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**THE EPISTLE OF JAMES—  
A DOCUMENT ON HEAVENLY WISDOM**

By W. Ralph Thompson

**I. Introduction**

Wisdom (*hokhmah*) forms the third of three sources of knowledge in the Old Testament: 1) the law concentrates on God's commandments and claims; 2) prophecy sets forth His counsels; and 3) wisdom literature treats of His person and His cosmic works, and reveals the moral relationship and the responsibility which man sustains toward God and toward his fellow men.<sup>1</sup>

Hebrew literature does not presume to reveal a wisdom discovered independent of revelation. Nor does it seek to harmonize Hebrew religion with pagan philosophies.<sup>2</sup> The fear of the Lord is its basis (Job. 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; Eccl. 12:13); and it involves the hatred of pride, of arrogance, and of every evil way (Prov.8:13) Revelation is the key that unlocks the mystery of God's ways in the world. By the knowledge of His revealed will Hebrew wise men sought to determine man's moral responsibilities.

Old Testament wisdom reveals that earthly possessions are not to be sought for their own sake, but should be received as tokens of God's favor. Hence earthly prosperity is to be prized insofar as it is accompanied by righteous conduct.'

But right conduct is not expected of individuals alone. It must be evident in social and political institutions. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34) Because blessings or curses fall upon a land according to the character of its government, numerous counsels to rulers are given in Hebrew wisdom literature (e. g., Prov. 29:12, 14; 31:1-9).

Nevertheless Hebrew wise men gave much of their energies in a quest for the solution of the enigmas of life, the mystery of God's dealings with men.

The Epistle of James is the only book of the New Testament which might be called "Wisdom Literature." It is located under wisdom's banner because of the apostle's discussion of wisdom in chapter  
three.

In this paper, the writer will point out why James speaks of wisdom where he does. Then he will show that the meaning which the apostle puts into the term is unique]y different from the meaning that commonly is conveyed by the word. After that he will demonstrate that 'the wisdom from above" which James regards so highly finds its counter-part in several other New Testament teachings. From that point he will move to chapter one to indicate how the application of the meaning which James gives to the word "wisdom" adds rich understanding to his discussion of wisdom in chapter one. Then a rapid survey of the epistle will be made to indicate that it is unified around the concept of wisdom. Finally, some conclusions based on the findings in this paper will be made.

Let us see first —

## **II. Why James Discusses Wisdom in Chapter Three.**

To grasp the logic of James's emphasis on wisdom it is necessary to observe that chapter three begins with a counsel against many of his readers becoming teachers.

He immediately supports this advice with two reasons. First, because God will judge teachers with greater strictness than He will use in judging other people.

The explanation for such strictness is obvious: teachers profoundly]y influence their students either for good or for ill. Especially is this true when their students are immature. Most undergraduate students and all new converts to Christianity fall into that category. Since attitudes and conduct are determined largely by what one really believes, the devastation wrought by those who teach false doctrine is appalling.

Jesus underlined the seriousness of false teaching, either by pre-

cept or example, when He said, "It is inevitable that stumbling-blocks should come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble" (Lk.17:1,2, NAS). If one had better be drowned than to cause a weak Christian to fall into sin, it is little wonder that James cautions against one lightly becoming a teacher.

His second reason for advising the immature not to rush into teaching positions is because a teacher makes large use of the tongue, and the tongue must be brought under control if it is to operate safely.

But Jesus showed that the mouth speaks forth what is in the heart (Mk. 7:14-23). James sees the uncontrolled mouth, like a fountain of bitter water, pouring out the evil which is resident deep within it.

James implies that the "first qualification for a teacher is wisdom."<sup>4</sup>

But he was not using "wisdom" in the usual sense of the word.

## **III. James's Use of the Word "Wisdom" Is Unique.**

Words are silly things unless they convey accurately the thought of the one employing them.

Some words have a variety of meanings. Hence the interpreter must observe carefully the context to discover what shade of meaning the writer intended to convey.

It sometimes happens, too, that alter lives his own peculiar meaning to words. Tillich, in his Christian theology, was notable for that. The technical term for such a practice is "*usus loquendi*."5

The Apostle Paul illustrates this point when he uses the word "Jew" in two ways. In Romans 2:9 and 10 and Romans 3:1 he gives the word its usual meaning. In these passages, a Jew is a member of an ethnic religious group, a member of the Hebrew race. but in Romans 2:28 and 29 he uses the word to represent believers in Christ: 'He is not a Jew' he says, "who is one outwardly.... He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart. . . ." To use the word, "Jew" to represent a Christian even though he be a Gentile, is unique.

If a child upon seeing a certain animal calls it a horse, yet describes it as possessing horns, having split hooves, and saying moo," the hearer may be reasonably sure that the child saw a cow. And if the hearer fails to put the child's meaning into the word "horse," he will fail to grasp what the child is saying James's use of the word "wisdom" in chapter three is just as unusual. The dictionary definition of "wisdom" is "knowledge and good judgment based on experience."6 To put it more simply, "wisdom" ordinarily means a proper use of knowledge. It is something intellectual in nature, something accrued across the years. but Dummelow rightly states that "Wisdom, in St. James's view, is moral rather than an intellectual quality."7

Take his definition of earthly wisdom (3:14-16) It is characterized by bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. It is carnal (unspiritual). These are qualities of the heart, not of the mind; they are moral not intellectual.

Moral qualities likewise describe the wisdom from above. It is pure. It is peaceable. It is gentle. It is open to reason. It is full of mercy. It is full of good fruits. It is sure of itself It is sincere. And it produces a harvest of righteousness.

So whichever type of wisdom James describes, he speaks in moral terms The one is earthy, carnal; the other, heavenly.

James's second type of "wisdom" is "from above" (3:17). In 1:5, he states that it comes through the medium of prayer ("Let him ask of God"). And in 1:6, he shows that it is received as a result of faith. We must conclude, then, that the wisdom which James commends to his readers is not something acquired through experience but something received from God.

#### **IV. James's Discussion of Heavenly Wisdom parallels Other**

New Testament Teachings.

As one meditates on James's description of the wisdom from above, one senses a striking similarity between his statement and other New Testament teachings.

James tells us that heavenly wisdom "is first pure."

When the Apostle Peter, at the Jerusalem Conference, was describing that which happened to Gentile converts through his ministry he emphasized that the cleansing wrought by the Holy Spirit was the identical work that was accomplished in the hundred and twenty who

were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. He said, "God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8, 9). The Epistle of James tells us that the wisdom from above is first pure." (James 3:17).

Paul's analysis of the fruit of the Spirit also reminds one that James's statement about heavenly wisdom is strikingly similar. Peace and gentleness characterize both.

The Apostle John's oft-repeated emphasis on love also is in perfect harmony with the qualities described by James under the wisdom from above.

James's statement that heavenly wisdom is attained as a gift from God through prayer and faith reminds one of Jesus' urgent charge to believers to "ask, and it will be given...." That He had the Holy Spirit especially in mind is seen by the way He concludes His statement: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Lk. 11:9-13).

Finally, look at the Epistle to the Hebrews. The rest which the writer urges his readers to enter, and which he shows to be attainable through obedience and faith, and through ceasing from one's own carnal works (4:10), agrees perfectly with James's analysis of heavenly wisdom.

In view of the above, need the present writer point out that James's insistence on the need for heavenly wisdom is his peculiar way of saying that teachers are not prepared to teach until they are filled with the Holy Spirit? Need members of the Wesleyan Theological Society further argument to be convinced that what James calls "wisdom from above" is what Wesley called "Entire Sanctification" and "Perfect Love," and what others have called "The Fullness of the Spirit," or "The Rest of Faith," or "One's Personal Pentecost," or "The Second Work of Grace," or "Entire Consecration," or "Sanctification," or "Holiness"?

Jesus made clear that a sinful heart is the fountain of moral evil, that the evil that comes out of the mouth comes from an evil heart (Mk. 7:14-23). James agrees with the Master: one with an evil heart cannot control the tongue, therefore should not teach. The ability to control the tongue is found only in "the wisdom that is from above"-which "is first pure. . . ."

#### **V. James's Discussion of Wisdom in Chapter Three Gives Meaning to His Statements about Wisdom in chapter One.**

It is the present writer's conviction that most evangelicals apply James's statement about wisdom in 1:5-8 without regard for the context.

James has just told his readers to do something which is quite contrary to human nature: "Count it all joy," he said, ".... when you meet various trials...." Then he explains why. It is because trials test one's faith. They try one's confidence in God's love and goodness. "The testing of your faith," he continues, "produces steadfastness." Certainly steadfastness is a desirable Christian virtue.

But trials per se do not make a Christian mature. Trials can be devastating. Trials will make the Christian believer either better or bitter, depending on the attitude with which they are faced. Steadfastness under trial must be maintained, says James: "Let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete."

God desires the perfection of His children. He accomplishes that not only through the crisis experiences of Regeneration and Sanctification, but through the slower means of increasing knowledge, and through a liberal supply of trials.

Paul speaks of the same methodology when he says, "Suffering produces endurance"-endurance is steadfastness-"and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5). Thus, what Paul calls the work of the Holy Spirit, James calls "the wisdom from above."

In chapter one, verse five, then, James is not speaking of divine guidance for making decisions. He is talking about the necessity of having those inner qualities which Jesus said the Father is eager to give to his asking children (Lk. 11:13). By them we are made able to face our trials even with rejoicing.

Since James, in chapter three, defines what he means by wisdom, we miss the significance of what he is saying in chapter one if we try to read another meaning into his words. Therefore, Christians should not turn to James 1:3 when desiring a promise for guidance. Rather, they should turn, e. g., to Psalm 32:8, where God says to those whose transgressions are forgiven, "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. " Or let them use Proverbs 3:6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths."

## **VI. The Epistle of James Has Wisdom As a Central Emphasis.**

Most interpreters appear to look upon the Epistle of James as a collection of aphoristic statements and brief homilies strung together without special relationship one to another. The present writer does not believe that to be so. On several occasions while teaching at Taylor University, instead of giving the usual type of test over the Epistle of James, this writer assigned his classes the task of showing how every paragraph in the book, except the introductory one, relates directly to the thesis that a genuine faith in Christ produces Christian works. Repeatedly, a number of nearly perfect papers would be turned in.

But what is it that enables one to have such a living faith, a faith that works in practical, everyday situations? It is the Holy Spirit operative in the heart. And this to say that the Epistle of James is one of Christendom's richest sources of teaching on practical holiness.

## VII. Conclusion.

In view of the above, a number of conclusions may be drawn with regard to the Epistle of James:

1. What James calls "the wisdom from above" is what Wesley called Entire Sanctification.
2. This wisdom from above is necessary in order for one to put into practice all the exhortations which James gives in his epistle.
3. No teacher, especially no teacher of religion, is qualified for his task unless he has what James calls "the wisdom from above."
4. According to a survey reported to this writer by Professor Glen Heck, of the National College of Education, Evanston, Illinois, the children of our land get almost 100% of their ideals, not from their peers, nor from Sunday school teachers, nor ministers, nor day-school teachers, but from their parents. So one is not qualified for parenthood unless one is filled with the Holy Spirit — has the wisdom from above.
5. Since every person influences the attitudes and conduct of those with whom he comes in touch, everybody is in that sense a teacher. Therefore, one is not qualified even to live successfully unless one has the wisdom from above.
6. Jesus would not let the first disciples begin their ministry until after they had tarried, until they were endued with power from on high. Matters would be vastly different in our churches if they maintained such a standard for ministers and for teachers in church-related schools.
7. The method by which one obtains this wisdom is by asking God. But there is need to ask for faith, nothing doubting. If fathers "who are evil know how to give good gifts to their children, "how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. " "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy might be full."

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### Reference Notes

1. Wisdom literature is found in the books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, and in certain of the Psalms, especially in Psalms 19, 37, 104, 107, 147, and 148.
2. Gustave Friederich Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1883), pp. 537-38.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 552.
4. J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 1036, col. 1.
5. Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Zondervan Publishing House. n. d. ), p. 181.
6. Thorndike-Barnhart *Comprehensive Desk Dictionary* (The Country Life Press, Garden City, N.Y., 1951), q. v.
7. *Ibid.*, col. 2.

**JOHN FLETCHER'S INFLUENCE ON  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
WESLEYAN THEOLOGY IN AMERICA**

By John A. Knight

Introduction

Not until recent years has the significance of John Fletcher's theology been assessed by interpreters of the history of Christian doctrine. For almost two hundred years his work was eclipsed by the Wesleys and by some in the Calvinistic wing of the 18th century Evangelical Revival in England, except for occasional references by historians and biographers of his contemporaries.

David C. Shipley's perceptive study, "Methodist Arminianism in the Theology of John Fletcher," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Yale, 1942, was a pioneer work in this country. Particularly in the last two decades others have begun to recognize the importance of Fletcher to the development of Wesleyan theology.<sup>1</sup>

The close relationship of John Fletcher and the Wesley brothers is well known. Although Fletcher was not a part of Wesley's itinerancy and his name appears on the role of Wesley's conference only in 1784, nonetheless Wesley linked himself, his brother Charles, and Fletcher together in what has been called an "exposed triumvirate."<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that from time to time Fletcher invited John Wesley and his assistants into his parish. About 1764 he wrote to one of Wesley's preachers, inviting him to come as he had opportunity, and stated: "I hope that my stepping as Providence directs, to any of your places (leaving to you the management of the societies) will be deemed no encroachment. In short we need not make two parties: I know but one heaven below, and that is Jesus' love; let us both go and abide in it."<sup>3</sup> In 1766 Fletcher commented that the coming of Wesley's preachers into his parish gave him no "uneasiness . . . I rejoice that the work of God goes on by any instrument, or in any place."

Fletcher evidently preached in the societies of Wesley, Wesley preached in his pulpit, and Wesley's preachers were welcome in his parish. This warm relationship was destined to reach a new dimension in the 1770 Calvinistic controversy, out of which the foundation of Fletcher's theology developed, and during which he became the defender of Wesley and the theological spokesman for Wesleyan Methodism.

The founder of Methodism was concerned that at his death, his mantle should fall upon a man of ' faith, unselfishness, diligence, and a degree of learning." These endowments he found in John William Fletcher (1729-85). Thus in January, 1773, Wesley invited the vicar of Madeley to become his successor. Encouraging him to consider the request seriously, Wesley wrote that to all the above qualities necessary for such a task, God "has lately added, by a way none could have foreseen, favor both with the preachers and the people."<sup>5</sup>

The unforeseen way which Wesley thought God had used to equip Fletcher for such a role was the eruption of a hitherto more or less concealed theological controversy over the issue of the means or conditions of salvation. The occasion for the outburst was the statement in Wesley's Conference Minutes of 1770 that the Methodists had "leaned too much toward Calvinism."

In clarifying this assertion the Minutes declared that this had been the case "with regard to 'working for life.'" They had "received it as a maxim, that a 'man is to do nothing in order to justification. '" According to the Minutes, "Nothing can be more false." Though man is not saved by the "merits of works," he is saved by "works as a condition." Man is rewarded "because of" his works, and is "every moment pleasing or displeasing to God according to" his works.<sup>6</sup>

Immediately these sentiments caused a furor of disagreement on the part of the Calvinistic Methodists, resulting in a number of heated written attacks on Wesley and the Minutes, and evoking counter attacks by his defenders. The leading protagonist for the Wesleyan position was John Fletcher, who during the eight years of the controversy, 1770-78, produced almost everything he ever wrote, and provided one of the strongest bulwarks that Wesleyan Methodism has found.

Fletcher's writings gave the Methodist Revival an intellectual and theological foundation which today is almost universally accepted as a matter of course. After he finished what he had to say on predestination, election, free will, good works, and Christian perfection, there was little left to be said—save for the perennial task of adapting to continuously changing cultural conditions.

Few would deny Fletcher's theological and literary abilities. His stature is reflected in part by knowledgeable commentators on his life and thought. Of him Luke Tyerman, his biographer, has said:

Among the Wesleyan Methodists, he settled forever all the questions of the Calvinian controversy. For many a long year, Methodist preachers drew their arguments and illustrations from his invaluable Checks . . . He did for Wesley's theology what no other man than himself at that period could have done. John Wesley traveled formed societies, governed them. Charles Wesley composed unequalled hymns for the Methodists to sing; and John Fletcher, a native of Calvinian Switzerland, explained, elaborated, and defended the doctrines they heartily believed.

Fletcher has been described as the "earliest and fullest expositor and interpreter in English of the Remonstrant theology of Arminius;

whose works remain the storehouse of its treasures and the armoury of its defense." It has been said that the theology of the Methodist movement was the theology of John Fletcher of Madeley.<sup>9</sup>

Abel Stevens, one of the leading historians of Methodism, has written of Fletcher's *Checks*: "They have been more influential in the denomination than Wesley's own controversial writings on the subject. They have influenced, indirectly through Methodism, the subsequent tone of theological thought in much of the Protestant world."<sup>10</sup>

While Fletcher was eminent as a theologian, he also was unequalled as a saint. His contemporaries, who spoke of him at all, were unanimous in their view that in the galaxy of names which make up the historic roll of the Evangelical Revival, no star is so bright as that of Jean Guillaume de la Flechere.

Wesley thought he was without a spiritual peer, and wrote that he had not found one to equal him - "one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God; and I scarce expect to find another such on this side of eternity." In the Conference Minutes of 1786, the answer to the usual question, 'Who died this year?' is recorded thus "John Fletcher, a pattern of holiness, scarce to be paralleled in a century."<sup>12</sup>

It is difficult to account for the fact that only scant attention has been given to this man, who more than any other, apart from Wesley himself, molded Methodist theology in its early history. He was more systematic than Wesley-overcoming the limitations imposed by the latter's itinerancy; and to his Checks to Antinomianism Wesley gave his approval.<sup>13</sup>

Fletcher was constrained to defend what he regarded as Wesley's meaning in the Minutes, although he could not equally approve the manner in which that meaning was expressed.<sup>14</sup> He felt strong responsibility to write so as to discharge his "duty towards God," and towards his "honored father in Christ, Mr. Wesley, and his misunderstood Minutes."<sup>15</sup>

But more specifically, Fletcher wrote because he thought, like Wesley, that the Calvinists' theology leads to antinomianism, or to a separation of doctrine and life, justification and new birth. He stated his chief reason for publishing his First Check thus:

It appears if I am not mistaken that we stand now as much in need of a reformation from antinomianism as our ancestors did of a reformation from popery. People, it seems, may now be 'in Christ' without being 'new creatures, ' without casting 'old things' away. They may be God's children without God's image; and 'born of the Spirit' without the 'fruits of the Spirit. "<sup>16</sup>

Fletcher's aim, then, was to oppose the antinomian objection to Christian perfection. <sup>17</sup>

Though Wesley feared that the "antidote" could not "spread so fast as the poison, " he was hopeful that Fletcher's Checks would slow the progress of antinomianism.<sup>18</sup> Wesley thought highly of these writings. In 1774 he stated that Fletcher had clearly shown that Christ is the

meritorious cause of our salvation-pardon, holiness, and glory-"as I think scarcely any one has done before since the Apostles."19

To combat the Calvinistic threat to perfection, Wesley enjoined: "Let all our preachers carefully read over ours and Mr. Fletcher's Tracts."20 At the conference of 1776 the exhortation was given to preach "universal redemption frequently and explicitly," and read Fletcher's . . . tracts, as well as Wesley's.20

These introductory historical comments should be sufficient to remind us of the fact of Fletcher's importance in the beginning days of Wesleyan theology. However, the rather narrow design of this paper should be understood. No attempt is made here to relate Fletcher's thought to any particular Methodist theologian or preacher in the Wesleyan tradition in America. For one thing direct lines of influence are not always easy to establish. And further, my first-hand knowledge of the thoughts of the earliest American Methodist leaders is far too limited.

In dealing with the topic assigned to me, my purpose simply is to call attention to the first Wesleyan theologian as a kind of background for our discussion of certain developments within Wesleyan-Holiness theology. More specifically, I wish to suggest several clues to Fletcher's significance for early Wesleyan theology in America by looking at 1) his influence on Wesley's later thought (i.e., after 1770); 2) the way his writings were viewed and accepted in America; and 3) selected key elements of his thought which were congenial to the American scene, particularly in the first part of the 19th century.

### **I. Fletcher's Influence on Wesley's "Later" Thought From Free Grace to Free Will**

The theme of our conference, "Some Aspects of the Development of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology," assumes that this theology has not been static, but has manifested certain changes or shifts in emphasis through-out its history. Robert E. Chiles has suggested that "the transition from free grace to free will is one of the fundamental changes in American Methodism since the time of John Wesley." He notes that because of a shift in priority from faith itself to "evidences" for faith, and because of the moralistic revision of the understanding of sin there has been a movement away from the classical Protestant orthodoxy of John Wesley. 22

Chiles has expanded this theme in his fascinating book, *Theological Transition in American Methodism, 1790-1935*,23 in which he illustrates the shift from revelation to reason, from sinful man to moral man, from free grace to free will. Convincingly, he traces the changes in Wesleyan theology through three generations of Methodist theologians.

He observes that Richard Watson in his *Theological Institutes* (1823-29) attributed more to man than did Wesley and "represents a first subtle step toward the modification of free grace in the direction of free will."24

D. D. Whedon during the second half of the nineteenth century, it is claimed, shifted further the emphasis from soteriological to an-

thropological grounds, and insisted on man's responsible freedom, without giving much attention to grace. Whedon argued that the will chooses motives which grace supplies.<sup>25</sup>

According to Chiles, this development culminated in John Miley's *Systematic Theology* (2 volumes, 1894). Miley suggested that whether good motives are derived from nature or from grace is indifferent so far as moral freedom is concerned.

Finally, men like Borden Parker Bowne (d. 1910) and Albert C. Knudson (d. 1953), Methodist philosophical and theological thinkers, stressed the metaphysical significance of personality even apart from the gracious basis of motives. Thus concludes Chiles: "The apostasy from free grace to free will is complete."<sup>26</sup>

In seeking to uncover clues to the influence of John Fletcher on the development of Wesleyan theology in America, particularly with regard to this issue, I suggest that the "first subtle step" in this shift from free grace to free will can be found, not in Richard Watson (in whom Chiles finds it), but in Wesley himself. Certain aspects of John Wesley's theology indicate a more decided anthropological emphasis during the last twenty years of his life, primarily with regard to man's freedom of the will.

Careful study indicates that this transition of emphasis was made possible by the defense of Wesley's Minutes of 1770 by John Fletcher (d. 1785), whose *Checks to Antinomianism* entitle him to be called the "first systematic theologian of Methodism." This later development in Wesley frequently is unobserved both because the significance of the Calvinistic controversy (1770's) for a historical understanding of Wesley is too little appreciated, and because Fletcher's defense of and influence upon Wesley has received little more than passing attention.

That Chiles has overlooked this influence, both in his article and that portion of his book which discusses the problem of free will,<sup>27</sup> may be seen in the fact that almost all the material which he quotes or cites from Wesley was written before 1770.

Further, a brief survey of those relevant references to Wesley's writings which are dated following this time indicates that the referents used by Chiles have to do more with free will than with free grace. For example, eight references are made to Wesley's Letters after 1770, but only two relate specifically to the problem of man's freedom. In these though Wesley mentioned prevenient grace,<sup>29</sup> the emphasis, unobserved by Chiles, is on man's ability to believe if he will (though not when he will). God's assistance of man in believing is stressed, rather than man's assistance of God in the salvation process.<sup>29</sup>

Ten Sermons written after 1770 are cited by Chiles. Four are related only indirectly to the question of freedom, and deal with the nature and love of God, Christ's death and perfection.<sup>30</sup> Of the six sermons which are pertinent to the discussion of man's moral and spiritual abilities, two stress works and man's power of self-determination,<sup>31</sup> and in two others which discuss freedom, Wesley did not refer at all to prevenient grace,<sup>32</sup> or questioned the significance of asking whether man's free will is "natural or superadded by the grace of God."<sup>33</sup> Only in the remaining two sermons adduced by Chiles did Wesley

assert that conscience is a supernatural gift of God, 34 or make an attempt to balance God's grace and man's free will.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, Chiles alludes to several additional writings of Wesley other than his letters or sermons; but these are deliberate attempts to underscore man's freedom,<sup>36</sup> with the exception of Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* — most of which was written prior to 1770 though the latest edition is dated 1777.<sup>97</sup>

The purpose in examining these references is not to disagree with Chiles' understanding of Wesley's theological position. It is simply to observe that the preponderance of evidence which he uses to sustain his interpretation was written by Wesley before 1770, and that the relevant references to material prepared after the Calvinistic controversy began, i.e., after Fletcher's defense of Wesley's Minutes, indicate a decided anthropocentric emphasis.

### **Arguments for Free Will**

This shift of emphasis, not of theological position, in the direction of man's freedom, may be substantiated conclusively from the writings of the "later" Wesley. Following 1770 man's power of choice came to pervade Wesley's thought. He buttressed his new emphasis upon man's free will by three main arguments, which seem to correspond to his well-known threefold criteria for truth—Scripture, Reason, and Experience.

1) Wesley began saying that man is free by virtue of the fact that he is a man, made in God's image according to Scripture, and that man by nature is free to choose the good. He insisted, on the basis of the Scriptural teaching that man is a creature of God, that the power of choice is standard equipment for man.<sup>38</sup>

Earlier Wesley had stated that because of grace there is no man in history in a completely "natural" state. Now he states that every man made in the "natural" image of God has will and liberty, and that Christ came to recover the moral image. Nothing is said of restoring the natural image. The implication is that in the Fall man did not lose his liberty, a part of the natural image. Liberty, then, is man's by virtue of the fact that he is a man.<sup>39</sup>

At times Wesley affirmed that man, though fallen, still possesses power of choice, and yet no explanation that it arises out of prevenient grace is given. More and more, he tended to underscore man's abilities, leaving one with the impression that man can do almost what he wills simply because he is a man.<sup>40</sup>

2) Wesley began stressing the idea that man's guilt must not exceed his accountability and that responsibility cannot be greater than his freedom, else the canons of Reason are violated. To the later Wesley the reality of man's freedom is not only a scriptural teaching, but also a rational necessity. Thus more and more emphasis was placed on man and his responsibility, rather than on God and His grace. If man is not free, then reason dictates that he cannot be accountable and therefore he is capable of neither reward nor punishment.<sup>41</sup>

Wesley affirmed his position on the basis of the "*nature of things*", 42

saying that man can choose the "better part" - assisted by God's grace. 43 It is noteworthy that he did not say the "better part" is man's by grace, assisted by man's choice. This way of stating the matter makes grace appear to be secondary to man's freedom and accountability.

3) Increasingly Wesley observed that the universal Experience of man testifies to his power of choice. In Wesley's mind, experience corroborates the witness of Scripture and Reason to the power of choice in man. Man is conscious of possessing a "power of self-determination." He senses a "liberty of contradiction," a power "to act one way, or the contrary." To deny this, for Wesley, would be to deny the common experience of all mankind.<sup>44</sup>

With this solid support of Scripture, Reason, and Experience, Wesley made choice a dominant theme in his later writings.<sup>45</sup> His position regarding man's freedom is no different from that prior to 1770, but Wesley went further to state that Pelagius' heresy was merely in believing that one by the grace of God can "go on to perfection." <sup>46</sup> Though Wesley asserted that this possibility is by the grace of God, his approval of Pelagius does indicate a shift of emphasis in favor of man's power of decision. Man's eternal state depends upon his choice.<sup>47</sup>

Man's power of choice is both assumed and emphasized in the numerous admonitions which are included in many of Wesley's late sermons, and which are noticeably absent from his Standard Sermons. For example, in "The Important Question" (1775) Wesley concluded: "I set before you life and death, believing and cursing. O choose life! . . . And having once fixed your choice, never draw back. . . Go on in the name of the Lord, whom ye have chosen.."

It cannot be said that Wesley anywhere avowed that man has freedom apart from God. In fact he stated the opposite. In 1772 he wrote: "Both Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Wesley absolutely deny natural free-will. We both steadily assert that the will of man is by nature free only to evil. Yet we both believe that every man has a measure of free-will restored to him by grace."<sup>49</sup>

Nonetheless the priority of grace unintentionally was made to appear to be secondary to man's responsible choice. The emphasis on man's freedom increasingly was shifted away from the ocentric to anthropocentric categories. This transition is revealed clearly in one of Wesley's last statements. Speaking of conscience in 1790, he wrote: "Whether this is natural or superadded by the grace of God, it is found, at least in some degree, in every child of man."<sup>50</sup>

Miley, in whom the transition from free grace to free will is supposed by Chiles to have culminated, made a similar point as we have seen. <sup>50a</sup> Chiles states that for Miley whether motives "are derived from nature or from grace is indifferent so far as moral freedom is concerned."<sup>51</sup>

Thus by the end of Wesley's life he seems not to have been too concerned as to whether man's liberty and conscience are by nature or by grace. He simply wanted to affirm that man has them-else he is not a man. It appears, then, that the "transition" from free grace to free will. began in the later Wesley himself, and not in Richard Watson.<sup>52</sup>

## Stronger Emphasis on Works

Clearly Wesley came to emphasize man's freedom in a way which he had not done prior to 1770. The primary reason seems to be his continued conflict with Calvinism which caused him to stress works in an effort to avoid Antinomianism. This continued altercation led him increasingly to underscore the necessity and possibility of good works and quite frequently without mentioning their relation to grace.

In 1770 Wesley wrote a tract, "What is an Arminian" in which he pointed out that the one point of division between Arminians and Calvinists relates to the question: 'Is predestination absolute or conditional' "The Arminians, " he noted, "believe it is conditional; the Calvinists, that it is absolute."53

Wesley attempted to show that the doctrine of unconditional election is absolutely incompatible with any demand for works. In 1771 he wrote "The Consequence Proved" and cited some of Toplady's statements from which one must deduce that "the elect shall be saved do what they will; The reprobate shall be doomed do what they can."54

Wesley denied the doctrine of absolute predestination, claiming that if a choice had to be made between Roman works and Calvinistic election, he would choose the former. "I do not believe," he wrote in 1772, "salvation by works. Yet if any man can prove (what I judge none ever did, or ever will) that there is no medium between this and absolute predestination; I will rather subscribe to this than to that, as far less absurd of the two."55

Wesley was sure that the position stated in the 1770 Minutes, which evoked such a storm of controversy and which Fletcher defended in his Checks, provides a third possibility so that no such clear-cut choice between works and election is necessary. He was equally convinced that the Minutes, which made what he thought is a legitimate place for works, and the doctrine of decrees cannot stand together.56

This high regard for works prompted Wesley to insist upon salvation by works "in a Scriptural sense." In 1779 he published in *The Arminian Magazine* a short essay entitled "Thoughts on Salvation by Faith."57 In it he again stated that the Calvinists see "no medium between salvation by works and salvation by absolute decrees." Thus since he denied absolute election, in their view he was affirming salvation by works.

Wesley endeavored to clarify this by saying that if salvation is by unconditional election, then it is neither by works nor by faith. If human salvation is by a conditional election, i.e., "He that believeth shall be saved, " then it is by a faith which worketh by love, "which produces both inward and outward good works." In this sense no man will be saved finally without works.58

It has been thought that this represents a withdrawal from Wesley's earlier position of salvation by grace alone.59 However, he was reasserting simply that justification always issues in the fruit of sanctification.60

Fearing Antinomianism Wesley asserted that Christ's righteousness must become our own — "personal holiness" is required of man. The righteousness of Christ is "necessary to entitle us to heaven; personal

holiness is necessary to qualify" us for it. Without the righteousness of Christ we could have no claim to glory; without holiness we could have no fitness for it. Wesley said this had been his position for fifty years, and from it he had "never varied, no, not an hair's breadth."<sup>61</sup>

Though Wesley seems to have been correct in claiming that none of these sentiments at all indicate a retraction from his earlier position of salvation by grace, the continued conflict with the Calvinists, as well as the practical concerns of the revival,<sup>62</sup> in his later years pushed him to stress freedom and man's works more than faith and God's grace.

It is at this point that the strong influence of John Fletcher begins to be seen. Wesley viewed Fletcher's works as being a significant contribution toward the clarification of his own position, especially with regard to particular predestination. In 1772 Wesley declared that with Fletcher's *Checks* it became "indisputably clear, that neither my brother nor I had borne a sufficient testimony to the truth. For many years, from a well-meant, but ill-judged, tenderness, we had suffered the reprobation Preachers (vulgarly called Gospel Preachers) to spread their poison, almost without opposition."<sup>63</sup>

Since Wesley had long opposed predestination, he evidently was acknowledging that he had not found time to construct systematically a theology which could successfully refute the predestinarians. This, Wesley felt, Fletcher had done. Speaking specifically of the 1770 Minutes, Wesley stated that Fletcher had "effectually vindicated" them, for "there is no resisting the force of his arguments."<sup>64</sup>

Wesley's opposition to Calvinism persisted until his death. In a letter of January 19, 1791, a few months before he died, he stated: 'Certainly Calvinism is the direct antidote to Methodism — that is, heart religion...'<sup>65</sup> Further, there is no evidence that Wesley's evaluation of Fletcher's *Checks* was ever altered. He continued to view them as an effective polemical tool against the Calvinists.

It is in this high regard for Fletcher's works that a clue to his influence upon the "later" Wesley is suggested. Fletcher, in Wesley's mind, had held together so well in his *Checks to Antinomianism*, both God's grace and man's freedom, that Wesley felt safe in stressing either the one or the other depending upon the situation or need at the moment. Consequently, in his later years he stressed the abilities of man rather than the grace of God.

Prior to 1770 Wesley objected to unconditional election primarily because of its implications for the doctrine of God; following 1770 he opposed it largely because of its implications for the doctrine of man.<sup>66</sup> His soteriological understanding became more antropocentric and less theocentric.

This transition is exactly what Chiles says happened first in Richard Watson, who placed "larger stress on man's free will and his 'doing,'" thereby beginning a "subtle shift in emphasis" from "prevenient to cooperant grace, " "from divine grace and initiative to the human agency and role in the economy of salvation."<sup>67</sup>

The fact that there is a change of emphasis in Wesley's writings following the Calvinistic controversy of the 1770's seems to be clear. If this shift was indeed occasioned and encouraged by Fletcher's *Checks*

which opened the door for Wesley to emphasize man's power of choice and the necessity for good works — sometimes without reference to the context of grace which makes them possible then Fletcher exercised an indirect influence on American Wesleyan theology through Wesley, whose writings obviously were known and admired by persons of influence on this side of the Atlantic.

## II. Importance of Fletcher's Writings in America

During the formative years of the Evangelical Revival in England the Wesley's most important theological support came from John Fletcher who defended Wesley in the Calvinistic controversies of the 1770's and produced his series of writings, *The Checks to Antinomianism*. Likewise, in the early years of Methodism in America, from the founding of the societies in New York and Baltimore, Wesley's writings along with those of Fletcher and the hymns of Charles, supplied the standards for theological judgment and belief.

Fletcher's *Checks* were a rich store of doctrinal ordinance. By 1791 an American edition was published, and by 1820 at least two more editions had come off American presses. These *Checks*, originally issued seriatim, were especially welcomed by the struggling Methodist societies in the American colonies. In this way Fletcher's writing had a direct influence on American Methodism.

When other American editions of the works of Fletcher and Wesley appeared around 1830, they received appreciative notices in the *Methodist Quarterly Review*. *The Christian Advocate* (1826) also concerned for Methodism's doctrinal integrity, referred regularly to Wesleyan sources for authoritative guidance.

Wesleyan theology in America, introduced by Wesley and Fletcher, was sustained by second-generation British theologians and Biblical interpreters such as Richard Watson, Adam Clarke, and Joseph Benson. These men tended to make a place for natural theology; and to emphasize the role of reason, especially in establishing Christian "evidences".

A significant key to knowing who were the most influential Wesleyan theologians and writers in America in the 19th century is the list of prominent authors in the Conference Course of Study. In 1816 the General Conference of the Methodist Church authorized a Course of Study for Methodist preachers lacking formal theological training. Candidates studied selected texts and were examined on them. Because the large majority of Methodist preachers through most of the 19th century were trained in this Course of Study, its widespread influence is

obvious.

Since 1848 the books for this course have been listed quadrennially in the Methodist Discipline. Prior to the publication of such lists, Conference Journals and publishers' notices indicate the books in use, as well as references in the writings of Methodist leaders.

By 1827 the Illinois Conference recommended among others, Fletcher's *Checks to Antinomianism*, along with Wesley's *Sermons* and *Notes* and Clarke's *Commentaries*. The course which Bishops Hedding

and Emory presented to the Philadelphia Conference in 1833 included Fletcher's Works, but did not require them. Fletcher's writings continued to occupy a place of honor in later Methodism in America, appearing on the Course of Study down to 1880.<sup>69</sup>

By 1775 Fletcher had completed his *Checks* and had included as the *Last Check* his "Treatise on Christian Perfection." This exposition of the doctrine of Christian perfection was most important in the future of the Methodist societies in America. It has been called second only to Wesley's Plain Account among the "Textbooks of Methodism."

Fletcher's personal prestige, his saintly character, and his literary craftsmanship won him a wide reading on both sides of the Atlantic and throughout the century that followed his death.

John L. Peters has observed that Christian perfection was a characteristic feature of early American Methodist preaching, though not a dominant feature during this period. Further, he claims that the primary emphasis was on the instantaneous over the gradual aspect of perfection.

For example, Thomas Webb, in New York, in preaching on the giving of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, said:

The words of the text were written by the apostles after the act of justification had passed on them. But you see, my friends, this was not enough for them. They must receive the Holy Ghost after this. So must you. You must be sanctified. But you are not. You are only Christians in part. You have not received the Holy Ghost. I know it. I can feel your spirits hanging about me like so much dead flesh.<sup>69</sup>

Francis Asbury, first American Methodist bishop, clearly made Christian perfection this theme. His Journal attests to this fact. Peters says, "With the doctrine of Christian perfection thus highly regarded by the leaders of early American Methodism, it is not surprising that at the Conference of 1781 the traveling preachers present agreed that they would 'preach the old Methodist doctrine and enforce the discipline which was contained in the Notes, Sermons and Minutes published by Mr. Wesley.'"<sup>70</sup>

American colonial Methodism in its standards and in its preaching made the doctrine of Christian perfection one of its characteristic features. This was understood to be an experience attainable "now and by simple faith" and yet opens the door for continued Christian growth in grace. It was with this connotation that the doctrine was embodied in the first Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Although in some ways Fletcher's understanding of Christian perfection was perhaps more balanced, as for example in holding together both the gradual and instantaneous aspects, unquestionably his treatise on perfection, as well as all his Checks, wielded great direct influence in shaping Wesleyan theology in America particularly during the first half of the 19th century.

### **III. Key Elements in Fletcher's Theology**

During the early part of the 19th century the American scene was characterized by a spirit of optimism, hope, adventure, freedom, activism, and a consciousness of man's significance and abilities. Experience and the practical aspects of life were dominant. Wesleyan thought, including that of both Wesley and Fletcher, appealed to these features of the times. While no attempt is made here to develop major aspects of Fletcher's theology, certain key features may be suggested which made his thought attractive at this period

#### **Concern for the Practical**

Fletcher was a theologian, but also a parish priest, preacher, and "director of spiritual life." His thought developed and matured amid the situation or actualities of life within his parish. The parish of Madeley and Coalbrookdale had long included learned and zealous Non-Conformist ministers, whose chapels peopled with faithful attendants. Vivally alert Quakers added greatly to the intellectual and religious life and the burnishing beams of the Continental Enlightenment had fructified latitudinarianism in Shropshire.

Life within this parish, with its institutional churchly pluralism and diverse understandings of "Law and Gospel," and with its obvious pangs of the industrial revolution tearing coal from beneath the ground and devouring the green earth—was the context in which John Fletcher shaped his theological views. Serving as a spiritual counselor, he maintained in himself a balance between development of mind and heart.

Further, Fletcher's writings were occasioned by controversy. In many ways he shared the practical concerns of Wesley, who had an extreme animosity toward antinomianism which he felt results from the preaching of Calvinistic doctrine—i. e., insistence on the Divine sovereignty and neglect of the Divine requirements.<sup>71</sup> Fletcher could not endure those who talked of being justified and sanctified while they were guilty of drunkenness, uncleanness, and dishonesty. He clearly saw the practical results of the teachings that good works are unnecessary, that one's standing is assured by Christ's election, and that imputed righteousness makes personal piety indifferent.

Fletcher's disagreement was with the Calvinist doctrine of election, which he thought brought these serious practical results. He maintained that his two targets were: 1) finished salvation, or the impossibility of backsliding; and 2) imputed righteousness, in the sense that the Christian remains a sinner. To these he opposed: 1) the doctrine of a second justification by works, which he held refutes both these errors; and 2) the doctrine of perfection.<sup>72</sup>

The almost perennial problem of antinomianism, which was a concern in America during the early 19th century, made Fletcher's writings significant.

## Search for a "Middle Way"

Fletcher's conciliatory temperament, his ecumenical spirit, and in part his pastoral concerns, as well as his Anglican circumstances, caused him to seek a "middle" course between theological extremes. This aim of maintaining a "middle" position Fletcher carried out both in his preaching and pastoral ministry. He sought to reconcile apparent contradictions in Scripture; to adapt these reproofs to the capacities and situations of men, without altering the substance of them.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, he made every effort to avoid unconditional election, irresistible grace, and finished salvation on the one hand; and, on the other hand, the idea that man can set the terms of his own salvation, come to God when he chooses, or by works merit God's righteousness.

Particularly, regarding the doctrine of free will, Fletcher sought a "via media" which would equally assert that man cannot will the spiritual good unassisted by divine grace, and would simultaneously claim that when man does will it by grace he does so freely. He concurred with his opponents that the will, though always free, is free only to evil if unaided by grace, and that freedom to choose the good comes from redeeming grace alone.

However, Fletcher contended against the Calvinists that God gives to every man grace enabling him to choose life according to his dispensation or light, that man is in a state of probation, and that Christ died for all men, not only for the elect.<sup>74</sup> To support this position Fletcher quoted Augustine's statement: "If there be no free will, there is nothing to be saved from: if there be no free grace, there is nothing whereby we may be saved."<sup>75</sup> Fletcher had a similar way of stating the same thing: "If you take away free grace, how does God save the world? And if you take away free will, how does he judge the world?"<sup>76</sup>

The "via media" was a practical means of reconciling rigid Calvinists and rigid Arminians, both of whom Fletcher considered to be in error. He appealed to the "moderate" Calvinists (who renounce absolute necessity) and the "candid" Arminians (who contend for doctrines of justice) to lead the way toward unity. The "middle way" was designed to avoid both "speculation, which is careless of action," and "activity, which is devoid of spirituality." Fletcher purposed to bring together the Pharisees who slighted Christ on the one hand, and the Antinomians who ignored obedience on the other.<sup>77</sup>

Fletcher's use of the "via media" as a theological method was an attempt to understand particular religious truths as perspectives which share - along with apparently opposing positions - in a higher synthesis of Truth. This method has been called "dialectical."<sup>78</sup> Certainly, it was applied to every area of religious concern in an effort to relate reason and faith, philosophy and theology, science and religion, rationalism and mysticism, Arminianism and Calvinism, Christianity and culture, doctrine and morality, law and gospel, faith and works, speculation and spirituality, time and eternity, and Methodism and the Church of England.

It is not improper to speak of Fletcher as a "mediating" theologian. This method and approach would have been attractive to segments of

American culture, particularly during the next several decades following his death.

### **Saving Faith and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

Fletcher's own experience convinced him of the need for saving faith, a personal encounter with God. On hearing a clergyman preach in England Fletcher came to see that though he had studied divinity and won awards at the University for his theological treatises, he did not understand saving faith. By rigorous discipline he had sought to conquer his evil nature; but the more he strove the more he was beset by his sin. At last he discovered that nothing but a revelation to his own heart could bring salvation.

His diary for January 12, 1755, reads:

I received the sacrament though my heart was as hard as flint . . . Instead of going straight to Christ, I have wasted my time in fighting against sin with the dim light of reason, and the mere use of the means of grace; as if the means would do me good without the blessing and power of God. I fear my knowledge of Christ is only speculative, and does not reach my heart. I never had saving faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore, all my thoughts, words, and works, however specious before man, are utterly sinful before God.<sup>79</sup>

The following day Fletcher read from Wesley's Journal that one must not depend on feelings, "but go to Christ," with all his sins, and all his "hardness of heart." He then read Romans, chapters three and seven, which he thought portrayed his spiritual condition perfectly. On the night of January 23 he became a "new creature."

However, Fletcher still prayed earnestly that he might have "dominion over sin, and peace with God; not doubting but that joy and a full assurance of faith would be imparted to me in God's good time. "81) This account transcribed by Benson from Fletcher is consistent with Fletcher's own statement to Charles Wesley:

I soon could trace all my experience in your preachings. Only one thing I could not account for. You preached forgiveness of sin, and power over sin as being given at the same time. This brought me to examine the point. I knew...that tho I had had repentance towards God and tho he had often forgiven my sins and made me taste the powers of the world to come, I was yet a stranger to the merits of him by whom I had received these benefits . . . After as I was in prayer about one o'clock in the morning I was enabled to cast myself down upon Christ so as to have peace, assurance, and power over sin.<sup>81</sup>

Mrs. Fletcher later said her husband continued to pray that God

would take more "full possession of his heart," and bestow a "brighter manifestation of God's love to his soul."

In October, 1771, Fletcher enjoined Joseph Benson to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, insisting that he needed "that full assurance which nothing can give but the baptism, nothing can keep but the indwelling God."<sup>82</sup>

This full assurance comes with the baptism with the Holy Spirit, according to Fletcher. He came close to asserting that one is not a true Christian until he is filled with the Holy Spirit. He wrote:

St. Paul everywhere declares that it is the common privilege of Christians to 'be filled with Spirit,' Eph. 5:18; I Cor. 6:19. Nay, he even intimates, that the name of Christian should be refused to those who have not received the promise of the Father, Rom. 8:9.<sup>83</sup>

Wesley felt that Fletcher's sharp distinction between justification and initial sanctification, on the one hand, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, on the other, implies that one does not receive the Holy Spirit in justification and initial sanctification. Evidently Joseph Benson had come to hold the same view as Fletcher, for Wesley admonished him on March 9, 1771, to refrain "from speaking of Mr. Fletcher's late discovery. The Methodists in general could not bear this. It would create huge debate and confusion. I wish you would read over that sermon in the first volume on the 'Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption.'"<sup>84</sup>

Telford suggests that the "late discovery" was Fletcher's doctrine of being filled with the Holy Spirit, which to Wesley was misleading because it implied that one does not receive the Holy Spirit in justification and initial sanctification. Earlier Wesley had written to Benson: "If they [followers of Fletcher] like to call this [entire sanctification or full assurance] 'receiving the Holy Ghost,' they may: only the phrase in that sense is not scriptural and not quite proper; for they [disciples at Pentecost] all 'received the Holy Ghost'; when they were justified."<sup>85</sup>

Wesley did not distinguish between "receiving the Holy Spirit" and "being baptized with the Holy Spirit" as some in the holiness movement have done. Nor did he connect Christian perfection or entire sanctification with Pentecost.<sup>86</sup> Fletcher apparently was the first to make this identification. <sup>87</sup>

Further, Wesley thought that Fletcher was suggesting that one who has any sin within him cannot be a believer. Benson it seems was influenced by this view also, for on May 27, 1771, Wesley wrote of him: "Joseph Benson . . . is by no means clear in his judgment. The imagination he has borrowed from another good man [evidently Fletcher], 'that he is not a believer who has any sin remaining in him,' is not only an error, but a very dangerous one; of which I have seen fatal effects."<sup>88</sup> Just what these effects were Wesley did not state. It is likely that he thought this position would lead the Christian believer to despair.

Wesley may have been misinterpreting Fletcher at these points. Fletcher did maintain that in justification one is given a degree of witness of the Spirit. He did not assert that one who has the body of sin remaining within him is not a Christian in any sense-although from

some of his statements this might be inferred.<sup>89</sup> Wesley himself had stated that one is not "properly" a Christian, or a "true" Christian, until he receives the Holy Spirit.<sup>90</sup>

This is not to say that the views of Fletcher and Wesley at this point are identical. Wesley acknowledged that they are "a little different, though not opposite."<sup>91</sup> For Fletcher one becomes a Christian in the dispensation of the Son, as the disciples of Jesus; and a "true" Christian with full assurance (perfection) in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, as the disciples at Pentecost. Wesley agreed that one becomes a "true" Christian, as the disciples at Pentecost; but that there is yet a higher stage of Christian life, namely Christian perfection.<sup>92</sup>

The insistence of both Wesley and Fletcher on the immediacy of Christian reality fits well the desire for such in America.

### **God's Activity in History**

The immediate issues pertaining to Calvinistic Methodism were discussed within a broad framework which required the explication of Fletcher's theology in terms of a central, but all encompassing, religious conception. This conception is his doctrine of dispensations. Fletcher did not attack the view of predestination as such, but other and broader elements of Calvinist theology. He opposed unconditional reprobation and related issues because they undercut his particular understanding of God's purposes in the historical process.

Fletcher stated that the key to various aspects of his theology was his doctrine of dispensations. This doctrine was essential to the whole structure of his thought. He was convinced that to obscure this teaching is to be forced to accept unconditional election and reprobation, which by all means must be denied because of their implications for the doctrine of God and history.<sup>93</sup>

The foundation stone of the doctrine is prevenient grace, which Fletcher accepted as being Scriptural. He concluded that if Christ tasted death for every man, as the Scriptures teach, there is undoubtedly a Gospel for every man, even for those who perish by unbelief and rejection of it. A "generous Gospel," then, is more or less patently revealed to all men, according to the clearer or more obscure dispensation which they are outwardly under.

According to Fletcher, there are three major dispensations:<sup>94</sup> 1) of the Father (that of Gentiles and the Jews); 2) of the Son (that of John the Baptist); and 3) of the Holy Spirit (that of the perfect Gospel in Christ).<sup>95</sup>

The dispensation of the Father includes two groups: (*Gentiles*-who have been given the light of natural religion, revealed by creation, providence, reason, and conscience; and *Jews*-who have been given the light of the law, through the patriarchs, prophets, and priests. In this dispensation one lives in uncertainty and doubt.

The dispensation of the Son is that of John the Baptist, or "infant Christianity." This speaks of Christ, but he is known primarily by the history of the Gospel. One who is obedient to this light is a Christian, but an imperfect" one. In this state of grace doubts are dissipated, and love begins to gain ascendancy over fear.

The dispensation of the Holy Spirit is that of the "perfect Gospel of Christ. " One who is introduced to this dispensation by the baptism of the Holy Spirit comes to know Christ in a way far superior to that of the flesh or the senses. Here one knows deliverance from the power of sin and is filled with the Holy Spirit.

These dispensations represent not only time periods, but also stages in one's spiritual encounter with God. In any dispensation one may be saved if he is obedient to the light he has, and obedience brings more and fuller light. One who has been filled with the Spirit, looks forward to the coming of Christ at the last day.<sup>96</sup>

Fletcher's doctrine of dispensations uniquely combines both in unchanging and a dynamic quality. Its absolute character can be seen in the presupposition of the unity of Truth and the claim that every dispensation, being an expression of the one Gospel, is ultimately saving when obeyed. The relative and progressive character is revealed in the fact that the clarity, distinctiveness, and benefits of the Gospel vary according to the dispensations, so that they are not of equal significance historically-either with regard to world history or to one's own personal history.

Only by such a doctrine, thought Fletcher, can both the sovereignty and justice of God be preserved. And the basic doctrinal consideration in the Calvinistic controversy was the doctrine of God, from which the related problem of ethics logically follows. Both sides in the debate started with God. Fletcher thought the Calvinists' understanding of God leads to antinomianism; and the Calvinists thought Fletcher's doctrine of God opens the door to works-righteousness.

Consequently, the doctrine of dispensations was crucial and central to Fletcher for its encompassing character provided a practical way of bringing together rigid Calvinists (whose understanding of God tends toward antinomianism) and Bible Calvinists (whose doctrine of God rightly requires both faith and works.)

The important point for us is to observe that with this doctrine Fletcher was saying that revelation is historical and progressive; that man is placed in history by God and is thus responsible to Him; and that history is the arena wherein God's purposes are fulfilled, thereby making the element of Hope central in the life of the believer.

It is this dynamic and teleological conception of the religious life, and of all history, a perspective easily adapted to the American scene in the 19th century, which constitutes the greatest aspect of John Fletcher's influence. He insisted that progress must not cease in the life of the believer. There must be continuous movement toward a fuller relationship to God.

And it is this all-encompassing view of the significance of history, the graciousness of God's creation, and the "sovereignty of Grace" which makes him significant for contemporary Wesleyan thought.

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12. MCM, I, 183.
13. WJW, III, 463.
14. Nor could Fletcher, because of his burning desire for unity as well as truth, condone the conduct of Lady Huntingdon and Mr. Walter Shirley, who vociferously attacked Wesley and his 1770 Conference Minutes. See Tyerman, p. 185, who cites "An Account of John Fletcher's case, with the reasons that have induced him to resign the

Superintendency of the Countess of Huntingdon's college (Trevecca) in Wales." Also see Joseph Benson, *The Life of the Rev. J. W. Fletcher* (New York: Waugh & Mason, 1835), p. 152.

15. *Thirteen Original Letters Written by the Late Rev. John Fletcher. . . to which are added his Heads of self-examination* (Bath: Printed for Campbell & Gainsborough, 1791), p.21.
16. FW, I, 108.
17. Benson, p. 153.
18. LJW, V, 276, 290, 307.
19. LJW, VI, 79-80.
20. WJW, VIII, 336 ("Large Minutes").
21. MCM, I, 126.
22. Robert E. Chiles, "Methodist Apostasy: From Free Grace to Free Will," *Religion in Life* (Summer, 1958), XXVII, 438.
23. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965).
24. Chiles, *Religion in Life*, 442-43.
25. Chiles cites "Methodist Theology in America in the 19th Century," *Religion in Life* (Winter, 1955-56), XXV, 92f; also D. D. Whedon, *The Freedom of the Will as a Basis of Human Responsibility and a Divine Government* (New York: 1864).
26. Chiles, *Religion in Life*, 444-47
27. Chiles, *Theological Transition*, pp. 144-157.
28. LJW, VI, 239.
29. LJW, VII, 202.
30. WJW, VI, 266, 235, 250, 323.
31. WJW, VI, 280; VII, 205.
32. WJW, VII, 228.
33. WJW, VI, 345 (Italics mine).
34. WJW, VII, 188.
35. WJW, VI, 507-513.36. WJW, X, 358-61, 388, 431, 444.
37. WJW, XI, 366-446.38. WJW, X, 475, 478; VI, 427, 362, 318.
39. E. H. Sugden, ed., *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley* (London: The Epworth Press, 1921), I, 188, 183. Cited hereafter as WSS. WJW, VI, 269-7(), 276.
40. WJW, VI, 242; X, 475, 478.
41. WJW, VI, 227, 318.
42. WJW, X 457 (Italics mine).
43. WJW, VI, 280.
44. WJW, VII, 228.45. WJW, VI, 240, 326.
46. WJW, VI, 328.47. WJW, VI, 194.
48. WJW, VI, 505; also 527, 252, 391.49. WJW, X, 392, 457, 463-64, 473; also VI, 512, 187f.50. WJW, VII, 345.
- 50a. *Supra*, p. 9.
51. Chiles, *Religion in Life*, p. 445, citing Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II, 304f.

52. This slight change of emphasis in Wesley has been fully discussed and documented in my article, "Aspects of Wesley's Theology After 1770," *Methodist History*, April, 1968, on which I have relied here.
53. *WJW*, X, 358-60.
54. *WJW*, X 370-74.55. *WJW*, X 379.56. *WJW*, X, 379, 478; also VI, 199-200.
57. *WJW*, X, 492f.58. *Arminian Magazine* (London: Frys, Couchman, and Collier, March, 1779), II, 120-122.
59. See William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (New York: 1946), p. 115; also Umphrey Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion* (Nashville: 1936), p. 166ff.
60. Robert E. Cushman agrees with this assessment in his excellent article "Salvation for All-Wesley and Calvinism" in William K. Anderson, ed., *Methodism* (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1947), pp. 111f. However, Cushman, like Chiles overlooks the fact that Wesley's assertions of freedom and works following 1770 are not equally balanced by affirmations of grace.
61. *WJW*, VII, 313-14, 317; also VI, 385.
62. The increases in the membership of the societies, reflected in the Conference Minutes' statistics which were first listed in 1767, were too small to satisfy Wesley. See *MCM*, I, 72, 77, 85, 92. His sermons and letters after 1770 indicate a growing concern that the revival might be slowing somewhat. See *WJW*, VI, 334, 463, 286-89; VII, 211f. 221f. 20. 24: *WW*. V. 185.
63. *WJW*, X, 413.
64. *WJW*, X, 449, 452.65. *LJW*, VIII, 256. By "Calvinism" Wesley referred to unconditional election, and not to the Calvinistic interpretation of sin or grace.
66. See John Allan Knight, "John William Fletcher and the Early Methodist Tradition" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1966), p. 388f. This is not to claim that Wesley did not object to unconditional election on both these grounds before 1770. See, for example, *WJW*, VII, 376-83.
67. Chiles, *Theological Transition*, pp. 162-63, quoting with approval Dunlap, "Methodist Theology in Great Britain," pp. 477f.
68. Chiles, *Theological Transition*, pp. 38-42.69. John Leland Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 82; also p. 97.70. Peters, p. 87.
71. *LJW*, V, 83.
72. *FW*, I, 207.
73. Benson, pp. 55-58.
74. *FW*, I, 323.

75. Fletcher's source here is uncertain. However, a very similar statement is found in Augustine's "On Grace and Free Will, " Ch. 37. Cf. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (ed. Philip Schaff; New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1887), V, 459.
76. FW, II, 206.
77. FW, II, 343n; IV, 365
78. David Shipley, *op. cit.*, carefully adumbrates Fletcher's theological method
79. Benson, pp. 24-25; also WJW, XI, 282-83.
80. Benson, pp. 26, 28-29; also WJW, XI, 284-85.
81. Baker, Frank, "The Early Experience of Fletcher of Madeley," *Proceedings Wesley Historical Society*. Vol. XXXIII. June, 1961), p. 29. Fletcher probably wrote this account in 1755 or 1756.
82. FW, III, 183.
83. LJW, V, 281.
84. LJW, V, 228. The sermon to which Wesley referred is found in WSS, I, 178f.
85. LJW, V, 215.
86. WJW, VIII, 104.  
Benson, p. 207. 190.
88. LJW, V, 252.
89. FW, I, 311; IV, 134, 136 (Sermon on 1 Cor. 5:17).  
WSS, I, 83.
91. LJW, VI, 146.92. For a criticism of this "two-fold" idea in Wesleyan theology, see Rob L. Staples, "John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection: a Reinterpretation" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pacific School of Religion, 1963), 222-35.
93. See FW, II, 15-16.
94. The fact that Fletcher gave his fullest account of the various dispensations in his *Portrait of St. Paul*, which is his expression of the ideal minister, indicates the fervor of Fletcher's practical concern. See FW, III, 166f.
- 95 FW, II, 261f.
96. See FW. III. 170-73. 178-181 176: II. 262-63: I, 580.

**ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION IN  
EARLY AMERICAN METHODISM:**

**1812-1835**

by Allan Coppedge

John Peters has provided a valuable introduction to the place of the doctrine of Christian perfection in American Methodism. The evidence he presents makes clear that from its establishment in 1784 to the first decade of the nineteenth century the Methodist Church was firmly committed to the proclamation of full salvation. With Wesley's strong encouragement the leadership of the newly founded church determined to make entire sanctification an important doctrinal emphasis. Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury joined hands with men like Ezekiel Cooper and Jesse Lee to make sanctification the logical extension and complement of their emphasis upon regeneration and assurance. ' Apparently the preaching of "holiness of heart" was particularly prominent just after the turn of the century. Coke responded in 1802 from Liverpool with delight at the great revival on the American continent and noted: "I am glad to find by Brother Asbury, that you universally press upon your believing hearers the necessity of Sanctification and entire devotedness to god."<sup>2</sup>

But did this widespread interest in Christian perfection continue in the second, third, and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. As the frontier preachers were primarily concerned about the conversion of sinners, did they really have time to devote to such doctrinal niceties as Christian perfection? Peters argues that while it officially continued to be a part of the church's doctrinal standards, in practice it suffered serious neglect. He connects this break in emphasis with the General Conference of 1812, which removed for convenience reasons certain doctrinal tracts from the Discipline. Among these were *Wesley's A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* and his sermon "On Christian Perfection," which hitherto had been published full in the Discipline. Because of growth in the size of the *Discipline*, The Conference decided to publish the doctrinal tracts in a separate volume. According to Peters, however, these tracts did not appear until 1832, or a full twenty

years later, by which time a generation or two of Methodist preachers had rounded out their doctrinal views without the benefit of the Church's official promotion of Christian perfection. The practical effect of this action, according to Peters, was to remove the doctrine from widespread circulation and to give it a less authoritative status, thus producing a sort of "gap" in Methodism's historic emphasis on full salvation for two to three decades.<sup>3</sup> It is against this "dark night of the soul" for the doctrine of Christian perfection that Peters paints his picture of the "revival of holiness" in the late 1830's and 1840's under the influence of Timothy Merritt's *Guide to Christian Perfection*, the Tuesday Meeting of Phoebe Palmer, and the editorial pen of Nathan Bangs.

Following the lead of Peters, American historians have now accepted as almost axiomatic that the doctrine of entire sanctification played little if any part in the development of Methodism during the first third of the nineteenth century. Timothy Smith opens his discussion of Christian Perfection in America with the observation that "considerable evidence suggests that this doctrine did not occupy a chief place in early Methodist preaching in the New World," and accordingly he begins his survey with Merritt's *Treatise on Christian Perfection* published in 1825. <sup>4</sup> Charles Ferguson echoes the thesis that although this Wesleyan doctrine was accepted by the preachers, making it acceptable among restless people in an unsettled land had not been feasible. The result was that "while perfection held on as an avowed ideal, American Methodists had little experience with it." <sup>6</sup> Others have followed this lead, and it has now received a semi-official status in the standard three volume *History of American Methodism*, in which the discussion of sanctification ends in the middle of the first decade of the century and does not resume until the 1830's and 40s.<sup>6</sup>

The significance of this break in continuity within the Church regarding entire Sanctification is twofold. First, it lends credence to the view that this doctrine played no really essential part in Methodism during the first third of the nineteenth century, which in turn raises the larger question of just how much it has ever been an integral part of the American Church's theological proclamation.

Second, it makes it possible to view the strong emphasis on Christian perfection during the middle and latter decades of the century as something not quite in accord with Methodism's historic emphases, a kind of theological stepchild, somehow related but not really a full member of the family. It then becomes easy to see the marked interest in sanctification and the so-called "Holiness Crusade" as something of a theological novelty rather than as an expression of doctrinal continuity. While this approach leaves unsolved the eighteenth century focus on full salvation as a crucial aspect of American Methodist preaching, this "gap" in interest in sanctification clearly makes it easier to relegate this earlier period to the distant and not too relevant past.

It now appears, however, that there is some serious question about the evidence for this supposed "neglect" of entire sanctification. Frank Baker, in his book *From Wesley to Asbury*, deals at some length with the separation of the doctrinal tracts from the *Methodist Discipline* by the General Conference of 1812, and in the process touches the foundation of

Peters' thesis. Peters apparently was following a discussion of the doctrinal tracts by Bishop Tigert in his Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism. Tigert had only encountered one copy of the collected tracts, dated 1832, from which he incorrectly deduced that the book agents had waited twenty years before carrying out the directives of the 1812 Conference. Baker demonstrates, however, that the first edition of these "Doctrinal Tracts" was published in 1814 as *A Collection of Interesting Tracts*, explaining several important points of Scripture Doctrine. Published by order of the General Conference. He surmises that there must have been a reasonably good sale for this volume, which included Wesley's two works on Christian perfection, because an unaltered second edition appeared in 1817. This was followed by further editions in 1825 and 1831. Altogether at least fifteen editions of this volume appeared throughout the nineteenth century. Further, it is clear that Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* was issued separately, possibly by several publishers. One such example is its appearance as Tract No. XXXVI of the New-York Methodist Tract Society. In addition, the General Conference of 1816 placed the *Plain Account* on the first official course of study for its preachers, thus ensuring their acquaintance with the standard theological formulation of the doctrine.

Thus, Baker, as Methodism's master bibliographer, has convincingly demonstrated that it is no longer tenable to hold that two generations of Methodist preachers "rounded out their doctrinal views" without the influence of Wesley's focus on Christian perfection. He argues that whereas previously both doctrine and discipline had been bound together in one volume, from 1812 there were to be two volumes, Volume 1 dealing primarily with Discipline and Volume 2 with Doctrine.<sup>9</sup> The implication of this is quite clear. The Conference intended to keep before the preachers certain theological emphases, including Christian perfection, and they succeeded in doing just that from the period 1812 to the 1830's and beyond. The frequency of publication during this period "by the order of the General Conference" makes it very difficult to see how the preachers of the day could have seen them as somehow less authoritative than previously.

This continued official desire to publish abroad Methodism's traditional focus on entire sanctification during this era is paralleled by the repeated determination of the preachers to proclaim the doctrine. One of the few pieces of evidence that Peters cites to support his contention of a break in the traditional emphasis on Christian perfection comes from the journal of Benjamin Lakin. A lengthy quotation from Lakin gives his evaluation of some decline in religious fervor on his appointment to the Limestone Circuit, Kentucky, in 1814. Lakin attributes this to a deficiency in "enforcing the doctrine of Sanctification" and allowing the people to rest in only a justified state. This Peters interprets as an indication of a decline in interest in the doctrine of holiness.<sup>10</sup> What he fails to tell us, however, is that in the very next sentence Lakin declares what he has determined to do about the problem, viz, to preach the doctrine with renewed vigor. Lakin writes: "Immediately set about a reform in myself and began to preach and enforce the doctrine of

holiness by showing the state I found the people to be in and the need of perfecting holiness in the fear of God. One cannot help but suspect that Peters has not been wholly candid about the evidence he had at hand. This very selective handling of the data raises serious questions about both Peters' thesis and his judgment in the use of these historical materials.

Other evidence from the journals and biographies of this period strengthen the conviction that holiness was not a neglected theological issue. On September 3, 1819, Herman Bangs preached on Christian perfection from Psalm 37. "The people, " he declared, "were wide awake to the subject and from the information afterward received, they were satisfied it was the truth." Later that fall he reported a revival of interest in the subject where he served, as the people "groaned for sanctifying love." He warned: "When believers are in full stretch for holiness, look out for a work of God in all its branches."<sup>12</sup> For the following two decades he continues to report examples of believers "hungry after holiness, " and many sanctified or filled with perfect love. <sup>13</sup>

While Bangs as a New York pastor represents the east, Michael Ellis may serve as an example of the rougher frontier preachers. He is described in *Sketches of Western Methodism*: "His heart was deeply imbued with the grace of God; and having attained the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, the perfect love that swelled his heart rolled out to bless mankind " His biographer doubted "whether he ever preached a sermon in which he did not introduce the doctrine of Christian perfection as taught in the Bible, and preached by Wesley and Fletcher. It was the plain, old-fashioned, unvarnished doctrine of entire sanctification. "<sup>14</sup>

Although New England has been considered the section of the country least receptive to Methodist theology in general and Christian perfection in particular, the Methodist preachers apparently continued to press their case. The Presiding Elder of the New Haven District, the Rev. Laban Clark, spoke of the gift of the Holy Spirit in "its renewing and sanctifying influence" on "the pardoned believer, to purify him unto God.<sup>15</sup> In 1826, the New England and Maine Conferences set aside a day of fasting and prayer "for holiness of heart and for more laborers in the holy ministry "<sup>16</sup> And in the mid-thirties, Rev John Lindsey preached a sermon on holiness and purity of heart to the New England Annual Conference. When the leadership of the Church speaks forthrightly about the importance of the sanctification of believers, and annual conferences fast and pray over the experience, it is difficult to conclude that the doctrine is suffering from serious neglect.

James Gilruth, a Presiding Elder in Michigan, records in his journal both preaching and professions of sanctification as regular occurrences. One year he closed a camp meeting where forty to fifty were converted, and "some also professed sanctification." Two weeks later he wrote, "I preached on sanctification from I Thess. 4:3 with good liberty and the people were all attention and much impressed." Within another two weeks he had used the same text to preach "in a plain manner on Sanctification."<sup>18</sup>

While on the positive side it is clear that there were many proclaim-

ing holiness of heart during the second, third, and fourth decades of the century on the negative side some were apparently excluded from the ranks because they could not subscribe to the doctrine. In 1816, a Mr Judy was under consideration for a license to exhort from his Quarterly meeting. Apparently by mutual consent he separated from the Methodists because, it was reported, "he could not believe in our doctrines of baptism and Christian perfection and as our rules did not admit him to Oppose them in public or private, he left us being resolved to oppose them. "Had we licensed him, " observed one of the preachers, "we should have had our trouble with him "19

In addition to the biographies and journals the publications produced during this period provide some very helpful insight into the theological interests of the day When the first volume of the newly reestablished Methodist Magazine appeared in 1818, the publishers J Soule and T Mason, described the purpose of the magazine within a well-defined doctrinal framework, and in the process declared that "the grace of God is manifested in the redemption of a fallen and guilty world through Jesus Christ — in the gift of the Holy Spirit — in the establishment and spread of the gospel, and in the conviction, conversion and sanctification of the souls of men. "20 These concerns are clearly reflected in the contents of the opening volume of the magazine. The Rev S. G. Roszel wrote from Baltimore to describe how the preachers were in the process of promoting a revival in their area and "longing to see greater display of the power of God in the conversion of sinners, and sanctification Of believers. The plain truths of the gospel preached in this revival indicate the central doctrinal focus of these preachers. They included corruption of the human nature, the universal offer of salvation, repentance justification by faith, regeneration, as well as "all the branches of experimental and practical godliness, and especially that holiness of heart without which no man can see the Lord. " The effect of this kind of preaching he noted, was that "some who had come to the meeting in distress were crying for mercy; some shouting glory to (rod for pardoning grace, and others earnestly seeking to be filled with all the fullness of God." In one of the class meetings, the members remained on their knees from three in the afternoon until ten at night "praying for a present and full salvation from sin."21

The same issue included a report of the Cow-Harbour Camp Meeting on Long Island in which not a few were described as groaning for full redemption in the blood of the Lamb." In addition two short memoirs reflected a lively interest in Christian perfection. Mrs. Anna Nickerson's story included an incident in her life a year after her conversion when "she experienced an uncommon degree of the sanctifying power of divine grace, a sense of which she retained, and of which she gave a uniform testimony."23 And a South Carolina preacher, the Rev James Rogers, who focused his proclamation around the central themes of repentance, faith, and holiness of heart and life, is described as making many "the witness of justifying, comforting and sanctifying grace."24

A review of the articles and sermons in the Methodist Magazine over the next twenty years reveals that while entire sanctification did

not occupy as prominent a place as in later years, it certainly does appear often enough to prevent it from being styled a neglected theological concept.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps more significant, however, are the accounts of revivals, camp meetings, letters to the editor, and the Short memoirs, all of which make clear that at the level of the local congregation Methodism was very much alive to the doctrine of Christian perfection. These first-hand accounts of the impact of theology on the lives of Methodists show that the principle doctrines preached by the traveling circuit riders were human depravity, general redemption, repentance toward God, faith, and holiness of heart and life.

Nothing suggests that this emphasis was an isolated phenomena limited to only a few scattered locations. The memoir of an American missionary to Nova Scotia, John Man, recorded how the Lord "filled him with the love of God in an extraordinary degree, delivering him from the remains of a carnal mind, and causing him to drink deep into the spirit of holiness."<sup>27</sup> From Maine the Rev. D. Hutchinson, a Presiding Elder in the Keenebec District, rejoiced that "our gracious God is pouring out his Spirit upon the people more or less in every circuit both in the awakening and conversion of sinners, and in the sanctification of believers." "The preachers," he declared, "are all in the spirit of the work"<sup>28</sup> An account of revival close to Oneida, New York, reported that "while some had been seeking for pardon through the blood of Christ, others have been breathing for perfect love." <sup>29</sup> Further west in Ohio, a remarkable moving of God's Spirit had reached a peak in December 1818 but had continued unabated until February of the following year. An eyewitness wrote:

But during the latter part of this time, and since, the deepening and extension of the work of grace in the hearts of the believers was considerably greater than at any former period. A considerable increase in general piety and fervent devotion among these, had been very apparent. Many had been deeply convinced of the necessity of holiness of heart, and are earnestly groaning after it; and a few have lately been able to testify that they have been made partakers of the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit."<sup>30</sup>

As a result of revival in this area a number who Professed to have obtained the gift of sanctification formed themselves into bands <sup>31</sup> reminiscent of Wesley's select bands of the eighteenth century. From Mississippi, William Williams described a renewed interest in the doctrine of sanctification in "Wesley's sense." Some were professing the experience while others were pressing toward it. "The preachers," he declared, "generally are becoming more earnest in urging their hearers to 'go on to perfection'."<sup>31a</sup>

Another preacher began his appointment to Newark New Jersey with the intention of making his chief work in the pulpit and classes that "of explaining and enforcing the doctrine of full sanctification, as a present privilege, . . .; believing with Wesley 'that where holiness revives in believers, there the work of God spreads in all its branches.'"

But when he began to visit his classes, he discovered to his dismay only one witness to the doctrine. He described their state: "The doctrine of Christian perfection they believed, . . . and many of them delighted me with their inquiries into the nature of it, observing that they had often heard it preached but that it was never before so brought home to their hearts." As he began to preach, however, a general revival broke out among the society and he was soon able to rejoice that "many came forth as witnesses, blessed with perfect love."<sup>31b</sup>

The story of Edward Paine illustrates the experience of many Methodists in this period:

He had long been sensible of the remains of the carnal mind, but he knew not that it was possible to obtain deliverance in this life; but on becoming acquainted with the doctrine of Scriptural holiness, he resolved never to rest until he had found full redemption in the blood of the Lamb.

With this resolution he started in company with his friends for a camp meeting. On the way he heard by chance a Rev. Washburn preaching on Psalm 46:4 and came into an experience of cleansing from all unrighteousness. He testified that God had given him a clean heart, and renewed a right spirit within him.<sup>32</sup>

Many accounts during the twenties and thirties are similar to the description of the revival of religion in Columbia County, New York, in 1824. A correspondent to the Methodist Magazine reported:

Old professors are much quickened, and the necessity of sanctification is pressed on the people by the preachers; and blessed be the Lord, while many are excited to seek after this blessing, others profess an experience of it.<sup>32a</sup>

Further evidence of the interest in Christian perfection comes with the publication of the first significant American book on the subject in 1825. In that year Timothy Merritt, a pastor in New York City, issued his *Treatise on Christian Perfection, with Directions for Obtaining That State*. It was reported of Merritt that "holiness was the great business he lived to promote."<sup>33</sup> Apparently, he did so quite convincingly, for two years later his work appeared in the fourth edition, and by 1871 it had gone through thirty-three editions.<sup>34</sup> One reviewer called it an original work, "just such a one as the Methodists for years have wanted." He continued:

"It is pleasing to learn that the inquiry after gospel holiness is on the increase among congregations of the Methodists; and as this doctrine preached and practiced is the most effectual way to promote revivals of religion, so is it the most effectual way to preserve them." <sup>35</sup>

It was his vital concern for holiness that led Merritt in 1839 to resign his position as assistant editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal* to launch a new monthly magazine in Boston entitled *The Guide*

to Christian Perfection. 3fi Merritt clearly represents an element of continuity regarding sanctification throughout the twenties and thirties and into mid-century.

Also in 1825 Aaron Lummus published a series of articles in Zion's Herald in which he refuted three contemporary errors concerning the doctrine of perfection. Peters dismisses this as evidence that Wesley's doctrine was under attack. 37 But the significant factor is that the concept of holiness was very much a live issue in the mid-1820's. The response to Lummus' articles must have been gratifyingly positive, for he issued them in book form the following year as *Essays on Holiness*.<sup>38</sup> Shortly thereafter Lummus found himself leading a widespread revival of religion in Manchester, Conn., and plead with other Methodists not to stop praying for this movement of God "until hundreds are converted and scores, at least, sanctified wholly to God."<sup>38a</sup> The interest in Christian holiness was clearly not on the decline.

The year 1826 also saw the Methodist Tract Society *publish The Character of a Methodist*, one of Wesley's earliest statements on the doctrine of Christian perfection.<sup>39</sup> In addition, the late twenties saw articles on holiness of heart appearing on occasion in the *Christian Advocate*,<sup>40</sup> along with testimonies of sanctification and reports of revivals and camp meetings where some were earnestly "struggling after holiness of heart."<sup>41</sup> One observer noted:

We witnessed more humble inquiring conversation on the subject of sanctification and heard more expressive language used, indicative of an anxious desire to obtain a correct experience of this inestimable blessing, than is usual to be heard, even at Camp Meeting.<sup>42</sup>

B. Sabin of Ithaca, New York, wrote to the *Christian Advocate*:

The doctrine of sanctification doth greatly revive among our preachers and people. Both here and in the adjoining circuits many appear to be earnestly seeking for 'all the fullness of God,' nor do they seek in vain; for several can testify, that 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;' and they 'love the Lord their God with all their hearts.'<sup>43</sup>

Reporting a revival in his church, John Wallace recalled that "we have urged the converts to 'go on into perfection,' " and "some have found the treasure of holiness and others are pressing after it." Their enthusiasm was so contagious that members of other denominations in his area were beginning to show interest in the doctrine of perfect love. 44

In 1822-23 the head of the Methodist Book Concern, Nathan Bangs, wrote a series of articles on a course of study for younger Methodist preachers, under the title "The Importance of Study to a Minister of the Gospel." Under the category of theology, Bangs proposed:

On the doctrines of Repentance, Justification, and Sanctification, you can find no authors who have illustrated those subjects with greater clearness and accuracy than Wesley and Fletcher.<sup>45</sup>

Bangs was reflecting, of course, the continued American dependence on the English Methodist theologians for their definitive statements on doctrine. The American Church was still very much committed to the historical articulation of these doctrines in the works of Wesley and Fletcher. Fletcher is of particular significance because of his special interest in the doctrine of Christian perfection. Next to Wesley's *Plain Account* Fletcher's *Last Check to Antinomianism*, basically an essay on Christian perfection, was the most influential theological document on the subject both in England and America. The first edition of Fletcher's *Works*, including the "Last Check," was published in America in 1791, with the second edition in a six volume set following in 1809.<sup>46</sup> Many of his works appeared separately, such as *An Address to Imperfect Believers, who cordially embrace the doctrine of gospel sanctification*,<sup>47</sup> and the essay *Christian Perfection*.<sup>48</sup> In the early thirties a new edition of Fletcher's *Works* appeared. *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* first ran a lengthy review of these volumes including the sections on Christian perfection, and then published extensive extracts from them.<sup>49</sup> Another indication of the influence of Fletcher on American theology in general and Christian perfection in particular comes from the accounts rendered by Methodist preachers to the Book Concern for the volumes they had sold. The book accounts of Benjamin Lakin which list the volumes he sold from the years 1812 to 1817 make quite clear that Methodists had continuing interest in both the theological works of Fletcher as well as his *Life* written by Joseph Benson, both of which reflect Fletcher's concern for holiness of heart.<sup>50</sup> The Methodists interest in Fletcher during the first four decades of the nineteenth century cannot but reflect their ongoing commitment to the historic Wesleyan position on Christian perfection.<sup>51</sup>

Among others suggested by Nathan Bangs in his recommended reading list for young preachers two have particular significance for the place of Christian holiness during these years. One was Adam Clarke and his *monumental Commentary on the Scriptures*, completed in 1826. Without question Clarke's work has been the most influential commentary every published in American Methodism. One tribute to the measure of his influence classified him as "the greatest scholar in Methodism" in the generation which succeeded Wesley.<sup>52</sup> Abel Stevens claimed his work "may be said to have initiated critical biblical studies" among Methodists in America. Certainly for nineteenth century American Methodists Clarke's was the commentary on the Bible. While Christian perfection was no specialty with Clarke, it clearly pervades his work. As he was vitally interested in other doctrinal matters, sanctification appears as only one of several important and distinct theological concepts. But the fact that it does appear regularly through-out his commentary, guarantees that the subject was consistently before multitudes of Methodists who maintained a serious interest in the study of the Scriptures.

The other author mentioned by Bangs was Richard Watson, who published his *Theological Institutes* first in serial form beginning in 1825. Watson was called the "first systematizer of the theology of Methodism," and his *Institutes* quickly became the standard exposition

of Methodist doctrine. Robert Chiles in *his Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935*, categorizes Watson as "easily the single most determinative of the early Methodist theologians."<sup>53</sup> Daniel Curry wrote in 1877:

To no other single agency is the continued doctrinal unity of Methodism so much indebted as to the extensive use of Watson's Theological Institutes . . . This great work has been the standard of Methodist theology for a full half century.<sup>54</sup>

Watson's certain commitment to the concept of Christian perfection meant, then, that the doctrine of sanctification was also uniquely before the Methodist preachers during this period beginning with the 1820's. <sup>54a</sup>

The journals, periodicals, and theological works of the period 1812 to 1835 reveal a significant and ongoing interest in the doctrine of sanctification. In the light of the evidence of many coming into an experience of holiness of heart as a crisis experience during these years it will be increasingly difficult to maintain that this was an era of "benign neglect" regarding Christian perfection. Peters has contended that although the doctrine continued to be an official position of the Church, it suffered a practical decline in the everyday life of the community of believers on the frontier because of their preoccupation with the experience of conversion. According to this view Christian perfection as a doctrine and as an experience was simply not a live issue for frontier Methodists. This position is no longer tenable. While it is true that holiness of heart never rivaled initial redemption in the overall scheme of preaching, the data is quite clear that the Church continued to keep sanctification before its people in both periodicals and in theological writings, and the journals of the preachers as well as the reports of revivals and camp meetings give abundant evidence that many Methodists were seeking and finding full salvation. Christian perfection was obviously before the Church in both theory and practice.

In the light of these materials how are we to account for the appearance of this "gap" theory regarding the place of sanctification in the early nineteenth century? What factors may have led Peters and others into holding such a position? The first is a natural tendency to accent the holiness emphasis of mid-century by playing down its place in the life of the Church in the earlier period. The deeper the shadow of the valley, the more brilliant the light on the mountain peak will seem. In this case, the tendency to sharpen the contrast has certainly been over done. It would be even more unfortunate if this handling of historical materials was designed to make the holiness movement of mid and late nineteenth century appear to be in discontinuity with the historic emphases of Methodism. The evidence certainly does not support this interpretation. The rise of emphasis on Christian holiness at mid-century is clearly an increased accent of an already existing theological distinctive, not a shift from central doctrinal concerns to some obscure theological position of minor significance.

A second factor behind the development of Peters' thesis is a somewhat uncritical acceptance of two major sources for his argument.

The first of these is the reliance upon the lamentation of the 1832 General Conference about the lack of witnesses to the doctrine of entire sanctification. Peters believes this represents an evident decline in promotion and acceptance of the doctrine throughout the Church. But surely in the very nature of the case General Conferences are prone to overstate the ups and downs of the pulse of the Church, and at best are a very narrow base upon which to rely when writing theological history. The second area of difficulty lies in Peters' use of Bishop Tigert's argument that the doctrinal tracts by which the Church promoted its emphasis on Christian perfection went unpublished for a twenty year period from 1812 to 1832. This is interpreted as official neglect, which gave the impression to upcoming preachers that the Church was not really taking this doctrinal distinctive very seriously. The numerous editions of these tracts throughout this period, as shown by Baker, give ample evidence that on this matter both the bishop and Peters have overlooked some very relevant bibliographical data.

Another factor is that too much weight has been given to the generalization that frontier preachers were so preoccupied with evangelism that they had no time to call men to an experience of entire sanctification. This categorization is far too broad. Clearly there were preachers who had little connection with the doctrine either in theory or in their own experience. Yet it is equally clear that many did know the doctrine experientially and included it in their preaching. Peters himself recognizes this in his documentation of the vital place the doctrine held in the first twenty years of the life of the young Church. In these years, also, the Church was a frontier organization, yet Asbury and others consistently kept Christian perfection before the Methodists "to prevent people from settling on their lees."<sup>55</sup> If the frontier preachers of the eighteenth century found time to proclaim holiness of heart along with regeneration and justification, there is no intrinsic reason why the men of the nineteenth century could not do likewise.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, a contributory factor is the contrast between the lack of American theological literature on Christian holiness in the early decades of the century and the abundance of works on this subject in the latter years. In this early period theological formulation in almost every area was done for the Americans by British Methodists, such as Wesley, Fletcher, Clark, Benson, and Watson. Very little normative theological work was done on American soil. ' On the doctrine of Christian perfection the first important work to appear from the hand of an American was Timothy Merritt's *The Christian Manual*, which the author himself styled a "compilation." The lack of native theological statement stands in stark contrast to the flood of holiness literature that appeared later by American writers, and this has led some to assume that because they were not producing treatises on the subject, the leaders of the Church in the early part of the century were not vitally concerned with this aspect of Methodist theology. But this impression cannot be sustained in the light of the fact that very little theological statement of significance on any doctrine was set forth by the American Methodists during this period. For all their normative doctrinal articulation they were still very much dependent on their English brethren.

This British influence is reflected, for example, in the language used by early Methodists to describe their experience of entire sanctification. Following Wesley, the terminology employed is predominantly atonement language and its accompanying connection with the work of Christ, rather than Pentecostal terminology with its relation to the Holy Spirit. Methodists tended to use the concepts and vocabulary of Paul and John more than those of Luke. The role of the Spirit is seen primarily as that of the agent of salvation in general and the experience of perfect love in particular. There are occasions, however, when the move to identify entire sanctification with the examples of baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts is evident. Thomas Webb had apparently done this earlier in America. Henry Moore records that Webb once took a text from one of the epistles about the Holy Ghost and declared:

The words of the text were written by the apostles after the act of justification had passed on them. But you see, my friends, this was not enough for them. You must be sanctified. But you are not. You are only Christians in part. You have not received the Holy Ghost. I know it. I can feel your spirits hanging about me like so much dead flesh 58

Clearly for Webb "receiving the Holy Spirit" was identical with entire sanctification.

Gaddis reports that among the Cumberland Presbyterians, whose theological disposition was quite Arminian, there was a tendency to speak about sanctification in terms of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as early as 1814.<sup>59</sup> B. W. McDonald in his History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church is very emphatic about the importance which the early leaders of that denomination attached to the doctrine and experience of Holy Ghost baptism:

. . . our fathers believed in an abiding baptism of the Holy Ghost as a distinctive blessing after conversion . . . Of all the doctrines held . . . the one about this abiding baptism of the Holy Ghost was most esteemed by them.<sup>60</sup>

And from Ithaca, New York, in 1826, Methodist B. Sabin wrote regarding a powerful revival in which the children of God had "labored earnestly for holiness of heart. " One thing that called their attention to the necessity of this important doctrine, he said, was the testimony of one preacher "who arose after there had been a discourse from 'have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed,' and said he had traveled upwards of sixteen years, and did fully believe the doctrine of sanctification as held by our church, but he had not experienced it." He determined to seek the experience of a clean heart, however, and requested prayer.<sup>61</sup> Quite evidently to all who heard the sermon on receiving the Holy Ghost it was an experience identical with entire sanctification.

This should not be surprising in the light of the identification of these concepts by two writers of considerable influence on the American

Methodists. The first is John Fletcher, whose impact on the American understanding of the theology of Christian perfection was only slightly behind that for Wesley himself.<sup>62</sup> Fletcher's contribution during the period under consideration has already been noted, so it only remains to point out that it was Fletcher in his *Last Check* who first made the correlation between the baptism of the Holy Ghost and Wesley's concept of Christian perfection.<sup>62a</sup> Although the *Last Check* was not published until 1775, as early as 1771, Fletcher had written to Charles Wesley concerning this identification:

I shall introduce my, why not your doctrine of the Holy Ghost, and make it one with your brother's perfection. He holds the truth, but this will be an improvement upon it, if I am not mistaken. In some of your Pentecostal hymns you paint my light wonderfully. If you do not recant them we should perfectly agree.<sup>62b</sup>

Fletcher's place as a theological formulator regarding sanctification must certainly be reckoned as a significant factor in the later equation of these two doctrinal concepts during the mid-century holiness emphasis in America.

The second writer is Hester Ann Rogers, whose *Memoirs and Letters* were among the most widely circulated spiritual autobiographies in Methodist circles. One preacher reported that in 1817 on his circuit alone he had sold fourteen copies of her *Life* and seven of her *Letters*. Apparently only the *Journal of John Nelson* rivaled her works in popular appeal to the Methodist layman in the early nineteenth century. <sup>63</sup> In describing her spiritual pilgrimage, Mrs. Rogers relates in detail her struggle to obtain the blessing of entire sanctification. In the midst of her prayer for sanctification, she recalls:

I thought, Shall I now ask small blessings only of my God: Lord, cried I, make this the moment of my full salvation! Baptize me now with the Holy Ghost and the fire of pure love: Now "make me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Now enter they temple, and cast out sin forever. Now cleanse the thoughts, desires and propensities of my heart, and let me perfectly love thee.<sup>64</sup>

Quite clearly in her mind the experience of the baptism of the Spirit was identical with that of full salvation, and the widespread distribution of her story cannot but have made American Methodists more ready to see an intimate connection between these two concepts. Thus the significant sale of the works of Fletcher and Mrs. Rogers must be seen as an important contributory factor in the later identification by holiness advocates in American Methodism of entire sanctification with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. One on the theological level and one on the popular level had the effect over the years by their consistent and wide-ranging influence of predisposing the Americans to equate the biblical data on entire sanctification and Christian perfection with that relating to the baptism of the Holy Ghost and Pentecost.

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## Reference Notes

1. John Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*, p. 80-97. cf. section XXII, "On Perfection, Rules of Methodist Episcopal Church, 1784," in Nathan Bangs' *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, I, p. 197.
2. MS: Letter to Timothy Merritt, New England Methodist Historical Association Library. Cited in Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
3. Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
4. Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, p. 116. In fairness it must be noted that since the publication of his work, Dr. Smith has revised his original evaluation of the place of the doctrine in the early years of American Methodism. He is now convinced that the doctrine played an important role in the first three decades of the nineteenth century .
5. Charles W. Ferguson, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, p. 267; cf. Donald Dayton, "Christian Perfection to the Baptism of the Holy Ghost," *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Syman, p. 42.
6. E. S. Burke, ed., *History of American Methodism*, I, 307; II, 609.
7. Frank Baker, *From Wesley to Asbury*, 176-180.
8. General Conference, *Journal*, I, 160-161, cited in Merrill E. Gaddis, "Christian Perfection in America," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1929.
9. Baker, *op. cit.*
10. Peters, *op. cit.*, 98-99.
11. "The Journal of Benjamin Lakin," *Religion on the American Frontier*, ed. W. W. Sweet, IV, 249.
12. Herman Bangs, *The Autobiography and Journal of Rev. HerInan Bangs*, 53-54.
13. *Ibid.*, eg. July 29, and August 22, 1926, p. 139; August 30, 1832, p. 173; June 11, October 23, and November 15, 1841, pp. 208-212. Peters lists Bangs as an exception to the general practice, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
14. James B. Finley, *Sketches of Western Methodism*, p. 98.
15. *The Methodist Preacher*, II, pp. 95-96, cited in Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 99. Peters classifies Clark and Herman Bangs as "illustrations of an infrequent usage" of the doctrine.
16. *Christian Advocate*, September 9, 1826. 17. John Lindsey, "Sermon: Gospel Purity," *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review*, XVII (1835), pp. 33-45. 18. "Journal of James (Jilruth, 1835," *Religion on the American Frontier*, ed., W. W. Sweet, IV, pp. 401, 440, 443, 445.
19. "Journal of Benjamin Lakin," *op. cit.*, p. 251.
20. *Methodist Magazine*. I (1818). 5.

21. "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. S.G. Roszel. Baltimore, February 16, 1818." *Methodist Magazine*, I, pp. 156, 158.
22. "A Short Account of a Camp Meeting Held at Cow-Harbor, Long Island, Which Commenced August 11, 1818," *Methodist Magazine*, I.
23. "A Short Memoir of Mrs. Anna Nickerson," *Methodist Magazine*, I, p. 307.
24. "A Short Memoir of the Rev. James Rogers," *Methodist Magazine*, I, p. 297. For other testimonies from these memoirs see *Ibid.*, VI (1823), pp. 89, 199, 258, 417-418, 439; VII (1825), pp. 86, 378ff, 418ff, 446; XI (1828), pp. 98, 119, 130, 138; and *passim*.
25. For example: R. Treffy, "Sermon on Christian Perfection," *Methodist Magazine*, V (1822); Wm. P. Burgess, "Sermon: Benefits Resulting from the Sacrificial Death and Glorious Life of Jesus Christ." Burgess discusses full salvation as one of the benefits of believers. *Ibid.*, IX (1826); Adam Clarke, "Christian Perfection," *Ibid.*, XI (1828); Review of section of Fletcher's Works on Perfection, *Ibid.*, XI (1833); Rev. John Lindsey, "Sermon: Gospel Purity," and B. F. Shepard, "Essay on Christian Perfection," *Ibid.*, XVII (1835).
26. "Revivals of Religion in Schenectady," *Methodist Magazine*, III (1820), p. 357, and *Ibid.*, I, p. 297.
27. "Memoir of Mr. John Man, Missionary in Nova Scotia," *Ibid.*, II (1819), p. 16.
28. "Extract from a letter from Rev. D. Hutchinson," January 25, 1819, *Ibid.*, p. 116.
29. "Account of the Revival of Religion in the Oneida District in the Genesee Conference," dated August 2, 1818, from Utica, *Ibid.*, p. 75.
30. "Letter to Rev. John Collins, March 20, 1819," *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.
31. "Revival of Religion in Scioto District (Ohio):, Chillicothe, April 22, 1819, *Ibid.*, p. 233.31A "State of Religion in the Mississippi District," October 20, 1824, *Ibid.*, VIII (1825), p. 39.31B "Revival of Religion in Newark, N.J.," *Ibid.*, VIII, (1825), p. 240.
32. "Memoir of the Rev. Edward Paine," *Ibid.*, III (1820), p. 407.
- 32A. "Revival of Religion in Columbia County, N. Y.," *Ibid.*, VIII (1825), p. 111. For other representative examples see *Ibid.*, VI (1823), p. 477; VIII (1825), pp. 283, 441, 484; X (1827), pp. 38, 84, 181-182, 243; XI (1828), p. 35; and *passim*.
33. Cited in Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
34. *Christian Advocate*, October 12, 1827, II, 22; Smith, *Revivalism*, p. 116.
35. *Christian Advocate*, II, p. 22.
36. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
37. Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

38. Smith, op. cit.
- 38A. Methodist Magazine, X (1827), p. 182
39. Christian Advocate, November 25, 1826.
40. Christian Advocate, January 13, 1827; January 11, 1828.
41. Christian Advocate, June 29, 1827; other examples include: September 16, 1826; September 23, 1826; October 14, 1826; November 18, 1826; December 8, 1826; January 6, 1827; October 12, 1827.
42. Christian Advocate, October 12, 1827.
43. Christian Advocate, October 14, 1826.
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45. Methodist Magazine, VI (1823), p. 33; Published in 1826 as Letters to Young Ministers of the Gospel on the Importance and Method of Study. This second edition is also Cited in Peters, op. cit., p. 102.
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49. Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review XV (1833), pp. 406-450; XVI (1834), pp. 131-173.
50. "Methodist Publishing Activities," Religion on the American Frontier, IV, pp. 700-706; and Joseph Benson, The Life of the Rev. John W. De La Flechere, (Nashville: Publishing House of M. E. Church, South, 1888), pp. 205, 216, 276-278, passim.
51. Cf. Fletcher's influence on Asa Mahan: "The terms by which we designate it were those by which it had been presented since the times of Wesley and Fletcher, namely, Christian Perfection, Entire Sanctification, and Full Salvation, " Autobiography of Asa Mahan, p. 367, cited in B. B. Warfield, Perfectionism, II, p. 57.
52. M. L. Edwards, Adam Clarke, p. 32.
53. Robert Chiles, Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935, p. 42.
54. Ibid., p. 47.
- 54A. Richard Watson, Theological Institutes (London: John Mason, 1829).; 3rd edition), III, pp. 197-205.

55. The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury, I, p. 66. cf. Peters, op. cit., pp. 85-97.
56. For additional documentation of the place of Christian perfection in eighteenth century Methodism cf. History of American Methodism, I, pp. 301-307; W. W. Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, IV, pp. 77, 91, 96, 102, 114, 121, 125-128, 140, 156, 159, 208, 210, 211; Asbury, Journal, I, pp. 66, 127, 299, 351, 406, 420, 556, 696, 716; II, pp. 93, 139, 383.
57. J. P. Pilkington, The Methodist Publishing House, I, pp. 92, 95, 101-103, 142, 149, 179, 181-182, 280-284, 286. Robert E. Chiles, Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935, chapter II, "Methodism's Theological History: From Wesley to Watson, 1790-1840," pp. 37-45.
58. J. F. Hurst, The History of Methodism, III, p. 1252, and Frank Baker, op. cit., p. 185. Peters, op. cit., 82.
59. Merrill E. Gaddis, "Christian Perfectionism in America," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1929, p. 298-301.
60. B. W. McDonald, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 105, cited in Gaddis, op. cit., p. 299.
61. Christian Advocate, October 14, 1826.
62. Cf. the use of Fletcher in a response to a Calvinistic rejection of the doctrine in "Christian Perfection," Christian Advocate, II, p. 73. January 11, 1828.
- 62A. John Fletcher. The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher (Salem, Ohio: Schmul, 1976), pp. 630-633, 645, 647-648, 656. cf. David Cubie, "Perfection in Wesley and Fletcher: Inaugural or Teleological," Wesleyan Theological Journal, 11 (Spring, 1976), pp. 25, 29-30; and Herbert McGonigle, "Pneumatological Nomenclature in Early Methodism," Wesleyan Theological Journal, 8 (Spring, 1973), pp. 68-69.
- 62B. MS: Fletcher to Charles Wesley, November 24, 1771; No. 38, Fletcher Volume, Methodist Archives, London.
63. "Methodist Publishing Activities," Religion on the American Frontier, IV, pp. 700-706.
64. Thomas Coke, The Experience and Spiritual Letters of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers (London: Milner and Somerby, n.d.), p. 41.

**NINETEENTH CENTURY PHILOSOPHY  
AND HOLINESS THEOLOGY:  
A Study in the Thought of Asa Mahan**

By  
James E. Hamilton

. . . as is a man's Philosophy, so is his Theology. The changeless laws of our being render us, in all departments of research and action, philosophic beings. In Religion, we can no more be exempt from the influence of Philosophy, than in all other departments of investigation. . . God hath joined Philosophy and Religion together. We do violence to the nature which he has given us when we attempt to put them asunder. False Philosophy is the mother of false religions. A correct Philosophy is the handmaid of true religion.'

So wrote Oberlin College's sage and saint, president, professor of philosophy, and chief propagator of Christian perfection. His words do not have the ring of familiarity to twentieth century ears, particularly Wesleyan holiness ears. Significantly, however, two of the most widely read holiness authors of the last century, Asa Mahan and Thomas Upham, were internationally known philosophers.<sup>2</sup>

Asa Mahan is identified in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Spring, 1974, in terms of Academic Orthodoxy, 3 Scottish Common Sense Philosophy, and the theology of the holiness movement. The focus in this paper will be upon one aspect of the relation between Mahan's philosophy and his theology of scriptural holiness. Our procedure will be the following: 1) to give a brief exposition of Mahan's understanding of the nature and purpose of philosophy; 2) to analyse his concept of the philosophic spirit; 3) to show how he relates philosophy and theology in general; 4) to discuss his analysis of the idea of perfection; 5) to explain his view of the simplicity of moral action; 6) to apply the philosophical ideas of perfection and simplicity of moral action to his theology of holiness in terms of the crisis of entire sanctification, growth in grace and the unity of personal and social aspects in a holy life.

Although an independent thinker who eludes neat categories of classification, Asa Mahan may be located both methodologically and in terms of the substance of his thought within the broad stream of Scottish Common Sense Realism. He saw the teachings of Thomas Reid as effectively reversing the trend of modern philosophy "in the direction of fundamental truth."<sup>4</sup> He writes of "the Christian system of Reid," meaning by this that philosophical realism both prepares the mind to recognize and receive an authenticated revelation from God, and tends in every way to complement and confirm the truth and influence of the Bible.

### **1. The Nature of Philosophy**

What, then, is the philosophical method which Mahan conceives to be thus fruitful and which lies at the heart of his conception of philosophy. It is this: to observe, to analyse, to order, to elucidate and to account for the facts of conscious experience. "All mankind," he says, "have a quenchless thirst for knowledge, and the profession of world-thinkers is to furnish food for thought...." The philosopher's raw material is the data of human consciousness. The philosopher must explain this data and its implications without transforming it into something different. <sup>3</sup> He must give reflective form to knowledge through organizing and elucidating it on the basis of fundamental principles.<sup>9</sup> In his researches he seeks to find and explain the causes of things and especially the ultimate reason why things are as they are and not otherwise.<sup>10</sup> The philosopher can discover and increase our understanding of truth, not just point out the mistakes of others. Philosophy's "heaven-appointed mission," he writes, includes not only pointing out the errors of others, but attempting to mark out the line on which truth leads and "where and why error, in all its forms, takes its departure from that line."<sup>11</sup> In this way, philosophy can prepare us to recognize and embrace biblical revelation.

### **2) The Philosophic Spirit**

In Mahan's view human beings are philosophers by birth, so much so "that almost nothing delights us so much as philosophic truths and principles, when once we become acquainted with them."<sup>12</sup> However, the philosophic spirit requires cultivation. Five correlated ingredients are basic: love of truth, intellectual humility, a teachable spirit, an independent mind, and a spirit of wonder issuing in reflective curiosity. The greatest need of universal humanity, says Mahan, "is a knowledge of truth and a state of feeling and action in harmony with truth manifested to the mind."<sup>13</sup> "The true idea of education is mental development in fixed correlation to this great end."<sup>14</sup> The Church, he says, should counsel her sons and daughters to "buy the truth and sell it not," and to let truth be the everlasting dwelling place of their souls. <sup>16</sup> Speaking personally, Mahan writes in his Autobiography that during his long life "truth and duty were the golden pavement on which (he) was immutably determined to walk" and that he never advocated "any doctrine but under the conviction that it was true. or any measure but

under the persuasion that it was right and wise. "16 Looking ahead to the great final Day of Judgment, Mahan declares:

For ourselves, we would much rather have the artillery of the entire universe directed against us, than to have this thought light upon our souls . . ., that we had failed to maintain the most sacred aim to know the whole truth just as God had revealed it, irrespective of all other considerations, and to give to the world an undisguised report of what God had taught us. 17

Insofar as Christianity or education fosters a love of truth, it fosters the spirit of genuine philosophy. When the philosophic spirit is fully developed, he says, "the love of truth, for her own sake, takes full possession of the mind."18

Complementing devotion to truth is a sense of intellectual humility. There are good reasons for us to be humble. First, the human mind is "adapted to a state of endless growth and expansion."19 However pure our character may be, our finite mental powers are still in a relatively imperfect state of development. Second, in contemplating various objects of thought, each, of us has a standpoint peculiar to himself. Our perspective is not complete but partial. Third, even the holiest person has a "continued liability to erroneous judgment. "20 The true philosopher, aware of these limitations, has what Mahan labels, "an omnipresent apprehension of his limited knowledge and liability to error."21

Love of truth together with intellectual humility produces the third quality, a teachable spirit. With this spirit, in the words of Proverbs, the mind "cries after knowledge, and lifts up her voice for understanding; it seeks for her as silver and searches for her as for hid treasures."22 Valuing truth supremely, the true philosopher will be equally ready to learn from a child or from an enemy. He will weigh the arguments of those who differ from him with child-like simplicity and candor. A teachable spirit, says Mahan, "is the true and only true philosophic spirit. "23

The fourth characteristic, an independent mind, is essential to the growth and development of our mental faculties. Like our physical powers, our minds can achieve healthy growth only by exercise.

If the mind would grow, it must walk out amid the vast realities around it, and tax its energies in the solution of the great problems of truth and duty.... The individual that will not consent to endure the labor, or rather enjoy the luxury, of hard thinking will never pass the boundary of mental childhood....24

Passively receiving the thoughts of others tends to weigh the mind down and "palsy its energies instead of strengthening and developing them."25 The very constitution of our mental nature as God created it requires us to be "in the highest and best sense of the words, " independent thinkers, and to surrender to no man, or class of men the prerogative of thinking or judging for us."26

Independence of mind is a condition of recognizing truth as truth. Mahan tells the story in this connection of a pastor who set out to imitate

John Wesley's precise schedule of sleeping, praying, studying, eating and carrying on his various activities. The result? In less than one year he was forced to leave the ministry, a hopeless dyspeptic.<sup>27</sup> Suppose, says Mahan, the preacher had instead determined to think as Wesley did, passively receiving Wesley's teachings as the perfect and infallible exposition of Scripture. In that case, says Mahan, the man would have become as hopeless a spiritual dyspeptic as he had a physical one.

Suppose, on the other hand, the preacher had sought to copy the vital principles of Wesley's inner life and

"with a wise discrimination . . . had studied Mr. Wesley's teachings and doctrines with a supreme reference to their adaptation to render that man of God what he was, and to induce similar transformations in all who should receive them as he did, and has valued and received them for the same end that Mr. Wesley did. In that case, "the righteousness" of our preacher would have "gone forth as brightness, and his salvation as a lamp that burneth."<sup>28</sup>

Truth has sanctifying influence upon the heart, says Mahan, only when it is perceived to be in fact truth.

Mahan regards this fundamentally philosophic quality of independent judgment as a distinguishing mark of a Christian mentality. A biblical Christian, he says, proves all things for himself, holding fast to that which is good. He recognizes that "this side the eternal throne there are no infallible interpreters of truth, that God alone is the Lord of the intellect and the conscience," and that he must receive all other men's thoughts, not passively, but "as an independent judge of what is true and of what is false, of what is right and of what is wrong."<sup>29</sup> He spoke the following words in 1850 to the Y. M. C. A. of London, England:

I have sometimes thought that were such men as Calvin and Wesley here they would demand an apology of many of their modern followers, as the condition of admitting them to companionship, for having implicitly copied their sentiments, instead of imitating their God-like examples as honest and humble disciples of truth, and yet daring to appear before the world as their representatives.<sup>30</sup>

The final characteristic of the philosophic spirit is a pervasive sense of wonder issuing in reflective curiosity. Mahan's words reveal something of his own spirit.

When the mind of the child first opens its mental eye upon the universe around him, what wonders burst upon his vision. What deep and soul-stirring problems present themselves to his thoughts, and how intense the desire that glows in his bosom to exercise his powers in their solution' . . . he walks forth in a cloudless night, when "the everlasting blue" is studded with its myriad gems.... With what feelings of wonder and mental inquiry does that child contemplate this scene!

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are:  
Up above the world so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky."

Oh, that feeling of wonder in man! It is the source of all true greatness, if it is only rightly directed. Now let this child possess and preserve a pure heart, and by the grace of God he may do it without fail; let him become a pupil of universal truth, and preserve in all his researches a manly, sanctified independence, and what a thinker he will become....

By way of contrast, how melancholy the spectacle of idle unreflective sightseers, passing through life without ever

attempting to explain to themselves the causes of the events they see in the external world, or the laws which regulate their occurrence, and without turning thoughts in upon themselves, and seriously pondering the great questions pertaining to human duty and destiny 32

Such people forfeit the basic condition of human dignity and excellence, a well-developed philosophic spirit.

### **3) The Relation Between Philosophy and Theology**

In order to analyse Mahan's view of the relation between philosophy and theology, it will be useful to employ the categories of understanding and of evidence. Regarding evidence, Mahan holds that the function of philosophy is to assess theological truth claims. Three areas of application must be distinguished: (1) theism in general; (2) Christian theism; and (3) special teachings of the Bible, such as the doctrine of sanctification. Mahan argues that (1) and (2) are susceptible of rational verification. The chief source for his discussion of (1) is his *Natural Theology*.<sup>33</sup> His justification of (2) takes the form of a defense of the whole Bible as a revelation from God. The most complete discussion of this subject is found in *Modern Mysteries Explained and Exposed*.<sup>34</sup> In this connection we should note Mahan's confidence that research into the nature and characteristics of evidence itself will clearly illumine the ground of our assent to the claims of Christianity.<sup>35</sup>

The specific concern of this study is (3). How much and what kind of evidence may a doctrine of special revelation be expected to have? Mahan credits his thinking at this point to Thomas Aquinas.<sup>36</sup> On some doctrines there is overlap. Nature as well as the Bible teaches us of God as creator, of the soul and of moral duty. These teachings may be rationally verified. Doctrines peculiar to the Bible, however, such as those of the Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement are not contrary to but above reason. These may be vindicated by virtue of "their conscious accordance with the known condition and wants of man,"<sup>37</sup> though not strictly verified. Mahan's concept of "internal evidence" is crucial at this point.

Mahan contends that all people have a basic conviction that human nature, like the compass, must vibrate to the real, not to the unreal "The direction of the needle to the pole," he says, "indicates the existence of a reality adequate and adapted to draw it in that direction."<sup>38</sup> Man, for example, is a religious being and needs an object of his worship; he is a fallen being and needs a redemptive provision to restore him to purity and peace; he is "an endlessly progressive being, and needs to be in the presence of realities adapted to draw out his immortal powers, and cause them to expand towards absolute intellectual and moral beauty and perfection forever."<sup>39</sup> Whenever man finds himself confronted with ideas and facts perfectly correlated to his fundamental needs, then like a thirsty man who finds water, he believes himself to be in the presence of truth. Thus, as a person becomes more conscious of the correspondence between the great truths of Christianity and the basic requirements of human nature, he becomes increasingly convinced of the truth of Christianity. <sup>40</sup> It should be noted here that Mahan regards the doctrine of entire sanctification as meeting fully the demand of our moral being for perfect rectitude.<sup>41</sup> When we try the doctrine by this principle, he claims, "we find it to have all the evidence in its favor" that any truth of special revelation can have. <sup>42</sup> It should be noted also that a philosophical analysis of human nature is a clear prerequisite for "a correct understanding of the bearing of the internal evidence of Christianity. <sup>43</sup>

In addition to this positive vindication, the special teachings of the Bible may also be shown to be free from self-contradiction and from incompatibility with well-established facts. In other respects they are above reason and are addressed to faith in supernatural revelation.<sup>44</sup>

Mahan treats the philosophical assessment of theological truth claims as determinative for Christian experience. Faith, he argues, must be rooted in reason's assent. Far from being a leap in the dark, faith is "fixed fidelity of will to valid evidence, or rational conviction. "<sup>45</sup> Initially, this evidence is not to be found in Christian experience. While it is true that "the experimental results of Christian faith are among the many sources of proof of the divinity of our religion," we still must ask, "What is the primal ground of that faith?"<sup>46</sup> The answer must come in terms of rational conviction rooted in solid evidence.

We turn now from the category of evidence to that of understanding. Consistently with his commitment to Christian theism, Mahan holds that God has revealed himself both in the natural order and in the Bible and that this revelation is harmonious and complementary. The revelation given in nature provides the context in terms of which biblical revelation is to be understood, just as the Old Testament is the context for understanding the New Testament. Thus, for example, philosophical investigation "of the grounds of moral obligation will lead us to perceive distinctly and feel deeply our obligation to obey the moral precepts of Christianity."<sup>47</sup> The Bible in turn provides many keys for understanding the world. The moral and spiritual teachings of Scripture illuminate philosophic conceptions, rendering them more distinct and impressive, and extend our vision far beyond what reason could discover by the light of nature alone.

Since natural and biblical revelation are complementary, we should undertake the initial study of each independently. Then we should compare our conclusions. If we find harmony and unity, we shall normally discover that our understanding also is increased. However, if we find incompatibility, we should infer neither that philosophy is right nor that the Bible is right, but that we have erred in our researches. "We should renew our independent investigations in each domain for the purpose of detecting the error into which we have fallen."<sup>48</sup> In the remainder of our paper we shall be concerned with the category of understanding rather than with evidence. We shall show how Mahan uses philosophical analysis to illumine the theological concept of Christian perfection.

#### 4) The Idea of Perfection

In Mahan's view the judgments and voluntary activities of rational beings all have reference to fundamental ideas, such as the ideas of beauty, truth, goodness, justice and their opposites. One such regulative idea comprehends all others, the idea of perfection. Whenever we speak of something as good, true, beautiful or just, he says, we "contemplate it relatively to the idea of perfection."<sup>49</sup>

When applied to a moral agent, what does the term "perfection" signify? Mahan's somewhat technical definition reads as follows:

Every being . . . was created for a certain sphere of existence and action, and is endowed accordingly with . . . internal capabilities which perfectly adapt it, when these capabilities are fully developed, to that sphere. When such (a) being . . . is subject to such influences, that all these internal capabilities receive the most full and harmonious development possible, then such (a) creature . . . is in a state of perfection.<sup>50</sup>

In other words, whenever a being's action is in full harmony with the requirements of its individual sphere, that being is perfect.<sup>51</sup> In one sense, of course, the perfection of the creature must always fall infinitely short of the absolute perfection of deity. However, in terms of capabilities related to a given sphere of activity, there is a sense in which the creature may at each successive moment be as perfect as God.

In the case of man, the particular sphere to which our rational voluntary powers are adapted is the moral sphere. Consequently, man is "morally or ethically perfect when his entire moral activities are in full harmony with the moral law, or the idea of duty."<sup>52</sup> To put the point another way, when our moral action is in full harmony with the revealed will of God according to all the light presently available to us, then our action is as perfect "as the action of God is, relatively to his knowledge and capacities."<sup>53</sup> If the great moral ideal of human existence is to devote ourselves to "the glory of God in the highest holiness and happiness of himself the world and the universe," then whenever the achievement of this ideal becomes a person's controlling intention, so that he devotes his entire energies to its realization according to all the light in his reach and

the use of the best means within his knowledge and control, " such action is in the nature of the case as perfect as it can be.<sup>54</sup>

### **5) The Simplicity of Moral Action**

We turn now to consider Mahan's concept of the simplicity of moral action. Mahan is an intuitionist in moral philosophy.<sup>55</sup> His method is reflective analysis of conscious moral experience. Such analysis, he argues, clearly evinces that the human mind affirms moral obligation in view of the intrinsic or relative worth of certain objects, such as the well-being of another person, or the glory of God. The object might even be moral action which is appropriate in view of a given relationship, such as gratitude to a benefactor or obedience to authority. Mahan agrees with Kant that personal moral character pertains exclusively to the will and is determined by the ultimate or controlling intention.

The conception of ultimate intention is crucial to Mahan's view of the simplicity of moral action. What is an ultimate intention? An intention is a choice of the will. Such a choice may be termed "ultimate" when two conditions are met. First, it must be subordinated to no other intentions. Rather, all other choices of the will must be subordinated to it. There cannot be two ultimate intentions. If there are two, one would not be ultimate. Neither can a particular volition exist which is incompatible with one's ultimate choice. Any choice contrary to a given ultimate intention implies, for the time being, a new ultimate intention supplanting the former one.<sup>56</sup>

Second, the final reason for the intention must belong exclusively to the object of choice. An ultimate intention according to this criterion is one whose object has intrinsic worth. If the choice of an object were made for some reason distinct from the object, then that reason would itself be the true chosen object. In terms of these two conditions combined, an ultimate intention is one in which an all-controlling choice is made of an intrinsically worthy or valuable object. Virtue, then, is a function of "the relation of willing to the intrinsic character of the . . . object of the intention."<sup>57</sup> Outward actions and states of mind or of feeling have moral character only derivatively in terms of their relation to the ultimate intention.

From this analysis it is an easy step to the simplicity of moral action. The question at issue is whether or not incompatible elements, such as sin and holiness, or right or wrong, can coexist in a single moral act.<sup>58</sup> Mahan answers in the negative and roots much of his argument in the nature of ultimate intention.<sup>59</sup> The character of a given moral act is determined exclusively by one's ultimate intention. An ultimate intention is a simple act of volition in which an all-controlling choice is made of an intrinsically worthy object. Consequently, incompatible elements, such as sin and holiness cannot coexist in a single moral act. It should be clear at this point that Mahan's views of perfection and of the simplicity of moral action are complementary. Only as moral actions are simple or unmixed in character may moral perfection be realized in human experience. Conversely, if the term "moral perfection" is ever correctly applied to human actions, then such actions must be morally pure or simple.

Before applying these philosophical views to the biblical teaching of sanctification, one distinction must be made. A person newly arrived at a state or moral perfection may be in perpetual danger of falling from that state because of mental prejudices and disordered states of feeling generated by previous habits of wrongdoing. By way of contrast, a person may reach a point at which the mind and feelings so thoroughly support and so little oppose the ultimate intention of the will that the moral state is a confirmed one and the likelihood of falling is minimal. It is legitimate to say that the state of the first morally perfect person is very imperfect by comparison to the second, while the state of the second is thorough or entire in a way that that of the first is not.<sup>60</sup> Evidently, moral perfection in the second sense precedes and is a condition of perfection in the second sense, while perfection in the second sense is "a good to be sought in the full discharge of present duty."<sup>61</sup>

## **6) Entire Sanctification**

### **a) The Crisis**

The application of Mahan's views to biblical holiness may be readily understood. He begins with the premise that perfection in the sense of full compliance with known duty is "an irreversible condition of eternal life."<sup>62</sup> This he infers from the nature of repentance, from the fact that forgiveness in the Bible hinges upon intentional abandonment of known sin, and from the intrinsically simple nature of moral action, a doctrine which finds biblical expression in the teachings that no man can serve two masters; that one must forsake all to be a disciple of Jesus; and that the human heart, like a spring, cannot bring forth both sweet water and bitter. Mahan declares that "instead of its being true that none attain perfection in this form, none are actually saved who are not thus perfect." <sup>63</sup> Consequently, "the first holy act of the converted sinner is as perfect as any act of any intelligent being in existence."<sup>64</sup>

However, the moral state of the newborn Christian is of infantile weakness and must be preserved from decay and corruption by his pressing on to a condition of being confirmed, settled and strengthened in the way of holiness and peace.<sup>65</sup> To this end he must be taught that there are two forms of perfection found in Scripture.

The one presents a most sacred duty to be done, a duty the non-discharge of which shuts the soul from heaven. The other present is us with an infinite good to be sought. The former is a changeless condition of attaining the latter, while the latter when attained, reacts upon the former, renders it fixed and permanent, greatly enlarges the sphere of its operations, and renders the forms of its development of an incomparably higher order.<sup>66</sup>

Thus it is, Mahan claims, that in such Scripture passages as Deuteronomy 30:1-6 God seems to promise perfection on the express condition of perfection. <sup>37</sup> There are simply two different types of perfection involved.

It is not our purpose to discuss Mahan's belief that the attaining of a mature and confirmed state of holiness involves a crisis. It is our purpose to show that the nature of this crisis is not a matter of passing from a state of moral imperfection to a state of moral perfection. Rather, the crisis is the crucial pivotal point in the passage from a relatively feeble and fragile state of moral purity to a thoroughly confirmed one.

The primary changes taking place in the crisis of entire sanctification, therefore, pertain not to the will's controlling choice as such, but to the enlightenment of the mind and the cleansing and subduing of the feelings. In the first case, "the Spirit sanctifies by presenting Christ to the mind in such a manner that we are transformed into his image."<sup>68</sup> "The Holy Spirit is given for the express purpose of so presenting the Lord Jesus Christ to our minds that we may experience the full power of his redemption."<sup>69</sup> Statements pertaining to the Spirit's enlightening of our minds in connection with the crisis of entire sanctification abound in Mahan's writings.

Similarly, one finds frequent statements referring to the propensities, dispositions and tempers. Scriptural terms, such as "crucifixion of the old man" or "destruction of the body of this death" mean that the propensities, dispositions and tempers are so renovated that the world with its affections and lusts have no more power over a sanctified person than they have over the dead.<sup>70</sup> To be sanctified wholly is to receive a total renovation, purification and cleansing of all our propensities and tempers.<sup>71</sup> This renovation does not free us from temptation, but restores our sensibilities to a perfectly normal state<sup>72</sup> in which they are "subdued into harmony with the action of the intelligence and will."<sup>73</sup>

#### b) Growth in Grace

It should be evident at this point that in Mahan's view growth in grace cannot mean growth from a more sinful to a less sinful state either before or after the crisis of entire sanctification. If it were a matter of changing from more sinful and less holy to less sinful and more holy, then repentance would require gradual renunciation of sin, growth in grace would cease when perfect holiness were attained and Jesus Christ could never have grown in grace. All three inferences are contrary to Scripture. Sin is no more a requirement for growth in a spiritual babe than is disease in a physical baby. Sin like disease hinders and resists healthy growth.<sup>74</sup>

The necessity for growth in grace is not to be found in the moral defectiveness of the new birth or of entire sanctification, but in the structure of human nature. Says Mahan,

. . . all our powers and susceptibilities are progressive. Not only to possess knowledge, and to be pure in heart, but a continued growth in knowledge and purity is a fundamental want of our nature. All our powers and susceptibilities stagnate as soon as we become stationary.<sup>75</sup>

The destiny of the faculties of the human soul for continual expansion lays the foundation for growth, not from sin to holiness, but from grace to grace and from glory to glory.

### c) The Unity of Personal and Social Aspects of a Holy Life

The unity of personal and social aspects of a holy life is rooted for Mahan in the twofold nature of ultimate intention. Ultimate intention refers inward to the controlling purpose of the will, the deeply personal source of the heart's motivation. Ultimate intention also refers outward to objects of choice: to God, to others, to the world of relationships. In the simplicity of moral action the two are united. It is morally impossible to choose to be pure of heart in a non-social sense. Purity of heart implies a right relationship to moral principles, and many moral principles have their roots in social relationships. Thus, Mahan could write that there are "forms of duty" which "bind us relatively to all social organizations, domestic and civil;"<sup>76</sup> that the Church is or ought to be a universal reform society,<sup>77</sup> and that the great reform movements of his day were nothing other than "the idea of perfection, laboring for development, and demanding an external realization, in the public mind."<sup>78</sup>

By the same token, and finally, he alone is a true reformer in the social arena who is pure in heart. Social moralizing and crusading for particular reforms without heart holiness is hypocrisy. The true reformer, who is devoted to moral principle from the heart, will not ride hobbyhorses. He will oppose wrong and uphold right across the board, being devoted in principle to the glory of God, to human well-being and to social justice from the controlling source of motivation and in the simplicity of moral action.

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#### Reference Notes

1. Asa Mahan, *System of Intellectual Philosophy*, revised and enlarged from the second edition (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1855), p. 9.
2. Daniel Steele notes that holiness authors Mahan and Upham, along with Charles G. Finney, were the only well-known writers on mental philosophy who wrote on the psychology of Christian experience. Cf. Daniel Steele, *Love Enthroned* (Boston: Christian Witness Co., 1875- recently reprinted by Schmul), pp. 163- 64. Both Mahan and Upham had thorough training in the biblical languages under Moses Stuart of Andover, as well as in philosophy.
3. See E. H. Madden, "Oberlin's First Philosopher," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 6 (1968), pp. 57-66; and James E. Hamilton and E. H. Madden, "Edwards, Finney and Mahan on the Derivation of Duties," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 13 (1975), pp. 347-360. The entire issue of *The Asbury Seminarian*, Vol. 22 (October, 1977) is devoted to aspects of the background and development of Mahan's thought.

4. Asa Mahan, *Critical History of Philosophy* (London: Elliot Stock, 1883), II, 84.
5. Asa Mahan, *Science of Natural Theology* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1867), II, 299.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 392-393.
7. *Critical History of Philosophy*, I, 73.
8. *Science of Natural Theology*, p. 307.9. *Critical History of Philosophy*, I, 5.10. *Critical History of Philosophy*, I, 4.11. *Critical History of Philosophy*, I, 2.12. *A System of Intellectual Philosophy*, p. 1013. Asa Mahan, "Certain Fundamental Principles, Together with their Applications," *Oberlin Quarterly Review*, Vol. 2 (1846), p. 234.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 236.15. *Ibid.*16. Asa Mahan, *Autobiography: Intellectual, Moral, and Spiritual* (London: T. Woolmer, 1882), p. 72.17. "Certain Fundamental Principles, Together with their Applications," p. 234.
18. *System of Intellectual Philosophy*, p. 11.
19. Asa Mahan, "Relation of Christianity to the Freedom of Thought and Action, " p. 122. I do not have the bibliographical data for this lecture.
20. Asa Mahan, "Brotherly Love," *Oberlin Quarterly Review*, Vol. 4 (1849), p. 8
21. *Critical History of Philosophy*, I, 77.
22. *System of Intellectual Philosophy*, p. 11.
23. *Ibid.*
24. "Relation of Christianity to the Freedom of Thought and Action," p.123.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, p. 126
27. A dyspeptic is one who suffers from chronic indigestion.
28. *Autobiography: Intellectual, Moral, and Spiritual*, pp. 73-74
29. "Relation of Christianity to the Freedom of Thought and Action, " pp. 131-32.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
33. *Science of Natural Theology*.
34. Asa Mahan, *Modern Mysteries Explained and Exposed* (Boston: Jewett, 1855), pp. 344-422. See also *Critical History of Philosophy*, I, 364-400.

35. System of Intellectual Philosophy, p. 8.36. Critical History of Philosophy, I, 416-418.37. Critical History of Philosophy, I, 418.38. Science of Natural Theology, p. 249.39. Modern Mysteries Explained and Exposed, p. 395.
40. Ibid., pp. 396-397.
41. Asa Mahan, Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection (Boston: D. S. King, 1839-recently reprinted by Schmul), p. 176.
42. Ibid.
43. System of Intellectual Philosophy, p. 8.
44. Critical History of Philosophy, I, 418.
45. Critical History of Philosophy, I, 403.
46. Critical History of Philosophy, I, 419.47. System of Intellectual Philosophy, p. 8.48. Asa Mahan, Doctrine of the Will (3rd ed.; Oberlin: J. M. Fitch, 1847), p.19.
49. Asa Mahan, Science of Moral Philosophy (Oberlin: J. M. Fitch, 1848), p. 338.
50. Ibid., pp. 338-339.
51. Asa Mahan, "Idea of Perfection," Oberlin Quarterly Review, Vol. 1 (1846), pp. 465-466.
52. Science of Moral Philosophy, p. 339
53. "Idea of Perfection," p. 467.
54. Ibid.
55. Cf. "Oberlin's First Philosopher" and "Edwards, Finney and Mahan on the Derivation of Duties."
56. Science of Moral Philosophy, p. 137.
58. Mahan discusses this issue in Doctrine of the Will, "Idea of Perfection," and Science of Moral Philosophy.
59. He also argues from the intrinsic nature of moral law.
60. "Idea of Perfection," p. 468.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., pp. 473-474
64. Ibid., p. 479.65. Ibid.66. Ibid., pp. 479-480.
67. Ibid., p. 474.68. Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection, p. 168.
69. Ibid., p. 169.

70. Asa Mahan, *Out of Darkness Into Light* (New York and Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1876), pp. 269-270.
71. *Ibid.*, 272, 276.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 277. Mahan points out that Adam and Eve, prior to the Fall were free from all evil propensities, yet they were tempted and fell. (*Ibid.*, p. 276).
73. "Idea of Perfection," p. 468.
74. Asa Mahan, *Life Thoughts on the Rest of Faith* (London: F. E. Longley, 1877), pp. 115-116.
75. Asa Mahan, *The True Believer; His Character, Duty and Privileges* (New York: Harper, 1847), p. 163.
76. *Science of Moral Philosophy*, p. 342.
77. Cf. Mahan's "Articles on Reform," which appeared in *The Oberlin Evangelist*, February-August, 1844;chapter40fDonaldW. Dayton, *Discovering An Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Edward H. Madden, *Civil Disobedience and Moral Law in Nineteenth Century American Philosophy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968).
78. *Science of Moral Philosophy*, p. 343.

# THE FUNDAMENTALIST LEAVENING OF THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT, 1914-1940 THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE: A CASE STUDY

by  
Paul Merritt Bassett

The smell of battle hangs over those portions of H. Orton Wiley's *Christian Theology* which have to do with the character and role of Scripture. It is not at first apparent, but when the work is seen in the context of the popular religious press, especially the holiness press, surrounding it, and when it is compared with the other serious theological endeavors of the holiness movement to that time, the polemical character manifests itself. To have brought the battle to the consciousness of the target audience of *Christian Theology* would have been most impolitic. Nonetheless, Wiley did enter the fray, declaring the unsuitability of either the liberal or the Fundamentalist positions with respect to the authority and inspiration of the Bible. He attempted a third alternative, much more Wesleyan, and classically orthodox, than the two extremes. But he came in on cat's paws and a generation or two of holiness preachers thought he was basically a Fundamentalist. The contrast between his position and the "received" position of the great majority was not perceived, though the clues are ample and Wiley does not dissemble.

The struggle surfaces briefly where Wiley works with "The Christian Book," as subsection of his chapter on "The Christian Revelation." In a move not at all prefigured by his theological models — Pope, Miley, and Curtis — and in a mood totally foreign to them, Wiley speaks of false conceptions of the Bible. "Three worthy monarchs," says he, "have had sceptres thrust into their hands and thereby [have been] forced into a false and unworthy position before God and man." These worthy but ill-used "monarchs" are in the Church, the Bible, and reason.'

Of the abuse of the prerogatives of the Church, we need say nothing here. But Wiley's critique of the abuse or misuse of Scripture's authority is highly significant.

"The Reformers themselves strove earnestly to maintain the balance between the formal and the material principles of salvation, the Word and Faith, but gradually the formal principle superceded the material, and men began unconsciously to substitute the written Word for Christ the Living Word. They divorced the written word from the Personal Word and thus forced it into a false position. No longer was it the fresh utterance of Christ, the outflow of the Spirit's presence, but merely a recorded utterance which bound men by legal rather than spiritual bonds. Men's knowledge became formal rather than spiritual. The views of God attained were merely those of a book, not those of a Living Christ which the book was intended to reveal. As a consequence Christ became to them merely a historical figure, not a Living Reality; and men sought more for a Knowledge of God's will than for God Himself. They gave more attention to creeds than to Christ. They rested in the letter, which according to Scripture itself kills, and never rose to a concept of Him whose words are spirit and life. The Bible thus divorced from its mystical connection with the Personal Word, became in some sense a usurper, a pretender to the throne."<sup>2</sup>

At first reading, this paragraph appeared to refer to the scholasticisms that characterized both Lutheranism and the Reformed tradition in the century between the death of Calvin and the rise of Pietism. But an examination of Wiley's bibliography would show that while this is one point of reference, it is not the only one. His acquaintance with early Protestant scholasticism is little more than passing. The past tenses of the cited paragraph notwithstanding, they referred to a then contemporary issue. Tone and context both point to fundamentalism.<sup>3</sup>

That Fundamentalism is a referent here is more strongly confirmed by what Wiley says of the third of the maltreated monarchs, Reason.

"Lastly, Reason itself was forced into a false authority. Severed from its Living Source, the Bible was debased to the position of a mere book among books. It was thus subjected to the test of human reason, and as a consequence there arose the critical or critico-historical movement of the last century known as 'destructive criticism.' Over against this as a protest arose a reactionary party, which originating in a worthy desire to maintain belief in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, as well as its genuineness, authenticity and authority as the Rule of Faith, resorted to a mere legalistic defense of the Scriptures. It depended upon logic rather than life. Spiritual men and women—those filled with the Holy Spirit, are not unduly concerned with either higher or lower criticism. They do not rest merely in the letter which must be defended by argument. They have a broader and more substantial basis for their faith. It

rests in their risen Lord, the glorified Christ. They know that the Bible is true, not primarily through the efforts of the apologists, but because they are acquainted with its Author. The Spirit which inspired the Word dwells within them and witnesses to its truth. In them the formal and material principles of the Reformation are conjoined. The Holy Spirit is the great conservator of orthodoxy. To the Jew, Christ was a stumbling block, and to the Greek foolishness; 'but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God' (I Cor. 1:24). ""

Here was a clear attack on both Liberalism and Fundamentalism, then, from within the ranks of the Holiness Movement. Both alternatives, Wiley seems to be saying, tragically overextend the province of reason or logic; and Fundamentalism, with its defense of Scripture, has been no less forgetful of the genuine content of the Bible and no less damaging in its substitution of Scripture for the living Christ than has Liberalism.

Not content with critique of untenable alternatives, Wiley then turns to construct a genuinely Wesleyan third alternative. It is neither liberal nor fundamentalist. It leans in neither direction. It is an authentic alternative, and it is that deliberately. To understand it best, it seems right to review the development of the attitude toward the Scriptures that developed in the years during which Wiley's own denomination, the Church of the Nazarene, was becoming a denomination indeed. Wiley and the denomination and the Protestant-wide controversy over the Bible ripened together.

One of the lesser known differences between Wesleyanism and Calvinism in the last century, buried in the tussle over free-will, is that of hermeneutic principle. And this, in turn, is intimately linked, both as cause and effect, to divergent doctrines of inspiration and authority. The difference would not have been clearly apparent up until the 1870s. But around that time as Sandeen has shown, American Calvinism in its Princeton mutation clearly, but unwittingly, broke from the old paths in the matter of biblical interpretation and in its description of the authority and inspiration of the Book.<sup>5</sup>

The Westminster Confession had been quite clear in insisting that the authority of Scripture rests on two sources, perhaps three: perhaps the witness of the Church, certainly its divine origin and certainly the witness of the Holy Spirit in the believers.

"We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the holy scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it both abundantly evidence

itself to be the Word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authorship thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."<sup>6</sup>

The rise of modern science, in the meantime, with its redefinition of what a fact must be and of reality itself, based upon these re-defined facts, had narrowed the definition of what truth or a truth must be and how it would be determined to be truth or a truth indeed. <sup>7</sup> Nineteenth century theologians, with varying degrees of awareness and complicity, accepted the new definitions of fact, or reality and of truth.<sup>8</sup>

The turn this took in the theology developed at Princeton helped to set the stage for the development of Fundamentalism Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield in particular applied the new (now commonplace) definitions to the rising argument in Calvinist circles concerning the authority of Scripture and produced a doctrine of inspiration that admitted only one of the two or three sources of authority declared by the Westminster divines. Says Hodge,

"The infallibility and divine authority of the Scriptures are due to the fact that they are the word of God; and they are the word of God because they were given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost."<sup>9</sup>

This is to say that the proof of authority lies external to Christian experience. The Bible is authoritative because it is inspired. The venerable notion of the testimonium Spiritus sancti, a doctrine essential to Calvin's theology, to Luther's, and to evangelical theology in general, is reduced to a minor role in Hodge and in subsequent Princetonian, then Fundamentalist, theologies.<sup>10</sup>

Concurrently with the development of the Princeton theology, American Methodism was developing its own systematics, though it was not at all hesitant to draw from its British forebears in the faith. It was not immune to the scientific revolution in definitions, but its insistence upon experience as a source of theology kept the more nearly positivistic and rationalistic influences at bay in the nineteenth century. Consequently, the Methodist theologies contemporary with Hodge and Warfield seem in many ways to be in quite another world when they speak of Scripture authority. Miner Raymond, whose *Systematic Theology*, published in 1877, was the first American Methodist systematic clearly links biblical authority to the testimonium Spiritus sancti,<sup>11</sup> as also does the most influential Methodist theology of the time, the *Compendium of Christian Theology* by W. B. Pope. <sup>12</sup> Raymond does tend to bury the idea in the more pressing contemporary concern with experience; Pope, on the other hand, peppers his discussion of revelation with it so that it is never more than two logical steps away at any point in the consideration.

It may be debated whether the Princeton mutation is at this point genuinely Calvinistic though one is inclined to believe it is. There is no doubt whatsoever that Raymond and Pope are Wesleyan. And there is a clear, very clear, and significant difference in the two views of Scrip-

ture. John Miley, whose *Systematic Theology* of 1892 comes to be required reading in the Nazarene's "Course of Study for Licensed Ministers" from 1911 to 1932 [in 1911, it stood alone; from 1916 to 1932 it was an alternative, along with Ralston's *Elements of Divinity*]<sup>13</sup> tends as Miner Raymond did to overlay the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* with the doctrine of experience, but the older notion is still there and very significant to the understanding of the authority of Scripture. <sup>14</sup> So it may be confidently asserted that by 1900, a distinguishing tenet of Wesleyan theology in contradiction from the Calvinism of Princeton and those whom it influenced is the insistence upon the internal witness of the Spirit as a source of biblical authority — "internal witness" being taken in both an individual and a corporate sense.

This may help to explain why Methodism and the holiness movement did not concern themselves more than very minimally with the issues being raised by the so-called "higher criticism" in the period 1870-1914, while the reformed tradition was abubble with controversy.<sup>15</sup> For Wesleyans, the authority of Scripture depended to some degree upon its own self authentication, but more importantly, experience of the authenticating voice of the Living Word clinched the matter.

This confidence that the authority and inspiration of Scripture could not be undone by those who could attack only from non-religious grounds and therefore could not touch the experiential validation of the truth and authority of the Word is seen the very first attempt at a theology treating most of the topics usually considered in a full-scale systematic theology produced among the holiness people. E. P. Ellyson's *Theological Compend* was published in 1908 by deliberate arrangement to celebrate the merger that year of the Holiness Church of Christ and the Church of the Nazarene, a date and event since taken to mark the birth of the Church of the Nazarene as a national denomination.<sup>16</sup>

In this first wide-gauged systematic theology from within the Holiness movement itself, there is not a word concerning the doctrine of revelation. Strange, in a way, because the leaders of the merging groups, and to some degree the rank and file, surely were not ignorant of the rising tide of positive appreciation for biblical criticism in the United States nor of the negative reaction to it. Their multitude of periodicals speaks of it and warns of its excesses. But apparently in 1908 a Wesleyan systematic theologian could safely let not only the topic itself but also the broader area of revelation go unexamined. Probably there was no perceived need for it either catechetically or apologetically. The authority and inspiration of Scripture were believed to be divine, and that was believed to be self-explanatory.

The temper of the times was not long in changing, however. By 1913, B. F. Haynes, editor of the neonate *Herald of Holiness* is including in almost every issue both an affirmation of confidence in the divine authority and inspiration of Scripture and an attack on those otherwise inclined. His method was two-fold. He would either approach the subject in his own editorials or by way of his comments upon editorials and articles appearing in other religious periodicals. Seldom are his sources Methodist or otherwise Wesleyan, though Haynes himself had been reared in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had served as

pastor in several of her distinguished pulpits in Tennessee (including McKendree Church of Nashville) and had edited a paper on behalf of a large contingent within his conference. 17 To be sure, he had suffered the wrath of certain bishops for his outspoken ways, and ecclesiastical demotion was familiar territory to him. But it is yet surprising to see him drawing so little from his own tradition and so much from the more Reformed-oriented *Herald and Presbyterian*, D. L. Moody, Reuben Torrey, and others. This is especially impressive in the light of the almost-every-issue criticism of Moody, Torrey and the Reformed tradition in general for its rejection of "second blessing holiness."<sup>18</sup>

In September of 1913, the *Herald of Holiness* began carrying an advertisement advising and urging the purchase of Arthur T. Pierson's book, *Many Infallible Proof: The Evidences of Christianity, or the Written and Living Word of God*.<sup>19</sup> Though the book was published by Fleming Revell, it was being offered through the Nazarene Publishing House. It is quite probable that Ellyson read the work before writing his *Compend*, but still felt no need to enter the lists on the topic upon which it expounds.<sup>20</sup> The book itself was almost a generation old when the *Herald* began to advertise it. Pierson, at the time of writing in 1886, was pastor of Bethany Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, and a leader in the Niagara conferences and other forerunners of Fundamentalism. His quarrel was not with the so-called "higher critics," however. In fact, his book pays them scant heed. That battle was to come later. Rather, he wrestles with the skepticism born of the Enlightenment and carried over into the various forms of agnosticism that were in vogue in certain circles throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup>

One very interesting note sounded by Pierson, however, must be underlined, for it is a note retained in classical evangelical Protestantism from Luther and Calvin, through the Pietists and Wesley, maintained by the early Holiness movement and lost by them in the heat of the Fundamentalist controversy. That is the intimate, even inextricable relationship between Christology and the inspiration of Scripture. Pierson's sub-title cites it ... The Written and living Word of God. Throughout the work, he links the two. So he says,

"What grounds are there for holding the Christian religion to be of divine origin and supreme obligation? This is the question, around which all else clusters. The Bible is but the great Book, and Christ, the great Person, of the Christian religion."<sup>22</sup>

The climax of the work is in his discussion of "The Divine Person," without which discussion, Pierson makes it clear, declarations about the Book (which he does not call "divine") are spiritually and theologically empty.<sup>23</sup>

Haynes, for his part, is also faithful in the early years of the warming controversy to keep Christology central and to avoid presenting the credentials of the Scripture apart from the context of the person and work of Jesus Christ. So it is that in October, 1913, he can write, "Yes, blessed be God, this inspiration of the Bible is verbal in the most acute, intense, literal, all inclusive sense. Nothing short of this would be like or

worthy of God, and nothing short of this would meet man's need."<sup>24</sup> And in April, 1914, he could write,

"All Scripture is His, is of Him, is for Him, is through Him, is by Him, reveals Him, exalts Him, is inseparably joined to Him in honor and integrity and validity, and no man dares invalidate or seek to invalidate this sacred Word without doing despite to the honor and majesty of the Christ. The inspired Word centers in, revolves around, points to and reveals Christ as its center and its source. No man honors the Word without honoring Christ. All true preaching of the Word is to honor Christ. There is a path from any and every passage of this Bible to the very Christ Himself,"<sup>25</sup>

The verbal inspiration for which Haynes so stoutly contends is not the verbal inspiration that became a fundamentalist watchword, perhaps shibboleth, a decade later. The argument had not yet developed sufficiently for Haynes to mean what they meant nor for his readers to take it in the later sense. He simply meant that none of the Scripture was of human devising-that it was God's own Word, given by His special inspiration only. Haynes is thinking essentially of the Word, not of words.

Nonetheless, the climate was becoming more heated every day, and the approach of a Pierson, and the assumption of an Ellyson, and the balance and terminological equivocation of a Haynes would not suffice. The very term "verbal inspiration" takes on an increasingly technical meaning, and the tendenz of the term and of the battle in which it plays such a critical role is already clear by 1914.<sup>26</sup>

Up to that year, the "Course of Study" for the Nazarene ministry seems to have assumed that John Miley's treatment of the doctrine of revelation was sufficient. But in 1914, the list of books includes Miley's theology and adds All About the Bible by Sidney Collett as required fare for the third year theological student. <sup>27</sup> This work was to remain on the "Course of Study" until 1944. Collett, whose book first appeared in Great Britain in 1905, under the title The Scripture of Truth, shows clearly the earlier ambiguity of the term "verbal inspiration," as well as hinting at the direction the definition was to take. Ironically, Collett himself retained without a single change his own definition of the term, however. So that, for him, it meant the same in the twentieth edition of circa 1934 as in the first. <sup>28</sup> He argues for a verbal inspiration that is not merely an inspiration of thoughts, nor yet a process of mechanical dictation. "If the testimony of Scripture is to be believed, God always gave the words, but He did not always give the thoughts!"<sup>29</sup> What keeps Collett back from a mechanical dictation theory is the variety of personalities that shines through the various biblical books, "hence, any attempt to define the exact nature or method of inspiration can only engender fruitless discussion, which must end in confession."<sup>30</sup> He goes on to quote with approval a sentence from an address delivered by the Dean of Westminster at the Abbey in late 1904: "Behind and beneath the Bible, above

and beyond the Bible, was the God of the Bible." "Herein," says Collett, "lies the true and only explanation of the mystery of inspiration."31

So Collett, and Haynes, held desperately to a divinely inspired Bible by means of the term "verbal inspiration." And both insisted on the subordinate character of the Bible with reference to the Person and Work of Christ (Haynes) and God Himself (Collett). But the relationship of christology to the doctrines of inspiration and revelation was no clearer than the meaning of the term "verbal inspiration."

By 1920, the terms have been sharpened and the enemy more clearly identified. In the intervening years, the proportion of editorials and editorial comments on the authority and inspiration to those on the Person and work of Christ changes radically. There was parity in 1914, but by 1920 the former were outnumbering the latter by 10 to 1. And now, in 1920, the "higher critics" as a class, and occasionally a specific one from among them, are clearly and frequently targets. In July, editor Haynes, noting the decrease in membership in the larger Protestant denominations, especially the Methodist Episcopal churches, North and South, says, "We repeat, as we have often said in these columns, that the curse of higher criticism is chiefly to be credited with this state of things . . . 32 By October, 1920, Haynes begins to use that hypostatic language to describe the Scriptures which was to become typical of Fundamentalism.

"If the Bible were given half a chance, it would show its power to awaken and turn men to God. The Bible is not only the light and life of the world, but it is a light and life-giver. The power of John Wesley's preaching was, that his sermons were packed full of the Bible. Too much of the preaching of today is packed full of everything except the Bible."33

Throughout March of 1920, the Herald of Holiness had featured a series of articles by J. Warren Slote entitled, "Is the Bible Inspired? Some Suggestions." The mood of the series is calm and it is innocent of any of the issues that later racked the Fundamentalists themselves. Innocent, but not unaware.

"There are differences of opinion among God's sincere children as to how the message came, some feeling that the great truths which these human instruments were to convey came to them and that they expressed them as best they could in terms to which they were accustomed; others believing that God gave these men the very language in which to express the truths revealed to them. To the casual observer the method may make little difference; but to the devout student and disciple it matters much. If God gave the truth only, the idea only, the concept only, allowing the human instrument freedom in its expression, without divine supervision, we are not sure that the book is really God's work; for to err is human, and it would have been comparatively easy for the recipient and recorder

to have selected improper words in giving expression. One misused word in a paragraph or sentence could change the meaning of the whole. Would God entrust to human judgment, faulty as He knows it to be, a task so momentous and so important to the well-being of the race, for which He sent His Son to die? Hardly. It seems to the writer that God revealed the truth, allowed the instrument freedom to express it in so far as the method of presentation was concerned, but at the same time supervising the selection of terms so that each truth was set forth in language fully adequate, exact, and at the same time in terms understandable as far as possible by him and those through and to whom it was originally given.

Like in the operation of the modern wireless telegraph, one instrument is so turned to the other as to catch the ether waves and accurately record the message transmitted, so it appears the human element used in the creation of the Bible was so keyed by selection and preparation to the divine personality that when the message was transmitted from above they, here below, caught it, were inspired by it, enunciated it, and recorded it exactly as it was originally given in words adequate to contain and convey it, such words having been either selected or censored by the divine representative, the Holy Spirit."<sup>34</sup>

Two weeks later, Slote insisted that while the Bible is not a science text, it is scientifically accurate. And in response to the documentary hypothesis he insists on the unity of the Book.<sup>35</sup> His last article examines Jesus' attitude toward the Old Testament and concludes

"If Jesus made no correction of the Old Testament records but on the other hand, both by His attitude and speech, confirmed them and sought to have His followers accept and regard them as of divine authority, we may do well to accept them as they come to us and as they are indeed and in truth the Word of God."<sup>36</sup>

This side of the controversy, Slote's reasoning appears to be quite naive, even circular. But within its own context, in terms of the state of the controversy in 1920, his point of view is very like that of the usual conservative at that early stage.<sup>37</sup> Verbal inspiration is the battle line, however ill-defined the term may have been. The Bible is authoritative because it is God's word. The notion of *the testimonium Spiritus sancti* is ignored, even in Wesleyan circles. There is not a word of it in the periodicals of the Church of the Nazarene from 1912 onward for a generation, but there is no end of defenses of the Bible on the grounds of its own self-authentication.

In 1923, the sixth General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene submitted an "Approved Constitution" to the various districts of the Church for their decisions and voted to act on the whole at the seventh

Assembly, to be held in 1928.<sup>38</sup> The proposed changes show many kinds of tensions to be testing the new denomination, not the least of them being the issues raised by the surging battle for the Bible. Up to 1923, the "Article of Belief" referring to Scripture had read: "By the Holy Scriptures we understand the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, given by Divine inspiration, revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation; so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith."<sup>39</sup> The indebtedness of the article to the Thirty-nine Articles of Episcopalianism and to the Twenty-five Articles of Methodism is patent. So also is the item on Scripture in the "Agreed Statement of Belief," a sort of liturgical summary of Nazarene doctrine: "We believe in the Divine inspiration of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and that they contain all truth necessary to faith and Christian living."<sup>40</sup>

Neither the periodicals of the Church printed between the sixth and seventh Assemblies nor the minutes of the district assemblies, nor the minutes of the 1928 Assembly show any sign of debate over what came to be the new "Article of Faith" on the Scripture. This lack of noteworthy debate shows clearly the perceived need of the Nazarenes to align themselves in the now-raging controversy. Now the Article read: "We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures by which we understand the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation; so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith." The "Agreed Statement of Belief" was also altered to read: "We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and that they contain all truth necessary to faith and Christian living."<sup>41</sup>

Affirmations of full inspiration and inerrancy seemed to be required in the creed now. But why? The rationale is nowhere to be found except in the broader context of American Protestant wars over the Bible. There is no written evidence to inform us, but "informed sources" report that it was H. Orton Wiley who framed the new article.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, the phrase "plenary inspiration" is his — not originally, of course, but as it commends itself to the doctrines of Wiley's denomination. But there is much room to doubt that the word "inerrantly" is his as well. In his own systematic theology, he will argue for the integrity of the Book, and even assert its freedom from what he calls "essential error." But "inerrance" seems to be deliberately avoided as saying both too little and too much.<sup>43</sup> The word itself had, by 1928, become one of the shibboleths of Fundamentalism, and much more an emotional than a cognitive term. Charles Hodge had earlier rejected the idea, if not the term.<sup>44</sup> A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, a decade later, insisted upon inerrancy as necessary to the authority of Scripture.<sup>45</sup> The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. in 1893 declared its allegiance to the position of Warfield in the resolution of the Brigg's case, and went on to claim that the Princeton position of Warfield was integral to that of the Westminster Confession and the declarations of the larger Catechism.<sup>46</sup> In the spring of 1919, the newly founded World's Christian Fundamentals Association, an interdenominational group

that numbered among its members some powerful leaders (especially among the Presbyterians and Baptists) — such as Reuben Torrey, Charles G. Trumbull, Lewis Sperry Chafer, and Griffith Thomas — made belief in a verbally inspired, inerrant Bible one of its nine points. This very point was quoted with unreserved approval in the *Preachers Magazine* a decade later.<sup>47</sup>

These, and later, declarations tended to force the issue of biblical authority and inspiration. The only alternative to inerrancy seemed to be errancy. The only alternative to infallibility, fallibility. The only alternative to verbal, ideational.

During the years between 1923 and 1928, the Church of the Nazarene adopted as her own heroes the principal soldiers in the ever more clearly defined Fundamentalist camp. There were no Wesleyans, no Methodists, except Harold Paul Sloan, who were carrying the battle.<sup>48</sup>

The newly launched *Preacher's Magazine* carried as its lead article in its first issue, January, 1926, an article by F. M. Messenger, "Modernism vs. Christianity," which draws heavily on the argumentation of J. Gresham Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*, published not quite two years earlier.<sup>49</sup> The next issue of *the Preacher's Magazine* (February, 1926) carries E. P. Ellyson's "The Present Crisis or Christianity vs. Religion," in the lead.<sup>50</sup> Ellyson, a former member of the Society of Friends and later a general superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, again avoids discussion of the problem of biblical authority, but instead insists on the essential relationship of orthodox Christianity to genuine Christianity. <sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, the attraction of the fundamentalist response to the liberals among the Nazarenes is seen in the warm review given by P. H. Lunn to a book entitled *Where the Higher Criticism Fails*. (The book itself is calm enough.)<sup>52</sup>

Both the *Herald of Holiness* and the *Preacher's Magazine* for the period 1923 to 1928 promote heavily the works of William Jennings Bryan, Reuben Torrey, A. T. Pierson, and Sidney Collett. The *Preacher's Magazine* features in its front cover pictures and drawings of prominent religious leaders, past and contemporary, including several with whom it argues theologically in its pages.<sup>53</sup> One is impressed that in this period "second blessing holiness" was not as critical to the denomination as it had earlier been. Orthodoxy on this point was the *de iure* mark of the "good Nazarene." A fundamentalist orthodoxy with respect to the inspiration and authority of Scripture had become a *de facto* mark of the "good Nazarene."

This is re-inforced by the tone and words of the Address of the General Superintendents to the 7th General Assembly, in 1928.

"First, we note with pleasure that there are no differences or divisions among us. We are a perfectly united denomination. In this General Assembly there will be no discussions of modernism or fundamentalism. We are all fundamentalists, we believe the Bible, we all believe in Christ, that He is truly the Son of God. We stand for the same great fundamentals and we will not be torn asunder nor be hurled into strife by arguments or contentions arising from the differences of opinion

regarding the great underlying principles of Christianity. "54

"We must stand for the whole Bible. We do not as a movement believe merely that the Bible contains the Word of God. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God. We believe it from Genesis to Revelation. We stand for it in life and death."55

"Every man in this body is a fundamentalist . . . We believe the Bible and accept it as being the revealed Word of God, immutable, unchangeable, infallible and sufficient for every human need. A modernist would be very lonesome in this General Assembly."56

"We stand for the Bible; we stand for the whole Bible, an immutable Bible. "57

And yet, for all of this obvious sympathy with Fundamentalism and openness to an increasingly carefully constructed Fundamentalist terminology, there was still a small hint that the testimonium Spiritus sancti was not forgotten and that modernism and higher criticism were not to be the modern Ichabod for Nazarenes.

Floyd W. Nease, president of Eastern Nazarene College and product of Bresee's and Wiley's Pasadena University, wrote in the August, 1927, issue of the *Preacher's Magazine* on "The Preacher's Attitude Toward the Critical Study of the Bible." "Is it basically more fair," he asks, "for the representatives of Fundamentalism to assume that the liberalists are a set of knaves than for the latter to assert that the Fundamentalists are ignoramuses and fools?"58 He urges the values of higher criticism, deploring its "destructive" practices and urges pastors to own and say sets of critical commentaries.

A year later, Stephen S. White, newly installed president of Bethany Nazarene College, wrote on "The-Holiness School and Fundamentalism," pointing out the tendency toward harshness and legalism among Fundamentalists, but indicating that the Nazarene's aim should be to emphasize experience, proper religious experience, as an avenue to a proper Fundamentalism.59 Here, in Nease and White, both young but recognized educational leaders, was a call for fairness-even acceptance of the positive contributions of modernism. These declarations, in the context of the declarations of the General Superintendents cited earlier, are quite conciliatory, relatively speaking. In 1924, a lead editorial by J. B. Chapman, cited by Timothy Smith as "the high-water mark of the [Nazarene] effort to make common cause with embattled Fundamentalists," had argued that Nazarenes could in no way accept nor tolerate any aspect of the modernist enterprise. 60 But Chapman, so well-respected throughout the Church, was not voicing an opinion held by certain significant leadership.

And here we confront an ambivalence if not an enigma. By 1928, the General Superintendents, whose number was augmented in that year by Chapman's elevation, were quite clear in their sympathies with Fundamentalism as it sought to defend the Scriptures — almost unre-

served sympathies. Chapman, editor of the Herald from 1923 to 1928 and editor of the *Preacher's Magazine* from its first issue, in 1926, until well into his super-intendency, was also clearly favorable to the Fundamentalists, and numbered himself among them with respect to the battle for the Bible. Chapman's popularity among Nazarenes in general probably speaks of a general sympathy for the Fundamentalists, and support for them in the matter of the defense of the Book, among Nazarenes everywhere. The influence of J. B. Morrison, who was given a wide and warm welcome into the Church of the Nazarene in 1922, was among her most popular and heeded preachers, and who was elected General Superintendent just 14 years later, in 1936, was clearly directed in support of the biblicist position of the Fundamentalists.<sup>61</sup>

Nonetheless, Fundamentalism could not gain the Nazarenes' total allegiance even on so important an issue as biblical authority. Two courses of events illustrate the ambivalence, but cannot explain it.

In the summer of 1925, the *Herald of Holiness* began carrying advertisements of a book by Basil W. Miller and U. E. Harding entitled *Cunningly Devised Fables: Modernism Exposed and Refuted*. It was published without the trade imprint by the Nazarene Publishing House and is the first extended head-on attack of modernism to come from the Nazarenes.<sup>62</sup> The work is warmly endorsed in the 2 September 1925 *Herald of Holiness* by A. M. Hills. In his review he clearly states that Miller was the author, that Harding's name was used to give credibility and a wider reading of the book.<sup>63</sup> Harding was an evangelist of wide acquaintance in the holiness movement; Hill's reputation as a scholar and controversialist was probably without parallel among the holiness people. The book itself carries a laudatory introduction by James B. Chapman.<sup>64</sup> The chapter titles give more than adequate clue to the contents and character of the work: "Modernism's Blind Rejection of the Fundamentalists," "Modernism's Fraudulent Fictitious, Uninspired Bible," "Modernism's Mud God, Non-miraculous Universe, Dead Soul and Deified Man," "Modernism's Unbalanced, Illegitimate Jesus and the Fable of the Resurrection," "Modernism's Stainless Sin, Fabled Salvation and Bloodless Atonement," "Modernism's Godless Conversion Through Religious Education," "Modernism's Degenerate Church," "Modernism's Satanic Missionary Program," "Modernism's Hell-Hatcheries of Her Vile Dogmas" (primarily her seminaries), "Modernism's Non-Christian Program of Evolution," "The Old Book and the Old Faith."

It may be observed that the barbs in the chapter titles are only made more prickly by the contents of the chapters themselves. But the most important datum to be underlined is the hypostatizing of the Bible, and the author's willingness to attribute to it that which most orthodox theology gave to the divine persons alone. Furthermore, this is done, as it would later be done in Hills' work, without reference to the Holy Spirit as the agent of continuing inspiration and without reference (the focus, foundation, activator and absolutely essential hermeneutic "principle," as it were, of scripture. (Again, references to the Holy Spirit as at least the Spirit of interpretation and to the Living Word when the Bible was under discussion, all absent in Miller's work, were

standard in orthodox theologies.) The term "Word of God, " for Miller refers only to the written Word. He calls it, for instance, "the gate of heaven," "the House of God," "the Holy of holies," "light, eternal light . . . the only light in time."<sup>65</sup>

To be sure, in calmer moments, Miller clearly stated that Jesus Christ, not the Bible, was his redeemer, as did most Fundamentalists. But the effect of Miller's argument was to raise the Bible to the sort of divinity traditionally attributed only to the Trinity. Again, Miller, and other Fundamentalists, would stoutly deny this if we were engaged in a soteriological discussion. But in terms of theological method and system, and with reference to such critical areas as epistemology and its corollary, revelation, he, and they, have not a Trinity but a Quadrinity.

The Publishing House now has no data on the press run of the book, so its popularity is not readily quantifiable, and one's own boyhood memories present very unreliable evidences from a scientific point of view. But in that boyhood, passed 15 to 25 years after the publication of the work, one can remember the laity of the congregations of which his father was pastor being very much aware of the book as a sort of standard catalog of the errors of the Modernists, especially on the issue of biblical authority.

But however popular such a work might have been among the denomination in general, some official circles were much more careful. The report of the General Board of Education to the 1923 General Assembly had recommended that J. B. Chapman and Basil W. Miller's manuscript entitled *The Faith Once Delivered to the Saints* be referred to the Committee on Education for consideration for inclusion in the "Course of Study for Licensed Ministers."<sup>66</sup> The Committee on Education passed the matter on to the newly created and elected Book Committee.<sup>67</sup> This bit of maneuvering was not at all necessary, for the General Board of Education had the right to act on the matter, as did the Committee on Education (the separate jurisdictions of the two committees not being clear then).<sup>68</sup> Either could have placed it on the Course of Study. Neither would. Why? Is there a clue in the fact that the chairman of the first and third committees (General Board of Education and Book Committee) was James B. Chapman and that the secretary was H. Orton Wiley?<sup>69</sup>

The matter surfaces again in the 1928 General Assembly with some interesting nuances in evidence. The resolution passed by the 1928 Assembly says,

"Whereas at the last General Assembly the General Board of Education recommended for publication a manuscript written by Basil Miller *entitled The Evidences of Christianity*; and

"Whereas the Manuscript Committee of the Publishing House also recommends the same for publication; and the Publishing House requests that said manuscript be recommended for the Minister's Course of Study before it begins publication; be it

"Resolved, that this be referred to the General

There is no hint given as to the origination of this resolution, but the equivocations in terms — including the title, Manuscript Committee for Book Committee, "Minister's Course of Study" for "Course of Study for Licensed Ministers" — and the proposal that the Assembly Committee on Education recommend it both for publication and inclusion in the Course of Study (two actions not really now within that Committee's authority) point to it as a move from outside the circles that had been mandated to work with the matter. And note, too, that the work was now attributed to Miller alone. Why was Chapman's name withdrawn?

The Committee on Education did take the matter up and recommended that it be referred to the Committee on Course of Study. This recommendation was approved by the Assembly, but there is irony in the move. 71 There was not then and never had been a Committee on the course of Study. Surely such an experienced hand as H. Orton Wiley, secretary of the referring committee, knew that. The net effect of the assembly's actions was to kill the project so that however strongly identified popular Nazarene feeling might be with that of the Fundamentalists, a clearly Fundamentalist work was not to find its way into the Course of Study.

H. Orton Wiley's presence at every step, always in a policy-shaping role, is circumstantial evidence that his was a major influence that kept that book from the official list. This evidence, plus the common knowledge that Wiley framed the 1928 "Article of Belief" on Scripture, except perhaps for the word "inerrantly," are critical data in explaining why Fundamentalism did not capture the Church with its biblicism. The clinching datum is still a dozen years in the future, but there is mounting testimony to Wiley's rejection of Fundamentalism as he takes over as editor of the *Herald of Holiness* from James Chapman at the 1928 assembly. In Wiley's tenure of eight years (1928-1936), editorials taking up the struggle are almost non-existent, though Wiley is not at all slow to manifest his confidence in the authority and inspiration of Scripture. 72 His grounds for doing so will be made clear and will be shown to be quite different from those of much of Nazaredom — lay and official. For now, 1923 to 1928, and even later, Wiley seems to have followed the more politic road of keeping the official structure and doctrine of the church away from endorsing doctrinaire Fundamentalism, even on the point of biblical authority rather than attempting to formulate a positive position which might, in the heat of the larger fray, be misunderstood.

One remaining piece of evidence needs to be examined to show both the Fundamentalist leavening of the Church of the Nazarene and her ambivalence toward that brand of conservatism in the period between the World Wars.

It had become obvious as early as 1919 that the new denomination led a systematic theology of its own. The two which were recommended in the "Course of Study" were already by that time quite old and

not synchronized with the age of the assembly line, urbanization, and obviously increasing social mobility. Benjamin Field's *The Student's Handbook of Christian Theology* had been published in 1886; John Miley's *Systematic Theology* was dated 1892; and older than them both, but recommended from the beginning, was Samuel Wakefield's *Christian Theology*, a revision of *Watson's Institutes*, published in 1869. William Burton Pope's *Compendium of Christian Theology* and Charles Hodges' *Systematic Theology*, neither of them in the "Course of Study" but both very widely used in the colleges of the holiness movement, date from 1881 and 1871 respectively. These could not meet the onslaught of modernism. They knew little of it.

So it was that in 1919 a formal request was made by the General Department of Education to H. Orton Wiley, then president of Northwest Nazarene College, Nampa, Idaho, that he write a full-range systematic theology.<sup>73</sup> About the time that Wiley was being importuned, A. M. Hills, a member of the Pasadena University faculty, began to write his own systematic theology, urged on by his former students.<sup>74</sup> For whatever reasons, Hills' theology was published almost a decade before Wiley's, first appearing in 1931. It was not published by the Nazarene Publishing House, but by C. J. Kinne, a Nazarene elder long connected with denominational literature and publishing interests. A search of several sorts of correspondence revealed nothing as to why the Publishing House did not print the work. Conversations with some persons contemporary with the events suggested that Hills was considered too liberal with respect to the authority and inspiration of Scripture.<sup>75</sup> This is indeed quite surprising if it be true, for Hills was clearly a Fundamentalist.<sup>76</sup> And whatever may have been the earning for moderation, conservatism without dogmatism, on the part of many in the movement, especially that wing encompassed by the Church of the Nazarene, Hills' work left no room for maneuver. Only his resistance to the theory of mechanical dictation keeps him from an almost complete identification.<sup>77</sup> He does go so far as to say that "we no longer have an absolutely inerrant Bible," but this has to do with the disappearance of the "original autographs," and it is a declaration made more nearly as a logical necessity than as an admission of any authentic problems.<sup>78</sup> The misquotation of OT passages by NT writers, and the errors in identifying OT authorship of passages by NT authors, are all but explained away by noting that the NT writers were more interested in truth than strict accuracy, and that there are so few discrepancies.<sup>79</sup> Hills, drawing deeply from Hodge also disavows any intent to "bind up the cause of Christianity with the literal accuracy of the Bible."<sup>80</sup> But the entirety of his discussion of "revelation" is finally about the Bible, and it is governed from beginning to end by the canons of formal logic. <sup>81</sup> Finally he is moved to present a nearly posttization of the Bible. As an example of this latter, we cite two paragraphs toward the close of Hills' argument for the authority of Scriptures.

"It (the Bible) caused the idol-gods to fall on their faces, and struck the heathen oracles dumb. It was a heaven-sent wind that swept away the poisonous malarial of heathenism, and let in the sunlight of truth, and the pure atmosphere of heaven. With its still small voice of holy

influence it whispered to souls who were planning iniquity, and in love with secret sin, and somehow the spell was broken, and the spirit of wisdom came, and they repented and turned to God.

It uncovered the world of despair to men rushing on in their mad career of wickedness, and they fled with fear and trembling from the wrath to come. Through all the years, it has rebuked every iniquity, and encouraged every thing that was lovely and of good report. It put the spirit of human pity and brotherly love into the hearts of cruel men, and they tore down their amphitheaters and stopped their gladiatorial shows, and struck the shackles from the limbs of slaves."<sup>82</sup>

There is not one word of the continuing work of the Holy spirit in revelation, i.e., the *testimonium Spiritus sancti*, nor one word of Jesus Christ expands on the topic of revelation. Of course Hills does believe that redemption comes through Christ and not through the Bible. But his magnum opus leaves quite another impression. This is a systematic theology, and it might be expected to be sufficiently guarded in expression so that one would not gain an impression that the written Word is the Savior. The fact is that Hills accepted much of the Fundamentalist argument for the authority and inspiration of the Bible without seeing that he was arguing that where Scripture appeared to fail, or at least falter, the principle weight of authority in his system fell on the *testimonium logicum*.<sup>83</sup> Here was the position that Wiley so clearly scored — "a worthy desire to maintain belief in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, as well as its genuineness, authenticity and authority as the Rule of Faith [Wiley here has simply cited Hills' outline point for point] [resorting] to a mere legalistic defense of the Scriptures. It depended upon logic rather life."<sup>84</sup>

Nonetheless, in spite of Wiley's critique of theologies such as Hills' as being too biblicistic; and the critique of grass roots opinion, as it was expressed in administrative leadership, that Hills' work was too liberal with respect to Scripture, the Fundamentalism of Hills took hold of the Church of the Nazarene in the 1930's and 1940's. The conciseness and logical precision of his sections on revelation and Scripture lent themselves to the pedagogical methods of many a teacher who failed to catch the presuppositions at work in the whole of Hills' work. The question of biblical authority was set in the ideological context of Fundamentalism, however, sharp may have been the differences upon specific details.<sup>85</sup>

The effect of Hills' work is seen in the 1936 edition of E. P. Ellyson's *Theological Compound* of 1908. It is now renamed *Doctrinal Studies*, and the "Forward" is a bit defensive with respect to the change in spirit in the new presentation. "Doctrinal Studies recognizes the Bible as the Word of God, a revelation of the will of God to man, and the final authority as to Christian doctrine."<sup>86</sup>

Now a chapter ("lesson") is added to the original work, speaking of the need for the Bible and of its inspiration. While the tone of the chapter is quite simple and irenic, and clearly aimed at quieting conservative anxieties, it clearly yields nothing to the right nor to the left, to the Fundamentalists nor the liberals. For instance, Ellyson says, "Science can discover man as a dual being, as having a physical body and natural

life, and develop a system of psychology from this point of view; it can place man among the animals as a superior animal, and may think of him as a religious animal, but it must stop there . . . Without the Bible we would know man only as the highest of animals. But man is spirit, as well as natural life and physical body, and belongs on the spirit level; it is the spirit that makes him human, a man." 87

In speaking of revelation and inspiration, Ellyson again refuses to battle. "The Bible is the inerrant revelation of the will of God to man, the infallible rule of Christian faith, containing all necessary truth for our salvation, holy living and triumph in death."88 This declaration would satisfy neither side—the liberal being dissatisfied with the claim of normativeness, the Fundamentalist unhappy with the qualified character of its inerrancy. Nonetheless, Ellyson evidently felt a need to include a chapter on the matter in the newer appearance of the work.

It remained to H. Orton Wiley both to offer a genuine Wesleyan alternative to Fundamentalism and modernism and to place the official theology of the Church of the Nazarene, if not the grass roots, back on truly orthodox turf.

Wiley has no doubt that the Bible is the primary source of Christian theology. "The Holy Scriptures," says he, "constitute the quarry out of which are mined the glorious truths utilized in constructing the edifice of Christian doctrine."89 But there is a profound ambiguity here, for he goes on to say,

". . . in a deeper sense, Jesus Christ, our ever-living Lord is Himself the fullest revelation of God. He is the Word of God—the outlived and outspoken thought of the Eternal. Thus, while we honor the Scriptures in giving them a central place as our primary source in theology, we are not unmindful that the letter killeth but the Spirit maketh alive. Christ, the Living Word, must ever be held in proper relation to the Holy Bible, the written Word. If the letter would be vital and dynamic, we must through the Holy Spirit, be ever attuned to that living One whose matchless words, incomparable deeds, and vicarious death constitute the great theme of that Book of books."90

Here is a passage at a far remove from the hypostatizing of the Bible regularly practiced by the Fundamentalists and such Nazarenes as Hills, Miller and Chapman. Positively, Wiley seeks to revive the venerable notion of the testimonium Spiritus sancti. He says that the recognition of the dual source of theology — Scripture and the spiritual illumination of the Church (experience) —

"when rightly construed, find(s) (its) deeper unity in the Glorified Christ, by Whom the Holy Spirit is given as at once the inspiring source of Holy Scriptures, and the illuminating, regenerating and sanctifying Presence by Whom believers are enabled to perceive and understand the truth as presented in the written Word. This

evangelical conception corresponds to the twin principles of the Reformation, which found expression in the formula, 'Scripture alone, and faith alone.' "91

Wiley then points out the tendency of Protestantism to neglect the principle of spiritual consciousness, the spiritual illumination of the Church, as it has insisted on the authority of Scripture alone.

Revelation and the written Word came to be regarded as identical. Intellectual adherence to certain received doctrines was accepted as the standard of orthodoxy. The concept of the Church as at base a spiritual fellowship was not duly emphasized. Legalism (superceded spirituality. Further still, the testimonium Spiritis sancti which had been interpreted as a spiritual experience, gradually came to mean nothing more than human reason."92

These are remarkable words, given their ecclesiastical context. In Protestantism at large, the Fundamentalist controversy was still alive in 1941. And by contrast, Wiley's colleague Hills quoted Miley and came up with a definition of the theological role of Scripture that was completely amenable to the Fundamentalists.

"If tested by the purest moral and religious intentions, or by the sharpest inquisition of the logical reason, or by the profoundest sense of religious need, or by the satisfaction which its truths bring to the soul, or by its sublime and transforming power in the spiritual life, the theology of the Scriptures rises infinitely above all other theologies of the world. That they are a direct revelation from God, with the seal of a divince original clearly set upon them, gives to their theology a certainty and sufficiency, a grace and value, specially divine."93

For Wiley, this declaration would be both inadequate and leading. For him, moral and religious intentions, far from being tests of the value of Scripture are themselves to be judged by Scripture Logical or rational coherency consistency are no tests of the character of the Bible. The question is not whether the written word proves true under the most searching of rational inquisitions, for that would be to make an instrument a criterion. For Wiley, Scripture (as revelation) and reason are methodological correlates One does not authenticate the other.95 The fact that Scripture meets the profoundest sense of religious need is no test of the value of Scripture, per se; rather it is testimony to the adequacy of the Living Word of whom it testifies.96 And, again, it is the living Word who satisfies the soul with truth, not the Bible in se. To speak of the Scripture's "sublime and transforming power in the spiritual life" is to say too much, for it is Christ and Christ alone who transforms through His Holy Spirit.97

The theological role of the Bible, as Wiley sees it, is to serve as the foundation for Christianity, as a religion. He quotes Pope at length and

with apparent approval, the gist of the matter being seen in the assertion that "as the basis for the science of theology the Bible is Christianity."<sup>98</sup> Thus, in the construction of a theology, the Bible is absolutely authoritative. But what makes the Scripture spiritually authoritative, for Wiley, is not its power to meet human needs, objections and criteria, but its witness to the essential revelation, Jesus Christ.<sup>99</sup> He is the direct revelation from God.

". . . The Bible . . . must be considered in relation to Christ the Living Word. Not from themselves do the inspired books give forth light. The original source of the Christian knowledge of God must ever be, the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him as the ever-living Light the written word is subordinate. The Personal Word manifests Himself in and through the written word. The books which were written concerning Him by evangelists and apostles bear a relation to His Divine-human life resembling His own spoken words to His Person; and these books through the succeeding ages derive their light and their truth uninterruptedly from Him who is the Light and the Truth.

Mystically connected with the Christ of God, the Scripture continues to be the objective medium through which by the Spirit, the original Light shines into the hearts of true believers. When, however, the living synthesis of the written word and the Personal Word is lost, the Church thereby sunders the Bible from the spiritual communion in which it perpetually stands, and comes to view it as an independent book, apart from the living Presence of its Author. Divorced from its true meaning and mystical ground, the Bible holds a false position for both theologian and teacher."<sup>100</sup>

To these things, Hills and other Fundamentalists would probably give assent, but only in *pro forma* fashion. But such a doctrine of biblical authority as Wiley here implies, and the theological role he here implies that the Scripture ought to play, could in no way fit into the various Fundamentalist theological systems. That they would not fit is in large part a consequence of the Fundamentalist presupposition that Scripture is the revelation of God. For Wiley, that revelation extends beyond the Bible to Christ and into the living body of Christ, the Church. Both experimentally and methodologically, one comes from faith in Christ to belief in the authority of Scripture, and not vice versa. Again, what the Fundamentalists, such as Hills, would want to confess, spiritually, they betray methodologically for they too would insist upon the christocentricity of their faith. But systematically, by beginning from the ground of the authority and inspiration of Scripture, they cannot give Christ the pre-eminence. Wiley scores them deeply at this point without naming them.

In terms of systematic theology, then, the Bible is an intermediate authority.

"Christ the Personal Word was Himself the full and final revelation of the Father. He alone is the true Revealer. Not merely His words and acts, but He Himself as manifested in His words and acts. In this sense it may be truly said that 'The Oracle and the oracles are one.' To rightly understand then, the nature and function of the Bible it must be viewed as occupying an intermediate position between the primary revelation of God in nature and the perfect revelation of God in Christ-the Personal Word."101

The irony in the matter lies in the fact that though Wiley was clearly opposing the Fundamentalist position with respect to the character of Scripture, his obvious orthodoxy and compatibility on most other critical issues, and the rigorously christocentric character of his whole work, encouraged many a Fundamentalist in the holiness movement to account him a powerful ally-even on the very point at which he differs with them. Perhaps the best example of this irony is seen in the very introduction of Christian theology written by General Superintendent James B. Chapman. There is no evidence that suggests that Chapman had moved away from his earlier position, which was clearly Fundamentalist. Yet, his endorsement is ringing: ". . . you will find the scope adequate, the theses orthodox, the arguments convincing, and the conclusions clear and unequivocal."102 So it was that at least quasi-official approval was given to a work really a bit at odds with what officialdom believed. And this was followed by inclusion in the "Course of Study" as the standard theology for Nazarenes.

Fundamentalism could not leaven the whole lump. But it has continued to affect the Church of the Nazarene, especially as it has become more and more clear that she has inherited two basically incompatible points of view; not on some peripheral item, but with regard to the central issue of spiritual-theological authority.

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## Reference Notes

1. H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (3 vols.; Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene Publishing House, 1940), I, p. 140. Hereinafter, references to this work will be abbreviated thus: CT I.140, etc.
2. CT I.141.
3. Cf. CT III.401-402 and I.83-86.
4. CT I.141-142.
- 5 Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1970), esp. pp. 103-131.
6. Philip Schaff, *Bibliotheca Symbolica Ecclesiae Universalis. The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes* (3 vols.; New York: Harper, 1877), III, pp. 602-603.
7. Cf. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925; Free Press Paperback ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1967).
8. Cf. Karl Barth, *Die Protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1952). In the English edition, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl* (Tr. Brian Cozens; New York: Harper and Row, 1959), cf. the chapters on Feuerbach, Strauss, and Ritschl in particular. A slightly later but very clear example of the influence of empirical science on Christian theology is D.C. Macintosh, *Theology as an Empirical Science* (New York: Macmillan, 1919).
9. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (2 vols.; New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1874), I, p. 153. Also see, B. B. Warfield, "The Present Problem of Inspiration," *Homiletic Review* 21 (1891), 410-416.
10. Cf John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I. 71. Luther's stance is also clear: "We ought not, then, to believe the Gospel simply because the Church has approved it, but because we are sensible of the fact that it is the Word of God . . . Every person may be sure of the Gospel when he has the testimony of the Holy Spirit that this is the Gospel-a personal testimony. " (from WA 30Z, 687-688.) Also see, Sandeen, op. cit., pp. 118-130.
11. Miner Raymond, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.; Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden; New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1877), I, pp. 194, 208-216.
12. William Burt Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology: Being Analytical Outlines of a Course of Theological Study. Biblical, Dogmatic, Historical* (3 vols.; 2nd ed.; New York: Phillips and Hunt; Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, n.d.), I, pp. 150-155, 175, 206, 228.
13. John Miley, *Systematic Theology* (2 vols.; New York: Eaton and Mains; Cincinnati: Curts and Jennings, 1892). Thomas N. Ralson, *Elements of Divinity* (Nashville: Redford, 1847). Ralson also speaks of the testimonium as the greatest of all sources of authority. but he

- too nearly inundates the notion with talk about experience. Cf., pp. 719-730 of the edition done by T. O. Summers (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1924).
14. Miley, op. cit., I. 34-35.
  15. Cf. Sandeen, op. cit., 103-161, 188-207. Note that the authors of the Fundamentals were almost to a man steeped in the theology of the Reformed tradition, including the Anglicans there represented. Cf. also the denominational affiliations table presented by Sandeen, op. cit., 152, for the highly significant Niagara Conference of 1878-a millenarian forerunner (so Sandeen) of the Fundamental Movement.
  16. Edgar P. Ellyson, *Theological Compend* (Chicago and Boston: Christian Witness, 1908). Ellyson was at the time president of Texas Holiness University, Greenville. He was elected one of the original General Superintendents of the denomination at the 1908 meeting.
  17. Cf. B. F. Haynes, *Tempest-Tossed on Methodist Seas* (Kansas City: Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene, 1914).
  18. This may be in consequence of two matters: his less than pacific career among the Methodists, which included several instances of episcopal censure, and his association with the Pentecostal Alliance, which, while heavily supported by a number of Tennessee Methodists, was largely in the hands of Cumberland Presbyterians and members of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., both clergy and lay. These were all holiness people, but they were influenced as much by the Oberlin School, with its roots in the Reformed tradition, as by Wesleyanism. Cf. Timothy L. Smith, *Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes. The Formative Years* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962), pp. 180-199.
  19. *Herald of Holiness*, 17 Sept. 1913, p. 13. Pierson's book was published in New York by Fleming H. Revell, 1886.
  20. The copy of Pierson's book held by the library of Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri, is from the library of Edgar P. Ellyson and bears the number 260 in his own collection. The style of Ellyson's bookplate in the volume indicates a purchase date no later than about 1903.
  21. E. g., Pierson, op. cit., pp. 145-162, where he writes concerning the "moral beauty of the Bible."
  22. *Ibid.*, 29.23. *Ibid.*, 185ff. "In the study of Christian evidences, having considered the witness of prophecy and of miracle, the harmony of the Word of God with science, and with our moral nature, we now go a little deeper and touch the heart of the whole body of Christianity-the Person of Christ. Here is the focal center of all Christian evidence . . ." (p. 215).
  24. *Herald of Holiness*, 15 October 1913, p. 1. The title of the editorial is "Verbal Inspiration."

25. Herald of Holiness, 8 April 1914, p. 4. The title of the editorial is "Christ the Center and the source."<sup>26</sup> For a short analysis of the process by which the idea of verbal inspiration came to be sharpened, narrowed and made more technical, cf. Sandeen, op. cit., 123-130. Originally, the term "verbal" meant something more akin to "in idea" or "in concept, " but even by 1912, in the seventh volume of the Fundamentals, George S. Bishop was writing, "God wrote the Bible, the whole Bible and the Bible as a whole. He wrote each word of it as truly as He wrote the decalogue on the tables of stone." (Amzi C. Dixon, Louis Meyer, Reuben A. Torrey, eds., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, vol. 7 (Chicago and Los Angeles: Testimony, 1912), p. 53.)
27. Sidney Collett, *All About the Bible: Its Origin-Its Language-Its Translation-Its Canon-Its Symbols-Its Inspiration-Its Alleged Errors and Contradictions-Its Plan-Its Science-Its Rivals* (New York, et al.; Revell, n.d.). Cf. Herald of Holiness, 11 March 1914, p. 11. (London: Marshall, 1905). Cf. "Foreward to the Twentieth Edition, " pp. III-IV, and pp. 78-85 in any edition.
29. Ibid., 83.
30. Ibid., 78.
31. Ibid., 80.
32. Cf. Herald of Holiness, 21 July 1920, pp. 1-3.
33. Herald of Holiness, 20 October 1920, p. 3.
34. Herald of Holiness, 10 March 1920, p. 8.
35. Herald of Holiness, 24 March 1920, p. 6.
36. Herald of Holiness, 31 March 1920, pp. 8-9.
37. Cp. Slote's view with that of Collett, op. cit., 78-85, 96-99.
38. Cf. Sixth General Assembly, *Journal . . . 1923*, p. 54-56.
39. *Manual . . . 1923*, p. 22.
40. Ibid., p. 29.
41. *Manual . . . 1928*, p. 22; also p. 28.
42. *Conversations: Mildred Bangs Wynkoop*, 27 October 1977, Carl O. Bangs, 4 April 1975; Ross Price, 7 July 1969.
43. CT I. 212. Also cf. CT I. 205-206.
44. Charles Hodge, op. cit., I. 170.
45. Archibald A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, "Inspiration, " *Presbyterian Review* 2 (1881), 225-260.
46. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, 16 (1893), pp. 162-169.
47. *Preacher's Magazine*, October 1929, pp. 308-309. Presumably, the quotation and comment were inserted by Editor James B. Chapman.

48. Cf. Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), pp. 382-386.
49. P.5.50. Pp. 6-9.51. Cp. Ellyson's *Theological Compend*, pp. 30-70. He devotes twice as much space in the *Compend* to christology as he does to the doctrine of God, which is the next most important topic there. Cf. *Preacher's Magazine*, February, 1926, pp. 7-8.
52. Cf. *Preacher's Magazine*, January 1926, p. 28.
53. E.G., the cover of the May 1926 issue carries the picture of D.L. Moody, while A. M. Hills is quite critical of Moody for rejecting the doctrine of "second blessing holiness" in his article on Moody in the series, "Great Preachers That I Have Known" (*Preacher's Magazine*, May 1929, p. 175).
54. Seventh General Assembly, *Journal . . . 1928*, p. 49.
55. *Ibid.*, 52. This is noted as a "Principle that will guarantee our future. "
56. *Ibid.*, 58.
57. *rbid.*, 63.
58. P. 26.
59. *Herald of Holiness*, 22 August 1928, pp. 8-9.
60. Smith, *op. cit.*, 319; *Herald of Holiness*, 5 November 1924, p. 1.
61. Morrison had taken the field against modernism in Methodism as early as 1917, especially at the point of the influence of higher criticism: cf. *Little Methodist*, April 1917, p. 3. But he was well aware of the fact that while one might be a Wesleyan Fundamentalist, the heart of the Fundamentalist gospel was Reformed. Aware he was of the fact, but he did not see its implications with respect to the concepts of biblical inspiration and authority. Cf. Smith, *op. cit.*, 315-316.
62. The initial advertisement appears in the 3 June 1925 issue.
63. P. 13.
64. "The merit of this book is such that, as a friend of the authors', I shall be contented if it can but have the circulation and the reading which it deserves. Let the unbeliever read it as a cure for his doubts. Let the uncertain read it to steady his trembling feet. Let the believer read it to confirm his faith and to fill his quiver with arrows for the conflicts of the days to come." (P.8).
65. *Op. cit.*, 132-133.
66. Sixth General Assembly, *Journal . . . 1923*, p. 238.
67. *Ibid.*, 159.
68. The Committee on Education was an assembly committee in liaison between the General Assembly and the General Board of Education

- Several reports of the latter to General Assemblies indicate that it had jurisdiction over the content of the Course of Studies for Licensed Ministers. That the former could recommend manuscripts is shown by several actions doing just that (e.g., Fifth General Assembly, Journal . . . 1919, p. 113).
69. Cf. Fifth General Assembly, Journal . . . 1919, p. 8; Sixth General Assembly, Journal . . . 1923, pp. 6, 11. Wiley was secretary of all three committees.
  70. Seventh General Assembly, Journal . . . 1928, pp. 113-114.
  71. *Ibid.*, 241.
  72. Wiley began his editorial tenure with the 25 July 1928 issue. Not until issue for 27 November 1929 does he write an extended editorial on the Bible. On this occasion, it is in commemorating Universal Bible Sunday. He had, in the 17 July 1929 issue, presented an editorial entitled "The New Archeology and the Bible, " but this was primarily limited to a bit of commentary on an article reprinted from the Presbyterian.
  73. Cf. Chapman's introduction to Wiley's theology, CT I. 5.
  74. Cf. A. M. Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology: A Systematic Theology* (2 vols.; Pasadena, Calif.: C. J. Kinne, 1931), "Dedication," I.iii. Alas, I have lost the reference to Hills' own indication as to when he began to write, but he put it in the context of the end of "the late War. "
  75. Conversations: Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, 27 October 1977; C. B. Widmeyer, summer 1972. [Date in my notes is illegible.]
  76. To be sure, Hills is outside the camp of the Fundamentalists, generally speaking, with respect to the millennium, for most of them were pre-millennialists and he was unabashedly post-millennial, and he admits that "we no longer have an absolutely inerrant Bible. " (*Op. cit.*, I.131. *Italics his.*) But his mode of argument, "proofs" of inspiration and authority, and theological method all mark him off as belonging among them.
  77. *Ibid.*, I. 130-131.
  78. *Ibid.*, I. 131 -132.
  79. Hodge, *op. cit.*, I.170.
  80. Hills, *op. cit.*, I. 134.
  81. Cf. *ibid.*, I. 101-203, where in one hundred pages there is no word of the Living Word, nor of the testimonii Spiritus sancti. The style is that of a lawyer's brief. Very seldom indeed did classical theology speak of revelation as if it referred to the Bible alone.
  82. *Ibid.*, I. 146.
  83. Cf. *ibid.*, I. 184-203, where Hills dissects higher criticism. This he does by pointing to the logical fallacies of the practitioners of historical-literary criticism. While he does a credible work in casting doubt upon critical theories, he really does nothing positive to

- demonstrate the point he seems to want most to make, i.e., the reliability of the Bible.
84. CT I. 142.
  85. E.g., Bible School Journal, April 1935, pp. 53-63(lessonfor21April 1935, "The Holy Scriptures"). While the adult exposition by E.P. Ellyson shows no clearly fundamentalist sympathies, and may even be trying very carefully to lead away from them, the sections written by Basil W. Miller and D. Shelby Corlett, the latter being the section for the teacher of youth, are clearly committed to the Fundamentalists' presuppositions. Corlett quotes Hills three times, draws upon his arguments another three or four times, and quotes Collett once in his twenty-four column inches.
  86. (Kansas City: Nazarene, n. d. ) Date is taken from "Foreword, " p. 6, as is the quotation.
  87. Ibid.. 22.
  88. Ibid., 24.
  89. H. Orton Wiley and Paul Culbertson, Introduction to Christian Theology(Kansas City: Beacon Hill, n.d.), p. 27. Also cf. CTI.33-34.
  90. Wiley and Culbertson, op. cit., 27. Also cf. CT I. 34-37. In this latter passage, Wiley is as critical of Protestant biblicism as he is of Roman Catholic papalism.
  91. CT I. 35-36.
  92. CT I. 36-37.
  93. Cp. Miley, op. cit., I. 12 and Hills, op. cit., I. 12.
  94. Cf. CT II. 37 and III. 345-348.
  95. Cf. CT I. 146.
  96. CT I. 142-146.
  97. Cf. CT I. 134-138.
  98. Cf. Pope, op. cit., I. 41. Also see CT I. 143-145.
  99. Cf. CT I. 135-142 and Wiley and Culbertson, op. cit., 42.
  100. CT I. 139-140.
  101. CT I. 138.
  102. CT I. 6. Chapman goes on to say, "Without the slightest reservation, I commend Dr. Wiley and his work on Systematic Theology to all men everywhere to whom such commendation from me can carry meaning." (Pg. 6-7).

**THE DOCTRINE OF THE SANCTIFYING SPIRIT:  
Charles G. Finney's Synthesis Of Wesleyan  
And Covenant Theology**

By Timothy L. Smith

The year 1835 was the *annus mirabilis* of both liberation theology and the doctrine of sanctification in the United States. Phoebe Palmer professed the experience of perfect love at a weekly ladies' prayer meeting held at her sister's home in New York City that year, and for the next four decades made the "New York Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness" the center of Methodist perfectionism and spiritual feminism, and the source of much of its social concern.<sup>1</sup> That year, also, Orange Scott, presiding elder in Springfield, Massachusetts, won over a majority of the New England Methodist ministers to abolitionism by sending each one a three-month subscription to William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*. Scott's subsequent agitation of this issue, in defiance of the bishops, led eight years later to the secession of the Wesleyan Methodists in upstate New York and, in a move to prevent New England from joining them, to the division of the Methodist church, north and south, at the General Conference of 1844.<sup>2</sup>

Methodists scarcely dominated the scene, however. Evangelicals of New England Congregationalist backgrounds, who when residing west of the Hudson River were required by the terms of the plan of union of 1801 to become Presbyterians, moved in parallel directions in the year 1835. In January, John J. Shipherd and Asa Mahan came to New York City to persuade Arthur Tappan to locate at Oberlin, Ohio, the college he planned to support for the students who had withdrawn from Presbyterian Lane Theological Seminary, in Cincinnati, when the trustees forbade their anti-slavery activities the year before. Tappan, who had been a mainstay of Lane, and who had supported the students during much of the year of feverish antislavery activity which followed their withdrawal, agreed to the plan, and named Mahan, a Cincinnati Presbyterian pastor who had sustained the students against the trustees, to be

president at Oberlin. Tappan's conditions were, however, that evangelist Charles G. Finney, recently pastor of the congregation of revivalists and reformers which he and his brother Lewis Tappan had helped organize in New York City, should spend half of each year in Oberlin as professor of theology; that the faculty, and not the trustees, should be in control of the college; and that it should be committed to "the broad ground of moral reform in all its departments."<sup>3</sup>

Oberlin became at once the vital center of Christian reflection and action aimed at the liberation of Black people from slavery and racism; of women from the male oppression which excluded them from the higher professions, but exploited them in the oldest; of poor people from ignorance, alcohol, and the greed of merchants and land speculators; and of American society generally from all those forms of institutionalized evil which stood in the way of Christ's coming kingdom.<sup>4</sup> Theodore Dwight Weld, whose perfectionist view of Christian faith underlay his recent emergence as the most prominent evangelical abolitionist in the country, appeared at Oberlin in the fall of 1835, just as Finney completed his first half-year as professor there, to give a series of lectures on abolition and train students as anti-slavery agents. Finney, whose New York congregation had meanwhile erected the Broadway Tabernacle for his church and revival center, began that fall the Lectures to Professing Christians which signaled his growing involvement with the doctrine of the sanctification of believers, which he thought crucial to further progress in Christendom's march toward the millennium.<sup>6</sup> The widespread merging of Christian perfection with moral reform, in a theology no longer Calvinist, though professedly Puritan, was too much for the more conservative of the Scotch-Irish preachers in the Presbyterian church, 1 U. S. A., and certainly too much for the Princeton Seminary faculty. Within two years, that denomination also divided, ostensibly over theological but in fact also over social issues.

The broader significance of these events has been obscured by the tendency of historians, recently being reversed, to view perfectionists and abolitionists as eccentric if not lunatic strains in American religion. Another series of events in the same year 1835 suggest, rather, that Christian radicalism was for the moment in the mainstream. Nathaniel W. Taylor, professor of theology at Yale and the chief architect with Lyman Beecher of the "New Divinity," or the "New England Theology," as it was called, published four essays in his journal, *The Christian Spectator*, which placed him firmly in the camp of those to whom sanctification had become the crucial issue. By grafting onto covenant theology the doctrine of the moral nature of divine government, which required the consent of the human will to all that God provided or demanded; by locating depravity not in our natures, as Jonathan Edwards had, but in our dispositions our selfish wills; and by adopting Samuel Hopkins's idea that disinterested benevolence, or unselfish love toward God and man, was the sum of the Christian's duty, Taylor and Beecher transformed Calvinist dogma into a practical Arminianism, without having to jettison Calvinist verbiage. <sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Lyman Beecher's son Edward, who joined the famous "Yale Band" to become

the first president of Illinois College, spoke for many of the young New Englanders whom Yale and Andover seminaries sent out as missionaries to the Midwest in the 1830's.<sup>9</sup> He called in 1835 for "the immediate production of an elevated standard of personal holiness throughout the universal church-such a standard . . . as God requires, and the present exigencies of the world demand. " With Finney, Edward Beecher believed that on its creation depended all hopes for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.<sup>10</sup>

The ethical seriousness of the New Divinity equaled that of the Methodists on one hand, or the Unitarians on the other. The title of the first of the four articles Taylor published indicated its content: "The Absolute Necessity of the Divine Influence for Holiness of Heart and Life." The second began with refreshing directness: "The promised agency of the Holy Spirit, for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of saints, is the rock of safety to the church, and the hope to the world. All preaching and prayer which dispenses with the necessity of this divine influence . . . tends to drive revivals of religion, and religion itself, from the earth." This divine influence, however, Taylor went on to say, "never violates the great laws of moral action or contravenes the freedom of the subject." It does not leave man "the mere creature of passive impressions or a machine operated upon by compulsory force. " As such radical moralism became the central expression of evangelical piety, Boston's Unitarians could no longer claim a monopoly on ethical concern. In the years 1834 and 1835 their most honored leader, William Elderly Channing, brought to a climax his series of twelve sermons on The Perfect Life which closely paralleled the radical ethics of both Methodism and the New Divinity. In each of them he insisted that absolute personal righteousness, attained by obedience to the commands and imitation of the character of Jesus, was the only standard of Christian virtue and the only assurance of everlasting life. <sup>12</sup>

The year 1835, finally, was crucial in the history of the movement to free the slaves. Lewis Tappan helped William Lloyd Garrison out-manuever his brother Arthur and two other Tappan brothers, both of them Unitarians living in Boston, who wanted to moderate the abolitionist crusade for a moment in search of broader popular support. Arthur then joined Lewis in financing an immense expansion of abolitionist propaganda through four monthly journals, one appearing in each week of the month. They flooded the country in the twelve months after July, 1835 with a million pieces of abolitionist literature. The anti-slavery movement, having mounted this radical and "public" challenge to the South, could never again unite moderate Christians in a genteel moral consensus. <sup>13</sup>

That year also, Garrison embraced radically perfectionist piety as the only way to motivate the nation to free the slaves, liberate women, renounce warfare, and substitute love for force in the administration of justice. A company of able scholars have recently underlined the essentially evangelical commitments which governed the abolitionist crusade, not only in its earliest years, but during and after the year 1835, when Garrison began advocating a platform of "universal reform. " He aimed to overthrow "the empire of sin" by an agitation whose only

weapons were truth and love. 14 Aileen Kraditor has shown that Biblical ideas of righteousness dominated his thought down until 1843, when he began to question the authority of the Scriptures, and 1845, when he discovered Thomas Paine. That before those dates Garrison's position paralleled that of Finney, Weld, and Orange Scott is evident from an editorial entitled "Perfection" which he published in *The Liberator* on October 15, 1841. "Whether this or that individual has attained to the state of 'sinless perfection' " is not the issue, the unsigned editorial began. What matters is "whether human beings, in this life, may and ought to serve God with all their mind and strength, and to love their neighbors as themselves!" Instead of assailing the doctrine "be ye perfect, " Garrison continued, believers who were "not wholly clean, not yet entirely reconciled to God, not yet filled with perfect love," should acknowledge that "freedom from sin is a Christian's duty and privilege, " and obey St. Paul's injunction to "put on the whole armor of God."15

Garrison's use of Wesleyan terms and concepts is a reminder that Methodist clergyman believed God had raised up their movement in order "to reform the nation, and spread scriptural holiness over the land." Since my days in graduate school, when I wrote *Realism and Social Reform*, evidence has multiplied that holiness preaching was from Francis Asbury's time onward an important catalyst to Methodist participation in movements for social justice. Philip Bruce, a preacher stationed in Portsmouth, Virginia, wrote Bishop Thomas Coke on March 25, 1788, of immense revivals among African slaves as well as free whites. "Here liberty prevails," he wrote. On one preacher's circuit in nearby Sussex and Brunswick Counties, between twelve and fifteen hundred whites besides a great number of Blacks had been converted; and a friend had informed him that at the February court in Sussex, Methodists had filed deeds of manumission setting free over a hundred slaves.<sup>16</sup> By the 1830's, Wesley's followers in New England had established a reputation of commitment to the popular side in such political issues as universal white manhood suffrage, workingmen's rights, and a tax-supported system of free public schools. They generally endorsed the crusade for total abstinence earlier than others, in response not only to Wesley's influence, but to the cry of their American Indian converts, and of free Blacks and working class whites in Northern cities, who insisted that liquor was for their people a tragic curse. <sup>17</sup> And at the end of the century, Norris Magnuson has shown, such Wesleyan organizations as the Salvation Army and the Door of Hope Mission learned from the poor people they served the necessity for a moral reconstitution of the social and legal structures which allowed the exploitation of the indigent. Evangelicals of many persuasions, including Methodist William Arthur, author of the famous holiness tract, *The Tongue of Fire*, had come by the same route to a similar conclusion during the 1850's.<sup>18</sup>

But on the American scene, at least, the denominational approach is myopic, as indeed I find it to some extent to be in Bernard Semmel's study of what he calls *The Methodist Revolution in England*. I have briefly examined the reports of Moravian missionaries in Antigua, in the years between 1800 and 1833, comparing them with those of the Methodists who were equally effective on that island, and find little

difference between the efforts of the two missions to liberate Black people from the molds in which their African past and their American enslavement had imprisoned them. An immensely detailed plan of personal interviews and moral instruction for individual converts kept Moravian missionaries busy from dawn to dark of every day. True, they scorned preaching theology, being convinced that to tell the story of the cross of Jesus was the surest way to awaken the hearts and minds of the Africans. Once awakened, however, the converts found Biblical teachings about purity, honesty, unselfishness, loyalty to marital bonds, and a forgiving spirit-in short, about the life of holiness-defined the character of a Moravian, despite what Methodists complained (and Semmel argues) was the antinomian character of the Moravian doctrine of justification. 19

The same is true for the home missionary movement which swept American Congregationalism in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Whether at Yale College, or along the advancing frontier of Yankee settlement in New York, Pennsylvania, and the upper Midwest, revivalists and home missionaries whose doctrines were still cast in Calvinist language displayed the same purpose as the Methodists: to produce, through a free response to the gracious truth of the gospel, the sanctification of disorganized and demoralized persons.<sup>20</sup> The rising expectations of the millennium which both home and overseas missions inspired did not glorify the American Empire or rationalize westward expansion, but demanded holiness. The millennial vision seems to have been a thoroughly internationalist one-at least as ecumenical as Wesley's view of the world parish. Those who shared it proclaimed the judgments of God upon all laws, governments, and social institutions, whether in the United States or elsewhere, which stood in the way of hope for a just and holy future for human kind.<sup>21</sup>

Spokesmen for the New Divinity were never able to see, or at least to admit, what their critics readily perceived was their adoption of many Methodist doctrines. <sup>22</sup> In the same year 1835 when the columns of Nathaniel Taylor's *Christian Spectator* made the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit the central issue in New England theology, he published an attack on Wesley's doctrine of the witness of the Spirit which misconstrued the founder of Methodism to teach that a subjective and personal revelation from God, rather than a transformed ethical life, attested one's conversion. Nathan Bangs remonstrated, but Taylor stuck to his charge. Methodists were only partially dismayed to hear themselves denounced by Congregationalism's greatest intellectual leader for not making personal holiness the only assurance of saving grace.<sup>23</sup>

For these reasons, then, the story of how Charles G. Finney forged in the crucible of Oberlin's social activism a theology of liberation in which the Arminianized Calvinism of the New Divinity was the chief element, and the doctrine of what Finney called "perfect sanctification" through the baptism of the Holy Spirit was the catalyst, seems to me to illuminate best the history of radical religious thought in nineteenth-century America. Among Congregationalists and New School Presbyterians, the notion of Christian perfection was new and, therefore, almost impossible to associate with a traditional order. Although Methodists

occasionally preached or wrote on the theme without reference at all to the social crisis of the 1830's for which their founder's message was newly relevant, antiquarian or individualistic views of that doctrine were not possible for preachers whose roots lay in Calvinism. At Oberlin especially, the interaction of theological reflection and spiritual experience with revolutionary ideology and political action was evident in all parties, and most especially in the evangelist whom Arthur Tappan made a professor of theology, Charles G. Finney.

Finney consented, after some initial reluctance, to accept the appointment at Oberlin because, during the previous two years, he had become convinced that the church could not save the nation unless its members found a way to translate the doctrine of sanctification into concrete experience. He had carried his evangelistic crusade from western New York to Philadelphia, New York, Providence and Boston and then had become pastor of Arthur Tappan's circle of revivalist and antislavery radicals in New York City. There, however, amidst the institutionalized evil evident in urban culture, the optimism with which he had in preceding years anticipated the early onset of the millennium was harder to sustain. Reform crusades-even one mounted to liberate "fallen women"-encountered withering opposition, some of it from less aggressive New School Presbyterians. Finney saw in the invitation to Oberlin an opportunity to develop a company of leaders who would make the idea of Christian holiness the center of a renewed campaign to subject American society to the rule of Christ. 24 There he could help train and inspire a corps of revivalists, ready to declare judgment upon all institutions which ran counter to the law of God and to affirm the dawn through His grace of a new day.<sup>25</sup>

Finney's role, as he conceived it, was not to agitate for particular reforms so much as to provide spiritual inspiration and a Christian ideology for them all. When Arthur Tappan guaranteed that the Oberlin faculty and students would be free of interference from trustees or other outsiders, and then guaranteed not only Finney's salary but whatever might become necessary to maintain the solvency of the school, the evangelist agreed to plant himself for half of each year at what he thought were the two arenas where America's moral destiny would be decided-New York City and the upper Midwest. The Oberlin venture did not in any sense, therefore, isolate him from the main currents of American social idealism. Rather, the college and community furnished him with a laboratory of both spirituality and radical social action, in which the idea of Christian perfection soon reigned supreme.<sup>26</sup>

Both Finney and Mahan left behind autobiographies, written in their old age, which recounted with some improvement from hindsight the events at Oberlin between 1835 and 1840. Far from fitting the image of a backwoods evangelist, Mahan was a moral philosopher of great sophistication, His textbook asserting an absolute standard of righteousness and directly challenging the increasingly popular utilitarian views of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill was the second most widely used in the standard course which college presidents taught for senior classes in nineteenth century America. Both Mahan and Finney, moreover, were very close students of the English Bible; and their study

aimed not only at understanding theology but at cultivating their own spiritual life. They freely acknowledged that during Oberlin's first five years a deep hunger for the highest personal achievements of piety and righteousness was their primary motivation. Mahan wrote that though he had been an effective evangelist, and preached often at Methodist camp meetings, he found in St. Paul's writings evidence of a personal relationship with Christ which he did not know, and for which he continually prayed.<sup>27</sup> Not since Luther and Wesley had theology and experience been so closely intertwined.

In September, 1836, in the middle of the revival with which the college opened its second year, a student asked whether Christians had Biblical grounds to anticipate a relationship with Christ which would enable them to live without committing such sins as produced guilt and condemnation-in short, to live a morally sanctified life. President Mahan answered, passionately, "yes," though acknowledging he had not yet attained such a relationship. During that evening and the following day, however, he broke through to what he saw was the way to the experience of Christian perfection: faith in Christ's atonement. "When I thought of my guilt, and the need of justification," he recalled, "I had looked at Christ exclusively, as I ought to have done; for sanctification, on the other hand, to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, I had depended mainly on my own resolutions."<sup>28</sup> The next evening, Mahan preached to the revival congregation on the text "the love of Christ constraineth us," declaring both from Scripture and his own experience "that we are to be sanctified by faith, just as we are justified by faith." Although he did not use in the sermon the phrase "baptism of the Holy Spirit," as he remembered having done when writing his autobiography over thirty years later, the version of the sermon which appeared in print in 1839 declared that "the appropriate office of the Holy Spirit" is to reveal the love of Christ so powerfully as to enable Christians fully to consecrate themselves to Him.<sup>29</sup> Later, in a thoughtful discourse entitled "The Divine Teacher," the president explained that the Holy Spirit "enlightens the intellect, and carries on the work of sanctification in the heart," presenting Christ to our minds "in such a manner, that we are transformed into His image" and freed from forlorn reliance upon "our own natural powers as moral agents."<sup>30</sup>

Finney was not present that second evening, and probably did not yet approve Mahan's decisive turn toward the idea that a "second crisis" of Christian experience was necessary to a life of sanctity. But he began immediately what proved a three-year process of working his way through the teachings of the Bible concerning the covenant of holiness. As always, his head must go ahead of his heart. That fall and winter, however -which proved to be his last in New York City-Finney included in the second series of his Lectures to Professing Christians one entitled "Sanctification by Faith," two on the subject of "Christian Perfection," another declaring "Love is the Whole of Religion" and a final one entitled "Rest of the Saints. " The last defined faith as "yielding up all our powers and interests to Christ, in confidence, to be led, and sanctified, and saved by Him. " All of these lectures took as their starting point the general outlines of the New Divinity.

In the fall of 1838, when ill health prevented his spending the winter traveling in evangelistic work, Finney undertook to deliver and publish in *The Oberlin Evangelist*, the faculty's new organ of religious and social reformation, a series of lectures on Christian perfection. In a letter to readers, printed along with the third lecture, he explained that in the years before 1835 he had been wholly and, he believed in retrospect, wisely committed to revival preaching aimed at securing the conversion of sinners. During his years in view York City, however, he became "fully convinced, that converts would die" and "that revivals would become more and more superficial, and finally cease, unless something effectual was done to elevate the standard of holiness in the church." He subsequently realized that he had known Christ "almost exclusively, as an atoning and justifying Savior," but not as a sanctifying one. In the last two or three years, he continued, "I have felt as strongly and unequivocally pressed by the Spirit of God to labor for the sanctification of the Church, as I once did for the conversion of sinners....God has been continually dealing with me in mercy....How often I have longed to unburden myself, and pour out my whole heart to the dear souls, that were converted in those powerful revivals." Through the lectures, then, he hoped to correct the deficiencies of his earlier ministry. 32

The suggestion some scholars have made, following William McLoughlin, that such high-blown spirituality indicated a turning away from the movement to reform society will not fit the facts. 1839 and 1840 were vintage years for Christian revolutionary ideology at Oberlin. Finney's *Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures* published in the latter year included several on human government, in which he declared that "when one form of government fails to meet any longer the necessities of the people, it is the duty of the people to revolutionize.... In such cases it is vain to oppose revolution; for in some way the benevolence of God will bring it about.... God always allows His children as much liberty as they are prepared to enjoy." Finney claimed, in a passage cut from his *Memoirs* before their publication in 1876, that he led the college that year also in resistance to racism. When students from the South questioned the propriety of Black students eating with them at the same tables, he wrote, the faculty adopted his proposal to set up separate tables where any who did not wish to eat with the Blacks might take their meals; the historic arrangements thus being reversed, the separate tables remained empty. Moreover, the lectures on sanctification themselves contained a radical attack on prevailing legal standards of business ethics which left little room of the profit motive.<sup>35</sup>

As for slavery, then in 1839 the Ohio legislature, as Dona]d Layton has recent]y pointed out, adopted a statute which seemed to extend to all of that state the jurisdiction of Kentucky law over fugitive slaves, Finney introduced a resolution at the next meeting of the Ohio Anti-slavery Society declaring the statute "a palpable violation of the Constitution of this state, and of the United States, of the common law and of the law of Clod," and announced it "as a well-settled principle of both Common and constitutional law, that no human legislation can annul or set aside the law or authority of God."<sup>36</sup> At the commencement exercises

in September, 1839, Jonathan Blanchard presented his famous address, "A Perfect State of Society" to the Oberlin Society of Inquiry. Over a thousand persons attended a meeting of the Lorain County Anti-slavery Society on commencement evening; they denounced "the disgraceful 'Black laws' of Ohio" and resolved that the membership would "not support any man for the legislature" who did not favor the repeal of all Ohio laws "founded on a distinction of color." <sup>37</sup> The report of these events in the *Evangelist* accompanied a stirring account of schools for the children of fugitive slaves which Oberlin graduates were maintaining in Canada and a denunciation of the "blood-thirsty and land-coveting whites" of Florida who had waged a three years war against the Seminole Indians and now were resisting their permanent settlement in the southern part of that state out of fear that runaway slaves would find protection among them.<sup>38</sup>

The development of Finney's doctrine of Christian perfection, then, reflected and reinforced his revolutionary concern, and that of the Oberlin community generally, to reform society. The lectures of 1838 and 1839, which we shall examine in a moment, demonstrate that Oberlin's political radicalism was rooted in the central theme of the Old and New Testament Scriptures: the God of eternity had bound himself in covenant with those who would be his people, making them morally responsible to him and to one another to help his kingdom come, as Jesus put it, and his will to be done, on earth as it was in heaven. Unlike John Wesley, Finney drew deeply upon Moses and the prophets, and upon the long tradition of Puritan or covenant theology. Moreover, his starting point in New Testament studies was not Moravian pietism, but Samuel Hopkins's distillation of the ethical teachings of Jesus and Paul into the law of disinterested benevolence-what Wesley called perfect love. When Finney discovered, apparently out of his own study of the English Bible, the logical and historical links between covenant and promise in the Old Testament, and Jesus' covenant and promise in the New of His continuing presence through the sanctifying comforter, the Holy Spirit, the circle was complete. He then proclaimed, as Wesley refused to allow his preachers to say, that the entire sanctification of the believer's moral will was achieved through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That proclamation did not reduce but in fact radicalized Christian concerns for social justice. For it offered to Calvinist, Pietist, and Arminian alike a way of repossessing the doctrine of the sovereignty of God over individuals as well as over the structures of society.

The result, Finney recognized, would be a radical reshaping of what the next year he called the "science of theology." Like other branches of knowledge, he declared, theology must be open to "new truth" and ministers of the Gospel should cast aside the fear of changing their opinions about what the Scriptures teach. "I was to a wonderful extent blind to my profound ignorance of the word of God, till about three years past," he wrote. "Since that time I have been able to read it with a degree of astonishment in respect to my former ignorance which I cannot express." And he added, "I pray the Lord to deliver me, and to deliver the ministry, from the absurd prejudice that chains them and the Church to a set of stereotyped opinions on all] religious subjects."<sup>39</sup>

Finney began the lectures, then, with one on "eternal life" which, based on a text from the fifth chapter of I John, equated it with the present experience of sanctity, rather than a future experience of blessedness. True faith, he said, is "receiving Christ as in dwelling Savior," who becomes "the eternal life of the soul." God's presence does not alter human nature, but enables the Christian to begin a life of complete obedience.<sup>40</sup> The second lecture, on faith, based on Jesus' response to those who asked him "what shall we do," insisted that Calvinists and Arminians alike were trying to produce faith by obedience, despite God's directive that holiness flows from "faith which works by love." Finney declared that in his earlier Lectures on Revivals he had erred in not showing "that the exercise of faith is the first thing to be done." The key element in that faith, he wrote, was "the consent of the heart or will" to the truth of God's faithful love, as it is "perceived by the intellect." Trust stemmed from "confidence in the character of God." <sup>41</sup> The third in this trilogy on hope, faith, and love was entitled "Devotion," which Finney defined, with characteristic concreteness, as "that state of the will in which the mind is swallowed up in God, as the object of supreme affection." In such a life of devotedness, "we not only live and move in God, but for God." He renounced the tendency to separate devotion from duty, including faithfulness to the ordinary duties of business life. And he rebuked those who forget that "devotion belongs to the will," not to the "ever-varying states of emotion," which some "are prone to call religion."<sup>42</sup>

For lecture four, Finney revised one of his earlier Lectures to Professing Christians entitled "True and False Religion," based on Galatians 5:1. The true, he said, is the opposite of slavery: genuine liberty to act out of love. "The true Christian never yields to the will of God by constraint" but is drawn and persuaded, engaged and committed, by joyous awareness that "infinite wisdom and love" makes Christ the soul's "supreme, eternal choice." <sup>43</sup> Slavery consisted in being obliged to choose between two evils. The slaves in the American South were not strictly speaking in a state of involuntary servitude, he said, for they "prefer being as they are, to being in a worse condition-to being imprisoned or whipped for attempting to escape." Though the religion of many persons is analogous to such slavery, he said, true faith brings genuine liberty.<sup>44</sup>

Finney then turned to two lectures on "the law of God." Its demands were wholly fulfilled, he said, following both Moses and Jesus, in the commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. Drawing upon but expanding Samuel Hopkins's idea of disinterested benevolence, he made a crucial distinction between loving one's self as an act of benevolence, and mere self-indulgence. Even more important, however, was Finney's explanation that by love of the heart" he did not mean simply an emotional attachments "By the heart I mean the will," he wrote; "emotions, or what are generally termed feelings, are often involuntary states of mind . . . and of course do not govern the conduct. Love, in the form of an emotions may exist in opposition to the will...." Since "the will controls the conduct," he continued, "it is, therefore, of course, the love



preoccupied him in the succeeding months. And his dawning awareness that the Christian needs divine help beyond that of merely the illumination of the intellect was evident in his thoroughly Wesleyan exposition of chapters 7 and 8 of the epistle to the Romans.<sup>49</sup>

Five lectures on "The Promises," printed from May to July, bore the fruits of his study of the Old and New covenants. "We never keep the commandments, only as we take hold of the promises," Finney began; "by this I mean that grace alone enables us, from the heart, to obey the commandments of God." In a vastly complex recitation of the Old Testament promises which, he said, "belong emphatically to the Christian church" and especially of God's pledge recorded in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 to put a "new heart" within His people—passages which he quoted at length three or four times in the first of these five lectures—Finney burst through to an assertion that holiness consists in partaking of the divine moral nature. This did not mean that God had promised "to change our constitution—to destroy our personal identity—and make our spiritual existence identical" with his. Rather, Christians were invited to become "partakers of the moral nature, or attributes or perfections of God" which are "by the Spirit, through the promises, begotten in our minds." This assertion, though couched in the language of God's moral government, was staggering to anyone not teetered on St. Paul. It clearly made the work of the Holy Spirit central to the new covenant. And that covenant, Finney now declared, was not the promise itself, nor an "outward precept," nor "any outward thing whatever, but an inward holiness brought about by the Spirit of God—the very substance and spirit of the law written in the heart by the Holy Ghost."<sup>50</sup>

This study of the promises inspired Finney's decisive turn to the language of Pentecost to expound the covenant of grace. On further examination of the Scriptures, he concluded that "the blessing of Abraham," which Paul wrote had "come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ," was not simply Christ himself but, rather, the Holy Spirit. The promises of His coming formed "one unbroken chain from Abraham to Christ," completed when the risen Lord pledged to his disciples that they should be baptized with the Spirit. This "blessing of Abraham," Finney declared, Christians must receive by faith which, though it began in "perception of the truth," was complete only when they yielded their wills to "the guidance, instruction, influences, and government of the Holy Spirit."<sup>51</sup> It was now clear to him, he said, that Christ and the apostles regarded the day of Pentecost "as the commencement of a new dispensation, in which the old covenant was set aside only in the sense that it was fulfilled in the new."<sup>52</sup>

In this rich context of scriptural and covenant theology, Finney was finally able to declare the doctrine of sanctification through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "Every individual Christian may receive and is bound to receive this gift of the Holy Ghost at the present moment," he proclaimed Christians who have been born again do not have that gift "in such a sense as it is promised in these passages of the Holy Scripture, or in a higher sense than he was received by the Old Testament saints . . . of whom it was said that 'they all died in the faith, not having received the promise.'"<sup>53</sup>

The next year, Finney's "Letters to Ministers of the Gospel" urged them to preach earnestly the doctrine he had so recently come to understand himself. They should spare no pains to help new converts realize their need of the experience of entire sanctification. He acknowledged again that his instruction to converts had in former times "been very defective, " for he had not clearly seen "that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is a thing universally promised . . . to Christians under this dispensation, and that this blessing is to be sought and received after conversion." That baptism "is the secret of the stability of Christian character, " he declared; new converts need "to be baptized into the very death of Christ, and by this baptism to be slain, and buried, and planted and crucified, and raised to a life of holiness in Christ."<sup>54</sup>

Throughout all of their lectures and letters of these years, Finney and Mahan consistently declared that the only assurance that God was accomplishing his purpose in human lives was ethical: the righteousness which showed itself in radical rejection of all sin, whether individual or structural, through faith in Jesus Christ. Again and again, they and other members of the Oberlin faculty rang the changes on this theme, renouncing what they alleged was the antinomianism of the Oneida "perfectionists" on one hand and, on the other, the unwillingness of conservative Calvinists to trust the promises of God.<sup>55</sup>

Here was a theology cradled in experience and nurtured in Scripture, just as Wesley's had been. And the experience was of persons ready to organize their lives around the pursuit of a right relationship with God, which they believed would be attested by just and loving relationships with their fellow human beings and a holy war on the corrupted structures of society. The immediate background, however, was the revitalized Calvinist ethics of Samuel Hopkins, rather than the Anglican moralism which launched Wesley on his quest, or the pietism which helped him at a crucial juncture to see he could realize it through trust in Christ. The social contest, moreover, was the optimism of a new nation, where hopes were blossoming of a social order hallowed by divine grace and hence characterized by justice and love.

Finney's earlier preaching had stressed so much the freedom and responsibility of human beings to repent and make a new life as to allow the charge that he ignored the role of God's grace in sanctification. Now, however, he was affirming that divine grace, poured out in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, was indispensable to the sanctification of both persons and the structures of society. Individual Christians must receive that divine gift by a faith so reasonable and a consecration so deliberate as to leave fully intact their moral responsibility to help build a righteous society and a holy character. Never a Pelagian, I think, Finney had found a way to reclaim the doctrine of God's sovereignty without becoming a Calvinist, either. He had discovered, he believed in Scripture, a Pentecostal version of covenant theology which opened the door to the evangelical unity for which Wesley and Whitefield prayed but were never able to grasp. Rooting the experience of the baptism of the Spirit in the Old Testament covenant of holiness also insulated it against the anti-intellectual and mystical corruptions of it which Wesley feared and which, alas, forgetting Finney, twentieth-century Pentecostals seem often to have embraced.

Interestingly enough, Finney did not profess to have attained this experience himself until three years after these lectures were completed. They provide the context necessary to understand the little-noticed passage of his autobiography, describing his supply pastorate during the winter of 1843-1844 at Marlborough Chapel, in Boston. This was a newly-organized Congregationalist group which, he said, was "composed greatly of radicals," most of them holding "extreme views" on such subjects as non-violence, women's rights, or anti-slavery. During this winter, he declared, "my mind was exceedingly exercised on the question of personal holiness. " After many weeks of Bible reading and prayer during which he avoided visiting with individuals, Finney found himself, as he remembered it, in "a great struggle to consecrate myself to God, in a higher sense than I had ever before seen to be my duty, or conceived as possible." In particular, he felt unable to give his ailing wife up without reservation to the will of God. "What if, after all this divine teaching, my will is not carried," he asked himself, "and this teaching takes effect only in my sensibility? May it not be that my sensibility is affected by these revelations from reading the Bible, and that my heart is not really subdued by them"" The issue was the same one he had raised at the revival in Oberlin in 1836: desire versus will, sentiment versus choice.<sup>56</sup>

One memorable day, however, the evangelist was able, as he put it, "to fall back, in a deeper sense than I had ever before done, upon the infinitely blessed and perfect will of God. " Then, in an act of consecration which fit precisely Samuel Hopkins's description of the Christian's duty, but which Wesleyans thought outrageous, Finney recalled, "I went so far as to say to the Lord, with all my heart, that He might do anything with me or mine, to which His blessed will could consent, that I had such perfect confidence in His goodness and love, as to believe that he could consent to do nothing, to which I could object," including "the salvation or damnation of my own soul, as the will of God might decide." In this moment he said he also gave up his former assurance of salvation, and took it for granted from that day forward that he would be saved, as he put it, "if I found that . . . [God] kept me, and worked in me by His Spirit, and was preparing me for heaven, working holiness and eternal life in my soul."<sup>57</sup>

Looking back at this experience when writing his Memoirs thirty-two years later, Finney declared:

As the great excitement of that season subsided, and my mind became very calm, I saw more clearly the different steps of my Christian experience, and came to recognize the connection of all things, as all wrought by God from beginning to end. But since then I have never had those great struggles, and long protracted seasons of agonizing prayer, that I had often

experienced. It is quite another thing to prevail with God, in my own experience, from what it was before.... I have felt since then a religious freedom, a religious buoyancy and delight in God, and in his word, a steadiness of faith, a Christian liberty and overflowing love, that I had only experienced, I may say, occasionally before.... Since then I have had the freedom of a child with a loving parent.

This testimony to the fruits of a second work of grace would have suited any Methodist. Certainly the evangelist did not describe it in the terms of man's natural ability to obey God's absolute moral law which had pervaded his earlier preaching. The full cooperation of God with man, an immersion in the divine presence which both made possible and hallowed the free act of full consecration, had become for him, as for John Wesley's Methodists, the way to spiritual peace and moral triumph.<sup>58</sup>

The transfer of Finney's Pentecostal language into American Methodism was direct and immediate. George O. Peck, editor of the influential Methodist weekly, the *New York Christian Advocate*, paid close attention to Finney's lectures as they appeared in *The Oberlin Evangelist* in 1839 and 1840. In the fall of the latter year, he became the first Methodist since John Fletcher to equate the experience of entire sanctification with the baptism of the Holy Ghost.<sup>59</sup> Others followed at once, and by 1855 reports of Methodist camp meetings and revivals in a variety of periodicals frequently referred to persons being "baptized" or "filled with the Spirit," and used the terms interchangeably with "heart purity," "perfect love," or "entire sanctification."<sup>60</sup> Phoebe Palmer, leader of the holiness awakening among Methodists, was so deeply involved in the elaboration of John Wesley's language of Calvary that she was one of the last to adopt the new terminology; but she did adopt it, in the fall of 1856, after a summer of immense spiritual refreshing in camp meetings in Western New York.<sup>61</sup> Her next major book, *Promise of the Father for the Last Days*, made Peter's text at Pentecost the basis of faith for the "second blessing" and the foundation as well of a Biblical argument in favor of women's right to preach the gospel—a right which she had exercised, but refused to claim, for the previous 20 years.<sup>62</sup>

During the succeeding decade Wesleyans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Friends devoted to the proclamation of Christian holiness intermingled, in preaching and in witness, the language of Pentecost and the language of Calvary. The imagery of the Spirit did not displace the cross, certainly. Holiness camp meetings, especially Methodist ones held along the eastern seaboard, closed with long Sunday night communion services, at the end of which Christians who had prayed throughout the week for the baptism of the Holy Spirit were urged to open their hearts and sing "The cleansing stream I see, I see, I plunge, and oh, it cleanseth me."<sup>63</sup>

What Methodists did not adopt from Finney, however, and possibly did not even seriously consider, was the revitalized form which his Biblical study gave to covenant theology. Grafted onto the tap-root of the Wesleyan doctrine of a sanctifying atonement, this Puritan perspective on Old and New Testament truth would have deeply enriched the Methodist tradition, I believe. John Wesley, as Professor John N. Oswalt has recently pointed out, did not rely very much upon the Old Testament as a source for the doctrine of Christian perfection. The immense revival of Old Testament studies in our time, illustrated in reference to these questions by Rudolf Otto's volume, *The Idea of the*

Holy, offers insight into what it might have meant had Wesley's study of the Bible rooted itself more deeply in Moses and the prophets. But in Wesley's century, those who made a specialty of Old Testament theology were the Calvinistic preachers whom he found it important to resist, because he thought their doctrine of election undermined the call to Christian perfection. The theology of Charles G. Finney, however, brought the whole of both the old and new covenants to bear upon God's purpose to create his children in holiness and righteousness.

Methodists shared Finney's deep consciousness of sin-especially his awareness of its stubborn social character-and his fierce loyalty to the law of righteous love offered an alternative to the sentimentalizing of New Testament doctrine which lay immediately in the future. By the end of the century evangelicals of many backgrounds had romanticized the doctrine of the Atonement, separating their understanding of God's love from his judgments which are "true and righteous altogether. " The liberal heirs of the New England theology had meanwhile pulled loose the idea of the Incarnation from its rooting in God's covenant of grace. Moreover, the social gospel, which began in the sturdy Biblical theology of Oberlin and Wesleyan preaching before the Civil War, was shorn of its strength when nothing but a humanized conception of the love of Jesus was its motive power. Charles M. Sheldon's question, "What would Jesus do" is always a crucial one; but what God's law and our faithfulness to Him require should always be the context in which Christians ask that question. That context is precisely what the Biblical idea of a covenant of righteousness offered to those who were awakened to the promise of a sanctifying Spirit.

In retrospect, this story of the maturing of Charles G. Finney's theology, and of its rooting in the clash of events and ideas in which the Biblical notion of righteousness was central, bears in important ways on issues of great significance today. The central one, of course, is the ethical problem raised by the more ecstatic, subjective, and individualistic character of contemporary witnesses to the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, both in and outside Wesleyan circles. These have allowed if not encouraged an unbiblical divorce of individuals from corporate or social ethics, of personal from what Wesley called "social holiness. "Finney's systematic interpretation of Biblical teachings also suggests a Scriptural authentication for a set of beliefs about the baptism of the Holy Spirit which some have suspected were an imposition from a folk theology upon Wesleyan doctrine. Dealing with that issue in Biblical terms, will I think, shed important new light on the nature of the link or, as I would incline to put it, the gap between nineteenth-century Wesleyan and twentieth-century Pentecostal and charismatic perceptions of higher Christian experience.

The story also returns us to the problem of evangelical ecumenicity. Christ calls to unity in doctrine and practice those who believe the Bible to be a sufficient rule of both. Finney's labored effort to put together Wesleyan and covenant theology reminds us that since the days when Wesley and Whitefield found themselves pulled apart, their followers have never been able to pull themselves together. And the problem is larger than, merely, the dialogue between neo-Arminian and neo

-Calvinist positions. For the world-wide mosaic of Bible-believing Christians today includes also the evangelicals in the Mennonite, Brethren, and Quaker traditions; the Pentecostals and their new-found allies in the broader charismatic movement; the modern heirs of continental Pietism, whether in Lutheran, Reformed, or Moravian communities; the Southern Baptists and their extended family of spiritual kinfolk in the South, which in some ways includes and in other ways does not include the many millions who follow in Alexander Campbell's train and call themselves Disciples of Christ; the Adventists, most of them now, perhaps, in the Seventh Day Adventist Church; those properly called fundamentalists, who look back to the Biblicist, millenarian, and Christological doctrines forged into an anti-modernist credo during the controversies of the first three decades of this century; and what I have called elsewhere the post-fundamentalist evangelicals of the center, mostly of Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregationalist backgrounds, who dominate the headlines of church news in the great cities of the nation, maintain theological seminaries such as Fuller, Gordon, Trinity, and Bethel, and share in a network of evangelistic enterprises for which Christianity Today is the voice and Billy Graham the symbol. Finney's pilgrimage through New England Theology to the doctrine of a baptism of the Holy Spirit which he believed would both inwardly sanctify and consecrate to radical ethical ideals the whole of the covenanted community of Bible-believing Christians speaks to all these evangelical movements. His enrichment of Wesleyan doctrine reminds us that Jesus concluded his last-supper homily on the coming of an illuminating and sanctifying spirit with the prayer that his followers should be one, "as I Father am in you, and you in me.

Finally, Finney's intellectual pilgrimage through the Scriptures (passing from the nature of the original covenants of holiness made between God and his people represented by Abraham, Moses, and David, through the prophetic translation of the ideas of both blessing and covenant into the promise of the Holy Spirit's coming, and thence through the preaching of John the Baptist and the teaching of Jesus to the fulfillment of all these promises in the experience of Pentecost) challenges as a fundamental distortion of Christian theology the dialectical approach to the question whether Christology or Pneumatology are the vital center of Christian faith. What Finney proposed in the lectures I have summarized, and what, in my judgment, the Old and New Testament Scriptures repeatedly affirm, is that the three persons of the Trinity are united in all the mighty acts of redemption by which God renews and sanctifies His people. To extend the distorting dialectic between Christ-centered and Spirit-illuminated religion to an historical contrast of nineteenth and twentieth century faith compounds this bad theology with poor history; for from 1839 forward, evangelical believers in America moved steadily toward the conviction that the God who came near in covenant with Israel and in redemption through the life and death and life again of His Son remains savingly near in all ages through the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit.

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## Reference Notes

1. Documentation for this (as for other points in this essay where the work is cited) appears in my *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1957), 105, 116-117.
2. The same, 181, 184-185. Cf. Donald Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York, 1976), 73-85; Donald G. Mathews, "Orange Scott: The Methodist Evangelist as Revolutionary," in Martin Duberman, ed., *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1965), 71-101; and Smith, *Revivalism*, 181, 184-185.
3. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery* (New York, 1971), 129-130.
4. Smith, *Revivalism*, 104-105, 108-113; Dayton, *Evangelical Heritage*, 15-24, 35-43.
5. Wyatt-Brown, *Tappan*, 131
6. Charles G. Finney, *Lectures to Professing Christians* (New York, 1837), lectures no. 17, 19, 20. This work has appeared in many subsequent editions.
7. George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven, Connecticut), 59-87 Nathaniel W. Taylor, "The Revolution in the Presbyterian Church," *The Quarterly Christian Spectator*, IX (December, 1837), 597-646, a little-noticed article in which Taylor equated New School doctrine with the New England Theology and raised the slavery issue, 629; Smith, *Revivalism*, 26-27, 185-187
8. Taylor, "Revolution in the Presbyterian Church," loc. cit., 599, 604-17. Sidney E. Mead, *Nathaniel William Taylor, 1786-1858: A Connecticut Liberal* (Chicago, 1942), underplays the perfectionist ethics in Taylor's theology.
9. Robert Meredith, *The Politics of the Universe: Edward Beecher, Abolition and Orthodoxy* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1968), 73-84.
10. Edward Beecher, "The Nature, Importance, and Means of Eminent Holiness Throughout the Church," *The American National Preacher: Or Original Sermons - Monthly*, X (June and July, 1835), 193-194, 197, 203. Meredith, *Politics of the Universe*, 91-101, shows the relationship of these sermons to Beecher's friendship and alliance with abolitionist Elijah P. I. Lovejoy from 1834 to the latter's death at the hands of a mob in October, 1837.
11. The articles, which appeared unsigned, as did all the others of which I presume Taylor to be the author, are: "Man's Dependence on the Grace of God, for Holiness of Heart and Life," *The Christian Spectator*, II (March, 1835) 76-89 "The mature and Application of Divine Influence in the Salvation of Man," the same (June, 1835), 301-321; "An Inquiry into the True Way of Preaching on Ability," the same, 223-257; and "The Scriptural view of Divine Influence," the

- same, (December, 1835), 591 -597, in which the discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit, 595-597, seems to me to lay down the basis in logic for Charles G. Finney's later use of the terminology, "baptism of the Holy Ghost."
12. William Ellery Channing, *The Perfect Life, in Twelve Discourses* (Boston, 1873). I have recently discovered that the "Dr. C. " to whom Charles G. Finney refers in his *Memoirs* (New York, 1876), 356-357, is identified in the Ms. version at the Oberlin College Archives as William Ellery Channing.
  13. Wyatt-Brown, *Tappan*, 131.
  14. Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics in Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York, 1967), 59, 79-82.
  15. The same, 90-91; cf. pp. 24-25, showing Garrison's agreement with the New Divinity and, hence, with Finney and Mahan, on the nature of depravity and of free will, a context for Garrison's thought of which Professor Kraditor is largely unaware.
  16. Philip Bruce, "An Extract of a Letter . . . to Bishop Coke, dated Portsmouth, Virginia, March 25, 1788," *The Arminian Magazine* (American), II (November, 1790), 563-564, came to my attention through my student, Thomas C. Johnson. Cf. the idea of sanctification as liberation from sin through love, "the inward law of the gospel, The law of the Spirit of life, " in a sermon by "Dr. Cutworth, " the same, I (September, 1789), 444-445.
  17. George Claude Baker, *An Introduction to the History of Early New England Methodism, 1789-1839* (Durham, North Carolina, 1941), 37-38, 45-82; Smith, *Revivalism*, 154-159, 169,172, 184-185; James B. Finley, Dayton, Ohio, December 3, 1819, to the editor, *The Methodist Magazine*, III (January, 1820), 34-40, quoting statements by Indian chiefs praising the liberating power of the "good Spirit" from addiction to whiskey; "State Legislation on The Temperance Question, " *The A. M. E. Christian Recorder*, no. 18 (August 17, 1854), 70.
  18. Norris Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work, 1865-1920* (Metuchen, New Jersey, 1977), 165-178 and, generally, 101-102, 117, 124-126, 140-142; Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, 148-177; William Arthur, *The Tongue of Fire; or, The True Power of Christianity* (New York, 1880), 52-57, 110-132, 145-146.
  19. Accounts of British Methodist overseas missions in *The (American) Methodist Magazine*, I (1819), 30-36, 193-200, 313-319, and passim do not refer at all to the doctrine of sanctification, though the journal shows Methodists in the United States continuously interested in the subject. For the Moravians, see their American journal, *The United Brethren Missionary Intelligence and Religious Miscellany . . .*, II (First Quarter, 1825), 9-10; and cf. *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren*, I (1790), 7-15.
  20. Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (London, 1971), 27-35; review of Thomas H.

- Skinner, *Thoughts on Evangelizing the World* (New York, 1836), in *The Christian Spectator*, IX (June, 1837), 291-295; and "Encouragement to Effort, for the Speedy Conversion of the World," the same, VII (March, 1835), 1-8.
21. Garth M. Rosell, "The Millennial Roots of Early Nineteenth-Century Reform: An Examination of Charles G. Finney's Theology of Social Action," presented to the Hopkins Harwichport Seminar in American Religious History, 1975.
  22. Asa Rand's description of Lyman Beecher's New Divinity as resembling "in its prominent features and bearing Wesleyanism," a "strange mingling of evangelical doctrine with Arminian speculation, . . . tending to produce spurious conversions," quoted in *The Baptist Weekly Journal of the Mississippi Valley* (August 9, 1833), is typical of scores I have seen.
  23. "Wesleyan Methodism on the 'Witness of the Spirit'," *The Christian Spectator*, IX (June, 1837), 176-182 and passim; and W. M. B., "Letter to the Christian Spectator on the Witness of the Spirit," *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review*, n. s. VIII (October, 1837), 457-576, review the controversy.
  24. Wyatt-Brown, *Tappan*, 65-70, 129-131, 133-141.
  25. The same, 109-114, 121-123; Kraditor, *Means and Ends*, 22-25, 78-81; Finney, *Memoirs*, 333-343.
  26. William G. McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York, 1959), 108-113, misunderstands Finney's choice of role as a pietistic withdrawal from social action, an interpretation which the events at Oberlin, described below, do not sustain. Cf. Dayton, *Evangelical Heritage*, 15-14.
  27. Edward H. Madden, *Civil Disobedience and Moral Law in Nineteenth-Century American Philosophy* (Seattle, Washington, 1968), 44-45, and passim. Cf. D. H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience: The Shaping of the American National Ethic* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1972), 89-97, on Mahan as moral philosopher; Finney, *Memoirs*, 340-351; and Asa Mahan, *Out of Darkness Into Light . . .* (Boston, 1876), 125-131, 133-136.
  28. Asa Mahan, *Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection . . .* (4th ed., Boston, 1840), 185-187.
  29. The same, 186-187; cf. Mahan, *Out of Darkness*, 139-147.
  30. Mahan, *Scripture Doctrine*, 163-193, prints this lecture, which includes his personal testimony cited above; the quotation is from p. 172. This volume, printed on a Methodist press in Boston, uses Wesleyan terms such as "perfect love" and "entire sanctification" freely.
  31. Finney, *Memoirs*, 340; Finney, *Lectures to Professing Christians*, 213.
  - 32 Charles G. Finney, "Letter to Readers," *The Oberlin Evangelist* (cited hereinafter as OE), January 30, 1839.

33. Charles G. Finney, *Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures* (Volume I, Oberlin, 1840), 24.34. Finney, Ms. for *Memoirs*, 1875, Oberlin College Archives. Garth Rosell called my attention to this passage in the manuscript.
35. OE, I (March 14, 1839), 51, and (March 27, 1839), 57.
36. Dayton, *Evangelical Heritage*, 47.
37. OE, I (September 11, 1839), 157.
38. The Same
39. OE, II (April 22, 1840), 67-68.
40. OE, I (January 1, 1839), 9-10.
41. OE, I (January 16, 1839), 18-19.
42. OE, I (January 30, 1839), 26-27.
43. OE, I (February 13, 1839), 34.44. OE, I (February 13, 1839), 34.45. OE, I (February 27, 1839), 41.46. OE, I (March 13, 1839), 50.
47. OE, I (March 13, 1839), 50-51.
48. OE, I (March 27, 1839), 65-67. Cf. Mahan, *Scripture Doctrine*, 52-58, 101-103, on Romans 7 and 8; and Cutworth's sermon, *The Arminian Magazine*, I (September, 1789), 429, 444, 446, on the "law of the Spirit of life," in Romans 8.
49. OE, I (April 24, 1839), 74-75.
50. OE, I (June 19, 1839), 106, for the quotation, and for the other four lectures, the issues for May 22 to July 17.
51. OE, I (August 14, 1839), 137-138. Cf. Finney's letter "To Ministers of the Gospel of all Denominations," the same, II (June 3, 1840), 92, also using the terminology, "baptism of the Holy Ghost" freely. The two references thus bracket the writing of the summary lectures early in 1840 which were published in Charles G. Finney, *Views of Sanctification* (Oberlin, 1840) in which the term does not appear, but in which, pp. 194-195, Finney explains his preference for "entire sanctification" over "entire consecration," on both Biblical and practical grounds.
52. OE, I (August 28, 1839), 147.
53. OE, I (August 14, 1839), 138.
54. OE, II (May 6, 1840), 76. Cf. the letters in the same series in the two succeeding issues: (May 20, 1840), 84, and (June 3, 1840), 92. Finney composed these letters shortly after completing the last seven lectures in the series on *Christian Perfection*, printed in OE from January through mid-April, 1840 and, in July of the same year, in his volume titled *Views of Sanctification*. These concluding lectures recapitulated the logic of the earliest ones in the series and did not employ the terminology of Pentecost, leading scholars (including myself) who previously relied chiefly on that volume and neglected

- to read the Evangelist carefully, to suppose Finney did not at this stage teach the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
55. OE, I (August 14, 1839), 140.56. Finney, *Memoirs*, 350-351, 373-375.57. The same, 375-376.58. The same, 381, and, for testimony that his subsequent preaching promoted such a "second experience" of sanctification through the baptism or filling with the spirit, 422-425. Charles G. Finney, *Sermons on Gospel Themes* (transcribed by B. J. Goodrich; Oberlin, 1876), of which I have seen an undated New York edition, contains, pages 406-410, a passage which replicates all the teachings of Phoebe Palmer on the experience of sanctification.
  59. (George O. Peck), "Christian Perfection," *The Methodist Quarterly Review*, XXIII (January, 1841), 128-132, 151-152. The same author's *The Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection Stated and Defended . . .* (New York, 1841), 224-244, set forth a detailed summary of literature pertaining to the Oberlin perfectionists which shows his close reading of the *The Evangelist*; the volume consists of his lectures delivered in New York City in response to developments at Oberlin. Cf. John Fletcher, *Works*, (4 vols.; New York, 1851), I, 160, 167-168.
  60. See "Faith an Element of Power, " *Zion 's Herald*, XXV (September 8, 1852), 2; "How Souls are Purified," the same, (August 25, 1852), 4; Peck, *Scripture Doctrine*, 416; John H. Wallace, *Entire Holiness* (Auburn, New York, 1853), a Methodist tract, 91-95; and editor Fletcher Harper's use of the terms as synonyms in *Harper's Monthly*, XVIII, number 109 (June, 1859), 841.
  61. Richard Wheatley, *The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer*(New York, 1876), 312-317, 326-327, and (for an important quotation of an undated article of hers in "The Guide to Holiness) 544-546.
  62. Phoebe Palmer, *Promise of the Father, or a Neglected Specialty of the Last Days . . .* (Boston, 1859).
  63. Henry B. Ridgeway, *The Life of the Rev. Alfred Cookman . . .* (New York, 1874), 115, 193-198, 229, 235-236, 239, 258, 281, 292-293, 311, 345, 402-405. Cf. my *Revivalism and Social Reform*, 135-141, for numerous references; and, for surprisingly thoughtful discussions combining Wesleyan and Oberlin concepts in the seedbed of what became Midwestern holiness radicalism, *Proceedings of the Western Union Holiness Convention*, held at Jacksonville, Ill., Dec. 15th-19th, 1880 (Bloomington, Ill., 1881), 28, 38, 41, 47-48, and 63-69.

## **THE DOCTRINE OF THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: ITS EMERGENCE AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Donald W. Dayton

Four years ago at this meeting, I presented a study on "Asa Mahan and the Development of American Holiness Theology." I At that time I used the first president of Oberlin College to illustrate a major shift in nineteenth century holiness thought a movement from explicating the doctrine of "entire sanctification" in terms of "Christian Perfection" to the use of "Pentecostal" terminology, especially as it found expression in the doctrine of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." The core of that study was a comparison of two of Mahan's books, *The Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (1839)<sup>3</sup> and *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* (1870).<sup>3</sup> This analysis revealed (1) a basic shift from a fundamentally "Christocentric" pattern of thought to one that might be called "Pneumatocentric"; (2) a corresponding movement from dividing history into two "covenants" divided by Christ (more exactly the atonement) to a threefold pattern of "dispensations" interpreted according to a trinitarian formula; (3) a shift in exegetical foundations that gave a new prominence to the book of Acts that had not been characteristic of the Wesleyan tradition, or especially of Wesley himself; (4) a consequent emphasis on such "pneumatic" themes as "power," "gifts of the Spirit" and "prophecy" in a variety of senses; (5) a shift from the goal of sanctification in "Christian Perfection" to a greater emphasis on the event of the "second blessing"; and (6) finally, a renewed emphasis on "assurance" and the "evidence" of having received the "Pentecostal Baptism."

Since the presentation of that study, what was originally intended to be only a minor by-path in my doctoral program has grown to become its major focus. I discovered in pursuing the interaction between these two contrasting ways of explicating "entire sanctification" clues to answering a number of troubling questions about the evolution of Wesleyan/Holiness thought and practice. My conclusions are about to be put in final form in the writing of a dissertation seeking the "Theological Roots of Pentecostalism" by tracing a series of themes (especially the,

"baptism of the Holy Spirit, " the emergence of "faith" or "divine healing," and the rise of premillennialism) from early Methodism through various nineteenth century holiness currents to the emergence of Pentecostalism about 1900. 4 The invitation to present here a study in development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the 19th century ,provides the opportunity to restate, correct and amplify my earlier statement. I hope in the process to take advantage of the resources gathered here to correct my own reading of the material before it finds more permanent expression.

Since that earlier study of Mahan, I have been attempting to confirm my analysis, to seek in early Methodism the sources of the tension between these two ways of articulating entire sanctification, and also to trace out the later developments in the story. This work has convinced me that in considering this question we are dealing with one of the major unresolved issues in the Wesleyan/Holiness theological tradition.

I think that it is fair to say that Wesley roughly fits into the former of these two patterns. By this I mean that Wesley is fundamentally Christocentric in his theological patterns of thought (especially by comparison to developments after the Civil War in America), that he prefers the "covenantal" to the "dispensational" way of describing Christian history, that he does not characteristically appeal to the book of Acts to establish his key claims, that his writings do not reflect a pre-occupation with such "pneumatic" themes as "power" and the "gifts of the Spirit", that his concern in "Christian Perfection" is primarily teleological, and so forth. Though Wesley's doctrine of assurance through the "witness of the Spirit" might possibly be taken to break this pattern, in broad outline I think that we should say that on these questions Wesley stands essentially in a classically Protestant tradition not easily assimilatable into the patterns of pneumatocentric thought of the late nineteenth century.

This position is, however, disputed by some. Most recently one thinks of the suggestion of A. Skevington Wood, Robert Tuttle, and others that John Wesley should be viewed as a "theologian of the Spirit. " Such a position is also implied in a recent dissertation by Norman Kellett entitled "John Wesley and the Restoration of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Church of England in the Eighteenth Century. " But a close examination of that study indicates that the author is arguing more for a renewal of experiential Christianity under Wesley than for a renewal of the doctrine of the Spirit in a formal sense. While no doubt a recovery of the experiential pushes one in the direction of emphasizing the Spirit- and it may be granted that Wesley shows signs of such a movement-it is still possible to distinguish between such emphases in an essentially Christocentric framework and the same emphases expressed in a more radically Pneumatocentric mode. Even A. Skevington Wood finally places Wesley in the more classical camp by insisting that "precisely because Wesley understood from Scripture this supportive role of the Spirit, his theology remains firmly Christocentric."

Some of these issues become clearer in turning to the disputed question of Wesley's use of the expression "baptism of the Holy Spirit."

Later holiness theologians, especially those in the last century, have been puzzled by Wesley's reticence to use this term with regard to entire sanctification. Charles Brown felt that "the early Wesleyan theologians were so far misled by the technical theologians that they failed to put proper emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit."<sup>9</sup> More recently Charles Carter has treated this question in some detail, explaining Wesley's reluctance to use the expression on cultural and historical grounds, indicating that he "knows of no instance in which either Wesley or Fletcher ever spoke against the use of this terminology of the 'baptism in the Spirit'."<sup>10</sup>

But Wesley's reticence about this vocabulary cannot be so easily dismissed. It appears to have been a deliberate and measured response to controversies and discussions that arose in the early years of the so-called "Calvinistic Controversy" of the 1770s. John Fletcher and his biographer and editor Joseph Benson were much more inclined than Wesley to use this Pentecostal vocabulary. Fletcher, for example, was confirmed in his conviction that he should resign from Trevecca in part by Walter Shirley's attack on Benson's writings on the "baptism of the Holy Spirit. " Shirley had maintained that "the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2) had its complete fulfillment on the day of Pentecost."<sup>11</sup>

Wesley apparently shared at least some elements of Shirley's position. Earlier he had objected to Benson's tendency to speak of sanctification as "receiving the Holy Ghost," insisting that "the phrase in that sense is not Scriptural and not quite proper; for they all 'received the Holy Ghost' when they were justified."<sup>12</sup> Wesley apparently attributed the source of these ideas to Fletcher, writing during that period against "Fletcher's late discovery."<sup>13</sup> Fletcher, on his part, was also clear about his differences from Wesley along this line. Some years later he wrote to Miss Mary Bosanquet, later to be his wife, that his own views on perfection were much like Wesley's "with this difference, that I would distinguish more exactly between the believers baptized with the Pentecostal power of the Holy Ghost, and the believer who, like the Apostles after our Lord's ascension, is not yet filled with that power."<sup>14</sup>

From these and related fragmentary comments I conclude that Wesley was not only reticent about identifying sanctification with Pentecost, but specifically repudiated at least some of the common themes associated with that position. In part this was apparently because he was fearful of undermining the classically Protestant association of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" with Conversion. But it is also clear, however, that this identification was made in early Methodism, especially in the thought of John Fletcher and Joseph Benson. These differences in nuance and vocabulary between Wesley and his followers, while significant, did not result in radically different articulations of the doctrine of sanctification-at least in classical Methodism. But they do point to an ambiguity bequeathed by early Methodism to later generations of those seeking "Christian Perfection. " And in another time, and under other circumstances, the seeds of Fletcher's formulation could take root and grow in such a way as to overwhelm Wesley's position.

This development took place in America. Both Wesley and Fletcher were sources for the pre-Civil War revival of the doctrine of "Christian

Perfection" in the 1830s. Manual anthologies of the period print Wesley and Fletcher side by side. Benson's writings were also widely distributed during this period. The popular diary of Hester Ann Rogers also showed the influence of Fletcher. Other isolated illustrations of "Pentecostal sanctification" occur, but Wesley's patterns remained dominant for several decades-no doubt in part because of Wesley's over-riding authority, but also surely because the broader ideas of perfection were more congenial to this optimistic and even utopian period in American life. But whatever the reason, in antebellum America the "perfection"

themes were predominant, whether one turns to Methodism, the merging holiness circles gathered around the Guide to Christian Perfection, or the Wesleyan Methodists.

The Pentecostal language of Benson and Fletcher was present in the background as a minor motif but often without specific reference to sanctification. In both the Oberlin Evangelist and the Guide to Holiness the expression "baptism of the Holy Ghost" is used to refer to a general awakening or revival of which Pentecost is the great archetype, or again to the many "anointings" or "baptisms" that Christians may experience during their life, or also to the special "spiritual unction" of the preacher that enables sermonizing to transcend human effort.

There is a special burst of Pentecostal imagery at Oberlin in the wake of the discovery of the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification in the years just before and after 1840. Most significant for later developments was Asa Mahan, as I have indicated in my earlier study, but his movement in this direction was probably later, most likely in the 1860s.

A. M. Hills, Church of the Nazarene theologian, was later to lament the fact that "Finney failed to connect the obtaining of sanctification with the baptism of the Holy Ghost."16 He even went so far as to suggest that this failure prevented Oberlin from becoming a major center of holiness thought and experience. But this may be too strong. As Hills admits, "sometimes he almost got the truth,"16 and Timothy Smith has argued that Pentecostal themes were woven into Finney's letters in the Oberlin Evangelist in 1839 and 1840. 17 But the language was not used in Finney's more widely read Views of Sanctification 18 nor in his volumes of systematic theology. Much later, in 1871, Finney would address the Oberlin Council of Congregationalism on the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit,19 but by this time the pattern was becoming more common and Finney's emphasis is more in the direction of the "endowment of power" that themes of "perfection."

Other Oberlin faculty were more explicit in their emphasis on the Holy Spirit and more likely to associate Pentecost with sanctification. Henry Cowles prepared in 1840 two short sermons on the "baptism with the Holy Ghost for the Oberlin Evangelist. The second of these Concluded that "the plan of salvation contemplates as its prime object, the sanctification of the church, and relies on the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the great efficient power for accomplishing the work. "20 A later work of Cowles was entitled On Being Filled with the Holy Ghost.21

But perhaps more interesting were the views of John Morgan expressed in two essays in the first volume (1845) of the Oberlin

Quarterly Review. The first of these was entitled "The Holiness Acceptable to God, " an essay that so impressed Finney that he incorporated it into the first edition of his systematic theology (1847). A second essay on the "Gift of the Holy Spirit," however, argued that "the baptism of the Holy Ghost, then, in its Pentecostal fullness, was not to be confined to the Primitive Church; but is the common privilege of all believers."<sup>22</sup> Morgan also made explicit his view that "the baptism of the Spirit is the peculiar privilege of the saints" and not to be confused with the "influence of the Spirit of God by which sinners are converted."<sup>23</sup> These two essays are also important because they illustrate the continuing tensions that so often surface in attempts to integrate the themes of "holiness" and "perfection" into the story of Pentecost. The former essay illustrates the themes of "holiness" without great emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. In the latter essay on the Holy Spirit, themes of perfection give way to an emphasis on the "endowment with power from on high."

But these discussions fell largely into the background and seem not to have had major influence in effecting the later shift-though there was after the Civil War some tendency to reach back and draw on these discussions after the shift had taken place. The broader and more obvious shift toward the "Pentecostal" formulation of entire sanctification seems to have taken place in the wake of the revival of 1857-58 in the years just before and after the Civil War.

The harbinger of this development was the popular essay by British Methodist William Arthur, *The Tongue of Fire*, published in 1856 and distributed in eighteen editions within the next three years.<sup>24</sup> More subtle than much that would follow, this book is more an exposition of Pentecostal themes as a model for the longed-for spiritual awakening than a specific defense of "Pentecostal sanctification, " but it did help set the "Pentecostal" tone of the revival to follow and helped move Methodism and the holiness circles closer to a "Pentecostal" elaboration of their distinctive doctrine.

Arthur may also have been a major influence on Phoebe Palmer. By the next year she too was using "Pentecostal" vocabulary to promote "holiness." Her reports to *The Guide to Holiness* of her evangelistic work in Canada, the USA, and the "Old world" during these years all reveal an increasing move in this direction.<sup>25</sup> Her reports were also widely distributed in book form as *Four Years in the Old World*.<sup>26</sup> Also from this period is the not so widely distributed but nonetheless significant work entitled *The Promise of the Father*.<sup>27</sup> This study, actually a defense of the ministry of women as a "neglected specialty of the last days," clearly teaches holiness doctrine through the vocabulary of Pentecost.

These harbingers of what was to come did not immediately sweep all into their path. In 1870 when Asa Mahan's book on *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* was offered to the Palmer's publishing house, Phoebe resisted, suggesting that Methodists were not quite ready to receive the doctrine in this form and that perhaps a Calvinistic publisher would be more appropriate. Mahan replied that precisely because he was presenting the doctrine in a new form, "a new interest in the whole subject

will be excited."28 The Palmers, however, proceeded with publication and another "holiness classic" was born, one that had impact far beyond Methodist and holiness circles.

The impact of such writings grew rapidly though out the rest of the century and by 1900 holiness capitulation to the Pentecostal formulation was nearly complete. This development might be said to climax in 1897 when *The Guide to Holiness* substituted the words "and Pentecostal Life" for "and Revival Miscellany" in its title in response "to the signs of the times, which indicate inquiry, research, and ardent pursuit of the gifts, graces, and power of the Holy Spirit. 'The Pentecostal idea' is pervading Christian thought and aspiration more than ever before."29 *The Guide* during this decade reverberated with reports in the image of Pentecost-sermons were published in a column called the "Pentecostal Pulpit," women's meetings were reported as "Pentecostal Woman-hood," prayers were held in the "Pentecostal closet," music was provided by "Pentecostal choirs," and the Scriptures were distributed by "Pentecostal Bible Houses." This was also the period that saw the publication of such works as S. A. Keen, *Pentecostal Papers* (1895), H. C. Morrison, *Baptism with the Holy Ghost* (1900), Seth Cook Rees, *the Ideal Pentecostal Church* (1897), Martin Wells Knapp, *Lightening Bolts From Pentecostal Skies* (1898), and so forth.

The fact of this shift, once pointed out, is obvious-one has only to compare the first few years of *The Guide to Christian Perfection* in the late 1830s and early 1840s with those just before the turn of the century. The reasons for the shift are not entirely clear. Advocates of the change have suggested that here finally is the great breakthrough for which the Wesleyan tradition had been straining for a century-and that the Pentecostal vocabulary provides the most biblically appropriate way of explicating the doctrine of entire sanctification. Others less sympathetic with the change will notice other forces at work. There was for example, a collapse of the pre-Civil War optimism that had at least subliminally supported the earlier themes of perfection. After the War, at least in some circles, the longing was more for "power" and the fundamental perception of the world was less optimistic and expansive. (More about this issue later.) It may be as well that the new Pentecostal vocabulary offered a fresh, more obviously biblical, vocabulary that avoided earlier disputes about the precise definition of "perfection" and more easily fit into the developing interdenominational character of the holiness movement. Something of this may be seen in an 1874 appeal by Daniel Steele, who after giving his own testimony to a "baptism of the Spirit", in *The Guide to Holiness*, advised all "to cease to discuss the subtleties and endless questions arising from entire sanctification or Christian perfection, and all cry mightily to God for the baptism of the Holy Spirit."30

But we should also notice that the turn to the doctrine of the Spirit in the late 19th century was a wider phenomenon. In 1899 C. I. Scofield would remark that

"We are in the midst of a marked revival of interest in the person and work of the Holy Spirit. More books, booklets and tracts upon that subject have issued from

the press during the last eighty years than in all previous time since the invention of printing. Indeed, within the last twenty years more has been written and said upon the doctrine of the Holy Spirit than in the preceding eighteen hundred years."<sup>31</sup>

To the extent to which this is true, the holiness shift to Pentecostal vocabulary would be the form this broader development took within the more narrow confines of the holiness and related traditions.

But the adoption of this new way of explicating entire sanctification failed to resolve the fundamental tensions that had been present from the beginning. The fact remained that from the doctrine of Christian Perfection as it had been articulated classically by Wesley there were few real crossovers to the Pentecostal accounts and vocabulary. And conversely, those who gave priority to the Pentecostal accounts found it difficult to move easily out of these texts to the Wesleyan themes of sanctification and cleansing. True, certain connections could be made via strained harmonization or through the utilization of broader theological themes, but the Acts texts emphasizing cleansing were few and far between, Acts 15:9 being the text most frequently claimed as the bridge. Continuing struggle with this problem is evident throughout the literature of the late nineteenth century, and at least three answers to this fundamental tension may be discerned.

The first of these, the position that became normative holiness teaching, may be seen in the effort to express the holiness doctrine through the pentecostal imagery, arguing in effect for "Pentecostal sanctification" and that the disciples had indeed been entirely sanctified on the day of Pentecost. In this formulation the holiness theme of "purity" was related to the Pentecostal theme of "power" as two parts, the negative and the positive, of one event or act of God. Thus Thomas K. Doty would attempt to hold the two together by emphasizing *The Two-fold Gift of the Holy Ghost* (1890), arguing that the " 'Second work of grace,' properly so-called, includes both salvation from all sin, by the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the Gift of the Anointing of the Holy Ghost. "<sup>32</sup> The effort to keep these themes together is also reflected even in the title of A. M. Hills' *Holiness and Power* (1897). Nazarene theologian E. P. Ellyson could then later reflect what had come to be normative holiness teaching by quoting his denomination's Manual to the effect that entire sanctification "is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service."<sup>33</sup>

But the tensions implicit in this solution to the problem are revealed in two mutations that took place in the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The first of these was to take the doctrine as developed, wash out the "purity" themes of the holiness tradition and continue to teach a doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second definite work of grace subsequent to conversion for the purpose of empowering for service. This solution was more congenial to the Calvinistic wing of revivalism and is the form in which the doctrine spread through pre-fundamentalist evangelicalism. This development is ex-

pressed most clearly in the tradition of Evangelist D. L. Moody. In response to the prayers and entreaties of two Free Methodist ladies who felt that he lacked power, Moody was "baptized in the Spirit" in 1871.<sup>34</sup> Moody, however, was reluctant to speak openly of this experience, but his successor, R. A. Torrey, showed no such reticence and gave the doctrine special emphasis in such books as *The Baptism With the Holy Spirit*(1897), and *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*(1910).

A second variation resolved the tensions between "purity" and "power" in the more normative holiness teaching by breaking up the experience into two separate events to advocate "three works of grace. " To the classical holiness pattern of two works of grace, conversion and entire sanctification, was added a third, the Baptism of Anointing of the Holy Spirit. Intimations of this solution begin to appear early and are sometimes attributed to Fletcher. Just before the publication of Arthur's *Tongue of Fire*, for example, the *Guide to Holiness* carried an essay by "J. D.," asking a question that seemed to arise from the empirical observation that not all the "entirely sanctified" seemed to be "empowered with the Spirit":

May not a soul enjoy the blessing of entire holiness, and still live short of the fullness of the Spirit? If so, do we not err when we use the term BLESSING without making a distinction between being saved from all sin and being "filled with the Spirit."<sup>36</sup>

A number of persons, especially B. H. Irwin in the mid-West and R. C. Horner of Ontario, moved from these intimations to articulate a doctrine of "three blessings" or "works of grace." R. C. Horner is particularly interesting because he reveals a more extensive and sophisticated knowledge of Wesley, having at one point written an extensive refutation of the emerging attacks on Christian Perfection in the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>36</sup> In one sense it may be said that Horner understood Wesley better than the mainstream of the holiness movement. As Horner put it

Wesley taught that holiness was salvation from inbred sin, and he knew that the disciples were not told to wait for cleansing. He collected and quoted prayers that had been offered up for the entire sanctification of God's people, but did not intimate that any of these prayers were answered on the day of Pentecost.<sup>37</sup>

This then was the situation at the end of the nineteenth century on the eve of the emergence of modern Pentecostalism. In summary, the classical Methodist formulation of Christian Perfection was susceptible to an elaboration in terms of Pentecost in the work of Fletcher and Benson. Though Wesley resisted this development when it came to the fore in the "Calvinistic Controversy" of the 1770s, the ambiguity remained and the question reemerged in the antebellum revival of Christian Perfection in America, especially being anticipated in another Calvinistic" context, that of early Oberlin College. In America the Pentecostal formulation took root and grew, especially after the Civil War, to become the dominant holiness formulation by the end of the century.

But the original tensions reasserted themselves in such a way as to produce three variations: (1) The dominant holiness position which viewed sanctification as the negative aspect and empowering for service as the positive aspect of the one event of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit"; (2) the more "Reformed" or "Keswick" variation that de-emphasized the theme of "purity" for the theme of "power" while keeping the basic structure of the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" as a second, definite experience subsequent to conversion; and (3) the "third blessing" variation that split the holiness baptism of the Spirit into two events, sanctification and the "baptism with the Holy Spirit" or the "baptism with fire."

That is the story as I understand it. Further detail and documentation will be available in the dissertation.<sup>38</sup> In conclusion, I would like to discuss in a more informal manner the significance of the history and developments sketched above. I believe that the story outlined above provides important clues to issues that have troubled the holiness movement for some time. Among these would be (1) the relationship theologically of the holiness movement to Pentecostalism as it emerged at the turn of the century; (2) the loss of the process side of sanctification that was originally present in the more subtle relationship of crisis and process in classical Methodism's doctrine of Christian Perfection; (3) the reasons for the decline of the antebellum social reform studied by Timothy Smith in Revivalism and Social Reform,<sup>39</sup> especially as these questions arise in the holiness context; and (4) the very important shift in the nineteenth century from a dominant post-millennial eschatology in the early period to the rise of a pre-millennial eschatology in the latter part of the century.

First of all, I believe that the developments sketched above make clear the precise relationship of the holiness movement to Pentecostalism. This relationship is both positive and negative. On the one side I find it difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of the rise of modern Pentecostalism without the background of the Wesleyan doctrine of "Christian Perfection" transmuted into the doctrine of "Pentecostal sanctification." The rise of the doctrine of the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" was accompanied by a number of other developments (a shift toward the ecstatic, rise of emphasis on the "gifts of the Spirit," a shift toward premillennialism, etc.), all of which were in the direction of Pentecostalism. Indeed, I think it is fair to say that late nineteenth century holiness thought is closer to the patterns of Pentecostalism than it is to the thought of Wesley. The holiness movement provided the basic underlying theological framework of Pentecostalism.

On the other hand, Pentecostalism was at the same time definitely a mutation within the holiness tradition—a sort of "holiness heresy" if you will. Pentecostalism is most directly related to the two variations on the holiness doctrine of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." One needs only to take the Torreyite and Hornerite variations and add "speaking in tongues" as the initial evidence of the "baptism" to have the two major branches of Pentecostalism, the more Reformed theology teaching two crises (conversion and a "baptism of the Spirit" for the empowering for service evidenced by speaking in tongues—combined with a more

gradual doctrine of sanctification) and the more Holiness theology teaching three crises (conversion, sanctification as a crisis, and the Pentecostal doctrine of the "baptism of the Spirit" as a "third blessing"). Though these late nineteenth century variations on normative holiness teaching were efforts to resolve ambiguity present from the beginning of the Wesleyan tradition, they were both repudiated before the even more offensive doctrine of initial evidence of speaking in tongues developed.

Secondly, these developments also illuminate the vicissitudes of the subtle formulation of Wesley in combining both process and crisis in his doctrine of entire sanctification. It has been clear for some time that the theme of process tended to drop into the background in the late nineteenth century in favor of an emphasis on the crisis. In this development popular holiness thought tended to fall more and more into a "two blessing" pattern with the emphasis on the discreteness of the two events and a tendency to identify the work of the Spirit too exclusively with the second. One key to this development (there are others) is the rise of the doctrine of "Pentecostal sanctification." The earlier Wesleyan themes of perfection and growth were more integrally related to patterns of process and development while Pentecost is inherently an event—an event that tends to emphasize discontinuity rather than continuity with what precedes and follows. This shift of emphasis is often subtle and varies in strength according to the sensitivities of various advocates of the doctrine, but in it is to be found at least one clue to why "crisis" became the crucial aspect of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century holiness doctrine of entire sanctification in its pentecostal formulation.

Thirdly, I think it is possible to discern in this development certain clues as to why the late 19th century decline in revivalism of the impulse toward social reform. The picture is very complex, and we must resist the tendency to oversimplify. Antebellum revivalistic reform was rooted not only in the depth of religious experience these people had but also in a variegated network of inter-connected motifs that gave additional support to the reform impulse. Among these would be the cultural optimism of the period, its post-millennial vision of God's working in the world, themes of perfection as expressed in the doctrine of entire sanctification and in other ways, an emphasis on the role of human agency and so on. It is possible to see in the rise of the Pentecostal formulation of entire sanctification the erosion of some of these supporting themes.

This erosion is discernible at several points. I think that it is possible to see in the rise of the doctrine of pentecostal sanctification some shifts from the strong ethical content of sanctification in classical Methodism to the more experientially (and perhaps even ecstatically) oriented "pentecostal" formulation. Again, part of the key to the reform movements was the affirmation of human agency, especially over against the antecedent Calvinistic depreciation of the role of human agency in favor of divine sovereignty. Those who affirmed the role of the human will in salvation were inclined also to place a greater emphasis on human role in the rebuilding of society. As a result, the Arminian tendencies of antebellum religion were a key part of the push toward

reform. But there is a sense in which the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" pushes back in the direction of divine sovereignty by calling the convert to "tarry" and "wait" for the "baptism" to be given more completely according to divine initiative. It is also possible to discern other motifs more congenial to one or the other way of understanding sanctification. The pre-Civil War era of emphasis on perfection also revealed confidence, optimism, and similar themes, while the Pentecostal formulation seems to speak more to a pessimistic mood seeking a recovery of "power" in the midst of powerlessness and inability. One would not wish to make too much of these shifts (and others), but they are discernible and do help provide clues to what was being experienced, at least subliminally, in the popular culture of the nineteenth century.

Finally, and in a similar vein, it is possible to see in these developments certain clues to, or at least parallels to, the shift in eschatology from the dominant post-millennial theology of the pre-Civil War era to the late nineteenth century rise of premillennialism. Post-millennialism was in many ways a sort of social counterpart to the more personally oriented doctrine of "Christian Perfection," especially as it found expression before the Civil War in America. The first several issues of the Oberlin Evangelist proclaimed that a major purpose of the journal was "to call attention to the fact that the millennium is to consist in the entire sanctification of the church." Similarly, there is also a sense in which premillennialism was the social correlate of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" on the personal level. Both expressed a similar pulling back from the role of human initiative, a greater emphasis on divine sovereignty, a stronger emphasis on discontinuity rather than continuity, and so forth.

In my earlier essay on Asa Mahan, I tried to indicate a few ways in which this difference is integral to the two positions. This may be illustrated in the use of the Bible. Under Wesley and later "Christian Perfection" formulations of entire sanctification, a variety of biblical figures, both Old and New Testament, could become direct models. It was often pointed out that such figures as Noah and Abraham were said by the Scriptures to have walked "perfect" before the Lord, at least in some sense. But in the "Pentecostal" formulation this direct modeling is somewhat precluded by the fact that the Spirit came upon the church definitively only at Pentecost so that a greater emphasis is given to the role of the Old Testament as predicting the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. In this formulation passages like the prophecy of Joel became more important, especially as it was quoted in Acts 2. As these themes moved more to the center of concern, the interest in prophecy is heightened—both in terms of adopting a more promise-fulfillment manner of relating the testaments and also beginning to see the New Testament events as proleptic intimations of the future. Such fundamental shifts could well have helped prepare the way for the rise of the "prophecy conferences" in the late 1870s. Similarly the use of the term "dispensation" and the more complex division of the heilsgeschichte in the later Pentecostal formulation of holiness teachings could predispose adherents to be more receptive to dispensational themes carried by the prophecy and bible school movements. It is at least worth noticing that the shift to "Pentecostal" formulations of holiness teaching usually antedated the adoption of premillennialism by a decade or so.

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## Footnotes

1. Wesleyan Theological Journal 9 (Spring, 1974), 60-69. Another version of this paper appeared as "From 'Christian Perfection' to the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit'" in H. Vinson Synan, *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1975), pp. 39-54.
2. (Boston: D. S. King, 1839), as well as other editions.
3. (New York: W. J. Palmer, Jr., 1970), as well as other editions.
4. See my fuller statement of some of this in "The Evolution of Pentecostalism," *Covenant Quarterly* 32 (August, 1974), 28-40.
5. "John Wesley, Theologian of the Spirit," *Theological Renewal* #6 (June/July, 1977), 26-34.
6. Robert Tuttle of Fuller Theological Seminary represents the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic tradition in the United Methodist Church. His position is best expressed in unpublished materials prepared for a United Methodist Commission on the charismatic renewal but there are hints in *The Partakers* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974). Zondervan will soon issue a major study of Wesley by Tuttle.
7. By Norman Lawrence Kellett (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1975).
8. "John Wesley, Theologian of the Spirit," p. 26.
9. Charles Ewing Brown, *The Meaning of Sanctification* (Anderson: Warner Press, 1945), pp. 114-5.
10. Charles W. Carter, *The Personal and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: A Wesleyan Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 180.
11. Letter of Fletcher dated March 22, 1771, to Benson, reprinted in Luke Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), p. 179.
12. Letter of Wesley dated Dec. 28, 1770, to Benson, reprinted in John Telford (editor), *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, Vol. V* (London: Epworth Press, 1931), p. 215.
13. See, for example, the letter of Wesley dated March 9, 1771, to Benson in Telford, *Letters of Wesley, Vol. V*, p. 228.
14. Letter of Fletcher dated March 7, 1778, to Miss Mary Bosanquet in Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, p. 411.
15. A. M. Hills, *Life of Charles G. Finney* (Cincinnati: Office of God's Revivalist, 1902), p. 226.
16. *Ibid.*
17. See his paper first presented at the Sixth Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies and repeated at the Wesleyan Theological Society, November 5, 1977 as reprinted elsewhere in this issue.
18. (Oberlin: James Steele. 1840).

19. Finney's appendix to the British edition of Mahan's *Baptism of the Holy Ghost* may be based on this 1871 address.
20. *Oberlin Evangelist* II (1840), p. 93.
21. (Oberlin: J. M. Fitch, 1848).
22. *Oberlin Quarterly Review* I (August, 1845), p. 115. This essay was later published in pamphlet form with an introduction by Finney (Oberlin: E. J. Goodrich, 1875).
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.
24. (New York: Harper, 1856).
25. See the reports of this in Melvin E. Dieter, "Wesleyan-Holiness Aspects of Pentecostal Origins" in H. Vinson Synan, *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, pp. 65-77.
26. These letters are collected in *Four Years in the Old World* (New York: Walter C. Palmer, Jr., 1870).
27. (Boston: Henry V. Degen, 1859).
28. See Asa Mahan, *Autobiography, Intellectual, Moral and Spiritual* (London: T. Woolmer, 1882), pp. 413-4, as well as Mahan's letters to Phoebe Palmer in the Phoebe Palmer papers, Rose Library, Drew University.
29. "Pentecost-what is it?" *Guide to Holiness*. 66 (Jan., 1897), p. 37.
30. "Baptism of the Spirit," *Guide to Holiness* 20 (February, 1874), p. 38.
31. C. I. Scofield, *Plain Papers on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Revell, 1899), preface.
32. (Cleveland: Christian Harvester, 1890).
33. E. P. Ellyson, *Doctrinal Studies* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1936), p. 106.
34. Various descriptions in Richard K. Curtis, *They Called Him Mister Moody* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1962), p. 149; William R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody* (New York: Revell, 1900), pp. 146-7; and in R. A. Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1923 and other editions), chapter 7.
35. "J. D.," "Entire Sanctification and the Fullness of the Spirit," *Guide to Holiness* 29 (April, 1856), p. 97.
36. Notes on Boland (Boston: McDonald & Gill, n. d.).
37. *Pentecost* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1891).
38. "Theological Roots of Pentecostalism" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, the University of Chicago, 1978).
39. (New York: Abingdon, 1957).