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CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTES	5
A BRIEF ANATOMY OF HOLINESS	7
Bruce D. Marshall	
HOLINESS AND ETHICS.....	19
Thomas B. Dozeman	
SPIRIT/SHEKHINAH/SAKINA: NO HOLINESS BUT SOCIAL HOLINESS..	35
Michael Lodahl.....The Presidential Address	
“WON OVER WITHOUT A WORD”: HOLINESS AND THE CHURCH’S MISSIONAL IDENTITY IN 1 PETER.....	50
Dean Flemming	
HOLINESS AND CATHOLICITY: A FRUITFUL TENSION FOR THE WESLEYAN TRADITION.....	67
Douglas M. Koskela	
ORDINARY PRACTICE AS ECCLESIAL HOLINESS: INTERSECTIONS OF WORK, SACRAMENT, AND LITURGY	78
Joshua R. Sweeden	
EUCCHARISTIC PARTICIPATION: HOLINESS AS THE RELATIONAL SHAPE OF CHRISTIAN MORAL THEOLOGY	93
Timothy R. Gaines	
ECCLESIAL INSTITUTIONS AS MEANS OF GRACE: A WESLEYAN VIEW OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE HOLY CHURCH.....	107
James E. Pedlar	
FROM CAUSALITY TO RELATIONALITY: TOWARD A WESLEYAN THEOLOGY OF <i>CONCURSUS</i>	122
Joshua D. Reichard	
BLASPHEMING IN TONGUES: DEMONS, GLOSSOLALIA, AND THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE.....	139
Christopher J. Richmann	
BAPTISTS AND HOLINESS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: A STORY RARELY TOLD.....	156
Doug Weaver	
EDWARD IRVING ON CHRIST’S SINFUL FLESH AND SANCTIFYING SPIRIT: A WESLEYAN APPRAISAL	175
E. Jerome Van Kuiken	
BOOK REVIEWS AND ADVERTISING	186

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EDITOR'S NOTES

The 2013 annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society convened jointly with the Society for Pentecostal Studies on the campus of Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, Washington, March 21-23, 2013. Under the skilled direction of program chair Jason Vickers, numerous presentations illuminated the overall theme of "Holiness." The articles in this issue are selections from those presentations. They include the plenary address of Bruce D. Marshall and the presidential address of Michael Lodahl.

The identity of the current officers of the Wesleyan Theological Society are available in this issue. The WTS web site is Wesley.nnu.edu/wts. Available at this site is information about a searchable CD containing the full content of all issues of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* and much more information about the Society itself, past and present.

Allow me a personal note. After more than two decades as editor of this journal, I now am moving to new responsibilities. Serving you for these many years has been a great pleasure. My gratitude goes especially to those men and women, highly valued colleagues and friends, who have served with me on the Editorial and Executive Committees of the Society. I leave with a definite touch of sadness, but also with a clear sense that the fertile world of Wesleyan scholarship remains rich and highly relevant to the needs of today's church and world.

Barry L Callen, Editor
February, 2014

A BRIEF ANATOMY OF HOLINESS

by

Bruce D. Marshall

“Strive,” we are admonished by scripture, “for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). To this holiness every human being is called by God, and for it every human being must strive. Every human being is called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and the disciples of Christ are, whatever their circumstances or state of life, called to be holy. The call to holiness is thus universal, extending to every human being.

The Second Vatican Council, to recall one influential recent example, insists on the universal call to holiness with particular force. “The Lord Jesus, divine teacher and model of all perfection, preached holiness of life (of which he is the author and maker) to each and every one of his disciples without distinction: ‘You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Mt. 5:48). . . . It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love.”¹

What, though, is this holiness? *Quid sit*—what is its essence, or its most essential features? Differently put, what is its basic anatomy, its grammar? On that question I would like to reflect here.

Holiness and Seeing God

Scripture’s admonition to strive for holiness already tells us something basic. Holiness is ordered toward seeing God. Whatever holiness is, whatever its essence, seeing the Lord is its aim or purpose. Scriptural holiness is thus a means to an end, the end of seeing the Lord. It is not, however, an extrinsic means to this end, a means that has an arbitrary or merely conventional relationship with the end at which it aims. It is not as though God had simply stipulated that in order to come before him face to face you need to have holiness, although God might equally well have stipulated that you need to have money, or a long beard, or belong to a certain social class. Rather, holiness is an intrinsic means to the end at which it aims, the end of seeing God.

¹*Lumen Gentium*, §40 (*Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992], 396-7).

In this respect, the relationship between being holy and seeing God is akin to that between a practice and what Alasdair MacIntyre calls a good internal to that practice.² Some goods, like having food to eat, can be realized in any number of ways—paying money for it, growing your own, bartering your bicycle for it—none of which is uniquely required by the good itself. Other goods, by contrast, can only be attained by way of a particular practice, a particular way of being. The exquisite and highly particular joy that comes from solving a difficult math problem—or a difficult theology problem—we can have only by working at math problems or theology problems, not by paying money or giving away our bicycle. Seeing God—the supreme good, the purest joy, the good for which we are made—is like this. It comes only from holiness (that is, being holy is a necessary condition for it), and holiness comes from striving.

Another crucial New Testament passage on seeing God helps us be more precise about the connection between holiness and the vision of God. John promises us that “when he”—the risen Lord, first of all—“appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn. 3:2). Holiness is necessary for seeing God, and so, it seems, is being like God. Being like God, in other words, unavoidably goes together with seeing God, just as being holy unavoidably goes together with seeing God. In fact, our text immediately goes on to underline the bond between the two: “[E]very one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (1 Jn. 3:3). Likeness to God is, it appears, intrinsic to seeing God, just as holiness is intrinsic to this vision and its attainment.

This stands to reason. Philosophers as far back as Plato have held that like is known by like. The more alike two creatures are the greater the intimacy there can be between them, and the greater the knowledge each can have of the other. Of course we are, at least by nature, immeasurably unlike God. Or better, our natural unlikeness to God always exceeds any likeness we have to God as creatures made in God’s image.³ We cannot bridge this gap—but God can, and does.

²See *After Virtue* (3rd edn., Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 187-191.

³“[B]etween creator and creature we can find no likeness (*similitudo*) save where there is to be found an even greater unlikeness between them,” as the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) puts the point in a somewhat different connection. DH 806 (=Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum: A Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations of the Catholic Church* [Latin-English], 43rd edn, ed. Peter Hünermann [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012]; my translation).

In the biblical view of things as well, although in a way unimaginable to the ancient philosophers, like is ultimately known by like. To see God is to have an unsurpassable sort of intimacy with God, the intimacy reserved for those who are not simply God's creatures, but are his friends—those who are like him, who know him best. Israel knows of no prophet on a par with Moses, “whom the Lord knew face to face” (Dt. 34:10), and yet Moses promises a future prophet greater than he who will, it seems, know the Lord yet more intimately than he, whose vision of the Lord will be yet more direct than his own (Dt. 18:15).⁴ Christians recognize here a prophecy of Jesus Christ, whom we will be like when he appears in glory, as he is like the Father of whom he speaks, because he always sees the Father face to face (Jn. 8:38).

Seeing God necessarily involves holiness, and seeing God necessarily involves likeness to God. Taken together, these two conditions for seeing God suggest, obviously enough, what holiness is. Being holy is being like God. If we want to get a deeper sense for the anatomy of holiness, however, we need to reflect on at least two further questions. (1) Which God, exactly, is being holy being like? (2) In what, more exactly, does the likeness to this God that makes for holiness consist?

Locating God Correctly

If holiness is being like God, then clearly it will be important to locate God correctly—to worship and to strive for likeness with the right God. Should your god be Molech, for example, or Josef Stalin, you might very well succeed by your way of life in becoming like your god. You might even succeed in seeing your god. In that case likeness to your god would include delighting in and abetting the ritual sacrifice of children, or in engineering the forced starvation of millions of peasant farmers, embracing mass murder as a means to building the workers' paradise on earth, and therefore as a good. This would not be holiness. If our “god” is whoever or whatever is most important to us, then the chances are actually quite good that in the end each of us will become like our god. It is therefore crucial to get a fix on the right “god,” on the one to whom likeness is holiness rather than emptiness and destruction.

⁴On the Christological result that comes from reading these two texts in Deuteronomy together, see Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1: *From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 2-8.

In any society, certainly including ours, there will be multiple gods after whom its inhabitants may strive, gods that may demand the loyalty of human beings in the most aggressive ways. As a result we cannot take it for granted that when we say holiness is being like god, we are all talking about the same god, and therefore about the same holiness. When John the apostle and the author of Hebrews speak of holiness, they clearly identify the God in likeness to whom true holiness consists. This God is the Trinity. This God is, more precisely, the Father, who in unfathomable love for us has made us his children and promised us that, as his children, we will see his Son and be like the Son in glory when he appears. To this the Holy Spirit bears witness, the Spirit in whom we confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh (1 Jn. 4:2), and in whom we live as God's children now.

Since the God in likeness to whom holiness consists is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, our second question, as to what this likeness involves, will be complicated from the outset. If the God whom we must be like in order to be holy is three distinct persons, holiness will presumably involve a relationship to each of these three persons. We should not assume that this is simply the same relationship, three times over. Each of these three persons is irreducibly distinct from the other two. So it seems likely that our relationship to each, and ultimately our likeness to each, will also be irreducibly different from the relationships we have to the other two. True holiness, the holiness of which scripture speaks, is therefore a threefold likeness to a three-personed God (to recall a phrase of the poet John Donne). We need to say a bit, then, about our likeness to each of the three divine persons, beginning with the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of Holiness

That genuine holiness, the holiness without which no one will see the Lord, is first of all the work of the Holy Spirit seems intuitively obvious to Christians. The Spirit is, after all, called Holy for a reason: he is the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4), the one who makes us holy. This again is surely right as far as it goes. There has to be an intimate connection between holiness in us and the person of the Spirit. We need to think, though, about what exactly this connection might be.

One way of thinking about the bond between holiness and the Spirit is to conceive of the link as experiential. Being holy, being like God, is an experience we have (or don't have). What sort of experience? Well, naturally, an experience of the Spirit. To be holy is to experience, to be immediately aware of, being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

On this understanding of things, to be holy is not simply to experience fruits or effects of the Spirit, however vivid—to experience, for example, a love, peace, and joy that go with being indwelt by the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Holiness, rather, is an experience of the Spirit as such, an experience, moreover, that we cannot have without knowing we have it, and cannot know without having it. To many Christians this experiential way of thinking and talking about holiness is too obvious to require comment, and to question it is at once to doubt the reality of holiness and the presence of the Spirit—indeed to call into question Pentecost itself.

It is certainly not my intention to question either the reality of holiness or the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit, but I do think we need to ask how both of these are bound up with the actual experience of Christians. The human heart, so scripture and philosophy each suggest in their own ways, is unfathomable to its possessors. Human beings cannot understand the human heart—starting with their own—and among the beginnings of wisdom is to recognize this. Only God can know the heart with complete surety. Only to God's gaze, not to its own, is the soul utterly transparent. Unlike God, we lack direct access to the true nature of our own experiences, perhaps especially our affective experiences, and so we can be mistaken about them and about their import. Of countless goings on within we are of course aware, but we should not mistake this for direct, unmediated access to the true nature of our myriad experiences, Descartes and his various followers notwithstanding.

This suggests caution, rather than immediate certainty, about when we have and have not had an experience of the Holy Spirit. Jonathan Edwards, among the finest Christian theologians of the religious affections, rightly maintained that the Holy Spirit gives us new and divine experiences, affections nature can never produce. But he also knew that there is no single way for us to be sure which is which. Assurance of the Spirit's presence is not so much a matter of immediate experiential certainty as of an ongoing process of discernment and judgment, in which many factors must play a role.⁵

⁵“[T]hose gracious influences which the saints are subject of, and the effects of God's Spirit which they experience, are entirely above nature, altogether of a different kind from anything that men find within themselves by nature.” Yet “[a]ssurance is not so much to be obtained by self examination, as by action. The apostle Paul sought assurance chiefly in this way, even by forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those things that were before.” Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, revised edn., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 205, 195.

It will be objected here, quite rightly, that God is not bound by our limits, in the present case by the opacity our own experience has to us. God, so the objection goes, can teach us the nature of our own experience, and so can give us an experience of the Spirit that authenticates itself to us, in spite of our native inability to see our own hearts clearly. The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit, as the apostle teaches, that we are children of God—that we are like God, and have at least a share in his holiness (Rom. 8:16).

So the Spirit does, indeed, but it is not obvious that the Holy Spirit does this by giving us an immediate, self-authenticating experience of his own personal presence. Of the presence of the Spirit we may rightly be sure, but none of us has an experience that comes stamped with the label “brought to you by the Holy Spirit” or “I am an experience of the Holy Spirit.” If we did not believe in the Holy Spirit, believe that the Holy Spirit is a personal agent who can make himself immediately present to us, and hold a lot of other (true) beliefs about the Holy Spirit, would we be able to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit? We might be like the Ephesian disciples in Acts 19, who did not even know there was a Holy Spirit until they were told. They needed to be told—and to be baptized in the name of Jesus—in order to experience the transforming, holiness-creating power of the Holy Spirit.

To think this is not at all to limit the universal reach, here and now, of the Spirit’s activity as such. We might well suppose that the Holy Spirit is in some way immediately present and active in the life of every human being, as Catholic theologians often argue, but there still seems good reason to think that a human being nonetheless needs to be told about the Holy Spirit, and to believe what he is told, in order actually to have an *experience* of the Holy Spirit. This is all the more true, it would seem, if we are talking about an experience of the Spirit that the person who has it can recognize as such. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, but as long as the Holy Spirit does this in sighs too deep for words (Rom. 8:26), the sighs will go up without our experiencing it, though they will not necessarily be any less effective for that.

The upshot of these considerations is that our experience of the Spirit will depend on our having enough true beliefs about the Spirit to recognize the experience for what it is, and so recognize the presence of the divine person who sanctifies us. The Spirit is immediately present to us, by grace our souls are joined immediately to the Spirit, but we have no immediate *experience* of the Spirit. Our experience of the Spirit depends

on at least one thing besides the immediate presence of the Spirit himself, namely our having some correct beliefs about the Spirit. And if we have no immediate experience of the Holy Spirit, our likeness to the Spirit cannot consist in an immediate experience of him. Our holiness, at least insofar as it involves a likeness to the person of the Spirit in particular, is not first of all an experience. Differently put, experiences of the Spirit will be a result of holiness, an effect of a more elemental relationship with the Holy Spirit rather than holiness *consisting* in such experiences.

Another way of thinking about the relationship of believers to the Spirit that constitutes holiness is to hold that holiness is practice. Holiness is walking by the Spirit, living a life shaped by the promptings of the Holy Spirit—the more deeply shaped, the more holy. Seen in this way, holiness is sometimes understood more in terms of personal or individual practice, and sometimes more in terms of social practice. But there is, of course, no need to play these off against one another. We may disagree about what practices the Spirit prompts and which ones the Spirit discourages but, unless we want to say that the Spirit prompts either no personal practices or no social practices, there is no general need to see personal and social holiness as opposed, and much need to see them as two sides of the same coin.

Again, this is without doubt right as far as it goes. There is an intrinsic connection between likeness to the Spirit and what we do, between holiness and practice. This is not, however, to say that the likeness to himself the Spirit imparts just *is* practice. Some of the basic reasons for this are pretty obvious. Practice comes and goes, while holiness, presumably, abides, as the presence of the Spirit abides. The way practice waxes and wanes that is pertinent here is not that the quality of our practice can vary—sometimes we are patient with our teenager, sometimes we are not, hard as we try. In a Christian, that is a sign of sanctification only quite imperfectly realized.

Rather, practice comes and goes, even among the most holy people in this life, in the obvious sense that they are not always practicing. Mother Teresa was not holy only when she was cradling the dying in the streets of Calcutta; even the most saintly person can only ladle out soup to the homeless so many hours a day. Yet, surely Mother Teresa was still holy when she was sleeping, opening the mail, or doing the wash, just as much, in fact, as she was when she gave a dying leper a cup of water to drink. She was holy even when she was doing any number of things that nobody sees as practices distinctively prompted by the Spirit.

Of course, it is possible to do all of these things in a holy way (think of St. Thérèse doing the wash).⁶ But that is just the point. It is usually the holiness of the agent that makes the practices holy. When a person consistently acts in heroically virtuous ways, that is quite rightly taken as a sign of holiness, of a deep likeness of that person to the Holy Spirit. But the likeness has to lie at a deeper level than the practices themselves. Practices animated by the Spirit, like experiences of the Spirit, are effects rather than causes of that likeness to the Spirit which is truly basic to holiness. The holy person walks by the Spirit, of course, but only because she first lives by the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:25). Conversely, that we strive for holiness means that holiness cannot simply be equated with the striving itself.

The likeness to the Spirit that underlies both experience and practice and is their needed basis is, I think, clearly captured by a well-known statement of St. Paul: “[T]he love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5). At a level deeper than experience and practice, at the deepest level there is, closer to us than we are to ourselves, the Holy Spirit has been given to us in person.⁷ Here, at the heart of the matter, nothing at all comes between the soul and the Holy Spirit. Here there is a genuinely immediate union of the human being with the Holy Spirit, a union that by the Spirit’s power comes to pass, as Thomas Aquinas puts it, *non mediante aliqua creatura*, without the intervention of any creature.⁸ This immediate union of the believer with the Holy Spirit is not itself the content of any experience—we cannot gaze upon it as we do our passing thoughts or our past actions—though it is productive of the sorts of experiences that Christians often think of as the movements of the Spirit, as it is productive of the practices and ways of action that Christians know to describe as the works of the Spirit.

Precisely by being given to us in this most intimate way, the Holy Spirit directly impresses his own likeness upon us. The Holy Spirit is given to us not simply as an indeterminate divine person, one of the

⁶See her account of this incident in *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, trans. John Clarke, O.C.D. (3rd edn, Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1996), 250.

⁷See Augustine, *Confessiones*, III.vi.11: *interior intimo meo et superior summo meo* (PL 32, 688; cf. the English version by Henry Chadwick, Saint Augustine, *Confessions* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], 43).

⁸In *I Sent.* d. 14, q. 3, sol. (S. *Thomae Aquinatis Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 1, ed. P. Mandonnet, O.P. [Paris: Lethielleux, 1929], 328).

three, we know not which, but in his own personal uniqueness. Poured into our hearts, the Holy Spirit expresses his own personal identity deep within us, and correspondingly impresses his own unique individuality upon us.

The apostle is straightforward about the precise character of the impression the Spirit makes within us, the stamp of his own uniqueness that he imprints upon us. The Holy Spirit is the personal love of God shed abroad in our hearts. The mark he impresses upon us—the likeness of himself he creates by his immediate presence within us—is also, of course, love. Here we see the importance of the ancient idea that love is not simply a common or essential attribute of God, shared by the three persons (though it is that), but also a unique personal characteristic of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes forth from the Father and the Son as love, as the perfect expression of their infinite love for one another and so as himself love in person. When this love in person is given to us, the person who is love gives us our love for God, as Paul says (Rom. 5:5).⁹ When it comes to the Holy Spirit, then, the likeness to this divine person in which our holiness most basically consists is love—the love the Spirit creates within us by joining us to himself, bringing about in us, creatures though we are, a living share in the love of the Father and the Son have for one another.¹⁰

Conformed to the Son

I promised a brief anatomy of holiness, and I will indeed be briefer on the likeness to the Son and to the Father that are similarly constitutive of holiness. As it turns out, much of what we need to know is already contained in what we have said about the way the Spirit imparts his likeness to us.

Among the arresting features of the way Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit is the modesty he attributes to the Spirit. Just as Jesus himself came

⁹Augustine is the first to make this point with vigor and clarity: “[The Holy Spirit] is the one meant when we read, ‘God is love’ (I Jn. 4:8, 16). So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him, and he himself is love. The human being has no resources to love God except from God.” *De Trinitate* XV.xvii.31 (trans. Edmund Hill, O.P., *The Trinity* [Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991], 421; translation altered).

¹⁰On the matters touched on in this paragraph, see especially the rich treatment of the mission of the Holy Spirit in Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, §§28–31, trans. Cyril Vollert, S.J. (St. Louis, B. Herder, 1946), 154–180.

not to do his own will but that of the Father who sent him, and came not to glorify himself but to glorify the Father, so the Holy Spirit, Jesus teaches us, will not speak on his own; rather “he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (Jn. 16:15). It is no surprise, therefore, that the Holy Spirit does not attest himself, but Jesus, and does not seek so much to bring about in us an experience of himself, as of Jesus. The Holy Spirit imprints his very own likeness upon us, to be sure, but the Holy Spirit is love, and it is the characteristic of love, at least of the pure, self-donating love that is the Holy Spirit, to look away from itself to another, who is loved.

The Holy Spirit does not impress himself upon us, shed the love he is abroad in our hearts, in order that we may love *him*, the Spirit, but in order that we may love Jesus. Precisely by impressing his own form upon us, we could say, the Spirit conforms us to Jesus Christ. Because he himself is love, in other words, he does not impress his own form upon us *instead of* the form of Jesus, but rather the Spirit impresses the form of Jesus upon us *by* giving us a likeness to his own modest, self-disregarding person.

Here we come to what seems like the most obvious answer the New Testament offers to the question with which we began—what is it to be holy? If holiness is likeness to God, and God is the Trinity, then the person of the Trinity we most clearly understand what it is to be like is the incarnate Son. The New Testament has many ways of expressing this likeness to Jesus Christ in which holiness most manifestly consists for us. It is having the mind of Christ, who emptied himself for us, who became poor for us that we might become rich in him (Phil. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 8:9). It is being the Father’s adopted children, sharing not just by legal right but in reality all that belongs to the natural Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:14-17). It is bearing the image of the man of heaven, as we have borne the image of the man of dust (1 Cor. 15:47-49).

For the moment, I want to underline only one aspect of the holiness that consists in likeness to Christ, the holiness the Spirit himself brings about in us by conforming us to Christ, making us bearers of the image of the man of heaven. Likeness to Christ is conformity to his *person*. But his person is of both divine and human nature. To be conformed to him—to be holy—is thus to share in what belongs uniquely to him in both respects. When it comes to holiness, that means especially sharing in the perfection of his human love for, and knowledge of, the Father.

To be holy is not simply to have a knowledge of the Father qualitatively similar to Jesus’ own, if much inferior to his. That is not an intimate

enough likeness to make for holiness. Rather, holiness is to have a share in Jesus' very own human knowledge and love of the Father, the knowledge that is uniquely his. The saints are those who are joined to Jesus so closely as to have his mind, who are shaped like him because they cling so closely to him by the Spirit's grace. "Of his fullness we have all received" (Jn. 1:16)—we have received, that is, of his very own personal, human fullness of knowledge and love for the Father. Indeed, the very gift of the Spirit that sheds love abroad in our hearts, and so our holiness at its most immediate source, is, it would seem, simply a sharing in Jesus' own perfect possession of the Spirit (Jn. 3:34).

The Eschatological Father

What then of the Father himself? If holiness is to love the Son by the Spirit's gift and in just that way to share in the Son's own human knowledge of and love for the Father, in what does our likeness specifically to the Father himself consist? In a sense the answer is contained in the question. To be holy through conformity to the Son is to share in the Son's own likeness to the Father. So our likeness to the Father is simply our share in the Son's likeness, the latter perfect with respect to both his divinity and his humanity. Once again, this is right as far as it goes. But here we need to remember that "it does not yet appear what we shall be" (1 Jn. 3:2).

While we are even now holy by conformity to the Son, only in the end will our conformity to the Son be fully realized and perfected. Only then will we fully appreciate in what Jesus' likeness to the Father—and so our own, since we have our own likeness to the Father only as a share in his—actually consists. Our holiness ultimately consists in likeness to the Father, the unoriginate source. But as yet we still strive for that holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Only when our holiness is perfected in glory will we truly realize in what that holiness, now fully transparent to us through the vision of its pure source, actually consists in our own case.

A Concluding Methodological Observation

Much that is indispensable to an adequate anatomy of holiness has here not even been mentioned. I have mind, not least, the necessary communal and sacramental, that is to say, ecclesial, mediation of holiness. I will, though, have to save that for another time. Allow me to conclude with what I may as well call a methodological observation.

I have been talking about holiness, and have been trying to grasp, in words, some of the basic features of its grammar, of what I have been calling its “anatomy.” Nothing wrong with that, as long as we remember that holiness is not, first and last, something to be talked about. “Holy” is something *to be*. It is a truism hardly worth repeating that those who are good at talking about holiness are not necessarily good at being holy, and that holy people are not necessarily given to, or good at, talking about it. In the end, it is not simply the case that being holy is immeasurably more important than talking about it, but that those who are really holy have to be the ones to decide when it has been rightly talked about.

HOLINESS AND ETHICS

by

Thomas B. Dozeman

The linking of holiness and economics, or more broadly ethics, was crucial to John Wesley, and their centrality continues in the different Wesleyan traditions that he birthed. In the *Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems*, Wesley stated the frequently repeated quote: “there is no religion, but social religion; and no holiness but social holiness.”¹ The economics of holiness reflected in this quotation embraces more the ancient meaning of “economy” (*oikos*) as “household” since Wesley was seeking to counter an individualistic and private form of solitary Christian religion.

Over against this, Wesley concluded that the Christian religion could not exist in any way without society.² And, if I understand him correctly, Wesley intends by the use of the word “society” not only the social interaction of the community of faith (i.e., the connectionalism of the *koinonia*), but also a broader engagement with the world in doing good, socially and economically. In fact, it would appear that the broader social and economic engagement with the world, grounded in the “holiness of the heart,” is what propels us into a “holy life” moving toward Christian perfection.³ One of the obstacles in perfecting holiness, according to Wesley, is wealth (or to use his term, “material possessions”), since it gives us

¹John Wesley and Charles Wesley, “Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems,” 2.5, in List of Poetical Works, vol. 14 of *The Works of John Wesley. Third Edition Complete and Unabridged* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 321.

²See, for example, John Wesley, “Upon the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount: Discourse the Fourth,” §24, in Sermons I, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 1 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976-), 531-49.

³John Wesley, “Christian Perfection,” §40, in Sermons II, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 1 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976-), 99-124.

the illusion of power and security. It breaks down the connectionalism of holiness, insulating us from God and others.⁴

I will explore the biblical foundation for Wesley's vision of holiness, focusing in particular on the Priestly and Deuteronomic literature of the Pentateuch since these two bodies of literature provide the paradigm of holiness in the Hebrew Bible. The Priestly literature may be defined as the "P" source in the Pentateuch, of which the main body of literature includes the creation mythology in Genesis 1 and the account of the revelation at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19-40, Leviticus, and Numbers 1-10. The Deuteronomic literature is the book of Deuteronomy. In each literary tradition, I will ask three questions: (1) What is holiness? (2) How is holiness transferred to humans? And (3) what is the relationship between holiness and social or economic morality? I will conclude by bringing the biblical authors into conversation with Wesley and ourselves around three questions: (1) Is there no religion but social religion, and no holiness but social holiness? (2) Can we perfect holiness through social and economic morality? And (3) is wealth an obstacle to perfecting holiness?

Holiness: The Two Separations

What is holiness in Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature? Here the two traditions agree. God and holiness form an intrinsic web. God is the source of all holiness in the Pentateuch. Yahweh is "majestic in holiness" according to the writer of the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15:11). The hymn makes it abundantly clear that holiness is a quality that emanates directly from the character or essence of God. Jacob Milgrom writes: "Holiness is [God's] quintessential nature, distinguishing [God] from all beings."⁵ The praise of holiness in the Song of the Sea certainly supports the conclusion of Milgrom since it is couched in the proclamation of Yahweh's incomparability: "Who is like you majestic in holiness, awesome of praise, worker of wonders." But Milgrom is quick to add that the reversal of the state-

⁴John Wesley, "The Danger of Increasing Riches," §131, in *Sermons IV*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 4 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976-), 178-86. For further discussion see, Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), esp. 29-46.

⁵Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 3A of *The Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven, Y CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 1712.

ment is not true. That is, holiness is not Yahweh.⁶ In other words, holiness cannot be equated with God, even though God is holy. Holiness acts as an agency of the divine will.

The repeated divine command to the Israelites in the Priestly literature, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (e.g., Lev. 11:45), illustrates the distinction between God and holiness. The command is not for the Israelites to become God, “You will be God, for I am God.” Rather, they are to be holy, “You will be holy, because I am holy.” Holiness and God are organically related, but they are not the same. The subtle relationship between God and holiness and the transfer of holiness to humans is crucial for understanding biblical religion, including worship (cultic holiness) and ethics (social holiness). They are related, but not the same thing.

If holiness and God are intrinsically related, but not the same, then what exactly is holiness? The problem with defining holiness is that it lacks content. The Hebrew *qadash* simply means “to be separate,” while the noun *qodesh* designates an object, marks a person, place, or thing as being removed or separated from the profane or everyday world.⁷ In other words, the term “holy” lacks clear content. No person or object in our world is inherently holy. Any thing or person to whom holiness is attributed is simply segmented out and separated from the everyday or profane world. Because of this peculiar reality, biblical writers tend to define holiness by identifying what it is separate from, rather than directly predicating a quality to the person, object, or possession. The Priestly description of the tithe in Lev. 27:32 provides illustration: “All tithes of herd and flock, every tenth one that passes under the shepherd’s staff, shall be holy to Yahweh.” The selected sheep that are designated as being holy do not have a special content (they don’t glow); they are defined, instead, by their separation from the other sheep.⁸

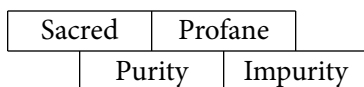
⁶Ibid.

⁷David P. Wright, “Holiness,” ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 3 of *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 237-49. For additional discussion of holiness in the Hebrew Bible see John G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel in Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis, Minn: Augsburg/Fortress, 1989); and Stephen C. Barton (eds.), *Holiness Past and Present* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2003).

⁸Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 3B of *The Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001), 2398-2400.

When holiness is applied to a larger religious cosmology in the Priestly literature and in the book of Deuteronomy, it continues to lack content, representing instead the separation between a holy God and humans, who are not inherently holy. The separation between God and humans, signified by holiness, gives rise to the confession that God is transcendent, “the other,” meaning distinct from us and from the created or profane world. Thus, when we confess with the author of the Song of the Sea that Yahweh is majestic in holiness, we are making a statement in the act of praise about our separation over against God. Yahweh’s majesty or holiness is separate from us; it is incomparable. In fact, we are doubly removed from God since the separation designated by holiness is of two kinds; it is ontological (the separation of the sacred and the profane/common) and anthropological or biological (the separation of the pure and the impure).

The following diagram illustrates the two-part separation of holiness.⁹ The categories of the sacred and the profane in the top level of the diagram represent the ontological separation between God and creation. The categories of the pure and the impure in the lower level designate the biological contrast between purity or health and impurity that arises from the violence of the human ego.



The following examples from Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature provide illustrations of the ontological and anthropological separations of holiness.

The author of Deuteronomy underscores the ontological separation of the sacred and the profane in the prayer of first fruits. The act of tithing in this text is described as “removing the holy from the house.” Then, after giving the tithe, the worshiper invokes God with the words:

Look down from your holy habitation from heaven
and bless your people Israel
and the ground that you have given us.

⁹ See the further discussion in Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 3 of *The Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 616; and Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993).

In this prayer, God dwells in heaven, not on earth; the two realms are distinct.¹⁰ Heaven is the location of holiness, not earth. The request for a blessing on Israel and the ground accentuates the permanent separation between the sacred and the profane. Blessing must emanate from heaven; it cannot emerge from the profane world itself; it does not spring forth from the ground. The same is true for humans in the book of Deuteronomy; they are not part of the world of heaven. The author states this explicitly in Deut. 4:32: “God created human beings on the earth.”¹¹

The Priestly author is even more adamant on the permanent separation of the sacred and profane, removing God from the realm of heaven altogether in Genesis 1: “In the beginning God created heavens and earth” (Gen. 1:1). In the Priestly cosmology, heaven is no longer the “holy habitation” of God as in Deuteronomy. To where the Priestly removes God we are never told.¹² The distancing of God in Genesis 1 is meant to underscore the separation of the sacred and the profane, but it is certainly not intended to denigrate the creation or humans. Humans are good, blessed, and even image-bearers of God in the utopian world of Genesis 1, but they are not holy (Gen 1:26-30). The created world, too, is good, but not holy (Gen. 1:31).¹³

The verb “to be holy” (*qadash*) first appears at the close of the creation story in the establishment of Sabbath, not as an object in creation, but as a distinct day from the previous six days. Genesis 2:3 states: “God blessed the seventh day and *hallowed it*.” Although the verb is correctly translated “to consecrate” or “to make hallow” in the NRSV, the root meaning is that God “separated” the Sabbath from the other six days, thus creating a permanent distinction between them. The first six days of creation focus on the human world in all of its complexity—all of which is

¹⁰Thomas B. Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology of Ordination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 62-3.

¹¹Dozeman, *Holiness*, 63-4.

¹²The phrase “heaven and earth” can describe the totality of creation. See, for example, Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, Minn: Augsburg, 1984), 93-101; and Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, vol. 1A of *The Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Publisher, 1987), 11-15

¹³Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok in *The JSP Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 10-11; Phyllis Bird, “‘Male and Female He Created Them’: Gen. 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981), 135-44.

designated “good.” But on the seventh day no act of creation takes place and no object within creation demands the reader’s attention. Holiness is, instead, a moment in time in which God rests in the divine realm, prompting us to mimic the action in the human world.¹⁴ The harmony of action is worship, which creates “cultic holiness,” not in humans, but in moment of the Sabbath.

When we leave utopia and enter the world of our everyday experience, both the authors of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature introduce a second degree of separation in characterizing holiness. It is the separation of the pure and the impure, caused by the spilling of blood into the ground. The story of Cain and Abel provides the paradigm. The shedding of blood in this story is a virus. The incubation period begins when Cain experiences anger or hurt over the divine acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice rather than his own. The deity warns Cain to control his ego, stating: “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it” (Gen. 4:7).¹⁵ Cain fails the test and kills his brother.

This action of Cain transforms the test of the human ego into an environmental and social contagion of blood-violence, which introduces impurity into creation. Blood out of context—that is to say blood outside of the human body—is the starting point for all violence in the world; it screams when it hits the ground.¹⁶ The result is that Cain is alienated both from the sacred realm of God and now from the creation itself, which is transformed from the pure world of Genesis 1 to the impure or toxic world of blood-pollution.¹⁷ Thus, holiness comes to designate a double separation between God and humans in the Pentateuch: the most primal is the ontological distinction between the sacred and the profane;

¹⁴Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 167-73; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 34-6. For reflection on the meaning of Sabbath as time rather than place, see Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951).

¹⁵Sarna writes: “The Hebrew text bristles with difficulties” (*Genesis*, 33). On the problems of translation and interpretation, see Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 299-301.

¹⁶Wenham describes the power of blood to pollute (*Genesis 1-15*, 107). Sarna also notes that the crying out of the blood invokes legal background as a plea for help on the part of the victim (*Genesis*, 34).

¹⁷Wenham explains the alienation of Cain: “it means you [Cain] are cursed away from the land, i.e., you are banished from the cultivated area that was man’s original home (cf. 2:5) to the uncultivated steppe” (*Genesis 1-15*, 107).

this is overlain further with the biological separation between the pure and the impure.

The authors of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature use a range of metaphors to characterize the further alienation between God and humans that arises from the violent shedding blood and its resulting contagion or impurity. The author of Deuteronomy introduces the emotions of rage and jealousy into the deity. Moses warns the Israelites in Deut. 4:24: "For Yahweh your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God."¹⁸ The Priestly writer avoids the emotional and intimate imagery of Deuteronomy, preferring instead the more dispassionate language of medicine and disease in which the contagion of blood in creation produces sickness, a plague, which requires an antidote. Moses states to Aaron in Num. 16:46: "Take your censer, put fire on it from the altar and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them. For the wrath has gone out from Yahweh; the plague has begun."¹⁹

The separation of holiness in each case presupposes the ontological (the sacred and the profane), but it widens to include the biological (the pure and the impure). The resulting distinction attributes purity, life, health, wholeness, order, and peace to divine holiness, as compared to the impure world of death, disease, decay, and violence, which now infects creation and all humans.

The two-part separation between God and humans makes any contact between them volatile and dangerous. Unregulated contact with holiness results in death to humans, regardless of motive. God kills Uzzah when he steadies the ark (a holy object), in spite of his good intention (1 Sam. 6:6-11). This story illustrates the point made earlier that holiness has no content, including the content of morality. Rudolf Otto recognized this, when he stated that holiness is a void, which is pre-moral; what he means is that holiness precedes social and economic morality and thus cannot be directly equated with ethics, in which humans, not God, are the primary actors. For Otto, the premier biblical example is the unprovoked

¹⁸The use of "jealous" signifies the passion of an offended lover in marriage law (e.g., Num. 5:11-31). The author of Deuteronomy uses this term to describe the anger of the deity against the unfaithfulness of Israel, see Moses Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 5A of *The Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 208, 295.

¹⁹See George Buchanan Gray, *Numbers* in the *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 213.

attack of Yahweh in Ex. 4:22-26; it captures the dynamic and pre-moral quality of holiness. Scholars struggle in vain to provide moral content to the story, seeking a cause for the arbitrary nature of the divine assault. Such a search is wrong headed, according to Otto, since the episode probes the pre-moral character of holiness, which he identifies as the numinous.²⁰ If it were otherwise, we could directly predicate holiness with a particular ethical action (e.g., giving our wealth to the poor) or virtue (e.g., love). But, for Otto, humans cannot work their way to holiness through either of these forms of morality. Any such predication eliminates the root meaning of holiness as separation from the profane world.

The pentateuchal authors agree with Rudolf Otto; they too insist that holiness cannot be grounded in our best ideals since we are the subject of the action, whether it be the act of our giving to the poor or the virtue of love. Holiness is, rather, separate from us altogether; it signifies an action of God upon us, the objects who are not hard-wired to receive it without divine aid. The result is a paradoxical situation. Humans need holiness for life and health. But the gift is a two-edged sword. It can kill or heal. Rudolf Otto probed this ambiguous nature of holiness, when he described it as an *Ungeheuer*, a monster. Thus, humans do well to proceed with great caution when confronted by holiness, as in the case of the prophet Isaiah, who proclaims: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a human of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the king, Yahweh of hosts!" (Isa. 6:5). The most appropriate human response to holiness is fear or awe, as modeled by Moses before the burning bush in Ex. 3:6: "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God."

The volatile nature of holiness underscores that the biblical confessions, such as "Immanuel" ("God with Us") or "Yahweh, the Holy One in our midst," are filled with unresolved tension, giving rise to a central theme in biblical literature: How is God able to overcome the separation inherent in holiness, take up residency on earth, and renew the world without destroying either it or the humans who live in the world? Thus, the central goal of biblical religion is to overcome the separation between God and humans through the transmission of holiness. Both Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature envision such a transmission as a two-

²⁰Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, 2nd ed., trans. J. W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), 2-8, 25-30, 60-61.

stage process that begins with cultic holiness and proceeds to social holiness.

The Divine Transfer of Holiness to Humans: Cultic Holiness

The transmission of cultic holiness is essential to both the authors of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature. Both traditions agree that holiness is, for the most part, transmitted in worship. They also agree that God is the active subject in the transfer of cultic holiness; humans can only receive it as a gift. But the traditions move in very different directions in describing how God transmits cultic holiness to humans. The differences are evident in the separate accounts of the divine descent, revelation, and transmission of holiness at the divine mountain of Horeb in Deuteronomy and at Sinai in the Priestly literature.

In Deuteronomy, the transfer of cultic holiness at Horeb is a charismatic event. Yahweh is the subject of a direct, immediate and personal revelatory experience aimed at the entire Israelite nation.²¹ The author tells us that the Israelites approached Mount Horeb and that divine speech directly infused all of the people. Moses states: "Yahweh spoke to you out of the fire." He continues: "You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice" (Deut. 4:12). The result of the successful transfer of cultic holiness is that Israel becomes a "people holy to Yahweh," meaning their separation from "all the peoples on earth" (Deut. 7:6). The infusion of cultic holiness through divine words drives home the "otherness" of God to the Israelites, creating a sense of "creature-consciousness," to use the words of Rudolf Otto. The people state to Moses: "Today we have seen that God may speak to someone and the person may still live" (Deut. 5:24). The direct, charismatic infusion of cultic holiness into the entire Israelite people creates awe and a sense of mystery. The author of Deuteronomy clarifies this mystery as a new orientation to all of life, characterized as the "fear of Yahweh" in a holy people (Deut. 5:29). The result is that all of the Israelite people now live in a deep and internal relationship with God and with each other, signified as covenant, which separates them from all other people in the world.²²

²¹Thomas B. Dozeman, *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology and Canon in Exodus 19-24*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, vol. 37 of The Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 68-80.

²²*Ibid.*, 83-5.

In the Priestly literature, the deity remains the subject of the transfer of cultic holiness at Sinai; but it is described as a non-charismatic process. By this I mean that the Glory of Yahweh descends into sacramental objects within the tabernacle cult through carefully orchestrated rituals, as compared to the direct infusion of cultic holiness into the people in Deuteronomy.²³ The invasion of cultic holiness into the sanctuary creates a pure environment separate from the impure world, which must be safeguarded from the Israelite people, who are not holy. In view of this, Jacob Milgrom defines the Priestly understanding of cultic holiness in sacred space as “that which is unapproachable except through divinely imposed restrictions.”²⁴ As a consequence, Yahweh states to Moses at Mount Sinai: “Set limits around the mountain and keep it holy” (Ex. 19:23).

Once the mountain is protected, the Glory of Yahweh takes up residence in the tabernacle through a three-stage ritual descend: first, onto the summit of Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:15-18); then, into the sanctuary (Ex. 40:34-38); and finally into the altar within the courtyard of the tabernacle (Lev. 9:22-24). The infusion of holiness into the altar allows the Aaronide priests to mediate religious health care to the Israelite people through blood-sacrifices (Lev. 1-7). Although these sacrifices provide a temporary antidote to the impurity of blood-violence, cultic holiness is not transferred to the Israelite people. Instead, it remains restricted to the sanctuary, as a health-care resource that must be quarantined and protected from impurity by the priests.²⁵

The Relationship between Holiness and Economic Morality: Social Holiness

The authors of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature agree that God is always the subject of cultic holiness and that humans can do nothing but receive it as a gift. This is true whether the transfer of cultic holiness is a

²³T. N. D. Mettinger, “The Kabod Theology,” in *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, vol. 18 of *Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982), 80-115.

²⁴Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 42-47; *Leviticus 17-22*, 1398. See also Jacob Milgrom, “The Changing Concept of Holiness in the Pentateuchal Codes with Emphasis on Leviticus 19,” in *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas*, ed. John F. A. Sawyer, vol. 227 of *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 65-75.

²⁵See the discussion of the Day of Atonement as a ritual of purgation by Milgrom (*Leviticus 1-16*), 1061-84.

direct charismatic infusion into the entire worshiping community as in Deuteronomy, or a health care resource distributed by priests through sacramental rituals as in the Priestly literature. In either case, however, cultic holiness continues to lack clear content, because God, the other, is its subject. Thus, the transformative power of cultic holiness is pre-moral; it purges and empowers worshipers to live a life free of blood-violence in the profane world; but this power lacks moral content. The transfer of cultic holiness requires social holiness for its content. Both the authors of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature agree on this point. The ethical action of humans in the profane world gives content to cultic holiness. But the interpretation of social holiness is very different because of the contrasting views of cultic holiness in Deuteronomy and in the Priestly literature.

In Deuteronomy, all the people are infused with cultic holiness from the direct charismatic encounter with the voice of God. The successful infusion of cultic holiness separates the Israelites from the rest of humanity. Moses interprets the experience in the following manner: "For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God; it is you Yahweh has chosen out of all the people on earth to be his people, his treasured possession" (Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:18).²⁶ The statement of Moses indicates that in the book of Deuteronomy the goal of religion is realized in the cult. God overcomes the separation with humans through the charismatic transmission of holiness into the entire people. We might characterize this as a radical theology of justification.

Cultic holiness, nevertheless, gives way to social holiness when the focus shifts in Deuteronomy from God's action in worship to the role of the people in the profane world. Social holiness in Deuteronomy is not intended to sanctify the people through ethics, because God has already achieved the goal of transferring holiness to the people. Social holiness is aimed, rather, at protecting the cultic holiness that has already invaded and transformed the people. Social holiness in Deuteronomy is an ethical system that is meant to ensure the separation of a holy people from the world.

²⁶The commentary on the nature of Israel as a "holy people" and a "treasured possession" is wide ranging. See H. J. Kaase, "Das Heilige volk: Zur alttestamentlichen Bezeichnung *'am qadosh*," in *Freude am Evangelium: Festschrift für A. de Quervain*, ed. J. J. Stamm, vol. 44 of *Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1966), 50-61.

Social holiness includes restricted marriage practices (Deut. 7:3) and isolation from other cultures (Deut. 7:5), even if it requires the violent exercise of social holiness in the form of the ban or genocide (Deut. 13:8).²⁷ Social holiness also includes a rejection of material possessions, described as the wealth of the other nations. Moses cautions the Israelites not to covet silver or gold, with the warning that any violation will prompt the violence of social holiness in the form of the ban on the transgressor (Deut. 7:25-26).²⁸ In this way, the exclusive social and economic ethics in Deuteronomy provides the content to the successful transfer of cultic holiness into the people at Horeb.

In the Priestly literature, cultic holiness is not transferred to the people at Sinai. Cultic holiness is transferred, instead, to the sanctuary and its objects, which provide a health care resource for the people through blood sacrifice. Without the successful transfer of holiness, sacrifice only functions as a temporary antidote to blood violence in humans. The limited effect of the sacrificial system is because the people are not infused with cultic holiness in the act of worship. Thus, in the Priestly literature, the goal of religion is not realized in worship. Cultic holiness invades the sanctuary, its objects, and even the priestly class, but not the Israelite people (Ex. 24; 40; Lev. 8-9).²⁹ Worship provides health care resources for humans, but not a complete transformation or, if you like, justification. Further sanctification of the people is necessary to complete the transfer of holiness into humans. In view of this, social holiness takes on a very different role in the Priestly literature. Social holiness is not an ethical system for protecting the holiness in the laity, as in the book of Deuteronomy. Social holiness is aimed, instead, at completing and thus perfecting the transfer of holiness into the people.

The Holiness Code in the book of Leviticus represents social holiness in the Priestly literature.³⁰ It is aimed at laity, not priests. The focus

²⁷For discussion of the ban (genocide) in the ethics of Deuteronomy, see P. D. Stern, *The Biblical Herem: A Window in Israel's Religious Experience*, vol. 211 of *Brown Judaic Studies* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991).

²⁸For discussion of the material possessions of the nations as "abhorrent" and therefore "taboo," see Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 268.

²⁹For discussion of the transfer of holiness to the Priests, see Dozeman (*Holiness*), 81-103.

³⁰For summary of the central themes of the Holiness Code, see Milgrom (*Leviticus 17-22*), 1319-1443.

of the Holiness Code is, for the most part, ethical action in the profane world, not worship. As such, it provides the content to the cultic holiness of the Glory of Yahweh. The central theme of the Holiness Code, “You shall be holy for I am holy,” is a command for laity to extend the partial health care that they have received in the cult into the profane world through social and economic ethics.³¹ It is a command about sanctification, not justification. The goal of the Holiness Code is to perfect holiness in the people of God. The radical economics of Deuteronomy, in which gold and silver pollute the holiness in the people and thus must be rejected out of hand, gives way in the Holiness Code to a focus on *achieving* transformed social relations, all of which are aimed at controlling blood violence in the profane world (Lev. 17, 19).

Social holiness includes marriage patterns and the avoidance of incest (Lev. 18, 20), Sabbath observance and proper worship (Lev. 19; 21, 23; 24), distribution of wealth to the poor in reaping harvest (Lev. 19), fraud (Lev. 19), and just payment for services and business practices (Lev. 19), all of which are summarized as Jubilee ethics (Lev. 25-27). It is noteworthy, that material possessions—the gold and silver of the nations singled out as taboo in Deuteronomy—are not excluded out of hand in the Priestly literature. Instead, material possessions must be used to achieve the transformed social relationships of the Jubilee law in the profane world. In this way, the social holiness of the laity provides content to the cultic holiness of the Glory of Yahweh, and in so doing holiness is perfected through ethics.

Wesley and the Pentateuch on Holiness

The above summary of cultic and social holiness in Deuteronomy and in the Priestly literature provides a broad context for returning to John Wesley's three reflections on holiness summarized at the outset.

First: “Is there no religion but social religion and no holiness but social holiness”? Both the authors of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature would disagree with Wesley on this. I am sure that we are not doing justice to Wesley in isolating this statement from a broader view of holiness; but, in point of fact, it has often functioned in isolation in some forms of Wesleyan tradition. The danger of focusing exclusively on social

³¹See Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress Press, 1995).

holiness as the core of religion is that it does not probe its primal meaning as separation. The transformative power of God, made known through the invasion of holiness, is incomparable to all human social systems; holiness lacks content precisely because it is rooted in the “otherness” of God.

The authors of both Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature agree on this point and thus they distinguish between cultic and social holiness and probe the primal meaning of holiness in the former, where God alone is the subject of all action. The embracing of social holiness independent from cultic holiness runs the danger of equating holiness with social and economic morality. Such a reduction reduces religion to personal piety or social politics. Both are important, but neither probes the pulp of religion. As we have seen, holiness critically evaluates all piety, all politics, and all social economics. It is pre-moral. Its power originates in the sacred, or to put it in the terms of the biblical authors, cultic holiness precedes and empowers social holiness.

Second: Can we perfect holiness through social and economic morality? The authors of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature diverge on the role of social holiness. The author of Deuteronomy could not disagree more with Wesley that holiness is perfected through social and economic morality. This is because the goal of holiness is achieved in the cult, thus no perfection of holiness is needed; rather it must simply be protected through ethics. It is the Priestly writers who agree with Wesley on the importance of sanctification in perfecting holiness. For them, the ethics of social holiness achieves what is only begun in the cult; it provides content to cultic holiness outside of the worshiping community and thus perfects holiness. The health care that takes place in the sacrificial system of the Tabernacle of Leviticus 1-16 is completed in the ethical holiness of the people outside of the cult in Leviticus 17-27.

Third: Are material possessions an obstacle to perfecting holiness? The authors of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature couldn't agree more with Wesley on the dangers of possessions. But again, the two traditions diverge on the nature of the danger. Deuteronomy presents a radical ethics of economics. The possessions of the profane world—the gold and silver of the nations—pollute in all cases, requiring a strict separation from the economic system of the world. Social ethics in this case is envisioned as protecting cultic holiness, which has already transformed the people of God. Social holiness is exercised through the ban to ensure an

egalitarian and separatist economic system. I do not think that Wesley would agree with the rigid social exclusiveness or the exercise of violence that the authors of Deuteronomy advocate to protect the holiness in the people from the pollution of possessions.

The Priestly literature advocates a more moderate ethics of economics in which the Israelite laity must be in the world, but not of it. Possessions are not condemned out of hand; but wealth must be regulated through the economics of the Jubilee. Here again it appears that Wesley is grounded in the economic world of the Priestly literature. Wesley does not condemn the accumulation of possessions out of hand. In fact, Wesley notes a certain inevitability of wealth among Christians. "True Christianity," he notes, "must cause diligence and frugality, which, in the natural course of things, must beget riches." But it is precisely at this point, according to Wesley, that Christianity "has a tendency, in process of time, to undermine and destroy itself." Why? It is the natural tendency of riches to weaken our own self-denial, which undermines the law of Jubilee, by fostering "pride, love of world and every temper that is destructive of Christianity." As a result, sanctification and the perfection of holiness in the people of God are stunted since we "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and in a great measure stop his gracious influence from descending on our assemblies."³²

How do we keep wealth from destroying us if we are following the vision of social holiness in the Priestly literature? Wesley provides his solution: "I can see only one possible way; find out another who can. Do you gain all you can, and save all you can? Then you must in the nature of things grow rich. Then if you have any desire to escape the damnation of hell, give all you can; otherwise I have no more hope for your salvation than of that of Judas Iscariot."³³ Blunt words indeed, especially for wealthy Christians in North America! I think that I am beginning to understand more clearly what Wesley meant by his bold proclamation that "there is no holiness but social holiness and no religion but social religion."

Evaluating Wesley's Reflections on Holiness

The summary of cultic and social holiness in Deuteronomy and in the Priestly literature provides a broad context for returning to Wesley's reflections on holiness outlined at the outset of my presentation. Our lim-

³²John Wesley, "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity," §122, in *Sermons IV*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 4 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976-), 86-96.

³³*Ibid.*, §122.18.

ited time together only allows for a brief engagement between Wesley and the Pentateuch on holiness.

First, both the authors of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature would disagree with Wesley's statement that "there no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness." I am sure that we are not doing justice to Wesley is isolating this state, but we should also admit that it has, indeed, often functioned in isolation in some forms of later Wesleyan tradition. The danger of embracing Wesley's definition of social holiness in isolation is that it does not underscore the separate nature of holiness as the "otherness" of the deity. Both Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature ground the otherness of God in the exploration of cultic holiness. The examination of social holiness, in which we are the subject of the action, separately from cultic holiness, where only God is the subject of action, equate and reduces holiness to morality. When and if this happens, we have left the broad cosmological world of biblical religion, and we reduce the mysterious world of religion to personal piety or politics. Both are important, but neither probes the pulp of religion. As we have seen, holiness critically evaluates all piety, all politics, and all social economics. It is pre-moral. Its power resides with the sacred, or, to put it in the terms of the biblical authors, cultic holiness precedes and empowers social holiness.

Second, the authors of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature diverge on the role of social holiness. The author of Deuteronomy could not disagree more with Wesley that holiness is perfected through social and economic morality, because the goal of holiness is achieved in the cult. It is the Priestly writers who would agree with Wesley on the importance of sanctification in perfecting holiness. For them, the ethics of social holiness achieves what is only begun in the cult. The health care that takes place in the sacrificial system of the Tabernacle of Leviticus 1-16 is completed in the ethical holiness of the people outside of the cult (Lev. 17-25). Social holiness provides content to cultic holiness and thus perfects it.

Third, the authors of Deuteronomy couldn't agree more with Wesley on the dangers of possession. But I do not think that Wesley would agree with their rigid social exclusiveness or with the exercise of violence that they advocate to protect the holiness in the chosen people from the pollution of possessions. Wesley would certainly agree with the jubilee law of the Priestly author. But on the topic of wealth as a catalyst for the breakdown of community, I think that Wesley has gone beyond the worldview of the biblical writers, who had not yet experienced the toxic combination of individualism and wealth and what it could do to the connectionalism of holy living that, for Wesley, is at the heart of religion.

SPIRIT/SHEKHINAH/SAKINA: “NO HOLINESS BUT SOCIAL HOLINESS”

by

Michael Lodahl

Presidential Address Delivered at the 2013 Annual Meeting
of the Wesleyan Theological Society, Seattle, Washington

It's a little like what the author of that ancient sermon we call Hebrews mysteriously put it so long ago: "Someone has testified somewhere" (2:6). So also I testify that someone, somewhere in the past year or so, wrote someplace that a good working definition of "holiness" is that it is what happens whenever God "shows up." Holiness, in this somewhat phenomenological rendering of the term, "happens" when creatures find themselves in the presence of—and so find themselves overwhelmingly confronted by—the transcendent Source and Sustainer of their fragile frames.

We think of Isaiah in the Temple: "Woe is me, for I am a human of unclean lips, and live among a people of unclean lips." Or perhaps we think of the repeated biblical refrain, "All flesh is grass," or of a rough fisherman's first date with Jesus: "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man," or of that same sermon called Hebrews, drawing from the Torah: "Let us give thanks . . . with reverence and awe, for indeed our God is a consuming fire" (12:28, 29). Holiness happens.

There is the axiomatic Christian conviction that God has "shown up" ultimately and decisively in the person and history, the words and works, the compassion, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. If holiness is "God showing up" among frail creatures of dust, and feeble as frail, then holiness is that human who is Emmanuel, "God with us" (Mt. 1:23).

Of course, it is Matthew who quotes the prophet Isaiah to this effect, and it is clear that Matthew is burdened to stress this point about the divine presence in Christ and as Christ. New Testament scholars among us are already "going ahead," like the resurrected Jesus did, "to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed [his disciples]," there at the end of Matthew's gospel (28:7, 16). It is remarkable that Matthew comments,

“when they saw [Jesus], they worshiped him.” Even more remarkable is that the text continues, almost hauntingly, by reporting that “some, however, doubted” (28:17).

In any event, Jesus does not divide the group into “true believers over here” and “you doubters over there.” Instead, Jesus, having received “all authority in heaven and on earth,” gives his great commission to everyone in this motley crew. And Matthew ends on the promise of Jesus: “Remember, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (28:20). Emmanuel is God is with us, with us in Jesus. “I am with you always,” Jesus promises as he sends out his Jewish disciples to the nations, to those Gentiles of every kind. From beginning to end, and in the middle, Matthew’s emphasis is promised presence, the very presence of God. Holiness happens, happens as God is present with us.

Divine Presence in Church Trouble

It is in the midst of Matthew that I want to direct our attention, ruminating in chapter eighteen on the promise of presence. Here we encounter Jesus instructing his disciples about how to deal with the inevitability of offenses given and received within the community of disciples. Transgressions also happen. But only Matthew’s gospel carefully outlines such a detailed strategy for dealing with offense.

First, the offended, the sinned against, should seek out the offending brother or sister quietly, alone, and try to work for reconciliation in that sequestered setting. “But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you,” much like Deuteronomy instructed the Israelites, “so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses” (18:16). We remember that, if that doesn’t work, now we can “tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (18:17).

So we are in the middle of instruction regarding how this community of discipleship is intended to do the hard and necessary work of reconciliation. How will this *ecclesia* function when the going gets rough, and especially when the trouble is not coming from the outside but gets going from the community’s very midst? How do we live together as brothers and sisters, yoked together with Jesus, learning from this one who is gentle and humble in heart? The next words attributed to our Teacher are these: “Truly I tell you, whatever you [plural] bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (18:18). It is patently obvious that these words refer to this

process of hoped-for reconciliation within the disciplined community. In Daniel Harrington's words, "[this] power would seem to concern either the imposing (and lifting) of decrees of excommunication or the forgiving (and not forgiving) of sins."¹

Matthew's Jesus continues: "Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven" (18:19). Here is a sentence that sorely needs to be taken always in its context! The reference to "two of you" seems to match perfectly with the earlier reference to the offended disciple taking "one or two others along" in the second phase of attempted reconciliation. So also, then, is that well-beloved promise of Christ's presence, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (18:20). Harrington comments, "The ideas of agreement, common prayer, and Christ's presence are here in the service of exercising the power to bind and loose in the case of the brother [or sister] who sins," and so "the context continues to be judicial, not directly liturgical."²

This remarkable promise of the presence of Jesus among a gathered few, then, occurs in the context of some gritty directives about dealing with difficulties, and perhaps difficult people, within the community of forgiveness. "Since such processes were used by the Essene and early rabbinic communities," Harrington observes, "it was only natural that the Matthean Christians should have their own procedures and that their rules might help to define their community identity for both insiders and outsiders."³ In this case, then, holiness happens: "I am there among them" in the difficult conversations involving confrontation, third-party observers, sorting out the issues, trying to determine and then assign guilt or innocence, forgiveness, reconciliation or, sadly, excommunication of an unrepentant offender.

That is not the Matthew 18:20 that I grew up with. The one I grew up with was gloriously de-contextualized. It was about Jesus being with us even in Wednesday night prayer meetings where you might need to lean heavily on the assurance that you only needed the two or three folks to guarantee God's presence. Of course, we always knew that Jesus is with just the one, right? My own dear parents were in a gospel quartet in my

¹Daniel J. Harrington, S. J., *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 269.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

early growing-up years. I wonder how many times I heard this song: “On the Jericho Road /There’s room for just two./No more and no less/Just Jesus and you.” What a great song! Too bad it is not true.

We know that Jesus called a dozen disciples to become a renewed Israel, a revived people of God together, a city set on a hill, a community of disciples living together under the yoke of Jesus’s teaching, receiving divine forgiveness and, ideally at least, extending that forgiveness to one another. We remember that he taught them to pray, “Our Father . . . forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” As I learned through college and seminary, it certainly became attractive to read Matthew 18:20 as the promise of divine presence in Jesus Christ, by the lovely power of the Spirit, among the company of disciples—even if only two or three. It went together so well with John Wesley’s dictum, which by then I had learned as something of a mantra: “No holiness but social holiness.”

Now I have come to appreciate the fact that the promise of divine presence more directly addresses this process of doing the hard work, having the difficult conversations, making the tough calls, that enable a community of disciples to prevail through the inevitable issues of hurt, anger, pride, shame, forgiveness, reconciliation and justice. Holiness happens . . . here in the hard places of church life.

The Shekhinah in Their Midst

I came to a moment of realization about this sometime during my doctoral studies at Emory University. I had become drawn into Emory’s lively Jewish-Christian conversation and had become enamored with the Talmud—that great encoding of generations of rabbinic discussion and debate regarding the identity and vocation of the people Israel, especially in the glaring absence of the Temple. The Talmud provides a textual window into the Jewish community as it strove over generations to wrestle with the questions of everyday life before God, as the people of God. Then one day this very fledgling student of the Talmud stumbled across a tantalizing teaching from the earlier layer of Talmud called the *Mishnah*: “If two sit together and words of Torah pass between them, then the Shekhinah is in their midst.” Right about then, a dissertation was conceived.

My digging among the ruminations of biblical and Second Temple scholars has left me thinking that it is notoriously difficult to establish a point of origin for the term *shekhinah*, derived from the verb “to dwell.” Second Maccabees may provide the best clue; it includes a prayer of

Jerusalem priests for the “Temple of your indwelling.” As Joseph Sievers has observed, “*Skenosis*, an abstract feminine noun, finds its closest Hebrew parallel in meaning as well as in form in *Shekhinah*.”⁴ If this is the case, then we may conclude that this term, which may have developed in part as a circumlocution for God’s dwelling in Israel’s midst, had been closely associated, if not virtually identified, with the Jerusalem Temple. If the term originated in the Jewish conviction that the Temple was the divine *skenoseos*, God’s place of dwelling, then the destruction of the Temple pressed hard the painful question, “Where is God now?” Could holiness “happen” without the Temple? The early rabbinic movement, whose questions were codified in the Mishnah, wrestled hard with this question, as did early Jewish followers of Jesus. Certainly, the community of disciples for whom, and likely by whom, the gospel of Matthew was written also wrestled with this question.

As the house of holiness of Israel’s God lay in ashen ruins, the rabbis, these sages of Torah, developed their fascinating conviction that the Shekhinah, God’s presence, dwelt in Israel’s midst—particularly in the sages’ midst as they engaged together in the study of Torah, doing so for the sake of God’s people in new and alien places, facing unanticipated threats to their well-being, asking the burning questions of a people in exile. And the Shekhinah, they were bold to believe, had wandered into exile with them. It is notoriously difficult to date historically the sayings that were gathered, edited and collated as the Talmud, but we do know this much. It was Rabbi Hananiah ben Teradyon, a contemporary of Rabbi Akiva, early second century, who was reported to have taught that if two sages engage the Torah together, then the Shekhinah is dwelling in their midst.

Similarly, Hananiah’s contemporary rabbinic colleague Halafta ben Dosa is reported to have taught, “If ten men sit together and occupy themselves with the Torah, the Divine Presence rests among them as it is written [Psalm 82:1], “God has taken his place in the divine council.”⁵ Halafta proceeds to argue, Abraham-style, that the Shekhinah is present

⁴Joseph Sievers, “Where Two or Three . . .”; The Rabbinic Concept of *Shekhinah* and Matthew 18:20” in *Standing before God: Studies on Prayer in Scriptures and in Tradition with Essays, In Honor of John M. Oesterreicher*, eds. Asher Finkel and Lawrence Frizzell (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1981), 172.

⁵Hananiah’s version of the teaching on the Shekhinah is found in *Mishnah Tractate Avot* (“ethics of the fathers”) 3:2; Halafta’s closely follows in *M. Avot* 3:6.

also for a gathering of only five, then for just three, then “even to two,” and finally “even of one.” It is striking how often some variation of this teaching on the Shekhinah appears, and almost without exception the divine presence is associated with a social context, a gathering of, say, two or three. I once offered this commentary on Rabbis Halafta and Hananiah: “In either case it is [within] a communal interpretive process—a religious community confronting, and being confronted by, its sacred text —[that] . . . God’s presence is experienced.”⁶

I still remember that, as I wrote those words, it seemed to me that the similarity to Matthew 18 was far too intriguing to overlook or dismiss. Is there a relationship between the sayings of these Mishnaic rabbis, who (perhaps not coincidentally) lived and taught in the region of Galilee in the early second century, and Jesus’ promise to be “there” in the midst of the judiciary/reconciliatory process of the community of disciples? If there is a relationship, how might we construe it? What happened here?

Holiness on the Move: Options

Joseph Sievers asserts that “the idea of the Shekhinah with two people . . . is a concept that can be traced to the first century,”⁷ i.e., earlier than either Hananiah or Halafta and perhaps very near to the time of Jesus and virtually contemporaneous with the composition of Matthew. Here are a few of the several possibilities:

- Perhaps there was already a notion of the Shekhinah dwelling among two or three sages talking Torah even in Jesus’ own time, and Jesus himself adapted this idea to himself. Perhaps, but not likely—especially in light of the likelihood that this idea of a mobile Shekhinah would really be necessary only after the destruction of the Temple.
- It would be more likely that the author of Matthew, as conversant as he obviously was with the earliest developing rabbinic schools in the middle to second half of the first century CE, drew upon a saying of growing popularity—that the Shekhinah dwells outside the Temple ruins and among the people Israel, particularly as they are engaging Torah—and adapted it to Jesus as “Emmanuel,” the

⁶Michael Lodahl, *Shekhinah/Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 56.

⁷Sievers, 174.

accomplishment of the Divine Presence in the world. In this scenario we have, in W. D. Davies's catchy verbal sketch, "a Christified bit of rabbinism."⁸

- It is possible that this sort of formulation was simply "in the air" of mid- to late-first century Jewish thought and speech. Interestingly, its earliest usage seems to arise from teachers of the region of Galilee, so perhaps it even had its beginnings there. In this scenario, we do not seek an easily identifiable line of influence from one teacher or tradition to another, but something more like a common cultural wellspring for gesturing toward the holy presence of God—again, particularly in the trying times after the Temple's demolition. It is intriguing that, in the consideration of this possibility, we may appreciate a potentially profound significance in the association of divine presence with, and within, the interpersonal engagement of those who love God—in one setting, those who love God as the gracious bestower of Torah, and in another setting, those who love God as the gracious bestower of Jesus. *Is this not the same God?*

We should remember, incidentally, that "Torah" here should not be understood too narrowly to be only the Pentateuch; it includes also the oral interpretations of Torah passed down through generations of rabbis and their disciples. This "oral Torah," the rabbis eventually came to believe and to teach, was also given to Moses on Sinai—a distinctly creative way of stipulating that divine revelation continued and continues through the rabbinic wrestlings with Scripture. So much of this wrestling was concerned with the everyday matters of maintaining Jewish identity amidst almost countless threats to this seasoned community of interpretation.

Interestingly, Sievers points out that "a text dealing with the question of the Shekhinah among judges states that 'court proceedings also are Torah,'"⁹ i.e., that the rabbinic rulings regarding "binding and loosing" were believed to have been blessed and guided by the presence of the near-dwelling God of Israel. It is tempting to follow Davies in the judgment that

⁸W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol. II (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 790.

⁹Sievers, 176.

Jesus “has simply been substituted for the *shekinah*, and gathering together ‘in my name’ for the study of the Torah. As in the Mishnah, so in Matthew: the zone of the sacred is not dictated by geography but is mobile.”¹⁰

Kupp is correct: “Evidence for the source of Matthew 18:20 is too scanty, the origin of the Shekinah concept is too clouded, and the contexts of the two sayings too distinct to point to any specific historical-literary relationship.”¹¹ Nonetheless, we can concur with Davies on his judgment that in both the rabbinic and Matthean formulations, “the zone of the sacred is not dictated by geography but is mobile.” Holiness moves. Both the rabbis and the Matthean sages seek the divine presence *precisely in their midst as communities of interpretation*. We understand these promises of presence to be a reassuring reply to the quest for holiness in the midst of fragile and frail human beings who are striving to maintain communal identity and continuity over the ravages of time and in the face of the persistent acids of ambiguity.

Intertextual Engagement

We encounter these textual claims to a divine presence and ask, “Is there a Presence beyond the text? And if so, can we say that only our community, our tradition, provides the place of dwelling for the Holy Presence?” When these passages from Matthew and the Mishnah are set side by side, do they become “fightin’ words”? Questions continually spin out of these texts like a vortex in reverse, such as:

For either of these communities, is the promise merely a claim, a stipulation, or is it something more like a testimony? Is it an attempt to describe what we might boldly call an “experience of God”? Was there a mysterious, elusive Presence that Jewish sages sensed, even if ever so slightly and fleetingly, as they studied and argued face to face? Did they experience what they took to be the very presence of God? Or is the claim of the Shekinah’s presence really nothing more than a textually-generated argument? And if so, does textual study in the presence of others generate some kind of “experience” that might be interpreted as an awareness of divine presence? What is going on in these texts? What is going on beyond them? Is there a presence before these texts?

¹⁰Davies and Allison, 790.

¹¹Kupp, 195.

Warren Carter has written that the rabbinic sayings about the Shekhinah related to the question regarding “where and how God’s forgiving presence and will were [to be] encountered now that the Temple was destroyed. Matthew’s answer is Jesus.”¹² So the question perhaps becomes whether or not Matthew’s answer was intended to supplement the rabbis’ answer or supersede it? We probably should guess that the latter was intended, which leaves us to wonder whether we can, in good faith, follow in this supersessionist claim. If Jesus as Emmanuel essentially embodies exhaustively the divine presence, then these rabbinic claims regarding the Shekhinah are empty errors. But can we assume such a thing if it were to turn out that the Gospel of Matthew has adapted “a rabbinic commonplace” (Davies) and transferred it wholesale to Jesus? It would seem disingenuous to trumpet such triumphalism.

What are our options? We cannot, must not, collapse these two claims into some sort of generalized divine presence that does not do justice to the distinctiveness of the respective communities—their histories, texts, practices, traditions. Kupp is correct, I think, to suggest that “the striking correspondence” between Matthew 18:20 and early second-century rabbinic claims “points at minimum to two distinct religious circles. . . dealing with similar questions about divine presence in terms of their own community identity and experience.”¹³

As Christian scholars, we are of course inclined to assume the possibility of a “true experience” of the resurrected Christ in the midst of his gathered disciples as they wrestle with issues of community identity. If, as Wesleyans, we follow John Wesley in trusting in the veracity of an experience of divine presence, “the witness of the Spirit,” then are we not obligated at some point to consider the possibility of a valid and compelling “testimony of the Shekhinah” in the Jewish community? Or is that an abandonment of Christian convictions regarding the singularity, irreplaceability, and utter uniqueness of Jesus Christ?

Kupp seems correct in detecting a “rhetorical antithesis” between Matthew and Mishnah, perhaps even “possible reference to the very real historical antithesis between the two religious worlds of Matthew’s communities and their counterparts in Judaism.”¹⁴ They were, and continue

¹²Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 369.

¹³Kupp, 195.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 196.

to be, two religious worlds. But they are not air-tight. Communication is possible. We can open our community's texts to practitioners of that other "religious world," and they to us. Not all Jews and Christians are interested in doing this, and perhaps not all need to be. One striking example of interest in this, the movement known as *Scriptural Reasoning*, represents a faithful and courageous attempt to do precisely this.¹⁵ We wonder whether there is Presence Divine in the midst of such a gathering.

But the quandary does not quit here. I still remember the moment about ten years ago, while reading Frederick Denny's *Islam and the Muslim Community*, that I encountered this striking claim: "When the Qur'an is recited properly, God's presence, in the form of his *sakina*, is believed to descend upon the reciter and hearers. This *sakina* is a 'tranquility,' literally, which includes the sense of a protecting and guiding spiritual presence." Denny adds this parenthetical aside: "Compare this with the Jewish notion of *shekhinah*, 'the Presence of God in the world.'"¹⁶ As though I needed any encouragement!

Indeed, the comparison cries out to be made. *Al-Sakina* is derived from an Arabic root that denotes "stillness," "quiet," "calm"—with a secondary meaning "to settle down, to dwell in a habitation." It seems unavoidable that the terms *sakina* and *shekhinah* bear some close historical/semantic relationship to one another. It is important to observe that Muslim tradition has tended, virtually unanimously, to understand *sakina* as a divine gift of peacefulness and calm. It is a kind of divine reassurance in the face of unbelief and opposition, but is decidedly not interpreted as signifying God's very presence. But one has to wonder to what extent theological considerations have placed artificial constraints on possible alter-

¹⁵See especially Peter Ochs, *Another Reformation: Postliberal Christianity and the Jews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011) and Ochs and Nancy Levene, eds., *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2003). See also *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*, eds. David F. Ford and C. C. Pecknold (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007). I should mention that New Testament scholar Sarah Whittle of Nazarene Theological College Manchester is an active participant in the Scriptural Reasoning endeavors in Great Britain; see her 2012 WTS Annual Meeting presentation. "Reading and Reasoning Together with Other Faiths: An Exploration of 'Scriptural Reasoning' and Congruent Currents in Wesleyan Hermeneutics."

¹⁶Frederick M. Denny, *Islam and the Muslim Community* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1987), 62-63.

native significations of *sakina*. Jewish scholar Reuven Firestone, self-admittedly not working from within the Islamic tradition, is not convinced that “quiet” or “tranquility” always works as an adequate translation of the term in its qur’anic usage; he suggests a *shekhinah*-friendly shade of meaning, “a divine indwelling.”¹⁷ He appeals to passages such as: “Muhammad said to a fellow believer, ‘Do not grieve, for God is with us.’ Then God made His *sakina* to descend upon him and supported him with forces you did not see.” (9:40)

A passage that provides the most fascinating possibilities for inter-textual engagement is found in the Qur’an’s second *surah* or chapter, widely known by its nickname “The Cow.” By far the longest *surah* in the Qur’an, “The Cow” is filled with biblical allusions and stories, including a version of the appointment of Saul as king of Israel. “The prophet said to [the people of Israel], ‘The sign of [Saul’s] kingship is that the Ark will come to you in which there is *al-sakina* from your Lord and a relic from the family of Moses and the family of Aaron, borne by angels. In this is a sign for you if you are true believers” (2:248). It is difficult to avoid the real possibility that *sakina* here shades very closely to *shekhinah*—the Divine Presence among the people Israel, particularly since the passage has to do with “the Ark of the Presence.” Is *al-sakina* a gift of tranquility from God, quite distinct from God? or is *al-sakina* better understood to be a signification of God’s very presence, *a la Shekhinah*? In a fashion comparable to the difficulties encountered in the similar sayings of Matthew and the Mishnah, once again the weight of the evidence is inconclusive. As Firestone observes, “Western scholarship considers the term [*sakina*] to have derived from the rabbinic concept of *shekhinah*, based on Q 2:248, but has had difficulty fitting such a concept into all the other verses.”¹⁸

So the ontological status of *sakina* remains an open question; in any case, there may be only one qur’anic text that seems immediately amenable to Denny’s claim that, for Muslims, “When the Qur’an is recited properly, God’s presence, in the form of his *sakina*, is believed to descend upon the reciter and hearers.”¹⁹ In 48:26 we read that “God sent down *al-sakina* upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and charged them

¹⁷Reuven Firestone, “Sakina,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Qur’an*, Vol. 4, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 590.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹See f.n. 19.

with the word of piety [or self-restraint], of which they were. . . its true keepers.” If “the word of piety” can be equated with revelation, and it likely can, then we have here at least one qur’anic text that does indeed associate the descent of the *sakina* with qur’anic recitation. This is an intriguing possibility. Further, the idea is found much more explicitly in a *hadith* or traditional story about Muhammad.²⁰ In the *hadith* collection of al-Bukhari (d. 256 CE; 870 in Muslim calendar), we read of a man during the time of Muhammad who was reciting Surah 18 while his tethered horse stood nearby. During his recitation, a descending cloud encircled and engulfed him; his horse was visibly startled and unsettled by the sight. So the next morning the man sought out Muhammad and told him what had happened, to which the prophet replied, “It was the Sakinah that descended for the Qur’an.” I suppose we have to say that, in this case, while there were two who were gathered, only one of them was human.

Conclusion

Where, finally, do all these meanderings among Matthew, Mishnah, and Muhammad lead us? These intertextual paths, for all of their possible intersections, interweavings, and cross-cuttings across several centuries, seem to lead to a testimony like this. *Holiness happens in the huddling of disciples around the locus of divine revelation.* For Matthew, it is a gathering “in my name” that is assured of the very presence of the living Jesus Christ; for the Mishnah, it is a gathering “for the sake of Torah” that is assured of the *Shekhinah*, the very presence of God; for Muhammad, it is a gathering to hear the faithful and proper recitation of the Qur’an that is assured of the *Sakina*, the gift of divine calm, divine peace—and perhaps even of divine presence.

What shall we make of these things, we members of the Wesleyan Theological Society? Happily, or at least hopefully, we are under no constraint to agree entirely about how to answer this question. But I would like to conclude with these three relatively brief suggestions:

1. However narrowly or broadly we might construe “holiness,” if “holiness happens” when God “shows up” in the midst of creaturely realities, then perhaps Wesley has put us, his inheritors and successors, on a good path by insisting that “there is no holiness but social holiness.” Admittedly, Wesley had in mind only the social phenomenon we call “the

²⁰Firestone, 591.

church,” a relatively narrow construal of holiness. Our present ruminations are intended not at all to deny this Christian conviction, but to ask whether we can legitimately restrict social holiness to the church alone. We are asking here about the synagogue and the mosque, even as we acknowledge the morass of difficulties that such a question may well create.

2. Though Wesley did in fact have only the church in mind when he stipulated “no holiness but social,” his liberating vision of divine grace opens up other possibilities. Think for just a moment about his sermon “Free Grace” in which he proclaims that divine grace “is free in all to whom it is given” and “does not depend on any power or merit in man,” for all such human goodness or virtue “flow[s] from the free grace of God; . . . Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all; that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man, but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son, and ‘with him freely gives us all things.’ But is it free for all, as well as in all? To this some have answered ‘No.’”²¹ Wesley, of course, answered with a rousing “Yes!”

If such grace truly is free *for all* and free *in all*, then it seems inevitable that this grace (which is the Spirit of God) should be freely active and experienced within the social realities and constraints of all human beings. Wesley could even speak of a “social grace” whereby “[God] draws some souls through their intercourse with others.”²² Is it possible that the *Shekhinah* is indeed that “social grace” present and active within the Jewish community’s wrestling with its texts over these many centuries, and thus profoundly a Torah-shaped Presence? Perhaps the greater challenge: Is it possible that the *Sakina* is indeed that “social grace” present and active within the Muslim *umma*’s recitation, hearing, and obeying of the Qur’an over these many centuries, and thus a Qur’an-shaped Presence?

3. Finally, if these possibilities seem insufficiently faithful to the Matthean proclamation of Jesus Christ as “Emmanuel, God with us,”

²¹John Wesley, Sermon CXXXVIII, “Free Grace,” *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 7 (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, reproduction of 1872 ed.), 373-374.

²²Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1966 reprint of 1872 ed.), 106.

hopefully we can follow Wesley as our guide at least as far as his sermon “On Faith” would lead us. In it he suggests a healthy agnosticism, insofar as “it is not so easy to pass any judgment concerning the faith of our modern Jews.” Indeed, admits Wesley, “it is not our part to pass sentence upon them, but to leave them to their own Master.”²³ Now, that is a fascinating phrase, “their own Master”!²⁴ It speaks to a uniquely formed relationship between God and the Jewish people, does it not? As to Islam, Wesley in this same sermon dropped some intriguing hints about the possibilities of grace; he acknowledged that some Muslims “were . . . being taught of God, by His inward voice, all the essentials of true religion.” Here Wesley mentions a Muslim author “who, a century or two ago, wrote the *Life of Hai Ebn Yokdan*” which, Wesley judged, “contains all the principles of pure religion and undefiled.”²⁵

Holiness happens. And it appears to be the case that “there is no holiness but social holiness.” We might be inclined to argue long and hard against the notion that holiness happens in communal traditions other than the Church. Or we might feel ourselves more generously inclined toward the

²³Wesley, Sermon CVI, “On Faith,” *Works*, Vol. 7, 197, 198.

²⁴I have written in another context regarding this phrase, “Of course ‘their own Master’ is, for Wesley, none other than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; nevertheless, as *the Jewish people’s own Master*, God is addressed and obeyed—the experience of God is shaped, the perception of God framed by an education other than Christian teaching, . . . God is ‘their own Master’ as the God of the Torah, the God who liberated a slave people out of Egypt and called them to become God’s own covenant people. This is *their own Master*, one who has become their own Master through a particular historical (rabbinically formed) ‘education and a thousand other circumstances’ uniquely a part of Jewish memory and identity.” M. Lodahl, “To Whom Belong the Covenants? Whitehead, Wesley, and Wildly Diverse Religious Traditions,” in David Ray Griffin, ed., *Deep Religious Pluralism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 204.

²⁵Wesley, “On Faith,” 197. The author of the story was a 12th-century Muslim philosopher, Ibn Tufail. See the 2012 Wesleyan Theological Society annual meeting presentations by Kelly Yates, doctoral student at the University of Manchester, “The Wesleyan Trilateral: Prevenient Grace, Catholic Spirit, and Religious Tolerance”; and Mark A. Murphree, Toccoa Falls College, “‘Pure Religion and Undefiled’: A Wesleyan Analysis of Ibn Tufail’s *The Improvement of Human Reason*.” Both of these appear as articles in the Spring 2013 edition of *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Vol. 48, No. 1), 54-61, 106-116.

synagogue but much less certain about the mosque. I am not trying to settle the issue; I am only trying to raise it.

To be sure, this is not simply a theoretical matter. If the promised presence of Christ is for the “two or three who are gathered in [his] name” as they strive hard to maintain a faithful community of forgiveness and reconciliation, then our Christian claims about the divine presence turn out to be damnably empty if we do not practice the things our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us. Denying the divine presence to synagogue and mosque does not automatically guarantee divine presence to us. If indeed “there is no holiness but social holiness,” then finally the social onus is on us.

“WON OVER WITHOUT A WORD”: HOLINESS AND THE CHURCH’S MISSIONAL IDENTITY IN 1 PETER¹

by

Dean Flemming

Holiness and mission have experienced a strained relationship in the church. In many Christian communities, they seem like vehicles traveling in different directions. *Holiness* sometimes is reduced to a matter of individual purity and piety. In other cases Christians take the call to be separate from the world as a mandate to *withdraw* from the world, which threatens on the outside. Others misconstrue holiness as a summons to launch a crusade *against* the world. From such perspectives, holiness has little to do with or even obstructs the church’s mission.

In contrast, mission popularly involves what the church *does* to reach the outside world. It often focuses on activities like giving verbal witness, evangelizing the lost, and planting churches. Or it might include deeds like running a soup kitchen or building wells in Africa. Mission mainly concerns what God’s people *do* to reach or serve outsiders, rather than who they *are* and how they *live*. Conceived in these terms, holiness and mission appear to have little that links them. One focuses on Christians’ inward life and the church’s *difference* from the world. The other mainly has to do with how to bring outsiders into the fold. Even in our theological discussions or in the way we structure theological education, “holiness” and “mission” too often are perceived as separate categories.² They function like ships passing in the night.

The New Testament letter of 1 Peter, however, challenges any such divorce between holiness and mission. It pictures the church’s mission

¹This article is adapted from a portion of Dean Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling* (2013). Used by permission of InterVarsity Press.

²Traditionally, for example, “holiness” is addressed as part of the theological curriculum, while discussions of “mission” happen within the disciplines of “mis-siology” or “practices.”

and its holy character as seamlessly woven together. Peter's primary concern is who God's people *are*—their missional identity—and how they are to live out that identity in relation to an unbelieving world as God's holy people. Perhaps more than any other New Testament book, 1 Peter spotlights the need for "missional holiness." Here I will explore the connection between holiness and the church's missional identity in 1 Peter. then ask what missional holiness looks like in practice, and finally consider how Peter's perspective on missional holiness might help to shape the church in mission today.

Missional Identity

Aliens and Exiles. A crucial question for Peter's understanding of mission is: "Who are we?" For Peter, the church's identity and its mission are inseparable. Perhaps the key metaphors that portray the church's missional identity are those of "aliens and exiles" (2:11; cf. 1:1, 17).³ These images have deep roots in Israel's story. Abraham was called to leave his homeland and live among the Hittites as "a stranger and an alien" (Gen. 23:4). His descendants became "aliens in the land of Egypt" (Lev. 19:34). Later they were forced from their homeland to dwell as exiles in Babylon. What is more, Peter's readers are exiles of the *Diaspora* ("dispersion" 1:1). At the time of his writing, this language describes the experience of Jews being scattered and dislocated from their home country throughout the Roman Empire. Although Peter writes primarily to Gentiles, he inscribes them into Israel's experience of being strangers and refugees in a strange land. His striking language underlines the point: these Christians are outsiders and misfits. They are not at home.

But in what sense are they "exiles" and "resident aliens?" This is not primarily a description of their actual social or political status, either before or after they became followers of Christ.⁴ Rather, Peter's language speaks of people who once were at home in their social world, but now are like foreigners in their own culture. Formerly, they did "what the Gen-

³Despite frequent attempts to make a distinction in the meaning of the terms "aliens" and "exiles," there seems to be little difference in how they function in 1 Peter. See Moses Chin, "A Heavenly Home for the Homeless: Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter," *Tyndale Bulletin* 42 (1991): 110.

⁴Against, e.g., John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981); *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), esp., 312-13, 476-83.

tiles like to do" (4:3). But that radically changed with their new birth (1:3). God gave them a new status as "chosen exiles" (1:1 AT). He called them to a new, contrasting way of life, which by definition brought an estrangement from their non-Christian family members and neighbors. Their real home is no longer within the culture in which they were born and raised. Rather, it is found in their life "in Christ" (3:16, 5:10, 14).⁵

This does not imply that Peter wants his audience to withdraw from their social world into a pious ghetto. Nor is Peter's point simply that they are exiled from their true home in heaven. They still live "among the Gentiles" (2:12), and that is precisely where their mission is to be carried out. As Miroslav Volf reflects:

Christians do not come into their social world from outside seeking either to accommodate to their new home (like second-generation immigrants would), shape it in the image of the one they have left behind (like colonizers would), or establish a little haven in the strange new world reminiscent of the old (as resident aliens would). They are not outsiders who either seek to become insiders or maintain strenuously the status of outsiders. Christians are the *insiders* who have diverted from their culture by being born again.⁶

The church's alien status in 1 Peter is similar to the tension between being "in the world" and not "of it" in the Gospel of John (Jn. 17:11-19). And the "world" in which these Christians were located was dominated by Rome.

It is no accident that, at the end of the letter, Peter refers to Rome, not by its own name, but by the name "Babylon" (5:13)—the Old Testament symbol of a worldly empire that opposes God, the place of Israel's exile. Being God's people in Christ sets these Christian communities at odds with Rome's story of how life should be lived in the empire. Like Israel in Babylon, they could no longer fit in with practices that honored Rome's gods and lords, with Rome's systems of power and violence, or with its codes of status and honor. In that empire, "misfits" are marked targets of hostility, harassment, and contempt. Misfits *suffer* (4:12-19).

⁵Joel B. Green, "Living as Exiles: the Church in the Diaspora in 1 Peter," in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament*, ed. Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 317.

⁶Miroslav Volf, "Soft Difference: Theological Reflections on the Relation between Church and Culture in 1 Peter," *Ex Auditu* 10 (1994): 18-19.

But that is not the whole story. Although as exiles and aliens Christians maintain a critical distance from the values and lifestyle of their culture, they are still actively a part of that culture. They "live an alternative way of life within the political, ethnic, religious, and cultural institutions of the larger society."⁷ Peter sees these Christian communities as a transforming, missional presence "among the Gentiles" (2:12). They belong, but they do not belong. This paradoxical existence in exile becomes the context for participating in the mission of God as understood in 1 Peter. Their mission flows out of who they *are*.

A Holy Priesthood. A second and closely related aspect of the church's missional identity in 1 Peter is that Christians are *God's holy people*. The mission of God is inseparable from the holiness of God. And the holiness of God leans out toward the world in the form of a holy people. Peter's foundational appeal to holiness comes in 1:14-15:

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Invoking to Leviticus 19:2, Peter once again anchors his readers in Israel's story. Just as Israel, called out of bondage by God's grace, was to reveal the holy character of God to the nations, so the church, redeemed by the blood of Christ the lamb (1:19), was to showcase the holiness of God on the streets and in the marketplaces of the empire. The call to holiness in the first place means being "different" and "distinctive." In order to make a difference among the Gentiles, the Christian community must be *different* from the Gentiles.⁸ But holiness also means being conformed to the character and ways of a holy God. "God's people must *become holy*," writes Douglas Harink, "because they are first *made holy* by God who himself *is holy*."⁹

This God-grounded holiness is concrete and comprehensive. It must be lived out, as Peter puts it, "in all your conduct" (1:15). Holiness extends into all "the nooks and crannies of life."¹⁰ For Peter, that holy lifestyle takes the shape of the self-giving love of Jesus: ". . . Christ also

⁷Ibid., 20.

⁸See Green, "Living as Exiles," 322.

⁹Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 55.

¹⁰Joel B. Green, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 44.

suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps" (2:21; see 3:15). This is poles apart from the kind of isolating, world-rejecting mentality that at times masquerades as "holiness." Rather, the church's distinctive life, characterized by holy love, enabled by the redeeming work of Christ (1:18-23), lived out "among the Gentiles," becomes a way of witness to the surrounding world (see 2:12; 3:1, 13-17).

The link between holiness and mission is especially strong in 1 Peter 2:4-10. This passage stakes out Peter's defining picture of the church's identity. Drawing on the imagery of Exodus 19:6, Peter reads the Christian community into Israel's mission as a "holy" and "royal priesthood" (2:5, 9) and a "holy nation" (2:9). It is important to understand how Peter uses this language. Despite the common Protestant notion of the "priesthood" of each individual believer within the church, Peter's thought runs in a different direction. His concern is the priestly role of the whole people of God, which is oriented outward.¹¹ The purpose of this holy, priestly community is to mediate God's salvation and blessing to the world, declaring the mighty acts of God through word and deed (2:9). The "spiritual sacrifice" it offers "is its holy, cruciform life as a godly people in the midst of the nations, and for their sake."¹²

The church's holiness, therefore, is not some sort of counterbalance to its mission. On the contrary, the call to be holy is indispensable for engaging in God's mission in the world. From Peter's perspective, holiness is neither a summons to retreat from the world into individual spirituality nor a call to march against the world, treating it as an enemy. Joel B. Green articulates well Peter's vision of the church's relationship to the world:

We are not against the world; the holiness of God's people is . . . not found in reciprocal animosity with their opponents. We do not withdraw from the world. We do not work out our identity and sense of mission simply by negating the beliefs and behaviors of others. If we are different from the world, it is not because we set out to be so, but rather because our lives rest ultimately in a God who is different and we follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ."¹³

1 Peter's vision of missional holiness is of a church that is radically different, yet fully engaged, for the sake of others.

¹¹Paul J. Achtemeier, *A Commentary on First Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 156; Green, *1 Peter*, 61, 220-21.

¹²Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 69.

¹³Green, "Living as Exiles," 324.

Missional Conduct

The Mission of "Doing Good." What does missional holiness look like in practice? Peter addresses this issue in his exhortations to the church which begin in 2:11. Verses 11 and 12 serve as a kind of heading for what follows:¹⁴

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.

Although this is a new section of the letter, it is tethered to what comes before. Peter challenges his readers, in effect: "As a community that is called to be holy as God is holy (1:15), as God's priestly people, graciously chosen and precious in his sight (2:4-5, 9-10), as exiles who no longer fit into your own culture, *live out that identity*. Live such exemplary lives before others that the very people who are bent on besmirching your name may be won over and worship the God you serve."¹⁵ For Peter, who God's people *are* determines how they *live*.

1 Peter bristles with references to Christian "conduct" (see 1:15; 2:12; 3:1, 2, 16) and to doing what is "good" (see 2:12, 15, 20; 3:10-17; 4:19). In fact, "doing good" is a major theme in the letter. But what does it mean for God's holy exiles to "do good"? And what does this have to do with the mission of God?

Bruce W. Winter takes the language of "doing good," especially in 2:14-15, as a reference to Christians of some means performing acts of public benefaction. For this service, Christian benefactors would receive "praise" from the ruling authorities (2:14) in the form of public accolades or inscriptions on monuments.¹⁶ Winter sees civic benefaction by wealthy

¹⁴David Horrell, "Between Conformity and Resistance: Beyond the Balch-Elliott Debate Towards a Postcolonial Reading of First Peter," in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter*, ed. Robert L. Webb and Betsy Bauman-Martin (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 133.

¹⁵See Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010), 127.

¹⁶"The Public Honouring of Christian Benefactors: Romans 13.3-4 and 1 Peter 2.14-15," *JSNT* 34 (1988): 87-103; reprinted in *idem*, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens*, FCCGRW (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 25-40; cf. 11-23.

Christians as a way of “seeking the welfare of the city” (Jer. 29:7). In other words, it is a means of positively engaging their social world. Furthermore, such public actions become “God’s way to refute charges that Christians were not good citizens” (see 1 Pet. 2:15).¹⁷ But Peter’s appeal to good deeds in 2:13-17 is too general to support the idea that he is specifically targeting rich Christians. Moreover, Peter contrasts “doing good” with “doing wrong” in 2:14-15 and with “sinning” in 2:20, which do not point toward civic benefaction. Neither does 1 Peter’s notion that “doing good” may trigger unjust suffering (2:20; 3:14, 17).¹⁸ It is unlikely, then, that Peter’s goal in 2:13-17 is that Christians be recognized and rewarded as “good citizens” of Rome.

Nevertheless, Winter is correct that for Peter “doing good” is a form of public witness. It is visible and outward oriented.¹⁹ Peter’s headline statement in 2:12 talks about good conduct “among the Gentiles,” as well as good deeds that can be “seen” by others. Much of what follows places the community’s good behavior in the context of relationships with outsiders who oppose them. For example, “It is God’s will,” Peter affirms, that by “doing good” in relation to political authorities, believers will expose the false judgments of their critics and thereby “silence the ignorance of the foolish” (2:15).

This public conduct has the character of both difference *and* attraction. On the one hand, the new lifestyle of God’s people draws a striking contrast to the way they used to act (2:11; 4:3). They have abandoned their old sinful practices, and that life-change is obvious to others. Peter says, in effect, your former party-mates are baffled when they realize that “You don’t party anymore!” (4:4).

On the other hand, “doing good,” like a powerful magnet, attracts those outside the faith. The church’s honorable conduct, Peter believes, will lead even some former critics to experience a complete turnaround. They “will glorify God on the day he visits us” (2:12 NIV). Some interpreters think this statement does not refer to the Gentiles’ conversion but

¹⁷*Welfare of the City*, 22-23; quotation from 22.

¹⁸See Green, *1 Peter*, 75, and Torrey Seland’s critique of Winter’s reading: “Resident Aliens in Mission: Missional Practices in the Emerging Church of 1 Peter,” *BBR* 19 (2009): 577-78.

¹⁹This does not mean that Peter takes no interest in how Christians act toward one another. Believers are to live out their holy character and identity as they “love one another deeply from the heart” (1:22; see 2:17; 3:8; 4:8-9). Indeed, mutual love and unity within the family of God are essential if the church hopes to have a transforming effect on the world around it.

only to "their forced acknowledgment of God on the day of judgment."²⁰ The language of "glorifying God," however, normally refers to the voluntary worship of God's people (see 1 Pet. 4:16). We cannot miss the echoes of Jesus' command to "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Mt. 5:16).

Peter, then, recognizes the evangelistic effect of the Christian community's good deeds. As a result of observing the church's distinctive way of life, Peter is hopeful that unbelievers will come to faith in Christ (see 3:1), and so join the company of those who glorify God on the last day.²¹

Mission and Lifestyle Holiness. "Doing good," on its own, is a rather imprecise notion. But Peter relates it to his concrete context in the form of the "domestic code" found in 2:13–3:7. This section of the letter unpacks what it means for God's people to "do good" in the midst of their daily social, political, and family relationships in the Roman world. Peter's household code is different from those in Colossians 3:18–4:1 and Ephesians 5:22–6:9 in that it is focused less on relationships among Christians and more directly on how Christians engage unbelievers.

The signature verb in Peter's household instructions is to "be subject." Slaves should be subordinate to their masters (2:18), wives to their husbands (3:1), and Christians in general should be subject to "every human institution" (2:13). The latter includes political authorities, such as emperors and governors (2:13–14). God's people are even to "honor the emperor" (2:16). At first blush, this sounds more like a call to conform to society's expectations than to *transform* social values. Indeed, some interpreters think that "fitting in" is precisely what this domestic code is about. Peter, it is claimed, seeks to blunt the arrows of antagonism being aimed at the church by showing that Christian behavior conforms with what is generally considered good and acceptable to the Romans.²²

²⁰Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission. Vol. 2. Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 1522, n. 124; see also Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 178.

²¹I take the phrase that is literally rendered a "day of visitation" in 2:12 to refer to the end-time day of the Lord rather than a present "visitation" of God (against, e.g., E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981], 171; Wayne A. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter* [Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1988], 117). Converted Gentiles, then, would worship God on the last day in light of their present faith.

²²See especially David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981).

It is true that what it means to “do good” is not the exclusive property of the church. The fact that unbelievers can recognize what is good in Christian conduct (2:12) shows that there is common ground between Christians and those around them about the notion of “doing good.” In other words, Christian conduct is not completely countercultural. But that is not the whole picture. It is no coincidence that the glue that holds together Peter’s instructions to Christian slaves (2:18-20) and spouses (3:1-7) is his appeal to the story of Christ (2:21-25). Peter defines good conduct in a hostile environment with the example of Jesus. It takes the form of subordinating oneself, loving enemies, enduring unjust suffering without retaliation, all for the sake of others.²³ “Doing good” ultimately means to follow in Jesus’ steps (2:21).

Only in light of the pattern of Christ can we understand Peter’s vision of the mission of God’s people within the various institutions of their social world. They are able to bear witness to the gospel through their good conduct, not because their behavior is the same as that of the culture around them, but precisely because it is *different*. This is especially clear in Peter’s instruction to Christian wives in 3:1-2:

Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives’ conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Here Peter addresses a household in which the wife is a believer and the husband is not. In Roman society, this scenario is a domestic tinderbox waiting to ignite. Plutarch expresses widely-held cultural expectations in his “Advice to Bride and Groom”:

A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband’s friends in common with him. Their gods are the first and most important friends. Therefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the door tight upon all strange rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favor.²⁴

²³See Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 79.

²⁴*Moralia* 140D; translation adapted from Plutarch, *Moralia*, vol. 2, LCL (trans. F. B. Babbitt; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928), 311.

Given the expectation that a wife should practice her husband's religion, it is clear that when Peter advises believing wives to "be subject" to their husbands, this does not involve sacrificing their higher loyalty to Christ. What is more, Peter's reference to husbands who "disobey the word" suggests that they are not simply "unbelievers," but men who actively reject the gospel (see 2:8); they are likely hostile toward the faith.²⁵

Yet, despite competing loyalties and open opposition, Peter is optimistic that husbands can be "won over" to Christ as a result of observing their wives' daily behavior. As Elliott notes, given that these spouses may well be their husbands' first and only contact with the Christian community, such conduct is especially crucial.²⁶ Peter defines this lifestyle not in terms of Rome's values, but rather Christian character: purity of life (see 1:22) and reverence for God (3:2). In the presence of an unsympathetic or even an antagonistic husband, wives' Christlike conduct serves as an attractive witness. "The wife's aim," writes Harink, "is not to manipulate the husband into believing the word—he may finally refuse—rather, she takes up the gracious action of subordination because this is the way of Jesus Christ. . . . It is the gospel proclaimed."²⁷ For Peter, *submission* leads to *mission*.

The emphasis here is firmly on a witness of a holy lifestyle rather than of words. In fact, Peter hopes that wives may win over their husbands "*without* a word" (3:1; italics added). This does *not* mean that Christians should avoid speaking about the gospel under any circumstances (see 3:15). Nor does it suggest that a witness of good behavior is wholly sufficient on its own. The fact that the husbands in question have disobeyed "the word" (3:1) implies that they have already heard the Christian message. Nevertheless, in a situation of hostility to the gospel, Peter holds that it will be deeds, not words, which have the most powerful evangelistic effect.

Peter's "word to the wives" is not restricted to them alone. In the context of 1 Peter, wives (as well as household slaves in 2:18-20) are display-case examples of Christians who find themselves "aliens and strangers," on the margins of an unfriendly society. As Joel B. Green observes, "What is said to believing wives in relation to their disbelieving husbands is applicable to all believers in relation to a disbelieving

²⁵Green, *1 Peter*, 94.

²⁶Elliott, *1 Peter*, 558.

²⁷Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 87.

world.”²⁸ To Christians who are involved in the various social institutions of the Roman Empire, Peter says, in effect: “Don’t conform. Don’t withdraw. Engage your world. But do so as God’s holy, distinctive people who embody Christ’s self-giving love in your everyday conduct.”

Mission and Suffering. We cannot understand the practice of missional holiness in 1 Peter apart from the theme of suffering. Words for suffering appear more in this letter than any other New Testament book.²⁹ Peter sews this thread into the whole fabric of the letter (see 1.6-7; 2.12, 18-25; 3.13-18; 4.1-6, 12-19; 5.8-10). But what does suffering have to do with mission?

In the first place, Peter sees the experience of undeserved suffering as something quite normal when God’s people engage their world. Christians should not be surprised when they find themselves coming under fire, “as though something strange were happening” (3:12). For Peter, doing good is no guarantee that Christians will avoid conflict. Indeed, just the opposite is true. God’s people can and often do “suffer for doing what is right” (3:14; see 2:20; 3:17; 4:16). Remarkably, Peter never advises Christian communities to withdraw from their involvement in society in order to avoid suffering. Nor does he disparage or cast blame on those who cause their suffering in the first place.³⁰ Rather, he affirms that, in suffering, God’s people are only walking in the footsteps of Jesus, whose priorities and practices also resulted in mistreatment (see 2:21-23; 4:12-14).³¹

The supreme example, then, of how to respond to harassment is Christ himself who suffered unjustly for the sake of others (2:21; see 3:17-18). Peter draws an analogy between Jesus’ mission of enduring abuse for others and that of the church.³² The analogy is not complete—Christ’s suffering uniquely atoned for human sin (2:24; 3:18). But Christians are called nonetheless to participate in Christ’s sufferings (4:13) and respond to mistreatment in the way Jesus did. Suffering *for the sake* of Christ is one way in which Christians become *like* Christ.

²⁸Green, *1 Peter*, 90.

²⁹*Pašchō* (“to suffer,” 12 times) and *pathēma* (“suffering,” 4 times). See Seland, “Resident Aliens,” 569-70.

³⁰Green, *1 Peter*, 227.

³¹*Ibid.*, 284.

³²See Abson P. Joseph, *A Narratological Reading of 1 Peter*, LNTS 440 (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 119-21.

In particular, the Christian community refuses to "repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse," but rather offers grace and blessing to their enemies (3:9). Christian slaves, for example, must freely choose not to retaliate against a harsh master (2:18), for this is the pattern of Christ: "When he was abused, he did not return abuse" (2:23). Through their vulnerable enemy love, God's people proclaim the gospel of a Messiah who in love suffered unjustly in order to bring his enemies to God (3:18).

Ultimately, the church's suffering and how it responds to that suffering becomes a compelling form of witness. Suffering "may be a catalyst for the conversion of unbelievers."³³ Good conduct in the midst of suffering may lead slanderers to glorify God (2:12).³⁴ Wives who live courageously holy lives in the face of adversity may win over their husbands (3:1-2). What is more, Christians who display the way of the Messiah in the midst of harassment cannot help but spark questions. When Peter admonishes God's people to be prepared, whenever asked, to explain their hope in Christ, he does so in the midst of his exhortations to remain steadfast in suffering (3:15; see 3:13-17).

Indeed, Peter could hardly conceive of participation in God's mission *without* suffering. Peter recognizes that the mission of God in Christ is accomplished through suffering, with its ultimate expression in the cross. If Christians desire to find a place in God's mission, they must be willing to bear the cost of suffering with and for the sake of that God. As Christopher Wright reflects, the church's suffering in mission is no less than a participation in "the suffering mission of the suffering God."³⁵

Missional Witness

We have seen that Peter focuses on bearing witness through ethical living, particularly in the context of suffering. This does not mean, however, that *verbal* testimony plays no role in Christian mission. Indeed, the witness of word and life and inseparable in 1 Peter. Two passages in particular shine a spotlight on this connection. The first is 1 Peter 2:9:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (*italics added*).

³³Green, *1 Peter*, 227.

³⁴Joseph, *A Narratological Reading of 1 Peter*, 119.

³⁵Wright, *Mission of God's People*, 240-41.

As we noted earlier, Peter's first concern in this passage is with what God's people *are*. But their identity as God's chosen, holy people also gives them a purpose in the world. This community of priests exists *in order that* (ὅπως) it might proclaim the liberating and loving acts of God. Some interpreters argue that the term "proclaim" in this verse is not missionary language. Rather, it is only about the kind of declaring that happens when God's people praise him in their public worship.³⁶ Others, in contrast, think this verb specifically has to do with witnessing to unbelievers. In other words, Peter wants his readers "to proclaim the gospel to their neighbors and family."³⁷

Must we choose, however, between a "vertical" reference to praising God and a "horizontal" sense of declaring the good news to outsiders? Are not *both* aspects present? As for the former, the Old Testament background for this language points to the activity of worship. In Isaiah 43:21, God speaks of "the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise" (cf. Ps 9:14). The kind of "declaring" envisioned in 1 Peter 2:9, then, includes corporate worship and praise. Yet even this is not an exclusively "vertical" activity. In both the Old Testament and 1 Peter, "such declarative praise is not a private affair between God and the worshipers, but it spills out into the public arena as one of the means by which God draws the nations to himself."³⁸ Through public praise, God's people "announce God's mercy and power to those who overhear [them], who have not yet been called out of darkness into his wonderful light."³⁹

At the same time, Peter's vision of the church's proclamation is not restricted to public worship alone. As a "holy priesthood," God's people mediate his salvation blessings to the world. In the context of 1 Peter, this surely includes telling forth the mighty deeds of God to unbelievers in a variety of settings (see 3:13-16). These saving acts focus in particular on the story at the center of Christian mission, the redeeming death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1:3, 18-21, 2:21-25; 3:18-21).⁴⁰ What is more,

³⁶See, e.g., Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*, 133; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1998), 110. See also John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 160-62, who limits the evangelistic significance of 1 Peter 2:9 to the setting of public worship.

³⁷Seland, "Resident Aliens in Mission," 585; see also Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* 2, 1524.

³⁸Wright, *Mission of God's People*, 250.

³⁹Dickson, *Best Kept Secret*, 163.

⁴⁰Green, *1 Peter*, 62.

Peter moves immediately from the thought of declaring God's salvation into his exhortation to live the kind of lives before unbelievers that draws them into the worship of God (2:11-12). Missionary proclamation, then, flows out of the church's identity as a holy priesthood (2:9a), and it partners with the kind of ethical conduct that attracts those outside into the sphere of God's grace. The witness of word is wedded to the witness of life.

The second key text for understanding how the life of holiness relates to verbal witness is 1 Peter 3:15-16:

But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame.

The focus here is on *verbal* testimony. Christians must always be prepared to give a "defense" to those who demand a "reason" for their hope. This "apology" is probably not a formal defense, as might take place in a courtroom. Rather, "Peter sees his readers as being 'on trial' every day as they live for Christ in a pagan society."⁴¹ It is clear that the church's witness in this passage is *responsive*, not proactive. It is triggered when an unbeliever asks a question that demands an explanation.

What kinds of questions might ordinary Christians be asked? The context of these verses is important. Just prior to this passage, Peter assures his readers that even if they suffer for doing what is right, they are blessed (3:14). And in verse 16, he refers to "those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ." The scenario Peter imagines, then, is likely of unbelievers informally questioning Christians about their behavior—a lifestyle that swims against the tide of accepted social practices.⁴² Later, Peter mentions some of the kinds of behavior that might prompt questions. Christians, for example, might be criticized for refusing to participate in various forms of idol worship, which pervaded daily social life in the empire. Likewise, former friends, amazed that Christians no longer participate in orgies, drunken parties, and other kinds of popular self-indulgence, might demand to know why they have abandoned their com-

⁴¹Michaels, *1 Peter*, 188.

⁴²Achtmeier, *1 Peter*, 233.

pany (4:3-4). Peter expects God's people to give an explanation of why they live the way they do, even when confronted with hostile or at the least unsympathetic, questions.

For Peter, such questions are ultimately about the *hope* that is within the Christian community (3:15). That hope should be the focus of how God's people respond to their critics. This is less a matter of piling up irrefutable arguments or doing "apologetics" in the popular sense and more a narrating of the story of Christ—his suffering and death, his resurrection from the dead, and his return in glory (see 1:3-12).⁴³ This gospel-oriented hope issues in a way of living, which is so distinctive and countercultural that it provokes questions from outsiders. The structure of verse 15 brings out this marriage between word and life. The church's readiness to witness to the hope within flows out of the call to "sanctify Christ as Lord" in their hearts (3:15a). In 1 Peter, God's people sanctify their Lord through sanctified living, that is, behavior that puts on display the holy character of God (1:15-16). Joel B. Green notes the similar pattern of logic we find in the prayer Jesus taught his disciples. It "weaves together the hallowing of God's name with the behavior of God's people" ("Hallowed be your name. . . . Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:9-10)).⁴⁴ For Peter, if there is no difference in lifestyle, there is no reason for others to question.

The church's "show and tell" witness is also clear in verse 16. Peter says, in effect: Always be ready to explain your life in Christ, but "do it with gentleness and reverence." *How* an answer is given," notes Daniel Powers, "is sometimes as important as *what* answer is given."⁴⁵ "Gentleness" describes an attitude of humility and courtesy, even in the face of unjust treatment (3:16c). "Reverence" here refers to an orientation toward God that determines how God's people respond to others. The way Christians speak to unbelievers must always be consistent with their message about a suffering, self-giving God. It is an expression of what it means to "sanctify Christ as Lord" (3:15)—the Christ who endured abuse without retaliation; the Lord who suffered, entrusting himself to the righteous judge (2:23). For Peter, a gentle defense is part of "good conduct in

⁴³Green, *1 Peter*, 117; Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 94-95.

⁴⁴Green, *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁵Daniel G. Powers, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*. NBBC (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2010), 118.

Christ” (3:16). Peter’s point is clear: there is no defense worth hearing apart from a life worth questioning.⁴⁶

A Summary for Today’s Church on Mission

1 Peter offers a robust understanding of missional holiness. Peter fully integrates the church’s life of holiness with its public engagement of the world. I conclude by summarizing some key elements of this integration in light of how they might continue to shape the church in mission.

1. First, 1 Peter is perhaps unrivaled in the New Testament in its focus on the church’s *missional identity*. For Peter, who we *are* shapes how we engage the world around us. From Peter’s perspective, we are exiles and strangers in a foreign land. We are caught up in God’s mission from the margins of our culture. Above all, we are a *holy* people who display the character of the God who called us before the eyes of a watching world (1:13-15). Our missional identity is inextricable from the holy character of God.

2. Second, Peter spotlights *good behavior* as a key instrument of mission. Dan O’Connor is right that “no part of the New Testament speaks out more eloquently . . . on [the] theme of holiness of life as a way of Christian witness [than does 1 Peter].”⁴⁷ For Peter, we live out our missional identity by “doing good.”

3. Third, “doing good,” Peter stresses, means *engaging unbelievers in every dimension of life*. As God’s people, we “follow in Christ’s steps” in relation to political leaders, employers, spouses, former partying friends—everyone. Our new lifestyle cuts a clear difference from that of the culture around us. Yet there is a compelling attraction in that very difference, enough that some may be “won over without a word” (3:1). This “silent witness” is especially appropriate for a church under pressure.

4. Fourth, for Peter, living as God’s holy exiles and doing good toward others inevitably involves *suffering*. Just as suffering characterized Christ’s mission in the world, so it is with his people. Sooner or later, the life of the kingdom and the life of the culture will collide. Yet, rather than trying to escape all suffering, Peter sees our response to unjust treatment as an opportunity to live out the gospel of Christ’s self-giving love.

⁴⁶Dickson, *Best Kept Secret*, 188.

⁴⁷Dan O’Connor, “Holiness as a Way of Christian Witness,” *IRM* 80 (1991): 17.

5. Fifth, for all of its emphasis on holy conduct and nonverbal witness, 1 Peter does not *neglect the role of proclamation in the mission of God*. People who have been transformed through hearing the word are now called both to proclaim God's saving deeds (2:9) and defend and explain their Christian hope when it is questioned (3:15). Yet the *attitude* in which we do so is crucial (see 3:16). Whenever Christians demonize their critics, pass judgment on their opponents, or ridicule the beliefs or behaviors of others, they may score political points, but they probably lose any chance to persuade persons to become followers of Christ. Our verbal witness always partners with a holy lifestyle. It is rooted in the inner disposition of "sanctifying Christ as Lord" (3:15).

I am convinced that 1 Peter's perspective on missional holiness speaks prophetically to the church of the twenty-first century. Engaging in God's mission as "exiles" and "resident aliens" is never easy. It creates significant tensions. Peter invites us to be involved in the institutions and public life of our cultures, even as we are fully aware that we are not at home in them. Miroslav Volf calls this relationship a "soft difference."⁴⁸ By this he means that God's people do not set out to change society's structures, but seek to live within them in distinctive, transforming ways.

For *engaged exiles*, Christian witness rejects all forms of pressure or manipulation. Sometimes it comes as a gentle explanation when others question why we live differently (3:15-16). On other occasions it will mean proclaiming the gospel by the character of our conduct "without a word" (3:1). It may take the form of a loving response to mistreatment. Peter reminds us that there are times when, embodying the good news by our holiness of life is even more important than our words.

In summary, Peter sews together in a seamless garment the church's identity as God's holy people and its mission on behalf of the world. He shows us that mission is first and foremost about who we *are*. We are a community of holy exiles, radically different, but fully engaged in our social world. Mission is also about lifestyle holiness, allowing the suffering love of Christ to penetrate every corner of life. And mission is about witnessing to our living hope, sometimes with words, sometimes without, so that others may join the company of exiles and celebrate the glory of God (2:12).

⁴⁸Volf, "Soft Difference," 2.

HOLINESS AND CATHOLICITY: A FRUITFUL TENSION FOR THE WESLEYAN TRADITION

by

Douglas M. Koskela

Biblically and theologically, the notion of “the world” is multivalent. The world refers both to the order from which God’s people are called out and set apart and to the object of God’s loving and salvific embrace. This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the Gospel of John. In chapter 17 alone, Jesus prays for his disciples, whom the Father has given him “from the world” (v. 6), who just like Jesus “do not belong to the world” (v. 14), yet who just like Jesus have been “sent into the world” (v. 18). He prays that they may be one and may be in the Father and the Son “so that the world may know” that the Father has sent Jesus to them and loves them (v. 23). The repetition of the word *kosmos* in various forms throughout this passage makes it clear that the church’s relationship to the world would be anything but simple, a sentiment that has been doubtless confirmed by succeeding generations of disciples.

How, then, might the church find its theological bearings with respect to this world? In what follows, I suggest that two of the “notes” or “marks” of the church relate to each other in such a way that they can help us do just that. The four marks of the church identified in the Nicene Creed—one, holy, catholic, and apostolic—have long represented a significant set of categories for ecclesiological reflection. Two of these marks in particular, holiness and catholicity, are also found in the third article of the Apostles’ Creed. I suggest that these two marks form a conjunction of considerable significance for the Wesleyan reception of the Christian tradition.

In particular, the Christologically-directed focus implied in the confession of the church as holy provides a clear sense of the church’s calling. And yet the pneumatologically-enriched fullness implied in the confession of the church as catholic cautions us against narrowing unduly that vocation to holiness. This article will aim to develop a vision of these two marks in creative and fruitful tension, such that the transformative pur-

suit of holiness unfolds within the richness of the church's life and worship.

The Holiness and Glory of God

Let us begin with some reflections on holiness as a mark of the church. In Leviticus 19:2 the people of Israel are commanded to be holy, "for the Lord [their] God is holy." This command is picked up in 1 Peter 1:15-16 and extended to Peter's audience: "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct, for it is written, 'you shall be holy, for I am holy.'" The structure of these passages suggests that the holiness to which God's people are called is related to and indeed dependent upon the holiness of God, even if as an analogue. It is appropriate, therefore, to start by considering what we are actually saying when we confess the holiness of God. To get a sense of what is at stake here, we might pose the question this way: does the confession of God's holiness belong primarily to the realm of apophatic discourse or to the realm of cataphatic discourse? In other words, is holiness merely a way of affirming God's transcendence and ineffability, or is there specific content in this confession to which we might have access?

A tendency toward the former might be implied by the contexts in which God's holiness is usually invoked. Theologians often appeal to the category of holiness when they wish to highlight God's distinction from the world, from that which is not God. The weight of emphasis thus falls on God's *otherness*. This can be seen, for example, in Hans Urs von Balthasar's well-known distinction between God's holiness and God's glory. "As the 'holy one,' God makes known especially his divinity in its supramundane character separated from the world; as the 'glorious one,' he makes known both his 'being present' in the world and, united to this, his sovereign superiority to the world."¹ Careful readers of von Balthasar will also note the essential connection between holiness and glory. Specifically, the holiness of God represents God's very being—unbounded, radiant, and complete. Von Balthasar's notion of glory reflects the disclosure—though partial and appropriate to what creatures can apprehend—of that very being of God. Thus, holiness and glory are not opposites. On the contrary, for von Balthasar glory refers to the revelation *to some degree* of that which God is purely and completely—and holiness points

¹Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 7, edited by John Riches, translated by Brian McNeil, CRV (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 268.

us toward that purity and completeness. So, there are clearly epistemological limits to our apprehension of God's holiness. Even for von Balthasar, holiness is more than a placeholder for God's transcendence.

More recently, John Webster has picked up this theme by insisting that a fully Trinitarian rendering of the category of holiness will bring God's relationality to the fore. He writes:

“it is fatally easy to think of God's holiness simply as a mode of God's sheer otherness and transcendence—that is, as the opposite of relational; as concerned, not with God *with* us, but with God *apart from* us. But to follow that path is radically to misunderstand the biblical testimony. The holiness of God is not to be identified simply as that which distances God from us; rather, God is holy precisely as the one who in majesty and freedom and sovereign power bends down to us in mercy.”²

Webster grounds his reading of God's holiness on a basic theological principle; namely, that there is a fundamental coherence between the being of God *ad intra* and the being of God *ad extra*. Thus, a wedge must not be driven between the attributes of God and God's saving work as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.³ For Webster, the character of God's holiness is exemplified by the Father's calling out a people from that all that opposes God's purposes, by the Son's liberation of those called from the opposition to God's purposes, and by the Spirit's completion of that calling by sanctifying God's people in fellowship with the holy God.⁴ It should be made clear, of course, that Webster does not deny that transcendence and otherness are part of what God's holiness signifies. His concern is that God's holiness is not *limited* to such categories. His starting point for apprehending God's holiness is the work of the triune God in the economy of salvation, and thus the otherness of God is set against the background of God's covenant relationality.

While clearly affirming Webster's contention that both otherness and relationality must be involved in a Trinitarian account of holiness, I would contend that transcendence should have the priority in this particular attribute of God (if not in our overall doctrine of God). That is to say, the distinction between God and that which is not God is the first thing

²John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 45.

³Webster, 42.

⁴Webster, 48.

signaled when the term holiness is employed. Then, and only then, are we in a position to apprehend the full extent of God's love as reflected in the economy of salvation. Holiness first and foremost signals God's otherness, precisely so that we can recognize the magnitude of grace involved in the incarnation of the Son and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit with creation. Another way of saying this is that a genuinely Christian account of holiness implies a fundamental *distinction*, but not *distance*, between God and God's creation.

This reading of God's holiness resonates with the work Kenneth Collins has done to articulate John Wesley's conception of holiness. Collins notes that, for Wesley, divine holiness is an attribute that serves primarily to distinguish God from creation.⁵ At the same time, Wesley refused to separate the holiness of God from the love of God. Indeed, our understanding of each of these predicates informs the other. "For Wesley," Collins writes, "holiness must ever be understood in terms of the divine love, a love that is energized in a freely chosen outward movement, that stoops down, as it were, and draws the relation, makes contact, and establishes fellowship."⁶ Still, while a Wesleyan account of holiness must not be abstracted from God's love, the first and primary work of the concept of divine holiness is to establish a clear distinction between God and that which is not God.

Understanding the Church's Holiness

We are now in a position to consider what all of this means for our understanding of the church's holiness. The Scriptural mandate noted above, to be holy because God is holy, implies some fundamental connection between divine holiness and the sanctity of the church. What is the nature of this connection? Here we are helped, I believe, by the notion of analogical language developed by Thomas Aquinas.⁷ Using Thomas' categories, we are not dealing here with a case of univocal predication—that is, we are not claiming that the church is holy in precisely the same manner and the same degree as God is holy. There remains a distinction between God and God's creatures that not even the most robust doctrine

⁵Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007), 21.

⁶Collins, 21.

⁷Thomas' reflections on analogical, univocal, and equivocal language are developed in the *Summa Theologica*, I.13.5.

of *theosis* can or should overcome. What is God's by nature becomes ours by sheer gift, and even then does not obliterate our utter dependence on God to all eternity. We also are not dealing here with a case of equivocal predication—that is, we are not claiming that the church's holiness bears no relation whatsoever to God's holiness. As I have already suggested, the Levitical call to holiness taken up by 1 Peter implies some relation between the two. It appears that we are dealing, then, with a case of analogical predication. The church's holiness is in some ways like, and in other ways not like, the holiness of God.

Both the similarities and the differences between God's holiness and the church's holiness are instructive. Let us consider first the dissimilarities. The first can best be conveyed by the notion of dependence. For creatures, life and breath are always the gift of God. If part of the fundamental distinction implied in God's holiness is that God is the giver of life and we are not, then we simply will not have access to holiness in this particular sense. This is true quite independently of the reality of sin and brokenness in the world. For even if one points to the *imago Dei* here as a ground of likeness to God, one is still dealing with a gift of God's grace. This grace which is given to human beings in creation establishes an enduring posture of dependence on the one in whose image they have been made.

The second dissimilarity does involve the reality of sin and brokenness in the world. Holiness for us involves transformation. God is holy by nature, by simply being who God is. But for human beings, holiness requires change. The call to holiness is a call to rebirth, to transformation, to new creation. This is precisely why 1 Peter places the emphasis on *conduct* that appropriately reflects our calling as a holy people. Beginning at 1:13 we read:

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct.

Thus, in terms of both the church's posture of dependence on God and its need for transformation, the holiness confessed of the church bears an asymmetrical relationship to that of God.

How then is the church's holiness like God's holiness? In our foregoing reflections, we recognized two basic dimensions of an explicitly

Christian account of divine holiness: distinction and relationality. As the transcendent other, the Holy One reaches out to the world in salvific condescension. Only when we first recognize that God is not like the world can we begin to ascertain the extent of God's love. In like manner, the people of God are both called out from the world and sent into the world in loving servanthood.⁸

Drawing on the Pauline theme of reconciliation, David R. Nienhuis suggests that in this respect the church reflects the God it worships. He writes: "When this loving, holy God works in our lives (both individually and communally), this pattern of being separated out from the world in order to love the world is replicated in us."⁹ He proceeds to describe the work of the Holy Spirit in detaching us from the practices and patterns that oppose God's saving purposes. He continues, "but again, this Spirit-driven, separating act does not end in our being hidden away in safe, sectarian seclusion from the world. Instead, it enables us to imitate God's Son Jesus, whose pure, holy adherence to the will of the Father empowered him to enter entirely into the reality of broken human existence, pouring himself out in self-emptying service as God's servant for the transformation of the world."¹⁰

Indeed, what Nienhuis outlines here is a Trinitarian framework for holiness as a note or mark of the church. The Father is the one who calls us to holiness and whose will determines what specific patterns and practices holiness will entail in a broken world. The Son is the one who reveals that will to us, such that the form of holiness in the world is none other than the form of Jesus Christ. This is precisely why I identified earlier the church's sanctity as Christologically directed. The Spirit is the one who both enables our detachment from the patterns of the world and empowers our outpouring into that world as new creatures with good news to proclaim and embody.

In such a Trinitarian rendering of this confession, we are wise to keep in mind the doctrine of appropriations, namely, that every act of God is an act of all three Persons, even as we associate particular activities with one of the Persons. In that light, the church's holiness is the work of

⁸Collins recognizes this emphasis in Wesley. See *The Theology of John Wesley*, 21.

⁹David R. Nienhuis, "The Community of Holiness," in *Holiness as a Liberal Art*, edited by Daniel Castelo (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 95.

¹⁰Nienhuis, 95.

one God. The God who calls us to holiness, demonstrates what it entails, and enables it to be a reality in our life together is none other than the Holy One at the center of the church's worship.

Reflections on Catholicity as a Mark of the Church

What, then, shall we make of catholicity as a mark of the church? As many Protestant hymnals will attest with a carefully-placed asterisk, "universal" is often given as a synonym for catholic in reference to the church. Indeed, John Wesley was quite comfortable to use the phrase "catholic church" as another way of saying "universal church," as in his sermon "Of the Church."¹¹ A similar move is made in his better known sermon "Catholic Spirit." While the nouns modified by the word "catholic" in that sermon are spirit and love rather than church, he uses "catholic" and "universal" interchangeably.¹² Yet the spatial dimension of catholicity that is captured in the term universal does not exhaust the depth and richness of the third mark of the church.

At its heart, catholicity implies the wholeness, richness, and fullness of the church's life. Etymologically, the term signifies that something is related to or in reference to "the whole." Thus applied to the church, catholicity brings to mind the variety of practices and treasures that have marked Christian life and worship in many languages and cultures throughout the centuries. The term reflects, in many ways, a theologically robust account of diversity.

In his study *Catholicity and the Church*, the Eastern Orthodox theologian John Meyendorff traces the first use of the term "catholic church" to the famous maxim of St. Ignatius of Antioch: "where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church." Meyendorff suggests that that initial use signified "that Christian assembly which had accepted the whole of the divine presence in Christ, the whole truth, the fullness of life, and had assumed a mission directed at the salvation of the whole of God's creation."¹³ Meyendorff also draws out another implication of that Ignatian maxim, namely that catholicity is not a human achievement. Using phras-

¹¹John Wesley, Sermon 74, "Of the Church," I.10, in *Sermons III*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 3 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976-), 50.

¹²John Wesley, Sermon 39, "Catholic Spirit," III.4, *Works* 2:94.

¹³John Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 7.

ing with which many Wesleyans will resonate, he writes: “no human group, however worthy, holy, and active, is able to ‘create’ catholicity: it can only cooperate with divine grace and manifest (or fail to manifest) the divine concern for the life and salvation of the world.”¹⁴

Meyendorff’s treatment, drawn as it is from its patristic soil, reflects two basic movements of catholicity. There is both an outward tendency to embrace the world and a centering tendency to embrace the fullness of the gospel. To borrow from physics, we might say that catholicity involves both the church’s centrifugal movement outward and its centripetal movement toward its Christological center. Pneumatologically, this dual movement indicates both the generosity of the Holy Spirit to press the church toward an audacious and universal mission and the guidance of the Spirit toward the fullness of Christ. This is precisely why Meyendorff suggests that a failure of catholicity can involve either missionary passivity—neglecting the outward impulse—or indifference in doctrine and worship—neglecting the centering impulse.¹⁵

Catholicity as Outward Movement. Let us first consider what the outward movement of catholicity entails. There is a natural and immediate connection here to another mark of the church, apostolicity. The apostolic church is the sent church, and catholicity makes clear the scope of that apostolic mission. Jürgen Moltmann develops the relationship between these last two marks of the church as follows: “The church is catholic in its mission, because in its proclamation it appeals to people who do not belong to it, and because it does not accept that there is any sphere which Christ would not have claimed for his own from the beginning. Thanks to its hope it cannot surrender any individual person or any part of creation.”¹⁶

At the same time, the Christian church has seen too many examples in its history of the missionary impulse transforming wittingly or unwittingly into a homogenizing impulse. An appropriate rendering of catholicity can help us here as well. The catholic church is “the inclusive church. The catholicity of the church is always threatened by the natural

¹⁴Meyendorff, 10.

¹⁵Meyendorff, 10–11.

¹⁶Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 349.

human instinct for homogeneous associations and relationships.”¹⁷ Catholicity in this sense is reflected not only in the pluralism of race, class, and language, but also in structures that develop and sustain meaningful translocal connections among congregations.¹⁸

Catholicity as Inward Movement. If the outward impulse of catholicity impels the church to embrace the world broadly and widely, then what is to prevent the erosion of identity? Does catholicity commit us to doctrinal or doxological indifference? Quite the contrary, for we recall Meyendorff’s claim that catholicity also draws us toward “the whole of the divine presence in Christ, the whole truth,” and “the fullness of life.” This centering tendency suggests that catholicity is not wholeness achieved by means of the least common denominator. Rather, it is the embrace of the wholeness given in the self-disclosure of the triune God.

In this light, the church that is catholic must be willing to name and reject that which obscures or opposes the salvific work of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Not only did Wesley clearly recognize this, but he emphasized it in the very sermon that many of his heirs have used to make precisely the contrary point. While it is all too common to appeal to “Catholic Spirit” to minimize the place of doctrine in Christian identity, Wesley did no such thing. Toward the end of that sermon, he made it clear that a catholic spirit was not doctrinal indifference, laxity in worship practices, or a groundless lack of commitment to a local congregation.¹⁹ He employs both the centering and the outward impulse in his affirmation of catholic love:

But while he is steadily fixed in his religious principles in what he believes to be the truth as it is in Jesus; while he firmly adheres to that worship of God which he judges to be most acceptable in his sight; and while he is united by the tenderest and closest ties to one particular congregation, —his heart is enlarged toward all mankind, those he knows and those he does not; he embraces with strong and cordial affection neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. This is catholic or universal love.²⁰

¹⁷Wallace M. Alston, Jr., *The Church of the Living God: A Reformed Perspective* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 58.

¹⁸Alston, 59.

¹⁹Wesley, “Catholic Spirit,” III.1-3, in *Works* 2:92-94.

²⁰Wesley, “Catholic Spirit,” III.4, in *Works* 2:94.

His brother Charles offered a more poetic rendering of this twofold notion of catholicity in his hymn “Catholic Love”:

Redeem'd by thine almighty grace,
I taste my glorious liberty,
With open arms the world embrace,
But *cleave* to those who cleave to thee.²¹

Holiness and Catholicity in Fruitful Tension

Having developed an account of holiness and catholicity as marks of the church, we now turn briefly to explore their interaction. As we have seen, each of these marks involves two movements. Holiness signifies first a detachment from the world as we have known it, and then a movement outward in loving service. Catholicity signifies first an outward loving embrace of “neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies,” and then a centering tendency toward the fullness of God’s self-disclosure in Christ. These marks of the church thus represent mirror images of each other, reflecting both the theme of being called out and the theme of being sent into the world.

Yet each mark places a different movement in the primary position. In that light, the call to holiness helps to orient the church’s catholicity. A holy church will work against the erosion of its identity and accommodation to the patterns of the world—which is really a way of saying idolatry—by insisting that God alone can save and heal the world. And from the other direction, catholicity serves as a check on the Gnostic impulse that often tempts those pursuing holiness. A catholic church will never abandon the world to its own self-destructive devices, but will reach out in embodiment of the whole gospel to the whole world.

It is quite fair to ask, at this stage, what this might look like on the ground. We might consider the General Rules of the United Societies, that foundational document of the early Methodist movement.²² I suggest that the General Rules can serve as a model of the fruitful tension between holiness and catholicity. For example, the one and only condition for admission to a society was “a desire to flee the wrath to come.” In that

²¹Charles Wesley, “Catholic Love.” Appended to John Wesley. *Catholic Spirit*. London: Cock, 1755. Accessed through the website of The Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition, Duke Divinity School.

²²“The Rules of the United Societies,” in *John Wesley*, edited by Albert C. Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 177-180.

sole requirement, we see both holiness—the impulse to be detached from the self-destructive patterns of the world—and catholicity—that all with that desire were welcome, regardless of class or status.

The three rules that Wesley outlined reflect this tension as well. The explication of the first rule, to “do no harm,” identifies tangible ways of detaching from the practices that marked one’s former life—the first movement of holiness. One can hear an echo of 1 Peter’s admonition not “to be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance.” The explication of the second rule, to “do good,” includes a substantial list of tangible practices of catholic love. Doing works of mercy to all people as much as possible, caring for their bodies and souls, makes concrete the outward impulse of catholicity. And the third rule, to “attend upon all the ordinances of God,” brings these marks together. Wesley’s call to embrace *all* the means of grace was a call to receive the fullness or catholicity of God’s gifts, and the result would be a Spirit-empowered transformation that is the very stuff of holiness.

Therefore, these two marks might well serve as signposts for the church as it finds its way between the temptations to idolatry and Gnosticism in any number of contexts: to worship in ways that are both appropriately centered and reflective of the diversity of God’s kingdom; to give pastoral care that recognizes bodies as the locus of both suffering and resurrection; and to embrace boldly a mission to the ends of the earth while resisting cross-cultural acts of unintended violence. This path takes us right back to where we began, with various biblical conceptions of the world that resist conflation. As is so often the case, it is Alexander Schmemmann in his remarkable book *For the Life of the World* who reminds us what it means to see the world truly: “When we see the world as an end in itself, everything becomes itself a value and consequently loses all value, because only in God is found the meaning (value) of everything, and the world is meaningful only when it is the ‘sacrament’ of God’s presence.”²³ The church that lives in the world as a sacrament of God’s presence is truly the holy catholic church.

²³Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973), 17.

ORDINARY PRACTICE AS ECCLESIAL HOLINESS: INTERSECTIONS OF WORK, SACRAMENT, AND LITURGY

by

Joshua R. Sweeden

In every context, Christians wrestle with integrating faith and everyday life. As western Christians emerge from the mold of modernity and a ubiquitous dualism of belief and practice, the challenge of recovering a tangible faith that touches the ground in concrete ways and speaks to everyday circumstances and issues is paramount. A crucial step forward is a retrieval of the holistic nature of faith by being attentive to the ways faith is integrally enmeshed in all realities of life.¹

The Disconnect

Sharing this imperative, Gregory Pierce has noted that Christians generally experience a disconnect between their everyday lives and corporate worship. He states that Christians need guidance in “connecting their Sunday faith to their weekday lives.”² Pierce is referring generically to mainline Christians, yet his findings should be particularly disconcerting for ecclesial bodies who claim to share Wesley’s emphasis of “holiness of heart and life.” While “Wesleyan/holiness” churches (as I will broadly refer to them) have maintained a focus on Christian perfection and the holy life in corporate worship, often little is said about how everyday life—and the ordinary practices that constitute everyday life—relates to, contributes to, or even testifies to holiness (the classic exception being the

¹The Valapariso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith is a prime example of recent theological scholarship directly engaging the relationship between faith and everyday life. Specifically, the project’s launch of *PracticingOurFaith.org* and the subsequent Practicing our Faith library highlights the indelible connection between Christian practice, the church, and the formation of a way of life.

²Gregory F. Augustine Pierce, ed., *Of Human Hands: A Reader in the Spirituality of Work* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 12.

mid-twentieth century legalistic lifestyle mandates of many holiness churches which say little if anything about holy *practice*).³

The disconnect between worship and everyday life and practice in Wesleyan/holiness ecclesial bodies may be attributed to various factors from the modern construction of spheres (private vs. public, religious vs. secular) to shifts in the purpose and intent of corporate worship (from formational to highly emotive and experiential). Such factors certainly contribute to a sense of disconnect. However, the most significant cause of disconnect may be an over-emphasis on personal holiness and inner transformation and the corresponding under-emphasis on social or corporate holiness and outward transformation. Whatever the causes, it is my contention that any disconnect between everyday life and practice and corporate worship in the Wesleyan/holiness tradition is magnified by a narrow understanding of holiness that often sidesteps the calling of the church to be a holy people. In this regard, the disconnect between everyday life and worship is symptomatic of larger issue: the need to articulate holy living not only through the lives of individuals but through the corporate life of the ecclesial body.

As a step toward addressing the larger issue, this paper is a preliminary exploration of the relationship between ecclesial holiness, corporate formation, and everyday and ordinary practice. For Wesleyan ecclesial bodies, such an exploration is demanded not only because of the disconnect Christians experience between corporate worship and everyday life, but because John Wesley himself, as Theodore Jennings notes, “seems to be endlessly preoccupied about triviality, about *adiaphora*” (referring to things commonly considered beyond the concerns or statutes of faith).⁴ Wesley, of course, knew that the practices of everyday life are anything

³Alasdair MacIntyre defines practices as “a coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity, through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to and partially definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended.” Practices are not simply *any* activity, but are those that maintain a robust social and historical grounding and whose means are determined by their ends. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 187.

⁴Theodore W. Jennings, *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 16.

but trivial or inconsequential. The task going forward, then, is to approach Wesley through the lens of “practical divinity.” This may require a re-reading of Wesley. As Jennings states:

The systematic habit of mind that we owe, perhaps, to the ghost of Hegel encourages us to look for grand and sweeping theoretical vistas, which can then be made concrete through application to, and illustration by, particular instances. Nothing could be further from Wesley’s approach. In theology he does not enunciate major themes like christology or atonement, from which to draw conclusions about, say, freedom from sin. He is more likely to begin from something like gossip or backbiting and show its incompatibility with love, and in the process say something about the divine nature or the “end of Christ’s coming.’” . . . He begins with the concrete reality of his hearers or readers.⁵

By way of illustration, this paper will more narrowly focus on the concrete reality of everyday work. The hope is to demonstrate how two elements of ecclesial life—sacraments and liturgy—nurture and shape practices of everyday work. In this way, everyday work can reflect the corporate holiness of the people “called out” as witnesses to God’s reign and be an *extension* of sacrament and liturgy in the world.

Everyday Work as Sacramental

Work is one of the most ordinary and commonplace realities of everyday life. From a modern, western perspective, work is often construed as paid employment, but a fuller understanding recognizes the centrality of work in every person’s life. Appropriately, Karl Barth calls work, “The active affirmation of human existence,” noting both its necessity for survival and its expression of human creative endeavors.⁶ As fundamental to human existence, work serves as a prime example of how Christians struggle to understand everyday life and practice in relationship to corporate worship and ecclesial holiness. Any number of ordinary and everyday practices face a similar challenge of being understood—that is, narrated by—ecclesial life. Indeed, if holiness is the transformation of our affections toward God and each other, we should expect that ordinary activities like

⁵Ibid., 15.

⁶Karl Barth and A. T. Mackay, *The Doctrine of Creation: Church Dogmatics, Volume III, 4* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 527.

eating, child-rearing, recreating, conversing, entertaining, consuming and discarding will be reoriented in light of corporate understandings of holy living.⁷ Everyday work, therefore, is to be a significant lens through which to explore everyday life and practice as ecclesial holiness.

Sacrament (lit. “that which is holy”) is historically understood from both the Greek *mysterion* or “mystery” and the Latin *sacramentum* or “sacred oath.” It was Augustine who gave us the oft-quoted definition of sacrament as an “outward sign of inward grace.” John Wesley inherited this definition through the Anglican tradition, although for Wesley, sacraments are “outward signs *and* inward grace.”⁸ This is fitting given Wesley’s emphasis on holiness of heart and life. Sacraments are not only signs and symbols of God’s grace, but they are transformative as well. Consider Wesley’s assertion that the Lord’s Supper is both a sanctifying and converting ordinance. In this case, communion is not only a visible sign of God’s grace, but also concurrently instills grace.

Here the connection between sacraments and holiness becomes clearer. On the one hand for Wesley, “sacraments” were strictly identified as baptism and eucharist—those instituted by Christ in scripture—while, on the other hand, that which is holy is not confined simply to these two ecclesial practices of worship. This is especially true for Wesleyan/holiness churches. Staples notes, for example, how “Anabaptist currents that flowed into the Wesleyan stream through the holiness movement served to water down the Wesleyan doctrine of baptism and to diminish the sig-

⁷Not anything constitutes a “practice.” While much of what we do in a day, from brushing teeth to folding laundry, does not resemble a practice as typically connoted, it can be difficult to make clear distinctions if everyday life is subsumed under the Christian narrative. In this regard, even the most mundane activities may be practices in that they participate in God’s redemptive activity in the world. Consider the definition of a Christian practice proposed by Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra: “By ‘Christian Practices’ we mean *things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in the light of God’s active presence for the life of the world.*” Something as mundane as eating or working would constitute a practice inasmuch as it is re-narrated through the Christian community and is engaged in light of and in response to God’s activity. See Dykstra and Bass, “A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices,” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Dorothy Bass and Miroslav Volf (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), 18.

⁸See Rob L. Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1991).

nificance placed on the Lord's Supper by the Wesleys."⁹ Arguably, while the Anabaptist currents that diluted and diminished significance of the sacraments have hindered Wesleyan/holiness churches ecclesiologically, those currents could also provide a needed lens for uncovering the sacramentality of ordinary practices. The balance required here is similar to the tight-rope that John Wesley walked: maintaining a high-church Anglicanism alongside free-church proclivities.

John Inge's exploration of sacrament may be helpful for the balance Wesleyan/holiness churches need to achieve. Inge argues for the sacramentality of place, specifically with regard to the church. He suggests that the sacraments enable Christians to express the "placed-ness" of God's revelation, particularly that of Christ and the incarnation. We have "sacramental encounters," not "given only to a few," but that exist as testimonies to many of the God who reveals. These testimonies and sacramental encounters come to us, therefore, not only in the storied places of scripture, but in the places that since have been shaped by the narrative. God's continual self-revelatory action in the world is able to be understood because the church's sacraments express the Christian experience of the world, an experience of the world that begins with the *mysterion* of God. As Inge states, "the biblical narrative leads us to expect God's self-revelation and, therefore, that the world is a possible place of sacramentality."¹⁰

Central to Inge's exploration is the correlation between sacramentality and holiness. He even notes that his interest in the subject of place was sparked by the question of what qualifies a "holy place."¹¹ By the end of the text, he concludes that all churches could operate as shrines (or holy places). The church should function as a witness to/in the world embodying prophetically here and now the eschatological reality associated with holy places and pilgrimage. This is similar to how John Howard Yoder describes the church as the "first fruits." The church "is or is to be in itself the beginning of what is to come."¹² Understanding the church as shrine

⁹Ibid., 16.

¹⁰John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place: Explorations in Practical, Pastoral, and Empirical Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 74.

¹¹Ibid., ix.

¹²John Howard Yoder, "Why Ecclesiology is Social Ethics: Gospel Ethics Versus the Wider Wisdom," in *The Royal Priesthood* (Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 125.

maintains its identity as a storied place, but also signifies that the church is part of a larger story. This larger story is of God and God's relationship with the world in Christ, "the starting point," Inge states, of Christian theology.¹³

The sacramentality of place and the placed-ness of the church have far-reaching implications for how everyday work is conceived as ecclesial holiness. Inge has opened the door for understanding everyday practices as possible places of sacramentality. Indeed, practices are never place-less. Practices can be places of sacramentality, however, only when they are shaped by a narrative of the Christian "experience of the world that begins with the *mysterion* of God." Accordingly, the church remains central in the formation of sacramentality in the world or, as I am arguing, holiness in everyday work.

Everyday Work as Liturgical

Liturgy (lit. "work of the people") often narrowly refers to the rituals of corporate worship, connoting those specific, often formal and "sacramental" performances of worship. More fundamentally, liturgy is the work—outpouring—of corporate identity. Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann defines liturgy as "an action by which a group of people become something corporately which they had not been as a mere collection of individuals—a whole greater than the sum of its parts."¹⁴ This definition is particularly helpful ecclesialogically. When conceived only in reference to formal worship, liturgy as "the work of the people" refers to the activity of the laity or congregation in response to the clergy. In other words, liturgy is the work of the people because rituals require respondents. Schmemmann, however, recovers the rudimentary meaning of liturgy as the "action by which a group of people become something corporately" and also the action of corporate life participating in a specific calling. Thus, he says, "the Church itself is a *leiturgia*, a ministry, a calling to act in this world after the fashion of Christ, to bear testimony to Him and His kingdom."¹⁵

Acknowledging the basic meaning of liturgy is a reminder that Christian worship is anything but abstracted ritual confined to Sunday

¹³Inge, 123.

¹⁴Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 25.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 25.

performance. While Christian liturgy is unmistakably performed in corporate Sunday gatherings, it is also corporately performed in individual lives throughout the week. I say *corporately performed* to signify the fact that “individual” performances remain outcomes of corporate identity. In other words, the liturgical performances of Christian worship are both prescriptive and descriptive of Christian confession. Regarding everyday work, therefore, Christian liturgy not only *informs* understandings of work, but is continuously *performed* through good work. In this way, liturgical practices are not abstract rituals confined to corporate gatherings, but extensions of the people of God into the world and in everyday life and practice.

It is at this juncture that the relationship between the church’s vocation and a person’s everyday work demands attention. Wesleyan churches are largely indebted to Martin Luther’s perspective of work found in his strong critique of the clerical captivity of vocation. Seeing the inevitable marginalization of laity whose work was not considered a “calling” and the clerical misuse afforded by the status of a “higher calling,” Luther broadened vocation to include all persons in their “station” of life. Luther’s encouragement of lay vocation has been a predominant Protestant position. Gary Badcock has shown, however, that there is a downside to Luther’s revision. Vocation can become tied to each person’s specific employment and place in the social order.¹⁶ When vocation becomes connected to occupation, and moreover, occupation becomes intrinsically attached to one’s personhood, calling easily comes to mean being a tailor, farmer, judge, or even peasant. Obviously, this can open the doors to a problematic justification of social standing and hierarchy. The significance of Luther’s emphasis on individual vocation may also have distracted some Protestant churches from articulating the more fundamental notion of vocation as corporate and ecclesial.¹⁷

¹⁶Gary Badcock draws attention to Luther’s connection of calling and social standing. He states that for Luther “all people have a standing, and office in the world.... One does not, in fact, need to search far to see what one’s responsibilities are or what one’s standing is.” Badcock elaborates on Luther’s understanding in noting that all people, believers and unbelievers, have an “earthly office,” but the unbeliever “does not embrace it in faith as a calling.... Faith alone allows us to accept our worldly work as something religiously significant,” i.e., vocation. See Gary D. Badcock, *The Way of Life* (Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 36-37.

¹⁷The problem with this shift is that it distances “Christian vocation” from the prophetic witness inherent in God’s calling of a people. Good work in the

Wesleyan/holiness denominations share the struggle to articulate vocation in corporate or ecclesial terms. It does not help that Methodist and Wesleyan/holiness churches find their roots in a movement which, as Albert Outler notes, had “no doctrine of the church.”¹⁸ Indeed, John Wesley rarely talked about the church in a formal, constructive sense.¹⁹ Arguably, however, the lack of ecclesiological development in Wesley may simply be evidence of an assumed (Anglican) ecclesiology. It is interesting that in his revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, Wesley felt no need to address the article on the church. It would be difficult to say John Wesley’s theology and practice was anything less than inherently ecclesial. This is further evidenced by the fact that societies, classes, and bands were designed to complement local congregations and not intended to take congregational form.

Alongside the apparent absence of a formally articulated ecclesiology, there is also limited formal theological engagement of vocation by John Wesley. There are writings and remarks that may evidence a theology of vocation, e. g., “Wesley’s Covenant Prayer,” but these forays must be extracted and compiled.²⁰ In this sense, Charles demonstrates a theology of vocation that places personal calling within the framework of

post-Luther arrangement simply means doing one’s work well—with kindness, gratitude, integrity, etc. The greater calling of practicing or performing redeemed work which testifies to God’s reign gets neglected. John Howard Yoder similarly notes how the “Protestant doctrine of vocation” has followed Luther’s model and made vocation a matter of the “order of creation” rather than one’s activity arising from faith in Jesus (*Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, 26).

¹⁸Albert Outler, “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?” in *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1964), 11ff.

¹⁹The clearest exception is John Wesley’s sermon “Of the Church” written in 1784. Though brief, Wesley does provide some framework for defining the church.

²⁰Wesley’s Covenant Prayer first appeared in his *Short History of the People Called Methodists* published in 1781: “I am no longer my own but thine/ Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt/ Put me to doing, put me to suffering/ Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee/ Exalted for thee or brought low for thee/ Let me be full, let me be empty/ Let me have all things, let me have nothing/ I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal/ And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit/ Thou art mine, and I am thine/ So be it/ And the covenant which I have made on earth/ Let it be ratified in heaven/ Amen.”

ecclesial calling. When Charles writes, “the vocation of the church is to sustain many vocations,” the intent is to allow “a variety of vocations to develop and flourish with our churches.”²¹ There also is the interconnect-
edness of personal vocation and corporate worship for Charles Wesley:

Charles’ hymns reflect the myriad of responses to God’s call, experienced in the different forms we have explored, graciously enabling each disciple to reaffirm her or his true vocation. Worship then becomes for us the “vocation of a lifetime and a joyful obligation” that we need to take seriously, not just on Sundays but in our everyday lives.²²

Yet the fact remains that with John and Charles Wesley we only find occasional statements on vocation and the church.

I am not suggesting that the contemporary struggle in Wesleyan/holiness churches to articulate corporate and ecclesial vocation is the fault of John or Charles Wesley. There is plenty of “ecclesiology” in the Wesleys to be uncovered. Arguably, articulating ecclesial vocation and holiness was never the same priority in the Wesleyan/holiness tradition as was personal holiness. This is especially the case with the American holiness movement which, being “largely a child of 19th-century revivalism . . . stressed the religion of inward experience, of John Wesley’s ‘warmed heart.’ When such ‘heartfelt’ religion became a reality in people’s lives, they saw less need for churchly structures and liturgies.”²³

For Wesleyan/holiness churches today, the need for a more robust ecclesiology is paramount if we are to talk about ecclesial holiness. Furthermore, it is impossible to consider ordinary practice as ecclesial holiness—especially everyday work—without being able to articulate corporate/ecclesial vocation. A starting point, therefore, is to reach beyond John and Charles Wesley to a fundamental Christian understanding of vocation found in the corporate identity and calling of the people of God.

We might begin by recognizing that the calling (vocation) of the people of God is no less than God’s calling for all creation. As Gary Badcock

²¹Tim Macquiban, “Work on Earth and Rest in Heaven: Toward a Theology of Vocation in the Writings of Charles Wesley,” in *Our Calling to Fulfill: Wesleyan Views of the Church in Mission*, ed. Douglas Meeks (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2009), 69.

²²*Ibid.*, 63.

²³Staples, 22.

states, “vocation is best understood in terms of this basic tenet of theology, that humanity is called by God to faith, to holiness, and to service.”²⁴ The people of God discover their vocation in the very fact that God has called all creation to faithfulness. As John Howard Yoder states, “The people of God is called to be today what the world is called to be ultimately.”²⁵ In other words, Christian vocation is fundamentally to live into God’s reign as witnesses of “the world that is to come.” The calling of the people of God is not contingent upon their perfect enactment of God’s reign.

The story of the people of God, of course, is littered with accounts of failure and unfaithfulness. George Lindbeck’s essay “The Church” illustrates this point well: “The church’s story, understood as continuous with Israel’s, tells of God doing in this time between the times what he has done before: choosing and guiding a people to be a sign and witness in all that it is and does, whether obediently or disobediently, to who and what he is.”²⁶ He describes the church’s fundamental vocation as *witness*: “The primary Christian mission is not to save souls but to be a faithfully witnessing people.”²⁷ Accordingly, the church is called to testify to—i.e., enact—God’s redemptive activity in the world. It is not responsible to establish God’s reign and should certainly avoid the coercive, juridical, and power-seeking tendencies that have marked its history.

When Christian vocation is shaped by the values of the kingdom of God, Christian love becomes expressed in all areas of life, including family, workplaces, friendships, and even the state. The task is “to be holy where we are, amid the responsibilities of ordinary life, and within the community or communities in which we live.”²⁸ Following Schmemmann’s claim that the

²⁴Badcock, 15-16.

²⁵Yoder, *Body Politics*, ix.

²⁶George Lindbeck, “The Church,” in *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, by George A. Lindbeck and ed. James Joseph Buckley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 2003), 157.

²⁷Ibid., 159.

²⁸Ibid., 123. Badcock uses the example of his brother who expresses his “calling” as a fireman to argue that vocation, ultimately, is not a call to specific occupations, but to a way of life. He states, “I am, however, unable to agree with his claim that God called him to be a fireman. The call of God in the Bible is the call to do something that can be directly characterized as religious in quality—for example, some action to which the Word of God directs us. It would be more accurate, therefore, to speak of the calling that his work as a fireman allowed him to fulfill: to show love, to do good, to train for ministry, and to work in Christian service in the church and in the workplace” (106).

church is a liturgy, “a calling to act in this world after the fashion of Christ,” the parallels between liturgy and vocation become apparent. Like liturgy, vocation is foremost not an individual’s work, but the work of the people.

The primary understanding of vocation is the call to witness to God’s reign as a people. While witnessing occurs, of course, through individuals in ordinary life, it remains grounded in a corporate and ecclesial identity. Recovering liturgy as “the work of the people” reminds Christians that vocation and calling imply living holy in everyday work. The activities of ordinary life are not interruptions to the church’s liturgy, but potential liturgical acts themselves. Such an understanding does not discount the possibility of specific (e.g., occupational) calling, but does acknowledge that Christian vocation is the calling to be God’s holy people, which is nothing less than liturgy in action.²⁹

Everyday Work as Ecclesial Holiness

Thus far I have explored the possibility of everyday work as both liturgical and sacramental. On one hand, it is important to name both liturgy and sacrament as prescriptive and descriptive of everyday work since they inform this work and are to be inherent in its performance. On another hand, there is an undeniable tension when it comes to differentiating the terms *liturgical* and *sacramental*. I struggle to envision work as sacramental that is not also liturgical, or liturgical that is not also sacramental. The two terms are not synonymous, and there are conventional ways for distinguishing them, but conventional modes for differentiating liturgy and sacrament (definitions, etymological analysis, historical accounts, etc.) seem to break down when the messiness of lived reality meets Christian practice and witness.

²⁹Alexander Schmemmann makes a similar point in describing the church as a sacrament for the world. He notes how the church is to be sacramental or symbolical, reflecting the liturgy of the eucharist. “Historians of theology have many times noted that in the early patristic tradition we find no *definition* of the Church. The reason for this, however, lies not in the ‘lack of development’ of the theology of that time—as several learned theologians suppose—but in the fact that in her early tradition the Church was not an object of ‘definition’ but the living experience of the new life. This experience—in which we find also the *institutional* structure of the Church, her hierarchy, canons, liturgy, etc.—was *sacramental*, *symbolical* by its very nature, for the Church exists in order to be always changing into that same reality that she manifests, the fulfillment of the invisible in the visible, the heavenly and the earthly, the spiritual in the material.” Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), 35.

The practice of the eucharist is a primary example of this complexity. It is clearly both a sacrament and a liturgical act. This is not simply because the Christian tradition has named eucharist a sacrament, or because it is the culmination—or focal point—of the church's Sunday liturgy. The eucharist is a sacrament because it is the preeminent sign of God's grace. As the church partakes of the eucharist, it is tangibly reminded of the cost of God's gift. The spilled blood and broken body of Christ are evinced in the elements and the sting of death is remembered. The sorrow is only eclipsed by the proclamation of the mystery: "Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again." Yet, as Wesley believed, there is more than a simple remembrance happening. The sacrament of eucharist is also constitutive for the church and its holy life. In fact, the eucharist "is much more than a ritual repetition of the past. It is rather a literal re-membering of Christ's body"—the formation of a eucharistic people.³⁰

Similarly, the eucharist is liturgical because it is the result of people's work. The people prepare the elements, gather, confess, reconcile, and literally make the bread: "The bread offered is common: it comes from and represents our everyday lives. It was bought with our wages or money from our pension, made by hand or mass-produced in a factory, and sold at a profit. When offered to God, however, a dynamic other than the merely human comes into play. By grace, the bread offered is sanctified through its incorporation into the resurrection of Christ."³¹

An additional work of the people in the eucharist is the task of *being sent*. The origins of the term "mass" are a reminder that the eucharist goes forth into the world along with God's people. The term is partly derived

³⁰See William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 229. Cavanaugh reiterates this quotation saying, "Modern Christians often speak of 'hearing' or 'attending' the Eucharist; priests 'say' the mass. The ancient church, by contrast, tended to speak of 'doing' the Eucharist (*eucharistiam facere*) or 'performing' the mysteries (*mysteria telein*). The word *anamnesis* had the effect not so much of a memorial, as one would say kind words about the dead, but rather a performance. The emphasis is thus on the entire rite of the Eucharist as action, and not simply on the consecration of the elements" (230).

³¹Esther Reed, *Good Work: Christian Ethics in the Workplace* (Baylor University Press, 2010), 48. Reed further explains, "Bread from the local bakery represents what I am calling the proper autonomy of the secular. The secular is what belongs to this age or is part of the historical order that we all inhabit. Offering this bread to God, in the knowledge that the divine life will infuse its every part, becomes the framework in which to think about the work of all human hands."

from the Latin *missa*, meaning “sent,” giving it a similar root as the words mission, missal, and even missile. It is no coincidence that the liturgy of the eucharist is couched in language of “going forth.” In other words, the eucharist liturgy points to an overflowing of the bread and wine as it is embodied by and continued forward by Christians themselves. In this sense, eucharist is also liturgical, the work of the people, because God’s people share in the extension of the eucharist into everyday life.

What I am suggesting may only be a starting point for Christians who find the practice of eucharist far removed from the everyday world of work. It often seems that giving God thanks and praise is a routine exercise reserved for Sunday, an isolated liturgy that only momentarily triumphs over the realities of the week. But a cloistered eucharist is a contradiction of both its sacramental nature and liturgical function. The thanksgiving that is the eucharist engenders a full-bodied response to God’s gifts. If Christians “know the accursed nature of work, but we also know that Christ is risen,” then the proclamation of the Paschal Mystery should overflow into everyday life.³² Accordingly, the eucharist breaks down “modern notions of the private-public divide.”³³ The transformation of the bread corresponds to the transformation of human work and the eschatological, forward-looking dynamic of the eucharist gives meaning to the bread and to the work of human hands.

Consequently, the spheres of private-public, earthly-heavenly, and religious-secular are shattered. Concerns about “workplaces that belong to the proper autonomy of the secular are drawn into the transforming influence of the gospel.”³⁴ Similarly, Alexander Schmemmann shows how the eucharist collapses the spheres of time and space. He calls the eucharist “the *preface* of the world to come, the door into the kingdom,” and at the same time asserts that when we proclaim “the kingdom *which is to come*, we affirm that God *has already endowed us with it*.” In the eucharist, “the future has been given to us” in order that “it may constitute the very *present*.”³⁵ Through the act of thanksgiving the church dis-

³²Ibid., 51.

³³Ibid., 46.

³⁴Ibid., 49. In the eucharist, one sphere is not exchanged for another, as if the private represses the public, or the heavenly the earthly. Instead, as the bread of the eucharist displays, the bread remains bread—the work of human hands—“but becomes for the faithful a reality composed of two realities, an earthly and an heavenly.” See Reed, 48.

³⁵Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 39.

covers its vocation, the calling to respond by enacting God's gift of the future in the world. The result is a tangible reorientation of everyday life under the reality of God's reign.

One can see that the eucharist is a prime example of how sacrament and liturgy are both prescriptive and descriptive of everyday work. As a practice constitutive for the church, the eucharist shapes and informs practices of work. At the same time, as the eucharistic community engages the world, the eucharist is extended by the church through everyday practices of work. Accordingly, everyday work is an indelible part of the church's holiness. Work is the most consuming activity of our daily lives (I am not simply talking about paid employment, of course). If ecclesial holiness is to be embodied by persons in the everyday, uncovering how practices of work may be holy is an unavoidable task. It would matter, of course, what the work is, if it testifies to and participates in the new creation, if it points to God's reign. I would not attempt to claim at all work can be holy. But if everyday work can be liturgical, then it would be difficult, at least in a Christian theological sense, to not also say that everyday work is ecclesial. Similarly, if everyday work can be sacramental, then we could also say that it is holy.

I am proposing that the holiness of any practice, including work, is grounded in the church. This claim is very appropriately "Wesleyan." John Wesley recognized grace and holiness outside the traditional structures of church, yet nevertheless insisted that holiness is engendered by the practices and disciplines of the Christian community. The Methodist movement worked alongside congregations. Wesley insisted that members of societies, classes, and bands be connected to a congregational life where the sacraments were practiced.³⁶ Furthermore, the formation of ordinary

³⁶Though Wesley had his own preferences regarding ecclesial structure and worship, he found "many reasons to abate [the] zeal" of prescribing a particular style for others. Yet he always maintained that "every follower of Christ is obliged, by the very nature of the Christian institution, to be a member of some particular congregation or other (some church, as it is usually termed), which implies a particular manner of worshipping God—the "two cannot walk together unless they be agreed" [cf. Amos 3:3]—yet none can be obliged by any power on earth but that of his own conscience to prefer this or that congregation to another, this or that particular manner of worship." This reasoning carried over into an expectation that members of the movement maintain membership in a local congregation. See John Wesley, "Catholic Spirit," in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 96.

practice as ecclesial holiness was a primary concern for Wesley.³⁷ His restorationist impulse for Christian perfection and holiness led to the creation of a movement that was, as Outler suggests, “an evangelical order within a regional division of the Church catholic,”³⁸ or as Colin Williams puts it, “*ecclesiolae in ecclesia*—small groups of believers living under the Word and seeking under the life of discipline to be a leaven of holiness within the ‘great congregation’ of the baptized.”³⁹ In this sense, Wesley hoped that the Methodists would exemplify the fundamental calling of the church by embodying holiness in everyday life.⁴⁰

The vocation of Wesleyan/holiness today must remain grounded in the calling to be “a leaven of holiness” for the church catholic. As John Wesley believed, this is a task that does not begin with theological “distinctives” but with the pursuit of Christian perfection made evident through ecclesial holiness in ordinary practice.

³⁷Staples appropriately states, “Now it so happened that the Wesley of the ‘warmed heart’ was none other than Wesley the ‘High Churchman, the son of a High Churchman,’ to use his own words. This latter Wesley, the lifelong Anglican, had an enduring appreciation for the established church, and for him the Anglican liturgies and sacraments were of immense importance for the cultivation and propagation of holiness.” See Staples, 24.

³⁸Albert Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 306.

³⁹Colin Williams, *John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1960), 149.

⁴⁰According to John W. Wright and J. Douglas Harrison, it was “part of the Methodist vocation . . . to remain faithful members of the various ecclesial bodies in which they worshiped, with their distinctive beliefs, polity, and liturgies. Methodists were to leaven the church catholic as part of it. They were not a distinct ideological group, but a voluntary group of believers within the church catholic who had been reconciled to each other in their pursuit of Christian perfection by means of the Methodist discipline.” See John W. Wright and J. Douglas Harrison, “The Ecclesial Practice of Reconciliation and the End of the ‘Wesleyan,’” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 37-2 (2002): 207.

EUCCHARISTIC PARTICIPATION: HOLINESS AS THE RELATIONAL SHAPE OF CHRISTIAN MORAL THEOLOGY

by

Timothy R. Gaines

My purpose is to suggest that the Wesleyan theological tradition is uniquely positioned to render ethics intelligible in the face of a daunting ontology problem found in late modern ethics. I will suggest that the eucharistic practices in concert with the doctrine of holiness contained within the Wesleyan theological tradition offer amelioration to the fragmented ontology out of which late modern ethics attempts to operate, and that these practices have the further benefit of rendering the ethical enterprise intelligible such that ethics are ordered to the vision of *shalom* in the Hebrew Bible, and its New Testament correlates, reconciliation and holiness.¹

I understand that what Wesley called “holiness of heart and life” is precisely that which restores persons to right relationship with God *and with one another*. Irv Brendlinger’s recent study of Wesley’s social ethics articulates holiness as a “genuine moral change in the human life” which includes: “(a) a reorientation of motivation which he calls purity of intention; (b) the renewed image of God (moral image); and (c) the ability to love God and neighbor.” It is the relational aspect of restored relationship to God and neighbor that I am equating with *shalom* or reconciliation, interpreting these concepts through a Wesleyan account of holiness. Wesley’s well-known adage, “There is no holiness but social holiness,” connotes a relational aspect which includes the reconciliation of person to person. I will suggest that eucharistic practice provides the basic shape of Christian ethics, especially as these practices are rooted in a triune doctrine of God. Before I can make these suggestions, however, we must have an understanding of the problematic nature of ethics in the late modern era. It is to that relationship we now turn.

¹See Irv A. Brendlinger, *Social Justice Through the Eyes of Wesley: John Wesley’s Theological Challenge to Slavery* (Ontario: Joshua Press, 2006), 105.

Ontological Fragmentation and the Unintelligibility of Ethics

In his 1992 Bampton Lectures, Colin Gunton cogently argued that the Western philosophical tradition has been strongly influenced by a fascination with characteristics of the divine which tend toward stability and fixity, rather than motion and relationality. “The God of most Western philosophy is single, simple and unchanging,” Gunton argues, “and that is the problem.”² Confusion between *hypostasis* and *ousia* has led thinkers, both ancient and modern, to displace the relational unity of God, opting to speak of God in such a way that they locate trinitarian analogies *within* rather than *between* the Persons of the Trinity. More recently, T. A. Noble has attributed the development of the concept of “person” in the Western tradition to the historical advancement of trinitarian theology, suggesting that a relational ontology was present as the concept of personhood grew. “Unfortunately,” he writes, “partly because of Boethius’s definition of ‘person’ as ‘an individual substance of rational nature,’ we came to equate being a person with being a self-contained, self-existent, self-sufficient, separate ‘individual’ who is able to think and feel and will.”³

As an heir to this philosophical tradition and concept of personhood, Immanuel Kant sought to develop a system of ethics predicated upon the absolute autonomy of human persons and their ability to employ a rational will to govern their affairs. For Kant, a theologically-based ethics is far too epistemologically slippery, and must be dispatched in favor of something which all rational persons can grasp. The result was not a dismantling of the philosophical place God held, but a *relocation* of the God function, such that humans themselves provided that which held the world together through their rational will. Kant’s hope here is that this move can free us from the tyranny of a totalizing yet ambiguous order, precisely as it disarranges the univocal tone of totalitarianism into a polyphony of solitary (and sometimes discordant) voices. The members of the choir are now all soloists, and the conductor has taken leave of the podium.

This is for our good, the argument proceeds, for rationality is that which now provides the moral boundaries for humanity. This rationality is predicated on the exaltation of individuality, ontologically rending one

²Colin Gunton, *The One, The Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 24.

³T. A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 217-218.

person from another. The “moral space” between persons serves the “bodily integrity” of both persons, holding one person from another at a comfortable distance. One person cannot encroach or make a claim on another, for this would violate the moral space between persons. In this vision of morality, moral space between persons serves to separate, rather than act as a space of relational unification, which is not entirely problematic, since the end of late modern ethics is not *shalom*, but tolerance.

Moral space as separation serves an ontology of unrelatedness. It is an ontology that makes ethics a set of governing principles designed to accommodate the clash of rational wills which is the inevitable outcome of human experience if humans are ontologically separated. If morality is predicated on an overarching set of values or a rational principle, ethics serves to govern our interactions with other persons so that the rational principle is not violated. Of course, even this view of ethics presupposes that we agree on the overarching rational principle, which is unnecessary according to an ontology of individual fragmentation.

The more likely situation is that I adhere to a different overarching rational principle than the other, creating a state of affairs in which ethics can only be that which governs the clash between my rational principle and the rational principle of the other. Ethics, then, is not the art serving the beauty of reconciliation, but the execution of techniques to either outmaneuver or oppress the other in favor of my own rational principle. All of this is possible because I am fundamentally and ontologically unrelated to the other, obliterating the moral-relational space between persons.

If ethics is merely the defining of governing actions in service of an overarching rational principle, the clash of rational wills is that which defines ethics, locating it within unreconciled power dynamics. That is, if ethics is that which governs my rational principle coming into collision with your rational principle, the outcome of ethics likely will be written by whichever side is able to wield its power most effectively over the other. In the absence of a *telos* of something beyond toleration, ethics need not be anything more than what we have described above.

In his astute observations about this modern dilemma, C. B. MacPherson finds that the reduction of relational space we are describing results in the political notion that rights stem from one's self-ownership, giving rise to human relations being understood only from the perspective of property ownership and market exchange. “The basic assumptions of possessive individualism,” he argues, are “that man is free and human by virtue of his sole proprietorship of his own person, and that human

society is essentially a series of market relations.”⁴ When relations are simply the impersonal exchanges of fundamentally unrelated persons, the height of the underlying ethical program is an efficient and beneficial marketplace. Rights serve to protect market exchanges, predicated on liberal self-ownership, but can do little for the sake of relationality beyond exchange. The market may administer a suspension of violence, but it cannot bring *shalom*.

This dilemma, of course, is not foreign to the Wesleyan theological tradition. As D. Stephen Long rightly observes, ethics has been precisely that which theologians have often used to attempt to reconcile religion to the modern situation, resulting in Christianity becoming a kind of repetition of modernity. “God and goodness, doctrine and ethics, truth and love were rendered asunder. The Methodist tradition of ethics assumes that rights, justice, or values are more universal categories than the Christian doctrine of God.”⁵ Long’s observations presuppose that “Methodism’s desire for relevance to the modern merged technology, religion, and ethics to such a degree that they are nearly indistinguishable,” resulting in the Wesleyan tradition’s temptation to forsake its own foundations and make ethics a matter of rights theory, rather than moral goodness.⁶

Fortunately, many thinkers who are aligned with the tradition of John Wesley have done much to establish goodness within the confession of a Three-One God, and to think ontology relationally, opening a way to understand morality in terms of holiness—which requires a critique of modernity’s penchant for locating ontology within the individual, atomizing person from person.⁷ The Wesleyan tradition, with its emphasis on restoring humanity to the *imago Dei*, or what John Wesley called “holiness of heart and life,” includes a relational realignment so that ethics finds its end in *shalom*, rather than in late modern rights theory.

⁴C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 270.

⁵D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley’s Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 30.

⁶Long, 16.

⁷Some representative works which have advanced our understanding of holiness in a relational sense are Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1972) and Thomas Oord and Michael Lodahl, *Relational Holiness: Responding to the Call of Love* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2005).

If Gunton's read of the Western tradition is right, it is my claim that modernity has rendered ethics unintelligible. In its relocation of unifying principles from the transcendent to the immanent, the modern person has been reduced to an autonomous monad whose relationships with other autonomous monads are nothing more than unrelated market exchanges. The space in which ethics occurs, then, has been obliterated, for the relationships between radically individualized persons is artificial; in the space between monads there can be no substance, for if substance itself has been located within the monad, the space between them is a vacuum. In this view of ontology, the most that ethics can provide is a temporary truce between persons.

Reconciliation in the hope of *shalom*, however, is a different question entirely. For this reason, the moral theology of the Wesleyan tradition can apply a healing balm to the wounds opened by modern ontology. But it must do so making use of its own resources, especially eucharistic practices informed by a trinitarian doctrine of God and a robust doctrine of holiness, rather than attempting to apply a Wesleyan social ethic on top of a theologically problematic ontology, as Gunton has well illustrated.

Trinity, Holiness, and the Intelligibility of Ethics

Christian moral theology has a different end in view than that of modern ethics. Its view is eschatological in that it is satisfied and fulfilled only when the goodness of God's *shalom* has been established. It both remembers the garden and lives in hope of the New Jerusalem.⁸ Its view populates the moral space between persons with the possibility of relational reconciliation. It does not understand created beings to be fundamentally unrelated to one another.

The teleological character of Christian moral theology charts a different course than late modern ethics as it takes seriously an ontology of relationality. If we are truly related to one another at an ontological level, the aim of our intercourse ought to be reconciliation of those relationships rather than the overcoming of one person's rational will by another

⁸Both of these biblical images are fundamentally relational. Life in the garden flourishes as the newly-created humans live in right relationship toward one another under the creative fiat of a good God. The New Jerusalem of Revelation 21 and 22 shows a centrality of God's presence with the people which orients their life in such a way that their relationships with one another are characterized by the absence of strife and violence and by the presence of unity in their unending liturgy.

person's rational will. With an ontology of relationality undergirding moral reasoning, what was once "mine" and "yours" becomes "ours," for no longer are the desires of the other something that are distinct from my own, but become bound up in our relational existence together.⁹ Said differently, the aim of moral theology is not that my rational principle would overcome yours through power or coercion, but that we would be sufficiently reconciled one to another that the clash of rational principles becomes altogether unnecessary.

The Wesleyan theological tradition contains resources to generate an ontology of relationality so that moral theology finds its end in the *shalom* of God. In particular, Wesley's doctrine of full salvation or holiness is that location within the tradition where ethics takes reconciliation as its *telos* as humans are transformed to live in right relationship with God and their neighbors. That Wesley advocated a doctrine of holiness that was social is clear throughout his writing. That Wesley was a trinitarian Christian is also clear throughout his sermons and in Charles Wesley's 1767 collection of trinitarian hymns that John endorsed. Wesley preached an "economic" doctrine of the Trinity for the sake of "practical divinity." That is, Wesley was rarely concerned with articulating orthodoxy for its own sake. Orthodox confession was important because it was the foundation on which Wesley's soteriological theology was constructed. His confession of a triune God is tied to his preaching of holiness because it is in and through God's triune revelation and operation that human persons are made holy, transformed to live in right relationship with God and one another. The nature of this relationship between humans and God is a relationship of participation in God's triune life.

Participation in God's triune life is ultimately dynamic. It is not simple imitation or reflection because imitation or reflection can be understood to be an act of the will alone, whereas participation in God's life, and the life of holiness which results, can only be understood in terms of grace. Though I may, following Aristotle, will to imitate a particular moral activity, and even be successful to some extent, Christians must differentiate this from the shape of the moral life. Sheer imitation requires little or no change of character, nor does it necessarily have goodness as its *telos* or divine grace as its catalyst. We do well to remember Augustine's

⁹See Oliver O'Donovan's discussion of the principles and practices of communication, founded in *koinonia*. Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 242ff.

confession at this point: "I must go beyond this natural faculty of mine as I rise by stages towards the God who made me."¹⁰

Simple imitation, willing ourselves toward some ethical act based on principle, may not necessarily depend on a source outside of the human will, and thus we are led back into the trap from which we are seeking to escape. Simple imitation presupposes autonomy in a moral sense, contributing further to an ethics based in fragmented ontology. Participation, on the other hand, is the will motivated in response to love, or what Wesley would refer to as "holiness of heart and life." In a moral context, it is an act of gratitude rather than willing, understanding moral agents as those persons who are primarily the recipients of love, restored in the *imago Dei*, rather than as those who have willed themselves with the most resolve and vigor.

Of course, we are making a theological claim about the shape of the moral life. The shape is the receipt of God's love poured out by the Father to the Son in the Spirit, returned to the Father by the Son in the Power of the Spirit in an eternal and reciprocal exchange. As such, the shape of the moral life is the shape of the divine life, opened to creation for the possibility of participation. Wesley understood being restored in the image of God in three ways: the natural image, the political image, and the moral image. His sermon "The New Birth" accounts for God, and Wesley is clear at this point to affirm that this God is the three-one God creating humanity according to all three aspects of the divine image, but chiefly in God's moral image. "God is love," Wesley writes, "accordingly, man at his creation was full of love which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words and actions. God is full of justice, mercy and truth: so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator."¹¹ In this representative quotation from Wesley, we can see that he (1) understands the good of human interaction in relational terms of justice, love and mercy, (2) that such interaction can only be a result of the human being restored in the natural, moral and political image of God, and (3) that this restoration is to a three-one God whose life is characterized by justice, love and mercy.

Theodore Weber has argued cogently for a trinitarian image of a Wesleyan political language on this basis, suggesting that the theological notion of government is trinitarian. "The concept of the political image,"

¹⁰Augustine, *Confessions*, R. S. Pine-Coffin, trans. (New York, NY: Penguin Books), 10.8, 214.

¹¹Wesley, sermon "The New Creation."

he writes, “grounds government theologically in the doctrine of God, or more specifically, in the governing relationship of God to the world. . . . The theological foundation of government is the Trinity in being and action.”¹² While our attention is on the nature of human interaction and not government *per se*, it is helpful to see that government as a form of human interaction is to be established in terms of relationality among persons rather than the upholding of rights between them.¹³ In other words, if we are to understand theology in Wesley’s tradition, we do well to understand human interaction in terms of being restored in the natural, moral and political image of God by participation in God’s triune life, so that we live in right relation to God and neighbor—holiness of heart and life.

Such is the shape of the moral life, and such is the reconciling and relational gift that the Wesleyan tradition stands ready to offer to a modern ethics which cannot take us beyond mere toleration. Holiness is that which springs from participation in God’s triune life, reconciling us to God and to one another. John Webster has characterized holiness as “ingredient within human flourishing” precisely because holiness is a “mode of relation” in which God’s economic and salvific actions are those which establish personal and moral relation between God and creation, and among the creatures of creation.¹⁴ This is a life constituted relationally, a humanity which is truly fellow-humanity.

I now will suggest that John Wesley’s writings, including his 1787 sermon “The Duty of Constant Communion,” gives Wesleyan thinkers cause to understand the restoration of the *imago Dei*—and thus ethics—sacramentally, such that ethics might be oriented toward the eschatological *shalom* of Christ’s reign rather than the provisional rights theory of modernity in this time between the times. This claim can be made

¹²Theodore Weber, *Politics in the Order of Salvation: Transforming Wesleyan Political Ethics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 396.

¹³Weber has also argued that Wesley was not a “possessive individualist” in the line of liberal modern thought. Wesley distrusted the conclusions of the “great triumvirate” of Voltaire, Hume and Rousseau precisely because their political philosophy presupposed a natural state of unrelatedness. Wesley’s belief in God’s universal offer of prevenient grace was for him that which constituted the relationality of all persons, and was a primary motivation for his social ethics. See Weber, 346, ff.

¹⁴John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2003), 101.

because Wesley took seriously the doctrine of God as the establishment of goodness. Thus, as we suggest the ways in which the Wesleyan tradition can offer resources to ethics, we must first sketch the doctrine of God in a way that it bears witness to God's self-revelation, which also will open the possibilities of establishing ethics within the context of relational ontology. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer has written, "The Christian ethic speaks in a quite different sense of the reality which is the origin of good, for it speaks of the reality of God as the ultimate reality without and within everything that it is."¹⁵

Holiness as an Ethics of Reconciliation

In what we have seen so far, the Wesleyan theological tradition contains resources to offer healing to the fragmented ontology of modern ethics, which cannot have *shalom* as its *telos*, but leaves us with an ontology of fragmentation. Lest we think that the way forward is the wholesale dismissal of human rights or a moral theory of rights, we should stop to consider that the corpus of John Wesley's work is replete with admonitions for rights. At the same time, Wesley's own theory of rights was not what MacPherson has already helped us to see as possessive individualism. Rather than human rights serving the efficiency of market exchanges among autonomous and self-owned monads, Wesley's use of the term had a different foundation and *telos*. "Wesley's historical and organic social thinking on the one hand," Theodore Weber explains, "and his theology of stewardship on the other, put him into a different rights tradition from that of possessive individualism."¹⁶ Weber argues that Wesley's doctrine of stewardship in concert with elements in Wesley's thinking that imagines the history of rights as "the history of a community working out the conditions of common existence and mutual relationship" are together sufficient evidence to convince thinkers after Wesley that so-called human rights need not be predicated upon autonomy.¹⁷

Wesley's 1778 tract *Thoughts Upon Slavery* demonstrates not only his distaste for the practice of slavery, but also provides a thorough dismantling of the logic upon which the practice was based. Our attention to this tract is best focused on Wesley's dismissal of the legal precedent for slavery. "The grand plea [in favor of slavery] is, 'They are authorized by law.'

¹⁵Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995), 192.

¹⁶Weber, 348.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

But can law, human law, change the nature of things? Can it turn darkness into light, or evil into good? By no means. Notwithstanding ten thousand laws, right is right, and wrong is wrong still. There must still remain an essential difference between justice and injustice, cruelty and mercy. So that I still ask, Who can reconcile this treatment of the negroes, first and last, with either mercy or justice.”¹⁸

According to Wesley, inasmuch as the practice of slavery encroaches upon the autonomy of one person by another, there is a still more insidious root to the problem: it cuts against the fabric of mercy. “That slave-holding is utterly inconsistent with mercy is almost too plain to need a proof,” he continues. Though Wesley goes on to engage the military and economic arguments which were used to support the slave trade, the root of his objection lies in the fact that mercy and justice are not to be found in such a practice, and that the merciful treatment of one human person by another is the foundation of what Wesley terms “natural justice.” “I strike at the root of this complicated villainy,” he writes. “I absolutely deny all slave-holding to be inconsistent with any degree of even natural justice.”¹⁹

Wesley’s arguments against the slave trade were certainly concerned with maintaining one’s rights to freely live in one’s own country without the threat of unjust seizure or murder. But the larger context for his arguments against such a practice was that engaging in such practices robbed a person of the natural justice which has been provided by God to all human persons. The maintenance of such natural justice is a work of mercy, and to ignore such natural justice is not only to turn away from works of mercy, but also to irreparably mutilate the relationship between one human and another. The violation of natural justice extends to the unnatural arrangement of one human owning another, according to Wesley, altering what naturally would be a relationship governed by mercy. The moral violation Wesley sees in the slave trade is not merely in the impingement of one’s autonomy, but in the perversion of what one’s relationship ought to be to another human person. In this context, “natural rights” do not necessitate autonomy, but they do require justice and mercy to act as the measure of one’s relationship and intercourse with other persons. Natural justice is what has been authorized by God in

¹⁸John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, 33-34.

¹⁹Wesley, *ibid.*, 34-35.

regard to the treatment of other human persons and the establishment of relationship with them, and serves to reconcile neighbor to neighbor.²⁰

If the Lord's Supper is indeed the *chief* means of grace recommended by Wesley in the progress toward holiness or Christian perfection, and if the nature of holiness is that we are not only restored to God but also to our neighbors, it stands to reason that the practice of the Eucharist can be understood in moral terms, precisely for its ability to communicate the grace necessary for *shalom* to be present among human persons. Further, we can begin to see how the Wesleyan tradition can provide an important corrective to ethical thought by establishing an ontology of relationality and working within that ontology to heal and restore relationships. At the Lord's Table, we not only celebrate the sacrifice of Christ, but we are also reminded of who we are as members of Christ's body, particularly that we do not attend the table alone.

In his startlingly vivid sermon "The New Creation," an elderly Wesley marvels at the "strange scene...opened to our view" as we look in hopeful expectation toward the *eschaton*. In the eschatological vision Wesley develops, "jarring and destructive principles" will disappear in the same manner as briars, thistles, thorns, death, sorrow and crying, giving way to "an unmixed state of holiness and happiness."²¹ The apex of his vision is "a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, *and of all the creatures in him!*" Such a vision draws together creatures in relational reconciliation. Reconciled enjoyment, rather than detached toleration, is the eschatological *telos* of human relationships, according to Wesley.

From Wesley's writings we can sketch the logic undergirding this essay's thesis: (1) ethics are guided not by principle but by works of rela-

²⁰Dietrich Bonhoeffer's ethics contain a similar characteristic. Like Wesley, the morality of relationships for Bonhoeffer can be found the adherence to what has been authorized by God in regard to a particular relationship. Parents, for example, are authorized to care and provide for their children. They are authorized to discipline the child as well. Should provision, care, or discipline breach the boundaries of authorization, it is unacceptable abuse. Children, too, are authorized to make a claim upon their parents, and demand that a parent live within the requirements of their authorization. "Natural rights" are a gift of God, and that these rights are given by virtue of being children of God. In the absence of this theological rationale, the argument disintegrates. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995).

²¹John Wesley, "The New Creation." Emphasis added.

tional mercy, such that we live in right relation to God and to our neighbors, (2) the *telos* of human relationship is relational reconciliation and *shalom*, rather than detached toleration, and (3) eucharistic practice leads us on the path toward both of the previous ends, which are included in holiness.

We are prepared now to say that the Wesleyan tradition renders ethics intelligible by providing a divine referent, establishing human relationship within that referent and thus being capable of populating the moral space (which is necessarily relational) between persons. I conclude by emphasizing the third of these points.

Eucharistic Participation and the Shape of Ethics²²

Eucharistic participation opens the possibility of rendering ethics intelligible, and this participation is the same as the life of holiness. If the doctrine of the trinity opens the possibility of understanding holiness of heart and life in terms of participating in God's life, it is the sacraments which are a primary location of our participation in the divine life. The life of holiness is the life lived by participating in God's triune life, and in the Lord's Supper ethics is rendered intelligible by restoring the divine referent absent in modern ethics and by strengthening an ontology of relationality.

First, the broken body and spilled blood of Jesus Christ become for us a location of participation in the triune life of God, not as divine persons, but as sinful human persons in need of redemption. The wound in Jesus' side is not only that place from which God's life flows out, but also that place where Christ invites us to place our hand in his side and thus enter the divine life for the sake of our salvation. The broken body and spilled blood, remembered and celebrated in the Lord's Supper, become for us the place whereby God invites human persons to be lead closer toward holiness of heart and life.

The eucharistic liturgy of the United Methodist Church carries forward the theologic of eucharistic participation in God's triune life. The liturgy prays: "Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his

²²Due to the constraints of space, we will limit our discussion of the sacraments to the practice of holy communion. Baptism, however, can also be seen as a communal act of participation in the triune life of God.

blood.”²³ There is something of the trinitarian *missio* in this prayer as the church is gathered and sent by the Holy Spirit. The same animating Spirit which descended upon the Son at his baptism, propelling him into the Father’s mission, is the Spirit which now conceives the church as the body of Christ in the world and propels it into the Father’s mission. In the receiving of the bread and wine, the church joins by participation the triune life of God.

Further, the liturgy recognizes the relational reconciliation made possible in the celebration of the Eucharist. This prayer is for the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon *us*, so that “For the church, being present is about humans being fully present to each other and to God.”²⁴ To be a human being is “to be created in and for relationship with God and other human beings. The particular character of that being is defined and realized christologically and pneumatologically, by Christ the creator and the Holy Spirit, the one through whom the perfection of that creation is promised and from time to time realized.”²⁵ To be fully present to God and to other human persons is to become fully human. It is to embody the reconciliation and enjoyment of all creatures in Wesley’s eschatological vision. It is to be rooted into a network of relationality governed by mercy, such that holiness constitutes the shape of the moral life.

Persons who come to the sacramental celebration are persons who are necessarily in relationship with one another, and who, by virtue of their participation in the sacrament, affirm the goodness of their relationship to one another. They are those who gather around a common table and feast upon a common loaf and common cup. Thus, the sacraments are the place where radical individualism is most incoherent because the sacraments are not celebrated in isolation, practically or theologically. The sacraments are the celebration of the community gathered in the name of the Son by the power of the Spirit to the glory of the Father. Being so gathered, there is an eternal exchange of love which characterizes the Three-One God. Here “God’s love flourishes and people enter the communion of the triune God.”²⁶

²³United Methodist Hymnal, 14.

²⁴Brent D. Peterson, *Created to Worship: God’s Invitation to Become Fully Human* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2012), 179.

²⁵Gunton, 223.

²⁶Peterson, 17.

Holiness of heart and life, then, is a prescription for ethics and that which renders ethics intelligible as it recognizes that human persons have been created for right relationship with God and with one another. Sacramental participation is more than Christ being present to us, but also our being made present to Christ and to one another. This character of the Eucharist is not something that escaped John Wesley's attention, for to enjoy our fellow creatures also requires that we attend to the administration of Christ's body and blood, so that we might be redeemed for enjoyment and reconciliation. Wesley's eucharistic theology presupposes a relational fabric which is torn when relationships are distorted, as was the case in institutional slavery. It is at the Lord's table that we enter into the triune life, progress toward holiness of heart and life, and begin to live into the reality of being reconciled to God and to one another. Eucharistic participation embodies the relational ontology of humanity that the Wesleyan tradition can commend to late-modern ethics. It shows forth an ontology of relationality, unified by a divine, triune referent, not only acting in the memory of the garden and in the hope of the New Jerusalem, but embodying the *shalom* of holiness in a reconciliation to God and to one another.

ECCLESIAL INSTITUTIONS AS MEANS OF GRACE: A WESLEYAN VIEW OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE HOLY CHURCH

by

James E. Pedlar

The relationship between the “charismatic” and “institutional” aspects of the church is a significant issue in ecclesiological literature.¹ There is general agreement among ecclesiologists that the visible church, as it exists in history, has an institutional aspect, although some see the church’s institutionality in a completely negative light, while others believe it to be divinely ordained, even in its particulars. Likewise, everyone wants to affirm that the church is a creature of the Spirit, and that the life and health of the church depend upon Spirit’s gifts, the charisms, those diverse concrete manifestations of divine grace that are given to persons and bring an obligation to vocational service for the building up of the body of Christ. Thus, all agree that the church has both an institutional and a charismatic aspect, but how should we conceive of the relationship between the two?

This question is of great interest to those who are interested in the theology of reform and renewal, and in particular in the question of how we should understand the place of reform and renewal movements in the life of the church. Discussion of these “movements” is often framed around this question of the relationship between the charismatic and institutional aspects of the church, but there is considerable variation in the way the issue is addressed.² I will illustrate the breadth of the discus-

¹Portions of this paper are adapted from chapter II.2 of my doctoral dissertation, “A Theology of Ecclesial Charisms, with Special Reference to the Paulist Fathers and The Salvation Army” (Ph.D. diss., Toronto: University of St. Michael’s College, 2013).

²In my dissertation I propose a five-fold typology of views on the question of the relationship between the charismatic and the institutional. In addition to the two types I discuss below, I identify the following three: charismatic *more fundamental* than institutional (Boff, von Campenhausen), charismatic *in legitimate tension* with institutional (Rahner), and *charismatic as justification for separate institutions* (Cullmann). See *Ibid.*, chapter II.2.

sion by contrasting the two extreme positions before proposing what I believe to be a Wesleyan solution to the problem, drawing on the concept of “means of grace” as a way of understanding ecclesial institutions.

Two Extremes on the Spectrum of Views

Charismatic *Opposed* to Institutional. The first type of approach to this question is perhaps best encapsulated in Max Weber’s memorable phrase “the iron cage of bureaucracy.”³ Popular understandings of “charisma” have been heavily influenced by the work of this pioneering sociologist and the very sharp distinction he drew between charismatic and institutional authority. Weber, however, actually took his understanding of charisma from the earlier work of Lutheran legal scholar Rudolph Söhm whose investigation of early Christianity introduced the concept into modern scholarship.⁴ Söhm argued that the earliest Christians viewed their communities as drawn together and constituted by the charisms of the Spirit.⁵ Leadership, he claimed, was provided by charismatic figures and was not formalized into offices. Church offices were a later development, and Söhm viewed them as a failure and a retreat from the original charismatic organization of the church.⁶

Söhm’s interpretation of the early church had a profound influence in the early twentieth century, though it was not blindly accepted. Adolf von Harnack, for example, agreed that the primitive church was charismatic, but proposed that there had originally been non-charismatic leadership as well. He identified the charismatic leaders with itinerant preachers and prophets who exercised a universal ministry, and he suggested that local leaders, presbyters, bishops, and deacons, exercised their min-

³On this phrase see Talcott Parsons’s introduction to Max Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Florence, KY: Routledge, 2001), xvii–xviii.

⁴Rudolf Söhm, *Kirchenrecht* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1892).

⁵Therefore, he argued, they understood the church to be a spiritual entity which was beyond all human law. The contrast here is between the church constituted by the consent of the members in a democratic “free association” sense and the church as constituted by the charismatic action of the Spirit. Enrique Nardoni, “Charism in the Early Church Since Rudolph Sohm: An Ecumenical Challenge,” *Theological Studies* 53, no. 4 (1992): 647.

⁶*Ibid.*: 648.

istry on the basis of a different kind of charism.⁷ In the final analysis, however, Harnack followed the same line of thinking as Söhm in proposing that the emerging institutional church was hostile to the charismatic element, and eventually succeeded in suppressing it.⁸

This type of “oppositional” perspective on institution and charism continues to circulate at a popular level, although it is difficult to find any significant scholarly work today which continues to oppose institution and charism in principle.⁹ Vestiges of this view can be seen in the “restorationist” impulse that is present in some evangelical traditions, such as classical Pentecostals who historically resisted the label “denomination,” in part because they were attempting to avoid what they believed to be the corruption of “institutional” churches.¹⁰ Contemporary North American culture is highly sceptical concerning institutions of any kind, and therefore many people in this context, including most Christians (and perhaps *especially* evangelicals), assume that institutions are life-

⁷Adolf von Harnack, *The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries*, ed. H. D. A. Major, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: Williams & Norgate, 1910), 241–242. However, according to Harnack, these local authorities existed in varying combinations and permutations. See Nardoni, “Charism in the Early Church Since Rudolph Sohm,” 648–649.

⁸This is evident in Harnack’s definition of “Catholicism” as the point in the church’s development when “the apostles, prophets, and charismatic lay teachers ceased and their place was taken by the norm of the apostolic doctrine, the norm of the apostolic canon of Scripture, and subjection to the authority of the apostolic episcopal office.” Harnack, *The Constitution and Law*, 245; Nardoni, “Charism in the Early Church Since Rudolph Sohm,” 648–649. As is well known, Harnack saw the features of Catholicism as he defined it as “foreshadowed as early as the first century and in the writings of the New Testament,” but maintained that “the Catholic elements did not constitute the essence of primitive Christianity,” and he maintained that “Catholicism” did not really take hold until the beginning of the third century. Harnack, *The Constitution and Law*, 253 and n.1.

⁹Even mainstream Pentecostal theology, where one might expect to find such affirmations, has moved beyond an oppositional perspective, as seen in the reports of the Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue. See the overview in Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Church as Charismatic Fellowship: Ecclesiological Reflections from the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18 (2001): 100–121.

¹⁰See Wolfgang Vondy, “Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Historical and Theological Contribution,” in *Denomination: Assessing an Ecclesiological Category*, Ecclesiological Investigations 11 (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 100–116.

draining and oppressive and pose a great threat to the work of the Spirit. The problem with this perspective is that it views the church's institutional character as resulting from a "fall" from a primitive state of charismatic purity. As I will argue shortly, however, the church, if it is to endure through time as a concrete human community, must have an institutional aspect.

Charismatic and Institutional as Complementary. At the other end of the spectrum is an approach that proposes that the charismatic and the institutional aspects of the church should be taken as complementary. The teaching on charisms in the documents of Vatican II presents such an approach, speaking of the "hierarchic and charismatic" gifts through which the Spirit directs and equips the church.¹¹ A fundamental harmony between the charismatic and hierarchical (or institutional) gifts is presupposed in this perspective. The hierarchy, which has the gift of oversight, nevertheless submits to the working of the Spirit by endorsing and approving the charismatic gifts of the people.¹² Shortly after the council, Gabriel Murphy, a Roman Catholic brother, completed a study of the theology of charisms, which included a chapter summarizing the use of the term at Vatican II. His summary of *Lumen Gentium's* teaching on charisms stresses how the church is aided by "two forms of assistance," hierarchical and charismatic gifts, both of which come from the Spirit. The two kinds of gifts cannot be essentially divided or separated, but should rather be conceived of as "overlapping" and permeating each other.¹³

The end result of this approach can be seen in some of Pope Benedict XVI's thinking on this subject. He attempts to *fuse* charism and institution via an argument concerning the sacramentality of the church. Writing as Cardinal Ratzinger, he rejects this institutional versus charismatic discussion altogether, arguing instead that the church's official ministry is based on the sacrament of orders, and therefore, by its very nature,

¹¹*Lumen Gentium*, §4, in Austin P. Flannery, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, New Revised Edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 352.

¹²*Lumen Gentium* §45, *Ibid.*, 405.

¹³Gabriel Murphy, *Charisms and Church Renewal* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1965), 123, 125.

transcends the sociological category of “institution.”¹⁴ The church itself, including what others would term its “institutions,” is characterized as a charismatic entity which exists by divine right.¹⁵ This approach therefore overcomes the opposition between charism and institution, but creates another problem by fusing the two together so closely that the distinction between charism and institution is lost.

Ecclesial Institutions as Means of Grace

The Church is Necessarily Institutional. Having contrasted these two extreme approaches to this question, I propose what I believe is a Wesleyan solution to the problem, one which avoids the pitfalls of either extreme by drawing on Wesley’s concept of the “means of grace.” I begin with the claim that the church is *necessarily institutional*.

There is no agreed-upon definition of “institution,” either in sociological or theological discourse. The literature on the relationship between the charismatic and the institutional aspects of the church reflects this challenge, with authors often using the terms “institution” and “institutionalization” without offering any definition whatsoever.¹⁶ My position is that an institution is simply a stable pattern of social interaction. Institutions, therefore, are best conceived as existing on a continuum which includes everything from a recurring encounter between two persons to a large organization such as the United Nations. In taking this position I am following the line of argument in Miroslav Volf’s *After Our*

¹⁴To speak of the church’s ministry as an institution implies, in Ratzinger’s view, that ministry is something which the church “can dispose of herself” and “can be determined of her own imitative,” views which are clearly inadequate in light of the ministry’s sacramental character. Joseph Ratzinger, “The Ecclesial Movements: A Theological Reflection on Their Place in the Church,” in *Movements in the Church: Proceedings of the World Congress of the Ecclesial Movements, Rome, 27-29 May, 1998*, Laity Today (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1999), 25–26.

¹⁵He prefers therefore to discuss “movements” in the church, like the Franciscans, under the category of the church’s universal apostolicity. *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁶For example, the influential work of Rahner, Suenens, and Sullivan on this subject all proceeds on an assumed understanding of “institution.” See Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, trans. W. J. O’Hara (Freiburg: Herder, 1964); Léon Joseph Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); Francis A. Sullivan, *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal: A Biblical and Theological Study* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1982).

Likeness, which in turn draws on the sociological theories of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann.¹⁷

Institutions need not be “formal” organizations with explicitly stated objectives, rules, and officers, although such organizations certainly are institutions. Informal patterns of social interaction are also a kind of institution. In any given social relationship, it is inevitable that, over time, stable patterns will develop, and those stable patterns are basic forms of social institutions. This means that there is no non-institutional space in which a human person can exist.¹⁸

I adopt this approach for two reasons. First, definitions which make such features as formal laws and officers essential to institutionality end up viewing institutions primarily through the lenses of “power” and “control.” That is, that they tend to view all institutions as oppressive bureaucracies which inhibit the freedom of autonomous individuals.¹⁹ Without

¹⁷Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 234–245. Peter L. Berger and Thomas. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1967), 47–67. See also the definition provided by James Gustafson: “An institution is a relatively persistent pattern of action or relationships in human society.” *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: The Church as a Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 30.

¹⁸Even further, all our experiences are interpreted and understood through the concepts, practices, and symbols we appropriate from our various institutional contexts, including ecclesial institutions. This approach comports well with George Lindbeck’s cultural-linguistic approach to religion, which draws in part on the work of Berger and Luckmann. In Lindbeck’s argument, “inner experience” is derived from a cultural-linguistic framework regarding ultimate concerns (his understanding of a religion), although he further clarifies that a religion (as a cultural-linguistic framework) and religious experience exist in a dialectical relationship. That is, it is not simply that religion shapes experience in a unilateral way. See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1984), 32–41. Although Lindbeck does not use “institution” as a primary category in his account, the definition of institutions which I am employing (stable structures of social practice) is broad enough to include everything which Lindbeck includes in his cultural-linguistic category. In other words, a particular religion has an inescapably institutional character.

¹⁹For example, Hasenhüttl defines institutions as follows: “An institution is a changeable, but permanent product of purposive social role behaviour which subjects the individual to obligations, gives him formal authority and possesses legal sanctions.” Gotthold Hasenhüttl, “The Church as Institution,” in *The Church as Institution*, Concilium: Religion in the Seventies (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974), 15.

discounting the significant potential for coercion and control which exists in many institutions, I would argue that the tendency to influence by coercion and control is not an essential feature of *all* institutions. For example, a small group that meets in someone's home is a kind of institution, and as such it has a formative influence over its members, though its influence is not achieved through coercion.²⁰

The second reason I prefer to define institutions simply as stable patterns of social interaction is because overly formalized understandings of institutions also give support to the idea that "movements" in the church are not institutions because their structures are often informal. When "movements" are considered "non-institutional," the relationship between reform movements and established church structures is framed in an overly oppositional manner. Under the definition I prefer, "movements" in the church are a type of institution. They are less institutionalized than established church structures, but they are not free of institutionalization. In fact, from the perspective of "control," sometimes informal structures can be *more* dangerous than formal structures because a particular personality can exert tremendous influence on people, often without being subject to much oversight and accountability.

If institutions are stable patterns of social interaction, then the church is necessarily institutional because the church exists as a concrete human community which endures through time, and as a community which endures through time it inevitably will develop stable patterns of social interaction. Stable patterns of Christian fellowship, worship, ministry, sacraments, and the proclamation of the Word are all institutions which are the result of our patterned social interaction and yet also confront us as an external reality.²¹ To be clear, I am not saying that the

²⁰Volf frames the issue this way: "The members of the church do not stand over against the church as an institution; rather, their own actions and relations are the institution church. Although the institutional church is not their "product," but rather is a "product" of the Spirit, the church does not stand over against them as a kind of objectified, alien entity, but rather is the manner in which they relate and behave toward one another." Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 241. I think Volf's overall direction here is correct, although he understates the objective character of institutions, I believe, in reaction to typical Protestant anti-institutionalism.

²¹This point is brought out well by Lindbeck in his comparison of religion to a cultural-linguistic system: "To become a Christian involves learning the story of Israel and of Jesus well enough to interpret and experience oneself and one's world in its terms. A religion is above all an external word, a *verbum externum*, that molds and shapes the self and its world, rather than an expression or thematization of a pre-existing self or of pre-conceptual experience." Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 34.

proclamation of the Word, for example, is *merely* a pattern of social interaction. While it is not *merely* a human institution, it *is* a human institution. It is one of a variety of social institutions that we find in the church, through which the Spirit graciously acts and through which God's people responds to God's gracious presence. I am arguing, in other words, that ecclesial institutions have a sacramental character. However, the Wesleyan understanding of sacraments as "means of grace" enables us to avoid the problem of "fusing" charism and institution, which I identified as problematic in Ratzinger's sacramental understanding of ecclesial institutions.

The Wesleyan Understanding of "Means of Grace." John Wesley employed the theological category "means of grace" as his preferred way of talking about the sacraments.²² It would be fair to say that Wesley viewed the Lord's Supper as the preeminent means of grace, speaking of it as "the grand channel whereby the grace of his Spirit was conveyed to the souls of all the children of God."²³ Wesley's best-known definition of "means of grace" seems particularly well-suited to a discussion of the dominical sacraments:

By "means of grace" I understand outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end—to be the *ordinary* channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.²⁴

Wesley's understanding of the means of grace, however, was much broader than the two dominical sacraments. In various references throughout his works he lists more than fifteen different means of grace. Although it does not come from Wesley's own hand, the definition of means of grace offered by Henry Knight does justice to Wesley's use of

²²He did not invent the term, but borrowed it from earlier Anglican sources. Outler's introduction to Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," notes that the phrase appears in "The General Thanksgiving" (Morning Prayer) in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, and in the BCP *Catechism*: "What do you mean by this word Sacrament? I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given to use by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive this grace, and a pledge to assure us thereof." *The Book of Common Prayer* (Toronto: Anglican Book, 1962), 15; 550; Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 377.

²³Sermon 26, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount – VI," §III.11, in Outler, *Works*, 1:584–585.

²⁴Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," §II.1, *Ibid.*, 1:381.

the term: "Means of grace are means through which persons experience and respond to the loving presence of God."²⁵ While Wesley has not left us with a complete list of the means of grace in one place, following Knight, we can synthesize what Wesley has said in various places and categorize the means of grace under three headings: "general means," "instituted means," and "prudential means."²⁶

"General" means are those which ought to characterize every aspect of the Christian life, such as taking up our cross and keeping the commandments. These means can be contrasted with particular means, more specific practices such as prayer and the Lord's Supper.²⁷ The other two categories, "instituted" and "prudential," are both types of "particular" means. When Wesley speaks of "instituted" means he is referring to those means which have been appointed by God for the church in all times and places, including prayer, the Word of God (read, heard, proclaimed, meditated upon), the Lord's Supper, fasting, and "Christian conference," which is an idea to which I will return in a moment.²⁸ "Prudential means," on the other hand, are specific means which vary according to time and place, and may develop in response to the particular needs and challenges that the church is facing at any given moment.²⁹ Prudential means, for Wesley, included such things as particular rules for holy living, the Methodist class and band meetings, prayer meetings and covenant services.³⁰

Nearly all of the instituted and prudential means Wesley identifies would be considered "ecclesial institutions," according to my definition.

²⁵Henry H. Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace*, *Pietist and Wesleyan Studies* 3 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 2.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 5.

²⁷"The Doctrinal Minutes, 1749," Conversation the Second, Bristol, August 2, 1745, §50, in Henry D. Rack, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 791; Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life*, 3; Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 257.

²⁸"The 'Large' Minutes," June 29, 1744, §§40.1-40.5, in Rack, *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:855-857.

²⁹Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life*, 3; Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 266.

³⁰"The 'Large' Minutes," June 29, 1744, §§40.6, Rack, *The Works of John Wesley*, 10:858.

Three in particular are quite obviously institutional: “Christian conference,” by which he means rightly ordered conversation among believers, and class and band meetings, which formed the organizational core of the Methodist revival. As a means of grace in general, “Christian conference” could take a wide variety of forms, but within Methodism, “conference” came to take on a particular meaning as an annual gathering of Wesley and selected Methodist leaders during which they would discuss key matters of doctrine, discipline, and practice, dealing with controversial questions and attempting to clarify misunderstandings of their positions.³¹ The Annual Conference went on to become the standard ruling body in Methodist polity. What is often forgotten is that such a Conference was envisioned by Wesley not merely as a legislative body, but as a means of grace. Christian believers, gathered in the presence of God, seeking to rightly order their conversation before him, could expect to “experience and respond to the loving presence God.”³² Thus Conference, a characteristically institutional practice, was conceived as means of grace by Wesley.

The class and band meetings are two further examples of Methodist “institutions” which were considered means of grace by Wesley. Although both types of meeting developed somewhat organically in the context of the revival, once they were established Wesley provided clear structures for their organization and leadership. The class leaders were instructed to maintain contact with their members in order to receive their collection for the poor, inquire after their spiritual state, and offer advice, correction, comfort, or exhortation as appropriate. They were then to report back to the leaders of the Society regarding the collection and informing them of those who were sick and those who refused correction.³³ The smaller and more selective band meetings, organized by age, sex, and marital status, focused on pursuing spiritual progress through mutual accountability.³⁴ This system of classes and bands is familiar territory to students of Methodism, but what is sometimes overlooked is that Wesley

³¹On the origins of the Methodist Conference, see the extensive Introduction to *Ibid.*, 10:1–109.

³²Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life*, 2.

³³See “The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies,” §3, in Rupert E. Davies, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 9 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 70.

³⁴“Rules of the Band Societies” (December 25, 1739), and “Directions Given to the Band Societies” (December 25, 1744) in *Ibid.*, 9:77–79.

viewed the classes and bands as prudential means of grace. And yet, as is abundantly clear, these means of grace were highly organized, and, I would say, highly *institutional*. They had structures, rules, formal leaders, and standardized procedures that were to be followed across the Methodist movement.

These institutional structures were greatly used by God not only to bring people to saving faith, but also to cultivate and correct the exercise of spiritual gifts in the context of Christian community. Thus, they were an *institutional means of charismatic grace*. That is not to say that Wesley viewed such institutions as being of equal importance to the Lord's Supper. Rather, it is to say that these stable patterns of social interaction (to use my terminology) were used by God as means for his people to experience and respond to his gracious presence. The institution was not the enemy of the Spirit but the instrument of the Spirit.

Wesley's View Contrasted with "Enthusiasm" and "Formalism"

Wesley's position is further clarified when we consider it in contrast with his two main theological opponents on this issue: the *enthusiasts* and the *formalists*.³⁵ An "enthusiast," in the particular eighteenth-century meaning of the term, is a person who believes they have direct, unmediated, and infallible access to the Spirit of God, without recourse to correction by scripture, tradition, or the Christian community.³⁶ The enthusiast sees the means of grace as unnecessary on the grounds that grace is given to

³⁵For a succinct summary of Wesley's view of the means of grace as distinguished from formalism and enthusiasm, see Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life*, 11–12.

³⁶See John Locke's classic description of enthusiasts as those who have "flattered themselves with a persuasion of an immediate intercourse with the Deity, and frequent communications with the divine spirit." *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Thomas Basset, 1690), §IV.19.5 (since this work is available in numerous editions I have simply cited the section number rather than the page number). Wesley himself, of course, was often charged with being an enthusiast, although he denied the charge, most notably in Sermon 37, "The Nature of Enthusiasm," wherein he attempts identify "true enthusiasts" as those who either (a) presume that they are Christians when they are not, (b) presume they have gifts of the Spirit when they do not, or, most relevant to my argument in this paper, (c) presume to attain the ends without the means. See Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 44–60.

the individual believer immediately, apart from all means. Wesley came into direct conflict with a particular brand of enthusiasm in the “quietism” or “stillness” teaching of the English Moravians, some of whom were arguing against the use of *all* means on the ground that Christ himself “is the only means of grace.”³⁷

Wesley responded to this enthusiastic perspective by arguing that, although God could, indeed, work outside of any means should he choose to do so, we have no reason to expect that he *will* do so when he has appointed his ordinary channels of grace and made them readily available to us.³⁸ In his *Cautions and Directions Given to the Greatest Professors in The Methodist Societies* he writes, “One general inlet to enthusiasm is the expecting the end without the means—the expecting knowledge, for instance, without searching the Scripture and consulting the children of God.”³⁹ Wesley’s concern, of course, is that the enthusiasts are opening themselves to private revelations without the normative correction that comes through the means of grace, especially those means which, as Knight has noted, keep us focused on the particular identity of God—Scripture and the Lord’s Supper.⁴⁰ Thus, Wesley clearly rejects the enthusiast’s claim that no means are necessary.

On the other side, the formalist is one who sees the means as possessing some sort of inherent power, as if they “distributed” God’s grace simply by the work being done. Such a position would be typical of some of Wesley’s Anglican contemporaries, whose view of sacraments tended in the direction of Roman Catholicism. The distinction between *God’s grace* and the *means* is lost. The formalist runs the risk of presuming upon

³⁷Wesley references this objection in Sermon 16, “The Means of Grace,” §II.4, and as Outler’s note (n. 36) on this passage indicates, this is very similar to a phrase of the Moravian leader Molther, noted in Wesley’s *Journal*, April 25, 1740. Outler, *Works*, 1:382. Cf. Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life*, 12; Kenneth J. Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 110–114.

³⁸“God *can* give the end without any means at all; but you have no reason to think he *will*.” Sermon 37, §39, Outler, *Works*, 2:59.

³⁹In Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 300. See also Sermon 37, “The Nature of Enthusiasm,” §27, Outler, *Works*, 2:56.

⁴⁰Cf. Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life*, 12.

God's grace rather than seeking the living presence of the sovereign Lord through these means.⁴¹

While encouraging the constant use of the means of grace, Wesley was careful to offer his people precautions against falling into "formal religion," as can be seen, for example, in the instructions he gives at the end of his sermon "The Means of Grace." First, he suggests that one should "always retain a lively sense that God is above all means."⁴² In other words, do not lose the distinction between the means and God, and do not presume upon God's grace. Secondly, when using any of the means, one must always remember that "there is no *power* in this. It is in itself a poor, dead, empty thing: separate from God, it is a dry leaf, a shadow."⁴³ The means are not effective simply because the work has been done. Thirdly, "in using all the means, seek God alone," and "use all means *as means*," not as if they were an end in themselves.⁴⁴ The end of the means of grace is the transformation of the human person by the love of God in Christ, such that, by the Spirit, she is enabled to live a life of holy love for God and neighbour. The means must always be subordinate to that end.

Ecclesial Institutions as Means of Grace

Relating all of this back to the debate about the relationship between the institutional and charismatic dimensions of the church, I suggest that the "charismatic *opposed to* institutional" is a kind of "enthusiasm." Likewise, the "charismatic *complementary to* institutional" view is a kind of "formalism." The enthusiast is one who believes they can have the charismatic life of the Spirit apart from the institutional church, and the formalist is one who fuses charism and institution in such a way that they run the risk of presuming upon God's grace. A Wesleyan solution to this problem of the relationship between "the charismatic and the institutional" aspects of the church is to propose that *ecclesial institutions are means of grace*—they are

⁴¹Strangely enough, as Knight notes, this presumption can actually create a sense of distance between the person and God's presence since they might presume that they have communed with God simply by making use of the means, thereby being deluded by "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5). Ibid., 11.

⁴²Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," §V.4, Outler, *Works*, 1:395.

⁴³Ibid., 1:§V.4, 396.

⁴⁴Ibid.

frail instruments, having no power in and of themselves, and yet they are used by God as his means whereby his people can experience and respond to his gracious presence in their midst.

Therefore, against an enthusiastic interpretation, ecclesial institutions are not inherently threatening to spiritual life and freedom. The charismatic and the institutional are not opposed to one another. It is through various stable patterns of social interaction among believers that we encounter the gospel, are nurtured in the faith, fellowship with one another, and act in the world. Through ecclesial institutions we worship the Triune God and receive, cultivate, and exercise the charisms of the Spirit. All of these things take place in a social environment that exists concretely in time and therefore will always be marked by patterns of institutionalization.

It is true church history has often seen conflict between movements of renewal and leaders in established churches. But these are not simply clashes between “the charismatic” and “the institutional,” as if those are two opposing forces at work in the church. The tensions which often exist in these situations are tensions *between different kinds of institutions*, both of which are (at least potentially) means of grace. Methodism is a case-in-point. Many people might identify the early Methodist as a “charismatic movement.” Yet it was *highly institutional*, as my discussion of conferences, classes, and bands should have demonstrated, and those institutional features were a key aspect of its success.⁴⁵

The Methodists had many conflicts with the established Church of England, which was a very different type of ecclesial institution. Nevertheless, Wesley insisted that his Methodist people could still find the most important means of grace in the established church, and he resisted separation from the Church of England. The conflict between Methodism and the Church of England, therefore, cannot be explained as a conflict between the charismatic and the institutional, but should rather be seen as a conflict between two types of ecclesial institutions.

At the same time, against a formalist view, this Wesleyan solution that I am proposing insists that ecclesial institutions are not automatically effective means of grace. Ecclesial institutions are certainly open to abuse

⁴⁵As Howard Snyder states, “Without the class meeting, the scattered fires of renewal would have burned out long before the movement was able to make a deep impact on the nation.” Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 57.

and distortion, and much of the conflict that arises between reform movements and established churches is because of abuse and distortion on both sides of the conflict. Therefore, the church cannot presume upon the Spirit's blessing, and my claim that ecclesial institutions are means of grace cannot be taken as a licence for ecclesiastical triumphalism. Just as one might "drink judgment" in the Eucharist (1 Cor. 11), so the Spirit may carry divine judgment through other ecclesial institutions, or indeed, might even abandon a particular ecclesial institution in judgment, as the glory of the Lord departed from the Temple in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. 10-11).

Likewise we must be sure to distinguish between institution and charism, lest we fail to honor the Spirit's sovereignty (1 Cor. 12:11). However, the abuses and distortions found in ecclesial institutions do not indicate that institutions themselves are inherently opposed to the Spirit. The church's institutional character is not indicative of a primitive "fall" from an earlier "charismatic" state, but rather is an essential part of the church's constitution as a human community.⁴⁶ Thus, in spite of the frailty of ecclesial institutions, they are the means through which the Spirit graciously acts, and through which God's people experience and respond to his loving presence.

⁴⁶Some important ecumenical work in the early 1960s on this topic dispelled the myth of a primitive "fall" from charismatic perfection. See Hans Dombois, "The Church as Koinonia and Institution," in *Institutionalism and Church Unity*, ed. Nils Ehrenstrom and Walter G. Muelder (New York: Association Press, 1963), 120; R. P. C. Hanson, "Institutions in the Early Church," in *Institutionalism and Church Unity*, ed. Nils Ehrenstrom and Walter G. Muelder (New York: Association Press, 1963), 96-97; Berndt Gustafson, "Types of Religious Institutionalization," in *Institutionalism and Church Unity*, ed. Nils Ehrenstrom and Walter G. Muelder (New York: Association Press, 1963), 123. Although I take issue with his identification of "Jewish Christianity" with the institutional church and "Gentile Christianity" with the "spiritual" church, J. L. Leuba's earlier work nevertheless affirms the essential institutionality of the church, and stands behind some of the essays noted above. See Jean-Louis Leuba, *New Testament Pattern: An Exegetical Inquiry into the "Catholic" and "Protestant" Dualism*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutter, 1953), 93-126.

FROM CAUSALITY TO RELATIONALITY: TOWARD A WESLEYAN THEOLOGY OF *CONCURSUS*

by

Joshua D. Reichard

Similar to perennial philosophical debates on free will versus determinism, theological questions persist concerning the freedom of human beings to act in accordance with God's will. Debates between Calvinists and Arminians, theological determinists and free-will theists remain contentious and unresolved. While John Wesley attempted a solution to the problem of free will with his doctrine of prevenient grace, his attempt was seen as an overemphasis on human volition to the theological determinists and an under emphasis on human responsibility to libertarian free-will theists. The ways in which God and humanity interact, in light of both philosophical and scientific understanding of the natural world and theological conceptions of God's character, remain difficult to explain in universally acceptable terms.

This article represents the framing of this debate in terms of *concur-sus*, the concurrent action of two or more causes that lead to a particular effect. In the case of theological concursus, the two primary factors in question are human and divine actions. Our goal is to frame Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace as concursus in contemporary philosophical terms. Moreover, insofar as Christian perfection is Wesley's most distinctive but most often misunderstood teaching,¹ a theology of concursus can help rationalize, clarify, and communicate just what Wesleyans mean when they talk about prevenient grace or the sanctification of the human will.

Three historical perspectives on concursus documented by Bernard Boedder² are surveyed and evaluated here in light of Wesley's doctrine of

¹Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 51.

²Bernard Boedder, *Natural Theology* (New York: Longman's Green and Company, 1902). I acknowledge that Boedder was not a Wesleyan, but he provides one of the more comprehensive surveys of the historical models for concursus.

prevenient grace. Finally, contemporary pentecostal, process-relational, and scientific perspectives are synthesized to formulate a direction for a Wesleyan theology of concursus that affirms “empowered but uncoerced” participation in God’s loving interaction with humanity.³ The result, it is hoped, will contribute to the ongoing development of a philosophically and scientifically informed Wesleyan theology.

Three Philosophic Options

1. Prior Concursus: God Acts through Humans by Causation. The theory of prior *concursus* states that when apparently free creatures act, they act only as secondary causes because their existence is grounded in the first cause, which is God. Augustine believed that before the fall it was possible for humanity to be sinless, but the grace of God was necessary (*adjutorium sine qua non*). Augustine argued that after the fall, the grace of God or “concurrence” aids humanity (*adjutorium qua*) and humanity must cooperate with that aid. Further, Augustine affirms the general cooperation of God as the primary cause and the activities of humans as secondary causes.⁴ According to prior concursus, “God concurs with [God’s] creatures in action as the first cause, whilst creatures are the [secondary] cause.”⁵ For Augustine, human actions simply proceed from the primary action of God.

Influenced by Augustine’s notion of general concursus, Thomas Aquinas (1125-1275) uses the term *operatio* to denote divine cooperation with the actions of finite beings. Aquinas asserted that God moves creatures to action; that is, human action is exercised inasmuch as God directs those actions. Aquinas maintained that God directs the operation of the created order; therefore, God is the cause of the actions of every agent.

Aquinas also argued for the dependence of finite activities upon the action of God insofar as God’s influence upon the activity of humans is a motion or application exercised upon the faculties of humans; therefore, God “operates in their operation” and creatures act in virtue of divine

³Barry L. Callen, “John Wesley and Relational Theology,” in *Relational Theology: A Contemporary Introduction*, eds. Brint Montgomery, Thomas J. Oord, Karen Strand Winslow (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 7-10.

⁴Dagobert Runes, “Concurrence and Concursus,” *The Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Citadel Press, 2001), 111.

⁵Boedder, *Natural Theology*, §47.

power.⁶ The understanding of concursus postulated by Aquinas affirms concursus *praeivus* as cooperation with God that co-produces a free act of the human being and casually determines such an act as a *praemotio physica*. Accordingly, God applies predetermination to the otherwise indifferent will of the human being. This Thomistic view consists of the notion that the will of the human being is predetermined by God physically and *ad unum* before self-determination. Aquinas stated that “the first cause exerts the strongest influence upon the effect, that influence is nevertheless determined and specified by the proximate cause.” Therefore, according to prior concursus, God acts through creaturely action.

Further, in prior concursus, the operation of the human will is an essential part of the created order, apart from which it would be impossible for human beings to act in accordance with their own will. God causes activity at the “moment when the [human] operates, not as a divine operation, but as an operation natural to a finite faculty.” The human will is the secondary cause of the action and God decrees simultaneous concurrence with the action.⁷ When God wills the action of finite human beings, the human will is the proximate cause of “the same action which is attributed to God as its first cause.”⁸ The action of the creature is dependent on God not only mediately but immediately as well, and not only because God is the source for human existence but because God constitutes the reality of the human being. Thus, in the tradition of Augustine and Aquinas the action of God is exercised in the action of the creature.

2. Permissive Concursus: God Grants the Use of Human Will.

The theory of permissive concursus states that God voluntarily permits human beings to exercise their will. This is a slight variation of prior concursus with reference to the Thomistic dictum “*omnia agunt in virtute ipsius*”; that is, every being that acts is in the exercise of its action dependent upon an influence proceeding from Godself, and thus God is the cause of all actions of active human beings. However, the foundational notion of prior concursus from Aquinas suggests that God grants permission for free creatures to act rather than simply viewing creatures as secondary causes preceding from God as the first cause. Therefore, when God concurs, God grants application of free will and does not suppress it.

⁶Boedder, *Natural Theology*, §47.

⁷Ibid, §47.

⁸Ibid, §47.

Ultimately, the action proceeds from God and not the creature alone by virtue of God's permission.

Further, permissive concursus suggests two characteristics of a morally free faculty: the use of liberty and the act of choosing. Accordingly, the free act of the human being can depend on both God and self immediately for action. Boedder states that "God, willing the exercise of freedom at the moment when it is exercised, implicitly wills that there be a choice made by the creature."⁹ In other words, God grants the actual use of creaturely freedom. God grants the action of choice without making a firm determination. An *actus physicus* was to Boedder "the immediate effect both of God willing the use of the free will and of the creature having this use actually under God"; in the *actus physicus*, free creatures can accept or refuse, by means of volition or nolition, options in relation to moral law and God thereby approves or disapproves of decision-making. Thus, God may will to allow or not to impede the decision-making of human beings.¹⁰

3. Conferred Concursus: God Orients Human Will to Exercise Freedom. The theory of conferred concursus consists of the notion that God orients the human will to exercise its own freedom to act, but not necessarily to will. Conferred concursus was defined by Joseph Pohle as *concursus collatus* or *concursus exhibitus*: the "actual bestowal of divine help for the performance of a specific act which the will freely posits." God physically agrees to perform the same act the human being has chosen. According to Pohle, the self-determination of free will "precedes the divine causality as a condition precedes that which it conditions; not, however, as a cause precedes its effect."¹¹ Therefore, *concursus collatus* must be a simultaneous act, but an act which arises in the preparatory conditions of God's presence and the fundamental reality of the freedom of the human will.

Unlike prior concursus, the theory of conferred concursus states that the free will to act arises from the conditioning influence of God's presence already at work in the conditions from which the action arises. In conferred concursus, while the will may arise in the creature, the will is

⁹Ibid, §47.

¹⁰Ibid, §47.

¹¹Joseph Pohle, *Actual Grace: A Dogmatic Treatise* (Toronto: W. E. Blake and Sons, 1919), 74.

conditioned and oriented by God before the final action of the creature occurs. God is “present” in the action. In the case of conferred concursus, God is understood as prompting or influencing the human will to act but God does not necessarily act directly through the human subject. Thus, God is not considered merely a first cause working through secondary causes. Instead, God prompts the human being and orients the will of the human being to action. God is part of the interrelationality of conditions from which human actions arise, but God does not immediately determine the action of the human being.

Prevenient Grace as Concursus

In summary, the theory of prior concursus states that because God is the first cause and all other causes are subject to God, it is truly God acting through seemingly free creatures, not the creatures themselves; that is, the will is not functional unless God regulates particular decisions. Second, the theory of permissive concursus states that God grants human beings the use of free will; that is, God wills the will of the creatures. Finally, the theory of conferred concursus states that God orients, or relationally influences, the human will to make free, albeit enabled or influenced, decisions. Of these three options, conferred concursus is perhaps the most compatible with Wesley’s doctrine of prevenient grace.

Classical Arminians have affirmed the notion that human beings have the capacity to repent or desire to repent apart from God’s specific, immediate, supernatural determination. In simple terms, God does not act on behalf of human beings; there is some real action on the part of the human being as well. Arminius defended “synergism” (belief in human-divine cooperation in salvation) against “monergism” (belief that God is the all-determining reality in salvation which excludes human participation).¹² In response, some Calvinists argue that Arminianism is semi-Pelagian; that is, that any such synergy between the human and divine will elevates the human will higher than is deserved in light of the reality of human sin.¹³

However, Roger Olson defends the historic Arminian position, arguing that it is not “devoted to free will out of any humanistic or Enlighten-

¹²Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 2. See Barry L. Callen, “Soteriological Synergism and Its Surrounding Seductions” in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (46:2, 2011).

¹³Ibid, 6.

ment motive or optimistic anthropology.”¹⁴ As such, John Wesley was perhaps the most influential advocate for Arminian soteriology. Wesley agreed to a large extent with Arminian theology, with the exception of Wesley’s views on atonement, the possibility of apostasy, and Wesley’s own doctrine of Christian perfection. In some instances, Wesleyan Arminianism was set in contrast with classical Arminianism because of Wesley’s contributions to the formulation of the doctrine of prevenient grace.

While John Wesley strongly affirmed Arminian theology, the notion of prevenient grace indicates some common ground between Arminianism and Calvinism.¹⁵ Some have argued that this situates Wesley with theological compatibilists who seek to reconcile the sovereignty of God and human free will with moral responsibility. For example, Ron Highfield argues that John Wesley’s doctrine of prevenient grace may be seen as a form of non-Augustinian theological compatibilism.¹⁶ Compatibilists adopt a view of “circumstantial freedom of self-realization.”¹⁷ They are considered “soft” determinists. Theological compatibilists maintain that an act is “free” if its direct cause is within the agent rather than being imposed on the agent by some external cause. However, most compatibilists argue that, although the agent is free to choose, it is only free to choose a pre-determined end. Wesley did not affirm that such determinism, however soft, applies to free will. Instead, the agent is enabled by God through prevenient grace, and then multiple options exist for the agent to choose.

Although Wesley’s theology can be described as synergetic and cooperant, he argued that grace is God’s initiative that must be freely appropriated.¹⁸ As Wesley asserted: “God worketh in you; therefore you can work.”¹⁹ Thus, prevenient grace can be understood as a form of theo-

¹⁴Ibid, 96.

¹⁵Olson, *Arminian*, 36.

¹⁶Ron Highfield, *God, Freedom and Human Dignity: Embracing a God-Centered Identity in a Me-Centered Culture* (InterVarsity Press, 2013), 91.

¹⁷Phillip Cary, in P. Cary, J. Doody, and K. Paffenroth, eds., *Augustine and Philosophy* (Lexington Books, 2010), 79-102.

¹⁸Kenneth Collins, *Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Abingdon Press, 2007), 292.

¹⁹Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Volumes I-IV, *Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984-1987), Volume 3, 206-208.

logical compatibilism and the biblical outworking of a philosophical theory of mediate and immediate conferred concursus.²⁰ In this model, God's prevenient grace creates the mediate condition from which human action arises, but God also acts immediately in the moment of human choosing by concurring with the human choice.²¹ God makes possible the freedom to choose but does not determine the outcomes.

Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace was influenced by Molinist theology. The Molinist tradition can be summarized with the axiom, "it is up to God whether we find ourselves in a world in which we are predestined, but it is up to us whether we are predestined in the world in which we find ourselves."²² Molina believed that grace was "a sort of divine assistance or power given to people to enable them to perform certain acts."²³ For Molina, the "difference between sufficient grace and efficacious grace" was "not in the quality or magnitude of the grace itself, but in the response of the human will to that grace."²⁴ As such, the Molinist perspective is highly compatible with the classical theory of conferred concursus. God prepares the human will to will. Wesley did not accept Augustine's "deterministic moral psychology."²⁵ It may be argued that prevenient grace is a form of conferred concursus, although it retains God's role in determining, regulating, and controlling every human decision.

Prevenient grace, as Wesley defined it, is divine grace that precedes human decision, existing prior to and without reference to human initiative but "free in all for all." Wesley considered prevenient grace to be the "first dawning" of God within the life of human beings. He believed that prevenient grace allows human beings to engage their God-enabled free

²⁰Ibid, 169.

²¹Note that in terms of mediate causation, God confers grace not only by the initial act of the cross of Christ but through the totality of such conferred grace in the past which constitutes the present. In like manner, God concurs immediately in the present with human choices when those choices concur with God's will.

²²Theodore Regnon, *Bannesianisme et Molinisme* (Paris: Retaux-Bray, 1890), 30.

²³Clark H. Pinnock, *The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).

²⁴Pinnock, *Grace of God*, citing Molina, *Concordia* 3.40; 4.53.2.25:30.

²⁵Randy Maddox, "Psychology and Wesleyan Theology: precedents and prospects for a renewed engagement," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 23 (2004):101–109, 102.

will to accept the salvific offer of God. Whereas Augustine held that grace cannot be resisted, Wesleyan Arminians believe that it enables but does not ensure individual acceptance of the saving grace. Individual salvation depends on a “free response to God’s offer of salvation.”²⁶ Prevenient grace thus enables all humanity to respond to the grace of God without rendering such response inevitable.

The grace of God precedes divine causality in positive exercise of the human will, but not in terms of cause and effect; the grace of God influences the human will to positive, responsive action. Wesley believed that prevenient grace assists in the alleviation of relative sin, that is, individual distance from relations with God, and thereby makes cooperation with God more accessible regardless of the effects of sin. But even that cooperation is not the result of human effort. Wesley contented that the exercise of the human will “does not depend on [humanity’s] good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions . . . for all these flow from the free grace of God. They are the streams only, not the fountain.”²⁷

By means of prevenient grace, God solicits and excites the will of human beings in a way that permits a response of the human will that either assents to or dissents from the operation of grace. However, such grace flows “universally and unconditionally” as an effect of the atonement. The grace of God is “God doing on our behalf what we could never do for ourselves.”²⁸ As such, Wesleyans can affirm the notion that prevenient grace enables people “to repent and exercise faith toward God” with their “mind enlightened” and “will freed.”²⁹ Such working of grace allows what Kenneth Collins calls “empowerment and imperative.”³⁰

Consequently, the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace is less compatible with prior and permissive concursus than with conferred concursus. God enables the exercise of the positive human will. In so doing, there is an interaction between the divine initiative and human response,

²⁶Kenneth J. Grider, *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1984), 279.

²⁷Outler, *Sermons*, 3:545.

²⁸Kenneth L. Carder, *Living Our Beliefs: The United Methodist Way* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources), 77.

²⁹Gordon Lewis & Bruce Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Zondervan, 1996), 187.

³⁰Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 156.

and the human initiative and divine response.³¹ Without God's enabling and preceeding grace, the human being could not positively choose to concur with the will of God. Human beings, by virtue of the influence of the immediate past and the possibilities of each moment of experience, can exercise some measure of will, but cannot positively concur with the divine will apart from the initiative of God. Thomas Oord maintains that God provides "power and freedom to all creatures capable of self-determination."³² Prevenient grace is God's gifting of freedom and power to human beings moment by moment.³³ As God enables free human beings to cooperate with the divine will, God and human beings can authentically interact, cooperate, and concur. When such concursus occurs, human beings participate in God's initiative.

Contemporary Pentecostal Perspectives

As contemporary heirs of the Wesleyan tradition, Pentecostals also interpret their experiences of the Holy Spirit as conferred concursus, wherein God orients the human will to the possibility of freely-chosen positive actions. As Vinson Synan notes, Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection is a "perfection of motives and desires."³⁴ Pentecostals affirm a divine re-orientation of the human will and maintain practices that support the "role of affect and emotion in empowering and directing human choice and action"—Maddox contends that these are critical to the human participation in the divine will.³⁵ This synergistic relationality characterizes Pentecostalism, where "the whole point of *pneuma*" is to move "toward relationality."³⁶ From the divine perspective, "Wesley affirmed a God who epitomized the proper response-ability of the emotions."³⁷

³¹See William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley: With Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (University Press of America, 1984), 248.

³²Thomas J. Oord, *The Altruism Reader: Selections from Writings on Love, Religion, and Science* (Templeton Press, 2007), 9.

³³*Ibid.*, 9.

³⁴Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 18.

³⁵Maddox, "Psychology," 109.

³⁶Amos Yong, *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 195.

³⁷Randy Maddox, "Seeking a Response-able God: The Wesleyan Tradition and Process Theology," in Bryan Stone & Thomas Oord, eds., *They Nature and Thy Name is Love: Process and Wesleyan Theologies in Dialogue* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2001), 111-142; 116.

Although Maddox notes that Pentecostalism cannot legitimately claim to be a direct outworking of Wesley's theology,³⁸ Pentecostal practices, including passionate worship, fervent prayer, and "manifestations," suggest the reality of the cooperative activity of God. For example, the exercise of the gift of prophecy can be identified as conferred concursus since the Holy Spirit orients the human will to speak specific words. The manifestation of the activity of the Holy Spirit is thereby expressed through human action. For Pentecostals, conferred concursus is understood as a chain of events wherein the Holy Spirit prompts action, human beings act in alignment with the will of God, and God responds. The concept of the Spirit as the presence of God working in cooperation human beings characterizes a Pentecostal notion of conferred concursus.

Contemporary Philosophical and Scientific Perspectives

Wesley's approach to theology and science marked a departure from his Enlightenment-era peers. He recognized that there is more to know about God and the natural world than may ever be known by human beings.³⁹ This humble approach may serve as the basis for a scientifically and philosophically informed Wesleyan theology of concursus. However, nineteenth century Methodists contended that the human "capacity for rational choice" is what frees human beings to "rise above and control all influences."⁴⁰ But as Maddox argues, neither this nor the experimental psychology movements of the twentieth century adequately account for a Wesleyan theology of divinely influenced human decision-making.

As contemporary science continues to reveal new observations about the constitution of reality itself, the problem of concursus is not merely a philosophical one. A Wesleyan theology of concursus must account for, and interact with, the best observations of science without being caught up in either scientism on one hand or dogmatism on the other. The actual mechanisms by which prevenient grace provides the ground for concursus in cooperation with the physical realities of human neuropsychology and physiology evade adequate description. It is there-

³⁸Randy Maddox, "Wesley's Understanding of Christian Perfection: In What Sense Pentecostal?," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34.2 (1999), 78–110.

³⁹Randy Maddox, "John Wesley's Precedent for Theological Engagement with the Natural Sciences," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 44.1 (Spring 2009): 23–54, 46.

⁴⁰Maddox, "Psychology," 104.

fore prudent to follow Wesley by accounting for what science has to say, what revelation suggests, and embracing the enduring mystery of God's concurrent action. Wesley reasoned that there will always be something in the matter of concursus which "we cannot well comprehend or explain."⁴¹ However, contemporary science and philosophy, in particular advances in Process-Relational thought, can enhance a contemporary Wesleyan theology of concursus appropriate for the twenty-first century.

In contemporary theological discourse, Vincent Brümmer describes a type of *concursus* that is similar to conferred concursus and compatible with prevenient grace.⁴² He maintains that all of the conditions for the exercise of human will inherently exist in every moment of human existence. Brümmer argues that the divine will can serve as a "contributory cause" to the free exercise of the human will without being the "sufficient cause" for the human being's final decision. His proposal is that a kind of "double agency" is possible insofar as God enables human beings to do the divine will without imposing that will on them.⁴³ For Brümmer, "double agency is a matter of cooperation" between the human being and God, not God simply determining the human being's final actions.⁴⁴ For Brümmer, concursus is a matter of God orienting the will of a human being to cooperate with the divine will and the human being simultaneously choosing that action. As Terry Wright concludes, "God acts, creatures act, but sometimes these two lines of activity entwine." When they do, such interactivity occurs because of God's enabling grace.⁴⁵ This kind of conferred concursus, where God enables but does not determine human choice, is highly compatible with an outworking of Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace.

There is a range of models for relating theology to the natural sciences. But when relating Wesleyan theology to science it is important to highlight the "contextuality of the current reigning scientific models."⁴⁶ A

⁴¹John Telford, ed. *The Letters of John Wesley*, AM, Volumes 6 (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 287.

⁴²Vincent Brümmer, "Farrer, Wiles and the Causal Joint," *Modern Theology* 8 (1992), 1–14.

⁴³Ibid, 5.

⁴⁴Ibid, 5.

⁴⁵Terry J. Wright, "Reconsidering Concursus," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 4(2) (2002), 207; 214.

⁴⁶Maddox, "Precedent," 37.

Wesleyan theology of concursus should refrain from depending too heavily on current scientific theories, such as quantum indeterminacy, and avoid the temptation to ascribe concursus to a “God of the gaps” strategy.⁴⁷ A Wesleyan theology of concursus has philosophical compatibility with process-relational theology. Wesley’s emphasis on God’s love and on human responsibility “find at least some congeniality with Whitehead’s philosophy.”⁴⁸

The most relevant congruence between process-relational theology and Wesleyan theology “lies in convictions about the nature of God and God’s interaction with humanity.”⁴⁹ Process-relational theology provides a metaphysical worldview to support the development of a Wesleyan theology of concursus and also contributes to Maddox’s call for a non-dualistic approach to the human person in relation to God.⁵⁰ Process-Relational theology strives to maintain no distinction between supernatural intervention and the causal order of the natural world; God participates in every moment of experience for all entities, including human beings. The opportunity for concursus, then, becomes both mediately and immediately available if God is always and at once present in all things, including human beings, providing opportunities for cooperation with the divine will. Such conferred concursus requires no supernatural intervention, but provides the interrelational conditions necessary for concursus to occur. In Process-Relational terms, real cooperation between God and the world reflects the “very nature of the divine-world relation.”⁵¹ God’s participation does not make choices for human beings, but makes human choices possible. Maddox defines this deep interactivity as “responsible grace” or divine-human interactivity that is “grace-empowered but uncoerced.”⁵²

⁴⁷Philip Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

⁴⁸John B. Cobb, “Wesley the Process Theologian,” Lecture at Point Loma Nazarene University (San Diego, February 2, 2000).

⁴⁹Maddox, “Seeking a Response-able God,” 112.

⁵⁰Maddox, “Psychology,” 108.

⁵¹David Ray Griffin, “Process Theology and the Christian Good News: A Response to Classical Free-will Theism,” in *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 13.

⁵²Maddox, “Seeking a Response-able God,” 113; *Responsible Grace*, 19

For example, Oord argues that prevenient grace “offers the way to affirm God’s loving initiative and creaturely response to God.”⁵³ Wesley changed the Augustinian view of God as working externally on sinful human beings by “locating the working of God within human beings.”⁵⁴ Thus, Wesley’s doctrine of prevenient grace is compatible with the Process-Relational notion of the internal unity of God’s activity in each moment of existence. But, while Wesley emphasized the actual exercise of the human will, those decisions are never made independent of God’s grace. From a Process-Relational perspective, apart from God’s ordering of eternal objects and luring actual occasions toward the divine will, the only determination of the present in each moment is the totality of the occasions of the immediate past. God’s grace is conferred on the human decision in that God provides the possibility of novelty, and the actualization of the common good, in each moment of creaturely experience. David Ray Griffin notes that “every finite actual entity receives an initial aim from God, being thus evoked into existence by prevenient grace.”⁵⁵

For Wesley, raw determinism was untenable. God’s prevenient grace provides the possibility for human beings to concur with the will of God in each moment and through regular concurrence, realizing “holiness.” God’s grace is enabling, but not irresistible. As Maddox notes, Wesley affirmed the “full participation of our physical dimension in inclining humans to various states and actions, while maintaining some modest ability to refuse automatic enactment of these inclinations.”⁵⁶ In such interaction, “no event in the world, accordingly, is ever brought about unilaterally by God; divine-creaturely cooperation is always involved.”⁵⁷ Therefore a Wesleyan theology of concursus might affirm that neither the immediate past nor God have complete determinative control over the present; prevenient grace makes possible the human capacity to overcome the determinative forces of the past and cooperate with the activity of God.

Although Process-Relational theologians emphasize that God merely lures all entities toward the realization of God’s will, it can be concluded that, if God’s will is realized, both the human being and God have simul-

⁵³Oord, *Love*, 53.

⁵⁴Cobb, “Process Theologian.”

⁵⁵Griffin, “Good News,” 32.

⁵⁶Maddox, “Precedent,” 51.

⁵⁷Griffin, “Good News,” 13.

taneously cooperated to achieve a simultaneous effect. Nevertheless, God's work is far larger than individual human cooperation, and must not be restricted to such concursus alone, but to a far broader "conjunction of co-operant and free grace" in the overall work of God in the world.⁵⁸ Grace, then, is God's universal participation in all and the participation of all things in God. Such a "panentheistic" view is highly compatible with Wesley's notion of grace "for all" and "in all." Philip Clayton calls this "participatory divine agency."⁵⁹

Even though Wesley argues for divine action that could disrupt the "causal chain" of physical events, this need not mean supernatural interruption or direct determination of the human will.⁶⁰ From a Process-Relational perspective, Wesleyans can affirm that "each prompting of prevenient grace" leads to new possibilities of participation in the will of God that are not supernatural, but expressions of God's mediate and immediate presence in the natural order.⁶¹ But, as Greathouse and Dunning note, while prevenient grace grants human beings the ability to respond to God's call, which distinguishes Wesley from Calvinism, humanity is also capable of "rejecting this call in abuse of [their] freedom."⁶² A Wesleyan theology of concursus may be best defined in terms of human beings cooperating with the will of God by the enabling grace of God; but that cooperation is not unilaterally determined. God awaits human response to the "uncoerced divine initiative."⁶³

Although Cobb argues that the reality of such human cooperation may compromise *solia fide*, if prevenient grace is understood in both mediate and immediate concursus, the primacy of God's initiative can be upheld.⁶⁴ Collins notes helpfully that it is an oversimplification to say that Wesley's perspective on concursus was purely synergistic: "both divine and human acting must itself be caught up in an even larger conjunction

⁵⁸Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 293.

⁵⁹Philip Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit: New Forays in Philosophical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 209.

⁶⁰Wesley, *Thoughts on Necessity*, in Jackson 10, 478.

⁶¹Carder, *Living*, 85.

⁶²Greathouse, William M., and H. Ray Dunning, *An Introduction to Wesleyan Theology* (Beacon Hill Press, 1989).

⁶³Maddox, "Seeking a Response-able God," 116.

⁶⁴John B. Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 87-88.

in which the...sole activity of God, apart from all human working, is equally factored in—not simply co-operant or responsible grace, but the conjunction of responsible and free grace.”⁶⁵ To a large degree, the ever-present, ever-working reality of God’s lure in process-relational theology provides a metaphysical framework for the abundance and endurance of God’s grace, not only in God’s interaction with human beings, but with all of reality. This may help to account for what Collins notes is “missing” in purely synergistic models of concursus, namely “the sheer bounty and richness of the divine love.”⁶⁶ Wesley believed that such a rich synergy could be so transforming that human beings could be “truly freed to love God and others consistently.”⁶⁷

As a part of the multidimensional processes of the world, process-relational theists maintain that “God everlastingly responds perfectly to the ever-changing situation of creatures. This is the meaning of divine love.”⁶⁸ Divine love, therefore, means intrinsic relations with the entire created order. The God of process-relational theology does not love or act passively, but loves and acts in tandem with the unfolding of the world. For process-relational theists, God is not “outside” of the human person but an intrinsic part of the reality that constitutes the human person moment by moment as each new occasion of experience is realized. Thus human beings can affirm that notion that “we participate in constituting the very being of one another and the divine reality participates in constituting our being as we participate in the constituting of the divine reality. We are quite literally in God, and God is quite literally in us.”⁶⁹ Thus, prevenient grace may be seen as God’s fundamental presence loving and lurking each human person, and the whole world, toward salvation and wholeness.

Michael Peterson’s criticism of process-relational thought is noteworthy. He argues that process-relational philosophy is a “weak if not distortive conceptual system for interpreting Christianity in general and

⁶⁵Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 164.

⁶⁶Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 292.

⁶⁷Randy Maddox, “Formation and Reflection: The Dynamics of Theology in Christian Life,” *Quarterly Review*, 21.1 (Spring 2001), 20–32; 21.

⁶⁸John B. Cobb, *The Process Perspective: Frequently Asked Questions about Process Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003), 34.

⁶⁹Cobb, *Perspective*, 13.

Wesleyanism in particular.”⁷⁰ Even so, to adopt certain metaphysical principles from Process-Relational theology to interpret prevenient grace or Christian perfection does not constitute a total adoption of the entire canon of the Process-Relational tradition. The insights provided by Process-Relational philosophy can facilitate a scientifically and philosophically informed Wesleyan perspective without dominating it or driving it too far from historical Orthodoxy. Further, a healthy Wesleyan theology of concursus can acknowledge the limitations of any culturally-situated philosophy and thus appropriate ideas with a measure of prudence.

Conclusion and Implications

A Wesleyan theology of concursus can best be described as a “real process of interaction between the individual and God.”⁷¹ Whether in terms of conferred concursus, synergy, double agency, or actualization of the divine lure, Wesley’s doctrine of prevenient grace remains capable of profiting from and withstanding dialog with contemporary philosophy and science. The balance of concursus is the reality of “authentic human cooperation with God saving grace.”⁷² As Wesleyan scholars continue to work toward a philosophically and scientifically tenable theology for the twenty-first century, a Wesleyan theology of concursus may aid in the renewal of Christian living and the discipline of the means of grace. A contemporary Wesleyan theology of concursus can affirm Wesley’s careful balance and avoid the extreme positions with regards to divine action, human free will, and divine-human interaction.⁷³ For Wesley, “it is only in response to our experience of God’s gracious love for us, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that our affection of love for God and others is awakened and grows.”⁷⁴

A contemporary Wesleyan theology of concursus, informed by philosophy and science, must move beyond the academy and into the lives of ordinary Christians. Historically, this has been a struggle for Process-Relational theology. On the opposite end of Wesleyan theological spec-

⁷⁰Michael L. Peterson, “Orthodox Christianity, Wesleyanism, and Process Theology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 15.2 (1980), 44-58; 57.

⁷¹John B. Cobb, “Wesley: Conclusions,” Lecture at Point Loma Nazarene University (San Diego, February 2, 2000).

⁷²Maddox, “Pentecostal?” 95.

⁷³Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 181.

⁷⁴Maddox, “Psychology,” 103.

trum, Pentecostals have communicated this reality quite well and have motivated their constituents to action. A primary reason for a broad attraction toward Pentecostal worship is that it communicates the relational conviction of “God among us and working with us.”⁷⁵ But, if contemporary Wesleyans can communicate concursus in terms of prevenient grace as plainly and effectively as Wesley himself, it should have real implications for how Christians live their lives, make daily decisions, and by grace, work out their own salvation, both for themselves and the world.

⁷⁵Grant McClung, “Evangelism,” in Burgess & Van Der Mas (eds.), *The New International Dictionary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 617-623; 619.

BLASPHEMING IN TONGUES: DEMONS, GLOSSOLALIA, AND THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE

by

Christopher J. Richmann

[W]hen but a few of our company were met together at the hall for prayer on Friday night, the power of God fell upon me and while prostrated upon the floor a new revelation of the glory of my Risen Lord was granted me, and while in this condition the Holy Spirit took possession of my body and soon began to speak through me words in a language or utterance I have never learned nor heard before.¹

This testimony comes not from a pentecostal publication but a 1907 issue of the official organ of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). This church body, founded in 1887 by a former Presbyterian minister turned independent healing evangelist, A. B. Simpson, was a major player in the holiness and higher life movements of the late nineteenth century. During the years of the Azusa Street revival (1906-1909), the C&MA experienced its own outbreak of revivals. For many in the C&MA, this was understood to be the fulfillment of the “latter rain” outpouring that they had been taught to expect. They tarried for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, were “prostrated” by the Holy Spirit, and prayed for and testified to divine healing. In short, they acted very much like pentecostals.

A Changed Denominational Stance

In 1974 the same C&MA periodical published an article by an Alliance college professor entitled “Tongues Should be Tested.” Gerald McGraw wrote:

I have learned . . . lessons through experiences in testing tongues in people who voluntarily approached me and my col-

¹W. A. Cramer, “Pentecost at Cleveland,” *Alliance Weekly* (April 27, 1907): 201. Hereafter AW.

leagues in the past few years. First, I have been astonished at the high percentage of demonic tongues encountered. Counselees include people from virtually all sections of the United States, people from various age groups and occupations and denominations. . . . [M]any were quite confident that the test would demonstrate a true gift from the Holy Spirit. But the shocking fact is that over 90 percent of those who requested a tongues test had a demonic tongue.²

The C&MA was never fully pentecostal or fully anti-pentecostal. The organization neither accepted the “initial evidence” teaching that defines many pentecostal denominations nor did it repudiate spiritual gifts and manifestations. The Alliance remained officially, in Simpson’s words, “open and cautious.”³ Yet a clear shift had occurred in the span between these two articles cited (1907 and 1974).

Scholars and other leaders of the Alliance have noted the “historical drift” of the organization from its earliest practices and principles.⁴ Much discussion centers on the Alliance’s early acceptance and promotion of charismatic gifts. Pentecostal historians have unanimously pointed to the C&MA and A. B. Simpson as theological forerunners of pentecostalism. He articulated the “fourfold” gospel message that was adopted by pentecostals, as well as the “latter rain” expectancy of spiritual gifts and manifestations as a witness to Christ’s soon return. During the years of the Azusa Street revival, worship in pentecostal and Alliance settings was often indistinguishable. But a series of steps in the C&MA as well as among pentecostals in the wake of the revival resulted in a growing divide between these evangelical siblings.

Given the pentecostal style of worship in the early C&MA and its official policy of openness to spiritual manifestations and gifts, the near-absence of such phenomena in the C&MA by mid-century deserves

²Gerald. E. McGraw, “Tongues Should Be Tested,” *AW* (June 5, 1974): 5.

³Up to the mid-1930s, C&MA leaders even recommended there should be “a place for tongues in every church.” This position was first articulated in Hudson Ballard, “Spiritual Gifts with Special Reference to the Gift of Tongues,” *Living Truths* (January 1907): 23-31.

⁴For instance, Ernest Gerald Wilson, “The Christian and Missionary Alliance: Developments and Modifications of its Original Objectives” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1984); and Paul L. King, *Genuine Gold: The Cautiously Charismatic Story of the Early Christian and Missionary Alliance* (Tulsa: Word and Spirit Press, 2006), 232 ff.

explanation. McGraw's words above provide a clue. Simply put, one major reason for the decrease of glossolalia and other pentecostal practices in C&MA throughout the twentieth century was the increasing attribution of tongues speech to demonic forces. Spiritual discernment and caution about evil powers have always been cherished by the C&MA, but scholars have failed to draw attention to the increase of demonic attribution in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the rise of warnings on demonic tongues occurred as the passionate, reasoned, and sustained arguments *for* tongues decreased. This combination left average Alliance members with little to gain and much to fear in the practice of tongues, leading to an unmistakable decline in the practice.⁵

Factors Leading to Separation from Pentecostalism

If ever a religious leader should have embraced pentecostalism, it was A. B. Simpson. He never visited Azusa Street, but he knew many Azusa alumni personally and witnessed many similar revivals. Furthermore, he did not reject glossolalia, and even desired the experience.⁶ Simpson delivered to the pentecostal movement many of its core teachings and epitomized the atmosphere of spiritual expectancy, innovation, and fervor that characterized the turn-of-the-century holiness movement.⁷ According to Simpson in early 1906, the "cessation" of spiritual gifts was not a divinely orchestrated reality, but a sad consequence of spiritual languor.⁸

⁵The author is aware that in identifying demonic attribution as part of the "explanation" of the decline of tongues in the C&MA, the historical shift is not fully explained. This thesis may help to explain why the practice decreased among regular believers, but the phenomenon of leaders increasingly warning against demonic tongues still requires explanation.

⁶Whether or not Simpson could be called a "seeker" of tongues is admittedly a matter of some debate. He certainly did seek "all that God had for him" and was open to the possibility that this included tongues. See Charles Nienkirchen, *A. B. Simpson and the Pentecostal Movement: A Study in Continuity, Crisis, and Change* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 105-106, and Paul King, "Seek Not, Forbid Not: The Early Christian and Missionary Alliance Position on Glossolalia," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40, no. 2 (2005): 286-287.

⁷This is detailed most thoroughly in Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1987). The best study of A. B. Simpson's theology in historical context is Bernie A. Van de Walle, *The Heart of the Gospel: A. B. Simpson, the Fourfold Gospel, and Late Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009).

⁸A. B. Simpson, "The Divine Serpent or Christ in the Gospel of Mark," *AW* (February 24, 1906): 117.

Any pentecostal would have agreed. Prior to the emergence of tongues at Azusa Street, he frequently preached that Christians should pray for and expect supernatural occurrences and spiritual gifts.⁹ The language of Pentecost was thick in the air Simpson breathed, and he shared that air with other radical holiness leaders who would go on to become pillars of the pentecostal movement. But Simpson and the C&MA that he founded and presided over until his death in 1919 did not accept the pentecostal message of Azusa Street or the pentecostal denominations that sprang from it.

First among the reasons that the C&MA did not experience the rapid proliferation of glossolalia and other manifestations was Simpson's policy of openness combined with caution. The C&MA's official stance welcomed and recognized tongues and other scriptural manifestations, but opposed any doctrine of "necessary evidence" of spirit-baptism.¹⁰ Simpson was a strong leader, and he led through frequent speaking engagements at camp meetings and churches, as well as through the pages of his books, tracts, and editorial duties. He warned frequently of abuse of manifestations and their tendency to distract from what he considered more substantial spiritual and ethical concerns. Alliance members rarely, therefore, exhibited the unabashed exuberance or indiscriminate excitement for spiritual manifestations that was frequent in Pentecostal circles.¹¹

The second major reason that the C&MA did not wholeheartedly embrace pentecostalism is that it lost a number of its most pentecostally-inclined members during the controversies of the Azusa era. Due to the work of Azusa alumni like Ivey Campbell, Glenn Cook and Frank Bartleman, pentecostal revivals emerged in Alliance churches and conventions throughout the country.¹² Bartleman was a major force for division as he traveled the Alliance circuit in 1907 and 1908, often showing up at conventions to speak without an invitation. His influence was referred to cryptically in the August 31, 1907, *Alliance Weekly* as "conflicting elements." These early confrontations laid a blueprint for future conflict. Leaders and congregations were soon being labeled and divided along pentecostal and non-pentecostal lines.

⁹"The Servants of the Lord," *AW* (June 10, 1905): 358.

¹⁰*AW* (April 30, 1910): 78.

¹¹For years, this middle-of-the-road approach has been summarized in the pithy slogan "seek not, forbid not," which has been widely attributed to Simpson.

¹²See Gary B. McGee, "How Pentecost Reached Ohio in Dec. 1906," *Assemblies of God Heritage* (Spring 1988): 4.

Third, in 1912, the C&MA took organizational steps that signaled the beginning of its change from a loose interdenominational fellowship of churches to a true denomination. Fearing that much of its funds were going to churches, evangelists, and missionaries who had effectively left the C&MA or who no longer held C&MA doctrine, the organization passed a resolution insisting that property held by churches and missions that did not fully subscribe to Alliance teaching must revert back to the C&MA. By drawing a line in the doctrinal sand, the C&MA confirmed the concerns of pentecostally-inclined members that the Alliance was in fact not open to pentecostalism. The tolerance of the C&MA had its limits, and apparently many pentecostals in the Alliance had reached it. Individual members, leaders, and whole churches gradually departed the C&MA, leaving the organization without its strongest advocates for pentecostal theology and practice.

Fourth, following close on the heels of the early exodus of C&MA members into pentecostalism and the 1912 “reversion clause,” the growing number of independent pentecostals took steps toward formal organization. This further alienated the C&MA since organizations such as the Assemblies of God, which formed in 1914, explicitly endorsed the doctrine of glossolalia as the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism. In 1918 the Assemblies of God officially required its credentialed leaders to subscribe to the teaching. This process raised the differences between pentecostals and the C&MA to an official level, making distinct identities easier to articulate and more entrenched.¹³

Fifth, an isolated controversy between a tongues-speaking C&MA missionary named W.W. Simpson (no relation to A. B. Simpson) and the Alliance spilled over into the larger life of the organization.¹⁴ W. W. Simpson had been in Northwest China for fifteen years as a missionary with the C&MA when in 1908 he witnessed a Chinese man speak in tongues. After reading accounts from pentecostals in the United States explaining the doctrine of tongues as initial evidence of Spirit-baptism, Simpson was convinced that all true believers ought to seek this experience. His fellow C&MA China missionaries, however, did not agree. In 1912, Simpson

¹³The decision to make initial evidence an official teaching in the Assemblies of God also precipitated F. F. Bosworth's movement back into the C&MA in 1918.

¹⁴See Michael David Wilson, “Contending for Tongues: W. W. Simpson's Pentecostal Experience in Northwest China,” *Pneuma* 29, no.2 (2007): 281-298.

himself received Spirit-baptism with tongues, along with more than thirty others at the mission.¹⁵ He thereafter preached emphatically that only those who spoke in tongues were truly Spirit-baptized and thus qualified for missions work. By 1914, Simpson had become the object of two official investigations by the C&MA.

In May of 1914, A. B. Simpson reached out to the missionary in China. He presented to him the “well known” C&MA stance that neither tongues nor any other manifestation was “essentially connected with the baptism of the Holy Ghost.” W. W. Simpson could not accept the statement, resigned from the C&MA, was credentialed by the Assemblies of God, and returned to the same mission area, causing division and confusion among the C&MA missionaries and converts. The Alliance saw this as a blatant disregard for standard missionary policy and reported Simpson’s withdrawal to *Alliance Weekly* readers.¹⁶ By 1919, the C&MA reported that seventy-five members, five evangelists, and two school teachers in China had withdrawn to the Assemblies of God.¹⁷

Satan Seen at Work

Even with all of these complications, throughout the 1910s the C&MA continued to experience and promote spiritual manifestations—even tongues. The occurrence of pentecostal phenomena was never as high as it had been in 1906-1909, but not until the late 1920s did a discernible change in attitude toward manifestations occur in Alliance leadership. Until that time, William T. McArthur’s early assessment of the tongues movement in Chicago continued to represent the C&MA perception: “Like so many of these widespread movements, it is a mixture of good and evil, for Satan has not been asleep.”¹⁸

¹⁵W. W. Simpson, “Notes from Kansu,” *AW* (March 1, 1913): 345-346; W.W. Simpson, “Missionary Department: From Tibet,” *AW* (November 16, 1912): 104.

¹⁶*AW* (May 30, 1914): 130.

¹⁷Phoebe B. Snyder, “Tibetan Border Mission Conference,” *AW* (October 25, 1919): 76.

¹⁸William T. McArthur, “The Promise of the Father and ‘Speaking with Tongues’ in Chicago,” *AW* (January 26, 1907): 4. King refers to the decade of the 1930s as a “drift from cautious expectancy to wary tolerance.” A number of details signify this “drift”: a change in nomenclature from “full gospel” to simply “gospel” in Alliance writing; the departure of charismatic Alliance leaders like T. J. McCrossan, E. N. Riley and his son Richey; and the rise of leaders who were less warm to tongues, like John MacMillan and William Christie. *Genuine Gold*, 232-237.

Satan had a starring role in the drama of the turn-of-the-century radical evangelical world. A corollary of divine healing and tongues-speech was the perceived reality of Satan's work on earth. If angels danced around their heads, Satan often whispered in their ears. When they believed a practice or belief was in error, they often attributed it to Satan, as when Charles Parham described the "finished work" teaching of William Durham in 1912 as "diabolical."¹⁹ As William McArthur reported of the Chicago revivals in 1907, "much of the speaking in tongues is the power of the evil one, and . . . many of the unintelligible utterances resemble the crowing of roosters and the voices of other animals."²⁰ Likewise, in 1908 two C&MA missionaries in China recognized evil forces at work in a Chinese man whose tongues speech was accompanied by contradictions and unscriptural utterances.²¹ Even so, Alliance members and pentecostals tended to give their flocks the assurance that God's true children could not be deceived. "The devil cannot act through you and talk through you," the *Apostolic Faith* encouraged its readers, "if you are God's child and baptized with the Holy Ghost."²² The impression was that demonic activity was a real threat, but those with spiritual discernment and common sense were not in danger of being deceived.

While anything that was in doctrinal error or seen to oppose the work of God could technically be labeled demonic or Satanic, the focus of warnings in the early pentecostal revival was more often on abuses falling under the category of "fleshly" or "fanatic." Simpson attributed "false flames" to the work of the devil, but did not directly connect tongues with demonic activity. Although the deceptions of the devil were real, early leaders warned that undue fear of demons endangered genuine spiritual experiences. As R. A. Jaffray put it in 1909, "Let us not allow the enemy to

¹⁹Charles F. Parham, *The Everlasting Gospel* (1902, reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 118-119. Cited in D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 249.

²⁰William T. McArthur, "The Promise of the Father and 'Speaking in Tongues' in Chicago," *AW* (February 9, 1907): 64.

²¹W. W. Simpson and William Christie, "Demon Possession in our Mincheo Native Conference, January, 1908," *AW* (March 18, 1908): 38-39; William Ruhl, "Western China," *AW* (May 9, 1908): 99.

²²*Apostolic Faith* (December 1906): 3.

so 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.'"²³

The classic treatise of demonic attribution aimed at pentecostalism was *War on the Saints*, co-written in 1912 by Welsh revival leader Evan Roberts and Jesse Penn-Lewis. In the winter of 1913-1914, the *Alliance Weekly* published a serial review of the book. Commending its call for Christian vigilance against the powers of darkness, the reviewer also noted with approval the authors' argument that human passivity is the great tool of Satan.²⁴ But much in the book earned a strong condemnation as well. In general, the reviewer was put off by the book's preoccupation with the demonic, what he called its "morbid" character.²⁵ Especially galling was the contention that evil spirits can take abode in one who is Spirit-baptized.²⁶ Caution is appropriate, but tongues should not be banned out of excessive fear.

Alliance Patience Weakens

Into the mid-1920s, the traditional call for openness to tongues was broadcast in some corners. Paul Rader was A. B. Simpson's immediate successor as president of the C&MA, pastored large C&MA "temples" in Pittsburgh and Chicago, had a pioneering radio ministry, and occasionally filled in at Aimee Semple McPherson's pulpit in Los Angeles. Rader left the C&MA in 1924 in the midst of controversy over his leadership style. He likely continued to have an influence on Alliance circles through his publications. In his 1926 collection of sermons, *Harnessing God*, readers were warned of the consequences of resisting spiritual gifts. He wrote: "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?"²⁷ But there also was caution. Because the people of God were

²³R. A. Jaffray, "Speaking in Tongues': Some Words of Kindly Counsel," *AW* (March 13, 1909): 395.

²⁴"'War on the Saints': An Analytical Study," *AW* (December 27, 1913): 205-206. In all the discussions of "passivity" here, the meaning is a sort of gullible openness to spiritual forces that is particularly present when believers seek spiritual manifestations of any kind.

²⁵N. H. Harriman, "'War on the Saints': An Analytical Study, Part II," *AW* (January 3, 1914): 219.

²⁶Harriman, "'War on the Saints,' Part II," 220.

²⁷Paul Rader, *Harnessing God, Messages with a Method: The Way to 'Abundant Life' for Spirit, Soul and Body* (New York: George H. Duran, 1926): 96.

so hungry for spiritual blessings, thought Rader, they would take what they could get, even if it meant fanaticism.²⁸ Leaders, therefore, should encourage the use of gifts in a responsible way.

Rader advocated a practical and level-headed approach to testing the spirits, seeing demonic tongues as something to be confronted rather than feared. All that fear accomplishes is the “grieving of the Spirit.”²⁹ Rader’s advocacy for tongues had a defensive quality that should not be missed. He sympathized with the tongues-speakers who had been marginalized by the C&MA. His plea for moderation and openness should be seen as evidence of the rising tide against tongues as well as the continuance of apologies for it. Coming from a leader no longer officially part of the denomination, the weight of his 1926 work is difficult to assess. In any case, Rader represents an outlook on tongues that was—like Rader himself—on its way out.

A shift in pastoral advice on tongues began to occur in the second half of the 1920s. Oswald J. Smith, an Alliance pastor of a large congregation in Toronto, wrote on the baptism with the Holy Spirit. He conceded that tongues and other manifestation may accompany Spirit-baptism, but it was clear that these gifts were to Smith incidental to the true purpose of Spirit-baptism,” for “better than all that . . . [is the] power for service.”³⁰ And the evidence of Spirit-baptism involved another issue:

Tongues can be counterfeited. It is utterly absurd to think that God would use something capable of counterfeit as the evidence of so important an experience. . . . Here is the unmistakable evidence. When the Holy Spirit fills a man he immediately begins to bear fruit; fruit that neither man nor devil can counterfeit. He may have many of the gifts, including tongues, but if he does not produce the fruit he is not filled with the Spirit. A Spirit-filled life is far too important to rest on a gift that might easily be counterfeited by Satan.³¹

Smith’s warning was vivid. Satan could mimic tongues and other manifestations. This suggested that tongues was unreliable and dangerous. Real evidence for the Spirit’s presence is to be found in the “fruit” of a godly life.

²⁸“If the leaders don’t lead to pleasant pastures the sheep will jump the fence to fanaticism.” Rader, *Harnessing God*, 99.

²⁹Rader, *Harnessing God*, 108.

³⁰Oswald J. Smith, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (New York: Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1925), 45-46.

³¹Smith, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 46.

In 1927 T. J. McCrossan wrote a booklet defending the Alliance position. He was an Alliance-affiliated Presbyterian minister and instructor of biblical languages who was brought into the full gospel movement by Charles Price in 1922. He was baptized in the Spirit and believed that tongues was a genuine gift for today—although he did not speak in tongues himself.³² He argued that one of the reasons tongues cannot be the only evidence of Spirit-baptism is “because Satan can readily counterfeit this sign.” According to McCrossan, Christians were not immune. He wrote of a “good sister” who spoke in tongues at a prayer meeting, only to discover through the help of a missionary to China that she was blaspheming Christ in a Chinese dialect. Until this was discovered, all supposed that her experience was genuine. In retrospect, McCrossan insisted that she had opened herself to demonic deception by seeking manifestations rather than God.³³

In one sense, Smith and McCrossan were not doing anything new. Alliance leaders had always warned of the possibility of satanic counterfeits. But what was new, in McCrossan’s discussion in particular, was that Christians could be demonically influenced and that there were no *obvious* indications of Satan’s activity when he was producing a counterfeit sign (such as animal noises or anti-biblical utterances). In the view of Smith and McCrossan, there was little to commend and much to fear in the experience of speaking in tongues. Their writings were being read around the same time the Alliance subtly dialed back its historic commendation of tongues in some of its official publications.³⁴ Tongues was

³²T. J. McCrossan, *Speaking with Other Tongues: A Sign or Gift—Which?* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Alliance Publishing, 1927), 34. McCrossan described his experience of Spirit-baptism this way: “the Spirit took possession of our tongue. . . . We were literally speaking with another tongue as the Spirit gave to us to utter forth, but it was all in English.” *Ibid.* McCrossan argued that speaking “with new tongues” as announced in Mark 16:17 referred to an experience of all believers with a “renewed” tongue refraining from cursing and harmful speech, intent on constantly praising God. *Ibid.*, 20-22.

³³McCrossan, *Speaking with Other Tongues*, 32-33.

³⁴This was demonstrated in two “significant omissions” in Alliance published material on tongues. First, the ideal (even if far from the reality) that every local church should have a place for tongues was excised from Hudson Ballard’s original 1907 statement when it was reprinted in the pages of the *Alliance Weekly* in October, 1934. A second significant omission occurred with the reprinting of A. B. Simpson’s 1907 article-turned-tract titled *Gifts and Graces*. After a discussion of all the spiritual gifts, including tongues, Simpson advised readers “not

clearly under fire. No longer were local Alliance churches encouraged to nurture the gift of tongues among their congregants; no longer were demonic counterfeits described as easy to identify; and no longer were sincere believers assumed to be safe from demonic possession.

From the late-1930s, patience with glossolalia among Alliance leaders thinned. More and more frequently, ministers and denominational officials described the negative effects and demonic origin of tongues. They were less confident that any glossolalia was from God, although they did not shut out the possibility of genuine tongues. Concerns that tongues were instances of demonic activity and indicative of doctrinal errors came to overwhelm any general support. For instance, as a missionary for the Alliance, John A. MacMillan had encountered numerous instances of demon possession. In 1934, just prior to becoming assistant editor for the *Alliance Weekly*, he issued an article series on “the Spirit-filled Christian.” While A. B. Simpson had classified both fleshly and demonic tongues under the larger heading of “false” manifestations, MacMillan argued that manifestations come in three varieties: genuine working of the Holy Spirit, entirely emotional, and those connected with demons.³⁵ This categorization helped pave the way for the final extreme attack on demonic tongues.

A. E. Ruark was ordained with the C&MA, but apparently did not ever serve an Alliance congregation. He spent his life teaching at Peace River Bible Institute and Prairie Bible Institute, both in Alberta, Canada.³⁶

[to] fear or ignore any of the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Ghost, no matter how extraordinary.” This admonition was excised from a 1930s reprint of Simpson’s classic statement. “The Gift of Tongues,” *AW* (October 27, 1934): 678. Compare Ballard, “Spiritual Gifts with Special Reference to the Gift of Tongues,” 24; A. B. Simpson, “Gift and Grace,” *AW* (June 29, 1907): 303. This omission was first brought to light by H. D. (Sandy) Ayers, *The Christian and Missionary Alliance: An Annotated Bibliography of Textual Sources* (Landham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 251; see King, *Genuine Gold*, 236.

³⁵John A. MacMillan, “The Spirit-Filled Christian, Part V: The Home of the Holy Spirit in Man,” *AW* (March 17, 1934): 167.

³⁶Both schools had numerous connections with the Alliance, although they were not officially affiliated. Prairie Bible Institute was mentioned often in *AW* as a place where Alliance ministers and missionaries were trained. See February 15, 1936, 108; March 25, 1939, 189; December 25, 1945, 829; October 7, 1950, 637, and September 18, 1963, 15. Peace River Bible Institute was also mentioned occasionally in *AW* as alma mater of Alliance ministers: January 24, 1979, 29; June 9, 1982, 9; and February 27, 1985, 27.

In 1947 Ruark published *Falsities of Modern Tongues*.³⁷ According to Ruark, “it is God’s saved people who are being deceived,” and this raised the stakes. While he did not deny the possibility that genuine tongues existed,³⁸ he was confident that “the greater part of speaking in tongues is done through evil spirits.”³⁹ Ruark taught that unbiblical seeking (especially attached to the Pentecostal initial evidence doctrine) invites demons. In fact, he claimed to witness many occasions in which demon possession occurred precisely as one was seeking “the baptism.”⁴⁰ According to Ruark, demons use the passive body as a “steppingstone.” More was at stake than theological error.

From the late 1940s—and in many publications appearing after his death in 1963—prominent C&MA leader A. W. Tozer offered a balance to the Ruark view, advocating for an “evangelical mysticism” that was in general more open to spiritual experience.⁴¹ But Tozer was also suspicious of practices and experiences born of any “latter-daylight theory”—a reference at least in part to the Pentecostal doctrine of evidential tongues.⁴²

³⁷A.E. Ruark, *Falsities of Modern Tongues* (High River, Alberta: n.p., n.d.). K. Neill Foster gives the date of 1947, which is not found in the copy I obtained. “Glossolalia and the Ruark Procedure: Distinguishing between True and False Utterances,” *Alliance Academic Review* (1997).

³⁸“We have met an odd one who seems to have a scriptural experience.” Ruark, *Falsities of Modern Tongues*, 8.

³⁹Ruark, *Falsities of Modern Tongues*, 2. Later Ruark would claim that ninety percent of tongues speaking was demonic in origin. Foster, “Glossolalia and Ruark Procedure.”

⁴⁰Ruark, *Falsities of Modern Tongues*, 15-16.

⁴¹Eleanor Harris, “The Thought of Aiden Wilson Tozer: An Analysis and Appraisal with Special Emphasis on his Mysticism and Conceptual Approach to the World” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1980). E. Lynn Harris, *The Mystic Spirituality of A. W. Tozer, a Twentieth-Century American Protestant* (San Francisco: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).

⁴²“Over the last half-century quite a number of unscriptural notions have gained acceptance among Christians by claiming that they were among the truths that were to be revealed in the last days. To be sure, say the advocates of this latter-daylight theory, Augustine did not know, Luther did not, John Knox, Wesley, Finney and Spurgeon did not understand this; but greater light has now shined upon God’s people and we of these last days have the advantage of fuller revelation. We should not question the new doctrine nor draw back from this advanced experience. The Lord is getting His Bride ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. We should all yield to this new movement of the Spirit. So they tell us.” A. W. Tozer, “How to Try the Spirits,” in *The Best of A. W. Tozer: 52 Chapters*, comp. Warren W. Weirsbe (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 187-188.

Regardless, MacMillan and Ruark mark a significant advance in the C&MA attack on tongues. According to them, instances of genuine tongues were rare, and demons lay in wait everywhere to prey on Christians. Demonic tongues were no longer classified as a type of “false tongues” along with carnal manifestations, but a distinct counterfeit requiring a distinct theological and pastoral response. Detecting and extracting tongues became more technical and the negative effects of demonic speech became grimmer.

Responding to the “Charismatic” Movement

The C&MA took a keen interest in the “new tongues movement” of the 1960s and 1970s. With this interest came an intensified attack on tongues and a growing association of tongues with the demonic. On the eve of the charismatic revival, some C&MA leaders still focused their warnings on “fleshly” manifestations.⁴³ But, by the 1970s, C&MA leaders focused almost exclusively on the demonic origins of tongues.

The first official Alliance response to the charismatic movement came in early 1963. The Board of Managers adopted a somewhat cynical tone, saying that, despite the “new and more euphonious name [‘charismatic movement’],” the C&MA is “completely familiar with the teaching and phenomena of this movement no matter what they are called or where they occur.” The “scars” had not faded.⁴⁴ Their official report was a re-endorsement of A. B. Simpson’s report on the subject from 1908 which called for watchfulness and openness.

Despite this ambivalence, as the “decade of the Holy Spirit” wore on, hostility toward tongues combined with A. E. Ruark and John MacMillan’s increased interest in deliverance ministry and demonology. V. Raymond Edman’s 1966 article indicates this continuing shift. In “Are Tongues Divine or Devilish?” he explained:

There is likewise a false gift of tongues which is decidedly of the devil. Demonology may be ignored or derided in our day, but it is the same dreadful reality now as it was when the Saviour cast

⁴³For instance, Franklin M. Ballard, “Christ Builds His Church in Habbe-land,” *AW* (June 28, 1961): 12. “Because of the teaching of the missionaries and through their own knowledge of the Word they themselves realized that these manifestations could be of the Spirit or of the flesh.”

⁴⁴“Where We Stand on the Revived Tongues Movement,” *AW* (May 1, 1963): 5.

out demons in Galilee long ago. . . . To the Christian insistent upon having some particular gift of the Spirit, and thus rejecting the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, there can be the dreadful reality of the gift of tongues by demonic power. I have known such.⁴⁵

One of MacMillan's Nyack students, Gerald McGraw, later taught at Alliance-affiliated Toccoa Falls College. In two *Alliance Weekly* articles in 1974, McGraw responded directly to the charismatic movement. Aside from the doctrinal error of "initial evidence," McGraw noted one of the main "practical" dangers in the charismatic movement: failure to test the spirits.⁴⁶ He had a detailed action plan for testing tongues—urging the use of 1 John and similar tests for all cases of tongues speech, done in a "prayer session," which he described as a "private setting, with a chairman and a small group of intercessors. . . ."⁴⁷ From his own experience he estimated that ninety percent of tongues were demonic in origin,⁴⁸ and they were more powerful and crafty than ever before.

In 1971, a revival originating in Saskatoon spread through western Canada. The minister at the center of the revival was William McLeod, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church. The revival reverberated throughout Alliance circles for the next several years.⁴⁹ McLeod's ministry of spiritual warfare was characterized by direct confrontation with demons and vehement warnings against all kinds of practices he considered "occult."⁵⁰

⁴⁵"Spiritual Discernment: Are Tongues Divine or Devilish?" *AW* (March 3, 1966): 6. This article was originally published as "Divine or Devilish?" *Christian Herald* (May, 1964): 14-17.

⁴⁶Gerald E. McGraw, "Tongues—True or False?" *AW* (May 22, 1974): 10.

⁴⁷McGraw, "Tongues Should Be Tested," 4. McGraw also recommended asking the spirit to confirm Jesus' lordship, the second coming, and other basic Christological questions.

⁴⁸McGraw, "Tongues Should Be Tested," 5.

⁴⁹See a firsthand account of the revival in H. Robert Cowles, "Saskatoon: Vortex of Revival," *AW* (January 19, 1972): 6-9. Darrel R. Reid refers to the 1971-1972 western Canada revival as one of the "major developments that define the Canadian Alliance today." "Towards a Fourfold Gospel: A. B. Simpson, John Salmon, and the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada," in George A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 286.

⁵⁰W. L. McLeod, *Demonism among Evangelicals and the Way to Victory* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Western Tract Mission, 1975), 91, 163-166, *et passim*.

Seeking for gifts, he wrote, is “an invitation to demons to try and counterfeit the real.”⁵¹ Openness to demons could also be triggered by any indiscriminate seeking for “more of God.” He emphasized the completeness of the believer without special supernatural experiences. He found that the demon-possessed frequently spoke in tongues, and he cautioned that speaking in tongues may lead one further from God rather than closer. Building on MacMillan’s conception, which categorized demonic tongues separately from those of human source, McLeod effectively trimmed the categories to two, divine and demonic.

K. Neill Foster’s 1975 book on tongues quickly became a C&MA classic, being reprinted numerous times under a number of different titles.⁵² Foster, a missionary, writer, and educator, was greatly influenced by MacMillan’s theology of spiritual warfare. Foster endorsed the exercise of all spiritual gifts, but maintained distinct caution on tongues. He was open to charismatic experiences, but said that “the devil has been having a field day among charismatics.”⁵³ Sounding a familiar theme, Foster aimed his critique at those who panted after supernatural gifts. Again, it was “dangerous passivity” that is “an open invitation to occult invasion and demonic deception.”⁵⁴ Like McGraw, Foster was given to statistics: twenty-five percent of his deliverance ministry was devoted to extracting tongues demons, and eighty percent of the tongues he had encountered were demonic in origin.⁵⁵

McGraw, McLeod, and Foster represent the height of hostility to glossolalia. While they were careful to establish their C&MA “credentials” by affirming the existence of genuine tongues, their attitude was one of suspicion, buttressed by damning statistics. According to their teachings, genuine tongues was rare and the assurance of genuine tongues even rarer.

⁵¹McLeod, *Demonism*, 108.

⁵²References here will be to K. Neill Foster, *Help! I Believe in Tongues: A Third View of the Charismatic Phenomenon* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975).

⁵³“A general observation . . . is that the less grounded on the Bible a group or an individual may be, the more easily the charismatic movement penetrates.” Foster, *Help!*, 23, 89.

⁵⁴Foster, *Help!*, 60.

⁵⁵Foster, *Help!*, 89.

Conclusion

Throughout the twentieth century, the case against tongues in the C&MA grew while the case for tongues weakened. One of the chief features of tongues opposition was the increasing attribution of tongues speech to demonic powers. Tongues speakers and those sympathetic to tongues speakers were not driven out of the Alliance, but maintaining a positive or even a neutral attitude toward tongues became increasingly difficult as the century wore on.⁵⁶ The charismatic renewal exacerbated opposition and wariness of glossolalia.

From the earliest days of the pentecostal revival, A. B. Simpson urged caution and discernment mixed with openness. Until Simpson's death in 1919, the polemic against tongues centered on the fleshly abuses that the phenomenon brought in its train. In the 1920s and 1930s, the warnings against demonic influence in tongues speech became more detailed and more common, as seen in the works of T. J. McCrossan and Oswald J. Smith. Simultaneously, more balanced views like that of Paul Rader were edged out. In the 1940s and 1950s, John MacMillan took an even stronger stance against tongues. Seeds sown by A. E. Ruark and MacMillan blossomed in the demon-centered theology of Gerald McGraw, William McLeod, and K. Neill Foster.

John MacMillan's ministry is the significant turning point in the Alliance history with glossolalia. Gerald McGraw's insistence that *all* tongues be subjected to verbal testing, and his claim that ninety percent of the tongues he encountered were of demonic origin, represents the furthest a C&MA leader could venture from A. B. Simpson's openness without openly repudiating the official Alliance position. Scarcely could any C&MA member feel comfortable seeking or practicing glossolalia when influential leaders like McGraw demanded the immediate testing of the gift in a spiritually intense setting such as his "prayer sessions" where the intimidation factor was high.

The story of the C&MA's "historical drift" and "modification of its original objectives" must include close attention to the evolving response to glossolalia described here. One may speculate that this growing opposition to tongues had wider effects on the C&MA stance toward other

⁵⁶"I must admit that I sense a negative attitude among some of my Alliance brethren toward those who have the gift of tongues." Thomas H. Stebbins, "A Plea for Charity," *AW* (August 2, 1972): 17.

experience-based teachings, especially sanctification and spirit-baptism. Included in the attack on tongues was condemnation of all seeking for “more of God.” Leaders singled out evil spirits as the cause not only of the majority of *false* tongues, but the overwhelming majority of *all* tongues, and labeled the seeking of spiritual experiences as the primary gateway to demonic activity. The identity of the C&MA shifted accordingly.

BAPTISTS AND HOLINESS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: A STORY RARELY TOLD

by

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While scholarship continues to show interest in Reformed contributions to the Holiness Movement, Baptist involvement has largely been ignored. The work of Bostonian A. J. Gordon, well-known advocate of Keswick Holiness teachings, is the primary exception.¹ Beyond Gordon, who is essentially treated as an anomaly, Baptist scholars past and present have given scant attention to the study of the Holiness Movement in their work on Baptists in America in the nineteenth century. Surprisingly the wide-ranging 1881 *Baptist Encyclopedia* of William Cathcart ignores holiness figures.² William G. McLoughlin, Jr., in his 1959 work on *Modern Revivalism*, included some nineteenth-century Baptist figures but did not connect their evangelism to a belief in holiness.³ Southern Baptist evangelism professor Roy Fish recently surveyed the impact of the revival of 1858 upon Baptists but provided very little theological analysis of holiness concepts.⁴

Scholars of the Holiness Movement have touched briefly on Baptist involvement. In his history of the Holiness Movement, Melvin Dieter gave some attention to Baptists.⁵ Timothy Smith's *Revivalism and Social Reform* (1976) remains a basic source for a brief overview of Baptists and Holiness

¹See A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of the Spirit* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1894). William H. Brackney, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004), 245.

²William Cathcart, *Baptist Encyclopaedia* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881).

³William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959), 154.

⁴Roy Fish, *When Heaven Touched Earth: The Awakening of 1858 and its Effects on Baptists* (Azle, TX: Need of the Times Publishers, 1996).

⁵Melvin Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1996), 33, 50, 91.

teachings. Smith said there was a “noteworthy” movement among Baptists.⁶ This essay will examine the teachings of four key Northern Baptist holiness advocates of the 1850s to 1870s—Henry Fish, John Q. Adams, A. B. Earle, and Edgar M. Levy. Their teachings contribute to an understanding of the interdenominational character of the Holiness Movement. In doing so, some nuance or at least further depth can be added to the comprehensive study of holiness concepts in the nineteenth century.

Henry Fish (1820-1877). Timothy Smith contended that Henry Fish’s 1857 book *Primitive Piety Revived*, with its call for apostolic soul winning helped pave the way for the awakening of 1858.⁷ Fish was evidently well-known in New Jersey Baptist life and involved in promoting Baptist education. A graduate of Union Theological Seminary in 1845, he was then ordained as pastor of the Baptist church at Somerville. In 1851 he became the pastor of First Baptist Church, Newark, and remained there for twenty-seven years.⁸

Fish’s push for a return to primitive piety, which he called evangelical sanctification, sounded a familiar Baptist identity marker—the desire to restore the New Testament church. Fish offered a familiar mid-nineteenth century experiential definition of holiness as eradication: “The Spirit of God is the grand animating agency in the Christian Church. He is the sanctifier of the soul. He enables us to overcome and eradicate the remains of sin within us and give to the new nature symmetry, beauty, maturity and strength.”⁹ In good Baptist/evangelical fashion, Fish said that “it requires much less vigilance to maintain a sound creed than a sound heart.”¹⁰

Fish highlighted the role of faith and Scripture in his doctrine of holiness. He wrote that “faith secures our sanctification” and “the believing soul accepts the word of God.” Yet, holiness did not come “without exertion on our part.” Believers needed to strive for holiness since it was a “great witness, better than argument or persuasion.”¹¹ Fish identified with

⁶Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1976), 138-140.

⁷Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, 49.

⁸Cathcart, *Baptist Encyclopaedia*, 394-395. Andrew M. Manis, “Henry Clay Fish” in Bill J. Leonard, ed., *Dictionary of Baptists in America* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 118.

⁹Henry C. Fish, *Primitive Piety Revived or The Aggressive Power of the Christian Church* (1855) (Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1987), 86, 234.

¹⁰Fish, *Primitive Piety Revived*, 59.

¹¹Fish, *Primitive Piety Revived*, 86-87, 138-139.

the move among holiness advocates to call for a return to Pentecost and the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an enduement of power. He wrote a journal article, "Power in the Pulpit," in which he elaborated about holiness and witnessing. He warned against "professional piety" and reminded his readers that "a holy office does not make one holy." He argued that holiness or the baptism of the Holy Ghost was the most essential ingredient to pulpit power. The apostles at Pentecost were not qualified to preach "until the Divine Spirit, in a special sense, had come upon them." "Neither is anyone," Fish added.¹²

John Q. Adams (1825-1881). In his personal testimony, Adams said that he was converted at Norfolk Street Baptist Church, New York, at the age of twenty and then received sanctification two years later, but did not at that time know what to call the experience. He then lost the blessing after two months because he did not know that he needed to keep it through "the exercise of simple faith in Jesus."¹³ Subsequently, Adams testified that he entered a cycle of sinning and repenting and even desired death—comments often heard in other Baptist holiness testimonies—if that was the only way to be set free from his sins. During this time, Adams entered the ministry (Caldwell, New Jersey, 1849) and had success in evangelism and writing, though he suggested he ministered amid "great nervousness and doubt and fear."¹⁴ In 1853, for example, Adams wrote a book, *Baptists the Only Thorough Religious Reformers*, which went through several editions, and even today is published as a classic restorationist declaration that Baptists embody the authentic New Testament church.¹⁵

¹²H. C. Fish, "Power in the Pulpit," *The Christian Review* (January 1, 1862): 118-119.

¹³John Q. Adams, "Experience of John Q. Adams," in John Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life in the Baptist Denomination* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1870), 130.

¹⁴Adams, "Experience of John Q. Adams," in John Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 133. William C. Kostlevy, "John Quincy Adams," in William C. Kostlevy ed., *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2001), 7.

¹⁵John Quincy Adams, *Baptists, The Only Thorough Religious Reformers in a Course of Lectures*, 1853 (New York: Edward H. Fletcher, 1854; Paris, ARK: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 2008 reprint).

In 1856, Adams became pastor of North Baptist Church, New York, and soon the Revival of 1858 changed his focus.¹⁶ He testified that he learned about the second blessing at one of the gatherings at Phoebe Palmer's home and was impressed that Christians from various denominations, including other Baptists, were there. He also read William Boardman's 1858 book *The Higher Christian Life*.¹⁷ In 1859, after a battle with dysentery, Adams no longer desired death but began to preach "a higher Christian life experience," even though he had not yet experienced sanctification. He attended gatherings at the Palmers and yearned for an emotional experience for days. Finally, on March 25th, he began to trust without any feeling or emotion—clearly a Palmerian approach to holiness.¹⁸ That day, Adams testified, "was a day of peace such as I had never enjoyed before.... Through him I was more than a conqueror. Sin had no dominion over me. I had no anxiety, no fear; Jesus fully saved me, and saved me fully each moment. I entered into rest—the rest of faith, and soon my soul was filled to overflowing with the love of Christ."¹⁹

Adams' preaching of sanctification at his church found receptive hearers and significant opposition. On July 1, 1859, he and eighty-one members of the church—perhaps not surprisingly those of poorer economic status—organized a new congregation, Antioch Baptist Church. The following year the New York Baptist Association extended fellowship

¹⁶William Kostlevy contends that Adams' hiring at North Baptist Church was essentially a reward for the notoriety he received from writing the book. Kostlevy, "John Quincy Adams," 7.

¹⁷For the writings of Phoebe Palmer, see Richard Wheatley, *The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984). For Boardman, see William Boardman, *The Higher Christian Life* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984; Boston: H. Hoyt, 1858).

¹⁸Adams, "Experience of John Q. Adams," in John Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 142-144. Phoebe Palmer said not to rely on feelings for assurance of holiness. For more on Palmer's view, see Charles Edward White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), 138.

¹⁹Adams, "Experience of John Q. Adams," in John Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 145.

to them, but opposition ultimately denied full membership.²⁰ Adams still maintained his Baptist convictions, however.²¹

In one of his earliest sermons on sanctification, Adams spoke of entire sanctification as being “entirely set apart for God—to be wholly consecrated, with the consciousness, wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit, that such consecration is accepted through the merits of Christ. Body, soul, and spirit are sanctified wholly.” According to Adams, the believer is in a state of “the most perfect self-renunciation” and, in words he repeated and were later emphasized by other Baptists, “the soul is sweetly at rest” and experiences “the rest of faith” even though trials and temptations may come. The sanctified believer also has a “sweet sense of inward purity” under the “sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.”²²

Adams offered a method for proving the doctrine of sanctification. The “justified soul” had “a deep sense of the need” for the experience and the justified acknowledged that they were not living up to the present privileges of a better Christian life. Adams ironically noted that as persons approached death they did not seem to oppose the possibility of sanctification. In good Baptist/evangelical fashion, Adams said that sanctification was clearly found in the Bible, and was experienced in the apostolic church.²³

²⁰Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, 138. For an overview of the economic conditions of Antioch Baptist Church, see “Some Account of God’s Dealings with the Antioch Baptist Church: Being the Fourth Annual Report,” *The Christian: Devoted to the Advancement of Gospel Holiness* 1 (August 1863): 115-128. Adams received no “stated salary (115).” During the Civil War, the church sold cotton from the church’s pews and refilled them with hair to help with their financial needs (125). Hereafter the journal will be referred to as *The Christian*.

²¹In a preface to the 1876 centennial edition of his book, *Baptists, The Only Thorough Religious Reformers*, Adams still criticized “pedobaptists” for the “utter inconsistency of pedobaptism with the principles of the New Testament” and for not agreeing with Baptist principles which were “based on God’s word.” He commended some former pedobaptists who had joined the Baptist denomination—a fact at odds with the non-sectarian nature of his holiness writings (see below). In celebration of the American centennial, he declared that “American principles are, essentially, Baptist principles.” See Adams, *Baptists, The Only Thorough Religious Reformers*, ix.

²²John Q. Adams, *Sanctification: a sermon, preached in the North Baptist Church, New York, June 12, 1859* (New York: Sheldon, 1859), 4-6.

²³Adams, *Sanctification: a sermon*, 8-10.

He concluded in Palmerian language, "God can do this work. He is willing to do it. He has promised to do it."²⁴

Sanctification was not due to human effort, according to Adams, but was solely the work of divine grace. Again reflecting the influence of Phoebe Palmer, Christ was the altar for the obedience that believers offer.²⁵ Adams preached to his congregants that they had been willing to exercise faith for conversion; then why not "exercise faith in Christ to purify their hearts . . . to subdue sin?" Both the first and second blessings were obtained solely by faith.²⁶ Adams attempted to steer clear of being branded a "perfectionist." In contrast to being perfectly sinless, he said that he was "perfect in ignorance, in weakness, in folly and, aside from Christ, I am perfect in vileness and sin! This is the only perfection I claim! But for my perfect ignorance, Christ has perfect knowledge—for my perfect weakness, He has perfect strength—for my perfect folly, He has perfect wisdom—for my perfect vileness and sin, He has perfect righteousness and sanctification. By faith I appropriate Him. And taking Him, I take all."²⁷

From 1863 to 1868, Adams published a holiness journal called *The Christian; Devoted to the Advancement of Gospel Holiness*. He asserted that the journal would "ignore sectarianism" and "present the truth as we find it in God's Word."²⁸ Baptists were the primary audience and the primary authors of numerous articles and testimonies.²⁹ The journal's defense for advocating holiness followed a method which was part and parcel of Baptist identity. The Bible was the Christian's sole authority for

²⁴Adams, *Sanctification: a sermon*, 11. For Palmer's similar approach, see Harold E. Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought, Studies in Women and Religion*, Vol. 22 (Lewiston: Edward Mellen Press, 1987), 263-267.

²⁵Adams, *Sanctification: a sermon*, 5-6. For Palmer on the concept of Jesus, the sacrifice and the altar of the sacrifice, see Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought*, 247, and White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer*, 140. See also Melvin Dieter, "The Development of Nineteenth Century Holiness Theology," in Martin E. Marty, ed., *Modern American Protestantism and Its World: Historical Articles on Protestantism in American Religious Life*, Vol. 4, *Theological Themes in the American Protestant Word* (New York: K. G. Saur, 1992), 58.

²⁶Adams, *Sanctification: a sermon*, 12.

²⁷Adams, *Sanctification: a sermon*, 14.

²⁸"Salutation," *The Christian* 1 (January 1863): 15.

²⁹Adams, "Preface," in John Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 5.

faith and thus it was his/her duty to affirm the biblical nature of the second blessing. In addition, Scriptural authority was verified by personal experience and, in the case of holiness, the testimony of “hundreds of God’s most devoted children” affirmed it.³⁰

Throughout subsequent journal issues, Adams’ teaching was reflected in the testimonies of his church members and fellow Baptist pastors from New York and beyond. The “Christ against culture” separatist rhetoric associated with groups considered sectarian by the larger culture was strong and unabashed. Adams said that world’s spirit of selfishness and unbelief was seen in pleasures and recreations like the race course, the theatre, the ballroom and the card table.³¹ The holiness message was to be inclusive, however. C. W. Brooks, another Baptist pastor from New York, preached that sanctification was for all Christians. Citing the favorite Protestant and especially Baptist teaching of the priesthood of all believers, Brooks said that “All have equal rights to the fullness of divine grace...[the] high and low, rich and poor, bond and free.”³²

In Palmerian language and that of the larger Wesleyan tradition, these Baptists testified that the separate works of grace—justification and sanctification—were to be accepted by “simple faith” or by “naked faith.” The seeker must not rely on feelings or emotion but upon the Word of God. If a person did not feel any different, he/she must “only believe.”³³ According to C. W. Brooks, “Sometimes we are shut up to the naked faith upon the simple promise of God’s word, without any other light or feeling. . . . Now, we are to believe that, because God says so, and for no other reason. His word and not our feeling is to be the basis of our faith. Satan

³⁰“Sanctification,” *The Christian* 3 (March 1863): 47.

³¹John Adams, “Sketch of a Sermon: On Nonconformity to the World,” *The Christian* 1 (March 1863): 43.

³²C. W. Brooks, “Sketch of a Sermon: On Holiness,” *The Christian* 1 (April 1863): 60.

³³For example, see “Age of Reason,” *The Christian* 1 (June 1863): 96. “Experience of Rev. J. J. M., A Pastor in Massachusetts,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 177. “Experience of Elihu Gunn, A Baptist Pastor in Iowa,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 34. Analysts of the theology of Phoebe Palmer note that her language of “naked faith” had precedents in the Wesleyan tradition, for example, in the work of William Carvosso and William Fletcher. Methodist Nathan Bangs criticized “naked faith” for its vulnerability to self-deception. See Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought*, 238, 248, 271. White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer*, 105, 276.

tells you that this is presumption; no, it is not; it is simple faith. It is the highest presumption to dare to disbelieve what God says.”³⁴

Adams and supporters often described the experience of holiness in mystical-type language. Christ was a “perfect Savior” who offered a present “full salvation.” Entire sanctification was “perfect peace” and an experience of divine light in the soul. The soul was filled with “uninterrupted” peace and light.³⁵ As one believer testified, “A new sensation, one I had never felt before, seemed to fill me, to permeate my whole being. It was not excited feeling, it was not joy. It was peace—deep, calm, perfect peace, a peace like a river. It was love, unutterable love. It was light, an atmosphere of light, in which my soul seemed bathed, and which seemed to penetrate body and soul alike.”³⁶

The role of emotion in the Baptist experience of holiness was at times conflicted. Repeatedly, Baptist stories sounded Palmerian when believers said that they did not experience “ecstatic or rapturous emotion.” Simple faith did not need or rely on emotionalism. Baptists affirmed that they cast themselves on the altar of sacrifice, giving all to Christ who was the altar and sanctified the gift.³⁷ At the same time, one Baptist said that the Holy Spirit came upon him in such power that he “could only utter the Spirit’s name by way of adoration for a quarter of an hour . . . I fell upon the floor powerless, though not entirely unconscious, for an hour.”³⁸

While Baptists preferred the rational method of simple faith, their testimonies revealed that the emotional weight leading up to the mystical relief experienced in the second blessing could be intense. Believers “panted” after the baptism of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ They told of the frustrations

³⁴C. W. Brooks, “To a Seeker of Holiness,” *The Christian* 1 (November 1863): 167.

³⁵“Experience of Miss S. M. G.,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 16-18.

³⁶“Experience of Mrs. H. A. R.,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 262. See also “Experience of a Struggling Pastor,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 72.

³⁷“Experience of Miss S. M. G.,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 16-17, 23. White says that Palmer herself was not consistent on this point of faith and emotion. White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer*, 143.

³⁸“Experience of _ _ _,” A Baptist Pastor in Kansas,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 218.

³⁹“Experience of Rev. A. P. Graves, The Evangelist,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 116.

of living a Romans chapter seven life—the ups and downs of doing what they did not want to do and not doing what they should. A striking number of seekers reminiscent of Adams' personal story told how they wished for death in order to escape a life of sin and the cycle of the broken resolutions of a non-sanctified life.⁴⁰ Moreover, like Adams and Palmer affirmed, believers had to keep testifying of the experience or else they would lose it.⁴¹

Adams and supporters acknowledged opposition to their holiness experience. They responded that they were discouraged “by what is called orthodoxy.” The support for holiness—a restoration of “the Pentecostal model” of the “primitive church”—was actually the only way to unify the church.⁴² They contended that holiness was not a sectarian doctrine as opponents charged, nor was it a threat to denominational identity: “We seek to advance not “Methodist holiness” or “Baptist holiness” or “Presbyterian holiness” but “gospel holiness.”⁴³

Adams' 1870 book *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life in the Baptist Denomination* reprinted numerous testimonies that had originally appeared in the six-year run of the journal. The book continued to elaborate on the affirmation of holiness as a second experience of grace. Authors discussed what term or phrase was best to use to describe holiness. These Baptists stated their hesitancy to use terms usually associated with Methodism, like perfect love, entire sanctification and Christian perfection—though they still did so.⁴⁴ Adams acknowledged the influence of Presbyterian William Boardman's *The Higher Christian Life* upon Baptists

⁴⁰For example: C. W. Brooks, “The Higher Life,” *The Christian* 1 (December 1863): 181. “Experience of Elihu Gunn, A Baptist Pastor in Iowa,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 28. “Experience of Mrs. A. S.” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 58-61. William Boardman talked of resolutions not working in the life of an unsanctified believer. Boardman, *The Higher Christian Life*, 267.

⁴¹“Experience of Elihu Gunn, A Baptist Pastor in Iowa,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 36. “Experience of Mrs. A. S.” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 62. For an analysis of Palmer's theology of testimony, see Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought*, 248, and Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, 30-32.

⁴²Onesimus, “Love-Unity-Power,” *The Christian* 1 (April 1863): 52. “Spiritual Power,” *The Christian* 1 (June 1863): 89. For the Holiness Movement as “restorationism,” see Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, 5-6.

⁴³“The Close of Our First Year,” *The Christian* 1 (December 1863): 192.

⁴⁴For example, “Experiences of a Struggling Pastor,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 66, 72.

because he clearly focused on the authority of the Bible. While Adams had employed various terms for holiness, he declared that he preferred Boardman's phrase "higher Christian life" because it avoided hints of sinless perfection.⁴⁵ Other Baptist testimonies liked his reference to the higher Christian life as a "second conversion."⁴⁶

Some testimonies noted the influence of the work of Oberlin holiness leader Asa Mahan. One anonymous "struggling pastor" writing about Mahan sounded a typical refrain regarding the reading of all non-Baptist holiness literature: "whether the philosophy of the writer was correct or his choice of terms judicious, one thing was sure: there was attainable for the Christian a 'higher life,' a deeper experience. . . ."⁴⁷ At times, Phoebe Palmer was mentioned in the 1870 book of testimonies, but actually less than might be expected given her influence.⁴⁸

Absalom B. Earle (1812-1897). Itinerant Baptist evangelists were not an uncommon sight in the nineteenth century. The focus of their preaching was the "salvation of souls." Some, like Emerson Andrews but especially A. B. Earle, were involved in the Holiness Movement.⁴⁹ Timo-

⁴⁵Adams, "Preface," in John Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 3-4.

⁴⁶For example: "Experience of Mrs. A. S.," in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 63. "Experience of Mrs. L. J. H.," in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 183. For "second conversion," see Boardman, *The Higher Christian Life*, 47, 110.

⁴⁷"Experiences of a Struggling Pastor," in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 66.

⁴⁸For example: "Experience of Mrs. H. A. R.," in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 261. I have not focused on Palmer's role as a woman in ministry, or her support for women in ministry, a position that was problematic for most Baptists of the era.

⁴⁹Timothy Smith wrote that Andrews "clearly preached a second work of grace." Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, 139. In one sermon recorded in his autobiography, Andrews declared that ministers must have the "endowment of the power of the Holy Spirit," and he pled to see the "world civilized and evangelized" in order to see "Pentecost repeated, to see a nation born in a day." See Emerson Andrews, *Living Life; Or, Autobiography of Rev. Emerson Andrews* (Boston: James H. Earle, 1872), 313-316. In a published book of forty sermons, Andrews did refer to the Holy Spirit often; one sermon was entitled "Filled with the Spirit" and another "The Power of the Spirit." However, at least in these sermons, Andrews focused on salvation and never used the language of holiness (i.e., perfect love, sanctification, baptized in the Holy Spirit, higher Christian life, rest of faith, etc.) typically found in the Holiness Movement or among holiness Baptists. Emerson Andrews, *Revival Sermons, Preached in Protracted Meetings* (Boston: James H. Earle, 1882), 29-34 and 84-89 especially.

thy Smith said that Earle was one of the two most respected evangelists in America from 1859 to 1874 or until the popularity of the D. L. Moody era.⁵⁰ According to Smith, Earle received sanctification in 1859 and consequently gave weight to the Adams movement.⁵¹ In actuality, Earle did not receive sanctification until 1863. His journey towards sanctification followed the same pattern as Adams. He was successful in evangelism but still battled the despair of a Romans seven lifestyle of broken resolutions. In 1859 Earle resolved in a diary, which he called his “consecration book,” to a life of entire sanctification to God; yet sin, especially his strong will, defeated him. Finally after much struggle, he had “simple faith” in God’s word.⁵² At 5:00 p.m., on November 2, 1863, although he had never felt weaker, Earle testified that he fully trusted in Christ and felt “peace without fear, which really became rest.”⁵³

Throughout the 1860s, Earle did itinerant evangelism throughout the New England states and then California. He preached to Baptists but he became known as one of the earliest revivalists to conduct union interdenominational meetings in which denominational distinctives were muted. Earle thought union meetings were best to convert sinners to the faith; yet he still declared that believers could hold firm denominational convictions.⁵⁴ The “new measures” of Charles Finney’s evangelism also had recently entered Baptist life and Earle used them skillfully.⁵⁵

⁵⁰Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, 141.

⁵¹William C. Kostlevy, ed., *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2001), 91. Timothy Smith said that the Adams movement brought other Baptists into Holiness circles. In citing the expanding Baptist literature, he includes the work of William L. Parsons and D. F. Newton. Parsons was not Baptist. According to a contemporary of Newton, B. T. Roberts, Newton was a “devoted Baptist” of New York City. However, neither in an autobiographical piece nor in the work of Newton that Smith cited did Newton ever mention a Baptist affiliation. Adams’ journal, *The Christian*, did occasionally run articles from other sources, including the *Earnest Christian*, which Newton began editing in 1861. See Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, 139. Howard A. Snyder, *Populist Saints: B. T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists* (Grand Rapids: Willam B. Eerdmans, 2006), 557. D. F. Newton, “Our Life as It Has Been and Is,” *The Earnest Christian and Golden Rule* (January 1866): 5-7.

⁵²Absalom B. Earle, *The Rest of Faith* (Boston: James H. Earle, 1873), 62-74.

⁵³Earle, *The Rest of Faith*, 74.

⁵⁴Earle, *Bringing in Sheaves* (Boston: James H. Earle, 1868), 240-242.

⁵⁵To trace Earle’s evangelistic journeys, see Absalom Backus Earle, *Bringing in Sheaves* (Boston: James H. Earle, 1868). For a discussion of Earle and Charles Finney’s “new measures” see, McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles*

Earle wrote three books that offered a full description of his view of holiness: *Bringing in Sheaves*, 1868, *The Rest of Faith*, 1873, and *Abiding Peace*, 1881. The books do not reveal much progression of thought. The first actually has a chapter entitled “Rest of Faith,” the title of the second book. The third, *Abiding Peace*, provides Earle’s fullest definition of faith.⁵⁶ Scholars of the Wesleyan tradition will again quickly note the many influences of Phoebe Palmer’s theology of holiness that found their way into Earle’s ministry.

Earle did not coin the phrases “the rest of faith” and “abiding peace” in Christ which he used to define holiness—Adams had already used the terms.⁵⁷ Still, given Earle’s national reputation as an evangelist, he clearly helped popularize and perpetuate these positive descriptions to Baptists and the wider Holiness Movement. Earle used the language of entire consecration on occasion, but interestingly did not use the common phrase, entire sanctification. Unsurprisingly, he asserted that the experience was not sinless perfection. With that said, Earle was not afraid to talk of a second blessing, distinct from conversion, in Wesleyan terms of perfect love.⁵⁸

Earle also reflected the Wesleyan/Palmerian move toward Pentecostal language. He did not employ the language of Pentecost nearly as much as the concept of “rest,” but the identification of the second experience of grace as being “baptized in the Holy Spirit” is clear.⁵⁹ Earle noted

Grandison Finney to Billy Graham, 154. Earle was cited briefly by historians of his era as an evangelist who worked in “union revivals”. See Frank Grenville Beardsley, *A History of American Revivals* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1904), 250-251. See also W. F. P. Noble, 1776-1876. *A Century of Gospel-Work: A History of the Growth of Evangelical Religion in the United States* (Philadelphia: H. C. Watts and Co., 1876), 548. Noble called Earle an “eminent revivalist” and related a story of him working “harmoniously together” with a Methodist pastor.

⁵⁶Absalom Backus Earle, *Abiding Peace* (Boston: James H. Earle, Publisher, 1881).

⁵⁷Adams, “Experience of John Q. Adams,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 145. “Experience of _ _ _ , A Baptist Pastor in Kansas,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 220.

⁵⁸Earle, *Abiding Peace*, 18, 66, 74, 79. Earle, *The Rest of Faith*, 80. Earle, *Bringing in Sheaves*, 170, 380. Rather than positive descriptions, William McLoughlin (not noting Earle’s emphasis on holiness) suggested that Earle’s reference to “sweet rest” was a “sentimental evangelicalism” that subsequent revivalists like D. L. Moody “took to new heights.” McLoughlin, Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham*, 155.

⁵⁹Earle, *Abiding Peace*, 72. Earle, *Bringing in Sheaves*, 16-17, 227.

proudly that at least one pastor had called him a “Pentecostal evangelist.”⁶⁰ For example, he developed a handy ten-point checklist for his evangelistic work which he named “Ten Evidences of Conversion for Younger Christians.” Number ten was “a growing desire to be holy and like Christ” which was called “the crowning evidence of all.” Earle also had a ten-point checklist entitled a “Self-Examination for Older Christians.” The climactic numbers nine and ten asked, “Do I believe I have been baptized with the Holy Spirit since my conversion?” and “Am I now sweetly resting in Christ, by faith, now?”⁶¹

According to Earle, the second blessing was “not a sinless state, but rest, the rest of faith, a calm, sweet resting all with Christ.” This rest “will prevent gloomy and distressing fears about the future.” How does a believer know he/she has obtained the experience? The proof of holiness was the production of the fruits of the Spirit. Temptations, in good Wesleyan fashion, were still present, but Earle said they were easier to resist.⁶² This was not the result of human effort, of course, but relying and thus resting on faith in Christ. The blessing was received and retained by faith alone. In typical Palmerian fashion, the believer could rest in the promise of “only believe.”⁶³

When Earle published his third book, *Abiding Peace*, he continued to define holiness as the “rest of faith.” However, the focus had shifted. In *Bringing in Sheaves*, Earle had described his personal reception of holiness as “peace without fear, which really became rest,” and he affirmed that the experience was “an abiding fullness in Christ’s love” without interruption.⁶⁴ In *Abiding Peace* he moves to more fully defining this rest as “abiding peace” in Christ. Believers, after their conversion, sought more to their Christian lives and were frustrated at ups and downs, or what Earle called “unrest.” He preached that Christians could “abide in the fullness of Christ’s love without these breaks” in communion with Christ. There was no promise of physical rest from “toil, labor, or pain,” but during these challenges the sanctified believer has “abiding peace” in

⁶⁰Earle, *Bringing in Sheaves*, 332.

⁶¹Earle *Bringing in Sheaves*, 222-227.

⁶²Earle, *Bringing in Sheaves*, 336.

⁶³Earle, *The Rest of Faith*, 53.

⁶⁴Earle, *Bringing in Sheaves*, 377. Earle, *The Rest of Faith*, 41. Earle, *Abiding Peace*, 60.

Christ.⁶⁵ Citing the prophet Isaiah, Earle declared that “In this state you will not worry at things that seem dark and mysterious; but, trusting all with God, your peace will be as a river.” Adams’s followers had used the peace like a river description even before Earle and before the 1873 gospel hymn “It is Well with My Soul,” written by Horatio Spafford after he tragically lost his four daughters at sea.⁶⁶

In his exposition of abiding peace, Earle highlighted the concept of “soul travail” which is called a “Gethsemane” experience. Christians who were living in deeper communion with God would recognize this soul travail as they fully surrendered to God. In mystical sounding terms, Earle said that the aim of soul travail was to exit from one’s spiritual closet “endued with the divine gentleness and power of Christ, mightily to stir the hearts of those who have lost their first love, and to kindle the flame of his own soul upon theirs.”⁶⁷

Earle continued his earlier focus on faith to “only believe” but he provided even more elaborate Palmerian language, language which sounds to contemporary ears like the prosperity gospel or the promises of divine healing evangelists: “If you ask him in faith to give you abiding rest and peace, you will have it; you cannot fail to receive it.” “Let us remember, then,” Earle exhorted, “that whatever we want of God we are to believe for that definite thing . . . whatever we can believe for without doubting, we are sure to have; it cannot fail. . . .” In a bit of caution, Earle affirmed that mystery was involved: “We can always receive an answer to the prayer of faith; but it may be a negative answer. . . . If the thing prayed for cannot be granted, you will not have faith for that definite thing, only that you can be answered.” In the end, if you have the faith, the gift of holiness will be the result.⁶⁸

Earle’s focus on holiness was tied to his work as an evangelist. He said that the utility of holiness meetings not “characterized by intensity of

⁶⁵Earle, *Abiding Peace*, 17.

⁶⁶See Isaiah 48:18 and 66:12. Earle, *Abiding Peace*, 72-73. “Experience of Mrs. H. A. R.,” in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 262.

⁶⁷Earle, *Abiding Peace*, 25.

⁶⁸Earle, *Abiding Peace*, 60-61, 71. Palmer was described by her critics as: “believe that you have it and you have it.” Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought*, 275. Palmer, as later holiness Baptists do, gave focus to instantaneous sanctification. God did not command her to wait for it, but to possess it. See White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer*, 130.

desire for the salvation of souls” should be doubted. Only Christians filled with the Holy Spirit like the apostles of the New Testament era can really be successful in revivalism. When the evangelist has the “endowment from on high,” others will feel that power and sinners will be converted.⁶⁹

Edgar M. Levy (1822-1906). Edgar M. Levy grew up a Presbyterian but was ordained to the Baptist ministry at First Baptist Church, West Philadelphia, at the age of twenty-one in 1844. After a pastorate there of fourteen years, he served in Newark, New Jersey, for ten years. In 1868, he returned to Philadelphia to become pastor of Berean Baptist Church. From this church, Levy became the major Baptist figure involved in the national holiness camp meeting phenomenon of the 1870s.⁷⁰

Levy published his experience of holiness in the booklet *Bondage to Freedom: How I Entered into Rest*.⁷¹ According to Levy, in February 1871 he was invited by a neighboring Methodist pastor to hear a visiting evangelist speak about the need for holiness. After attending several meetings, Levy knew that he was justified but realized there was something that he was missing. Typical of Baptist holiness testimonies, Levy considered himself a Romans seven Christian. “I am conscious of loving God,” Levy testified, “but like some sickly, flickering flame, I am expecting every moment to see it expire altogether. I have joy; but, like a shallow brook, the drought exhausts it. I have faith; but it is such a poor, weak thing, that I am in doubt, sometimes, whether it is faith at all.”⁷² Soon, however, an “insatiable hunger” filled his soul and he desired to be “perfect in love.”⁷³

⁶⁹Earle, *Abiding Peace*, 20.

⁷⁰William C. Kostlevy, “E(dgar) M(ortimer) Levy,” in William C. Kostlevy ed., *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2001), 160-161. Levy wrote an account of the awakening of 1858 in Newark, New Jersey, but never used the word sanctification to describe it. The account was written two years prior to Levy’s affirmation of a personal experience of sanctification. Edgar M. Levy, *History of the Newark Baptist City Mission: From Its Origin in 1851 to its Seventeenth Anniversary in 1868* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1869).

⁷¹Edgar M. Levy, *From Bondage to Freedom: How I Entered into Rest* (Boston: Advocate of Christian Holiness, n.d). Levy’s experience also appeared in *Holiness Miscellany. Essays, Dr. Adam Clarke and Richard Watson. Experiences of Bishop Foster, Rev. Geo. Peck, D.D., Rev. Alfred Cookman, Rev. J. A. Wood, Rev. E. M. Levy, D.D., D. Steele, D.D.* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Association for the Promotion of Holiness, 1882).

⁷²Levy, *From Bondage to Freedom: How I Entered into Rest*, 8.

⁷³Levy, *From Bondage to Freedom: How I Entered into Rest*, 9-10.

Despite opposition from some colleagues, Levy continued the journey toward holiness. On one occasion, he fell upon the floor of his study to beg God, not for “pardon” but for “purity.” The climatic day came on March 9, 1871. With his soul in “great agony,” Levy testified that the Devil confronted him about his “theological training, my professional standing, my denominational pride.” But, a “strange peace” entered his soul and he experienced the “blessed baptism.” He “cared no longer for the opinions of men.” He “was willing to be a fool for Christ, and to suffer the loss of all things.” In language reminiscent of Earle, Levy “now had an abiding Christ.” While Levy testified to a month long experience of struggling with the need for sanctification, he declared that “the exercise of faith in a perfect Savior” was instantaneous.⁷⁴

Levy’s support for holiness found him an integral place at the national camp meetings for holiness. In an 1873 camp meeting sermon, he reiterated some of the themes of his personal testimony and added some doctrinal exposition—including typical Wesleyan language about holiness as cleansing and eradication. He preached that “to a certain extent, the Christian is sanctified when he is converted.” But soon the working of the “old man” reappeared and the believer experienced the frustrations of Romans chapter seven. The seeker desires to have the disease of sin “entirely eradicated”; “he yearns for perfect love.” Sanctification by faith, Levy exhorted, accomplished this eradication. “If it be of faith, then it must be instantaneous. Works require time for their execution. Faith, on the contrary, is an act of the soul. In a moment the soul, by the exercise of faith, can ‘wash and be clean.’”⁷⁵ With such focus on the Holy Spirit in sanctification testimonies, Levy made sure to define holiness as a work of the Trinity.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Levy, *From Bondage to Freedom: How I Entered into Rest*, 14-20.

⁷⁵“Edgar M. Levy, “Monday Morning Sermon on Entire Sanctification,” in Adam Wallace, ed., *Modern Pentecost: Embracing a Record of the Sixteenth National Camp-Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness Held at Landisville, Pa. July 23rd to Aug. 1st, 1873* (Philadelphia: Methodist Home Journal Publishing House, 1873), 138-141.

⁷⁶“Edgar M. Levy, “Monday Morning Sermon on Entire Sanctification,” in Adam Wallace, ed., *Modern Pentecost*, 140-141. Baptist Keswick leader, A. J. Gordon will later not approve of the idea of instantaneous sanctification. “Likeness to Christ is but another name for holiness, and when, at the resurrection, we awake satisfied with his likeness (Ps. 17:15), we shall be perfected in holiness. This is simply saying that sanctification is progressive and not, like conversion, instantaneous.” See Gordon, *The Ministry of the Spirit*, 119.

Like Adams and nameless others, Levy preached that holiness was the only possible basis for present unity among Christians. Unity in creeds, ordinances, church government or forms of worship had not and would not occur. The national camp meetings, Levy preached, brought a unity in “the washing of the blood of Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As it is the nature of sin to separate, disintegrate and repel, it is the nature of holiness to unite, adjust and harmonize.” The doctrine of sanctification could not be ignored, Levy concluded, since it “is the one grand end of salvation”; we “cannot enter heaven without holiness.”⁷⁷

Conclusion

This study contends that Baptist historians have too long neglected the influence of the Holiness Movement in nineteenth-century Northern Baptist life. Smith and other analysts easily demonstrate that there were some Baptist champions for holiness. This study hopefully has fleshed out the views of some of these key Baptists, views that have rarely been discussed in any depth. This study also notes the significant influence of Wesleyan concepts on some Baptists from the Holiness Revival of 1858. Baptists said they were influenced by Presbyterian William Boardman—that is true, especially in their use of the phrases the higher Christian life and second conversion—but the influence of the ideas and language of

⁷⁷Levy, “Monday Morning Sermon on Entire Sanctification,” in Adam Wallace, ed., *Modern Pentecost*, 144. For a discussion of the theme of unity, see Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, 202–205. Dieter also noted that the Holiness Movement in the 1870s could be seen its interdenominational influence on the Evangelical Alliance. He noted the speech of Richard Fuller at the EA’s 1873 meeting as revealing the “terminology” to describe a “piety” that was “completely within the patterns of Wesleyan perfectionism that was being utilized by the Holiness Movement (p. 102).” Dieter did not identify that Fuller was a prominent Baptist from Baltimore. His speech on “personal piety” clearly appealed to the centrality of “personal holiness” and like Levy, said “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Interestingly, Fuller also described a Romans seven lifestyle of frustrated resolutions and most tellingly, he spoke of “entire consecration to God.” At the same time, Fuller’s language is very Baptist with-out Wesleyan-like references. He highlights anti-creedalism, the priesthood of believers, and the need for personal piety rather than perfect love or a higher Christian life. Fuller urges listeners to “personal piety, growing sanctification.” See Richard Fuller, “Personal Religion, Its Aids and Hinderances,” in Philip Schaff and S. Irenaeus Prime, eds., *History, Essays, Orations, and other Documents of the Sixth General Conference of the Evangelical Alliance, Held in New York, October 2–12, 1873* (Harper and Brothers, 1874), 333–337.

Phoebe Palmer, whether mediated through Palmer or Adams, was profound. Holiness Baptists affirmed an instantaneous sanctification rooted in the “naked” “simple faith” of God’s Word and used Pentecostal language to describe holiness—which most likely was adapted by them as a Baptist act of biblicist restorationism. At the same time, these Baptists highlighted a positive emphasis on the “rest of faith” and “abiding peace,” most likely as an attempt to distance themselves from or at least balance the more perfectionistic language found among non-Baptists. Holiness Baptists clearly identified the experience of sanctification with the endowment of power received in the baptism of the Holy Spirit for greater effectiveness in the salvation of souls. These Baptists helped facilitate the push for Spirit-led mission activity in Holiness and Baptist life.

Why, then, the prevalent ignorance or silence about Baptist involvement in the Holiness Movement? Elder Jacob Knapp, regarded the most popular Baptist evangelist of the 1830s to 1850s, told a story about meeting some believers who proclaimed that they had reached a state of entire sanctification. Knapp commented, “As for myself, I was never troubled with too much holiness; my difficulty has rather been the want of it.”⁷⁸ Knapp’s story reminds us that not all Baptists were involved in the Holiness Movement and many thought perfectionism an elusive ideal. Instantaneous sanctification never caught on among most Baptists. They maintained their focus on conversion and its instantaneous moment as the core of religious experience.

If we were to adopt a skeptical historical assessment, we could say that Timothy Smith’s contention that there was a “noteworthy” movement of holiness among Baptists in the middle decades of the nineteenth century hinges on the definition we ascribe to the word “noteworthy.” Perhaps “noteworthy” could be used more easily if the ministry of Boston Baptist leader A. J. Gordon, the influential partner with D. L. Moody in promoting the Keswick variety of holiness in the latter half of the nineteenth century, was included. Still, most Northern Baptists were not very comfortable with Gordon’s holiness views or pre-pentecostal inclinations.

However, the role of denominational identity and prejudice should be considered as well. During the middle decades of the nineteenth century, a new genre of books, including one by John Q. Adams before he experienced sanctification, was published emphasizing Baptist distinc-

⁷⁸Elder Jacob Knapp, *Autobiography of Elder Jacob Knapp* (New York: Sheldon and Co., 1868), 178-179.

tives and pushing the restorationist concept that Baptists were *the* New Testament church.⁷⁹ Ecumenical-like cooperation was not easily compatible when denominational competition raged. Moreover, itinerant evangelists often ministered in union-interdenominational settings which began to flourish during this era's revivalism.⁸⁰ Baptists leery of holiness teachings could more easily ignore them if they were outside of explicit Baptist circles. While one sanctified Baptist said, "The Devil said Methodism, the Lord said gospel truth,"⁸¹ Baptist silence probably indicates some inclination that the Devil was not always wrong. Denominational prejudice died hard.

Speculation goes only so far. What the sources reveal is that some Baptists were involved extensively in the Holiness Movement and they affirmed the higher Christian life with the positive image of the "rest of faith," which brought each sanctified believer an "abiding peace" in Christ. Holiness Baptists might use the language of Asa Mahan, William Boardman, or especially Phoebe Palmer and the Wesleyan tradition, but in the end, for them, it was Bible holiness that filled their souls with glory.

⁷⁹James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 531-32. This proliferation was most likely due to increased competition among various denominations.

⁸⁰In some ways, it is easy to think of A. B. Earle as a Billy Graham type Baptist. He affirmed he was Baptist, but his itinerant evangelism was functionally non-denominational.

⁸¹"Experience of W. E. Noyes, A Pastor in Maine," in Adams, ed., *Experiences of the Higher Christian Life*, 227.

EDWARD IRVING ON CHRIST'S SINFUL FLESH AND SANCTIFYING SPIRIT: A WESLEYAN APPRAISAL

by

E. Jerome Van Kuiken

Edward Irving (1792-1834), a Reformed pastor-theologian, raised questions about sanctification still needing addressed with care by Wesleyan pastors and theologians. Irving was a Scottish Presbyterian minister in London in the 1820s and 1830s. His dramatic preaching style transformed his tiny congregation into a mega-church to which a number of nineteenth-century notables flocked. His novel (for that time) theological views rapidly led to derision by society, division within his congregation, and his defrocking on charges of heresy by the Church of Scotland.¹

In his eschatology, pneumatology, and Christology, Irving pioneered positions which increasingly have become acceptable within various streams of Christianity. Irving's pretribulational premillennialism prepared evangelicals in his day for Darby's more popular version of this doctrine, although Irving held to a historicist rather than a futurist interpretation of biblical prophecy.² His advocacy of charismata such as glossolalia, prophecy, and apostleship, available through a post-conversion baptism with the Holy Spirit, anticipates the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and New Apostolic Movements.³ His claim that in the incarnation Christ

¹Biographies of Irving include (Margaret) Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, 2nd ed., rev. in 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862); A. L. Drummond, *Edward Irving and His Circle* (n.p.: James Clarke, [1936]); H. C. Whitley, *Blinded Eagle: An Introduction to the Life and Teaching of Edward Irving* (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, 1955); Arnold Dallimore, *The Life of Edward Irving: Fore-runner of the Charismatic Movement* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1983); and Tim Grass, *The Lord's Watchman* (Studies in Evangelical History and Thought) (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2011). Grass's is the most balanced of the lot.

²Grass, ch. 13; cf. 302.

³C. Gordon Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973); Dallimore; Grass, chs. 16-18. For a primer on the New Apostolic Movement, see Gregory Metzger, "A New Apostolic Movement? The Need for Discernment," *Books & Culture* July/August 2012; accessed 31 August 2012.

assumed a fallen, even sinful, human nature has been taken up by twentieth-century Reformed theologians such as Karl Barth,⁴ the Torrance brothers,⁵ and Colin Gunton,⁶ who in turn have transmitted this view to various scholars in the Roman Catholic,⁷ Church of the Nazarene,⁸ Pentecostal,⁹ and broadly evangelical traditions.¹⁰ In Irving's thought, his eschatology, pneumatology, and Christology interlink as mutually validating

⁴*Church Dogmatics* (ed. Geoffrey Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. G. T. Thomson *et al.*; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957-69) I/2, 151-155 and throughout Barth's writings.

⁵For samples of this pervasive theme in Torrance theology, see T. F. Torrance, "Introduction," xv, xviii, and J.B. Torrance, "The Vicarious Humanity of Christ," 140-141, in Thomas F. Torrance, ed., *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed A.D. 381* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1981). Both Torrances studied under Barth.

⁶Initially in Colin E. Gunton, "Two Dogmas Revisited: Edward Irving's Christology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41:3 (1988), 359-376, republished in Colin E. Gunton, *Theology Through the Theologians: Selected Essays 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 151-168. Gunton returned to Irving repeatedly in his later writings. Grass, one of Gunton's former doctoral students, notes Gunton's crucial role in stimulating study of Irving (xv).

⁷Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. with an introduction by Aidan Nichols (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990; 1st American ed. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 22; Thomas G. Weinandy, *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993). Balthasar was an early appreciator of Barth (5). Weinandy is both Catholic and Charismatic. His book includes surveys of Irving's, Barth's, and Balthasar's views (ch. 5) and is much influenced by Gunton (57 n. 6), who wrote its foreword.

⁸David Rainey, "Edward Irving and the Doctrine of the Humanity of Christ: 'The Method Is By Taking Up the Fallen Humanity'" (unpublished paper presented at the annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society, Anderson, IN, 6 March 2009); T. A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People. The Historic Doctrine of Christian Perfecting* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), ch. 7. Rainey is a former student of Gunton's, with Noble a student of T. F. Torrance. As we shall see, though, neither Rainey nor Noble uncritically accepts Irving's view.

⁹David W. Dorries, *Edward Irving's Incarnational Christology* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon, 2002). This is the published version of Dorries' doctoral thesis, completed under J. B. Torrance (xi). Dorries is a former professor at Oral Roberts University.

¹⁰E.g., Graham McFarlane and Ray S. Anderson. McFarlane, who teaches at London School of Theology, the largest conservative evangelical theological college in Europe, did his doctoral thesis under Gunton on Irving's Christology; see his *Christ and the Spirit: The Doctrine of the Incarnation according to Edward Irving* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996). Anderson, a student of T. F. Torrance,

elements within his total theology.¹¹ This article will concentrate on the latter two doctrines, particularly as they relate to Christian sanctification.

Christ's Sinful Flesh

Irving affirms that, in the Incarnation, God the Son assumed a human nature exactly the same as ours. But ours is a fallen nature, subject to total depravity and its effects, guilt, suffering, and mortality. Therefore, Christ's humanity was characterized by these defects. His being "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3), "made sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), and bearing "our sins in his body" (1 Pet. 2:24) are *ontologically*, not merely *forensically*, true.¹² The "evil powers inherent in flesh" in its fallen state,¹³ its sinful inclinations, were a perpetual source of temptation to him until sin was rooted out by the ontological change wrought by the Resurrection.¹⁴ Irving is careful to insist that, although Christ's human *nature* was sinful, his *person* remained unstained by sin.¹⁵ The ground of this distinction lies in the traditional Christological claim that in the Incarnation, the divine Logos assumed anhypostatic humanity—a human nature but not a human person, with the Logos himself supplying the personhood in the man Christ Jesus.¹⁶

Christ's Sanctifying Spirit. Not only was the person of the earthly Christ sinless; prior to his resurrection, his humanity was continuously

taught for years at Fuller Theological Seminary. For a biographical sketch of Anderson and his relation to Torrance theology, see Christian D. Kettler, "Tribute and Review," *Participatio: Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* Supplementary Vol. 1 (2011), 1-13; accessed 2 March 2013.

¹¹Grass, 173; cf. 171; Peter Elliott, *Edward Irving: Romantic Theology in Crisis* (Ph.D. thesis, Murdoch University, 2010), ch. 6, accessed online 23 Sep. 2011; Byung-Sun Lee, 'Christ's Sinful Flesh': *Edward Irving's Christological Theology within the Context of his Life and Times* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2011), accessed online 8 Feb. 2013.

¹²*Christ's Holiness in Flesh, the Form, Fountain Head, and Assurance to Us of Holiness in Flesh* (hereafter CHF) (Edinburgh: John Lindsay, 1831), xxvi-xxix, 1-2, 37, 45, 55-58. Cf. *The Collected Works of Edward Irving* (hereafter CW) Vol. V, ed. G. Carlyle (London: Alexander Strahan, 1864), 146-147, 152, 174, 319-321, 330-331, 335.

¹³CHF, 28.

¹⁴CW V, 160-163; CHF, xxx, 40, 93.

¹⁵CHF, vii-viii, xi, xxvi.

¹⁶CW V, 3, 115-116.

being made sinless by the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit. Irving rejects his critics' view that Christ's human nature was sanctified once and for all time at the moment of conception so that thereafter no sin was present in it. This view, Irving claims, postulates a "physical change" that would destroy Christ's consubstantiality with us, including his liability to being tempted as we fallen sinners are (Heb. 4:15).¹⁷ Such a beginning to Christ's earthly life also would render its end redundant: "For if in his conception the particles of his flesh were changed from unholy to holy, from mortal to immortal, then what was left to be done at the resurrection?"¹⁸

Instead, Irving sets forth his own view "that in Christ there was the law of sin and death, which the law of the Spirit of life did ever prevail against . . . ; and that the thing spoken of in the holy Scriptures as holiness is nothing else than the putting down of the law of sin and death in the members, by the law of the Spirit of life in the mind."¹⁹ Elsewhere he describes Christ's experience in a manner anticipatory of a modern sewage treatment plant:

Christ who, through his flesh, doth receive the gathering streams of all corruption, doth feel their approach, is conscious of their vileness, is terrified and agonised by their number and aggravation, doth feel them as his own, doth cry out on their account, yea doth confess them as his own in the book of Psalms, the only record of his inward man; and yet is not overwhelmed with them, though sorely grieved, but ever as they come hath power to convert them into streams of living waters, which he sendeth forth for the refreshing of all living.²⁰

Consequently, the sinful impulses within Christ's flesh never produced actual sinning.²¹

Crucial to Irving's account of Christ's sanctification is that the Spirit alone, and not any divine power of the Son's own, is its source. Irving

¹⁷Letters to a Mr. Macdonald (21 May, 1830) and to Thomas Chalmers (2 June, 1830), in Oliphant, vol. 2, 123-124, 138; *CHF*, 37-38, 79-81.

¹⁸"On the Human Nature of Christ," in *Morning Watch* 1, Mar. 1829, 97.

¹⁹*CHF*, 38-39; cf. 60, 73-74, 78. On pp. 42-43 he specifically rejects any idea of the "eradication" of sin in Christ's flesh during his earthly lifetime; rather, fleshly sin was in a state of enforced "impotency," like an animal bound to the altar to be sacrificed.

²⁰*CHF*, 28.

²¹*CW V*, 126-127, 169-173, 245; *CHF*, 43; *DP*, 9.

holds to a kenotic Christology in which the Logos reduces his abilities to those of a mere human being. The Spirit condescends to submit to the authority of the Son of Man *as a man*, not as the divine Son, in a manner prototypical for Christians of their authority to wield the Spirit for their own sanctification and empowerment,²² even to the point of possessing “perpetual infallibility of thought, speech, and behaviour”!²³

Implications for Christian Life. Irving saw specific pastoral implications to his theology: if, as his opponents claimed, Christ's human nature were not sinful, then it must be his alien, sinless humanity that is the object of God's salvific affection rather than our own. But if Christ truly has shared our lot, we may trust in his sympathetic mediation, hope in a future resurrection like his, and follow his example now through Spirit-empowered, holy lives.²⁴ At his church trial for heresy, Irving powerfully illustrated this last point:

This is no question of scholastic theology. I speak for the sanctification of men. I wish my flock to be holy; and, unless the Lord Jesus has contended with sin, as they are commanded to do, how can they be holy when they follow Him? Can I ask the people to do or suffer more than He did? He is the Captain of their salvation, and I wish them to follow Him! Can a soldier who is sick, wounded, or dead, be expected to follow a leader who is filled with the omnipotence of God? Nay! But if his captain be sick, wounded, and dead, too, may he not ask the soldier to do the like? Now Jesus was sick for us, contended with sinful flesh for us, and hence it is that He can call on us to follow Him in our contendings with sin, our sicknesses, and deaths.²⁵

²²CW II, 220; IV, 531-538; V, 87-89, 112-113, 124, 132-134, 256, 437-440; CHF, 39; *The Day of Pentecost, Or, The Baptism with the Holy Ghost* (hereafter DP) (London: Baldwin & Cradock, 1831) (ebook), 16, 28-32, 41, 62, 64, 70, 76, 90. In CW IV, 537, Irving retracts any previous statements which may suggest that Christ defeated sin by his divinity rather than by his humanity alone.

²³DP, 54; cf. 30-32, 42, 53-55, 65; CW V, 256. Irving explicitly insists that infallibility is not reserved for the pope but is the common privilege of all Christians (DP, 55).

²⁴CW IV, 526-558; V, 128, 132-133, 438; CHF *passim*; DP *passim*. See CW IV, 541-559 for a moving meditation on Christian life as a sharing in the holy, self-sacrificial love of Christ.

²⁵Irving's defense at his trial (13 March, 1833), in Oliphant, vol. 2, 346. Cf. CW IV, 536-539; CW V, 141, 145-146.

Elsewhere Irving critiques his own Reformed tradition for overemphasizing believers' persisting sinfulness. Rather, he insists that God commands and therefore makes it possible for fallen beings to live in perfection of holiness in this life, a perfection entered through regeneration and contradicted whenever Christians yield to sin.²⁶ Irving sees his Christology as countering both despair and pride over one's spiritual state: we need not despair of being holy despite our sinful flesh, for Christ was holy in the same flesh as ours; and we dare not stand aloof in "Pharisaical pride" at our holiness, for Christ's own holiness did not cause him to distance himself from our sinful flesh.²⁷ To Irving's mind, the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification particularly leads to such Pharisaism:

For . . . if you are ashamed to think the holy soul of Jesus should inhabit mortal and corruptible flesh, . . . then you will be also ashamed, after you have been sanctified of the Holy Ghost, to confess the sinfulness of your own flesh, but will think and believe, with the Arminians, that it hath received a purification . . . and, thus purified, you will loathe to mingle again with publicans and sinners, lest you should be tainted anew; and you will say, "Stand off: I am holier than thou."²⁸

In short, Irving detects in the Wesleyan view of Christians' sanctification the same troubled concept of sanctification as ontological change that bedevils his Christological critics' view of Christ's humanity's sanctification *in utero*.

A Wesleyan Appraisal

How may Wesleyans respond to Irving? We should commend him first for calling Christians to a presently-available holy lifestyle of victory over sin. In this and in his supporting exegesis of such texts as Matthew 5:48 and 1 John 1:7-2:2, Irving hews close to Wesley.²⁹ The emphasis afforded to the Holy Spirit, the agent of sanctification, is also a welcome one to

²⁶Letter to Marcus Dods (8 March, 1830), in Oliphant, vol. 2, 114; CW I, 623-624, 644; CHF, 6-9, 42, 69-72.

²⁷Letter to his sister Elizabeth (27 March, 1833), in Oliphant, vol. 2, 358.

²⁸CW V, 127. For the lumping together of Arminians and Methodists, see CW V, 77. For Irving's critique of the "abominable notion of the Wesleyan Methodists" regarding conditional security in Christ, see CW V, 196.

²⁹Cf. CHF 5-8, 69 with John Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection in Works* (Jackson) XI, 376, 390, 444.

those whose tradition has been influenced by the likes of John Fletcher and Daniel Steele. Furthermore, Irving calibrates Christian holiness to the earthly life of Jesus, a critical move if one is to avoid framing one's expectations of Christian life according to notions foreign to the faith. Irving's view of Christ-defined holiness encourages engaging sinners rather than avoiding them. This certainly rings true to the New Testament, and his critique of Pharisaical Arminians on this score bears an uncomfortable resemblance to some—though by no means all—expressions of the Wesleyan Holiness Movement. Indeed, Irving's strong emphasis on the reality of Christ's human frailties and struggles counterbalances Wesley's tendency to underplay these in deference to Christ's divinity.³⁰

On the other hand, Irving's own thought comes perilously close to Gnosticism³¹ with his talk of a postmortem "physical change" to the very "particles of [Christ's] flesh" being necessary in order to eliminate sin. Nazarene theologians Wynkoop and Dunning have taught Wesleyans to beware of conceptualizing sin as a quasi-material entity to be removed rather than as an affective disposition to be reoriented.³² Such a reorientation is compatible with continued existence in a mortal body and fallen world.

Irving is able to affirm a continuous conversion of sinful into sinless desires throughout Christ's and Christians' lives. The underlying sin inherent in human nature, however, can only be suspended, not destroyed, in this life. But if this is so, then Christ's sinlessness is radically relativized, for there remains a fundamental element of his being that passively, if not actively, resists God and incurs divine judgment. Jesus himself then falls short of the first great commandment to love God with the totality of one's being.³³ Given this point, Irving's distinction between sinfulness of nature and sinlessness of act cannot stand, for sin still clings to

³⁰For a survey of the literature on this point, see Richard M. Riss, "John Wesley's Christology in Recent Literature," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 45:1 (Spring 2010), 108-129.

³¹Noble, 168-169.

³²See, e.g., Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1972), ch. 8; H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1988), 13-17. Even in his critique of Wynkoop, Richard S. Taylor, "Why the Holiness Movement Died," *God's Revivalist March* 1999 (repr., Cincinnati: Revivalist Press, 1999), 14-15, agrees with the point above.

³³Despite Irving's claim in CW IV, 526.

Christ's acts in the form of a less than whole-natured commitment to God. Likewise, Irving's attempted distinction between sinfulness of nature and sinlessness of person fails. According to his reading of the Psalms, Christ "doth feel [corrupt desires] as *his own* . . . doth confess them as *his own*"; that is, he does not excuse them as belonging to his nature rather than his person, but takes *personal* responsibility for them. In the end, Christ's death is for *his own sin* and his spotlessness as both priest and sacrifice comes into question.

On his part, Wesley claims that, in the Incarnation, Christ was "made in the likeness of the fallen creatures" in their disgrace, sufferings,³⁴ temptations,³⁵ and "innocent infirmities."³⁶ Despite his likeness to our sinful flesh, however, he was "pure from sin."³⁷ In that case, there is hope for our own liberation from sin amid the same conditions. Wesley would concur with Irving that an element of sin remains in believers subsequent to their regeneration. What he would disagree with is Irving's belief that regeneration effects as much perfection in holiness as is available this side of eternity. The discovery of remaining sin, Wesley taught, should drive one to seek an "entire" sanctification, a full sharing in the "mind of Christ," in whom no sinful disposition found room.³⁸

The primary attraction of Irving's doctrine of Christ's sinful flesh is surely experiential. There is comfort in knowing that Christ has gone through all that we do. Or has he? If, as Irving claims, Christ never actually sinned, then arguably the *majority* of human experience eludes him. He knows nothing of the initial thrill of temptation yielded to, the sweetness of stolen water (Prov 9:17), the guilt and later miserable consequences of wrongdoing, or the temptations peculiar to those who already have become habituated to a certain sin. The premise that one can only sympathize with and be a role model for persons in conditions that one

³⁴*Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 730, on Phil 2:7.

³⁵*Explanatory Notes*, 25, on Matt 4:1; 821, on Heb. 4:15; *Plain Account* (Works XI), 419.

³⁶*Explanatory Notes*, 304, on Jn. 1:14; 821, on Heb. 4:15; cf. 822-823, on Heb. 5:7-8.

³⁷*Explanatory Notes*, 546, on Rom. 8:3; cf. 830, on Heb. 7:26; 910, on 1 Jn. 3:5.

³⁸Sermons 13 ("On Sin in Believers") and 14 ("The Repentance of Believers"), Works V, 144-70; *Plain Account* (Works XI), 380-7, 401-3, 423.

has personally experienced bears scrutiny,³⁹ for it leads to the conclusion that Christ must be *exactly* like us in every way, to the extent of actually sinning.⁴⁰ And if he is just the same as us, then can he truly save us or merely empathize?⁴¹ Irving's illustration at his trial points up the problem. How can a dead captain lead dead troops? Would a soldier really wish to follow an invalid into combat?

As we have seen, Irving's solution to Christ's kenotic weakness is the Spirit's power. Here too we find experiential attractiveness, this time based not on Jesus' likeness to us but on our likeness to him, for we have received the same Spirit as he did and therefore, under Irving's model, can expect to live *exactly* like him in every way, inclusive of infallibility.⁴² Among the dangers to be avoided here are Nestorianism and its anthropological cousin, Pelagianism, in both of which the accent falls on the human contribution to salvation.⁴³ If Christ saves us primarily as a Spirit-filled human being, then was the Incarnation truly necessary? Could we not have saved ourselves with but the assistance of the Holy Spirit? Our being born sinners is not an insuperable obstacle to this line of argument since for Irving even Christ's sinlessness was only relative.

While Irving held that Christians may be free from all error but not from all indwelling sin, Wesley believed the opposite. In his *Plain Account*

³⁹E.g., must Jesus as a Jewish rabbi in first-century Galilee have felt the struggles peculiar to a twenty-first century pregnant Peruvian cocaine addict in order to be "in all points tempted like as we are"? Cf. S. W. Sykes, "The Theology of the Humanity of Christ," in S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton, eds., *Christ Faith and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 61.

⁴⁰As Marilyn McCord Adams asks, "What if God's soteriological task is to redeem by making even horror-filled human lives meaningful? What if God's principal strategy were to sanctify them by metaphysical identification? Wouldn't Incarnation into a human nature that *not only suffers but perpetrates horrors fill that bill?*" *What Sort of Human Nature? Medieval Philosophy and the Systematics of Christology* (The Aquinas Lecture; 1999; Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999), 98 (emphasis mine). One could respond that "meaning" divorced from justice is a fleeting fantasy that does not promote universal *shalom*—like a cigarette at Auschwitz, it may help one cope, but it offers no hope.

⁴¹Cf. Rainey, 7-12.

⁴²In *DP*, 76, Irving warns that to claim that Christ relied on his own divinity for power during his earthly life is to render him useless as an example to us.

⁴³On the family resemblance between the two heresies, see Frances Young, "A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22 (1971), 104.

of *Christian Perfection*, he repeatedly urges that sanctification leads to a perfection of love but not of knowledge or manners. The perfect love that replaces a sinful disposition is compatible with errors of judgment, from which arise unintentional transgressions of God's law. These unintentional transgressions merit God's judgment and so require to be covered by Christ's atoning work.⁴⁴

Wesley's acknowledgement of the limits of earthly perfectibility fits well with James' warning that we all err (Jas. 3:2)⁴⁵ and with Paul's confession that we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26-27). It also underscores the bedrock *pro nobis* of the gospel: the Lord does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We imitate him *analogously*, not *univocally* (as Irving seems to imply), for he and his work remain radically unique.⁴⁶ He is the eternal, *monogenēs* Son; we are sons and daughters by his grace (Jn. 1:12, 18; Gal. 4:4-7). He gave his life once in atoning sacrifice; we give our lives continually in gratitude and service (Eph. 4:32-5:2; Heb. 9:11-28; 13:15-16; 1 Jn. 3:16; 4:9-11). He is free from sin; we are freed from sin (Jn. 8:34-36, 46; 1 Pet. 2:21-25). His words and ways are blameless through their infallibility (Pss. 12:6; 18:30; 19:7); ours are blameless through his forgiveness of our failings (Pss. 19:12-14; 139:23-24).

This, however, raises an unresolved issue within Wesleyan theology. What is the relationship of sin to infirmity, and what are the implications not only for Christian perfection but also for *Christ's* perfection? In a recent article, Mark K. Olson has traced how Wesley first identified infirmity with sin, then distanced the two in the interest of proclaiming salvation from all sin as available in this life, then finally re-established the link between infirmity and sin "improperly so called" while still affirming a presently possible entire sanctification.⁴⁷ Missing from Olson's fine article is any discussion of

⁴⁴*Plain Account* (Works XI), 374, 383-384, 394-399, 415-419, 442-443.

⁴⁵Cf. *Plain Account* (Works XI), 375-376, with p. 417.

⁴⁶Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series 129) (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010); 269-71; Ivor J. Davidson, "'Not My Will but Yours be Done': The Ontological Dynamics of Incarnational Intention," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7:2 (April 2005), 203, puts it succinctly: "It is the same Spirit who empowers Jesus who enables other human beings to confess that Jesus and his saving actions are unique."

⁴⁷"John Wesley's Doctrine of Sin Revisited," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 47:2 (Fall 2012), 53-71.

Christ's own human infirmities. If all infirmities are inseparable from sin and require atonement, then by sharing in our infirmities, Christ too is sinful and must atone for himself, as in Irving's view.⁴⁸ Wesley, though, distinguishes between our "innocent infirmities" which Christ shared and "sinful infirmity" which he did not.⁴⁹ Probing this distinction may prove fruitful for resolving the tension which Olson has highlighted.⁵⁰

Conclusion

This article has considered the relationship of Edward Irving's Christology and pneumatology to his account of sanctification. From a Wesleyan perspective, we have found serious deficiencies in his doctrines. Nevertheless, their rehabilitation in recent decades demands that we continue to engage seriously both with his teachings themselves and with the genuine pastoral concern undergirding them—the concern that Christians embrace the biblical call, "Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."

⁴⁸One Wesleyan writer who has seen this implication clearly is John W. Larson, *What Is the Difference Between the Carnal Nature and the Human Nature? (An Inductive Study in the New Testament)* (unpublished M.A. thesis, Western Evangelical Seminary, 1977) and *Another Look at the Source of Jesus' Humanity A Reexamination of the New Testament and the Chalcedon Creed* (unpublished M.Div. thesis, Western Evangelical Seminary, [1984]). His solution is to revive the heterodox "heavenly flesh" Christology associated with Menno Simons and the ancient Gnostics and Apollinarians. Larson shares Irving's practical concern but arrives at the opposite Christological conclusion. (My thanks to Rev. Larson for sharing his theses with me.)

⁴⁹*Explanatory Notes*, 821, on Heb. 4:15 (de-italicized) and 5:2. This distinction has a precedent in Reformed theology, e.g., Johannes Wollebius, *Compendium Theologiae Christianae* Ch. XVI.3.iii-iv in John W. Beardslee, ed. and trans., *Reformed Dogmatics* (A Library of Protestant Thought) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 90.

⁵⁰One might, for instance, see "innocent" and "sinful" infirmities not as two *types* of infirmities but as two *stages* of the same infirmities. Noble, 173-176, 185-188, takes this step by describing how Christ used the Holy Spirit's power to perpetually discipline his fallen flesh so that no sin ever arose from its impulses. Since Noble follows Wesley in holding that Christians, although possessed of the Spirit, continually fall short of God's perfect standard due to their fallenness (90-94, 124-125, 191-193), the implication is that they do not discipline themselves as well as Christ did. The question then arises, why should this be the case universally? Either one must posit that Christ's sinless perfection is due to resources which we lack (His personhood as the divine Logos? His eternal communion with the Father? His lack of original sin from conception onward? A greater measure of the Spirit? All of the above?) or else that, hypothetically, Christians may attain sinless perfection in this life. Clearly, more work remains to be done on this issue.

BOOK REVIEWS

Bird, Michael F., ed. *Four Views on the Apostle Paul*. Counterpoints: Bible & Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 236 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-310-32695-3.

Reviewed by Thomas E. Phillips, Dean of the Library and Information Services, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA.

Readers of this series will be quite familiar with the book's format. Four recognized scholars debate the best reading of Paul's theology. Each author offers one full chapter, followed by brief responses from the other three authors. The editor, Michael Bird, has offered an exceptionally strong introduction and conclusion to the volume. Readers would be well served to read Bird's conclusion before reading the rest of the volume.

The readings in this volume are well structured and the authors are well-chosen. Thomas R. Schreiner, James Buchanan Professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, represents what many readers will quickly identify as a classic Reformed reading of Paul. Paul is interpreted in light of the classic Protestant categories of substitutionary atonement and imputed righteousness. Although Schreiner is aware that this reading is quickly losing ground in both scholarly and popular circles, he concedes little ground to more contemporary readings. Evangelicals and Wesleyans who have been nurtured in fundamentalist or fundamentalist-leaning churches will hear echoes of their own tradition represented here. However, this position is brought under devastating criticism from all three of the book's other co-authors. Persons who are growing uncomfortable with the Reformed tradition of substitutionary atonement will find all the evidence that they need to abandon that position in the three razor-sharp critiques offered in the first section of this book.

Luke Timothy Johnson, Robert W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Candler School of Theology, offers a "Catholic" reading of Paul. Other than Johnson's uncompromising insistence upon the role of the church in Paul's soteriology and his strong desire to place the Pauline tradition in close alignment with the subsequent development of the classic Christian tradition, there is little to mark Johnson's reading as distinctively Catholic. Johnson joins with Schreiner

and a tiny minority of scholars who presume the authenticity of all thirteen Pauline letters. In this respect and in his willingness to attribute the harsh sexism of the Pastoral Epistles to Paul, Johnson is very close to Schreiner's Evangelical reading of Paul (although Johnson rejects Schreiner's Reformed antithesis between law and works, on the one hand, and grace and faith, on the other).

The last two sections are more representative of contemporary critical approaches to Paul. Douglas A. Campbell, associate professor of New Testament at Duke University, argues for a "post-new perspective" reading of Paul. Campbell's reading of Paul is both emphatically Trinitarian and apocalyptic. His reading is far less individualistic than Schreiner's and less ecclesiastic than Johnson's. Campbell argues for a Pauline theology rooted in Romans 5–8 in which Paul sees the Christ event as revelatory of God as the Spirit works to bring about the new creation through the apocalyptic intervention of the cross and resurrection. According to Campbell, Paul understood Christ to be creating a new "brotherhood" through the Spirit. (Campbell is not bothered by gender-exclusive language in regard to either God or humanity, even though Campbell clearly separates Paul from the sexism of the Pastorals.)

Mark D. Nanos, Soebbing Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence at Rockhurst University, offers a Jewish reading of Paul's letters. As Nanos himself insists, his reading of Paul is by no means representative of Jewish understandings of Paul. Rather, Nanos claims that most contemporary Jews presume a reading of Paul's letters that is more informed by the Reformed reading of Paul represented in Schreiner's chapter than they are by his reading. According to Nanos, most Jews assume that Paul was an ex-Jew who converted to Christianity and who then believed that his fellow Jews were obligated to do the same or else face an eternal hell (exactly what Schreiner affirms). Nanos—like Campbell—acknowledges his debt to the "new perspective" of E. P. Sanders, N. T. Wright, and J. D. G. Dunn. Nanos likewise rejects both Schreiner's Reformed reading of Paul and the typical Jewish response to that reading. In Nanos's reading, Paul maintained very distinct attitudes toward Christ-accepting Jews, Jews who did not accept Christ, Christ-accepting Gentiles, and Gentiles who did not accept Christ. According to Nanos, nearly all readings of Paul have erred by failing to recognize these differences. Nanos argues that Paul presumed salvation for all Jews (including Jews who observed Torah without accepting Christ) and that Paul was quite comfortable with Christ-accepting Jews (like himself) continuing to observe the Torah. In Nanos's

understanding, Paul argued only that Christ-accepting Gentiles should not observe the Torah, including the practice of circumcision for males. In Nanos's interpretation, such observation on the part of Christ-accepting Gentiles would suggest that the new age had not dawned and that God was not yet expanding the blessing of God to all nations. However, by accepting Gentiles into the people of God as Gentiles, God—in Nanos's reading of Paul—was demonstrating that the last age had begun in fulfillment of prophecy.

Much more could be said about a book of such length and complexity, but one lacuna and one bit of skewed perspective must be noted. First, the lacuna: The "new perspective" on Paul is frequently mentioned. Because the "new perspective" is now the generally accepted scholarly perspective, this dominant approach to Paul should have been given its own chapter. Second, the skew: Two of the four authors accept all thirteen letters as Pauline. This in no way reflects contemporary scholarly opinion on Paul. This slant in the direction of uncritical scholarship results in a volume that downplays the importance of fairly adjudicating authorship issues. Apart from these substantial deficits, the book is well-conceived and well-argued. The debate is best suited to persons with some prior background in the Pauline letters.

Brendlinger, Irv. *The Call to Authenticity: A Handbook of Hope for the Church*. Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2009. 154 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-9819582-1-7.

Reviewed by Jon R. Kershner, Adjunct Professor of Theology, Earlham School of Religion, Richmond, IN.

If you are interested in the vitality and faithfulness of the church, are looking for a resource to invigorate your congregation or theology students, or are disenchanted with jargon-laden church growth fads, Irv Brendlinger's work *The Call to Authenticity: A Handbook of Hope for the Church* is for you. Brendlinger's scholarship focuses on a close and competent reading of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, but the work is filled with plenty of anecdotes, illustrations, and stories so that it could be used just as well in a seminary class as in a small group comprised of lay congregants. By avoiding popular catchwords (e.g., "missional," "emergent"), Brendlinger makes his book accessible and eliminates the need to learn new religious jargon. Most importantly, he situates his analysis within the whole tradition of the church's longing for faithfulness.

Influenced by Wesleyan and Quaker traditions, but, most especially, as a student of the history of theology, Brendlinger weaves together biblical, patristic, Reformed, Wesleyan, and Radical Reformation theological insights with an astute understanding of twenty-first-century culture. The result is an ecclesiology that is both a return to a long-standing tradition that originated with the apostles and has been present in the great church reform movements ever since, and has fresh insight that is practical and applicable today.

Brendlinger's book is biblical exegesis in a narrative way. The reader can immediately discern that what lies between the covers of *The Call to Authenticity* was fleshed out, wrestled with, and reflected upon in the crucible of the author's ministry as a pastor and teacher. Brendlinger chronicles how his assumptions regarding the church's true nature changed through his experiences as a pastor and how this change of understanding invigorated his vision for the church. In the first two chapters, Brendlinger describes his own journey coming to these conclusions, his disillusionment with experiences in the church, and his joy in discovering the insights that are the content of the rest of the book.

At this point, Ephesians takes center stage in Brendlinger's analysis. He argues that the calling of the church is to act according to the frequently repeated phrase in Ephesians 1, "to the praise of [God's] glory." This insight might seem like nothing particularly original, and Brend-

linger would agree, but his analysis becomes especially poignant when he suggests that “reflecting God’s nature” is an appropriate way to understand “glory.” From this perspective, the common, everyday joys and beauties of human living, friendship, and nature evoke a holy gratitude for gifts from God. Here, theology leads to doxology, and the mundane takes on the sacred. Reflecting God, then, is the calling of the church and must not be relegated to a separate, “religious” sphere of Christian life, but rather is integrated into the core of it.

Brendlinger explains that Paul believed that attentiveness to the calling of the church enlivens faith and provides hope. Hope, Brendlinger argues, is not incidental to the calling of the church; instead, it is essential to it because “hope comes from knowing who we are” and “what God expects of us” (49). The author’s own experience resonates with Paul’s statements to the Ephesians: understanding the purpose of the life of faith, and the nature and purpose of the church, brings hope.

Exploring Pauline metaphors for the church, Brendlinger says that central to all of them is the idea of incarnation. The church, he asserts, is Christ’s visible body, literally. Brendlinger suggests that the church’s incarnation of Jesus’ body can be rightfully understood as “transubstantiation.” The incarnation continues in the life of the church, an ecclesiology that is radical in its implications, if for no other reason than that personal salvation is refocused so as not to be an end in itself, but to serve the incarnation of Christ to the world in the church. But, here, Brendlinger offers a caution as well. He is conscious of how church fads can over-emphasize and under-emphasize a particular concept or jargon. He explains that “body life” once became a church catchphrase that, in the end, contributed to the dilution of its incarnational meaning. Thus, *The Call to Authenticity* provides a service to the church not only in its positive endorsement of a biblical model of ecclesiology but also as a warning of the way theology and the church are susceptible to cultural fads.

How, then, is the church to live into this calling to reflect God and incarnate Christ in the world? Taking his cue from Ephesians 4:11-12, Brendlinger reverses common perceptions of whose is the task of ministry. In a compelling argument, he asserts that Paul intended the clergy to equip the saints, the church at large, to do works of ministry, not to do the work of ministry by themselves. Ministry, here, is not to be understood as a specialized task that occurs within the walls of a church building, but is broadly understood as meeting human need in the variety of contexts in which the saints find themselves throughout the week. Clergy teach the laity how to recognize and respond to those needs.

Brendlinger sees three components to the equipping of the gathered church: teaching/learning, *koinonia*, and corporate worship. Significantly, he does not proscribe a particular *method* or *form* of worship as more authentic and faithful, but describes worship as the simple act of “attributing worth to God” (109). Thus, worship is not about human achievement, or saying all the right things about God. Instead, in worship the saints speak directly to God and listen to God. This kind of direct intimacy with God in worship is a clear implication of Brendlinger’s strong emphasis on the church as the incarnation of Christ.

The result of this ecclesiology from Ephesians, Brendlinger argues, is a mature church able to embody Christ-likeness in service to others. However, Brendlinger resists attempts to quantify “success.” Instead, the focus is on maturity in the body of Christ, the members of which are prepared to be ministers, and, then, as an authentic *by-product* of that maturity and preparation, springs outreach, new ministries, and evangelism.

The beauty of Brendlinger’s book is its simplicity. That is, according to Ephesians the church is the body of Christ and its purpose is to live into the calling to reflect God through acts of ministry. Since this is not some new program of church growth to buy into, but instead is the nature and calling of the church, the task of the saints is simply to be authentic: to be what the church already is. This is incredibly refreshing.

At the same time, *The Call to Authenticity* is provocative and demanding. For example, relating the church’s incarnation of the body of Christ to transubstantiation leaves nowhere for mild theologies of complacency to hide. At another point, Brendlinger uses the analogy of a football huddle to describe the gathered church (97-98). The point of the analogy is to take the focus off of the feel-good sentimentality that can arise when a congregation meets together and, in so doing, he re-prioritizes the purpose of the church to living faithfully beyond the walls of the church building. Moreover, Brendlinger’s soteriology—driven by his high incarnational theology—seems to purport a perfectionism in its emphasis on the assumption of Christ’s characteristics and love, though not Christ’s divinity (125). However, the thrust of his soteriology is not about achieving a certain level of religious acumen, but about the transformation and maturity that God has already made possible. Statements like these ask the reader to consider anew what it means to be among the “saints.”

To conclude, *The Call to Authenticity* is a coherent and invigorating analysis of the church. It is both scholarly and pastoral. Brendlinger uses his experiences as a teacher/preacher to articulate a vision of the church that has enraptured his passion and has important implications for ministry and faithfulness.

Chan, Francis and Preston Sprinkle. *Erasing Hell: What God Said about Eternity, and the Things We Made Up*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2011. 208 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0781407250.

Reviewed by David Baggett, Professor of Philosophy, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA. This is a corrected version of a review that first appeared in the Fall 2013 issue. We apologize for errors in that earlier version that appeared during the editing process.

In *Erasing Hell: What God Said about Eternity and the Things We Made Up*, Francis Chan teams up with Preston Sprinkle to provide a counterpoint to those like Rob Bell whose popular book was bound to elicit responses by more conservative commentators. The authors defend a more traditional view of hell as ultimately inhabited by the majority of humankind, likely featuring extreme pain if not torture, perhaps literal fire. They consider it their duty as Bible believers to embrace such notions and to warn people of the judgment to come, not softened by wishful thinking about second chances or domesticated pictures of a less-than-terrifying hell.

Chan and Sprinkle are concerned that a driving force in domesticating theology to make it more palatable is that people are slow to let God be God. Their book is intended to be about “embracing a God who isn’t always easy to understand, and whose ways are far beyond us; a God whose thoughts are much higher than our thoughts; a God who, as the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, has every right to do, as the psalmist says, ‘whatever He pleases’ (Ps 115:3 NASB)” (17). To drive home the point, they then reiterate, “God has the right to do **WHAT-EVER** He pleases” (17). Regardless of what readers think about their take on hell, they state that they should believe Psalm 115:3 because, “at the end of the day, our feelings and wants and heartaches and desires are not ultimate—only God is ultimate. God tells us plainly that His ways and thoughts are infinitely higher than ours (Isa. 55:9). Expect then, that Scripture will say things that don’t agree with your natural way of thinking” (17).

The fact that God’s ways are above ours does not mean that various efforts at theologizing that do not comport with ultra-literalist or extremely conservative interpretations of scripture represent a denial of God’s transcendence or an effort to domesticate God’s ways to the comfortable confines of human ideas. Take the authors’ citation of Psalm 115:3. Is it obvious that this verse means that God can do *whatever* God

pleases? Chan and Sprinkle treat the verse as if its obvious meaning is that God's will has no constraints. They express the point in terms of God's "right," which really is not a notion we can find in the verse itself, but why are "rights" rather than character, love, or grace language consistent with the actual psalm?

Chan and Sprinkle stand rather firmly in a Reformed tradition that may be characterized as Ockhamistic. Ockham was the Medieval thinker who basically espoused that morality is whatever God wills it to be. In the older venerable tradition emphasizing the nature of God and humanity having been made in God's image—a fact not altogether vitiated in our fallenness (by God's grace)—God's goodness, though infinitely greater than human goodness, is still essentially recognizable. Certain axiomatic, nonnegotiable moral intuitions are sufficiently veridical and reliable so that we have a way to adjudicate between conflicting theological claims about God's alleged commands and the like. Ockhamism abandons this approach, opting instead to emphasize God's otherness, transcendence, and inscrutability.

Thinkers ranging from Alasdair MacIntyre to Charles Taylor to David Bentley Hart have extensively chronicled the paradigm shift effected by moving from the older tradition to Ockhamism. Chan and Sprinkle affirm their place within the newer tradition by their comments about Romans 9. "The text itself is not confusing," they write, adding to "read it for yourself. It's fairly simple to understand. . . . Maybe we don't want to admit that we believe in a God who is so free to do whatever He wants" (129). They spend no time interpreting Romans 9:22-23 by appeal to exegetical, historical, and contextual considerations, apparently thinking its meaning is obvious. Instead they conclude, "What if God decided to do this? What if God, as the sovereign Creator of the universe, decided to create 'vessels of wrath prepared for destruction'? And what if He did so in order to 'show His wrath' and 'make known His power'? And what if it's His way of showing those He saves just how great His glory and mercy is? What would you do if He chose to do this? Refuse to believe in Him? Refuse to be a 'vessel of mercy'? . . . 'What if?' is a probing question that forces us to face our inflated view of our own logic. It's another way of asking: Just how high is my view of God?" (130). Thus, the authors think Romans 9 is easy to understand. What they understand as its correct interpretation is merely classical Calvinism, yet that interpretation is predicated on, to my thinking, bad exegesis of Romans 9:22-23. These two verses do not refer to an idea of double predestination but to those

worthy of either destruction or mercy due to the kind of lives they lived.¹

There is simply no hope of understanding rightly what Paul is up to in Romans by cherry picking a few passages plucked from context and interpreted with wooden literalness. Paul is telling a dynamic story that culminates in God the Son becoming human, being the perfectly faithful Jew, and making possible God's perfect fulfillment of covenantal faithfulness. It is true that the Jews among the early Christians had to come to terms with God's prerogatives to reconfigure Israel, to reveal the shape of his salvation plan that might be different from their expectations, and theirs was a call to give up thinking that salvation was a function of ethnicity or available through the law. It was through Christ, and for Jew and Gentile alike. This was God's doing, and it was good. Let God be God.

However, when Chan and Sprinkle state, "Let God be God," they mean something very different: Not that God is recognizably good, despite residing beyond our ken in many respects, but that God is good no matter what, in the Ockhamistic sense. And the "highness" of one's view of God has to do, not with the extent of God's grace, mercies, and love, but the inscrutability of God's will, the caprice of God's commands, and the arbitrariness of God's choices. The authors commit the same mistake when they interpret the verses about God being the Potter. Again, they conclude that whatever God does is perfect, and humanity must affirm it. But they state this not to suggest that God is loving, righteous, merciful, kind, holy, and the like, and that we, having been made in God's image, should recognize such traits and give God glory for his faithfulness. Instead, we are to affirm that the good is whatever God says it is.

Chan and Sprinkle conflate an important distinction recognized by John Locke. Reason alone cannot figure out in advance all of God's various activities in his dealings with humanity. We are thus deeply dependent on revelation: God's revelation to us of God's ways, plans, and methods. They ask a series of rhetorical questions to drive home this point. Would we have been able to predict or foresee God's treatment of Achan and his family? Or would we, if we were God, have commanded Ezekiel

¹See the treatment of these verses in Ben Witherington, with Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 258.

to do things like lie on one side for 390 days and then his other for 40? Of course not, but from this fact the authors try to extrapolate that "Scripture is filled with divine actions that don't fit our human standards of logic and morality. But they don't need to, because we are the clay and He is the Potter. We need to stop trying to domesticate God or confine Him to tidy categories and compartments that reflect our human sentiments rather than His inexplicable ways. We serve a God whose ways are incomprehensible, whose thoughts are not like our thoughts. . . . It's incredibly arrogant to pick and choose which incomprehensible truths we embrace" (136).

Our inability to predict or even fully understand some of God's ways does not mean we should infer that our standards of morality and reason are mere human sentiments impotent in comprehending divine truth. Extolling the importance of reason does not require believing that reason could have prognosticated the entirety of salvation history with all its ebbs and flows, vagaries and vicissitudes. However, most of God's actions, in retrospect, are eminently understandable, and even those hard to understand are usually not impossible to believe rationally and are reconcilable with our best moral and rational insights and intuitions. Indeed, these very God-given standards help us distinguish between better and worse theologies and biblical interpretations. It is not the domestication of God to reject certain interpretations; it is the use of the minds God has given us to separate the theological wheat from the chaff.

God is truly good, and indeed the Good, not in any sort of Ockhamistic sense, but because God is the best candidate for the ultimate Good to which our best moral intuitions and veridical ethical insights make us privy. Saying God is good is actually meaningful and has determinate content. And the contents of morality will never make us call good evil or evil good. There are cases and times when some of our moral convictions may need to be challenged, and Chan and Sprinkle point out passages in the Bible that may do so. But there is a world of difference between passages difficult but not impossible to square with nonnegotiable moral intuitions and entailments of Reformed theology like unconditional election, which is simply rationally impossible to swallow.

Croswell, Laurence and Mark Croswell. *Lift up a Standard: The Life and Legacy of Ralph C. Horner*. N.p.: [Wesley Press], 2012. 468 pages. ISBN: 978-089827-725-8.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Research Professor for World Christian Studies, New York Theological Seminary, New York, NY.

This book is an important requiem to a Canadian Holiness tradition, that of the Standard Church of America, which merged in 2004 with the Wesleyan Church. It makes three important contributions. First, it provides a carefully documented biography of the complex and controversial evangelist Ralph Cecil Horner (1853-1921), whose intense and often flamboyant labors created both the Holiness Movement Church and the Standard Church of Canada. He was one of the primary leaders of the Holiness revival in Canada during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Second, it outlines the history of the denomination that had to struggle with the leadership and legacy of a remarkable charismatic but authoritarian leader. Third, it gives access to the history of foreign mission undertaken by persons associated with the Standard Church of America.

Horner was converted within the context of the Methodist Church of Canada and was licensed as a local preacher in 1882. He felt called to be an evangelist and refused to take a parish. When his evangelistic campaigns attracted sensational press coverage, the Methodist Church attempted to curtail his activities and assign him to a parish. The struggle with the Methodist Church lasted several years and led to a severing of ties in 1895. Horner sought and received ordination in the Rochester Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church (USA) and was ordained that same year. However, he refused to submit to the discipline of the Wesleyan Methodists and instead developed the Holiness Association of Canada as a quasi-denomination. He attempted to obtain a government charter (1896) for this group as the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Canada, but was blocked by the Methodist Church which asserted a patent on the term "Methodist." Eventually, the movement was incorporated as the Holiness Movement Church and officially separated from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1897.

Horner's approach to governance in his church was that all should accept without question his authority in all matters. The rigidity and conservatism of his leadership made the option of the Azusa Street revival and the inspired version of Pentecostalism attractive to many. The pri-

mary leader of what became the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (Robert Edward McAlister) left the Holiness Movement Church after a visit to Los Angeles, and many lay people followed. The leadership style issue came to a head in 1917 when Albert T. Warren was elected bishop. Horner refused to concede or surrender the official papers, files, and seal. The matter was finally settled in secular court. In a court-supervised election, Warren was confirmed as bishop.

A few months later, Horner and some followers established the Standard Church of America in opposition to the Holiness Church of Canada. He died in 1921, but the divide between the two denominations remained. Merger talks between the two groups began in the 1938 but did not succeed despite multiple attempts. Both held unsuccessful merger conversations with the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Pilgrim Holiness Church. Finally, in 2004 the Standard Church merged with the Wesleyan Church, a process that required several years of intense negotiation and effort.

The history of the Standard Church and of the Holiness Movement Church, as well as their ethos, polity and praxis, is bound up with the life and personality of Horner. He is important for Holiness theology as well as evangelism, being famous, and in some quarters infamous, for his three-stage *ordo salutis*. He can be considered part of the Radical Holiness movement; he was a peer and contemporary of fellow radicals Albert Sims (1851-1935), Martin Wells Knapp (1853-1901), Seth Cooke Rees (1854-1933), and Frank Mortimer Messenger (1852-1931).

The Foreign Missionary Society was founded (1954) by Naomi Green to support mission work already begun (1899) with the encouragement of Horner. However, the history of mission work in both denominations is much older. By 1915, there were ten missionaries in Egypt and seven in China. Two years later, the sixteen missionaries and Egyptian pastors voted unanimously against Horner's effort to remain as bishop. When the Holiness Movement Church merged with the Free Methodist Church in 1954, the Egyptian Church joined the new body. The Standard Church of America missionaries eventually reentered Egypt and also worked in Mexico, Ghana, and China.

The book contains a number of useful appendixes including a bibliography of the books written by Horner (but not the periodicals edited or the periodical articles), a list of those eligible to vote in the contested election of 1916, a list of missionaries, and a key to the well-selected historical

photos included in the volume. The footnotes are gathered at the end of the volume, and access is enhanced with an excellent index.

The book is intended as an introduction to the Standard Church of America. One wishes that more attention had been given to sources (diaries, correspondence, and periodicals) that are tantalizingly mentioned but seldom cited and never footnoted nor the locations disclosed. It is hoped that this most interesting Holiness tradition will continue to receive scholarly attention and that its published materials will be preserved, digitized, and made widely available. It is also hoped that the relationships between Horner and other Holiness leaders, strained though they often were, will be examined in the context of the Holiness revivals of the period. Without the story of the two Horner-founded churches, the story of the global Holiness movements is incomplete. The authors are to be thanked for providing an important contribution to the history of these Canadian movements.

Crutcher, Timothy J. *The Crucible of Life: The Role of Experience in John Wesley's Theological Method*. Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2010. 279 pages. ISBN-13: 9780981958279.

Reviewed by John Culp, Professor of Philosophy, Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA.

Crutcher's study of John Wesley's understanding of experience in theology shows how Wesley avoided an orthodoxy with no connection to believers' lives and an experiential subjectivity with no theological faithfulness to the Christian tradition. Originally his Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Catholic University of Leuven in 2003, this paperback edition makes Crutcher's valuable study available to a broader audience as the first volume in *The Asbury Theological Seminary Series: The Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements in Wesleyan & Pietist Studies*. Organized in four parts, Crutcher begins with a presentation of the cultural and philosophical background to Wesley's understanding of experience, moves on to a careful discussion of the role of experience in knowing for Wesley, then turns to the relationship of experience to Scripture in Wesley's theological method, and concludes with some brief suggestions about the implications of Wesley's theological method for contemporary thought.

Crutcher's description of Wesley's theological method begins by contrasting Wesley's Aristotelian understanding of the role of experience in knowing to the alternatives of his time: scientific materialism, the British empiricism of Locke and Hume, and the rationalism of the Cambridge Platonists. The Aristotelian tradition assumed the reliability of sensory experience and understood reasoning to involve apprehension, judgment, and argumentation. Logic organizes experience by means of categories that exist prior to experience. While appreciative of scientific experimentation, Wesley's commitment to a theistic worldview led him to challenge the adequacy of scientific materialism because of its incompleteness that left out spiritual reality. Wesley agreed with Locke's rejection of innate ideas but preferred Aristotle's understanding of logic as based on metaphysical reality. For Wesley, the reality of the identifying characteristics or essences of objects are known through Scripture rather than immediately through experience. Wesley agreed with the priority of spiritual reality and the unification of religion and reason in the rationalist tradition while retaining his emphasis upon experience.

With Wesley's understanding of experience clearly identified, Crutcher demonstrates the dynamic relation between Scripture and expe-

rience. For Wesley, experience was both public and external as well as private and internal. The inward personal aspect of experience provided the location of an encounter with spiritual reality that transcended the individual and checked private understandings. However, experience was not simply the passive reception of data. Instead, Wesley recognized that sensations of the world are shaped by engagement with reality. The personal engagement with reality could lead to misperception because a person might lack information or modify an impression once it was received. In order to understand experiences, Crutcher argues that Wesley assumed that logic and Scripture organized data. Wesley thought that logic could either confirm or challenge an understanding of experience, but experience overruled logic when logic was not developed or when experience could not be adequately explained by reasoning.

Scripture pre-formed even non-religious knowledge such as science by showing how scientific experience is to be understood. In religious experience, Scripture supplied knowledge of the witness of the Spirit, which was the precondition for knowledge of God. Scripture provided the proper expectations, identified possibilities, and distinguished improper interpretations. However, experience could correct the pre-understanding provided by Scripture. Wesley acknowledged the role of interpretation in understanding Scripture by recognizing this role for experience. Neither Scripture nor logic are innate ideas but instead are known and understood through experiences of learning and study. Crutcher concludes that Scripture and reason interact dynamically with experience, which is both the source of knowledge and a testing ground of knowledge. But only Scripture can supplement experience with knowledge of a reality beyond sensory experience. Scripture and experience provide the data for knowledge and interact in a dynamic manner rather than either Scripture or experience always having priority. Reason provides the tool that processes Scriptural and experiential data into usable knowledge that can be demonstrated to be valid through on-going experience.

Crutcher deals with a variety of interesting topics in describing Wesley's theological method. For example, he devotes a chapter to the topic of the spiritual senses in Wesley. Although often understood as epistemological resources providing knowledge of spiritual realities that are unknowable by physical senses, Crutcher downplays the epistemic role of spiritual senses for Wesley. According to Crutcher, the spiritual senses are not an epistemological resource but instead confirm for the believer that Scripture is the authoritative description of the trans-sensory reality. He

strongly rejects any priority being given to experience, even that of the spiritual senses, over Scripture. Another interesting topic that Crutcher briefly alludes to is the implication of Wesley's theological method for phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches to knowledge of the divine. The experiences of the Christian believer, properly understood, provide understanding of the trans-sensory reality that is not meaningful when gained in any way other than through the believer's experiences.

Crutcher offers a self-consciously Wesleyan response to important issues in the rediscovery of religion by philosophers in both the analytical and continental traditions. He develops a carefully nuanced understanding of Wesley's use of Scripture, logic, and experience. His frequent summaries and clear structure facilitates understanding his argument. Further, his extensive citation of Wesley and his commitment to dealing with Wesley rather than Wesley as understood by Wesley's defenders or opponents both supports his understanding of Wesley and provides resources for those interested in working further on Wesley's thought.

Crutcher's careful distinction of Wesley's epistemology from the other dominant epistemologies of Wesley's times points to the importance of the prior conditions of Scripture and logic in coming to knowledge through experience and avoids simplistic understandings of the role of Scripture and experience in theology. His explanation of the role of Wesley's epistemology in his theological methodology demonstrates the importance of philosophical and theological reflection interacting rather than being opposed or distinct from each other.

At several points, further development of Crutcher's work would have been helpful. One of those points comes up in his identification of spiritual senses with faith. While Wesley makes that identification, Crutcher rejects the spiritual senses as an epistemological resource. But if faith is the evidence that comes through spiritual senses, it appears to be more than just a capacity but also involves resources for knowledge in some way. Both Abraham in Aldersgate and Athens and Mealey in "John Wesley" in *The Spiritual Senses* (ed. by Paul L. Gavryluk and Sarah Coakley) describe the spiritual senses as being both a capacity and a resource providing knowledge of God. While most Wesley scholars recognize that faith is not simplistically a human response but must also include a sense of faith as divine gift, the role of the spiritual senses in coming to and living a life of faith needs further explication. Does faith as a gift mean that the individual passively receives faith from God? If so, the question of those without faith becomes a major issue as articulated by Schellenberg's

challenge to the hiddenness of God. Wesley does not think God is hidden but can be known by the utilization of God-given grace. But what is the role of human agency or cooperation with divine grace? It would have been helpful if Crutcher had said more about this relationship.

A related question arises from Crutcher's discussion of Wesley's treatment of natural theology. He makes it clear that Wesley did not find much of a role for natural theology. But he could have raised the question about the consistency of Wesley's epistemology in relation to natural reason. Abraham in Aldersgate and Athens offers a corrective to Wesley by calling for a role for natural theology. One last request for further development of Crutcher's thought relates to his brief development of the implications of Wesley's experiential theology. His discussion here is limited to abstract identification of potential applications. Hopefully, Crutcher will continue to work on these implications in order to discuss them more fully and more concretely.

A brief warning to readers: Crutcher uses a few terms that could be misunderstood if one does not read carefully. His phrase "a priori conditions" could be understood to refer to innate knowledge. But his mention of Wesley's rejection of innate ideas and Kant's categories of understanding indicates that a priori conditions are not naturally present in each person. Also, Crutcher's identification of theology as relational and an implication of Wesley's theological method could lead some to think that Crutcher sees Wesley as opening the way for open, relational, or process theology. Crutcher understands relational as social or communal rather than as metaphysical. The further questions that this work raises demonstrate the significance and value of this insightful work on Wesley's epistemological assumptions in his theological method.

Demarest, Bruce, Bradley Nassif, Scott Hahn, Joseph Driskill, and Evan Howard. *Four Views on Christian Spirituality*. Counterpoints Bible & Theology Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012. 230 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-310-32928-2.

Reviewed by J. E. McDermond, Professor of Christian Ministry and Spirituality, Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, PA.

This text's basic format has been around since at least 1977 when Robert Clouse edited *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*. Clouse and IVP brought together authors who both advocated for their viewpoint and responded to the submissions offered by the other contributors. That text has sold over 100,000 copies and is still in print. Since then, Zondervan has established two "Counterpoints Series." One focuses on "Church Life" and contains six titles. The second, "Bible and Theology," to which the text under review belongs, contains twenty-two volumes. Clearly there is a market for this format, and there is good reason. In one volume, the reader can conveniently access various perspectives on a given topic, and the reader benefits from acknowledged "experts" both promoting a view and graciously critiquing other perspectives.

In this volume, Zondervan and Bruce Demarest bring together Bradley Nassif (Orthodox), Scott Hahn (Catholic), Joseph D. Driskill (Progressive Protestant) and Evan Howard (Evangelical) to dialogue on the topic of Christian Spirituality. Demarest points out that a "prominent feature of our times is the robust revival of spirituality, both Christian and non-Christian" (11), and one assumes this revival helped trigger this text's publication. However, Demarest rightly notes that this contemporary interest in spirituality is quite diverse. In fact, he describes it as "a Walmart of spiritual options" (12) in the postmodern world. Among the offerings in "postmodern spirituality . . . can be found the self-help movement, Native American sweat lodges, Taizé communities, and the Mosaic generation" (13). This text does not focus on those options. Rather, the common focus is a Christian spirituality that "embraces devotion to the triune God, abiding in Christ, pursuit of holiness, and cultivation of virtues—in short, the whole of life lived under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit" (17).

The serious challenge the authors faced was the sheer vastness and diversity of the task before them. Nassif notes, "This essay can offer no more than an overture to the larger score of the church's spiritual life" (28). Hahn encourages us to "think about what must fall within the range

of Catholic spirituality: the silence of Trappists and the Pentecostal praise of the Charismatic Renewal; the rarified intellectual life of the Dominicans and the profound feelings of the Franciscans; the wealth of the Knights of Malta and the elected poverty of the Missionaries of Charity. . . Ignatian detachment and Marian warmth" (73-74). Driskill attempts to find commonality in groups as diverse as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Friends (Quakers), and admits, "The term *main-line Protestant* is widely used today, even though its meaning is, to a considerable extent, fluid" (116). Finally, Howard is asked to speak for all Evangelicals, which, given the diversity of the National Association of Evangelicals, is no small task.

Nassif explains that, within Orthodox Christianity, the goal of spirituality is "the deification or glorification of the believer" (29), which takes place through focusing on the gospel in worship, i.e. the lived context where "orthodox spirituality is caught more than it is taught" (28). Hahn admits "it is futile . . . to try to circumscribe Catholic spirituality by reducing it to a lifestyle or psychological profile" (74), and instead he writes about "basic points common to Catholics" (74), such as the foundational theme of "divine filiation" (75), sharing God's life (76ff), life in the Trinity (78ff), and various doctrinal themes (86ff). Driskill believes spirituality within the Progressive Protestant context "is concerned with the lived experience of faith, the communities that shape the experience, the practices that sustain it, and the moral life that embodies it" (115). These practices and life tend to highlight scholarly inquiry and reason (119ff) as well as the social gospel, justice and social action (125ff). Finally, Howard proposes that "Evangelical spirituality focuses...on the 'with-God' life in all of its lived dimensions. It concerns the manner by which we live in communion with Christ in response to the Spirit in pursuit of holiness resulting in service to others" (160). Among the elements found within this approach are a basic Protestant world view, concern for orthodox (not Eastern Orthodox) theology, lived conversion, and an active, not passive, life of faith.

Unfortunately, the weight and breadth of the book's agenda are more than the content can bear. For the most part, the authors simply do not address well the focus on "devotion . . . abiding . . . pursuit . . . and cultivation . . . under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit" noted above and identified by Demarest in the introduction. Howard's critique of Hahn as "a reflection on the doctrinal prolegomena to spiritual theology" (109) could have been rephrased for most of the essays. They read like

doctrinal introductions or historical backgrounds to the lived experience of Christian spirituality, which is not clearly spelled out. The exception is Evan Howard's essay, which does a fine job of addressing the task given to the participants, and he gives a fair amount of attention to John Wesley and other revivalists in the course of his presentation.

Additionally, I was surprised by the selection of viewpoints included in this collection. In particular, I cannot understand why "Progressive Protestantism," which even its advocate, Joseph Driskill, acknowledges is in serious decline, is selected over Pentecostalism, which is growing worldwide, or Anabaptism, which is a small but distinct perspective on what is involved in the Christian life. Even the inclusion of a proponent from the "Emerging Church" would have made more sense, at least to me.

Ultimately, I found the text disappointing. What this book offers is a background introduction to four Christian theological traditions as they touch upon spirituality in broad brush strokes. However, having read Demarest's introduction, I was expecting a book, written from four perspectives, addressing both the theological foundation *and* lived experience of those four traditions. I had hoped for more, but only received half of what I anticipated.

Hammond, Geordan and Peter S. Forsaith, eds. *Religion, Gender, and Industry: Exploring Church and Methodism in a Local Setting*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011). 258 pages. ISBN-13: 9781608996421.

Reviewed by Stephen W. Rankin, Chaplain and Minister to the University, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

This book contains a collection of essays based on papers presented at the Religion, Gender and Industry conference held at the Telford campus of the University of Wolverhampton (2009). Thirteen chapters range from John Fletcher's doxological trinitarianism to a reexamination of the people of Fletcher's parish, to a study of the network of women preachers in early Methodism (with Madeley Parish as a keynote) to the connection between Madeley and American holiness leader Phoebe Palmer. The chapters work well, first to modify current historical biases by highlighting the positive role of religion often missed by social historians (especially given the long influence of E. P. Thompson). Second, this work helps to show that religious motives as such have impact on broad public concerns in gender and industrial relations. Necessary work can be done without transposing it into more standard historiographical categories.

Jeremy Gregory's opening chapter critiques this standard approach and demonstrates the need for the present study. The opening chapter nicely sets the context for fresh interpretations of specific topics. Moving to "the people" of Madeley Parish, Barrie Trinder in chapter 2 complicates the often harshly simplistic picture of working class people caught up in massive changes from industrialization: "'Colliers' and 'miners' are words too readily subject to stereotype" (31), Trinder says, then describes them in a more complex light. He does the same with "pit girls" and argues that John Fletcher's call to this parish came as much in sympathy for their difficult working conditions as concern for their moral laxity and wantonness.

The next part of the work focuses on specific aspects of John Fletcher's ministry. Chapter 3 by William Gibson probes the relationship between Fletcher and Bishop James Beauchamp, rehabilitating the bishop's reputation of indifference and suggesting, furthermore, that Beauchamp knew full well of the "taint" of Methodism on Fletcher and chose to overlook it to allow him to continue his pastoral work. This view modifies the standard "conflict" narrative between Anglicans and Methodists. Similarly, in chapter 4, David R. Wilson examines how Fletcher used Methodist practices (e.g., society and chapel) to extend the church. Wilson argues that this picture calls into question Alan Gilbert's construal of "bitter confrontation" (55) between church and chapel.

Peter James Lineham in chapter 5 explores why John Fletcher read Emmanuel Swedenborg's work and seemed to "flirt" with heterodox ideas. Though Fletcher remained thoroughly orthodox and evangelical, his mystical sensibilities fueled his desire to clarify the contours of evangelical mysticism (83) and to develop his dispensational view of history, particularly the dispensation of the Spirit (86). Chapter 6, by Ken Loyer, describes Fletcher's "doxological trinitarianism." Sound doctrine and a virtuous life cannot be separated (98). Loyer argues, thereby, that Fletcher sought to steer a mediating course between extreme tendencies in unitarianism, on the one hand, and a rationalist trinitarianism in orthodox Anglican theology on the other (107).

Chapter 7 moves back to social history, examining the communal Trefeca Family, originating with and overseen by Howel Harris. The Madeley/Fletcher link to the Trefeca Family came through the Countess of Huntingdon's invitation to John Fletcher to serve as President of her school. In spite of Harris' autocratic and patriarchal leadership, women were attracted to the Family for much the same reason they were attracted to Methodism: lively and "home" preaching and close-knit community (117). Brett C. McNelly's chapter 8 focuses on Mary Fletcher's pastoral leadership after her husband's death and extends to other women leaders. McNelly argues that they were motivated less by political concerns and more by religious convictions. Rather than mapping political language (e.g. "proto-feminist" [125]) onto their experiences, historians should see the positive influence of faith as sufficient (though not exclusive) motivation. John H. Lenton in chapter 9 describes the network of women preachers connected to Mary Fletcher, Mary Tooth and Madeley Parish. Four diagrams show these links extended into other parts of England. This chapter serves as a study of the influence of gendered relationships, as women looked to each other for support in ministry.

In chapter 10, Carol Blessing examines the life of Mary Tooth, who took up Mary Fletcher's mantle after her death. Blessing notes the significance of the length of their combined ministries, over forty years, and seeks to give Tooth her own full profile outside of Fletcher's shadow, thereby making clear Tooth's own particular impact among Methodists, which "expanded in some senses the boundaries of women's work in early nineteenth-century religion" (172).

In chapter 11, Harold Raser uses Phoebe Palmer's relatively brief visit to Madeley to examine John Fletcher's theological influence on Palmer. Using the title of her book, *Promise of the Father*, Raser shows

how Fletcher's dispensational history provided the ground for Palmer's understanding of the Spirit's Pentecostal outpouring as including women. Furthermore, Fletcher's view of Christian perfection fit well with the American context and with Palmer's thought. Her wide-ranging ministry thus carried Fletcher's influence deep into nineteenth century American Christianity. Laurence Wood's chapter 12 takes the reader back in time, arguing that the Fletchers "pentecostalized" (196) John Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection and made this view standard doctrine among early American Methodists. Wood references the writings of Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, and the historian Abel Stevens as well as *The Methodist Magazine* and *Quarterly Review* (201) for evidence.

In the concluding chapter, editor Peter Forsaith argues that the papers collected in this volume indicate the need for more local history work to continue the modification of standard but misleading impressions of eighteenth-century English church life. It inevitably involves seeing John Fletcher more in his own right (rather than as heir to John Wesley).

As collections of essays go, this one is particularly well-conceived. It demonstrates the value of interdisciplinary collaboration. The writing is strong throughout the book. The sources are well-documented. Authors generally stick close to their subjects and do not over-read the evidence. The book's theme is timely and of crucial interest, especially in that it helps to give religious faith its due (countering the reductionist functionalism in many histories) in terms of influence on important subjects like gender and industry.

The editors themselves admit one weakness (if one wants to call it such), and I would add two other suggestions. Abraham Darby, who pioneered the iron smelting process that accelerated the Industrial Age, was a Quaker living in Shropshire. Similarly, one finds Catholic recusants living also in the area. In a study of this sort, it would have been interesting and perhaps helpful to pursue these relationships, and the editors admit as much (xv). Beyond this gap, the one chapter that stands apart from the others is Ken Loyer's chapter on John Fletcher's doxological trinitarianism. All the other chapters stand as straightforward history, so this explicitly theological study stands out, not as an oddity so much as a prompt for more interdisciplinary work. Harold Raser's chapter on Phoebe Palmer makes reference to theological themes as does the chapter by Laurence Wood, but both stick mostly to historical description. A more robust interplay between the theological contributions and the historical narratives would add interesting and helpful facets to a well-drawn picture.

Lancaster, Sarah Heaner. *The Pursuit of Happiness: Blessing and Fulfillment in Christian Faith*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010. 117 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1608999026.

Reviewed by Sarah Conrad Sours, Instructor of Religion, Huntingdon College, Montgomery, AL.

Every now and again, another skirmish in the parenting wars is ignited when some attention-seeking parent says, out loud or in print, that parenting is not fun, or when a scientific study purports to demonstrate that childbearing does not contribute to one's happiness. The blogosphere erupts in a predictable exchange of condemnations, misunderstandings, and general angst, while a few optimistic folks, committed to public discourse—even on the internet—try to address problems with the way the alleged conflict is presented: “Okay, I’m not always having fun, but I am happy,” or “Just because it doesn’t make me happy in the moment doesn’t mean it’s not worth doing.” They either lack the sophisticated vocabulary necessary for making such distinctions, or they know better than to use it in forums where a common complaint is “tl dr” (“Too long, didn’t read,” itself too long to type out in full). Still, most such folk stumble across a rather noteworthy point: that the word “happiness” is perhaps being misunderstood or misused in these attention-grabbing but unreflective pronouncements. In the vernacular, “happiness” seems to mean little more than having fun, getting what one wants (regardless of the desirability of one’s desires), and avoiding constraint. Nevertheless, Sarah Heaner Lancaster believes the language of happiness may offer a constructive alternative to communicating the gospel, because it offers plain language to folks for whom more traditional or technical language about salvation (justification, sanctification, holiness—indeed, the word salvation itself!) is too foreign or forbidding.

For Lancaster, Wesley’s work “offers a deep and meaningful description of happiness that shows it to be, along with holiness, the essence of salvation itself” (4). She contextualizes his work with a brief but deft survey of the philosophical and theological history from which he draws before sketching the contours of his own depiction of happiness. She finds his approach theoretically sound, holistic, and practicable. It weaves together the insights of pagan philosophical tradition, Scholastic theology, and a decidedly English iteration of the Enlightenment. Wesleyan happiness comes from and is oriented toward God. It cultivates holy desires while disciplining disordered ones. It is inescapably communal,

even as it is attentive to the individual's conscience and immediate experience of God. It is not coterminous with holiness, and, indeed, stands as a corrective to barren, joyless piety. It does not shun spiritually productive suffering or quail in the face of extended periods of "heaviness," nor does it reject appropriate sorrow for the sinful condition of the world, but it continually insists that the Christian hope is for eternal joy and that we may be offered a foretaste of that joy on this side of eternity.

A truly Wesleyan pragmatism is on full display in Lancaster's work, both as an explicit topic of conversation and as a methodological commitment. But this is no unreflective and facile adoption of modern idiom to make rigorous theology palatable enough for uneducated and undisciplined modern tastes; Lancaster's work enacts precisely what it proposes. Her language is clear and accessible without being over-simplified or imprecise. The expert reader will see both the rigor of her thought and the complexity of the issues she discusses, but the novice will encounter few stumbling blocks to an introductory understanding of those same issues. Her survey of Greek philosophy, for example, gently introduces the technical language of *eudaimonia* and *makaria* to the introductory reader, while quietly gesturing the more advanced scholar toward the intricately related concepts of contingency, virtue, theodicy, and teleology. Plain speaking need not be antithetical to thoughtful scholarship, but a work that advances a particular theology *as accessible and rigorous* ought to be so itself; this one certainly is.

The readers of this journal will already be disposed to see the Wesleys as a useful resource, but Lancaster's choice here is worth commending all the same. The virtue ethics tradition has much to offer contemporary church and society by way of both description and correction, but some of its key conceptual loci find their fullest expression in linguistic convergences that are not readily translated into English. The relationship between emotions, passivity, and suffering in Aquinas's thought, for example, expresses itself neatly in the Latin *passio* but requires cumbersome explanation in English. Wesley's sermons certainly present linguistic and conceptual hurdles of their own (witness, e.g., his critique of laughter, which Lancaster can only contextualize, not redeem entirely), but there is a certain congruity that comes from shared language (which is always also shared history). Concepts that are not merely presented but generated in English are more readily conveyed to an Anglophone audience than those that must be translated (which is to say thought afresh) into it. Sermons, too, are already oriented toward the church and are thus conge-

nial to the project of doing theology for the church, even if Wesley's sermons use language that is to us somewhat antiquated and at times uncomfortably confrontational.

However, no book can display all virtues and perfections simultaneously. One might rightly wonder whether a church that comes to use the language of happiness in the way that Lancaster suggests may not succumb to the very misunderstandings she seeks to correct, despite her care in describing the full range of emotions that belong to Wesleyan happiness (including, especially, "heaviness" and sorrow for sin). Her nod to Eric G. Wilson's critique of present-day churches as "happiness companies," peddling "immediate gratification . . . superficial comfort . . . static contentment" (92; quoting Wilson, *Against Happiness: In Praise of Melancholy*, 8), is apt, but whether a church steeped in trite and even morally bankrupt public discourse about happiness is capable of resisting this tendency and embracing Lancaster's rich, nuanced description is an open question.

Lancaster's book will be more at home in some contexts than in others. It would be a happy addition to an undergraduate Christian Ethics or Methodism syllabus; United Methodist seminaries might profitably assign it as preparatory reading for matriculating Divinity students. Despite her obvious effort to make this work accessible to that wondrous being, the motivated lay reader, if this book is to have an impact on lay Methodists, it will likely be at a remove—that is, through those who read it in seminary rather than in Sunday School or small groups. That is a loss to lay Methodists, of course, but one for which Lancaster cannot be held accountable. Those who are so inculcated in the gratification of immediate pleasures that they cannot be troubled to type out "too long, didn't read" in full need more than a single excellent book to remedy their lacks.

Pirotte, Jean, Caroline Sappia, and Olivier Servais, eds. *Images et diffusion du christianisme. Expressions graphiques en contexte missionnaire XVIe-XXe siècles*. Collection mémoire d'Église. Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2012. 399 pages + CD of images. ISBN: 978-2-8111-0612-6.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Research Professor for World Christian Studies, New York Theological Seminary, New York, NY.

Why does the Salvation Army show up in a volume devoted to the uses of art in world Christianity? And why are two essays on a Protestant mission that comes from the European Revival (Le Réveil) of the nineteenth century included in a volume in which the other eighteen essays reflect primarily the Catholic experience, beginning with Jesuit missionaries in North India and Tibet in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (H. Didier, 45-56) and Franciscans in "New Spain" in the sixteenth century (N. Beligand, 57-89)? The answer is that images of every imaginable variety have been used in the diffusion and definition of Christianity around the world in a myriad of ways. The Salvation Army and the Société des Missions Évangéliques de Paris (SMEP) have both produced extensive photographic archives. While the theological controversies of the church about images and their treatment in various reforms have been carefully analyzed, less attention has been given to their roles in the development of Christianity around the world as it currently exists. This volume is a wide-ranging effort to broaden research on this issue. The Centre de Recherches et d'Échanges sur la Diffusion et l'Inculturation du Christianisme (CREDIC) has an ambitious agenda of research on world Christianity. CREDIC has produced more than thirty volumes from its international conferences and has inspired much research beyond those conferences.

The material is presented in five sections: (1) the use of art in evangelization and catechesis; (2) the development of indigenous arts; (3) photographs and images, including poster art; (4) diverse representations concerning culture and mission, including maps, comic strips, design; and (5) a section on contemporary developments regarding images and the enculturation of Christianity. Six essays deal with Asia, five with European or European mission agencies, two with Latin America, and one with Canada.

The focus of this review is on the articles devoted to the Salvation Army and the SMEP, founded in 1822. Patricia Van Schuylenbergh of the Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgium, contributed "Feu et Sang': Croisade congolaise en images d'Henri et Paula Becquet, missionnaires de l'Armée de Salut" (209-27). The Becquets founded the Salvation Army in the Congo (1934) and, a year after their arrival, the Salvation

Army had recruited 1400 adherents and 113 officers. By 1959 there were 16,000 officers in 324 posts and sites as well as 11,000 students in Salvation Army schools. The family donated their archives to the Museum in their native Belgium. It is a large diverse archive documenting not only the work of the Salvation Army in Congo, but also the work of other missions. The photographs (many by professional photographers) comprise an important part of the collection. Van Schuylenbergh found in the collection documentary evidence that portrays the theological, social, and ministerial values of the Salvation Army. She argues that there is a high congruence between the stated values of the Salvation Army and the photographic record.

The Pietistic "Réveil" originated SMEP and produced an extraordinary archive that forms the core of the mission research library in Paris, housed at DEFAP, in the old SMEP mission center. Jean-François Zorn, historian of the SMEP and a leader in world Christian studies, contributed "Des affiches missionnaires protestantes. D'après-seconde guerre mondiale à la fin de l'ère missionnaire, 1945-1970" (229-41). The posters selected for analysis were produced to promote the annual fund raising week of SMEP. It was an important element of sustaining the financial viability of the SMEP. Zorn identified two themes: (1) the money collected was rarely destined for anything other than evangelization, and (2) the posters reflect a concern about the corrosive role of money in mission and were preparing the way for a new approach to mission that would be a partnership not based exclusively on money from "the north."

The second article on SMEP by Émilie Gangnat, "Les photographies diffusées par la Société de Mission Évangélique de Paris" (243-59), focuses primarily on photographs of the Zambèze River area mission. In her analysis of the extensive photographic holdings of the society, she found that, whatever the overt purposes of the photographs, the collections reveal the changes in mission and document the evolution of individual missionaries. Since this essay was written, the photos have become publically available as a "Collection" on the website of the Ministère Français de la Culture.

This volume challenges scholars of traditions with photographic archives to use them as historical, theological, anthropological, and/or sociological resources for understanding the movements that produced them. It suggests useful methodologies for using these resources. Most Holiness and Pentecostal denominations and most missionaries have produced extensive photographic archives during the last century. It is hoped that this volume, and others like it, will stimulate interest, preservation, and use of these important artifacts, and that as they are used more sophisticated heuristic frameworks will be developed.

Quanstrom, Mark R. *From Grace to Grace: The Transforming Power of Holiness*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2011. 159 pages. ISBN 9780834127258.

Reviewed by Mark H. Mann, Associate Professor of Theology and Director of the Wesleyan Center, Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, California.

Quanstrom singled himself out as a leading voice in Wesleyan-Holiness circles with his 2003 work, *A Century of Holiness Theology: The Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene*, a largely historical work that looks at the development of the two primary models for understanding holiness that have prevailed within the Wesleyan-Holiness movement over the past century. That book closes by highlighting the concerns of many leaders in Holiness churches that their “movement” is all but dead, but his last words strike a more hopeful refrain. Despite the ambiguity these conflicting models present and the fears of many about the future of holiness preaching, teaching, and experience, Nazarenes—and folks in other holiness denominations as well—remain committed to “Holiness Unto the Lord Now and Forever” (*A Century*, 181). *From Grace to Grace* is Quanstrom’s first attempt to provide a constructive contribution to the ongoing development of Holiness theology, and therefore to the recovery of the Holiness movement.

Quanstrom begins, in section one (“Humility”) where most holiness theologians do, by developing a “right” conception of sin, appropriately framing his discussion of judgment, original sin, and sin in believers in terms of the spiritual virtue one would hope to achieve upon coming to terms with sin: humility. This is particularly important for Quanstrom, who believes that not taking sin seriously enough is one of the chief reasons for the decrease in the preaching, teaching, and experience of holiness within the Wesleyan-Holiness movement, and therefore pivotal to its recovery.

In section two, “Faith,” Quanstrom leads readers through a fairly straightforward exposition of the nature of justification and the possibilities and expectations of the life available to those who have experienced such grace. In this section, Quanstrom is thoroughly Wesleyan, and one senses Wesley’s “Scripture Way of Salvation” as the backdrop for nearly all that he has to say. Like Wesley, Quanstrom also takes great care to distinguish his view of free grace from that of Calvinists, which both Wesley and Quanstrom believe leads to antinomianism and therefore ultimately undermines growth in holiness. In the concluding chapter of this section, Quanstrom also offers a discussion of one topic often missing from con-

temporary discussions of Christian holiness within Wesleyan-Holiness circles: the person and role of the Holy Spirit. Quanstrom considers this an important part of his recovery project: "Uncovering the 'Pentecostal' heritage of the Holiness movement would be [helpful for the holiness tradition for it] would make it crystal clear that holiness is not something achieved but rather Someone received" (97).

Section three, "Love," more directly takes on some of the areas of controversy identified in his previous book, especially regarding the nature and experience of entire sanctification. Where he lands is ironically at the same time both less and more Wesleyan—that is, true to John Wesley—than his own tradition has been. Holiness churches, like the Church of the Nazarene, were right to see their core belief that entire sanctification results in a heart and life of perfect love that could be sustained until death as a retrieval of John Wesley's teachings. But Quanstrom suggests a move *away* from Wesley on the matter, wishing instead to talk about the personal appropriation of holiness in terms of the life of "entire consecration" expressed through "singleness of intention" (108). Quanstrom then rightfully calls for a reappropriation of Wesley's emphasis on the means of grace as the path to growth in holiness, concluding with an equally helpful and important discussion of the "paradox of perfection" for which the great sign of one's growth in holiness is a growing humility regarding just how much one has yet to grow in grace. Thus, the paradox.

In Quanstrom's brief, final section ("Hope") he discusses ways in which our present experience of God's sanctifying grace provides a foretaste of its culmination in the final coming of God's New Creation and thereby how such anticipation can help revitalize the Holiness movement. As he states, "Holiness is not simply sought as a way to escape future condemnation, but is a way to realize the character of the kingdom of heaven here in this present world. Holiness is the evidence that the kingdom of heaven as begun" (153).

Each of the brief chapters—as is the case in the entire book—is given its title from one of the sermons of John Wesley, which is telling of the extent to which Quanstrom draws upon the Wesley brothers in this book. Indeed, next to Scripture they are his most oft-cited sources. In this way, *From Grace to Grace* provides an effective introduction to holiness theology that also serves as an effective introduction to the theology of the Wesleys.

A significant departure from his earlier book (which was an adaptation of his doctoral dissertation), *From Grace to Grace* is written for a more popular audience and in a pastoral style. It draws heavily upon per-

sonal experience from Quanstrom's many years as, first, a pastor and, more recently, a theology professor to undergraduate students at a Christian college (Olivet Nazarene University). I suspect, therefore, that this book will prove intellectually stimulating and spiritually inspiring for both undergraduate students and educated laity alike.

Those who are less likely to find it stimulating or inspiring are those expecting the kind of serious, in-depth treatment of holiness theology and doctrine that can serve as a road map for the movement as it seeks to move forward: that is, the kind of in-depth treatment that the author himself anticipates through his first book. So, there is little conversation with other current holiness theologians or with many of the issues that they have addressed in their work. For instance, Quanstrom completely ignores important contemporary conversations about the communal, systemic, and even cosmic dimensions of sin, instead focusing on sin, and therefore holiness, as an essentially individual matter. In this way, Quanstrom seems to assume an almost functional understanding of the Church—that is, it is essentially a means for the growth of individual believers—a view foreign to Wesley's ecclesiology and increasingly challenged by numerous Wesleyan-Holiness historians and theologians alike. Likewise, Quanstrom ignores the work being done at the intersection of psychology and Wesleyan theology that, in light of the complex, embodied nature of human experience, will, and intentionality, provides a significant challenge for thinking of either entire sanctification or consecration as "singleness of intentionality." Indeed, such an ideal seems almost as naive as older holiness notions of "sinless perfection" now seem to be. Finally, non-Nazarenes hoping for Quanstrom to speak effectively to the larger Wesleyan-Holiness movement will have to do some extrapolating, for he is clearly speaking *as a Nazarene to Nazarenes*.

Considering the nature and scope of *From Grace to Grace*, these criticisms might be a bit misplaced. Through conversation with the author since the initial writing of this review, I have learned that nearly everything that I criticize here resulted from limitations placed on the work by the publisher. Indeed, I have learned a great deal from Quanstrom and have deep respect for him and his work, and therefore have great hope for his enduring contribution to the theology of the denomination and tradition that we share. In this respect, I hope my criticisms are perceived, not as serious reservations about his current work, but instead as a goad for this fine theologian and teacher to address such issues and speak to a larger denominational and theological audience in some future work.

Smith, James K.A. *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013. 224 pages. ISBN-13: 9780801035784.

Reviewed by Aaron Perry, Associate Pastor, Centennial Road Church, Brockville, ON.

Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works is the second volume of James K.A. Smith's series, "Cultural Liturgies." In the first volume, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Smith argued that human beings are lovers, education is about formation of desires, and formation happens through practices. In *Imagining the Kingdom*, Smith delves deeply into formation through the lens of worship.

This is a book *between*. It is a book *between* university and church, scholars and practitioners. It is about the space *between* intellectualism and behaviorism. It is about what happens *between* the starting and the (s)ending of the worship service. In all these *betweens*, Smith desires to shape Christian action through four propositions. First, human beings are embodied, and every part of being human must factor embodiment. Second, embodied beings develop through practices that form the background of their formation and the possibility of (re)formation. Third, embodied beings are shaped by inhabiting stories. Fourth, the Christian story can shape and form embodied persons for mission through liturgy. Thus, *Imagining the Kingdom* is a liturgical anthropology concerned both with the kinaesthetic and poetic—the bodily basis of meaning and being primed therein for story by liturgical enactments of the Christian story (13).

Consider the tension Smith introduces: Why does Smith find himself reading Wendell Berry while sitting in Costco? Because worldview does not always form praxis. Smith's confession of his cultural faux-pas is part of the driving force of his reconsidered anthropology: "What if we are actors before we are thinkers?" (32). Utilizing Merleau-Ponty, Smith argues the "body, for the most part, is not something of which I am conscious; rather it is the condition of possibility for my consciousness. It is my constant *background*" (49). Smith uses Merleau-Ponty's concept of *praktognosia* to make this (dis)connect between worldview and action. *Praktognosia* is the "original and primary 'access to the world' by which I 'understand' the world without recourse to discursive, propositional processing" (56). While this is a *learned* knowledge, it is not an intellectual knowledge (57). Smith's Costco example makes his point: the body has learned to do certain things that go against its intellectual and proposi-

tional commitments. To ignore this is to neglect how practices in consumerism, nationalism, and other egoisms formed the practices of otherwise well-taught Christians (39-40).

This leads into Smith's appropriation of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*: the manner of being in the world that is learned and formed within the body by its surrounding community that simultaneously helps one make sense of the world. The values, natural actions, and expectations of a person come from the practices of the community from which they come. This is not strictly a materialistic position, as there is a (his)story to a community's *habitus* (83). A *habitus* is "the complex of inclinations and dispositions that make us lean into the world with a habituated momentum in certain directions. We don't 'decide' our way into every action. Our being-in-the-world is characterized by inclinations that propel us to all sorts of action 'without thinking'" (79).

Because of this embodied manner of living and learning stories, stories are not memorized, but "imbibed through ritual practices" (110). "Ritual is the way we learn to believe with our bodies" (92). The storied nature of human beings is hardwired in cognition. Stories are what help people make cognitive sense of the world. From here, Smith's argument completes nicely with his focus on liturgical formation in worship: So, how does worship work? By the Spirit, the Christian story is imbibed through practices into the believer's body for continued practice in the world.

The challenge of being so ambitious in argument (being against worldview in the Reformed world) *and* in form (being *between*) is that if the book does not bridge the divide, it falls between the cracks. Smith is most aware of his challenge. Indeed, he gives the strongest critiques to any potential interlocutors: this project "[w]alks a delicate hypocritical tightrope: I am making an allusive argument ... for the irreducibility of the aesthetic. I am providing an intellectual analysis of why and how incarnate significance eludes our intellectual grasp. I'm trying to convince you of the fact that we are more fundamentally *moved* than convinced" (120). This reader was moved and believes others in the Wesleyan strain will also be. Yet, Smith's compelling picture would be serviced with attention to a couple areas.

First, Smith's anthropology draws too significant a line between practices and intellectual activity. He writes, "The acquisition of habit happens on a register that eludes and exceeds the intellect. Nonetheless, it is still an acquisition, an embodied orientation that is acquired, that we

learn" (57). But does the acquisition of *all* habits, especially the most meaningful ones, really *elude* the intellect? Smith gives the example of a dancer, saying that a dancer does not acquire the habits of a dancer by analysis and reflection. While I am not a dancer, I did learn to play the piano at a very humble level. When trying to learn a piece of music, at some point my fingers simply *knew* the piece of music and I did not need to *think* about playing. However, when learning the piece, I had to analyze the piece, move slowly and unnaturally over the piano keys as my fingers learned the piece. My fingers only learned the piece because I was intellectually engaged with every note. At some point playing the piano *exceeded* my ongoing intellectual activity, but it had not *eluded* it.

Second, Smith's notion on free will deserves more nuance, especially for a Wesleyan reader. He believes that the notion of *habitus* means that human beings are already predisposed to certain actions by habits already engrained (36). "*Habitus*, then, is a kind of compatibilism. As a social being acting in the world, I'm not an unconstrained 'free' creature 'without inertia'; neither am I the passive victim of external causes and determining forces. Neither mechanical determinism nor libertarian freedom can really make sense of our being-in-the-world because our freedom is both 'conditioned and conditional'" (84). Smith then writes that an "action is only 'free' if it is deliberately chosen without any constraint" (86, n. 21). Yet this approach does not address a typical view of libertarian freedom. Libertarian freedom is not freedom without constraint. Indeed, there may be many constraints on freedom, but libertarian freedom affirms that the actor may have chosen otherwise. The actor may be inclined to making a certain action, but the choice is only free if the actor may have done otherwise. Smith's notion of *habitus* may easily be used by Wesleyans, then, in examining free will, while they would not call it compatibilism.

Smith's argument is ultimately concerned with action. "[W]hat's ultimately at stake in a liturgical anthropology is a philosophy of action" (137). Smith's section entitled, *The iPhone-ization of our World(view): Compressed Stories and Micro-Practices* (137-50) draws the reader deeply into this argument. It is the best section of the whole book. Like a Chaim Potok novel, every preceding page finds its place in this section, as the whole book comes together in Smith's critical engagement with social media. Bound up in the practices of Twitter, Facebook, and the like is a world imagined and practiced. Through social media, every space is now a space of self-display. The body is always on display, and its result is end-

less self-consciousness. Social media practices bring the body into a world of flourishing that is not the story of the biblical narrative as there is no space of safety and not being self-aware. Here Smith gets personal in light of the practices *expected* to be part of this embodied (yet virtual) world: “I do not envy our four teenagers in the least: far from carefree, their adolescence is a tangled web of angst that is...qualitatively different from that of past generations” (145).

Let me practice Smith’s argument for a moment. If the narrative is about the (mis)formation presenting to one’s children, then arguments will be polarized, the body—including all of its emotional (re)action—will be overemphasized, and the alternatives to certain choices may not seem to be live options. In this light, especially with Wesley’s affirmation that the world is our parish, Wesleyans will find Smith’s impassioned plea for the practiced narrative of the scriptural narrative through worship a compelling story.

Truesdale, Al, ed. *Global Wesleyan Dictionary of Theology*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2013. 605 pages. ISBN 978-0834128378.

Reviewed by Brian C. Small, Lecturer in Religion, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

As the title indicates, this new dictionary of theology is both global and Wesleyan in character. That character is first reflected in the contributors to the volume. The register of 126 contributors at the beginning of the volume lists scholars who come largely from Methodist, Wesleyan, Nazarene, and other closely related institutions of higher learning spread across six continents—although the majority of contributors do originate from the United States. Its global character is also reflected in the scope of topics selected for inclusion. These topics are often assessed from a Wesleyan perspective.

The 372 topic headings fall broadly under twenty categories: Bible (General, Old Testament, New Testament), Christianity and Other Religions, Church and Culture, Church and Society, Church/Ecclesiology, Denominations in the Wesleyan Family, Early Methodism, Ethics, Historical Traditions and Topics, Liturgy/Worship, Missions/Missiology, Philosophy, Sciences (Natural, Social), Spiritual Disciplines/Formation, Systematic Theology, Theological Movements, and Wesleyan Tradition. A brief introductory essay on the Wesleyan theological tradition hints at the nature of the topics selected for inclusion. Wesleyan concerns—such as soteriology, warmhearted spirituality, God's grace, holy living, compassion for the poor, and doctrinal expression in sermons, hymns, and liturgy—all find representation in the essay topics. Most importantly, the Wesleyan concern to emphasize commonality rather than differences with the broader Christian tradition is reflected in the topic selections.

Essays are usually no more than two to three pages in length. Internal cross-references to other essays in the volume are marked in bold print. Additional related topics are listed briefly at the end of each essay. At the end of most essays is also a brief listing of usually two to three (but as many as six to seven) suggested resources for further study. The dictionary also includes a Scripture index at the end of the volume. The essays are written in very readable prose. Technical jargon is kept to a minimum, and Greek and Hebrew terms, when used, are transliterated. Hence, the dictionary aims to be a reader-friendly resource that is geared to pastors, laypersons, college students, and church teachers.

The essays are not comprehensive in scope, and terms are often evaluated from a Wesleyan perspective. For example, the essay on "atone-

ment” does not lay out the various theories (except to mention them in passing) but largely focuses on Wesley’s view of the atonement and its reception in the ensuing tradition. The essay on “grace” gives considerable attention to Wesley’s theology of grace. The entry on “sacraments” focuses entirely on Wesleyan views of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The essay on John Calvin includes a considerable discussion of Wesley’s disagreement with Calvin regarding the issue of predestination. The essay on “historical theology” mentions a number of leading Wesleyan theologians. Many other articles often include a paragraph or two on the Wesleyan view of a particular topic.

Naturally, this dictionary includes essays dedicated to distinctively Wesleyan interests. In addition to the entries on Wesleyan denominations and traditions, the dictionary contains essays on “covenant service,” “love feast,” “Methodist connectionalism,” “Wesleyan theology of childhood,” “Wesleyan approach to Scripture,” and other similar such topics. A few articles are devoted to some significant Wesleyan figures such as Jacob Arminius, John and Charles Wesley, John Fletcher, and Phoebe Palmer. Surprisingly, there are no essays for many other important Wesleyan theologians such as Adam Clarke, Richard Watson, William Burton Pope, John Miley, or Thomas Oden.

While it is evident that this dictionary is highly selective in its topics, it is not always clear why certain topics merit their own entry while other topics are omitted. A few examples of this selectivity will suffice. An essay is rightly devoted to Jesus of Nazareth, but there is none for the Apostle Paul. There are entries given to two significant early church heresies (Arianism, Pelagianism), but many other prominent heresies (Docetism, Montanism, Marcionism, Nestorianism, etc.) are not included. With respect to world religions, articles are devoted to African traditional religions and Islam, but there are no articles for Hinduism or Buddhism. Essays are dedicated to a few significant theologians (Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and Martin Luther), but many other important theologians do not receive their own entries. Surprisingly, there are no entries for either Karl Barth or neo-orthodoxy. Naturally, one can briefly read about many significant theologians in articles dedicated to movements or concepts with which they were associated. Hence, one can read about Charles Finney in the entry for “revivalism” or Philipp Jakob Spener in the entry for “Pietism” or Athanasius in articles for “Trinity” or “church fathers.” Thus, the dictionary in part gives more emphasis to broader theological terms, concepts, movements, and traditions than it

does to individual figures throughout church history. Considering the highly selective nature of the topics included, then, it would have been helpful if the dictionary included indices for persons and subjects not given their own topic heading.

While this dictionary is not comprehensive in the range of topics that it treats, those of a Wesleyan persuasion will still find much that is enriching and interesting in this attractive and durably bound volume.

Vail, Eric M. *Creation and Chaos Talk: Charting a Way Forward*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012. 275 pages. ISBN 9781608997916.

Reviewed by John Culp, Professor of Philosophy Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA.

Vail's 2009 dissertation title, "Using 'Chaos' in Articulating the Relationship of God and Creation in God's Creative Activity," nicely describes *Creation and Chaos Talk*, the revision of his dissertation. Vail utilizes Scripture, historic sources of Christian thought, recent developments in scientific thought, and contemporary theology and philosophy to offer an alternative to traditional theological understandings of creation based on a Platonic unchanging metaphysic. The Platonic understanding of chaos as a barrier to the formation of being was modified by the early Christian tradition into chaos as an opposition to God's creative efforts resulting in the doctrine of creation from nothing. Vail affirms creation from nothing but challenges understanding creation as only involving divine decision and agency.

Vail begins by describing contemporary understandings of the term "chaos." Theology views chaos as opposition or resistance to external forces. However, chaos in scientific understandings is basically unpredictability that results from nonlinear relations that are more complex than linear relations. While contemporary scientific understandings of the complexity and interrelatedness of all reality need to be recognized by theology, contemporary physics also needs a way to organize its insights into nature and creation. Theology provides that framework.

Vail supports his revised understanding of creation and chaos in three basic steps. He first argues that the biblical creation materials do not think of creation as the divine imposition of order upon chaos. Interpreting creation in Genesis 1 as God's defeat of chaos depends on studies that focused primarily on comparisons to *Enuma Elish*. Challenging that methodology, Vail argues that interpretation of biblical materials must begin with a careful consideration of the textual tradition of those materials rather than with a comparison to other materials. Examination of biblical texts dealing with creation reveals a general concept of a covenant between God and Israel. This concept of covenant provides the framework for understanding the creation materials as articulating a relationship between God and creation that begins within God as Trinity and makes room for creation and on-going creation involving the responses of created realities to God's creative activity.

Vail next turns to theology and Irenaeus' understanding of creation as an initial stage that continues to develop under God's guidance. Irenaeus models the development of a new understanding of creation for a new intellectual climate while remaining faithful to the Christian tradition. Retaining the concept of God's creation from nothing, Irenaeus described creation as the establishment of the ordering of chaos into a completed creation. Moving to contemporary theology, Vail examines Catherine Keller's *tehomic*, or chaos, understanding of creation, which understands chaos as having a positive role in creation. Although Keller's emphasis upon the interrelatedness of all reality and her rejection of chaos as having only a negative role in creation are helpful, Vail concludes that her understanding of creation as manifesting the divine blurs the distinction between God and creation. The loss of a clear distinction between God and creation grows out of Keller's inadequate understanding of Trinitarian relations and leads to a loss of identity for creation.

Vail, in a final move, draws on Dabney's pneumatological theology. Dabney's emphasis upon God's presence in the world as Spirit maintains the relatedness of God to creation without confusing or blurring the difference between God and creation. The Spirit is the possibility of God in every impossibility. God is the openness that makes the other possible rather than the creator of order out of randomness and disorder. The distinction between God as possibility and created reality as the fulfillment of God's possibility distinguishes between God being in creation through the Spirit and creation being in God as dependent upon God. The "transjective" Spirit and "transcarnate" Word operate "throughin" creation as the very possibility for the self-expression of the other as a result of God's call. The creative event is a combined act of God with the very other coming into being. Chaos then is a "discreative" response of creation to the fulfillment of God's possibility.

Creation and Chaos Talk models a significant way to do theology and provides important insights into contemporary efforts to understand the doctrine of creation while remaining faithful to the Christian tradition. Vail's concept of God's creative activity as including the creative activity of creation in further creation is clear but he does acknowledge the need for further work in the metaphysics of this position. *Creation and Chaos* demonstrates many admirable characteristics such as concern for the Christian tradition, compatibility with Wesleyan theology, and an interest in the implications of his position for doctrines such as soteriology.

One challenge to Vail's conclusions arises from an alternative perspective. Those who conceive of the conclusion of history as a restoration of an initial perfection will challenge Vail's Irenaean position as incapable of supporting a final consummation of history without an initial actual perfection. Although he modifies Irenaeus' position to include contemporary understandings of the physical world, he clearly holds that creation was not complete or perfect in its initial creation. God and creation work together to bring about a complete and perfect creation rather than to recover a lost primitive perfection. Vail's relational metaphysics challenges the "being" or static metaphysics that defenders of original perfection assume. One of the metaphysical tasks facing Vail is explaining how perfection arises from incompleteness.

A related, but more crucial issue, arises out of his retention of the doctrine of creation from nothing. Creation from nothing makes clear the difference of God from creation. Although Vail appreciates and utilizes ideas from Keller and Bracken, he affirms creation from nothing as necessary for faithfulness to the Christian tradition because this doctrine recognizes divine sovereignty. The basic conceptual issue with Vail's understanding of divine sovereignty becomes evident in his discussion of a conclusion to God's and the creation's creative activity. Vail makes clear that the conclusion of creative activity is not a final defeat of chaos in a fulfillment of being. But his retention of an ultimate conclusion of creative activity seems to fall back into a static metaphysics.

Why is the end of creativity necessary if there is no need for a final control over, or defeat of chaos? Baslides' concern for God's complete sovereignty expressed in creation from nothing rather than as an emanation or from existing matter reappears in Vail's retention of a completion of creation, even though this completion occurs as a result of a lengthy cooperative effort by God and creation. Vail has explained chaos as creation that has not reached fullness but is in disharmony with the possibility of becoming in love for the o/Other (220-221). Although the distinction between immaturity of created realities and malcreative acts is difficult if not impossible to articulate, Vail maintains that they are not identical because God's relationship with creation does not begin with an antagonistic relation. Instead, God's creation is the start of a relationship with an other in which there is room for development without a fixed goal. In this relationship, there are both advances and retreats but the dynamism of God's creation is good. Chaos is a problem that needs to be addressed but it does not destroy an other. In fact, the eradication of

chaos involves the same self-giving of God for the other as God's initial creative activity. In all of this, Vail provides an explanation of creation that affirms God's crucial role, the importance of the creation in further creation, and chaos as a response of created reality to God without requiring a goal fixed, and thus imposed, by God. To affirm a doctrine of creation from nothing that results in a finally completed creation appears to reintroduce the solitary concept of divine sovereignty that Vail opposes when he rejects understanding chaos as opposed to God.

Finally, Vail's rejection of panentheism as a resource for his position may lose some helpful resources. Some panentheists such as Phillip Clayton [see "Open Panentheism and *Creatio ex nihilo*," *Process Studies* 37.1 (Spring-Summer 2008): 166-181] also affirm creation from nothing. Further, Anna Case-Winters [*Reconstructing a Christian Theology of Nature* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 125] challenges other panentheists in their use of the metaphor of the world as God's body for losing the integrity of the creation, which is also part of Vail's concern to avoid blurring of the distinction between God and creation. While panentheists struggle with clarifying the relationship of God to the world in terms of the various metaphors that are used to describe that relationship, the category of metaphor might prove useful for Vail in consistently maintaining the cooperation of God and creation in creating. Panentheism also might provide terminology that would be more helpful than Vail's terms such as "transject" in contrast to object and subject and "throughin" as a way to talk about relatedness and distinction/independence. While these terms indicate important concepts in Vail's understanding of God's relation to the world in creation, their complexity makes communication of those concepts difficult.

Williams, Jeffrey. *Religion and Violence in Early Methodism: Taking the Kingdom by Force*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. 228 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0253354440.

Reviewed by Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait, Managing Editor, *Christian History Magazine*.

This is, to put it plainly, a provocative book. The reasons why are clearly stated by Catherine Albanese and Stephen Stein in their editor's introduction: "This volume breaks new ground by its focus upon the violent dimensions of Methodist spirituality involving themes of warfare, aggression, conflict, and pain, in contrast to the standard accounts of the Methodist tradition dealing with comfort, home, and peace" (x).

Williams' main argument is that, perhaps from the moment Charles Wesley penned "Soldiers of Christ, Arise," discourse about war—war on sin, war on Satan, war on the self, and even fights with God—characterized early American Methodist spirituality: "The religious life was nothing less than a battle against a wide array of forces, malevolent and benevolent. By bodily and spiritually 'fighting the good fight' and 'taking the kingdom by violence,' even as they were 'wounded' or 'killed' by God in the process of justification and sanctification, American Methodists sought salvation, holiness, and religious community" (4). Furthermore, this violent rhetoric had a complicated relationship to Methodist willingness to engage in actual violence. In some cases "their enlistment in God's army for the most cherished prize of eternal redemption overshadowed the trivial contests of politicians," whereas other issues, such as slavery, "seemed to warrant action that moved beyond spiritual war on the part of the believer. . . . The believer's holy violence intended to lead to salvation provided a powerful justification for social violence" (5).

Williams believes that, beginning with A. Gregory Schneider's seminal work *The Way of the Cross Leads Home* (1993), while Methodist spirituality has come into historiographical focus, its martial aspect has been ignored. To a large extent he is right, though I would note at least the partial opposition Lester Ruth's *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality* (2005). Williams notes the work of Ruth but also observing that Ruth focuses on editing and excerpting primary sources. Still, it is very possible to discern the martial strain from the excerpts Ruth chooses. Williams, however, has gone a step further in making a theoretical argument, indebted to (though not following in all respects) René Girard's exploration of the connections between religion and violence. For the purposes of the book,

Williams defines violence as “the use of force in order to cause injury or harm to someone or something” (10). This leaves aside (though he does not in the end ignore) the question of differences between physical and spiritual violence and of the morality or immorality of the use of force.

Williams first discusses both violence and war in the thought of John Wesley. He is, I believe, accurate in his contention that Wesley’s spirituality “depended heavily upon the notion of conflict between saint and sinner, good and evil, the redeemed and the demonic;” that “bodily exercises” had a place in this struggle; and that “Wesley celebrated when a believer reached the end of his or her life having ‘conquered’ sin, Satan, and the world” (39). This may not be a lens some of us are used to applying to Wesley, and it gives a new dimension to Wesley’s emphasis on Christian community when one pays close attention to the spiritual struggles that Wesley thought community involved. He also notes that Wesley did not emphasize or demand that his followers engage in *physical* violence. Wesley was conservative about political involvement, “forbade his followers from physically defending themselves against mob attacks” (46), and disliked the way the situation in the American colonies was developing into violence—though he eventually shifted the blame entirely to American shoulders for inciting and continuing that violence, thus enabling him to argue that Britain was fighting a “just war to suppress rebellion” (52).

American Methodists inherited Wesley’s construction of the spiritual life in violent terms. Many, though not all, continued to emphasize the spiritual battle to the exclusion of the physical one. But whereas Wesley began to interpret American rebellion in terms of sin and thus include resistance to it in the cosmic battle against sin, many American Methodists “failed to see a connection between the cosmic battle and either the Revolution in particular or war in general” (63). Freeborn Garrettson was only one among many who argued that Methodists could not fight in the Revolution because the spiritual struggle against sin was far more important: “The value American Methodists placed on suffering violence rather than inflicting it helped mark their political reorientation. Language of defending one’s rights and privileges paled when compared to the spiritual benefits of suffering for God” (65). This example—a major point of Williams’ argument—suggests “that we ought to resist a hasty conclusion that belief in a cosmic battle between good and evil has a direct and necessary cause-and-effect relationship in encouraging or defending warfare” (65). Whereas Wesley could reconcile his belief in the cosmic struggle

with his belief that Christians could also legitimately engage in physical warfare, early American Methodists by and large could not.

Williams then turns from physical to spiritual struggles, focusing on the changing ways Methodists interpreted “bodily exercises” in relationship to the “good fight” for salvation. As Methodism established itself, “Methodists began to exert greater control over their bodies in ways that made physical harm at the hands of spiritual forces less likely for the Christian soldier. As a result, the second generation of Methodists began to draw a clear distinction between themselves and their forebears who related grave tales of physical suffering at the hands of the divine and demonic alike” (70). Methodists in the early nineteenth century began to talk less about physical suffering inflicted by God on the believer as he or she struggled for salvation, and also to speak less frequently about Satan’s attacks as physical and more frequently about the devil’s mental temptations. All of this coalesced with American Methodist entry into the political realm: “As Methodists limited the power of God and Satan to harm their bodies, they assumed the power to harm others, and they often justified this power theologically” (92). Methodists also became much more willing to emphasize their physical citizenship as Americans along with their spiritual citizenship in the community of saints, joining “with other Protestant Christians in articulating the importance of Christianity to the health and preservation of the republic” and embracing “the evolving civic theology of the nation as birthed by God and providentially chosen for spreading national moral, economic, and political values to the world” (95). Particularly as Methodists helped conquer, evangelize, and subdue the West, they “accepted the civil responsibility to punish the wicked and defend the innocent” (129) and began to identify the nation with God’s purposes in the same way Wesley had with the British suppression of rebellion some generations before—and in direct contrast to their forebears in the Revolutionary era.

Williams then reintroduces the theme of the “genteel devotion” of later nineteenth-century Methodism that characterizes such depictions as Schneider’s, but places it against the context of Methodist willingness to embrace state-sanctioned violence and to view the Civil War as vital in the cosmic struggle against sin (in which they were not alone among American Protestants, as Harry Stout made abundantly clear in *Upon the Altar of the Nation* [2006]): “In the very years that vivid battles between spiritual forces for individual salvation declined, Methodists participated

in the bloodiest war the nation had ever seen—and they did so under the guise of the war as a sacred battle. . . . As Methodists defined away the struggle for their own salvation and their collective identity of the church as an army of soldiers, they elevated political struggles, and the violence that attended them, to cosmic proportions. In the process, they assumed the right to take human life and legitimated that right by linking it with their responsibility to destroy evil” (159).

In the end, Williams argues (invoking *Left Behind* in the process) that humans will always use violent imagery to talk about the religious life. The solution he proposes is not to eliminate the imagery, but rather to “diffuse the tendency of religious communities to apply cosmic dimensions to human conflicts in order to motivate and justify their violent behavior” (175). This was something American Methodists did well in the short term during the era of the Revolution, but it failed in the long term. Could it succeed again? Would it take a concerted effort to refuse the embourgeoisment that led Methodists to identify their aims with those of their nation?

While not without precursors (in Stout and Ruth as well as Johanna Cruikshank and John Wigger), this book will challenge most everything you thought you knew about early Methodist spirituality, early Methodist pacifism, and the full price paid for the growing respectability of nineteenth-century Methodism. Its current applicability is also painfully obvious. By and large, those who oppose the way in which Wesleyans, and American Christians in general, identify with American civil religion have sought to combat that identification by emphasizing the Christian narrative of peace and community and by eliminating martial language and imagery from the Christian story. Williams dares to argue, with Civil-War era Methodists as his prime example, that that is the wrong approach—or, at least, that it is not enough. Maybe it is only from a place of persecution, never from a place of power, that the difference between social and spiritual violence (if there is one) and the ability to reject one and affirm the other, can be maintained. As G. K. Chesterton once said, “The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon.” It is certainly true that, as Albanese and Stein wryly comment in their introduction about much historiography extolling the beauties of early Methodist community, this book “must modify what we think about all those melting times” (x).

Wright, John, ed. *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic: Conversations with George Lindbeck, David Burrell, and Stanley Hauerwas*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012. 159 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0801039829.

Reviewed by Justus H. Hunter, Ph.D. candidate, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.

In 2007, David Burrell, Stanley Hauerwas, and George Lindbeck were invited to Nazarene Theological Seminary to participate in a series of interviews for the Hugh C. Benner Endowed Lectureship. *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic* is a product of those interviews, but it is not merely a set of transcriptions. Rather, John Wright draws upon the interviews in order to construct an argument. *Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic*, therefore, joins the growing ranks of critical and constructive engagement with postliberalism and the so-called Yale school. More specifically, Wright's text contributes to the growing *evangelical* engagement with postliberalism.

Transcriptions of the interviews occupy the central chapters of the text, enclosed within two introductory chapters and a constructive conclusion. Wright's stated goal is "to reestablish postliberal theology's concern for the visible unity of the church catholic" (6). Of course, he must deal with the much-maligned labels "postliberal" and "Yale school." Wright's solution is a ramified description of the common aspects of Burrell, Hauerwas, and Lindbeck's thought. This unity, Wright contends, is methodological: all three reflect "a contemporary retrieval of Augustinian Thomism through interaction with twentieth-century linguistic philosophy" (8).

Wright's introductory chapters attempt three things: (1) to describe the historical precedence for postliberalism, (2) to isolate postliberalism's animating concern, and (3) to unpack the aforementioned description. In terms of precedence, Wright isolates the *nouvelle théologie*, appealing to Congar's ecumenism and De Lubac's critical and constructive account of the supernatural. This is the "program" of Catholic theology that Lindbeck, Burrell, and Hauerwas "implicitly produced and renewed . . . decades after it had ceased to be fashionable" (22). Wright proceeds to describe postliberalism's animating concern as the "culture of authenticity" and the secularism manifest in the institutionalization of "Religious Studies." The evangelical orientation of the text is manifest in these pages. Against these values and cultural shifts, he insists, postliberals developed the "earlier, traditional, ecclesially-based program for theology," putatively exemplified by Congar and De Lubac (42). This was achieved, method-

ologically, via a distinctive fusion of Karl Barth (for Wright, a *ressource-*ment theologian), Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Thomas Aquinas.

The four subsequent chapters are (apparently edited) transcripts of the interviews with Lindbeck, Burrell, and Hauerwas (respectively), followed by a “conversation” between the three figures. The individual interviews are organized biographically. The Lindbeck chapter gives special insight into his project, aims, and evaluations on his own life work. That this is one of the last pieces we will have from him is both significant and sorrowful. The transcribed “conversation” is particularly intriguing. Here we see not only the commonality among the figures, which is Wright’s heavy emphasis, but also points of genuine disagreement (e.g., 128-29).

Wright’s concluding chapter is a rebuttal to Paul DeHart’s *The Trial of the Witnesses* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), an important critique of postliberalism in general and Lindbeck in particular. Wright responds to several aspects of DeHart’s thesis, most importantly DeHart’s objection to intratextuality. To put it pithily, for DeHart, theology is a trial. Trials require juries to pass judgment. The jury, according to DeHart, is the public (or “culture”), to whom theologians submit their proposal for approval. Postliberal theological method fails insofar as intertextuality rejects this dimension of the trial. As a result, postliberal theology fails in its missional task.

Wright offers a rejoinder to DeHart. Indeed, theology is a trial, and indeed it has a jury. However, the jury is not the “public,” Wright contends, but the communion of saints. Thus, Wright’s text arrives at a constructive proposal on postliberal theological method. It is unclear how well this works as a rebuttal; it seems to reaffirm DeHart’s worries over enclosure and sectarianism. However, Wright’s appeal to the communion of saints is worthy of consideration, both on its own terms and as a potentially important rebuttal to common evangelical criticisms of postliberalism’s potential relativism.

Although Wright’s text is both insightful and provocative, his analysis would be more helpful and persuasive had he noted key points of disagreement and contention among his thinkers. As it stands, his descriptions of these three postliberals are entirely too unified. This is particularly worrisome given the distinctively Hauerwasian flavor of this confluence. Within the interviews, however, one detects significant disagreement, notably around ecumenism. Furthermore, it would have been helpful had Wright supplied a more detailed description of the actual proceedings of the interviews and his transcription procedures. Were the

interviews conducted over multiple days or one night? Do the chapters reflect the order of the interviews, or Wright's decision? Are the transcriptions revised in any way? If so, how? Such information would be especially helpful, given the overtly constructive aims of the text.

Postliberal Theology and the Church Catholic joins an important body of literature on the interaction between postliberalism and evangelical theology. Furthermore, it recalls attention to the signal achievement of twentieth century theology: ecumenism. Wright's text would serve nicely as an introduction to postliberalism, and will also be of interest to specialists in twentieth-century theology.

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