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BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE “SECONDNESS” OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

by
Frank G. Carver

Introduction

This seminar focuses on the issue of preaching and teaching two works of grace in a Biblically authentic way. My concern is anchored in my own history.

My background is old-fashioned Methodist. I was nurtured on the knees of a praying mother, my spiritual sensibilities were impacted by the presence of a Methodist preacher grandfather, and I was early exposed to the interdenominational holiness camp meeting. My undergraduate years were spent at Taylor University with its holiness heritage, and my call to the ministry led me eventually into the Church of the Nazarene and to Nazarene Theological Seminary.

Sometime during those years of transition from adolescence to adulthood an awareness was creeping over me that, although I was fully convinced of the truth of my evangelical and Wesleyan heritage, I was becoming more and more uneasy about the manner in which I heard Scripture used to support and proclaim the holiness message. This was so even though I possessed no criteria at that time by which to judge adequately. I was left with a haunting sense of incredibility about the state of what I now label “holiness hermeneutics.” This feeling was not dissipated by my training at Nazarene Theological Seminary where my knowledge of the Bible was greatly enhanced, but somehow very little of interpretive method penetrated my approach to Scripture.

After two years of pastoring a home mission church in western Nebraska I felt called in 1956 to begin graduate studies leading toward a Ph.D. in New Testament studies and to prepare for a teaching career in the Church. As I did so, an inner driving motivation was to grasp the tools and methods necessary for the task of finding out for myself the “how” of the Scriptural legitimacy for the distinctives of the Wesleyan message. All of my academic life

I have been at this task of discovering the Biblical foundations of the holiness message for the needs of my own heart and ministry. This quest has permeated my research, my teaching, my writing, and my proclamation.

Out of my studies in the Wesleyan heritage¹ and in the whole of Scripture has come a foundational presupposition. It has become unquestionably evident that in terms of our Protestant commitment to the primacy of Scripture in religious authority, the Biblical use of the word “Holiness” can function as a synonym for integrity. There is a profound sense in which holiness is to God what integrity is to man. Old Testament theologians tell us that the holiness of God in its first definition refers to the inner secret of His being, and then second to the revelation in history of His moral character or ethical attributes. We are holy first as brought by redemptive action into the sphere of God’s life and we are holy second as our lives in response take on the moral character of the God who has revealed Himself in redemptive history.² So God’s holiness is “his utter self consistency,”³ as Wilbur T. Dayton puts it, and when we become involved in the communication of holiness to man, integrity is a necessary characterization of the hermeneutical process that is appropriate to its object. Holiness as integrity demands that we let the Biblical text speak for itself and on its own terms, and that we are compelled to handle the text with all the honesty, objectivity, and openness of which we are capable. Manipulation, even of a Biblical text, does not become holiness!

Holiness proclamation is by definition Biblical proclamation. To proclaim the Biblical message is to proclaim the holiness message! Wesley appears to agree: “I found it in the oracles of God, in the Old and New Testament when I read them with no other view or desire, but to save my own soul.”⁴ His own definition of what he was teaching was more often than not expressed in the language of Scripture itself as in his tract, “The Character of a Methodist.”⁵

The true Wesleyan is not afraid of the Biblical text. By definition as Wesleyans we are “Biblical” first and “Wesleyans” second; to proceed any differently borders on ideological idolatry. For us as convinced Wesleyans Biblical preaching is holiness preaching! If we do not believe that to proclaim the Scriptures with contextual integrity is to do justice to the message of holiness, then we have no right to the phrase, “Scriptural holiness,” and further we have no authority for that message apart from the subjectivity of a religious experience and the peculiarities of a scholastically transformed tradition.

A second basic presupposition from which we work is the general or comprehensive use of the language of the holy in the Old and New Testaments. Holiness in the Old Testament is first of all a religious concept. It involves a relation of exclusive allegiance to the God who alone is holy per se. In the Old Testament holiness is secondly a developing ethical concept. It involves a response in life to God that is exclusive of all that is contrary to the above allegiance to Him, exclusive of all that is contrary to the revealed moral character of the Holy One to whom we exclusively belong. As W. T. Purkiser observes, in the Old Testament “references to the holiness of persons fall into two major classes.” One “is basically cultic or ceremonial: the priestly concept of holiness,” and the other “involves ideas of moral goodness or righteousness: the prophetic concept of holiness.”⁶

In these two complementary streams the sanctification language flows out of the Old Testament into the New. The priestly or cultic stream appears primarily in the Epistle to the Hebrews and infrequently in the Johannine writings. At times it characterizes Paul's usage as well as some of the other occurrences in the New Testament. The first thrust of this priestly stream is relational, to be authentically related to the Holy God present in Jesus. The prophetic stream appears primarily in Paul, particularly in Romans where he seeks to prevent his teaching on justification by faith from being perverted in such a way as to license sin. 7 Paul's concept of sanctification serves primarily to keep his concept of justification in balance. The first thrust of this prophetic stream is thus ethical, a life consistent with the character of the Holy One revealed in Jesus.

From this perspective it is obvious that sanctification as a "second" work of grace cannot neatly and uncritically be identified with every use of the "sanctification" or "holy" language in either the Old or New Testaments. It is interesting that Wesley noted this explicitly in relation to Paul's use of the sanctification language:

(2) That the term sanctified, is continually applied by St. Paul, to all that were justified. (3) That by this term alone, he rarely, if ever, means, "saved from all sin." (4) That, consequently, it is not proper to use it in that sense, without adding the word wholly, entirely, or the like. 8

Our present attempt, therefore, is not one of the detailed exegesis of the classic passages that use the sanctification language, as productive and enjoyable as that might be. Instead we will suggest, in a "sharing" rather than a "proving" mode, some approaches and Biblical theological perspectives that I have found helpful and illuminating in my own personal quest.

The first is the primary principle of my own working "holiness hermeneutic," 9 which I like to describe as

I.

From the Privilege of Grace to the Crisis of Faith

The Biblical presentation of holiness as applied to persons is first of all a quality of life flowing from the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Within this as we begin to develop a "Biblical theology of holiness" a hierarchy of concern emerges from the reading of the literature. As I read my Bible I find it concerned first with holiness as a grace relationship to God in Jesus Christ, secondly with holiness as an ethic or response in life enabled by the Holy Spirit consistent with the nature of that relationship, and only thirdly with a chronology of faith-experience through which one enters into a perfected, or thorough-going grace relationship to the Christ of the cross and the resurrection. The nature of the Biblical materials demands that we work both in interpretation and in application primarily from the nature and privilege of the life in grace to the experiential need of some kind of "faith-crisis" for its full realization in day-to-day discipleship. The primary necessity for the "crisis" flows from the gospel's presentation of and call to the life of grace, the holy life.

As I read his *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, this, I am convinced, was the way of Wesley. His "front line" presentation of "scriptural

holiness” was to stress the standard and privilege of the holy life and that often in the language of Scripture itself. In a summary definition in the final pages of the Plain Account he writes:

In one view, it is purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is the giving God all our heart; it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers. It is the devoting, not a part, but all, our soul, body, and substance to God. In another view, it is all the mind which was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked. It is the circumcision of the heart from all filthiness, all inward as well as outward pollution. It is a renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the full likeness of Him that created it. In yet another, it is the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. 10

From this understanding of what was possible by the grace of God in the life and heart of the believer Wesley would proclaim its availability, but his understanding of “how” it took place came more from the observation of experience than from Scripture. 11 In his scriptural hermeneutic, then, Wesley worked primarily from the privilege to the crisis, and not from the crisis to the privilege! He writes, for example, in the Plain Account. that

we do not know a single instance, in any place, of a person’s receiving, in one and the same moment, remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a new, a clean heart. Indeed, how God may work, we cannot tell; but the general manner in which he does work, is this. 12

Then follows a full page presenting what I call a “psychology of Christian experience.” Again in a sermon “On Patience” (James 1:4), written probably after 1783, we get a glimpse of his hermeneutic:

11. But it may be inquired, In what manner does God work this entire, this universal change in the soul of the believer? This strange work, which so many will not believe, though we declare it unto them? Does he work it gradually, by slow degrees? Or instantaneously, in a moment? How many are the disputes upon this head, even among the children of God! And so there will be after all that ever was or ever can be said upon it.... And they will be the more resolute herein because the Scriptures are silent upon the subject; because the point is not determined-at least in express terms-in any part of the oracles of God. Every man therefore may abound in his own sense, provided he will allow the same liberty to his neighbor; provided he will not be angry at those who differ from his opinion, nor entertain hard thoughts concerning them. Permit me likewise to add one thing more. Be the change instantaneous or gradual, see that you never rest till it is wrought in your own soul, if you desire to dwell with God in glory. 13

Rob Staples states the point clearly: in Wesley’s thought “there is a clearly discernible distinction between the ‘substance’ of sanctification and the ‘structure’ of sanctification,” 14 that is, between the “what” holiness is in its essential content and the “how” and “when” of the process involved

in attaining it. For “Wesley the structure was less important than the substance.” 15 His admonition was, “Let this love be attained, by whatever means, and I am content; I desire no more. All is well, if we love the Lord our God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves.” 16 Staples’ conclusion to his discussions of “Substance and Structure” and “Scripture and Experience” seems valid:

Wesley’s authority for the substance, “love excluding sin,” was scriptural, but his authority for the structure (a process comprising two instantaneous crises: “initial” and “entire” sanctification) was primarily experiential, i.e. psychological. 17

So when we state our primary “holiness hermeneutic” as working from the privilege of grace to the crisis of faith, we appear at this point to be in tune with Wesley. There is no better place to illustrate this scripturally than to return for a moment to Wesley. The privilege of grace he could state succinctly and simply:

It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification, for a full salvation from all our sins, from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief, or as the Apostle expresses it, “Go on to perfection.” But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. It is love “rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks.” 18

For Wesley entire sanctification scripturally was first of all and most of all to be understood as love, 19 “love excluding sin; love filling the heart.” And his favorite and fundamental text for this was the Great Commandment: 20

“What commandment is the foremost of all?” Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL; THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’ The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other greater commandment than these” (Mark 12:28b-31).

Our attempt to distinguish between a “Biblical theology of Christian experience” and a “psychology of Christian experience” can best be seen here. The first part of the Great Commandment (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) is the covenant demand at the heart of a covenant renewal document. It is an interpretive summary of the initial Ten Words, the constitution of the covenant God made at Sinai with His people Israel. As such it is the fundamental confession of the Israelite faith from Moses’ day up to this very moment.

The second part of the Great Commandment (Leviticus 19:18) comes out of that part of Leviticus known as the Holiness Code (17:1-26:46), a section punctuated by the refrain, “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (19:2). As a people separated to God, rendered holy first by their deliverance out of Egypt (Exodus 19:4-6), Israel is to live out who they are as a holy people. They have been brought into the grace-circle of His holy life. The revealed character of God is the measure of the holiness expected, for the ritual and ethical instructions which are to guide their

behavior are grounded in the nature of God Himself as holy: “I the LORD who sanctifies you, am holy” 121:8).

These two great, all-penetrating and summary Old Testament Scriptures Jesus, in prophetic fulfillment, put together as the “great” summary of all that His coming was to mean. For in His incarnation, life, ministry, death and resurrection He brought the Great Commandment into authentic reality in the midst of humankind, “Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world” (John 10:36). He lived it out to the full! And in that living and dying He made available the privilege of the life of the Great Commandment to all who live from His day until eternity: “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they may also be sanctified in truth” (John 17:19). In the context of the Fourth Gospel Jesus’ sanctification was His utter submission to the cross as the will of the Father for Him. Therefore in this text our sanctification is our utter submission to His cross as the will of the Father for us. The touchstone criteria for defining our sanctification has become His sanctification!

Now back to the Great Commandment. The new covenant privilege, standard, and demand is clear. To witness in preaching to this in all of its beauty and promise in the total Biblical context with the help of the Holy Spirit will awaken in our hearers a hunger for a “Great Commandment” relationship and quality of life. We then invite them to a decisive faith-grasp of what is truly theirs “in Christ.” We confront our hearers in this great text with the privilege of grace that we might lead them into the crisis of faith!

I believe this to be the basic “holiness hermeneutic,” the hermeneutic most appropriate to the Old and New Testament witness to the redemptive work of God in Christ. The Biblical texts are in the main theologically wholistic rather than psychologically analytic, that is, they do not distinguish neatly between initial and partial stages of realization and the full faith-participation in the privilege afforded. I believe this is true of the great texts which use the “sanctification” language out of both the priestly 21 and prophetic streams. 22 Other areas which can be profitably approached in this manner are those texts which use the “cleansing” or “purification” language, 23 the “gift,” “baptism,” and other language used in relation to the reception of the Holy Spirit, 24 the “perfection” language, 25 and the “death” and “crucifixion” metaphors 26. This list is by no means comprehensive, only an obvious beginning.

The Pauline use of the indicative and imperative moods has been seen by some interpreters to depict distinctly the two crises. 27 A careful study of the classic passage, Romans 6:1-14, convinces me that it too falls best under the above hermeneutic. First I judge the argument of the passage to be more expositional than situationally hortatory in its primary intention. Second the positive imperative in 6:13, “present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead” (c£ 12:1), appears to be essentially one of ethical response to a privilege of grace already experienced (w. 3-11). So basic to the full working out of the imperative in life is the quality of relationship fully realized in the second crisis as we know it. I believe the experiential reality of the second crisis in potential is included in the call of verse 11 which summarizes the previous indicatives and brings them to a decisive conclusion: “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin. but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

A faith-identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (vv. 3-10) in the fullest sense is one Biblical way of defining the crisis of entire sanctification.

We have attempted to suggest “from the privilege of grace to the crisis of faith” as our fundamental “holiness hermeneutic.” Further suggestions include some areas that I find uniquely productive in my own witness, although they are not totally unrelated to the above stance. The first of these:

II.

Sinai as a Theological Paradigm

Coming out of my teaching an undergraduate course on Exodus in recent years this line of thought is still somewhat in embryo. For this reason and due to lack of space I will lay it out in a somewhat skeletal way. The Exodus passage which contains in essence the theological paradigm to which the whole of Exodus bears witness is 19:4-6a. Under Moses’ leadership the Israelites have been delivered from Egypt and have made their way to the foot of Sinai where they are encamped. In preparation for the Sinai theophany and the giving of the Ten Words Moses goes up to God where Yahweh calls to him from the mountain with the following proclamation for “the house of Jacob” and “the sons of Israel” (v. 3b):

“You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

God’s intention for the Israelites was not merely to bring them out of Egypt but in the words of the text to bring “you to Myself” which is further defined as “be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” In view certainly is the nature of the encounter at Sinai.

A brief outline of Exodus with some significantly theological texts inserted and accompanied by occasional commentary should make our basic perspective clear. We are concerned primarily with the theological witness of the texts. Our attempt is to be sensitive to how the narrative presentation progressively reveals on the one hand the holy character of the God of grace and on the other the true nature of the people of God, and therefore their need of a radical grace. It is a story of sin, grace, and holiness.

I. Slavery: Israel in Egypt (1:1-11:10)

A. Oppression in Egypt (1:1-2:25)

But he said, “Who made you a prince or a judge over us?” (2:14a).

Prefigured in this account (vv. 11-15) is not only the issue of spiritual leadership, but also the nature of the Israelites, for the rebellion motif first appears. The description of the oppression concludes with a summary indication of the disposition of God toward His people (2:24-25).

B. Moses’ call and commission (3:1-7:7)

1. The call of Moses (3:1-4:17)

(See 3:10-12)

“You shall worship God at this mountain”: already in the call of Moses the arrival of the Israelites at the mountain of Sinai is seen to be significant in relation to God’s destined purpose for His people.

2. The return to Egypt (4:18-6:1)
(See 5:21-23)

The issue was the command to gather their own straw (5:6-9).

The Israelite nature is further revealed, only now Moses himself is also seen as truly Israelite in spiritual character. But most of all we observe that the deliverance of God’s people is grounded (1) not in the kindness of a benevolent Pharaoh, (2) nor in the willingness of the Israelites to be delivered, and (3) not even in the abilities of a charismatic deliverer, but alone in the utter grace of Yahweh, God of Israel!

3. The call renewed (6:2-7:7)
(See 6:6-7)

The grace character of the deliverance out of Egypt continues to be stressed as indicated by the use of the recognition formula, “you shall know” (v. 7). The plague narratives which follow give the fullest expression possible to this motif.

C. Confrontation with Pharaoh (7:8-11:10)
(See 10:1-2)

The recognition formula, “that you may know,” punctuates significantly the plague narratives with its witness to the unique sovereignty of Yahweh, the God of grace.

II. Liberation: From Egypt to Sinai (12:1-18:27)

A. God’s deliverance (12:1-14:31)
(See 14:11-14)

Again the twin themes of sinful unbelief and the sheer grace of Yahweh appear.

B. A song of thanksgiving (15:1-21)
(See 15:11)

Grace is linked clearly and inherently with holiness in the Exodus context. Biblically grace and holiness go together more profoundly than we in holiness circles normally are able to articulate.

C. The wilderness journey (15:22-18:27) So the people grumbled.... There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them. And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer” (15:24, 25b-26).

In context the story appears designed to signify theologically the need for torah and to suggest its proper function. If so it can be said that the declaration, “I, the LORD, am your healer,” witnesses to God’s intention for the torah in the life of the people (see Psalms 1:2-3; 119:9-11, 45,92, 130, 147, 165). Is the grace of deliverance leading into a “second” grace, or into the “completion” of grace, a grace linked to the true function of torah?

In 17:2, 7 complaint has reached its inevitable result in naked unbelief: “Is the LORD among us, or not?” Or does complaint in fact arise out of unbelief? Rebellion is clearly the nature of this delivered people!

We can observe how the narrator has now set the stage for Sinai!

1:1-15:21 narrates a grace deliverance.

15:22-18:27 is a narration of the manifestation of unbelief and of the sufficiency of God-both a negative and a positive preparation for Sinai.

Posed is the grace and ethic problem: deliverance alone is not enough! God Himself must continually be relied upon! So God is about to bring them to Himself and impart to them in 19:1-40:38 instructions for worship and life. God in a manifestation of the holy reveals His character as it impacts their covenant relationship to Him, in the knowledge of which they are to commit themselves to the God of the Exodus on a new level-the level of the revealed PRESENCE of the “holy” God of Mount Sinai!

III. Revelation: Israel at Mount Sinai

A. Law and covenant (19:1-31:18)

1. Theophany and covenant (19:1-20:21)

“I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, . . . and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (19:4-6).

Then God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me . . .” (20:1-3).

As the Ten Words are spoken . . . (20:4-17), “all the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. Then they said to Moses, ‘Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die.’ And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid, for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.’ So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud [NIV, ‘darkness’] where God was” (20:18-21).

The only moral and spiritual safety is a radical faith-relationship to the holy God Himself! Inherently involved in this “holy security” is

(1) the “darkness” of faith (v. 21), and

(2) the true function of the torah: “God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin” (v. 20).

The Biblical-theological issue of holiness is the PRESENCE of the God of Mount Sinai, the ethical demands of One whose holiness has been clearly revealed-a clear vision of Mount Calvary to come!

Therefore the instructions and guidelines for life and worship follow, including an account of “sin after Sinai” in a highly illuminating narrative of sin, judgment, grace, and restoration, all in the context of the inescapable reality of the holy.

2. The Book of the Covenant (20:22-23:33)

3. The ratification of the covenant (24:1-18)

4. Instructions for covenant worship (25:1-31:18)

B. Rebellion and restoration (32:1-40:38)

1. Breach and renewal of the covenant (32:1-34:35)
 2. The building of the tabernacle (35:1-40:38)
- (See 40:34-35)

Thus I find that a Sinai theological paradigm speaks more powerfully to me and shows more promise for relevant holiness preaching than does the more familiar “Red Sea to Jordan River and into Canaan” typology. For with the latter you can never escape from typology (leading often to fanciful allegory) even after one enters the promised land, but with Sinai in view one is always dealing with the theological issues of holiness, sin, and grace.

III.

Law and Flesh Versus Grace and Spirit

Most definitive in my thinking for several years has been the Pauline theology of law and flesh in contrast to grace and Spirit. These four categories open up for me a way of understanding a second crisis theologically as well as some possibilities for articulating it psychologically.

The easiest way to share these perspectives is to go briefly to a text in Acts that is informed by the law and grace struggles of the early church and also directly relates to the disciples’ experience of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. I refer to Acts 15:8-9 in the context of the Jerusalem council and Peter’s speech on that occasion where the reference is to the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Roman centurion Cornelius (10:34-48):

“And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. “

The context is familiar. There were those in the Church who wanted to compromise the freedom of the gospel of grace by a return to circumcision and the Law of Moses (15:1, 5). The Church met at Jerusalem to solve the issue and Peter brings the experience of his ministry to Cornelius to bear on the problem. As reported by Luke Peter’s speech functions as a miracle-authenticated call to discipleship in terms of the understanding of the gospel as experienced and understood in the Gentile mission. 28 Peter saw in the miracle of the gift of the Holy Spirit to his Gentile friends the evidence that the nature of everyone’s relationship to God is one of unadulterated grace: “We believe that we [Jews] are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [Gentiles] also are” (15:11).

As we have concluded on this passage elsewhere,

From this perspective the cleansing of the heart by faith is understood as that operation of the Holy Spirit in our Christian existence that allows grace to be truly grace. It is the cleansing of our hearts all the way to grace, a cleansing of the will from all trust in the flesh before God. It is therefore a cleansing to faith alone in our relation to God. 29

Although a more detailed study would be in order, how we arrive at the above interpretation can perhaps be illuminated adequately by another quotation from previous work:

“Cleansing” in this total context [of the Acts narrative] has [in Lukan theology] a twofold dimension.

First, the very opening of Cornelius’ heart to the gospel is the work of the Holy Spirit. God has erased the distinction that made him as a Gentile unclean in contrast to the “clean” Jew (11:9). Faith itself is here a gift of the Spirit. In Cornelius’ case the cleansing work of the Spirit began long before Peter invaded his horizons. His prayers, alms, and fear of God as a devout man (10:1-3) were not “works” which were rendering him acceptable to God, but evidence of the faith-stance that the Spirit was bringing to birth in his heart.

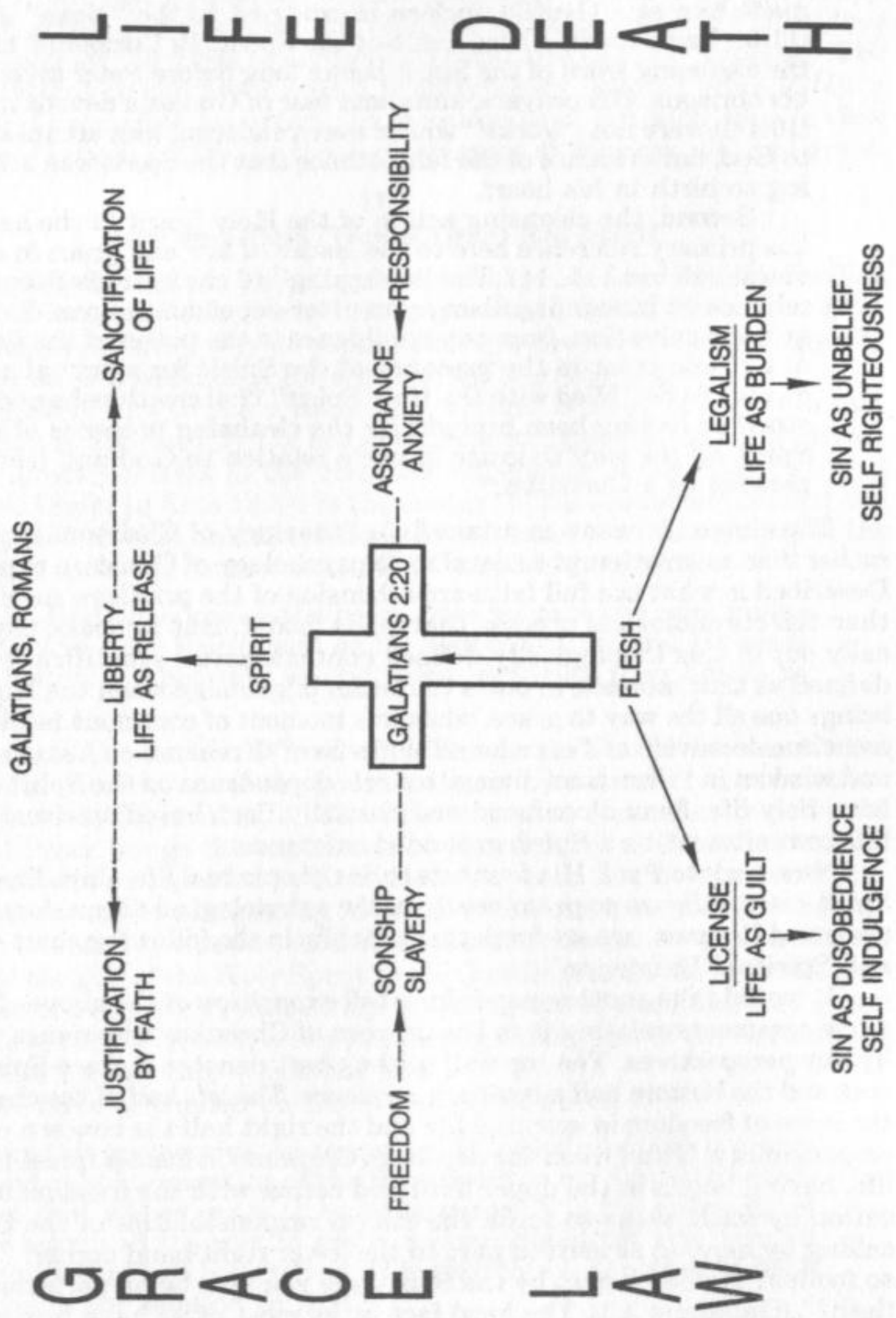
Second, the cleansing action of the Holy Spirit in the heart has primary reference here to the issues of law and grace in salvation (cf. vv. 1, 5, 11). The “cleansing” of the heart is from all reliance on human legalism to an utter dependence upon divine grace in salvation, from any confidence in the power of the flesh to a single trust in the presence of the Spirit for spiritual adequacy. To be “filled with the Holy Spirit” (2:4) can thus be understood as having been brought by the cleansing presence of the Spirit all the way to grace in one’s relation to God and fellow-persons as a Christian.³⁰

The above is meant as primarily a “theology of Christian experience” rather than as an attempt to develop “a psychology of Christian experience.” Described is what the full faith-apprehension of the privilege entails rather than the chronological process that leads into it. But to speak psychologically out of this theologically defined context, entire sanctification can be defined as that moment in one’s Christian pilgrimage when the Holy Spirit brings one all the way to grace, when in a moment of conscious faith-commitment one decisively and once for all shifts from all reliance on human strength and wisdom in “Christian” living to a sole dependence on the Spirit of Christ for a holy life, from a confused and partially flesh-based spiritual life to a full commitment to a Spirit-grounded existence.

Now back to Paul. His four categories of spiritual life-law, flesh, grace Spirit-which figure so prominently in the soteriological discussions of Galatians and Romans, are set forth theologically in the following chart on “Paul and Spiritual Existence.”

It would take another paper for a full exposition of the above chart, but a few comments relating it to the process of Christian experience will clarify our perspectives. The top half of the chart denotes a grace-Spirit existence and the bottom half a law-flesh existence. The left half of the chart raises the issue of freedom in spiritual life and the right half the concern of ethical responsibility. Often when the new-born Christian in his/her quest for a holy life, having begun in the upper left-hand corner with the freedom of justification by faith, seeks to fulfill the ethical responsibilities of the Christian calling by moving at least in part to the lower right-hand corner: “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3). The hard fact is, as most of us have proven in our own attempts at spiritual responsibility, that somewhere in the early stages of our Christian lives we have sought, usually somewhat unaware of what we are doing, to please God partly in reliance on our own strength and

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wisdom—the flesh. Then on down the road after few or many embarrassing failures and the resulting struggles, the Holy Spirit begins to open our eyes to the nature of the problem, and invites us to “give up” on ourselves and make Him our sole source of spiritual power. This moment of repentance, acceptance, commitment, surrender, consecration (use your own term), is the faith-crisis of entire sanctification. It takes place when we finally move in faith-commitment to the cross of Christ cleanly from a flesh-dependent existence with its “license-legalism” pendulum to a Spirit-dependent existence into that true realm of “liberty” where sanctification of life can become a way of life!

This does not mean that there will not be moments of “sin improperly so-called” or perhaps even of “sin properly so-called,” when in a moment of physical and psychical weakness, carelessness, anxiety, ego-threat or spiritual leanness, that we will not fail of the Christ-likeness of attitude and behavior that we so much desire. But it does mean that when those moments do occur we are fully aware of the issue at stake, that in that moment we relied on ourselves-the flesh in its strength and wisdom, and not on the presence of Another-the Spirit of Christ in our lives.

So I find these four categories, as elucidated by Paul, implicit in the Acts account, illustrated in the history of the Church, and experienced in my own walk with the Lord theologically satisfying as I attempt to do Biblical justice to my own heritage.

IV.

Love in the Johannine Witness

During the years of teaching a course on the Biblical theology of holiness I developed a simplistic outline which I share with students very early in the course. It is an attempt to use the witness of 1 John to illuminate Wesley’s phrase, “love excluding sin.” I share that outline as a suggested programmatic door to the possibilities of the “Johannine witness to love” for holiness proclamation. So with some modification the outline is as follows:

Sanctification and holiness are key words in the Wesleyan heritage which at times become very confusing for some to handle. 1 John in the years after graduation from seminary enabled me to come to terms with my own Methodist heritage and that of my adopted family, the Church of the Nazarene.

1 John and the Fourth Gospel fill for me with meaningful and livable content a significant phrase from John Wesley, “love excluding sin.”³¹ The full quote from Wesley’s sermon on “The Scripture Way of Salvation” reads as follows:

It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification, for a full salvation from all our sins, from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief, or as the Apostle expresses it, ‘Go on to perfection.’ But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul.... For as long as love takes up the whole heart, what room is there for sin therein? ³²

Albert C. Outler sums up Wesley’s understanding of sanctification in a penetrating, and for me, very helpful way:

There is impressive testimony to the fact that he came finally to understand that Christian maturity is chiefly faith's freedom to respond to God's grace without fear of rejection or pride of possession. 33

John can help us to grasp in mind and heart this "faith's freedom to respond to God's grace without fear of rejection or pride of possession" 34, a truly Wesleyan definition of holiness. Grace and freedom are big words in a fully Biblical definition of holiness!

1 John sums up its witness in two simple yet profound theological statements which comprehend God's relationship to the Christian's existence:

1:5 "God is light"

4:8 "God is love"

Both affirmations are realized in life by "love excluding sin." For "love excluding sin" is revealed in 1 John as

a life in grace - "God is light" and

a life of grace - "God is love,"

which together add up to the life of salvation in relation to God: "whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected" (1:5).

Therefore in the language of 1 John the holy life is first simply and continually letting God in Christ love us to the depth of our need, be it sins or sin, and in turn sharing that love with others.

Or to put it in another way: all that God asks of us is that we receive His love, and pass it on to those around us: "if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us" (4:12).

So LOVE EXCLUDING SIN IS FIRST our total need before God given always and unhesitatingly to His love. This means that everything the Holy Spirit calls sin in our lives, that is, makes us uneasy in our conscience before Him about it, we surrender to the grace of God in Jesus Christ (1:5-7; see 1:8-2:2; 3:1-3; 4:9-10).

LOVE EXCLUDING SIN IS SECOND this love received governing all of life's relationships. Any lack or omission of that love in expression by word and deed, as we are made aware of it, we give back to His love in confession for His forgiveness and cleansing (1:9; 4:17-19; see 1:3-2:11; 4:7-21).

Conclusion

"God is love" (4:16)

(See 3:16-24)

Because of the grace that "God is light" and "God is love" the two situations in which we can be assured are "when our heart condemns us" (3:20) and when "our heart does not condemn us" (3:21)!

The last time I shared this outline with a group of undergraduates other than religion majors in a class entitled "The Life of Holiness," their question was, If holiness is as simple as 1 John appears to make it, why do the theologians make it so complex for us?

V.

Conclusion

The above is one Wesleyan's attempt to illustrate a "holiness hermeneutic" that can deal openly with Scripture in the context of contemporary Biblical studies and at the same time do justice to the essential motifs of the

Wesleyan heritage. As a Wesleyan I want my heritage to flow authentically out of Scripture, and I want to allow Scripture its full freedom to judge, correct, and enrich my heritage and my own spiritual journey.

I have long worked with the general hermeneutical principle in relation to the authority of Scripture question: Until one has a hermeneutic that will allow every passage in the Bible to function as the Word of God, one does not have a hermeneutic adequate for any passage. Could it not be reworded in this present context to read: Until one has a hermeneutic that will allow one to preach holiness from every book of the Bible, one does not have a hermeneutic adequate to proclaim holiness from any book of the Bible?

Footnotes

1It has been necessary for me to teach the graduate seminar on Wesley several times over the years as well as incorporate him in my undergraduate class dealing with the Biblical theology of holiness. But I make no claim to be a Wesley “scholar.”

2See David L. Thompson, “Old Testament Bases of the Wesleyan Message,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Volume 10 (Spring, 1975), pp. 38-47.

3Wilbur T. Dayton, “Entire Sanctification as taught in the Book of Romans,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Volume 1 (Spring 1966), p. 2.

4John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City 1966), p. 117. Reprinted from the complete original text as authorized by the Wesleyan Conference Office in London, England, in 1872.

5Ibid, pp. 17-21.

6W. T. Purkiser, *Exploring Christian Holiness, Volume 1: The Biblical Foundations* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1983), p. 30.

7Romans 5:1-8:39, particularly the argument in 6:1-7:6.

8Wesley, p. 43. It can be said in the same vein that simplistic or uncritical use of some second-sounding phrases in the New Testament without careful qualification has problems as well. E.g., Romans 1:11, 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 3:10, etc.

9”Hermeneutics,” “a theory of interpretation,” traditionally seeks “to establish the principles, methods, and rules needed in the interpretation of written texts.” Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 2nd ed., 1981), p. 81. I am using the word “hermeneutic” in the sense of “hermeneutical principle” or principle of interpretation which “may be loosely defined as the key by which the interpreter gets into the circle of understanding.” Soulen, p. 85.

10Wesley, p. 117.

11See the brief discussion of this point in Rob L. Staples, "Sanctification and Selfhood: A Phenomenological Analysis of the Wesleyan Message," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Volume 7, (Spring, 1972), pp. 6-8.

12Wesley, p. 31.

13Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 3: Sermons III*, 71-114 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), pp. 176-177. This sermon first appeared in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1784 (March and April, VII.121-27, 178-82). See Outler's comments, p. 169, for the reason for the dating after 1783. See further on Wesley's psychology of Christian experience in his sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," Outler, pp. 203-204, which appeared in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1785.

14Staples, p.4.

15Staples, p. 6. From his discussion on pages 4-8 he states later in the article (p.11) that "we have shown that Wesley found no scriptural support for the instantaneousness of entire sanctification. This does not mean that Wesley was right, or that his is the final word." He did note however (p. 7) that Wesley did find Scriptural authority for certain aspects of the structure: Wesley "was certain that Scripture, as well as experience, taught that sin remains in believers after the new birth. Secondly, he found support in Scripture, as well as in experience, for the possibility of entire sanctification in this present life." See Staples' article for his documentation in Wesley's writings.

16The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., ed. John Telford (London: The Epworth Press, 1921), II, 75.

17Staples, p. 8. His use of the term "psychological" here I find confirming for my use of the distinction in "holiness hermeneutics" between "a Biblical theology of Christian experience" and "a psychology of Christian experience."

18Albert E. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 2: Sermons II*, 3470 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), p. 160. This sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," was written in 1765. Outler, p. 155, writes that "of all the written sermons, this one had the most extensive history of oral preaching behind it: forty instances of his using Eph. 2:8 before 1765, nine in 1737.... The text continued to be a favorite: twenty recorded instances in the quarter century following 1765."

19Staples, pp. 6f., has a paragraph documenting this in Wesley. Indicative of course is Mildred Bangs Wynkoop's interpretation of Wesley under the title, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972).

20"How clearly does this express the being perfected in love!" Outler, *Sermons II*, p. 167. See also "The Character of a Methodist," in Wesley, *Plain Account*, p. 17. All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated are taken from the New American Standard Bible, 1975.

21E.g., John 17:17-19; Hebrews 10:10, 14; 12:14; 13:12.

22E.g., Romans 6:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:23f.

23E.g., John 15:3; Acts 15:8-9; Hebrew 9:13-14; 1 John 1:7, 9.

24E.g., Mark 1:8; Luke 11: 13; the Paraclete passages in John 14,15, and 16; Acts 1:5; 2:4; 2:38; 15:8.

25E.g., Matthew 5:48. Philippians 3:12-15; 1 John 4:7-21.

26E.g., Mark 8:34; Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Colossians 3:3. An issue to be determined in each instance here is whether the metaphor refers subjectively to Christian experience or objectively to the death of Christ with whom the believer died (Romans 5:12-21) and with which death s/he identifies in the moment of faith.

27Staples, pp. 12-12a, in dependence on the work of Richard E. Howard, "The Epistle to the Galatians," *Beacon Bible Commentary* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1965), pp. 23, 90, 93, 111. But see Howard's "Some Modern Interpretations of the Pauline Indicative and Imperative," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Volume 11 (Spring 1976), pp.38-48, where he interprets Paul's indicative and imperative as best as I can read him in a way that appears consistent with the approach taken here.

28I am dependent here on my exegetical study of this text which has been published as "Preparing to Preach from Acts 15:6-11," *The Preacher's Magazine* (September, October, November, 1978), pp. 30ff.

29Frank G. Carver, *The Cross and the Spirit: Peter and the Way of the Holy* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1987), p. 81.

30Carver, "Preparing to Preach from Acts 15:6-11," p. 32. See the sermon outline developed on the passage, p. 53.

31Along with 1 John one could explore with great profit the Johannine theology of love in the Farewell Discourse (cc. 13-17) in relation to Wesley's phrase.

32Outler, *Sermons II*, pp. 160, 167.

33Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 29.

34Ibid.

THE USE OF HAB. 2:4 IN ROM. 1:17: SOME HERMENEUTICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

by
David S. Dockery

Introduction

The theme of Paul's grand epistle is summarized in Rom. 1:17 as the revelation of a righteousness of God. In confirmation of this idea, Paul cites Hab. 2:4b. The worthy reputation of this Old Testament passage is well attested in both Jewish and Christian literature. That it was of special importance in Jewish circles can be seen in the famous remark of Rabbi Simlai (ca. A.D 250). The Talmud records this remark in Makkot 23b, "Moses gave Israel 613 commandments, David reduced them to 10, Isaiah to 2, but Habakkuk to 1: the righteous shall live by his faith." 1 The text is also quoted in Gal. 3:11 and Heb. 10:38, which shows its importance to the early church. S. L. Johnson comments: "The just shall live by faith' - is, without question near the soul of Pauline theology." 2 Historically, the text's testimony as a firm foundation for New Testament theology continued to grow. "The preeminent illustration of this phenomenon was the text's catalytic effect in leading to the Reformation: Habakkuk's great text, with his son Paul's comments and additions, became the banner of the Protestant Reformation in the hands of Habakkuk's grandson, Martin Luther." 3

Even though these remarks are true, the text continues to be not only a theological benchmark, but an exegetical problem. In this discussion, we will examine the meaning of Hab. 2:4b in its historical context as well as Paul's use and understanding of it. It is not possible to examine the history of the interpretation of this passage, nor all the possible interpretive alternatives in a paper of this kind. We will, rather, seek to analyze the text and summarize the theological and hermeneutical implications.

An Interpretation of Hab. 2:4b

Habakkuk's central oracle was a word of hope and salvation. Hab. 2:4a described the character of Babylon: "Behold he is a puffed-up person, his

soul is not upright in him.” A prophet of the same period (Zephaniah) spoke of the humble and poor-in-spirit believer, the very opposite of the inflated opinion represented in the first part of this verse. Habakkuk also contrasts this arrogance and conceit with the description of the believer in verse 4b: “But a righteous man shall live by faith.” Thus the righteous “shall not die” (Hab. 1:12), but they shall live. 4 The sense is that the righteous shall be preserved alive because of his faith, or faithfulness, that is his steadfast loyalty. It is observed by Cranfield that, “The original reference was probably not to the individual righteous man but to the Jewish people. . .; but the tendency to understand the words with reference to the individual will have made itself felt quite early.” 5

Textual Problems

The text in Hab. 2:4 reads: “the righteous shall live by his faith/faithfulness.” The LXX translation is “He that is righteous shall live by my faith,” that is God’s faithfulness. Paul’s citation can be translated: “he who through faith is righteous shall live” or “the righteous shall live by faith.”

The major textual problem concerns the third masculine suffix attached to *‘emunah*. The MT has the third person pronoun, *be’emunato*, while the LXX has the first person pronoun, *ek pisteos mou*. Brownlee has summarized the problem:

Instead of *be’emunato* in Hab. 2:4, G, Ag., and Old Latin read *be’emunati*. It is no loss that the word in vii. 15 (i.e. IQpHab) is no longer extant, for in the script of the scroll *waw* and *yod* could not have been distinguished. The interpretation *‘emunatam* (“their faith”) at viii. 2, however, fortunately confirms the 3rd per. suffix—the plural number being merely a part of the translator’s free representation of the thought. The Palestinian recension reads *en pistei autou* with MT against G’s *ek pisteos mou* In the NT neither suffix is attested (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38), but the interpretation is consonant with the 3rd person. 6

Lexical Exegesis

1. The basic idea of the noun *sedek* seems to have been that of conformity to a norm.⁷ Righteousness in the Old Testament is not primarily an ethical quality.⁸ The righteous person is the one who conforms to the given norm. “The verb ‘to be righteous’ means to conform to the given norm, and in certain forms, especially in the hiphil, it means ‘to declare righteous’ or ‘to justify.’”⁹

The standard of righteousness is not provided simply by custom. Eichrodt sees the OT concept of righteousness against the wider background of the covenant relationship with Yahweh: “It may therefore be said that in the case of Yahweh his righteousness implies the same kind of right conduct which in Israel upholds the law by means of judicial procedure; the justice appropriate to Israel on her side is determined by her position as the covenant people, in virtue of which she can count on the intervention of the divine assistance in any danger which threatens that position.”¹⁰ Gowan believes that the term has a judicial nuance.

The just, the righteous one, is the one who has been vindicated, whom God has declared to be right. There is a legal background to this word; it denotes the winner in a case at law in some of its Old Testament uses. So it is not restricted in its reference to a purely internal quality of goodness which one may possess. It is used in situations of controversy to denote the side which is right. 11

2. The Hebrew understanding of life involves both an existential and eschatological perspective. The most significant aspect of this understanding is its theocentric foundation, “its dependence on God.”¹² Only by faithfulness will the righteous man live. The verb *hayah* “connotes not only physical survival in a time of disaster, but also living in right relation to God.”¹³ BDB appropriately classifies *yiheyeh* of Hab. 2:4b as “the pregnant sense of fullness of life in divine favor.”¹⁴

3. “ ‘Faithfulness’ and ‘faith’ stand close together in the Hebrew term ‘*emunah*.’”¹⁵ The idea is that of unwavering hold of the word of God against all opponents to the contrary. The sense is somewhat different in the LXX translation of the promise, “the righteous shall live by my faithfulness.”¹⁶ It is this change in the LXX and in Paul that provides the source for the primary hermeneutical challenges in our text. We will investigate these later in the paper.

The primary usage of ‘*emunah*’ has the meaning of firmness, fidelity or steadfastness.¹⁷ The word has the passive meaning in the majority of OT occurrences, and is probably the sense in Hab. 2:4, although it can be construed to have a double sense.¹⁸ This mediating position is the preferable understanding.

‘*Emunah*’ understood actively is simply an unwavering trust in God’s word. “In contrast to the overbearing disposition of the wicked, the believer, like Abraham in Genesis 15:6 and Isaiah 28:16; 30:15 put an immovable confidence in the God who had promised His salvation and the coming Man of promise.”¹⁹ It was a steadfast, undivided surrender to Yahweh, “a childlike, humble and sincere trust in the credibility of the divine message of salvation.”²⁰

The passive sense emphasizes “one’s own inner attitude and the conduct it produces.”²¹ Yet we advocate a both/and significance to the term. Thus we can read it as referring to fruit of faith, steadfastness or faithful fruit. Bryant proposes the following option:

It must be carefully maintained that neither the Old nor New Testament separate faith from its fruits or faithfulness. The distinction between faith and faithfulness is somewhat artificial, for . . . in the long run they are the same thing. The Bible knows nothing of a true faith which does not hold fast its confidence to the end.²²

Exegetical Summary

The context coupled with the difficulty of understanding the meaning of the words themselves within the passage provide the interpreter with less than easy answers. Since our main purpose is to see Paul’s usage, we will only summarize the exegetical considerations.

Habakkuk seems to have performed his ministry in the reign of Jehoiakim, since the Chaldeans (Babylonians) are mentioned as already well known and of formidable reputation (1:6-11). The rapacious nobles, allied with corrupt religious leaders, were shamelessly robbing and oppressing the common people in Judah. Therefore they were to be punished through the instrumentality of the Chaldeans.

However the prophet sees that the Chaldeans will pose a serious problem to reconcile with the doctrine of God's holiness, because they are a people without respect for moral law. Habakkuk does not fall into an impatient cynicism, but rather sets a worthy example of waiting on the Lord for the answer (2:1). The answer is found in the passage with which we are dealing. The answer is that the proud shall be condemned and the faithful believing ones shall live (2:4).²³

The pesher exegesis in the Qumran commentaries understood "the righteous will live by faith" to be an explanation which "concerns all those who observe the Law in the House of Judah. God will deliver them from the House of Judgment because of their affliction and their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness."²⁴

The prophet's intention was most likely a judgment upon the pride of the Chaldeans. It is evident from the context that the passage "treats of the relation between man and God, since the words themselves speak of a waiting for the fulfillment of a promising oracle, which is to be preceded by a period of severe suffering."²⁵ Life is promised to those who hold faithfully to the word or promise and wait for its fulfillment in time of tribulation. It is not the character or integrity that is the virtue of the righteous person, but one's faith/faithfulness. The great promise to these who are faithful believers is *yiheyeh* (they shall live). This covenant faithfulness is opposed to the pride of the Chaldeans. Thus the promise is given to those who in humble submission express firm reliance upon God.²⁶ The LXX and Paul rightly understood this by the use of *pistis*. Our task is now to see the meaning Paul brought out of these words.

An Interpretation of Romans 1:17

The theme of the epistle to the Romans is stated in 1:16, 17; in the gospel in which Paul glories and counts a high honor to proclaim, there is revealed a righteousness of God. The present tense is used by Paul to indicate that revelation "is being revealed" in the ongoing process of proclaiming the gospel.

Grammatical Exegesis

1. The meaning of *dikaioσune theou* has been the subject of much discussion.²⁷ The debate concerns whether or not Paul's use of the expression is intended to refer to a quality in God. The genitive *theou* may be taken in at least three different ways: (1) as an objective genitive, in which case the righteousness is that which God grants (Luther); (2) as a subjective genitive in which case it refers to that which belongs to God (Käsemann); (3) as a genitive of origin, in which case it is God's righteousness, but proceeds from God to men (Cranfield). While grammar is important, we must listen attentively to Käsemann:

What is even more comical is that when *dikaiosune theou* is discussed there is virtual consensus today in speaking of a genitive of author, yet everyone conceals his own opinion behind the grammatical cipher. In a technical age, rules of language often wrap materials in a thick fog and make it possible for opposing views to achieve an easy peace.²⁸

Coupled with Käsemann's statement, comes a caution from Cranfield: "The last word in this debate has clearly not yet been spoken."²⁹ The theological objections raised by Käsemann against understanding *theou* as a genitive of origin cannot be brushed over lightly. He maintains that regarding it as a genitive of origin involves an isolating of the gift from the Giver and an anthropocentric rather than theocentric of the gospel, and that it is individualistic. This objection is raised primarily against Bultmann,³⁰ but we still must opt for the third option listed above. Along with Cranfield, we believe, "Paul's focusing attention on the man who is righteous by faith is bound up with the use which he makes in Hab. 2:4; but everything he says about the justified man is said within the context of the gospel, which for Paul is certainly not a gospel of man's self understanding, but the gospel of God."³¹

2. The words *ek pisteos eis pistin* have also been understood in many different ways. A nice survey of the problem is given by Murray J. Harris.

A myriad of proposals have been made in regard to the meaning of the phrase *ek pisteos eis pistin*, such as: from the faith of the preacher to the faith of the hearer; from God's faithfulness to man's faith; from smaller to a greater degree of faith (cf. *apodoxes eis doxan*, 2 Cor. 3:18); from faith as a starting-point to faith as a permanent condition. But it seems more natural to construe *ek* as indicating not the source or starting point ("from faith") but the basis or means ("by faith"; as in Hab. 2:4), with the *eis pistin* either intensifying the effect of *ek pisteos* (thus, "by faith from first to last," New International Version), or denoting the goal of God's impartation to men of a righteous status ("leading to faith"). On either of these latter views, faith is portrayed as the vital and perpetual characteristic of Christian experience.³²

According to John Murray, Paul's purpose in the repetition here and in 3:22 is "to accent the fact that not only does the righteousness of God bear savingly upon us through faith but also that it bears savingly upon everyone who believes."³³ Confirmation of this view is provided, we believe, by the Habakkuk quotation, *Kathos gegraptai ho de dikaios ek pisteos zesetai*. It is to this quotation which we now give our attention.

Lexical Exegesis

1. The history of Pauline research over the last hundred years has raised several questions about *ho dikaios*. Is it to be understood primarily as declaratory (to declare righteous) or behavioral (to make righteous)? Regardless of which view is taken, does this mean that the believer is no longer in status or in actuality a sinner?³⁴ More importantly, is justification central to Pauline thought and if so, is justification a present experience, or does it belong, more strictly, to the future, as an anticipated verdict of the last judgment?³⁵

Although recent interpreters of Paul have found other “centers,” such as: reconciliation (Martin), (2) liberty (Longenecker) and (3) resurrection (Gaffin), we tend to affirm that justification is central to Paul (Johnson, Ridderbos). More or less assuming this to be the case, is justification declarative or behavioral? 36 Thiselton, using Wittgenstein’s concept of language games, has presented a brilliant argument about the phenomenon of “seeing . . . as . . .,” of seeing x as y. 37 Applying this to Pauline thought, the believer is “seen as” righteous, specifically within the context of eschatology or at least in the context of the new age. Yet in the context of history, he remains a sinner. 38

One of the key questions raised by this subject is whether justification in Paul is to be regarded as present or future. Some passages (e.g. Rom. 5:1, 9) suggest a present sense, while others (Gal. 5:5) have an eschatological reference. Both Bultmann and Barrett speak of the paradoxical nature of the situation when an eschatological verdict is pronounced in the present. 39 Kasemann has attempted to ground justification in the context of apocalyptic. 40 The problem is best answered in this lengthy quotation of Thiselton:

The fact that we have to do with the logic of evaluation or verdict, especially in an eschatological context, explains an important point. If we are confronted with two statements, one of which asserts p and the other of which denies p, we are faced with a contradiction. If one man claims “x is black” and another claims “x is white,” one of them must be wrong. But the situation is different when we are faced with the logic of evaluation or verdict. If one man claims “x is satisfactory,” or “x is fast,” and the other claims “x is unsatisfactory,” or “x is slow,” each may be a valid assessment in relation to a different frame of reference. In the same way, if justification is a verdict, for God to declare the believer righteous in the context of eschatology does not contradict His declaring him a sinner in the context of history, or in terms of what he is in the natural world. In the context of the new age, the eschatological verdict of “righteous” which belongs to the last judgment is brought forward and appropriated by faith. In this sense, justification, although strictly future, is operative in the present “apart from law” (Rom. 3:21; cf. Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9). In as far as the believer is accorded his eschatological status, viewed in that context, he is justified. In as far as he still lives in the everyday world, he remains a sinner who awaits future justification. History and eschatology each provide a frame of reference in which a different verdict on the believer is valid and appropriate. This is neither contradiction nor even “paradox.” In Wittgenstein’s sense of the “home” setting of language-game, eschatology is the home setting in which the logic of justification by faith properly functions. 41

The notion that justification by faith is a legal fiction (as in Sanday and Headlam) rests on viewing the problem only from an historical frame of reference. However, from the eschatological perspective the situation is seen differently. From the historical standpoint, justification is future, but by appropriation of the eschatological verdict, it is possible for “the righteous” to live by faith in the present experience of being justified. 42

As we noted earlier, the most common Old Testament usage of righteous or righteousness is forensic. In Paul we believe it has this declarative nature, seen eschatologically. 43 In other words it has to do with acquittal from the just condemnation on sin. As in a court of law a man may be declared acquitted, which means he cannot be touched by law, so Paul conceives that a man may be declared as righteous and his sins no longer held against him. 44 Paul's concept of justification is a work of God and man can do nothing to earn this righteous position.

2. *Zesetai* refers to life with God, which alone is true life. It is primarily eschatological, where its fullness can be enjoyed, although it can be enjoyed in some sense in the present. Other references in Romans can be found in 2:7; 4:17; 5:17, 18, 21; 6:4, 10, 11, 13, 22, 23; 7:10; 8:2, 6, 10, 13; 10:5; 12:1.45

For Paul, as for other Jews, "life" and salvation were practically synonymous. The Aramaic *hayye* is the same word for life and salvation. For Paul, life does not stop then with initial salvation, but includes sanctification and is consummated in final glory. 46

3. What are we to do with Paul's utilization of *pistis*? "The fact that Paul drops both pronouns may lend some force to the view that he wishes to bring out his characteristic phrase, 'righteous by faith.' "47 Probably, he is again emphasizing the idea of continual faith or " 'faith all the time:' man (if righteous at all) is righteous by faith; he also lives by faith."48

Translation Challenges

In Paul's quotation of Hab. 2:4, we have yet to examine the problem of translation. The question is, are we to take *ek pisteos* with *dikaioi* or with *zesetai*? In the classic work by Charles Hodge, he argues that "the connection of *ek pisteos* with *dikaioi* is certainly best suited to the apostle's object which is to show that righteousness is by faith, but in either construction, the sense is substantially the same; salvation is by faith." 49 It is not possible in this paper to deal with the grammatical features involved in the problem. 50 Are we to render the proposition, "The righteous shall live by faith"? Murray has argued, following Lightfoot, for the latter alternative. 51 But Cranfield has convincingly argued for the connection of "the righteous" with "by faith." Even though the LXX translation seems to favor the other option; (1) the immediate context, (2) the structure of the epistle along with (3) the connection of righteousness with faith in Rom. 5:1 indicate that *ek pisteos* is almost certainly to be connected with *ho dikaios* rather than *zesetai*. 52

Exegetical Summary

The emphasis in Habakkuk as we noted is on covenant faithfulness or what is traditionally called sanctification. At first glance Paul's use of Hab. 2:4 in Rom. 1:17 seems to depart from the context of the Old Testament passage. But this is not necessarily so. Paul does have a forensic meaning for "righteous," but his concept of faith or trust is one which continues. Habakkuk's emphasis upon trust is not forsaken. It must be remembered that:

Paul does not teach justification by faith in a vacuum. Faith does make one righteous both forensically and, increasingly, in actuality, because faith issues in the *en Christo* (I) relationship. 53

It is best to follow Westcott that, “ ‘faith’ (in the Pauline sense) and ‘faithfulness to God’ (which is what the Prophet had in mind), in the long run are the same thing.” 54 With these thoughts in mind, let us conclude with some final comments regarding the hermeneutical and theological significance of our passage.

Hermeneutical Considerations

Paul’s appeal to Hab. 2:4 is for the purpose of confirmation from the Old Testament. The apostle is so convinced of the unity which prevails between the old and new covenants, that he cannot assert one of the great truths of the gospel without quoting a passage from the Old Testament in its support. 55

The utilization of Hab. 2:4 is probably an example of what Roger Nicole calls “details of prophecies revealed in New Testament light.” 56 In many cases the New Testament writers, being illumined by the Holy Spirit, perceived with greater clarity than the Old Testament writers themselves, God’s intended meaning behind the prophecies. What the prophets had seen only dimly and in terms of general principle, the New Testament writers saw in the glowing light of fulfillment in a perspective in which a wealth of details fall into place.

In the New Testament quotations of Hab. 2:4 (Gal. 3:11 and Heb. 10:38) in addition to Rom. 1:17 57, the Old Testament passage is variously understood as relating to justification by faith or sanctification by faithfulness and perseverance. It has been suggested that these topics go beyond Habakkuk’s intention in his prophecy. Yet we have seen that Habakkuk does deal in the context with judgment and that 2:4b emphasizes that by faith or covenant faithfulness, people of God gain assurance of life in the midst of such calamities. The attitude of continual trust in Yahweh is that which characterizes the righteous. It is this feature of trust that the New Testament writers emphasize, though in a variety of ways. “One may not feel obliged to assert that Habakkuk envisioned the full range of implications present in his statement, but it is apparent that his formulation was divinely designed to embody a principle present in his day in the midst of the calamities of the Jewish people, but even more explicitly manifest in relation to the gospel of Jesus Christ, as Paul and the author of Hebrews have made clear.” 58 The terms of Habakkuk’s oracle are sufficiently general to make room for Paul’s application of them. Paul’s application does not violate the prophet’s intention, but broadens it to express the theology of his abiding message. 59

Theological Reflections

The theme of justification by faith is especially evident in Pauline literature. Paul drew a sharp distinction between the righteousness of works and the righteousness of faith (e.g. Rom. 3, Gal. 2). For those who accept a canonical approach to theology, as we do, 60 the Epistle of James presents a problem, since he states, “a man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (James 2:24). Luther’s relegation of James to a lower level than Paul is less

than satisfactory. Wesley's solution seems better in this case. Wesley believed James in speaking of "works" to be referring not to the works of the law, but to fruits of faith; and in speaking of "faith" not to commitment of the whole person to the living Christ, but to an intellectual assent.

Yet, Luther did not emphasize faith to the detriment of loving works. The only faith that justifies is a faith which bears fruit in love. By faith, one "is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor." 61 It was Melancthon and not Luther who separated the two, and thus radically separated justification from sanctification.

This misunderstanding of "justification by faith alone" which belied the need for sanctification and spiritual growth was opposed by Jonathan Edwards and those in the puritan / pietist tradition, including Wesley and Whitefield. 62 In contemporary Catholicism, efforts are being made by Karl Rahner 63 and Hans Küng 64 to reassess the conflict with Protestantism, especially Reformed theology, to reformulate the relationship between objective and subjective aspects of justification.

The great Protestant theologian of the twentieth century, Karl Barth, has raised questions regarding justification by faith. In volume IV of the Dogmatics, he insists that God not only turns to man in free grace but converts man to himself. For Barth, declaring righteous is also making righteous. While justification must be distinguished from sanctification, it is inseparable from it. Justification has logical priority over sanctification but not chronological priority. 65

In recent Evangelical theory, G. C. Berkouwer and Donald Bloesch, following in the Calvinist tradition, have essentially agreed with Barth. The difference is that justification is monergistic where by faith we simply submit and receive God's declaration of righteousness while we are called to cooperate in the process of our sanctification. 66

In conclusion, the church's proclamation must not separate faith from faithfulness. Habakkuk's concept of trust as covenant faithfulness must be seen as a very real aspect of a Pauline theology of justification. Paul would be disturbed to find that in much preaching faith is improperly emphasized almost to the exclusion of faithful works. If we join faith and faithfulness in our preaching, we shall not fail to see God's blessing. Of all preaching, what is usually called revival or decisional preaching can be the most dangerous, if not the most mischievous, because it tends to neglect the aspects of holiness and perseverance as necessary for a proper understanding of Paul's teaching on justification by faith and its related emphasis on covenant faithfulness.

Conclusion

We have attempted to search out the meaning of Paul's concept of justification by faith. We have seen that Paul uses the quote from the prophet Habakkuk to express his concept of faith. For Paul, the meaning of faith and faithfulness are synonymous. The meaning of faith must include the idea of ongoing or continuous faith. Protestant theology has largely shaded Paul's meaning by reading the text through the eyes of Melancthon. Melancthon separated faith from faithfulness. Even though this approach was challenged by

Puritans and Pietists, including Edwards, Wesley and Whitefield, it nevertheless has continued to dominate Protestant approaches to Pauline theology. The author himself was one who was guilty of such a reading of Paul. This essay marks a paradigm shift in our thinking and we trust that it will be helpful for others who have tended to separate the Biblical concepts of faith and faithfulness and the theological themes of justification and sanctification. Justification must be distinguished from sanctification, but it is nevertheless inseparable from it.

Endnotes

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2S. L. Johnson, Jr., "The Gospel That Paul Preached." *BSac* 128 (1971). 327.

3G. J. Zemek, "Interpretive Challenges Relating to Habakkuk 2:4b," *GTJ* 1:1 (1980), 43.

4Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1978). 226.

5C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 1:100.

6W. H. Brownlee, *The Text of Habakkuk in the Ancient Commentary from Qumran* (JBLMS 11; Philadelphia: SBL, 1959), 44-45. The problem is discussed more extensively in Brownlee, "The Placard Revelation of Habakkuk," *JBL* 82 (1963), 322ff; J. A. Emerton, "The Textual and Linguistic Problems of Habakkuk II. 4-5," *JTS* 28 (1977), 10ff.; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 272-73 outlines the various ways that the LXX witnesses position the possessive mou with dikaios; concerning the mou of the LXX, it "could mean either 'because of my (sc. God's) faithfulness' or 'because of his faith in me' " says Cranfield, *Romans*, I. 100.

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11D. E. Gowan, *The Triumph of Faith in Habakkuk*, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976), 41.

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15O. Michel, "Faith," *NIDNTT*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1975); I, 597.

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30R. Bultmann, “DIKAIOSYNE THEOU,” *JBL* 83 (1964), 12ff.

31Cranfield, *Romans*, 1, 99.

32Murray J. Harris, “Appendix: Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament,” *NIDNTT*, 3. 1189.

33J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), I, 32. Cf. Ibid., “From Faith to Faith,” in Appendix II, pp. 363ff. and the discussion of a view similar to Barth in: T. F. Torrance, “One Aspect of the Biblical Conception of Faith,” *Expository Times*, 68 (1957). 111-114.

34This question has been dealt with in my recent discussion, David Dockery, “Romans 7:14-25: Pauline Tension in the Christian Life,” *GTJ* 2 (1981), 239-257.

35Cf. Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1980), 415-22.

36Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 128ff. has attempted to show that the declarative sense rests on the verbal *dikaioo*, while the ethical or behavioral interpretation rests on the noun or adjectival form. Also See Cranfield, *Romans*, 94-95.

37Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, 417.

38Ibid., 419.

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40Kasemann, *Romans*, 30-31.

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43J. Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 119ff. notes that Paul's use in *Romans* conclusively means to declare righteous.

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62Cf. Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, IVP, 1979) and Richard Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather* (Washington: Christian University Press, 1979).

63Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helican Press, 1966), IV, 207.

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65Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), IV, 2, 507.

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PIETY AND POVERTY IN JAMES

by

Robert Lee Williams

M. Dibelius insisted that “James has no ‘theology.’”¹ Nevertheless, in his discussion of “ethos” we read,

Clearly some trains of thought emerge which-without any artificial construction-combine to form an animated and characteristic unity. Without doubt, what is stressed the most is the piety of the Poor and the accompanying opposition to the rich and to the world.²

Scholarship on James has made great strides since Dibelius, but that claim from 1920, unlike most other important ones in the work, has never been seriously contested. Two outstanding commentators of recent years, while correcting certain of Dibelius’ perspectives, have proceeded to build on his enunciation of the rich-poor issue in the letter. S. Laws places the issue first among “the characteristic ideas and interests of James.”³ P. Davids considers it not only a theological issue⁴ but also the entire basis for a *Sitz im Leben* of the letter.⁵ It remains unclear what kind of issue it is. Whether ethos, piety, ideas and interests, or theology, the issue of the poor and the rich is a major one in James.

How then shall we approach it to bring some clarity to the discussion and hopefully thereby to bring the discussion into more direct relevance to our own lives? We shall consider the matter from a viewpoint that some have called “social history.” Such an approach will address the issue less in terms of the above labels and more in terms of the actual use of the letter by some writer for some group(s). Thereby we shall sense the force of the letter with respect to the economic question and grasp how the writer and the addressees were oriented to that question.

The procedure will consist of three parts. First, we shall re-examine the question of the letter’s setting. Then we shall analyze the passages relevant to the piety and poverty question on the basis of the revised understanding of the setting. Finally we shall describe the writer’s overall perspective on piety and poverty emerging from the passages as a whole in light of their historical setting.

I. The Setting of the Letter

In 1970 F. O. Francis assumed to be correct “the general view that James lacks situational immediacy.”⁶ This view has proved to be both imprecise and misleading. By 1980 S. Laws considered it “reasonable” to conclude that the teaching on rich and poor constituted a “real concern of the author” and his concern was “not shared by the Christian group he knows most intimately.”⁷ Two years later P. Davids insisted, “The epistle will reflect the *Sitz im Leben* of its place of publication.”⁸ However, Davids can elucidate in prudence only a “general situation” for the epistle from the “late 40s and early 50s.”⁹ By contrast, this writer thinks that evidence can deliver more on the promise of knowing the setting of James in two respects.

The Situation of the Writer

First, R. P. Martin has carefully crafted a “tentative hypothesis” for the writing of James that has not absolute historical certainty, but genuine historical probability.¹⁰ He observes that Josephus’ account of events surrounding the death of James in 62 A.D. (Ant. 20.197-203) corresponds to the socio-economic orientation of the letter of James. Josephus records that from 59 A.D. the aristocratic high priests oppressed the lower priests by withholding their Temple wages. The lower priests, then, were inclined to support the militant Zealots and sicarii (20.180-81).¹¹ James’ letter, in turn, teaches support for the poor, who could have included Jewish Christian priests (Acts 6:7), over against the rich (Jas.1:27; 2:1-9,15-16; 5:1-6), as well as patient waiting for God rather than responding with violence in times of stress (1:2-4, 19-21; 2:11-13; 3:13-4:4; 5:7-11).¹² In short, Martin’s “tentative hypothesis” is sufficiently compelling for us to employ it as a “working hypothesis.”

Furthermore, we can clarify the hypothesis on the matter of when the letter of James was written. If the letter can reasonably be seen to address circumstances in Jerusalem beginning in 59 A.D., was it written before James’ death or after his death as a counsel of moderation in his name? Placing the writing shortly before his death in 62 A.D. has the merit of offering a plausible explanation for two somewhat conflicting comments by Josephus in connection with James’ death. He notes that James was charged with “breaking the law” (Ant. 20.200). Then he adds that those who were “the most fair-minded and who were strict in observance of the law” strongly disapproved and took extraordinary steps to have deposed the high priest Ananus, who was responsible for James’ death (20.201-3).

What is behind the charge of James’ breaking the law? If we suppose with Martin that the charge against James arose from his contact with Paul at the time of Paul’s arrest (Acts 21:18, 23-24, 27-33),¹³ we encounter two difficulties. The first is Paul’s arrest was in 57 or 58 A.D., several years before James’ death in 62. The second is that if James had been closely linked with Paul by the Jerusalem believers “all zealous for the law” (21:20; cf. the Pharisee believers in 15:6), those described similarly by Josephus, “strict in observance of the law” (Ant. 20.201), would probably not have reacted so strongly against Ananus.

An alternative basis for the charge is the letter of James. While the letter would seem to us not to violate the Mosaic Law, the aristocratic high

priests might find it much more questionable. Would it not violate their sense of the law to read of the rich fading away (Jas. 1:11) or of no distinction to be made between themselves and those in filthy clothing (2:1-4) or of the rich oppressing the poor in the court and committing blasphemy (2:6-7) or of the rich as facing judgment soon (5:1-6)? Such perspectives would probably make James the same intolerable political liability to the Sadducean aristocracy as his brother Jesus (cf. Matt. 23) and the radical Hellenistic Jew Stephen (cf. Acts 7:51-53) were to Sanhedrins three decades earlier. Furthermore, the strong objections from the city's conservatives suggest that James was not guilty of breaking the law according to their "strict" understanding of it (*Ant.* 20.201). 14

In connection with Martin's hypothesis then we have evidence for understanding the letter of James as precipitating James' death and therefore for dating the letter not long before his death in 62 A.D.

Communication with the Addressees

The second respect in which we can know more about the setting of the letter of James concerns the addressees.

Discussion of addressees has been stymied in large part by the seemingly conflicting data of a Christian author, "servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ," alongside Jewish addressees, "the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (1:1). Davids therefore limits his projected findings accordingly, "The epistle will reflect the *Sitz im Leben* of its place of publication, not that of its 'recipients.'" "15 While the foregoing analysis does indeed reflect conditions in Jerusalem rather than among the addressees, evidence is available on communication between Jerusalem and Jewish groups around the Mediterranean. This evidence will shed light on why the concerns in this letter were not just delivered as a Christian homily in Jerusalem but were written down and sent around the Mediterranean. We shall ascertain first what contact James had with non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem, then how the letter would be sent, and finally why the letter was sent.

First, James' contact with non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem. Having discovered the historical situation which probably underlies the writing of the letter, we can interpret the addressees in a more Jewish sense, a more natural sense. We propose that the Jewish Christian James addressed his letter to Jews throughout the Diaspora. The avoidance of such a possibility by scholars has apparently been related less to NT usage than to an inability to conceive of such contact between Christian Jews and non-Christian Jews. The "twelve tribes" are mentioned prior to James only in Q (Matt. 19:28//Luke 22:30) and probably constituted for Jews a traditional OT term for their ethnic group, literal Israel, at least prior to Luke's using it. 16 Similarly, the term "Dispersion" has no necessarily Christian reference. 17

While the inability of scholars to conceive of friendly contact between Christian and non-Christian Jews is understandable in light of the NT record of Jewish opposition to the Christian movement, that general perspective need not close our minds to evidence to the contrary. Davids has acknowledged James' role as a mediating figure in the tension between conservative Jewish Christians and supporters of Paul. 18 He fails to take seriously evidence of a similar role for James in the Jerusalem community as a whole, Christian and non-Christian. It is customarily discounted as gross

exaggeration when Hegesippus records that Jewish leaders killed James because of concern that “the whole people were in danger of looking for Jesus as the Messiah” from the Jewish Christian leader’s influence (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.10). However, Josephus, as we saw earlier, insisted from a more objective point of view that a very influential group of citizens was extremely upset at the action against James and “some others” (Ant. 20.200-201). 19 It is reasonable to consider that this influential group with sympathy for James consisted to some extent, and perhaps totally, of non-Christian Jews. Martin aptly characterizes James’ mediating role from reading his letter in light of the tensions in Jerusalem in 62 A.D.

May we propose that in James we meet a leader caught in a very delicate position and trying to effect a *modus vivendi* between opposing factions? He was in declared sympathy with the needy priests, whether Jewish or messianic, and championed their cause. On the other side, he opposed the Zealot manifesto of violent lawbreaking, murder and hatred. 20

Thus far we have seen evidence for his friendly relations with the significant elements of the Jerusalem non-Christian community during the period of increasing difficulties in the city beginning in the late 50s.²¹ Now we turn to the question of how letters were sent to Jewish communities around the Mediterranean. A body of information on communication links between Jerusalem and Diaspora Jewish centers has been largely ignored. H. Vogelstein informs us in general that “fully authorized messengers” (Heb. *seliah*, Gr. *apostolos*) moved regularly in two directions among Jews, from Jerusalem to the Diaspora communities and from those communities to Jerusalem. 22 NT evidence of such emissaries from the Jerusalem Jewish establishment is found in Paul’s trip to Damascus with letters from the high priest to the synagogues for arrest of Christians (Acts 9:1-2; cf. 28:21). James could transmit letters the same way (15:22-23). Regarding the importance of these envoys in Judaism, S. Safrai has drawn attention to the fact that they were often leading figures who preached, resolved halakic problems, inspected facilities, and collected money. 23 This pattern indicates that letters were delivered to Jewish synagogues by official emissaries from the high priest and to Christian congregations by official representatives of James.

Furthermore, we get the impression that to some extent the high priest and James were interacting with the same Diaspora groups, the same local synagogues. 24 In the 30s Paul certainly expected to find Jewish Christians around the synagogues in Damascus (Acts 9:1-2). In Antioch the Jewish synagogues are the most likely locations for the Jewish Christians (11:19). Luke considered it Paul’s custom to preach in synagogues (17:1-2), but also to leave when his message was resisted (13:43-46; 14:1-6; 18:4-7; 19:8-9). Where the social situation was disagreeable, we may assume that most of Paul’s converts, though not necessarily all of them, left the synagogue and started a new group in a house (18:7-8; cf. 14:23; 19:9-10). Where no such difficulty developed, the Christians presumably continued to meet in the synagogues (13:5; 17:10-14, 17). Other mission work may have resulted in less disagreement and therefore left the Christians in the local synagogues. Such seems to have occurred in Antioch (11 :20-36; cf. Gal. 2: 11 -12). Peter’s mission work may have followed this pattern (Gal. 2:7; cf. 1 Cor. 1:12). The four groups

not identified as churches in Rome may also still be part of synagogue congregations (Rom.16:10-11,14-15; cf. Heb.10:24-25, possibly to Roman Christians). The result of this data is that a number of synagogues from Antioch to Rome probably had both Christian and non-Christian Jews 25 and therefore maintained some communication with both the high priest and James in Jerusalem. 26

In the stylized language, we find, contrary to other commentators, indication that James is addressing a synagogue not limited to Christian Jews but containing both Christian and non-Christian Jews. In Jas. 2:7 the phrase “the good name called upon you” is unique in the NT but is found referring to Yahweh in prophetic contexts of the LXX, including Amos 9:11 quoted in its LXX version by this James at the Jerusalem Council according to Luke (Acts 15:17). Truly Laws observes, “Were the epistle to be taken as originally a Jewish writing, that idea (‘the good name called upon you’) would be understood here.” 27 We need only add that the Jewish Christian, being a Jew, would identify with the term just as easily, even though he would relate the “name” to Jesus as well as Yahweh. 28 E. Haupt stated long ago, “Palestinian Christianity externally still remained within the confines of Judaism, and therefore continued to adhere to the legal regulations of this religion.” 29 In effect, Haupt’s comment on Palestinian Christianity seems to apply to Christianity in the Diaspora to a greater degree than has been noticed.

That James’ letter was composed for such Diaspora audiences is suggested by its literary form. Davids cites W. W. Wessel as establishing long ago that James’ so-called “diatribe” style is in fact the style of a Jewish synagogue homily. 30 Such a homily would presumably be delivered by the official bearer as a “word of exhortation” in a synagogue service such as we see in Acts 13:14-41 (cf. Heb. 13:22).

Why, then, did James write his letter to the Diasporic synagogues? We have accepted as a working hypothesis Martin’s proposal that the letter reflects James’ concern for the needy priests and his opposition to any use of force to rectify the injustice of the priestly aristocracy in Jerusalem around 60 A.D. His interest in relating this message to synagogues in the Diaspora is related to the ongoing communication we have found to exist between Jerusalem and the synagogues. He evidently wants to apply to the synagogue congregations some lessons he has learned in the recent past. Since about 59 A.D. there has been growing tension in Jerusalem. The Diaspora synagogues, in their ongoing contact with Jerusalem, will not be immune to the basic problems. From seeing the corruption of the priestly aristocracy, he counsels against deference to the wealthy (Jas. 2:1-13). His sympathy for the unpaid priests leads him to promise exaltation and vindication of the lowly (1:9; 2:5; 5:9). In light of increasing militancy he counsels against all violence as well as the attitudes that lead to it (4:1-2; 5:7-9). We shall now examine the specific sections on piety and poverty in the letter.

II. The Sections on Piety and Poverty

The foregoing perspective on the setting and purpose sheds light on the structure of the letter. Francis has drawn attention to a “double opening statement” in Hellenistic letters. 31 Following this “tendency to repeat topics in the opening verses,” “these themes . . . are subsequently developed in

the body of the epistle.” 32 He found this pattern in James and was thereby the first to propose a structural unity for the letter. The themes introduced in James’ “double opening statement” (Jas. 1:2-11, 12-25) are three: testing (1:2-4,12-18), wisdom-words (1:5-8,19-21), and poor-rich (1:9-11,22-25). 33 Interrelating the three themes, he notes that testing constitutes “the fundamental issue that underlies the development” of the other two themes in the body, rich and poor (2:1-26) and wisdom and words (3:1-5:6). 34 Davids then modifies this analysis of 3:1-5:6. Quite properly, and helpfully for the needs of this study, he limits the section on wisdom and words to 3:1-4:12 and entitles 4:13-5:6 “testing through wealth.” 35 This modification clarifies the “testing” theme as fundamental by not only beginning each part of the double introduction with it (1:2-4, 12-18) but also concluding the body with it (4:13-5:6).

If we are correct in placing the writing of this letter in the context of James’ difficulties coming from two sides in Jerusalem subsequent to 59 A.D., the three topics isolated by Francis take on a historical identity corresponding to their literary unity. The fundamental issue of testing in the letter corresponds to the stressful character of life as James had been experiencing it in Jerusalem. The other two topics correspond to the two kinds of difficulties he had found to be causing the stress. In the topic of rich and poor James offers a Christian interpretation that the rich oppress the poor. While the particular oppressors and oppressed of his society, the two socioeconomic classes of priests, are not named, careful exegesis of the relevant passages will show that their situation underlies James’ choice of material. In discussing the topic of wisdom and words, the author seems to be giving a Christian analysis of how violence comes about, from wisdom and words emanating from the “evil impulse” (4:1,3). 36 Again, while the militant Zealots are not mentioned, their mentality is clearly reflected in his criticism of wisdom and speech promoting violence as a means of accomplishing the divine purpose. Then in the concluding topic of testing, perhaps regarding both speech and wealth (see n. 35 above), James offers a jarring Christian perspective on what those not under stress are truly facing. He makes no mention of the aristocratic priests, but, we shall find again, their lifestyle underlies his comments.

If we are correct in interpreting this letter’s structure as reflecting, albeit in generalized ways, the two problems James saw “tempting” or “testing” people in his society, and the third problem of imminent “testing” which the secure in society were not aware of facing, we can determine which passages to examine closely for information on our subject of piety and poverty. We shall focus on chap. 2 for James’ attention to the poor and 5:1-6 for attention to the rich. Meanwhile, since James introduces his concerns with a double opening statement containing his themes, we do well to begin our study with his two comments of introduction on piety, poverty, and wealth (1:9-11,22-25), as well as the second half of his transitional comment (1:27) between the introduction and the major section on the poor in the body of the letter.

1:9-11, 22-25-Introduction

In these two preliminary statements James consoles the poor person with eschatological gain and threatens the rich person with eschatological loss.

In 1:9-11 he commands “the humbled brother” to boast in his exaltation and “the rich person” to boast in his humiliation. The command constitutes a promise of “reversal of fortune” by James to each category of persons, similar to the aphorism of Jesus in Q, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14). 37 That society is here divided along economic lines is evident from use of the term “rich.” The writer expresses solidarity with the poor man, as a “brother.” At the same time, his statement to the rich man is the much more emphatic of his two messages. He devotes one line to exaltation of the poor and five lines to the humiliation of the rich. The warning is made on the basis of comparing the brevity of man’s life to that of grass, a proverbial perspective with OT parallels (Ps. 103:15-16; Isa. 40:6-7). It is therefore a reversal at death about which the author is writing. This passage then suggests that the letter will devote more space to criticism of the rich than to comfort of the poor. Here “his emphasis is firmly on the fate of the rich.” 38 Accordingly, we shall find this first passage of the introduction to relate most closely to 5:1-6, where James launches an extended, scathing attack on the rich.

The second statement of the general piety and poverty theme in the introduction arises in 1:22-25. Being “doers of the word and not hearers only” is found to continue discussion of “reversals” in connection with Jesus’ teaching. On the Jewish debate over hearing and doing (‘Abot 1:17; 5:14) 39 James is expressing the firmly held position of his brother Jesus (Matt. 23:2-3; cf. 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49), a position regarding which he attacked “the scribes and the Pharisees” (Matt. 23:2), his religious opponents in the Jewish establishment. James is issuing a warning to the religious, here his “beloved brothers” (Jas. 1:19) in the synagogue audiences. This warning he develops by a contrast. The one who only hears ends up “deceived” by himself instead of “blessed.” The process of self deception, employing the mirror symbolism, indicates that the one who only hears fails to “persevere” in accordance with “his true self.” Perseverance means submitting to the ethical demand of the gospel (1:21). 40 One who so fails to persevere will lose the eschatological, perhaps also experiential, 41 “blessing” of “wholeness” and “freedom” he expects from the law. As 1:9-11 on the poor and the rich relates closely to 5:1-6 about the gross mistreatment of the poor by the rich, so 1:22-25 to James’ beloved Jewish brothers is a preliminary warning related to 2:1-13 and 2:14-26, two extended warnings on heeding the needs of the poor.

1:27 - Transition

The writer has promised eschatological benefits to the poor. He identifies with them and urges them in their present plight to live in light of their future hope. The writer has at the same time promised the rich eschatological reversal. He then issues a warning to his synagogue addressees to heed the actions, implicitly ethical, called for by God’s word. The transitional section 1:26-27, specifically 1:27, the second verse, makes this ethical requirement explicit.

James requires of his listeners that worship of God be expressed in attention to the “defenceless.” 42 Certain people are clearly “religious” in cultic activity 43 That practice cannot be considered valid, however, unless it is “pure and undefiled,” ethically legitimate. 44 The specific “to visit orphans

and widows in their affliction” was such a common OT perspective that our author is probably employing it as typical of God’s more general concern to secure legal rights and material provisions for any “socially disadvantaged.” 45 Furthermore, NT use of the term “affliction” (thlipsis) in reference to endtime difficulties 46 link the trials of the helpless in his society with the matters to be reversed for the humbled brother (1 :9). In thus reinforcing concern for the poor, the writer makes clear that his ethical concern that “hearers” also be “doers” (1:22-25) is an exhortation to his “beloved brothers” (1:19), the Jews, Christian and non-Christian, in the Diaspora synagogues for the self-sufficient to be diligent to keep track of, and provide for, the needs of those not self-sufficient, as one would do with “brothers” of one’s own family (1:9).

Meanwhile, the fact that James cites typical OT figures, practically proverbial, rather than contemporary individuals suggests that he wanted “a consciously ‘Biblical’ situation” that would apply broadly, “pointedly evocative of a whole tradition of divine judgment on injustice.” 47 This transitional verse shows James’ concern in 1:22-25 to be for the unprotected, equivalent to the humbled in 1:9, and leads directly into 2:1-7, his first major warning to his addresses to heed the needs of these unprotected and relates directly to 2:14-17, the subsequent major warning of a similar kind.

2:1-7-Social Dignity for the Poor

We have found that James sympathizes with the poor, condemns the rich, and warns his synagogue “brothers.” Becoming more specific, he urges this last group, his audience, to be attentive to the needs of the unprotected among them. These needs can be differentiated as social and economic. At this point the writer elaborates on the social need, the importance of guarding the social dignity of the poor.

The writer describes a situation in which such “brothers” as he is addressing sin against a poor person who comes into their “synagogue,” an assembly of the Jews. Their sin is one of social discrimination in favoring a rich man also visiting the assembly. 48 While not an actual instance the example used by the writer must bear some relation to his readers’, or hearers’, reality. 49 Such a situation is readily found in the high priest’s aristocratic emissaries’ arriving for a visit at a Diasporic synagogue. 50

Certainly James’ own emissaries, presumably not persons of wealth, carried this letter and would be the ones delivering these words to James’ synagogue addressees. Knowing this, we can understand the immediate relevance of this initial example on the hearers. 51 James condemns the assembly’s action initially on the general principle of anti-discrimination in the OT (2:1, 4; Lev. 19:15) but subsequently and more importantly on the ground of choosing differently from God when they use their judgment (2:5-7). In 2:5-6a the listeners hear that God has made a decision actually favoring the poor, whereas the assembly’s action has moved in the opposite direction “dishonoring” the poor. The plain implication is that the assembly ought to treat the poor in a manner that corresponds to God’s perspective toward the poor. R. B. Ward has shown that the poor are here being considered “brothers” with the synagogue group. 52 The poor should receive honor in the congregation. God has selected that economic group 53 for eschatological benefits to which he alluded in 1:9. The first beatitude in its Lukan form

(6:20), that the poor have the kingdom, lies close to James' thought. "Rich in faith" refers to their future economic status upon actual inheritance of "the kingdom," not to the quality of their faith. 54 Their attitude toward God is expressed, instead, by the term "love." 55 So James is making the painful observation that Diasporic synagogue practice runs counter to God in dishonoring the very ones that God has destined, already, for honor in the future society for those devoted to Him. The observation is reinforced in 2:8-9 by placing the poor person into the OT category of "neighbor." James could make this connection from the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), associating the neighbor with a person in grave need (though with a curious twist, v.36), illustrating the OT command to love one's neighbor as oneself (Luke 10:27; cf. Lev.19:18). The same connection, however, could be found in the OT (Prov. 14:21). Classifying the poor person as neighbor made discrimination against him not just "ridiculous" from a logical standpoint but Biblically "a transgression." 56 Nothing less than one's love of the poor person as oneself will do. Only this understanding of the "royal law" (2:8), the "law of the kingdom" 57 to love one's neighbor is commensurate with the standards of the "kingdom" promised to those who love God (2:5). The clear indication, now in legal (or Biblical) terms as well as logical terms, is that the synagogue members could end up more than embarrassed in, positively excluded from, that royal society. They will be judged without mercy because of their lack of mercy for the poor (2:13a).

In 2:6b-7 James turns from inappropriate negative behavior toward the poor in light of God's perspective to inappropriate positive behavior toward the rich in view of a history of being victimized by the rich. The rich are known to make life difficult for the synagogue in two ways, economically and socially with the surrounding culture. The rich oppress the synagogue society, here James' "beloved brothers" (2:5), not the poor, by legal court action. Such legal oppression for financial benefit was common in the OT, which is behind the thought here. 58 If the letter was written from Jerusalem in the early 60s, the high priest, who collected tithes by an unjust method in Judea (Ant. 20.181), may have had a similar approach to milking the Diaspora synagogues for taxes. Just as this practice would have been implemented by the high priest's envoys, 59 in turn word could get back to James through his own envoys. Resulting from the economic injustice is the second problem caused by the rich. The reputation of the Jews' God Yahweh, along with their own reputation as Jews, was tainted among the surrounding pagan populace by such scandalous practices being perpetrated by Jewish leaders on their synagogue members.

We conclude that the stylized example and the traditional language show not that the writer is unacquainted with the synagogue settings he is addressing but that he seems to be generalizing from information he has about them and is clearly invoking OT prophetic terminology to convey what he considers to be God's disapproval of the synagogue activities.

This passage is the first of two in the body of the letter to address a warning to the synagogue audience about the importance of helping the poor. This warning is an immediate outgrowth of the introductory warning on being doers and not hearers only in 1:22-25 and the subsequent explanatory transition in 1:27 showing that doers' attention must be on the unprotected. The next passage we consider, 2:14-17, complements 2:1-7.

2:14-17-Material Help for the Poor

Having addressed the social dignity of the poor in 2:1-7, the writer considers the economic matter, the material needs of the poor, in 2:14-17. While James constructs another hypothetical scene with stylized description of a person in need in 2:15, commentators agree on some continuity between the poor man with shabby clothing in 2:2 and the brother or sister lacking food and clothing in the present passage. Laws is probably correct in appraising the situation as one not of utter destitution but of ordinary poverty that could too easily be dismissed. 60 The one with words of comfort is not ignoring the poor one. The passive voice commands in 2:16 constitute prayer to God for the person in need. 61 In 2:19 the belief that God is one probably refers to James' hearers as reciting the Shema of Deut. 6:4. 62 James nevertheless voices strong and repeated disapproval of this relationship to God. The hearer must learn from Abraham 63 and Rahab the importance of "works" of hospitality (2:21-23, 25). The person's faith is of no profit, it cannot save him (v. 14); it is of no profit (v. 16); it is dead (v. 17), useless and dead (v. 20)!

This stern warning is not James' message for the rich. It is directed to all those the author considers "brothers" (2:14), those in the Diasporic synagogues listening to his message. The warning is not because of the writer's displeasure with certain social classes. It is because of his concern, which he considers a reflection of God's concern, for the poor. James' point is thus reminiscent of his brother's parable of sheep and goats (Matt.25:31-46). Jesus insists that destiny for "eternal punishment" or "eternal life" is determined strictly by whether or not individuals have performed charitable deeds "for one of the least of these brothers of mine." Presence or absence of such charitable deeds will be the Son of man's single consuming concern when he "comes in his glory."

This second section of chap. 2, making it imperative to provide for the material needs of the poor, completes the first section, which requires granting to the poor the same acceptance one would accord his "neighbor." Both of the passages grow out of 1:22-25, 27 warning his listeners to be "doers" in attending to the unprotected. We now shift to a different focus on the poor, an expose on the exploitation of the poor by the rich in 5:1-6.

5:1-6 Condemnation of the Rich

This section is an expansion on the reversal of fortune promised in the first of our two introductory passages on the poor (1:9-11). 5:1-6 alludes to why God plans to exalt the humbled and humble the exalted. In Davids' structural analysis this section is the second and last of the third major unit 4:13-5:6, in the body of the letter. The unit focuses on greed and explores two ways that his addressees are tested because of wealth. 64 In our particular section those being tested are unjustly treated employees of the rich. 65 The employees are evidently considered "brothers" with whom those addressed in the synagogue communities (5:7) could identify. 66 As before (1:10; 2:6), the rich, by contrast, are not considered part of the community of "brothers."

This section does not concern the poor as primarily an economic class it concerns the unjustly treated, a legal class. However, what the writer says here tells us a cause of poverty, indeed the only cause that he mentions in the letter, and therefore a reason, perhaps the only reason, for God's sensitivity to the plight of the poor. As a result, the section indicates much about the historical basis for the poverty and the theological basis of God's sympathy for the poor evident earlier in the letter.

Again we find a setting of traditional material, powerful landowners withholding wages of their day-laborers (5:4). Here more than usual the language "appears to be consciously archaized or 'Biblicised'" probably in order "to add particular force to his general argument" in some relation to his addressees.⁶⁷ From our earlier findings based on Martin's hypothesis this agrarian setting probably had its inspiration in the crisis created by the wealthy Jerusalem priests' withholding wages. The use of a traditional setting is attributable in part to the Jerusalem problem's not being directly relevant to the Diasporic synagogues (though indirectly, as we discussed above regarding 2:6b-7) and in part to the writer's subsuming under a single memorable picture, a "traditional class of oppressor,"⁶⁸ the variety of forms that worker exploitation may have taken among the Jews of the Diaspora. Whereas in 2:6b-7 the wealthy exploited synagogue members legally through the court system, here they defraud illegally (5:4), outside the courts, evidently simply because they are powerful enough to get away with it.

The writer reserves his most scathing denunciation for this situation. The rich, as rich, are unrighteous! "Miseries" are coming upon them (5:1). The reasons are numerous and are stated vividly. As in Jesus' parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21) the rich man's assets are temporal (Jas. 5:2-3) and therefore "essentially valueless."⁶⁹ Moreover, in similarity to Jesus' recommendation of spending one's assets for "heaven" (Matt. 6:19-21), the assets here, which "could have been used by the poor," are, because they are stored, "being withheld from the service which God intended them."⁷⁰ Therefore, they "will be evidence against you" (Jas. 5:3). Third, and worse than the lack of generosity, is the fact that the wealth constitutes ill-gotten gain. The wages of laborers were "withheld" (v. 4), presumably "with intent to defraud."⁷¹ This action has resulted in frantic cries from these workers in their desperate straits, and God is careful to hear and, in view of "Lord Sabaoth" from Isaiah 5, is poised to respond with swift judgment. Fourth, the writer bitterly contrasts with the impoverished workers the sumptuous life of the rich (Jas. 5:5), comparable to Jesus' rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The rich have unwittingly prepared themselves for "a day of slaughter" in eschatological judgment. Finally, to this threat the writer appends the charge that the rich are responsible for illegitimate legal action against, and even deaths of, righteous people (Jas. 5:6; cf. 2:6). Certainly perversion of the justice system by the rich was part of OT prophetic complaint. Indeed, "murder" from starvation would seem to refer more to how bad oppression could become rather than to how bad it actually was in the writer's situation.⁷² However, Josephus records that among the poorer priests whose wages were withheld starvation did in fact occur during the period in which we are placing this letter. The high priests' slaves received "the tithes that were due to the priests, with the result that the poorer priests starved to death. Thus did the violence of the contending

factions suppress all justice” (Ant. 20.181). In summary, “he (James) presents the rich as the traditional enemies of God and of his innocent people.” 73 5:1-6, at the end of the body of the letter, thereby affords us, in its stylized way, a historical explanation for the promised reversals of fortune in 1:9-11, located somewhat chiasmatically in the earlier half of the letter’s introduction.

This “sharp, cutting cry of prophetic denouncement” 74 is not a warning to the rich, only a vitriolic condemnation of them. As such, however, we can readily understand it also as a warning to the “brothers” of the synagogue about what real dangers to expect from association with the rich. We earlier identified the wealthy visitor in 2:2 with the high priest’s envoy. In light of the apparently specific reference to the same group in the killing of the righteous man in 5:6, we can interpret 5:1-6 to be a veiled but vicious denunciation of the high priestly aristocracy who were oppressors of the people. It was therefore the most serious warning from James in Jerusalem to the Diaspora synagogues for them to dissociate themselves from such godless corruption, albeit corruption in the form of religious leadership at the highest levels in Judaism. If our historical hypothesis is correct, the great influence held by the high priestly aristocracy explains the writer’s choosing to employ traditional OT prophetic language which denounces corrupt religious leaders in league with the governmental and commercial power brokers of the society. 75

Meanwhile, 5:1-6 makes clear to us that a historical cause of poverty is the rich man, specifically the rich man’s lack of generosity in redistributing his wealth (v. 3), and his callous and corrupt business practices with his employees, who have less influence in society (vv. 4, 6).

This brings us to an understanding of why God watches over the poor with such singlemindedness. It is not because of a nobility in poverty. On the contrary, poverty seems to be a compromised state with little to commend it except perhaps for inclining a person more urgently to God in desperation (5:4). God’s interest is also not based on the poor person’s exceptional piety as is often thought in connection with “the poor” coming to have a connotation of “the pious” in OT developments. 76 Instead, the source of God’s interest in the poor seems to be God’s righteousness. 77 His preoccupation with the poor seems to stem from his obsessive concern for people who are being denied their due. The defrauded employees are “innocent” and have not resisted their oppressor (v. 6). Instead they have cried out to God (v. 4) who will “resist” the oppressor on their behalf. “God is the God who secures the rights of those who have no hope.” 78 This is the reason we find Him intent to reverse their fortunes (1:9), to provide them human support (1:27), both in social status (2:6) and material help (2:15-16), to select them for His future society (2:5), and to avenge every cruelty meted out to them in their positions of inferiority (5:4).

III. James’ Perspective

James’ overall perspective on piety and poverty, which evidently reflects the critical situation in Jerusalem around 60 A.D. and addresses his fellow Jews in the Diaspora synagogues of that time around the Mediterranean, deserves to be synthesized in a social scenario in view of its continuing relevance.

The synthesis consists of three categories of people, the poor man, the rich man, and the synagogue member. The situation logically begins with the rich man. He unfairly withholds an employee's wage (5:4). The employee, taking no steps to resist the employer (5:6), is thrown into poverty through no fault of his own. He is innocent of any wrongdoing (5:6). If it were not for such actions by employers, or other wealthy people who utilize the court system to take control of others' assets legally but unjustly (2:6; 5:6), there would be no poor. The unscrupulous, but often legal, actions of the rich are the only causes that James, from his perspective in Jerusalem (Ant. 20.180-81), relates. The employee thrown into poverty in some cases dies of starvation (5:6). In other cases he appears in a synagogue service (2:2), or perhaps along a street (2:15). In the synagogue he is prone to get a cool reception if there is a wealthy visitor present as well (2:3). The poor man may also be subjected to a display of pious concern by a synagogue member, a concern, however, which evaporates into no relief of the poor man's needs (2:16). The third category of people, the synagogue member whom we have just mentioned, shows great respect for the rich man entering his synagogue (2:3). The obsequiousness to his socio-economic superior contains a bitter irony. The wealthy man has no more compunction about legally defrauding the synagogue member of his property (2:6) than the wealthy man had in withholding his employee's wage (5:4). Adding insult to injury, the synagogue member's God is discredited among his pagan neighbors in the process (2:7).

James responds in the following ways to the three categories of people. He consoles the poor man as a brother (1:9; 2:15) by promising him that God will exalt him in the coming kingdom (1:9; 2:5) at "the parousia of the Lord" (5:7), which may, however, be after death (1:10-11). He can assure the poor man too that God is well aware of the cruel injustice the poor man has experienced and that the perpetrator will pay and will pay in full (5:1-5). God is equally aware of the social indignities the man has suffered (2:3, 6) and the pressing material needs regarding which prayers have been said and then backs have been turned (2:15-16). No special piety is attributed to the poor man, only special treatment from God to compensate for the rich man's exploitative "inhumanity to man."

To the synagogue member James issues warnings as a brother with loving concern (1:19; 2:1, 5, 14; 5:7). In general, the warning is to act in accordance with the message from God that will save him from future judgment (1:21-22). Such action means primarily helping people in need in the Jewish synagogue community (1:27; 2:15-16). The synagogue member must be sensitive both to the social dignity of the poor man (2:2-3,6) and to his material needs (2:15-16). The reason for such attention to the poor, he explains, is God's special focus on them as the special objects of His present concern (5:4, 6) and His future benefits (1:9, 2:5). In addition to warnings to be solicitous toward the helpless, James issues other warnings to be distrustful of the wealthy. They employ unrighteous but legal means to bring even synagogue members to their knees (2:6), just as they do their employees (5:4, 6). They also bring disgrace to the synagogue as a whole (2:7). James warns his brothers overall that they must turn to the poor and away from the rich if they are to escape both temporal disaster and shame (2:6-7) and eternal condemnation (2:13).

To the rich man James issues not warnings but scathing denunciations. He never tells him to turn. He clearly considers him to be set irrevocably in his course of unrighteousness. Never identifying the rich man as a brother, James distances himself from the man. He is content to tell the man that God knows his sins and to promise the offender that God will repay. God

knows of the defrauded wages (5:4) and the unscrupulous court actions (2:6; 5:6), which have ruthlessly driven people into poverty (5:4) and even to death (5:6). God knows too of the rich man's enormous assets, stored (5:2-3) or lavished on himself (5:5) instead of distributed to alleviate need (5:3). Therefore, James counsels as a promise, the rich man shall suffer in the future for all his wrongs (5:1). His present life is simply preparing him as an animal sacrifice (5:5), for a future as painful as fire (5:3). Furthermore, that future will come soon (1:10-11).

We see then that James issues promises to the poor man and to the rich man and warnings to the synagogue member. We find too that while the poor man is not commended for his piety, the synagogue member is warned to turn from his hypocrisy, and the rich man is simply castigated for sins, without any reference to this piety. Presumably, in the perspective of God's righteousness, the piety of the poor man and the rich man pale in comparison to God's compassion for the victimized and God's anger against the perpetrator.

Conclusion

We have found principally three things about the letter of James. First, the letter probably has a determinable and much more specific *Sitz im Leben* for its writing than has been noticed heretofore. Second, the author, seeing the devastation of the poor by the high priestly aristocracy in Jerusalem, wrote the Diasporic Jews to be especially solicitous to the poor with whom they had contact. Indeed, by way of threat, to do less was to incur God's eternal condemnation at the eschatological judgment. Third, he also warned the synagogue community against associating with the rich, by which term, again because of recently deteriorating priestly leadership in Jerusalem, he had primary reference to the high priest's envoys. Compared to the Acts' picture of James as the moderate diplomat, James had perhaps undergone a considerable change of mind about the rich in general, in light of the atrocities in which he had seen the wealthy priests participate. He was quite possibly "radicalized" in the direction of his brother, and Lord, and the result was that he ended up suffering the same fate as well. There may be some truth to Hegesippus' account when he claims from his source 79 that James was killed because the religious establishment considered him too great a political liability (cf. Jesus and Mark 11:18), "The whole people was in danger of looking for Jesus as the Messiah" (Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 2.23.10).

We conclude with an attempt to make clear the kind of issues involved in this study. In terms of the title, the issues are two. James' "piety" is an ethic consisting of the activity of helping those in need. "Poverty," a social state not only of economic destitution but also of social, legal, and psychological problems, is traceable to one social factor, oppression by the wealthy. This ethic of active kindness needed for such a state of social difficulty James has based on a theology, a concept of God's righteousness, which is used to judge all social interaction. The issues involved in the topic of piety and poverty in James therefore consist of human interaction in society, with the result being a bad social state, which is then evaluated by a theology, with the result being an ameliorative ethic.

Notes

1M. Dibelius, James (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 21.

2Ibid. 48.

3S. Laws, The Epistle of James (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980) 26.

4P. Davids, The Epistle of James (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 41-47.

5Ibid. 28-34.

6F. O. Francis, "The Form and Function of the Opening and Closing Paragraphs of James and I John," ZNW 61 (1970) 118.

7Laws, James 9.

8Davids, James 24.

9Ibid. 30, 34.

10R. P. Martin, "The Life-Setting of the Epistle of James in Light of Jewish History," Biblical and Near Eastern Studies (ed. G. A. Tuttle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 97-103. Davids is the only one I have found to have interacted with Martin's proposal. The concern that Martin "appears to take Hegesippus' narrative too seriously" (Davids, James 30 n. 95) seems unwarranted when Martin bases his argument primarily on the earlier evidence of Josephus and Acts and employs Hegesippus only as secondary evidence, and very critically even then (Martin, "Life-Setting" 98-99, 102 n. 14).

11Ibid. 99.

12Ibid. 99-100.

13Ibid. 101 n. 8.

14We have now addressed indirectly the authorship of the letter. The above evidence together with other research on the figure of James and the letter bearing his name leads us to conclude authorship by James or an amanuensis for him during his life. The question of whether a Palestinian Jew could have written the rather good Greek of this letter has been answered in the affirmative, barely, by J. N. Sevenster (Do You Know Greek? Leiden: [Brill, 1968] 3-21, 189-91). Whether James the brother of Jesus in fact had the education to write the letter or instead entrusted it to an amanuensis is impossible to ascertain (Davids, James 13). James' knowledge of his brother's perspectives in the Q material are certainly reflected in the letter (J. Cantinat, Les Épîtres de Saint Jacques et de Saint Jude [Paris: J. Gabalda, 1973] 27-28 n. 16). Also, the perspective on the Torah in the epistle has been reconciled with relevant data about James by Davids' careful sorting out (Davids, James 19-20). The same writer has shown that the connection between Jas. 2:14-26 and Paul is probably apparent rather than real (ibid. 20-21).

15Ibid. 24.

16I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 818.

17Davids, James 64.

18Ibid. 19.

19In a similar vein Luke was of the opinion that conservative Jewish believers already numbered in the thousands in Jerusalem at the time of Paul's arrest (Acts 21:20).

20Martin, "Life-Setting" 100.

21The fact that James' letter was written concerning intra-Jewish problems in the late 50s and early 60s would seem to explain how James 2 could be written after Romans and not in any relation to it. Such an explanation, made possible by Martin's historical hypothesis, is simpler than the early composing and later redacting proposed by Davids (James 12, 16, 22, 34).

22H. Vogelstein, "The Development of the Apostolate in Judaism and Its Transformation in Christianity," *HUCA* 2 (1925) 99, 103, 119.

23S. Safrai, "Relations between the Diaspora and the Land of Israel," *The Jewish People in the First Century* (ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1.208-9.

24J. Adamson (*The Epistle of James* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976] 105) suspected this ten years ago.

25The coexistence of both kinds of Jews makes it easier to understand the surprising phenomenon that the Jewish term "synagogue" and the Christian term "church" appear in the same letter (2:2; 5:14). The synagogue represents for Jew, whether Christian or not, an assembly of the group. By the church is meant only the Christian Jews of the group. Only elders who are Christian Jews can exercise such "eschatological power" (Davids, James 194) for healing.

26The compilation by J. Jeremias (*Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967] 63-71) of Jewish communities in the Diaspora shows that the potential number of synagogues is enormous.

27Laws, James 105.

28Furthermore, thinking in terms of such mixed synagogues eliminates the awkwardness created by trying to interpret the economic terms of rich and poor, which one finds in the text, as religious terms of Christian Jew and non-Christian Jew, which one wants to find in a Christian document. The writing is not, and evidently need not, be so clear to be Christian.

29E. Haupt, *Zum Verstaendnis des Apostolats im Neuen Testament* (Halle, 1896) 126, cited in Vogelstein, "Development" 111.

30W. W. Wessel, "An Inquiry into the Origin, Literary Character, Historical and Religious Significance of the Epistle of James" (Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh, 1953) 71-112, cited in Davids, James 23.

31Francis, "Form" 111. Davids (James 24-29) follows closely Francis' analysis.

32Francis (Form)

33Ibid. 118.

34Ibid.

35Davids, James 28-29. This section should perhaps be further revised to "testing through speech (4:13-18) and wealth (5:1-6)."

36p. H. Davids, "Theological Perspectives on the Epistle of James," JETS 23 (1980) 99-100.

37Cf. the juxtaposed blessings and woes in Luke 6:20-26.

38Laws, James 66.

39Ibid. 85.

40Ibid. 83.

41Ibid. 87.

42Ibid. 89.

43Davids, James 101.

44Ibid. 102.

45Laws, James 89-90. D. J. Roberts ("The Definition of 'Pure Religion' in James 1:27," *ExpTim* 83 [1972] 215-16) finds from a variant reading here the aspect of protection.

46Laws, James 89-90.

47Ibid. 9.

48Whether the assembly is judicial, as R. B. Ward holds ("Partiality in the Assembly: James 2:2-4," *HTR* 62 [1969] 87-97) is not certain. See Adamson (James 105) and Laws (James 101-2). Davids (James 109), however, is convinced by Ward.

49Laws, James 98.

50The stylized character of the account does not cancel its value "as a historical source for actual circumstances." as Dibelius (James 129) claimed.

51The situation is reminiscent of the Corinthian Christians' pandering to the wishes of Jewish visitors who claimed authorization as "apostles of Christ" (2 Cor. 11:13, 20, 22).

52Ward, "Partiality" 94-96.

53The fact that "the poor" became a term for the pious in the OT and subsequently, as Davids (James 111 -12) has noted, does not cancel or dilute the economic meaning here since James refers to the group as "the poor of the world."

54Ibid.

55The statement that “God chose” the poor for an inheritance promised to “those who love him” does not in itself make clear the relative sequence of God’s choosing and man’s love. The context seems to favor God’s choosing first and man’s love afterward.

56Laws, James 107.

57M. L. Smith, “James 2:8,” 7 ExplTim 21 (1910) 329.

58Davids, James 112-13.

59Safrai, “Relations” 209.

60Laws, James 120-21.

61Ibid.

62This is another indication of a Jewish group with both non-Christian and Christian perspectives. If they were all Christian, one could expect a more christological watchword, such as “Jesus is Lord” (1 Cor. 12:3).

63R. B. Ward, “The Works of Abraham: James 2:14-26” HTR 61 (1968) 286-89.

64JDavids, James 26.

65We exclude 4:13-17 from consideration because the discussion of wealth there seems to shed no light on the poor.

66The “brothers” can still be considered a mixture of non-Christian and Christian Jews to whom the Christian writer counsels patience until the “parousia of the Lord” (5:7). It is his hope, not theirs, on which he is drawing for their comfort. What comfort is it, though, for those who are not Christians? Since he foresees the Lord’s parousia as righting all wrongs for the victimized (5:4), he would probably expect his words of eschatological comfort to have an evangelizing effect on the victimized non-Christian Jews (cf. 5:9). Furthermore, it is not unlikely that he anticipates a climactic turning to the Lord by his non-Christian Jewish “brothers” at the time of his return (cf. Paul’s hope in Rom. 11:26). After all, it is well known that Christian Jews were not the only Jews with a messianic expectation in the first century.

67Laws, James 196.

68Davids, James 178.

69Laws, James 198.

70Davids, James 176.

71Laws, James 201.

72Ibid. 205.

73Ibid. 197.

74Davids, James 175.

75It also perhaps explains why he would so often make the same point as his brother Jesus but not use the same story. In a period still before the gospels James may have realized that the stories and comments he would use against the high priestly aristocracy were, in most cases, ones which Jesus employed against Pharisees. Pharisees had become James' main support group, it would seem (Ant. 20.201; Acts 21:20), and his use of stories directed against Pharisees might provoke much offense among them that could be avoided by utilizing ideas from the ancient prophetic texts of the OT.

76Davids, James 111.

77A. Kuschke, "Arm und reich im Alten Testament," ZA W 57 (1939) 56.

78Davids (James 103) considers this to be the theme of chap. 2.

79W. Telfer ("Was Hegesippus a Jew?" HTR 53 [1960] 148-149) has shown that Hegesippus employed here a Jewish Christian document probably written outside Palestine in the period 115-30 A.D.

PREDESTINATION AS TEMPORAL ONLY

by

J. Kenneth Grider

One of the most interesting theological finds I have made in recent years is that God's predestinating of us does not seem to have to do with eternal destiny.

God does indeed predestinate us in certain ways. Six times the word for "to predestinate" is used in the NT. Besides the instances of cognates of that very word "*proorizo*," other "*pro*" words are found in both Testaments which also show that God makes pre-decisions on various matters. And God sometimes makes decrees, even as kings do, according to Scripture. But my recent study suggests that none of these references has to do with our eternal destiny, but only with other matters.

In order to focus on what Scripture teaches on predestination as I have considered the matter of late, perhaps something should first be said about the four views on predestination which have been developed historically, after which I will discuss predestination as I feel it should be taught. The reader who is acquainted with the subject of predestination might wish not to read what appears here under the topic "The Four Views Historically," and read about the direction my thought is taking as discussed under the heading "Temporal Predestination."

The Four Views Historically

At least four views of predestination have arisen historically-only three of them being major views.

One of these is the view of sublapsarian predestination. This is the view that Adam was free in his crucial sin; but that once he sinned freely, the eternal destiny of each other person in all human history was decided upon by the completely sovereign God. The view should have been called post lapsarianism because it means that after the Fall, or the lapse, the destiny of each person was decided upon by God. This is the view of Augustine, the first theologian, East or West, to teach unconditional predestination. This is an unconditional view because the predestination is not conditioned on whether or not a person meets any condition such as that of repenting and believing on Christ. Augustine believed, strangely, that the number of those

humans unconditionally predestinated to go to heaven is equal to the number of angels that fell.

James Arminius believed that Augustine got his idea for the doctrine from the Stoics, and Emil Brunner suggested the same thing. Augustine did read and appreciate the Stoics and he might well have been borrowing from them at this point, for they taught a doctrine that is similar. They taught that there is a law of necessity by which the whole universe and everyone in it functions, and that even God is subject to it. It is possible, also, that in this doctrine Augustine was borrowing from the Gnostics, for they also taught a doctrine that was similar. They taught in general that all individuals are born either with a certain divine spark of gnosis, knowledge, or that they are simply animal souls born without that knowledge. Some Gnostics believed that some people are “psychics,” who can change their eternal destiny; but for the most part, the Gnostics believed that each of us is unconditionally predestinated to receive salvation or not to enjoy it.

Augustine might have needed to be able to read Greek better, for him to be influenced significantly by the Greek writings of the Gnostics. Yet some of his predestination teachings are so similar to theirs that there might have been an influence from them upon his view. 1 Augustine felt, of course, that he was teaching at this point what Scripture does.

Besides Augustine, Martin Luther taught sublapsarian predestination. Luther was similar to Augustine in many ways, excepting his doctrines of the church and the Lord’s Supper. This usual similarity included the matter of predestination. Luther even said that he did not know which eternal destiny he himself was predestinated to. He said it would undermine our being justified by faith if we could know, i.e. have knowledge of, our predestinated destiny.

Supralapsarianism is another predestination view. It is the view that Adam was not free in his sin, and that even his eternal destiny, along with everyone else’s, was determined by God before Adam’s creation and even before the creation of the world. This view might have been called prelapsarianism, even as sublapsarianism should have been called postlapsarianism. No one clearly taught supralapsarianism prior to Calvin, and it is not even certain that Calvin did. It seems, though, that *his Agreement by the Genevese Pastors* teaches sublapsarianism, whereas his *magnum opus, The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, might teach supralapsarianism. Not making it altogether clear whether Adam was free in the first sin, Calvin certainly teaches at least a sublapsarian view. He writes, “And so also infants themselves, as they bring their condemnation with them from their mother’s womb, are exposed to punishment, not for another’s sin but for their own.” 2 Of reprobated infants Calvin says that “. . . even their whole nature is as it were a seed of sin, and cannot be otherwise than odious and abominable to God.” 3

Calvin’s son-in-law, however, Theodore Beza (1519-1605), who taught so long at Calvin’s school in Geneva and was one of James Arminius’ professors, definitely taught supralapsarian unconditional predestination. Likewise, it was taught and promoted in Holland at Leyden University by Arminius’ colleague there, Francis Gomarus (1563-1641).

At the same time, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, some supralapsarians began to teach the view in a slightly changed form: modified supralapsarianism. Here, the view is modified so that there is no positive decree to reprobation; there is only a single decree, through which God elects some, in the whole human race, to be saved eternally-and those passed over go to eternal hell simply because that is their just desert since they sinned in a real way when Adam sinned (there being no positive decree through which God reprobates them). This was taught by some so as to be a bit more soft. Supralapsarians had been accused of reflecting on God's goodness by teaching the so-called double predestination, in which there is a positive decree to reprobate. Giving respect to such criticism, they thought it might better protect God's goodness if they taught that there was no reprobating decree. The Belgic Confession was quoted, as human freedom was discussed, as pretty much teaching some sort of unconditional predestination, stating also that those not elected simply go to their own place without a reprobating decree. Yet no single significant theologian of those times taught modified supralapsarianism.

A fourth view of predestination is Arminius' conditional predestination. Arminius taught that God does predestinate each individual to an eternal destiny, but that it is based on God's foreknowledge of the individual's free response to or rejection of the gospel. This is sometimes called class predestination: that God predetermines that the whole class of those who freely believe are predestinated to go to heaven, and that it is predetermined that all those who, although given the help of prevenient grace, reject Christ, will go into eternal punishment.

After Calvin and others had made so much of God's decrees, Arminius taught decrees, but changed the order of them. In his Declaration of Sentiments, 4 delivered by him in 1608 before the governmental authorities at The Hague, he discusses predestination with care, seeking to gain permission that his kind of view might be promoted in the churches along with the other view of views. Whereas the supralapsarians taught that the first decree was to save and damn certain individuals and that a later decree was to create them, Arminius taught that God's first decree was to send Christ to redeem sinful people. He said that God's second decree was to receive into favor those who repent and believe. The third decree is that of prevenient grace: to help everyone to do this repenting and believing. The fourth decree, for Arminius, was to save and damn individuals according to God's foreknowledge of the way in which they would freely respond to His offer of grace.

It is interesting that Arminius felt that eternal decrees, which are of course never spoken of in Scripture (only God's plans and purposes are spoken of), should be a part of one's theological system. They probably are not properly part of an Arminian kind of theology. I once suggested this to H. Orton Wiley, and he said that Arminianism does indeed need decrees. Mildred Wynkoop, however, has suggested what I think is correct: that decrees are inappropriate for Arminianism. 5 Dr. Carl Bangs shows in his important study of Arminius 6 that, in a number of ways, Arminius tried to be as conciliating as possible to the Calvinists of his time since he ministered in a Reformed denomination. This might partly account for his use of decrees in his theology. Something else that might have figured in it was his very proximity to the Calvinists: perhaps he was so close to them that he did not have the

perspective of distance that belongs to us now, and was not altogether weaned from the views he had earlier expounded. 7

So Arminius taught that God has already predestinated some individuals to eternal bliss and others to eternal torment, but that it is based on His foreknowledge of their free response to the offer of grace. He taught conditional or class predestination; and he taught individual predestination based on foreknowledge; and he taught decrees including his fourth.

Temporal Predestination

The predestination teaching which I have of late come to think of as what is surely taught in Scripture, which seems to be altogether Arminian basically, is what might be called temporal predestination. By this I mean the understanding that predestination does not have to do with a pre decision of God regarding the eternal destiny of people, but that it has to do with temporal matters which God graciously decides for believers-only having to do with Christians.

The verb for “to predestinate,” *proorizo*, occurs six times in the NT, and there is no counterpart word in the Hebrew OT. These instances are in Romans 8:29, 30; Ephesians 1:5,11; Acts 4:28; and 1 Corinthians 2:7. The KJV translates it as “predestinate” in only the first four of these instances; and as “determined before” and “ordained” respectively in the other two. The ASV has “to foreordain” in all six instances; the RSV changes this to “predestinated” in Romans 8:29, 30; the NASB has “predestined” in all six instances; and the NIV has “predestinated” in Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 1:5, 11, “decided beforehand in Acts 4:28, and “destined” in First Corinthians 2:7.

This means that the Greek word for “to predestinate” is relatively rare in Scripture. Yet there are numerous words with the prefix “pro” in them that have to do with God’s or man’s predecision to do something at a later time, and they at least relate to the idea of predestination or predetermination. Words having to do with prediction of later events, as in the case of Old Testament prophets, also somewhat relate to the idea of predestination. The preposition pro for “before” is used often in the New Testament to refer to what God did or promised or planned before the world was created (see John 17:5; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; Jude 25).8

Contrary to what has been understood by most Christians since Augustine’s time, it seems to me that predestination in Scripture does not have to do with eternal destiny. All the various predestination theories, sublapsarianism, supralapsarianism, modified supralapsarianism, and Arminius’ conditional predestination view, relate predestination to eternal destiny. Yet, in the six places in Scripture where the word is used, eternal destiny is not referred to. In none of the six has God predestinated anyone or any group of persons (believers, unbelievers) to eternal bliss or to eternal damnation.

Take the Romans 8:29, 30 instances of *proorisen*. There we read, “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” Here, “predestined,” is probably not used with reference to eternal destiny-although perhaps a better possible case could be made for such reference in v. 30, than can be made for such a reference in any of the other predestination passages. This passage states that

“those God foreknew,” meaning surely those He foreknew would believe, “he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.” That is, He pre-determined that the ones who would believe would be conformed to Christ’s likeness. Conformed, here, *symorphous*, is an adjective, from *syn* (with) and *morphe* (form) - and the *morphe* probably refers to the essence of something. 9 The likeness to Christ which the Father predestinates for believers is of course only an approximate one, the kind that relates to what is possible for us as humans with our erring finiteness. The point here, however, is that eternal destiny does not enter into the picture at all.

It is also to be noted that in the next verse the same kind of non-destiny meaning probably obtains. There, “those he predestined” (based on His foreknowledge according to the previous verse), he “called,” and the ones He called He “justified,” and the ones He justified He “glorified.” Here, unlike what obtains in the previous verse, the writer does get around, finally, to a word that has to do with destiny: glorification. So it could conceivably be interpreted that the predestination has to do with destiny-and it does, finally. But the passage states that, having predestined or predetermined for believers, through His foreknowledge (v. 29), that they would freely believe, He called them and justified them-and, perhaps because of His foreknowledge of their continuing as believers, He “glorified them.” 10 As mentioned, destiny does get referred to in this passage; but the reference is so much disjoined from what is itself said to be predestinated that this glorification destiny can hardly be said to be what is itself predestinated.

Arminius, and what might be called the authentic Arminians, taught God’s foreknowledge of our acts-even as Calvinists always have. It is the Socinians, early, in Protestantism, and what might be called the inauthentic Arminians later (such as the Bostonian personalists), who have denied God’s foreknowledge. Arminians and Calvinists have both taught it because Scripture surely does-here in Romans, e.g., and in the various Biblical predictions (especially when people fulfilled them without setting out to do so, as Judas did). So, in Romans 8:30, God foresees that individuals will believe; and in due time, He calls them to Himself in various ways as through preaching and by the Spirit’s summons. And as they respond favorably to this call, He justifies them. Then, still based on His foreknowledge (see v. 29) that individuals will keep believing, He glorifies them. Here Paul enlists a number of his grand theological concepts, in a sweeping statement of predestination.

That this is probably not an Augustinian-Calvinistic teaching of the predestination of some, the elect for whom Christ died, to glorification, is shown by other teachings in this very chapter of Romans and in other Pauline writings. As Paul opens up what we have marked as chapter 8, he states that the ones who have “no condemnation” are the ones among us who are “in Christ.” He goes on in vv. 3-4 to say that we who are “in Christ” are not simply predestinated whether or not, but that God has “condemned sin” in himself and in us, “in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.” And, that believers are not predestinated in the sense of eternal security, is shown by what he asks late in the chapter, after making the two references to predestination in vv. 29, 30. He asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ” (v. 33). “Trouble” won’t, nor “hard-

ship,” nor “persecution.” Nothing will. It is to be noted, though, that these things will not be able to separate us from Christ’s “love.” A person might in persecution or whatever, fall from saving grace as Simon Magus did (Acts 8:9-24); but even if one does fall from regenerating grace, he or she is not separated from Christ’s love. Christ still loves even the apostate person who crucifies Christ freshly by rejecting Christ (see Heb. 6:4-6).

The two instances of cognates of *proorizo* in Ephesians 1:5, 11 (*proorisas*, v. 5 and *prooristhentes*, v. 11) are similar to the two predestination words in Romans 8:29, 30: they do not relate to eternal destiny. In Ephesians we have one of the Bible’s richest areas of predestination teaching. While only two actual words for predestination appear in the epistle, the idea of God’s having made certain pre-decisions is prominent. Paul first states that he is an apostle “by the will of God” (v. 1), which reminds us that he said elsewhere that God “set me apart from birth and called me by his grace. . . .” (Gal. 1:15).

Then he says in 1:4 that “he chose us in him before the creation [foundation NASB] of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” Thus, before creating the world, God decided that the ones who would freely believe would be chosen, and that they would be “holy” and “blameless.” Nothing is here said that has to do with our eternal destiny. Paul goes on to a stronger word than “chosen.” He says in v. 5 that what God “predestined,” or predetermined, was that we would be “adopted as sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the pleasure of his will...” And in v. 11 he says, “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.”

Several things are to be noted here. In v. 5 the predestination is not to heaven or hell, but “to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ.” That is, God pre-determined that those who would believe—the believing being mentioned in v. 13 - would be adopted as His children. In v. 11, the predestination is again not to destiny, but “in order that we . . . might be for the praise of his glory.” The “we” here is probably a reference to Paul himself, for his next words seem, in distinction, to refer to his readers, as he says, “And you also were included in Christ.” Again it is to be noted that they were not included willy nilly according to an unconditional election. Paul says, “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you . . .” (v. 13). They were included in actual fact after they “heard the word of truth” and after they had “believed.”

The other two of the six New Testament Greek “to predestinate” passages need to be considered. The Acts 4:28 one reads in the NIV, “They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.” This is similar to the KJV in not rendering as “predestinate.” The ASV (RV) has “to foreordain” here as in all the six “to predestinate” (*proorizo*) passages. The RSV renders “to predestinate.”

The instance of a cognate of *proorizo*, “to predestinate,” here, *proorisen*, does not have to do with a predestination to one or the other of the two eternal destinies. Peter and John had been released by the authorities, and when they had gone “to their own people” (v. 23), these believers praised God that

“they,” the authorities, “did what” God’s “power and will decided before hand should happen.” The predestination therefore had to do with God’s pre-decision, based on His foreknowledge, that the apostles would go forth freely, being permitted to do so by the authorities. Nothing whatever is said or implied that has to do with eternal destiny.

In the First Corinthians 2:7 passage, where the same form of the predestination word appears, *proorisen*, the NIV reads, “Now we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.” The KJV here has “decrees” as does the RSV but the NASB renders “predestined.” Again, it does not relate to either of the eternal destinies. Paul is simply saying that he and others “speak a word of wisdom among the mature [perfect ones]” (v. 6), “that has been hidden”-which word “God destined,” or predestined, “for our glory before time began” (v. 7). The passage shows that God planned to offer the gospel even before He created man, as Arminius taught, in what he called God’s first decree which was to send Christ. It implies God’s foreknowledge that we humans would sin and would need redemption. It has nothing to do with a predecision to given heaven to some individuals and hell others.

Besides these six instances of cognates of *proorizo* in the New Testament (there being no counterpart Hebrew Old Testament word), there are as mentioned earlier, numerous Hebrew and Greek Bible words with the prefix “pro” in them and that relate to what either God or humans decide ahead of time to do. 11 Yet not one of them that I have checked indicates that God predecides individual destiny.

Further, what is here being called temporal predestination does not have to do with decrees of destiny, or with what are often called unalterable decrees of destiny - Arminius and Wiley notwithstanding. While Scripture speaks frequently of “decrees” and “edicts” of “a king or a ruling body,” and of their being unalterable as in the case of those of the Medes and Persians (cf. Ezz. 6:11; Est. 8:8f; Dan. 6:8)12-it only rarely speaks of God making decrees of any kind. And when it does, they are not decrees as to eternal destiny. They simply have to do with His rulings. Thus we read, “Then the Lord made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them” (Ex. 15:25). Here God’s decree is simply a law such as kings often made. Thus we read that a decree is the same as a covenant:

He remembers his covenant forever
the word he commanded, for a thousand generations,
the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac.
He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree (1 Chron. 15:15-18).

In another rare instance of a decree as related to God, it again is simply a ruling of His. We read, “Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them” (Rom. 1:32). Here the ruling is not an arbitrary, inscrutable, and mysterious one, through which destiny is decided without regard to the individual’s actions. It regards “those who do such things” as are referred to in the list of sins just mentioned in vv. 29-31.

God decrees a “disaster” (1 Ki. 22:23; 2 Ch. 18:22; Jer. 40:2), a famine (2 Ki. 8:1), and other such matters, but the decrees are simply His rulings, or His agreements; and they usually announce what will happen on earth according to whether the people are obedient or disobedient.

So predestination, according to what I seem to be finding lately, does not have to do with eternal destiny; and the few Biblical references to God’s decrees do not refer to destiny either. Both predestination and the decrees (and the various other pre-decisions on God’s part) have to do with this present life.

So predestination, according to Scripture, does not have to do with eternal destiny, but with temporal matters. Also, even God’s pre-decisions, where cognates of *proorizo* do not appear, do not have to do with such destiny-nor do God’s decrees.

These understandings which I have come to recently are only espoused tentatively at the present time. I am so respecting of the church in its long-standing theological debates that I am slow to conclude that the various views of theologians on predestination, for many centuries, were all incorrect. But this is the way I find myself viewing this matter at the present time, as I am open to be taught differently by the interpretations of my sister and brother peers who might take pen in hand, as in the Wesleyan Theological Journal, to point out to me my errors.

Notes

1See U. Grant Browning, “The Influence of Greek Thought Upon Christian Theology Through the Medium of Gnosticism,” B. D. thesis, Nazarene Theological Seminary, 1957, pp. 133-137.

2John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 8th ed. trans. John Allen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), I, 1, 8.

3Ibid, I, 1, 8.

4See James Arminius, “Declaration of Sentiments,” *The Works of James Arminius* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956).

5Mildred Wynkoop, *Foundations of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1967), pp. 101-105.

6Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971).

7Ibid, pp. 71, 350-355.

8The NIV is being used unless otherwise noted.

9See Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, Vol. 3, Romans, (K.C.: Beacon Hill Press, 1974), p. 166.

10Ibid, p. 167.

11A study of many of these is contained in I. Howard Marshall, "Predestination in the New Testament" in *Grace Unlimited* ed. Clark Pinnock (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), pp. 127ff. (see also David J. A. Clines, "Predestination in the Old Testament" therein).

12See article "Decree," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979). I. 909

ORIGINAL SIN AS PRIVATION

An Inquiry into a Theology of Sin and Sanctification

by
Leon O. Hynson

In the theological synopsis of his excellent work on Arminius, ¹ Carl Bangs points out the resistance of James Arminius to the classic Augustinian and Reformation formulation of the doctrine of original sin. Arguing that the doctrine of universal sinfulness was best formulated in terms of deprivation rather than depravity, Arminius sought a theological alternative to the standard Augustinian position of sin as the result of concupiscence. Augustine, especially in his conflict with Pelagius in the fifth century, had bought intensively into neo-Platonist and Manichaeian distortions of the Judeo-Christian doctrine of creation and its high valuation of the material order. These religious philosophies related the body to evil. For Plato evil is a distortion of being and the body an example of that evil, particularly in its sensuality.

Augustine concluded that the passion which accompanies sexual intercourse is the continuing source of sinful pride and depravity in every life. While it may be argued that use of the genetic motif does not require an ontological view of original sin it is difficult to acquit the Augustinian view of that inference. By interpreting sexual passion as concupiscence-the ascendancy of the senses over reasons²-Augustine made possible the physical and ontological associations which accompany his interpretation of original sin. A resulting suspicion of the flesh and sexuality has fostered guilt and maladjustment for many.

While Augustine proposed other views of original sin such as pride and perverted love, these views are best seen as secondary to his major definition.

James Arminius was informed concerning this classical formula through his Reformed roots. The Calvinists expressed their doctrine through several vehicles-the Gallican Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and Swiss (Helvetic) Confessions. The definitions are consistent. Original sin is defined in Heidelberg as coming from Adam and Eve “whereby our nature became so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin.” A distinction is made

between “inborn” and “actual” sins (Q.10). The Gallican Confession (1559) prepared by Calvin and de Chandieu, his pupil, describes sin as “an hereditary evil.” It further states that in Adam’s person “we have been deprived of all good things” (Article X). In the Belgic Confession (1561) sin is described as a corruption of the whole nature resulting in the loss of all of “his [man’s] excellent gifts which he had received from God, and only retained a few remains thereof....” Original sin is an “hereditary disease, wherewith infants themselves are infected in their mother’s womb.” It is also likened to a root which grows up into sinful branches. The Belgic Confession suggests that the sense of this corruption should create a sighing for deliverance from the body of death.

The Thirty-nine Articles employ the language of the Augsburg Confession in describing original sin as “a fault and corruption” of the nature of everyone, as an infection remaining in the regenerate. It concludes (Article IX) by stating “that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin.”

Dort employed the genetic analogy to argue that “a corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring,” to insist that all have derived corruption “by the propagation of a vicious nature,” or to point out that all are “prone to evil.” Dort was written after Arminius’ death (d. 1609).

A review of these major confessional positions suggests certain key analogies by which original sin is described:

1. Genetic-such words as propagation, corrupt stock, conception and birth, inborn, hereditary, root.
2. Disease-hereditary disease, corrupt infection, vicious, concupiscence.
3. Descent-fall.
4. Flaw-bent to sin, prone to evil.
5. Deprivation-loss.

In view of the consistency of genetic metaphors in these Reformed decrees (which Wesley later buys into), it is desirable to seek out the reasons and sources for the Arminian diversion. Admittedly, the Gallican Confession could be a key with its focus upon deprivation of “all good things” (Article X). The Belgic Confession also stresses loss of all “excellent gifts.”

Bangs’ discussion sets forth the importance of the idea of *privatio* in Arminius’ doctrine of sin. In the fall man “deserved to be deprived of the primeval righteousness ... of the image of God....” Adam’s sin entailed “the withdrawing [*privatio*] of that primitive righteousness and holiness which, because they are the effects of the Holy Spirit. . ., ought not to have remained in him....”³

According to Arminius actual sins are committed because of the corruption of nature, a result of the privation consequent upon original sin. God’s covenant with Adam and Eve, through their obedience, would result in God’s gifts being passed on to their posterity. But in disobedience they could not perpetuate those blessings, being unworthy. Therefore, wrote Arminius:

This was the reason why all men, who were to be propagated from them in a natural way, became . . . devoid [*vacui*] of this gift of the Holy Spirit or original righteousness. This punishment usually receives the appellation of “a privation of the image of God,” and “original sin.”⁴

However, he is not content to rest on this point until he asks whether it is enough to define original sin in terms of absence or privation. Is there

some contrary quality (some metaphysical substance or positive evil), which more adequately describes original sin? Arminius states that

. . . we think it much more probable, that this absence of original righteousness, only, is original sin itself, as being that which alone is sufficient to commit and produce any actual sins whatsoever.”

Arminius employs the same language of the Gallican Confession (Art. IX and X) in his disputation “On the First Sin of the First Man” when he writes that man was “placed in a state of integrity” but in the fall was “deprived of the primeval righteousness.”

The Belgic Confession, prepared for the Churches of Flanders and the Netherlands, contains some motifs that are like the Gallican, but lacks specific allusions to integrity and privation. Further, it gives a straightforward statement about sin as hereditary disease, infection, and as a root which produces actual sin. The themes of the Gallican Confession are more apparent in Arminius than those of the Belgic.

SOURCES

We must recognize that privation motifs do not originate with the sixteenth century. Without doubt, Augustine developed a conception of privation of the good. In the *Enchiridion*, a summary statement of his mature theology (written 421 A.D.), he states his “basic principle:”⁵

The cause of evil is the defection of the will of a being who is mutably good from the Good who is immutable.

. . . This was the primal lapse of the rational creature, that is, his first privation of the good. In train of this there crept in, even without his willing it, ignorance for the right things to do and also an appetite for noxious things. 6

In *The Nature of the Good (De Natura Boni)* (404 A.D.) Augustine teaches that God is the Supreme Good and that all good things derive from Him, all natures, measure, form or order. Evil is a corruption of these. Where there is good, there is being. If the good should be totally consumed, there could be no evil. Without the good there is no existence. Sin is not from God. Sin vitiates nature, i.e., what God has made. Sin is an abandonment of the better things. “The deed is the evil thing, not the thing of which the sinner makes an evil use. Evil is making a bad use of a good thing.”⁷

If Augustine emphasizes privation as the definition of evil, let it not be concluded that he offers a Pelagian alternative of the innocence of human nature. Indeed, consequent upon the fall of Adam, the entire race became corrupt and guilty. Because of original sin, the vitiating and corruption of human nature, everyone will misuse the good. The will is corrupted by original sin so that we freely will to do evil. But this “freedom” is the freedom of self-love, not the true freedom which centers upon God. 8

Anselm, one of the next great Christian theologians, defined original sin as the privation of justice (*absentia debitae iustitiae*). Because all sin is injustice, and original sin is strictly sin, then the latter is simply injustice. Original sin is “the absence of the justice we ought to have.”⁹

St. Thomas Aquinas further developed the notion of original sin as the privation of original justice, teaching that original justice effects the submission of reason and the will to God, a submission caused by sanctifying grace. Original justice included sanctifying grace. “In Adam original justice was conferred on human nature and was to be passed on by propagation.”¹⁰ In the fall, the inner harmony of man’s nature, grounded in his original submission to God, was forfeited. This privation of original justice is total; it is wholly lost.

St. Thomas contends that original sin is “the privation of original justice.” But it is more: the disorder of the disposition of the soul, or “second nature.” “It is a corrupt habit.” By habit, Thomas does not mean an active power which inclines us toward a certain way. It is not a positive inclination toward evil. Original sin results in such an inclination not directly, but indirectly, through depriving us of the original justice which would have prevented disorderly actions.¹¹

This Thomist conception of the privation of original justice, including sanctifying grace, brings us closer to the Arminian definition. Joseph Rickaby’s comment that the privation of sanctifying grace is original sin¹² is equivalent to Arminius’ view that the “absence of original righteousness,” i.e., the privation of the Holy Spirit, “is original sin itself.”¹³ Thomas, however, seems to teach that original justice is not renewed by baptism. Baptism restores sanctifying grace which delivers from original sin.¹⁴

Finally, as Vandervelde points out, the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) reaches the conclusion that “since the remedy for original sin is the sacrament of baptism, and since by this sacrament sanctifying grace is infused, original sin must entail the privation of sanctifying grace.”¹⁵ Bellarmine has described the corruption of nature as coming not from “the accession of any evil quality, but simply from the loss of a supernatural gift on account of Adam’s sin.”¹⁶

In analyzing the thought of Augustine, Anselm, Thomas, and Bellarmine, an evident progression from Augustine’s view of sin as the privation of the good to Thomas’ and Bellarmine’s conception of the loss of original justice or sanctifying grace is evident.

No essential difference between the definitions of Bellarmine and Arminius seems apparent. It is inconceivable that Arminius arrived at his position in a vacuum. Bellarmine (1542-1621) and Arminius (1560-1609) were contemporaries. Bellarmine was a powerful anti-Protestant figure whose ideas were largely anathema to the Calvinists. The moderate Calvinist, Junius, was familiar with his theology, especially the Controversies, and sharply criticized them.¹⁷ In 1586 Arminius visited Italy and was viciously, but falsely, attacked by some Dutch Calvinists for consorting with Bellarmine. Although the historical lines from Catholic thought to Arminius remain to be traced, it is not surprising that Arminius was accused of a flirtation with Bellarmine. Less understandable is the accusation of Pelagianism. Arminius considers privation or the absence of the Holy Spirit both as the source of actual sins, and as the expression of man’s radical alienation from God. From this state only grace may free mankind.¹⁸

Moving from the important but elusive problem of historical traces, we look toward the Methodist heritage which was joined to Arminian theology. The evidence suggests that Arminius enunciates a more adequate theology

of original sin than Wesley and some of his successors. A negative, privative motif dominates Arminius while the 18th and 19th Century Methodists usually denominate original sin in terms of positive corruption, the apparent addition of an ontic degradation. Arminius never doubts the corruption of every human being, but he expresses it in ethical and relational categories. Fallen man is without original righteousness, or the Holy Spirit (or sanctifying grace). To say that man is without the Spirit/sanctifying grace/original righteousness is not identical with the assessment that man is depraved, corrupt, diseased or degraded. The language of Arminius leads us to seek the soteriological answer in relational terms. That of the Reformers and Wesley requires a solution expressed more in ontological language.

Arminius believed, according to Bangs, “that the effect of the depravity language could be gained in terms of a simple deprivation.”¹⁹ Is there any indication in Arminius that the privation emphasis is incomplete requiring another theological step, i.e., description of the consequence of actual sin as depravity; a deprivation leading to depravity? Does the deprived person become depraved as the result of his actual sins? (Or are actual sins the result of a depraved nature, the traditional Reformed and Wesleyan view?)

Arminius’ definition of sanctification leads to the conclusion that deprivation results in depravity. Expressed in other terms, autonomous man lives upon (or out of) his own resources, without the Spirit. With his entire focus being himself, his words and deeds are selfish, curved in to himself. Living autonomously man must manifest a corrupted life. This more psychological conception is consistent with Arminius’ relational definition. Sanctification is:

“ . . . a gracious act of God by which he purifies man who is a sinner and yet a believer from the darkness of ignorance, from indwelling sin [*peccatum inhabitante*] and from its lusts or desires and imbues him with the Spirit of knowledge, righteousness and holiness.”²⁰

If for Arminius deprivation eventuates in the commission of actual sins resulting in depravity, his is a notion of depravity much less starkly pictured than Calvin’s or Beza’s. This is alarming for some Calvinists (and some Evangelicals) who must attribute the worst to man in order to adequately ascribe glory to God. The question is: Is it necessary to employ “worm” or “dung” language to describe sinful man *vis-a-vis* God? Because man is lost, does that require us to pile up a mountain of negative adjectives to bury him?

WESLEY

When we move to Wesley there is a question about his treatment of original sin. Nothing in Wesley approximates the relational and ethical definition found in Arminius. In his attempt to explain the transmission of sin, Wesley steers around Augustine’s concept of CONCUISCENCE, but arrives at a similar destination by emphasizing “inbred” sin. This use of genetic analogies leads Wesley toward a metaphysic of sin. Sangster has criticized Wesley for interpreting original sin as a “rotten tooth.”²¹ Mildred Wynkoop, on the other hand, attempts to place Wesley in the Augustinian stream which focused on sin as perverted love,²² which is a relational category. Robert Chiles accents the diversity of interpretation in scholarly assessments of Wesley’s view of sin.²³

Wynkoop's interpretation is particularly attractive because Wesley's most consistent definition of sanctification is love; love for God and neighbor. The appropriate theological corollary is the definition of original sin as self-love. This correlation of problem and solution would suggest the following theological parallels:

<i>Problem</i>	<i>Solution</i>
1. If sin is described as DISEASE,	then the saving answer is HEALING.
2. If sin is described as INBRED,	then the saving answer is REGENERATION
3. If sin is described as SELF-LOVE,	then the saving answer is HOLY LOVE.
4. If sin is described as ROOT,	then the saving answer is ERADICATION.
5. If sin is described as ALIENATION,	then the saving answer is RESTORATION.
6. If sin is described as POLLUTION,	then the saving answer is CLEANSING.

The point is that we require a solution which parallels the problem. If sin is described theologically as a disease, then we need to provide a theological parallel to describe the solution, i.e., healing. It makes no theological sense to offer to eradicate an alienation. Wesley's primary definitions of sin and sanctification do not mesh well. Wynkoop's interpretation provides such a correlation, but the question remains whether this is where Wesley's theology moves. Chiles interprets Wesley's view of sin thus: "Sin is not so much ontological degradation or demolition of human reality as it is illness or contagion; not so much biological and sub-personal distortion as it is an inversion of relationships involving motive and intention." 24

In the final analysis it must be said that Scripture employs many metaphors for describing sin. Wesley's immersion in the Bible is manifested in his use of analogies that may be described as relational, substantial, medical, psychological or ethical. No quarrel should be raised over the use of these varied metaphors. They are highly descriptive, graphic, physical and spiritual analogies. When David laments, "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5), the message reaches his readers with clarity. An immediate identification with David's experience is achieved. The metaphor is a powerful illustration of the problem of sin, but it is a linguistic expression which must not be reified. When David's comment is given ontological status, sin is often traced to some positive fault in our genetic inheritance. Following this view of sin, sanctification becomes an uprooting, and eradication. The stumbling block in this view of sin involves the issue of apostasy or falling from grace. If sin is uprooted in the believer (a unitary rather than relational view of sin), how is it rooted again in the experience of apostasy? Once destroyed, how is it resurrected? Is it not more adequate to describe sin as a relational breakdown, to be corrected, as Arminius suggests, by the renewing of the Holy Spirit in regeneration? Relational theology avoids the Augustinian and Reformed associations of original sin with the body and sensuality. Psalm 51:5 is a powerful picture of sin, but we must not build an ontology of sin upon it. Titus 3:5 is suggestive of an adequate relational theology upon which we may build a systematic theology of sin.

THE METHODIST HERITAGE

Beyond Wesley in English and American theologians other nuances of thought concerning original sin are considered. Robert Chiles has traced

the shift in several American and English Methodist theologies from Wesley's view of "sinful man" to Albert C. Knudson's emphasis on "moral man." Transitional figures were Richard Watson and John Miley.

Richard Watson (1781-1833) was the major systematic theologian of Methodism in the era following Wesley. In turn Thomas Ralston's *Elements of Divinity*, Luther Lee's *Elements of Theology*, Samuel Wakefield's *System of Christian Theology*, Miner Raymond's *Systematic Theology*, and to a degree, H. Orton Wiley's *Christian Theology*, followed Watson's lead in presenting and transmitting the idea of deprivation. All of these except Wiley were Methodists. Their views were supplemented by Thomas O. Summers' *Systematic Theology*, William Burt Pope's *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, Henry Clay Sheldon's *System of Christian Doctrine*, and Solomon J. Gamertsfelder's *Systematic Theology*. Gamertsfelder was a member of the Evangelical Association, founded by Jacob Albright, and Wiley was a minister of the Church of the Nazarene. All ten of these represented an essential effort to cast a Wesleyan theological structure.

Richard Watson's key work was shaped in the 1820's; Ralston's (1806-1891), in 1847; Raymond's (1811-1897), in 1877; Pope's (1822-1913), in 1875-76; Sheldon's (1845-1928), in 1903; Lee's (1800-1889), in 1853; Wakefield's in 1873; Summers' (1812-1882), in 1888, edited by John Tigeret; Gamertsfelder's (1851-1925), in 1921; and Wiley's (1877-c. 1961), in 1941.

Watson in nearly one hundred pages discusses the scriptural account of the fall and original sin. That the Scriptures detail "the natural and hereditary corruption of the human race, a commonly called original sin," Watson has no doubt. However, he rejects the suggestion that original sin consists in "a positive evil, infection, and taint . . . judicially infused into man's nature by God...." In support of this view he cites Arminius' "Private Disputation" where the heart of the privation theme is found. Watson argues "that positive evil and corruption may flow from a mere privation. . .," illustrating this from physical death wherein the privation of the "principle of life" produces all of the ingredients of death, including decomposition. This illustration is repeated by several of his followers. Watson cautions that deprivation must not be separated from depravation. 25

Following Arminius, Watson develops the concept of the privation of the Holy Spirit in man as the explanation for human sinfulness. Man could have avoided rebellion, but he did not. Then "the Spirit retired, and, the tide of sin once turned in, the mound of resistance being removed, it overflowed his whole nature. In this state of alienation from God men are born, with all these tendencies to evil, because the only controlling and sanctifying power, the presence of the Spirit, is wanting. 26

Chiles criticizes Watson's compromise of his Wesleyan heritage, claiming that Watson offers a "less virulent conception of depravity passively elicited by the withdrawal of the Spirit." Despite this, Chiles himself expressed a not so dissimilar view, lacking the privative motif, but approving a relational argument and a conception of sin as illness. 27

Moderate Realism -The Watson School

Thomas N. Ralston, Samuel Wakefield, and Miner Raymond represent the lineage of Richard Watson in Methodism. They follow Watson in the familiar

repetition of sin as a “depravation arising from a deprivation.” They are described as “moderate realists” because they stress the more moderate theme of privation while sharpening the depravation emphases.

Ralston, primary theologian of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, spoke of the “privation of moral good.” While Watson spoke of depravity “arising” from deprivation, Ralston saw it “resulting” from privation, apparently a synonymous variation. No infusion of moral evil was necessary to account for the sinfulness of mankind, only the withdrawal of the Spirit. Ralston was particularly cautious about the concept of “total” depravity taken to mean human worthlessness, but used in the sense of the “absence of all positive good” it was acceptable.²⁸

Miner Raymond rejects the concept of “total depravity” as ambiguous, and recasts the question in terms of man’s “total helplessness” to save his own soul. “Total depravity” too often conveys the concept of man as “a dog run mad” or “a demon incarnate.”

Raymond, like Watson and Ralston, emphasizes the idea of a deprivation which leads to depravation. Emphatically denying that original sin is “an entity, an actually existing thing, a created substance implanted in the human mind. . . ,” he argues for the language of subtraction and addition. In the fall, man lost his relation with the Creator, and grieved the Spirit who withdrew. This is the deprivation or subtraction. Then the spirit of the Evil One took control. This was the addition, “an incoming of what was previously absent.” In summary, he insists on the doctrine of the corruption of man’s nature by sin, and the total inability of man to perform good works, unless God helps him.²⁹

Mediate Realism

While the Watson “school” worked very closely with the Arminian definitions, sharpening the depravity language, a second group assumed more realistic leanings. They are identified as “mediate realists” for their preference of “depravity” as the realistic description of sin. Recognizing and using the privative focus of Arminius, they were unwilling to simply state with Arminius that privation *is* original sin. Therefore, in the depravation/deprivation formulation they chose the more realistic expression to emphasize man’s total helplessness. They stayed closer to Wesley than to Arminius. If Watson influenced their theology, Wesley shaped it more.

Pope, Summers, Sheldon, and Wiley are the representatives of this position, with Lee on the borderline. Strictly speaking Lee comes closer to Wesley than any of these scholars. His writing almost entirely lacks the privation motif, like Wesley’s, but stresses clearly the notion of inherent corruption, “natural bias” or “inclination” to evil. A strange phrase, “lapsed human nature,” enters the discussion, which Lee evidently understands as a synonym for “bias.”³⁰ William Burt Pope belongs to the last quarter of the 19th century. He is a consistent follower of Wesley more than Watson. Pope uniquely refers to “the original sin” of the devil suggesting that “the link between the pride which caused his [Satan’s] ruin and the transgression of our first parents was this: *ye shall be as gods!* Our sin is so to speak, a reflection or continuation of his.”³¹

Original sin is set forth as “the absence of original righteousness and the bias to all evil. But these are one in the withdrawal of the Holy Ghost” Thus Pope

sets the discussion in Arminian terms, emphasizing the loss of the Spirit as the loss of original righteousness. This theme is discussed under the rubric “Original Sin in Relation to the Second Adam.” Man possessed an original righteousness prior to the fall as a “Free Gift.” Upon the tragedy of the fall, God gave His Spirit back to the race as the Spirit of “enlightenment, striving, and conviction.”³²

While Pope gives some attention to the privative motif, he is more at home speaking of “a transmitted moral depravation or corruption,” a “bias of human nature,” or “hereditary depravity.”³³ Reference is made to those who interpret the fall to be “the loss of the Spirit as an essential element of human nature”; but he does not seriously pursue the question historically.³⁴ His historical comment about Arminius and the Remonstrants says nothing about deprivation.

Thomas O. Summers taught theology at Vanderbilt, and followed Ralston as one of the M. E. Church, South’s major thinkers. He edited a revised edition of Ralston’s *Elements*. He was obviously aware of the Arminian influence on Ralston and in Methodism. On the question of original sin he quoted a “Reformed” Arminian statement that

“the free will of man toward the true good is not only wounded, maimed, infirm, bent, and [*attenuatum*] weakened; but it is also [*captivatum*] imprisoned, destroyed, and lost, and its powers . . . debilitated and useless unless they be assisted by grace. - . . .”³⁵

When Summers quotes Arminius that the “absence alone of original righteousness is original sin itself,” he hastens to remind his readers that Arminius also states; “since it alone is sufficient for the commission and production of every actual sin whatever.” Thus Summers seeks to hold both negative (privation) and positive (depravity) language in balance in order to avoid weakening the Wesleyan approach. He heartily assents to the privation emphasis, but prefers the depravity metaphor.³⁶

Original righteousness is not specifically defined but Summers does insist that the *donum superadditum* is inadequate, implying that righteousness or the presence of the Spirit is constitutive of God’s creation of man in His own image.

Henry Clay Sheldon was professor of theology at Boston University and wrote his *System of Christian Doctrine* in 1903. Sheldon believed that original righteousness was a constituent in Adam. The Roman doctrine *donum superadditum* is rejected because it makes “what belongs to the very idea of a normal man a supplement or attachment.”³⁷

Sheldon raises strong objections to the definition of sin as negation or privation.

“So far from suggesting that it springs universally from lassitude of spirit, it is often associated with a powerful selfassertion. . . . Sin does not appear as a mere lack of a holy will, or a relaxing of the hold upon the good; it appears rather as a full-orbed will-power wrongly directed, and so includes a positive aspect.”³⁸

Sheldon here is expressing another version of the depravation from deprivation theme.

Although Chiles claims that Sheldon and Olin Curtis reflect a world akin to the evangelical liberalism of persons like Borden Parker Bowne or Albert C. Knudson,³⁹ Sheldon's view of original sin is traditional. He defines it as "hereditary corruption." Affirming the definition of sin as selfishness, he concludes that heroic illustrations of "self-abandon" suggest the need for another term for sin.⁴⁰ He does not shrink from depravity language.

H. Orton Wiley is the theologian of the Church of the Nazarene, with very broad influence in many Wesleyan-Arminian fellowships. A prominent teacher and college administrator, he made his most signal contribution in his three volume *Christian Theology*, published 1941. Nothing in the Wesleyan holiness heritage has come forth to replace it.

In his analysis of original righteousness, Wiley rejects the Catholic notion that holiness is something added to man's original constitution. He argues for the "holiness of man's nature by creation" including the immediate presence of the Spirit. Man was created holy; he was created in the image of God.

Original sin is defined in traditional terms as "inherited depravity," "a perverted or twisted nature," "pollution," "hereditary tendency," "morally depraved state." But like Watson, Ralston, or Raymond, Wiley concludes, from his analysis of the term "flesh" (*sarx*) (Romans 8:5,8, 9, 13; Galatians 5:24), that "the term flesh as used here, is representative of the fallen estate of mankind generally-not the destruction of any of its essential elements, but the *deprivation* of its original spiritual life, and hence the *depravation* of its tendency."⁴¹

Wiley is very specific in denying that depravity is a "physical entity or any other form of essential existence added to man's nature. It is rather, as its name implies, a deprivation of loss." It is "*privatio*, or a privation of the image of God." Original righteousness is lost. "Depravity is therefore 'a depravation arising from deprivation.' Connected with this deprivation is a positive evil also, which arises as a consequence of the loss of the image of God."⁴²

The privative emphasis in Wiley, significant though it is, is overshadowed by the depravity motif. Intending to offer a balanced emphasis, Wiley focuses more strongly on consequence (depravity) than on cause (privation), more on the positive evil than on the absence of the Spirit. Lindstrom suggests that Wesley compares original sin to an evil root and specific sins to the fruit proceeding from the root.⁴³ Wiley is more at home with Wesley, but he is not a mimic.

Reformed Realism

If the mediate realists employed the language of depravation more strenuously than Watson's "school," the "reformed realists," represented in S. J. Gamertsfelder,⁴⁴ move to an extreme only approximated in Reformed theology. Gamertsfelder's position is unsophisticated and expresses a kinship with Augustine's concupiscence. Sharply rejecting the privation emphasis, his description of depravity and its universal presence lacks the careful bounds necessary to avoid confusion and error. Gamertsfelder writes: "Original sin is perpetuated by natural generation."

There is no need of resorting to any arbitrary imputation of Adam's sin or Adamic corruption to the race. Inborn sin is by natural generation.

He insists that this reality is no more mysterious than "the fact that life perpetuates itself."

"We know that in animal as well as in vegetable life some qualities and characteristics perpetuate themselves by natural generation. This truth forms the principle of all stock improvement. There is no reason why the principle should not apply in the moral realm. Anthropology teaches us that physical, mental, and moral qualities are perpetuated by natural generation. Therefore, we call the corruption of the race native depravity, Inborn or Original Sin."⁴⁵

With this bold repetition of Augustine's ontology of sin, it is not difficult to see why Gamertsfelder rejects the privation emphasis. A brief comment allows that man in the fall was deprived, "a deprivation that in theology is technically called depravity."⁴⁶ But he takes strong exception to the idea that "the absence of the good is badness." This will not suffice.

"Sin is more than mere want of being, it is not merely an absence of right. Moral evil is not merely a privation of the moral good, it is not merely a loss of Divine righteousness. . . . Sin is a positive force set up against God."⁴⁷

Gamertsfelder's realism, starkly portrayed as it may be, was but the human picture. He balanced out his pessimism with an optimism of grace, emphasizing the promise of Christian perfection in the life of the believer.

Summary: Watson to Wiley

A review of the ten theologians who have been studied reveals virtual unanimity in the question of original sin.

1. All of them with the exception of Sheldon and Gamertsfelder give rather positive evaluation of the privation language found in Arminius. Watson, Ralston, Raymond, and Wakefield echo the Arminian teaching in strong terms. Watson's "Yea" becomes the "Amen" of the others.

2. All of these scholars qualify Arminius' concept. Thus they move beyond the more gentle description of Arminius to speak of original sin in terms of inherited depravity. The "depravation arising from deprivation" motif cited in Watson is found in Ralston, Raymond, Wakefield, Wiley, Sheldon, and Gamertsfelder. The last two along with Summers, Lee, and Pope portray original sin in more realistic terms, i.e., in the familiar pessimism of the Protestant creeds.

3. Most of these writers focus on the concept of original righteousness. Watson and his disciples, like Arminius, stress the equation of original righteousness and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Some of these—Summers, Lee and Sheldon—lack the pneumatological referent found in Bellarmine and Rahner, and in Watson's company. The doctrine of *donum superadditum* is acceptable to none. Throughout we recognize the position that the presence of the Holy Spirit or original righteousness is constitutive to the nature of man created in the image of God.

4. Many of these men questioned the language of “total depravity,” but there is a general belief that properly defined this language is acceptable. Gamertsfelder stressed that “total” does not mean the de-humanization of mankind. It rather means that original sin influences everything we do: distorting our thoughts, perverting our passions, captivating our will, and preventing us from any good work, i.e., works of merit.

5. In general these men express a Wesleyan conception of sin as inherited or inbred. Their adoption of privation language is through Watson. Wesley therefore is modified by Arminius but the Wesleyan influence seems to remain dominant.

6. Everyone except Gamertsfelder carefully avoids language which may suggest that original sin is an entity or a thing. Gamertsfelder voices the view that has become the *lingua franca* of popular fundamentalism, i.e., that, as David expressed it, “in sin did my mother conceive me,” interpreting sin in virtually physical or material terms.

7. Watson offers a worthy alternative to Roman Catholic attempts to explain why baptized (and thus regenerated) Christians still have depraved (deprived?) children. Watson argues that righteousness is a free gift given by God alone, not through any human generation.

IMPLICATIONS OF PRIVATION LANGUAGE

A. For a Christian Theology of the Fall.

The doctrine of the privation of original righteousness, so evident in the major theologians of the Methodist heritage, seems not to have influenced evangelical thinking to any great degree. The privative motif in hamartiology seems strange and new. To some it appears to be Pelagian. It is not. Others rightly insist that the concept be surrounded by the safeguards of orthodox emphases on depravity in order that theological balance be sustained. Whatever disagreements his views may have evoked, Armius believed that his definition adequately summed up the problem of human sinfulness. To say that a person is depraved is to say that he is without the Spirit; to teach the privation of the Spirit is to say that man is corrupt.

Some theologians still insist on painting the blackest and most pathetic portrait of man possible. The linguistic heritage described by E. Gordon Rupp as the “pessimism of nature” rests on the Augustinian negation of human sexuality, the Reformed portrayal of the glory of God and a contrasting putdown of man as the dialectical requirement. If God is better praised and glorified by viewing man as a worm, then let man be vilified. In fact, such a demeaning of man, while it is intended to refer only to fallen man (and is not meant to describe human culture, e.g., art, music, literature, etc.), becomes a dominating picture in too much Reformed and Wesleyan theology. Sin is allowed to be so darkly pervasive in human experience that in practice it is accepted as a constitutive element in human nature. In reality, sin perverts human nature.

The doctrine of privation, however, permits no such view of human *nature* (nature is here the essential nature of man which in the fall is deprived of the divine Spirit as the sanctifying presence). Human nature is deprived of that which is its completeness, its wholeness. Without the Spirit we are unwhole, unhealthy, incomplete. Unlike much pathetic theology which speaks of the death of self, we accent not its death but its life.

The crucifixion about which St. Paul speaks is the passing away of the autonomous “I” which is succeeded by the renewed or living “I.” “I am crucified. I live.” (Galatians 2:20). The essential “I” has never died; it has been deprived of its wholeness or fullness. The privation concept teaches that what I need is a renewed and completed essential self. This deprived self is made whole in the renewing of the Holy Spirit; when the righteousness of God, lost in the fall, is restored. Then my relationships are controlled by the “anchored I” rather than by the autonomous “I.” The incompleteness of the autonomous self is now swallowed up in spiritual fullness.

In privation theology sin is not a *constitutive* aspect of fallen human nature. Sin is not attached to our nature as an alien substitute in the vacuum of lost righteousness. Sin is deprived human nature acting out of itself, rather than out of the Spirit. Without the Spirit, every human expression is bent; bent away from God and toward self.

Some theologies have taken the position that fallen man, even when justified, has two natures. That is a logical inference of a theology which reifies sin, making it an alien entity or presence. The “two natures” view is certainly inconsistent with the theology of privation, but more importantly cannot be squared with the New Testament. While Paul’s seventh chapter to the Romans is used to justify this kind of psychological and spiritual schizophrenia, the opening verses of chapter eight show Paul’s contrast between life lived under the law of sin and death and life under the law of “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” Two natures? No! It is human nature, created by God, but in the fall become deprived; the human spirit minus the Holy Spirit; human nature without the fulness that grants or bestows a unity of man and God.

Arminius’ privation concept does not detract from the worth of man. While in no sense does the view deny the lostness and inability of man, it offers a superior construct for recognizing the value of this human existence deprived as it is. Having lost the spirit of God, man still mirrors the divine glory. While we must continue to recognize the importance of the salvific question, which proceeds upon the recognition of man’s lostness, we must also insist upon the importance of the creational issue. Man after all is the creature made a “little lower than God” (Psalm 8).

B. For the Wesleyan Doctrine of Sanctification

How does the Arminian theme strengthen the Wesleyan approach to sanctification? Does it provide a more relational framework to replace the categories of “substance” which have been derived from the Roman Catholic scholasticism of the Middle Ages?⁴⁸ Relational categories are more meaningful in our time than the substance emphases of Augustine or Thomas Aquinas. Or, another question: Does the Arminian emphasis indicate a reconstruction in the doctrine of sanctification?

This analysis of ten theologians whose views are essentially Wesleyan lead to the conclusion that a Wesleyan extension of the privation theme occurs at their hands. Arminius’ position, in which depravity language is muted, is sharpened from privation to “depravation arising from deprivation.” This sharpening is more in harmony with the traditional Wesleyan theology of sanctification which asserts that inbred depravity remains in the believer and that a second work follows the first

work, i.e., sanctification follows the new birth. In that second moment, all depravity is cleansed from man's nature. A strong strand of the holiness movement has argued that sin remains as an alien root in the believer and that only an eradication of that core solves the problem of inherited sin.

Privation theology, even that variation enunciated as "depravation arising from deprivation," does not require the root of sin/eradication emphasis. The *heart* of the sin problem is privation; the *consequence* is depravity. The saving solution is not uprooting sin, but the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Recognizing that the Spirit is restored in regeneration, it is understood that this is an incipient sanctification, not the full restoration of the wholeness God has in store for the new believer. The outworking of this new life is toward the perfection (wholeness) of love.

Is the Wesleyan focus on the need for a second stage in the sequence of salvation undercut by the use of privation theology? No! The rationale for this negative answer proceeds upon the sequential character of salvation in the scripture. Most Protestant theologies recognize that regeneration is a beginning, a *new birth*. It is not the goal or the end of the race. In some sectors of the church, a desire for greater precision or datedness has led to strong emphasis on numerical structures; hence the language "second work of grace." Elsewhere there is an accent upon a developmental model, as illustrated by the child, the young man, and the father of I John 2. Some in another part of the church are so impressed by the staying power of sin that they can only recommend chipping away at the monolith until death. Whatever the expectation, there is unanimity in the judgment that sanctification, while beginning in regeneration, is either a crisis *and* a process, or perhaps only a process, which *follows* the new birth. It does *not precede* the gracious experience of the new birth.

Employing privation theology, it is argued that in regeneration there is a renewing of the Holy Spirit, followed by the insistent claim of Christ upon His followers to be consecrated to a total love. In the movement of the spiritual life, the believer, living, as a result of regeneration, in the consciousness that he is a son of God, realizes a deepening sense of God's call to him to dedicate his ransomed being to God completely. This is not the surrender of the rebel, but the offering of the sacrifice of love. The requirement of total love-loving God with the whole self and the neighbor as oneself is something the unconverted person could never comprehend. Now he is a new creation, through surrender and faith. To this point in his pilgrimage he has no framework for understanding the call to full consecration which the Lord now begins to press upon him. Now he faces a crisis of love, a crisis which is as significant as the crisis of the new birth. In the experience of the new birth the supplicant repents and believes on Jesus Christ. Now a renewed man, a son of God, he consecrates his whole life to God. This is the *ordo salutis*: first, dropping the arms of rebellion; then, offering oneself in love.

The crisis of love entails an intentioned full obedience to Christ's commandments. "If you love me, keep my commandments," Jesus taught. Obedient love-agape is a lifelong challenge and response, based on a crucial *center*. While there are those daily decisions or crises in every life which test our commitment, there will be that one comprehensive epoch which gives all of these separate moments their cohesion. Otherwise the

Christian life is an existential flux. There is, I claim, such a singular epoch or moment. Therefore it is right to stress the cruciality of the “second” level or sequence of the Christian life; the crisis of total dedication and fullness. Christian perfection or perfect love is the center of that circumference called Christian faith and life.

Nothing in this discussion should suggest or imply that there needs to be a great gap in time between the crisis of the new birth and the crisis of unreserved love; between the act of surrender and the act of consecration. Usually it is our consciousness of the larger claims of sonship which is deficient. That will result in a delay, but that is our lack of insight, or our spiritual infancy, or the inadequacy of the preaching and teaching to which we are exposed.

That there are many crises in the Christian life is obvious. However, the nature of discipleship suggests the attainment of a concrete determination which shapes every subsequent choice. This is a total commitment which affects every claim made upon the Christian’s life. Here is a significant moment in which the will consciously casts the believer’s future direction and pattern.

Footnotes

¹Carl O. Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971).

²See *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, Trans. and ed. by Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, n.d.), pp. 225-26. For discussion of this see Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), pp. 374-77, and G. Vandervelde, *Original Sin* (Amsterdam: Rodopi N. V., 1975), pp. 16-17: “In Adam this carnal passion [sexual desire] was wholly absent. Procreation was a rather staid and tranquil affair, devoid of passion or lust and governed solely by reason and will”

³James Arminius, *Writings*, I (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), pp. 480-85.

⁴In his “Private Disputations” XXXI, section V, *Ibid.*, II, pp. 77-78, Arminius had taught the departure of the Spirit as the result of man having offended God. In this present quotation he equates the loss of the Spirit with the loss of original righteousness. See *Ibid.*, p. 79, section IX. In *Ibid.*, II, p. 558, Arminius states: “God makes man a vessel; man makes himself an evil vessel, or a sinner. - - .”

⁶Bonner, p. 370. That “principle” is that evil is a privation of the good; that evil is a corruption of the good.

⁶*Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, pp. 353-54. Here also is Augustine’s theme of the lapse of reason and the ascendancy of passion which is the basis of the universality of sin. *Ibid.*, p. 365, speaks of Christ “as begotten and conceived in no pleasure of carnal appetite-and therefore bore no trace of original sin-”

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 326-338, especially sections 1, 4, 10, 17, 28, 34, and 36, the source of this quotation.

⁸See Vandervelde, p. 18.

⁹Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 29. See also *Of God and His Creatures: An Annotated Translation. Summa Contra Gentiles* of Saint Thomas Aquinas, by Joseph Rickaby (Westminster, MD: The Carroll Press, 1950), p. 379, fourth note: “God’s first arrangement was to give sanctifying grace to every man in the moment when He created the man’s rational soul. To speak as we should speak of a human scheme, this arrangement was defeated by Adam’s sin. Consequently upon that sin, God arranged to give sanctifying grace, ordinarily, not in creation, but in baptism. Before baptism, the infant is devoid of sanctifying grace. That void is not a mere negation, it is a privation. . . . Whence this privation? Through the sin of Adam, the head and representative of the human race, and therefore of that child. This privation of sanctifying grace, as traceable to the sin of the first parent, is original sin in that child.” For an understanding of the threefold submission which comprises original justice: submission of reason to God, the lower powers to reason, and body to soul, see Ibid., p. 381.

¹¹See *Aquinas on Nature and Grace*, ed. by Eugene Fairweather (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 120. Original sin is the disordered, i.e., inharmonious nature of man. “Its cause,” writes Thomas, “is the privation of original justice, which took away from man the subjection of his mind to God.” Ibid., p. 121.

¹²See Rickaby, p. 379, footnote 10, supra.

¹³Sanctifying grace is defined as an “abiding, interior, efficacious communication of the divine Spirit, with its effects. . . ,” in Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, “Sanctifying Grace,” *Theological Dictionary* (New York:

Herder and Herder, 1965), p. 421. Rahner in “Original Sin” *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 4 (New York: Herder and Herder (1969), p. 329, declares that from the time of Anseim onward: “The essence of original sin was increasingly situated in the lack of sanctifying grace for which Adam’s actual sin [and ours, Rahner insists] was responsible.” He expresses this as man’s lack of the “sanctifying Pneuma.”

¹⁴In *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Thomas states: “Though by the sacraments of grace one is so cleansed from original sin that it is not imputed to him as a fault,.. . yet he is not altogether healed. . . . “A defect of nature remains so that all children are flawed by original sin. See Rickaby, p. 382.

¹⁵See Vandervelde, pp. 41-42, where the importance of this conception-of original sin as the privation of sanctifying grace-in post-Tridentine Roman Catholic theology to the present time is demonstrated. In footnote 287, he traces the notion to William of Auvergne (d. 1249) who rejected it.

¹⁶William E. Addis and Thomas Arnold, “Original Sin,” *A Catholic Dictionary* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Limited, 1960), p. 61.

¹⁷See James Broderick, *Robert Bellarmine: Saint and Scholar* (London: Oates and Burns, 1961), p. 76. Junius and Arminius were in close association. Bangs, pp. 193-205.

¹⁸Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 189-91, writes that sin is the misuse of freedom. “It is not a ‘something.’ It is the act-ual negation of the core around which and the direction for which our existence was created. . . . Refusing the anchoring in God, one may try to find it in the world, or unanchored choose for one’s own autonomous I.”

¹⁹Bangs, p. 340.

²⁰”Private Disputation” 49, cited by Ibid., p. 346. Earlier in his life Arminius had defined indwelling sin *-peccatum inhabitante-as* reigning sin. In *this* quotation he is suggesting deliverance from reigning sin, but apparently not from the presence of sin. Ibid., p. 189.

²¹William Sangster, *The Path to Perfection* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), pp. 113-15.

²²Mildred Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), pp. 155-56: “Sin is love, but love gone astray.” “Sin is love locked into a false center, the self. . . . Sin is the distortion of love.”

²³See Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 121-22.

²⁴Ibid. Chiles cites John Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 58, to refute the presumed Wesleyan understanding of sin as a thing. This according to Peters is not “congruous with the . sense of momentary reliance” which the believer knows, and inconsistent with the doctrine of backsliding and restoration.

²⁵Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, II (New York: Carlton and Porter, n. d.), p. 78, speaks of “a depravation arising from a depravation.” The latter word should be “deprivation” as in Thomas N. Ralston, *Elements of Divinity* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1924), p. 140; T. O. Summers, *Systematic Theology* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1888), p. 47. See Watson, *Works*, X, 6th ed. (London: John Mason, 1848), p. 481, where the word “deprivation” is used. Thus in the other edition we have a misprint.

²⁶Watson, II, pp. 78-82. Watson explains that those in whom the Spirit is restored and renewed still conceive children who are deprived of the Spirit. “For when the Spirit was restored to Adam, being pardoned, it was by grace and favor; and he could not impart it by natural descent to his posterity, ... since these influences are the gifts of God, which are imparted not by the first but by the second Adam; not by nature, but by a free gift....”

²⁷Chiles, pp. 129, 122.

²⁸See Ralston, pp. 140-142, 125. Samuel Wakefield, *A Complete System of Christian Theology* (New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1873), p. 297, for the depravation from deprivation motif.

²⁹Miner Raymond, *Systematic Theology*, II (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1877), pp. 80-81, 89, 94. Raymond also uses the terms “proclivity towards the wrong, a vicious propensity,” to describe man’s sinfulness. Raymond stresses in particular the enslavement of the will. *Ibid.*, p. 76. See Chiles, p. 133, note 41.

³⁰Luther Lee, *Elements of Theology* (Syracuse: Wesleyan Book Room, 1865), pp. 116, 120-22. Lee was a professor of theology at Adrian College. He left the Methodist Church to become the primary theologian of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Chiles, p. 54, correctly sees Lee as the heir of Watson, but he is not following Watson in his view of original sin.

³¹William B. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology II* (Cleveland: Thomas and Mattill, n. d.), p. 6.

³²*Ibid.*, pp. 55-60.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 51, 47.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 68. The historical commentary by Pope makes reference to the Roman Catholic doctrine of original righteousness *added* to the purely natural elements which are the essential person. This *donum superadditum* was lost in the fall throwing man back to the original created (essential) person or condition.

³⁵Summers, p. 33.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 59-60. Summers summarizes his view of original sin: “the doctrine of inherent, natural, universal, total and hereditary depravity.” It is “that which we *bring with us* into the world; a fearful patrimony, a sad inheritance!”

³⁷Henry C. Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1903), pp. 303-04.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 310.

³⁹Chiles, pp. 61, 35.

⁴⁰Sheldon, pp. 321-22, 310.

⁴¹H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, II (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1941), pp. 98-100.

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 119, 123-24. Wiley cites the familiar reference from Watson on privation. John Miley, *Systematic Theology*, I (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1892), pp. 444-45, also emphasizes depravation from deprivation.

⁴³Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (London: The Epworth Press, 1950), p. 38.

⁴⁴Solomon J. Gamertsfelder was professor of theology and president of Evangelical Theological Seminary, Naperville, Illinois, from 1896-1919. A minister of the Evangelical Association, which traces its heritage from American Methodism through Jacob Albright and others, Gamertsfelder drew upon a broad cross-section of theological sources. He was apparently influenced

by both Reformed and Wesleyan sources. He sustained a fairly traditional doctrine of Christian perfection. He also appreciated the “evangelical liberalism” of Harnack, Seeberg, and Karl Holl, with whom he studied during a summer visit to Europe in 1906. His *Systematic Theology* cites some of these and other German theologians. At first the Evangelical publishers rejected his manuscript as too liberal, but by changing a “few strategic words here and there” it was accepted and published in 1921. See William Henry Naumann, “*Theology and German-American Evangelicalism*,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1966), pp. 210-212.

⁴⁶S. J. Gamertsfelder, *Systematic Theology* (Harrisburg: Evangelical Publishing House, 1921), p. 429.

⁴⁶Ibid., p 428: “Depravity is mainly that moral badness that has been imparted to the stream of human life by the sin of our first parents.”

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 410.

⁴⁸See Berkhof, pp. 192, 437.

THE RELATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE SELF

by
Richard S. Taylor

Exactly what is the nature of the Spirit's relation to the self? Closely related to this question is a second: Is the self and the body a dualism or a monism? What we believe about the nature of man will affect our answer to the first question; similarly our conclusions concerning the relation of the Spirit to the self will shape our doctrine of man. In this inquiry therefore it can be expected that our theological question will be continuously interwoven with the anthropological question.

Of recent years the influence of Oscar Cullmann in his rejecting of the platonic type of dualism, the rediscovery of man as a unity and the redirecting of emphasis on man's resurrection, has in some quarters resulted in "throwing the baby out with the bathwater"-the "baby" being man's spirit. Coordinate with this has been a drift toward conditional immortality. An ancillary purpose of this paper therefore is to show that unless there is a personal agent distinct from the brain, the relation of the Spirit on the self cannot but be the direct operation of the Spirit on the brain itself, with necessarily deterministic implications.

First of all may it be said that the so-called mind-body problem (the ability of immaterial substance to control material substance) cannot be a valid problem for the Christian who builds on the premise that the Bible accurately reveals God's relation to the world. For a basic tenet of Biblical revelation is that God is spirit, and as Spirit has created and sustained matter. But if God as spirit can create and control matter, there is no inherent impossibility in the postulate that human minds as immaterial entities can control physical brains and bodies.

This traditional distinction between mind and brain means that selfhood is more than phenomenal. Cerebral activity and selfhood are not exact equivalents. A homey analogy is provided by Madeleine L'Engle in an interview in *Christianity Today*.¹ At 17 years of age she had a date with a boy whom she thought was quite sophisticated, until he opined "that death was death and that was that." We are, he said, our cerebral cortex. "When it's gone,

we're gone." In outraged reply this 17 year old girl said: "I can't even see you without my glasses. Are they doing the seeing? No. I am. I'm seeing through them. My brain isn't doing the thinking, I am. I'm thinking through it."

As we all know, this historic and traditional concept of selfhood flies directly in the face of behaviorism and materialism. In a recent article on the brain, written by Patrick Young for Newhouse News Service, the author, after detailing some recent discoveries concerning neurotransmitters, calmly concludes: "As a result of such finds, the mind and brain are no longer regarded as separate." Later is a slight qualification: "The new neurobiology has blurred the strict demarcation of mind and body that long dominated scientific medicine."

But ironically neurobiology cannot consistently maintain this stance, for in spite of itself it drags the concept of a distinct self back into the reckoning. Notice how the author of the article unwittingly acknowledges this. Suddenly the concept of personhood as more than brain is reintroduced. He reports the concession of modern medicine that a person's reaction to adverse life events is the cause of mental illness. Implied is that this reaction is more than preprogrammed physiological response, but is voluntary. He even speaks of the benefits of prayer and meditation. Also he says: "Biofeedback teaches people to exercise thought control over such stress-associated physical problems as high blood pressure, fast heart-beat and tension headaches." 2 To speak of exercising thought control is to imply an agent who in some sense is distinct from the brain. Instead of the self being equivalent to celebrations, or completely at the mercy of brain activity, here is the admission that there is a higher "boss." The brain can be acted upon by this agent in a relationship that is consciously volitional. 3

There is therefore a self which in this world includes the brain but is not defined solely by the brain. We are now ready to plunge more directly into the primary subject of the paper-the relation of the Spirit to this self.

Some years ago the Lutherans (Missouri Synod) put out a symposium entitled, *What, Then, Is Man?* 4 They made a valiant attempt to integrate behavioral brain science with Christian orthodoxy. Much of the volume was spent analyzing Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus. They felt compelled to assume that coincident with Saul's conversion was a substantive change in Saul's brain. Of the three theories advanced as attempts to explain what happened the authors conceded that the theory most in harmony with revelation was that of a cerebral miracle. Yet this hangs them on the horns of a dilemma: first, because it is incompatible with their Lutheran premise that the Spirit converts solely through "the Word and the Sacrament" (p. 28), never directly; and second, because they think they see in the idea a crypto-Calvinistic implication, viz., irresistible grace-and this they cannot abide (p. 193). As far as I could tell, they never succeeded in resolving their dilemma.

But the problem is real; for, as they say: "After all, we see that Saul speaks and moves differently immediately after his conversion; speaking and moving are bodily events, produced by muscular action; muscles are controlled by the brain. To deny that man's brain is changed in some respects when he undergoes conversion would be scientifically absurd" (Ibid.). Since no one wants to be scientifically absurd, we had better concede the involve-

ment of a lot of cerebral activity. But must it be explained deterministically and irresistibly? The question is: Was the cerebral activity caused by the Spirit such that conversion was its infallible result? or was it simply coordinate with the conversion, a phenomenon essentially spiritual, only secondarily cranial?

When we turn to the Scriptures we find that the Holy Spirit at times does work both irresistibly and physiologically. The gift of tongues on the Day of Pentecost is an example. Here were Spirit-filled believers unexpectedly and miraculously enabled to speak in languages which they did not know; in fact, the narrative of Acts 2 gives the distinct impression that their brain patterns and vocal cords were literally taken over by the Spirit and operated transvolitionally. Since such total possession sometimes occurs in demon-possession, there is no inherent impossibility in similar action by the Spirit. The Bible does not tell us whether this language speaking was a physiological miracle for this occasion only, or whether a knowledge of the language was imparted to their brains, so that henceforth the language was available at will.

Careful study will suggest that such irresistible and unexpected action of the Spirit is related to gifts, rather than personal salvation; i.e., endowments given for carrying on the work of God, normally given to those already in a grace relationship to God. The miracle at Pentecost was not their conversion to Christ, but was experienced by persons already spiritually yielded and pliable—hence not, strictly speaking, an example of irresistible grace.

That the Spirit can be resisted at the moral and soteriological level is made clear in the Scriptures. At once we think of Genesis 6:3: “My Spirit will not contend with man forever.” Speaking of the children of Israel Isaiah says: “Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit” (63:10). In the New Testament we are reminded frequently of the fatal peril of resisting the Holy Spirit. Stephen minced no words in his chastisement of the Jews: “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!” (Acts 7:51; cf. John 16:8; 1 Thess. 4:8; Heb. 10:29).

At this point let us take our own look at the Saul’s conversion. Was it an example of irresistible grace? And did it really require a cerebral miracle? On a monistic basis, we must say yes, for on a monistic basis conversion would have been ipso facto a brain alteration, and the brain alteration would have constituted the conversion, with no remainder. Obviously this would have been extreme monergism, with resistibility no longer an open question. Such a conversion would be undeniably coercive.

But on a dualistic basis no such direct, arbitrary miracle needs to be postulated. On this basis self and brain are not equivalent terms. It was Saul as a person, a self, who was converted, and this conversion impacted his brain and every other facet of himself, bringing the whole into a new alignment. As a self Saul was aware of what was happening; he was an active participant; he was making a decision; and he could have reacted differently. Whatever Saul was consciously doing had its parallel activity in the brain, no doubt; but the conversion was not the effect of supernatural brain change.

Admittedly there were supernatural and highly dramatic events which forced Saul into a person-to-person confrontation with Jesus Christ. But notice the psychological factors. Having fallen to the ground in a physical

response to the blinding light he received a normal communication, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” This was not an inner impression on his brain, but a signal received and decoded by his brain via the normal process of sound waves. Saul’s perfectly normal, uncoerced response was, “Who are you, Lord?” When Jesus identified Himself, and the awful truth broke in on Saul’s mind, it was in perfect possession of his faculties and entirely as a free agent that he spoke his next words: “What shall I do, Lord?” This was a conscious, totally free acknowledgement of Jesus’ identity and a capitulation to Him as Lord. Saul’s brain of course was fully involved; by means of his brain he was thinking, deciding, and speaking. But the brain was not the actor; Saul was. The brain was his instrument no more and no less than it had been that morning when he ordered breakfast at the wayside inn.

Why did Saul surrender to Jesus in this dramatic moment instead of persisting in unbelief (which he could have chosen to do, even as did his compatriots when the sky darkened and the earth shook and the rocks rent and the temple veil was torn in two on Black Friday)? There are two clues. One is the implication of Jesus’ words: “It is hard for you to kick against the goads”-more literally, to “keep on kicking against goads” (A. T. Robertson).⁵ The implication is hard to avoid, viz., that Saul was already under conviction, and was battling within himself. His very rage against the Christians, excessive and unreasonable as it was, was possibly his angry attempt to hide even from himself his own uncertainty and agitation. Saul therefore was partially prepared for this sudden confrontation-at least at a subliminal level.

The other clue is in the fact of Saul’s basic honesty and sincerity. Saul was not yet, at least, deliberately walking against light. He himself years later explains God’s seeming favoritism with the words: “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief” (1 Tim. 1:13). What this means is that Saul’s will was already on God’s side. His violent opposition to the Church flowed out of piety, not wickedness; loyalty to God, not conscious rebellion. His conversion was not to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to God in Christ. This was the new burst of enlightenment which redirected and restructured the religious devotion which was already his.

There really seems therefore to be no need to explain Saul’s conversion even on psychological grounds in terms of a cerebral miracle. God used both providence and the Gospel to force upon this person a spiritual crisis. The providence was the blinding light, unusually supernatural and radical, perhaps, but not really essentially different from an accident which today puts a person flat on his back where God can get his attention. The Gospel was given to Saul first by Stephen, then confirmed by Jesus Himself: “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” The profound disturbance of conscience was the impact of the Holy Spirit, one spirit impressing another spirit, utilizing perhaps the Stephen event as His catalyst. But at no time was Saul’s freedom abridged, or his personhood reduced to puppethood. He was influenced by the Spirit but not overwhelmed. Rather, he was wooed and won.

But was Paul’s conversion simply a psychological breakthrough without distinctly supernatural elements? No; all true experiences of regeneration require the direct action of the Spirit upon the self in creating a real change, by which the self is made spiritually alive and dispositionally turned toward heaven. This is the divine culmination of the previous preparatory

influences which we call Gospel, Providence, and Prevenient Grace. But we are not under obligation to see in this supernatural action of the Spirit any more than action primarily on the hitherto dormant spirit, with cerebral activity being consequent-perhaps coordinate-but not causative.

Some additional insights into the nature of the Spirit's relation to the self can be found in Ephesians 5:18-21: "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (v. 18). The contrast is striking. Both wine and the Spirit are entities to be received voluntarily and internally. Both are expected to exercise some kind of control. The effect of wine can be explained scientifically, in physiological terms. In the words of Jerry G. Dunn:

Ethyl alcohol, when taken into the body, goes almost immediately into the blood stream and up to the brain. It begins to affect the cortex of the brain, where the higher brain centers that have to do with memory, conscience, and judgment are located. The anesthetic effect of alcohol slows man's reactions measurably. It decreases his ability to judge distances and to tell the difference between visual and auditory stimulæ. 6

What this means is that the person full of wine has surrendered his person-hood to a chemical force which takes possession of his entire being, altering radically his state of consciousness, his perceptions, and his behavior. The power of this chemical is reductionist, enslaving, and debasing. He is less free than before, for the chemical induces him to say and do things which he would not say or do if sober. He is less of a person than before, for he is no longer in charge of his thinking or of his behavior. In this direction is debauchery indeed, exactly as the text says.

The contrast between this and Spirit-fullness is both in comparable effects and in kind of effecting. The effects of Spirit-fulness are as ennobling as winefulness is debasing. Never is a person more free than when filled with the Spirit; never is he more truly himself. Such differences in effects prove conclusively that the action of the Spirit is radically different in nature than the action of alcohol. This difference focuses on the fact that the Spirit is not a chemical or a physical property, but a person, whose influence is primarily spiritual and moral. The Spirit does not arbitrarily change brain cells or brain condition as a means of supplanting the freedom of the self, contriving thoughts, decisions, and judgments which are being programmed rather than chosen. In other words, Spirit-fullness is not a physiological intoxication.

The crucial point is that alcohol affects the brain directly and physically, in such a way that personhood is diminished and moral judgment is anesthetized. But the Holy Spirit accepts the reins because they have been given to Him and will hold them only as long as they remain surrendered to Him. We are not dealing with a physical force but a spiritual presence and a spiritual reinforcement.

This nature of Spirit-fullness is illuminated further by our Lord's description of the Spirit's promised relation to believers (John 14-16). He is called the *Parakletos*, one called alongside to help, not to work the machinery. The term is translated Helper, Strengthener, Advocate, Spokesman, but never operator.

Furthermore, Jesus said the Holy Spirit would teach, i.e., make truth clear, and enable the understanding. But does this include the impartation of truth cognitively? Yes, for “he will tell you what is to come,” Jesus said (16:13). This means the Spirit can impress the mind communicatively; He can impart new information. Our thoughts therefore are subject to the Spirit’s action. But normally the Spirit’s method will be the quickening of recall: He “will remind you [Jesus said] of everything I have said unto you” (14:26).

We cannot pursue further the rich multiplicity of ways the Spirit relates Himself to the believer, as Guide, Reprover, Enabler. In summary it is clear that He can communicate to the self by spiritual impression, by emotional incitement, by creating thoughts, by arousing the conscience. All of these methods of course involve brain activity, but they do not consist of arbitrary cerebral manipulation in such a way as to mechanically induce desired ends. The manifestations of Spirit-fullness (to return to Ephesians 5), which are speaking with one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord, giving thanks for all things, and submitting ourselves one to another in the fear of Christ, are things we do, freely, volitionally, gladly. We have been convicted by the Spirit, and brought to believe in Jesus by the Spirit’s enlightenment and enablement, and we have been helped in putting away sin from our lives, and we have been drawn by the Spirit to a complete consecration and surrender, until the Holy Spirit has moved into the center of our being as Comforter; and in this role He makes Jesus real to us, imparts His love, joy, and peace, reminds us of duty, alarms us of peril, urges us to pray and witness; and now we find ourselves disposed to sing and speak and praise and submit. But all of these benefits of the Spirit’s presence come in the form of one person’s influence on another, not as a puppeteer pulling strings. We are still free to grieve the Spirit and to resist Him. Let us remember that when this personal freedom is gone in the relationship, the relationship becomes mechanical and nonmoral - and dead.

In admonishing believers to avoid being filled with wine but to be filled with the Spirit the apostle Paul is implying real options. No one is preprogrammed for one or the other. There is a person who is free to go either direction. But in one direction he will lose his freedom, in the other he will enlarge it. We cannot insist too strongly that the Spirit is not in the business of supplanting personhood with Himself. He does not have to make us less than ourselves in order to rule us. It is not a conquest which spells abridgement of the self, or its absorption into the divine. The Spirit does not reduce the self but energizes it.

Surely it is clear that while “wine-fullness” is chemical and physiological, Spirit-fullness is on a different level of personhood. It is spiritual and moral (Psalm 51:10). But do we thereby rule out any direct, supernatural action of the Holy Spirit on the brain as a physiological organ? By no means. But perhaps we can say that the Spirit’s action on the brain is primarily restorative healing, rather than a causative manipulation. The miraculous deliverance from drug addiction experienced by some would suggest such a healing.

What about dispositional tendencies and behavior? We believe that the Holy Spirit cleanses when He fills, and that at a very deep level. There is a cleansing of the carnal mind. by which we mean the inherited

predispositional bent toward self-sovereignty and self-willfulness. This can be radically displaced with a bent toward pliancy, submissiveness, and humility before God. Is this a cerebral miracle? We cannot say dogmatically. But insofar as a disposition is tied to an established brain pattern (as truly as an addiction), there is no reason to suppose that the Spirit could not perform a miracle directly on those brain patterns, and rearrange them. He would do it without bungling, without injury, and without risk of complications.

Yet the alteration would not be itself unalterable. The brain is a plastic organ, and takes on the pattern of habit and thinking chosen by the self. The person whose brain has been healed, either of chemical addiction or carnal-mindedness, can reestablish the evil pattern if he trifles with the occasion of his former bondage.

Where has our exploratory essay brought us? Some basic pointers emerge. The relationship of the Spirit to the self is an interpersonal relationship, not a mechanical one. Neither is it chemical in nature, as in the case of alcohol. We must avoid therefore any concepts which imply that the Spirit acts upon us in any way analogous to the action of alcohol.

But to preserve the essential interpersonal nature of the Spirit's relation to the self we must carefully preserve the freedom. To the extent to which persons are acted upon arbitrarily and irresistibly to that extent is their personhood violated and they become things. We must therefore not only resist secular determinism, but theological determinism as well.

Finally, we need to be alert to the bearing of this on our doctrine of man. An interpersonal and thoroughly ethical relationship between the self and the Spirit can exist only on a dualistic basis. If man is not spirit first and brain second, there is no alternative to total Spirit-control of the person via the brain. I see no middle ground. If there is no agent capable of cooperating with the Spirit's impressions or resisting them, then our traditional (and I believe Biblical) concept of personhood disappears. All that is left is a thing being acted upon, with results unavoidable and predetermined. But in that case the concepts of sin and holiness go out the window also.

Endnotes

Note: Bible quotations are from NIV.

1 *Christianity Today*, June 8, 1979.

2 "Researchers learning language of brain," by Patrick Young, Newhouse News Service. *Oregonian*, n.d.

3 As Donald M. MacKay says: "It was I who chose; and no doubt as the correlate of my choosing, certain things happened in my brain mechanism which set the course of the physical outcome" (*Brains, Machines, and Persons* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980], p. 86).

4 *What, Then, Is Man?—A Symposium of Theology, Psychology, and Psychiatry* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1958).

⁵*Word Pictures in the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930), Vol. III, p. 448.

⁶*God Is For the Alcoholic* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 17.

“DIALOGUE” WITHIN A TRADITION: JOHN WESLEY AND GREGORY OF NYSSA DISCUSS CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

by

Major John G. Merritt

Introduction

John Wesley was a man of profound purpose. This is reflected in his life and work. It is quite obvious, also in his distinctive doctrinal contribution of Christian perfection, which is permeated with purpose in its goal-oriented content. But what was it, besides the probable imprint of his intense personality, that gave his doctrine of Christian perfection its explicit goal-consciousness? Since this is a question of origins, we must turn to the historical context in which Wesley’s theological formulations emerged. And in doing that we find his environment is rooted in a historical/theological understanding of continuity with the past that extends from the Early Church Fathers in the first five centuries of Christian history to that of his own eighteenth century.

I. CONTEXTUAL MATTERS: THE ANGLICAN SETTING

The starting point for attempting to discern the origin and extent of the influence of the Early Church Fathers on John Wesley lies not in the first five centuries of the Christian Era, but in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. 1 It is by setting up these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century boundaries that we can engage ourselves with interpretive matters that will necessitate and allow our going back to the second through the fifth centuries. It is in this earlier period, through its “dialogue” with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that we will be able to perceive the nature and center of the influence of the Early Church Fathers on Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection. This is because Wesley, by birth and eventually by conviction, was a part of a church in which patristic concerns had long held a place of priority. Lawrence McIntosh has shown that “the appeal to the Fathers of the primitive Church was so pervasive in the seventeenth-century Anglicanism that it can properly be thought of as a methodological

principle.”² This pervasive appeal was rooted in and influenced by the Church of England’s conviction of its continuity with the Early Church.³ By the time of John Wesley, these historical/theological convictions had been wedded to political/theological developments. This latter complex of factors involved the Elizabethan Settlement, “Arminian” influences, sacramental concerns, ecclesiastical understandings,⁴ and the Non-juring parties within Anglicanism.⁵

As Wesley announced his intention to take Holy Orders within a religious environment with such historical precedents and roots, it is not surprising that his father Samuel advised him to read patristic literature.⁶ Whatever the effect of the influence of this pre-ordination advice, it is clear that these writings grew in their importance for Wesley after his ordination, being due, in part at least, to the greater need he now felt for interpretive authority.⁷ This was met to a marked degree by what became known as the “Holy Club” at Oxford University. It was within this closely-knit community that the patristic commitments of Wesley’s Anglicanism began to have such an explicitly important impact on his life and thought, with eventually profound ramifications for the development of his doctrine of Christian perfection. “This group had developed a keen interest in the ancient liturgies and the monastic piety of the fourth-century ‘desert fathers.’”⁸ Through their studies in the Fathers, the members of the Holy Club became convinced that the life-style advocated and practiced by the Fathers provided an authentic model for the contemporary expression of “practical primitive Christianity.”⁹

Probably the single most influential factor in patristic study within the Holy Club was John Clayton—who became a member of the club on April 20, 1732¹⁰ - who focused on the importance of primitive Christianity, particularly the Eastern Church, and insisted on the continuity of the Church throughout the ages.¹¹ Among the various areas of patristic study in which Clayton guided Wesley, one is of particular significance for our present concerns. This involves the consideration of Macarius the Egyptian and Ephraem Syrus and their descriptions of “‘perfection’ (*teleiosis*) as the goal (*skopos*) of the Christian in this life.”¹² As Dr. Albert C. Outler points out, this dynamic understanding of perfection which grew out of Eastern spirituality contrasted with the static spiritual theology and mystic quietism of Western Christianity, because both Roman Catholics and Protestants generally articulated perfection in terms of state rather than process.¹³ It was through Wesley’s interaction with the spirituality of the Eastern Church in the shaping of his doctrine of Christian perfection that

. . . the ancient and Eastern tradition of holiness as disciplined love became fused in Wesley’s mind with his own Anglican tradition of holiness as aspiring love, and thereafter was developed in what he regarded to the end as his most distinctive doctrinal contribution .¹⁴

If we accept as valid Outler’s interpretation of Wesley’s interaction with early Eastern spirituality, we must ask how this “dialogue “ was carried on: At what points and with whom did Wesley make contact with the Eastern Church?

We may start the unraveling of this fairly complex problem by noting that for Wesley the most adequate ancient model of a dynamic expression of perfection was Clement of Alexandria's "Christian Gnostic." 15 And from Clement we may trace a line of development which forms that tradition in Eastern spirituality with which Wesley "communicated" in the evolving of his doctrine of Christian perfection. Wesley thought that the person through whom he was "interacting" with this tradition was "Macarius the Egyptian," one of the "desert fathers" that the Holy Club studied in its Oxford gatherings. But was it the voice of Macarius that Wesley actually "heard" in his conversations with antiquity? On the basis of discoveries made by Werner Jaeger, the great Harvard hellenist scholar, Dr. Outler does not think so. Outler basically follows Jaeger in proposing that there are positive links between the writings attributed to Macarius and those of Gregory of Nyssa. That linkage, on the basis of Jaeger's historico-literary criticism, is made by attributing the authorship of the Macarian Homilies-extracts of which Wesley included in Volume I of his Christian Library, published in Bristol between 1749 and 1751-not to a "fourth-century Egyptian 'desert father,' but rather (to) a fifth-century Syrian monk, whose concept of Christian spirituality was derived almost exclusively from Gregory" of Nyssa. 16 Therefore, Professor Outler suggests that if Jaeger is correct in discerning this connection between the Macarian Homilies and Gregory of Nyssa, then John Wesley

. . . was actually in touch with Gregory of Nyssa, the greatest of all the Eastern Christian teachers of the quest for perfection. Thus, in his early days, (Wesley) drank deep of this Byzantine tradition of spirituality at its source and assimilated its concept of devotion as the way and perfection as the goal of the Christian life. 17

Thus, says Outler,

Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection is an amalgam of many sources, but its fountainhead (outside the New Testament, of course) is Gregory of Nyssa. 18

This, then, would explain why Wesley in his affinity for "Macarius" would also be attracted to Clement of Alexandria. For, in a way, Wesley was really in "dialogue" with an Eastern tradition of spirituality that has lines of continuity stretching from Clement of Alexandria and Origen through Basil the Great (the older brother of Gregory) to Gregory of Nyssa. Thus John Wesley was in trans-historical union with the ancient Church at points John Clayton could not have imagined and Wesley did not realize!

Though "the Holy Club . . . provide(d) a satisfying and absorbing solution to some of the problems confronting Wesley," Green observes that "his search for a final authority in its activities did not prove ultimately complete." 19 It is this sense of incompleteness regarding authority, as well as the incompleteness of certainty about his own relationship to God, which accompanies Wesley as we briefly review his ill-fated missionary service in the Georgia Colony, for which he set sail from Gravesend, October 21, 1735. 20

The methodical, studious and deeply devotional life of the Holy Club did not remain behind at Oxford, but was carried with Wesley and his associ-

ates 21 to Georgia-including an abiding interest in the writings of the Early Fathers. However, through the study of William Beveridge's *Pandectae*, "a vast array of ancient Eastern liturgical texts," 22 and Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, 23 Wesley became convinced that the "Apostolic Constitutions" and "Apostolic Canons"-which he and Clayton had earlier analyzed together at Oxford and, influenced by the Nonjuror, Thomas Deacon, considered to be of apostolic origin²⁴-did not possess apostolic authenticity.²⁵ This led to Wesley's decision that some errors had been made by the General Councils regarding several issues related to salvation and that "the foundation upon which he had laid so much of his own ecclesiastical structure was unreliable." 26

Therefore, at the risk of distortion through oversimplification, we may say that the conclusions which Wesley reached point to a gradual shift of emphasis which began with ecclesiological concerns expressed primarily, though not exclusively, in liturgical experimentation in Georgia and reached a climax in the soteriological concerns expressed in Wesley's "heart-warming" experience during the historically, spiritually and theologically pivotal religious gathering in London on Aldersgate Street in 1738.

II. TRANSITIONAL MATTERS: THE RADICAL REVERSAL

The climax reached at Aldersgate in 1738 was the end result of a process of change of emphasis that was largely set in motion in Georgia. But we must note that that which made Savannah the locus of its commencement was the consequence of Wesley's decision in 1725-four years before he became part of the Holy Club-to commit his life to the "ideal of holy living."²⁷ And going to Georgia was simply an outworking of Wesley's fidelity to that commitment, the object of which was not only to save the souls of the American Indians but to save his own as well. According to his own testimony, neither objective was achieved: "I went to America to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me!" 28 The relation of this motivation for missionary service to what Outler calls his "first conversion" 29-which, if true, I would specify as his "ethical" conversion-reveals that between 1725 and 1738 Wesley placed sanctification before justification. It is this prelude to the process set in motion in Georgia that makes the climax of the shift of emphasis reached at Aldersgate significantly determinative for Wesley's view of sanctification within the total structure of salvation. The nature and importance of this is clearly expressed by Professor Outler:

In those years, 1725-38, (Wesley) consistently misplaced "holiness" . . . before justification, as preparatory to it. Bishop George Bull and most other Anglicans from Bull to Tillotson had done the same thing-and Wesley would berate them for it later on. One of the decisive shifts in his 1738 transformation was the reversal of this order. Thereafter, justification always stands first, without any antecedent "holiness" or merit of any kind as a necessary precondition to human salvation. 30

But what was it that caused Wesley's "evangelical" conversion at Aldersgate to result in such a drastic soteriological reversal? A possible answer may be perceived in noting how the changing and modifying of the sources Wesley utilized impacted on his growing understanding of the nature and

attainment of Christian perfection. The devotional works which gave birth to Wesley's concern for holiness and which nourished it up to at least 1725 were representative of two Latin traditions of mystical spirituality. 31 These two strands conceived of perfection primarily in static terms and were gradually rejected by Wesley in favor of a dynamic view of "active holiness in this life" 32 as he "found his way back to the traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy-Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Macarius of Egypt, and others." 33 It was this change from static to dynamic categories that introduced the factors of process and goal to Wesley's understanding of perfection.

It is at this point that the profound influence made on Wesley by the Moravian Brethren is seen to occupy a crucial place in our study. Their emphasis on faith as a personal embracing of the provisions of Christ for justification rather simply being mental assent to the truths of redemption eventually brought Wesley to the inward assurance of his personal salvation, if not the reception of salvation itself, at the meeting on Aldersgate Street. This is recorded by Wesley as part of a lengthy journal entry on May 24, 1738:

In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. 34

Apparently, the great reversal in Wesley's structuring of his *Ordo Salutis* is rooted in his assurance of a present, personal salvation based on faith and trust in "Christ alone." This, then, suggests that Moravian influence is greatly, if not wholly, the cause of Wesley's permanent positioning of justification prior to sanctification in the process of salvation.

However, it is quite possible, in the light of Wesley's later disagreement with the Moravians about sanctification and his eventual break with them, that the influence of Moravianism did not go much further. This may be due to the depth of the influence of the Eastern Fathers on Wesley's developing view of holiness (reinforced by the patristic "bias" of his Anglican heritage), in which process and goal are paramount elements in perfection. Because the Moravian leader, Count Zinzendorf, insisted that entire sanctification was concurrent with justification, 35 we may be safe in concluding that the element of goal, and hence process, in relation to perfection would be weak or absent and would thus mean that the subsequence of sanctification to justification is logical rather than chronological and experiential. Further, the synergism derived from the Fathers and deeply rooted in Anglican tradition, 36 which keeps operative the process that leads to the goal, was incompatible with Moravianism, as may be seen in Wesley's criticism of their "quietism" that was antinomian in tendency. 37 It is within this context of the concurrence of justification and entire sanctification and the antipathy to synergism that the Moravian concept of imputed/forensic rather than actual / ethical holiness finds its home. It is this which brings us to the most

serious area of disagreement that existed between Wesley and Zinzendorf, as was evident in their rather heated discussion at Gray's Inn Walks in Holborn on June 16, 1741. 38

If our above analyses are correct, we may thus propose that the Moravian influence in affecting the relative positioning of justification and sanctification was only in terms of logically placing sanctification after justification, rather than in terms of experiential subsequence and content. Although this resulted in Wesley's coming to see that justification is on the basis of faith rather than preparatory holy living, I propose he was inclined to go beyond logical subsequence to experiential subsequence because of the deep influence of the Eastern Fathers on him in terms of the relation of perfection to process and goal. In other words, Wesley's understanding of Christian perfection that emerged from his Aldersgate experience was to a significant degree an intermingling of (1) Eastern concepts of goal and content in dynamic perfection with (2) the Moravian understanding of the logical subsequence of sanctification to justification in the *Ordo Salutis* which establishes faith as the basis for the entire process of salvation. This, of course, is consistent with Outler's depiction of the unique configuration that characterizes Wesley's theology:

The unique mixture of the theological notions thus far accumulated was now to be smelted and forged into an integral and dynamic theology in which Eastern notions of synthesis (dynamic interaction between God's will and man's) were fused with the classical Protestant *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*, and with the Moravian stress upon "inner feeling." 39

As we now listen to the "dialogue" which Wesley thought was going on between himself and Macarius the Egyptian, but which Outler, on the basis of Jaeger's conclusions, 40 says was really with Gregory of Nyssa, we shall, first of all, analyze two of Gregory's works which explicitly address the matter of perfection: viz., *De Professione Christiana* ("On What It Means to Call Oneself a Christian") and *De Perfectione* ("On Perfection"). Second, we shall look at the "Macarian" Homilies XL and XLI (which Wesley read and studied) from Jaeger's interpretive perspective because of the connection they have (as he, I believe, convincingly argues) with the Macarian *Epistula Magna* ("Great Letter"). 41 Having done this, we shall, third, be able to look-more summarily than analytically-at appropriate sections in two of John Wesley's better known sermons; viz., "Christian Perfection" and "The Scripture Way of Salvation."

III. INTERPRETIVE MATTERS: THE TRANS-HISTORICAL "DIALOGUE"

The Writings of Gregory of Nyssa 42

There is a patterned relationship between Gregory of Nyssa's two works, *De Professione Christiana* and *De Perfectione*.⁴³ Often the pattern which Gregory follows in closely related writings is to engage in a brief or limited discussion of a matter in one work and then expand on it in the subsequent one. That pattern is evident in *De Professione Christiana* and *De Perfectione*. This and other instances show "that although Gregory has no closed system, there is a systematic coherence in his thought and a core of basic con-

cepts to which his treatment of the Christian religion reverts, from whatever side he may approach it.” 44 Thus it is perfection defined as “a life lived in accordance with virtue” 45 which constitutes a central theme in these two works and which impacts such ideas as sanctification.

Analysis of De Professione Christiana

Having focused his introduction of this letter to one Harmonius on raising the question of what “Christian” means, Gregory launches into the main body of his letter by explaining what “Christianity” is, deriving its meaning from the meaning of “Christian.” 46 But having said this, Gregory proceeds to the term “Christ” as the clue to the meaning he is seeking in his quest. 47 Because of the royal definition of “Christ,” which implies His reigning power, dominion is expressed in terms of “virtue” which is understood as “purity and freedom from every passion and every evil.” 48 This involves uniting the idea of dominion to a particular zone of freedom in the description of “virtue” which is specified by nine terms, six of which are Biblical and three of which are philosophical. 49 This nine-fold specification is comprehended by and is native to Christ’s nature: “Christ is and is said to be all of them.” 50 This has direct bearing on the meaning of “Christ,” thereby making Him the interpretive clue to the meaning of “Christian.”

Gregory takes the complex of Christian-Christ-reigning power and freedom expressed in the nine virtues to focus on conformity by faith, this time in the sense of being “united” with Christ and “identified” with Him.⁵¹ Gregory calls this “participation,” which thereby gives us the definition of “Christian.”⁵² Just as it is impossible for “Christ” not to be the personification of these virtues, it is impossible to be a “Christian” without a participation in those qualities. 53

Going from this definition of Christian in terms of Christ, Gregory defines Christianity as “an imitation of the divine nature.” 54 Thus both Christian and Christianity are Christologically defined. Consequently, a Christian is understood primarily in terms of the personification of virtue because of the royal and dominating connotations of Christ’s names and titles.

This raises the problem of the relation of these existential definitions to human nature and capacity. 55 Gregory says this lofty truth is not beyond human experience because the participation in Christ restores us to the original condition of human nature. This original condition involves the “likeness of God,” the “imitation” of which was our original “constitution.” The lack of one’s conformity to the Christological definition of “Christian/Christianity” has a negative effect, accompanied by divine disapproval, for the understanding which unbelievers will have of the divine is shaped by the display-or lack of display-in our lives of those virtues that are descriptive of Christ’s nature. 56 For this reason, perfection corresponding with the perfection of the Father is enjoined upon Christians: “Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). 57 Thus we are led up to the central idea of perfection through its Christological definition and description, as well as in terms of its necessity.

Gregory proceeds to observe that this development of his thought raises the question about the possibility of relating human and divine natures, now that he has dealt with a previous question on the same subject. 58 It seems to be raised because of an imperative that is rooted in his defense of relati-

ng the divine and human natures; viz., the command to be perfect. If the relation of the divine and human entails being like God in terms of perfection, how can this be in terms of the compatibility of these two natures? 59 Gregory apparently answers by clarifying the nature of imitation, unification, participation, etc. 60 It is not ontic union, but ethical union; it is not union of being, but of action. Actions are described as Godlike when they are pure and free of evil in the areas of thought, word and deed. 61 This kind of “imitation” of the transcendently divine and perfect is possible because God is also immanent. 62

At this point the element of choice reappears in relation to the cosmic pervasiveness of God’s perfection. Thus choice is in reference to separation from “earthly passion.” 63 Such separation is not physically locative; rather it is ethical: “It is a separation which does not come about through a change of place, but is only achieved through choice.” 64 Because it is ethical rather than physically locative, the context of separation is wherever we are. 65 Since this is so, “the word of the Gospel enjoins nothing difficult upon us” 66 - an affirmation that points to Gregory’s belief in the possibility of perfection within a human context.

Because this relationship is ethical rather than locative, and because it is a relationship with the immanence of the transcendent Father and is made possible by such immanent transcendence, this makes possible a perfection here which results in “depositing in the treasure there (in heaven) a wealth of virtue” (Matthew 6:19 and Luke 12:33). 67 Apparently having in mind a deposit which draws interest, the dividends which accrue to the Christian from this deposit in the heavenly treasury are “a return which reflects (God’s) nature.” 68 Taking the imagery of deposit and return, Gregory brings his letter to a close by speaking of it as the “payment” (return?) for the deposit (?) of Harmonius’ previous letters. 69 Is this just a clever play on the emphasis of his letter or does it also reflect the nature of the deposit-payment and hence is a subtle expression of the works-righteousness that possibly may be inherent in Gregory’s structure of salvation? Thus, in concluding our analysis of *De Professione Christiana*, we must ask to what degree, if any, is the relationship of works and faith in the understanding of grace a concern of Gregory in his Christological emphasis on perfection. Also, we must ask: Is the emphasis of Gregory in this letter later detected in Wesley’s conflicts with Calvinism over the relation of human and divine action in the understanding of grace? Does Wesley’s approach suggest an influence that is from or parallel with Gregory?

Analysis of *De Perfectione*

Although *De Perfectione* Christologically describes perfection in rather absolute terms, Gregory, in his introduction to the letter, says that it is really “the life toward which one must tend,” 70 apparently placing his concept of perfection within a goal-oriented context - “your purposes . . . your goal” - with possibly something of an ideal being present. Thus what follows is to be understood as indicating a goal toward which we are to be oriented rather than being construed as existential absolutes.

In the general introduction to the burden of *De Perfectione*,⁷¹ Gregory suggests that the term “Christian” indicates a relationship between Christ and the believer which is defined as a “partnership in His revered name” 72

and involves the Christian's deriving his name from the name of Christ. It is in light of this that such a partnership is a relationship of grace, 73 which, as a consequence, is the source of two imperatives. The first states that an understanding of "the greatness of this gift" is required so as to elicit proper gratitude for it. 74 The imperative which follows emphasizes that the partnership in Christ's name is to reflect a moral identification in terms of ethical expression: "To show through our life that we ourselves are what the power of this great name requires us to be." 75 Gregory specifies such moral expectations by structuring the letter around the ethical implications of at least thirty-two names of Christ employed by St. Paul. By responding to the invitation of the emphases which these names embody, we are able to enter into the quality of life which corresponds to the meaning of the various names that are subsumed under the title of "Christ." 76

However, not all the names; which are summed up in "Christ," can be imitated- some can only be worshipped, evidently not because of sin, but because of the finite limitations of human nature. It is in relation to the ethical expression of the names of Christ-and in the worship of others-that "perfection" is introduced, as was done in *De Professione Christiana*. 77 It is in imitation/worship that the "man of God is to be perfect," 78 with such perfection being related to purity: "This perfection must never be mutilated by evil." 79 Gregory goes on to explain and illustrate by various images how sin "mutilates" perfection, thereby at least partially describing his understanding of the nature of perfection. 80 Sin which mutilates involves the admixture of irreconcilable elements: Man/beast, light / darkness-polarized images which consist of the presence of opposites. Thus, we may propose that, for Gregory, perfection involves true harmony and synthesis.

This harmony is predicated on the overpowering by destruction of 'the enemy' by "the stronger." Such a triumph is a "victory (of) virtue . . . over evil" and occurs "through an alliance of the unreasonable elements against the unsound ones," 81 thereby showing the relation of "virtue" to reason in the thought of Gregory. Within this context, "virtue" is also identified with "goodness" which is thought of in ethical, dynamic terms: "The good . . . exists in me . . . (and) is made to live through the death of the enemy. 82 Thus the "tak(ing) hold of virtue" means a relinquishing of opposites, a cessation of the attempt to participate in both virtue and evil. Consequently, we may expand on the above proposal and with legitimacy characterize perfection as single-mindedness; we may speak of it as an ethical rather than a chronological matter, by which we mean that perfection is more the result of a decisive choice or choices rather than the end-result of a chronological process.

Having provided the Christological hermeneutic for understanding perfection in dynamic and integrative terms, Gregory is now ready to launch into his

. . . original argument, namely, that the one road to the pure and divine life for lovers of virtue is knowing what the name of Christ means, in conformity with which we must shape our lives, attuning it to virtue through the emphasis on the other terms which we gathered together in our introduction from the holy voice of Paul. 83

In keeping with this interpretive principle, which he established in his introduction, Gregory proceeds in the main body of the letter to focus on

the thirty-two names or titles of Christ, arranging them under eighteen different headings in the text. And in doing this, Gregory addresses several themes which were later also of importance to Wesley, such as union with Christ, 84 a derived rather than native purity which involves a radical liberation from sin, 85 and holiness understood as singular rather than mixed constitution. 86

The unfolding and structuring of these themes in a way that relates Christ's names to the moral nature of the believer serve to reemphasize (1) the inner coherence of the letter around an explicit ethical center and (2) the intentional consistency with those Pauline concerns that inform and shape that center. However, at certain points in his discussion Gregory may extend human responsibility beyond its legitimate function within the context of perfection—i.e., there may be a possible overemphasis on human involvement at the expense of God's gracious action. On the other hand, we must be careful to recognize and remember that Gregory shows in the letter that we share in the names of Christ “through his life,” 87 rather than share His life through participation in His names. This would suggest a strong emphasis on grace in Gregory's view of perfection; that which enables believers to participate in Christ's grace is grace itself. In fact, there is more emphasis on this aspect of grace as we approach the conclusion of *De Perfectione* than on the recurrent underscoring of choice in the main body of the discussion. This may suggest that for Gregory grace is the context and the source for his synergism of divine and human interaction in the quest for perfection.

It is this synergism of grace which is expressed in (1) the “Christian”/ “Christ” interaction by the imitating of Christ (2) within the area of action-word-thought. 88 That which determines whether the complex of action-word deed is in harmony with Christ is the presence or absence of earthly passion. 89 The source of freedom from passion which makes possible the harmony of action-word-thought with Christ is the purity which is derived from Him. 90

All this brings Gregory to the point where he is now ready to define perfection along these lines:

Perfection in the Christian life in my judgment (is) the participation of one's soul and speech and activities in all of the names by which Christ is signified, so that the perfect holiness, according to the eulogy of Paul, is taken upon oneself in “the whole body and soul and spirit,” continuously safeguarded against being mixed with evil. 91

The Pauline fragment which Gregory incorporates in this definition of perfection is found in the text from which Wesley derived his key expression of “entire sanctification,” with that term of Paul's in turn possibly serving as the source of the concluding words of Gregory's definition: “against being mixed with evil”:

May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thessalonians 5:23, RSV).

As in Wesley's time, so in Gregory's, many apparently felt that the limitations and fluctuations of human nature made the possibility of perfection unthinkable. In the concluding words of *De Perfectione*, Gregory of Nyssa

declares that the fact of the changeableness of human nature is no obstacle to the kind of perfection he is affirming. Our human nature, which admittedly does have the character of pronounced mutability, is not to be destroyed; rather it is to be kept pure. This evidently relates us to that perfection which never stops changing because it is constitutionally dynamic: “For this is truly perfection: never to stop growing towards what is better and never placing any limit on perfection.” 92 And with that Wesley could not have agreed more!

Having identified the motifs of Gregory’s perfectionist teaching in *De Professione Christiana* and *De Perfectione*, the next step in providing the conceptual framework within which to hear his voice is to consider the “Macarian” Homilies.

The “Macarian” Homilies

Werner Jaeger affirms that the “Macarian” Homilies have a clearly discernible Gregorian basis:

The (Great) Letter (of Macarius) has shown that even where Macarius is paraphrasing a text of Gregory of Nyssa from the beginning to end, he adds much of his own. His thought can be said to take Gregory as point of departure and then to expand and vary its model. The same seems to be true of many of the homilies, though the influence of Gregory is not equally conspicuous in all parts of them. 93

But in order to perceive the Gregorian basis of the Homilies, we must note the relation of the Great Letter and the Homilies. The starting point is Jaeger’s proposal that Macarius’ “Great Letter” is rooted in Gregory of Nyssa:

We have found that the rediscovered text of Gregory’s treatise on the ascetic life (*De Instituto Christiano*) is the real source of the formerly so-called “Great Letter of Macarius.”94

The import of this discovery is crucial for our understanding of the Homilies:

Whatever his true name, there can be no doubt that the writer of the “Great Letter of Macarius” is identical with the author of the so-called Macarian homilies.95

This assertion is given further credence because both the Letter and the Homilies evidence the same Biblical basis, utilize the same theological vocabulary and together share a “mystic-ascetic philosophy.” “In short, both Letter and Homilies stem from the same personality,” 96 even though Gregory’s name does not appear in the Letter. 97

In his analysis of the thought of “Macarius” in the Homilies, Jaeger has chosen Homilies XL and XLI because, as Outler has noted in the beginning of this major section, “the first part of the Macarian Epistula Magna is in fact an abridgement of Homily XL” 98 and Homily XLI is conceptually inseparable from its immediately preceding homily. Thus we begin with Homily XL.

Homily XL

As in the Letter, prayer in this homily is given the place of prominence among the other virtues. This is because prayer links the soul with God’s

power and love. The linkage which is established by prayer is placed within an ethical context of intensity of emotion—"being inflamed to divine eros and ardent desire for God by spiritual love in him" 99 - and intellectual activity, which together focus on "sanctification and perfection through reception of the Spirit." 100 This is consonant with the Gregorian approach of placing grace after human effort in the quest for perfection and holiness through the Spirit. This, of course, is again in contrast to Wesley's emphasis on prevenient grace as the motivator of the human will.

Growing out of the introductory section which contrasts the two types of moral chains, the homily asks three basic questions related to the degrees of spiritual development—a movement which also is encountered in *De Instituto Christiano*.

The first question stems from the observation of those who do good, yet make no pretension of being in a state of grace: Are they therefore excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven? 101 This motif of degrees relative to heaven or hell is reflective of Gregory's emphasis "of steps or degrees in the soul's ascent to perfection," where, as Jaeger reminds us, "the Spirit assists man according to the degree or measure of his faith and to the stage of his 'spiritual age.'" 102 This is taken up by the homiletician to emphasize, as Jaeger says, "where there are steps, there is progress, even if it be slow and gradual." 103 And, like Gregory, he makes clear that this ascent involves a moral struggle, which Macarius illustrates with two combative metaphors: a wrestling match and a competitive chariot race—both of which point to two irreconcilably hostile forces within the heart of one struggling toward the goal of perfection. 104 Yet, as Jaeger notes, Macarius "also feels strongly the impossibility of two such hostile factions sharing the same camp." 105

The second question continues the concern with degrees of progress along the path to perfection. It deals with the difficulties of those who have made progress, but who still encounter "doubts and problems" as they seek to apply the code of Gregory's treatise to the communal life of the monastery. 106

The third question is a return to the problem of two opposing moral forces within the heart of the aspirant toward perfection, created by the metaphor of the wrestling match and the chariot race: "How can two persons of grace and sin exist simultaneously in the heart?" 107 To deal with this issue, Macarius uses at least two more metaphors, neither of which is really compatible with the other. First, he speaks of a fire burning under a kitchen pot. While the fire burns, the pot is heated; if the fire is neglected, the pot will turn cold. But if the fire is rekindled, the pot will once more contain heat. So it is in the spiritual life: Attention to the source of spiritual power will revive spiritual warmth; neglect will result in spiritual coldness. Since heat and coldness cannot coexist, Macarius is apparently suggesting a negative answer to the question of the coexistence of sin and grace in the same heart. But, as Jaeger perceptively observes:

Perfect grace and absolute sin do not really dwell together at the same time. And yet man must have tasted hell and death in order to distinguish bitter and sweet, death and life; so the presence of the one is linked with the experience of the other. 108

This metaphor, then, pictures the alternating conditions of heat and coldness that may exist in the aspirant for perfection.

The next metaphor to which Macarius suddenly shifts is that of the “gradual pulling of fish from the depths of the sea with the rod by which it has been caught.” 109 This suggests that Macarius is also trying to say that the way to perfection is a long, slow process.

Homily XLI

In extending the issue of the coexistence of sin and grace in the same heart into Homily XLI, Macarius recognizes this mixed condition and does not deny its practical reality. However, such a recognition does not imply that this inward inconsistency is a permanent state; rather by taking up the Gregorian emphasis on perseverance and moral exertion, Macarius, as Jaeger states, sees this as

. . . an initial period during which man’s will is tested to see whether or not it is able to preserve its love of God pure and undefiled, without making common cause with evil but dedicating itself entirely to grace. Then, after this time of probation, grace takes possession of the soul and penetrates its innermost recesses until the soul is completely permeated and ruled by it. 110

However, Jaeger does not make clear when this permeation of the soul by grace takes place. Since, in his *De Instituto Christiano* and in his *De Professione Christiana* and *De Perfectione* Gregory says that perfection is not fully entered in this life, the probationary period to which Jaeger refers may therefore extend the entirety of the Christian’s life. If this is so, the moral exertion mentioned in connection with probation would be a life-long necessity. But if the permeation by grace can occur in this life, there is then the question of whether Macarius identifies this penetration with grace or whether it is a condition which is conducive to development toward perfection, with that condition being maintained by attention to humility. For immediately after referring to the full possession of the soul by grace, Jaeger states “the greatest enemies of the progress of grace are pride . . . and lack of humility. He who abounds in grace must deem himself poor and unworthy and in need of help.” 111

The Relation of John Wesley to Homilies XL and XLI

We have observed through the preceding analysis that both Wesley and Gregory meet at the point of many common themes. Yet it is within their shared context of perfection as dynamic process and goal that the two men arrange their emphases in different ways, particularly in terms of the motif of grace within a synergistic structure. Another contrast between Wesley and Gregory may be noted by comparing the former’s two sermons, “On Sin in Believers,” 112 and “The Repentance of Believers,” 113 with the latter’s Homily XL. Whereas Gregory appears to emphasize the impossibility of sin and grace coexisting in the same heart, Wesley declares that although sin does not reign following justification, it does coexist with grace as an indwelling nature in the heart of the believer prior to entire sanctification. Thus it becomes fairly obvious that Wesley is in more positive “dialogue” with Gregory in relation to Homily XLI (which does appear to modify the either/or tone and atmosphere of Homily XL) than he is in relation to Homily XL.

The Writings of John Wesley

Now it is time to listen primarily to the other end of the “conversation” as we turn our attention to two of John Wesley’s writings which help constitute “his vision of the rightful aspirations and expectations of Christian faith and devotion” 114—a vision which he usually articulates as “Christian perfection.”

Analysis of “Christian Perfection”

Following the model of Philippians 3:14, 15 in which Paul paradoxically speaks of himself as not yet being perfect yet being included among those who are perfect, John Wesley, in his sermon, “Christian Perfection,” which was first published in 1741, 115 seeks to show how this Pauline emphasis is not contradictory. Because holiness consists of a moral perfection that is neither absolute nor exclusive of non-moral elements of imperfection, Wesley conceives of Christian perfection in dynamic rather than static terms. It is a perfection that is susceptible to and not incompatible with spiritual development: Christian perfection is not a perfection

. . . which does not admit of a continual increase. So that how much soever any man has attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to “grow in grace” and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God his Savior. 116

This, of course, parallels Gregory of Nyssa’s dynamic concept of perfection stated in the closing sentences of *De Perfectione*.

The moral nature of such perfection is seen in the two basic areas in which Christians are or may be perfect in this life. First, there is a minimal level of moral perfection which Wesley ascribes to all believers: “A Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin” 117 at any stage of the Christian pilgrimage. Second, there is the full sense in which Christians can be perfect in this life, although, as the tenor of the second division of the sermon reveals, perfection in these terms is not the universal experience of all believers:

But it is only of those who “are strong in the Lord,” and “have overcome the wicked one,” or rather of those who “have known him that is from the beginning,” that it can be affirmed they are in such a sense perfect as, secondly, to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers. 118

The second or full sense of perfection apparently refers to deliverance from the sinful nature, for Wesley’s statement that “my evil nature, the body of sin, is destroyed,” 119 most likely refers back to evil thoughts and evil tempers. Wesley’s focus on this aspect of perfection is from a Christological perspective: Christ is (1) the Pattern for the perfection which involves freedom from the sinful nature and (2) the source of the virtuous expressions of that life. 120

It is in Wesley’s Christological expression of perfection that we may further detect possible positive influences by Gregory of Nyssa who, in a very similar fashion, Christologically interprets perfection. But, unlike Gregory, Wesley places grace prior to works in relation to holiness. In refuting justification by works put forth in what he thought was an erroneous interpretation of 1 John 1:7-9, Wesley, by implication, affirms the chronological

precedence of justification over sanctification and the theological precedence of grace over the works which flow from justification and sanctification: The interpretation to which Wesley has made reference “assert(s) justification by works in the strongest sense possible. It is making all inward as well as outward holiness necessarily previous to justification.” 121

Wesley thus summarizes his ethical approach to Christian perfection by stating that:

It remains, then, that Christians are saved in this world from all sin, from all unrighteousness; that they are now in such a sense perfect as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers. 122

But in making this summary, the possible future tense frame of reference, in which he places freedom from the sinful nature, introduces an ambiguous quality to the rest of the sermon in terms of the attainability of such liberation. Though he explicitly and Christologically defines the content of Christian perfection, implies by various images that it constitutes the goal of the Christian life, suggests that it is subsequent to justification, and (in the latter part of the sermon) exhorts believers to pursue perfection, Wesley is rather vague as to when the aspirant for holiness may expect perfection to transpire in this life. Such ambiguity—at least in this sermon—may suggest that for Wesley, as with Gregory, Christian perfection is both goal and way, which together carry moral implications and obligations for this life.

Analysis of “The Scripture Way of Salvation”

A careful reading of the first main division of “The Scripture Way of Salvation” reveals that the transformation defined as sanctification and which commences with justification is not fully accomplished at the inauguration of salvation. Wesley observes that the impact which the initiation of this transformation brings to bear upon the new believer is so tremendous that he or she may think that the renewal is complete—that there is deliverance from both outward and inward sin—in the moment of justification. Wesley puts it this way:

How naturally do those who experience such a change imagine that all sin is gone! That it is utterly rooted out of their heart, and has no more any place therein! How easily do they draw that inference, “I feel no sin, therefore, I have none.” It does not stir therefore, it does not exist: it has no motion; therefore, it has no being. 123

But not too much time elapses before such believers become aware that inward sin—the sinful nature—is still present, with intense inner conflict often being their subsequent experience, without, however, the assurance of sonship, which the witness of the Holy Spirit provides, being removed. Wesley bases this realistic perception of post-conversion experience on Galatians 5:17 and Romans 8:16 and on paragraph 4 of Homily IX in the Homilies of Macarius, which Wesley includes in Volume I of his *The Christian Library*:

How exactly did Macarius, fourteen hundred years ago, describe the present experience of the children of God! “the unskillful (or unexperienced), when grace operates, presently imagine they have

no more sin. Whereas they that have discretion cannot deny that even we who have the grace of God may be molested again For we have often had instances of some among the brethren who have experienced such grace as to affirm that they had no sin in them. And yet after all, when they thought themselves entirely freed from it, the corruption that lurked within was stirred up anew, and they were well nigh burnt up.”¹²⁴

It is with this inner moral situation perceived following the co-commencement of justification and sanctification that that which Wesley calls “the gradual work of sanctification” ¹²⁵ is supposed to deal. The focus of this gradual work of sanctification is the deepening radical treatment “of our evil nature” ¹²⁶ which has as its objective an increasing death of sin (which, in light of the immediate context, may be assumed to be the sinful nature and the inner stirrings which it prompts) and, conversely, an increasing aliveness to God. This is done through the enablement of the Holy Spirit within the context of the life of discipleship. ¹²⁷

It is in relation to the situation involved in gradual sanctification that Wesley introduces a third element in the continuum of salvation; viz., entire sanctification: “It is thus,” says Wesley, in the developmental setting of gradual sanctification, “that we wait for entire sanctification, for a full salvation from all our sins—from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief.” ¹²⁸ This suggests that the term “entire sanctification” is a crucial interpretive concept in Wesley’s soteriological schema and defines the nature of the chronological, theological and experiential comprehensiveness of salvation. It is by this hermeneutical key and within this redemptive framework that we propose two things: First, entire sanctification by its very constitution is seen to be the counterpart of initial sanctification and hence introduces the element of “goal” to the total process of salvation. Second, flowing from the element of goal, the term “entire sanctification” indicates that “gradual” or “progressive sanctification” (which deals with the gradual mortification of the sinful nature) is not to be understood as coextensive with the entirety of the Christian life so that the conflict prompted by inner sin must be endured until physical death. The basis for making these two distinctions from Wesley’s trilogy of initial, gradual and entire sanctification is his description of the “entire sanctification” for which “we wait” as a dynamic goal called “perfection.” The concept of goal is philologically inherent in perfection—“Let us go on unto perfection” (Hebrews 6:1, A.V.) - and Wesley definitively fills it with the content of a love that has radical consequences for the sinful nature:

But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin, love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. ¹²⁹

Wesley evidently locates this goal before the end of the Christian life because he amplifies his description of the love which expels sin in terms that can refer only to the believer’s activity in this life: “It is love ‘rejoicing ever more, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks.’” ¹³⁰

From our earlier analysis of Gregory of Nyssa, it is reasonably clear that we find in this first division of Wesley’s sermon correspondences to Gregory

in at least three significant areas: (1) Salvation in its fullness points to perfection; (2) perfection is dynamic rather than static and hence is not experientially incompatible with human nature; and (3) the dynamic process, if not the goal, of perfection is ethically related to this life. However, in the second and third main divisions of the sermon, a dissonance between Gregory and Wesley is “heard” in the understanding of grace in terms of its chronological, theological and functional relation to works. This may be summarized in stating that entire sanctification rests squarely on faith as convictional and appropriating which is preceded, prompted and accompanied by grace. In contrast to Gregory, works, for Wesley, do not make us worthy to receive the grace of God. Rather, because of the sin which does remain in the believer following justification, the inability to perform truly good works reveals the need for full salvation, with prevenient grace prompting the faith that brings perfection in love. And because it is faith, rather than works, that makes possible the attaining of Christian perfection as the goal of salvation, entire sanctification may be anticipated and experienced after justification and prior to death. Although the content and goal of such perfection in the thinking of Wesley largely correspond with that of Gregory’s teaching, Wesley apparently differs from Gregory in placing the goal before death, thereby positing that the struggle with inner sin need not last the entirety of the Christian pilgrimage.

Some Dialogical Dissonances

After listening to the “dialogue” between Gregory of Nyssa and John Wesley, we may now ask: Is Gregory’s main influence on Wesley in terms of dynamic perfection as goal and content, but not on the impetus and means for attaining perfection? What, then, is the source of Wesley’s view of prevenient grace in relation to perfection? These questions are significant because both Gregory and Wesley are synergistic; they use the same components in their synergism. However, I propose that they differ in the way they interrelate and balance those elements.

Gregory, through “Macarius,” began to “speak” to Wesley during his Oxford years through the influence of John Clayton. And from what we can determine, the conversation was positive. Then why do we now perceive some points of divergence over such an issue so mutually important to both men? By looking at Wesley’s thought and life within a broader historical frame, it is being proposed here that Wesley’s synergism before 1738 appears to correspond more with Gregory’s. If that is an accurate observation, then we may ask whether Wesley’s “evangelical” conversion in the Aldersgate meeting on May 24, 1738, contributed, in part at least, to this rather obvious difference between Wesley and Gregory over the relation of grace and works.

In connection with this, it may be significant that Wesley’s view prior to 1738 may more closely approximate Gregory’s during the time that Wesley placed sanctification before justification. Was this placing the “cart before the horse” influenced by the Fathers? If so, did Wesley’s patristic studies influence his method for reaching perfection as well as his understanding of the content of sanctification? Did the methodology of attainment change after Aldersgate because Wesley from then on placed sanctification after justification? But though Wesley’s synergism prior to 1738 seems to corre-

spend more closely to that of Gregory's during the time that Wesley placed sanctification before justification, does Gregory's dynamic concept of process and goal emerge after 1738 when Wesley reversed the logical and chronological order of sanctification and justification? This rather confusing interaction of factors is indeed difficult to sort out; however, a possible untangling of these strands may be possible when we consider a basic motif that Jaeger perceives in his interpretation of Gregory's theology in *De Instituto Christiano*.

Because of their synergistic structurings of the process of salvation, both Gregory and Wesley emphasize the utter necessity of cooperation with God. But what is it that inclines us to cooperate with God? This question points to the crux of the matter in the synergistic differences between the two men. If that is so, then how does Wesley's concept of perfection differ with Gregory's because of this divergence of thought over the balance of human effort and grace? And further, what is the function of grace in Gregory's theology and what is its emphasis and its relation to perfection? 131 Jaeger provides this clue:

To sum up, we must admit that in Gregory's treatise there is a definite doctrine of the function of divine grace in the process of man's salvation. The emphasis is on defining the mutual effect of grace . . . and works with regard to the perfection of man. 132

Jaeger states that Gregory's theory of "the mutual effect of grace and works with regard to the perfection of man" emerges from a concrete, corporate context. "It is prompted by the writer's intention of giving the ascetics to whom he addresses himself in this work some practical assistance in their work of self-perfection." 133 Thus Gregory's works-grace syndrome is evidently designed for those already within the process of salvation. If this is so, then could this be the reason for the lack of explicit emphasis on prevenient grace in Gregory? Could this mean that now, because one has experienced saving grace, his response will bring growth in grace toward perfection? But even if this possibility does provide a valid explanation for the nature of Gregory's emphasis on grace, it still does not give to grace that intense primacy which is found in Wesley. For we can with assurance state that for Wesley grace always precedes us at any point along the continuum of salvation, with the response to that grace providing the impetus for growth in grace. Thus, in a very real sense, the full spectrum of grace in Wesley's thought always retains the element of prevenience. Consequently, we can still affirm that in the structuring of their respective synergisms, Gregory is characterized by a works-grace pattern and Wesley advocates a grace-works syndrome.

This points us back to the relation of *De Professione Christiana* and *De Perfectione* to *De Instituto Christiano*:

The two works of Gregory directly concerned with *teleiotes* or *homoiosis pros ton theon* the *Quid nomen Christianorum sibi velit* and the *De Perfectione*, remain more on the surface of the problem, or content themselves with fixing the goal. The treatise *De Instituto Christiano* marks a decided advance beyond this stage in the direction of practical education for the goal and toward a clearer distinction of the essential factors involved in the process. 134

It is possible, says Jaeger, to note the relation of the “essential factors” to the upcoming Augustinian-Pelagian controversy and the later Semi-Pelagian dispute of the fifth century. According to Jaeger, the Semi-Pelagian view of grace and the human will was “precisely the doctrine of *sunergia* advanced by Gregory of Nyssa, inculcated in (*De Instituto Christiano*) and elsewhere.” 135

Because of the influence of Gregory on Wesley, this statement regarding Gregory may make it possible to account for the charges of Semi-Pelagianism directed later at Wesley and the Methodists. But if Wesley takes Gregory’s view of the goal, but not the “essential factors” involved in reaching it—especially after Aldersgate in the relating of grace and free will in a markedly different way than prior to his “heart-warming” experience could the charge of Semi-Pelagianism be nullified? Furthermore, even if Wesley’s synergism may not have its roots in Gregory, it is quite clear that Wesley’s view of grace does not square with Augustine’s, at least after the latter’s encounter with Pelagius. Then what is the source of Wesley’s view of grace? If our observations in the second major section of this paper are correct about his radical restructuring of the relationship of sanctification and justification, then we may with some confidence propose that Wesley’s view of grace in terms of his grace-works synergism is the result of Moravian influence “purified” by his commitment to the Early Fathers.

CONCLUSION

We have been listening to John Wesley and Gregory of Nyssa “dialogue” within an Anglican setting which is rooted in an understanding of a historical/theological continuity that is perceived to span the Christian centuries. The interaction of the various factors of that Anglican context, interpreted against the backdrop of Wesley’s “ethical” and “evangelical” conversions in, respectively, 1725 and 1738, reveal to us how and why Wesley (1) reassessed the place of the patristic writings in relation to Scripture and (2) revised his structuring of the *Ordo Salutis* by placing justification before sanctification. Wesley’s study of the Fathers in Georgia brought about a change in the nature of patristic influence on him. Although still greatly important to him, this development made the Fathers, for Wesley, subordinate to rather than coordinate with Scripture.

The shifting that occurred in Georgia was complemented by a reshaping of the understanding of grace and its relationship to works, as the result of his Aldersgate experience, which gave to grace a total and permanent primacy in Wesley’s thought. It was this new positioning of grace within his theology which provided a new understanding of the Fathers for Wesley in terms of the synergistic structuring of salvation. By blending this concept of grace with the Eastern dynamic concept of perfection as both process and goal, Wesley was able to make to the Church his unique contribution of the doctrine of Christian perfection which is attainable in this life following justification, which releases from the sinful nature, and which, through grace, is compatible with and adaptable to mutable human nature.

These issues were topics of high priority in the Wesleyan-Gregorian “dialogue,” with their points of agreement and disagreement placing them in bold relief. But what does the “conversation” prove? What does it indicate? Because of his rather strong reservations about Werner Jaeger’s hypothe-

sis of the relation of Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius the Egyptian-and hence Dr. Albert C. Outler's resulting construction of the connection between Gregory and Wesley - Robert Brightman thinks the "conversation" does not reveal too much in "that any comparison between the two men can be made only on the basis of an affinity of ideas and not on the basis of a line of historical influence." 136 However, if, as done in this paper, we take a more positive attitude toward Jaeger's, and hence Outler's, arguments and paralleling what Professors Paul M. Bassett and Donald W. Dayton have suggested about the relationship between Wesley and Gregory, 137 we have reason to posit that the connection between the two Churchmen is "dialogical" in the sense of the continuity of a soteriological tradition at the point of Christian perfection rather than in terms of a coincident affinity of ideas.

But whatever line of historical relationship may be drawn from Gregory to Wesley, that influence is modified by the ideas and experiences clustering around the Oxford years, the Georgia mission and the Aldersgate conversion within Wesley's Anglican setting. The consequence, we thus suggest, is that the formulation by John Wesley of a doctrine of dynamic Christian perfection which is radically experienceable in this life is in varying degrees historically and conceptually rooted in that Eastern tradition of spirituality bounded, on the one hand, by Clement of Alexandria and, on the other, by Gregory of Nyssa.

Notes

1I am personally indebted to Professor Robert M. Grant of The University of Chicago Divinity School for suggesting to me this historiographical insight.

2Lawrence D. McIntosh, "The Nature and Design of Christianity in John Wesley's Theology: A Study in the Relationship of Love and Faith." Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, Madison, N.J., 1966, p. 85.

3John C. English, "The Heart of Renewal: John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Initiation." M.A. thesis, Wesleyan College, Macon, Ga., 1967, p.18.

4Ibid., p. 19.

5Space limitations do not allow discussion of this important and fascinating ecclesiastical factor which significantly shaped patristic influences in Wesley's immediate religious and educational environment. Although only brief mention is made of the Nonjuring parties, analysis of this churchly

development has helped to inform the first major section of this paper. For further details see English, pp. 12, 25, 26; Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville: Abingdon Press,1970), pp. 13,21,39,40, 164; and V. H. H. Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley: A Study of John Wesley and Oxford* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1961), p. 173.

6Baker, p. 16.

7Ibid., p. 25.

8Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley in A Library of Protestant Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 8.

9Green, p. 168.

10Ibid, p. 173.

11Baker, p. 31.

12Outler, pp. 9, 10.

13Ibid, p. 10.

14Ibid

15Ibid

16Ibid., p. 9.

17Ibid

18Albert C. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975), p. 96.

19Green, p. 153.

20Outler, *John Wesley*, pp. 10, 11.

21Charles Wesley, Benjamin Ingham and Charles Delamotte. Outler, *John Wesley*, pp. 10, 11.

22Baker, p. 49; Outler, *John Wesley*, p. 12.

23Richard P. Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists." Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, Durham, N.C., 1972, p. 161.

24McIntosh, pp. 87, 88.

25Baker, p. 49; McIntosh, p. 87; Outler, pp. 12, 13; Heitzenrater, p. 162.

26Baker, p. 49.

27Outler, *Wesleyan Spirit*, p. 70.

28John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley*. Entry for January 24, 1738. Percy Livingstone Parker, ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), p. 53.

29Outler, *Wesleyan Spirit*, p. 70.

30Ibid, p. 71, middle italics supplied.

31Outler, *John Wesley*, p. 252.

32Ibid

33Outler, *Wesleyan Spirit*, p. 70.

34Quoted in Outler, *John Wesley*, p. 66.

35John Wesley, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*. Edward H. Sugden, ed. (London: Epworth Press, 1921), II, 363, 364.

36Albert C. Outler, "Methodism's Theological Heritage: A Study in Perspectives in Methodism's Destiny in an Ecumenical Age, Paul M. Minus, .Tr.. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 57.

37Outler, John Wesley, p. 353.

38Outler, "Theological Heritage," p. 60.

39Outler, John Wesley, p. 14.

40Werner Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954).

41Outler, John Wesley, p. 9.

42Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *Ascetical Works*. Virginia Woods Callahan, trans. Volume 58 in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1967).

43Jaeger, pp. 27-31.

44Ibid., p. 31.

45Ibid, p. 32.

46Saint Gregory, p. 83.

47Ibid., p. 84.

48Ibid.

49Ibid.

50Ibid.

51Ibid

52Ibid.

53Ibid., p. 85.

54Ibid

55Ibid

56Ibid, p. 86.

57Ibid.

58Ibid., pp. 86, 87.

59Ibid

60Ibid., p. 87.

61Ibid

62Ibid.

63Ibid

64Ibid, p. 88.
65Ibid
66Ibid
67Ibid, italics supplied.
68Ibid
69Ibid, p. 89.
70Ibid, p. 95.
71Ibid, pp. 95-100.
72Ibid, p. 95.
73Ibid
74Ibid
75Ibid
76Ibid.,pp. 96-98.
77Ibid, p. 99.
78Ibid
79Ibid
80Ibid, p. 100.
81Ibid
82Ibid
83Ibid, p. 101.
84Ibid, pp. 111-115.
85Ibid, p. 116.
86Ibid, p. 117.
87Ibid., p. 120.
88Ibid
89Ibid, p. 121.
90Ibid
91Ibid
92Ibid, p. 122.
93Jaeger, p. 209.
94Ibid., p. 152.
95Ibid, italics supplied.

96Ibid, italics supplied.

97Ibid, pp. 156, 157.

98Outler, John Wesley, p. 9.

99Jaeger, p. 210.

100Ibid

101Ibid, p. 212.

102Ibid, p. 213.

103Ibid

104Ibid, pp. 214, 215.

105Ibid, p. 215.

106Ibid., p. 216.

107Ibid

108Ibid, p. 217.

109Ibid

110Ibid, p. 218.

111Ibid

112John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley. Sermons I:1-33* in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, Albert C. Outler, ed., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), pp. 317-334.

113Ibid, pp. 335-353.

114Outler, John Wesley, p. 252.

115John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley. Sermons II: 34-70* in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, Albert C. Outler, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), pp. 97, 98.

116Ibid, pp. 104, 105.

117Ibid, p. 116.

118Ibid, p. 117.

119Ibid p. 118.

120Ibid pp. 117, 119.

121Ibid, 120.

122Ibid

123Ibid, p. 158.

124Ibid, p. 159.

125Ibid, p. 160.

126Ibid

127Ibid

128Ibid, italics supplied.

129Ibid

130Ibid

131Jaeger, p. 95.

132Ibid, p. 96.

133Ibid

134Ibid,p. 97.

135Ibid

136Robert S. Brightman, "Gregory of Nyssa and John Wesley in Theological Dialogue on the Christian Life." Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, Boston, Mass., 1969, p. 367.

137Paul M. Bassett and William M. Greathouse, *The Historical Development. Volume II in Exploring Christian Holiness*. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City,1985), p.108. Donald W. Dayton, "The Historical Background of Pneumatological Issues in the Holiness Movement" in Alex R. G. Deasley and R. Larry Shelton, eds., *The Spirit and the New Age*. Volume V in Wesleyan Theological Perspectives (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, Inc., 1986), pp. 248, 249.

TONGUES-SPEAKING AND THE WESLEYAN-HOLINESS QUEST FOR ASSURANCE OF SANCTIFICATION

by
Charles Edwin Jones

Do you hear them coming, brother,
Thronging up the steeps of light,
Clad in glorious shining garments,
Bloodwashed garments pure and white.

‘Tis a glorious church without spot or wrinkle,
Washed in the blood of the Lamb;
‘Tis a glorious church without spot or wrinkle,
Washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Ralph E. Hudson, 1843-1901 (1892)

From its inception in the eighteenth century, the Wesleyan quest for Christian perfection was both individual and corporate. Although John Wesley described perfect love as victory over inward sins such as pride, envy, greed and jealousy, Methodist doctrinal and behavioral standards were recorded in a published Discipline, and Wesleyan societal norms were enforced by official class leaders in obligatory class meetings. Claims by the founder and other Methodists to hearts “strangely warmed” and to affections characterized by love alone, contravene in no way the pervasive puritanism and pietism of the movement. Both the early Methodists and their late-nineteenth century holiness followers held to a puritanical standard for all believers. Like the original Puritans before them, both held that although decorous conduct in itself was no sure indicator of grace, its absence surely indicated a lack thereof. When being admitted to full conference membership, Methodist preachers vowed that they were “going on to perfection,” were “earnestly striving after it,” and were expecting “to be made perfect in this life.” They were enjoined to do all within their “power” to build up those committed to their care “in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord.”¹ Joy over being “plucked as brands from the burning” per-

vaded Methodist class meetings and “watch-night” services designed for spiritual introspection and diversion from the temptation to drink.

A similar, slightly modified pattern emerged in independent groups established by holiness revivalists in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. An attempt by the extremely-ascetic Free Methodist founders (dubbed “Nazarites” by their enemies) to reinstate the class meeting and to abolish instrumental music in the church, failed of imitation by other groups. Their propensity toward ascetic standards of conduct and joyful demonstration in worship (Free Methodist women had a reputation for shouting their hair down) gained wide acceptance, however, in other groups as well. Most independent holiness churches established in the heyday of the National Holiness camp meetings in the 1880s and 1890s, were scarcely larger than a good-sized Methodist class meeting, and put much more store in being “clean and straight” than in being large. They generally replaced the class meeting with a prayer (and testimony) meeting on Wednesday or Thursday evening. Itinerant evangelism attracted more ministers than the pastorate and even churches in important centers such as College Mound, Missouri, 2 were included on circuits. Under this system the pastor might preach in each church only one Sunday a month. Years later A. Milton Smith remembered that in his boyhood his home congregation near Prescott, Arkansas paid the pastor \$100 per year, but gave an evangelist \$100 for a ten-day revival meeting. 3 With a pastor’s time divided among several congregations, local leadership was by necessity, if not by design, in the hands of one layman who in many respects resembled the Methodist class leader. Typically he had led the holiness band in the local Methodist Church, which had furnished the charter members of the independent group. Often he (or occasionally she) was a leading citizen, a merchant, physician, teacher or prosperous farmer. Representative of such were: J. F. Spruce, a farmer near Floresville, Texas; A. J. Peck, a cotton broker of Duncan; Arthur Beaver, a merchant of Oklahoma City and Bethany; and George Beck, a merchant of Miami, Oklahoma; Will Roney of Carl Junction, and Elias Sanner, farmer near Clarence and merchant of College Mound, Missouri; Joseph Hughs, Sr. of Wellsville Kansas; F. W. Swain, a physician of Kewanee, Illinois; John Y. Johnston farmer of Rosebud, Michigan; Isaac W. Hanson, a harness maker of Haverhill Massachusetts; J. A. Culbreth, merchant and banker of Falcon, North Carolina; and T. J. Shingler, wealthy landowner, farmer and turpentine manufacturer of Donalsonville, Georgia.

With the pastor only occasionally present, the personal charisma of the local leader was crucial. Typically, he constructed or purchased a church building, provided the bulk of the support for pastor and evangelist, administered discipline, and served as Sunday school superintendent, adult teacher, and treasurer. Most importantly, he demonstrated the authority of zeal characteristic of Methodist revivalist leadership and welcomed freedom and heartfelt demonstration in worship. As often as not he or she was a shouter and encouraged emotional display in the Spirit by others. Ideally, both the leader and the saints were prayed-up and came to church expecting to walk in the light, enjoy a time of blessing and see sinners converted. Unresolved conflicts were regarded as hindrances to the spiritual freedom of the saints and the winning of the lost. The holiness congregation was to be a model of sanctified piety in personal and collective ethics as well as in

dress and behavior. Separation from the world, holiness believers maintained, was a necessary prerequisite to the quest for sanctification and to the bliss of a place among the sanctified. The experience of entire sanctification lived out in a sometimes hostile world was “a heaven to go to heaven in,” and the holiness church, a model community of ethical conduct and fervent piety, afforded “such hallowed fellowship as cannot otherwise be known.”⁴

As in justification the Holy Spirit through prevenient grace brought the repentant sinner to faith and knowledge of salvation, so the same Spirit gave witness to the fully consecrated believer that he was wholly sanctified, in fact “married” to the will of God. This was the consciously articulated teaching concerning the experience of the individual. Parallel to this was another, never explicitly articulated teaching about the witness of the Spirit to sanctification in the church. “If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”⁵ The sanctified Christian had burned all bridges and was determined to go “through” at all cost, even if that meant going alone. A place among the beloved in the church, nevertheless, was very precious. To be out of step with the saints was an exceedingly serious matter for it was by the witness of the Spirit to the purifying work in his heart and by hearty conformity to and fellowship with the saints in the church that the individual gained assurance of sanctification. Emotional demonstration, though welcome in worship, was never held up as normative or as an infallible proof of sanctifying grace. Spiritual shouting by those in the congregation so gifted resulted in the edification of the whole body. Shouting by other good people not so gifted threw a pall on the meeting. Even children (perhaps especially children) were conscious of the difference.

Assurance of acceptance with God, holiness people taught, was instead to be had through “the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.”⁶ Opportunity for individuals to relate their experiences was given in nearly every service. In addition holiness worship utilized gospel songs inspired by or written for National Holiness camp meetings. Combining reiteration of doctrinal teachings, Biblical images, and an evangelistic appeal, these songs required the singer ritually to testify and at times to shout. Representative of this genre is “Glory to Jesus,” by A. F. Myers.

If you want pardon, if you want peace,
If you want sorrow and sighing to cease,
Look to the Savior who died on the tree,
Jesus can save you, for He saved me.
If you want boldness, take part in the fight,
If you want purity, walk in the light,
If you want liberty, shout and be free,
Jesus can cleanse you, for He cleansed me.
Glory to Jesus, He satisfies me,
Glory to Jesus, I'm free, I am free,
Glory to Jesus, I'll shout it I will,
Glory to Jesus, I cannot keep still.

Songs and sermons alike drew on a very wide range of scriptural images and metaphors: the Exodus, the Promised Land, the Tabernacle, Beulah, the Cross, and the Blood of Christ, and used a large variety of textual material: patriarchs and prophets (especially Jonah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel) in the Old Testament, and Johannine and Pauline sources as often as Luke-Acts in the New Testament. Holiness life and worship at the time of the Parham-and Seymour-led revivals in Topeka, Houston, and Los Angeles displayed a unity of teaching, fellowship, and fervor. Holiness people generally regarded like-minded believers, whether of their particular group or not, as being part of the “work,” fellow champions of the “cause” of holiness. If at times puritanical holiness evangelists attempted to “clean fish” before they caught them, individual and corporate discipline and worship gave assurance to those who claimed to be sanctified as well as to those who sought Christian perfection: “Faithful is he who calleth you, who also will do it.”⁹

There is little reason to discount reports by Pentecostal historians of occasions of tongues-speaking among Wesleyan-holiness believers before Topeka, Houston and Los Angeles. With spiritual shouting, ecstatic speech was regarded by one holiness evangelist at least as being a manifestation of the Spirit. A. B. Crumpler could not countenance the teaching that tongues-speaking was the “initial evidence” of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, however, and resigned from the movement he had founded when the majority of ministers and members came to that position.¹⁰ Exercise of the gift of ecstasy in the church could be regarded as a contribution to the unity of the body. The claim, however, that the use of such a gift constituted the initial physical evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit flew in the face of the experience of sanctified believers not so gifted, and resulted in disunity and division. Wesleyan-holiness teaching held that perfect love, entire sanctification, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit were one and the same. The initial physical evidence doctrine separated the baptism of the Holy Spirit from entire sanctification. It set tongues-speech off from their ecstatic demonstration and in doing so created division. In Wesleyan-holiness thinking there was a close connection between liberty in the Spirit and unity. Making ecstatic speech a sign undermined the freedom in worship so essential to the effective witness of the church to unbelievers. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”¹¹ The “initial evidence” formula created a serious separation in the holiness ranks, putting its opponents on the defensive in relation to tongues and dampening the enthusiasm of their worship.

At the time of the 1901 revival in Topeka, there were in the United States more than a dozen independent church bodies (excluding the Wesleyan Methodist and Free Methodist churches formed earlier) owing the inspiration for their existence to Methodism and to the National Holiness camp meetings. Their combined membership was not more than 20,000. These included the Church of God (Unity Holiness People) and the Church of God (Independent Holiness People), two factions of a group in Missouri and Kansas destined to reunite in 1922, the Holiness Church of California, the Church of the Nazarene based in Los Angeles, the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America centered in Brooklyn, the Holiness Church of North Carolina, the Pentecostal Rescue Mission of Binghamton, New York, the Holiness Christian Church in Pennsylvania and Indiana, the Pentecostal Mission with head-quarters in Nashville, the Independent Holiness Church of Texas, the New

Testament Church of Christ, the International Apostolic Holiness Union and Prayer League, the Holiness Union based in Louisville, the Vanguard Mission of St. Louis, the Independent Holiness Church of Donalville, Georgia, the Pentecostal Union centered in Denver, the Metropolitan Church Association, and remnants of the Fire-Baptized Holiness Association of America. Probably two-thirds of these groups endorsed the General Holiness Assembly, which met in Chicago that year and toyed unsuccessfully with the possibility of forming a national holiness church. By 1919 eight of them were to merge into the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene and the International Holiness Church.

The Fire-Baptized Holiness Association, which in 1901 was nearly moribund and not yet committed to tongues-speaking, embodies in its doctrinal history emblems of all that was to trouble Wesleyan-holiness people in the movement then being born. The Fire-Baptized movement, launched but six years earlier by the highly persuasive B. H. Irwin, proclaimed belief in a third crisis experience, the baptism of fire, subsequent to entire sanctification. Introduction of the possibility of still further “effusions” characterized by explosives such as “dynamite,” “Iyddite,” and “oxidite,” together with Irwin’s confession of “open and gross sin,” caused most of his followers to desert “the fire” doctrine. Always regarded by the main body of Wesleyan-holiness people as a fanatical aberration, the Fire-Baptized movement opened up the possibility of a baptism of the Holy Spirit distinct from entire sanctification. Tongues-speech, which though not incorporated in “the fire” teaching had been permitted in Irwin’s meetings, came to be associated with the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the minds of his followers, an association which was to reappear and solidify at Azusa Street and to be carried far beyond. 12

The claim that there is a baptism of the Holy Spirit beyond entire sanctification and that its reception is accompanied by physical signs, put holiness leaders on the defensive. A principal reason for union among holiness churches in the decade following Azusa Street was the creation of bulwark against “fanaticism.” Although the term undoubtedly encompassed other threats, fanaticism in this context practically became a euphemism for speaking in tongues and accounts for the elimination of “Pentecost” and “Pentecostal” from Wesleyan-holiness church nomenclature by 1925. Other safeguards against fanaticism in the new denominations included were expanded creedal statements, a superintendency, a greatly enlarged ministerium including ordination of women as elders, and amendment of General Rules inherited from Methodism. In 1907, for instance, the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene revised the traditional Methodist rule against “taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus” and “singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God,” 13 to read: “Such songs, literature and entertainments as are not to the glory of God; the avoidance of the theater, the ball room, the circus and like places; also lotteries and games of chance; looseness and impropriety of conduct.” 14

In one sense nothing had changed. The same doctrinal formulas, metaphors and images pervaded holiness songs and sermons. The same exuberance characterized holiness worship. Early Nazarenes, for instance, were dubbed “Noisyrenes,” while holiness people together with their glossolalic brethren shared the honor of being called “holy rollers.” Certainly the stand-

ards of conduct enjoined by official rules were as stringent as the socially-enforced unwritten ones which had preceded them. Although female disciples of Charles Fox Parham had flouted the holiness dress code, the over-whelming majority of first-generation Apostolics, particularly those with Fire-Baptized roots, were every whit as puritanical as the non-tongues speakers. The rise of theatrical preachers who, like Aimee Semple McPherson, could claim the “initial physical evidence” of the baptism of the Holy Spirit while ignoring the pietistic behavioral strictures of the Wesleyan-holiness tradition, lay several decades in the future. Replacement of doctrine and ethics as the informant of religious experience, with experience as the foundation of doctrine and conduct was, nevertheless, a present reality. Thus the parent movement confronted its reformist offspring.

Although on the surface the Wesleyan-holiness defenders appeared to have stemmed the tide of experience-based innovation, they had unwittingly undermined the elements of assurance of personal and corporate sanctification, which characterized their own tradition. To be sure the Pentecostalist promise of “something more” eventually lured many including the evangelist Charlie Robinson, the evangelist and song writer Herbert Buffum and his wife and co-worker, Lillie, and the family of the future Assemblies of God general superintendent, Ernest Swing Williams, into the new movement. The Holiness Church of California, which made profession of the experience of entire sanctification a requirement for membership, suffered significant losses, the Williams family among them. (“Swing,” Ernest Williams’ middle name was for James Swing, the Holiness Church founder.) Practically all the members and ministers of the Holiness Church of North Carolina, a notable exception being A. B. Crumpler, the founder, adopted the “initial evidence” theory. Further doctrinal novelties, such as the “finished work of Calvary” and the “oneness of the Godhead” teachings, quickly slowed defections from the Wesleyan-holiness ranks, and widened the theological chasm between the bewildered holiness parent and her doctrinally creative glossolalic children. Fear of “hatching chickens for the hawk,”¹⁵ led to attempts to shield converts from proselytizing Pentecostalists, inspiring similar responses from them. Attendance by members of either group at services of the other was likely to elicit a warning such as: “You leave them alone. They’re dangerous.”¹⁶

Anxiety that demonstration might get out of hand caused some holiness pastors to discourage shouting and other heartfelt expression. As early as 1928 the Nazarene General Assembly meeting in Columbus, Ohio, passed a resolution (honored in the breach) introduced by N. B. Herrell, a district superintendent who was also a songwriter, outlawing handclapping and stamping of feet in public worship.¹⁷ Surrender of important terms, such as “Pentecostal,” impoverished religious discourse, and increased reliance on Phoebe Palmer’s “altar terminology” in teaching about sanctification reduced the emotional struggle of seekers while distorting the doctrine of prevenient grace. Imagery drawn from farm life, the camp meeting, and from John Bunyan (“Beulah Land,” for instance), which pervaded songs and sermons, lost its emotional power and meaning, and convictions which the founding generation had enshrined in General Rules as symbols of the passage from death to life, became for their children and grandchildren mere parental

taboos to be trespassed with guilty impunity in the rites of passage from childhood to adulthood.

In short, the “tongues” threat combined with other factors in causing Wesleyan-holiness people to shy away from their prior reliance on the authority of zeal and personal convictions. Conformity to rules of conduct replaced convictions about right conduct. And passivity leader-centeredness and authoritarianism gradually supplanted spontaneity, heartfelt emotion and Spirit-dependence in worship. Increasingly, the quest for holiness was an individual one, largely unsupported and uninspired by the holiness churches corporately.

Notes

1Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1936. (New York, 1936), 165, 185.

2Site of McGee Holiness College and editorial offices first of the Good Way, later of the Church Herald.

3A. Milton Smith, pastor of the First Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City, Missouri, 1946-59.

4Ritual for “Reception of Members” in Manual of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene, (Los Angeles, 1908), 66.

5I John 1:7 (AV).

6Revelation 12:11 (AV).

7Number 284 in Haldor Lillenas, ed. Glorious Gospel Hymns. (Kansas City, Mo., 1931).

8Figure used by Free Methodist Bishop W. C. Kendall in a sermon at the Evansville, Wisconsin camp meeting in 1965.

9I Thessalonians 5:24 (AV).

10Vinson Synan. The Holiness-Pentecostal Monument in the United States, (Grand Rapids, Mi., 1971), 128-129. In 1917, A. M. Kiergan (1848-1933) recalled a divided response to tongues-speaking among those attending a holiness camp meeting in 1881 in Linn County, Missouri. “But every preacher on the ground without exception declared it to be of the devil.” Prostration, however, was another matter. “To tumble over now and then was to be expected.” See A. M. Kiergan, Historical Sketches of the Revival of True Holiness and Local Church Polity from 1865-1916 (Fort Scott, Ks., 1972),31. In 1902 Maude Frederick, future wife of Nazarene General Superintendent J. B. Chapman, commented favorably on one woman’s prostration during a meeting at Sharp Top Texas: “One soul was laid out under the power of God. God used her in convicting sinners.” See Diary of Maude Frederick Chapman (1880-1940), March 20, 1902. Transcription in Nazarene Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

11III Corinthians 3:17 (AV).

12Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*, 61-68. In 1906 A. H. Kauffman, a minister of the International Apostolic Holiness Union, connected the glossolalic movement with the Fire-Baptized one. See his *Fanaticism Explained: Symptoms, Cause and Cure*. 3d ed. Grand Rapids, Mi., 1904, i.e. 1906. This is perhaps the earliest Wesleyan-holiness polemic against the new movement.

13Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1936, 34.

14Manual of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene (Los Angeles, 1907), 29.

15”Hatching Chickens for the Hawks” was an editorial by J. G. Morrison in the *Holiness Layman*, organ of the Laymen’s Holiness Association, explaining that he had joined the Church of the Nazarene in order to have a way of protecting his converts from the likes of Aimee Semple McPherson. See Timothy L. Smith. *Called Unto Holiness; the Story of the Nazarenes: the Formative Years* (Kansas City, Mo.. 1962). 312.

16 In 1937 a Pentecostalist friend of my mother attended a revival meeting at our holiness church, went to the altar, and claimed entire sanctification. When she joyfully told her pastor, A. A. Wilson, of her experience he warned her to leave us alone. Had the situation been reversed, our pastor would have done likewise.

17Journal of the Seventh General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City, Mo., 1928), 69. The resolution read as follows: “We as a people are a happy, joyous crowd. We believe in preserving a spirit of liberty and emotional demonstration. But our very joyousness may at times open the way for unwarranted and even unwholesome demonstration. Lest we should dissipate a spirit of reverence and be judged to be light and frivolous in our worship, we wish to offer the following: Be it resolved, That the General Assembly expresses itself as looking with disfavor upon certain expressions of approval which have been employed in our services of worship and evangelism, particularly clapping of hands, stamping of feet, etc, and hereby request that such expressions of approval cease henceforth; and further, that this action be announced in each service until it becomes practically effective.”

A. K. Bracken

N. B. Herrell

J. Glenn Gould

J. G. Morrison

E. P. Ellyson

J. Walter Hall

J. B. Chapman

Chas. A. McConnell

Edwin E. Hale

BOOK REVIEWS

David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 273 pages, \$10.95. Reviewed by Dr. Steve Harper, Associate Professor of Spiritual Formation and Wesley Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.

Dr. David Watson has written what may well be the most comprehensive examination of the early Methodist class meeting ever produced. The book is essentially Dr. Watson's Ph.D. dissertation which he completed under the guidance of Dr. Frank Baker at Duke University. The finished product provides the reader with a wealth and depth of information not readily available in any other form.

For me, the most valuable aspect of the book is Dr. Watson's setting of the class meeting in its larger theological and historical setting. In our day when functionalism reigns, it is refreshing to encounter a book that sets the mechanics in the proper context both for understanding and appreciating them. The book tells us why the class meeting was structured as it was.

I believe it is not possible to grasp the significance of the class meeting in early Methodism apart from these larger dynamics. Wesley's choice of form was derived from his theological and missional perspectives, as well as a broad knowledge and valuing of tradition that extended all the way back to the early church. Dr. Watson serves us well by providing this perspective in the introduction and first three chapters.

With this perspective in mind, we are then taken into the class meeting itself. As Dr. Watson puts it, we are allowed to view "the sinews of Methodism." In chapter four we explore the weekly meeting itself, the role of the class leader, the sense of connectionalism among the classes, Wesley's concept of spiritual maturity, and how the early Methodists expressed fellowship beyond the class meeting. This section abounds with primary material, including biographical accounts of class members and records from actual classes. The book gives the reader the feeling of "having been there."

Chapter five concludes the text and describes the significance of the class meeting for Methodism. Dr. Watson shows how it was a central expression of Wesley's ecclesiology, how it provided for meaningful community and relevant mission, and how it served the basic purposes which Wesley had in mind for Methodism. The chapter also analyzes the decline of the class meeting, how it has frequently been misunderstood, and how it may once again form the base for Wesleyans in achieving accountable discipleship.

Persons interested in seriously studying the class meeting will find all this stimulating and indispensable. But the book's value extends further by offering thirty-two pages of detailed endnotes, thirteen appendices containing original materials, an eighteen-page bibliography of both primary and secondary sources, and a most-useful index of names, places, and subjects.

My only caution regarding this book is that it may be too much for those making an initial dip into the subject. But here too, Dr. Watson has helped us by providing a shorter and simplified work entitled, *Accountable Discipleship*. This may well be the place for the average reader to begin. But these two volumes, taken together, serve as companions on a much-needed journey to recover a key element in our tradition.

Finally, I am greatly impressed by the fact that Dr. Watson is not simply a researcher and theoretician with respect to the early Methodist class meeting. He is also a practitioner, having established contemporary class meetings in connection with his pastoral ministry, his teaching in seminary, and now as part of work with the Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church. In *The Early Methodist Class Meeting* we read the words of one who knows deeply and who practices conscientiously the principles about which he writes. And through his efforts, we are seeing a revival of the class meeting as one further means of renewing the church.

Howard A. Snyder with Daniel V. Runyon. *The Divided Flame: Wesleyans and the Charismatic Renewal*. Grand Rapids, Mich., Francis Asbury Press, 1986. Reviewed by Melvin E. Dieter, Ph.D., Asbury Theology Seminary, Wilmore. Kentucky.

In this brief 120 page study-manual Snyder and Runyon try to find new ground to widen the very restricted dialogue between Wesleyans and charismatics. The limits of such a format allow the authors to present only the most basic outline of the issues being addressed. However, those who pursue the footnote references will find that the evaluations presented are modest and guarded enough to serve the purpose of the book in stimulating discussion on the questions that are raised. The primary usefulness of the book is within Wesleyan circles; however, the authors' Biblical definition of the nature of a charismatic church will be helpful to the many others who have little concern for the sad history of the past relationships between Wesleyans and Pentecostals.

The whole venture is tenuous and delicate because of the very restrictive official positions on the charismatic renewal movement which most of the major holiness denominations have adopted. Many readers in these churches will view the effort as an attempt to encourage "tongues" in the Wesleyan movement. This, the authors disclaim; rather, they seek to find a means for better understanding and mutual instruction for the good of both movements as forceful spiritual movements in the world today. As the authors point out (p. 75), both the holiness movement and the charismatic movements are here to stay, and it is imperative that both come to a better

working relationship with each other if the church and the world are to see examples of truly Spirit-filled holy and gifted movements.

We may hope that this book will cause at least some small hesitation in the lockstep of polemic which has marked Wesleyan/Pentecostal relationships since the rise of the Pentecostal movement at the turn of the twentieth century. If both parties were able to put the question of glossolalia to the side and get to the broader questions of what it means to be a “church of the Spirit,” as the authors attempt to do, that hope could be realized. An open and prayerful response to the central thesis of the book is especially critical to the holiness churches. They grew out of a revival which was the first to clearly confront American Christianity with the Biblical meaning of a Pentecostal ecclesiology. This work may be all too prophetic in its claims that holiness churches in seeking to respond to elements in Pentecostalism with which they disagree have trimmed back their own historical commitments to being “charismatic” churches. The ecclesiological issue is so critical to both the Wesleyan/holiness and Pentecostal/charismatic movements that both parties should welcome every such effort to establish more positive relationships between the two movements.

The Spirit and the New Age: An Inquiry into the Holy Spirit and Last Things from a Biblical Theological Perspective, edited by R. Larry Shelton and Alex R. G. Deasley. *Volume V: Wesleyan Theological Perspectives*, edited by John E. Hartley and R. Larry Shelton. Anderson, Indiana Warner Press, 1986. vii and 540 pp. Reviewed by Frank G. Carver, Ph.D., Professor of Biblical Theology and Greek, Director of Graduate Studies in Religion, Point Loma Nazarene College, San Diego, California.

This volume is the fifth and final volume in the *Wesleyan Theological Perspectives* series written and edited by contemporary evangelical scholars in the Wesleyan tradition. The previous volumes, all reviewed in this journal, deal with *Soteriology*, *Hermeneutics*, *Christian Ethics*, and *The Church*. Interestingly the volumes get progressively longer with the present volume being the largest! All involved in the production of this now completed series are to be commended for their contribution to the Biblical and theological integrity and current relevance of the heritage of Scriptural holiness. Along with this journal these volumes should be read by all who are professionally involved with the Wesleyan message, whether in pulpit or classroom.

With fourteen essays organized into three distinct sections the editors seek “to develop a holistic Biblical and historical treatment of the theology of the Spirit from a Wesleyan perspective.” Section I (272 pp.), “The Doctrine of the Spirit,” analyzes the development of the doctrine in the Biblical narratives and in selected historical periods. Section II (168 pp.), “The Hope of a New Age,” examines the Biblical and historical foundations for eschatology. Section III (97 pp.), “The Church and the Kingdom,” seeks to work out the implications of the above doctrines for the life of the Church. In the light of its contents the book is written more from “a Biblical and Theological Perspective” than from “a Biblical Theological Perspective” as the title

suggests. Only seven of the fourteen articles can be classified as strictly Biblical exegesis and theology. This is not a criticism of the book for its Biblical, historical, and theological breadth gives it a wholeness of treatment that makes for a most useful volume. This will be evident as we give a brief characterization of each article.

Section I opens rightly as Bruce Baloian, assistant professor of religion and philosophy at Azusa Pacific University, surveys the data concerning “The Spirit of God in the Old Testament.” The Old Testament understanding of the Spirit of God is presented under the headings of “leadership,” “the Spirit and wisdom/skill,” “prophetic inspiration,” “life/creation,” “judgment/salvation/sanctification,” and “the Spirit’s role in the age to come.” Baloian’s survey provides us with a basic, accurate, and convenient summary of the study of the Spirit in the literature of Old Testament theology. The Biblical material could have been handled from a more diachronic perspective opening the way for greater creativity in theological analysis. The mentor-process by which the essay came into being is intimated by the addition of John Hartley’s name in the table of contents.

The second essay, “The Spirit in the Gospels,” by George Lyons, professor of Biblical literature at Olivet Nazarene University, adds a creative touch to its comprehensive and competent survey of the relevant literature of New Testament study. In the first three subheadings, “the Spirit and the birth of Jesus,” “baptism, trial, and the Spirit,” and “the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus,” the data from the different gospels is treated together with some discrimination between them. But in the fourth, “the Spirit in the message of Jesus,” each gospel is examined separately highlighting the unique perspectives of each on the Holy Spirit. I found the treatment of Matthew the most creatively satisfying and that of Mark the least stimulating. Of value is the realization that each of the gospels contributes uniquely to our theological understanding of the Holy Spirit, for in them we have three distinct theologies of the historical Pentecost event -- Matthew (and Mark?), Luke-Acts, and John. One disappointment was that the Gospel of John was not given a separate chapter, for its profound perspective on the Spirit pervades the whole of the gospel and is hardly done justice to by the organization of the essay. I am unconvinced for example that “all it affirms is that God is ‘invisible and unknowable’ “ (p. 73) is at all relevant to the heart of the Johannine theology implicit in 4:24, “God is spirit.” I wonder too if Luke and Acts, if it is theological witness that is being examined, could not better have been treated together. But all in all this is one of the stronger chapters in the book.

Since writing the third contribution to this work Wayne McCown has moved from the position of dean and professor of Biblical studies at Western Evangelical Seminary to the post of Conference Superintendent, Southern California-Arizona Conference, Free Methodist Church. He approaches his study of Acts with an announced agenda, “a Wesleyan interpretation of the subject” (p. 89, cf. p. 109) which to some degree has influenced his choice and treatment of the Biblical data. Although he seeks as well to “show the shape of the data” (p. 89) his agenda has a tendency to compromise the article as purely descriptive Biblical theology. McCown’s presentation, however, does deal adequately and meaningfully with the theology of the Holy Spirit within the whole of the Lukan witness context. His analysis of the

Lukan data relating to the reception and filling of the Holy Spirit and to the issues of tongues and prophecy is excellent and most helpful.

The fourth article, "The Spirit in the Pauline Epistles," written by Alex R. G. Deasley, professor of New Testament at Nazarene Theological Seminary, is an excellent example of how descriptive Biblical theology ought to be done. The thoroughness and competence of his treatment of the Pauline data is greatly aided by an adequate and helpful organizational structure: "Paul's fundamental concept and its origin," "the Spirit and the life of the Christian community," and "the Spirit and the individual Christian life." As resource material for classroom and pulpit, one cannot find a more adequate and useful programmatic treatment.

R. Larry Shelton, professor of historical theology and interpretation and dean of the School of Religion at Seattle Pacific University, takes us into the area of historical theology with his discussion of "The Holy Spirit in the Theology of the Reformers." Primary attention is given to the Holy Spirit in the theologies of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Huldrych Zwingli. The author helps us see the continuity of Wesley's thought with "the importance of the Spirit's work in salvation and in the understanding of the meaning and authority of Scripture" (p. 116) in the theologies of the three great Protestant Reformers. Shelton's treatment helps us as contemporary Wesleyans to see clearly how we are adulterating our heritage when we are not discerning enough in our "borrowing of theological attitudes and methodologies from the more rationalistic heirs of neo-Scholastic Calvinism and Lutheranism" (p. 166).

Complementing Shelton's analysis is the next study, "Wesleyan Perspectives on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," by Rob L. Staples, professor of theology at Nazarene Theological Seminary. After a brief characterization of the experiential focus of Wesley's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Staples moves to the heart of Wesley's pneumatology as he analyzes the "Spirit" in relation to "Word" in reference to Classical Protestantism. Then Wesley's balance between Word and Spirit is examined in two areas, how the "testimony of the Spirit" functions in Wesley's hermeneutic and the place of the "witness of the Spirit" in Wesley's soteriology. How "the Spirit-Word bi-unity that permeated John Wesley's theology" (p. 230) has been lost to some extent in the theology of the American holiness movement is illustrated with an examination of Phoebe Palmer's altar theology. The author's plea for a return to the classical Wesleyan balance, both hermeneutically and soteriologically, between Spirit and Word, deserves to be seriously considered by contemporary Wesleyanism.

Donald Dayton, professor of theology and ethics at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, in his presentation of "The Historical Background of Pneumatological Issues in the Holiness Movement," gives us an appropriate sequel to the essays of Shelton and Staples. His very succinct historical analysis affords some insight into the tensions, theological and otherwise, within the holiness movement today as well as its uncomfortable relationship with the modern Pentecostal movement. Most fascinating is the author's attempt to see in the *filioque* controversy "the most essential and profound question of the holiness movement . . . and the greatest ambiguity in its pneumatology" (p. 250) which he proceeds to develop within the history of holiness doctrine itself (pp. 250-258) and in its relation to pentecostalism (pp.

258-261). A brief discussion of the relation of the social and political witness of the holiness movement concludes the essay. Closing Section I, “The Doctrine of the Spirit,” these three historical analyses by Shelton, Staples, and Dayton when read together, constitute a very valuable contribution to one’s understanding of the holiness movement today.

Section II of the volume focusing on eschatology returns to the Biblical perspective in its first two essays. First, Alexander Varughese, associate professor of religion at Mount Vernon Nazarene College, discusses the issue of eschatology in the Old Testament. After developing a working definition of eschatology that attempts to give both the “prophetic” and the “apocalyptic” their due, he defines his sources, and then proceeds to work his way through selected books delineating first the “expressions of prophetic eschatology” followed by the “expressions of apocalyptic eschatology.” Varughese’s treatment is sane and foundational, elucidating the essential “themes” of the Old Testament hope and avoiding the “schemes” that distort much popular writing on Biblical eschatology.

The second essay on Biblical eschatology is “The Hope of a New Age: The Kingdom of God in the New Testament,” written by I. Howard Marshall, professor of New Testament Exegesis at the University of Aberdeen. The author very ably fulfills his aim “to harvest and assess some of the recent scholarly discussion with a view to showing how an understanding of the KG [Kingdom of God] can give fresh vigor to our Christian hope in God” (p. 319). His treatment is detailed, balanced, critically and evangelically sound, and in the main, convincing. I know of no more adequate analysis of the data and recent opinion, an analysis that is very helpful as well as in the meaning and significance of the Kingdom of God for the life and proclamation of the Church.

The historical perspective reappears as David Cubie, chairman of the division of religion and philosophy at Mount Vernon Nazarene College, discusses “Eschatology from a Theological and Historical Perspective.” In an illuminating treatment Cubie helps Wesleyans understand their situation in a day of the dominance of premillennial if not dispensational views in evangelical eschatology. Although the author concludes that “probably no single eschatological view can claim to be the view most in harmony with the Wesleyan-Arminian theological perspective” (p. 402) he does draw from his quite detailed survey of the various types of eschatology in the Wesleyan tradition a balanced approach consisting of some essential elements that are in line with Wesleyan thinking (pp. 402-405).

John Stanley, assistant professor of religion and chairman of the department of religion at Warner Pacific College concludes Section II with “The Old Testament Promise of a New Age Fulfilled in the Church.” Writing from a confessed amillennial perspective Stanley attempts to show that the Old Testament promise of a new age is partially fulfilled in the Church. From this he makes some helpful suggestions as to eschatological motifs appropriate to Wesleyanism and gives a telling critique of Hal Lindsey’s premillennianism.

With Section III the essays are directed toward the pastoral work of the Church. In “The Holy Spirit in the New Age” Paul Livermore, professor of Biblical languages and literature at Roberts Wesleyan College, gives us an exegetically and realistically practical essay on Wesleyan holiness in

relation to the life of the Spirit. A proper stress is put on personal discipline. Ethical responsibility is given its due and that without any subtle drift into the errors of the moralistic legalism that often infects holiness ethics. Areas discussed are the indwelling Spirit and its dangers, prayer, power over moral failure, and the power to fulfill vocation. The latter includes a very useful treatment of the gifts and fruits of the Spirit.

“Social Holiness for a New Age,” written by Howard Snyder, associate professor of theology at North Park Theological Seminary and teaching pastor of Irving Park Free Methodist Church in Chicago, is a challenge to reflect on the issues of social justice in the light of the Kingdom to which the Church witnesses in the world. Snyder’s understanding of the Kingdom as relevant to the issues of justice is discussed as “the people of the Kingdom” and “the possibility of the Kingdom.” Under “the signs of the Kingdom” he presents a concrete and contrasting list of the ways in which the Church embryonically embodies and betrays the Kingdom now on earth, a list with which not all may agree! Under “the project of the Kingdom” he presents five major areas “as paradigmatic of Kingdom concerns in social order; international peace and justice, militarization, economic options, foreign policy and urbanization” (p. 497). A proper New Testament understanding of the Kingdom, expressed through the motifs of historical Wesleyanism, gives us as a modern holiness people much to search our souls about in terms of our stewardship of the Kingdom.

The final essay of section III and of the book, “In Newness of Life: A Wesleyan Theology of the Kingdom of God,” comes from the pen of Charles Dillman, professor of Biblical studies and chairman of the division of philosophy and religion at Spring Arbor College. Much of his material has been paralleled in previous essays, but is here given a more practical touch. Dillman focuses on the theme of newness of life in Scripture in relation to the Kingdom of God which he works out and seeks to apply in terms of a theocracy. The rest of the article moves into eschatological perspectives with a brief Wesleyan evaluation. The main value of the final essay is its refocusing of the central issues of the volume.

The book as a whole gives a balanced impression. Some duplication of material could have been avoided by more discriminating organization (or more faithful adherence by writers to the editors’ instructions?) and thus made for a shorter and more readable volume. The strength of the book lies in the scholarly competence of its Wesleyan contributors and in the essential unity of their witness to the character and power of the Wesleyan vision. A host of misconceptions about the true character of Wesleyanism in the context of the contemporary church scene could be eliminated by a careful reading of this volume. This final volume of the series on Wesleyan Theological Perspectives is very possibly the most significant of the five for those who minister within the heritage and for those without who seek to understand what the heritage is about in its contemporary expression. It is “must” reading for those who seek to proclaim holiness in the Wesleyan “spirit.”

The book appears relatively unmarred by editorial and typographical errors. Among the few which I did catch the omission of a “not” in line 30 of page 267 and especially the assertion that “David built the temple” on page 419 are the most serious. And it was a delight to see John Wesley’s thought characterized as “electric” on page 251!