me this strength and vitality which has led me from that picture in the closed hours of those nights to the light of this full new day, when I am enjoying the fruits of that first seed-sowing.<sup>100</sup>

While searching for faith as a child, McLeod learned the connection between love for God and love for neighbor as a result of her mother’s

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<sup>95</sup>Mary McLeod Bethune, “Spiritual Autobiography” (Daytona: Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, 1946), quoted in Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith, eds., *Mary McLeod Bethune Building a Better World: Essays and Selected Documents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 52.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

example. This principle motivated McLeod, upon the foundation of her Christian faith and spirituality, to construct a remarkable edifice of transformation, not only personal, but with substantial implications for society as well.

With love as the “universal factor”<sup>101</sup> in her experience, McLeod pursued Christian discipleship. Guided by “the principle of the Golden Rule”<sup>102</sup> McLeod cemented the connection between her personal faith and ministry with others. She said:

In my spiritual life, the ideal of the Golden Rule charges me to contend for the products of what is fair and just, and for the equality of opportunities to become my best self—not Peter, not John, not Ruth, not Esther, but Mary McLeod Bethune. As I received those things that are true, honest, lovely and beautiful, I pray that others shall have them, too. Oh, how I love to open the doors to let people in to a fuller experience.<sup>103</sup>

McLeod’s profound impact on the social, political, and economic lives of African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century grew from her Christian faith. She said, “I am strongly *inter*-denominational, *inter*-racial and *inter*-national.”<sup>104</sup> Theological implications of sanctification implicitly pervade her life’s work. McLeod’s Christian discipleship formed not only her own relationship with God in Jesus Christ, but led her to pray and act for others to receive that redemption. This quiet evangelistic component in McLeod’s life work informed her remarkable public leadership efforts.

According to McLeod, the mission of the church and its gospel mandate is the welfare and total well being of each individual.<sup>105</sup> Throughout her career she claimed that the church fell short of its calling because it tended not to proclaim “a religion that had meaning for this world and the present age.”<sup>106</sup> According to McLeod, “The truth is, the Negro long lived a revivalistic emotion and was taught to think of heaven as a land of luxury to which he would pass after a life of burden in this world. The Negro

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 55.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Newsome, “Mary McLeod Bethune and the Methodist Episcopal Church North: In but Out,” 136.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

needs an equality of religion. He needs a religion in which his religious feeling has matured into social passion.”<sup>107</sup> McLeod argued that the church should participate in the “full teaching of Jesus concerning the abundant life.”<sup>108</sup> In a speech entitled “Girding for Peace,” she asserted, “the church is beginning to acquire new courage in the application to life of the great moral truths. . . . But too often these principles are merely preached in beautiful language when there is the pressing need to set them forth in the specific language of deed.”<sup>109</sup> Although the evangelistic component of her ministry is subtle, McLeod contributes significantly to a rich understanding of salvation in the conversation to re-vision theology and practices of evangelism.

## Conclusion

The representative evangelistic practices of the three women studied here resemble the integration of ministries of word and deed commissioned by Jesus Christ in the gospels. Although these women addressed numerous issues through their evangelistic ministries, each ministered to and with African Americans in the South. Ripley, formed by the Wesleyan renewal movement in England, traveled widely, preaching “salvation,” although not without attention to the oppression faced by slaves and freed African Americans. Bennett labored within her denominational structure to establish Christian settlements for African Americans, to cultivate support for Paine College, and to form relationships of racial reconciliation within communities of faith. McLeod understood her task as one of encouragement to the church to embody its witness faithfully. McLeod, also an educator at heart like Bennett, fulfilled her calling to bring educational opportunities to African Americans while working against the systemic sins of racism within national policy-making bodies.

In this study, women’s evangelistic witness emerges as an integrally connected web of practices that provides a multifaceted paradigm beyond the concept of evangelism as solely verbal proclamation. As a result of these women’s experiences of faith, often articulated in the language of sanctification, they responded to God’s call to invite others into Christian discipleship through a verbal proclamation that was integrated with ministries of compassion. Their examples offer the contemporary Church models for deepening evangelistic theology and practice.

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

# **HOLINESS HERITAGE: THE CASE OF PANDITA RAMABAI**

**by**

**Howard A. Snyder**

For twenty-five years Benson and Emma Sellew Roberts, the son and daughter-in-law of Free Methodist founder B. T. Roberts (1823-1893), served as co-principals of Chesbrough Seminary (now Roberts Wesleyan College) in North Chili, New York. In addition to being educators, both shared the strong foreign missionary interest that had been nurtured by B. T. Roberts and his wife Ellen.<sup>1</sup> Around 1890 Benson and Emma Roberts learned of the remarkable work of India's Pandita Ramabai. Over the ensuing decade this new interest brought consequences that affected not only their lives but also that of Ramabai and her daughter, Manoramabai. The story of Chesbrough and of B. T. Roberts and his family thus intersected with that of Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati, "the most widely known and widely acclaimed Indian woman (if not indeed Indian person) of the nineteenth century."<sup>2</sup>

Chesbrough Seminary in upstate New York was a liberal arts, coeducational Christian academy, not a theological seminary. In the 1890s the school community was unusually cosmopolitan and international. Ches-

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<sup>1</sup>This essay is adapted from chapter thirty-nine of the author's forthcoming biography, *Populist Saints: B. T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

<sup>2</sup>Philip C. Engblom, "Translation Editor's Preface," in Pandita Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai's America: Conditions of Life in the United States*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg, trans. Kshitija Gomes (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), xvii.



brough was linked in multiple ways to the growing foreign missions enterprise of the Free Methodist Church, but also with other groups such as A. B. Simpson's newly-formed Christian Alliance and Evangelical Missionary Alliance (combined in 1897 as the Christian and Missionary Alliance). In 1891-1892 the Chesbrough student body included William Warwick from England, George Oberdorf from Germany, George and Mary Lucia Bierce Fuller (children of Marcus and Jennie Fuller, Alliance missionaries in India), Rangit Singh from India, Eduardo Galan from Mexico City, and two Japanese students. Howard Simpson, son of A. B. Simpson, was also enrolled as a student.<sup>3</sup>

Emma Roberts was especially passionate about foreign missions. She served as associate editor and later editor of *The Missionary Tidings*, the organ of the (Free Methodist) Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, which began publication in 1897. When she learned of the work of the Indian educator and reformer Pandita Ramabai, a convert from Hinduism to Christianity, she was intrigued. Emma became active in the Rochester Ramabai Circle, serving as president in 1905-1906.<sup>4</sup> It was not lost on Emma that Ramabai was, among other things, a strong model of female leadership and that Ramabai employed women preachers in her rescue and evangelistic work in India.<sup>5</sup>

Pandita Ramabai's connection with Chesbrough Seminary is a little-known but remarkable chapter in the larger stories of both B. T. Roberts and Ramabai. It makes an instructive case study in the character and influence of Roberts and early Free Methodism. At the same time, Ramabai's spiritual pilgrimage presents an interesting contemporary historio-

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<sup>3</sup>*Catalogues*, Chili and Chesbrough Seminary (North Chili, NY), 1869-96; Adella A. Carpenter, *Ellen Lois Roberts: Life and Writings* (Chicago, IL: Woman's Missionary Society, Free Methodist Church, 1926), 126f. Marcus Bell Fuller (b. 1852) was later editor of the *India Alliance*. His first wife Jennie (née Amanda Jane [Jennie] Frow [1851-1900]) wrote the book, *The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood*. An Oberlin graduate (as was his wife and daughter), Marcus Fuller received his call to missionary service through hearing a sermon by Free Methodist Wilson Hogue. See Wilson T. Hogue, *History of the Free Methodist Church* (Chicago, IL: Free Methodist Publishing House, 1915), 2:362; Oberlin College, *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary General Catalogue of Oberlin College, 1833-1908* (Oberlin, OH: Oberlin College, 1909), 350, 352; "Fuller, Jennie (Frow)," Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1998), 231.

<sup>4</sup>"Roberts, Emma Sellew" in John W. Leonard, ed., *Who's Who in New York City and State*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: L. R. Hamersly and Company, 1907), 1111.

<sup>5</sup>Emma Sellew Roberts, "Pandita Ramabai and Her Work," *Missionary Tidings* 2:6 (June 1898), 6.

graphic problem. Though there has been a virtual explosion of scholarly interest in this remarkable Indian educator, reformer, and feminist over the past decade in both India and the United States, virtually all her contemporary interpreters misunderstand the Holiness Movement context of the later stages of Ramabai's spiritual pilgrimage. This is true of the eminent contemporary Indian feminist and scholar, Meera Kosambi, but also of the American Evangelical Robert Eric Frykenberg.<sup>6</sup>

The evidence of Ramabai's association with Chesbrough Seminary is abundant, however, including even such details as the fact that Ramabai had two of B. T. Roberts' books in her personal library.<sup>7</sup> This essay explores Ramabai's connection with Chesbrough Seminary, but also, more broadly, her links with the Holiness Movement and her role in the rise of Indian Pentecostalism.

### The Saga of Pandita Ramabai

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) was born into a high-caste Hindu family. Her father, a distinguished scholar in Sanskrit and Indian literature, took

<sup>6</sup>As noted below. I refer here to two significant recent books: Pandita Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter: The Peoples of the United States (1889)*, trans. and ed. Meera Kosambi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), and Pandita Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai's America: Conditions of Life in the United States*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg. Each book is a translation, with commentary, of Ramabai's report on her 1886-88 visit to the United States, published in India in the Marathi language in 1889 but never translated into English until recently.

<sup>7</sup>The personal library of Ramabai and Manoramabai included Roberts' *Fishers of Men* and the posthumous collection, *Holiness Teachings* (two copies), compiled and published by Benson Roberts in 1893. All are inscribed by Benson Roberts. One copy of *Holiness Teachings* is inscribed "To the Pandita Ramabai With the love of BH and E. S. Roberts, A. M. Chesbrough Seminary, North Chili, N.Y. June 27 1898. May his love and power compass you." The other is inscribed "To Manorama Medhavi, Domini filiae [daughter in the Lord]. Pax gratia que Domini tecum. Natalie die XVII. With the regards of Benson Howard Roberts, A M Chesbrough Seminary." The inscription is undated but the reference to day of birth suggests it was a birthday gift. The volume *Fishers of Men* is the 1886 revised edition and is inscribed "To the Pandita Ramabai, from B H and E S Roberts, North Chili, N.Y., June 27 1898. 'All things are possible.'" Benson and Emma likely gave Ramabai the two books inscribed to her on the occasion of her visit to Chesbrough Seminary to enroll Manoramabai there in 1898. See "The Papers, Publications, Pamphlets and Selected Books of Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922)," microfilmed archival collection from the Pandita Ramabai Mission, Kedgaon, India, 2001 (microfiche #1 and subsequent fiches). This still largely unexplored source would likely shed further light on the matters explored here and specifically on the Ramabai-Chesbrough connection.

the controversial steps of giving his daughter a classical Hindu education rather than allowing her to become a child bride. Ramabai's parents and sister died of starvation when Ramabai was only about sixteen, but she and her brother survived. In 1880 she married Bipin Medhavi and the next year their daughter, Manoramabai ("Heart's Delight"; "Mano" for short) was born. In 1882 Medhavi died of cholera, leaving Ramabai, then twenty-three, to support herself and her infant daughter. A brilliant scholar, Ramabai had already at this young age become an expert in Sanskrit and in the Hindu classics, and her learning became the means of her own economic survival.

Ramabai gradually became disillusioned with Hinduism. Through reading the New Testament and contacts with Anglican missionaries who treated her kindly and assisted her English learning, Ramabai became intellectually convinced of the truth of the Christian faith. While studying in England in 1883 she and two-year-old Mano were baptized in the Church of England. Ramabai later wrote that in England she "found the Christian religion, which was good enough for me, *but I had not [yet] found Christ, Who is the Life of the religion*, and 'the Light of every man that cometh into the world.'"<sup>8</sup> However, her writings at the time show clearly that this was a major spiritual breakthrough for her—finding Christian truth after her increasing disaffection from Hinduism, though not from Indian culture.

Ramabai's passion to improve the lot of Indian women burned even as she continued her studies in England. It was deepened when she saw the rescue work being carried out near London by the (Anglican) Sisters of the Cross. When she witnessed this "work of mercy," she was confronted with a "real difference between Hinduism and Christianity." When she asked one of the sisters what prompted this selfless service of caring for and reclaiming "fallen" women, the sister turned to the Gospel of John and read the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Ramabai wrote, "I had never read or heard anything like this in the religious books of the Hindus. I realized after reading the 4th chapter of St. John's Gospel that Christ was truly the Divine Saviour He claimed to be, and no one but

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<sup>8</sup>Pandita Ramabai, *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure*, reprinted in Meera Kosambi, comp. and ed., *Pandita Ramabai Through Her Own Words: Selected Works* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 309 (emphasis in the original).

He could transform and uplift the downtrodden womanhood of India and of every land.”<sup>9</sup>

Beginning in 1886, Ramabai spent two and a half years in the United States traveling, lecturing, and raising support for her Indian reform work. She brought little Mano with her, but due to her constant travels she soon sent the five-year-old back to England, putting her in the care of the (Anglican) Sisters of St. Mary the Virgin there. While in the U.S., Ramabai published an influential book, *The High-Caste Indian Woman* (1887), which quickly sold over 10,000 copies and earned her some \$8,000. Ramabai developed an influential circle of well-connected American friends who helped her financially, arranged hundreds of speaking opportunities for her, and organized the Ramabai Association. Through this network Ramabai received donations of over \$20,000 to start a child widows’ home in India, plus pledges of \$5,000 per year for ten years.<sup>10</sup>

In America Ramabai paid particular attention to educational and reform movements. She learned of the pre-Civil War abolitionist movement and immediately saw parallels to the cause of liberating India’s child widows. She was deeply impressed with the lives of Harriet Tubman (whom she visited twice at her home in Auburn, New York), William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and also Abraham Lincoln—liberators all. She became close friends with Frances Willard, president of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), who appointed Ramabai vice president of the India WCTU. Willard described Ramabai as a “young woman of medium height and ninety-eight pounds”; “delightful to have about; content if she has books, pen and ink, and peace”; “a sort of human-like gazelle; incarnate gentleness, combined with such celerity of apprehension, such swiftness of mental pace, adroitness of logic and equipoise of intention as to make her a delightful mental problem. She is impervious to praise, and can be captured only by affection.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Pandita Ramabai, “A Short History of Kripa Sadan, or Home of Mercy” (March 1903), in Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai Through Her Own Words*, 279. Kripa Sadan was the rescue home Ramabai established for sexually abused and “fallen” young women.

<sup>10</sup>A. B. Shah, ed., *The Letters of Pandita Ramabai*, comp. Sister Geraldine (Bombay, India: Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, 1977), xx-xxi; 192f.

<sup>11</sup>Edith L. Blumhofer, “‘From India’s Coral Strand’: Pandita Ramabai and U. S. Support for Foreign Missions,” in Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker, eds., *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 158. Blumhofer helpfully details Ramabai’s contacts and networking in America.

Ramabai also paid close attention also to the various Christian denominations in the United States, and especially the ways they treated women. She commented on the Methodist Episcopal Church General Conference held in New York City in 1888, at which women's rights were an issue. Ramabai spoke caustically of Methodism's failure to open the doors of leadership fully to women and noted that, except for a few denominations such as the Quakers, Unitarians, "and a progressive branch of the Methodists," Christian churches "do not allow women the liberty to expound the Scriptures in their churches—for no other reason than that they are women!" She added, "Women may be as pure as anybody could wish, they may be learned, they may be eloquent and talented, they may be a hundred times superior to male preachers, but their one and only failing is that they are women" and so are not permitted to preach even if called by God.<sup>12</sup> By "a progressive branch of the Methodists" Ramabai may have meant the Free Methodists who at this time had a number of women preachers and evangelists, even though they did not fully ordain women.

Ramabai also observed that in America most of the financial support for missions and reform efforts came from the poor and from women. In general, wealthy folks "are not that greatly concerned about religion." The support for propagating the Christian faith that "comes from the poor and especially from poor women is greater than that which comes from the wealthy."<sup>13</sup>

Ramabai arrived back in India in early 1889, at age thirty. Within months she opened a home and school, the Sharada Sadan ("Home of Learning") for child widows. Mano returned from England, so mother and daughter were again united. With backing from the Ramabai Association and the support of over 4,000 members of some seventy-seven Ramabai Circles in America, and with Hindu as well as Christian support in India, Ramabai's home for high-caste Indian widows was soon flourishing. Before long Ramabai also "admitted to her school other girls and women who were not child-widows, but whose life was a drudgery, misery, and a struggle for existence."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai's America*, ed. Frykenberg, 219.

<sup>13</sup>Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai's America*, ed. Frykenberg, 203f.

<sup>14</sup>Shamsundar Manohar Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai* (Madras, India: Christian Literature Society, 1979), 27. Opened first in Bombay, the Sharada Sadan was moved to Poona in 1891.

Due to the devastation of plague and famine, Ramabai vastly expanded her mission of mercy in the late 1890s. “The Sharada Sadan was now no more an institution meant only for the high-caste Hindu child-widows. It was literally open to all irrespective of caste and creed.”<sup>15</sup> In 1898 Ramabai founded her famous Mukti (“Salvation” or “Liberation”) mission community at Kedgaon, near Poona (now Pune) and began taking in hundreds of child widows who were famine victims. Unlike her earlier work, Mukti was explicitly Christian from the start. Some of Ramabai’s widows had begun asking for Christian baptism and, given her own spiritual pilgrimage and some Christian conversions among her students, Ramabai could no longer maintain her policy of religious neutrality. She could not refuse or discourage the spiritual quest of the young Hindu widows who were of course influenced by their teacher’s example. “Ramabai’s intentional religious neutrality ultimately yielded to the force of her own goodness.”<sup>16</sup>

Advocating for the rights of women and children in India, Ramabai spoke out against British colonial rule as well as against the oppressive practices of Hinduism. In a letter published in a Marathi-language magazine in 1886 she wrote, “The British Government is sucking Indian blood and wealth while per force dispatching Indian armies to march and fight the British battle in Egypt and ultimately die over there.” She complained also of unfair taxation and unjust legal proceedings.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, Ramabai’s spiritual quest was continuing. In 1891 or 1892 as her work with child widows was growing, Ramabai had an encounter with God that in some ways paralleled John Wesley’s Aldersgate experience of 1738. Faith became deeper and more personal, giving her a daily sense of Christ’s presence. She came “to know the Lord Jesus

<sup>15</sup>Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 28.

<sup>16</sup>Blumhofer, “‘From India’s Coral Strand,’” 163, citing a remark by the noted Oxford University philologist and Sanskrit scholar, Friedrich Max Müller. Max Müller (1823-1900) befriended Ramabai in England. His linguistic work was key to establishing the historical links between Indian and European languages and civilizations. See F. Max Müller, *Auld Lang Syne, Second Series: My Indian Friends* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899), 142. Max Müller said Ramabai had “one of the most remarkable memories in the world,” according to Clementina Butler. Clementina Butler, *Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati: Pioneer of the Movement for Education of the Child-widows of India* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1922), 91.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 37.

Christ as my personal Saviour and have the joy of sweet communion with him,” she later wrote.<sup>18</sup> Then, in April 1895, she experienced a deeper work of the Holy Spirit at the Holiness camp meeting at Lanauli (or Lanowli, between Bombay and Poona) established by the American Methodist evangelist and entrepreneur William Bramwell Osborn, founder of Ocean Grove, New Jersey, and other holiness encampments and one of the founders of the National Camp-Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness in 1867.<sup>19</sup> This new experience was mediated partly through Ramabai’s reading the autobiography of Amanda Berry Smith, the African Methodist Episcopal holiness evangelist and former slave who served briefly as a missionary in India. Ramabai came “to realize the personal presence of the Holy Spirit” in her life “and to be guided and taught by Him,” she wrote. “The Holy Spirit taught me how to appropriate every promise of God in the right way, and obey His voice.”<sup>20</sup>

Frykenberg fails to mention this significant experience of the deeper life in his account of Ramabai’s spiritual pilgrimage. He outlines what he calls four “stages” of Ramabai’s “road of conversion,” focusing finally on the 1905 revival as Ramabai’s “baptism of the Holy Spirit” and thus her “fourth and final major turning point.”<sup>21</sup> Ramabai herself, however, cites the significance of her 1895 deeper experience. Frykenberg essentially misses the Holiness Movement connection, as do most of the accounts of

<sup>18</sup>Ramabai, *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure*, in *Pandita Ramabai Through Her Own Words*, 314.

<sup>19</sup>Blumhofer, “From India’s Coral Strand,” 164; Padmini Sengupta, *Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: Her Life and Work* (Bombay, India: Asia Publishing House, 1970), 232; Nicol MacNicol, *Pandita Ramabai: A Builder of Modern India* (1926), republished as *What Liberates a Woman? The Story of Pandita Ramabai, A Builder of Modern India* (New Delhi, India: Nivedit Good Books, 1996), 142; William C. Kostlevy, ed., *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 194. Blumhofer gives the year as 1894, but most sources indicate 1895 as the year of this experience.

<sup>20</sup>Ramabai, *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure* in *Pandita Ramabai Through Her Own Words*, 316. Cf. Sengupta, *Pandita Ramabai Saraswati*, 231f; Mary Lucia Bierce Fuller, *The Triumph of an Indian Widow: The Life of Pandita Ramabai*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia, PA: American Council of the Ramabai Mukti Mission, [1939]), 40f.

<sup>21</sup>Frykenberg, “Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: A Biographical Introduction,” in *Pandita Ramabai’s America*, 49-51. Frykenberg lists Ramabai’s first three turning points as: her encounter with Christianity before going to England; her “intellectual” conversion resulting from “her experiences in England and America”; and her “more personal and spiritual” conversion of 1891.

Ramabai's spiritual journey. The background here is the significant Holiness Movement influence in India in the 1870s and 1880s, particularly through Methodist missionary and bishop James Thoburn, missionary and church planter William Taylor, and others. In 1880 John Inskip, prominent holiness evangelist and president of the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness, conducted a series of evangelistic and holiness meetings in India in cooperation with William Osborn, who had gone to India with William Taylor in 1875. Inskip preached the Methodist doctrine of entire sanctification as "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." Amanda Smith was also ministering in India at this time; Smith and Inskip crossed paths in Bombay in October 1880.<sup>22</sup>

Ramabai developed connections with several American holiness people and also with Christian and Missionary Alliance workers in India. Her work at Mukti continued to expand. When the original ten-year mandate of the Ramabai Association ended in 1898, she returned to America to reorganize support. A more explicitly evangelical American Ramabai Association was formed. As Edith Blumhofer notes,

Ramabai's embrace of conversionist Christianity and affinity for aspects of the higher life and holiness movements had brought her into the flow of growing streams of popular Protestantism in the United States. D. L. Moody and his many networks promoted her as ever in their publications, collecting and forwarding funds. Still hailed for her learning, [Ramabai] now put more confidence in her heart than in her intellect. She had come around to the conviction that only the gospel could accomplish what she had set out to do.<sup>23</sup>

### **Manoramabai and Chesbrough Seminary**

Ramabai's spiritual pilgrimage in the 1890s complicated her daughter Mano's educational progress. In 1896 Ramabai sent Mano, then fifteen, back to England where over the period of a year and a half she attended four different boarding schools. These changes were dictated by Ramabai and reflected her own spiritual and theological transitions. Sister Geraldine of the Anglican Community of St. Mary the Virgin, who had

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<sup>22</sup>W. McDonald and John E. Searles, *The Life of Rev. John S. Inskip, President of the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness* (1885; repr. Salem OH: Allegheny Publications, 1986), 328-342.

<sup>23</sup>Blumhofer, "From India's Coral Strand," 166.



been Ramabai's principal mentor when Ramabai first went to England in 1883, was exasperated, complaining about "the mismanagement of [Ramabai's] only child's education." She and other Anglican friends constantly tried to strengthen Mano's ties to the Church of England and to steer her away from "dissenting" groups and what Sister Geraldine called "the adulterations of Methodism." But Ramabai told Sister Geraldine in 1896,

I believe in the Universal Church of Christ which includes all the members of His body, and am not particular about others being members of different sects. The dry discussion about sects and differences has never been an attractive one to me since I was converted. And now I enjoy the peace of God which passeth all understanding and do not trouble myself with small matters of opinion and differences.<sup>24</sup>

Sister Geraldine noted that Ramabai finally in 1897 sent Mano "to be trained as a missionary with people at Brighton, England," and "to be prepared to go with her to America early in January 1898."<sup>25</sup> Ramabai brought Mano with her to America in early 1898, along with two high-caste Hindu child widows. Surprisingly, she had decided to enroll her daughter and these Indian girls in Chesbrough Seminary, which she learned about in India through the Fullers and perhaps others.<sup>26</sup> As Blumhofer notes, the attraction this Free Methodist school "now held for Ramabai revealed her shifting religious sensibilities."<sup>27</sup> Ramabai had finally decided that Chesbrough was the best place for Mano and for selected others of her wards whom she wished to see receive further education.

<sup>24</sup>Shah, *Letters of Pandita Ramabai*, 335, 338.

<sup>25</sup>Shah, *Letters of Pandita Ramabai*, 350; Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter*, 29.

<sup>26</sup>Mary Lucia Bierce Fuller (1882-1965), a Chesbrough and Oberlin alumna, was especially close to Ramabai and looked upon her as her spiritual mother. She later wrote *The Triumph of an Indian Widow: The Life of Pandita Ramabai* (referenced above).

Of this journey to America Sister Geraldine wrote, "With Miss [Minnie] Abrams' capable help at Mukti, . . . Ramabai felt able to leave [in early 1898]. She had, the year before, sent three of her best pupils to America, and she now took two others with her. In England, she was joined by her daughter Manorama whom she took to America. These six girls were placed under the care of Mrs. Roberts, Principal of the A. M. Chesbrough Seminary, North Chili, N.Y." Shah, *Letters of Pandita Ramabai*, 353, 355; Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 19.

<sup>27</sup>Blumhofer, "From India's Coral Strand," 166.

Emma Sellew Roberts heard Pandita Ramabai speak in Rochester on this 1898 trip, but she and Adella Carpenter apparently had had contact with Ramabai for some time prior to this. In fact, Ramabai sent three high-caste child widows to study at Chesbrough in the summer of 1897. Now she enrolled two more and her own seventeen-year-old daughter at Chesbrough.<sup>28</sup>

This mission accomplished, and with renewed pledges of support, Ramabai returned to India in 1898. Stopping briefly in England, she was invited to attend the July Keswick Convention. There in a five-minute address she challenged the 4,000 attendees to intercede for revival in India, asking them “to pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all Indian Christians” and “that 100,000 men and 100,000 women from among the Indian Christians may be led to preach the Gospel to their country people.”<sup>29</sup>

Mano’s education at Chesbrough Seminary, according to Sister Geraldine, “was given to her without cost, as was also that of the five Indian girls with her in the Seminary, by the liberality of Mrs. E. S. [Emma Sellew] Roberts, the Lady Principal.”<sup>30</sup> Sadly, some of the Indian girls died while at the seminary; they lie buried in the North Chili cemetery, but others returned and gave years of faithful service.<sup>31</sup> Mano—like her mother, an outstanding student—flourished at the school, completing a three-year course of study in two years.<sup>32</sup> Sister Geraldine wrote:

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<sup>28</sup>Emma Sellew Roberts, “Pandita Ramabai and Her Work,” 5f; Emma Sellew Roberts, “The High-Caste Widows of India at the A. M. Chesbrough Seminary,” *Missionary Tidings* 2:6 (June 1898), 7f. Dyer notes, “When Ramabai went to America in 1898 she took with her several young women who were in moral danger from their relatives.” Helen S. Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai: Her Vision, Her Mission and Triumph of Faith* (London, UK: Pickering and Inglis, [1923]), 84.

<sup>29</sup>Pandita Ramabai in *Mukti Prayer-Bell* 2:1 (Oct. 1905), quoted in Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 216.

<sup>30</sup>Shah, *Letters of Pandita Ramabai*, 351.

<sup>31</sup>“Ramabai, Great Native Indian, Sent Daughter to Chesbro,” *The Pioneer* [of A. M. Chesbrough Seminary] 3:10 (June 1927), 1.

<sup>32</sup>Benson and Emma Roberts took, or at least intended to take, Mano with them to D. L. Moody’s Northfield Summer Conference for a week in August 1898, according to a July 30, 1898, letter in the Roberts Family Papers. Ambert G. Moody (D. L. Moody’s nephew) of the Northfield Summer Conferences wrote to Benson Roberts, “We are. . . glad to know that you are planning to come to Northfield for the August Conference for a week at least. We trust that you and Mrs. Roberts will bring the daughter of Pundita [sic] Ramabai with you, for the outing can but do her good.” A. G. Moody (Northfield, MA) to Mr. B. H. Roberts (North Chili, NY), July 30, 1898. B. T. Roberts Family Papers, Microfilm Reel 12, Frame 405.

[Mano] rose at five and spent her first half hour in prayer and Bible reading before beginning study and thus claimed a daily blessing on her work. She left the Seminary having gained the goodwill of all her fellow-students and the highest commendation of her teachers for the quiet and unobtrusive influence she had exercised. The five other Indian girls were her special charge while in the Seminary; she overlooked their studies, and was referred to by her teachers if any difficulty arose with regard to them. The examinations shewed [sic] that she had gained the first place of the year [1889-90] in the Seminary, and out of some ten subjects she gained honours in all but two. She also took extra science subjects. And to this must be added instrumental music. As a pianist she was brilliant.<sup>33</sup>

In April 1900, a month or so before Mano's graduation, Benson and Emma Roberts took her and some of the other Indian students to New York City to attend the great Ecumenical Missionary Conference there. Attended officially by over 3,000 missions personnel, the conference drew tens of thousands of interested Christians to Carnegie Hall and other venues for the main services. Emma Roberts introduced the Indian students at a Woman's Work in Foreign Missions meeting at the Central Presbyterian Church site on Thursday morning, April 26, and Mano addressed a mass meeting at Carnegie Hall on Sunday, April 29, speaking on "What an Indian Famine is Like."<sup>34</sup>

Mano graduated from Chesbrough Seminary with honors in June, 1900. She intended to go on to Mt. Holyoke for her college education, but decided instead to return to India to help her mother, who was in urgent need of assistance.

In his biographical introduction to *Pandita Ramabai's America*, Robert Frykenberg misunderstands the Chesbrough Seminary connection. He writes, "Soon after reaching America, Manorama was admitted to a

<sup>33</sup>Shah, *Letters of Pandita Ramabai*, 363. Shortly after graduating in June, 1900, Mano sailed for England where she visited Sister Geraldine and others before going on to India. Sister Geraldine notes that, in returning to India, Mano was commissioned by the American Ramabai Association to take charge of the Sharada Sadan, the residential school that Ramabai had opened in 1889. Shah, *Letters of Pandita Ramabai*, 364; cf. Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter*, 28f.

<sup>34</sup>According to the official conference report. See *Ecumenical Missionary Conference, New York, 1900*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: American Tract Society, 1900), 2:353-377.

women's college ('seminary') in New York." He doesn't mention the name of the school, or Emma or Benson Roberts, and misses the Holiness Movement context.<sup>35</sup> Chesbrough was not a college, and was coeducational. Blumhofer does mention the school and B. T. Roberts, but misidentifies Roberts as the founder of the Wesleyan Methodists. Kosambi mentions the school (misspelling it "Cheseborough"), but also is oblivious to the character of the school and its connections.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile in India Ramabai's Mukti mission community expanded rapidly as Ramabai rescued hundreds of starving child widows from a devastating famine in which an estimated thirty-seven million people perished. By the end of 1897, Ramabai had assembled the three hundred famine widows she had set out to find. She now began to develop plans to make Mukti a place for education, vocational training, and the equipping of Indian female village evangelists. "The famine widows constituted the nucleus for this experiment," notes Blumhofer.<sup>37</sup> Eventually, as the result of subsequent famines, Mukti grew to a community of some 2,000. Mary Lucia Bierce Fuller, who knew Ramabai well, wrote that, as Ramabai took in more and more girls during the 1900 famine, she "finally abandoned her original plan of a school for high-caste widows only, and [took] in girls of all castes, even thieving castes, aboriginals and out-caste scavengers," much to the consternation of even her helpers and the older girls. Ramabai was assisted now by a whole corps of American and English women who "one by one, came to Ramabai's help, never to leave her, some of them, till they died"—the Methodist missionary Minnie Abrams, Mary Macdonald, Lissa Hastie and many others, some of them medical doctors.<sup>38</sup>

At her mother's urging Mano, together with Minnie Abrams, spent nearly a year in Australia in 1902-03, building support for Mukti Mission and keeping in touch with Ramabai by letter. On her return, Mano continued helping with her mother's growing ministries.

<sup>35</sup>Frykenberg, "Pandita Ramabai Saraswati: A Biographical Introduction," in *Pandita Ramabai's America*, 47.

<sup>36</sup>Blumhofer, "From India's Coral Strand," 165f; Meera Kosambi, "Returning the American Gaze: Situating Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter," Introduction in Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounter*, 29.

<sup>37</sup>Blumhofer, "From India's Coral Strand," 164f.

<sup>38</sup>Fuller, *Triumph of an Indian Widow*, 48f, 52-55. "No other biographer was more closely and intimately associated with the Pandita" than Mary Lucia Bierce Fuller (Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 47).

## Revival at Mukti: The Indian Pentecost

A remarkable revival swept Mukti Mission in 1905. Ramabai said the revival grew out of “a special prayer-circle” consisting of “about 70 of us who met together each morning,” praying for “the true conversion of all the Indian Christians including ourselves, and for a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all Christians of every land.” Six months later “the Lord graciously sent a glorious Holy Ghost revival among us, and also in many schools and churches in this country.”<sup>39</sup> Sister Geraldine (based on Mano’s letters) described the revival as “a marvellous [sic] Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit,” continuing for “more than six weeks.” Mano said the revival’s outbreak “was manifestly God Himself working,” for “no stirring address [had been] delivered at the meeting; nor had there been any special effort to bring conviction of sin.” Mano reported that a “large number of girls and women” were converted, and “many have received the cleansing and fullness of the Spirit for life and service.”<sup>40</sup> Three months later Mano wrote to Sister Geraldine:

I told [in my previous letter] how the Holy Spirit had begun to work in the hearts of the girls in a most marvellous [sic] way and how His working led to agony on account of sin, confession and restoration and then intense joy. Perhaps, I did not mention the joy, for I remember that I wrote that letter at the very beginning of this Revival; and for the first few days hardly any joy was seen, but a sense of awe pervaded the atmosphere, and there was deep sorrow for sin. Then came the joy and the baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire; and what seems to be a special anointing for the Ministry of Intercession.<sup>41</sup>

News of revival outbreaks in Korea, Australia, and Wales appear to have helped spark the Mukti revival. Blumhofer writes, “[W]ith reports of the Welsh revival circulating widely, hundreds of Ramabai’s two thousand girls manifested unusual concern about sin, crying and praying for forgiveness. The noise of hundreds praying aloud individually and simultaneously permeated the compound day and night.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ramabai, *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure in Pandita Ramabai Through Her Own Words*, 320. Adhav says this revival “rooted at Mukti in 1905,” which began on June 29, spread to a number of other cities and towns including Poona, Bombay, Yeotmal, and Dhokla. Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 21, 230.

<sup>40</sup>Shah, *Letters of Pandita Ramabai*, 390f.

<sup>41</sup>Shah, *Letters of Pandita Ramabai*, 391.

<sup>42</sup>Blumhofer, “From India’s Coral Strand,” 168.

Mano would likely have witnessed somewhat similar scenes, if on a smaller scale, earlier at Chesbrough Seminary. In a circular letter Mano sent out in October, 1906, she described the revival. "A realization of the awfulness of sin, and a dread of its results took possession of many. And in almost all parts of Mukti, in the dormitories and school rooms, in the garden, and in the various compounds, there were to be found at all times of the day, souls crying to God for mercy and forgiveness." Then, as the Holy Spirit was poured out, the community experienced indescribable joy. Mano wrote:

God graciously granted to those who were seeking, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire, and to those who were willing, a real yearning for the salvation of souls and a special anointing for the ministry of intercession. In a marked way, God has been reminding us of the words of Scripture, "God hath *chosen* the foolish . . . the weak . . . and base things of this world," the "things which are despised . . . yea and the things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence."<sup>43</sup>

Revival of a somewhat different character came in late December 1906 and early 1907. Ramabai called it "another and greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit." Some of the girls "received a definite call to preach the Gospel" and some began "praying in different tongues." Ramabai said she wasn't surprised by the tongues-speaking because she had heard this gift had been given to Christians elsewhere in India.<sup>44</sup> She was a bit surprised, however, when one of the girls, who did not know English, began praying and praising God in English. "She was perfectly unconscious of

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<sup>43</sup>Manoramabai, Circular Letter (Oct. 8, 1906), quoted in Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 230.

<sup>44</sup>An editorial in the September, 1906, *Alliance Witness* spoke of "reports of the revival movement in India" which "frequently read like a continuation of the Acts of the Apostles. Some of the gifts which have been scarcely heard of in the church for many centuries are now being given by the Holy Ghost to simple, unlearned members of the body of Christ and communities are being stirred and transformed by the wonderful grace of God. Healings, the gift of tongues, visions and dreams, discernment of spirits, the power to prophecy [sic] and to pray the prayer of faith, all have a place in the present revival." Maud Wiest, "Editorials," *Alliance Witness* (Sept. 1906), 30, quoted in Gary B. McGee, "'Latter Rain' Falling in the East: Early-Twentieth-Century Pentecostalism in India and the Debate over Speaking in Tongues," *Church History* 68:3 (Sept. 1999), 655.

what was going on, her eyes were fast closed, and she was speaking to the Lord Jesus very fluently in English,” wrote Ramabai.<sup>45</sup>

News of Pentecostal revival in India filtered back to Azusa Street and was reported in *The Apostolic Faith*, the monthly paper associated with the Azusa Street revival that began publication in September, 1906. A brief piece in the November, 1906, issue entitled “Pentecost in India” reported that “the baptism with the Holy Ghost and gift of tongues is being received there by natives who are simply being taught of God.” This referred, however, to revivals elsewhere in India, not at Mukti.<sup>46</sup> A longer article in the September 1907 issue entitled “Pentecost in Mukti, India” (reprinted from an Indian publication) specifically mentioned Pandita Ramabai and her work and the Pentecostal outpouring at Mukti just before Christmas, 1906. The report stated that both Ramabai and Minnie Abrams were impressed by the reports from Azusa Street and had exhorted the Mukti community to “tarry for the promised baptism of the Holy Ghost.” Ramabai, the report notes, “fully acknowledged all that God had bestowed through His Spirit in the past; but she discerned there was the deeper fullness of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost accompanied with the gift of tongues which had not yet been received.” Gifts of various tongues, interpretation, and healing were part of this movement. The report noted that at Mukti “the girls and women are pressing on to greater things and are believing for the restoration to the Church of all the lost gifts of the Spirit.”<sup>47</sup>

Reflecting on the tongues-speaking, Ramabai said she “praised God for doing something new for us,” but she saw this revival in continuity with the one two years earlier despite its “special features,” including “the shaking of the body, and other physical demonstrations, speaking in dif-

<sup>45</sup>Mukti Prayer-Bell 3:4 (Sept. 1907), quoted in Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 218-219. Other girls were said to have spoken in Sanskrit and Kannada. McGee notes that Minnie Abrams testified to speaking in Hebrew and that “Ramabai did not speak in tongues, but commended the experience.” McGee, “‘Latter Rain’ Falling in the East,” 656.

<sup>46</sup>“Pentecost in India,” *The Apostolic Faith* 1:3 (Nov. 1906), 1. This report quotes Maud Wiest’s September 1906 editorial, cited above. A similar report from Sister A. G. Garr, “In Calcutta, India,” appeared in the April 1907 issue of *The Apostolic Faith*, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>Max Wood Moorhead, “Pentecost in Mukti, India,” *The Apostolic Faith* 1:10 (Sept. 1907), 4. See the discussion in McGee, “‘Latter Rain’ Falling in the East,” 656.

ferent tongues, simultaneous prayer, and such other things.” Ramabai was very clear that tongues-speaking was not “the only and necessary sign” of the Spirit’s baptism. She wrote at the height of the 1907 revival, “The gift of tongues is certainly one of the signs of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There is scriptural ground to hold this belief. But there is no Scripture warrant to think that the speaking in tongues is the only and necessary sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>48</sup> Pentecostal historian Gary McGee notes that “neither Abrams nor Ramabai registered tongues as indispensable to every instance of baptism in the Holy Spirit as did their American counterparts,” though both views were represented at Mukti. Ramabai and Abrams held a “more inclusive doctrine” of tongues that was similar to A. B. Simpson’s views and less like “that taught at Topeka and Azusa.”<sup>49</sup>

Through these revivals at Mukti, Pandita Ramabai became something of a bridge figure between the Holiness and Pentecostal movements. Minnie Abrams, baptized with the Holy Spirit during the 1905 revival, in 1906 published *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire*, an important book which influenced the beginnings of Pentecostalism in Chile and elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> McGee argues in fact that the 1905 and 1907 revivals at Mukti challenge the common view that modern Pentecostalism traces exclusively to the 1906-09 Azusa Street revival. A Pentecostal revival was already well underway in India before news of Azusa Street arrived. “Early Pentecostalism in India [thus] represents an important chapter in

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<sup>48</sup>Mukti *Prayer-Bell* 3:4 (Sept. 1907), quoted in Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 219-221, 223. This was also Minnie Abrams’ view; like Ramabai, Abrams saw the 1906-1907 revival in continuity with the 1905 one. Simultaneous praying aloud and outbreaks of prayer “all over the church while singing or preaching is going on, putting a stop to all other exercises,” had been part of the Mukti community’s experience “since the big Revival of 1905,” Abrams noted in 1907, as documented in Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, 225.

<sup>49</sup>McGee, “‘Latter Rain’ Falling in the East,” 657f.

<sup>50</sup>G. B. McGee, “Abrams, Minnie F.,” in Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander, eds., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 7. McGee notes that through sending a copy of her book “to May L. Hoover (Mrs. Willis C. Hoover) in Valparaiso, Chile, with whom she attended the Chicago Training School for Home and Foreign Missions (Methodist-related), Abrams significantly influenced the beginnings of the Pentecostal movement” in Chile. See also Gary McGee, “‘Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire!’ The Mission Legacy of Minnie F. Abrams,” *Missiology* (Oct. 1999), 515-522.



the story of modern Pentecostalism that must be examined on its own merits and not just as a spinoff from the Azusa Street revival.” Further, McGee argues, the role of glossolalia as understood by Ramabai and others at Mukti calls into question “the dominance of the classical Pentecostal doctrine of speaking in tongues”—namely, that tongues-speaking is the essential initial evidence of Spirit baptism. As McGee puts it, “Despite claims that Pentecostalism first sprouted in America, the fact that Holiness seed had been scattered on the soil of India has been overlooked.” The Mukti revival was nurtured by holiness and Keswickian Higher Life streams, as Ramabai’s own story bears out. The language of “Pentecost” and “Spirit baptism” was common in these streams well before Azusa Street. This background is part of the reason that Ramabai and Minnie Abrams “did not insist that every Pentecostal had to experience glossolalia.”<sup>51</sup>

The controversy over tongues-speaking split the Holiness Movement in the United States, giving rise to modern Pentecostalism as a distinct movement.<sup>52</sup> It is impossible to know just where B. T. Roberts would have come down on this issue had he lived into the 1900s. Certainly he would have rejected as unbiblical the view that tongues are the necessary evidence of Spirit baptism. But, given his own “Pentecostal” leanings—his emphasis on the baptism and the freedom of the Holy Spirit, on the empowerment of *all* believers, including women, for ministry, plus his emphasis on revival, his passion for world missions, and his support of Vivian Dake’s Pentecost Bands—it is at least plausible that he might have embraced the more inclusive view of Pandita Ramabai that glossolalia was a legitimate but not the most important gift of the Spirit. If so, he would have been an exception among holiness leaders. Given the climate of controversy over tongues in the U.S. after 1906, with extreme positions taken by both sides, it is just as plausible that Roberts would have rejected tongues-speaking except perhaps as the gift of known languages for missionary proclamation.

<sup>51</sup>McGee, “‘Latter Rain’ Falling in the East,” 648-665. McGee points out that “Pentecostal or Pentecostal-like movements” at various places in India antedated the Azusa Street revival by several decades. Of course, it is also true that several of the key figures in the Azusa Street revival had some background in the Holiness Movement.

<sup>52</sup>Best documented in Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), rev. ed. of *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (1971).

Manoramabai was familiar with the Free Methodist emphasis on revival and the work of the Holy Spirit due to her years at Chesbrough. Her own spiritual journey in the 1890s essentially paralleled that of her mother. She embraced personal faith in Jesus Christ and the deeper work of the Spirit, sharing with her mother the emphasis on holiness and on the Pentecostal empowerment of the Spirit. In this sense Mano, like Minnie Abrams, was one of the early pioneers of the modern Pentecostal movement.

After graduating from Chesbrough in 1900, Mano worked steadily with her mother for the next twenty years. She took an active part in the 1905 and 1907 Mukti revivals, as noted. Mano accompanied Minnie Abrams on a voyage to England in 1908, intending to continue on to the United States to visit a number of Pentecostal centers. Mano became seriously ill, however, and returned to India, gratefully experiencing God's healing on the return voyage.<sup>53</sup>

Ramabai expected that her daughter would succeed her in directing Mukti Mission, but Manoramabai, who had been in declining health for some time, died on July 24, 1921, at age 40.<sup>54</sup> Ramabai herself died only seven months later, on April 5, 1922, at age sixty-four. The work has continued to the present, however. Sometime after Ramabai's death, the Christian and Missionary Alliance took over trusteeship of the Mukti Mission "in accordance with Ramabai's will," noted Mary Lucia Bierce Fuller, with the understanding that it would continue as an independent ministry, not as part of the CMA missionary enterprise.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup>Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai*, 133; cf. McGee, "'Latter Rain' Falling in the East," 658.

<sup>54</sup>Adhav notes that Mano "was admitted in the Mission Hospital at Miraj for treatment . . . sometime during 1917 or 1918." Adhav, *Pandita Ramabai*, v-vi.

<sup>55</sup>Fuller, *Triumph of an Indian Widow*, 49. Information on Pandita Ramabai and Manoramabai is drawn primarily from the following sources, in addition to those already indicated: Eric J. Sharpe, "Ramabai Dongre Medhavi," in Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York, NY: Macmillan Reference, 1998), 557; Rajas Krishnarao Dongre and Josephine F. Patterson, *Pandita Ramabai: A Life of Faith and Prayer* (Madras, India: Christian Literature Society, 1963) 33-38; "Ramabai, Sarasvati (Pandita)," in Burgess, McGee, and Alexander, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 755f; "Smith, Amanda Berry," in Kostlevy, *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement*, 235f; Basil Miller, *Pandita Ramabai, India's Christian Pilgrim* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1949), 69, 80, 116. See also [Emma Sellev Roberts?], "Pundita Ramabai," *The Earnest Christian* 75:6 (June 1898), 183-85. This issue of *The Earnest Christian* carried a photograph of Ramabai on the front cover.

## Solving the Puzzle: Why Chesbrough?

At first it seems odd that Pandita Ramabai, with her wide international network of well-placed Christian and reformist leaders, would send her daughter and her choice scholars to the rather obscure Chesbrough Seminary. It is true that Ramabai had a pronounced affinity for America over England; as Meera Kosambi notes, Ramabai viewed the United States as “a more progressive country than imperial Britain and as a more suitable model for a colonized India to follow in its pursuit of freedom and advancement.”<sup>56</sup> So Ramabai apparently wanted Mano to be educated and shaped in America. But why Chesbrough Seminary?

Ramabai’s own spiritual pilgrimage provides clues. The attraction was at several levels. In hindsight, and in light of the growing body of literature on Ramabai, we can identify five interlocking factors, all of which have continuing relevance today.

**1. Commitment to social concern and reform—particularly women’s rights and ministry with the poor and oppressed.** Like her Hindu father, Ramabai was a life-long reformer. Even before she was a Christian she was an advocate for reform and liberation. Her concern especially was for full equality of women. As Frykenberg notes, Ramabai “stood as a champion of the lowly, the weak, and the poor, particularly downtrodden women and children.”<sup>57</sup> She learned of the long-standing Free Methodist commitment to women’s equality as well as, no doubt, the church’s earlier opposition to slavery and its concern for the poor. It is unlikely that she would have sent Mano to study at Chesbrough if the school had not embraced and lived these values.

**2. Countercultural Witness.** While Ramabai openly admired the freedom and relative equality of American society, she was aware of discrimination against women and against African Americans, Native Americans, and other minorities. She also disapproved of American materialism, pride, and the ostentation of the rich. These were all concerns that B. T. Roberts repeatedly had articulated.

Ramabai could see that Chesbrough Seminary maintained some critical distance from American culture, even though it was thoroughly com-

<sup>56</sup>Kosambi, “Preface and Acknowledgements,” in Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai’s American Encounter*, ix.

<sup>57</sup>Frykenberg, “Editor’s Preface to the English Translation,” in Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai’s America*, xi.

mitted to a quality classical education. Also, the Free Methodist emphasis on simplicity and plainness in dress and lifestyle would have attracted her—in principle, if not in detail. Ramabai always wore a plain white cotton sari and her hair short, both symbols of her widowhood, and maintained a simple lifestyle, including a vegetarian diet.<sup>58</sup> These of course were reflections of her Indian Hindu culture, but she apparently affirmed them also as Christian values.<sup>59</sup> Like Benson and Emma Roberts, and of course B. T. and Ellen Roberts, Ramabai looked on the ostentations of popular American fashion with disdain.

**3. Commitment to a broad liberal arts education for all.** Brilliant and well educated herself, Ramabai wanted her proteges to be thoroughly grounded in history, literature and languages, and the arts and sciences. She apparently became convinced that Chesbrough was committed to serious and rigorous study, within an explicitly Christian context.

Ramabai was well aware of the various reform movements in America and the fact that many of them were populist in character—that is, that they were energized by broad-based popular support, worked for the welfare of common people, and believed that the nation's political and economic structures should benefit all the people, not just the wealthy and powerful.<sup>60</sup> This populist current found resonance with her own spirit and agenda. She may have been attracted to the fact that Chesbrough was not elitist, but provided quality liberal arts education for common people and the poor.

**4. Emphasis on Christian mission.** As Ramabai became increasingly Evangelical in her outlook, explicit Christian mission became a more central concern. Ramabai approved the strong missions emphasis at Chesbrough and the fact that it was not narrowly sectarian. Though the

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<sup>58</sup>Butler, *Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati*, 88f.

<sup>59</sup>In a standard letter to prospective volunteer workers at Mukti, Manoramabai emphasized, “[O]ur style of living is thoroughly India. Our European workers do not wear the Indian dress, but they dress simply in their own way. Our rooms are very plain.” She explained that while “in most Missions where European workers are in charge, the food and manner of living is European, . . . ours is a thoroughly Indian Mission.” “The Papers, Publications, Pamphlets and Selected Books of Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922),” microfilmed archival collection from the Pandita Ramabai Mission, Kedgaon, India, 2001.

<sup>60</sup>Despite many misinterpretations, this is the essence of American Populism.

major focus of missions at Chesbrough was on Free Methodist work, mission work of other groups, such as the Christian Missionary Alliance, was also celebrated.

5. Finally—and very importantly in the light of Ramabai’s own spiritual journey—was the Free Methodist **emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit**, understood at this point in the Wesleyan Holiness sense, not in the later Pentecostal sense. Experientially at least, by 1895 Ramabai had become a part of the Holiness Movement and she wanted Mano and the other Indian students to come under this influence. She presumably hoped that the rising generation of Indian Christian leaders would arrive at the place where she had arrived.

Why Chesbrough Seminary? Strange as it may seem, this small school, reflecting the shadow of the now-departed B. T. Roberts, uniquely combined the set of concerns that were closest to Pandita Ramabai’s heart.<sup>61</sup> Ramabai was always a pilgrim on a journey. Despite the colossal differences of culture, in her pilgrimage she found kinship with the Wesleyan Holiness pilgrim community in North Chili, New York.

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<sup>61</sup>Ramabai published *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure* in 1907. This remarkable account (running to thirty pages in a recent republication) traces her spiritual pilgrimage. She also describes the 1905 revival and at the end recounts that she had now come to believe firmly in the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ. Pandita Ramabai, *A Testimony of Our Inexhaustible Treasure*, reprinted in Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai Through Her Own Words: Selected Works*, 295-324. Ramabai’s testimony has been variously reprinted; see Pandita Ramabai, *A Testimony*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Kedagon, India: Ramabai Mukti Mission, 1968), 67 pp.

# REAL CHRISTIANITY AS THE INTEGRATING THEME IN WESLEY'S SOTERIOLOGY: A CRITIQUE OF A MODERN MYTH<sup>1</sup>

by

Kenneth J. Collins

The work of several American Methodist scholars suggests that the later Wesley significantly modified or even repudiated his earlier basic understanding of what constitutes "real Christianity." For example, on the occasion of the two hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of John Wesley's Aldersgate experience, Albert Outler made the unsettling although largely unsupported claim that "Aldersgate was not the time when John Wesley became a 'real Christian.'" <sup>2</sup> In a rather interesting move, Theodore Jennings actually obviated the whole question by claiming that it made little difference to John Wesley whether he served God as a servant or as a son. <sup>3</sup> Randy Maddox repeatedly criticized the "reigning" standard interpretation of Aldersgate which has contended, among other things, that Wesley was converted in 1738 "from a pre-Christian moralist into a true Christian believer." <sup>4</sup> More recently, John Cobb maintained—in

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<sup>1</sup>This essay originally appeared in a slightly different form in *The Asbury Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 15-45. Used here by permission.

<sup>2</sup>Albert C. Outler, "Beyond Pietism: Aldersgate in Context," *Motive* (May 1963): 12.

<sup>3</sup>Theodore W. Jennings, "John Wesley *Against* Aldersgate," *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Fall 1988): 16. Bracketed material represents a change of tense.

<sup>4</sup>Randy L. Maddox, ed., *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990), 13.

the absence of very much argumentation—that Wesley was a [real] Christian prior to Aldersgate.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the evidence which is crucial to this contemporary reevaluation is found in John Wesley's "depressing" letter to his brother Charles in 1766 where the elder brother states: "[I do not love God. I never did]. Therefore [I never] believed in the *Christian* sense of the word. Therefore [I am only an] honest heathen, a proselyte of the Temple, one of the "fearers of God."<sup>6</sup> Other evidence can be garnered from Wesley's journal emendations of 1774 which represent a reassessment of the Methodist leader's early idiom of the "almost Christian" in terms of the following two variables: (A) a more developed and "nuanced" understanding of Christian assurance and (B) the important distinction between the faith of a servant/ the faith of a child.

Although modifications of the preceding two variables clearly resulted in some important changes in Wesley's soteriology, recent scholarship goes on to conclude that Wesley eventually put aside the distinction between an *almost* and an *altogether* Christian. Indeed, the general—although erroneous—view among some Methodist scholars today seems to be that Wesley either outright abandoned the language of real Christianity in his later years, as he developed his views on assurance and the faith of a servant, or else he reduced this language so greatly as to include the latter. But the preponderance of evidence, as will be demonstrated shortly, suggests otherwise.

Since the whole matter of Wesley's 1766 letter and his later journal emendations has already been treated in my earlier writings,<sup>7</sup> this present work will focus on what has been largely neglected in recent assessments, namely, the motif of "Real Christianity" itself, a motif which is valuable in its own right and also integral to a proper interpretation of Wesley's

<sup>5</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 64.

<sup>6</sup>John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 5:16. Emphasis is mine. I have translated the Greek here. Moreover, observe that in this excerpt just cited, and at this late date, Wesley still distinguishes the faith of a Christian from a fearer of God.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Kenneth J. Collins, "The Continuing Significance of Aldersgate [response to "John Wesley against Aldersgate" by T. W. Jennings, 8:3-22, 1988; rejoinder, 100-105]," *Quarterly Review* 8 (Winter 1988): 90-99; and "Other Thoughts on Aldersgate: Has the Conversionist Paradigm Collapsed?" *Methodist History* 30, no. 1 (October 1991): 10-25.

soteriology in general and to his understanding of Christian assurance and the faith of a servant in particular. Indeed, it will be maintained throughout that what Wesley understood by Christian assurance as well as the faith of a servant is not properly conceived except in terms of this salient motif. Observe that this present approach is quite the opposite of recent scholarship: that is, instead of neglecting the significance of real Christianity in the face of Wesley's changing soteriological views, those changing views will be interpreted precisely in terms of this ongoing motif.

In order to be historically sensitive and accurate, all of the theological themes just cited (real Christianity, the faith of a servant, and Christian assurance) will be tracked in terms of three major periods which range from 1725 to 1791. The results of this effort will then serve as the basis for a critical assessment of the *continuity* of particular soteriological elements in Wesley's writings—a task which should issue in a renewed appreciation for the salience of inward religion, the importance of spirituality, and the relatively high valuation of regeneration in Wesley's overall theology. Beyond this, the subtle shifts and nuances in Wesley's own theological vocabulary—the *discontinuous* elements, especially in terms of assurance and differing understandings of faith—will be considered as well. Some of the major questions to be addressed will include the following: What did Wesley mean by the phrase “the faith of a servant”? Did this phrase also embrace non-Christian communities? If so, what are the theological implications? What is the relation between the faith of a servant and the whole matter of assurance? Are all who lack assurance suitably described as having the faith of a servant or are there exempt cases? What are the implications of such concepts for the motif of real Christianity as Wesley *developed* this theme throughout his life? And lastly, what does the preceding reveal about Wesley's own estimation of the importance of spirituality and inward religion?

In a real sense, the interpretive task projected here is remarkably similar to that of literary criticism. In other words, the world of Wesley's texts—in terms of its idioms, rhetorics, and motifs—will become the principal interpretive framework for his changing soteriological doctrines. Wesley's thought, in other words, will be assessed in terms of his own vocabulary, his own theological themes, as he developed them over time. Other approaches, although valuable as well, are more akin to historical and theological criticism which may move beyond the world of the text to the historical precursors of Wesley's thought or to its contemporary rele-



vance. The danger in each of these transitions is that we may learn more about what Wesley read than what he said, more about contemporary judgments about Wesley than about his own. The present approach, then, will grapple with Wesley's theological judgments in terms of his own literary constructs, the themes which weaved their way throughout his entire literary corpus. What will emerge from such labor should prove troubling to some popular beliefs, but it will, no doubt, further the dialog among contemporary Methodist historians and theologians by employing an interpretive lens which heretofore has hardly been explored.

### **Significant Modifications in the Theme of Real Christianity: 1725–1747**

Even as a young man, John Wesley realized that great national churches, like the Church of England, though they insured the numerical predominance of a particular version of the faith, often left nominal Christianity in their wake. Indeed, for many in the eighteenth century, to be an English person was to be a Christian. However, as early as 1725, the year in which Wesley clearly saw the end or goal of religion as holiness, he challenged such glib assumptions among his compatriots and entreated John Griffiths, for example, "to let me have the pleasure of making him a whole Christian, to which I knew he was at least half persuaded already."<sup>8</sup> And a few years later, in 1734, in an important letter to his father Samuel, the young son complained that the bane of piety is "the company of good sort of men, lukewarm Christians (as they are called), persons that have a great concern for, but no sense of, religion."<sup>9</sup>

While he was in Georgia, Wesley not only employed the distinction of an almost/altogether Christian (to Mrs. Hawkins of all people, in a rather favorable way!),<sup>10</sup> but he also proclaimed a gospel so rich and full that it

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<sup>8</sup>Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vols. 25, 26. *The Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 25:209.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 25:400. Although Wesley was a faithful son of the Anglican church, he was critical of state churches which often mixed religion and politics to the detriment of the former. Indeed, Wesley criticized the emperor Constantine in several places in his writings, as the initiator of this unfortunate compromising trend. Cf. Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 6:261, 7:26, 164, and 276.

<sup>10</sup>Upon Mrs. Hawkins expressing a wish to receive Holy Communion, Wesley concluded: "I could no longer doubt of her sincere desire to be not only almost but altogether a Christian." Cf. Reginald W. Ward, and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 18. *Journals and Diaries I* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 339.

sparked one observer to note: “Why if this be Christianity, a Christian must have more courage than Alexander the Great.”<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, then, during the year 1738 in which Wesley encountered a gracious and redemptive God, he exclaimed: “Oh how high and holy a thing Christianity is, and how widely distant from that (I know not what) is so called. . . .”<sup>12</sup> But it was not until John wrote to his brother Samuel on October 30, 1738 that we begin to get a clearer indication of just what the younger brother deemed integral to the real Christian faith. In this letter, Wesley states:

By a Christian I mean one who so believes in Christ as that sin hath no more dominion over him; and in this obvious sense of the word I was not a Christian till May 24th last past. For till then sin hath the dominion over me, although I fought with it continually; but surely then, from that time to this it hath not, such is the free grace of God in Christ.<sup>13</sup>

To be sure, so concerned was John Wesley with the idea of being a real Christian in his early years that he noted in retrospect in 1739 that his reason for undertaking the arduous work of a missionary in Georgia, as well as his subsequent visit to the Moravians at Herrnhut, was his “desire to be a Christian.”<sup>14</sup>

Although, in light of the preceding evidence, Wesley’s early definition of real Christianity obviously went far beyond the nominal Christianity typical of eighteenth-century England, to include such necessary elements as justification and the new birth, it appears that his definition went *too* far. For example, on January 4, 1739, Wesley reflected in his journal:

Though I have constantly used all the means of grace for twenty years, I am not a Christian. Yea, though I have all

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 18:499-500. In particular, what had sparked this response was Wesley’s scriptural proclamation that “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

<sup>12</sup>John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 1:251.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 1:264. The significance of Aldersgate, at least as it appears in this letter, lies not so much in the matter of assurance (indeed, Wesley claims at this point that “the seal of the Spirit, the love of God shed abroad in my heart. . . this witness of the Spirit I have not; but I patiently wait for it.”), but in freedom from the power of sin. Again, Wesley exclaims: “Some measure of this faith, which bringeth salvation or victory over sin, and which implies peace and trust in God through Christ, I now enjoy by His free mercy.”

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 1:285.

(other) faith, since I have not "that faith" which "purifieth the heart." Verily, verily I say unto you, I "must be born again." For except I, and you, be born again, we "cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>15</sup>

At this juncture, Wesley had apparently confused the characteristics of the entirely sanctified, that is, freedom from the *being* of unholy tempers and affections, with the marks of the new birth. In fact, earlier evidence of this tendency, a consequence of what Wesley had thought the Moravians taught him, can be found in a desire which the young missionary expressed as he returned from Georgia: "I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it. . . . For whosoever hath it is 'freed from sin,' 'the *whole body of sin* is destroyed' in him."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, this same kind of confusion with respect to real Christianity surfaced in Wesley's sermon, "The Almost Christian," produced a few years later in 1741. Indeed, the traits of the altogether Christian displayed in this piece more aptly describe not the children of God, but only those who have been perfected in love. Wesley states:

Now whosoever has this faith which "purifies the heart," by the power of God who dwelleth therein, from pride, anger, desire, "from all unrighteousness," from all filthiness of flesh and spirit . . . whosoever has this faith, thus "working by love," is not almost only, but altogether a Christian.<sup>17</sup>

As will be apparent shortly, much of what Wesley had to say about "altogether Christians" in the preceding sermon was later modified. Nevertheless, the theme of real Christianity remained a vital one for him during this period, as demonstrated by its repeated emergence in his writings during the 1740s. In 1746, for example, in his *Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained*, Wesley rejects the argument that, because the English were baptized as infants, they were all, therefore, Christians *now*. And in a somewhat caustic vein, giving some indication of his sentiments on this subject, Wesley adds: "Consequently, [they] are no more

<sup>15</sup>Ward, *Journals*, 19:31.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 18:216. Emphasis is mine. It would take Wesley a few more years to articulate clearly the distinctions between the guilt, power, and being of sin as these distinctions relate to the justified, the regenerate, and the entirely sanctified.

<sup>17</sup>Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vols. 1-4. *The Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:139.

*scriptural Christians* than the open drunkard or common swearer.”<sup>18</sup> The next year, Wesley continues this theme and cautions against “that abundance of those who bear the name of Christians [who] put a part of religion for the whole—generally some outward work or form of worship.”<sup>19</sup>

During this early period, then, Wesley was right in searching for a standard to distinguish nominal from real Christianity. Indeed, such a normative judgment was vital to the success of the eighteenth-century revival. The problem was, however, that Wesley had set that standard much too high.

**A. The Faith of a Servant: 1725-1747.** Although such a course has not been taken recently in Wesley studies, it is perhaps best to consider the issue of “the faith of a servant” as well the doctrine of assurance, not only in terms of the whole Wesley but also, and perhaps more importantly, in terms of the motif of real Christianity—a motif which undergirds and informs these issues to a significant degree. First of all it must be asked, How did Wesley define the faith of a servant during the years 1725 to 1747? Remarkably, the exact phrase “the faith of a servant” is hardly developed during this initial period, although one reference associates it with sincerity and with the precursor of Christian faith. For example, the Methodist Conference of 1746 queried: “Who is a Jew inwardly?” And it replied: “a servant of God: One who sincerely obeys him out of fear. Whereas a Christian, inwardly, is a child of God: One who sincerely obeys him out of love.”<sup>20</sup> More importantly for the task at hand, the Conference then went on to declare that a person can be both sincere and penitent and still not be justified, indicating that the elements most often associated with the faith of a servant do not necessarily issue in justification.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Rupert E. Davies, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 9. *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 225. Bracketed material is mine. For other references to real Christianity during this period, Cf. Ward, *Journals*, 19:198; 19:318; Telford, *Letters*, 2:267; and Davies, *Societies*, 9:228.

<sup>19</sup>Baker, *Letters*, 26:229.

<sup>20</sup>Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:287-288.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 8:288-89. In this setting, the Conference defined sincerity as “a constant disposition to use all the grace given.” The Conference’s judgments about sincerity and justification, then, remind one of Wesley’s teaching that “a person can be saved if he will, but not when he will.”

The greatest development during this period, however, concerns not so much the direct explication of the phrase "the faith of a servant," but how Wesley linked this phrase with a key distinction which he did explore in some detail at this time, namely, the distinction between the spirit of bondage and the spirit of adoption. In particular, the identification of the "faith of a servant" with the "spirit of bondage" is revealed in the late sermon, "The Discoveries of Faith," produced in 1788. In it, Wesley observes: "Exhort him to press on by all possible means, till he passes 'from faith to faith'; from the faith of a *servant* to the faith of a *son*; from the *spirit of bondage* unto fear, to the spirit of childlike love."<sup>22</sup>

What then are the traits of the spirit of bondage displayed in the sermon "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" written in 1746, and which were later identified with the faith of a servant? Those under a spirit of bondage, Wesley argues, feel sorrow and remorse; they fear death, the devil, and humanity; they desire to break free from the chains of sin, but cannot, and their cry of despair is typified by the Pauline expression: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"<sup>23</sup> In fact, in this sermon Wesley specifically identifies "this whole struggle of one who is 'under the law'" with the spirit of bondage and with the spiritual and psychological dynamics of the seventh chapter of Romans.<sup>24</sup> More to the point, these traits just cited are hardly the attributes which constitute real Christianity according to John Wesley since he defined true Christians, at the very least, as those who believe in Christ such that "sin hath no more dominion over him."<sup>25</sup>

**B. The Doctrine of Assurance: 1725-1747.** Among contemporary Methodist scholars, it is well known that when John Wesley was under the strong influence of the English Moravians, he closely identified justi-

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<sup>22</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 4:35-36. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:258.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.* Observe that the servants of God are awakened, but they see not a God of love, but One of wrath. It is, therefore, important not to confuse the issue of awakening with regeneration (and conversion).

<sup>25</sup>Baker, *Letters*, 25:575. Also note that, although Wesley eventually made the distinctions between freedom from the guilt (justification), power (regeneration), and being (entire sanctification) of sin, as evidenced in his sermon *On Sin in Believers*, he continually maintained that even a babe in Christ has freedom from the power of sin. Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 1:314 ff.

fiying faith with full assurance.<sup>26</sup> However, by 1739 he began to realize that there are both degrees of faith *and* degrees of assurance and that a child of God may exercise justifying faith which is mixed with both doubt and fear.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, a second issue, which can be differentiated from the one just cited, concerns the question of whether Wesley ever lowered or abandoned the standard of real Christianity in light of his newly articulated distinctions. This time, however, the question will be considered not with respect to the spirit of bondage and its implications, but with respect to the whole matter of assurance.

On the one hand, the initial answer to this question must be “yes” since Wesley obviously modified his earlier erroneous views in two key respects. First of all, the English Moravians, who exercised a strong, early influence on Wesley, propounded a view of redemption which, according to Heitzenrater, “essentially equated conversion with perfection.”<sup>28</sup> In time, however, Wesley distinguished freedom from sin in terms of its guilt, power, and being, and thereby repudiated the Moravian doctrine on this score.<sup>29</sup> Simply put, for Wesley, redemption or initial sanctification entailed freedom from the guilt (justification) and power (regeneration) of sin, but not freedom from its being (entire sanctification). In other words, the carnal nature or inbred sin remained even in the children of God.

Second, and more importantly for the present theme, Wesley likewise modified his earlier view, noted above, which had associated full assurance with justifying faith.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, less than a year after he began the practice of field preaching, Wesley conceived the doctrine of justification by faith no longer in terms of full assurance but in terms of a *measure* of assurance.<sup>31</sup> But is this qualified assurance, occasionally marked by

<sup>26</sup>Richard P. Heitzenrater, “Great Expectations: Aldersgate and the Evidences of Genuine Christianity,” in *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990), 88-91.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 68-69.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 1:314 ff.

<sup>30</sup>In his sermon “Free Grace,” written on April 29, 1739, Wesley argues that “the assurance of faith which these enjoy excludes all doubt and fear.” However, by the end of the year, as Heitzenrater aptly notes, this emphasis was gone. Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 3:550 and Heitzenrater, “Great Expectations,” 81.

<sup>31</sup>Earlier, in June 1738, Wesley had been thrown “into much perplexity,” by a letter which maintained that “no doubting could consist with the least degree of

doubt and fear, necessary for redemption, for what constitutes real Christianity? Here the picture becomes somewhat complicated. For example, in a letter to John Bennet on June 1, 1744, Wesley states, among other things, that none is a Christian who does not have the marks of a Christian, one of which is "the witness of God's Spirit with my spirit that I am a child of God."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, at the first Methodist conference that same year it was affirmed by those present that "all *true Christians* have such a faith as implies an assurance of God's love."<sup>33</sup> However, by the time of the next conference in 1745 the question was reconsidered and a slightly different answer was offered. Wesley wrote:

Q. Is a sense of God's pardoning love absolutely necessary to our being in his favor? Or may there be some exempt cases?

A. We dare not say there are not.

Q. Is it necessary to inward and outward holiness?

A. We incline to think it is.<sup>34</sup>

In a similar vein, the conference Minutes of 1747 noted that there may be exempt cases, that justifying faith may not always be accompanied by a measure of assurance. But the conference then offered this caution: "It is dangerous to ground a general doctrine of a *few* particular experiments."<sup>35</sup> In addition, although this conference, like the one in 1745, recognized that there are, after all, exceptional cases, it nevertheless

true faith; that whoever at any time felt any doubt or fear was not weak in faith, but had no faith at all." Such a claim so disturbed Wesley that he immediately engaged in a round of bibliomancy and hit upon 1 Cor. 3:1ff, a passage that soothed his mind—at least for the time being. Cf. Ward, *Journals*, 18:254.

<sup>32</sup>Baker, *Letters*, 26:107-108.

<sup>33</sup>Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:276. The biblical evidence to which the Conference of 1744 appealed in substantiation of its position included the following: Romans 8:15; Ephesians 4:32; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Hebrews 8:10; and 1 John 4:10, 19.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 8:232. For helpful treatments on Wesley's doctrine of assurance, Cf. Mark A. Noll, "John Wesley and the Doctrine of Assurance," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (April-June 1975): 161-77; Michael E. Lodahl, "The Witness of the Spirit": Questions of Clarification for Wesley's Doctrine of Assurance," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23, no. 1 and 2 (Spring-Fall 1988): 188-97; and Arthur S. Yates, *The Doctrine of Assurance: With Special Reference to John Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1952).

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 8:293. For a contemporary treatment of the Methodist doctrine of assurance, Cf. Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Assurance of Faith: A Methodist Approach to the Question Raised by the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Infallibility," *One In Christ: A Catholic Ecumenical Review* 22, no. 1 (1986): 44-61.

clarified its meaning and affirmed: “But this we know, if Christ is not revealed in them [by the Holy Spirit], they are not yet Christian believers.”<sup>36</sup> In fact, in 1745, though this was a year of many changes, Wesley had still not retreated from his teaching that assurance is a vital ingredient of the *true* Christian faith, as evidenced by his following remarks made in a letter to John Smith that same year:

No man can be a *true* Christian without such an inspiration of the Holy Ghost as fills his heart with peace and joy and love, which he who perceives not has it not. This is the point for which alone I contend; and this I take to be the very foundation of Christianity.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, in 1747, Wesley continued this emphasis once again in a letter to “John Smith,” and stated: “The sum of what I offered before concerning perceptible inspiration was this: ‘*Every* Christian believer has a perceptible testimony of God’s Spirit that he is a child of God.’”<sup>38</sup>

In light of the preceding evidence, it is clear that Wesley even after 1745 still identified, for the most part, the assurance that one’s sins are forgiven as integral to the proper Christian faith. Not surprisingly, then, in a revealing letter to his brother Charles written a month after the 1747 conference, John illustrates his doctrine of assurance by pointing out: “(1) that there is such an explicit assurance; (2) that it is the common privilege of *real Christians*; (3) that it is *the proper Christian faith*, which purifieth the heart and overcometh the world.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, the

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. Bracketed material is mine.

<sup>37</sup>Baker, *Letters*, 26:182. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 26:246. Emphasis is mine. In an earlier letter to “John Smith” Wesley had maintained that “Every one that is born of God, and doth not commit sin, by his very actions saith, ‘Our Father which art in heaven’; the Spirit itself bearing witness with their spirit that they are the children of God.” Cf. Ibid., 26:232.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 26:254-55. Emphasis is mine. It is also interesting to note that Wesley’s thinking on the issue of assurance and real Christianity led him to conclude that “the Apostles themselves had not the proper Christian faith (since they lacked the witness of the Spirit, at the very least) till after the day of Pentecost.” Such a conclusion undermines the argument, often made by some Holiness scholars, that the Apostles were “real Christians” prior to the resurrection of Christ, such that Pentecost represents their entire sanctification! Cf. Jackson, *Wesley’s Works*, 8:291. Notice also that Wesley in commenting on Acts 1:5 reveals that all true believers, not simply the entirely sanctified, have been baptized with the Spirit: “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost—And so are all true believers to the end of the world.” Cf. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmull Publishers), 275.



observation that there are exceptions to Wesley's normal association of justification by faith and a measure of assurance is accurate; however, that he identified this faith which lacks the witness of the Spirit with real, proper Christianity is not.

## II. The Theme of Real Christianity Developed: 1748–1770

John Wesley's preoccupation with the theme of real Christianity, historically speaking, was undoubtedly reminiscent of the work of Johann Arndt and of such early German pietists as Spener and Francke. In his *Wahres Christenthum* (True Christianity), a work which Wesley saw fit to include in the first volume of his *Christian Library* in 1749, Arndt had highlighted the themes of personal reform, the repudiation of stale intellectualism, criticism of doctrinal provincialism, and the importance of sanctification more than a century prior to Wesley.<sup>40</sup> In particular, observe the opening lines of Arndt's work and the emphasis which they place on the practice of the Christian life.

Dear Christian reader, that the holy Gospel is subjected, in our time, to great and shameful abuse is fully proved by the impenitent life of the ungodly who praise Christ and his word with their mouths and yet lead an unchristian life that is like that of persons who dwell in heathendom, not in the Christian world.<sup>41</sup>

In a similar fashion, Wesley cautioned against nominal or "mouth Christians" and was not above sarcasm as evidenced by the following account which appeared in his journal during the year 1755:

One spent the evening with us who is accounted both a sensible and a religious man. What a proof of the Fall! Even with all the advantages of a liberal education, this person, I will be bold to say, knows just as much of heart religion, of scriptural Christianity, the religion of love, as a child three years old of algebra.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1979). For a detailed examination of the influence of the early German Pietists on the thought of John Wesley, Cf. Kenneth J. Collins, "The Influence of Early German Pietism on John Wesley," *The Covenant Quarterly* Vol. 48, No. 4 (November 1990): 23-42.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>42</sup>Nehemiah Curnock, ed., *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), 4:124.

Moreover, during this period, in a way characteristic of Continental Pietism, Wesley linked the motif of real Christianity to inward religion, to those dispositions and tempers of the heart which mark the regenerate believer.<sup>43</sup> For example, in his piece “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Sixth,” Wesley underscores that Christ “has laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity: the inward tempers contained in that holiness ‘without which no man shall see the Lord. . . .’”<sup>44</sup> This linkage, however, is even more emphatic (and perhaps more significant) in terms of Wesley’s notes on Luke 17:21 (“For behold the kingdom of God is within or among you”) where the English evangelical states not only that the kingdom of God is present “in the soul of every true believer,”<sup>45</sup> but also that “it is a *spiritual* kingdom, an internal principle.”<sup>46</sup> Beyond this, in his observations on Matthew 13:28, Wes-

<sup>43</sup>Part of the problem with some contemporary assessments of Wesley’s doctrine of regeneration is that the Methodist leader’s understanding of the degrees of this work of grace is refashioned, with the result that regeneration is linked, at its minimum, not with the new birth, as it should be, but with prevenient grace. Here the concept of regeneration becomes so broad that it even includes the initial restoring activity of grace, the awakening of faculties, in terms of unrepentant sinners. To illustrate, Randy Maddox, who is typical of this scholarship, writes: “Wesley came to emphasize that there was a crucial degree of regeneration prior to the New Birth: the universal nascent regenerating effect of prevenient grace.” John Wesley, on the other hand, although he did indeed postulate degrees of regeneration, linked its lowest degree not with prevenient grace, as is sometimes supposed, but with the new birth and with power over sin—characteristics which do not typify the unawakened sinner. Cf. Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, Tennessee: Kingswood Books, 1994), 159. For Wesley’s description of degrees of regeneration, Cf. Davies, *Societies*, 64; Jackson, *Wesley’s Works*, 11:421; Ward, *Journals*, 19:32; and Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley*, *The Library of Protestant Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 140.

<sup>44</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 1:572-73. Compare John Wesley’s estimation of inward religion and its linkage to real Christianity with Jennings’ virtual abandonment of this linkage as expressed in his piece “John Wesley Against Aldersgate.” Cf. Jennings, “Against,” 3-22.

<sup>45</sup>Wesley, *NT Notes*, 188. See also Wesley’s notes on Rom. 14:17 where he indicates that “true religion does not consist in external observances; but in righteousness, the image of God stamped on the heart...” Cf. *Ibid.*, 401.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.* For an excellent treatment of the cruciality of inward religion in terms of the dispositions and tempers of the heart (as well as their soteriological significance), cf. Gregory S. Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1989); and “Orthokardia: The Practical Theology of John Wesley’s Heart Religion,” *Quarterly Review* 10 (Spring 1990): 49-66.

ley once again displays the connection between inward religion and real Christianity, but this time more articulately as he develops a distinction between "outward" Christians and open sinners. Accordingly, in his *Notes Upon the New Testament*, Wesley observes:

*Darnel*, in the church, is properly outside Christians, such as have the form of godliness, without the power. Open sinners, such as have neither the form nor the power, are not so properly *darnel*, as thistles and brambles."<sup>47</sup>

So then, open sinners lack both the form and power of godliness; outside Christians have the form but lack the power; real Christians, on the other hand, have both the form and the power of godliness.

A second emphasis which emerges during this era is Wesley's expanded use of the terminology "the almost/altogether Christian." Such rhetoric has not dropped out of his writings, as is sometimes mistakenly supposed, although it has, of course, been modified. To illustrate, Wesley counsels John Trembath in 1760 that he must "recover that *power* and be a Christian altogether, or in a while you will have neither power nor form, inside nor outside."<sup>48</sup> Elsewhere, in his journal of 1762, Wesley points out that at Newtown he left between "thirty and forty members full of desire, and hope, and earnest resolutions not to be 'almost, but altogether Christians.'"<sup>49</sup> And a couple of years later, while he was in Madeley, the one-time Oxford fellow took great comfort in conversing once more with "a Methodist of the old stamp, denying himself, taking up his cross, and resolved to be 'altogether a Christian.'"<sup>50</sup>

The third major emphasis during this middle period as Wesley developed the motif of real Christianity was his insistence, to the consternation of some of his Anglican peers, that a Christian "while he keepeth himself

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<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>48</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 4:103. Emphasis is mine. For a treatment of John Wesley's doctrines of justification and regeneration as they relate to the question of conversion, cf. Bernard G. Holland, "The Conversions of John and Charles Wesley and Their Place in Methodist Tradition," *The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 38 (1971: 45-53, 65-71).

<sup>49</sup>Ward, *Journals*, 21:361.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 21:481. Compare this with Wesley's letter to the editor of *Llyod's Evening Post* on March 26, 1767, where he links being a "true Methodist" with real Christianity: "These are the principles and practices of our sect; these are the marks of a true Methodist (i.e., a true Christian, as I immediately after explain myself)." Ward, *Journals*, 22:72.

. . . *doth not* commit sin.”<sup>51</sup> In fact, in his sermons “The Marks of the New Birth” and “The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God,” both produced in 1748, Wesley refused to depreciate this standard of teaching. In the former piece, for instance, he reasoned that “an immediate and constant fruit of this faith whereby we are born of God . . . is power over sin: power over outward sin of every kind...”<sup>52</sup> And in the latter sermon he declared: “But whosoever is born of God, while he abideth in faith and love and in the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving, not only doth not, but cannot thus commit sin. . . . He cannot voluntarily transgress any command of God.”<sup>53</sup>

With this standard of teaching in place, during the 1760s Wesley not only maintained that one could abstain from evil, use the means of grace at every opportunity, and do all possible good (which is, in effect, to keep the General Rules of the United Societies), but also could be “but a Heathen still.”<sup>54</sup> He declared in a letter to Lawrence Coughlan in 1768 the need for both seriousness and caution on this subject that “many think they are justified, and are not.”<sup>55</sup>

Other elements of interest during this period include Wesley’s reflections, on two occasions, of his Oxford days. He stated, for instance, not only that the very design of the Oxford Methodists was “to forward each other in true, scriptural Christianity,”<sup>56</sup> but he also revealed in a letter written in 1769 that “when I was at Oxford, I never was afraid of any but the almost Christians.”<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the distinction between nominal and real Christianity was beginning to take on a paradigmatic flavor such that Wesley now began to speak not only of half Christians but also of half Methodists! Note his comments to Lady Maxwell in 1764: “And I entreat you do not regard the half-Methodists—If we must use the name. Do not

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<sup>51</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 3:172.

<sup>52</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 1:419.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:436.

<sup>54</sup>Jackson, *Wesley’s Works*, 10:365. This means, of course, that the standard of real Christianity is higher than the mere observance of the Rules of the United Societies. Cf. Davies, *Societies*, 69-73.

<sup>55</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 5:102.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 4:120. Moreover, in *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, Wesley maintains that the Methodists had one point in view, namely, “to be altogether, scriptural, rational Christians.” Cf. Telford, *Letters*, 5:153-154.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 5:137.

mind them who endeavour to hold Christ in one hand and the world in the other. I want you to be all a Christian. . . ."<sup>58</sup>

**A. The Faith of a Servant: 1748-1770.** Interestingly enough, it was not until this second period that the exact phrase "the faith of a servant" was explored in any significant detail. In 1754, in his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, Wesley defines the faith of a servant in terms of the spirit of bondage and fear that cleaved to the old covenant.<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere he associates the phrase with those who "fear God and worketh righteousness," as in his commentary on Acts 10:35.<sup>60</sup> However, this latter usage makes clear that the faith of a servant was conceived in a very general way by the English leader and included all those believers of *whatever religious tradition* who endeavored to worship God according to the light and grace which they had. Wesley explains: "But in every nation he that *feareth God and worketh righteousness . . . is accepted of him*—through Christ, though he knows him not. . . . He is in the favour of God, whether enjoying his written word and ordinances or not."<sup>61</sup>

Continuing this line of thought, since those who fear God and work righteousness are accepted even though they may be ignorant of Christ, the Holy Scriptures, and the sacraments, this demonstrates that such acceptance is not indicative of the real, proper Christian faith, as is often supposed, but instead is an important implication of Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace which is both universal and Christologically based.<sup>62</sup> In fact, in this same commentary, but this time on the book of Romans, Wesley cautions his readers and affirms that "real Christians have not the spirit of bondage."<sup>63</sup>

Moreover, when the Conference Minutes of 1770 are critically examined, it appears that Wesley explored two "tracks" of redemption:

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 4:263-264.

<sup>59</sup>John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmull Publishers), 646. In this commentary on *Jude*, Wesley also defines a servant in a second sense as one who has the spirit of adoption, but note that this is a definition which is rarely used and is *not* the one which forms the first prong of the distinction the faith of a servant/the faith of a son since only the latter prong is marked by the spirit of adoption. Cf. Wesley, *Notes*, 646.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 304.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>See Wesley's sermon *On Conscience* for more details on this aspect of prevenient grace in Outler, *Sermons*, 3:480 ff.

<sup>63</sup>Wesley, *Notes*, 382.

one for those who believe in Christ and another for those who have never heard of the Savior. In this and similar contexts, however, it should be borne in mind that Wesley never uses the word “justified” or its cognates. The “acceptance,” then, of those who never heard of Christ may mean that they are *in process* so to speak; they are *on the way* of salvation. That is, they have received prevenient grace and so will be responsible for more. But they are hardly redeemed. Although Wesley did not speculate in this area, perhaps there will come a time when such God-fearers will be confronted in a more direct fashion with the claims of Christ and the gospel.<sup>64</sup>

In light of these distinctions, a level of faith which issues in a degree of acceptance must not be confused with saving faith. For example, when Wesley explored the issue of the “unbelief” of the Disciples, their inability to cast out an evil spirit, as recounted in Matthew 17:14-21, he made the following observation:

But it is certain, the faith which is here spoken of does not always imply saving faith. Many have had it who thereby *cast out devils*, and yet will at last have their portion with them. . . . Now, *though I have all this faith, so as to remove mountains yet if I have not the faith which worketh by love, I am nothing.*<sup>65</sup>

So then, if even the disciples at this point did not have saving faith, although they followed Christ and were in some sense accepted of Him—as Wesley seems to intimate—then again, how is it possible that those who are ignorant of both Christ and the gospel can have redeeming faith—a faith which is not informed by fear but by nothing less than the salvific power of love? Indeed, for Wesley, the very substance of salvation is holiness, that is, the love of God reigning in the human heart, but how can this love have its place as the foundation of human affections unless people first of all know that God has loved them in Jesus Christ—

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<sup>64</sup>For a much different assessment of this issue, cf. Randy L. Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth or Salvation Through other Religions,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 27 (Spring-Fall 1992): 7-29.

<sup>65</sup>Wesley, *Notes*, 59-60. For an important study which shows the significance of “faith working by love,” for Wesley, cf. Kelly S. McCormick, “Theosis in Chrysostom and Wesley: An Eastern Paradigm on Faith and Love,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 26, no. 1 (1991): 38-103.

"We love because he first loved us?" (1 John 4:19).<sup>66</sup> And that this line of reasoning is descriptive of Wesley's own judgment is demonstrated by an appeal to a journal entry that he made in 1760. He writes:

The fundamental doctrine of the people called Methodists is, whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the true faith; the faith which works by love; which, by means of the love of God and our neighbour, produces both inward and outward holiness.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, Wesley's letters to Ann Bolton in 1768 and in 1770 illustrate the ongoing theme that the faith of a servant, although earnest and virtuous, falls far short of the promises which pertain to all real Christians. "I am glad you are still *waiting* for the *kingdom of God*," he writes to Ms. Bolton in 1770, "although as yet you are rather in the state of a servant than of a child."<sup>68</sup> In short, the acceptance of those who fear God and work righteousness must not be confused with the proper Christian faith. That is, although there are degrees of faith as well as degrees of acceptance (and each degree is important), not all faith is saving faith. Saving faith is energized not by the power of fear, but by the power of love.

**B. The Doctrine of Assurance: 1748-1770.** In his correspondence with Richard Tompson during 1755, Wesley clarified his doctrine of assurance in two key respects. On the one hand, he argued that there is an intermediate state between a child of the devil and a child of God and that those who are not assured that their sins are forgiven may have a degree of faith and, therefore, may be admitted to the Lord's Supper.<sup>69</sup> On the

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<sup>66</sup>See Wesley's notes on 1 John 4:19 where he points out that "This is the sum of all religion, the genuine model of Christianity," in Wesley, *NT Notes*, 638.

<sup>67</sup>Ward, *Journals*, 21:286. This journal entry is actually a part of a letter which Wesley sent to the Editor of *Lloyd's Evening Post* in order to offer a defense of Methodism.

<sup>68</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 5:207. See also 5:86 for the letter of 1768. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>69</sup>Baker, *Letters*, 26:575. Observe, however, that Wesley slipped back into his all or nothing language a few years later in 1759 when he wrote: "Is He not still striving with you? Striving to make you not almost but altogether a Christian? Indeed, you must be all or nothing—a saint or a devil, eminent in sin or holiness!" Cf. Telford, *Letters*, 4:52.

other hand, Wesley continued to emphasize the importance of assurance for the Christian faith and asserted: “But still I believe *the proper Christian faith* which purifies the heart implies such a conviction.”<sup>70</sup> Indeed, in this same piece Wesley pointed out with regard to assurance that “the whole Christian Church in the first centuries enjoyed it.”<sup>71</sup> And again he exclaimed: “If that knowledge were destroyed, or wholly *withdrawn*, I could not then say, I had Christian faith.”<sup>72</sup> In fact, in his summary sermon, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” produced in 1765, Wesley actually linked saving faith with assurance by maintaining: “And it is certain this [saving] faith necessarily implies an *assurance* . . . that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.”<sup>73</sup>

Wesley’s subsequent letters to Richard Tompson the next year contained even further clarification on this topic and one significant, though seldom understood, exception. Concerning this last point, Wesley admitted to Mr. Tompson on 18 February 1756, in a way reminiscent of the 1745 and 1747 conferences, that one may be in a state of justification and yet lack assurance. These are the exempt cases or exceptions as noted earlier. Thus, when Wesley posed the question in his letter, “Can a man who has not a clear assurance that his sins are forgiven be in a state of justification?” he replied, “I believe there are *some* instances of it.”<sup>74</sup> However, it was not until much later that Wesley indicated *the reason* for this exception. In a letter to Dr. Rutherford in 1768, Wesley elaborates:

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 2:161. Bracketed material is drawn from the immediate context. Notice that, in this setting, there are echoes of Luther’s *pro me* description of his own faith. For evidence concerning the several distinctions which Wesley made in terms of assurance (full assurance of faith, full assurance of hope, etc.), cf. Telford, *Letters*, 2:385, 3:161; Wesley *NT Notes*, 575, 632, and 638; Jackson, *Wesley’s Works*, 9:32, and Davies, *Societies*, 9:375-376.

<sup>74</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 3:163. Emphasis is mine. Nevertheless, not even this significant exception undermined Wesley’s strong association of real Christianity and assurance. Indeed, a month later, in March 1756, Wesley wrote to Richard Tompson: “My belief in general is this—that every Christian believer has a divine conviction of his reconciliation with God.” Cf. Telford, *Letters*, 3:174. See also Wesley’s letter to Mr. Tompson on February 6, 1756.



Yet I do not affirm there are no exceptions to this general rule [of the association of a measure of assurance with justification]. Possibly some may be in the favour of God, and yet go mourning all the day long. But I believe this is usually owing either to disorder of body or ignorance of the gospel promises.<sup>75</sup>

Two issues need to be separated here which are often confused. On the one hand, the elderly Wesley still did not identify nor confuse the faith of a servant, and its measure of acceptance, with the assurance that one's sins are forgiven; since being under "the spirit of bondage," a servant, properly speaking, lacks justifying faith. On the other hand, the Methodist leader recognized that in some exceptional cases those who are justified and regenerated (and hence children of God) may lack an assurance that their sins are forgiven due to either ignorance or bodily disorder.<sup>76</sup> This means, then, that Wesley actually defined the faith of a servant in at least two key ways. The first, which is a broad usage and occurs repeatedly in Wesley's writings, *excludes* justification, regeneration and assurance and corresponds to the spirit of bondage noted earlier. The second, which is a narrow usage and seldom occurs, corresponds to the exempt cases and exceptions noted above and *includes* justification and regeneration but not assurance. Interestingly enough, although the faith of a servant in this second sense is obviously Christian (saving) faith since it includes justification and regeneration, Wesley still did not refer to it as the *proper* Christian faith since it lacks assurance. This is a subtle distinction, to be sure, but no less important. Unless otherwise indicated, then, the remainder of this essay will employ the phrase "the faith of a servant" in the broad sense—a sense which is at the very heart of the debate in Wesley studies today.

The preceding discussion of Wesley's distinctions pertaining to assurance can now be outlined into three major groups as follows:

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 5:358. Bracketed material is mine.

<sup>76</sup>In addition, Wesley wrote to Dr. Rutherford in 1768: "Therefore I have not for many years thought a consciousness of acceptance to be essential to justifying faith." Cf. Telford, *Letters*, 5:359. See also Lycurgus M. Starkey, Jr., *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 68-69.

<b>Faith of a Child of God</b>	<b>Faith of a Servant (Broad)</b>	<b>Faith of a Servant (Narrow)</b>
Under the Spirit of Adoption	Under the Spirit of Bondage	Not Under the Spirit of Bondage
Have the Witness (Spirit)	Lack the Witness	Lack the Witness
Justified and Born of God	Not Justified and Born of God	Justified and Born of God
Have the Witness of the Spirit	Lack the Witness Due to Sin (Many People, Common)	Lack the Witness Due to Ignorance or Bodily Disorder (Few People, Exceptions)

Two views offer a different picture by contending that the faith of a servant is, after all, justifying faith. These are found in the writings of Scott Kisker and Randy Maddox. The former, for example, attempts to solve the difficulty surrounding the soteriological status of the faith of a servant by distinguishing two kinds of justification, a broad and a narrow sense, and by arguing that the former includes regeneration and assurance, but the latter does not. This distinction, which is never specified in Wesley's writings, permits Kisker to contend that those who have "the faith of a servant" are in fact justified (in the broad sense), although they are not properly designated as "the children of God" since they have neither been born of God nor have they received an assurance that their sins are forgiven. This view, which *separates* justification and regeneration in order to solve the soteriological problem, is nevertheless beset with difficulties.<sup>77</sup>

First of all, Wesley repeatedly links justification with regeneration in his writings. To illustrate, beyond the evidence in the sermon "The New Birth,"<sup>78</sup> Wesley notes in the Conference minutes of 1745 that inward sanctification (the new birth) begins in "the moment we are justified."<sup>79</sup> Much later, in 1762, he criticizes Thomas Maxfield precisely for severing the connection between justification and the new birth as revealed in the following critical remarks:

<sup>77</sup>The reader should note for the sake of clarity that Kisker's use of "broad" and "narrow" must be distinguished from my own employment of these terms.

<sup>78</sup>This sermon, in part, reads: "In the moment we are justified by the grace of God . . . we are also born of the Spirit." Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:187.

<sup>79</sup>Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:285.

I dislike your directly or indirectly depreciating justification: saying a justified person is not "in Christ," is not "born of God," is not "a new creature," has not a "new heart," is not "sanctified," not a "temple of the Holy Ghost." . . .<sup>80</sup>

Second, Kisker confuses the degree of *acceptance* that pertains to those who have the faith of a servant with *justification* which, as noted earlier, is quite a different matter.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the servants of God, those who have not yet received freedom from the guilt and power of sin (which is received at justification and the new birth), are therefore yet under the convincing grace of God in terms of *actual sins*. Nevertheless these believers have a measure of grace. Put another way, Wesley realized that these sinners were *on the way* to redemption, so to speak; that is, though not justified, they were responding—painfully no doubt—to the convincing grace of God. Moreover, if they continued to respond to this grace, they would move, as Wesley puts it, from the porch through the very door of salvation.<sup>82</sup>

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the separation of justification from the new birth almost invariably leads to the kind of antinomianism which Wesley impugned throughout his career. Although it is true that only sinners are justified, one cannot *remain* under the power of sin, typical of the faith of a servant, and yet be justified. Indeed, with the linkage between justification and regeneration severed, it comes as no surprise to learn that Kisker's interpretation suggests that one can be "justified" even while one *continues* in the practice of sin. He writes:

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<sup>80</sup>Ward, *Journals*, 21:395. Wesley's concern here, of course, is the question of antinomianism. It is not surprising, then, that Wesley also addresses this issue in at least two places in his *Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend*. Cf. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 10:273-274 and 10:279.

<sup>81</sup>The real distinction in Wesley's soteriology is not between a narrow and a general sense of justification, but between "acceptance" and "justification." Accordingly, the problem with Kisker's interpretation, and others like it, is that it does not interpret "acceptance" in relation to its *pastoral* context, as it should be (that those to whom this term was applied were on the way to justification and regeneration and therefore should not be discouraged); instead, it views "acceptance" in terms of Wesley's *theological* context of justification, regeneration and other normative doctrines. This is a subtle shift, to be sure, but no less important for its subtlety. Its consequence, again, is to undermine holiness.

<sup>82</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 2:268.

The sinner is justified. However, that sinner does not necessarily perceive that fact, either by the direct witness of the Spirit or by evidences which stem from the new birth. . . . Thus the sinner is *continually* under conviction of sin and fear of God.<sup>83</sup>

However, if sinners are “continually under the conviction of sin” as Kisker suggests, then it is clear that, although they have a measure of grace (convincing) and a degree of acceptance (as they respond to the grace of God), they can hardly be deemed justified. Indeed, it must be borne in mind that for Wesley the forgiveness of sins pertains to those sins which are *past*, not to the ongoing practice of sin. Dissociating justification from the new birth and its marks, then, can easily undermine the central theme of Wesley’s theology which is holiness. Linking the new birth with justification, on the other hand, will maintain the proper balance: first, that it is only sinners who are justified; and second, that men and women cannot remain justified if they continue in the practice of sin. Wesley held both these ideas together and without contradiction.

In some respects the position of Randy Maddox is similar to Kisker’s. He, too, identifies the “servants of God” as justified, but he does so not on the basis of a distinction between justification in a broad and narrow sense, as Kisker does, but on the basis of a “gradualist” reading of Wesley’s *via salutis*. Maintaining that “human salvation—viewed in Wesley’s terms—would be fundamentally *gradual* in process,”<sup>84</sup> Maddox argues for a view of incremental growth and development which positions justification remarkably early in the *via salutis*. That is, it occurs in the “initial penitent responses to God’s awakening work in their lives.”<sup>85</sup> Awakening, however, and even conviction of sin, do not necessarily issue in justification. To illustrate, the believer typified in Romans 7 is clearly both awakened and convinced, but he or she can hardly be said to be justified, as Wesley himself indicates, in light of the *ongoing* practice of sin.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Scott Kisker, “Justified But Unregenerate? The Relationship of Assurance to Justification and Regeneration in the Thought of John Wesley,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 28 (Spring-Fall 1993): 55.

<sup>84</sup>Maddox, *Responsible*, 152.

<sup>85</sup>Randy L. Maddox, “Continuing the Conversation,” *Methodist History* 30, no. 4 (July 1992): 235-241.

<sup>86</sup>Cf. Wesley, *Notes*, 379. Wesley points out that although this believer is “sincerely . . . striving to serve God, to have spoken this of himself [Paul], or any true believer, would have been foreign to the whole scope of his discourse. . . .”

Second, Maddox also applies his gradualist reading of Wesley's soteriology to the notion of regeneration, and this move allows him to affirm that the servants of God, those awakened by the power of grace, are regenerated as well! As with justification, regeneration occurs early in the *via salutis*; it is associated not with initially sanctifying grace—as one would expect—but with *prevenient* grace. Maddox elaborates:

The best beginning place is to recall the increasing stress that he [Wesley] placed on Prevenient Grace. Wesley understood this grace to effect a *rudimentary* regeneration of the basic human faculties in all persons from the moment of their birth. . . . As such, even the faith of a servant of God is possible only because of the presence of a *degree* of regenerating power of God's grace. . . . In this very idea of "degrees" of regenerating grace, of course, the mature Wesley was denying that regeneration per se occurs instantaneously.<sup>87</sup>

There are several difficulties in this passage. First of all, it is perhaps better to use Wesley's own vocabulary of the new birth (initial sanctification) and entire sanctification in the discussion of these matters since Maddox's vocabulary of "rudimentary regeneration" is problematic in either of one or two ways. On the one hand, this definition leaves the impression that one is *holy* from the moment of (natural) birth! But this is hardly satisfactory given Wesley's doctrines of sin and grace. If, on the other hand, "rudimentary regeneration" does not imply holiness at all but simply the "restoration of faculties" as a result of prevenient grace, then the situation is equally troubling, for such a definition would indicate that the regeneration typical of the faith of a servant does not entail holiness—an odd use indeed! This means, of course, that Maddox's interpretation would face the same problem as Kisker's, namely, that people who *remain* unholy (in their regeneration) are yet justified.

Second, contrary to Maddox, the new birth for Wesley *must* occur instantaneously. Here the issue is not so much chronology—although this is how it is often read—but soteriology. In other words, if believers are

<sup>87</sup>Maddox, "Continuing," 238. Bracketed material is mine. Interestingly enough, Maddox apparently renounces the connection between justification and regeneration at the end of this piece by rejecting my call for a "*conjoined* experience of initial justification and regeneration." If this is the case, Maddox's position would then face the same prospects of antinomianism as does Kisker's. Cf. 241.

waiting for something to be done first, then this reveals, to Wesley at least, that they are expecting salvation by works. If, on the other hand, the new birth, that act of grace which makes one holy, is a prerogative not of humanity but of God, then it can occur *now*. Put another way, the instantaneous elements of Wesley's *via salutis* are his principal vehicles for underscoring the crucial truth that it is God, not humanity, who both forgives sins and makes holy. This means, of course, that Maddox's suggestion that the instantaneous elements of the Wesleyan *via salutis* pertain to juridical themes while processive elements pertain to therapeutic (sanctification) themes is not quite accurate. Indeed, for Wesley, *both* justification *and* the new birth (and entire sanctification as well) are suitably described in terms of instantaneous elements (as well as processive elements) for the reasons already suggested.<sup>88</sup>

So then, Maddox's use of the ideas of *degrees* of justification and regeneration allows him to claim that the servants of God are both justified and regenerated, but we must remember that this is a justification and a regeneration which falls far short of the standards which the seasoned Wesley set for Scriptural Christianity, for it falls far short of holiness.

### III. The Motif of Real Christianity Resplendent: 1771-1791

It is well known among Methodist historians and theologians that, when John Wesley was en route to Georgia aboard the *Simmonds*, the powerful Atlantic storms revealed to the aspiring young missionary his fear of death. What has been less noticed, however, is that it was precisely the *mature* Wesley who continued to identify fearlessness in the face of death with being a real Christian. On December 27, 1772, for example, the Methodist leader made the following entry in his journal:

I dined with one who in the midst of plenty is completely miserable through "the spirit of bondage" and in particular through the fear of death. This came upon him not by any outward means, but the immediate touch of God's Spirit. It will

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<sup>88</sup>To highlight the instantaneous aspect of the new birth, Wesley draws an analogy with natural birth: "In like manner, a child is born of God in a short time, if not in a moment." But when he underscores the instantaneous element of entire sanctification, he appeals not to the image of birth but of death: "And if sin cease before death, there must, in the nature of the thing, be an instantaneous change; there must be a last moment wherein it does not exist, and a first moment wherein it does not." Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:198, and Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:329.

be well if he does not shake it off till he receives "the Spirit of adoption."<sup>89</sup>

Even more emphatically, Wesley wrote to Ms. Cummins on June 8, 1773, and made the connection explicit between real Christianity and fearlessness in the face of death:

O make haste! Be a Christian, a real Bible Christian now! You may say, "Nay, I am a Christian already." I fear not. (See how freely I speak.) *A Christian is not afraid to die*. Are not you? Do you desire to depart and to be with Christ?<sup>90</sup>

So then, if the elderly Wesley affirmed in the 1770s that a real Christian is one who is not afraid to die, then what does that make him while he was in Georgia? The implication is clear.

Yet another characteristic of real Christianity which Wesley developed during this last period was that of "[having] the mind which was in Christ and [walking] as He walked."<sup>91</sup> Real Christians, in other words, are those whose inward (and outward) lives have been transformed by the bountiful grace of God. "Unless they have new senses, ideas, passions, [and] tempers," Wesley counsels, "they are no Christians."<sup>92</sup> Indeed, when the English cleric was in Ireland during 1773, he asked himself the question concerning the citizens of Galway, among whom were twenty thousand Catholics and five hundred Protestants: "But which of them are Christians? Have the mind that was in Christ and walk as he walked?"<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Ward, *Journals*, 22:357.

<sup>90</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 6:31. Emphasis is mine. As is also characteristic of this period, Wesley asked Ms. Cummins if she had "power over all sin." See also Wesley's journal of March 17, 1772 for an example of his ongoing use of the distinction almost/altogether Christians; his entry of August 12, 1772 for the use of the term "notional" believers; and his letter to Patience Ellison in 1777 where he links the distinction between almost/altogether Christian with being an outside/inside Christian. Cf. Ward, *Journals*, 22:311 and 22:345, and Telford, *Letters*, 6:274.

<sup>91</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 2:467. Bracketed material represents a change of verbal form.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 4:175. Bracketed material is mine.

<sup>93</sup>Ward, *Journals*, 22:367. In this same year, Wesley was not beyond calling the Christianity of Henry VIII, Oliver Cromwell, and even a pope (Sextus Quintus) into account. Cf. Ward, *Journals*, 22:384. For an additional reference to Wesley's association of real Christianity with having the mind of Christ, cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:467.

—a question which amply suggests his yet lofty standards for being a real Christian. And of his own people, the “English Christians in general,” Wesley wryly noted in 1776 that they “know no more of Christian salvation [and hence of inward transformation] than Mahometans or heathens.”<sup>94</sup> And two years later, in a letter to Mary Bishop, Wesley made it abundantly clear what was at the heart of the gospel in his following observation:

Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense nor grace, bawl out something about Christ and His blood or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, “What a fine gospel sermon!” Surely the Methodists have not so learnt Christ. We know of no gospel without salvation from sin.<sup>95</sup>

Beyond this, during the decade of the 1780s Wesley continued to highlight the distinction between nominal and real Christians, and pointed out in his sermon, “The New Creation,” employing a familiar rhetoric by now, that the former “have the form of godliness without the power.”<sup>96</sup> Clues, by the way, as to when Wesley himself determined in his own mind to be a real Christian are found in a late sermon, “In What Sense We are to Leave the World,” where he indicates again the significance of the year 1725: “When it pleased God to give me a settled resolution to be not a nominal but a real Christian (being about two and twenty years of age) my acquaintance were as ignorant of God as myself.”<sup>97</sup>

Moreover, as in an earlier period, Wesley reflected back on the Oxford Methodists in a letter to Henry Brooke in 1786, where he avowed

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<sup>94</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 6:201. Bracketed material is mine. Oddly enough, during this period, some people were deprecating inward transformation and placed all their emphasis on social change. Wesley responded to this impoverishment of Christianity in his following observation: “That ‘the regulation of social life is the one end of religion’ is a strange position indeed. I never imagined any but a Deist would affirm this.” Cf. Telford, *Letters*, 6:205.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 6:326-327.

<sup>96</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 2:501. See also 3:152. For Wesley’s uses of the term “almost Christian” during this period, cf. Telford, *Letters*, 7:267, 8:127 and Curnock, *Journal*, 8:48; for the term “nominal Christian,” cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:501 and 3:452-53; and for the term “scriptural” or “Bible” Christian, cf. Telford, *Letters*, 8:112 and Jackson, *Wesley’s Works*, 7:287-288.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 3:152. A few years earlier, in 1780, Wesley strongly associated real Christianity and happiness. In his sermon, “Spiritual Worship,” for example, he declares: “none but a Christian is happy; none but a real, inward Christian.” Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 3:99-100.



that their design was nothing less than to be "Bible Christians."<sup>98</sup> The next year, in his sermon "Of Former Times," the one-time Oxford fellow revealed that the goal of the "Holy Club" was above all to help each other to be "real Christians."<sup>99</sup> But perhaps the most noteworthy accent during this late interval of Wesley's life was his strong identification of real, scriptural Christianity with the new birth and, therefore, with all the marks of the new birth such as faith, hope, and love. For example, in a pastoral letter to his nephew Samuel Wesley, who had converted to Roman Catholicism (although he later renounced this move), Wesley cautioned: "except a man be born again . . . he cannot see the kingdom of heaven; except he experience that inward change of the earthly, sensual mind for the mind which was in Christ Jesus."<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, in his sermon "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," produced in 1788, Wesley proclaimed:

How short is this description of real Christians! And yet how exceeding full! It comprehends, it sums up, the whole experience of those that are truly such, from the time they are born of God till they remove into Abraham's bosom. For who are the "we" that are here spoken of? All that are true Christian believers. I say "Christian," not "Jewish" believers. All that are not only *servants* but *children* of God.<sup>101</sup>

And a year later, in 1789, Wesley's strong identification of real Christianity with regeneration, with the children of God, is again unmistakable. "How great a thing it is to be a Christian, "he declares in his sermon *On a Single Eye*, "to be a real, inward, scriptural Christian! Conformed in heart and life to the will of God! Who is sufficient for these things? None, *unless he be born of God*."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 7:331.

<sup>99</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 3:452-453. See also Wesley's "Thoughts on a Late Phenomenon," where he reveals that the goal of the Oxford Methodists was to be "scriptural Christians." Cf. Davies, *Societies*, 9:535.

<sup>100</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 7:230.

<sup>101</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 4:49. Observe, in this late period, that Wesley links the faith of a servant not with the Christian faith but with Jewish (or legal) faith.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 4:121-122. Emphasis is mine. Though Wesley distanced himself from the English Moravians in terms of their association of continual joy with the new birth, the elderly Wesley apparently reverted back to such a linkage, at least on some level, as evidenced by his following remarks to his niece Sarah Wesley in 1790: "Perpetual cheerfulness is the temper of a Christian. . . . Real Christians know it is their duty to maintain this, which is in one sense to rejoice evermore." Cf. Telford, *Letters*, 8:234.

**A. The Faith of a Servant: 1771-1791.** In a letter to Alexander Knox during 1777, Wesley once again clearly articulates an intermediate state between a child of God and a child of the devil, namely, a servant of God.<sup>103</sup> “You are not yet a son,” Wesley advises Mr. Knox, “but you are a servant; and you are waiting for the Spirit of adoption.”<sup>104</sup> Similarly, in his sermon “On Faith,” the Methodist leader displays, in part, what constitutes the difference between a servant and a child of God: “He that believeth as a child of God ‘hath the witness in himself.’ This the servant hath not.”<sup>105</sup> Moreover, as in the preceding period, Wesley maintains that one who is a servant of God, who “feareth God and worketh righteousness,” enjoys the favor of God and is, therefore, accepted “to a degree,” as illustrated in his sermon “On Friendship with the World” produced in 1786: “Those on the contrary ‘are of God’ who love God, or at least fear him, and keep his commandments. This is the lowest character of those that ‘are of God,’ who are not properly sons, but servants.”<sup>106</sup>

To be sure, in his early ministry, John Wesley had not fully appreciated the notion that those who fear God and work righteousness are indeed accepted of him, and because of this failure in understanding, he and his brother, Charles, caused great harm among those who were attentive to the early Methodist preaching. In 1788, reflecting on this unfortunate situation, Wesley confessed:

Indeed nearly fifty years ago, when the preachers commonly called Methodists began to preach that grand scriptural doc-

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<sup>103</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 6:272-273.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 3:498.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, 3:130. Observe that Wesley revels in the notion that the Methodist societies build on a “broad foundation,” for he notes in his *Journal* that these societies require of its members “no conformity either in opinions or modes of worship, but barely this one thing, to fear God, and work righteousness.” Now if “fearing God and working righteousness” is the foundation of the Methodist societies, then this cannot be the proper Christian faith, otherwise Wesley would be requiring those who entered the Methodist societies to be Christians before they entered or to become Christians immediately thereafter in order to continue in the society—thereby putting the power to become a Christian (initially holy) in human hands, essentially equating it with the decision to enter or remain in a particular religious society. Cf. Curnock, *Journal*, 8:5. Moreover, this constitutes Wesley’s “narrow” use of the phrase “fear God and worketh righteousness.” For the “broad use” of this phrase, where Wesley ties it to the “exceptional cases” noted in the earlier chart, cf. Telford, *Letters*, 5:262-263; Outler, *Sermons*, 2:543, 3:130.

trine, salvation by faith, they were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand that even one "who feared God, and worketh righteousness" is accepted of him.<sup>107</sup>

That Wesley during the decade of the 1780s (and much earlier) had a greater appreciation of the faith of those "who feared God and worked righteousness" is clear, but, once again, this last point of acceptance must not be mistaken for justification or with being a real Christian. Observe that Wesley holds two ideas together. On the one hand, he or she who fears God is not a rank unbeliever; but on the other hand, "One that fears God is [still] waiting for His salvation."<sup>108</sup> In fact, late in his career Wesley associated the faith of a servant, the spirit of fear, with the spirit of bondage. Additional evidence of this association is found in a letter to Thomas Davenport, drafted in 1781. Wesley states:

You are in the hands of a wise Physician, who is lancing your sores in order to heal them. He has given you now the *spirit of fear*. But it is in order to the *spirit of love and of a sound mind*. You have now *received the spirit of bondage*. Is it not the fore-runner of the spirit of adoption? He is not afar off. Look up! And expect Him to cry in your heart, Abba, Father! He is nigh that justifieth!<sup>109</sup>

Accordingly, this excerpt demonstrates that in this late period Wesley still did not confuse the issue of "acceptance" (for the light and grace which they have), with justification, for those under "the spirit of fear" are still waiting for the One who justifies. This means, of course, that these believers are in the *way* of salvation; consequently, if they continue in this grace, and unfortunately some will not, then the One "who is nigh" will justify.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 3:497. See also Wesley's letter to Melville Horne at about the same time. Cf. Robert Southey, *The Life of John Wesley* (New York: W.B. Gilley, 1820), 1:258.

<sup>108</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 7:157. Albert Outler, however, pushes these tensions in the other direction and concludes that Wesley's mature understanding of degrees of faith "comes closer to an explicit statement of his vision of universal saving grace than anything else in the Wesley corpus." My own position, on the other hand, highlights the universality of grace (like Outler), but then goes on to note that not all grace is saving grace; that is, prevenient grace must not be confused with redeeming grace. Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 3:491.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 5:95.

Although, in light of the preceding considerations, the servants of God obviously lack the proper Christian faith—and hence cannot enjoy the privileges of the sons and daughters of God—they yet have a measure of faith which arises from the prevenient and convincing grace which precedes it, and are *for that reason* not to be discouraged. Therefore, Wesley’s seasoned and relatively favorable estimation of the faith of a servant probably emerged from his consideration that such a faith, in the normal course of spiritual development, would in time become the faith of a son. In fact, in his sermon “On Faith,” Wesley highlights just such a consideration:

And, indeed, *unless the servants of God halt by the way*, they will receive the adoption of sons. They will receive the *faith* of the children of God by his *revealing* his only-begotten Son in their hearts. . . . And whosoever hath this, the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit that he is a child of God.”<sup>110</sup>

Likewise, Wesley’s appreciation of a degree of acceptance and his exhortation to the servants of God to improve the rich grace of God is revealed in a sermon produced in 1788, “On the Discoveries of Faith,” in which Wesley counsels:

Whoever has attained this, the faith of a servant . . . in consequence of which he is *in a degree* (as the Apostle observes), “accepted with him.” . . . Nevertheless he should be exhorted not to stop there; not to rest till he attains the adoption of sons; till he obeys out of love, which is the privilege of all the *children* of God.<sup>111</sup>

Simply put, the faith of a servant of God is valued not only for the measure of faith that it is, but also for what it will soon become: the qualitatively different faith of a child of God. Indeed, for Wesley all soteriological distinctions are not one of degree—as is sometimes supposed—since a child of God who has been renewed through grace is *holy*, but a servant of God, on the other hand, is not. That is, for Wesley holiness *begins* at justification and initial sanctification (the new birth) as noted earlier. And the crucial nature of this redeeming grace is highlighted, indicating something of a soteriological turning point, by Wesley’s ongoing distinction between the value of works both before and after justification (and the

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<sup>110</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 3:497-498. The first emphasis is mine.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 4:35.

new birth). On the one hand, works prior to justification are not "splendid sins," but on the other hand neither are they "good," properly speaking. And it is precisely this transition from "not good" to "good" works which amply demonstrates that the transition from the faith of a servant to the faith of a child of God is not simply a change in degree but one of *quality*. As not all faith is justifying faith, so too not all faith is regenerating faith.

**B. The Doctrine of Assurance: 1771-1791.** By 1771, Wesley had distinguished full assurance, which excludes doubt and fear, from initial assurance which does not.<sup>112</sup> He had come to a greater appreciation of the faith of a servant and its degree of acceptance; and he had realized that in exceptional cases one may even be justified and yet lack assurance due to either ignorance of the gospel promises or due to bodily disorder. Nevertheless, the theme which Wesley chose to develop during this last period of his life was none other than a strong identification of assurance with the proper (real) Christian faith. To illustrate, in his sermon "On the Trinity," Wesley declares:

But I know not how *anyone* can be a Christian believer till "he hath (as St. John speaks) 'the witness in himself'; till the Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit 'that he is a child of God'—that is, in effect, till God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him through the merits of the Son. . . ."<sup>113</sup>

Similarly, in January 1787, Wesley acknowledged that "To believe Christ gave Himself for me is the faith of a Christian,"<sup>114</sup> and a year later he not only once again clarified the distinction between the faith of a servant and that of a son, but he also maintained that assurance is an integral component of the proper Christian faith. In his sermon "On Faith," Wesley reasons:

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<sup>112</sup>For two important references to Wesley's doctrine of full assurance, cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 3:549, and 4:36.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:385. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>114</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 7:361-62. Wesley's response to Mr. Fleury, who had claimed that Wesley pretended to extraordinary inspiration, was to associate the witness of the Spirit (assurance) as vital to the Christian faith: "I pretend to no other inspiration than that which is common to all real Christians, without which no one can be a Christian at all." Cf. Davies, *Societies*, 9:392.

Thus the faith of a child is *properly and directly* a divine conviction whereby every child of God is enabled to testify, “The life that I now live, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” And *whosoever hath this*, the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit that he is a child of God.<sup>115</sup>

Even more significantly, there is nothing in Wesley’s often-quoted letter to Melville Horne in 1788 which detracts from this identification and emphasis. Thus, in this correspondence, Wesley maintains that the servants of God who lack assurance are not thereby condemned, a commonplace by now, but he then goes on to assert—and this is what has been missed by some, that “we preach assurance as we always did, as a *common* privilege of the children of God. . . .”<sup>116</sup>

#### IV. Some Concluding Observations

For the sake of greater clarity and also in order to display the comprehensive view which emerges from this brief study of the motif of real Christianity in the writings of John Wesley, the following theses are offered for consideration.

##### 1. The Faith of a Servant

A. Wesley employed the phrase “the faith of a servant” in at least two distinct ways. The first, the *broad* usage, does not include justification, regeneration and assurance, and it represents the clear majority of cases. The second, the *narrow* usage, includes both justification and regeneration but not assurance, and it corresponds to Wesley’s exempt cases or exceptions. It represents the minority of cases.

B. The mature Wesley specifically identified the faith of a servant (in the broad sense) with the spirit of bondage. The characteristics of the spirit of bondage are sorrow and remorse; fear of God, death, the devil, and humanity; and the desire but not the ability to break free from the chains of sin.

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<sup>115</sup>Outler, *Sermons*, 3:497-498. Emphasis is mine. For examples of what Wesley meant by “full assurance,” cf. Wesley, *NT Notes*, 638; Outler, *Sermons*, 3:549, 4:36; Ward, *Journals*, 22:436.

<sup>116</sup>Robert Southey, *The Life of John Wesley* privilege of the sons and daughters of God suggests that it is rare when assurance, marked by doubt and fear, does not soon follow the new birth.

C. The faith of a servant in both the broad and narrow senses lacks assurance (the witness of the Spirit)—the one due to sin, the other to infirmity.

D. Though Wesley eventually came to realize that the faith of a servant (in the broad sense) involves a *degree* of acceptance, such faith does not constitute justifying faith. Indeed, Wesley's soteriological language distinguishes between "acceptance" for those who are at the very beginning of the *way* of salvation and "justification" for those who have "entered in." The identification of Wesley's inclusive notion of "acceptance" (see his notes on Acts 10:35) with the proper Christian (saving) faith may move in the direction of a universalism that the Methodist leader rightly rejected. Therefore, a distinction must be made between acceptance (according to the light and grace which they have; that is, according to prevenient and convincing grace) and saving faith that redeems through the reception of forgiveness and by making one *holy*.

E. Wesley taught that the faith of all servants, in the normal course of spiritual development, should in time become the "proper Christian faith." They are, therefore, not to be discouraged.

## 2. Assurance

A. By 1739 Wesley realized that justifying faith does not imply full assurance since it is often marked by both doubt and fear.

B. At least by 1747 (and possibly as early as 1745), Wesley maintained that assurance does not always accompany justifying faith. These exceptions pertaining to assurance, servants in a narrow sense who are both justified and regenerated, are not many but *few* since Wesley repeatedly affirmed that assurance is the *common* privilege of the children of God. The faith of a servant in the broad sense, on the other hand, which lacks justification, regeneration and assurance, is characteristic not of a few believers but of *many*. Nevertheless, even these are not without favor since they are under the leading of both prevenient and convincing grace. In 1768, Wesley reasoned that the exceptions to the normal association of justifying faith and assurance (narrow sense) are usually the result of bodily disorder or of ignorance of the gospel promises; that is, due not to sin but to *infirmity*. The faith of a servant in the broad sense, on the other hand, lacks assurance not due to infirmity but to sin since they are under the spirit of bondage.

### 3. Real Christianity

A. Wesley developed the motif of real Christianity from the time he saw the goal of religion in 1725 until his death in 1791.

B. Through the influence of the English Moravians, Wesley initially placed the standard of real Christianity much too high so as to include elements which properly pertain to Christian perfection. Eventually Wesley distinguished between the power and being of sin; the former relates to the new birth (and real Christianity); the latter to entire sanctification.

C. Wesley made a distinction between open sinners, outward Christians, and inward Christians in several places in his writings: the first lack both the form and power of vital religion (open sinners); the second have the form but not the power (servants in the broad sense); the third have both the form and the power (real Christians). Wesley defined the purpose of the United Societies as being a fellowship of those who have the form of religion and who are seeking its power. This level of faith, therefore, does not constitute what Wesley called the proper Christian faith.

D. At its minimum, real Christianity entails regeneration (and therefore freedom from the power of sin), as one of its principal characteristics. In fact, it was precisely the *mature* Wesley who stressed this identification in his sermons “Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith” (1788) and “On a Single Eye” (1789).

E. Since Wesley taught that justification occurs simultaneously with regeneration (although they can be distinguished logically), then real Christianity must also entail justification by faith (and therefore freedom from the guilt of sin).

F. In almost every instance where the seasoned Wesley employed the phrases “real Christianity” or “proper Christianity” or “Scriptural Christianity,” he was referring to the theological complex of justification and regeneration by faith (the latter as evidenced by the marks of the new birth) and a measure of assurance. In other words, the Methodist leader almost never identified a faith which lacks assurance (the faith of a servant in both senses) with the *real, proper* Christian faith. Nevertheless, since the servants of God in a narrow sense are both justified and born of God, and since they lack assurance not due to sin but to infirmity, they may suitably be called the children of God.



G. Since virtually all Methodist scholars agree that Aldersgate was the time of John Wesley's assurance and that he was justified and regenerated at least by this time, and since these theological elements are the very ingredients which the seasoned Wesley deemed to constitute the proper Christian faith, then Aldersgate must be the time when Wesley became a real Christian by his *own* mature definition—Albert Outler's un-argued claim notwithstanding.

Given the preceding evidence which has been carefully culled from Wesley's entire literary corpus, recent—and some not so recent—pronouncements on the subject of Wesley's understanding of the motif of real Christianity, as well as the value he placed on his Aldersgate experience in light of this motif, must now be reassessed by the scholarly community. Indeed, since the elderly Wesley continually defined real Christianity in terms of justification, regeneration, and a measure of assurance, then his Aldersgate experience must now be viewed as the time when Wesley became a real, true, Scriptural Christian. In fact, even if Aldersgate is simply deemed the time when the last piece of the puzzle, so to speak, was put in place, namely, assurance, as Maddox and others seem to suggest,<sup>117</sup> the conclusion remains the same: that is, 24 May 1738 was the time when John Wesley had the faith, not of a servant, but of a son; when he had the faith, in other words, of one who had finally entered into "the kingdom of God."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>Maddox, *Aldersgate*, 145.

<sup>118</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 5:207.

# **JESUS AS PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING: JOHN WESLEY AND THE RENEWAL OF AN ANCIENT TRADITION**

by

**Fred Guyette**

The claim that Christ is prophet, priest, and king is familiar to most Christians, though the biblical and historical resources for making these claims are often not well understood. What do we find theologically and ethically when we follow this cluster of images through scripture and the permutations of different interpreters? Is it possible to make these claims and still respect the Jewish traditions from which they come? Early expressions are found in Justin Martyr, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Peter Chrysologous. In the Middle Ages, the threefold office can be found in the work of Thomas Aquinas. John Calvin made the *munus triplex* a prominent feature of the Reformed catechisms and theology. John Wesley was committed to preaching Christ in all three of His offices and was instrumental in drawing out the social implications of Christ's three offices. Weaving the strands of these older traditions with more recent studies may help us better understand God's gift of salvation and healing, Jesus' prophetic critique of church and society, and our need to adore and obey Jesus as King.

## **Christ as Prophet, Priest and King in the Church Fathers**

Justin Martyr's *Dialogue With Trypho the Jew* (ca. 150) may be the earliest statement of the *munus triplex*: "Jesus received from the Father the titles of King and Christ and Priest and Messenger" among other hon-

ors.<sup>1</sup> What was Trypho's response to this claim? We are not privileged to know the answer, for Justin seems to be "talking *at*" Trypho rather than entering into dialogue *with* him. Judging by some other remarks made by Justin, however, we can see that this would have been a contested claim.<sup>2</sup> Justin believes that the Christians have supplanted the Jewish people in God's plan, and "the seed of Jacob now referred to is something else, and not, as may be supposed, spoken of your people . . . there are two seeds of Judah, and two races, as there are two houses of Jacob: the one begotten by blood and flesh, the other by faith and the Spirit."<sup>3</sup> We can surmise that Trypho and his fellow Jews would have been perplexed by Justin's words, for God nowhere disowns His Chosen People. The prophet Jeremiah, who spoke of the New Covenant, also says: "Israel shall not cease from being a nation before God (Jeremiah 31.35-37)."

A century later, when the rivalry we see in Justin's *Dialogue* has become more routinized, church historian Eusebius of Caesarea notes that there are three kinds of anointing found in the Hebrew Scriptures. He says:

And we have been told also that certain of the prophets themselves became, by the act of anointing, Christs in type, so that all these have reference to the true Christ, the divinely inspired and heavenly Word, who is the only high priest of all, and the only King of every creature, and the Father's only supreme prophet of prophets. And a proof of this is that no one of those who were of old symbolically anointed, whether priests, or kings, or prophets, possessed so great a power of inspired virtue as was exhibited by our Saviour and Lord Jesus, the true and only Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Eusebius proceeds confidently, not having to anticipate the objections of any flesh and blood representative of Judaism. He now has the backing of Constantine the Emperor, so that martyrdom at the hands of the Romans is

<sup>1</sup>Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* chapter 86: [http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-01/anf01-48.htm#P4816\\_1046146](http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-01/anf01-48.htm#P4816_1046146)

<sup>2</sup>Tessa Rajak, "Talking at Trypho: Christian Apologetic as Anti-Judaism in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*" in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* ed. Mark Edwards, Martin Goodman, and Simon Price (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59-80.

<sup>3</sup>Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* chapter 135: <http://www.ccel.org/fathers/ANF-01/just/justintrypho.html#Section123>

<sup>4</sup>Eusebius, *Church History* Book I, chapter 3: [http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-01/Npnf2-01-06.htm#P522\\_306670](http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-01/Npnf2-01-06.htm#P522_306670)

no longer an issue for Christians. Moreover, the words “we have been told” indicate that several generations had provided time to rehearse these claims, and no serious shadow of contention or controversy appears on his horizon.

The tradition of Christ as prophet, priest, and king is further elaborated and intensified by Peter Chrysologus in his *Sermon 59* from the fifth century. Peter refers to Jesus as “King of kings, Priest of priests, Prophet of prophets.”<sup>5</sup> Who could fail to be moved by Peter’s description of Jesus, even to be convinced by it all these centuries later? It seems to gather up the different traditions of both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament, and to express the Christian’s devotion to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And yet, there is still the matter of Trypho and his descendants, with their faith in God, their unique identity, and their beloved traditions. If the proclamation nevertheless proceeds as a truthful affirmation concerning Jesus Christ, it must still face squarely the moral meaning of this encounter, so as not to re-inscribe meanings that might lead to the horrors of another Holocaust.

### **St. Thomas: Christ is the Fulfillment of All Three Offices**

Many years later, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is still very much interested in Christians learning about the threefold office of Christ and understanding it rightly. In his lectures on Romans 1:1, he says that Jesus is holy and therefore designated as Priest. Jesus is rightly called the Royal King, owing to his power. And in his knowledge, Jesus is truly a Prophet.<sup>6</sup> Commenting on Matthew’s Gospel, Thomas notes that there were three offices in Israel which required anointing: priest (Aaron), king (David), and prophet (Elisha).<sup>7</sup> In the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas brings these observations to fruition Christologically. He grants that others may have certain graces distributed among them, but

Christ, as being the Head of all, has the perfection of all graces. Wherefore, as to others, one is a lawgiver, another is a priest, another is a king; but all these concur in Christ, as the fount of all grace. Hence it is written (Is. 33:22): “The Lord is

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<sup>5</sup>Peter Chrysologus, *Sermon 59* (Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 52: 363). See also Geoffrey Wainwright, *For Our Salvation: Two Approaches to the Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 111.

<sup>6</sup>See Peter J. Drilling, “The Priest, Prophet and King Trilogy” *Eglise et Theologie* 19 (1988): 179-206, especially p. 189.

<sup>7</sup>B. D. Soujeole, “Les tria munera Christi (The Threefold Office of Christ),” *Revue Thomiste* 99 (1999): 59-74, especially p. 6.

our Judge, the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our King: He will come and save us.<sup>8</sup>

A key question is whether Christ took flesh of the seed of David. Part of Thomas' answer to this question is rooted in Romans 1:3 where it says that Jesus was born of "the seed of David according to the flesh" (III q. 31, article 2). Thomas also holds that Matthew 21:9 is significant for this question, because it says that the Jewish people received Him with kingly honor, and said, "Hosanna to the Son of David" during his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

There are still other passages in which Thomas designates Christ as "prophet" by virtue of his ministry of proclamation, as "priest" by his sacrifice on the Cross, and as "king" because of the homage given by the Magi and again because of his Ascension into heaven.<sup>9</sup> So the threefold office of Christ is known to Aquinas, although we might wish that he had worked through the implications of these teachings for critiquing and renewing social life.

### Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King in John Calvin and Karl Barth

John Calvin develops the theme of Christ as prophet, priest, and king in his *Geneva Catechism* of 1542, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and in his many commentaries on scripture. He first brought these three offices together as a way of teaching the faith to children, using the question and answer format of the *Geneva Catechism*.

M.—What, next, is the force of the name Christ?

S.—By this epithet, his office is still better expressed—for it signifies that he was anointed by the Father to be a King, Priest, and Prophet.

M.—How do you know that?

S.—First, Because Scripture applies anointing to these three uses; secondly, Because it often attributes the three things which we have mentioned to Christ.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III, question 22, article 1: <http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/TP/TP022.html#TPQ22A1THEP1>

<sup>9</sup>B. D. Soujeole, "Les tria munera Christi (The Threefold Office of Christ)" *Revue Thomiste* 99 (1999): 59-74, especially p. 63.

<sup>10</sup>See "Catechism of the Church of Geneva," Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics, available online: [http://www.reformed.org/documents/Also,\\_Phillip\\_Butin,\\_Two\\_Early\\_Reformed\\_Catechisms,\\_the\\_Threefold\\_Office,\\_and\\_the\\_Shape\\_of\\_Karl\\_Barth's\\_Christology,\\_Scottish\\_Journal\\_of\\_Theology\\_44\\_\(1991\):\\_195-214](http://www.reformed.org/documents/Also,_Phillip_Butin,_Two_Early_Reformed_Catechisms,_the_Threefold_Office,_and_the_Shape_of_Karl_Barth's_Christology,_Scottish_Journal_of_Theology_44_(1991):_195-214)

Calvin deems it especially significant that Jesus was anointed “not with visible oil as was used in consecrating ancient kings, priests, and prophets,” but by the Holy Spirit. As for his kingdom, it is a spiritual kingdom. What kind of prophet is he? He declared himself to be an ambassador from God, who reveals all things so that no other revelation is to follow, and who teaches them the ways of righteousness. And as priest? Christ functions as a mediator between God and humankind, overcoming their estrangement by making a perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 9:22, 13:20), and making it possible for Christians to have access to God through prayer.<sup>11</sup>

Calvin’s *Commentary on Jeremiah*, chapter 33, verses 17-18, speaks of the future that God promises Israel beyond the disaster of the Exile. His interpretation emphasizes that it is above all the *church* that is being referred to:

The Prophet had spoken of the restoration of the Church; he now confirms the same truth, for he promises that the kingdom and the priesthood would be perpetual. . . . The safety of the people, as it is well known, was secured by these two things; for without a king they were like an imperfect or a maimed body, and without a priesthood there was nothing but ruin; for the priest was, as it were, the mediator between God and the people, and the king represented God. We now, then, perceive the object of the Prophet, why he speaks expressly here of the kingdom and the priesthood, for the people could not otherwise have any ground to stand on. He therefore declares that the condition of the people would be safe, because there would always be some of the posterity of David, who would succeed to govern them, and there would always be some of the posterity of Levi, to offer sacrifices. But this passage ought to be carefully noticed, for we hence gather, that though all other things were given to us according to our wishes, we should yet be ever miserable, except we had Christ as our head, to perform the office of a king and of a priest.<sup>12</sup>

As wonderful as this would have sounded in the ears of the Christians in Geneva, the flesh and blood Israelites of the Babylonian Exile are still at

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<sup>11</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 494-503.

<sup>12</sup>John Calvin, *Commentary on Jeremiah* [http://www.ccel.org/c/calvin/comment3/comm\\_vol20/htm/v.x.htm](http://www.ccel.org/c/calvin/comment3/comm_vol20/htm/v.x.htm)

risk of being eclipsed in favor of the symbolic value of the three offices for an altogether different historical community. So the crucial problem for all Christians, not just for the children of Geneva, remains: How are we to emphasize the threefold office of Christ without harming the Jewish people and without showing disrespect to their traditions?

The time came in Karl Barth's life when he had to deal with this question in a dramatic way. In the years leading up to World War II, Barth had structured a significant part of his *Church Dogmatics* around the *munus triplex*. His approach to Jesus as Priest employs a wide range of New Testament material: e.g., Jesus as "The Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1:29); Jesus speaking of His "blood of the new covenant" (Mark 14:24); the Pauline formula "He himself was offered as our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7).<sup>13</sup>

When Barth developed the theme of Jesus as King or "The Royal Man," the cross, resurrection, and the ascension were especially prominent in his thinking. Pilate's ironic declaration to the crowd in Jerusalem was "Here is your king" (John 19:14), but what kind of coronation does Jesus receive? It was a crown of thorns. Humility, obedience, and majesty all coincide in the account of events at Gethsemane and Golgotha.<sup>14</sup> First John 1:14 represents a summary and a restatement of these themes: "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Barth felt strongly that the prophetic office of Christ had not received enough attention in the Reformed heritage, and he sought to remedy that in *Church Dogmatics* IV.3. Here, Barth was especially interested in showing how Jesus is greater than the prophets of the Hebrew scriptures. Jesus is not "commissioned" or "inspired" like other prophets, but instead he is "sent by the Father."<sup>15</sup> Jesus is a prophet sent not just to Israel, but "He is the light of men come into the world (John 3:19)." Like the other prophets, Jesus speaks on the basis of the covenant—but whereas the prophets of old knew only the unfulfilled covenant, Jesus is the witness to the fulfilled covenant. Most decisively, the prophets of the Hebrew scriptures were messengers whose words went basically in one

<sup>13</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 274.

<sup>14</sup>See the discussion in *Church Dogmatics* IV. 2, 133 and 292.

<sup>15</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 49.

direction, from God to humankind, without prospect of bringing the needs of the people back to God. Yet Jesus Christ is instead the One Mediator *between* God and man.

The German Christians under Hitler made it their aim to promote a Jesus who was ripped away from his Jewish social and historical context. The Confessing Church decided rightly that this was utterly contrary to the gospel.<sup>16</sup> Whatever else is meant by the Christian claim that Jesus is prophet, priest, and king, it definitely does *not* mean that the Jewish people are forgotten or rejected by God. We might even say that the power of the Barmen Declaration, the Church's protest against Hitler's policies in Nazi Germany in 1934, is firmly rooted in an understanding of Jesus Christ's prophetic office.<sup>17</sup>

### John Wesley on Christ as Prophet, Priest and King

For the most part, John Wesley's discussion of Christ's threefold office is found in his sermons rather than in the catechisms favored by the Reformed tradition. We begin with one of Wesley's comments on the *munus triplex* found in a note he wrote on Matthew 1:16:

We are by nature at a distance from God, alienated from him, and incapable of a free access to him. Hence we want a mediator, an intercessor, in a word, a Christ, in his priestly office. This regards our state with respect to God. And with respect to ourselves, we find a total darkness, blindness, ignorance of

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<sup>16</sup>Barth's "answer" is still much-disputed. For samples of different "readings" of Barth, see: John Johnson, "A New Testament Understanding of the Jewish Rejection of Jesus: Four Theologians on the Salvation of Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 (2000): 229-246; Eberhard Busch, "The Covenant of Grace Fulfilled in Christ as the Foundation of the Indissoluble Solidarity of the Church with Israel: Barth's Position on the Jews During the Hitler Era," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52 (2000): 476-503; Charles H. Cosgrove, "The Church With and For Israel" *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 22 (1995): 259-278; Robert Willis, "Bonhoeffer and Barth on Jewish Suffering: Reflections on the Relationship between Theology and Moral Sensibility," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 24 (1987): 598-615.

<sup>17</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 86. For a moving first-hand account of the origins of the Barmen Declaration and its continuing relevance, see Heinrich Vogel's "Christ the Centre: The Christological Centrality of the Barmen Declaration" *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 47 (1984): 4-11. See also Mark Lindsay, *Covenanted Solidarity: The Theological Basis of Karl Barth's Opposition to Nazi Antisemitism and the Holocaust* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001).



God, and the things of God. Now here we want Christ in his prophetic office, to enlighten our minds, and teach us the whole will of God. We find also within us a strange misrule of appetites and passions. For these we want Christ in his royal character, to reign in our hearts, and subdue all things to himself.<sup>18</sup>

The context of redemption here is the inner life, in keeping with the emphasis of the Pietists and William Law. As Priest, then, Jesus Christ is a mediator who overcomes our alienation from God. As Prophet, Jesus Christ is our one true teacher. As King, Christ works within us to order our passions and virtues.

There is not yet very much in this passage from Wesley's work to suggest that the three offices of Christ might imply political and social responsibilities for the Christian. However, in Wesley's sermon from 1750, "The Law Established through Faith, II" we find this remarkable passage:

We may, at proper opportunities, dwell upon his praise as bearing "the iniquities of us all," as "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities," that "by his stripes we might be healed." But still we should not "preach Christ" according to his word if we were wholly to confine ourselves to this. We are not ourselves clear before God unless we proclaim him in all his office . . . not only as great "High Priest, taken from among men, and ordained for men, in things pertaining to God"; as such, "reconciling us to God by blood," and "ever living to make intercession for us," but likewise as the Prophet of the Lord, "who of God is made unto us wisdom," yea and as remaining a King forever; as giving laws to all whom he has bought with his blood; as restoring those to the image of God whom he has first reinstated in his favour; as reigning in all believing hearts until he has "subdued all things to himself"; until he hath utterly cast out all sin, and "brought in everlasting righteousness."<sup>19</sup>

Wesley's desire to "proclaim Christ in all his offices" moves us decisively in the direction of a faith that is engaged both in performing deeds of lov-

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<sup>18</sup>John Wesley's *Notes on the Bible*, conveniently available on the web at <http://www.gospelcom.net/eword/comments/matthew/wesley/matthew1.htm>

<sup>19</sup>This key passage is from Wesley's sermon "The Law Established through Faith, II," online at: <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-036.stm>

ing service to others and in the shaping of public life. In much of contemporary American Christianity, we find Christ proclaimed as priest *only*—one to whom we turn for healing and forgiveness of sins that are personal and private. In the Lord’s Supper, however, Christ must be proclaimed not only as a true Priest, but also as Prophet. We cannot truly celebrate the Lord’s Supper without finding ourselves called upon to feed the hungry, as Jesus did on so many occasions.<sup>20</sup>

In Wesley’s series of sermons dealing with the Sermon on the Mount, Christ is seen as the King who first transforms the heart, then seeks to transform the whole earth. Commenting on “Thy Kingdom come” in the Lord’s Prayer, Wesley writes:

The Lord God Omnipotent” then “reigneth,” when he is known through Christ Jesus. He taketh unto himself his mighty power, that he may subdue all things unto himself. He goeth on in the soul conquering and to conquer, till he hath put all things under his feet, till “every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” When therefore God shall “give his Son the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;” when “all kingdoms shall bow before him, and all nations shall do him service;” when “the mountain of the Lord’s house,” the Church of Christ, “shall be established in the top of the mountains;” when “the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved;” then shall it be seen, that “the Lord is King, and hath put on glorious apparel,” appearing to every soul of man as King of kings, and Lord of lords.<sup>21</sup>

Turning to the parables in Matthew 25, Wesley’s sermon “On Visiting the Sick” tells also of Christ the King, who is ready to establish justice and peace on behalf of his children who have been imprisoned, starved, and humiliated.<sup>22</sup>

In “Of the Church,” Wesley concentrates on the message of Ephesians, which declares racism to be contrary to the vision of Christ. How so? Because “*One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*” means that there are no

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<sup>20</sup>David Lowes Watson, “Proclaiming Christ in All His Offices: Priest, Prophet and Potentate” in *The Portion of the Poor*, ed. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 113-133.

<sup>21</sup>John Wesley, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, VI.” Available online: <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-026.stm>

<sup>22</sup>John Wesley, “On Visiting the Sick.” Available online: <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-098.stm>

second-class citizens in Christ's Kingdom and that racism must therefore be rooted out of our life together.<sup>23</sup> This commitment to the meaning of Baptism led Wesley to be an outspoken critic of slavery in America. In England, too, Wesley forged a partnership with William Wilberforce and urged him to work in Parliament for an end to the slave trade. This came to pass in 1807, followed by emancipation in 1833. In Wesley's thinking, this crusade was a matter of proclaiming Christ as King.<sup>24</sup>

"Scriptural Christianity" is in many ways the most visionary and eschatological of Wesley's sermons. Note this:

And, first, I would ask, Where does this Christianity now exist? Where, I pray, do the Christians live? Which is the country, the inhabitants whereof are all thus filled with the Holy Ghost? —are all of one heart and of one soul? Who cannot suffer one among them to lack anything, but continually give to every man as he hath need; who, one and all, have the love of God filling their hearts, and constraining them to love their neighbour as themselves; who have all "put on bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering?" who offend not in any kind, either by word or deed, against justice, mercy, or truth; but in every point do unto all men as they would these should do unto them? With what propriety can we term any a Christian country, which does not answer this description? Why then, let us confess we have never yet seen a Christian country upon earth.<sup>25</sup>

Thus he describes the Kingdom of God as a place where there would be neither war nor economic injustice, and where love of God and neighbor would rule over all. Wesley wants to make it clear that he does not yet see this in England nor in any other land, and therefore that Christians must come to understand the spread of the Kingdom of God as their mission.

### **Toward a Contemporary Restatement of Christ's Threefold Office**

In light of Wesley's vision concerning the social implications of Christ's threefold office, how should a contemporary re-statement of these themes proceed?

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<sup>23</sup>John Wesley, "Of the Church." Available online:

<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-074.stm>

<sup>24</sup>William E. Phipps, "John Wesley on Slavery," *Quarterly Review* 1 (1981): 23-31.

<sup>25</sup>John Wesley "Scriptural Christianity." Available online: <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-004.stm>

**1. The Question of Jewish Traditions.** The question of traditions and symbols that were originally Jewish and have been reinterpreted by Christians is very pertinent for exploring the meaning of “prophet, priest, and king.” In a poignant exchange in the 1930s, on the eve of the Holocaust, Martin Buber was asked about the basic difference between Christianity and Judaism. He recalled that Jesus was asked, “Are you the One who is to come, or shall we look for another?” and that Jesus’ responded: “My actions of healing and liberation speak for themselves.” Buber remarked that Judaism is not able to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. Buber was more impressed with the fact that the world is manifestly *not yet* redeemed.<sup>26</sup>

On one level, the Christian community is obliged to hear this Jewish “no” as a matter of respectful listening and receiving testimony from a reliable historical witness. On a deeper level, a dialectical proclamation should be able to proceed on two bases, one primarily historical and another that is primarily ethical. Historically: we should remember that Christianity began as a renewal movement *within* Judaism, and that *some* Jews did receive Jesus as Messiah.<sup>27</sup> Ethically, the symbolic nature of “prophet, priest, and king” for Christianity represents a wager of sorts. That is, the threefold office of Christ is meant to guide the actions of the Christian community in hope, in justice, mercy, and lovingkindness. The “legitimacy” of the wager is yet to be determined, according to the measure in which Christians allow their actions to be formed according to the pattern of Jesus’ life.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Jürgen Moltmann tells about Buber’s comments in “Israel’s No: Jews and Jesus in an Unredeemed World” *Christian Century* 107 (Nov. 7, 1990): 1021-1024. For another excellent treatment of these questions, see J. Schoneveld, “The Jewish ‘No’ to Jesus and the Christian ‘Yes’ to Jews,” *Quarterly Review* 4 (1984): 52-63.

<sup>27</sup>Jacob Jervell has championed this view in “The Divided People of God: The Restoration of Israel and the Salvation of the Gentiles,” in *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 41-74.

<sup>28</sup>For “conforming to Jesus,” see James Gustafson in *Christ and the Moral Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), especially his chapter on “Christ the Pattern.” The use of “wager” in this way is meant to echo Pascal’s wager, especially as Paul Ricoeur takes it in *The Symbolism of Evil*: “I wager that I shall have a better understanding of man and of the bond between the being of man and the being of all beings if I follow the indication of symbolic thought. That wager then becomes the task of verifying my wager and saturating it, so to speak, with intelligibility. In return, the task transforms my wager: in betting on the significance of the symbolic world, I bet at the same time that my wager will be restored to me in power of reflection, in the element of coherent discourse.” *The Symbolism of Evil*. Trans Emerson Buchanan (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 355).

**2. Jesus as Prophet.** A contemporary restatement of the *munus triplex* might begin with a renewed interest in Christ as prophet.<sup>29</sup> Luke 4:16-30 is one of the best resources for illuminating this claim. When Jesus came to the synagogue, he chose the words of Isaiah to introduce the themes of His mission:

The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind.

Jesus is a prophet, then, who speaks out on behalf of the poor and the hungry, and he commands his followers to speak also. The “captives” refers to both those who are oppressed by more powerful nations (as were the Jews in exile in Babylon) and those who are under the bondage of sin. In a similar way, “the blind” include both those who need healing to have their sight restored *and* those who *refuse* to see that the Kingdom of God is breaking into human history. Jesus the Prophet, then, challenges injustice in society, calling his followers to a new kind of freedom and granting them a vision of a new kingdom.<sup>30</sup>

**3. Jesus as Priest.** What do the gospels say about Jesus as priest? In Luke’s gospel we find the parable of the Good Samaritan, which shows an unworthy priest “passing by on the other side” rather than helping the man who fell among thieves. By way of contrast, in Luke 17, Jesus the “good priest” heals ten lepers, though only one of them returns to thank him.<sup>31</sup> Mark 2:1-13 shows a priestly Jesus healing a paralytic and forgiv-

<sup>29</sup>Mark McVann, “Rituals of Status Transformation in Luke-Acts: The Case of Jesus the Prophet,” *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Pub., 1991), 333-360.

<sup>30</sup>For more on social transformation as a theme in Luke, see: Mel Shoemaker, “Good News to the Poor in Luke’s Gospel,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 1992, v. 27 (1-2): 181-203. A Wesleyan perspective on social transformation is explored in more detail in Leon O. Hynson, “Wesley: Theology of the Moral Life,” *Asbury Seminarian* 1983, v. 38 (5): 18-30.

<sup>31</sup>Richard Bauckham, “The Scrupulous Priest and the Good Samaritan: Jesus’ Parabolic Interpretation of the Law of Moses,” *New Testament Studies* 44 (1998): 475-489. Also Frederick Gaiser, “Your Faith Has Made You Well: Healing and Salvation in Luke” *Word & World*, 16 (1996): 12-19. Edwin K. Broadhead, “Christology as Polemic and Apologetic: The Priestly Portrait of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 47 (1992): 21-34. S. Lewis Johnson, “Jesus Praying for the Whole Family: An Exposition of John 17:20-26,” *Emmaus Journal*, 9 (2000): 73-84. Joseph A. Grassi, “I Was Hungry and You Gave Me to Eat,” *The Divine Identification Ethic in Matthew*” *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 11 (1981): 81-84.

ing his sins, despite opposition from the authorities. For Matthew's part, the parable of the Sheep and Goats in chapter 25 teaches us to see Jesus as priest in the faces of the sick, hungry, and the imprisoned. Could there be a more direct challenge to the narcissism, competitiveness, and prejudice of today? Jesus, the great high priest, acts out of compassion and teaches us to go and do likewise.<sup>32</sup>

**4. Jesus as King.** It is part of John's special theological genius that he recognizes the extent to which the three images of "prophet, priest, and king" modify and re-interpret each other.<sup>33</sup> John knows Jesus as the prophet who cleanses the Temple (John 2:13-22). Jesus the prophet knows the heart of the woman at the well in John 4:19, and he is likewise called a prophet after multiplying the loaves and fishes in John 6:14. John's gospel shows Jesus as a priest who heals a blind man at the Pool of Siloam (John 9:1-13), and again as a priest at prayer in John 17. Here Jesus asks the Father that unity, knowledge, and love be given not only to his closest disciples, but also to a wider circle of believers who will later call on him, and even that those in the world who now reject him may come to know this love.

In John 18:33 Pilate asks Jesus whether he is the king the Jews have been looking for. Jesus answers, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." Jesus is both the Prophet sent to establish justice, and the compassionate Priest who shows solidarity with the vulnerable and cares for their needs. And it is

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<sup>32</sup>See the essay by Wesley D. Tracy, "Economic Policies and Judicial Oppression as Formative Influences on the Theology of John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 1992, 27(1-2): 30-56. Of special interest is Wesley's Sermon 51, "The Good Steward," which focuses on the questions that will be put to us in the day of judgment: Did we carry out the work of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, assisting the stranger, relieving the afflicted? Did we become "eyes to the blind, feet to the lame? a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow?" Available online: <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-051.stm>

<sup>33</sup>Or, as Isaac Watts says in his hymn, "Join All the Glorious Names." See Geoffrey Wainwright, *For Our Salvation: Two Approaches to the Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 98. See also the concluding chapter in Bernhard Anderson's *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 337-342. For an excellent analysis of Jesus as Prophet and King in John, see Marinus de Jonge, "Jesus as Prophet and King in the Fourth Gospel," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 49 (1973): 160-177.

these affirmations that help show what kind of king it is that Pilate has on his hands in John 18. Jesus is a King of Peace who does not fight against those who intend to kill him. He is a King of Peace whose life is laid down on his own initiative—it cannot be taken from Him, and he will take it back up again in the Resurrection. This is the King of Peace who likewise teaches his followers an agape-love, shaped by the cross and resurrection, that constitutes “a more excellent way.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>“God’s love is perfect. There is no more ultimate, more complete, more holy, more self-giving love than that which is directed toward us from the divine Giver,” says Theodore Runyon, “The New Creation: A Wesleyan Distinctive,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 1996, v. 31 (2): 5-19. See Wesley’s Sermon 43, “The Scripture Way to Salvation,” which focuses on God’s love and perfection. Available online: <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-043.stm>

# **“WE THE PEOPLE”: JOHN WESLEY’S CRITIQUE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY**

by

**John R. Tyson**

John Wesley (1703-1791) would have been 300 years old in 2003. As we consider the Wesleyan Tricentennial we do well to examine his contribution to the development of Protestantism. In this vein, we are apt to recall Wesley’s “Aldersgate experience” in which he felt his heart was “strangely warmed.”<sup>1</sup> Wesley’s prodigious efforts and relative success at evangelizing people who stood at the margins of eighteenth-century English society also spring readily to mind. The achievements of Wesley, the warm-hearted evangelist, have been chronicled in terms of sermons preached (more than 40,000) or miles traveled on horseback (more than 250,000).<sup>2</sup> He is as easily depicted as an advocate for the poor and a social reformer.<sup>3</sup>

While each of these popular recollections of John Wesley contain elements of truth, there was clearly more to the man and his work than this. Indeed, many aspects of John Wesley’s life and thought remain inadequately explored; his political views are one of these. In the following essay, we shall examine John Wesley’s political views as they emerge in a

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<sup>1</sup>W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley: Vol. 18, Journals and Diaries, I* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 250.

<sup>2</sup>Umphrey Lee, *The Lord’s Horseman: John Wesley the Man* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), 91.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Theodore Jennings, *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley’s Evangelical Economics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990).



series of treatises he wrote and published in the late 1760s and 1770s. This inquiry not only shows us a side of Wesley's work that does not often emerge in popular depictions, but it also raises some interesting questions about the close association between democratic political theory and Protestant Christianity as they have developed in the United States.

John Wesley suggested (satirically) that "every Englishman is a politician . . . we can instruct both the King and his Council. . . ." <sup>4</sup> He presented himself as entering unwillingly into the public political fray. His social commentary was an extension of his earlier willingness to instruct the Methodists, in private, on political matters. <sup>5</sup> He claimed no special training or "inside" information regarding the "present state of public affairs." He knew only what he had read in the newspapers ("and you know these are mostly on one side") and what he had seen with his own eyes. Wesley understood his foray into public political discourse as an attempt to speak Christian common sense to the divergent parties. Ironically, Wesley saw himself as being dispassionate and politically unaligned in this attempt: "If I have a little understanding from nature or experience, it is (in this instance at least) unclouded by passion." <sup>6</sup>

Although John Wesley did not consider himself well versed in political theory, he knew and had read the work of several contemporary political theorists. It is clear, for example, that he knew the work of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)—perhaps indirectly—since John Wesley's sermon "On Original Sin" (#44) cites a passage from Hobbes' *Leviathan*. <sup>7</sup> John Locke (1632-1704) was of more particular interest to Wesley and his journal evidences Wesley reading Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* in

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<sup>4</sup>Thomas Jackson, ed. *The Works of John Wesley, M.A.*, 14 Vol. (London: The Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), XI, 15. [Hereafter, *JW Works*, and etc.]

<sup>5</sup>John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley*, 8 Vol. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), III, 165-166. [Hereafter, *JW Letters*, and etc.] Cf. Allan Raymond, "I fear God and honour the King: John Wesley and the American Revolution," in *Church History*, 45 (S. 1976), 316.

<sup>6</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 15.

<sup>7</sup>Albert Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley: Vol. II, Sermons II* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 184. Outler notes: "The quotation is not from Hobbes directly, but from John Norris, *Reflections Upon the Conduct of Human Life*. . . . Wesley published an extract of Norris's *Reflections* in 1734...." Allusions to Hobbes' work appear in two of Wesley's sermons. Cf. *Ibid.*, 177, and *Ibid.*, 587.

May of 1745.<sup>8</sup> He returned to that task in earnest again in 1781 and subsequently published *Remarks Upon Mr. Locke's Essay on Human Understanding* in that same year.<sup>9</sup> Initially, Wesley appreciated Locke's work, especially as compared to that of Montesquieu,<sup>10</sup> since he found Locke's writing characterized by "a deep fear of God, and reverence for his word . . . though there are some mistakes, yet these are abundantly compensated by many curious and useful reflections."<sup>11</sup>

An important insight emerges in Wesley's assessment of Locke's *Essay*. He read political philosophy chiefly as a "folk-theologian."<sup>12</sup> In his sermon "On the Unity of the Divine Being" (#114), for example, he gave a negative assessment of several contemporary political writers, primarily from a theological standpoint: "Thus almost all men of letters, both in England, France, Germany, yea, and all the civilized countries of Europe, extol *humanity* to the skies, as the very essence of religion. To this the great triumvirate, Rousseau, Voltaire, and David Hume, have contributed all their labours, sparing no pains to establish a religion which should stand on its own foundation, independent of a God."<sup>13</sup> When Wesley read Dr. Thomas Reid's *An Enquiry into the Human Mind* (1764), he likened Reid to "that prodigy of self conceit, Rousseau—a shallow yet supercilious infidel, two degrees below Voltaire!" And he asked: "Is it possible that a man who admires him can admire the Bible?"<sup>14</sup> On May 24, 1774, Wesley read a collection of essays by Henry Home, Lord Kame—which used natural religion (Deism) to combat the secularism of David Hume. Wesley concluded that Lord Kame conceded too much Christian liberty to be of any use to him: "Did ever man take so much pains to so little purpose, as he does in his *Essay on Liberty and*

<sup>8</sup>Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries*, III, 66.

<sup>9</sup>*JW Works*, XIII, 455-464.

<sup>10</sup>Wesley was familiar with the work of Montesquieu and often referred to it disparagingly. In 1781 he published a pamphlet titled *Thoughts Upon Baron Montesquieu's 'Spirit of Laws.'* Its text is available in *JW Works*, XIII, 413-416.

<sup>11</sup>*JW Works*, XIII, *Remarks Upon Mr. Locke's Essay on Human Understanding*, 455.

<sup>12</sup>See Albert Outler, "John Wesley: Folk Theologian," *Theology Today*, 34 (July 1977), which is reprinted in Thomas Oden and Leicester Longden, eds., *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 111-124, for a discussion on how to read Wesley from this vantagepoint.

<sup>13</sup>*JW Works*, VII, "The Unity of the Divine Being," 271 (1789).

<sup>14</sup>Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries*, V, 412 (May 30, 1774).

*Necessity? Cui bono?* [to what good?] What good would it do to mankind, if he could convince them that they are a mere piece of clock-work? that they have no share in directing their own actions, than in directing the sea or the north wind? He owns, that 'if men saw themselves in this light all sense of moral obligation, of right and wrong . . . would immediately cease.'"<sup>15</sup> John Wesley grounded his political theory in a theological understanding of human nature and human destiny which set him apart from his Deistic and secularist contemporaries.

### John Wesley's Political Pamphlets

John Wesley's first major commentary on current political events was his *Free Thoughts on the Present State of Public Affairs: In a Letter to a Friend* which he wrote and published in 1768. The treatise was primarily an attempt to quell social tensions that had been generated by the controversies surrounding John Wilkes (1727-1797).<sup>16</sup> Wilkes was a free thinker and member of parliament from West Middlesex. In 1762 he established *The North Briton* as a megaphone for his attacks upon political opponents and King George III. On April 23, 1763, *The North Briton* strenuously attacked a recent speech of the King's chief minister as one of "the most odious measures and the most unjustifiable public declarations from a throne ever renowned for truth, honour, and an unsullied virtue."<sup>17</sup> As George Rude' concluded: "It seemed to many—and not least to George III himself—that, despite Wilkes's disclaimers, the King was being accused of being a liar."<sup>18</sup> Wilkes was arrested and imprisoned for these allegations, and he became the focal point and symbol for a series of riots and acts of civil disobedience that were carried out to cries of "Wilkes and liberty."<sup>19</sup>

John Wesley's response to the Wilkes controversy was profoundly shaped by his adherence to Romans 13:1, a desire to "fear God and hon-

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<sup>15</sup>Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries*, V, 410 (May 24, 1774). Lord Kame's work was *Essays on the Principles of Morality, and Natural Religion; with other Essays Concerning the Proof of a Deity* (Edinburgh, 1751).

<sup>16</sup>J.M.R. "John Wilkes," in Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 24 Vol. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), XXI, 242-250.

<sup>17</sup>George Rude', *Wilkes and Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 22. Rude' cited *The North Briton*, No. 45, to this effect.

<sup>18</sup>Rude', *Wilkes and Liberty*, 23.

<sup>19</sup>George Rude', *Wilkes and Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 1-36, offers an excellent summary.

our the King,”<sup>20</sup> as well as his fear of social chaos and mob rule. The results of the current turmoil, he thought, would be onerous: “The land will become a field of blood; many thousands of poor Englishmen will sheathe their swords in each other’s bowels, for the diversion of their good neighbours. . . . One must be; but it cannot be determined which, King W[ilkes] or King Mob.”<sup>21</sup> Laying aside the claims that English liberty had been undermined in the arrest of Wilkes and his removal from Parliament, Wesley urged his readers to learn the difference between “liberty” and “licentiousness”—describing the latter as “a wonton abuse of liberty, in contempt of all laws, divine and human.”<sup>22</sup> For peace to ensue, Wesley argued, the government must be allowed to enforce its laws against libel, slander, and treason, and use them to punish and silence those “incendiaries” who had caused the current conflagration. “It is possible,” Wesley opined, “this might restore peace, but one cannot affirm it would.”<sup>23</sup>

When Wesley asked, “What are the real causes of this amazing ferment among the people?” he found himself upon more familiar territory; it was primarily a matter of human sin. Greedy and unscrupulous people repeatedly printed lies and slander. The situation was further complicated by the dubious status of Wilkes; it is clear that he was not a person of sterling character. Benjamin Franklin, who was neither a Tory nor a conservative, knew John Wilkes in Paris and described him as “an outlaw, and exile of bad personal character, not worth a farthing.”<sup>24</sup> Wesley’s criticism of Wilkes was fully textured by his assessment of Wilkes’ sinful motives. He added to this assessment a string of general vices he found in the people: covetousness; ambition; pride; envy; and resentment. In short, John Wesley attributed the “present state of public affairs” to the flagrant and unbridled exercise of human sin. It was precisely this factor that turned liberty (which he believed the English already enjoyed) into “licentiousness” (which Wesley deplored).<sup>25</sup> Wesley’s solution to the contemporary social crisis, while touching upon the issue of liberty and the appropriate use of liberty, was more directly rooted in his affirmation of theological

<sup>20</sup>Telford, *JW Letters*, III, 38.

<sup>21</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 28.

<sup>22</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 33.

<sup>23</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 33.

<sup>24</sup>Rude’, *Wilkes and Liberty*, xiii.

<sup>25</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 33.

verities like human sin, the need for repentance, and God's willingness to redeem people or societies who turn to God in faith and repentance.

The continuation of the Wilkesite controversy prompted John Wesley to write a second time on matters relating to liberty.<sup>26</sup> His *Thoughts upon Liberty*, which was finished on February 24, 1772, and published later that spring, amounted to a more thorough consideration of liberty. Having described liberty, "improperly so called,"<sup>27</sup> Wesley turned to its opposite, "liberty properly so called." The proper understanding of liberty begins with the acknowledgment of God as Creator and Guide, and hence, liberty is viewed as an "indefeasible right." He studiously avoided the language of "natural law" or "natural rights" to describe the source of human liberty, even though these terms were commonly used by political philosophers of his day. Wesley's choice of terminology in this matter illustrates his ongoing theological struggle against the Deism and secularism that dominated the contemporary conversation about liberty. Liberty, in Wesley's view, was not a "natural" matter, it was a "supernatural," God-given gift. For this same reason, then, religious liberty provided the foundation and core of Wesley's idea of civil liberty. The interconnection of these concepts is illustrated in this statement:

. . . what is that liberty, properly so called, which every wise and good man desires? It is either religious or civil. Religious liberty is a liberty to choose our own religion, to worship God according to our own conscience, according to the best light we have. Every man living, as man, has a right to this, as he is a rational creature. The Creator gave him this right when He endowed him with understanding. Consequently, this is an indefeasible right; it is inseparable from humanity. . . .<sup>28</sup>

On this basis, Wesley argued that the English already possessed greater religious liberty than any other nation imagined: "In the name of

<sup>26</sup>William Warren Sweet, "John Wesley, Tory," *Methodist Quarterly Review*, 71 (1922), 255-256; Allan Raymond, "I Fear God and Honour the King": John Wesley and the American Revolution," *Church History*, 45 (S. 1976), 316-318.

<sup>27</sup>Wesley described four inappropriate kinds of liberty: (1) "the liberty of knocking on the head or the cutting the throats of those we are out of conceit with;" (2) "the liberty of taking, when we see best, the good and chattels of our neighbors;" (3) "the liberty of taking our neighbor's wives and daughters;" and (4) "that of removing a disobedient King." *JW. Works*, XI, 35-37.

<sup>28</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 37-38.

wonder, what religious liberty can you desire, or even conceive, which you have not already? Where is there a nation in Europe, in the habitable world, which enjoys such liberty of conscience as the English?"<sup>29</sup> So far as he could observe, the English had "liberty of conscience" and that was far more liberty than was known by most people throughout Europe.

John Wesley recognized that the matter of religious liberty did not greatly concern the contemporary champions of "Wilkes and Liberty." "But is not the ground of this vehement outcry," Wesley wrote, "that we are deprived of our civil liberty?"<sup>30</sup> This led to a transition in his argument as he paused to define "civil liberty:" "What is civil liberty? A liberty to enjoy our lives and fortunes in our own way; to use our property, whatever is legally our own, according to our own choice. And can you deny, 'that we are robbed of this liberty?' . . . Certainly I am not."<sup>31</sup> Then came some hyperbole: "I am in no more danger of death from King George, than from the Queen of Hungry. And if I study to be quiet and mind my own business, I am in no more danger of losing my liberty than my life." <sup>32</sup>

Wesley did not find himself deprived of "civil liberty," either with respect to his property or his person. Yet, his claims for possessing the fullest civil liberties came with an interesting proviso: ". . . if I study to be quiet and mind my own business."<sup>33</sup> This statement may be a reflection of Wesley's fear of "mob rule," a reflection upon the human propensity to sin, or an affirmation of a Christian's proper obedience to the "governing authorities" which have been established by God (Rom. 13:1-2) for maintaining order in human society (and hence the basis of Wesley's constitutionalism). In any event, this proviso indicated that Wesley tacitly realized that his "civil liberty" was not (and could not be) complete.

Once again, Wesley moved to more familiar (theological) ground, as he summarized his *Thoughts Upon Liberty*. He understood liberty as a tremendous God-given gift, which adheres to our humanity; hence, he believed that liberty should be understood primarily in religious terms, and only secondarily in civil terms. In his view, the English enjoyed more

<sup>29</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 41.

<sup>30</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 41.

<sup>31</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 41.

<sup>32</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 41.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

liberty than they realized, and the current clamoring for more freedom was slanderous, self-seeking, and sinful. Rather than complaining about being robbed of their liberty, Wesley reasoned, his contemporaries should thank God for the great liberties they already possessed, and should find productive ways to employ those liberties.<sup>34</sup>

Later in 1772, John Wesley authored another essay that has immediate impact upon our inquiry—*Thoughts Concerning the Origin of Power*. This pamphlet took Wesley still closer to the heart of his discomfort with the arguments of contemporary libertarians. After a brief historical survey of the development of various types of government, he opined: “. . . the grand question is, not in whom this [civil] power is lodged, but from whom it is ultimately derived. What is the origin of power? What is its primary source? This has been long a subject of debate. . . .”<sup>35</sup> He rightly recognized that the eighteenth-century “democrats” answered this question in very different ways than he did: “Where the people have the supreme power, it is termed a democracy.”<sup>36</sup> Wesley set this proposition in utter opposition to what he read in Scripture: “Now, I cannot but acknowledge, I believe an old book, commonly called the Bible, to be true. Therefore I believe, ‘there is no power but from God: The powers that be are ordained of God’ (Rom. 13:1). There is no subordinate power in any nation, but what is derived from the supreme power therein. . . .”<sup>37</sup>

In this argument, Wesley’s preference for constitutional monarchy merged with his reading of the Bible and his profound conviction about the pervasive nature of human sin. At best, the political libertarians were giving a “secular” answer to the question of political authority. At worst their answer was terribly naive about the moral condition of “the people” in whom the democrats (like Locke and Rousseau) sought to lodge political authority. On this basis, Wesley concluded: “The supposition, then, that the people are the origin of power is [in] every way indefensible.”<sup>38</sup>

Wesley found the claim “indefensible,” primarily because it was utterly inconsistent with his theological understanding of human nature. If the advocates for democracy really believed that all people possessed “the

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<sup>34</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 46.

<sup>35</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 47.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

right of choosing his Governors,” Wesley reasoned, why are they loath to extend that specific right to all people? Why are women, small landowners, young adults (who are old enough to serve in wars), and people of minority status specifically excluded? Wesley was sure that the answer to this inconsistency, which lay at the heart of the “democratic experiment,” was human sin. The libertarians did not really believe in the equality of all humanity, which was a premise that lay at the foundation of their argument; nor did they want liberty and democracy for all people—they wanted those things for themselves but not for others. Hence, Wesley reasoned that the secular definition of democratic theory was “indefensible”:

It is absolutely overturned by the very principle on which it is supposed to stand; namely, that a right of choosing his Governors belongs to every partaker of human nature. If this be so, then it belongs to every individual of the human species; consequently, not to freeholders alone, but to all men; not to men only, but to women also; not only to adult men and women, to those who have lived one-and-twenty years, but to those who have lived eighteen or twenty, as well as those who have lived threescore. But none did ever maintain this, nor probably ever will. Therefore this boasted principle falls to the ground, and the whole superstructure with it. So common sense brings us back to the grand truth, “there is no power but of God.”<sup>39</sup>

In 1774 John Wesley published his *Thoughts Upon Slavery*. William Warren Sweet rightly termed it “the noblest of all Wesley’s political publications.”<sup>40</sup> The treatise had been influenced by Wesley’s reading the works of a Philadelphia Quaker, Anthony Benezet (1713-1784).<sup>41</sup> The first eighteen pages of Wesley’s *Thoughts* amounts to a historical survey of the development and progress of the slave trade; much of this material

<sup>39</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 53.

<sup>40</sup>Sweet, “John Wesley, Tory,” 256.

<sup>41</sup>M. L. Birkel, “Anthony Benezet,” in Daniel Reid, et. al., eds., *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1990), 128. He published three treatises against slavery which were widely read by evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic; *A Short Account of that part of Africa inhabited by Negroes* (1762), *A Caution and Warning to Great Britian and her Colonies in a Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions* (1766), and *Some Historical Account of Guinea, its Produce, and the General Disposition of its Inhabitants, with an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave Trade, its Nature and Calamitous Effects* (1771).



was drawn from the work of Benezet and others; the last section of the treatise, and interspersed throughout it, was Wesley's Christian moral argument against "that execrable sum of all villainies."<sup>42</sup> He would accept no pro-slavery argument based on economic necessity. After turning aside several features of the economic argument, Wesley wrote as a moral theologian: "Better no trade, than trade procured by villainy. It is far better to have no wealth, than to gain wealth at the expense of virtue. Better is honest poverty than all the riches bought by the tears, sweat, and blood, of our fellow creatures."<sup>43</sup>

As surely as there is a God, Wesley believed, there is Divine retribution; how can those who prosper by the tears, sweat, and blood of their fellow human beings expect to escape God's great judgment? Adopting the phraseology of Romans 13:7, Wesley ably argued that a theological understanding of human nature should result in the "Golden Rule" (Matt. 7:12, "do unto others, as you would have them do unto you") being applied to the issue of liberty: "Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is, to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion! Be gentle toward all men; and see you invariably do unto every one as you would [that] he should do unto you."<sup>44</sup>

John Wesley's next literary excursion into political theory was his *A Calm Address to Our American Colonies*, which was published in Bristol by William Pine in late September, 1775.<sup>45</sup> It was Wesley's most controversial and most widely circulated political tract. Within three weeks forty thousand copies were sold,<sup>46</sup> and "within a few months fifty, or perhaps an hundred thousand copies, in newspapers and otherwise, were dispersed throughout Great Britain and Ireland."<sup>47</sup> It had gone through at least seventeen editions—most of which were unauthorized—and was printed ver-

<sup>42</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 43.

<sup>43</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 73-74.

<sup>44</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 79.

<sup>45</sup>Frank Baker, "The Shaping of Wesley's 'Calm Address,'" *Methodist History*, 14 (Oct. 1975), 6.

<sup>46</sup>*JW Letters*, VI, 182.

<sup>47</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 24.

batism in six major newspapers.<sup>48</sup> The treatise engendered at least 29 controversial literary replies, excluding reviews.<sup>49</sup> Many of these literary broadsides were written by Wesley's theological opponents, Dissenters (like the Baptist Caleb Evans) or Calvinists (like the Anglican Augustus Toplady).<sup>50</sup>

Wesley's most virulent critic was Augustus Toplady (1740-1778), who was an Anglican clergyman and a staunch Calvinist. Toplady discovered that Wesley's *Calm Address* evidenced a rather complete literary dependence upon Dr. Johnson's *Taxation No Tyranny*. His *An Old Fox Tarr'd and Feather'd* (Nov. 1775) lampooned Wesley as an inarticulate plagiarist.<sup>51</sup> Like Dr. Johnson, Wesley affirmed the right of Parliament to tax the American colonies, because they reaped the benefits of association with the empire. The fact that the Americans had no specific representatives in Parliament did not, in Wesley's view, set them apart from many Englishmen, including himself. Wesley's hotly worded reply to Caleb Evans illustrated this: "The writer<sup>52</sup> asserts twenty times, 'He that is taxed without his own consent, that is, without being represented, is a slave.' I answer, No; I have no representative in Parliament; but I am taxed; yet I am no slave. Yes, nine in ten [men] throughout England have no represen-

<sup>48</sup>Donald Kirkham, "John Wesley's 'Calm Address': The Response of the Critics," *Methodist History*, 14, (Oct. 1975), 13. Kirkham found selections and/or reviews of the "Calm Address" in the following British newspapers: *The London Magazine*, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *Lloyd's Evening Post*, *The London Chronicle*, *The Gazetteer*, *The Public Advertiser*, *The Morning Chronicle*, and *The Monthly Review*.

<sup>49</sup>Albert Lyles, "The Hostile Reaction to the American Views of Johnson and Wesley," *The Journal of the Rutgers University Library*, 24 (Dec. 1960), 1-13.

<sup>50</sup>Ronald Stone, *John Wesley's Life and Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 152. "Many of Wesley's most severe Calvinist critics in England were also supporters of the American cause and changes in England. So some political fights were correlated with the Wesleyan-Calvinist theological struggle over free will and predestination."

<sup>51</sup>Donald H. Kirkham, "John Wesley's 'Calm Address': The Response of the Critics," *Methodist History*, XIV, (Oct. 1975), 16. Richard Heitzenrater, ed., *The Elusive Mr. Wesley: John Wesley as Seen by Contemporaries and Biographers*, Vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 117, for selections from Toplady's attack.

<sup>52</sup>Rev. Caleb Evans (1737-1791), a Baptist minister from Bristol, published *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley* which went through at least five editions in 1775.

tative, no vote; yet they are no slaves; they enjoy both civil and religious liberty.”<sup>53</sup>

That Evans, and others of his ilk, would call the Americans “slaves” especially angered Wesley, since he had seen slavery first hand—in America—and written forcefully against it as “the execrable sum of all villainies.”<sup>54</sup> He urged Evans and others who considered themselves “slaves” to think again: “‘Who then is a slave?’ Look into America, and you may easily see. See that Negro, fainting under the load, bleeding under the lash! He is a slave. And is there ‘no difference’ between him and his master? Yes; the one is screaming, ‘Murder! Slavery!’ and the other silently bleeds and dies! . . . Is not then all this outcry about liberty and slavery mere rant, and playing upon words?”<sup>55</sup> Ted Jennings rightly asked: “. . . is it so mysterious that Wesley would find little sympathy in his heart for the rebellion of slave holders and merchant princes and Deists? These were the very sort of people whose injustice to the poor he so regularly denounced in England.”<sup>56</sup>

With an image that had Darwinian echoes (“let us not bite and devour each other”), Wesley suggested that these “brethren” were being so overcome by self-centeredness and sin that they had lost sight of God and the common good. For Wesley “liberty” was understood as freedom within particular spheres: Christian liberty amounted to freedom from sin and freedom for serving God and one’s neighbor; religious liberty was most ably summed up as “liberty of conscience,” the ability to believe and worship as one chose. Civil liberty he understood as the right of self-determination with respect to a person’s life and property. All these things the British and American people already enjoyed. What then is the basis of the outcry for “liberty?” He saw it as nothing more than a corporate manifestation of human sin that was based in greed and licentiousness. Because of this assessment, Wesley’s solution to the political dilemma before him was, primarily, a theological one.

Later in 1776, Wesley penned and published *Some Observations on Liberty: Occasioned by a Late Tract*. This “Late Tract” to which Wesley’s title referred was *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Princi-*

<sup>53</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 81.

<sup>54</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 59-80, *Thoughts on Slavery* (1774).

<sup>55</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 81.

<sup>56</sup>Theodore Jennings, *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley’s Evangelical Economics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 214.

*ples of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America* that was written by Rev. Richard Price (1723-1791), and published in March, 1776.<sup>57</sup> Wesley's journal indicates that he had begun reading Price's work on Thursday, April 4, 1776, he wrote: "I began an answer to that dangerous tract, Dr. Price's *Observations upon Liberty*, which if practiced, would overturn all government and bring in universal anarchy."<sup>58</sup> Price's treatise was thoughtfully written and it prompted Wesley to examine, more closely, the nature of liberty and the claims of the Americans.

One of Wesley's first points against Price's argument was that he (and indeed the Americans) had confused "liberty" with "independency." This was a distinction that Wesley had drawn in earlier writings as well: "What is it that they [the American colonies] claim? You answer, 'Liberty.' Nay, is it not independency? You reply: 'That is all one; they do claim it, and they have a right to it.' To independency? That is the very question. To liberty they have an undoubted right; and they enjoy that right. . . .<sup>59</sup> They enjoyed their liberty in as full a manner as I do, or any reasonable man can desire." Wesley's fundamental point here is an interesting one. Is it possible to have "liberty" without having political "independency?" Obviously, he thought it was.

John Wesley developed his constructive argument, then, by describing what sort of "liberty" people could enjoy without political "independency." In this context, he described both "religious liberty" and "civil liberty" as he understood them. First, the matter of "religious liberty":

Religious liberty is a liberty to choose our own religion; to worship God according to our own conscience. Every man living,

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<sup>57</sup>Richard Price was a Presbyterian minister at Newington Green at this time. His first book, *Review of the Principal Questions of Morals* (1758), was very influential and established Price as a commentator on contemporary ethical themes. In that work he argued that individual conscience and human reason should be used when making moral choices. Price also rejected traditional Christian ideas like original sin, and eternal punishment, and eventually joined the Unitarian ministry, although he professed a belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ. Along with Joseph Priestly he established a group of writers called the "Rational Dissenters." Among Price's visitors at Newington Green were Mary Wollencraft (with whom he opened a school), Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, John Howard, and Adam Smith.

<sup>58</sup>Nehemiah Curnock, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 8 Vol. (London: Robert Culley, n.d.), VI, 100.

<sup>59</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 91.

as a man, has a right to this, as he is a rational creature. The Creator gave him this right when He endowed him with understanding; and every man must give an account of himself to God. Consequently, this is an unalienable right; it is inseparable from humanity; and God did never give authority to any man, or number of men, to deprive any child of man thereof, under any colour or pretense whatever. Now, who can deny that the colonies enjoy this liberty to the fulness of their wishes?<sup>60</sup>

Based on this more primary concern, “religious liberty,” Wesley went on to describe “civil liberty.” Not surprisingly, his definition was shaped by his strong adherence to Romans 13:1-2 (with respect to the rule of law) and by his concern that all people in the society are accorded the same sort of liberty. In other instances, Wesley had argued for the equal rights of women, small holders, and slaves; now he demanded that the American definition of “civil liberty” must be fashioned in such a way that it included “loyalists” and slaves, as well as patriots:

Civil liberty is a liberty to dispose of our lives, persons, and fortunes, according to our own choice, and the laws of our country. I add, *according to the laws of our country*: for although, if we violate these, we are liable to fines, imprisonment, of death, yet if, in other cases, we enjoy our life, liberty and goods, undisturbed, we are free, to all reasonable intents and purposes. Now, all this liberty the confederate colonies did enjoy, till part of them enslaved the rest of their countrymen [the slaves, and loyalists]. . . .<sup>61</sup>

This brought Wesley back to his first point. Richard Price, and those like him, argued that “liberty” and political “independency” are inseparable. Price’s argument, as Wesley saw it, amounted to this: “Nay, you will prove, that not only the colonies, but all mankind have a right to it; yea, that independency is of the very essence of liberty; and that all who are not independent are slaves.”<sup>62</sup> Wesley disagreed, firmly believing that people could have “liberty” without “independency,” and that they could have “independency” and yet deprive others of “liberty” (and he had seen many examples of this).

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<sup>60</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 92.

<sup>61</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 92.

<sup>62</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 95.

Once again, John Wesley reacted strongly against in a “social contract” theory of government; he believed it was fundamentally wrong in its secular assumption that power comes from “the people,” not from God. Like other Enlightenment writers, Richard Price was not consistent in his understanding of “the people” from whom the power of civil government derived. The Enlightenment libertarians invariably had a rather narrow definition of who “the people” really were. Hence, Wesley asked: “What do you mean by ‘the people?’—Not women, not men less than 21 years of age, not children, not people who own no property: Is he not a man, whether he be rich or poor? . . . Has he not the nature of man; consequently, all the rights of a man, all that flow from human nature; and, among the rest, that of not being controlled by any but his own consent?”<sup>63</sup> Once again, Wesley found himself scandalized by political demands for liberty that did not include civil rights for women, the poor, children, and—as he added elsewhere—slaves. Wesley viewed the Enlightenment libertarians as self-centered sinners who cared nothing for humanity in general and merely sought liberty and preferential treatment for themselves and others of their own gender, race, and social class. He found this sort of understanding of “liberty” utterly indefensible, hence he wrote:

. . . the very men who are most positive that the people are the source of power, being brought into an inextricable difficulty, by that single question, “Who are the people?” [are] reduced to a necessity of either giving up the point, or owning that by *the people* they mean scarce a tenth part of them.<sup>64</sup>

*Observations on Liberty* concluded, as did so many of Wesley’s political treatises, with an evangelistic call for the restoration of vital Christian faith as the only adequate foundation upon which real “liberty” (be it civil or religious) could be built. Not surprisingly, he believed that having “a reverent and thankful heart” was the greatest liberty of all.<sup>65</sup>

Late in 1776, John Wesley penned another treatise that evidenced his political philosophy; it was *A Seasonable Address to the More Serious Part of the Inhabitants of Great Britain, Respecting the Unhappy Contest Between Us and Our American Brethren, With an Occasional Word Inter-*

<sup>63</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 101-102.

<sup>64</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 102.

<sup>65</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 118.

*dispersed to Those of a Different Complexion, by a Lover of Peace.* He stressed the urgency of the situation by likening Great Britain to a house on fire: "The former is like an house on fire; the devouring flames of an unnatural civil war are already kindled, and some hundreds of lives have fallen a prey to its insatiable violence. And how long before this may be our case here, God only knows!"<sup>66</sup>

If there is a villain in Wesley's *Serious Address*, once again it is human sin and corporate evil. Hence, he urged the reader: "But do not you, for your Master's sake, lose your favour in that unhallowed fire of contention, which the people who know God are now burning in. The old serpent may herein deceive us, as he has too often done already."<sup>67</sup> The writer urged his readers, "the inhabitants of Great Britain," to consider their own sinful complicity in the current conflagration. In Wesley's view, the British had no basis in their own righteousness to point to the sin and wrong doing of the Americans. Instead of blaming others, he urged his readers to consider the state of their own hearts and the actions of their own nation; on this basis, then, Wesley suggested that it is entirely possible that God was judging Great Britain because of her corporate sin:

. . . it is certain that iniquity of every kind, and amongst all ranks and orders of men, has and does abound; and as we are punished with the sword, it is not improbable that one principal sin of our nation is, the blood that we have shed in Asia, Africa, and America. Here I would beg your serious attention, while I observe, that however extensively pursued, and of long continuance, the African trade may be, it is nevertheless iniquitous from first to last. It is the price of blood! It is a trade of blood, and has stained our land with blood! And is the East-India trader a jot better? I fear not. . . .<sup>68</sup>

A second failing which Wesley discerned in the nation was "an astonishing contempt and neglect of truly sacred things; especially the solemn worship of Almighty God: And herein our Nobility and Gentry almost universally distinguish themselves."<sup>69</sup> With these two elements taken

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<sup>66</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 120.

<sup>67</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 123.

<sup>68</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 125.

<sup>69</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 126.

together, the British might plausibly blame themselves (and not the Americans) for the current catastrophe.<sup>70</sup>

John Wesley's prescription for the deadly malady of the nation began with serious self-examination on the part of all parties involved in the contention. In his view, political reconciliation must be based in religious reconciliation—with God and one's fellow humans—and without that foundation political reconciliation would be impossible. In fact, without repentance and reconciliation with God, political reconciliation would be inappropriate. Wesley had come to see the current crisis as a Divine "contention" with land: "I say 'divine contention;' and such doubtless it is, though in general we conceive it merely human. . . . It demands our first and most serious attention, being the first and principal means of restoring the wished for peace, and greatly desired reconciliation. For this is no other than to make God himself our friend; and 'if He be for us, who can be against us?' Let us do this therefore without delay. Let everyone remember his own sin, and not his neighbor's."<sup>71</sup> Hence, Wesley's advice to his British readers was: "Let us follow the example of the Ninevites [Jonah 3]. Let us 'break off our sins by repentance.' Let us 'observe such a fast as God hath chosen.'" <sup>72</sup> Wesley's prescription for the political crisis was one of theological repentance and reconciliation.

Early in 1777, John Wesley published a second edition of his *A Calm Address to the Inhabitants of England*. Now that the conflict had escalated into war, his attitude changed significantly. This was due in part to Wesley's hatred for war,<sup>73</sup> as Ronald Stone notes: "Wesley correctly saw that war was the worst expression of human sin."<sup>74</sup> But Wesley had also changed his attitude towards the Americans and their role in bringing about the war. Where his *Serious Address* (1776) had urged the readers not to seek to lay blame, now Wesley himself blamed the Americans for instigating the conflict. Where his earlier *Calm Address* (1775) had

<sup>70</sup>Stone, *JW Life and Ethics*, 183: "He [JW] found war so deplorable that his theodicy drove him to look for the reason [for it] in England's sin."

<sup>71</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 128.

<sup>72</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 128. This metaphor is based on Jonah chapter 3.

<sup>73</sup>While John Wesley detested war, he did not advocate for Christian pacifism. He begrudgedly accepted the "just war" theory of St. Augustine and others. Cf. Briane K. Turley, "John Wesley and War," *Methodist History*, 29 (Jan. 1991), 96-111.

<sup>74</sup>Stone, *JW Life and Ethics*, 137.



looked for a conspiracy (both at home and abroad) that sought to bring down the British monarchy, he now pointed more directly to a long-standing American agitation for political independence from Great Britain:

In the year 1737, my brother [Charles] took ship, in order to return from Georgia to England. But a violent storm drove him up to New-England; and he was for some time detained at Boston. Even then he was surprised to hear the most serious people, and men of consequence, almost continually crying out, "We must be independent; we shall never be well, till we shake off the English yoke." This sounded exceeding strange to him; as he could not form any imagination, that they could be happier under any government, than the mild one which they then enjoyed.<sup>75</sup>

Wesley concluded that this was the American position all along. The appearance of debate and petition for redress was all a charade; political independence was what they really sought all along. Hence, he reported: ". . . the Americans talked of allegiance, and said they desired nothing but the liberty of Englishmen. Many in England cordially believed them; I myself for one."<sup>76</sup> Earlier Wesley had seen the Americans as "dupes of designing men"; now he felt that he too had been duped by them. Allan Raymond rightly wrote: "This pamphlet marked the high point in Wesley's anti-Americanism. . . ."<sup>77</sup> Wesley's journal evidenced a similar transition; his entry for March 2, 1777, for example, reported the "deliberate murder" of an English ship's captain: "Such is the mercy, such the gratitude of American rebels."<sup>78</sup>

Drawing upon the argument he had earlier established in his *Observations on Liberty* (1776), Wesley continued to stress the ironic (and sinful) contradiction of the Americans crying out for their own liberty, while holding people of African descent in bondage. Wesley noted: "Do not you observe, wherever these bawlers for liberty govern, there is the vilest slavery?"<sup>79</sup> After observing the early English military successes, Wesley concluded that God had indeed assisted their cause.

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<sup>75</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 130.

<sup>76</sup>*W Works*, XI, 133.

<sup>77</sup>Raymond, "I fear God and honour the King."

<sup>78</sup>Curnock, *JW Journal*, VI, 139-140.

<sup>79</sup>*JW Works*, XI, 136.

## Summary and Conclusion

Based upon the preceding historical survey, it is clear that John Wesley believed that civil and religious liberties (which he often characterized as “freedom of conscience”) were fundamental human rights because of the God-given identity as persons created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, *Imago Dei*). He also believed that civil and religious liberties were most significantly enjoyed by people who had experienced the inner transformation (“holiness of heart and life”) suggested by his understanding of “Christian Liberty.”

John Wesley believed that original sin affects all humans, and therefore significantly affects human society. In this he seemed to follow the subsequent pattern of Reinhold Niebuhr in suggesting that flawed but moral people can only create an immoral society.<sup>80</sup> Wesley traced social ills like slavery, colonialism, economic deprivation, and political exploitation to human sin. In this particular assertion, Wesley, the folk theologian who had significant experience working among the poor and enslaved, broke company with the Enlightenment political philosophers. Where they saw the human collective as just and moral, Wesley saw it as deeply flawed and corrupted by sin.

Wesley believed that political authority has its basis in God’s will for human societies (Rom. 13:1); therefore, he believed that, in most instances, the Christian posture towards governmental authority should be one of obedience. In postulating God as the source of political authority, Wesley distanced himself from the Enlightenment philosophers of liberty. He argued that those theorists who claimed that government derived from the governed. Those claiming that government resides in a social contract between the people and the government were, in fact, advocating a human-centered understanding of society and therefore were fundamentally incorrect.

Various useful arguments notwithstanding, it is clear that Wesley was both a Tory and a monarchist.<sup>81</sup> He believed that monarchy was an appro-

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<sup>80</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Scribners, 1932). Someone (I think Paul Tillich) quipped that the book was wrongly titled: “It should have been called ‘Immoral Man, and EVEN MORE Immoral Society.’”

<sup>81</sup>William Warren Sweet, “John Wesley, Tory,” *Methodist Quarterly Review*, 71 (1922), 255-268; Leon Hynson, “John Wesley and Political Reality,” *Methodist History*, 12 (Oct. 1973), 37-42; Harry L. Howard, “John Wesley: Tory or Democrat?” *Methodist History*, 31 (Oct. 1992), 38-46.

priate form of governmental authority, and that the best kind of monarchy was one limited by constitutional means. We must hear clearly Wesley's emphasis on constitutionalism, because it flows directly from his understanding of human nature and the flawed character of human society. He believed that human sin is such a pervasive societal force that it must be limited in some specific areas for the good of society, even if this means the limitation of certain liberties. In this way, Wesley, a champion of freedom of the press in principle, advocated for limitations upon the freedom of the press and public discourse in certain crisis circumstances.

John Wesley found utterly preposterous the claims of his political opponents (libertarians, whigs) who argued that, if the governed did not participate in a representative form of government, their human liberty had been lost and they lived in a state of "slavery". He found these arguments particularly offensive from people who actually practiced chattel slavery and disenfranchised all women, as well as those freemen who did not have significant enough economic resources to own large tracts of land. He found it deeply hypocritical that such self-centered individuals should speak in the voice of "We the people." He concluded that their arguments were not really based in a practical concern for liberty—which should extend to all people—but were obvious expressions of human sin (self-centeredness); these were people who wanted liberty for themselves and not for others. In this way, John Wesley mounted a subtle criticism of liberal democracy as it was espoused by his enlightened contemporaries.

Wesley's political theory often merged with his Christian eschatology. He believed that, in some instances, human sin becomes so pervasive in a society that God undertakes to chasten or discipline ("contends with") that society in order to bring it to repentance. He pointed to the example of Nineveh which was saved and restored through the reluctant ministry of Jonah (cf. Jonah 3:6-10). This belief also set Wesley apart from his secular and deistic opponents, since he assumed that God could and would intervene in world events for God's glory and for human benefit. His supernaturalist premise and presuppositions caused Wesley to look for meaning beyond and behind human history. In a similar way, he believed that the highest value for humans and human society is "Christian liberty," and this is only achieved through repentance and reconciliation with God and one's fellow humans. While "Christian liberty" transforms and renews religious and civil forms of liberty, it clearly also transcends them. Hence, Wesley mounted a fundamental criticism of lib-

eral, democratic political theory, a criticism that remains plausible today. His criticism that those who cried for “liberty” in both England and in America were primarily motivated by sinful self interest (“licentiousness”) certainly seems to have had credibility when Wesley examined precisely whose rights and liberty were being considered under the phrase “we the people.”

Although John Wesley’s advocacy of constitutional monarchy rightly awakens no interest among twenty-first century Americans, his advocacy of a supernaturalist and theologically textured understanding of motives and limitations of liberal democracy should register a significant reminder to those who too readily assume its Christian basis. In a similar way, with his theological understanding that human nature is both free and flawed by sin, Wesley puts us on a more realistic course with respect to the results one can anticipate from fallen, human social collectives. In times that seem so shattered by human evil, perhaps we need to take some recourse in Wesley’s supernaturalist world view; God also contends against evil in this world, and with those nations which spurn God’s way of peace in the world. It also would be well for us to hear again Wesley’s willingness to transform his understanding of Christian Liberty into a new version of the Golden Rule. “Give liberty to whom liberty is due,” he wrote, “to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature.”

# STRANGE BEDFELLOWS: THE NAZARENES AND FUNDAMENTALISM

by

Stanley Ingersol

“Every man in this body is a fundamentalist, and so far as we know there is not a modernist in the ranks of the Church of the Nazarene,” declared general superintendent R. T. Williams to the assembled delegates and visitors to his church’s Seventh General Assembly.<sup>1</sup> It was 1928, three years after the Scopes Trial in Tennessee, and it is doubtful that many in his audience disagreed.

Twenty-one years later, writing in *The Preachers Magazine*, Oscar Reed, a young professor of philosophy and religion, argued that fundamentalism was wholly incompatible with Wesleyan theology. Using an argument made by many others, Reed asserted that Christian fundamentalism thrives in the soil of Calvinism. Since Calvinism is antithetical to Wesleyan-Arminian theology, Wesleyans cannot be fundamentalists without betraying their most cherished theological principles.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Quadrennial Address of the Board of General Superintendents, *Journal of the Seventh General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1928): 58.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar F. Reed, “Definitive Statements Concerning Nine Philosophies of Religion,” *The Preacher’s Magazine* (March-April 1949): 12-13, and (May-June 1949): 11. A similar argument was used by Wesley Tracy as editor of *Herald of Holiness* to answer the question “Do Nazarenes belong in the Fundamentalist camp?” Tracy responded that “Nazarene thinkers have usually made careful distinctions between themselves and Fundamentalists. Nevertheless, many Nazarenes embrace the Fundamentalist *ethos*.” “The Question Box,” *Herald of Holiness* (Sept. 1998): 20.

So were the Nazarenes of the 1920s and beyond “fundamentalists” or not? The answer depends, largely, on how one assesses fundamentalism and views its function in American religion.

### Literature That Probes Fundamentalism

The year after R. T. Williams spoke, H. Richard Niebuhr framed the conflict between modernists and fundamentalists as one “between urban and rural religion.” The fundamentalists, he said, “reflected not only the memories and habits of frontier faith but also the experiences of rural life.” He predicted a happy but brief life for fundamentalism, since “rural religion . . . is subject to further transition” as modernity encroaches on the countryside.<sup>3</sup> The acerbic social critic H. L. Mencken was not so convinced and portrayed fundamentalists as ignorant yokels who inhabited America’s cities as well. “Heave an egg out of a Pullman window,” he declared, “and you will hit a Fundamentalist almost anywhere in the United States today. They swarm in the country towns, inflamed by their pastors. . . . They are everywhere that learning is too heavy a burden for mortal minds.”<sup>4</sup> Norman Furniss, whose prose lacks Mencken’s propensity toward sarcastic comment, examined fundamentalism far more thoroughly in *The Fundamentalist Controversy* (1954). He also regarded fundamentalists as largely uncultured.

Richard Hofstadter’s classic work, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1962), viewed fundamentalists as deprived and argued that status or esteem was what they lacked and sought: “The fundamentalist mind has had the bitter experience of being routed in the field of morals and censorship, on evolution and Prohibition, and it finds itself increasingly submerged in a world in which the great and respectable media of mass communication violate its sensibilities and otherwise ignore it. . . . It has been elbowed aside and made a figure of fun.” In their marginalization, fundamentalists were being driven by the desire *to be somebody*, Hofstadter argued. He noted their penchant for right-wing politics.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1957; reprinted from the 1929 edition by Henry Holt & Company), 184-186.

<sup>4</sup>H. L. Mencken, “To Expose a Fool,” *The American Mercury* (October 1925): 160.

<sup>5</sup>Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 134.

Hofstadter did not mention fundamentalism in his celebrated essay, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics,” but there were important suggestions there also. In that essay, he identified a style of politics characteristic of groups who are motivated by their deep belief in conspiracy theories. These groups fear that others—whether Deists, Freemasons, Roman Catholics, anarchists, or communists—are out to destroy their way of life. In related essays, Hofstadter identified fundamentalists with this style of politics, characterizing them as people with “a Manichean view of the world” who see politics in terms of an eternal struggle between absolute good versus absolute evil.<sup>6</sup>

Other writers on fundamentalism have eschewed interpretations of economic, educational, or social deprivation, focusing, instead, on mood or attitude. Harry Emerson Fosdick, the renowned liberal preacher, provided a simple but useful definition of fundamentalism in his well-known sermon, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” Theological conservatives and fundamentalists can believe precisely the same doctrines, Fosdick stated. What separates the two is not the content of their doctrine but the basic spirit that the fundamentalist brings to it. Fundamentalism is not simply Christian orthodoxy; it is militant orthodoxy—orthodoxy on the warpath, with a glint of blood in its eye.<sup>7</sup>

This idea was endorsed by George Dollar of Bob Jones University. In his sympathetic treatment of his own movement, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (1973), Dollar argued that fundamentalism is “the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-Biblical affirmations and attitudes.” Like Fosdick, Dollar regarded militancy as the key. Louis Gasper’s *The Fundamentalist Movement, 1930-1956* (1963) took a different tack by treating fundamentalism as a Christian separatist movement whose reason for being rests in the distance it can gain and maintain from mainline

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<sup>6</sup>Compare the essay “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” with an essay following it, “Pseudo-Conservatism Revisited,” which does deal with Fundamentalists. In Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

<sup>7</sup>Fosdick preached: “We should not identify the Fundamentalists with the conservatives. All Fundamentalists are conservatives, but not all conservatives are Fundamentalists. The best conservatives can often give lessons to the liberals in true liberality of spirit, but the Fundamentalist program is essentially illiberal and intolerant.” He identified the Fundamentalists as those whose “intention is to drive out of the evangelical churches men and women of liberal opinions.”

churches. It is not just orthodoxy. To Gasper, the essence of fundamentalism is *sectarian* orthodoxy.

A similar view was adopted by Fuller Theological Seminary's E. J. Carnell—professor of apologetics, peer of Carl F. H. Henry, and leading figure in the post-war Evangelical renaissance. Carnell sought to differentiate American evangelicals from fundamentalists. He argued that fundamentalism claims to represent orthodox Christianity, but actually enshrines a cultish view of it. He described the primary traits of this cultic orthodoxy: “mores and symbols of its own devising,” detachment from “the church universal,” and belligerence. By contrast, those rooted in classical Protestant Orthodoxy are “impatient with the small talk of the cult; they long for authentic conversation on historic themes” and tend to be better educated.<sup>8</sup> The doctrine of the church is the dividing line between fundamentalism and [classical] orthodoxy, and the line is a sharp one, said Carnell. Fundamentalism rests its case on a separatist view of the church. It contends that, when a denomination has modernists among its clergy or missionaries, a Christian must withdraw financial support until said modernists are deposed. And if financial boycott fails, a Christian must disaffiliate forthwith, allowing a “pure witness.” Continues Carnell:

Fundamentalism [has] formulated its view of the church with an eye to the interests of the cult. Fundamentalists believe they are superior because they have withdrawn from historic denominations; they imagine that they alone glorify the gospel. Since the fundamentalist is deprived of the happy security that comes from communion with the church universal, he must devise substitute securities all his own. And the handiest substitute—the one calling for the least energy and skill—is to appear better by making others appear worse. In plain language, the fundamentalist tattles, because censure implies superiority.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Edward John Carnell, “Orthodoxy: Cultic vs. Classical,” *The Christian Century* (March 30, 1960): 377.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 378. In a different article on the subject, Carnell argues: “Fundamentalism is a paradoxical position. It sees the heresy in untruth but not in unloveliness. If it has the most truth, it has the least grace, since it distrusts courtesy and diplomacy. . . . Fundamentalism is a lonely position. It has cut itself off from the general stream of culture, philosophy, and ecclesiastical tradition. This accounts, in part, for its robust pride. Since it is no longer in union with the wisdom of the



Elmer Towns, a Jerry Falwell associate and self-avowed fundamentalist, pushed the notion of fundamentalist separatism further, noting two types of fundamentalists. "First-degree" separatists refuse to have any direct fellowship with theological liberals but will fellowship with fellow conservatives who do. "Second-degree" separatists even avoid fellowship with other conservatives if they fellowship with liberals.<sup>10</sup> To illustrate what this means, a first degree separatist, it is said, will not fellowship with the mainline church folk that Billy Graham fellowships with, but they will fellowship with Billy Graham. The second-degree fundamentalist will not even do that.

Ernest Sandeen's scholarship marked a sharp turn toward understanding fundamentalism primarily as a theological movement. His *Roots of Fundamentalism* (1970) was quickly recognized as a seminal work. Sandeen argued that fundamentalism flowed from the confluence of two separate streams in American religious thought: the 19th century Princeton theology's doctrine of the Bible's inerrancy and the growing grass-roots influence of dispensational premillennialism. Sandeen detailed each stream's emergence. He did not argue that these streams completely merged, or that a true fundamentalist must exhibit both traits. In fact, the "old Princeton" theology migrated from New Jersey to Philadelphia, to be newly enshrined at Westminster Theological Seminary, where even yet it retains a pristine flavor unaffected by popular premillennialism.

Other groups, such as the Churches of Christ, who would strike many people as fundamentalists, largely rejected the new premillennialism as well, at least until recently. The dispensationalist movement, on the other hand, thoroughly embraced the Princeton view of biblical inerrancy because that view bolstered its sense of authority, which dispensationalism's emphasis on predictive prophecy required. Thus, a large following developed in American Christianity in which the two streams were

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ages, it has no standard by which to judge its own religious pretense. It dismisses non-fundamentalistic efforts as empty, futile, or apostate. Its tests for Christian fellowship become so severe that divisions in the Church are considered a sign of virtue. And when there are no modernists from which to withdraw, fundamentalists compensate by withdrawing from one another. . . . Status by negation must be maintained or the *raison d'être* of fundamentalism is lost." See Edward John Carnell, "Fundamentalism," in *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, eds. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 143.

<sup>10</sup>Elmer L. Towns, "Trends Among Fundamentalists," *Christianity Today* (July 6, 1973): 12.

blended. This popular following included nearly all Pentecostals, a large majority of white Baptists, many black Baptists, and yes, more than a few Nazarenes and other Wesleyans. The seminal nature of Sandeen's work can be seen in subsequent studies of dispensationalism by Timothy Weber and various historians of early Pentecostalism, not to mention a new round of attention focused on the Princeton theologians.<sup>11</sup>

Sandeen's work was followed shortly by George Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (1980), another seminal work. He brought both theological and sociological lenses to bear on the problem, interpreting fundamentalists as religious conservatives who are profoundly conflicted by modernity. On one hand, they strenuously rejected the central tenets of 20<sup>th</sup>-century biology, but not the medicine based on it. They decried the way others used technological advances to reach the masses, but adapted the same tools to their own purposes. They benefited from rising middle-class prosperity and social change, yet were threatened by the prospect of further change. Marsden predicted that fundamentalism will always be visible in the religious landscape since social change is ongoing and always engenders reaction among religious conservatives.

Like Sandeen, Marsden's chapter on "The Holiness Movement" identified the spread of dispensational premillennialism with this movement. Yet Wesleyans barely make an appearance in this chapter. Marsden's treatment of "the Holiness Movement" focuses instead on the Keswick-holiness movement, that English import disseminated across America by D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, and others in their circle. Perhaps this is telling. While fundamentalism made significant inroads into the life of Nazarenes and sister Wesleyan churches, the larger story of fundamentalism, ultimately, is not the central theme in their stories.

The literature on fundamentalism includes a sub-strain that deals with the fundamentalist tendency toward right-wing politics. Early works in this genre focused on fundamentalists who were on the extreme right. Ralph Lord Roy's *Apostles of Discord* (1953) examined fundamentalism's seamy side by looking at such polarizing personalities as the anti-Semitic

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<sup>11</sup>For examples, see Timothy Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming* (1983); Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited* (1979), which argues that Pentecostalism emerged primarily as a millennial movement with the "gifts of the Spirit" as evidences of Christ's soon return; Mark Noll, *The Princeton Theology* (1983), a source book with a fine introduction by the editor; and Brad Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy* (1993).

evangelist Gerald Winrod, the reactionary Gerald L. K. Smith, publisher of the monthly *Cross and Flag* who raged against Blacks, Jews, and the United Nations, and the anti-communist, anti-internationalist Carl McIntire, among others. Erling Jorstad's *The Politics of Doomsday* (1970) extended the story another twenty years, updating Roy's work to include Billy James Hargis, whose Christian Crusade reduced the historic faith to anti-communism, and others of his type. Roy stated clearly that most fundamentalists "do not share [these] racial and religious bigotries."<sup>12</sup> Not all of his readers remembered or may have believed that statement since fundamentalist hate speech was easy to find on the nation's radio waves during the 1950s and 1960s. And Nazarenes were not immune from it. Shortly before the Nazarene Publishing House published Carl Bangs' *The Communist Encounter* (1963), Hargis blasted Bangs in a radio broadcast for statements Bangs made in a *Herald of Holiness* article.<sup>13</sup> After Bangs' book appeared, a group of California Nazarenes, calling themselves the Committee of Concerned Laymen, likewise attacked Bangs for not being sufficiently anti-communist and for commending the noted Christian social ethicist, John C. Bennett, whom they insinuated was a communist fellow-traveler.

Apart from the extremists, the more general conservative tendencies of fundamentalists were not studied as carefully until later, despite the fact that fundamentalism was a significant bastion of resistance to civil rights for Blacks. This changed with the growing interest in Southern religious history that emerged through Samuel S. Hill's influence in the mid-1970s, and the development late in that decade of "the new religious-political right." The latter became the subject of intense interest by the popular press and students of the social sciences—political scientists, historians, and sociologists alike. A large and growing literature on the political conservatism of rank and file fundamentalism has emerged since then.

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<sup>12</sup>Ralph Lord Roy, *Apostles of Discord* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953), 27.

<sup>13</sup>The attack on Bangs was the subject of Hargis' radio broadcast of October 1, 1962. A transcript in the "National Council of Churches—Evangelism Department" File, Nazarene Archives. A photocopy also is in the Carl Bangs profile folder. Among other "sins," Bangs had quoted from *The Christian Century*, which Hargis called "the voice of religious apostasy." Bangs' article appeared in *Herald of Holiness* (August 22, 1962).

## The Evangelical Kaleidoscope

My attitude toward the historiography of fundamentalism is straightforward. Each theory examines some facet of the truth, none is complete, and all tend to have some value. I find particular merit in Harry Emerson Fosdick's notion that fundamentalists are theological conservatives with militant (almost exclusive) attitudes, by Carnell's notion of fundamentalism as sectarian separatism, and by ongoing reflection on a model for understanding American evangelicalism advanced by Timothy Smith.

Smith argued in the 1970s that American evangelicalism should be understood as a mosaic. Evangelicalism is not monolithic but embraces a wide range of different theological communities that often think quite different thoughts. Reformed evangelicals do not think or always act like Wesleyan ones. Mennonite evangelicals differ in thought and ethics from Baptist evangelicals. Each religious community occupies a different place in the economy of American evangelicalism. Each is a different piece of a larger picture. One must look at the whole picture, and one must also look at the parts.

After feedback and further reflection, Smith shifted his model. He recognized that American evangelicalism is not static but in a state of constant flux. Each of the distinct theological communities under the Evangelical tent is also in flux—shifting, turning, changing. As the pieces shift, so does the total picture. In light of this reflection, Smith retired the notion of an Evangelical mosaic and began speaking, instead, of the Evangelical kaleidoscope—the colorful picture that changes every second.<sup>14</sup>

The helpful notion of the Evangelical kaleidoscope can influence our notions of fundamentalism. If we grasp that there is a variety of ways a person or a community can be Evangelical, then it is no big leap to conclude that there also exists a variety of ways that they can be fundamentalist. Not all modes of fundamentalism should be regarded as alien to the Wesleyan tradition. Indeed, we can understand one type of Wesleyan fundamentalism as a commitment to the central doctrines of grace and holiness of the Wesleyan tradition, but coupled to a perspective shaped by disdain toward modernism or some aspect of it, such as modern science. Other forms of Wesleyan fundamentalism may be based on rigid legalism, or even around the form of arid apologetic Wesleyan theology that John

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<sup>14</sup>Timothy L. Smith, "The Evangelical Kaleidoscope and the Call to Christian Unity," *Christian Scholar's Review* 15 (1986): 125-140.

Allan Knight dubbed “holiness scholasticism,” or even as a marriage of two or more of these. These are stances one may dislike and can be challenged as incompatible with the radical optimism of grace that is central to a Wesleyan understanding life, grace, and faith. They can be critiqued as a violation of the Wesleyan ideal that holds together “those two so long disjoined, knowledge and vital piety.” There they are, nonetheless.

I remember vividly a question that was asked when defending my doctoral dissertation many years ago. The examination was over a study of Mary Lee Cagle, the staunchest advocate of women’s ordination and ministry in the early Church of the Nazarene. I was asked about her attitude toward fundamentalism and replied that she undoubtedly considered herself one. Eyebrows were immediately raised all around the table. An examiner then stated that Cagle was in the ironic position of championing women in ministry, but simultaneously identified with the very impulse that later choked it. I denied that conclusion and have thought about the conversation often since then. Mary Lee Cagle, like most of the Wesleyan women preachers of her generation, regarded herself as a fundamentalist and would not accept the notion, popular today, that “fundamentalist inroads” into Nazarene life precipitated the significant decline of women in her denomination’s ministry after 1935. She almost certainly would say that, if the church forgot the biblical basis for women in ministry, then it was because the church neglected its ongoing exegetical task and failed to meet its catechetical obligations, thus allowing doctrines of the ministry that were generated out of other exegetical-theological traditions to fill the void. But as for her, Cagle’s own fundamentalism merely strengthened her determination to show that the basis of her ministry was grounded firmly and irrevocably in the Christian Scriptures.

One can view the first wave of American fundamentalism as a phase in the history of American evangelicalism that deeply tinged all the pieces in the Evangelical kaleidoscope. Among theological conservatives, there were few corners where fundamentalism did not penetrate in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. The Southern Baptist Convention suffered more than one split at the hands of those who thought the denomination not nearly conservative enough. Pentecostals largely viewed themselves as fundamentalists at this time. Conservative Lutherans became more so. R. T. Williams said, “Every man in this body is a fundamentalist, and so far as we know there is not a modernist in the ranks of the Church of the Nazarene.” While it was not literally true that “every man” present was a

fundamentalist—H. Orton Wiley, for instance, was very present and very clearly not one, nor were others present for the speech—still, the seepage of fundamentalism was evident all around. It was, in fact, knee deep.

### **The Church of the Nazarene**

The story of Evangelical Christianity's emergence from fundamentalism has been told many times. It is partly a story of joint effort across denominational lines, symbolized by the founding of *Christianity Today* and the National Association of Evangelicals as harbingers of a new style of post-fundamentalist evangelicalism. But it is equally the case that each denomination affected by fundamentalism later backed away from it by its own methods, each devising its own strategy for releasing fundamentalism's grip. H. Orton Wiley's actions at the 1928 General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene demonstrate this.

The move was on to introduce the notion of inerrancy into the church's Article of Faith on Scripture. Wiley had spent several years researching and writing the work that would be published eventually as his 3-volume *Christian Theology*. Alert to the issues, and oriented to an Anglo-Methodist understanding of Scripture, he guided the General Assembly to amend the statement carefully. The revised article on Scripture adopted by the Nazarenes in 1928 read: "We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures by which we understand the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation; so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith."<sup>15</sup> Like the Church of England's corresponding article on Scripture, which John Wesley and early British Methodists had been weaned on, and the corresponding article in American Methodism, with which Bresee, Reynolds, and other key Nazarene leaders were familiar, the revised Nazarene article on Scripture in 1928 emphasized the church's confession that Scripture is a reliable and trustworthy witness to salvation, while avoiding fundamentalism's more extreme emphasis. Wiley had succeeded in preventing the urge to tinker by allowing it to

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<sup>15</sup>"Articles of Religion" in *Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974) provides the Anglican and Methodist creeds laid out in parallel fashion. See pp. 147-148 for the articles on Scripture. Church of the Nazarene, *Manual*, (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1928), 22.

drift over into the Princeton notion of the total inerrancy of Scripture, with its attendant problems.<sup>16</sup>

By contrast, the Wesleyan Methodist Church went the opposite way in 1951, adopting the strictest view of inerrancy and creating a striking theological difference between it and its closest sister denominations—the Nazarenes and the Free Methodists.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, in the conflict between fundamentalists and modernists, Nazarene sympathies were clearly on fundamentalism's side and against religious skepticism, the higher critics of the Bible, the Darwinists, and the liberal Protestant theologies. Indeed, there is abundant evidence that Nazarenes regarded liberal Protestantism as the unwelcome accommodation of Christianity to distinctly anti-Christian assumptions. In its opposition to theological modernism, the Church of the Nazarene underwent a fundamentalist phase, as did other evangelical denominations.

Thus, critical questions emerged as fundamentalism's conflict with modernism grew sharper. How extensively would fundamentalism alter the Nazarene self-understanding? Nazarenes had developed a distinct theological identity early in their history, blending Wesleyan ideas of grace, faith, and holiness, American Methodist ideas of polity, and several assumptions of the believer's church tradition. Would that unique identity remain intact as the fundamentalist crusade developed, or would it be lost, swallowed up by a growing affinity with a newer and broader 20<sup>th</sup>-century movement whose spirit and purposes were quite different from those of the Wesleyan-Holiness movement, which had birthed the Nazarenes?

The issue can be drawn even more clearly by considering the nature of movements. Movements share certain features, whether religious or social in nature. They are not bred by consensus; they are born of dissent.

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<sup>16</sup>Paul M. Bassett's fine study of this is in "The Theological Identity of the North American Holiness Movement: Its Understanding of the Nature and Role of the Bible," in Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds. *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 72-108. Also see Bassett's "The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 13 (Spring 1978): 65-91.

<sup>17</sup>Ira Ford McLeister and Roy Stephen Nicholson, *Conscience and Commitment: The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America* (Marion, Indiana: The Wesley Press, 1976), 226-227. Stephen Paine, president of Houghton College, was the primary leader of this change. See Wayne E. Caldwell, ed., *Reformers and Revivalists: The History of the Wesleyan Church* (Indianapolis: The Wesley Press, 1992), 330.

Lawrence Goodwyn's history of the populist movement of the late 19th century is a helpful place to start for understanding their character. In *The Populist Moment*, Goodwyn argues that any new movement begins because people analyze a particular set of conditions. That analysis must seem cogent, at least to some of the people affected. Spokesmen who believe the analysis must be recruited, or else the analysis goes nowhere. The spokesmen spread the ideas of the movement and recruit new believers. Since the establishment controls the press, a movement must generate its own publishing enterprise. Tracts, booklets, broadsheets and periodicals produced by the movement press assist in recruitment and help the movement consolidate its gains. Meetings and conventions rally the faithful and energize them. Goodwyn stresses the vital significance of a movement maintaining its focus. His thesis, highly provocative, is that populism began as an agrarian revolt that achieved nearly all the basic steps but failed to mature as a political movement when populists began sharing their platforms with the advocates of the free silver campaign. This muddled the agrarian message, altered populism's objectives, and led to the movement's rapid demise.<sup>18</sup>

Goodwyn's conclusion regarding populism's failure is still debated, but his understanding of a movement's stages is helpful. The Wesleyan-Holiness movement established its own analysis of mainline Protestantism, particularly Methodism. Movement leaders diagnosed the problem as declension within Methodism as they witnessed the erosion of loyalties to the class meeting and other mechanisms designed to foster Christian holiness. In response, they generated a reform movement that sought to recover Wesley's emphasis on Christian perfection. They offered spiritual solutions to what they regarded as growing spiritual laxity and doctrinal confusion over the theology of holiness. It is important to note that those who opposed Wesleyan-holiness theology were also evangelicals, not liberals. Methodism's debate over holiness was a debate among evangelical Methodists. Its critique of creeping formalism and the culture bred by growing middle-class prosperity was developed before Darwin and before the higher critics of the Bible. The Holiness Movement used evangelists as its spokesmen, and developed a press that was independent of the Methodist officials.

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<sup>18</sup>Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (Oxford, London, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). *The Populist Moment* is a 342-page abridgement of a more comprehensive work, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America* (1976).



Two generations of leadership successfully kept the reform movement within the fold of mainline Methodism, but the movement's third generation became radically diverse and with that diversity came the rise of the holiness churches. As the movement fractured, the holiness churches that emerged viewed themselves as faithful to the original ideals of the movement and as new Methodist churches. In a fundamental way, the Church of the Nazarene was a product of the Wesleyan-Holiness movement and one expression of its ideals.

Fundamentalism analyzed the religious problem much differently and generated its own answer. Its foe was "liberalism," a theme underscored by J. Gresham Machen's classic battle text, *Christianity and Liberalism*. The Princeton theologians even regarded holiness theology as a Pelagian highway and thus part of the liberal problem. The evangelists who functioned as the primary spokespersons of the fundamentalist movement were not merely indifferent to the primary concerns of evangelical Wesleyans, but antagonistic to holiness thought. The fundamentalist press generally was unreceptive to holiness thought. To be sure, there are places where the complaints of the Holiness Movement and Fundamentalism appeared to intersect. For instance, the prevailing notion in dispensational theology was that the popular churches were apostate and fallen; such a charge could be linked to the holiness complaint that the established churches were formal and cold. Grassroots Nazarene laity and pastors often responded positively to fundamentalist appeals. Nazarene theologians, however, perceived a danger in the church identifying too closely with the new movement. The primary literature of the fundamentalist cause was written by Calvinists, who wove their basic theology into their attacks on Modernism.

Fundamentalism's intellectual giant was J. Gresham Machen, originally of Princeton and later of Westminster Theological Seminary. Machen and his Presbyterian colleagues skewered Wesleyan-Arminian theology as adeptly as they did Modernist ideas. Nazarene theologians were intent, then, on preventing Reformed theology from taking root in the church through fundamentalism's guise. A. M. Hills' sharp attack on the *Scofield Reference Bible* in the denominational paper is one example of this. A friend had noted that the Scofield Bible "has gained a large circulation, and is used extensively by our own people, both by preachers and people." Hills lamented this situation since the work was "saturated and soaked and dripping with Calvinism and opposition to holiness."

Likewise, H. Orton Wiley published articles in the church paper and in *The Preacher's Magazine* intended to blunt fundamentalism's influence. But his most sustained argument was made when the first volume of *Christian Theology* appeared in 1940. As Paul Bassett convincingly shows, Wiley penned an illuminating passage that discussed "three unworthy Monarchs" that had "scepters falsely thrust into their hands" at different points in Church history. These false authorities include tradition and reason, but he identified the third as the Bible itself. There is a danger, Wiley noted, when appeals to the Bible lapse into a "bibliolatry" that elevates the written word of Scripture to a place of supremacy over the Living Word of Christ. Wiley was writing explicitly about the second period in Protestant theology, often dubbed "the Scholastic period" which followed the Reformation and was marked by theological rigidity, the drawing of clear lines of demarcation between contending Lutheran and Reformed theologies, and denunciations of those outside the bounds of one's own "orthodoxy." In contrast, Wiley emphasized the subordination of the Written Word to the Personal Word, which is Christ, noting that "the original source of the Christian knowledge of God must ever be the Lord Jesus Christ." Bassett notes that "Wiley's discerning readers" understood that Protestant Scholasticism's era, and the "false Monarch" of bibliolatry that characterized it, were parallels to the fundamentalist era of Wiley's day.<sup>19</sup>

The spread of dispensational premillennialism was a leading factor in the fundamentalist crusade. The primary Nazarene theologians resisted dispensational theology, but approached the issue with different styles and intensity. Teachers of Nazarene theology were honor-bound to stress that the Church of the Nazarene took no stand on behalf of one millennial theory or another. Wiley deflected questions regarding his personal convictions about eschatology, and *Christian Theology* dispassionately surveyed the various viewpoints. Assessments of Wiley's own eschatology differ. Some perceive that Wiley was "most influenced by . . . a premillennialism [that is] carefully qualified and nuanced," while others assert that "nearly

<sup>19</sup>A. M. Hills, "The Scofield Reference Bible Examined for the Nazarenes," *Herald of Holiness* (September 10, 1932), 3. Wiley, *Christian Theology*, Vol. 1, 140-143. Paul M. Bassett, "The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Spring 1978), 65-67. Wiley's M.A. thesis was a study of the prologue to John's Gospel, and "Logos" doctrine remained an important element in his thinking.

everybody was wrong, according to Wiley, on eschatology.” He was amused by his students’ curiosity about his position and by their difficulty in discerning it.

A. M. Hills, on the other hand, deflected nothing. He was an ardent post-millennialist and staunch critic of dispensationalism. That outspokenness played a role when he stepped aside as president of two holiness colleges, and at Pasadena College some students were greatly annoyed that he frequently voiced opposition to premillennialism. At one point he was sternly warned by president A. O. Henricks to tone down his rhetoric or lose his position. When an early draft of his *Fundamental Christian Theology* circulated in the 1910s, he was advised that it would need to say something positive about premillennialism before it could be used as a Nazarene text. When the book appeared some fifteen years later, it included a brief section by J. B. Chapman setting forth the positive argument for premillennialism, thus meeting the earlier objection.

Olive Winchester likewise rejected the premillennialism that was spreading within the church. She was an amillennialist and interpreted The Revelation not as predictions of the future but as a coded record of events that had occurred in the biblical writer’s own lifetime, most likely during Nero’s rule, she thought.

The growth of dispensational premillennialism at the grassroots and its rejection by the church’s theological specialists was a small wedge, but over time this difference fostered a growing sense of alienation and suspicion between grassroots Nazarenes and the church’s trained theologians.<sup>20</sup> Despite Williams’ claim that “every man in this body is a fundamentalist,” many features associated with fundamentalism were being resisted in the name of Wesleyan doctrinal clarity. Wiley’s emphasis on preserving

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<sup>20</sup>Harold E. Raser, “Views on Last Things,” in H. Ray Dunning, ed., *The Second Coming: A Wesleyan Approach to the Doctrine of Last Things* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1995), 185. Carl Bangs, *Our Roots of Belief: A Biblical and Faithful Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1981), 72. Ross Price, “Dr. Wiley—Eminent Theologian,” 3, a clipping in the H. Orton Wiley profile folder, H. Orton Wiley Collection, Nazarene Archives. Ronald B. Kirkemo, *For Zion’s Sake: A History of Pasadena/Point Loma College* (San Diego: Point Loma Press, 1992), 93. A. M. Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, Abridged Edition, (Pasadena: C. J. Kinne, 1932), 550-571. Chapman’s contribution is on pp. 550-555. Ross Price, “Some Data on Miss Olive Winchester,” 7-8, in the Olive Winchester profile folder, Olive Winchester Collection, Nazarene Archives.

an Anglo-Methodist view of the “sufficiency of Scripture,” Hills’ opposition to the Scofield Bible, and the resistance of all three of the church’s major pre-war theologians to the exclusiveness of dispensational premilenialism contributed to the church’s post-war ability to back away from the fundamentalist mentality.

### **Fundamentalism Lives On**

Fundamentalism is hardly dead today. The Evangelical renaissance that followed World War II was designed to move American evangelicals away from fundamentalism’s negativity and exclusivity and toward a new and more critical orthodoxy. Fundamentalists initially decried this move as a betrayal of biblical Christianity, but a subsequent generation has tried to woo evangelicals back into fundamentalist modes of thought. Like their earlier predecessor, today’s neo-fundamentalist movements threaten the theological integrity of evangelical denominations by seeking to supplant a Christian organization’s founding vision with new ones of the fundamentalists’ own devising.

One reincarnation of Fundamentalism has a political face—the religious-political right. The religious-political right threatens to alter the traditional identities of religious communities by leading them to develop new identities drawn from political culture. In this case, reactionary political beliefs function as hermeneutical lenses, and insights from political life, rather than those drawn from the Bible itself, become “controlling insights” that determine how one reads, understands, and responds to the Christian scriptures. If we apply Fosdick’s principle that the difference between conservatives and fundamentalists is the spirit that they bring, then the problem is not that theologically conservative people are also politically conservative; it is the militant conviction that conservative politics is the true and only legitimate politics of an earnest Christian, and the application of political litmus tests as standards for measuring spirituality or Christian orthodoxy of another person or religious group. The deep irony is that avatars of the religious-political right threaten the Christian faith with the very thing they so often decry—the danger of reductionism; in their case, it is reducing the faith to a form of mere culture Christianity.

Another way in which Christian fundamentalism is being reincarnated is through new one-issue organizations. These organizations have developed solely to project a single fundamentalist doctrine into as many

venues as possible. The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood is a prime example. It exists for the sole purpose of striking one note and doing so over and over again. That single note is the assertion of a divinely-sanctioned and scripturally-mandated subordination of women to men in the family and church. The CBMW's officers and advisory board are a "who's who" of Lutheran and Reformed fundamentalist leaders. Its stand on the ordination of women is directly contrary to the historic stand of the Church of the Nazarene and the majority of Wesleyan-Holiness denominations. The CBMW has its own text-books: Wayne Grudem and John Piper's *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (1991) and Grudem's *Biblical Foundations for Manhood & Womanhood* (2000). It has local chapters organized in various churches. It has its own website and distributes bundles of pamphlets, booklets, and handouts. CBMW is not concerned with baptismal theology, Christian perfection, or worship wars. It only wants its single message to penetrate as many different congregations and denominations as possible, including your local church, and if that fails then a church near you. There are pastors and laity in the Wesleyan tradition who have heard CBMW's siren call and followed it, just as others followed Bill Gothard's teachings on female subordination a generation ago.

The Wesleyan doctrines of grace, faith, and holiness were at the core of the early Nazarene movement, but so, too, was the notion of an "apostolic ministry" in which the gifts and graces, not the gender, of applicants for ordination and ministry were evaluated. The ministry of women was not simply an "add on" to prevailing doctrines of the ministry in late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Protestantism. Rather, it was a different doctrine of the ministry altogether.<sup>21</sup> CMBW, however, invites Nazarenes to abandon such exegetical, hermeneutical, and theological positions that were central to the vision of the Nazarene founders and substitute its doctrine of the ministry for the Church of the Nazarene's own.

Likewise, the Creation Science Institute exists to project one fundamentalist idea into as many venues as possible. Its unequivocal emphasis on a literal "six-day creationism" is warmly embraced by some religious conservatives as an affirmation of "the old-time religion." Yet Creation Science is anything but that. In the late 1970s, Timothy Smith had a stan-

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<sup>21</sup>See, for instance, Stan Ingersol, "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy," *Holiness Today* (March 2000): 5-7.

dard lecture on the Texas school-book controversy of that day. In it, he demonstrated that six-day creationism had long been rejected not only as a mark of evangelical orthodoxy but also as a mark of knowledgeable fundamentalism. As Smith observed, the “day-age” theory and “the gap theory” were two different ways that fundamentalists had reconciled Genesis and modern geology—and done so by abandoning six-day literalism. Ronald Numbers has now documented this in far greater detail, showing the roots of the Creation Science Institute’s thinking in Seventh-Day Adventism, its subsequent appropriation by a few committed fundamentalists, and the carefully calibrated campaign to inject those ideas into the mainstream of late-20<sup>th</sup>-century fundamentalism, evangelicalism, and American politics.<sup>22</sup>

While there are numerous instances of Nazarene evangelists and preachers preaching six-day literalism, that viewpoint clearly was not taught as a standard by the denomination in its early years. In 1931, *The Young People’s Journal*, a denominational publication for high school youth, published a series on science and religion written by Olive Winchester. In the second essay in the series, Winchester described three scientific theories on the origins of the universe, identifying her own view as the “planetismal theory.” It held that the observable universe developed as gravitational forces caused matter to coalesce over long eons of time. Nazarene theologian A. M. Hills embraced the identical view when he discussed the Christian doctrine of creation in his two-volume *Fundamental Christian Theology*. While neither believed in biological evolution, Winchester and Hills embraced cosmic and geological evolution without compunction. H. Orton Wiley likewise believed in an ancient earth and saw numerous parallels between the Genesis account of creation and the discoveries of modern science. The Creation Science Institute and its acolytes suggest that anything less than six-day literalism is compromise with the spirit of the age, yet these examples from early Nazarene history demonstrate otherwise.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Smith’s lecture was one of five delivered at Nazarene Theological Seminary in a January 1979 inter-term course. His lecture on the emerging battle over classroom science texts was titled “The Old-Time Religion?” Also see Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>23</sup>*Young People’s Journal* (January 1931): 3-4, (May 1931): 3-4, (June 1931): 4, and other issues in passim. A. M. Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, Vol. 1, 263-279. H. Orton Wiley,

As the Creation Science Institute's influence is exerted in evangelical denominations, evangelicals would be wise to question exactly what CSI asks of them. It asks evangelicals to reject notions of an ancient cosmos and an ancient earth and retreat from the perspectives that dominated the Evangelical renaissance of the post-World War II era, when Carl F. H. Henry, Bernard Ramm, Timothy Smith, and a generation of respected evangelical leaders tried to move religious conservatives away from fundamentalism. These leaders regarded fundamentalism as contracted, pessimistic, and completely inadequate for meeting the challenges Protestantism would face in the modern world. Their very complaint was that early 20th-century fundamentalism had distorted orthodox Protestantism. The Creation Science Institute, however, regards the giants of post-war evangelicalism as misguided and bids evangelicals to follow its lesser light. Even more, it bids Nazarenes to reject the perspectives of their own denomination's first generation of theologians and accept an obscurantism that is neither native to it nor wise.

The Church of the Nazarene formed in the century in which Fundamentalism took shape as a movement. Both have grown up together. At times Nazarenes have even chosen to be bedfellows with Fundamentalism. But Nazarenes were the product of a very different set of theological ideas; their spiritual life is the expression of a different essential quality. If they are wise, those are truths they will never forget.

# FIGHTING AGAINST WORLDLINESS AND UNBELIEF: HENRY CLAY MORRISON AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT WITHIN METHODISM

by

Douglas M. Strong

In 1889, Henry Clay Morrison,<sup>1</sup> a relatively unknown, thirty-one year old Kentucky preacher, launched a newspaper entitled *The Old Methodist* (later called the *Pentecostal Herald*). The intent of this new holiness periodical was “to defend and fight for all the doctrines, traditions, and customs of Methodism.” The epigraph under the heading of the paper was a scriptural admonition: “Ask for the old paths.” According to Morrison, the “old paths” of the Wesleyan tradition—the doctrine of Christian perfection (understood by him to be an identifiable crisis experience of entire sanctification subsequent to conversion, accompanied by the baptism of the Holy Spirit<sup>2</sup>) and the outworking of a life of holiness

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<sup>1</sup>On the life and career of Morrison, see Henry Clay Morrison, *Life Sketches and Sermons* (Louisville: Pentecostal Publishing Co., 1903); idem, *The Confessions of a Backslider* (Louisville, Pentecostal Publishing Co., n.d.); idem, *Some Chapters from My Life Story* (Louisville: Pentecostal Publishing Co., 1941); C. F. Wimberly, *Henry Clay Morrison* (New York: Revell, 1922); George Whitefield Ridout, *Henry Clay Morrison: Prophet, Warrior, Orator* (Louisville: Pentecostal Publishing Co., 1944); Bessie Goldie Olson, *Henry Clay Morrison* (Des Moines: Boone Publishing Co., 1946); Percival A. Wesche, *Henry Clay Morrison: Crusader Saint* (Berne, IN: Herald Press, 1963).

<sup>2</sup>Whether or not the experience of the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is connected to the experience of “entire sanctification” is a matter of debate among twenty-first century Wesleyan scholars, but for the late nineteenth-century



demonstrated by renouncing the excesses of the prevailing consumerist culture—were not being followed by most Methodists. Especially disturbing to Morrison was Methodism's capitulation to "worldliness," which was evident in the church's various accommodations to bourgeois society: the replacement of emotional preaching with polished public speaking; the stress on Christian nurture and education as a substitute for dramatic conversions to Christ; a pandering to persons who had wealth or high social status; a certain staidness and formality in worship; and the participation of congregants in such practices as smoking, drinking, theater attendance, membership in secret societies, and "Sabbath desecration."<sup>3</sup>

Thirty-four years later, in 1923, Morrison, then a sixty-five year old and nationally famous Holiness evangelist, two-time president of Asbury College, and soon-to-be founder of Asbury Theological Seminary, wrote a series of articles in the *Pentecostal Herald* on a topic that he had begun to address frequently: the "new theology" of the "destructive critics." Taught at official Methodist seminaries and preached from many Methodist pulpits, this "higher criticism" threatened to undermine the church's orthodox foundation, thereby hindering it from its paramount evangelistic task of winning souls for Christ. Morrison considered such "unbelief" to be at least as serious a problem as "worldliness." While ministers previously had committed a sin of omission by neglecting Methodism's heritage of holiness, now they were committing a sin of commission by introducing a dangerous new theological message that enervated sound doctrine and Christian morality. The earlier tendency toward "ungodliness" was now combined with "skepticism"; or, put another way, "worldliness and unbelief" were both "flooding our country." Morrison was convinced that he was witnessing (in phraseology echoed later by historian Arthur Schlesinger) a "critical period in the religious history of this nation."<sup>4</sup>

Holiness movement, the linkage between the baptism of the Spirit and entire sanctification was considered to be a basic article of faith.

<sup>3</sup>Wimberly, 106; *The Old Methodist* 1:4 (March 1889): 1-3; *ibid.* 1:12 (November 1889): 1, 3.

<sup>4</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 35 (14 March 1923): 1, 8; *ibid.* (21 March 1923): 1, 8; *ibid.* (28 March 1923): 1, 8; *ibid.* (4 April 1923): 1, 8; *ibid.* (11 April 1923): 1, 8; *ibid.* (18 April 1923): 1, 8. My appreciation is extended to William Kostlevy for directing me to this particular series of articles in the *Pentecostal Herald*. See Arthur M. Schlesinger, "A Critical Period in American Religion," *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* 64 (1932): 523-47. Schlesinger was referring to the last quarter of the nineteenth century as the "critical period," while Morrison was referring to the 1920s. Holiness folk were nearly a generation later than Presbyterians and Baptists in their appropriation of the fundamentalist critique of modern theology.

## Seeking to Follow “The Old Paths”

Morrison’s life, from 1857 to 1942, spanned the Holiness movement’s most energetic era of growth, division, and institutional formation. His birth coincided with one of the defining moments of Holiness history—the “Nazarite” (or “Nazirite”) struggle within the Genesee Conference of western New York state, resulting eventually in the establishment of the Free Methodist Church in 1860. The Free Methodist understanding of the pertinent issues surrounding the preaching of entire sanctification presaged late nineteenth-century developments within the Holiness wing of Methodism. Free Methodists saw themselves simply as holding on to the original vision of Methodism: “to reform the nation, especially the church, and to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the land,” which, for them, was a summons to preach the experience of entire sanctification and to condemn any moral compromise with the “world.”

The Free Methodist’s commitment to moral purity meant a repudiation of the surrounding culture’s acceptance of slavery, personal adornment, status distinctions, and petty vices.<sup>5</sup> It also meant a repulsion of typical urban Methodist Episcopal (M. E.) congregations, with their expensive neo-Romanesque auditoriums,<sup>6</sup> their use of elaborate choirs and instrumental music, their development of professionalized, formally structured worship services with preaching modeled after the secular theater and, especially, their practice of selling or renting pews.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to the Free Methodists’ condemnation of economic privilege, Phoebe Palmer’s brand of parlor holiness (as well as the holiness message associated with the 1857-58 urban “laymen’s” revival) was quite comfortable with the church’s hierarchical structures and tended to be noncontroversial regarding issues such as slavery. When combined with Palmer’s stress on a volitional “laying on the altar” commitment to entire

<sup>5</sup>Leslie R. Marston, *From Age to Age A Living Witness: A Historical Interpretation of Free Methodism’s First Century* (Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life Press, 1960).

<sup>6</sup>See Kenneth E. Rowe, “Redesigning Methodist Churches: Auditorium-Style Sanctuaries and Akron-Plan Sunday Schools in Romanesque Costume, 1875-1925,” paper presented to the “United Methodism and American Culture” conference, St. Simon’s Island, GA, August 1995.

<sup>7</sup>Marston, 133-69, 260. On the embourgeoisement of Methodism, see Nathan O. Hatch, “The Puzzle of American Methodism,” *Church History* 63:2 (June 1994): 175-89.

sanctification that did not need to be emotional, it is evident that the urbanity of the Tuesday Meeting represented the type of adjustment to middle class culture that the Free Methodists were rejecting.<sup>8</sup>

The combination of both countryside and a city environment in the "burned-over" area of upstate New York in which Free Methodism developed created a regional milieu for the effects of religious embourgeoisement to become evident. Due to Buffalo's location as a commercial hub, many urban Methodists in that growing city observed the proprieties and accepted the decorous standards of the rising middle class earlier than the Protestants of other communities; meanwhile, these *nouveau riche* Methodists were connected by denominational polity to the surrounding rural area, which had a revivalistic history of challenging the cultural norms with its "ultraistic" behavior. The combination of urban conformity and rural noncomformity in the same M. E. conference was a volatile mix.<sup>9</sup>

As an example of the nonconformist attitude among the religious people of the "burned-over" hinterland, the African-American pastor Samuel Ringgold Ward commented in 1855 on the unusual degree of personal affirmation he received from his all-white congregation in rural New York. He was convinced that their unprejudiced behavior was due to the fact that they were "living in the interior of the State, apart from the allurements and deceptions of fashion." For Ward and other perfectionists, the relative isolation of rural communities from the temptations of citified society allowed the residents of small towns to live sanctified lives, resisting the worst excesses of materialistic consumption and bourgeois compromise.<sup>10</sup> Hal Barron has determined that agrarian towns in

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<sup>8</sup>Theodore Hovet, "Phoebe Palmer's 'Altar Phraseology' and the Spiritual Dimensions of Women's Sphere," *The Journal of Religion* 63 (July 1983). The bourgeois character of Phoebe Palmer's ministry should not be overstated, for B. T. Roberts (the founder of the Free Methodist Church) was sanctified at one of Palmer's meetings.

<sup>9</sup>James A. Revell, "The Nazirites: Burned-Over District Methodism and the Buffalo Bourgeoisie," Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 1993.

<sup>10</sup>Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, and England* (London: John Snow, 1855), 82-83. Ward was a perfectionist Congregationalist, not a Methodist, but in the Finneyite context of upstate New York, such distinctions were not very important. See Douglas M. Strong, "The Application of Perfectionism to Politics: Political and Ecclesiastical Abolitionism in the Burned-Over District," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 25:1 (Spring 1990).

the latter half of the nineteenth century were “communities against the stream where local farmers were at once tied to larger national markets and also entwined in a face-to-face local life.” The actions of various Holiness Methodists indicate that the ambivalence among rural-oriented northerners regarding their relationship to the broader culture extended beyond economic concerns to encompass their religious life as well.<sup>11</sup> The Free Methodists, even those who had moved to the city, reflected the older rural values of religious revivalism, while those church members in Buffalo who remained within the M. E. Church were more comfortable with the adjustments that were necessary for middle class prosperity. The Free Methodist critique was that “there was a stiffness and coldness in the city churches that was freezing out the common people. The pastors of the city churches were not soul winners.”

Outside of western New York, most Holiness-inclined Methodists stayed within the M. E. Church—for the time being. The pressures of middle class enculturation came somewhat later to Methodists in other parts of the country, particularly to those in the South. Gradually, though, church members in every section of the nation were compelled to decide to what degree they would accept the conventions of middle class society. Like the Nazarites, many Holiness Methodists around the country resisted enculturation. But, unlike the Nazarites, Holiness Methodists after the Civil War had an organization in which they could express their perfectionist predilections while remaining within the institutional church—the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness. After its founding in 1867, the National Camp Meeting Association provided an institutional support structure for Holiness Methodists, a support structure that had been unavailable to the Free Methodists earlier.<sup>12</sup>

But for some Holiness folk, particularly those from rural areas, their involvement in the National Association was not a sufficient hedge against the “worldliness” that they perceived in the M. E. Church(es)—

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<sup>11</sup>Hal S. Barron, “Staying Down on the Farm: Social Processes of Settled Rural Life in the Nineteenth-Century North,” in *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*, ed. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 340. See also Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 320, 324.

<sup>12</sup>Melvin Easterday Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1980), 123-127.

North and South. These people found like-minded support in the regional and local Holiness associations that sprang up after 1875. While those involved in the National Camp Meeting Association included both rural people and urban dwellers (often the recently arrived cousins of the rural folk), those involved in regional and local Holiness associations were much more likely only to be rural. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the leaders of the regional associations often left to establish their own Holiness denominations, or "bands."<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the leading figures of the National Association tended to be loyal Methodists. Those Holiness people who stayed in the National Association and the M. E. Church(es) throughout the late nineteenth century (such as Henry Clay Morrison) were devoted to the institutional church, although they were increasingly critical of it. They also accepted some aspects of American middle class culture: the value of higher education, for example, and also a discomfort with certain extreme expressions of religious zealotry. The limited acceptance, however, of these few bourgeois mores by Holiness Methodists was highly qualified.

One illustration of the embourgeoisement occurring within the larger Methodist Episcopal Church in the late nineteenth century was the attitude that was taken toward professional divinity schools for theological education, which were developing in the context of large Methodist universities.<sup>14</sup> Morrison himself became an embodiment of this phenomenon when he left Kentucky to attend Vanderbilt University in 1884. Even though Vanderbilt Divinity School in 1884 was awash in Southern evangelical piety, Morrison was uncertain about the appropriateness of his matriculation, and he spent only one year there. Morrison's ambivalence toward his enrollment at Vanderbilt is indicative of his ambivalence toward higher education in general. He appreciated the erudition (and the piety) of his professors, but his single-minded commitment to evangelism compelled him to withdraw from academic pursuits. The Lord's service,

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<sup>13</sup>Carl Oblinger, *Religious Mimesis: Social Bases for the Holiness Schism in Late Nineteenth-Century Methodism: The Illinois Case, 1869-1885* (Evanston: Institute for the Study of American Religion, 1973); Dieter, 236ff.; Charles E. Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867-1936*.

<sup>14</sup>Glenn Miller, "'The Doors of Opportunity': Methodist Theological Education and the University, 1866-1929," paper presented at the "United Methodism in American Culture" conference, St. Simon's Island, Georgia, August 1995.

he believed, called him away from “scholarly culture.” Morrison admired the value and even the social status of education, but when he sensed that he was actually becoming a part of the academic culture, he drew away.<sup>15</sup>

It was only a few years later, during Morrison’s successful pastorate of a prosperous congregation, that he was sanctified. Soon thereafter, he left his appointment as a local pastor, began an itinerant evangelistic ministry, and started his newspaper (*The Old Methodist*, later the *Pentecostal Herald*). In the paper, Morrison stressed the urgent need for revival and the importance of living a life of holiness. “Worldliness,” Morrison was convinced, was the greatest enemy of holiness, and it assumed many guises. It could come in the form of a temptation to “preach ‘growth’ as a substitute for entire sanctification.” Given his insistence on the experiential crisis associated with Christian perfection, Morrison was particularly disturbed by this tendency of ministers to de-emphasize the second (or even the first) definite work of grace.<sup>16</sup>

Worldliness could also take the form of immoral behavior. Morrison’s position on this matter is illuminated by the stated purpose of his paper. It was his intent that the paper would advocate “sanctification as taught in the Scriptures and preached by John Wesley, and [it] will never make any terms with or receive a flag of truce from the stillhouse, theater, ball room, or card table.” The holy life, first and foremost, was a reaction against the standards of the present world, a non-accommodation with the dominant culture. The opposite of worldliness was a lifestyle of Christian purity, indicated by following a code of moralistic behavior. The specific behaviors named in the code may seem arbitrary, but, according to the reasoning of the Holiness people, all of the items were consistent with a rejection of the commercialized culture of the day.<sup>17</sup>

For Morrison, holiness—the antithesis of worldliness—meant a personal identification with the poor. He said, “As for worldly possessions, very few deeply pious men have ever had them. . . . God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of His kingdom.” He railed

<sup>15</sup>Wimberly, 85-89.

<sup>16</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 10 (19 January 1898): 1; Wimberly, 93-106; A. Gregory Schneider, “Connectionalism Versus Holiness: Contrasting Bases of Identity for Leaders of Late Nineteenth-Century Methodism,” paper presented at the “United Methodism and American Culture” conference, Duke University, Durham, NC, September 1994.

<sup>17</sup>*The Old Methodist* 1:12 (November 1889): 3.

against status distinctions that came from paying too much attention to the fashions of dress or other “worldly pursuits.”<sup>18</sup> And he considered himself to be the ally of workingmen, commending, for example, Terrence V. Powderly, the “General Masterworkman” of the Knights of Labor, for his advocacy in favor of Prohibition.<sup>19</sup> Morrison’s commendation of the most influential leader of organized labor came at a time when “McKinley Methodists” (those associated with the Eastern entrepreneurial establishment and urban business interests) were severely criticizing both the labor unions and the Holiness movement.

Morrison wrote on the same three themes—the centrality of revivalistic evangelism, the need for entire sanctification, and the repudiation of worldliness—from 1889 until the end of World War I. Only a few new topics were addressed by Morrison in his paper during this entire thirty year period: the rise of Pentecostalism at the turn of the century (which he rejected); greater emphasis on Christian patriotism during the World War (which he promoted); and the expansion of the holiness message outside of institutional Methodism. Regarding this latter issue, Morrison took a moderate position. On the one hand, while remaining loyal to the M. E. Church, he also affirmed the work of smaller Holiness sects. He understood why people were leaving the church for “outside movements” such as the Free Methodists. Morrison did not blame the people who left, and he agreed with them when they complained that they had not been spiritually fed within institutional Methodism.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, Morrison was convinced that many of the “come-outers” were “deluded and misguided people” who had “ungovernable spirits.” Morrison’s negative judgment of the come-outers certainly was not because he was against spiritual exuberance or the expression of religious ecstasy. Campmeetings led by Morrison were characterized by jumping, clapping, shouting, and “frequent prostrations or trances” in which numbers of people “lay prone on the straw, seemingly dead for hours.” Nonetheless, Morrison regularly condemned “fanaticism con-

<sup>18</sup>*The Old Methodist* 1:12 (November 1889): 1; *Pentecostal Herald* 9 (11 August 1897): 2; Morrison, *The Christ of the Gospels*, 77-79.

<sup>19</sup>The Knights of Labor ceased to be a secret society in 1880; thereupon, under the leadership of Terrence V. Powderly, the union grew rapidly to 700,000 members within one decade.

<sup>20</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 10 (12 January 1898): 8.

nected with the holiness movement,” especially among the leadership of the smaller groups.<sup>21</sup>

As an example of his attitude toward the “outside movements” associated with the Holiness revival, in 1899 Morrison noted the presence of a relatively new group, the Church of the Nazarene. Though he was not tempted to become a Nazarene himself, he admired the sect and he regularly preached for them. Morrison’s appreciation for the Nazarenes was because of their fidelity to holiness. He noted that “the doctrines [of the Nazarenes] embrace all fundamental Bible truth: conviction, regeneration, sanctification, growth in grace, and a life of active service for the salvation of the lost.” Regarding the issue of worldliness, Morrison was impressed with the Nazarenes’ lack of compromise with the corrupting values of the “world”: they ordained women, for instance, a rejection of the patriarchal status distinctions of bourgeois culture, and their worship was warmly emotional, in contrast to the formalism of many Methodist churches. There was a stiffness and coldness in the city churches that was freezing out the common people. The pastors of the city churches were not soul winners. In the 1890s, Morrison agreed with his Nazarene brethren that a faithful church was one that highlighted “soul winning,” affective spirituality, and ministry to “the common people.”<sup>22</sup>

### Reacting to “This Critical Period”

Morrison’s stress on the themes of evangelism, holiness, and anti-worldliness continued unabated from 1890 until the end of the First World War. But by 1923—when Morrison wrote again about the Nazarenes—his topical interests had changed. “We have watched the growth of the Nazarene Church with deep interest,” Morrison declared. “The doctrines of the Nazarene Church,” he reported, “are essentially those of early Methodism,” and, similar to his portrayal of twenty-five years earlier, he enumerated the beliefs that he held in common with the newer sect: “repentance, regeneration, the witness of the Spirit, entire consecration and sanctification wholly.” But in 1923, Morrison’s affirmation of the Nazarenes also lifted up a particular aspect of their theology that he had neglected to describe in his earlier account: “they accept the Bible

<sup>21</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 9 (11 August 1897): 4, 5, 6, 8; idem. 10 (12 January 1898): 8, 9.

<sup>22</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 11 (25 January 1899): 8.



account of the creation of man, his fall into sin, the virgin birth of Christ, and the whole plan of salvation as set forth in the gospels and epistles.” He wished the Nazarenes to be “wonderfully effective in these days when many religious teachers are drifting away from the traditional faith.”

Unlike his previous writings, this mention of “the traditional faith” was not a reference to the “old paths” of Methodism but, rather, to a more generic, traditional Protestant belief system. Earlier, the distinguishing Wesleyan character of the Nazarenes elicited Morrison’s praise; now, their fidelity to Protestant orthodoxy was their primary attribute—and in this Morrison placed them in the company of many non-Wesleyan evangelicals who were fighting the same battle against “unbelief.”<sup>23</sup> In fact, Morrison extended his “right hand of fellowship to all men of all churches and all people who steadfastly believe the Bible and earnestly preach Christ, born of a Virgin, the eternal, pre-existent Son of God, who rose again from the dead and who has made an atonement on the cross for the sins of the world.” In contrast, he could “have no fellowship with. . .that brand of new theology that does away with the deity, the blood atonement and resurrection of my Lord.”<sup>24</sup>

The “unbelief” characteristic of this “brand of new theology” had become Morrison’s preoccupation in the 1920s. The “destructive criticism of the times” was thought to be destroying evangelical faith by subverting the biblical base for Christian morality, producing doubt in the minds of converts, and “put[ting] out evangelistic fires.” Morrison repeatedly specified the doctrinal issues with which he was most concerned, a veritable litany of the tenets of fundamentalism: the inspiration of Scriptures; the “fact of sin”; the deity of Jesus—including the virgin birth, the pre-existence, and the bodily resurrection of Christ; the importance of believing in the whole realm of the supernatural (including miracles); and, especially, the need of a vicarious blood atonement for sins. This last was seen as important for Morrison because without the “finished work of the atonement” there could be no cleansing blood for inward sin by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup>

Morrison was so taken with the problem of unbelief that he subsumed his favorite topic—the need for revival—under its heading. In

<sup>23</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 35 (14 March 1923): 8.

<sup>24</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 35 (4 April 1923): 8.

<sup>25</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 35 (21 March 1923): 1, 8; idem. (28 March 1923): 1; idem. (11 April 1923): 1, 8; idem. (18 April 1923): 1, 8.

order to be successful, Morrison declared, a revival must bring people to a correct understanding of the trustworthiness of the Word of God. Employing language that was remarkably similar to that used by Princeton Seminary's J. Gresham Machen in his 1923 fundamentalist manifesto, *Christianity and Liberalism*, Morrison declared that the "sole demand upon the individual is to decide between the two . . . [that is, between Harry Emerson] Fosdick's skepticism . . . and the great fire of holy evangelism." A battle for the Bible was raging, and no reconciliation was possible.<sup>26</sup>

Despite this concentration on the problem of unbelief, Morrison's public persona in the 1920s was still identified with the theme of holiness and its corollary, the problem of worldliness. He continued to speak constantly about the importance of entire sanctification and the witness of the Spirit. He also continued to critique the urbane culture of commodity and acquisition, of intellectualism and sophistication. He was deeply concerned because the Christian values of the rural plain folk—a sense of community, self-denial, and moral fortitude—were being replaced by the values of the "rich and cultured mob." Universities had made theology inaccessible to the average layperson, and clergymen in the "fastidious city church[es]" had become "too scholarly in their culture." Morrison addressed the way in which people (even ministers) were interested in promotion and high salaries and positions of power. He preached against the recklessness of the Roaring '20s: women were chastised for daring to dress improperly in order to satisfy the latest fashion; men were chastised for daring to risk their family's well-being on speculative financial deals.<sup>27</sup>

It is hard to say whether worldliness (the critique of bourgeois culture) or unbelief (the critique of modernist theology) had become the major controlling metaphor for Morrison in the 1920s. Morrison's son-in-law, Douglas Chandler, when interviewed in 1995 (as a ninety-five year old emeritus Professor of Church History), remembered his father-in-law speaking only on themes of entire sanctification and the life of holiness. Chandler did not recall any fundamentalist themes in Morrison's preaching. Clearly, the peo-

<sup>26</sup>J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1923); *Pentecostal Herald* 35 (14 March 1923): 1, 8; idem. (28 March 1923): 8; idem. (4 April 1923): 1, 8.

<sup>27</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 35 (21 March 1923): 1; idem. (28 March 1923): 8; idem. (18 April 1923): 8; Henry Clay Morrison, *The Christ of the Gospels* (New York: Revell, 1926), 76-79.

ple who were closely associated with Morrison perceived the holiness/anti-worldliness message as the predominant one throughout his career.<sup>28</sup>

But it is also evident from Morrison's editorials and published sermons that a subtle change had taken place in the evangelist's preaching by the 1920s. His identification with the common folk was still evident, but there was a limit to his commitment to a radical critique of American culture if the critique had any tinge of religious skepticism attached to it. In 1889, Morrison had commended labor leader Terrence V. Powderly for his support of Prohibition, but in 1923 Morrison found it impossible to support organized labor because by then labor's leaders had "entered into an alliance with the leaders of radical thought."<sup>29</sup>

Another revealing piece of evidence in this regard is the close personal working relationship between the Methodist Holiness movement and William Jennings Bryan, the leading symbol of populist fundamentalism. Bryan was a thoroughgoing Presbyterian: a ruling elder, a member of the General Assembly, and a close colleague of fundamentalist champion and Calvinist stalwart Clarence McCartney. But Bryan also had connections to Methodism. He attended a Methodist Sunday school and often worshipped at a Methodist church near his boyhood home. Like Morrison, Bryan represented the "folk religion of the Middle Border,"<sup>30</sup> believed that the essence of Christianity lay in its ethical and experiential dimensions, had great sympathy for the "struggling masses," and was convinced that the foundations of moral law were to be found in the teachings of Jesus and not in modern materialism. Thus, it is not surprising to learn that Bryan spoke to large crowds at Taylor College (a leading Holiness Methodist school), was listed as a contributor on the masthead of the *Pentecostal Herald*, and shared the speakers' platform with Morrison on numerous occasions.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Interview with Douglas R. Chandler, Gaithersburg, Maryland, 10 September 1995.

<sup>29</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 35 (28 March 1923): 8.

<sup>30</sup>Robert W. Cherny, *A Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1985), 9, 123; Paul W. Glad, *The Trumpet Soundeth: William Jennings Bryan and His Democracy, 1896-1912* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), 27.

<sup>31</sup>William Jennings Bryan and Mary Baird Bryan, *The Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Haskell House, 1925), 456; Glad, 27-30; Paolo E. Coletta, *William Jennings Bryan*, vol.3 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 226-27; Wimberly, 128; *Pentecostal Herald* 35 (1923): 8.

The interesting aspect of Morrison's 1920s attack on the problem of worldliness (unlike his 1890s attack on worldliness) was the way in which he directly linked it to the problem of unbelief. In Morrison's mind, these two concepts—worldliness and unbelief—were inseparably connected. Immorality, Sabbath desecration, the loosening of marriage vows, and even a Chicago Methodist church's sponsorship of "women prize fighters" were all the result of skepticism about the moral truths of the Bible. Integrity in one's business life was built on the reliability and inherent truth of the Ten Commandments. The doctrine of entire sanctification was based on the necessity of the blood atonement for the cleansing of sins.<sup>32</sup>

Morrison was not favorable toward socialism, but he did continue his longstanding critical analysis of the commercialized values intrinsic in the capitalistic culture of industrial America, by combining that analysis with negative assertions about the effects of liberal preaching. According to his reasoning, moral and biblical skepticism simply reflected the mindset that developed when one became captive to the prevailing market mentality. In a particularly striking passage of a published sermon, Morrison asserted that his contemporaries had "put Christ on the market." Many a minister, Morrison observed, would

. . . stand up before an unregenerated and wealthy congregation of people and sell Christ. He tells them that Jesus is not of Virgin Birth; that He is not God manifest in the flesh; that His death was unnecessary; that He never performed any miracles; that He made no atonement for sin in His death. Isn't this selling Christ? . . . I fear that many men and women are putting Christ on the market. They are imagining themselves to be shrewd and successful money-gatherers and manipulators of the Kingdom of God.

Morrison declared that the "false teachers" of the new theology were "slaves of their selfish appetites, who love to worship at the shrine of their own culture and supposed superior intellectuality." Worldliness and unbelief were viewed as evil twins that needed to be slain by Holiness folk and all other evangelical Christians.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 35 (14 March 1923): 1, 8; idem (21 March 1923): 1; idem (28 March 1923): 8; idem (11 April 1923): 1.

<sup>33</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 35 (21 March 1923): 1; Morrison, *The Christ of the Gospels*, 44-47.

### **The Ethos of the Holiness Movement Within Methodism: Not “Too Noisy”**

Henry Clay Morrison's career is illustrative of the character of Holiness people who remained within the Methodist Episcopal Church; they rejected a large portion of Gilded Age culture, but they also accepted some aspects of that culture. Morrison, for instance, always had a penchant for wanting to stay connected to persons with influence, even while he was critical of them. Though a “struggling boy, without wealth or backing,” according to his close colleague and biographer, C. F. Wimberly, Morrison looked for the “smile and hand-shake of approval” that often came from “cultured” men and women. Regarding his attitude toward the institutional church, Morrison also assumed a moderate stance. On the one hand, he diligently sought to expand the Holiness movement beyond the M. E. Church(es). He encouraged a kind of evangelical ecumenism, which was based first (in the early years) on the commonality of sanctified experience and then (in later years) on the commonality of orthodox doctrine. Despite this tendency toward evangelical anti-sectarianism, however, Morrison always remained loyal to the denomination of his youth, supporting its structure and its discipline (although criticizing its moral practice) at the same time that many other Holiness leaders were disowning institutional Methodism.<sup>34</sup>

On two other issues, Morrison took middle ground. First, while he endorsed enthusiastic religious expression, he was always on guard against any charges of “fanaticism.” He was proud of the observation that “none of the excesses bordering on fanaticism that marked the work of some holiness warriors” attended his ministry. In describing the Nazarenes, Morrison concurred with the accusation that “they are a bit too noisy.” He attempted to insure that his revival meetings did not exhibit such uncontrolled emotionalism. Nonetheless, Morrison also believed that the Nazarenes were “making a noise about essential things.”<sup>35</sup>

Regarding higher education—particularly ministerial training—Morrison envisioned a corps of revivalists who were well-educated but

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<sup>34</sup>Wimberly, 64-65; *Pentecostal Herald* 9 (11 August 1897): 1.

<sup>35</sup>*Pentecostal Herald* 9 (11 August 1897): 4-5, 8; idem 10 (12 January 1898): 8, 9; idem, 35 (14 March 1923): 8; A. F. Harper, ed., *Holiness Preachers and Preaching* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1984), 66-67.

not wrapped up in the “scholarly culture” of modernism. On the one hand, unlike the more radical Holiness leaders who were interested in training their pastors but could have cared less about the approval of the broader society, Morrison saw an advantage to accreditation and a cultural legitimation of the academic worth of Holiness schools. On the other hand, he did not put too much stock in the world’s standards of academic excellence. University-based divinity schools, for instance, could not be trusted as a place for evangelical theological education, for they were beholden to the “destructive critics.”

Morrison once returned to Nashville for a visit to his academic haunts of nearly forty years earlier. He remembered the “happy days of old” at the Vanderbilt of yesteryear, which he had “loved . . . devotedly.” But when he walked around the Vanderbilt campus in 1923, the place felt “like a cemetery . . . in which a thousand hopes and loves have been buried.” The loss of Vanderbilt to the forces of modernism caused Morrison “to lose confidence in men and things” and he “was forced to wonder who can be trusted and what can be regarded secure that is of the earth.” In that light, we can understand his goal for the founding of a new Holiness seminary on the campus of Asbury College. In the midst of religious insecurity, when “large numbers of preachers . . . have ceased to believe the plain work of the Bible. . . [and] are preaching their unbelief,” the new seminary would “stand true to the Bible from first to last.” As a Holiness Methodist who supported academic training but who was also wary of it, Morrison intended that his seminary would fulfill America’s need for a “well-educated, Spirit-filled, evangelistic ministry who are loyal to the Word of God and the Son of God.”<sup>36</sup> The effective Holiness preacher of the 1920s would now be equipped to face both the forces of worldliness and of unbelief.

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<sup>36</sup>35 (4 April 1923): 8; idem, (25 April 1923): 1.

# **TOWARD A PERSONAL PARADIGM FOR THE ATONEMENT**

by

**H. Ray Dunning**

Ever since Thomas Kuhn popularized the terms “paradigm” and “paradigm shift,” they have become useful tools to analyze the history and conceptuality of theology as well as the discipline of science to which Kuhn originally applied them. As Robert H. King has illustrated in an essay introducing the task of theology, the history of theology has been a history in which prevailing paradigms have been “challenged, transformed, and replaced.”<sup>1</sup> There are a variety of reasons for such shifts in the models by which various aspects of reality are interpreted. Perhaps one of the most dominant reasons is the inadequacy of the current paradigm to explain all aspects of relevant experience.

The history of theologizing about the Atonement in the West has consistently explained the work of Christ by using juridical categories, with the significant dissent being in the form of some variation on a “moral influence” theme. These have generally provided the exclusive options for a doctrine of the Atonement. But both are informed by the same legal paradigm, either positively or negatively. This is clearly the dominant way of thinking about the work of Christ in evangelical Christianity today. Consequently, “by almost any accounting, the understanding of the atonement most evident in fashionable hymnody and other expressions of popular Christian faith is the theory of ‘penal substitution.’”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert H. King, “Introduction: The Task of Theology,” in *Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 1-27.

Our cultural ethos in the West fosters this conceptuality and even grinds the spectacles through which we read the Scripture.

### **The Legal Paradigm**

There is strong scholarly support for the thesis that the legal paradigm that has informed Western theology from the second century onward was introduced into the stream of Christian thought by the man who has rightly been called the “Father of Latin Theology,” Tertullian. Along with other “standard” theological terms, he introduced the terms and ideas of “merit” and “satisfaction” as the basis of Divine acceptance of humankind. These concepts were entrenched in the Western theological mind by Cyprian and reinforced by St. Augustine. While Tertullian did not make them the basis for a doctrine of the Atonement, this was done in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by St. Anselm. The idea of salvation by “merit” became the basis for the Roman Catholic system of piety.

Even though Martin Luther made a significant break with the Roman Catholic interpretation of justification, he did not question the underlying paradigm. He merely shifted the locus of “merit” from the believer who had earned (or purchased) merit by good works to Christ whose merit was attributed to the one who had faith but who remained *simul justus et peccator*. While having a stronger understanding of sanctification than Luther, Calvin likewise interpreted the work of Christ according to this same paradigm. It has been well established that John Wesley, too, at least shared the terminology and conceptuality of a “satisfaction” interpretation of the Atonement.<sup>3</sup>

But here we encounter an interesting ambiguity. Wesley’s central soteriological commitments were constantly in tension with the satisfaction motif. Throughout his writings, there appear three major issues that bothered him:

1. **The nature of God.** Most versions of the satisfaction interpretation are based on the idea that the essential nature of God is sovereign will or justice. Wesley, to the contrary,

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<sup>2</sup>Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 23.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Allen Renshaw, “The Atonement in the Theology of John and Charles Wesley,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University, 1965; Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 101-107.



asserts that nowhere in Scripture is it said that “God is Justice,” but it does say “God is Love.”<sup>4</sup>

2. **The universality of the Atonement or the question of the inclusiveness of grace.** The inescapable logical implication of the satisfaction view is either universalism or limited atonement. Generally, the latter position was adopted and Wesley found this to be in gross contradiction to the teachings of Scripture.
3. **The centrality of the holy life.** Here was Wesley’s most vigorous point of opposition because of his profound commitment to holy living (sanctification). If one takes the satisfaction view with full seriousness, it logically leads to the conclusion that the holy life is inconsequential. While at least some of its advocates struggled to find a place for the necessity of holiness, the real bite was taken from the effort.

Some years ago, J. Glenn Gould called attention to a fourth tension by observing, “Perhaps there is a basic inconsistency between Wesley’s hazily defined doctrine of the atonement and his clearly stated doctrine of prevenient grace.”<sup>5</sup>

Wesleyan theologians have often attempted to avoid the above-mentioned implications by following Hugo Grotius’ *Governmental Theory*, which turns out to be merely a moral influence approach in reverse. It obviously never escapes the legal paradigm that has been indigenous to Western theology.

### **The Work of John McLeod Campbell**

The first real break with this motif appears to have arisen out of the pastoral work of a Scottish pastor and theologian named John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872). Following his ordination, he was appointed pastor to the Parish of Rhu (Row) where he faithfully served for five years. He soon discovered among his parishioners an absence of the joy and sense of assurance he believed the New Testament taught to be the privilege of

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<sup>4</sup>John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, reproduction of the 1872 edition), 10:227; *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1954).

<sup>5</sup>J. Glenn Gould, *The Precious Blood of Christ* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1959), 75.

believers in Jesus Christ. As he explored the reason for this, “the more he became convinced it was due to a ‘legal strain’ in their thinking that led to a want of true religion in the land.”<sup>6</sup> The theology that informed their religious life was Federal Calvinism. According to this teaching, “God had made a Covenant, or contract, with Christ whereby he would be gracious toward certain ones on the conditions that Christ die for their sins. But how could one know whether he was one of the elect? In order to answer this question, a Practical Syllogism was developed: Major premiss (sic): The truly penitent person is one of God’s elect. Minor Premiss (sic): (based on self-examination) I have repented. Conclusion: Therefore I am (probably) one of the elect. But such a conviction, warned the Westminster Confession, might only be reached after a lifetime of doubt and struggle.”<sup>7</sup>

Searching the New Testament, Campbell found a different picture of God, a God of grace and love who freely offered forgiveness that was not conditioned by considerations of worth and merit. He began preaching his message with transforming results in his church. The congregation flourished, their joy was abundant and his people became a vibrant group of followers of Christ. The end result was that various ecclesiastical groups in the Church of Scotland called Campbell on the carpet until finally he was tried before the General Assembly in May, 1831, and was deposed from the ministry. One of the most interesting aspects of the trial (which auditors said was a travesty) was that any appeal to Scripture was deliberate excluded.

Campbell later wrote a work on the Atonement that has been evaluated by some as one of the three most important works on the subject in the history of theology. It clearly illustrates the point being made here. His logical acumen recognized that the previous statements of the work of Christ had been developed by beginning with certain presuppositions, presuppositions that he felt needed critical examination. He recognized that beginning with faulty assumptions resulted in faulty conclusions. There was no problem with the deductive process, but with the presuppositions.

According to Campbell, the first step in atonement discussion should be a study of the biblical account of Christ’s work. If one yields oneself to the mind of Christ as revealed through the New Testament then certain

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<sup>6</sup>Daniel P. Thimell, “Christ in Our Place in the Theology of John McLeod Campbell,” *Christ in Our Place*, ed. T. Hart and D. Thimell (Exeter, England: Paternoster Press, 1989), 182-183.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

fundamental ideas commend themselves to the conscience as the proper foundations upon which to begin constructing a statement on the nature of the Atonement. Hence he set out to self-consciously develop his *The Nature of the Atonement* on presuppositions derived from Scripture. The central presupposition he thus identified was that the Atonement originates in the love of God.

While the love of God had never been entirely lost to view in any statement of the Atonement claiming to be Christian, in the forms of Calvinism to which Campbell was exposed the requirements of justice assumed the primary importance. This meant that the Atonement must precede forgiveness. “But,” says Campbell, “the scriptures do not speak of such an atonement, for they do not represent the atonement of Christ as the cause, but, just the contrary—they represent the love of God as the cause, and the atonement as the effect.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is important to remember that forgiveness, as the form in which love is manifested, precedes the Atonement. Any statement on the Atonement should always have this clearly in view. It is against a loving Father that we have sinned; and to such we are reconciled. This is the pivotal point of Campbell’s whole discussion of the Atonement. If reconciling love and justice requires giving primacy to one or the other, then love must be first. He was thoroughly Wesleyan at this point. Though founding atonement on the “fatherliness of God” was novel at the time, Campbell believed that he was only developing a doctrine implicit in the New Testament.

A second distinctive presupposition for Campbell was that the Atonement contemplates God’s prospective purpose that humanity shall be sons and daughters. Here is one of his most significant insights. While every view of the Atonement takes account of both the “retrospective” and the “prospective” aspects (Campbell’s terms), Campbell felt that they had not been treated as organic aspects of the Atonement. Reformation theology had generally treated the prospective as almost incidental, whereas for Campbell it was clearly the most important. So it became characteristic of Campbell’s writing that the prospective purposes of the Atonement were always brought into clear view as determinative of its nature. This is likewise true of John Wesley, although using different concepts and terminology.

Herein lies one of Campbell’s major objections to founding a view of Atonement on the concept of justice—whether distributive or rectoral

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

(as the Governmental). Both systems visualize what he calls a purely legal atonement, that is, an atonement the whole character of which is determined by our relation to divine law. The real problem, however, is not merely to discover a way in which we may stand reconciled to God as a lawgiver. The question contemplated in Scripture and to which the Gospel is an answer is less how we can be pardoned and receive mercy and more how it could come to pass that the estranged can be reconciled. God's intention is, as St. Paul declared, "to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:5).

Campbell therefore could not rest in any conception of the Atonement that involved, as he said, "the substitution of a legal standing for a filial standing as the gift of God to men in Christ." The Atonement is thus revealed retrospectively as God's way of putting right the past, and prospectively as introducing us to a life marked by a filial relation to God eternally. Both are celebrated by believers, and both must be included in their thought concerning the nature of the Atonement.

Obviously, Campbell made significant steps forward by identifying the "Achilles' heel" of the various satisfaction theories of the Atonement, directing our attention to the nature of God as defined by the Incarnation, and highlighting the nature of the Divine-human relation as personal rather than legal or impersonal. However, in spite of all these tremendous insights, he still remained somewhat within the limitations of the Western tradition so that his most unique contribution (vicarious repentance, which his supporters have struggled manfully to defend) still is susceptible to the criticism of D. C. Macintosh: "Campbell's . . . own mind was still somewhat confused, as he groped his pioneering way toward that thoroughly rational and ethical view of reconciliation with God to which he perhaps never quite attained: because he shared the 'traditional concept of propitiation sacrifice,'" resulting in "the self-contradictory notion of a God already propitious enough to provide the propitiatory offering which is to propitiate Himself."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>"Two Important Books of Theology," in *Religion in Life*, 7, No. 3, Summer, 1938, 460-461. Unfortunately, Macintosh's critique is made from a too-liberal perspective that attributes this "self-contradictory" idea to St. Paul reflecting a phase when Jesus and Paul were set over against each other. Modern scholarship has exposed the fallacy of attributing this to Paul.

## Twentieth-Century Developments

Since early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Christian thinkers have been working in increasing interface with Scripture with the result that work on the Atonement has seen several helpful developments. One of the earliest works of the century, widely considered as a classic, was James Denney's *The Death of Christ* (1901). A study of this work reveals that it seems to be indicative of the direction in which informed Christian thought in Western theology was beginning to move. While typically Western in his focus on the "Death of Christ," Denney nevertheless recognized that "the starting point of our investigation must be the life and teaching of Jesus Himself."<sup>10</sup> Throughout his work, Denney insists on the "propitiatory character" of Jesus' death, but, unlike the traditional Protestant interpretation of Jesus' death as a sacrifice, he never suggests that His sacrifice was directed toward God. Rather, he "reinterprets" propitiation in terms of expiation, i.e., having "a reference to sin and its forgiveness."<sup>11</sup> He straightforwardly states that the Old Testament sacrifices "are looked at simply in the expiatory or atoning significance which is common to them all. They represent a divinely appointed way of dealing with sin, in order that it may not bar fellowship with God; . . . [It is] the conviction of all New Testament Christians that in the death of Christ God has dealt effectually with the world's sin for its removal."<sup>12</sup>

The entire mood of Denney's exposition is shaped by the premise that "the work of reconciling is one in which the initiative is taken by God, and the cost borne by Him; men are reconciled in the passive, or allow themselves to be reconciled, or receive the reconciliation. We never read that God has been reconciled."<sup>13</sup> The same point is made by P. T. Forsyth in his lectures given in 1908 and 1909 and published under the title *The Cruciality of the Cross*. Forsyth declares that his own "point of departure is that Christ's first concern and revelation was not simply the forgiving love of God, but the holiness of such love."<sup>14</sup> One would

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<sup>10</sup>James Denney, *The Death of Christ* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902), 9.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 216-217. Richard S. Taylor's appeal to Denney in support of his own argument for propitiation misses this point completely. Cf. Richard S. Taylor, *God's Integrity and Cross* (Nappanee, IN: Frances Asbury Press, 1999), 31.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 216-217.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, 144.

<sup>14</sup>*The Cruciality of the Cross* (Paternoster Press Biblical Classics, 1997), viii.

assume that this emphasis would support some form of a satisfaction interpretation of the death of Christ. But in a concluding chapter on the meaning of “the blood of Christ” he specifically rejects such an idea, saying: “The positive truth is that the sacrifice is the result of God’s grace and not its cause. It is given *by* God before it is given *to* Him. The real ground of any atonement is not in God’s wrath but God’s grace. There can be no talk of propitiation in the sense of mollification, or of purchasing God’s grace, in any religion founded on the Bible.”<sup>15</sup> In a most felicitous phrase he nails the issue: “Procured grace is a contradiction in terms.”<sup>16</sup>

### Insights from Biblical Theology

A significant transformation of the prevailing paradigm occurs as systematic theology comes to be more and more informed by biblical theology. One of the most important developments arises out of the recognition of the pervasive influence of Hellenistic modes of thought on the doctrine of God. This has led to an increasing abandonment of the idea of the “impassive” nature of God and an embracing of the fact of God’s “passivity,” that He is a dynamic reality, including the fact that He suffers. Instead of being considered a “heresy,” *patripassionism* has now become a joyfully accepted truth by many. This means that we can now take with full seriousness Paul’s words in 2 Cor. 5:19—“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.”

Traditional explanations of the Atonement, like those of Anselm and Calvin, have interpreted it as the work of Christ as a “man” since, as Calvin and others have said explicitly, only as a man could there be suffering because of the “impassive” nature of God. But we may now recognize that it was God, in Christ, who is the “sin-bearer,” suffering the cost of reconciliation. Evidently, Charles Wesley long ago glimpsed the light of this truth in his memorable lines (emphasis added):

And can it be that I should gain  
An int’rest in the Savior’s blood?  
Died he for me who cause His pain?  
For me who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love, how can it be  
That *Thou My God* shouldst die for me!

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid, 89.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, 41.

In general there has been a burgeoning recognition of the inadequacy of a juridical or legalistic way of interpreting the Atonement, accompanied by a turn to the personal dimension as the decisive context within which the work of Christ can be best interpreted. As Donald Baillie put it, "In theological argument on this subject we are apt to forget that we are dealing with a realm of personal relationships and nothing else."<sup>17</sup> P. T. Forsyth, in commenting on the metaphysical language of the creeds, notes that:

Most of those theories were fastened on the Church in the interests, indeed, of a true redemption, but at a time when the theology of redemption was apt to be conceived in terms of substance rather than subject, of metaphysic rather than ethic, of things rather than persons. . . . But we have come to a time in the growth of Christian moral culture when personal relations and personal movements count for more than the relations of the most rare and ethereal substances.<sup>18</sup>

This point has been reinforced by the insistence of many that the central soteriological concept of the New Testament is "reconciliation." In fact, as Donald Baillie notes, "A great deal of confusion has been caused by the fact that the English word 'atonement' has moved away from the sense it had when the Bible was translated, viz., reconciliation."<sup>19</sup>

According to Alister McGrath, the term "atonement" itself needs criticism. Tyndale introduced it into theological vocabulary, he says, as an equivalent to reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> Reconciliation is a metaphor derived from the realm of personal relations. However, when the latter term is properly understood scripturally, to say this does not set "reconciliation" in opposition to "justification" so that we must choose between two contrary teachings. The personal context enables us to understand the "must" of Jesus, what theologically we have referred to as the necessity of the Atonement. Too often the emphasis on the necessity of the death of Christ makes God subservient to a law above Himself rather than grounding the Atonement in the very nature of God.

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<sup>17</sup>Donald Baillie, *God was in Christ* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd, 1961), 198.

<sup>18</sup>P. T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., n.d.), 331f.

<sup>19</sup>Baillie, *God was in Christ*, 187.

<sup>20</sup>"The Moral Theory of the Atonement: An Historical and Theological Critique," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 38:205.

The ambiguity of the term “necessity” when applied to the suffering of the Savior has resulted in tremendous confusion about the meaning and significance of the cross. “Necessity” derives its meaning from the context. Martin Luther said, “Necessity belongs to ‘physics,’ not theology. If this concept is to be used in theology we must ‘bathe and wash it.’”<sup>21</sup> There is a “legal necessity,” a “moral necessity,” a “logical necessity,” and a legitimate concept of necessity that arises out of personal relations. It is from this latter context that the concept should be derived when speaking about the “must” that accompanies the work of Christ. There is a necessary suffering involved in the restoration of broken personal relations.

Vincent Taylor voices the modern conscience when he says: “Gone forever are feudal and merely legal conceptions of God, except in quarters where the modern spirit finds it difficult to enter. In fact, our danger is that of being content with this great truth, deepened by a growing emphasis upon the suffering of God Himself, and by the claim that the love of God is objectively manifested.”<sup>22</sup>

### Covenant Versus Contract

Another important concept contributing to the emphasis on the “personal” is the recognition of the nature of “covenant.” This is a pervasive theme throughout Scripture and a case can be made that “covenant” is the unifying motif of the Bible.<sup>23</sup> The point at issue, which many biblical theologians have now come to see, is that a covenant is to be distinguished from a contract. The former is personal in nature while the latter is legal. According to Robert Letham, the covenant came to be regarded as a contract during the Reformation period under the influence of Roman law.<sup>24</sup> A contract is characteristically thing-oriented whereas the covenant is person-oriented. When speaking theologically, the covenant “arises, not with benefits as the chief barter item, but out of a desire for a measure of intimacy.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Quoted in Harry Johnson, *The Humanity of the Saviour* (London: The Epworth Press, 1962), 28. Unfortunately, Luther did not use enough soap for his own theology.

<sup>22</sup>Vincent Taylor, *The Doctrine of the Atonement* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 195.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961).

<sup>24</sup>Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 40.

<sup>25</sup>Elmer Martens, *God's Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 73.



## Meaning of Justification

One of the more important aspects of recent studies in biblical theology is the emergence of a more adequate Biblical understanding of “justification,” which many biblical scholars now see to be a covenant word. Actually, the basic term is “righteousness,” “justification” being more properly translated by the awkward term “righteousfication.” In this light it is significant, as John A. Bollier says: “The general context in which righteousness is always used in the Old Testament is the context of the Covenant.”<sup>26</sup> Much confusion has occurred in the history of Christian theologizing about soteriology through a failure to recognize this meaning. This is understandable since the terms *sedheq* and *sedhaqah* have multiple meanings. Therefore, as Bollier says, “Because the origin of this word is so obscure and the possibility for the word to change its meaning in the course of usage is so likely, it is best to seek the meaning of *sedheq* and its cognates in their specific contexts.”

Attempting to interpret justification in the light of righteousness, understood ethically or legally, has led to the impasse between the Catholic and classical Protestant views mentioned above. John Wesley in particular explicitly rejected both positions. The first was rejected because it confuses justification with sanctification and the second because it is based on a “legal fiction,” where God treats the believer as righteous even though he is not. Perhaps inadvertently Wesley anticipated the modern Protestant emphasis by his distinction between justification as “a relative change” and sanctification as “a real change.” As Ziesler comments, “Although it is often acknowledged that elsewhere *dikaiosisuna* may have an ethical meaning, in ‘justification’ contexts a relational meaning is then widely accepted.”<sup>27</sup> This is precisely the significance of the observations of Bollier noted above.

There appears to be four major uses of the “righteousness” vocabulary. One refers to ethical righteousness—this is the most popular understanding of the term. Another, applied primarily to God, refers to “faithfulness to one’s word.” This implies a promise. If one manifests fidelity to that promise, she or he is considered “righteous.” A third is also attributed primarily to God and finds its enacted meaning expressed in the Exodus where Yahweh came to the aid of an enslaved people and delivered them on the basis of His compassion. Thus, righteousness suggests compassion

<sup>26</sup>“The Righteousness of God,” *Interpretation* 8, (1954), 404-413.

<sup>27</sup>J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), 9.

or mercy toward the needy and helpless. It is this third meaning that Martin Luther discovered in his studies of Romans and that became the basis of his Copernican Revolution in soteriology. The “righteousness of God” was not, as in Catholic piety of the time, the ethical righteousness God requires as a prerequisite to accepting us, a righteousness Luther felt he could never achieve, but God’s own attitude of grace and mercy toward helpless, sinful humankind.

Each of these meanings has significance for a sound doctrine of the Atonement, but the fourth is of critical importance. “Righteousness” here is a personal, relational, covenantal term. *In this context, a person is considered righteous when he or she conforms to the requirements of the relation within which they stand.*

The paradigmatic event for soteriological use is found in Genesis 15. The key is verse 6 where we are told that Abram believed God and God reckoned it to him as righteousness. The elements of a covenant-making encounter are all here. There is the promise from God to provide Abram a son of his own and subsequently innumerable descendants. Abram’s part of the covenant was simply to believe God and therefore, by “believing,” he was declared righteous. There is no mention of Abram’s ethical character and qualifications. That was irrelevant in this particular case.

### **The Inclusiveness of Grace**

What are the implications of this relational view of justification for the Atonement? When the concept is removed from the courtroom and placed in a personal context, the entire situation is changed.<sup>28</sup> We are no longer faced with the dilemma of punishment or laxity. Rather, we see God in Christ freely, not reluctantly, offering forgiveness to the rebellious sinner, although at a tremendous cost to Himself. The question that always presents itself is the extent of the offer of forgiveness. While the promise of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, is universal—to “whosoever will”—the Christ event, culminating in the laying down his life at the Cross, is an enacted, implicit promise that the provision is inclusive. When he died, as Athanasius put it, with his arms outstretched, he embraced all humankind. And as with all promises, the proper response is trust or faith. *Thus the promise-faith correlation stands at the heart of the Atonement.*

Apart from this inclusive promise, there is no possibility of Christian assurance. Faith could never rise above the level of uncertain hope. But in the light of the cross as God’s universal provision for all human persons, no one can ever look at the crucifixion and doubt that “He died for me.”

**IS YOUR ALL ON THE ALTAR?  
THE QUEST FOR WESLEYAN PERFECTION  
IN CAMPUS REVIVALS AT  
OBERLIN AND WHEATON COLLEGES**

by

**Louis B. Gallien, Jr.**

*Now let me gain perfection's heights  
Now let me into nothing fall!  
Be less than nothing in my sight  
And feel that Christ is all in all.*

Charles Wesley, *The Promise of Sanctification*,  
London, England, January 27, 1767

On January 1, 1733, John Wesley delivered a sermon to parishioners and university students at Oxford's St. Mary's Church on the subject of the "circumcision of the heart." He offered his view that Christians could be perfectly cleansed from sin and challenged his parishioners to be "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect" (Wesley, 1767, 203). This sermon was delivered a year before he would land in Savannah, Georgia. The impact that his ministry had in the United States and around the world is widely known. What many do not realize, however, are the numerous ways that Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection came to be interpreted and spread throughout college campuses in New England, the Midwest, and Upper South of the United States (Sprague, 1832).

My focus purpose here is to trace aspects of Wesleyan "perfectionism" by examining revivals at two Christian colleges in the Midwest

where institutional leaders were well-known preachers, professors, abolitionists, and political activists who embraced much of the Wesleyan doctrine on sanctification. I am referring to Charles Grandison Finney, second President of Oberlin College (and without doubt this country's commanding revivalist of the mid-nineteenth century) and Jonathan Blanchard, the second President of both Knox and Wheaton Colleges in Illinois, professor, preacher, political activist, and an infamous crusader against secret societies. Both of these men were heavily influenced by the Wesleyan-Holiness Movement and their campuses were impacted in different ways by their own interpretations of holiness and "perfection."

In 1994 I was asked by Donald Dayton, an eminent Wesleyan scholar, to trace these Wesleyan-Holiness roots for a Pew-funded project entitled: *Methodism and the Fragmentation of American Protestantism*. The ensuing conference was held at Asbury Theological Seminary in the Fall of 1995 and, according to Garth Rosell, a church historian at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, I was the first researcher to write about the eight-year existence of the Wheaton Seminary (1881-1889) that was sponsored and funded by the Wesleyan Church. That was not my only discovery. While perusing the Wheaton College archives, I came across a limited edition diary of the first recorded female of Wheaton College who was ordained by a mainline denomination (Baptist) on April 2, 1885. Rev. Frances Townsley was a traveling preacher to the Western borders of the United States and an infrequent speaker at revival services at Wheaton College (Townsley, 1908). By the time I finished my year-long search for those lost Wesleyan roots, I made some rather strong connections, not only to the Wesleyan Church's influence on Wheaton College, but, more lastingly, to the doctrine of Christian perfection that pervaded the ethos and institutional sagas of both Oberlin and Wheaton Colleges (Gallien, 1995).

### **Oberlin College**

As many historians have noted, Oberlin College was founded more as a "cause" than a college (Zikmund, 1969). It began in 1833 in the northern frontier of Ohio and was founded by John J. Shipherd and a motley crew of New England Congregationalists. They were seeking to establish a colony of believers whose lives centered on complete surrender to God's Word and undergirded by strict behavioral, dietary, and social guidelines. The First Congregational Church was founded at the same time. College and campus activities were intertwined between Tappan

Hall and the church. Most if not all of the early professors and students attended this campus church where Charles Finney preached on countless and memorable occasions (Fletcher, 1943).

The early causes of Oberlin College were not much different from the causes championed by the college at present, namely the continuing emancipation and commitment to full societal rights of African Americans and women. Oberlin was unique among liberal arts colleges in that its first college charter stated that the college would enroll both women and blacks—a first for any educational institution in the country. This came in direct defiance of societal norms and, at that time, regional laws that restricted the formal education of blacks and women. As a result, the college has retained a “radical” image and ethos ever since its founding. However, the “radical” agenda of the college took a slow and sure turn during the Progressive Era, a turn from a preoccupation with saving souls to a strong commitment to the Social Gospel.

It is clear from any recent visit to the campus that the tokens of the college’s strong evangelical commitment to personal salvation, revivals, and Christian perfection have long been stored in the archives of Mudd Library or relegated to the religious artifacts in the extant First Congregational Church. What remains from the nineteenth century is the reputation Oberlin nourished as an institution that attracts bright, studiously committed, and socially activist students. As an Oberlin proverb states: *You can always tell an Oberlin graduate, but you can’t tell her much*. One only needs to read the accomplishments of Oberlin graduates in any of the campus alumni magazines to gain glimpses of their continuing commitments to social and political change. An Oberlin colleague of mine once proclaimed, “Our causes run deeper than our careers” (Barnard, 1969).

## Wheaton College

Wheaton College was first established as Illinois Institute in 1853 by a group of Wesleyan Methodists who had established themselves as a distinct denomination at Sixth Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, where Jonathan Blanchard was a preacher in 1843. Like Oberlin, the Institute began with many of the same causes championed by Oberlin twenty years previously: open admissions to blacks and women, anti-slavery, anti-masonry, and strict behavioral codes for students. While it was not initially like a Christian colony (the town of Wheaton had preceded the college’s beginnings), it did maintain strong “town-gown” relationships among the

former New Englanders that founded the village a few decades earlier (Bechtel, 1984). The College Church of Christ, which met in the first college building, contained most of the college's professors, and students and the resident preacher was also the College President. This established the three languages that members of the college still refer to today as the conjoined and conflicting language patterns of church, college, and business. This all-encompassing community was reinforced by codes of behavior that exist to this day. Conversely, Oberlin's contemporary code of behavior may be summed up in a word: tolerance.

By 1859 the institution was nearly bankrupt and leadership was handed over by Charles Winship, an Oberlin graduate, to a proven presidential leader, Jonathan Blanchard, who had recently fled Knox College after bitter rows with the founding Gale family and the "liberal" Presbyterian church in Galesburg, Illinois. Blanchard left Knox with a \$100,000 endowment and a relatively new College Hall which was one of the locations for the Lincoln-Douglas debates years earlier. Blanchard had hoped that the nearby Congregational Churches in the Chicago area would sponsor the college as one of their own, since he had burned his bridges with the Presbyterians and the Wesleyans were too poor to continue to financially sponsor the college. Eventually, Blanchard would lead the college to a permanent interdenominational future, as would be Oberlin's eventual path, since no one denomination could compete either with Blanchard or Finney's egos or coalesce around their idiosyncratic political and social agendas (Kilby, 1959; Askew, 1969; Taylor, 1977).

Utilizing the same methods that Oberlin had established years before, Wheaton College began attracting a student body very similar to Oberlin's: a visionary, "martyr-age" group of men and women who were fueled by the postmillennial vision of Finney and Blanchard, that of a "perfect state of society." Thus, it was the quest for perfection that drove (and still drives) a perfectionist-oriented group of students at both institutions (K. Cumings, J. G. Haworth, O'Neill, 2001). If one examines the Wheaton College's alumni magazine, one would think one were reading from the same pages of its counterpart at Oberlin—a rarified group of committed graduates who are steeped in religious, political, and social causes.

The same is true of Wheaton's current student body. The office of student affairs has over fifty student-run organizations that reach out to diverse communities such as prison ministries and tutoring inner-city chil-

dren in Chicago. Of equal importance is their relationship to God. While the college “pledge” no longer contains the exhaustive list of social restrictions it once had, there are just enough for students to have a challenging mental list of guidelines to govern their four years in residence. Coupled with careful admissions selection, admissions officers looking for a “fit”, the college tends to replicate the drive for perfection through mandatory chapel services, Bible courses, and countless extra-curricular spiritual activities. Taken together, these programs perpetuate an ethos of doctrinal and personal “purity” among its constituents. However, in the Progressive Era (as Timothy Smith and George Marsden have chronicled so well), the college became immersed in the fundamentalist movement and rarely engaged the intellectual forces of the day (i.e., Darwin, Marx, Freud, biblical criticism) as it went decidedly “underground” in American higher education for decades (Dayton, 1976, Smith, 1980, Marsden, 1982).

### **Doctrine of Christian Perfection**

In relationship to Wesley’s doctrine of Christian Perfection, we have in view, then, two intensely reform-oriented educational, social, and religious communities that were ripe for Wesley’s call for entire sanctification. For the Oberlin community, the quest for Wesleyan perfection began during the revival in the Fall of 1836 when a student asked Asa Mahan, Oberlin College’s first President (with Charles Finney attending as a professor) if it were possible for a Christian to live a morally sanctified life. While Mahan declared, “yes,” he knew in his heart that he had not attained to such a spiritual state. After deliberating on Scripture and relying on prayerful guidance, Mahan concluded that a “second baptism” of the Holy Spirit was necessary for a believer to experience a life of full sanctity. At the time, Mahan did not realize that this crisis was very close to Wesleyan terminology of the “second blessing” (Madden and Hamilton, 1982). He began, with Finney, a three-year examination of working his way through the covenant of holiness and the Wesleyan doctrine of perfection. Coincidentally, Jonathan Blanchard, a Presbyterian minister at the time (and a recent seminary graduate of Lane Seminary, a radical abolitionist institution that was filled with Oberlin graduates), spoke to the 1839 commencement crowd of nearly a thousand on “A Perfect State of Society.” He outlined a postmillennial vision that challenged the graduates to perfect their lives and callings. Blanchard stayed on in Oberlin for two weeks and later declared:

The commencement seemed like one sweet and holy protracted meeting. . . . They [the graduates] exhibited an acquaintance with the languages, not a whit inferior to the corresponding classes in Middlebury College and Andover Theological Seminary, in both institutions I have been a student. . . . What strikes a stranger most on visiting Oberlin is the simplicity of their confidence in Christ and the singleness of their fear of God. . . . It is that childlike trust in Christ. . . . While I was there, it seemed the pervading spirit of the place (Blanchard, 1839).

As Roger Green explained, Finney's later belief that Wesleyan sanctification, while experienced by the individual, had social ramifications. Only a holy people, whose moral character manifested itself in holy actions, could do a holy work. And that work demanded a reconstructed society (Green, 1993).

The idea that a completely sanctified community was needed to bring about the larger millennial society held enormous appeal for Finney and Blanchard. What Blanchard struggled with, however, was the idea that the second experience—promoted by Mahan and later Finney as the baptism of the Holy Spirit—directly led to entire sanctification and the lessening of the will to sin in one's life. Blanchard wrestled with this doctrine for the rest of his life and came to no definitive conclusion. However, his particular brand of "perfectionism" was rooted in social and political reforms coupled with strict behavioral standards, replacing the *act* of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with a *code* of behavior as a visible measure of one's commitment to holiness. The various political reforms were written into the church's ordinances so there could be no mistake regarding the political and social stands of the church, and thus at least implicitly the standards of the college, since most were members of the College Church of Christ (Gallien, 1995).

### **Early Campus Revivals at Oberlin College**

Beginning with a strict behavioral code of discipline (and, in Finney's colony, dietary guidelines as well), both Blanchard and Finney sought to mold collegiate reformers through a classical education, frequent revivals, and a burning commitment to social and political reform. Revivals in the Wesleyan tradition were for the purposes of leading men and women into a closer walk and identification with Christ, either for the



first time, or as a renewed public commitment away from a life of sin into Christian perfection through the work of the Holy Spirit. Note this way of relating revivals and a college education:

The really effective agency of religion in the life of the colleges was the revival, that almost unexplainable combination of confession, profession, joy and tears which brought many young college men into the ministry. Most college presidents and college faculties of this era felt that they—or God—had failed a collegiate generation if once during its four years in college there did not occur a rousing revival (Rudolph, 1962, 77-78).

Finney stated in his *Memoirs* that he “had known considerable of the view of sanctification entertained by our Methodist brethren” (Rosell and DuPuis, 1989, 391). As Dupuis writes:

The development of holiness at Oberlin was just part of a much wider perfectionist movement that emerged out of the New Measures revivals of the 1830’s, which eventually largely gathered round John Humphrey Noyes. One of the earliest people to come out as a perfectionist in New York in about 1828 was James Latourette, who had been a Methodist. . . . Finney knew many of these people and had met Noyes himself (DuPuis, 2002).

The 1836 Oberlin Revival was led by Asa Mahan and Charles Finney. While Mahan preached, Finney actually took mental notes and later elaborated on Mahan’s address to the students in First Church and their reactions:

I recollect the Holy Spirit fell upon the congregation in a most remarkable manner. A large number of persons dropped down their heads, and some of them groaned so that they could be heard all over the house. It cut up the false hopes of deceived professors on every side. Several of them arose on the spot, and said that they had been deceived, and that they could see wherein; and this was carried to such an extent as greatly astonished me, and indeed produced a general feeling of astonishment. . . . However, it was reality, and very plainly a revelation of the state of the heart of the people made by the Spirit of God. The work went on with power; and old professors either obtained a new hope or were reconverted in such

numbers that a very great and important change came over the whole community (Rosell and DuPuis, 1989, 407-408).

Both Finney and Blanchard viewed revival as a personal and corporate commitment to action and the Oberlin community was set on fire with political activism as a result of the revival. The colony attacked not only slavery but racism in the state of Ohio as its members condemned unjust laws against black citizens. Community leaders denounced male exploitation of women and their exclusion from the ministry and formal education. They also lobbied against unnecessary foreign wars and invasions for nationalistic purposes. Finney was especially insistent on stopping land speculation in which so many Mid-western farmers were engaged (Smith, 1978).

It was during this era that a student exclaimed: "If you threw a rock in any direction of Oberlin's campus, you would hit a prayer meeting" (Crunken, 1982). The search for perfection was not limited to the church; it was also demanded in the classroom. As Garth Rosell points out:

Finney's classes were enormously demanding. The expectations which he placed upon his students were heavy. "Do not suppose that you can run about without study or reflection during the week—that you can engage in light reading and frivolous conversation, and for any length of time, interest your people on the Sabbath. You must be deeply studious men. You must think much, think correctly, and see that you are master of every subject, before you present it to your people (Rosell, 64).

Not all students were enthralled by the perfectionist environment that Finney engendered. While I was doing research in Special Collections, I uncovered a letter from a Wheaton, Illinois, townspeople named Lemira Langille, an Oberlin graduate, in which she reminisced about her college days at Oberlin. In one paragraph regarding Finney, she wrote:

One windy day I was passing the house of President Finney. He was in the front yard. Just then my veil [which she was wearing to shield her face from the sun] blew up exposing my face. He called out "Sinners hide their faces!" It was a long time before I forgave him for that impertinence (Langille, 1933).

These revivals, however, fueled the drive for perfection in ALL areas of life. This led Finney, Blanchard, and their students to nervous and physi-

cal exhaustion (not to mention the exhaustion of Finney's three wives!). In this regard, Wheaton College and its president mirrored the same revival methods and personal characteristics of Finney and the Oberlin community (Sweet, 1983).

### **Wheaton College Revival—Early Years**

While neither the commanding revivalist like Finney nor a convinced second-baptized "perfectionist" like Mahan, Jonathan Blanchard nevertheless followed patterns of revival similar to those at Oberlin College. During his first years in office, Blanchard personally led spiritual revivals during each academic year. It must be remembered that neither Wheaton nor Oberlin insisted that admission to the college be tied to a student's profession of faith. So, it was always assumed that there were a certain number of students who did not possess a personal faith in Christ. Revival, then, was another method of evangelization. If the President were fortunate, students would commit to "Christ as Lord" all of their lives and thus move towards, as Blanchard stated, "holiness."

Blanchard experienced several physical breakdowns. The first one in 1867 necessitated, under doctor's orders, a prolonged trip out West with his eldest son and eventual presidential successor, Charles Albert. Blanchard made it a point to invite Wesleyan-Holiness evangelists and speakers to hold student revival meetings. One of the more memorable ones was held by a former Wheaton student, Frances Townsley, who received Blanchard's total support for her eventual ordination to the ministry (Kilby, 1959).

By 1866 Wheaton sponsored a week of prayer that had been propagated earlier by religious institutions across the state of Illinois. Almost every church-sponsored college held these weeks of prayer at the beginning of their academic years. Blanchard also had professors at the college lead such meetings:

This gracious work is of a quiet, permanent character, and it is more interesting since it is carried on without the leadership of a pastor or evangelist, the professors of the College and other members of the church conducting all the meetings as well as the Sabbath services (Blanchard, 1879).

There was also a noticeable tie to the College Church, which would be surprisingly re-visited in the Revival of 1995.

As an outgrowth of these revivals, Wheaton Seminary was begun in 1881 by one of the college's first graduates, L. N. Stratton, an influential member of the Wheaton College Board, Wesleyan preacher, and the editor of the *American Wesleyan*, and President of the Wesleyan Educational Society. At least one-third of the seminary students were women who were committed to political and social activism, as was evident in their graduation orations. Many centered their speeches on women's rights, women's suffrage, and, women's sphere of influence in the church. When the seminary had to close in eight years due to financial hardships and the "collapse" of L. N. Stratton, three women alumnae had been ordained in mainline denominations (Gallien, 1995).

The revival patterns at both colleges were very similar: (1) The college administration sponsored the initial gathering; (2) It was led by members of the college and/or church staffs; (3) It began with conversions; and, afterwards; (4) It led to confession, repentance and forgiveness—all done in an open and public environment in church buildings that were similarly designed after Finney's Broadway Tabernacle in New York City. The effect of the oval design was dramatic, especially in regards to revival meetings, as any speaker from the pulpit could clearly see each member of the congregation.

A kindred spirit to Finney's fiery style, Blanchard was not universally admired as a revivalist:

I don't like Dr. Blanchard's preaching. He is very rigid and unyielding in his teachings, and inclined to press and coerce by fulminating the terror of the law, those whose belief differs from his own. He is at the opposite extreme from liberal Christianity as represented by Beecher. . . . I don't like to hear a man declare himself authoritative and send to Hell all who differ from him. The iron bedstead is an instrument of the past (Maas, 1996, 37).

As the Progressive Era neared, revivals in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition at Wheaton and Oberlin waned and were replaced by chapel speakers who emphasized "spiritual renewal." As Oberlin continued its turn towards Social Gospel issues and farther away from evangelicalism, the religious tone and tenor differed sharply from Wheaton's. Concurrently, as Wheaton grew in number and denominational diversity (and developed more rigorous academic standards), the college's revivals evolved into more inclusive events with titles like "Spiritual Emphasis Week." The era

of revivals lasting for unabated days were numbered and from 1945-1995, Wheaton College sponsored no revivals of any significance.

The closest assemblages that Oberlin could rally around in the twentieth century (that could be compared to revivals at Wheaton) were the numerous student demonstrations, sit-ins and teach-ins that were part and parcel of the Civil Rights/Vietnam/Women's Rights Era of the 1960s and 1970s in "protest-friendly" college and university communities. Indeed, if one would throw a rock in any direction in that era on campus, one may well have hit one of those assemblies. Oberlin is proud of its continuing heritage of societal and political activism that was born in the Finney era, and the college can be counted on as a "safe" harbor for dissent and dissenters (Blodgett, 1972).

### **Revival in a Postmodern Context: The 1995 Wheaton Revival**

On March 19, 1995, World Christian Fellowship, a student organization that meets every Sunday night on the campus of Wheaton College to sing, pray and hear a speaker with an emphasis on global evangelization, experienced a Wesleyan revival for four consecutive days and nights. Students from Howard Payne University were the featured guests on that Sunday night. A WCF student leader, Matt Yarrington, introduced them as students who had recently experienced an outpouring of God's grace several weeks prior. After the students testified to their experiences in Pierce Chapel (the building where the last revival of 1950 had taken place), microphones were set up on either side of the aisles in order for students to ask questions of the Howard Payne students.

These two student representatives from each addressed final words to the 800-900 students in attendance. One young lady stated: "I don't know what Wheaton wants or needs. I have no idea what God is doing here, but I do pray that you all can experience the tremendous blessing we received at Howard Payne." After she finished, her male counterpart spoke about his experience of confession, reconciliation with God, inner peace from the Holy Spirit and a sense of heightened relationship with his fellow students. He prayed that Wheaton students would receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. With open microphones awaiting them, students came one by one to confess sins that ranged from pride to sexual deviation. Some students formed prayer groups, others left to tell others what was happening at Pierce and the revival began to "take hold" (Beougher and Dorsett, 1995, 75-83).

I was a professor at Wheaton at the time and I remember clearly hearing of the revival the next morning. I made no attempt to go over to the old chapel since I did not want to hear some of the more horrific confessions, especially by students who could have been in my classes. The revival went on until Thursday night and by then I felt I had to experience the “wrap-up” session. The interesting historical footnote to the four-day event was that the crowds became so large that they had to ask permission to hold the event in the neighboring, newly-constructed chapel of the historic College Church. Ironically, the design of the chapel closely resembled both Broadway Tabernacle in New York City and First Congregational Church in Oberlin, Ohio, both edifices inspired by Finney’s “New Measures” of revival and evangelism. The oval sanctuary was a perfect location to end the revival. All eyes were riveted to the platform and the music and confessions were taking place there. To me, the last night was a page out of a traditional Wesleyan-inspired revival, with a lot of singing and testifying.

The ensuing discussions on campus became a great source of controversy. It became clear to me that there were multiple interpretations of what students and professors thought had transpired. While the Wesleyan-Holiness theme and involvement of professors and students who were from those or other Pentecostal traditions held a dominant hermeneutical perspective, many students from different denominational groups held very different views on the meaning of revival and the “role” of the Holy Spirit. My personal, anecdotal synopsis from some of those classroom (and out of class) discussions and analyses are:

1. For most Baptists and Methodists, the revival coincided with the springtime, a season that is historically synonymous with their respective denominational revivals. Students from the South were especially comfortable with the events.
2. Pentecostal/Charismatic groups were pleased that a revival had manifested itself on campus, but there was no direct evidence of student’s receiving the supernatural gifts of the Spirit; neither did any of the platform leaders display such gifts. Therefore, the revival did not go far enough.
3. The most amusing evaluation came from a Reformed student who stated that the revival was a result of a collective nervous breakdown among type-A students who long ago

needed some emotional release. Revivals need not be normative for a Reformed Christian.

4. Sacramentalists asked: What is a revival?
5. Anabaptists replied that only people who were steeped in a wicked world would need reviving;
6. For the vast majority of those who were not directly involved in the revival, or, those who were from non-denominational backgrounds, their response was one of “let’s wait and see” which was, by far, the majority view of most students at Wheaton College, including its president.

The aftermath was clearly a turning point in Wheaton’s history of revivals. The fact that many were not sure if it was Spirit-led or man-contrived led to some interesting discussions regarding the face and nature of revival in the twentieth century. Indeed, one student was so upset that he talked a senior administrative official into allowing him to address the faculty at our next meeting. The ensuing meeting was a particularly embarrassing event as the student upbraided the faculty on their lack of support for the revival and even called into question their spiritual commitments. Since many faculty members held the same conflicted views as previously described by students, it would have been close to impossible for professors to view the events any differently from their student counterparts.

The students who participated in the revival were very clear about its significance in their lives. The most ubiquitous comment I heard was the sense of relief they felt in unloading their “closeted” sins. Many of them felt as though they were living in an environment that would quarter no public confession of sin or wrongdoing, thus, they would have to either wear a façade or go “underground” in some of their activities that were considered neither spiritual, Christian-oriented, or in accord with the campus behavioral codes. This was not a new dilemma for a college that was born into an era of Wesleyan-Holiness revivalism. The quest for perfection in every area of student lives was demanded by the first president, professors, evangelists and students themselves and had been passed down through five generations of Wheaton students. Thus, for many of the participants, the revival represented a legitimately Christian form of public confession accompanied by relief that their lives, for at least one night, could be perfectly clean.

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# SEEK NOT, FORBID NOT: THE EARLY CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE POSITION ON GLOSSOLALIA

by

Paul L. King

In 1963 The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) adopted a position on glossolalia in a statement called *The Gift of Tongues—Seek Not, Forbid Not*.<sup>1</sup> Citing founder A. B. Simpson, the statement recognizes that speaking in tongues is a genuine gift of the Spirit, and thus should not be forbidden. At the same time, it maintains that tongues is not the evidence of the filling of the Spirit, is not God's plan that all speak in tongues, and is not to be sought.

While this statement does not claim that Simpson specifically coined the axiom "Seek not, forbid not," many have assumed that the phrase was Simpson's words. It has thus been reported in several studies on the relationship of the C&MA to early Pentecostalism.<sup>2</sup> A more recent study by Charles Nienkirchen entitled *A. B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement* documented tongues and other charismatic manifestations in the early C&MA, and was correct in determining that Simpson did not coin the phrase.<sup>3</sup> However, he went farther by maintaining that the "Seek not,

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<sup>1</sup>*The Gift of Tongues—Seek Not, Forbid Not* (Nyack, NY: The Christian and Missionary Alliance, n.d.)

<sup>2</sup>See Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), 145.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 139-140.

forbid not” policy was not the position of Simpson and the early Alliance, but rather was the invention of A. W. Tozer in 1963. Citing Simpson’s diary and some of Simpson’s alleged comments to Pentecostal leaders, Nienkirchen claims that Simpson was, in fact, a seeker of tongues and that Tozer was a revisionist of Alliance history, coining the “Seek Not, Forbid Not” phrase.<sup>4</sup> His claims have since been accepted and perpetuated in more recent studies on the Alliance and the Pentecostal movements.<sup>5</sup> However, the reaction of Alliance leader Richard Bailey was to declare that Nienkirchen is a revisionist for claiming that Simpson was a seeker of tongues.<sup>6</sup> Pentecostal historian Grant Wacker is more hesitant to go as far as Nienkirchen’s conclusion that Simpson’s diary proves him to be a seeker of tongues, saying, “Admittedly, Simpson’s language is elliptical, but taken together there can be little doubt that he sought all the gifts of the Spirit, including tongues if the Lord willed it.”<sup>7</sup>

What then is the truth? Did Simpson and the early Alliance teach the “seek not, forbid not” doctrine? Or, did Simpson really seek tongues? Was Tozer a revisionist as Nienkirchen claims? An in-depth study of the documents of the early Alliance between 1906 and Simpson’s death in 1919 overwhelmingly demonstrate that Simpson and early Alliance leaders did indeed maintain a kind of “seek not, forbid not” position, even if not precisely stated in these very words. Between 1906 and 1919 there were at least 26 cautionary statements by Simpson and his associates in

<sup>4</sup>Nienkirchen, 131-140.

<sup>5</sup>See Synan’s revised edition, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 147; Edith L. Bumhofer, *The Assemblies of God: A Chapter in the Story of American Pentecostalism, Volume 1—To 1941* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1989), 185; John A. Bertone, “A. B. Simpson and The Experience of Glossolalia: ‘To Seek or Not to Seek, To Forbid or Not to Forbid?’, accessed on the Internet, December 18, 2001, at <http://online.cbccts.sk.ca/alliancestudies/docs/SimpsonGloss.htm>; David John Smith, “Albert Benjamin Simpson: An Integrated Spirituality with Christ as the Centre,” (Belleville, Ontario, December 15, 1997, revised February 9, 1998), 17, accessed on the Internet Feb. 25, 2002 at [http://online.cbccts.sk.ca/alliancestudies/dsmith/djs\\_spirituality.html](http://online.cbccts.sk.ca/alliancestudies/dsmith/djs_spirituality.html).

<sup>6</sup>Hartzfeld and Nienkirchen, eds., *The Birth of a Vision*, 164. The statement by Bailey is an editorial note inserted by the publisher in the second printing of the book. For a discussion of this matter, see Paul L. King, “A Critique of Charles Nienkirchen’s book *A. B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement*,” *Alliance Academic Review* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 2000), 101-114.

<sup>7</sup>Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA; London, Eng.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 317, note 27.

C&MA periodicals, documents and correspondence not to seek after or pursue gifts or manifestations (13 by Simpson himself),<sup>8</sup> and at least nine instances counseling readers not to forbid, oppose, or despise tongues.<sup>9</sup> As early as 1883, soon after launching his healing ministry, Simpson nonetheless warned against a “wonder-seeking spirit,”<sup>10</sup> and would continue to do so throughout his lifetime.

<sup>8</sup>See A.B. Simpson, “All the Blessings of the Spirit,” *Christian and Missionary Alliance Weekly* (CMAW), Sept. 29, 1906, 198; Joseph Smale, “The Gift of Tongues,” *Living Truths*, Jan. 1907, 32-43; J. Hudson Ballard, “Spiritual Gifts with Special Reference to the Gift of Tongues,” *Living Truths*, Jan. 1907, 23-31; reported by Simpson in Editorial, CMAW, Jan. 26, 1907, 1; William T. MacArthur, “The Promise of the Father and Speaking with Tongues in Chicago,” CMAW, Feb. 16, 1907, 76; A.B. Simpson, Editorial, CMAW, Mar. 2, 1907, 97; A.B. Simpson, “Spiritual Sanity,” *Living Truths*, April 1907; A.B. Simpson, Editorial, CMAW, June 29, 1907, 301; Editorial, *The India Alliance*, Aug. 1907, 19; Arthur T. Pierson, “Speaking with Tongues,” *The India Alliance*, Aug. 1907, 19-21; A.B. Simpson, “Lengthening the Cords and Strengthening the Stakes,” CMAW, Aug. 10, 1907, 62; Mary Mullen, “Some Danger Lines,” CMAW, Nov. 2, 1907, 75; Baron Waldemar Uxkull, “Experiences of God’s Grace in Russia,” CMAW, Jan. 11, 1908, 245; C. J. Moon, “The Receiving of the Holy Ghost,” CMAW, Feb. 22, 1908, 344; “South China,” CMAW, Aug. 1, 1908, 287-289; A. J. Ramsey, “Speaking in Tongues: An Exegetical Study,” CMAW, April 4, 1908, 7, 17; A.B. Simpson, “Annual Report of the C&MA 1907-1908,” CMAW, 155-56, 193; A. B. Simpson, “What Hath God Wrought?,” CMAW, June 13, 1908, 170; A. B. Simpson, “Side Issues and the Supreme Object of Life,” CMAW, Sept. 12, 1908, 416; John Boyd, “Seated with Christ,” CMAW, Jan. 16, 1909, 261ff.; Edgar K. Sellow, “I Am Not Satisfied,” CMAW, Oct. 23, 1909, 60; Mary E. McDonough, “The Harvest Rain,” CMAW, Feb. 5, 1910, 297, 305; N. H. Harriman, “*War on the Saints*”: An Analytical Study, Part III,” *The Alliance Weekly* (AW), Jan. 10, 1914, 231; Anna O. Eldridge, “Purified and Tried,” AW, Sept. 4, 1915, 357; Letter from A. B. Simpson to Mrs. M. A. Weaver, Sept. 1916.

<sup>9</sup>J. Hudson Ballard, “Spiritual Gifts with Special Reference to the Gift of Tongues,” *Living Truths*, Jan. 1907, 23-31; reported by Simpson in Editorial, CMAW, Jan. 26, 1907, 1; Editorial, *The India Alliance*, Aug. 1907, 19; Arthur T. Pierson, “Speaking with Tongues,” *The India Alliance*, Aug. 1907, 19-21; A. B. Simpson, “Side Issues and the Supreme Object of Life,” CMAW, Sept. 12, 1908, 416; John Boyd, “Seated with Christ,” CMAW, Jan. 16, 1909, 261ff.; Editorial, *The India Alliance*, May 1909, 103; J. Hudson Ballard, “The Spiritual Clinic,” AW, Mar. 2, 1912, 343; J. Hudson Ballard, “Studies in I Corinthians,” AW, June 20, 1914, 198-199; June 27, 1914, 214-215; A. E. Thompson, “The Corinthian Epistles: Spiritual Gifts and Graces,” AW, Feb. 12, 1916, 315-316; A. E. Thompson, “The Corinthian Epistles: The Use, Abuse and Value of Gifts,” AW, Feb. 26, 1916, 341.

<sup>10</sup>A. E. Thompson, *A. B. Simpson: His Life and Work* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1960, revised edition, 140. In February, 1891, at a

### Caveats to a “Seek Not” Position

We must acknowledge that there are a few caveats, or seeming contradictions, to this “seek not” position in early Alliance writings. First of all, in 1893, thirteen years before the advent of the Pentecostal movement, Simpson did indeed advocate seeking gifts of the Spirit. Simpson writes of 1 Corinthians 12 that all the *charismata* may be expected throughout the entire church age and are “designed to be *zealously sought*, cherished and cultivated” (italics mine).<sup>11</sup> It cannot be denied that Simpson here strongly encourages *seeking* charismatic gifts. His use of the word “zealously” suggests his knowledge of the Greek verb *zeeloo*, translated “*covet earnestly* the best gifts” in 1 Corinthians 12:31 in the King James Version (also in 1 Corinthians 14:1, 12, 39). However, we need to look at his statement in the context of his times, and also in the context of his later statements. Once we do that, we can see that this is an isolated reference. We never see him making a statement like that again. At that time, Simpson was encouraging full and active receptivity to the gifts of the Spirit in a context in which such supernatural gifts had, for the most part, not been experienced. However, because of excesses in “seeking” after the Azusa Street revival of 1906, in later statements he tempers his words and never again says that gifts are to be “zealously sought.”

Second, in January, 1905, Harriett Bainbridge wrote an article in the *Christian and Missionary Alliance Weekly* on “Gifts of the Spirit,” urging readers to wait diligently on the Lord, seeking His face for the manifestation and exercise of all nine gifts of the Spirit.<sup>12</sup> Here the language of seeking is used in relationship to the gifts. Yet it is not directly seeking gifts, but seeking *God* for the gifts. Again, all the gifts of the Spirit had not been in operation, so it was a seeking to restore the functioning of *all* of the gifts to their originally intended state. Nonetheless, we must admit that a type of seeking is involved here. Alliance leaders felt it was quite appropriate to pray earnestly for all the gifts to be manifested.

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C&MA-related meeting in Maine, people fell under power and some unconscious for hours. But the article also *cautioned against seeking such manifestations*, citing false prophecies given in similar conditions (probably referring to the false West Coast predictions). Meetings in Maine,” CAMW, Apr. 17, 1891, 241-242; C. S. Carter, “An Explanation,” CAMW, May 1, 1891, 274.

<sup>11</sup>A. B. Simpson, “Words of Cheer for Christian Workers,” CAMW, April 28, 1893, 295.

<sup>12</sup>Harriett S. Bainbridge, “Gifts of the Spirit,” CMAW, Jan. 7, 1905, 2.

In May, 1906, shortly after the Pentecostal outbreak at Azusa Street, but probably before he had heard much of anything about it, Simpson advised “all seekers after truth to ‘try the spirits’ and ‘discern the things that differ.’”<sup>13</sup> Simpson speaks of “seekers after truth” as a positive kind of seeking, so long as they exercise discernment. The seeking he advocates here is not after manifestations, but after truth.

Another exception is found in J. Hudson Ballard’s statement on tongues published by Simpson in January, 1907, in *Living Truths*, republished by the Alliance later in the year as part of the book *Signs of the Times* as an official response to the Pentecostal movement, and repeated in 1934. In this official Alliance document, Ballard does mention seeking in a limited context: “We are never directed to pray for the gift of tongues, although we are told to *seek* some of the higher gifts (chapter 12:31, chapter 14:1).”<sup>14</sup> Speaking for the Alliance as a whole, Ballard hermeneutically and exegetically considered “seeking” appropriate for the gift of prophecy and other “higher” gifts, but not for tongues.

Yet another exception is found in 1908 when the editor of *The India Alliance* wrote positively about “those who have *sought for* and received a portion of the latter rain,” saying that they “testify with new power,” and exhorting, “with a sincere and open heart let us *seek* for all the fullness of God.”<sup>15</sup> Here, again, the seeking is not for specific gifts, but for “all the fullness of God” that is the believer’s privilege and expectation as a part of the latter rain, which God was pouring out upon His people. Numerous other similar exceptions could be cited.

As a further caveat, some would cite 1 Corinthians 14:1, “Desire earnestly the greater gifts,” arguing that to “desire earnestly” or to “covet” (Gr., *zeeloo*) is the same as to “seek.” Therefore, the language of seeking or desiring is merely semantical and thus begging the question. While not specifically critiquing the C&MA position, Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson, in their book *Empowered Evangelicals*, critique a “seek not” position in general:

But the phrase “Seek the giver, not the gifts” deserves closer examination. As stated, the advice is not biblical. St. Paul

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<sup>13</sup>A. B. Simpson, Editorial, *Living Truths*, May, 1906, 257-258.

<sup>14</sup>J. Hudson Ballard, “The Gift of Tongues,” *Signs of the Times* (New York, NY: Alliance Press Co., 1907), 156.

<sup>15</sup>Editorial, *The India Alliance*, June, 1908, 139.

explicitly urged us to “eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Cor. 14:1). This echoes his earlier encouragement to “eagerly desire the greater gifts” (1 Cor. 12:31). Perhaps it would be better (though less pithy) to say, “Seek the gifts because of the giver, but never instead of the giver.” The motto “Seek the giver, not the gifts” often reveals a passive, even fatalistic approach to asking for the things God has to give. . . . But the Bible encourages us to ask.<sup>16</sup>

### The Meaning of “Seek Not” in the Early Alliance

Did, then, the early Alliance cautionary statements against “seeking” advocate a passive stance toward gifts and manifestations and thus contradict Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1? Some of their writings considered in isolation could seem to indicate so, but when these statements are compared with others, passiveness is not what they had in mind. Actually, early C&MA leaders did not see a contradiction.

First, Ballard maintained that Paul’s exhortations do not advocate seeking a certain gift, such as tongues, but rather earnestly desiring, coveting, or seeking gifts in general, and especially the higher gifts, those that edify others most. Further, the language of Simpson and other early Alliance leaders echo agreement with the clarifications and modifications of Nathan and Wilson above that gifts are not to be sought *instead of* or *more than* God Himself. Note these examples:

- “undue magnifying of any one gift or the seeking of any kind of power *apart from Christ Himself*.”<sup>17</sup>
- “seeking *at any cost* the best gifts.”<sup>18</sup>
- “seeking it *for its own sake rather than* seeking the Spirit Himself.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson, *Empowered Evangelicals* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1995), 120-121.

<sup>17</sup>A. B. Simpson, Editorial, CMAW, March 2, 1907, 97.

<sup>18</sup>A. B. Simpson, Editorial, CMAW, March 16, 1907, 121.

<sup>19</sup>A. B. Simpson, “Spiritual Sanity,” *Living Truths*, April 1907; this was mistakenly titled, “Spiritual Sanctity,” Richard Gilbertson, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit: The Views of A. B. Simpson and His Contemporaries* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1993), 322

- “sought to an extreme degree. . . . There is always danger in *unduly seeking*.”<sup>20</sup>
- “The trouble these days is . . . *straining after them* [manifestations/tongues].”<sup>21</sup>
- “seek for manifestations and peculiar experiences *rather than for God Himself*.”<sup>22</sup>
- “causing them to seek after special manifestations *of other than God Himself*.”<sup>23</sup>
- “When we seek *anything less than God*.”<sup>24</sup>
- “the Blesser *more than* the blessing.”<sup>25</sup>
- “none of these gifts were sought for *in themselves*.”<sup>26</sup>
- “seeking tongues *rather than the Holy Ghost Himself*.”<sup>27</sup>
- “*seeking* for years . . . *seeking* for a physical manifestation when they ought to be witnessing and laboring for souls. . . . *Repeated seeking* and methods never used in the Scriptures have been employed to get all the seekers through to the ‘Bible evidence.’ ”<sup>28</sup>
- “*really want God instead of some gifts*, . . . really are hungry for holiness and the joy life, the clean life, wholly kept from sin.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>A. B. Simpson, “Gifts and Grace,” Toccoa Falls, GA: Toccoa Falls College, n.d.

<sup>21</sup>Mabel Dimock Oldfield, *With You Always, the Life of a South China Missionary* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1958), 89, citing her letters in 1907.

<sup>22</sup>A. B. Simpson, May 1908 Annual Report.

<sup>23</sup>A. B. Simpson, May 1908 Annual Report.

<sup>24</sup>A. B. Simpson, May 1908 Annual Report.

<sup>25</sup>William T. MacArthur, “The Promise of the Father and Speaking with Tongues in Chicago,” CMAW, Feb. 16, 1907, 76.

<sup>26</sup>Mr. S. Armson, “Ashapur, the Village of Hope,” *The India Alliance*, Sept. 1908, 26.

<sup>27</sup>T. J. McCrossan, *Speaking with Other Tongues: Sign or Gift—Which?* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1927), 32.

<sup>28</sup>F. F. Bosworth, *Do All Speak with Tongues?* (Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1918), 13-14.

<sup>29</sup>Paul Rader, *Harnessing God*, 96-97.



These statements are all in harmony with Nathan and Wilson's preferred rendering, "Seek the gifts because of the giver, but never instead of the giver." This is clearly what the early Alliance intended by not seeking, as opposed to a passive attitude.

Through close examination of C&MA documents, it also appears that they did not usually make use of the common King James biblical terminology used in 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1 for *zeeloo*. Although there is not a consistent pattern, they did not ordinarily say, "do not covet" or "do not desire earnestly."<sup>30</sup> Rather, they usually counseled, "do not seek." It would seem that "seeking" was intentionally used to differentiate from the biblical terminology used in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. In fact, in the King James Version, *zeeloo* is never translated as "seek."<sup>31</sup>

The real question to answer, therefore, is: What did the early C&MA mean by not seeking tongues or other manifestations? It is true that some in the C&MA today interpret "seek not" to mean not to desire tongues or have an expectancy of tongues, but to maintain a passive mode. In fact, the attitude in some Alliance circles has been "Seek not, forbid not, and hope not." But this is far from the early C&MA position. Early Alliance leaders encouraged earnestly desiring all that God had to give, including spiritual gifts, but without seeking after a particular manifestation.

In several cases, Alliance leaders used the language of "seeking" as a positive encouragement. W. C. Stevens exhorted, "It is imperative that in these momentous days of opportunity we all become acknowledged *seekers for our personal portion of the latter rain*."<sup>32</sup> Robert Jaffray counseled, "*Seek earnestly for the true and full endowment of the Spirit for which our souls hunger*."<sup>33</sup> Alliance leaders believed in seeking all that God has for each individual believer. William T. MacArthur counseled to seek God, not manifestations, yet "with hearts wide open in the fullest

<sup>30</sup>In a rare exception, one article in 1910 advises, "Keep your eyes away from others. . . . *Do not covet their 'manifestations' or 'gifts.'* Avoid gatherings where psychical manifestations are much in evidence." Mary E. McDonough, "The Harvest Rain," CMAW, Feb. 5, 1910, 297, 305.

<sup>31</sup>A different word group (namely *zeeteo*, *epizeeteo*, *ekzeeteo*, *anazeeteo*) is translated as "seek," and is not used in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, except for 1 Cor. 13:5 (love "seeketh not her own") and 1 Cor. 14:12 ("seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church").

<sup>32</sup>W. C. Stevens, "The Latter Rain," *Living Truths*, September 1907, 530.

<sup>33</sup>Robert Jaffray, "Speaking in Tongues—Some Words of Kindly Counsel," CMAW, Mar. 13, 1909, 395-396, 406.

expectancy.” Significantly, he mentioned that the Alliance message is “The Blessor more than the blessing.” Remarking early in 1907 that in Chicago they have not yet received tongues or special manifestations but will praise God if they do occur, he explains that “we are seeking the fullness of God in a way that is acceptable to Him.”<sup>34</sup> Eventually, after seeking the fullness of God in this manner, some of his church did speak in tongues.<sup>35</sup> Later in August at the Beulah Beach convention, his wife also received tongues. MacArthur’s position was evidently in agreement with Simpson, for Simpson did not issue any qualifications or caveats to MacArthur’s statement as he sometimes did when he did not fully agree with an article. Also Simpson later accepted him as his associate pastor, showing a close kinship with MacArthur.

To Alliance leaders, it was thus appropriate to seek the “fullness of God” in a way that pleases God. That “acceptable” way was understood by the C&MA as not seeking after manifestations, but “to wait expectantly upon Him without fear of fanaticism.” Similarly, in 1907 May Mabette Anderson wrote, “Let us *seek Him, Himself*, in all His satisfying fullness, and let Him give us ‘gifts’ as best pleaseth His heart of love.”<sup>36</sup> *The India Alliance* editor encouraged readers, “Let us not despise the least of God’s gifts. But let us *seek God Himself, not manifestations or gifts*, and He will divide severally to every man as He will. Not the gift but the Giver should occupy our attention.”<sup>37</sup> Likewise, later the same year, Mary Mullen, one-time C&MA missionary to Africa who received tongues, counseled to “*seek Him, not gifts or even graces*, but Him, Him alone.”<sup>38</sup>

Continuing into 1908, Alliance pastor C. J. Moon said that many had received the Holy Spirit with “some mighty manifestation, violent shak-

<sup>34</sup>William T. MacArthur, “The Promise of the Father and Speaking with Tongues in Chicago,” CMAW, Feb. 16, 1907, 76.

<sup>35</sup>MacArthur wrote that in June 1907 tongues had been poured out at the Alliance Tabernacle in Chicago without hysteria. Two people had received tongues, and a week later two more received. He reported, “Those who speak in tongues seem to live in another world,” people were prostrated, and “several were strongly convulsed.” W. T. MacArthur, “The Promise of the Father and Speaking in Tongues in Chicago,” CMAW, July 27, 1907, 44.

<sup>36</sup>May Mabette Anderson, “The ‘Latter Rain,’ and Its Counterfeit,” *Signs of the Times* (New York, NY: Alliance Press Co., 1907), 136.

<sup>37</sup>Editorial, *The India Alliance*, Aug. 1907, 19; Arthur T. Pierson, “Speaking with Tongues,” *The India Alliance*, Aug. 1907, 19-21.

<sup>38</sup>Mary Mullen, “Some Danger Lines,” CMAW, Nov. 2, 1907, 75.

ing of the body, extreme agony and travail for souls, tongues, etc. While *we are not to seek outward manifestations*, yet it is evident from God's Word that we have a right to expect them (Mark 16:20)."<sup>39</sup> Here again, like MacArthur's exhortation, active expectancy of gifts without seeking gifts seems to have been the Alliance norm.

Also in 1908, an *Alliance Weekly* article reported that believers in Russia "are *seeking holiness* in the daily life. They *don't seek special supernatural gifts*; they receive them with awe if God gives them."<sup>40</sup> Likewise, *The India Alliance* noted that, while tongues and interpretation occurred among the boys at the Dholka orphanage, "*none of these gifts were sought for in themselves*—they came as a result of humble confession of sin and failure, and a new and whole-hearted surrender to the Holy Spirit."<sup>41</sup>

### Sovereign Bestowal of Gifts

Simpson and other Alliance leaders from a moderate Reformed position stressed the sovereignty of God in bestowing gifts, as interpreted in 1 Corinthians 12. For example:

- Simpson (Sept. 1906)—"Let the Holy Spirit choose His fitting gifts for us."<sup>42</sup>
- Ballard (Jan. 1907)— "Every Christian should be willing to receive this gift if it please the Spirit to bestow it upon him."<sup>43</sup>
- The *India Alliance* editor (Aug. 1907)—"Let us not despise the least of God's gifts. But let us seek God Himself, not manifestations or gifts, and He will divide severally to every man as He will."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup>C. J. Moon, "The Receiving of the Holy Ghost," CMAW, Feb. 22, 1908, 344.

<sup>40</sup>Baron Waldemar Uxkull, "Experiences of God's Grace in Russia," CMAW, Jan. 11, 1908, 245.

<sup>41</sup>Mr. S. Armson, "Ashapur, the Village of Hope," *The India Alliance*, Sept. 1908, 26.

<sup>42</sup>A. B. Simpson, "All the Blessings of the Spirit," CMAW, Sept. 29, 1906, 198.

<sup>43</sup>J. Hudson Ballard, "Spiritual Gifts with Special Reference to the Gift of Tongues," *Living Truths*, Jan. 1907, 23-31; reported by Simpson in Editorial, CMAW, Jan. 26, 1907, 1.

<sup>44</sup>Editorial, *The India Alliance*, Aug. 1907, 19; Arthur T. Pierson, "Speaking with Tongues," *The India Alliance*, Aug. 1907, 19-21.

- May Mabette Anderson (1907)—“Let us seek Him, Himself, in all His satisfying fullness, and let Him give us ‘gifts’ as best pleaseth His heart of love.”<sup>45</sup>
- A. J. Ramsey (1908)—“all of these signs do not necessarily follow every believer.”<sup>46</sup>

On the basis of this interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12, Alliance leaders believed that speaking in tongues is thus not for all Christians, although this point was not frequently emphasized, occurring only once by Simpson, twice by Ballard, and once by F. F. Bosworth.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, it was implied regularly by appealing to the sovereign will of God.

According to one Pentecostal historian (Brumback), early on in the revival some Alliance leaders apparently believed, at least initially, that everyone could receive tongues. Mrs. William T. MacArthur (wife of C&MA Supt., and later Simpson associate and Board of Managers member) related her experience of tongues, saying that “this was like the ‘residue of the oil’ (Leviticus 14:18, 25) that flowed down upon the hem of Aaron’s robe, and that *God was doing this thing for all who would receive*” (italics mine). E. D. Whiteside was in charge of the prayer room at this particular time and encouraged people not to be afraid of manifestations or fanaticism.<sup>48</sup> He also invited Azusa Street Pentecostal leader Frank Bartleman to speak in his church several times. Apparently, he was encouraging expectation of the gift of tongues, although it is not clear that he was expecting that all could receive. In time, however, the MacArthurs, Whiteside, and other Alliance leaders eventually concluded that it could not be expected that tongues would be bestowed upon all who ask and are willing to receive, as was the experience of Simpson himself.

The central point that Alliance leaders were trying to make was that, while it is appropriate to desire spiritual gifts, it is not necessary or spiri-

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<sup>45</sup>May Mabette Anderson, “The ‘Latter Rain,’ and Its Counterfeit,” *Signs of the Times* (New York, NY: Alliance Press Co., 1907), 136.

<sup>46</sup>A. J. Ramsey, “Speaking in Tongues: An Exegetical Study,” CMAW, April 4, 1908, 7, 17.

<sup>47</sup>J. Hudson Ballard, “Spiritual Gifts with Special Reference to the Gift of Tongues,” *Living Truths*, Jan. 1907, 23-31; reported by Simpson in Editorial, CMAW, Jan. 26, 1907, 1; A. B. Simpson, Editorial, CMAW, April 30, 1910, 78; J. Hudson Ballard, “The Spiritual Clinic,” AW, Mar. 2, 1912, 343; F. F. Bosworth, *Do All Speak with Tongues?* (Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1920?), 13-14.

<sup>48</sup>Brumback, 79-80.

tually healthy to seek after certain manifestations. Simpson recorded Joseph Smale reporting that some people who did not want to speak in tongues, and even opposed tongues, had themselves received the gift.<sup>49</sup>

### The Early Alliance “Forbid Not” Position

The early C&MA was not so focused on a “Seek Not” position that they did not allow or encourage manifestation of tongues and other supernatural gifts of the Spirit. In January 1907, J. Hudson Ballard, in a statement that would be republished later the same year as the official Alliance position, wrote: “(a) The church of Christ today may receive the Gift of Tongues. (b) Every local church of Christ should have, in some of its members, the manifestation of this gift.”<sup>50</sup> Although it is seldom taught in the C&MA today, the early Alliance taught, “Every Christian should be willing to receive this gift if it please the Spirit to bestow it upon him. It is a dangerous thing to oppose or despise this, one of the immediate manifestations of the Blessed Spirit of God.”<sup>51</sup> In 1908, *The India Alliance* editor encouraged readers, “Let us not despise the least of God’s gifts.”<sup>52</sup> The same year, Simpson counseled not to pursue tongues, but neither to criticize or oppose it.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, the following year, Alliance leader John Boyd asserted, “Forbid not the exercise of the least of the gifts by those who have the genuine.”<sup>54</sup>

In spite of the controversies over the Pentecostal movement during the preceding five years, Ballard still wrote in *The Alliance Weekly* in 1912, “Forbidding tongues is fighting against God.” Further, he exhorted, “Let us all be sure we are willing to receive any gift, including the gift of tongues; yet let us leave the matter to the will of the Spirit Himself and be deeply thankful and satisfied with what He chooses to bestow. . . . Let no

<sup>49</sup>Joseph Smale, “The Gift of Tongues,” *Living Truths*, Jan. 1907, 32-43.

<sup>50</sup>J. Hudson Ballard, “Spiritual Gifts with Special Reference to the Gift of Tongues,” *Living Truths*, Jan. 1907, 23-31; reported by Simpson in Editorial, CMAW, Jan. 26, 1907, 1.

<sup>51</sup>J. Hudson Ballard, “Spiritual Gifts with Special Reference to the Gift of Tongues,” *Living Truths*, Jan. 1907, 23-31; reported by Simpson in Editorial, CMAW, Jan. 26, 1907, 1.

<sup>52</sup>Editorial, *The India Alliance*, Aug. 1907, 19; Arthur T. Pierson, “Speaking with Tongues,” *The India Alliance*, Aug. 1907, 19-21.

<sup>53</sup>A. B. Simpson, “Side Issues and the Supreme Object of Life,” CMAW, Sept. 12, 1908, 416.

<sup>54</sup>John Boyd, “Seated with Christ,” CMAW, Jan. 16, 1909, 261ff.

one dare oppose God's true gift. Let each one make sure he is ready for any gift the Spirit 'wills' to send him."<sup>55</sup> In 1916 C&MA missionary and Simpson biographer A. E. Thompson wrote, "Tongues are desirable, yet prophecy is preferable." He further exhorted that tongues should not be forbidden if used as directed in 1 Corinthians 14.<sup>56</sup>

In the decade after Simpson's death the "seek not, forbid not" concept continued to be maintained by Alliance leaders. In 1926, former C&MA president Paul Rader, successor to Simpson, counseled, "Get alone in your room and wait on the Lord until you are filled. You say, 'I might speak in tongues.' Well, if you do, Hallelujah. I am afraid of you if you are afraid of something the Holy Spirit gives from above. . . . Why not be willing, if the Lord sends it, to speak in tongues? . . . Paul tells us how to regulate the gifts, not to eliminate them."<sup>57</sup> Oswald J. Smith, an Alliance pastor and friend of Bosworth and Rader, also affirmed tongues and other supernatural spiritual gifts, but warned against seeking a manifestation.<sup>58</sup>

In 1927, Dr. T. J. McCrossan (an Alliance minister who did not speak in tongues, but traveled and ministered with independent Pentecostal healing evangelist Charles S. Price) continued the Alliance position, writing: "Satan often enters Christian assemblies and causes genuine saints to speak with tongues, whenever they are *seeking tongues rather than the Holy Ghost Himself*" (italics mine).<sup>59</sup> Later in the same book McCrossan writes, "Friend, we had better obey Paul's word and 'Forbid not to speak with tongues.' Let us take 'the middle of the road attitude' on this subject."<sup>60</sup> Published by the Alliance press, McCrossan's book became the most comprehensive explanation of the C&MA position. So we see that the "seek not, forbid not" concept is undeniably found in

<sup>55</sup>J. Hudson Ballard, "The Spiritual Clinic," AW, Mar. 2, 1912, 343.

<sup>56</sup>A. E. Thompson, "The Corinthian Epistles: Spiritual Gifts and Graces," AW, Feb. 12, 1916, 315-316; A. E. Thompson, "The Corinthian Epistles: The Use, Abuse and Value of Gifts," AW, Feb. 26, 1916, 341.

<sup>57</sup>Paul Rader, *Harnessing God* (New York: George H. Doran Co, 1926), 95-96, 99.

<sup>58</sup>Oswald J. Smith, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (New York, NY: Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1925), 44-46.

<sup>59</sup>T. J. McCrossan, *Speaking with Other Tongues: Sign or Gift—Which?* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1927) 32.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 42. McCrossan's daughter became a close lifetime friend of Kathryn Kuhlman.

C&MA publications from 1907 to 1927, though not stated so concisely as in the 1963 document.

### Other Pentecostals on Seeking Manifestations

Admonitions against seeking tongues and other manifestations, however, did not come only from the C&MA, but also from some Pentecostals. Elizabeth Sisson, who had been associated with the C&MA and a friend of Simpson associate Carrie Judd Montgomery and Pentecostal evangelist Maria Woodworth-Etter, actively embraced the Pentecostal movement and spoke at numerous Pentecostal meetings. In 1917 the Assemblies of God recognized her anointing, awarding her credentials at the age of 77. In spite of Assemblies of God connections, in 1912 she had written in the *Latter Rain Evangel* that the initial evidence doctrine was not found in the Bible.<sup>61</sup> In 1918, in an article in the Pentecostal periodical *The Latter Rain Evangel* about moving forward in the Lord, she referred to Simpson and wrote, "But how move forward? Not by clutching after gifts."<sup>62</sup> Azusa Street revival leader William Seymour (a friend of Alliance evangelist F. F. Bosworth), who later abandoned the evidential tongues doctrine (and the year before he died preached a series of meetings in the Alliance), admonished: "Don't you ever go looking for tongues. Seek Jesus for himself."<sup>63</sup> Azusa Street leaders Ansel Post and Frank Bartleman avowed that they did not seek after tongues.<sup>64</sup> Even Agnes Ozman, the first person to receive tongues through Charles Parham's ministry on January 1, 1901, also recounted, "I urged upon others not to seek for tongues, but for the baptism in the Holy Spirit."<sup>65</sup> Simpson's friend, British Pentecostal leader Alexander A. Boddy, wrote in a statement virtually identical to Simpson's position, "Union with the Giver, rather than the craving for gifts apart from Him!"<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup>E. Sisson, "Tongues and Prophecy," *The Latter Rain Evangel*, November 1912, 23.

<sup>62</sup>E. Sisson, "Move Forward," *The Latter Rain Evangel*, January 1918, 2.

<sup>63</sup>Douglas J. Nelson, "For Such a Time as This: The Story of Bishop William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival," Ph.D. dissertation, May 1981, Dept. of Theology, University of Birmingham, England, 204.

<sup>64</sup>Larry Martin, ed., *Holy Ghost Revival on Azusa Street: The True Believers* (Joplin, MO: Christian Life Books, 1998), 72; Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), 79.

<sup>65</sup>Larry E. Martin, ed., *The Topeka Outpouring of 1901: 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* (Joplin, MO: Christian Life Books, 2000), 110.

<sup>66</sup>A. A. Boddy, "They Two Went On," *The Latter Rain Evangel*, October 1912, 7.

Significantly, even some Pentecostals such as Foursquare Church theologians, who tend to believe in tongues as the initial evidence, admonish, “Do not seek to speak with tongues as if it were the baptism with the Holy Spirit—seek more of God and yield to Him. He will take care of the rest.”<sup>67</sup> In September, 1915, Anna Eldridge, the wife of George Eldridge, wrote an article for the *Alliance Weekly* in which she cautions seeking after manifestations, emotions or thrills.<sup>68</sup> Even though they left the C&MA the next year to identify more fully with the Pentecostal movement and became leaders in the Assemblies of God, they advised against seeking tongues and other such manifestations. Even W. W. Simpson, who left the C&MA over the evidential tongues issue, claimed, “I have always consistently cautioned them against seeking for tongues or manifestations, telling them to seek the Lord Jesus for that Baptism in the Holy Spirit which He promised to His disciples and bestowed on the Day of Pentecost and other occasions mentioned in the Book of Acts.”<sup>69</sup>

Independent Pentecostal evangelist Charles Price, a friend of McCrossan and F. F. Bosworth who had a close and positive relationship with the Alliance, wrote in a similar vein in 1940, “Seek the Healer, not healing.”<sup>70</sup> Though not addressing spiritual gifts, Kathryn Kuhlman showed influence from her early C&MA experiences (attending Simpson Bible Institute 1924-1926) by espousing a similar principle regarding the appropriate object to be sought: “It is not faith that you must seek, but Jesus.”<sup>71</sup> The fact that not only early Alliance leaders, but even some Pentecostals, have advised against seeking is noteworthy.

### Simpson a Seeker of Tongues?

Was A. B. Simpson a seeker of tongues? Let’s look at the evidence presented by Nienkirchen. He claims that Simpson’s diary “shows him to have been a seeker of Spirit baptism with tongues between 1907 and 1912.”<sup>72</sup> Simpson’s diary records:

<sup>67</sup>Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations for Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 1987, 322. Duffield and Van Cleave are from the Foursquare Church.

<sup>68</sup>Anna O. Eldridge, “Purified and Tried,” AW, Sept. 4, 1915, 357.

<sup>69</sup>Letter from W. W. Simpson to A. B. Simpson, October 17, 1916.

<sup>70</sup>Charles S. Price, *The Real Faith* (Pasadena, CA: Charles S. Price Publishing Co., 1940, 1968), 57.

<sup>71</sup>Kathryn Kuhlman, *Captain LaVrier Believes in Miracles* (Old Tappan, NJ: Spire Books, 1973), 83.

<sup>72</sup>Nienkirchen, 136.



August 9, 1907: “I pressed upon Him a new claim for a Mighty Baptism of the Holy Ghost in His complete Pentecostal fullness embracing all the gifts and graces of the Spirit for my special need at this time and for the new conditions and needs of my life and work. . . . I knew that I had been baptized with the Holy Ghost before but I was made to understand that God had a deeper and fuller baptism for me. . . . He often rested upon me in mighty realization and wondrously guided and blessed the work, but I felt there was MORE.

August 22, 1907: “God revealed to me the NAME of JESUS in special power and enabled me to plead it within the veil for an hour or more until it seemed to break down every barrier and to command all that I could ask. . . .

August 28, 1907: “I had been timid at times about dictating to the Holy Spirit who is *sovereign* in the bestowal of His gifts, but now I fully take all that is promised in HIS NAME.

September 5, 1907: “Lord show me what the “*Double*” means, all Thy estimate of it, the Double portion of the Spirit. Double all Thou has ever done for me. Give me *Elisha’s* blessing, the first born’s portion—all Thy gifts and all Thy graces.

September 6, 1907: “God would keep me still knocking. It is the third degree of prayer.”

September 14, 1907: “At the same time there was a deep sense of much more to come and that my heart could not be satisfied without all the fullness of His power.”

October 6, 1912: “Five years have passed since these mem. were written. Much has come and gone. God has been ever with me and wrought for me. No extraordinary manifestation of the Spirit in tongues or similar gifts has come. Many of my friends have received such manifestations, but mine has still been a life of [ ] fellowship and service. At all times my spirit has been open to God for anything He might be pleased to reveal or bestow.”<sup>73</sup>

Simpson taught that there could be “the Pentecosts and the second Pentecosts,”<sup>74</sup> so he believed he had received a genuine baptism in the

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<sup>73</sup>Nienkirchen, 106, 147.

<sup>74</sup>A. B. Simpson, *A Larger Christian Life* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1988), 42.

Spirit many years earlier, yet he also believed God wanted to give him a “deeper and fuller baptism” (a phrase that he and pentecostally-oriented Alliance leaders like David Myland and Carrie Judd Montgomery would use periodically) that would include “complete Pentecostal fullness embracing all the gifts and graces.”<sup>75</sup> Although Simpson never uses the word “seeking,” it can be recognized that he was indeed seeking more of God and all that God desired to give to him. Alliance historian John Sawin notes that Simpson’s diary does imply that he was expectant of tongues *or* other supernatural manifestations and that he was open to receiving anything God was willing to give.<sup>76</sup>

A careful analysis of Simpson’s wording clarifies the extent of his desire. It is significant that Simpson’s diary in 1907 does not specify that he was praying for tongues, but “all the gifts and graces.” Simpson’s mention of tongues in his 1912 entry does clearly indicate that Simpson did indeed desire to receive the gift of tongues, and could suggest that perhaps at one point he had just about come to the conclusion that God wanted him to speak in tongues.<sup>77</sup> Yet again, he does not specify tongues by itself, but rather “tongues *or* similar gifts.” It is noteworthy that he does not write “tongues *and* similar gifts.” His particular language indicates that he had a special interest in tongues of all of the gifts, but his

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<sup>75</sup>A Simpson editorial in 1914 encourages reader to claim a “deeper sanctification” and a “fuller baptism of the Spirit.” (same terminology used by Myland to describe his experience of speaking in tongues as the consummation of his earlier baptism of the Spirit). A.B. Simpson, Editorial, AW, April 11, 1914, 18.

<sup>76</sup>John S. Sawin, “The Response and Attitude of Dr. A. B. Simpson and the Christian and Missionary Alliance to the Tongues Movement of 1906-1920,” 22, 28. Paper presented at the Society of Pentecostal Studies Conference, September 1986, Fort Myers, Florida.

<sup>77</sup>Alliance historian John Sawin notes this: “Simpson saw and heard about the bestowal of the gift of tongues upon his respected friends and co-workers.... He wanted to receive for himself the same gift his friends had experienced, but couldn’t understand why the Lord was not pleased to bestow the gift upon him. So he continued to seek [the Lord, not tongues itself]. He gave much time praying and waiting on the Lord. The wonderful presence and power of the Spirit did come to him with renewed freshness, but not the gift of tongues.... His quest then, for which the diary is the record, was for a deeper, richer fullness of the Spirit than he had heretofore known, and his desire included the gift of tongues.” John S. Sawin, “The Response and Attitude of Dr. A. B. Simpson and the Christian and Missionary Alliance to the Tongues Movement of 1906-1920,” 22, 28. Paper presented at the Society of Pentecostal Studies Conference, September 1986, Fort Myers, Florida.

desire was not particularly or only for tongues. He indicates that he was willing to receive anything God was willing to give, be that tongues or something else.

Simpson does not use the language of “seeking.” Consistent with what he had stated before throughout the preceding five years, both publicly and in his diary, in 1912 Simpson says he was “open” for God to bestow anything God desired. Being actively open to gifts does not necessarily mean that he was seeking them. Although it might seem like seeking to some, a careful study of Simpson’s use of the word “seek” shows that it is quite unlikely that Simpson would use the word “seeking” to describe his active openness to tongues and other gifts. He was consistently following his counsel from 1906 on to “exercise at once a wise conservatism and a readiness of mind to receive whatever God is truly sending.”<sup>78</sup> In fact, in the light of all of Simpson’s statements regarding not seeking, he likely would bristle at the claim that he was seeking tongues.<sup>79</sup> Some Pentecostals would even argue that the reason Simpson never spoke in tongues was because he did *not* seek tongues. Further, in 1916, four years after his diary comments, Simpson continued to maintain the inappropriateness of seeking tongues: “We draw the line when teachers and evangelists insist on preaching . . . that the manifestations in *tongues or miracles must always be sought*. . . .”<sup>80</sup> In thirteen references in the context of eleven statements by Simpson (one in 1906, six in 1907, three in 1908, and the one in 1916), he specifically counsels against seeking tongues or other gifts.

### Simpson on Discernment and Balancing the Extremes

An analysis of Simpson’s statements shows that he is not categorically against *all* seeking, but a particular kind of seeking. What Simpson

<sup>78</sup>A. B. Simpson, “All the Blessings of the Spirit,” CMAW, Sept. 29, 1906, 198.

<sup>79</sup>Some may argue that it is a matter of semantics as to whether Simpson was “desiring” or “seeking” tongues. However, nuances in meaning are often crucial, as in the heresies declared and battles fought over a single word in the Christological controversies among early church fathers. So we must be careful not to claim what Simpson did not actually say. Examining Simpson’s choice of words closely and absorbing his thought and sensing his heart, I am convinced that Simpson would bristle at the thought of calling his desire “seeking.” In 13 statements between 1906 and 1916 he counsels not to seek manifestations, and in 7 of them he specifically warns not to seek tongues.

<sup>80</sup>Letter from A. B. Simpson to Mrs. M. A. Weaver, Sept. 1916.

opposed was “unduly seeking” or “the seeking of any kind of power *apart from or rather than* God” (or Christ or the Spirit). The implication is that seeking power or gifts in conjunction with and subordinated to seeking Christ Himself would be appropriate. Only in that sense could Simpson be considered a seeker of gifts. Simpson also cautions against “the undue magnifying of any one gift”<sup>81</sup> and “the danger of exaggerating [tongues].”<sup>82</sup>

Simpson encourages being “seekers after truth” who ‘try the spirits’ and ‘discern the things that differ.’”<sup>83</sup> Again and again Simpson counsels balance. For instance: “Distinguish between divine fervor and dangerous fanaticism”<sup>84</sup>; and “Let us not fear or ignore any of the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Ghost. . . . At the same time let us not fear to exercise the spirit of discernment. . . .”<sup>85</sup>

This analysis shows that Simpson and the early Alliance did advocate a kind of “seek not, forbid not” stance toward tongues, in which they overwhelmingly opposed seeking after tongues or other manifestations (especially rather than or more than God Himself), yet also clearly warned against forbidding or despising tongues. Simpson affirmed the C&MA’s openness to all that God has to give, but cautions against “the undue magnifying of any one gift or the seeking of any kind of power apart from Christ Himself.”<sup>86</sup> He wrote, “Some sincere and zealous friends are unduly sensitive about even the extremely gentle and moderate words of caution that have been expressed.”<sup>87</sup>

### **Simpson’s Non-Passive “Seek Not” Position**

Despite all of his expressed caution, Simpson was not passive. He actively and persistently claimed all that God had to give him. To Simpson’s mind, “seek not” clearly did not mean passivity. Although there was in the early C&MA a strong Reformed emphasis on the sovereignty of God, Simpson also wrote on the need for desiring something in order to

<sup>81</sup>A. B. Simpson, Editorial, CMAW, Mar. 2, 1907, 97.

<sup>82</sup>A. B. Simpson, “Spiritual Sanity,” *Living Truths*, April, 1907.

<sup>83</sup>A. B. Simpson, Editorial, *Living Truths*, May, 1906, 257-258.

<sup>84</sup>A. B. Simpson, “Fervor and Fanaticism,” CMAW, Dec. 22, 1906, 390.

<sup>85</sup>A. B. Simpson, “Gifts and Grace,” Toccoa Falls, GA: Toccoa Falls College, n.d., 18.

<sup>86</sup>A. B. Simpson, Editorial, CMAW, March 2, 1907, 97.

<sup>87</sup>A. B. Simpson, Editorial, CMAW, March 2, 1907, 97.

receive it: "Desire is a necessary element in all spiritual forces. It is one of the secrets of effectual prayer. . . . There is no factor in prayer more effectual than love. If we are intensely interested in an object or an individual, our petitions become like living forces."<sup>88</sup>

The appropriateness of desiring tongues was stated by other Alliance leaders as well. A. E. Thompson maintained, "Tongues are desirable, yet prophecy is preferable."<sup>89</sup> Likewise, Simpson's dear friend Robert Jaffray (himself a tongues-speaker) wrote, with Simpson's approval, of the appropriateness of seeking the "full endowment of the Spirit" and desiring tongues:

There is a great danger of fear of the works of the devil to such an extent that we shall *lose all courage to seek earnestly for the true and full endowment of the Spirit* for which our souls hunger. I have met *some who are so prejudiced on account of what that have seen that they say they have no desire to ever speak in tongues*, forgetting that tongues is one of the gifts of the Spirit. Let us not allow the enemy so to drive us away from, and cheat us out of, the real blessings of the Spirit because he has counterfeited in some cases the gift of tongues. We have no business to be afraid of evil spirits, for His has given us 'power over all the power of the enemy,' and He can give supernatural discernment of spirits.<sup>90</sup>

To clarify the misunderstandings, the original "seek not, forbid not" position of the Alliance is in harmony *with the modifications* suggested by Nathan and Wilson: "Seek not tongues *more than or instead of* God Himself. Seek the Blessor more than the blessing." A passive stance toward receptivity to tongues or mere tolerance of tongues was not the position of Simpson and the early Alliance.

In recent years there has been some movement toward clarifying and restoring the original C&MA position. Dr. Ron Walborn, Director of Pastoral Studies at Nyack College, has adopted the motto "expectation without agenda," meaning that we can expect supernatural gifts without seek-

<sup>88</sup>Simpson, *Days of Heaven on Earth*, Nov. 13, Nov. 15.

<sup>89</sup>A. E. Thompson, "The Corinthian Epistles: Spiritual Gifts and Graces," AW, Feb. 12, 1916, 315-316; A. E. Thompson, "The Corinthian Epistles: The Use, Abuse and Value of Gifts," AW, Feb. 26, 1916, 341.

<sup>90</sup>Robert Jaffray, "Speaking in Tongues—Some Words of Kindly Counsel," CMAW, Mar. 13, 1909, 395-396, 406.

ing after them with impure motives. Dr. David Schroeder, President of Nyack College and Alliance Theological Seminary, suggests the phrase “Cease Not, Compel Not” (cease not permitting and encouraging tongues and other gifts, but not insisting that people speak in tongues as a required evidence of the filling of the Spirit). Both of these statements accurately and consistently convey the early Alliance position.

### **Was Tozer a Revisionist?**

Nienkirchen surmised that the phrase “seek not, forbid not” was a late accretion by Tozer, whom he claimed was a revisionist of Alliance history and theology. The above analysis clearly demonstrates that Nienkirchen was mistaken in his assumption that the “seek not, forbid not” concept was Tozer’s recent invention. In addition to the evidence cited above, and most significantly, Billy Graham recounts in his book *The Holy Spirit*, “Many years ago in a class discussion at the Florida Bible Institute [C&MA affiliated school where Graham attended in the late 1930s] a teacher said something on the subject of tongues that has stayed with me. He advised his students to ‘seek not, forbid not.’”<sup>91</sup>

The above documentation demonstrates that the “seek not, forbid not” concept occurred frequently throughout early Alliance history and was not the creation of Tozer. Further, the exact phrase “seek not, forbid not” is not a 1963 invention, but was in usage in the C&MA as early as the 1930s. While it is conceivable that Tozer could have coined the phrase in the 1930s (as he was emerging as a voice in the Alliance then), there is no evidence that he is the one who did so. Keith Bailey (himself a tongue-speaker) reported that the motto was in common circulation when he came into the Alliance in 1944. He thought that it probably came out of a Board of Managers meeting in the 1930s. When Tozer worked on the draft of the 1963 document, it is now patently clear that he was using terminology that had been in use in earlier Alliance history and was not coining a new phrase or concept at that time. It is evident that Nienkirchen did not have sufficient information to make his claim. Apparently he was unaware of the many statements regarding not seeking in early Alliance documents.

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<sup>91</sup>Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit* (Waco, TX: Word, 1978), 264-265. Although Graham does not name the instructor who made the statement, it might have been John Minder, Graham’s chief mentor, who was an instructor at the institute and pastor of the Tampa Gospel Tabernacle (C&MA), under whom Graham served as an assistant minister.

Beyond that issue is Nienkirchen's claim that Tozer was a revisionist of Alliance history and theology. Nienkirchen cites a statement of Tozer in *Wingspread*, his biography of A. B. Simpson, as evidence: "The simple fact is that Mr. Simpson was miles out ahead of these people [Pentecostals] in spiritual experience. He did not need anything they had. He had found a blessed secret far above anything these perfervid seekers after wonders could ever think or conceive."<sup>92</sup> Bertone goes even farther in his conclusion, claiming that Tozer rejected "the experience of glossolalia entirely."<sup>93</sup>

If Tozer's statement is taken in isolation from his other writings, one could get the impression that he was hostile toward Pentecostals, and, maybe, for a period of time he *was* to some extent negatively biased. In fact, Tozer may have had in front of him some evidence to support his statement. For instance, as a part of a caustic letter accusing Simpson and the Alliance of actions like "Tammany Hall politics," W. W. Simpson had written to A. B. Simpson in 1916: ". . . you are fighting against God in turning down the teaching that the Lord baptizes people in the Holy Spirit now just as He did on the day of Pentecost, so that it is seen and heard just as Peter says in Acts 11:33. And if you will only humble yourself to seek the Lord for this mighty Baptism you'll get it and then you'll *know* what I am talking about."<sup>94</sup>

W. W. Simpson was apparently unaware that A. B. Simpson had indeed humbled himself, had been seeking a deeper and fuller baptism with all God's gifts and graces, and desired the gift of tongues, but would not seek after it. This is the kind of condescending attitude to which Tozer is obviously referring. Perhaps he had even read W. W. Simpson's letter, and was reacting to such. Simpson himself had warned of this type of outlook as early as 1907: "When we find a spirit of censoriousness, division, criticism and spiritual pride on the part of those who claim the highest

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<sup>92</sup>A. W. Tozer, *Wingspread* (Harriburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1948), 133. Cited in Nienkirchen, 136.

<sup>93</sup>Bertone, 13, note 46.

<sup>94</sup>Letter from W. W. Simpson to A. B. Simpson, Oct. 17, 1916. W. W. Simpson's chief complaint was that the official C&MA Board statement presented to him by Robert Glover differed from what A. B. Simpson wrote to Mrs. M. A. Weaver, a friend of W. W. Simpson. He claimed with bitterness, "Either Glover forged the statement he handed us or you have deliberately tried to deceive Mrs. Weaver." Neither was the case. A. B. Simpson was merely paraphrasing from memory what had been written and the thought behind it.

spiritual attainments, it neutralizes much of their power and influence.”<sup>95</sup> Tozer’s description, written in 1943, can also be considered in light of the distancing of the C&MA as a whole from Pentecostals that took place in the 1930s (see discussion below).

However, it should be noted that not all Pentecostals held this kind of haughty attitude toward A. B. Simpson and the Alliance shown by W. W. Simpson. Alexander Boddy, Jonathan Paul, Willis Hoover, George and Carrie Judd Montgomery, Charles Price, Cecil Polhill, William Seymour, and other moderate Pentecostals got along well with Simpson and early Alliance leaders. Thus, when other later comments by Tozer are taken into consideration, we find that he was much more positive toward Pentecostals than Nienkirchen and Bertone surmise:

I have known and studied these dear brethren, and have preached to them for a long, long time. I have studied them, and I know them very well, and I am very sympathetic with them. There are some churches that are very sane and beautiful and godly. . . . The movement itself has magnified one single gift above all others, and that one gift is the one Paul said was the least. An unscriptural exhibition of that gift results, and there is a tendency to place personal feeling above the Scriptures, and we must never, never do that!”<sup>96</sup>

Tozer, who was known not to mince words, here shows a warm affection for Pentecostals, and evidently even preached in Pentecostal churches, in spite of strongly disagreeing with what he considered their excessive magnification of tongues. The evidence shows that Tozer was not opposed to tongues, only against insistence that tongues is *the* necessary evidence of the filling of the Spirit. He even asserted that the gifts of the Spirit are a “necessity in the church” and that missing gifts are a “tragedy in the church.”<sup>97</sup>

### **Tozer’s Report of Henry Wilson’s Negative Assessment**

To understand Tozer’s viewpoint on the Pentecostal movement, it helps to know a little about relevant history. In 1907 after the Pentecostal

<sup>95</sup>A. B. Simpson, Editorial, *Living Truths*, August 1907, 435.

<sup>96</sup>A. W. Tozer, *The Tozer Pulpit* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1994), 1:2:99.

<sup>97</sup>A. W. Tozer, *Tragedy in the Church: The Missing Gifts* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1990), 13, 25.



outbreak in Ohio, Simpson's friend Henry Wilson was sent by Simpson from the Alliance headquarters to visit the C&MA Convention in Cleveland, March 25-29, as well as other C&MA works, and report on the Pentecostal revival. Cleveland C&MA pastor W. A. Cramer reported of his visit, "Our State workers and field superintendent, Dr. Henry Wilson, were all in perfect accord with the testimony given by those who received their Pentecost, and expressed themselves in thorough sympathy with the experiences as witnessed in our midst." The meetings continued to be "modest and steady."<sup>98</sup> Another periodical, *The New Acts*, reported Wilson as concluding "that this work is of God, and no man should put his hand on it."<sup>99</sup>

Simpson also reported on Wilson's appraisal of the Ohio Conventions, writing, "We have been delighted to hear from our good brother, Dr. Wilson, who has just returned from the Ohio conventions, that a deep spirit of revival appears to be resting upon the work and the workers in that district, and that our beloved people are being kept to a great extent from fanaticism and excess and are receiving all the fullness of blessing which the Lord is waiting to bestow without the counterfeit."<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, Simpson also elaborated further on his earlier editorial comments of March 16 about an extreme form of "abandonment" that opens oneself up to deception, thinking one is abandoning oneself unreservedly to God.<sup>101</sup>

Nienkirchen points out that a later third-hand report of Wilson's visit to Ohio by A. W. Tozer appears to contradict the statements by Cramer and Simpson that recorded Wilson's approval.<sup>102</sup> According to Tozer, after Wilson visited the Pentecostal meetings in Alliance, Ohio, he concluded, "I am not able to approve the movement, though I am willing to concede that there is probably something of God in it somewhere."<sup>103</sup> The apparent discrepancy may be solved by recognizing that the city of

<sup>98</sup>W. A. Cramer, "Pentecost at Cleveland," CMAW, Apr. 27, 1907, 201.

<sup>99</sup>"An Influential Endorsement," *The New Acts*, April 1907, 3, cited by Gary B. McGee, "Levi Lupton: A Forgotten Pioneer of Early Pentecostalism," *Faces of Renewal*, ed. Paul Ebert (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 207, n41.

<sup>100</sup>A. B. Simpson, Editorial, CMAW, Apr. 6, 1907, 157-158.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>102</sup>Nienkirchen, 136-139.

<sup>103</sup>A. W. Tozer, *Wingspread* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1943), 133.

Alliance, Ohio, was not a site of C&MA activity (although sometimes confused because of the same name “Alliance”), thus Wilson was approving the charismatic phenomena and practices he observed in C&MA meetings in Cleveland and other C&MA sites in Ohio (probably including Akron, not far from Alliance, Ohio), but not the Pentecostal meetings he observed in the city of Alliance.<sup>104</sup> Significantly, a recently discovered first-hand report seems to confirm that Wilson had dual viewpoints of the new movement. When speaking at an Alliance convention in Ohio at that time, Wilson proclaimed “that in a time of upheaval, the scum floats to the top; also that mountain climbing is lonely work; the farther you go up the mountain the more people you leave behind you.” He indicated that there are three classes of people: those who seek restoration of apostolic faith, those who hold back, and those who become fanatics.<sup>105</sup> Wilson’s differentiation would be consistent with both positive and negative assessments of different segments of this revival movement. He warned against both holding back and becoming too extreme.

Therefore, although Wilson was positive about the Pentecostal phenomena in the Alliance work in Cleveland, he was evidently negative about the manifestations and practices in the city of Alliance as being too fanatical. Akron C&MA pastor W. A. McKinney’s subsequent departure from the C&MA by early 1908 to become a part of the Pentecostal work in Alliance, Ohio, may have even stimulated in part by Wilson’s negative assessment of Pentecostal activities in the city of Alliance.

When viewed in retrospect, Wilson’s assessment of Pentecostalism in Alliance, Ohio, as reported by Tozer, seems to have been a prophetic harbinger of the even more serious problems that would eventually emerge. A year later Azusa Street leader Frank Bartleman preached nine times at the Pentecostal camp meeting there. Although himself a Pentecostal, his evaluation confirms Wilson’s earlier appraisal: “It was much a harder fought battle than the year before. There had been much fanaticism

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<sup>104</sup>Nienkirchen casts doubt on the authenticity and accuracy of Tozer’s report, but this clears up the confusion about the apparent contradiction without casting aspersions on the validity of the statement. McGee erroneously states that Levi Lupton pastored the Alliance church in Alliance, Ohio, when, in fact, there was no C&MA work there. He evidently confused the (Christian and Missionary) Alliance with the town of Alliance, Ohio. See McGee, “Pentecostal Awakenings at Nyack,” 26.

<sup>105</sup>Bertha Pinkham Dixon, *A Romance of Faith* (n.p., 193-?), 128.

and lawlessness developed. The ‘flesh’ tried to run the meetings.”<sup>106</sup> If some in the Alliance thought that Bartleman had been too fanatical, how much more so these meetings must have been for Bartleman to make this statement. As further confirmation, the local newspaper in the town of Alliance had described the Pentecostal camp meetings as: “The best of order prevails outside the tent, but within, it is bedlam, when once in full swing.”<sup>107</sup>

But things would get even worse in Alliance, Ohio. In 1911 in an *Alliance Weekly* article by Simpson associate F. E. Marsh entitled “False Prophets,” he listed one of the signs of a false prophet as “pandering to lusts,” writing, “There are many today who under the name of great spirituality seize the opportunity to feed their lust by taking advantage of guileless women, like the leader of the Pentecostal movement in Alliance [Ohio].”<sup>108</sup> The reference is to Levi Lupton, a Quaker minister who was one of the main leaders of the Pentecostal movement in Alliance, Ohio, but who had disgraced his ministry in December, 1910, due to a sex scandal.<sup>109</sup>

S. W. Gerow, who had been involved in the early Pentecostal revival in the C&MA, became pastor of the Alliance church in Akron in the Spring of 1908 after former pastor C. A. McKinney left the Alliance early in the year for the Pentecostal movement. In April, 1908, Gerow reported in the *C&MA Weekly* regarding the C&MA convention in Akron: “We praise Him for a clearer vision and conception of a Pentecostal plane to which His church is being lifted. . . . Praise God for the ‘Latter Rain’ Pentecost with signs and wonders following.”<sup>110</sup> This shows that he was quite open to charismatic phenomena, including speaking in tongues. However,

<sup>106</sup>Frank Bartleman, *Azusa Street* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1980), 119.

<sup>107</sup>Gary B. McGee, “Levi Lupton: A Forgotten Pioneer of Early Pentecostalism,” *Faces of Renewal*, ed. Paul Ebert (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 200.

<sup>108</sup>F. E. Marsh, “Here and There: False Prophets,” CMAW, July 29, 1911, 284.

<sup>109</sup>G. B. McGee, “Lupton, Levi Rakestraw,” DPCM, 561-562; Gary B. McGee, “Levi Lupton: A Forgotten Pioneer of Early Pentecostalism,” *Faces of Renewal*, ed. Paul Ebert (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 203 ff. Former C&MA pastor C.A. McKinney was also a leader at Alliance, Ohio, but was not involved in the scandal.

<sup>110</sup>“Notes from the Home Field,” CMAW, April 11, 1908, 33; S. M. Gerow, “Report of Annual Convention of Akron, O. Branch of the C&MA,” CMAW, April 17, 1909, 48.

Gerow also went through the difficult times in the Ohio C&MA over the evidence doctrine and Pentecostal excesses. He observed the extremes firsthand and was very aware of the severe problems in the Pentecostal movement in nearby Alliance, Ohio, both in unrestrained Pentecostal practices and teaching and in immoral behavior. Gerow left the Akron church to pursue another ministry, but returned to stabilize the church in the midst of recurrent Pentecostal conflicts. In January, 1917, W. A. Cramer, Secretary of the Central District, and H. M. Shuman, Superintendent of the Central District, both tongue-speakers themselves, reported to the Board of Managers regarding the work in Akron, "The strain in the work there thro [sic] some Pentecostal wrong teaching is all healed and the work is in good condition."<sup>111</sup>

Gerow became young Tozer's pastor and first mentor about 1918, giving Tozer his first opportunities to preach.<sup>112</sup> According to Tozer's biographer, "Much of his spiritual growth he attributed to the ministry of this godly man."<sup>113</sup> Tozer's early exposure to a man who had ridden out the storm of controversy surrounding the early Pentecostal movement in Eastern Ohio, and particularly in Alliance circles, likely shaped his thinking about Pentecostalism. Gerow had been quite positive about Pentecostal developments within the C&MA (he also later pastored the more charismatic C&MA church in Detroit following W. A. Cramer, one of the earliest C&MA leaders to receive tongues), and likely imparted to Tozer both his positive and negative experiences with Pentecostalism.<sup>114</sup> Gerow may have seen and told of some of the "perfervid seekers after wonders" of which Tozer speaks. Because of Gerow's intimate knowledge of the local circumstances, it is possible that he may have been Tozer's source of

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<sup>111</sup>Report of the Secretary of the Home Dept., C&MA Board of Manager Minutes, Jan. 27, 1917.

<sup>112</sup>James L. Snyder, *In Pursuit of God: The Life of A.W. Tozer* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1991), 52.

<sup>113</sup>David J. Fant, *A. W. Tozer: A Twentieth-Century Prophet* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1964), 16.

<sup>114</sup>About a year before Tozer joined the Alliance Church in Akron, the church went through some difficulties over the Pentecostal movement, but through the leadership of two tongue-speaking officials, District Superintendent H. M. Shuman and District Secretary W. A. Cramer, the issues were resolved. Cramer commented to the C&MA Board of Managers, "The strain in the work there thro [sic] some Pentecostal wrong teaching is all healed and the work is in good condition." C&MA Board of Manager Minutes, Jan. 27, 1917.

Wilson's negative statement after visiting Pentecostal meetings in the nearby city of Alliance.

### **Tozer's More Positive Attitudes Toward Tongues**

Tozer's attitudes toward tongues-speakers were not all negative, and he certainly did not reject "the experience of glossolalia entirely," as Bertone maintains. It is especially significant that H. M. Shuman, Tozer's District Superintendent who accepted him into ministry and later served as C&MA president, was a tongue-speaker.<sup>115</sup> Tozer himself served as Vice President under Shuman for four years, as well as editor of the *Alliance Witness* under Shuman's leadership. Additionally, Harry Turner, successor to Shuman as President of the C&MA, had been a Pentecostal missionary. Tozer had the confidence of both of these tongue-speaking leaders, and he also had confidence in them.

Further, in 1953, Paris Reidhead, a Baptist missionary with the African Inland Mission, was disfellowshipped from the mission and the Baptist association because he had spoken in tongues. He was welcomed into the C&MA, and Tozer took him under his wing.<sup>116</sup> If Tozer had opposed speaking in tongues, he would have never had such a warm relationship with Reidhead. So, rather than being opposed to tongues, we see that Tozer knew of genuine and positive speaking in tongues and negative experiences with Pentecostals as well.

Tozer also warned against shunning the supernatural work of the Spirit because of fear of wild-eyed fanatics, saying, "Well, my brother, I will not be frightened out of my rightful heritage. I will not be scared out of my birthright because some others didn't know what to do with the birthright or have found something else that has nothing to do with the birthright. I want all that God has for me!"<sup>117</sup> In his last message to the

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<sup>115</sup>Alliance evangelist and Simpson associate E. E. Johnson informed Keith Bailey of this fact.

<sup>116</sup>Conversation with Dr. Keith Bailey. Reidhead was also involved with the moderately charismatic Bethany Fellowship.

<sup>117</sup>A. W. Tozer, *The Counselor* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1993), 63-64. For more on Tozer's views on the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, see A. W. Tozer, *The Tozer Pulpit* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1994), Volume 2. Ernest Wilson also notes that Tozer's biography of Simpson "is a more subjective interpretation" than the earlier biography by Simpson's contemporary, A. E. Thompson. Ernest Gerald Wilson, *The Christian and Missionary Alliance: Development and Modification of Its Original Objectives*, Ph.D. Dissertation (New York, NY: New York University, 1984), 13.

C&MA, Tozer decried a neglect of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the evangelical church of the early 1960s, saying, “Now, I am not a tongues man, and I have never been, and I have no intention to join them. But I want to tell you that I believe in the gifts of the Spirit, and I believe they ought all to be in the Church.”<sup>118</sup>

It would seem that, over time, Tozer moderated his views of Pentecostals. According to Alliance historian John Sawin, Tozer told him he wanted to withdraw *Wingspread* from circulation because it was an “interpretation, not a biography” of Simpson.<sup>119</sup> Referring to Tozer’s use of the word “perfervid” as “unkind,” Sawin commented that Tozer “sometimes traveled miles to apologize for harsh statements he made at Council meetings.”<sup>120</sup> Sawin’s implication is that Tozer would not fully subscribe to what he had written earlier.

All of this demonstrates that Tozer, although having some earlier negative bias against at least some Pentecostals, was *not* a revisionist of Alliance history and theology. Rather, he was consistent with the beliefs of Alliance leaders of his time who believed in the gifts (some of whom even spoke in tongues) but distanced themselves from Pentecostals and, generally, from early Alliance attitudes of openness with caution.

### **C&MA Changing Views on Tongues Traced, Not to Tozer, But to 1930s**

An analysis of C&MA writings and practices shows a subtle but significant change in attitudes regarding tongues in the 1930s, indicating historical drift from earlier Alliance beliefs and practices. First of all, in October, 1934, John MacMillan, acting editor of *The Alliance Weekly*, republished with President Shuman’s approval Hudson Ballard’s 1907 statement on tongues from the book *The Signs of the Times*, reaffirming openness to tongues and the gifts, but denying the evidence doctrine, and saying tongues is desirable, but not to be sought after. However, an almost inconspicuous, but critical deletion from Ballard’s earlier official C&MA pronouncements was the avowal that every church should have some who

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<sup>118</sup>A. W. Tozer, *A. W. Tozer’s Last Message to the Alliance* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 2000), 13-14.

<sup>119</sup>Handwritten note by John Sawin, Nov. 23, 1988, Assemblies of God Archives.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*

speak in tongues.<sup>121</sup> In January, 1907, A. B. Simpson had originally published Ballard's pronouncement, then republished his article in full (with the statement intact) in June of the same year as a part of the book *Signs of the Times*, the official public C&MA response to Azusa Street. In 1914 Ballard had reasserted in the official C&MA journal that Alliance leaders are agreed that tongues should have a place in every church.<sup>122</sup> In 1928, nearly a decade after Simpson's death, Dr. Ira David reaffirmed this belief in *The Alliance Weekly*.<sup>123</sup> This omission in 1934 shows a clear backing away from the C&MA position when Simpson was living, which continued to be maintained for at least 10-15 years after his death.<sup>124</sup>

Further evidence of erosion of the early Alliance active openness to the supernatural is found in a reprint of Simpson's tract *Gifts and Graces* in the 1930s. As pointed out by Sandy Ayer, librarian for the C&MA's Canadian Bible College and Canadian Theological Seminary, the reprint "tellingly omits" a section of the original tract "which warns against fearing or ignoring the spiritual gifts and provides instruction in their appropriate public use."<sup>125</sup> Simpson's exhortations not to fear or ignore, but rather expect gifts and manifestations apparently were considered by C&MA editors and publishers in the 1930s to be too encouraging of the supernatural, especially for public use. It followed the pattern of removal of the clause on expecting all the gifts, including tongues, in every church.

Additionally, Ernest Wilson, who began his ministry in the C&MA in 1938, also documented indication of "historical drift" in the 1930s in his doctoral dissertation entitled *Modifications of Objectives in the Christian and Missionary Alliance*, noting that at one time the C&MA had been

<sup>121</sup>"The Gift of Tongues," AW, Oct. 27, 1934, 677-678; Nov. 3, 1934, 694-695; Nov. 10, 1934, 710-711.

<sup>122</sup>J. Hudson Ballard, "The Spiritual Clinic," AW, Nov. 21, 1914, 126.

<sup>123</sup>Ira David, "Spiritual Gifts," AW, Sept. 29, 1928, 638.

<sup>124</sup>Whether this editorial excise was the work of Shuman or MacMillan is unknown, but in the light of a letter from MacMillan to D. M. Panton responding to Panton's letter of concern about the article, it was probably MacMillan. Whether Shuman was aware of the omission is unknown, but it is a significant departure.

<sup>125</sup>H. D. (Sandy) Ayer, *The Christian and Missionary Alliance: An Annotated Bibliography of Textual Sources* (Lanham, MD, and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2001), 251. It should be noted that a more recent reprint of the tract by Toccoa Falls College includes the previously omitted section.

closer, not so much in its beliefs, as in its practices, to the Pentecostal camp.<sup>126</sup> The C&MA in the 1930s thus drifted from a position of cautious but expectant openness toward a position of a passive and more wary tolerance. Nienkirchen was thus correct that there was loss of the earlier openness of Simpson and early Alliance leaders to tongues and Pentecostal practices, but he was mistaken in attributing it to Tozer.

### **The Early Alliance View of Pentecostals Compared with Other Evangelicals**

Another way of discerning the early Alliance attitudes toward charismatic phenomena, and in particular tongues, is by comparing the early Alliance views with the viewpoints of other evangelicals of the time toward the Pentecostal movement. Many evangelical leaders were hostile toward the Pentecostal movement.

Holiness leader Alma White vociferously opposed speaking in tongues, calling it, “This Satanic gibberish” and “the climax of demon worship.”<sup>127</sup> The Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene deleted the word “Pentecostal” from its name because it did not want to be identified with Pentecostalism.<sup>128</sup> According to some sources, although Oswald Chambers believed in the supernatural, he referred to the “tongues movement” as a “Satanic Counterfeit.”<sup>129</sup> F. B. Meyer seems to admit the possible reality of tongues, but advised avoiding the Pentecostal movement because of its excesses.<sup>130</sup> R. A. Torrey, though not a cessationist, asserted that it was “emphatically not of God, and founded by a Sodomite,”<sup>131</sup> thus judging a whole movement by the accusations against Charles Parham of alleged homosexuality. H. A. Ironside “denounced both the holiness and pentecostal movements as ‘disgusting . . . delusions and insanities.’”<sup>132</sup> G. Campbell Morgan reportedly called the Pentecostal

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<sup>126</sup>Wilson, *The Christian and Missionary Alliance: Development and Modification of Its Original Objectives*, 157, 168.

<sup>127</sup>Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), 143.

<sup>128</sup>Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, 145.

<sup>129</sup>H. I. Lederle, *Treasures Old and New* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 24.

<sup>130</sup>Meyer, *Five Musts of the Christian Life*, 7374.

<sup>131</sup>Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, 144.

<sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*



movement “the last vomit of Satan.”<sup>133</sup> In his publication *The Modern Gift of Tongues: Whence Is It?*, Brethren writer G. H. Lang condemned the glossolalic experience of Alliance missionary Kate Knight (whom Simpson supported).<sup>134</sup> Some of these leaders were from the British Keswick movement, which as a whole appeared to have negative views of the Pentecostal movement.

On the other hand, although Simpson and the early Alliance had concerns and reservations about certain elements of the Pentecostal movement and discerned some elements to be counterfeit, they had no such condemning epitaphs for the movement as a whole (as some Alliance leaders do today). Simpson spoke highly of moderate Pentecostals such as Thomas Barratt, Alexander Boddy, Willis Hoover, and Jonathan Paul, and he appears to a large extent to have approved of the Pentecostal movements in Europe, England, Chile and Argentina.<sup>135</sup> The Alliance even cooperated with moderate Pentecostals in joint ventures and meetings.<sup>136</sup> The main objection of C&MA leaders was the initial evidence doctrine, and these leaders and movements took a more moderate position on the doctrine.

Even further, Alliance leaders spoke out against the opponents of tongues and the Pentecostal movement. Prominent Keswick leader A. T.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

<sup>134</sup>G. H. Lang, *The Modern Gift of Tongues: Whence Is It?* (London: Marshall Brothers, Ltd., [1913]), 17-49. Lang also spoke negatively of T. B. Barratt, Carrie Judd Montgomery, and A. A. Boddy, all friends of Simpson. See G. H. Lang, *The Earlier Years of the Modern Tongues Movement* (Enfield, Middlesex, England: Metcalfe Collier, n.d.), 27-33, 43-46, 59-60.

<sup>135</sup>T. B. Barratt, “The Seal of My Pentecost,” *Living Truths* 6, Dec. 1906, 735-738; A. B. Simpson, Editorial, CMAW, April 29, 1911, 65; A. B. Simpson, Editorial, AW, July 6, 1912, 210; Willis Collins Hoover with Mario G. Hoover, *History of the Pentecostal Revival in Chile* (Santiago, Chile: Imprenta Eben-Ezer, 2000), 126-128; see also Frodsham, *With Signs Following*, 175-187; A. B. Simpson, “Editorial Correspondence,” CMAW, April 30, 1910, 71-73, 86.

<sup>136</sup>“Convention in Haverhill, Massachusetts,” CMAW, March 19, 1910, 404; “Gleanings from Nyack,” CMAW, April 30, 1910, 82; “Who and Where,” AW, Feb. 17, 1912, 318; A. B. Simpson, Editorial, AW, May 30, 1914, 130; A. B. Simpson, Editorial, AW, Dec. 19, 1914, 177; “Ordination of Mr. George P. Simmonds,” AW, Jan. 30, 1915, 286; “Report on the Los Angeles Convention,” AW, June 1, 1915, 158; William T. MacArthur, “The Three Components of Christians,” *Latter Rain Evangel*, January 1918, 6-8; Montgomery, *Under His Wings*, 231. On cooperation with Cecil Polhill and the British Pentecostal Missionary Union, see C&MA Board of Manager minutes, March 30, 1912; October 11, 1913; October 16, 1915.

Pierson, who was respected by Alliance leaders and had been a close friend of Simpson's who had spoken at many of his meetings, nevertheless had a more negative view of tongues, concluding, "In not one instance has any good been traced to these manifestations."<sup>137</sup> The editor of C&MA missions periodical *The India Alliance*, although printing Pierson's article by request, took issue with Pierson's conclusions, saying, "We regret, however, that the writer makes such sweeping statements in regard to the modern 'tongue' movement. . . . We believe that to many has come great blessing through this movement."<sup>138</sup>

Jessie Penn Lewis and Evan Roberts, in their renowned book *War on the Saints*, believed the Church was not mature enough to exercise the gift of tongues properly, saying, "Until the spiritual section of the Church of Christ is more acquainted with the counterfeiting methods of the spirits of evil, and the laws which give them power of working, any testimony to such experience as true, cannot be safely relied upon."<sup>139</sup> Even though Penn-Lewis and Roberts were respected by Simpson and the Alliance, the Alliance took issue with their position:

We are in hearty sympathy with our authors in warning against danger in "seeking" to speak in tongues; but we have no sympathy with them in tying God down to any theory that makes it impossible for Him to enable one to exercise the "sign" until "the spiritual section of the Church" has mastered this "Text-book" [the book *War on the Saints*] and become "more acquainted with the counterfeit methods of the spirits of evil." This method of teaching blazes a dangerous trail.<sup>140</sup>

Further, the fact that Simpson and the early C&MA periodicals openly and positively published many occurrences and testimonies of speaking in tongues in its periodicals (Thomas Barratt,<sup>141</sup> Robert Jaf-

<sup>137</sup>Arthur T. Pierson, "Speaking with Tongues," *The India Alliance*, August 1907, 21.

<sup>138</sup>Editorial, *The India Alliance*, August 1907, 19.

<sup>139</sup>Jessie Penn-Lewis with Evan Roberts, *War on the Saints*, unabridged ninth edition (New York, NY: Thomas E. Lowe, 1973), 297-298.

<sup>140</sup>N. H. Harriman, "War on the Saints: An Analytical Study—Part III: All Thoughts from God or Satan," AW, Jan. 10, 1914, 231; see also A. B. Simpson, Editorial, AW, Jan. 17, 1914, 241-242.

<sup>141</sup>T. B. Barratt, "The Seal of My Pentecost," *Living Truths* 6, Dec. 1906, 735-738.

fray,<sup>142</sup> Mary Mullen,<sup>143</sup> John Salmon,<sup>144</sup> Cora Hansen,<sup>145</sup> Kate Knight,<sup>146</sup> and W. W. Simpson.<sup>147</sup>) demonstrates their openness to the gift of tongues. Also significant is the fact that Pandita Ramabai, whose Mukti Mission has been known as the home of the Pentecostal revival in India, designated in her will that the C&MA become the trustee of her mission after her death. This demonstrates two notable observations: (1) that the C&MA was sufficiently open to the charismatic manifestations that occurred in her mission and were welcomed by Ramabai; and (2) that the C&MA of her time was more in line with her charismatic beliefs and practices than Pentecostal missions in India which emphasized evidential tongues. All of this supports Alliance historian John Sawin's conclusion, "Simpson and the Alliance rejected the evidence view, but were hospitable to the tongues movement."<sup>148</sup> Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan astutely notes that the "Alliance position" was "a compromise unique in the early history of the movement."<sup>149</sup>

## Conclusions

Assemblies of God historian William Menzies observes, "The 'seek not, forbid not' Alliance position effectively closed the door to Pentecostal phenomena within their ranks."<sup>150</sup> However, this conclusion is disproved by the many continuing evidences of tongues-speakers among Alliance leadership. Evidence shows that Pentecostal phenomena did decline in the C&MA after the 1920s, but the door to it was never totally closed.

<sup>142</sup>Robert Jaffray, "Speaking in Tongues—Some Words of Kindly Counsel," CMAW, Mar. 13, 1909, 395-396, 406.

<sup>143</sup>Mary B. Mullen, "A New Experience," CMAW, Oct. 5, 1907, 17.

<sup>144</sup>John Salmon, "My Enduement," CMAW, Oct. 26, 1907, 54-55.

<sup>145</sup>Cora Hansen, "Testimony," *The India Alliance*, August 1908, 22-24.

<sup>146</sup>Kate Knight, "For His Glory," CMAW, Jan 25, 1908, 274.

<sup>147</sup>W. W. Simpson, "Notes from Kansu," AW, Mar. 1, 1913, 345-346.

<sup>148</sup>Sawin, "The Response and Attitude of Dr. A. B. Simpson and the Christian and Missionary Alliance to the Tongues Movement of 1906-1920," 29.

<sup>149</sup>Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, 145. In his later revised edition, he perpetuates Nienkirchen's mistaken conclusion that Tozer coined the term. Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971, 1997), 147.

<sup>150</sup>William W. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, [1971]), 72.

When comparing the publications of the early Alliance with more recent C&MA publications, apart from K. Neill Foster's testimony of receiving tongues in his book *The Third View of Tongues*,<sup>151</sup> almost no incidents or testimonies of tongues have been made known or republished in Alliance circles in more recent years. While Simpson's tract *Gifts and Graces* has been reproduced, to my knowledge Ballard's definitive statement apparently has not been republished since its abridged version in 1934, nor have other significant early Alliance writings on the subject such as *Signs of the Times*, T. J. McCrossan's *Speaking with Other Tongues*, or F. F. Bosworth's *Do All Speak with Tongues?* This shows the change in attitude and emphasis. Simpson and the early Alliance leaders were clearly more open about these expressions than, for the most part, the C&MA appears to be now. Speaking in tongues is practiced in the Alliance today, contrary to Menzies' assertion, but it is primarily private and downplayed. Even Dr. Keith Bailey's exhortation to C&MA District Superintendents in 1977 to allow tongues and interpretation in Alliance meetings has seemed to go unheeded in most C&MA circles since then.<sup>152</sup> Few Alliance churches would allow such public manifestations in their midst, although the tide may slowly be turning.

The sampling of documentation cited here demonstrates clearly that there was a much higher degree of expectancy of tongues and other charismatic phenomena by Simpson and other early Alliance leaders than today. They did not seek after tongues or other manifestations, but they did anticipate that God would pour them out upon the Alliance, and they actively desired all that God had for them. As Ballard reiterated of the unified C&MA belief in his day, "Alliance leaders are quite agreed in believing that speaking with tongues. . . should have a place in every Spirit-controlled church."<sup>153</sup> In other words, glossolalia was expected to be *normal* in every Alliance church, but not *normative* for every believer. Although the 1963 "Seek Not, Forbid Not" statement does acknowledge

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<sup>151</sup>K. Neill Foster, *The Third View of Tongues* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975), originally published under the title *Help! I Believe in Tongues: The Third View of Tongues*.

<sup>152</sup>See Keith M. Bailey, "Dealing with the Charismatic in Today's Church." A paper presented at the District Superintendent's Conference of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, Feb. 28-Mar. 2, 1977, Nyack, New York.

<sup>153</sup>J. Hudson Ballard, "The Spiritual Clinic," AW, Nov. 21, 1914, 126.

that tongues “may be present in the normal Christian assembly,”<sup>154</sup> this is a far cry from usual Alliance belief, practice, and expectation today.

Simpson did not change his mind or shrink away from this vision of fully charismatically-endowed Alliance churches. He had urged in an August, 1909, article, “Why may we not have all the gifts and all the graces of the Apostolic Church blended in one harmonious whole?... Why may we not have all the supernatural ministries of the early Church? . . . Why may we not have the ministry of teaching, the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, the faith of primitive Christianity, and even the tongues of Pentecost, without making them subjects of controversy, without judging one another harshly, because each may have all the gifts, and all in such beautiful and blended harmony?”<sup>155</sup> Nearly a decade later, in December, 1917, even after many conflicts and defections to the Pentecostal movement, Simpson repeated this desire, showing his ongoing vision for the future of the C&MA after his death.<sup>156</sup> His dream was for a Christian and Missionary Alliance that is “cautiously charismatic” or “charismatic without chaos,” to bring revival and power to the C&MA churches and to provide a home for those experiencing the charismatic dimension of the Christian life to express their faith in a safe and balanced atmosphere of both openness to all that the Spirit wants to do and discerning avoidance of excess and counterfeits.

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<sup>154</sup>*The Gift of Tongues—Seek Not, Forbid Not* and interpretation in Alliance services. Bailey, “Dealing with the Charismatic in Today’s Church.”

<sup>155</sup>A. B. Simpson, “Christian Altruism,” CMAW, Aug. 7, 1909, 322.

<sup>156</sup>A. B. Simpson, “Members of One Another,” AW, Dec. 8, 1917, 148. See A. B. Simpson, “Christian Altruism,” CMAW, Aug. 7, 1909, 322.

# THE “ETERNAL SONSHIP” CONTROVERSY IN EARLY BRITISH METHODISM

by

Barry W. Hamilton

While Adam Clarke’s *Commentary* stands as one of the great achievements of early British Methodism, his interpretation of the term “Son of God” triggered an intense Trinitarian debate. One of the greatest biblical scholars in Great Britain in his lifetime, Clarke shared his generation’s respect for reason, especially its capacity to interpret the Bible and its demand that revelation be consistent with human experience.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of his approach that revered Scripture and despised systematic theology, Clarke could not interpret “Son of God” as a term denoting Christ’s divine nature. Certainly, he did not deny the divinity of Christ; rather he restricted the use of the term to Christ’s human nature. Thus, he asserted that Christ became the “Son of God” only after the Incarnation.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding Clarke’s position an unfortunate aberration, Methodist leaders coerced preachers to endorse the “Eternal Sonship” or leave the

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<sup>1</sup>Adam Clarke presented his hermeneutical principles in the “General Preface” to his *Commentary*. See Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, 6 vols. (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, n.d.), 14-15. For an example of Clarke’s “rationalism” see Samuel Dunn, *The Life of Adam Clarke, LL.D., Author of a Commentary on the Old and New Testament, Etc.* (London: William Tegg, 1863), 188-190.

<sup>2</sup>Clarke’s generation widely misunderstood his position as theological speculation. For example, see William Jones, *Memoirs of the Life, Ministry, and Writings, of the Rev. Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.S.A.* (London: M’Gowan and Co., 1838), 542-545.

Connection.<sup>3</sup> However, Wesleyan ministers made Clarke’s *Commentary* a staple of their libraries; no one could deny its inestimable value for studying the Scriptures.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Methodists honored Clarke as an exemplary saint who combined scholarship and Wesleyan spirituality.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the real issue surrounding Clarke consisted of an exegetical dispute over the term “Son of God.”<sup>6</sup> Those who branded Clarke a heretic misread his interpretation as a denial of orthodoxy. The larger controversy took place between Methodist leaders and self-taught preachers.

### Theological Controversy within Early British Methodism

Methodism in the early nineteenth century experienced its share of a wider assault on orthodox Christian teachings, often termed “infidelity” by contemporaries. Challenges included various forms of Arianism and Socinianism, although some controversialists simply used these terms to cast aspersion on opponents.<sup>7</sup> Although the “Sonship” issue had been debated since the seventeenth century, the dispute that impacted the Methodists at this time came primarily from Unitarianism, Joseph Priestley’s form of “reasonable” Christianity.<sup>8</sup> Without its own systematic theology, the Wes-

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<sup>3</sup>See *Minutes of Several Conversations Between the Methodist Preachers in the Connexion Established by the Late Rev. John Wesley, M.A., at Their Eighty-Third Annual Conference, Begun in Liverpool, on Wednesday, July 26, 182* (London: J. Kershaw, 1826), 83-84; and *Minutes of Several Conversations Between the Methodist Preachers in the Connexion Established by the Late Rev. John Wesley, M.A., at Their Eighty-Fourth Annual Conference, Begun in Manchester, on Wednesday, July 25, 1827* (London: J. Mason, 1827), 77. Courtesy Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX). With special thanks to Rev. Page Thomas.

<sup>4</sup>“Adam Clarke’s *magnum opus*—the scholarly work for which he was most remembered and revered—was his eight-volume *Commentary on the Scripture* published between 1810-1826. It was a standard work, not alone for Methodists, for several generations.” Elden Dale Dunlap, “Methodist Theology in Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century: With Special Reference to the Theology of Adam Clarke, Richard Watson, and William Burt Pope” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1956), 95.

<sup>5</sup>See Dunlap, “Methodist Theology in Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century,” 92.

<sup>6</sup>“It was rather a question in philology than in theology.” Dunn, *Life of Adam Clarke*, 230-231.

<sup>7</sup>James Everett points out that in the late eighteenth century, when Adam Clarke ministered in that city, “Deism and Socinianism were rife in Liverpool.” James Everett, *Adam Clarke Portrayed*. 3 vols. (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1843-1849), 1:335.

<sup>8</sup>For the Trinitarian debates of the seventeenth century see Philip Dixon, “Nice and Hot Disputes”: *The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2003).

leyan movement struggled to train its ministers to respond intelligently to the crisis. Lacking a seminary, the movement relied largely on self-taught men and women drawn from the working class—people who lacked formal education and were often vulnerable to common-sense arguments.<sup>9</sup>

By 1818, some preachers and laity formed the Methodist Unitarian Movement, evidence of the inroads being made by rational religion.<sup>10</sup> Thus, when Clarke published the Matthew-Luke volume of his *Commentary and Critical Notes on the Holy Bible* (1817), some Methodists feared that Clarke's hermeneutical principles and theological opinions—in the hands of ignorance—might compromise Methodism's orthodoxy.<sup>11</sup> Concerned that Wesleyan ministers might misread Clarke, critics honed in on passages that tested his views on the Trinity and pronounced the footnote on Luke 1:35 unsound.<sup>12</sup> In his comments on this verse, Clarke rejected the application of the term "Son of God" exclusively to the divine nature

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<sup>9</sup>See "Section IV—Improvement of Young Preachers" in Samuel Tucker, *A Candid and Impartial Inquiry into the Present State of the Methodist Societies in Ireland; Wherein Several Important Points Relative to Their Doctrines and Discipline are Discussed* (Belfast: G. Berwick, 1814), 385-410.

<sup>10</sup>"In 1806 Joseph Cooke practically denied the witness of the Spirit and set the stage for the first of the only two schisms over doctrine. He rejected the doctrine of the Atonement as currently understood, abandoned original sin, denied the Trinity, and taught that justifying faith was in itself meritorious. Through these teachings and his emphasis on the Holy Scripture as interpreted by good sense and right reason, he led the way to Methodist Unitarianism in 1818." Dunlap, "Methodist Theology in Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century," 87. David J. Carter observes that Watson's *Theological Institutes* "aimed to help ministers refute Calvinist, Socinian, and rationalist ideas when they threatened to disturb the Methodist people." *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, ed. John A. Vickers (Peterborough, UK: Epworth, 2000), s.n. "Watson, Richard." See also John A. Vickers' entry, "Methodist Unitarian Movement," in the latter resource.

<sup>11</sup>For a summary of Methodism's quandary with Clarke, see Thomas Jackson, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson, Late Secretary to the Wesleyan Missionary Society* (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1834), 174. See also John W. Etheridge, *The Life of the Rev. Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.A.S., M.R.I.A., Etc., Etc.* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1858), 368-369. Jackson and Etheridge illustrate the misunderstanding of those who took Clarke's exegetical judgments for doctrinal opinion.

<sup>12</sup>After his death, Clarke's friends attributed evil motives to his critics. For example, see Nathan Bangs, *A Discourse on the Death of the Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke, Delivered in Green-Street Church, in the City of New-York, on the Evening of October 30, 1832* (New-York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1832), 14.



of Christ. Rather, he applied the term "to that *holy person* or *thing* . . . which was born of the virgin, by the energy of the Holy Spirit." Clarke connected "Son of God" to Jesus' birth so that the term referred to Christ only after the Incarnation.

Anticipating opposition, Clarke rejected the doctrine of Eternal Sonship, asking, "But is there any part of the Scriptures in which it is *plainly* said that the Divine nature of Jesus was *the Son of God*?" Clarke produced five reasons for this rejection: (1) "I have not been able to find any *express* declaration in the Scriptures concerning it"; (2) "If Christ be the Son of God as to his *Divine* nature, then he cannot be *eternal*; for *son* implies a *father*; and father implies, in reference to *son*, *precedency* in *time*, if not in *nature* too"; (3) "If Christ be the Son of God as to his *Divine* nature, then the *Father* is of necessity prior, consequently *superior* to him"; (4) "Again, if this *Divine nature* were *begotten* of the *Father*, then it must be in *time*; i.e., there was a period in which it *did not* exist and a period when it *began* to exist"; (5) "To say that he was *begotten* from all *eternity* is, in my opinion, absurd; and the phrase *eternal Son* is a positive self-contradiction." Clarke alleged, "This doctrine of the *Eternal Sonship* destroys the *deity* of Christ; now if his *deity* be taken away, the whole Gospel scheme of redemption is ruined." He noted the publications that addressed the issue in terms of "Socinianism" and "Deism," and prayed that God might "save his Church" from such "heterodoxies" and "their abettors."<sup>13</sup>

Certainly, no one could justly bring charges against Adam Clarke, for he strenuously upheld the divinity of Jesus Christ. As noted above, he believed the Eternal Sonship doctrine to be a denial of Christ's deity.<sup>14</sup> Clarke was indisputably Methodism's greatest biblical scholar, a renowned preacher and philanthropist. After his death, contemporaries counted him among the "greatest men" of his age.<sup>15</sup> Opponents could

<sup>13</sup>Clarke, *Commentary*, 1:490-491. See also Etheridge, *Life of the Rev. Adam Clarke*, 73.

<sup>14</sup>See *An Account of the Religious and Literary Life of Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.A.S., &c. &c., &c. By a Member of His Family. With an Appendix by J. B. B. Clarke, M.A.* 3 vols. (London: T. S. Clarke, 1833), 1:91-110; see also 1:298-301.

<sup>15</sup>See Maldwyn L. Edwards, *Adam Clarke*. Wesley Historical Society Lectures 8 (London: Epworth, 1942), 44-45; L. Giustiniani, *Divine Love: A Funeral Oration on the Death of the Late Dr. Adam Clarke, Delivered in French at Great Queen-Street Chapel, Lincoln's Inn Fields, Sept. 18, 1832*; and Dunlap, "Methodist Theology in Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century," 92. Dunlap cites John Fletcher Hurst, *The History of Methodism*. 7 vols. (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1902), 1255.

scarcely attack Clarke's character, for his service to Methodism had been monumental. Nevertheless, they charged him with believing that revelation could not contradict reason.

For Clarke, the Bible embodied divine reason, correlative with human reason aided by divine illumination. His critics thought he meant that when people encountered mysterious teachings in the Bible, reason could interpret those elements to satisfy the mind according to its prior experience. Clarke's critics misrepresented him in this case, for as a Methodist he defended divine revelation as necessary for Christian faith. In fact, reason added nothing to what God has revealed.<sup>16</sup> On the basis of Scripture, Clarke stoutly defended the divinity of Christ.<sup>17</sup> Certainly, those who affirmed a significant role for reason in the interpretation of Scripture often regarded the Bible as the sole source for Christian teaching and scorned "human creeds" and "works of divinity," and Clarke explicitly despised systematic theology.<sup>18</sup> Yet, while some scholars could sound "Biblicist"—for example, the Unitarians—Clarke kept his own views in check with his evangelical scholarship and his loyalty to Methodism. Unfortunately, his stubborn adherence to the letter of Scripture compromised his adherence to the historic creeds of Christendom with respect to Christology. Consequently, Clarke took an exegetical position that re-opened the debate over the Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ and challenged Wesleyan ministers to consider whether a common-sense reading of Luke 1:35 should allow them to differ with the historic creeds of the church.

Clarke never published a response to his critics. He believed Scripture had spoken and let the matter rest. When critics launched fusillades of pamphlets on the "eternal Sonship" issue, Clarke likened their attacks to a man who went to the seashore to hold back the tide with a pitchfork.

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<sup>16</sup>See Sermon XXXI, "Divine Revelation: A Discourse on Romans xv.4" in Adam Clarke, *Discourses on Various Subjects, Relative to the Being and Attributes of God, and His Works in Creation, Providence, and Grace* (New-York: M'Elrath & Bangs, 1831); Sermon X, "The Wisdom That Is From Above," in Clarke, *Discourses on Various Subjects*, 1:173-181, especially pages 175-177.

<sup>17</sup>Adam Clarke, *Christian Theology: Selected from His Published and Unpublished Writings, and Systematically Arranged: With a Life of the Author: By Samuel Dunn* (New-York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1837), 111.

<sup>18</sup>Ian Sellers, *Adam Clarke, Controversialist: Wesleyanism and the Historic Faith in the Age of Bunting* (Ian Sellers, 1976), 2; and *An Account of the Religious and Literary Life of Adam Clarke*, III:37.

A busy scholar who detested controversy, he contented himself with continuing his work on the *Commentary*.<sup>19</sup> Those who rushed to defend Clarke wielded no greater skill than his detractors, often displaying confusion regarding the “persons” of the Trinity and their relations.<sup>20</sup> Both parties strove to make the opposing side appear ridiculous, and in Stephen Brunskill’s case, his own unskilled use of rhetoric did not help Clarke.<sup>21</sup> From the vantage point of nearly two centuries, the Sonship issue illustrates the impossibility of resolving theological issues through Biblicist-rationalist approaches. The debate hinged around rhetoric, slander and convoluted theological argumentation, and thus failed to enrich the church’s faith.

### Richard Watson Defends the Eternal Sonship

The definitive response to the issue came from Clarke’s younger contemporary, Richard Watson (1781-1833). While Watson recognized Clarke’s exceptional standing and record of service, he nevertheless sensed a greater duty to defend the Eternal Sonship.<sup>22</sup> And although he refused to call Clarke an Arian or a Socinian, Watson did regard some of his opinions as meriting these labels. In some cases, he believed Clarke’s hermeneutical principles had a “direct tendency . . . to lead to errors, which Dr. Clarke himself would be the first to condemn.”

The year after Clarke’s volume on Matthew-Luke appeared, Watson published his *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ* (1818). He never meant his *Remarks* as an attack on Clarke’s character—in fact, Watson hints at the latter’s innocence; rather, Watson considered the defense

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<sup>19</sup>*An Account of the Religious and Literary Life of Adam Clarke*, III:168-169. See also Dunn, *Life of Adam Clarke*, 232; and Clarke, *Christian Theology*, 43-44.

<sup>20</sup>For example, see Sellers, *Adam Clarke, Controversialist*, 10.

<sup>21</sup>Sellers, *Adam Clarke, Controversialist*, 10-11. See Stephen Brunskill, *Thoughts on the Divinity and Sonship of Jesus Christ* (Liverpool: Caxton Press, 1819). Courtesy British Library (London, UK).

<sup>22</sup>For an overview of the “Eternal Sonship” controversy, see Dunlap, “Methodist Theology in Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century,” 104-108. On pages 107-108 Dunlap sums up the orthodoxy of both men in spite of the controversy: “From this difference between Clarke and Watson (and the other Methodists) it cannot be rightly assumed, however, that there was any issue concerning the incarnate deity in Jesus Christ or the consequent crucial doctrine of the Atonement.”

of orthodox Trinitarian doctrine to be an “imperative duty”—an indication that he aimed at a larger issue in Wesleyan Methodism.<sup>23</sup> In this pamphlet, he pointed out the danger of making reason the measure of revelation and demonstrated its weakness in theological matters. While both Clarke and Watson believed the interpretation of revelation should be consistent with reason aided by the Holy Spirit, Watson more clearly articulated the priority of revelation for Christian faith, even when consistency with reason proved impossible.<sup>24</sup> Watson may have feared that, if reason gained the upper hand, Methodism could not have maintained a consistently orthodox position on the Trinity among its ministers. Wesleyan doctrine would have been undermined by its own preachers, many of whom used reason to force Christian teaching to conform to their generation’s expectations about “reasonable” belief.<sup>25</sup>

Watson never blamed Clarke for doctrinal controversy within the Wesleyan Methodist Church, for he knew Clarke was one of Methodism’s greatest friends. Clarke had tirelessly served the Connection for decades—preaching, writing, starting schools and planting churches, sponsoring missions to the Shetland Islands, and writing his *Commentary*—which, in fact, was only the most prodigious of several major projects he published in his lifetime. Furthermore, Clarke’s philanthropy perhaps exceeded what any Methodist of his generation—minister or laity—extended toward human need. Every published account of Clarke’s life produced anecdotes of his provision of clothing and other necessities for the needy. He planted schools among the Irish, missions among the Shetland Islanders, provided hospitality for unemployed sailors at his estate near Liverpool, and served on boards for examining candidates for ordi-

<sup>23</sup>Richard Watson, *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ and the Use of Reason in Matters of Revelation: Suggested by Several Passages in Dr. Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the New Testament. In a Letter to a Friend*. 2nd ed. (London: T. Cordeaux, 1818). See also Jackson, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson*, 176.

<sup>24</sup>However, Clarke never judged reason capable of knowing God beyond revelation. For example, see Clarke, *Christian Theology*, 116.

<sup>25</sup>For example, see Samuel Tucker, *The Triumph of Scriptural and Rational Truth: Displayed in a Complete Refutation of the Absurd and Unauthorized Doctrines of the Eternal Generation of the Divine Logos, and the Hypostatical Union of the Two Spiritual Natures in Jesus Christ: in a Series of Letters addressed to the President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference* (London: Marshall and Mills: Fisher, Son and Jackson, 1828). Courtesy United Library, Northwestern University (Evanston, IL).

nation. This list speaks of an exemplary Wesleyan minister who stood head and shoulders above his peers.

Furthermore, Clarke's prominence had garnered important social connections with the English nobility. He had also been commissioned by the British government to publish a new edition of the *Fedora*, a collection of public records. Indeed, Clarke's reputation—his impeccable character and extraordinary competence as a scholar and preacher—made him an unlikely target for criticism from colleagues of high standing. He had an abundance of friends—in Methodism, in the Church of England, in the dissenting churches, among the general public, among the gentry, and in the national government. To take a public stand against Clarke risked alienation, criticism, and embarrassment. Those who remonstrated against his views would surely be attacked by scores of Clarke's prominent friends. Watson fully recognized the risk. Taking up the pen against his colleague almost inevitably meant being charged with ambition and jealousy—and indeed, Clarke's friends and family charged Watson with these faults even after both men were in their graves.

Watson sensed a strong obligation to publish his *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ*, even though he knew he would thus make an abundance of enemies. There is no evidence that Watson intended this pamphlet as a personal attack on Clarke, and certainly Watson never appears to have been motivated by ambition. Both men were exemplary Christians whose character and integrity provided no grounds for reproach, although their prominence gave each man his share of criticism. As a younger Wesleyan minister with exceptional talent, Watson had yet to earn the public esteem that Clarke held and thus hesitated to risk his reputation for a theological controversy. Since Watson had left the Wesleyan Methodist Church for the Methodist New Connexion in the early years of his ministry—even for only a brief period, he knew his detractors would quickly fasten on this event to discredit him, especially those who defended their esteemed friend Adam Clarke. When one considers the fact that Clarke and Watson respected each other and stayed on good terms, although there is no evidence that these men were particularly close associates, one has difficulty charging Watson with malice or ambition, even though critics accused him relentlessly. Yet no one could make a heretic of Adam Clarke, as stubbornly as the latter could cling to his exegesis. Watson knew Clarke never meant to lead his beloved Methodism into error.

But Watson could not remain silent while the Wesleyan Methodist Church faced an onslaught against its theological roots. In the late English Enlightenment, rationalism had assaulted historic Christianity for nearly two centuries. British Unitarianism spread rapidly in the early decades of the nineteenth century, challenging traditional Christian teachings such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. A rationalistic sentiment permeated the theological literature of this era and asserted the rights of individuals to think for themselves.<sup>26</sup> Methodism could not maintain an airtight isolation against these sentiments. Wesleyan ministers, left largely to their own resources for pursuing a “course of study,” read not only the recommended works of Wesley and Fletcher, but works of other theologians as well. Since Methodism had not produced a systematic theology, the movement’s leaders advised its ministers to read Wesley, Fletcher, and other Methodist “fathers.” Yet these were not convenient for the needs of preachers on the circuits.

Finding answers to theological questions took more time than most itinerants could spare. Methodism needed a “compendium” or systematic theology to address the issues of the day.<sup>27</sup> The ministers’ choices of collateral theological reading material subjected them to the rationalism that had made rapid inroads on the religious literature of that era. Thus, Methodist pulpits became tinged with the ministers’ own confusion and ill-guided theological reflection. Arianism and Socinianism became real dangers for the Wesleyan Methodist Church and compromised its doctrinal integrity. Methodist leaders like Watson, who traveled among the people and mixed with their colleagues, were well aware of the impending crisis that threatened to undermine and destroy historic Wesleyan teaching. Adam Clarke, the biblical scholar, closeted in his study with his *Commentary*, was apparently more sympathetic to the Enlightenment agenda than Watson and thus less guarded in his statements about the role of rea-

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<sup>26</sup>For example, see George Bevan, *God in Christ; Set Forth in Two Letters to a Friend, with Some Observations on Mr. McLean’s Tract on the Sonship of Jesus Christ; and an Appendix, Containing Some Remarks on Dr. Gill’s Arguments in His Body of Divinity for the Eternal Generation of the Son of God* (London: J. F. Dove, 1818), especially pages 2-8. Courtesy Bodleian Library, Oxford University (Oxford, UK). Bevan provides examples of the rationalistic presuppositions that circulated widely at this time.

<sup>27</sup>See Samuel Tucker, *A Candid and Impartial Inquiry into the Present State of the Methodist Societies in Ireland; Wherein Several Important Points Relative to Their Doctrines and Discipline are Discussed* (Belfast: G. Berwick), 332-369.

son in biblical hermeneutics.<sup>28</sup> Clarke did not sufficiently qualify his views on reason within a movement that claimed allegiance to historic Christian faith, even as that faith came under unprecedented assault from rationalism. Under these circumstances, Watson could not hold his tongue while his esteemed colleague unwittingly provided fuel for the enemies of orthodoxy.

Through his *Remarks*, Watson brought Methodist thought back into line with the Nicene and other early creeds of Christendom. He never disparaged reason as a human endowment; rather he considered reason as God’s gift that made the human race a special creation. Nevertheless, such special endowment had come under the curse of sin.<sup>29</sup> As fallen humanity, people could no longer use reason to apprehend revealed truth without the assistance of divine illumination. Ironically, Watson later expounded this pre-modern Christian perspective through his systematic theology, the *Theological Institutes*, a “modern” form of doctrinal exposition related to the quintessential Enlightenment compendium of universal knowledge, the “encyclopedia.” Through Watson and Clarke, Methodist thought embraced Enlightenment reason even as it expressed an Anti-Enlightenment faith. As Methodism’s leading biblical scholar, Clarke took this turn toward rationalism without fully recognizing the implications for historic Christian teaching. Through his scholarly application of “modern” reason in his *Commentary*, Clarke gave the biblical text an unparalleled authenticity and depth of meaning for his generation. As Methodism’s future systematic theologian, Watson recognized the unquestionable value of Clarke’s biblical scholarship for the church. Even so, Watson saw the danger of an unbridled Biblicism that neglected the faith of the intervening centuries. The *Remarks* were his prelude to the *Institutes*, his *magnum opus* by which he grounded Methodist scholarship in scriptural—and historic—Christianity. Through the *Remarks*, Watson called on Methodists not to allow reason to undermine orthodoxy.

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<sup>28</sup>Evaluating Clarke as an Old Testament scholar, Stephen Dawes mentions the Eternal Sonship controversy as “relevant only to the extent to which it illustrates Clarke’s stress on the use of reason in the interpretation of Scripture and in doing theology generally.” Stephen B. Dawes, *Adam Clarke: Methodism’s First Old Testament Scholar*. Occasional Publication no. 26 (Carharrack, Redruth, Cornwall: Cornish Methodist Historical Association, 1994), 26.

<sup>29</sup>See “Man Magnified by the Divine Regard,” Sermon IV in Richard Watson, *Sermons and Sketches of Sermons* (New-York: G. Lane & C. B. Tippet, 1848), I:54. This sermon was also printed in *The Methodist Magazine for the Year of Our Lord 1824*, VII:3-13, 41-47.

Watson's *Remarks* addressed the first issue—whether the Sonship of Jesus Christ designates his divine nature or his human nature, particularly as the latter refers to Christ's role as Messiah. Watson notes several occurrences in Scripture where the phrase “Son of God” refers exclusively to the divinity of Jesus Christ, a point that overturns Clarke's contention that no “express declaration of Scripture” exists where Jesus Christ is declared to be the Son of God exclusively in terms of divinity. As Sellers states, “Watson was the one man in Wesleyan Methodism with sufficient learning to point out that the former title [Son of God] is far higher than and different from that of Messiah as understood by the Jews of the day.”<sup>30</sup> Contrary to Clarke, “Son of God” and “Messiah” could not be synonymous. Neither could Jesus be called ‘Son of God’ on the basis of his miraculous conception, as Clarke asserted.<sup>31</sup> Rather, Jesus was called ‘Son of God’ as a designation for his divinity. Watson accused Clarke of inconsistency in disavowing a doctrine that allegedly had no “express declaration” in Scripture, for Clarke consented to infant baptism and the union of two natures in Jesus Christ. Yet Watson demonstrated the Eternal Sonship as a doctrine “expressly” avowed in Scripture.<sup>32</sup> His first selection consisted of two verses—John 1:14 and John 1:18—that contain the Christologically-significant term, “only-begotten.” He began with the opposition in verse 18 that “no man, (*oudeis, nullus, nemo*) hath seen” or (Watson paraphrased) “that is, in Scripture language, hath known, the Father.” Rather, “‘the only begotten Son,’ he *hath seen*, and known him, and hath, therefore, declared him: but if this ‘*only begotten Son*,’ were the man Jesus, separately and distinctly considered as a man; then at least one man . . . hath seen God, and declared him, which the former part of the verse denies. Between the term ‘*only begotten*’ and the nature of *man* there is an obvious opposition.” Watson adds further that the “14<sup>th</sup> verse is still stronger” in its demonstration that Christ's glory “could not be human glory” but rather the glory of divinity. “If this glory be referred to his miraculous works, as these works were wrought, not by his human, but his divine power, this view would fix the term “*only begotten*,” as a note of supreme and

<sup>30</sup>Sellers, *Adam Clarke, Controversialist*, 9.

<sup>31</sup>Clarke's own writings do not support Sellers' statement that he held a form of “adoptionist Christology” that proposed a “gradual communication of deity.” See Sellers, *Adam Clarke, Controversialist*, 3.

<sup>32</sup>Watson, *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship*, 6.



absolute Divinity, demonstrating itself by miraculous operations.” Watson points out an even “more striking view of the passage” with its comparison of Jesus’ “fleshly body” with the “tabernacle of Moses, the sacred tent of the divine Shekinah.” Thus, the glory of the “only begotten” is exclusively divine, without reference to human glory. By moving from point to point in a rising climax and positing human/divine elements as opposites (with an obvious preference for the divine), Watson struck at Clarke’s position as giving the lesser glory to Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

Yet Watson recognized that Clarke did not deny Christ’s divinity; rather, he feared that Clarke’s hermeneutical principles—in the hands of ill-guided Wesleyan ministers—could lead to a diminished role for the divine nature in the Incarnation. At one point Watson acknowledged—for the sake of argument—Clarke’s insistence that “Son” referred to both human and divine natures. Discussing John 3:16 as crucial for interpreting the term “Son,” Watson contended with Clarke that, although both natures might be assumed in this passage, “yet the force of this important text, as an expression of God’s love to the world, depends upon the use of that term, as the designation of the divine nature of Christ.” Without this signification—that ‘Son’ refers to the divine nature and not to the human—the love of the Father for the Son “lose[s] much of its unutterable tenderness, and affecting expression.” After all, it is the Father’s giving of His only begotten Son as a divine Savior that has, “to use Dr. Clarke’s own words, put an eternity of meaning into the particle *outo*, *so*, and left a subject for everlasting contemplation, wonder, and praise, to angels and men.” To attribute “only begotten Son” to the human Jesus, rather than to his divinity, would lessen the strength of the particle “so” and thus the degree of the love of the Father for humanity.<sup>34</sup>

Watson further supported the Eternal Sonship through the importance of the revealed name, “Father,” even when “divinity is spoken of without any reference to the peculiar and mysterious mode of his existence in three persons.” Thus, “‘The Father’ is the high and expressive distinction of the *first* [person].” When God revealed the nature of the Trinity in the New Testament, where terms “not only of the most expressive import but of the utmost precision were to be expected”—since these terms would be taught to converts from paganism—“the three persons are

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<sup>33</sup>Watson, *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship*, 8-9.

<sup>34</sup>Watson, *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship*, 10-11.

thus distinctly and emphatically designated. . . . *Baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.* . . . The inquiry then is, why the first person in the Godhead is thus called the Father with relation to a Son, in a case where there is a *distinct consideration* of the three?" Watson insisted that the "Father" correlates to the "Son" in terms of the divine rather than the human nature of Christ. In other words, these titles—Father, Son, and Spirit—designate essential relations within the Trinity rather than functional titles. The denial of these essential relations would nullify the substance of Trinitarian teaching pronounced on each new convert.

Watson continued his rebuttal of Clarke's position, citing several biblical passages in support of the Eternal Sonship. Of particular importance are Christ's titles, used in specific contexts. For example, in the story of the calling of Nathaniel, Philip invites the latter to meet "him of whom Moses in the law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the SON OF JOSEPH." Watson observed that nothing of the "miraculous conception" could be derived from this title, if this event had been employed by Jesus to support his call for discipleship. Nor did Peter intend to call Jesus "Messiah" when he called him the Son of God in Matthew 16:16. Rather, Peter used the title Son of God as an explicit confession of Christ's divinity; the ambiguous title of Messiah usually did not include reference to divine nature. In fact, Watson's argument largely stands on his knowledge that the Jews did not "generally, in the time of Christ, expect their Messiah to be a divine person." Watson relied once again on his "oppositional exegesis."

After he demonstrated Son of God to be a title for Christ's divinity, Watson turned to the basis for Clarke's rejection of the Eternal Sonship—his "rationalism"—and questions reason as a criterion for revelation: "How do I know that my reason in this particular case is right reason? That the communication of one single idea, which I may acquire in this life, when my knowledge is more improved . . . may not correct my present views, alter the whole scope of my present reasoning on these high subjects, and furnish me with some medium of proof, which shall demonstrate what now is to me, not only incomprehensible, but even contradictory?" While reason may be trusted with respect to sensory knowledge, how can it grasp the nature of God? Contrary to the Enlightenment correlation of human reason with eternal reason, Watson severs the connection and disqualifies reason as equal to revelation. Reason is fallible on the

grounds of its limits and incorrect judgments: “We can argue only from what we know; and if we err in knowledge, we must err in reason.”<sup>35</sup> Given this fallibility, Watson moved on to the primary issue—how far reason can be used to judge revelation—and cited Clarke:

The doctrine which cannot stand the test of rational investigation, cannot be true. We have gone too far when we have said, such and such doctrines should not be subjected to rational investigation, being doctrines of pure revelation. I know of no such doctrine in the Bible. The doctrines of this book are doctrines of eternal reason, and they are revealed because they are such. Human reason could not have found them out; but when revealed, reason can both apprehend and comprehend them.” “No man either can or should believe a doctrine that contradicts reason; but he may safely credit (in any thing that concerns the nature of God) what is above his reason.

Watson believed these principles placed reason above Scripture:

To most of these positions I object, generally, because they implicate the pernicious principle, that the meaning of Scripture is to be determined by our own views of what is reasonable; that human reason is to be made not only the *instrument* of investigating the meaning of the revelation, but the *judge* of the doctrine: a principle, which makes it a canon of interpretation, that where the letter of Scripture indicates a doctrine that appears unreasonable to us, it must be taken in a sense which does appear reasonable. [This would] make the sense of revelation to be what every man may take it to be; thereby destroying the unity of truth, and leaving us without any standard of opinion, except the ever varying one of human reason. [The most destructive application would be] to those parts of the sacred revelation which relate to the manner of the divine existence. This must, from its nature, be a subject of pure revelation, “for no man hath seen God at any time.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Watson, *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship*, 48-49.

<sup>36</sup>Watson, *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship*, 50-51. Watson also employed this high view of Scriptural authority while defending John Wesley against Robert Southey, whose unflattering biography of Methodism’s founder dismissed supernatural events as “enthusiasm.” See Richard Watson, *Observations on Southey’s “Life of Wesley:” Being a Defence of the Character, Labours, and Opinions of Mr. Wesley Against the Misrepresentations of That Publication* (New York: N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), 208-210.

For Watson, revelation by nature could not be superseded by human reason; without revelation “the love of sin veils the heart” and thus darkens the mind.<sup>37</sup> Revelation of the divine existence—including the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship—must be received as God’s own word as the light of Christ shines on the heart. Clarke’s “error” is the equation of “eternal reason” with “human reason.” To equate human reason with eternal reason regards the former as infallible, which no one admits. Instead, revelation must be received as infallible and accepted on the basis of its own evidence. Watson argued that Christian teachings “of every age” would not stand the test of rational investigation if reason meant “a process by which we inquire the truth and falsehood of any thing by comparing it with what we already know, and what we have already determined to be true.”<sup>38</sup> To subject Scripture to rational investigation would test God by human knowledge, to subject the Infinite to finitude.

Thus, Watson denied reason as the yardstick of revelation. The “rational investigation” advocated by Clarke could not go beyond revelation; indeed, such an investigation questioned God’s veracity. And if a “rational investigation” remained within the limits of revelation, it would not be “a rational, but a scriptural investigation; and Dr. Clarke has in vain attempted to correct the notions of those who exclude reason as the judge of the doctrines of an acknowledged revelation.”<sup>39</sup> Watson cited Ellis’s *Knowledge of Divine Things* on the impasse between reason and revelation: “The great difference between the objects of human knowledge and divine is that in the former there is a spacious field for new acquisitions and improvements; but in divine invisible objects it is far otherwise. The boundary is *fixed*; our inquiries limited to what is revealed; and all further search vain and unlaw-

<sup>37</sup>One of Watson’s best expositions on divine revelation is found in his sermon on II Corinthians 4:6. See Richard Watson, “The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ,” Sermon XCIII in *Sermons and Sketches of Sermons*, 2:244-251. Clarke would have agreed with Watson on virtually every point. See Adam Clarke, *The Christian Prophet and His Work: A Discourse on I Corinthians XIV.3* (New-York: E. Sargeant, and Grimmin and Rudd; and J. F. Watson, 1812), 132-133; bound with Adam Clarke, *A Discourse on the Nature, Design, and Institution, of the Holy Eucharist, Commonly Called the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. To Which are Added, A Collection of His Smaller Tracts; Including Two Sermons* (New-York: E. Sargeant, and Griffin and Rudd; and J. F. Watson, 1812).

<sup>38</sup>Watson, *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship*, 52-55.

<sup>39</sup>Watson, *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship*, 56-57.

ful."<sup>40</sup> Only faith, without the corroboration of reason, could be deemed a proper response when reason cannot support the truth of revelation. Watson drew on John Locke's observations on the relationship of reason and revelation. He sought to shore up faith in an era when naturalism was undermining confidence in historic Christian teachings, and rallied the Wesleyan Methodist Church to purge its ranks of every ministerial candidate who could not articulate an orthodox Trinitarian position.<sup>41</sup>

Watson brought his argument to a climax, scorning reason's ability to extend revelation: "If this then be the fact as to doctrines whose reasons are partly revealed, how can reason be the judge of those which are stated on naked authority—all here is darkness, which, if the sun has not dispersed, the light of the glow-worm may be applied to it in vain." Watson faulted pride as the basis for the rationalistic enterprise: "I know that there is nothing here so dazzling as in the principles on which I have animadverted; it is more flattering to the human mind to be accounted a judge, than to be reduced to the rank of a scholar; to be placed in a condition to summon divine wisdom to its bar, and oblige it to give an account of its decisions, than to receive them upon authority." He then linked biblical interpretation to the classical doctrine of divine illumination and advocated the reception of revelation on its own authority.<sup>42</sup> His *Remarks* thus limited reason's role in interpreting revelation and prepared the way for his *Institutes*, an authoritative statement of Trinitarian orthodoxy that would overshadow Methodist theology for decades.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Watson, *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship*, 60-61. Watson is citing John Ellis, *The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, Not from Reason or Nature* (London: J. Watts, 1743). An enlarged third edition of this work appeared in 1811. Ellis was a major figure in the Irish Counter-Enlightenment.

<sup>41</sup>"Mr. Watson's pamphlet on the Sonship of Christ was accompanied by similar publications from the pens of the Rev. Messrs. Moore, Hare, and Robert Martin; and by these means, and the interference of the conference, the orthodoxy of the body was preserved. Mr. Watson went to the source of the evil, and asserted the paramount authority of the word of God; and Dr. Clarke's theory is now generally discarded in the Wesleyan body." Jackson, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Rev. Richard Watson*, 184.

<sup>42</sup>Watson, *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship*, 80-81. Watson defended his views on divine illumination to the end of his life. See John Beecham, [Conversations with Richard Watson, 15 January 1833] (London: James Nichols, [1833]), 2. Courtesy of the United Methodist Archives and History Center (Madison, NJ).

<sup>43</sup>"The publication of this pamphlet stamped the character of Mr. Watson as an able divine and a profound thinker. Nothing that he had ever published made so deep an impression." Jackson, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson*, 180. See also Jabez Bunting, *Memorials of the Late Rev. Richard Watson* (London: John Mason, 1833), 28.

By subordinating reason to revelation, Watson defended the classical Christian heritage of Methodism and determined the limits of just how “reasonable” its faith should be. The Sonship controversy thus highlighted a storm center in the Wesleyan Methodist Church and likely provided the initial motivation for Watson to write his *Institutes* as a timely contribution to Methodist theological education.<sup>44</sup>

### The Silent Dignity of Adam Clarke

Adam Clarke never responded in public to Watson’s *Remarks*, but kept silence since he loved Methodism and loathed controversy. Clarke’s family and friends attributed his silence to his piety, and accused Watson of jealousy and ambition.<sup>45</sup> The Wesleyan Methodist Church—mostly at the behest of Jabez Bunting and Richard Watson—treated ministers who sympathized with Clarke’s views as heretics and enforced conformity in the face of threatened expulsion.<sup>46</sup> Shortly after Clarke’s death, his supporters published a hagiographical biography with an extended critique of the Sonship controversy appended as a separate section.<sup>47</sup> Most Methodists regarded Clarke as an outstanding Bible scholar and exemplary saint.<sup>48</sup> Even thirty years after Clarke’s death, his colleague James Dixon brushed off his views on the “Eternal Sonship” as a mistaken opinion that nevertheless could not tarnish his greatness.<sup>49</sup> In the minds of

<sup>44</sup>For a critique of Watson’s role in the development of Methodist theology, see John W. Wright, “Wesley’s Theology as Methodist Practice: Toward the Post-Modern Retrieval of the Wesleyan Tradition.” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35:2 (Fall 2000), 7-31. See also Randy Maddox, “Respected Founder/Neglected Guide: The Role of Wesley in American Methodist Theology.” *Methodist History*, vol. XXXVII, no. 2 (January 1999), 77-78 for his observations on Watson’s *Institutes*. In their critiques of Watson, neither Wright nor Maddox [see his note 51] take into account the context of theological controversy that overwhelmed British Methodism in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. See Tucker, *A Candid and Impartial Inquiry*, especially pages 287-310, 332-369, esp. 345-348.

<sup>45</sup>See *Life and Labours of the Rev. Adam Clarke*, 376-383; Dunn, *The Life of Adam Clarke*, 161, 179, 240; Edwards, *Adam Clarke*, 22.

<sup>46</sup>For example, see Dunn, *The Life of Adam Clarke*, 231-232.

<sup>47</sup>*Life and Labours of Adam Clarke*, 441-482.

<sup>48</sup>For example, see Nathan Bangs, *A Discourse on the Death of the Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke, Delivered in Green-Street Church, in the City of New-York, on the Evening of October 30, 1832* (New-York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1832), 14.

<sup>49</sup>James Dixon, *Recollections of Dr. Adam Clarke: A Lecture by the Rev. James Dixon, D.D., Bradford. Delivered in the Stock Exchange, Leeds, on Tuesday Evening, March 11, 1862. In Connection with the Young Men’s Christian Institute* (London: John Mason, 1862), 19-20.

both colleagues and posterity, Clarke stood far above any disagreement with Methodists of his generation.<sup>50</sup>

Methodism overlooked Clarke’s “faults” because his contention over the term Son of God was an exegetical opinion rather than a doctrinal heresy. The theological controversy took place between orthodox Methodist leaders—led by Bunting and Watson—and Methodist preachers, self-educated young men who were not firmly rooted in Wesleyan doctrine. Certainly Watson did not write his *Remarks* on the basis of unfounded concern. Enemies of the Eternal Sonship who misread Clarke’s exegetical opinion as a theological statement attacked Trinitarian orthodoxy as well as the leaders of the Wesleyan Methodist Church (who also misread Clarke).<sup>51</sup> Those whom the Methodists expelled over this issue often published pamphlets tinged with an embittered spirit.<sup>52</sup> Clarke himself endured private anguish and dismay at the expulsions, even as he maintained his views on the Sonship to his death. According to Rev. William Pollard, Clarke firmly adhered to his views as based on his exegesis. He especially sympathized with the “poor young men” who had to face the “inquisitors” in Manchester.<sup>53</sup> Clarke’s friends regarded him as a man whom Methodist leaders had wronged.<sup>54</sup> Yet Clarke and Watson

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<sup>50</sup>By the mid-nineteenth century, the Eternal Sonship debate had already lapsed into obscurity. For example, see *The Triumphs of Industry: Illustrated by the Life of Adam Clarke, LL.D.* Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1854. See also, Everett, *Adam Clarke Portrayed*, 3:500.

<sup>51</sup>For example, see Samuel Dill, *The Origin, Nature, and Dignity of the Sonship of Jesus Christ, in Which the Self-Existence and True Deity of the Son of God are Established on Scripture Testimony. Being a Reply to the Principal Arguments of the Most Popular Writers in Defence of Eternal Generation*. Belfast: H. Clarke, 1833.

<sup>52</sup>For example, see Joseph Forsyth, *The Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ Discussed. Three Letters to the President of the Wesleyan-Methodist Conference, Showing That the Doctrine of the Sonship of Jesus, Which That Venerable body Rejects as Heresy, was taught by Christ Himself, and constituted the alleged blasphemy for which he was condemned to death; also, a review of several pamphlets, published by Wesleyan-Methodist preachers, in defence of eternal Sonship, together with its effects upon preachers and people* (London: John Stephens, 1835), esp. 24-32. Courtesy of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, KY).

<sup>53</sup>Unpublished diary of Rev. William Pollard [Wesleyan minister, moved from Chelmsford Circuit to Windsor in 1827. At his own house East Cott near Annes.], 98-108. Courtesy Methodist Archives, Wesley Centre Oxford (UK).

<sup>54</sup>For example, see Dunn, *The Life of Adam Clarke*, 240.

stayed on good terms with each other, a measure of their largeness of spirit that eluded their contemporaries.

In the eyes of “official Methodism,” Richard Watson emerged as the leading defender of the Eternal Sonship. Already prominent as the President of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, Watson secured his reputation as Methodism’s leading theologian through the publication of his *Remarks*. A few years later he published the *Theological Institutes* as a compendium of Methodist orthodoxy to arm Wesleyan ministers against the onslaughts of infidelity and heresy. However, neither Watson nor any other critic could deprive Clarke of his eminent standing. Clarke’s contributions to both church and society could not be sullied by controversy over a footnote. Even as they expelled other ministers over this issue, Methodist leaders never brought charges against Clarke because they knew him to be innocent. At Clarke’s expense, the Connection used the Sonship issue to denounce rationalism and cull its ministerial ranks of budding heretics. Shortly after their untimely deaths, the Wesleyan Methodist Church memorialized Clarke and Watson as saints and scholars, models of holy living and church leadership. Within a few years the Eternal Sonship controversy itself became scarcely more than a footnote to Methodist history.



# JOHN WESLEY AND T. S. ELIOT DIALOGUE ON CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

by

Maxine Walker

As the twenty-first century begins, a new generation of readers will come to John Wesley, Anglican priest and “Methodist.” A new generation of readers also will come to T. S. Eliot, poet and literary critic. Most likely, few will pick them up together and wonder how these two Anglicans are alike. What brings me to consider their connections is that before September 11, my British Writers class was reading T. S. Eliot’s essays “Notes Towards a Definition of Culture” (1948) and “The Idea of a Christian Society” (1939).<sup>1</sup> Shortly thereafter, these same university students, who call themselves “Christians in the Wesleyan tradition,” were struggling with horrific September 11 events and, like many others, confused patriotism and nationalism with authentic Christian faith.

Within a year after the September 11 events, well-known Yale historical theologian George Lindbeck noted:

Societies need strong mediating communities through which traditions of personal virtue, common good and ultimate meaning are transmitted to new generations. It is hard to see how communities can flourish without a religious dimension . . . particularly in a culture with a haphazard collection of beliefs lacking depth and integrative power” (7, 99).

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<sup>1</sup>Quotations from T. S. Eliot’s “Notes towards a Definition of Culture” and “The Idea of a Christian Society” are from *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace/Harvest, 1939, 1948, renewed 1967, 1976).

In *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy*, author Colleen Carroll explains that Generations X and Y are “attracted to a worldview that challenges many core values of the dominant secular culture . . . [and] are concerned with impacting and engaging the larger culture . . . and [are] committed to living out their beliefs in the context of authentic communities that support them and hold them accountable” (16).

Within the Anglican communion that holds past and present witnesses in the present arena of worship and prayer, both Eliot and Wesley acknowledge that the grand paradox and true metaphor, the Incarnation of Christ, is the pattern for individuals and communities. Poet Eliot and preacher Wesley, in their respective commitments to “the vocation of Anglicanism,” both restrict and illuminate the definition of a society that is called “Christian” (Avis 474). Indeed, Eliot, more academically, delineates the roles and functions of Christian persons and groups in social structures that inform a Christian society, while Wesley forcefully identifies the Christian practices necessary for such a society. Both Eliot and Wesley are concerned about the ways life within culture “embodies” religion in a particular place and time.

With full awareness of the complexities of the issues and the difficulties in abstracting persons from embedded social, religious, political, and historical contexts, my immediate aim here is twofold:

1. To search for a common vision of Christian society that connects the life and legacy of an eighteenth-century Anglican priest and a twentieth-century poet who converted to the Church of England. Connecting the dots to form a “common vision” by using dates such as 1739, 1939, and trajectories toward 2039 may be merely “interesting” or, as Eliot poetically and paradoxically states, it may be “Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past” (“Burnt Norton,” *Complete Poems* 117).<sup>2</sup>
2. To consider how these legacies might articulate the connection between Christianity and culture as readers step into the accumulated experience and tradition of the Christian commu-

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<sup>2</sup>Unless otherwise noted, quotations from T. S. Eliot’s poems and plays are from *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1930 [22 printings], 1971).

nity. Both John Wesley and T. S. Eliot comprehended the dangers of individualism without accountability. Both embody characteristics of the Anglican Communion, i.e., the transformational grammar of the incarnated God in Christ—grace and nature, faith and culture, divine and human. (Avis 354) Both Wesley and Eliot note that corporate and institutional expressions of Christian belief contribute to a Christian society.

### The Year 1939

The year 1939 was an important year in T. S. Eliot's life and work. He left his post as editor of the *Criterion*, one of the most distinguished literary journals in the last century. William B. Yeats died that year, and T. S. Eliot became Britain's greatest living poet. In this year he published *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, and he wrote *The Family Reunion*, a verse drama that signaled his move toward a Christian confession in his writings.

By 1939, T. S. Eliot had already written his well-known poems, i.e., "The Hollow Men" and *The Waste Land* (1923). The "apparent contraries" that had occupied his poetic imagination would now be applied to his thinking about a Christian society and culture. (Crawford 1) In Eliot's 1928 spiritual conversion and turn toward the Church of England, the paradoxes of savage and city, desert and garden, fire and water, ritual and emptiness, continuity and fragmentation, rocks and fountains, and beginnings and endings would influence ways to "see" the current state of civilization and culture. And that "seeing" Eliot called an incarnation, the paradox of how culture comes into being and whether culture and what is called "religion" are aspects of the same thing.

Seven months before Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, Eliot delivered three lectures to the Masters and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. They were published later as "The Idea of a Christian Society." The lectures were based on nearly nine years of "conversation with certain friends" (a group named the "Moot"), notably writer J. Middleton Murry, theologians Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, academician Michael Polanyi, churchmen Rev. J. Lesslie Newbigin and Archbishop William Temple, politician Anthony Eden, and historian Arnold Toynbee. All of the above, as well as other important intellectuals, were concerned with the "de-spiritualization" of modern life and what could restore a revitalized Christian society in a post-war world.

Eliot saw the *telos* of that society as the realization of the Community of Christians, the Church within the Church that gathers together thoughtful practicing Christians. They in turn collectively form the conscious mind and conscience of the nation. In Eliot's social criticism, Tony Sharpe, University of Lancaster, points out, "Eliot combined . . . the functions of lay preacher and literary elder statesman by speaking against the Modernists and by expressing his growing distrust that political structures could or would find answers to social and economic dilemmas" (165).

### **The Years 1739 and 1939**

The year 1739 was an auspicious one for John Wesley. In March, he began the "strange way of preaching" in the fields and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation. The land for New Room in the Horse Fair, Bristol, was acquired and the plan developed to help pay for the chapel. In this year he declared that the "true old Christianity" is now under the new name "Methodism" (*Journal* 79).<sup>3</sup> He also built a house in Kingswood for colliers' children so that they too "might know the things which make for their peace" (*Journal* 84).

In this year following the Aldersgate experience, Wesley began his enduring interest in the evidences of "conversion." "How can these things be?" (*Journal* 71) Throughout his life, Wesley's confidence was unshaken that the "living argument" for conversion was neither tears nor fits, but the "whole tenor" of life. As Melvin Dieter puts it, the Aldersgate event shaped a theology that can identify authentic alternatives of Christian thought and action to replace views that have "dominated the shaping of failing cultural norms" ("Wesleyan Theology," 163). Albert Outler calls this Wesleyan perspective an inherent paradox in that a politically conservative priest shapes and looses a powerful agency for social change, i.e., trade union movements, prison reforms, and the abolition of slavery. All of them are done in a "dialogical dimension" in which the life of God is realized in the Christian—a kind of "spiritual respiration" over the whole of Christian life (*Evangelism & Theology* 25).

As 1739 concluded, the tensions embedded in Wesley's vocation emerged as both "vileness" and a "meta-method," a paradox that shaped his sense of Christian community. Balancing the tension between an almost

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<sup>3</sup>Unless otherwise noted, quotations from John Wesley's *Journal* are from *The Journal of John Wesley*, ed. Percy Livingstone Parker. (Kent England: STL Productions, n.d.).

obsessive order and vigorous dis-order in his life and thought paralleled his life-long ability to integrate perennial tensions within the Christian tradition. As Frances Young puts it, the tensions between “the individual and the community, the personal and the corporate, the Law and the Gospel, the Old and New Testaments, rationalism and emotionalism, Wesley welded inseparably together” (43). Each would be united but not confused; there would be co-inherence to speak the language of *theosis* (participation in the life of God). A. M. Allchin defines this participation, *theosis*, as “the now-ness of eternity” (33). This participation is best expressed in paradox.

Helpfully enough, Eliot’s well-known analysis of seventeenth-century “dissociation of sensibility” (embryo of the disintegrating tendencies of our time,” Frye 19) confirms Wesley’s confidence in the truth of paradox to both confound and clarify that which disintegrates. Wesley declares that “the perfect instructor of the foolish is faith,” and Eliot strikingly concludes that “the fire is the rose” (*Four Quartets* 59). Wesley scholars such as Henry Rack have alluded to T. S. Eliot’s “dissociation of sensibility” as a way to think about the two schools of Anglican thought over the “formal cause” of justification. In *Reasonable Enthusiast*, Rack points out that in the seventeenth century, this conflict resulted in a separation of doctrine and morality—a “rise of moralism” that “*masqueraded* [*italics mine*] as faith” (28). So it is even in the twentieth-first century. The political pundits and/or religious power-brokers in the recent 2004 presidential election claim the triumph of moral values as a feat of faith while Christian belief and creeds held “faithfully” over the centuries come to rest as a veneer over one or two social issues. Eliot puts it this way, “the old stones cannot be deciphered” (“Burnt Norton,” *Four Quartets* V). Perhaps a contrary to received opinion is needed, that is, the recovery of paradox, the recovery of incarnation as a way.

As David Tracy observes, loss of “felt synthesis of God, self, and cosmos” left the modern world in a paradoxical dilemma that writers and thinkers had to consider gravely (278). On one hand, to attempt some unifying vision for art, religion, morals, and culture often has led to judging one area by the standards of another. On the other hand, various aspects of culture have been isolated so that one had no bearing on the other or the opposite was equally injurious to synthesis, “the alliances were as detrimental all around as the separations” (qtd. in Kearns 78).

Another aspect of “dissociation” in Eliot’s own century appears in the assumption that “‘culture’ was required to play the role of the transcendent

arbiter of value in a social formation characterized precisely by its inhospitality to transcendental agents” (Williams 295, 297). Eliot’s 1949 drama *The Cocktail Party* is a posh affair in the world of the socially elite. Celia the forsaken mistress laments a world without the transcendent, without divine power: “I want to be cured / Of a craving for something I cannot find / And of the shame of never finding it.” Nearly fifty years following Eliot’s drama, David Tracy comments on this twentieth-century malaise: “God withdrew from the synthesis into ever greater transcendence and hiddenness” (279). That such theological matters would have cultural consequences in the long run was evident to Eliot (“Notes” 151); however, Eliot was just as aware that to defend the Christian faith is also an apology at some points for the existing culture. In this defense, Eliot notes, errors occur because religion and culture are identified at levels where they should be distinguished from each other (“Notes” 152).

Accordingly, Eliot sets out in *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* to explore a definition of “culture” that considers its complexities, differences, peculiarities, and interpretations. “Culture” is not a series of unrelated refinements, but a whole complex of behavior, thought and feeling. . . perceived in the less advanced and in the most highly developed nation (Williams, 295-97). Eliot continues, “I am obliged to maintain two contradictory propositions: that religion and culture are aspects of one unity, and that they are two different and contrasted things” (*Notes* 142-43). Eliot’s emerging definition becomes quite declarative, i.e., culture is the “*incarnation*” of its religion (*Notes* 105). An essential and indivisible relationship exists between culture and religion, and the transcendent in culture is its co-inherence of past, present, and future and its co-terminus in vertical and horizontal moments.

We are born with the dead:  
 See, they return, and bring us with them.  
 The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree  
 Are of equal duration. A people without history  
 Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern  
 Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails  
 On a winter’s afternoon, in a secluded chapel  
 History is now and England.  
 With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling.  
 (“Little Gidding,” *Four Quartets* 58)

The transcendent, the divine, is in this time, in this place.

Notions and practices of “culture” in the eighteenth century offered equal difficulties for realizing a Christian society. Culture *per se* was connected primarily with cultivation of the land and training of the mind. This kind of inner and outer “cultivation” for persons was moral conduct, and even if ignored or flouted, codes of moral behavior were still believed to be sanctioned by divine law. However, as the eighteenth century proceeded, various secular forms of thought eroded that authority of divine law, i.e., the “isms” of philosophic materialism, skepticism, optimism, sentimentalism, Deism, enthusiasm. Moreover, the cultural realities were primarily manifest in the multi-faceted aspects of trade and making money. The pre-industrial economic changes enriched the upper classes, provided some small prosperity for the middle class tradespersons, the new “economic” man, but the rural and urban poor remained in dire straits.

In 1748, Daniel Defoe wrote of the eighteenth century: “Trade is the Wealth of the World; Trade makes the Difference as to Rich and Poor, between one Nation and another; Trade nourishes Industry, Industry begets trade; Trade dispenses the natural Wealth of the World, and Trade raises new Species of Wealth, which Nature knew nothing of; Trade has two Daughters whose fruitful Progeny in Arts may be said to employ Mankind: namely Manufacture and Navigation” (qtd. in Plumb 21). Wesley makes this notable proclamation of his own century: “riches naturally beget pride, love of the world, and every temper that is destructive of Christianity. Now if there be no way to prevent this, Christianity is consistent with itself, and of consequence, cannot stand, cannot continue long among any people; since, wherever it generally prevails, it saps its own foundation” (Sermon 122, “Causes on the Inefficacy of Christianity,” 549).<sup>4</sup>

Eliot notes a parallel twentieth century cultural reality in his famous question, “Was our society . . . assembled around anything more permanent than a congeries of banks, insurance companies, and industries, and had it any beliefs more essential than a belief in compound interest and the maintenance of dividends?” (qtd. in Scott 62). Such are the rationalist and materialist aspects of Eliot’s and Wesley’s cultural landscapes.

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<sup>4</sup>Unless otherwise noted, quotations from John Wesley’s sermons are from *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Compilation and Preface Copyright, 1991).

Given these cultural threats to the recovery of a unifying force in social and cultural life, Eliot construes that “Christendom” is the highest culture the world has ever known (*Notes* 106). As postwar Europe struggled to recover, Eliot sought inspiration that Europe might be unified through their common tradition of Christianity which for centuries nourished the arts, laws, thought and behavior. For Eliot, “Europeans did not have to like one another or one another’s work, but they must recognize their mutual dependence so that they could save part of the “good” for which they were trustees: Greece, Rome, Israel, and the legacy of Europe’s past 2000 years” (Dale 172).

This confidence and faith in Christendom as the highest culture sounds very strange in our day in the historical context of the contributions of Muslims, for example, to the “good” over the centuries. This confidence and faith in the traditions of Christendom seem very odd in our day when “traditional” and “contemporary” worship wars threaten to fracture and separate the *living* [*italics mine*] faithfulness to the past. However, as Lindbeck notes in *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, “. . . the neglect of tradition is a major component in the sickness of our age; without tradition, without shared memories, there is no community: and without community, there is no firm personal identity for the individuals” (Lindbeck 124). Lack of knowledge and an understanding of the past religious traditions that shape one’s own culture, as well as an admiration for the wrong things in other cultures paralleled by a condemnation of the notable things in foreign cultures, lead to a misinformed generosity and arrogance. As Eliot puts it, the Briton, “unconscious of the importance of religion in the formation of his own culture, could hardly be expected to recognise its importance in the preservation of another” (*Notes* 166).

Whereas Eliot saw that the existence of Western civilization was threatened by the loss, even irrelevance of “Christendom” as a unifying common tradition, Wesley in his sermons spoke against nominal Christians, the “almost Christians,” i. e., those who lacked faith that works by love” and who criticized those who were being “filled with the fullness of God.” “Methodists” were to be a religious society of disciplined Christians within the Church of England, real Christians prepared to participate in and be accountable to all the means of grace, believers who would spread true Scriptural Christianity and teach the first principles of Christianity. Furthermore, the Christian tradition, from the ancient church to the early Anglican Church, was viewed as the resource for the renewal or revitalization of the church:



Ancient Christianity as a whole was portrayed as a model of belief and behavior, set explicitly against the models for belief and behavior that eighteenth-century Christians had inherited (that is to say, their culture). (Campbell 73)

For Wesley, his thinking and practices over his entire life, and the theological task of the Revival, stood revealed in Scripture, authenticated by tradition, confirmed by reason, and vivified in personal experience. Randy Maddox says that Wesley's convictions and doctrinal reflections are best described as a "hermeneutic spiral" of becoming aware of and testing pre-understandings" (47).

In a 1787 sermon "The More Excellent Way," Wesley encouraged those Christians on the lower road to come up higher, to leave the "good way" for the more "excellent way" (518). Even as Wesley knew that the Methodist Societies were the hope of reforming the Anglican Church by performance of the church's essential task through Christian mission, witness, and nurture (Outler, *Wesleyan Theological Heritage* 214), he also would say two years before his death, "What a mystery is this! That Christianity should have done so little good in the world!" ("Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity," Sermon 122, 555).<sup>5</sup> Eliot affirms a similar belief in the practices and efficacy of Christianity in culture. Religion and culture have to do with the incarnation of beliefs into how persons live. A brilliant culture does not reveal the truth of a religion, but shows what meaning and potency that religion has (*Notes* 106).

For Eliot, his work as a poet/critic was "continually modified and renewed by increasing experience" and his growing awareness that poetic *assent* and philosophical *belief* cannot be separated (*Sacred Wood* 75). Eliot becomes not just "*poet qua poet*," but is a poet whose beliefs are realized in art. Eliot declares, "I cannot see that poetry can ever be separated from something which I should call belief" (*Complete Poems* 139).

The New Critical theory of poetry, for which Eliot was early commended (and which he later critiqued), viewed the text in isolation and

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<sup>5</sup>In contrast to Wesley's assessment of the Methodists, Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his work on the church and state vehemently laments that in the "science" of Political Economy not only can two professors not agree but also they claim that they can "give light on Rents, Taxes, Income, Capital, the Principles of Trade, Commerce, Agriculture, on Wealth, and the ways of acquiring and increasing it. . . ." However, Coleridge says "compare this with the effect produced on promiscuous crowds by a . . . Wesley . . ." (Coleridge 214).

denied the writer the “security of having ‘behind’ him some larger authenticating structure, whether the ‘system of St. Thomas’ in Dante’s case, or a ‘formed visible Church’ in the case of Launcelot Andrewes” (Sharpe 112-13). Consequently, Eliot notes, “A Christian society [is one] in which the natural end of man—virtue and well-being in community—is acknowledged for all, and the supernatural end—beatitude— is for those who have the eyes to see it” (*Idea* 27).

Eliot’s method is to discover what is “already there” (*Idea* 27).<sup>6</sup> Discovering “what is there” and what is the end of Christian Society emerge in the gathering around a common vision of Christian life. Eliot says, “The most important question that we can ask is whether there is any permanent standard by which we can compare one civilization with another, and by which we can make some guess at the improvement or decline of our own” (*Notes* 91). In regard to discovering one’s work in society, Wesley puts it this way: “We shall then see there is no opposition between these—‘God works; therefore do ye work’—but on the contrary the closest connection, and that in two aspects. For first God works; therefore you *can* work. Secondly, God works; therefore you *must* work” (“On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” Sermon 85, 490).

The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation,  
Here the impossible union  
Of spheres of existence is actual,  
Here the past and future  
Are conquered, and reconciled. . . .

(“The Dry Salvages,” *Four Quartets* 44)

### From 1739/1939 Toward 2039

In a recent article in the British *Telegraph*, a feature writer described her recent return to the Roman Catholic Church, chiefly considered because she wants her children to have a sense of awe and to belong to something—whatever it is.” She continues, “I want [my children] to have the cultural enrichment that being a member of one of the great religions

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<sup>6</sup>Thus, to redeem the time is to take responsible action and involvement with the community here and now. “Burnt Norton” poetically shows that the intersection of time and eternity occurred in the Incarnation which redeemed time for the human race. Eliot says that this Community of Christians, a body of a “very nebulous outline,” would contain clergy and laity of superior intellectual and/or spiritual gifts. And it would include some of those who are ordinarily spoken of, not always with flattering intention, as “intellectuals” (*Idea* 27).

brings” (*Telegraph Weekend*). In the spirit of dramatic dialogue in which Wesley preached and Eliot poeticized and theorized, these two Anglicans “answer” her about being Christian and being in culture.

**T. S. Eliot:**

“There is an aspect in which we can see a religion as the *whole way of life* of a people, from birth to grave, from morning to night and even in sleep, and that way of life is also its culture” (*Notes* 103). Religion and culture are more than the rituals and habits connected with birth, marriage, and death.

**John Wesley** [To Lady Maxwell in 1764]:

“I entreat you do not regard the half-Methodists—if we must use the name. Do not mind them who endeavour to hold Christ in one hand and the world in the other. I want you to be all a Christian.” True religion is not correct praxis and doctrine but love of God and neighbor with the end as holiness of heart and life (Telford, *Letters* 263-64).

**T. S. Eliot:**

“Neither religious beliefs nor cultural beliefs are entirely unified; thus, we have to face the strange idea that what is part of our culture is also a part of our *lived* religion.” Actual religion cannot ever be purely Christian and thus persons can easily maintain contradictory beliefs, for “most of us live at the level on which belief and behaviour cannot be distinguished. . . . When we consider the quality of the integration required for the full cultivation of the spiritual life, we must keep in mind the possibility of grace and the exemplars of sanctity in order not to sink into despair” (*Notes* 104).

**John Wesley:**

“All men approve of this [that we ought to love one another as God loved us]. But do all men practice it? Daily experience shows the contrary. . . . The two grand general hindrances are, first, that they can’t all think alike; and in consequence of this, secondly they can’t all walk alike, but in several smaller points their practice must differ in proportion to the difference of their sentiments. . . . Though we can’t think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?. . . [T]hey may forward one another in love and in good works” (Sermon 101, “The Duty of Constant Communion,” 509).

**T. S. Eliot:**

To see the evils and confusion of the world, or even the rituals and practices of the church as external to oneself is extremely exhilarating and “that is an exhilaration that the Christian must deny himself.” The Church has perpetually to answer this question: to what purpose were we born? What is our end? (*Idea* 75).

**John Wesley:**

“Our end is to wear the true wedding garment, holiness. . . . It is neither ‘circumcision,’ the attending on all the Christian ordinances, nor ‘uncircumcision,’ the fulfilling of all heathen morality, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Walking as Christ walked” (Sermon 127, “On the Wedding Garment,” 564).

**T. S. Eliot:**

Culture is not merely the sum of several activities but a *way of life*. (*Notes* 114) The primary transmission of culture is the family and supplemented and continued by other conduits of tradition (*Notes* 115). “The community of Christians will be able to influence and to be influenced by each other because of their identity of belief and aspiration, their background of a common system of education and a common culture, and thus, they will be able to collectively form the conscious mind and the conscience of the nation. This is the church within the church, ‘ecclesiola in ecclesia’” (*Idea* 30).<sup>7</sup>

“We need to know how to see the world as the Christian Fathers (and mothers) saw it; and the purpose of re-ascending to origins is that we should be able to return with greater spiritual knowledge, to our own situation” (*Idea* 49). Notably, Eliot uses “re-ascend,” not “re-cover.”

**John Wesley:**

“Catholic love is a catholic spirit. . . . [A] man of a catholic spirit is one who in the manner above mentioned ‘gives his hand’ to all whose ‘hearts are right with his heart.’ One who knows how to value

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<sup>7</sup>The extraordinary difficulty in becoming this kind of “conscious mind and conscience of the nation” occurs because Eliot believes that the essential questions and issues are too easily concealed when religious thinking and religious feeling are separated from religious thought that precedes the criticism of political and economic systems (*Idea* 30).

and praise God for all the advantages he enjoys: with regard to the knowledge of the things of God, the true, scriptural manner of worshipping him; and above all his union with a congregation fearing God and working righteousness” (Sermon 39, “Catholic Spirit,” 301).

## Epilogue

Eliot’s emphasis on a “way” and Wesley’s “way” indeed represent the language of the Anglican *via media*—not a balancing act but a “living tension.” This tension exists, not in order to walk the tightrope of compromise, but it exists to live the opposites that are mutually illuminating and that fertilize each other (McAdoo 469). Equally significant, Wesley and Eliot begin and end at different points, but along the way they discern a common vision of the Christian life that is validated both inside and outside of the self, anchored in the corporate and communal work of the Church, and visible in cultural expressions.

Mapping such different journeys can tend to blur the complex identities of each and highlight the obvious similarities, but such a path also suggests needed discernment and relationships between those of us in literature and those who preach the Gospel and teach the Christian tradition. As faith continues to seek understanding by sons and daughters of the church, we live, as Albert Outler describes it, in a “corporate matrix of disciplined fellowship,” “. . . that we shall not live by bread alone nor yet without bread. . .” (*John Wesley* 25). John Wesley and T. S. Eliot preach and write in the failures and hopes of culture, and we are given bread for the way.

Lord of life, Thy followers see,  
Hungering, thirsting after Thee;  
At Thy sacred table feed,  
Nourish us with living bread.

(*Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* 34.1)

Lord, shall we not bring these gifts to Your service?  
Shall we not bring to Your service all our powers  
For life, for dignity, grace and order,  
And intellectual pleasures of the senses?  
The Lord who created must wish us to create  
And employ our creation again in His service  
Which is already His service in creating.

(“The Rock,” *Complete Poems*, 111)

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## **2005 SMITH-WYNKOOP BOOK AWARD**

**Presented to Samuel M. Powell for his book  
*Participating In God: Creation and Trinity*  
40<sup>th</sup> Annual Wesleyan Theological Society Meeting  
Seattle Pacific University: March 4, 2005**

**by**

**Thomas Jay Oord**

The Wesleyan Theological Society presented the 2005 Smith-Wynkoop Book Award to Samuel M. Powell for his book *Participating in God: Creation and Trinity*. The Smith-Wynkoop book award is presented annually in honor of the outstanding scholarly contributions of historian Timothy L. Smith and theologian Mildred Bangs Wynkoop. This award recognizes a recent publication of distinction in a research area related to the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. Each book honored is judged to have helped the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition to be better understood and/or promoted.

Powell's book is a constructive and systematic doctrine of creation. In it, he creatively engages contemporary scientific inquiry, Trinitarian theology, issues of interpretation, and ethics. Powell argues that authoritative and permanent Christian convictions about creation and the Trinity must be understood in the light of other forms of knowledge, such as philosophy and science.

The central insight of *Participating in God* is derived from the Wesleyan theological tradition. This insight is, as one award judge put it, "the conviction that God's essential quality of holiness is expressed as love in creation and redemption, and that the primary quality of holiness that



God expects in those embraced by His love is that they love in return. Thus, the title *Participating in God* expresses Powell's conviction that, since Scripture declares that God is love, it is only when we love as God loves that we participate in the love that God is."

Philip Clayton, a prominent voice in the field of science and theology, says that Powell's book is "the right book on the right topic at the right time. By intimately linking Trinity and creation, Powell successfully integrates recent science with a distinctively Christian view of the nature and acts of God. His profound meditation on the world's participation in God falls neither into a world-abandoning transcendence nor a God-obscuring spirituality of immanence. Rarely does one find theology so powerfully and systematically applied to state-of-the-art scientific knowledge of the world."

This year's Smith-Wynkoop award-winning book is published by Fortress Press. It is part of the publisher's prestigious "Theology and the Sciences" series that is juried by respected specialists in the field, including Ian Barbour, Sallie McFague, Arthur Peacocke, and John Polkinghorne. To publish in this series a book whose central insights derive from the Wesleyan theological tradition is a special achievement. Powell's book bodes well for the kind of future contributions Wesleyan/Holiness scholars may make in this rapidly growing field of work. *Participating in God* is a fine example of the Smith-Wynkoop criterion that a book will help the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition be better understood and/or promoted.

Powell has written other books and essays, including *The Trinity in German Thought* (Cambridge University Press). He has graduate theological degrees from Nazarene Theological Seminary and Claremont Graduate University. He serves as Dean of the School of Theology and Christian Ministry at Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, California, and has served as professor at Point Loma since 1986.

Reviewers noted that *Participating In God* is tangentially related to a larger debate at Point Loma Nazarene University. About four years ago, some persons outside the University began attacking PLNU because its professors taught evolution. The University president and faculty have been united in their intention to resist these outside pressures. Powell's work is not a direct response to the school's critics, but it offers a way for colleagues in other departments of the university and colleagues at other Christian colleges and universities to develop a framework for understanding the relationship between religion and science.

## BOOK REVIEWS

D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley's Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness*. Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon Press, 2005, 257 pp. \$34.00.

Reviewed by Gregory S. Clapper, Professor of Religion and Philosophy, The University of Indianapolis.

The title of this work might lead one to believe that it is an exposition of one narrow aspect of Wesley's theology—that which relates to morality. The subtitle might serve to reinforce this perception with the emphasis on “goodness.” However, these initial impressions would be wrong, as it is Long's purpose to show that Wesley's theological vision is thoroughly moral and his moral vision is thoroughly theological. Long, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, asserts that, for Wesley, the quest for “goodness” could not be done without the quest for God. In Long's words “. . . Wesley thought that God and the good, or doctrine and ethics, were inextricable. He did not seek a new foundation for morality in self-evident principles anyone could intuit” (p. 37).

To demonstrate this, Long spends much effort in a helpful overview of the philosophical “conversations” that Wesley found himself in during his life in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Long correctly sees this as a time when many thinkers were trying to found and ground morality independent of religious traditions. Long characterizes this as the rise of “ethics” as an independent discipline and he sees Wesley as ultimately taking his cues not from that “conversation” but from the moral theology tradition of Thomas Aquinas. Long notes, “My argument in this book is not that John Wesley was an explicit Thomist, it is that Wesley's work makes more sense when

placed in the context of the conversation Thomism represents, which is characterized as ‘moral theology,’ than when placed in the context of ‘ethics,’ which developed after the divorce between God and the good in the eighteenth century” (pp. 62-63).

Long elaborates on this theme throughout the book by emphasizing that Wesley was not a modernist theologian (chapter 1) but that he was a moral theologian (chapter 2) with strong affinities to Aquinas (chapters 4 and 5) and, finally, that Wesley was not a “public theologian” as Troeltsch and Reinhold Niebuhr would understand that phrase (chapter 6). This last point Long applauds, and the fact that Wesley’s thought cannot be accommodated to modernist and Troeltschian categories is one of the reasons why Long holds that Wesley can be important for today’s church.

Not many Wesley scholars will disagree with Long’s assessment that Wesley never tried to separate God and goodness, but they will also find much of interest in this volume, especially Long’s engaging analysis of several of Wesley’s sermons—and the significance of the way that Wesley himself arranged and ordered these sermons in the published editions that Wesley oversaw. Included in chapter 5, “Wesley’s Moral Theology,” are helpful analyses of “The Great Privilege of Those Born of God,” Wesley’s 13 discourses on the Sermon on the Mount, and his sermons on the law.

One of Long’s most original contributions, found in chapter 3, is his detailing of the shift in the intellectual culture of the eighteenth century from moral theology to ethics. There he recounts and compares the views of Kant, Locke, Hobbes, Hume, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and the Christian Platonists. Long ends up asserting, among other things (and in contradistinction to some Wesley scholars), that Wesley’s epistemology should not be seen through the lens of Locke.

Long also holds that Wesley, because he lived in a time of changing conversations about morality and ethics, at times asserted views that were not entirely consistent, especially with regard to freedom. Long asserts that Wesley referred to liberty as more basic than the will, and that this can lead to the modern will to power, with its assumption that the will, if it is to be truly free, “must be capable of a radical evil” (p. 44). Long says that this Lockean “freedom of indifference” is evidence that “Wesley simply did not see the serious problems he introduced into theology, even if he rightly deplored their consequences.” This is the primary, though not only, reason why Wesleyan Christians today must draw on the broader theological sources of the church catholic. “Wesley alone can never give us our theological compass” (p. 44).

According to Long, it was Wesley's more usual reliance on the epistemology of illumination and the metaphysics of participation of the Cambridge Platonists that saves him from his tendencies to overemphasize human freedom. It is this participation in God's nature that makes it inconsistent to assert that "our will must be grounded in a more basic liberty that can suspend judgment in its proper ordering to this end. That would make a capacity for liberty more basic to our being than Christ's grace. It is the great *privilege* to be partakers of the divine nature that allows us to discover ourselves to be holy and happy" (p. 62). Wesley's more typical reliance on people like Norris, who held that the moral life is not primarily a function of the will but of knowledge, "makes Wesley's work so important at the end of modernity. Knowledge and vital piety, reason and religion, theology and ethics, truth and goodness cannot be finally separated" (p. 56). Long also offers interesting references to the two scriptures at the heart of Wesley's moral theology—1 John 3:9 and 2 Peter 1:4—in order to show how participation and holiness of life are related.

Long says that, starting in the eighteenth century, the good and the true became separated in the minds of many because they no longer saw the will as a rational appetite, something Aquinas—and Aristotle—emphasized (p. 69). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Long says that the intellect was instead vanquished by the will (p. 66). Long says that Wesley did not consistently see what was at stake in this battle, but Long sees the center of gravity for Wesley's thought as being in the will-as-a-rational-appetite school of Aquinas.

This assertion, however, raises a serious question about Long's use of the available secondary sources on Wesley's views that are pertinent to his subject matter. Make no mistake about the fact that Long demonstrated an excellent facility with the original source material in his discussion of the philosophical texts which he discussed—both the Aquinas material and the eighteenth-century philosophical material. However, his lack of in-depth interaction with many of the secondary sources on Wesley's thought is a serious drawback to this book.

For instance, while Long sees enough congruence between Wesley's use of the language of the "tempers" and Aquinas's use of "virtue" to include an appendix comparing the two, nowhere in the book are there any references to the growing number of secondary Wesleyan resources that more subtly dissect and nuance these connections. Regarding the participation theme that Long sees as crucial in Wesley, Long might have

profitably included interaction with Hal Knight's fine book *The Presence of God in the Christian Life* where he discusses how the means of grace shape the tempers/affections. This reviewer's own *John Wesley on Religious Affections* might have profited the author in his search for enunciating a "deictic" (versus apodictic) analysis of the subject matter, and it might have led Long from eschewing Wesley's language of the affections and tempers in favor of the more intellectualist phrase "virtues, gifts and beatitudes," which Long uses at least seven times.

Perhaps the most telling lacuna in the secondary references directly pertinent to one of the key assertions of Long's book is the work of Richard Steele, especially his *Gracious Affection and True Virtue According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley*. In the second chapter Steele explicitly makes the case, directly contrary to Long, that for Wesley the will is *not* a rational appetite. Steele then goes on to assert, through detailed argument, that Wesley should be placed in the voluntarist tradition. No awareness of this important work ever surfaces in the Long volume, much less a careful interaction with Steele's reading of Wesley.

Long's final chapter seems to show that his ultimate purpose is to recommend Wesley as a guide for contemporary moral theology *precisely because* Wesley's views don't mesh with the Troeltschian/Niebuhrrian/fallibilist assumptions of our age. Here we find Long interacting with more secondary resources in the Wesleyan tradition, including Marquardt, Stone and Weber. Wesley scholars will find this a beneficial set of analyses and discussions.

While this book would have been strengthened by casting the net of scholarly interaction wider (as set out above), it still serves as a powerful challenge for those today who assume that living the Wesleyan vision of the Christian life can easily be reconciled to the spirit of our present age.

*A. J. Tomlinson: Plainfolk Modernist.* By R. G. Robins. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Reviewed by Thomas D. Hamm, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana.

When one looks for the origins of Pentecostalism, one place that would not occur to most historians is a prosperous, deeply-rooted Quaker family in Hamilton County, Indiana. Such were the origins, however, of Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson, usually known as A. J. Tomlinson. He is a figure well known to historians of American religious history as the founder of the Church of God of Cleveland, Tennessee, which in its various permutations claims six million followers today. This superb biography of Tomlinson by R. G. Robins not only compellingly explains how this came to be, but in so doing offers important insights about holiness and modernism as well.

Robins makes two major contributions to our knowledge of American religious history. Unless new materials are found (and some critical early Tomlinson diaries are missing), the first contribution is providing what will probably be the definitive biography of A. J. Tomlinson, generally acknowledged as a seminal figure in the history of Pentecostalism.

Born in 1864, Tomlinson grew up in an Indiana Quaker community that was transformed by waves of holiness revivalism in the 1870s and 1880s. Holiness Friends like Dougan Clark, William F. Manley, and Seth C. Rees helped bring Tomlinson into the larger holiness movement. Robins does impressive detective work in tracing Tomlinson's contacts with a wide variety of non-Quaker holiness figures, such as J. B. Mitchell, Martin Wells Knapp, and Frank Sandford. As was the case with a few other holiness Friends, such as Rees and E. P. Ellyson, a determination that Quaker opposition to water baptism was unscriptural led Tomlinson out of Quakerism. In his case, however, he felt called to missionary work in the mountains of North Carolina, where he felt called of God to found what today we would call an "intentional Christian community" on the model of the apostolic church, along with a school, orphanage, and newspaper. There he came into contact with other radical holiness advocates from North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia.

This work in North Carolina permutated into first the Holiness Church at Camp Creek and then into what was simply called the Church of God after Tomlinson relocated to Cleveland, Tennessee. As Robins

recounts the story, Tomlinson's conversion to Pentecostalism was inevitable once the Azusa Street revival began—speaking in tongues was claimed to be one of the marks of the descent of the Holy Spirit, and so it must be in churches that tried to reclaim the experience of the primitive church. With this message, and with what Robins portrays as phenomenal preaching and organizing gifts, the Church of God grew rapidly. Robins concludes by briefly treating a series of attempts to dislodge Tomlinson as leader. These finally succeeded in 1922 when Tomlinson was forced out amidst charges of financial mismanagement. Tomlinson continued to evangelize until his death in 1943.

The second contribution of Robins, however, and probably the more important, is theoretical. Key to his account of Tomlinson is what Robins calls “plainfolk modernism.” Robins makes a convincing argument that radical holiness figures like Tomlinson, while in many ways at odds with the larger American culture, also shared important elements of it. Certainly they rejected the biblical criticism and theological liberalism that we identify as “modernist.” But they also embraced central aspects of Victorian and Progressive Era American society. They were essentially optimistic—after all, they were convinced that divine gifts, even the healing of physical illness of all kinds, were available to them. They emphasized practical education—their Bible colleges were the religious counterpart of the professional schools of business, law, and medicine that became institutions in this period. And they shared a fascination with technology, especially transportation and communication.

However, these radical holiness believers separated themselves from even other holiness believers by their continuing commitment to a plainfolk tradition of egalitarianism and humility that went back to colonial days, rejecting the growing gentility of much of evangelical Protestantism. As Robins sums up, the holiness pentecostalism of Tomlinson and his compatriots suggests “the jut-jawed belligerence of cultural chauvinism more than the despair of cultural deprivation, not disaffected social isolation but, rather, a proud subculture's unyielding defense of its habits, truths, and folkways” (25). Robins thus makes sense of seeming contradictions about modern American religion that have left many observers puzzled. The result is a most impressive book.





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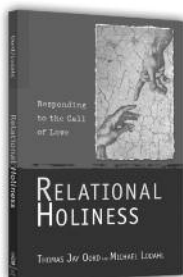
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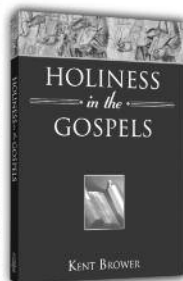
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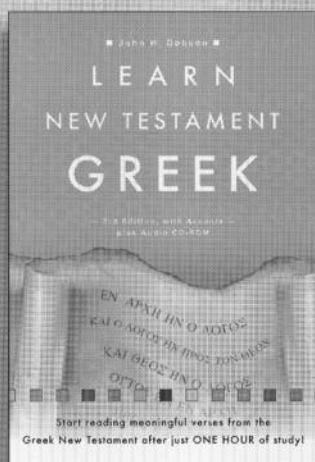
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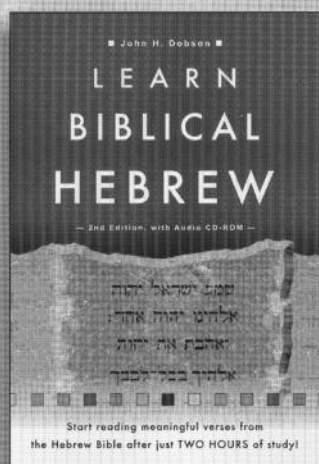
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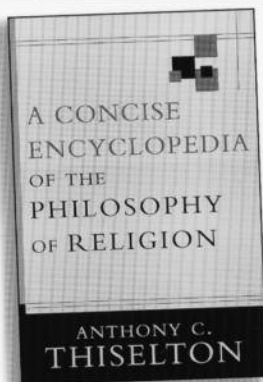
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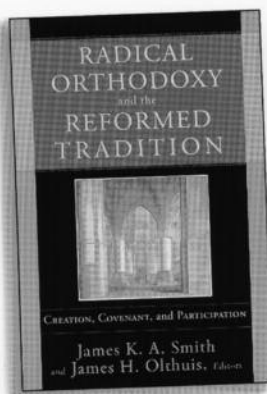
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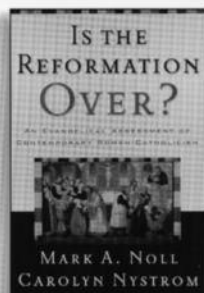
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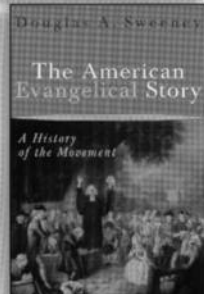
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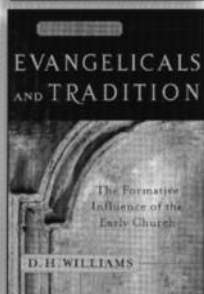


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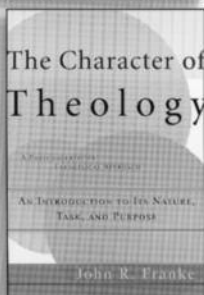


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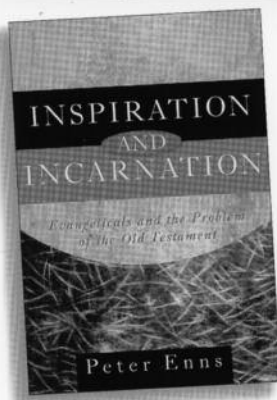
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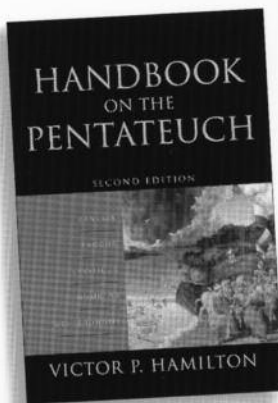
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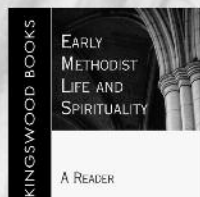
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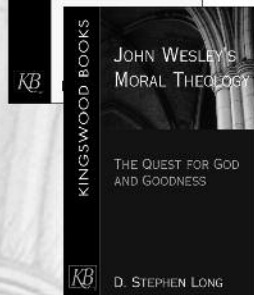
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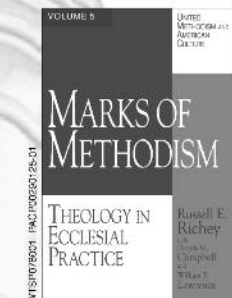
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**Russell E. Richey** is dean and professor of church history at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. **Dennis M. Campbell** is former dean of Duke Divinity School and headmaster of Woodbury Forest School in Woodbury Forest, Virginia. **William B. Lawrence** is dean and professor of American church history at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

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