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THE WESLEYAN REVIVAL FROM A PIETIST PERSPECTIVE

By

DALE W. BROWN

In the spirit of a camp meeting, I will take the liberty to testify to heartwarming encounters with the holiness legacy. As a teenager one of my aborted attempts at disciplined spirituality centered on a devotional booklet, *The Way*, by E. Stanley Jones. So it was on a Sunday evening in the early forties that I willingly went with my parents to the Wichita Forum to hear an inspiring message by the renowned missionary. About a quarter before nine, I was moved to go forward with many others. I wanted to find out more about Gandhi. I soon discovered, however, that others were there to "pray through: which seemed to me to be a strange idea. The next item from my unpublished journal comes from my days as a young pastor in Iowa. I passed a tent meeting and behold the people were plain. The black attire of the women was capped by white prayer coverings. I stopped and found a bench, for these were my people. I was shocked when the meeting became punctuated with loud Hallelujahs, Amens, and arm waving gestures. These people were supposed to be reserved Germanic types, expressing their emotions with their eyes if at all. This was my first encounter with the River Brethren, not my last, for my father-in-law later spent hours reminiscing in my presence about camp meetings in Dickinson County, Kansas.

Neo-Orthodox theologians led me to make a rational case for more holistic faith responses. In the civil rights movement, however, I resonated with worship styles in which heart and mind were united in the dialogical responses of the congregation. Now I feel more at home in an ethos of enthusiasm while some of you may have come to resonate with the quiet devotional Pietists.

In a more academic vein I have taught a course entitled "Luther, Calvin and Wesley." In spite of my prudent objectivity most students come out liking Wesley the best. Some have the audacity to accuse me of being warm to Wesley because of my Pietist predisposition. When I was serving as the visiting Lilly theologian to Berea College a decade ago, I read *Discovering An Evangelical Heritage* and other items by Donald Dayton which had been recommended to me. With so little knowledge, I was surprised to find myself

somewhat of a guru on Berea's spiritual roots. They were aware of their abolitionist stance and the details of their origins. However, most did not understand the larger milieu of Finney revivalism and the radical evangelical component of anti-slavery ferment. As a historian, I find most of my friends in 16th and 17th century German-speaking areas. When Berea's president commissioned me to write about the intellectual and spiritual roots of the College, I entered the fascinating world of antebellum American Christianity. All of which is to say that I have come to appreciate the rich heritage of the holiness legacy of the Wesleyan revival.

Pietism and Aldersgate

At this birthday celebration for Aldersgate, it is my mission to focus on the too often neglected Pietist relationships and influences at work in that context. Notable exceptions to the history of neglect include an older book by Arthur W. Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism*, and more recent research by F. Ernest Stoeffler and Martin Schmidt.¹ Since Pietism flourished on the same soil as earlier Anabaptism, Howard Snyder quite correctly filters radical and free church influences on Wesley through the Moravians.²

A major problem in studying Pietist/Wesleyan relationships has been the lack of Pietist source materials in English. Only recently has alleviation begun, with the appearance of three volumes of the *Classics of Western Spirituality* edited by Mennonite Peter Erb. We also have recent research and translated source materials on the life and writings of Pietism's most famous forbears, Philipp Jakob Spener and August Hermann Francke, respectively by K. James Stein and Gary Sattler.³ A more basic problem has been the failure of Ivy League historiography to acknowledge major Pietist and Wesleyan influences on American Christianity because of its preoccupation with Puritan roots.

I have been reluctant to follow Ernst Troeltsch and others in regarding the revival under the Wesleys as a wave of Pietism. I prefer to label the movements as sisters, or if this is objectionable, at least, first cousins. If we appropriate the former in naming Pietism the older sister, we need to emphasize that the younger sister rapidly became larger and very early became her own person. Both movements were parts of widespread awakenings of heart religion which included mystical Quietism in Spain, the Sacred Heart of Jesus movement in France, Hasidic revivals in Eastern European Judaism, and Jansenist and Puritan expressions of piety.

I do not want to suggest that Pietist influences constituted the sole or major influence on the Wesleys. I have found John Wesley to be a helpful and astute theologian because of the catholicity of his sources, Anglican, Patristic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Calvinist, Arminian, Puritan, and Pietist. As a coherent eclectic, his quadrilateral provides a helpful epistemological plumb line which operates in most traditions whether they admit it or not. Wesley appropriated all of these influences to shape Christian lives and communities for witness, mission and service. This makes Wesley a major theologian in my book, not in spite of but because he was foremost a folk theologian.

Personal Contacts. It was Wesley's experience at Aldersgate that launched his public ministry. And it was Moravian Pietists who before and after this event admonished, guided and inspired Wesley through four soul-

searching and personally redemptive years. Wesley was already acquainted with Johann Arndt's True Christianity,⁴ Francke's Pietas Hallensis,⁵ and the mystical writings of Jacob Boehme as appropriated by William Law and the Philadelphians led by Jane Leade in England. However, it was in the fall of 1735, when Wesley was sent as a missionary and Anglican priest to Georgia with his brother and two others, that he became personally engaged with Pietism. There were twenty-six Moravians from Herrnhut on board the ship, the Simmonds.

Who were the Moravians? Briefly, they were refugees from the old Unitas Fratrum, a religious society which emerged in Bohemia in 1457. A revival of the society took place when a remnant from this old Hussite group found refuge on the estate of Count Zinzendorf, a godson of Spener and student, of Francke, who became their dominant leader. If early Methodists could claim Zinzendorf in spite of their separation, as Wesleyans continue to claim Wesley in spite of their break from Methodism, then most of you could count yourselves in the apostolic succession of one of the oldest Protestant movements.

His Journal reveals that Wesley quickly sensed the Moravians to be filled with faith and the Holy Spirit. He began to learn German so that he might converse with them. Charles drew inspiration for Methodist hymnody from their 7:00 p.m. singing meetings. John's contribution was that of translation.

John Wesley was impressed by the humility of the Moravians in performing without pay tasks which none of the English would undertake. "If they were pushed, struck, or thrown down, they rose again and went their way. No complaint was found in their mouth."⁶ They impressed him, too, when, a few days out, the sail split. While there was terrible screaming among the English, he was impressed that the Herrnhuters remained completely calm, lifting songs of praise. At the same time he may have been reading a Pietist booklet by Francke entitled Nicodemus, which contrasted fearing God with caring men.

The Georgian portion of Wesley's Journal gives abundant evidence of his almost daily contacts with the Moravians. He learned to know August G. Spangenberg, the head of the German colony, and other leaders, such as Bishop David Nitschmann and Johann Toeltschig. He sought their counsel concerning the style of his ministry, his love affair with Sophia Hopkey, his angelistic efforts with the pagan Indians and black slaves, and how to deal with the threats to expel him from the colony. More important for the context of Aldersgate were the many conversations dealing with his personal doubts. The Moravians frequently asked him about his openness to the witness of the Spirit. His journal entries in Georgia are replete with positive references to the Moravians.⁷

Sailing back to England he mused that he had gone to Georgia to convert the Indians, but that the deeper question was who would convert him. The answer came in the person of Peter Boehler, a young Moravian missionary who seemed to specialize in witnessing to young intellectuals. The Wesley brothers came under his tutelage shortly after arriving back home on May 1. Though giving greater attention to Charles, Boehler was in frequent conversations with both. He convinced them that the lack of faith is the most serious sin and that religious certainty is a matter of the heart more than the head. Rattenbury believes that Boehler led the Wesleys through their

intellectual conversions prompting them to come to believe in the necessity of present salvation by a faith which must be felt and experienced.⁸ It was in the course of a restless search for this faith that John received the surprising news that Charles had found rest for his soul. This kindled three days of depression leading to the unwilling trip to a meeting on Aldersgate street. It is significant that Wesley's heart was warmed while listening to the reading of the favorite passage among Pietists for responding to the charge of works righteousness by their orthodox opponents. It was from Luther's preface to his commentary on Romans, in which he defined faith as a "living, creative, active, powerful thing..."⁹

Following Aldersgate, Wesley envisioned a trip to visit the Moravians in Germany. He sailed on June 13, hoping that the experience would further establish his soul. He conversed with Count Zinzendorf as I visited several communities, spending two weeks at the mother community at Herrnhut. He felt as if he was among the early Christians. He recorded that he could have stayed all of his life but wanted to spread their way throughout the whole world.¹⁰ Similar praise infused a letter to Charles:

The spirit of the Brethren is beyond our highest expectations. Young and old, they breathe nothing but faith and love at all times and in all places. I do not therefore concern myself with smaller points that touch not the essence of Christianity, but endeavor...to grow up in these after the glorious examples set before me...¹¹

At Herrnhut he participated in worship practices and structures of community which were later to be adapted for the people called Methodists. At Halle he was impressed with the size and number of buildings, especially the orphans' home and school which was to become a model for charitable institutions spawned by the Wesleyan revival.

Difference. Home again in England, Wesley kept in close contact with the Pietists as he experienced the first fruit of his itinerant ministry and field preaching. The break came during the latter months of 1739 when Wesley withdrew from the Fetter Lane Society, which was partly Methodist and partly Moravian, to center his activity in the Foundry, which was entirely Methodist. Though later he could write how he had nothing to do with the Moravians, his first criticisms were given in the spirit of "love and meekness."¹² Pietism represented a reaction to the rigid creedal orthodoxy of Lutheran scholasticism; Methodism embodied a correction to the rationalism of a deistic world view. If one accepts the theory that movements imbibe something of that which they oppose, the Pietists, especially the Moravians, retained more of the *sola fidei* stance of Luther than their negative critiques would seem to allow while Wesley maintained a greater place for reason than his criticisms of rationalism would seem to concede.

In the context of Aldersgate it is appropriate to look at Wesley's own summary statement: "Those three grand errors run through almost all those (Moravian) books, viz. Universal Salvation, Antinomianism, and a kind of new-reformed Quietism."¹³ Whereas the love theology of the Wesleys could not fathom how a loving God would predestine people to hell without giving them a chance to respond, many Pietists had difficulty in believing that a loving God would condemn people to hell forever. Spener felt it was natural

to have doubts about the eternity of hell. Attempting to be faithful to Scripture, Radical Pietists espoused a position of universal restoration which attempted to remain faithful to scriptural passages about heaven and hell. Regarding God's judgment as redemptive, they came to view hell as a kind of purgatory in which God will somehow redeem all. They believed this view to be consistent with texts such as 1 Cor. 15:22: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

The charge of antinomianism probably comes from the fact that Moravians more than other Pietists rejected works righteousness and retained an orthodox bias against good works. The reference to Quietism may refer to Wesley's struggle in the Fetter Lane Society with Philip Molther, who taught the doctrine of stillness. He believed that seekers should abstain from the Lord's Supper until filled with faith without any doubt or fear. Wesley disliked the erotic ingredients in some of the Moravian hymns, which shared the sentimental piety of the later Zinzendorf. The Count formed an "Order of Little Fools:" who spoke of themselves as "little bees who suck on the wounds of Christ, who feel at home in the side hole and crawl in deep."¹⁴ (Since such phenomena were exceptional, I prefer to judge Moravianism by its ecumenical spirit and passion for missions.

Doctrinal Similarities. In comparing basic theological motifs, it is easier to point to similarities than to demonstrate direct influences. I agree with Nagler and Schmidt that the similarities are more striking when Wesley's theology is compared to the thought and ministry of Spener and Francke rather than to the more passive Moravian interpretations of the Gospel. Both movements avoided doctrinal indifference at the same time it was stressed that doctrine be translated into life. Both made similar distinctions between essential and nonessential doctrines. Articles of faith related to salvation and verified in experience were the most important. Confessionalism was not to preclude love and tolerance in the Christian fellowship.

Testimonies of direct communion with God gave evidence of a streak of mysticism in both Methodism and Pietism. Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace functioned in a way similar to Pietist and Quaker emphases on the 'inner Word or "inner light" calling forth and stirring up the gift of grace in each one. However, special revelations needed to be tested by scripture, others, and the fruit of the Spirit. Rather than a speculative mysticism. There emerged a kind of practical mysticism that hallows all of life.

It follows that both movements embody a revival of the work of the Holy Spirit. Both the instantaneous and gradual work of grace were manifested in first hand religious experiences. It was believed that the God who is good enough to forgive us is powerful enough to change us. Both movements defined in similar ways doctrines of assurance, regeneration, justification, and sanctification and were accused of synergism, Pelagianism, and perfectionism. Though Pietist soteriology did not feature the second work of grace, Spener argued that perfection was a valid Biblical and traditional doctrine. He wished to free it from two abuses, the one stressing its impossibility and the other, the temptation to find it in the wrong places.¹⁵

Both movements spawned moralistic and legalistic ethics. However, Spener and Wesley stressed that works, joy, and emotions were the fruit of faith rather than the way to salvation. Experience was emphasized as a receptive medium rather than the productive source of revelation. Holding to medi-

ating positions between faith and works, law and gospel, judgment and love of the world, both movements embodied a practical theology which led to innovations in a desire to reform the church and to participate in an active hope for better times for the world.

Justification and Aldersgate

From these many possibilities the preacher in me will focus on three themes as a way to examine the implications of Aldersgate for contemporary Pietist and Holiness movements. Wesley was deeply influenced by the Lutheran focus on justification by faith as filtered through the Moravians. "Who wrote more ably than Martin Luther on justification by faith alone?" Wesley reflected. "And who was more ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification..."¹⁶ In less than a year, however, it seems that Wesley was demythologizing the aura of his own justification. In his journal entry of Jan. 4, 1739, he wrote:

My friends affirm I am mad, because I said I was not a Christian a year ago. I affirm I am not a Christian now. Indeed, what I might have been I know not, had I been faithful to the grace then given, when expecting nothing less, I received such a sense of the forgiveness of my sin as till then I never knew. But that I am not a Christian at this day, I as assuredly know as that Jesus is the Christ. For a Christian is one who has the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, which are love, peace, joy. But these I have not.¹⁷

In continuing to reflect on the experiences of Methodists, he concluded that one could have the indirect witness of the Spirit without knowing the direct witness of the Spirit's love and acceptance. His views resembled those of Spener and Francke. Spener had been nurtured in such a pious atmosphere that even though regeneration became for him a major theme, he could not point to a dated conversion experience. Francke's penitential struggle was resolved by a dramatic conversion experience which became a paradigm in Pietist soteriology. Yet in later life, Francke could say in a conversation with a student:

We do not ask, "Are you converted? When were you converted?" But we ask, what does Christ mean to you? What have you experienced personally with God? Is Christ necessary to you in your daily life?" And it is, to be certain, very likely that one does not know at all the period of time.....

In the context of their dynamic views of salvation, the witness of our forbears mitigates against rigidly programmed conversion experiences which fail to recognize that the ways of God may be different with each one.

There is yet another lesson which may be derived from Wesley's justification experience. Throughout the pilgrimage leading to Aldersgate, Wesley spoke in a self-depreciating way as one whose soul was lost, of a time when his sin was a lack of faith. As he reflected on the experience later, references to his pilgrimage before Aldersgate were more positive. Instead of describing it as a period in which he suffered a lack of faith, he named it a time when he had the faith of a servant. When Wesley related that he was going to Georgia to save his own soul, his intention was not as self-centered as it

might seem; for he meant that he was going to live for others and be a model priest. Like Luther and Calvin before him, Wesley's attempt to live according to the Sermon on the Mount was consummated in justification. Perhaps, the Moravians were like the secularized Methodists whom Bonhoeffer mentioned, who attempt to make people sinners so that they can convert them. Wesley may more nearly fit Bonhoeffer's soteriology than such persons in that he names obedience as a presupposition of faith as well as a consequence of faith. Wesley's testimony in experiencing the faith of a servant and of a son may parallel Bonhoeffer's dialectic in that "only one who believes is obedient, and only one who is obedient believes."¹⁹

This dialectic may speak to the condition of contemporary Pietist and Holiness groups. We will continue to receive those who are convicted sinners. We will rejoice when they are justified, regenerated, and move toward greater sanctification. But our communities continue to nurture those who are early indoctrinated to live by high moral standards. Because our ethos often does not permit anyone to be a sinner, there will be many among us who like, Wesley, are ripe for an experience of justification. Such may explain the attraction of many to theologians such as Karl Barth. Such speaks to my personal need. As I encounter liberation theologies I tend to despair. As a white, male, middle class, North American I belong to every category of oppressors. As a pious believer who has kept his hands clean, my conscience has become aware of my participation in systemic sin. My hands are not clean. I yearn for the faith of a son, one who feels loved, who knows that God loves even me, a white, male, middle class, North American. Wesley's distinction between the faith of a servant and that of a son was foreshadowed by an old Anabaptist statement on Two Kinds of Obedience, namely filial, which knows its source in the love of God, and servile, which has its source in a love of reward or of oneself.²⁰

Soteriology and Aldersgate

Wesley's conversion experience at Aldersgate inaugurated a public ministry in which he formulated a neat, yet, dynamic story of salvation. It is said that the fundamental question for Luther was how he could find a gracious God. For Calvin, it was how can we honor and do God's will? Since Wesley enlarged Luther's soteriology, some of you, no doubt, may grow tired of others asking whether indeed this is the Biblical center from which to derive a doctrinal system. Since I come from a tradition that claims both Anabaptist and Pietist roots, the Anabaptist side of me is often saying to the Pietist side, "You are more interested in what Jesus will do for you than in how, together, we can follow Jesus?" It was Bonhoeffer who felt that whereas religiosity seeks a wish-fulfilling god, the God of the Bible meets us in the center of our existence to commission us to be persons for others. He opposed translating Christian faith into a mystery cult. Rather it should retain its character as a Judeo Christian religion of historical redemption.²¹

When I first encountered Wesleyan soteriology, I confess I could have empathized with twenty-five or fifty works of grace more than the strong focus on a second or even a third conversion experience. The more I have read Wesley, however, the more I wish all varieties of Wesleyans would read Wesley. In that way mainline Methodists might imbibe a sense of expectancy for some kind of experience and more Holiness and Pentecostal folk

might appropriate Wesley's correctives and variations to his soteriological scheme. I began my studies in Pietism at a time when "pietist" was a bad word in theological circles. I found it necessary to assess Pietism in light of Spener and Francke, whose mediating theology was quite different from later caricatures and provided correctives for later manifestations. I believe the same to be the case with Wesley. In spite of my Lutheran Pietist prejudices against perfectionism, for example, when I read Wesley's own definitions, variations and corrections, my heart is strangely warmed.

The same applies to other soteriological themes. The emphasis on regeneration and sanctifying grace provides a corrective to self-centered salvation trips. Francke prayed fervently for funds to erect the many buildings for his charitable and educational work. What saved his prayers from being self-centered was his passion to serve others. He shared Wesley's insistence that faith was not faith unless it became active in love. There is no split in Wesley between personal salvation and social engagement, between inward and outward holiness.

There is yet another motif that would keep Wesley's soteriology from degenerating into self-centered attempts to save one's own life. His eschatological teaching insists that heaven begins now. By grace Methodists become collaborators with God in the present work of redemption. Without denying glorifying grace or final justification there was an eschatological goal directedness to Wesley's theology, a sense of expectancy of the future breaking into the present in such a way as to pull believers toward the kingdom vision of justice and peace.

We live an era in which people are manipulated by appeals to basic fears of communists, criminals, and terrorists. In the peace movement survivalists attempt to motivate us to repent through doomsday scenarios of nuclear holocaust. "Wake up or blow up!" Such warnings were foreshadowed by early Methodist preachers who called sinners to flee from the wrath to come. Without eliminating such preaching, Wesley, nevertheless, advised his preachers that people ultimately will not get to heaven out of fear of going to hell. Rather they will be drawn to heaven by the love of God. I have often appropriated this quotation as a lesson for the contemporary peace movement. People can be motivated by fear but a more permanent peace will come when people envision and participate in life as it is meant to be lived in Christ and the world as it was dreamed to be in Biblical visions of the kingdom of God. Because he believed there were no bounds to the free grace of God, Wesley rejected deterministic and pessimistic philosophies of history.²²

Ecclesiology and Aldersgate

If your denominations are like mine, we are afflicted with acculturation. Our members enjoy watching the rich and the famous more than identifying with the poor and the sanctified. Individualism subverts social Christianity; cheap grace replaces the costly grace of discipleship. Fears and hatred lead to finding one's security in bombs more than the love that casts out fear. America, not Jesus, is first.

Because of this accommodation to both liberal and conservative ingredients of popular culture, I assume that Holiness groups are experiencing a similar identity crisis. What are the marks which justify remaining separate? If the Holiness riffraff are admitted to the councils of the respectable,

will they be leaven or simply more dough? What will be the shape of movements for reform?

Howard Snyder calls for a revival of the ecclesiology of the radical Wesley. James McClendon in the first volume of his *Systematic Theology, Ethics* classifies the Holiness movement as having roots in the soil of the radical reformation. Of the many influences contributing to Wesley's theology, the ecclesiological innovations inspired by Aldersgate and the Moravians were the most radical in both senses of the word. First, they embodied a primitivism. Wesley was pleased when he felt his movement resembled early Christian practices. Second, they challenged and were opposed by status quo religion. Pietism and Methodism both embodied evangelical orders within the church catholic. Insisting that Christianity is a social religion, the bands, classes, and societies were disciplined caring and sharing communities which took the demands of discipleship seriously. Wesley insisted on voluntary adult commitment as a condition for becoming a Methodist. Though he maintained membership for himself in the Church of England and advocated the same for others, he stated that Methodists would separate from the church, as they later did, rather than give up extemporaneous prayer, lay preachers or open air gatherings.²³

The sectarian posture was joined with an ecumenical spirit. German Pietism was responsible for the first mergers of Lutheran and Reformed congregations. Spener and Wesley espoused greater tolerance for Roman Catholics and defined unity primarily in terms of love, witness and mission. And if one defines ecumenical in its etymological sense of the presence in the world, we need to add as evidence of an ecumenical spirit the fact that these movements spawned credit unions, free medical dispensaries, concern for prisoners, homes for orphans, schools for the poor, and sought to eliminate slavery; debtors' prisons, poverty and ignorance.

For what it is worth, I conclude by sharing an answer which has evolved when I am asked to prognosticate the future of one Pietist group, the Church of the Brethren. My answer is that I do not know what it may be. But I do strongly believe that those purposes for which our movement was called forth by the Spirit will continue and will be used by God until the eschaton. This faith and hope is kindled as I learn of countless reform movements and hundreds of thousands of base Christian communities which recapitulate ecclesiola in ecclesiae, sometimes in striking resemblance of earlier Anabaptist, Pietist and Holiness manifestations. Because of this hope, I can relinquish my need to save the institutions of the Brethren. Relieved of this burden, I can more freely and enthusiastically participate in calling the Brethren and others to appropriate the best from the vision we have received so as to be empowered to participate in signs of the kingdom coming.

Notes

1. Personal and theological relationships between Pietism and Methodism are treated in Arthur W Nagler, *Pietism and Methodism* (Nashville: Publishing House M.E. Church, South, 1918); F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973); and Martin

Schmidt, John Wesley: A Theological Biography, Volumes I, part 1 of II (New York: Abingdon, 1962, 1972).

2. Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980).

3. The three volumes in *The Classics of Western Spirituality* are Jacob Boehme, *The Way to Christ*; Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*; and *Pietists: Selected Writings*, edited by Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1978, 1979, 1983). The work on Spener in English is K. James Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1986). Biographical and primary sources of and about Francke and Halle activity are found in Gary R. Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1982).

4. Wesley was probably acquainted with the edition of Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, translated by A. W Boehm in 1712 (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1969).

5. August Hermann Francke, *Pietas Hallensis*. An appendage to George Whitefield, Orphan-House (London: W. Straham, 1743).

6. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, edited by John Emory (New York: Carlton & Lanahan, 1831 in seven volumes), III, 17.

7. *Ibid.*, 20.

8. J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Conversion of the Wesleys* (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), 77.

9. John Dillenberger, *Martin Luther* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, Anchor Book edition, 1961), 24.

10. Detailed reports of Wesley's visits to Germany can be found in Martin Schmidt, *op. cit.*, Volume 1.

11. John Wesley, *The Letters of John Wesley*, John Telford, editor (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 1.250.

12. John Wesley, *Works.*, III, 257 and John Wesley, *Letters*, I, 257.

13. John Wesley, *Journal*, edited by Ernest Rhys (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1906), I, 334.

14. John R. Weinlick, *Count Zinzendorf* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 199.

15. See treatment in Dale W Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 97 ff.

16. John Wesley, edited by Albert Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 107.

17. *The Journal of John Wesley* edited by Nehemiah Curnock (London: The Epworth Press, 1911, reprinted in 1938), II, 125.

18. Erich Beyreuther, August Hermann Francke (Marburg: Francke Buchhandlung GmbH., 1956), 52.

19. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Cost of Discipleship (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1963), 69.

20. "Two Kinds of Obedience" in Harry Emerson Fosdick, Great Voices of the Reformation (New York: Random House, 1952), 296-99.

21. Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison (N.Y: Macmillan, 1972), 336-37.

22. Snyder, *op. cit.*, 82.

23. Robert W Burtner & Robert E. Chiles, A Compend of Wesley's Theology (N.Y: Abingdon, 1954), 256-57.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY INTERPRETATIONS OF JOHN WESLEY'S ALDERSGATE EXPERIENCE: COHERENCE OR CONFUSION?

by

KENNETH J. COLLINS

A little more than five months ago, an august assembly gathered at St. Paul's Cathedral in London to commemorate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of John Wesley's Aldersgate experience. Similarly, celebrations were held in this country as well as in Australia, New Zealand, and basically everywhere else that Methodism has prospered throughout the years. Plaques were made, paintings were hung, and sermons were given to honor the father of Methodism and his experience. But beneath these joyous voices there were others to be heard, voices that cried that Aldersgate was a "non-event"¹ and that its continued celebration constitutes "a product of historical bad-faith and serves not to honor but to bury Wesley."²

The modern debate in this area focuses on two key issues. First, was Aldersgate the real beginning of Methodism and the revival of religion it spawned? Second, is it appropriate to designate this event as the conversion of John Wesley? Both of these questions are vital; both need to be addressed seriously by the heirs of Wesley as they approach the possibilities and problems of the twenty-first century. However, in order to maintain a sharp perspective and to facilitate a more penetrating analysis of the historical record, only the latter question will be entertained here.

My method is simple, although the object under consideration is not. First of all, the secondary materials of the twentieth century, ranging from Curnock's pronouncements in 1909, to the most recent issue of the Wesley Historical Society-all of which view 24 May 1738 as a conversion experience-will be explored. After this, those positions which specifically reject the conversion hypothesis, from Umphrey Lee in 1936 to Albert Outler today, will likewise be considered. I will then conclude with a number of (I hope) pertinent observations in light of Wesley's own writings.

I. Aldersgate As John Wesley's Conversion

The first body of literature to be considered is united in its estimation that 24 May 1738 marks Wesley's "evangelical" conversion. Please note, the term "evangelical" as employed here does not designate the emergence of a theological position vis a' vis the modernist controversy of the twentieth century, nor does it refer to an irenic modification of American fundamentalism. Its use here is more universal than this. In this context, "evangelical" is understood in terms of historical Protestant Christianity's multifaceted emphases on the experience of justification by faith, regeneration of heart and life, and the tension between law and gospel. Therefore, the names of Luther, Melancthon, Cranmer, and Calvin,³ reverberate in this setting.

In support of the hypothesis that Aldersgate was Wesley's evangelical conversion, we cite the British scholar Nehemiah Curnock. In an uncanny anticipation of Maximin Piette's later view, he writes, "Wesley's awakening began long before he thought of going to Georgia, and before the founding of the Holy Club."⁴ The reference is, of course, to the year 1725, when Wesley encountered his first religious friend in Betty Kirkham, and when he began to see more clearly the end or goal of religion, which, for him, was holiness. But why include Curnock under this first heading, since he seems to deem the year 1725 as the time of Wesley's awakening? The answer lies in Curnock's reluctance to end the discussion at this point—something which other scholars, as will be apparent shortly, are all too willing to do.

Curnock contends that initially Wesley's spiritual life was characterized by works-righteousness and self-justification. In substantiation of this claim, he writes: "His [Wesley's] standard takes the form of rule and resolution. --More law, more methods; a new cord to the flagellant's whip, or a new knot in the old cord."⁵ And he adds: "the first and most striking feature of [Wesley's] Diary is the dominating influence of 'Rules and Resolutions?'"⁶ In other words, in the course of his spiritual trajectory, Wesley was wrestling with the perennial problems of law and grace, works and faith—a very Protestant thing to do—and though he had correctly understood the purpose of religion in 1725, he did not yet see the proper means for its fulfillment. Curnock argues, "He neither knew the meaning of saving faith, nor had he the power to fulfill his Lord's mission."⁷ For this Aldersgate was required.

Likewise, George Croft Cell observes that Wesley's early spiritual life lacked Protestant substance in two principal aspects: the content of his preaching and the nature of his religious experience. The former deficiency, he states, "was overcome on March 6th (1738) when [Wesley] first preached salvation by faith."⁸ The latter was "overcome on May 24th, when he first let Luther's belief lay hold of him."⁹

For Cell, therefore, like Curnock before him, a judicious analysis of Aldersgate requires attention to the religious principles involved in Wesley's understanding fully, accepting finally, and laying to heart the old reformation doctrine of justification by faith.¹⁰ Aldersgate, then, was the conclusion of a transition from cognition to fruition, from intellectual assent to radical trust, from fides to fiducia (to use a phrase from Luther).

The bicentennial of Wesley's Aldersgate experience produced a spate of articles, a couple of books, and much reflection. That year, 1938, therefore, may present useful evidence for gauging that generation's assessment of the

relative value of Aldersgate. In the British journal, *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, for instance, the March 1939 edition contains a number of interesting entries. Not only is 24 May 1738 deemed John Wesley's conversion but the date is regarded as "the most important spiritual crisis of the (eighteenth) century?"¹¹ Closer to home, *The Christian Advocate of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, maintained in 1938 that "the Alders' gate experience can hardly be overestimated,"¹² and employed such phrases as "outstanding event," "transforming experience" and "new creature" to display the inherent quality and texture of this experience.¹³ Moreover, when the *Advocate* searched for analogies appropriate in this area, it found the conversions of Paul, Augustine, Luther, and Moody close at hand.¹⁴

Perhaps the most important work published on the occasion of the Alders' gate bicentennial was *The Conversion of the Wesleys* by J. Ernest Rattenbury. In this book, the British scholar/pastor responds to the thesis put forth by Piette the year before that Wesley was converted at the age of twenty-two. Such a view is warranted, Rattenbury reasons, only if conversion be defined in the "Catholic" sense as the turning of a worldly person to God.¹⁵ However, if conversion is understood in an evangelical way, as the experience of pardon and new birth-what Philip Schaff has referred to as the Protestant principle¹⁶-then the Belgian priest's date simply will not hold.

Rattenbury's greatest contributions to the discussion, however, lie elsewhere. He notes, first of all, that John Wesley's spiritual experience in the spring of 1738 should not be viewed in isolation but should be interpreted, at least in part, in terms of the similar experience of his brother Charles just days before-hence the title of his book.¹⁷ When Charles' experience is also taken into account, the conversionist view is greatly strengthened. This is to say that if John and Charles' religious experiences were indeed parallel, as Rattenbury contends, and if Charles referred to his experience as a conversion?' then the same term may be suitably applied to John's experience as well.

Rattenbury furthers his argument by developing a distinction already encountered in Cell's work. But instead of employing negative language and speaking of Wesley's deficiency in preaching and in religious experience early on, Rattenbury prefers to speak more positively and refers to these two elements in terms of Wesley's intellectual and evangelical conversions, respectively. The intellectual conversion occurs in the period from March 5th through April 23, when Wesley held several extensive conversations with the Moravian Peter Bohler concerning the nature of faith. And the evangelical conversion occurs on May 24, 1738, the time when, to use Rattenbury's phrase, "a devout Pharisee became an Evangelical Christian"¹⁸ and when "the dogma of justification by faith had become his experience?"¹⁹

By the middle of the twentieth century, the interpretation of Aldersgate as John Wesley's conversion was already well established as a modern perspective. Indeed, it was undeniably the most popular view of this era and its dominance in the journals, magazines, and conferences of both British and American Methodism was nothing short of remarkable. Nevertheless, the twentieth century's conversionist position was not just a simple appropriation of what an earlier age had thought, for there was a genuine and earnest reworking of the primary materials that often gave rise to fresh insights. Martin Schmidt, for example, though he too enunciates the by-now-familiar

themes of justification by faith, law and grace, and the critical character of the May 24th account in the Journal, makes his greatest contribution to the debate, perhaps, in fixing Wesley's spiritual crisis against the backdrop of his early life as reflected in the Journal. In other words, Schmidt moves beyond a commentary on May 24th and attempts to show the psychological, moral, and spiritual relationship between Aldersgate and the life which preceded it.

Just what does Schmidt discover? He finds reflected in the early pages of the Journal a life often colored by fear, anxiety, and depression, a life which eventually leads to a breakdown of sorts, spiritual if not psychological. And it is precisely Wesley's prior turbulent spiritual state which gives credence to the idea of conversion in Aldersgate Street in that it not only sets the stage for the conversion's occurrence but also renders it intelligible. In other words, Wesley's spiritual high was preceded by a corresponding spiritual low; integration was the result of a prior disintegration, resolution the outcome of prior malaise. Schmidt observes: "Thus it was only after the complete breakdown of his situation that John Wesley came to see the doctrine of justification as the central feature in primitive Christianity."²⁰

Writing two years after Schmidt, V. H. H. Green, the author of the work *John Wesley*, strikes a similar chord. Wesley's spiritual breakdown, he argues, liberated pent-up emotions and prepared the way for a re-integration of personality; "the crisis was resolved," to use his own words, "by a harmony, an assurance of faith that provided an answer to the immediate problems, and a foundation for the future."²¹ Green also expounds this same theme, interestingly enough, in terms of Wesley's early spiritual narcissism as evidenced by his excessive concern over his own salvation. But many modern scholars reject this thesis and date Wesley's release from such self-absorption from the time that he began his life-long practice of field preaching. Cautiously, Green concurs with this opinion so long as Wesley's itinerant activity is seen as a significant outgrowth of the Aldersgate experience, not as anything apart from it.²² That is to say, Wesley was not transformed as a result of his works, but prior to exercising them. His field preaching, then, was not the cause of his spiritual enlightenment so much as its flowering. "Slowly, with maturing age and growing absorption in the tremendous work he was undertaking," Green writes, "[Wesley] began to relinquish the problem of his own personal salvation and only then did the experience of 22 May fully fructify."²³ The point is that Wesley was a changed man before he hit the fields.

Frank Baker in his piece "the Challenge of Aldersgate," which was produced for the 225th anniversary of this event, in 1963, champions the idea that John Wesley described his experience in May of 1738 as a conversion, as did his brother Charles.²⁴ But Baker, realizing that the meaning of this word is often debated, draws some of the same distinctions already encountered. He, therefore, readily concedes that John was converted in the moral sense of the word years before, in 1725. But not content with this, he goes on to cite approvingly Schmidt's position that conversion is to be understood "in Lutheran terms of justification by faith."²⁵ Baker writes: "The letters, the sermons, the hymns, in which the two Wesley brothers reveal directly or indirectly their own views of what happened at Aldersgate, suggest that they thought of it as basically an experience of justifying faith."²⁶ And he adds: "Whatever their psychological or theological views, all students of the influence of Aldersgate on Wesley agree that something happened to release

new spiritual vigor."²⁷ Nevertheless, in a piece written three years later, Baker modifies his position somewhat and concludes that although Aldersgate was "not conversion in the conventional sense... it was undoubtedly an epochal event."²⁸

In light of the preceding, it is evident that Curnock, Cell, Rattenbury, Schmidt, Green, and Baker, among others, though each has a particular emphasis, are united in understanding the meaning of Aldersgate against the backdrop of such theological themes as justification by faith, regeneration, and assurance themes which for many scholars constitute the very heart of what is meant by conversion. However, this traditional interpretation which is both well supported and established is now being challenged in a most thoroughgoing way. Three scholars in particular, Umphrey Lee, Albert Outler, and Theodore Jennings, when they explore this same historical record, find little evidence of Aldersgate as the moment of Wesley's evangelical conversion. Indeed, Jennings discovers not health but a disease, a disease whose name is "Aldersgateism" which, of course, has not infected John Wesley himself but his heirs.

II. The Aldersgate Experience Is Not Wesley's Conversion

A position which is becoming increasingly popular in Wesley studies today-no doubt due in large measure to Albert Outler's approval is that the Aldersgate experience does not constitute the conversion of John Wesley. It would appear that Outler's view has in fact won the day in the United Methodist press. In the May 1988 issue of *Circuit Rider*, for example, many of Outler's conclusions are cited as if they were well established facts. That is to say they are cited without the proper documentation. Among these is Outler's opinion that Wesley "almost never referred to Aldersgate again in his writings."²⁹ However, Outler himself would agree, I am sure, that the primary sources must be scrupulously examined and that any position taken must be adequately substantiated not by mere authority but on the basis of evidence and reason.

At this point, one would observe that non-conversionist views share some remarkable similarities. Therefore, the following discussion may be facilitated by organizing them under four separate headings. These headings state the principle theses brought in contradiction to the conversionist position. For the sake of clarity, criticism will be offered in each major section rather than in a general concluding critique.

A. *Aldersgate Almost Never Referred to Again*

We have already noted that Albert Outler (joined by Theodore Jennings) attempts to play down the importance of 24 May 1738 by arguing that there is a "paucity of Wesley's own references to Aldersgate,"³⁰ and by maintaining that this experience was simply "one in a series of the turning points in [Wesley's] passage from don to missionary to evangelist"³¹ However, George Cell, referred to earlier, has discerned a chronology, a way of reckoning time, in Wesley's writings that makes Aldersgate its center. He writes:

In addition to the human way of timing events Anno Domini-there are scattered throughout the twenty-five volumes of his writings references, not a few cases, but numbered by the score to his conversion experience, anno meae conversionis.³²

In fact, in Wesley's sermons, theological treatises, and letters there are some specific references to 24 May 1738, as well as some general references to the year 1738, that cannot be denied as references to conversion, although they have often been misunderstood. The following pieces of evidence, numerous though by no means exhaustive, appear to support Cell's claim.

1. Four days after his Aldersgate experience, Wesley told some friends at the house of Mr. Hutton that "five days before, he was not a Christian."³³

2. On October 30, 1738, John wrote to his older brother Samuel: "By a Christian I mean one who so believes in Christ as that sin hath no more dominion over him. And in this obvious sense of the word I was not a Christian till May 24th last past."³⁴

3. Wesley's comment in his Journal on January 4, 1739, which is often used to diminish the significance of May 24th actually supports it by referring specifically to that day He writes: "My friends affirm I am mad, because I said I was not a Christian a year ago.... Indeed, what I might have been I know not, had I been faithful to the grace then given..."³⁵

4. In a letter to "John Smith" on December 30, 1745, Wesley said: "For it is true that from May 24, 1738, 'wherever I was desired to preach, salvation by faith was my only theme: ... And it is equally true that 'It was for preaching the love of God and man that several of the clergy forbade me their pulpits before that time, before May 24, before I either preached or knew salvation by faith."³⁶

5. On June 22, 1740, Wesley wrote in one of his letters, "After we had wandered many years in the new path of salvation by faith and works, about two years ago it pleased God to show us the old way of salvation by faith only."³⁷

6. In a lengthy letter to Thomas Church on February 2, 1745, Wesley repeated his claim put forth on June 22, 1740, just cited and added, "Let us go no farther, as to time, than seven years (1738) last past."³⁸

7. Again in a letter to Thomas Church on June 17, 1746, Wesley traced the course of his ministry along the following lines: "From the year 1725 I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labor. ... From the year 1729 to 1734., I saw a little fruit, . -- . From 1734 to 1738 I saw more fruit of my preaching....From 1738 to this time., the word of God ran as fire among the stubble."³⁹

8. In the year 1765, Wesley wrote to John Newton, "I think on Justification just as I have done any time these seven-and-twenty years, and just as Mr. Calvin does."⁴⁰

9. And in that same year he wrote to Dr. Erskine, "In. .. justification by faith I have not wavered a moment for these seven and twenty years."⁴¹

10. In November 1765, in his sermon, "The Lord Our Righteousness, "Wesley stated concerning justification by faith, "this is the doctrine which I have constantly believed and taught for near eight and twenty years. This I published to all the world in the year 1738..."⁴²

11. In 1772, Wesley observed: "With regard to [the doctrine] that we are justified merely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered, I have constantly and earnestly maintained [that] above four and thirty years."⁴³

12. Wesley affirmed in 1778: "I am not sensible that this has made any essential addition to my knowledge in divinity. Forty years ago I knew and preached every Christian doctrine (including justification by faith) which I preach now."⁴⁴ Once again, the reference is to 1738.⁴⁵

Albert Outler concedes the pivotal nature of the year 1738, on the basis of such documentation as we have just presented, but he interprets the evidence as evidence of a process of change from a faith in faith to faith itself, from aspiration to assurance,⁴⁶ and he argues that "the Aldersgate story as such drops abruptly out of sight after its publication in the second extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal (1740)"⁴⁷

However, Outler's last statement is incorrect. As we have seen, Wesley's correspondence with "John Smith" on 30 December 1745, specifically refers to the May 24th event.

Theodore Jennings, who accepts Outler's verdict concerning the data, contends that Aldersgate was a non-event.⁴⁸ Of him it may be asked: would Wesley have remembered a humdrum day seven years after its occurrence? The implication is clear.

Wesley expressly refers to the Aldersgate experience on at least four occasions in the years from 1738 to 1745 (first four items above). After this time, his references are a bit less explicit, but he repeatedly refers to the year 1738. And given his own earlier highlighting of 24 May as the day above all others in 1738, we may, in contrast to Outler's view, then, argue, even given the general nature of these later references, that Wesley had 24 May 1738 in mind as he wrote this material.

B. Wesley's "Disclaimers" in His Revised Journal

Others have sought to reduce the value of Aldersgate as Wesley's moment of conversion by contending that Wesley's alterations in the edition of the Journal printed in the 1771 edition of his works reveal that he changed his mind about this experience. They bring forward such references as: "I had even then the faith of a servant,"⁴⁹ "I'm not sure of this,"⁵⁰ "I believe not,"⁵¹ and "I then lacked... the full Christian salvation."⁵² Umphrey Lee, for example, writing in 1936, uses such references to reason that the proper approach to an evaluation of 1738 is to study "Wesley's subsequent religious life and his own more mature conclusions concerning his 'conversion.'"⁵³ When this is done, Lee argues, Aldersgate appears as a stage in Wesley's religious experience, "but it was neither the beginning of his Christian life nor the end of it?"⁵⁴

In a more eristic tone, Theodore Jennings states that "the plausibility of the conversionist reading of Aldersgate depends on the assumption that before May 24th Wesley did not have faith."⁵⁵ Therefore, after referring to the four editorial comments noted above, which do show that Wesley, in fact, had faith quite early on, Jennings concludes: "It is clear that the conversionist reading of Wesley's early Journal requires a systematic suppression of Wesley's fifty years of insight into the nature of faith, grace and the Christian life"⁵⁶

In fact, Jennings' argument is flawed since its premise is obviously false. Wesley's later notes are damaging to conversionist views only if one makes the untenable claim that this Oxford don had no measure of faith in his early years. But who asserts this? . . . The celebration of Aldersgate as a crucial event in Wesley's life does not need and is not dependent upon such an assertion. Jennings has tied the plausibility of the conversion model to an overdrawn contrast—a contrast that few scholars, moderate or otherwise, would care to make.

Moreover, both Jennings⁵⁷ and Lee⁵⁸ assume that by the phrase "faith of a servant" Wesley meant Christian faith. However, when Wesley's own use of the phrase in his writings is consulted, in particular the usage's found in his sermon "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" and those found in his commentary on Romans 7, it becomes immediately evident that the "faith of a servant" is not the faith of a Christian. It is, however, a measure of faith, to be sure, and this is precisely Wesley's point in his editorial changes: it is a "legal" faith. Ironically, in the very passage which Jennings quotes on this score, Wesley states: "Hitherto you are only a servant, you are not a child of God."⁵⁹ What all this means, then, is that the father of Methodism did not utterly reject his earlier interpretation, but instead modified it through subtle nuances. Jennings, among others, has failed to appreciate these.

C. Wesley's Emotional and Spiritual State After Aldersgate

Even the most cursory reading of Wesley's Journal reveals that spiritual depression and temptation were continuing problems for the Methodist leader beyond the year 1738. In the hands of both Outler and Jennings, however, these factors are employed to controvert the conversion hypothesis. Outler, for example, notes that Wesley was still troubled by "those symptoms of spiritual unsettlement which real faith was supposed to remove."⁶⁰ And Jennings, for his part, opines that the conversionist view would be obliged to show that Wesley's mood swings, especially those involving doubt and fear, ended on May 24th⁶¹ -clearly an impossible task.

But just how are Wesley's post-Aldersgate malaises to be understood? One must first of all understand the nature of this spiritual distress and the reason for its existence. Then, and only then, can some judgment be made with respect to its relationship to the May 24th event. The mere citation of Wesley's more somber moods and his subsequent spiritual struggles, as, for example, that of January 1739, in itself proves nothing, for it must then be shown in what way and to what extent these experiences are inconsistent with Wesley's having been converted at Aldersgate-something which neither Outler nor Jennings do.

Clearly, other assessments of this evidence can and should be offered. Could it be, for example, that Wesley's own spiritual turmoil after Aldersgate was precipitated, for the most part, by his painful realization that justifying faith neither destroys the whole body of sin (which must await the further work of entire sanctification) nor does it remove all manner of fear and the heaviness that results from manifold temptations? Again, could it be that Wesley's experience was similar to that of Christian David which Wesley saw fit to record in his Journal on 10 August 1738, in the following words:

I saw not then that the first promise to the children of God is, "sin shall no more reign over you"; but thought I was to feel it in me no more from the time it was forgiven. Therefore, although I had the mastery over it, yet I often feared it was not forgiven, because it still stirred in me, and at some times thrust sore at me that I might fall: because, though it did not reign, it did remain in me; and I was continually tempted, though not overcome.⁶²

Outler, at least, remains unpersuaded by such possibilities. "Real faith," says Outler, should remove the possibility of subsequent spiritual depress-

sion, but, he contends, there were several instances after 24 May 1738, when Wesley even denied that he was or ever had been a Christian.⁶³ Thus, in his book *John Wesley*, Outler refers the reader to a very dark though remarkably honest letter from John to his brother Charles in June 1766, part of which reads as follows:

In one of my last I was saying I do not feel the wrath of God abiding on me; nor can I believe it does. And yet (this is the mystery) [I do not love God. I never did.] Therefore [I never] believed in the Christian sense of the word. Therefore [I am only an] honest heathen, a proselyte of the Temple, one of the God-fearers.⁶⁴

But how is such an obscure and unrepresentative passage to be interpreted? If one employs it as Cutler does in order to "debunk" Aldersgate as the moment of Wesley's conversion then a question immediately emerges: why stop there? At face value, the letter reveals that Wesley never was a Christian in 1738 or in 1725 or at any other time prior to 1766 for that matter. Surely Cutler, and those who follow in his train, such as Jennings, really would not wish to claim this. Indeed, the inordinate difficulty of such an interpretation should indicate all the more clearly that the language of this letter is a fine instance of Wesley's tendency, on occasion, towards hyperbole pure and simple.

Now it is one thing to argue and to note correctly that there were times, after Aldersgate, when Wesley was dissatisfied with his spiritual walk, and quite another thing to maintain, as Cutler and Jennings do, that this detracts from the crucial character of Aldersgate. Wesley does not claim that the new birth cannot be followed by a measure of doubt, fear, or even depression. The before, the implication that Wesley by reason of the candor displayed in his journal was not regenerate cannot stand. By extension, Cutler's logic makes it doubtful whether anyone at all could be deemed born of God...since any subsequent negative evidence could be used to sustain the contrary.

D. Aldersgate: Simply the Time of Wesley's Assurance.

Referring to Peter Bobler's advice to Wesley on 4 March 1738 that he should "Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith,"⁶⁵ Cutler writes: "that is, preach the doctrine of justification by faith (which Wesley had always believed) until he had the personal assurance of it."⁶⁶ Clearly, Cutler prefers to view the Aldersgate experience, which followed the conversation with Bobler, not as Wesley's conversion to vital Christianity but as the time when he moved from "faith in faith to faith itself, from aspiration to assurance."⁶⁷ In a similar vein, Jennings modifies his exaggerated language slightly and now Aldersgate appears not as a 'non-event'⁶⁸ but as "one of many moments of reassurance."⁶⁹ But a question immediately arises: Is an appeal to the doctrine of assurance sufficient to explain all that occurred on May 24th? Observe the many elements in Wesley's own account of Aldersgate:

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.⁷⁰

Notice that Wesley connects a number of items in the selection above with the conjunction "and": trust in Christ alone, and assurance, and freedom from the law of sin and death. If there ever were a good example of Wesley's conjunctive theology, to which Cutler is so fond of pointing,⁷¹ this is it. Therefore, it is certainly not denied that assurance is an integral part of a total picture. What is denied, however, is that assurance is the whole of Aldersgate. The reference to freedom from the law of sin and death-and trust in Christ alone for that matter must neither be minimized nor repudiated in any assessment of this experience. And it is Wesley, himself, who first of all focused on this last aspect of power over sin, and not the Methodist hagiographers.

III. Conclusion

Not surprisingly, like Piette before them, both Outler⁷² and Jennings⁷³ consider the year 1725 as the year of Wesley's conversion. But here we must ask what constitutes conversion, and that not on our own terms, but on Wesley's. If conversion means a call to the ministry, sincerity in spiritual life, and an earnestness displayed in missionary service, then Wesley, of course, was converted prior to May 1738. If, however, the term is understood in an existential and evangelical way, as the time when one experiences both forgiveness and freedom from the guilt and power of sin, and the assurance which results from this, then by no stretch of the imagination was Wesley converted prior to Aldersgate. Moreover, that the latter definition is more appropriate to Wesley's own consideration of the matter is substantiated by the theology displayed in his Standard Sermons, especially in the pieces on the prerogatives of the children of God ("The Marks of the New Birth," "The Great Privilege of Those that Are Born of God" and "On the Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption") which in many places actually reflect the general sense of the Aldersgate account.

Why, then, are Cutler and Jennings, among others, still not convinced? Perhaps because they, and other scholars like them, are deeply impressed by the zeal of the early Wesley in his many activities on behalf of the Church. But do works, earnestness, sincerity, and zeal constitute conversion? Do they make a Christian? Wesley thought not, and this is the key to his spiritual autobiography.

Perhaps Cutler and Jennings have not fully considered the idea implicit in *sola fide* that so much which matters can happen in a relatively short period of time. It is truly remarkable that their position defines conversion without respect to the exercise of justifying faith. But if salvation, hence being a real Christian, is by faith, then why not a conversion that occurs rather quickly? Is the theology of these scholars predisposed to misprize brief, powerful, and significant crisis experiences? At times, their argumentation, their attempt to re-interpret Aldersgate and its significance, reminds one of Mrs. Hutton's protestation in the face of Wesley's own claim on 28 May 1738, that five days earlier he was not a Christian: 'If you was not a Christian ever since I knew you,' she spoke, 'you was a great hypocrite, for you made us all believe you was one.'⁷⁴

The view of Cutler and Jennings is not a new one, but an old one; not an original position but a borrowed one. Just as Piette's scholarship, published a generation ago, failed to overturn the conversion hypothesis in the twentieth century-as evidenced by the continuing success of the interpretations of Curnock, Cell, Rattenbury, Schmidt, et al., so too will these views fail. They will neither be able to bear the test of time nor will they satisfy the demands of a spiritually hungry people. As Elmer T. Clark quipped in 1938: "If there had been no Aldersgate, we should be under the necessity of inventing one."⁷⁵

Therefore, despite the new wave in Wesley studies, the importance of the Aldersgate account as a hermeneutical device through which one can gain insight into Wesley's spiritual dynamic cannot be denied. The dramatic structure of this account, the allusions to other significant conversion experiences within it (Paul, Augustine, Luther), the spiritual autobiography which precedes it, the indication of spiritual power and victory which conclude the record, and Wesley's numerous references to this event well after it occurred all illustrate that this was an extraordinary occurrence. Moreover, the very fact that scholars today are still discussing its value only serves to underscore its perennial significance.

Notes

1. Theodore W Jennings Jr., "The Myth of Aldersgate: The Subversion of Wesleyan Theology;" paper presented at the American Academy of Religion, Boston, Massachusetts, 5 December 1987, p.25.

2. Ibid., p.3.

3. In the year 1765, Wesley wrote to John Newton, "I think on Justification just as I have done any time these seven-and-twenty years, and just as Mr. Calvin does." Cf. John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.* 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 4:298.

4. Nehemiah Curnock, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), 1:12.

5. Ibid., p.34.

6. Ibid., p.47. Bracketed material mine.

7. Ibid., p.33.

8. George Croft Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1934), p.73. Bracketed material mine.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p.182.

11. R. Kissack, "Wesley's Conversion: Text, Psalm, and Homily;" *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 22 (March 1939): 1.

12. H. A. Boaz, "What Came Out of Aldersgate," *Christian Advocate* 99 (April 8, 1938): 6.
13. William P. King, "A New Creation in Christ," *Christian Advocate* 99 (April 8, 1938): 1.
14. *Ibid.*, p.5.
15. J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Conversion of the Wesleys* (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), p.42.
16. Robert E. Webber and Donald Bloesch eds., *The Orthodox Evangelicals: Who they are and what they are saying* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1986), p.46.
17. Rattenbury, *Conversion*, p.25. The conversion of Charles Wesley, by his own admission, took place on May 1738. For a detailed account of this spiritual transformation see: Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Journal of the Rev Charles Wesley, M.A.* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980), 1:90ff. Moreover, for another treatment of John's experience in light of that of his brother Charles', cf. A. Skevington Wood, *The Inextinguishable Blaze* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), p. 90ff.
18. *Ibid.*, p.35.
19. *Ibid.*, p.82. Emphasis mine.
20. Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography* (2 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1:223.
21. V. H. H. Green, *John Wesley* (London: Thomas Nelson Ltd., 1964), pp. 60-61.
22. *Ibid.*, p.63. Rupert Davies also develops the idea of Wesley's spiritual narcissism as a key to the Aldersgate experience. Cf. Rupert Davies, *Methodism* (London: The Epworth Press, 1963), p.52.
23. *Ibid.*, emphasis and bracketed material mine.
24. Frank Baker, "Aldersgate 1738-1963: The Challenge of Aldersgate," *Duke Divinity Bulletin* 28 (Spring 1963): 73. 25 *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, p.75
27. *Ibid.*, p.76.
28. Frank Baker, "Aldersgate and Wesley's Editors," *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 191 (1966): 310.
29. Scott R. Somers, "What Happened at Aldersgate: Then and Now?" *Circuit Rider* Vol.12 No. 4, (May 1988): 9.
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43. Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley* (14 vols.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978). 10:388.
44. Curnock, *Journal*, 6:209. 45For further evidence of this "chronology" see Telford, *Letters*, 5:90, 258- 59; 6:331, and Jackson, *Works*, 7:317, 10:403.
46. Outler, *John Wesley*, p, 14.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Jennings, "Myth," p.25.
49. Curnock, *Journal*, 1:423.
50. *Ibid.*, p.422.
51. *Ibid.*, p.423.
52. *Ibid.*, p.442.
53. Umphrey Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1936), p.90. Lee is included in this context even though he does refer to Wesley's Aldersgate experience as a "mystical" conversion (p.104). The reason for this is that Lee so empties the term of meaning that it is in reality a non-conversionist view.
54. *Ibid.*, pp.102-3.
55. Jennings, "Myth," p.25.
56. *Ibid.*, p.27.

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61. Jennings, "Myth;" p.30.

62. Curnock, *Journal*, 2:30. See also Wesley's comment in the *Journal* where he states that the faith he wants is that which "whosoever hath it, is freed from sin, the whole body of sin is destroyed in him..." (1:424). Emphasis mine.

63. Outler, Wesley, p.51.

64. Telford, *Letters*, 5:16. The bracketed material was written in shorthand which meant that it was for Charles' eyes only.

65. Outler, *Wesley's Works*, 1:442.

66. Outler, "Re-Appraisal," pp.8-9.

67. Outler, *John Wesley*, p.14.

68. Jennings, "Myth," p.25.

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PLACING ALDERSGATE IN JOHN WESLEY'S ORDER OF SALVATION

by

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On Wednesday, May 24, 1738, "About a quarter before nine," Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed," and, as he later witnessed, "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."¹ This year marks the 250th anniversary of this event, which is the birth-date of Methodism. Other events prior to this, though significant, are within the gestation period. Aldersgate is the moment of birth. But beyond its significance as a point of historic reference, what was Aldersgate?

To William R. Cannon it "must stand without dispute as the date of Wesley's conversion,"² but Francis J. McConnell derides such an analysis as too narrow, too reflective of the "cumbersome terminology [of] 'evangelical' con-version."³ Instead, McConnell interprets the experience at Aldersgate as a life passage from mechanistic legalism to "something more nourishing to the emotional life, something that he could feel," or as "a passage... [from legalistic] despair. . . [to reception by] a Father who takes the will for the deed, ... who makes possible new starts with the dawning of every day."⁴ Maximin Piette's famous evaluation is that the experience was Wesley's conversion of love, the earlier date of 1725 being his conversion of "moral resolve and aspiration."⁵ John Telford simply affirms that "Wesley had now attained to the righteousness of faith."⁶

One need not deny Cannon's definition of conversion-"God's own act in which a man is turned away from his former self, made to pass from darkness into light, delivered from the power of Satan unto God, made over in mind and spirit"⁷- "to make experience conform to theory," as McConnell notes.⁸ In reality, the moment of conversion and the moment of understanding that conversion has occurred may be distinct, and yet both may be significant soteriological events. Though Wesley was to change his mind about what Aldersgate meant in relation to his own state of salvation, he never wavered with reference to its doctrinal significance and its place in the revival. In 1788, he reaffirmed, at least twice, his evangelical principle: "All...true

Christian believers . . . have 'the Spirit of Adoption' "; they know " the pardoning word,' the word which spoke all their sins forgiven."⁹

More specific with respect to the theological and evangelistic significance of 1738 is the following recollection written in 1746:

(2.) From the year 1729 to 1734,...I saw little fruit. . . . For I did not preach faith in the blood of the covenant. (3.) From 1734 to 1738, speaking more of faith in Christ, I saw more fruit.(4.) From 1738 to this time, speaking continually of Jesus Christ, laying Him only for the foundation... the 'word of God ran' as fire among the stubble; it was 'glorified' more and more; multitudes crying out, 'What must we do to be saved?' and afterwards witnessing, 'By grace we are saved through faith.'¹⁰

Undeniably Aldersgate was the moment when the doctrine of Justification by Faith was sealed in his thinking. He had been progressively adopting this view, but Aldersgate equipped him to proclaim the pardoning word of God.

Wesley's interest in the order of salvation began early and remained with him in his several roles: as an Anglican spiritual director at Oxford, in Georgia' and over the United Societies. To quote Outler, "(Wesley) had an intensely practical concern with the order of salvation in the Christian life. The con-trolling theological inquiry throughout his life was into the meaning of becoming and being a Christian...."¹¹ Before Aldersgate the order was expressed almost exclusively in terms of human effort. Advance in sanctification was perceived as reward rather than grace. In two very early sermons (1730 and 1731), he insisted that "when we have cleansed our own hearts 'We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us!' "¹² Somewhat later, the grace note was present but the overwhelming emphasis was upon human effort. This may be seen in his famous sermon, "The Circumcision of the Heart." In its original form (Jan. 1, 1733), this sermon has a limited emphasis upon grace. Circumcision of the heart proves to be a human act, evident in the clause, "unless his heart is circumcised by humility,"¹³ echoing Deuteronomy 10:16: "circumcise . . . your heart." (By contrast, Wesley's Notes Upon the New Testament, in commenting upon Romans 2:29, the text for this sermon, refers to Deuteronomy 30:6: "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart." The NT Notes were published in 1754.)¹⁴ The sermon's order of salvation follows the triad of faith, hope, and love found in Augustine's Enchiridion but adds the prior step of humility.¹⁵ Though the language of states and stages is not used in this sermon, there is an easy correlation here of faith, hope, and love with the stages and a correlation of humility with the state of a servant.¹⁶

That the concept of states was developing in Wesley's thinking well before Aldersgate is evidenced by a diary entry by Benjamin Ingham (Mar.17, 1734): "Breakfast with . . . John Wesley; religious talk of three different states of man: natural, Jewish (or fearful), and evangelical-the two last only, salvable."¹⁷ That Wesley was also thinking of stages as well as states some time before Aldersgate is expressed in a letter written to his mother a year later (Feb.14, 1735), in which he identifies certain liberties mature Christians enjoy which neither the natural man, nor the Jew, nor the awakened sinner, nor infant Christians have. Three of these liberties are significant: "1. A liberty

from willful sin, which natural men have not. 2. A liberty from slavish fears, which awakened sinners have not. 3. A liberty in things of an indifferent nature, which . . . infant Christians have not."¹⁸

Still, evangelical truths had not yet become Wesley's own. His instruction in his sermon "The One Thing Needful" (1734) was "to regain the highest measure we can of that faith which works by love"¹⁹ In "The Trouble and Rest of Good Men" (1735), he compared "those who are yet weak in the faith" with one "who is full of the knowledge and love of God."²⁰ Significantly, in contrast to his alter emphasis upon sanctification by faith in this life, this sermon describes physical death as the last step in sanctification: the righteous are not only delivered "from the troubling of the wicked" and from their own "folly and infirmity," but also "from sin."²¹

The idea of stages adumbrated in "The Circumcision of the Heart" became explicit soon after Aldersgate, both in his sermon "Christian Perfection" (1739,1741), where the stages are specified in the Johannine terms of babe, young man, and father,²² and in his "Preface" to *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1740, 1741), where they are described developmentally, with the prefacing comment, "Indeed, how God may work, we cannot tell; but the general manner wherein He does work is this. . ."²³

Wesley's developed doctrine of states and stages is apparently an attempt to explain Aldersgate.²⁴ The questions he seems to be asking are: "How does this great evangelical experience fit within the overall order of salvation?" "What was my relationship to God before Aldersgate?" "In what state of grace were my parents and my devout Anglican friends before any heard the preaching of these evangelical truths?" (He had seen his father and his brother Samuel receive dying grace and subsequently had heard his mother testify to receiving the witness of the Spirit while partaking of the sacrament.) And a further question which as a loyal son of the church he sought to answer both for himself and others was: "In what state of grace are my fellow pious Anglicans who do not profess a clear evangelical experience?"

The place of Aldersgate, then, in Wesley's spiritual journey is subject to review for at least two reasons. First, Wesley himself was uncertain about its place in the order of salvation. Second, his way of stating the order, developed within the context of 18th-century Anglicanism, does not conform to our 20th-century evangelical language. We must not equate that which he calls "new birth" with that which we call "new birth" without careful examination of the evidence. Moreover, Wesley creates questions about what happened at Aldersgate by the *emendationes et errata* he entered at February 1,1738, in the 1774 and 1775 editions of his Journal²⁵ The original entry was written in a period of intense Moravian influence when his love for the Moravians made him susceptible to their interpretation of the order of salvation (though he had begun to question some of their extreme positions almost immediately). The problematic entry and Wesley's *emendationes et errata* are as follows:

Journal: "I who went to American to convert others, was never myself converted to God."

Emendatio: "I am not sure of this." (1774 ed.)

Journal: "...all these things [his life of ministry and devotion before Aldersgate], though when ennobled by faith in Christ they

are holy, and just, and good, yet without it are 'dung and dross,' meet only to be purged by 'the fire that never shall be quenched'"

Emendatio: "I had even then the faith of a servant, though not that of a son." (1774 ed.) [1775 ed. omits "meet . . . quenched."]

Journal: "...alienated' as I am 'from the life of God,' I am 'a child of wrath; an heir of hell
Erratum: "I believe not." (1774 ed.) [1775 ed. omits the entire comment.]

Journal: "The faith I want

Emendatio: "The faith of a son." (1774 ed.)

In what state or stage was Wesley prior to Aldersgate? Because Wesley's mature judgment was that he was then in the state of a servant, it is essential to compare this state with the other states and stages and to examine its use chronologically in order to understand the changes in Wesley's understanding of it.

Wesley viewed the order of salvation both generally, as it relates to God's saving activity with respect to all humankind, and particularly, as it relates to the specific Christian. These two perspectives are distinguished from each other in his vocabulary by the terms "state(s)" and "stage(s)." The states, by which all may be categorized, are: the natural man, the servant, and the son. The stages, by which Christians grow in holiness, are: the babe, the young man, and the father. These latter occur within the former, i.e., the stages occur within the state of the "son."

Consistently with his concept of states, Wesley suggests that under prevenient grace one is in one of two successive states: "preventing grace" and "convincing grace" These are followed by a third state, "the proper Christian salvation, whereby 'through grace' we 'are saved by faith!'"²⁶ In this paradigm and in each of the following analyses, the second state is that of the servant.

An early sermon, "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" (1739, 1746), describes these states from a variety of perspectives. From the perspective of the recipient of that grace the order is the "natural man," the man "under the law," and the man "under grace"; or those who are asleep, those who are awake, and those who believe; or again, a "child of the devil" or servant of sin, a servant of the law (of God), and a son of God. From the perspective of the quality of relation with God, "The 'natural' man neither fears nor loves God; one 'under the law' fears, one 'under grace' loves Him." Thus, "An unawakened child of the devil sins willingly; one that is awakened sins unwillingly; a child of God 'sinneth not, but keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not.'" Expressed from the perspective of the Evangelical Revival, the states are "the 'natural,' the 'legal,' and the 'evangelical'"²⁷ As this early sermon verifies, the servant is one who is convinced of sin, is under the law, is awake to his condition, fears, and is under bondage to sin, though unwillingly.

Wesley's understanding of the states remains quite consistent throughout his life, though some changes do occur. An example of his consistency lies in his view that the servant state is the bridge between the "legal" and the "evangelical." That view does not change. What does change, however, is his understanding of the nature of the servant state, In "The Spirit of Bond-

age and of Adoption" (1739, 1746) the one awakened, though he serves the devil unwillingly, is "still. . . [the devil's] servant."²⁸ Later the "awakened" is described as the servant of God.²⁹ At the earlier date Wesley would limit those "under grace" to those who, among other expressions of victory, "can continually cry, Abba, Father!"³⁰ Later the qualifier "continually" is applied to the stage of the young man.³¹

The term "dispensation" was also used at this time (1739/1746) as an equivalent of "states." Later (1775) it was used to describe all who in some sense were in saving grace, including servants and sons. John Fletcher developed the doctrine of dispensations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as a means of describing the various degrees of religious knowledge in which one in the servant state could live before entering into the evangelical state of the Spirit. The dispensation of the Son ("Jesus in the flesh") included those who had not yet discovered evangelical grace but were "servant" Christians, a view in conflict with Wesley's early description of the servant as a "child of the devil." However, the following letter from Wesley to Alexander Knox (Aug.29, 1777), recommending Fletcher's dispensations, illustrates Wesley's later view of servant:

You should read Mr. Fletcher's Essay on Truth. He has there put it beyond all doubt that there is a medium between a child of God and a child of the devil namely, a servant of God. This is your state. You are not yet a son, but you are a servant; and you are waiting for the Spirit of adoption, which will cry in your heart, "Abba, Father" You have "received the Spirit of grace," and in a measure work righteousness. Without being pained for what you have not, you have cause to bless God for what you have, and to wait patiently till He gives the rest by revealing His Son in your heart.³²

Notice that at this date, "a servant;' though he does not have "the Spirit of adoption;' is described as having "received the Spirit of grace;' as "in a measure [working] righteousness;' and as having "cause to bless God for what [one has]." What matters now is waiting "patiently till He gives the rest."

Wesley, and with him, Fletcher, sought to be comprehensive regarding God's saving work, teaching that all humankind are its objects. And, they sought to account as in some sense in the way of salvation all who work righteousness-even those who have never heard the Gospel.³³ These latter, Wesley included among those who had come to the state of the "medium between a child of God and a child of the devil-namely, [the state of] a servant of God?'

This point of view becomes quite relevant to understanding Wesley's state or stage before and after Aldersgate. For he believed that God's saving activity reaches to all who are in the church, who are earnest seekers, believers, and obeyers. Among these are those "servants of God;' a class which now included Alexander Knox, and at one time had included such persons as Susanna Wesley and John Wesley himself.

Such a point of view seems to have satisfied Wesley, but is it adequate for our understanding? Is it appropriate that we simply repeat Wesley's affirmation that he had been in the state of a servant and presume that he was adopted into sonship at Aldersgate when no such category as the "stage of

a servant" exists in our 20th-century holiness or evangelical terminology? Nor do we generally divide the life of holiness into three stages. So, before we can understand Aldersgate, we must more clearly understand the place of the new birth within the order of salvation as it was understood by Wesley and his contemporaries.

There are three distinct chronologies of grace expressed in the Evangelical Revival—the Moravian, the Calvinistic, and the Anglican—each having distinct experiential and ideological expectations as to what defines a Christian. For the Moravians it was fullness of faith; for the Calvinists Edwards and Whitefield it was assurance of their election; and for the Wesleys, at least prior to Aldersgate, it was a clean heart. Despite these different goals, the descriptions of the processes by means of which one moves toward these expectations contain strikingly similar phenomena. Moreover, each group, by defining the true Christian, sought to keep its members from a false profession. By being the true church within, they sought to revive the church.

The goal of the Moravians was fullness of faith. Their position, which in its extreme expression threw Wesley "into much perplexity" was that "whoever at any time felt any doubt or fear was not weak in faith, but had no faith at all; and that none hath any faith till the law of the Spirit of life has made him wholly free from the law of sin and death."³⁴ The Moravians were not in agreement among themselves over this description. On the one hand it had been widely taught by one of their leaders, Christian David, prior to his mission to Greenland, but he had subsequently rejected it.³⁵ On the other hand, Philip Henry Molther advocated it and also taught a quietism which saw all means of grace as hindrances to full faith.³⁶

"Fullness of faith" as a condition for salvation was not all that lay behind the misunderstanding between Wesley and the Moravian leader, Count Zinzendorf. By looking at the new birth as in some sense a perfection and fulfillment of Christian graces rather than as a beginning, we may understand Zinzendorf's affirmation that "when a man is justified, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit make his heart their dwelling place. And from then on, his heart is as pure as it will ever be."³⁷ The new birth thus described is closer descriptively to the holiness movement's concept of entire sanctification than to its concept of the new birth.

Jonathan Edwards, like John and Charles Wesley, responded to God's grace when a child. The following is from his vivid account:³⁸

I had a variety of concerns... about my soul...; but had two... remarkable seasons of awakening before I met with that change by which I was brought to those new dispositions, and that new sense of things that I have since had. The first time was when I was a boy... at a time of remarkable awakening in my father's congregation. I was then very much affected for many months, and concerned about the things of religion, and my soul's salvation; and was abundant in duties.

He and his friends "built a booth in a swamp, in a very secret and retired place, for a place of prayer . . . where;" he said, "I used to retire by myself; and used to be from time to time much affected." Yet in terms of saving grace, he evaluates these experiences negatively, for, "many are deceived with such affections, and such a kind of delight, as I then had in religion, and mistake it for grace."

A period followed when he "lost all those affections and delights, and left off secret prayer, at least as to any constant performance of it, and returned like a dog to his vomit, and went on in ways of sin." He describes his return to God, at age seventeen, in his last year at Yale:

God would not suffer me to go on with any quietness, but [after] violent inward struggles... I was brought wholly to break off all former wicked ways, and all ways of known and outward sin, and to apply myself to seek my salvation, and practice the duties of religion; but without that kind of affection and delight that I had formerly experienced.

There followed a struggle with the doctrine of election until he came to a place of rest regarding it. Then was renewed "that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since... Yet even regarding this he adds, ... it never came into my thought, that there was any thing spiritual, or of a saving nature in this."

The assurance came not long after, while he was walking in his father's pasture:

And as I was walking there, and looked up into the sky and clouds, there came into my mind, so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together: it was a sweet and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness.

He then gained that "great satisfaction as to my good estate" which he believed to be so necessary to his assurance of salvation.

Edwards' refusal to claim any degree of God's saving grace until a perfection of grace was realized received the same indictment from Wesley as did Molther's restriction of saving grace to fullness of faith. Edwards' view, Wesley commented, is liable to make "plain men and women...doubt of, if not wholly deny, all the work which God had wrought in their souls."³⁹ But there is a kinship of idea between Edwards' search for a witness to his election and Wesley's own early view, derived from Macarius, that there is an experience, a beatific vision, which once attained would assure one's eternal salvation. Wesley did not wholly renounce the legitimacy nor the possibility of experiencing this witness to one's eternal estate,⁴⁰ which he called "the plerophory or 'full assurance of hope' ";⁴¹ instead, he reserved it for "fathers in Christ," those who are identified in Wesley's order of salvation as having attained entire sanctification. Echoes of this witness are found in the 20th-century view that in entire sanctification God gives establishing grace.

George Whitefield also gives evidence of a Christian life preceding his "Aldersgate." Two or three years prior to his "conversion" experience, having read in Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* "that 'true religion was union of the soul with God and Christ formed within us,' " he records that "a ray of divine light was instantaneously darted in upon my soul."⁴² He describes the significance of the moment: "not till then, did I know that I must be a new creature." This experience was followed by many of the results ordinarily ascribed to the new birth: he was "built ...up daily in the knowl-

edge and fear of God"; fasting and other "such exercises" "soon grew profitable and delightful." "The lively oracles of God were my soul's delight"; "God made me instrumental in converting one who is lately come into the Church"; and "I grew in favor both with God and man and used to be much lifted up with sensible devotion, especially at the blessed sacrament."

There followed a time when "God was pleased to permit Satan to sift me like wheat...:' He wrestled with the shame of being identified with the Wesleys. Moreover, when he was chided by the master of his college for visiting the poor, his immediate response was that "if it displeased him, I would not:' But his "conscience...pricked [him] for this sinful compliance" and he "repented and visited the poor [at] the first opportunity During the six weeks of Lent (1735), he fasted, eating only coarse bread except on Saturdays and Sundays. In the sixth week he became ill and continued so for seven weeks. Then near Pentecost, as he records,

it was suggested to me that when Jesus Christ cried out, "I thirst;' His sufferings were near at an end. Upon which I cast myself down on the bed, crying out, "I thirst! I thirst!" Soon after this, I found and felt in myself that I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me.

Thus were the days of my mourning ended. After a long night of desertion and temptation... the Spirit of God [took] possession of my soul and, as I humbly hope, seal[ed] me unto the day of redemption.

As with Edwards, Whitefield's "Aldersgate" sealed his election.⁴³

There are several things we should observe about Whitefield's experience: (1) the genuineness of Christian life before this moment of "great salvation" in which Whitefield was "sealed"; (2) the period of anguish during which he wrestled with sins which are identifiable not so much with willful transgressions as with "sins within"; (3) the tarrying and waiting in prayer for this experience; (4) the use of pneumatological language to describe the life which followed: "Now did the Spirit of God take possession of my soul," a reality in harmony with Pentecost; and (5) the tendency to identify this "new birth" experience as in some sense a perfecting grace.⁴⁴ Whitefield, like Zinzendorf, rejected the degrees or stages of grace, at least as Wesley described them. Responding to Wesley's "Principles of a Methodist" (1742), he said: "I cannot agree with any one of the three paragraphs wherein you declare the three different states of a soul, before he comes to Christ, after he comes, and when he arrives at what you call sanctification, or the indwelling of the Spirit."⁴⁵

John and Charles Wesley, with John Fletcher, represent the Anglican and Catholic tradition with its emphasis on personal righteousness and sanctification. This could include a minimal emphasis on outer righteousness and "doing the best you can"⁴⁶ or a maximal one on inward righteousness. This latter position was taught by those who most influenced Wesley during his Holy Club years—Jeremy Taylor, Thomas a Kempis, and especially William Law.

Whatever may have been Wesley's experience with God in childhood and youth, it is evident that in the years 1725 and 1726 he made his mature choice for Christ. As he states—and notice the language of grace—"I determined,

through his grace, (the absolute necessity of which I was deeply sensible of,) to be all-devoted to God, to give him all my soul, my body, and my substance."⁴⁷ Was this also the moment when, as he testifies, "The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help...and I was persuaded that I should be accepted of him and that I was even then in a state of salvation"?⁴⁸ This was in 1726, when he became a Fellow of Lincoln.⁴⁹ His commitment occurred in connection with his reading of *Law's Practical Treatise Upon Christian Perfection and A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*.⁵⁰ Outler calls us to "note the striking parallels" between this account and that of Aldersgate.⁵¹

A popular bit of evidence often used to demonstrate that Wesley did not experience an evangelical conversion until Aldersgate was his presumed fear of death up to that time. Except in one instance, however, the phrasing of these accounts, at least in the Georgia entries in his Journal, is always of being unwilling to die. Notice the following: "About eleven I lay down in the great cabin, and in a short time fell asleep, though very uncertain whether I should wake alive, and much ashamed of my unwillingness to die. O how pure in heart must he be who would rejoice to appear before God at a moment's warning!"⁵² Even in the one instance where Wesley expresses fear of death-during a Georgia coastal trip-the contrasting ideal is desire for death: "This voice of God [the thunder], too, told me I was not fit to die; since I was afraid rather than desirous of it! O when shall I wish to be dissolved and to be with Christ? When I love him with all my heart."⁵³ The language in these and other instances is not that of the fear of hell but of perfectionist expectations within an Augustinian understanding of Christian grace. The lover should desire to be with the heavenly Beloved rather than cling to this earthly life. Notice also his hunger for purity of heart.

Wesley's concern as he approached Aldersgate was that at a minimum a Christian life should be victorious both without and within. His aspirations were as high as those of the Moravians, who expected that at their new birth they would receive fullness of faith. He wrote, "The faith I want is, 'a sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favor of God.' " But he went further. He wanted a faith whereby whosoever hath it is 'freed from sin'; 'the whole body of sin is destroyed' in him. He is freed from fear... And he is freed from doubt..."⁵⁴ (Some fifty years ago my father, a "holiness preacher," wrote in the margin at this passage, "This seems almost the standard of holiness.") As Wesley approached Aldersgate his expectation was for a clean heart His struggle was not with the deeds of sin but with inward sin.

The spiritual struggles of these men-Christian David and the Moravian Brethren, Whitefield, Edwards, and the Wesleys-were not the struggles of men in want of evangelical grace but rather, speaking from the perspective of the modern holiness movement, of those seeking after holiness of heart.

Aldersgate was a perfectionist experience; that is, to say, Wesley, along with others who participated in both the Evangelical Revival and the Great Awakening, in reaction against the prevailing tendency to identify Christians by sacrament, creed, or allegiance, set the standards of who is a Christian at a level of perfection. Although Wesley sought to avoid setting either Christian perfection or the standard for identifying a Christian too high, he

nevertheless did so by placing himself and many other genuine Christians in the state of a servant. He did this on the basis of two tests: a theological test "faith in a pardoning God"- and an experiential test-"the abiding witness of the Spirit" These tests were rigorously applied in the immediate context of Aldersgate, both before and after, but they were made less normative as the century advanced. This change was influenced by Wesley's continuing evaluation of those impacted by the revival and by his ongoing dialogue with such honored fellow

Anglicans as his brother Samuel and the Rev. Arthur Bedford immediately after Aldersgate and with "John Smith" between 1745 and 1748.⁵⁵

What was the nature of Wesley's experience in Christ prior to Aldersgate, and what state or stage within his order of salvation best fits Aldersgate? We are cautioned about the difficulty of such a question by Wesley's observation in 1739: "Perhaps one reason why so many think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, why they do not discern what state they are in, is because these several states of soul are often mingled together, and in some measure meet in one and the same person."⁵⁶

The servant state is frequently described as entailing many Christian graces. Charles Wesley seems to have had this state in mind when he described his mother's life as "a legal night of seventy years."⁵⁷ John Wesley observed that "even she (as well as her father, and grandfather, her husband, and her three sons) had been, in her measure and degree, a preacher of righteousness"⁵⁸ Possibly John was thinking of his mother when, in 1746, he wrote:

few of those who have the spirit of bondage and fear remain always without hope. The wise and gracious God rarely suffers this. Therefore, at such times as he seeth good he gives a dawning of light unto them that sit in darkness....They see the promise which is by faith in Christ Jesus, though it be yet afar off; and hereby they are encouraged to "run with patience the race which is set before them."⁵⁹

Wesley seems to reflect on his own state in a subsequent observation. After listing the various good works, both charitable and religious, which a natural man may do and yet be "equally a stranger to the spirit of fear [which a servant experiences] and to that of love," he raises a question and goes on to answer it.

...suppose there were added to all this a deep conviction of sin, with much fear of the wrath of God; vehement desires to cast off every sin, and to fulfill all righteousness; frequent rejoicing in hope, and touches of love often glancing upon the soul: yet neither do these prove a man to be "under grace," to have true, living, Christian faith, unless the Spirit of adoption abide in his heart, unless he can continually cry, "Abba, Father!"⁶⁰

Notice the qualifiers in this statement: "true, living Christian faith" and "continually," A servant could have a lower kind of faith, and while a servant may cry, "Abba, Father!" a servant cannot utter that cry consistently. So Wesley exhorts those "in a legal state" to press on into what sounds like Christian perfection: "Now 'present' thyself 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.'" The person in the state of a servant is presumed to be in a

state of grace:" 'Whereunto thou hast already attained,' 'hold fast.'..." It is from this servant state that one is to reach forth" 'unto those things which are before'; until 'the God of peace...make thee perfect in every good work, working in thee that which is well-pleasing in his sight."⁶¹

Wesley's "Principles of a Methodist;" written within the same time period as the sermon from which the preceding citations were taken (1742), identifies some of the limitations which are peculiar to the natural and legal states as limitations of the immature Christian. Thus he writes:

After justification. The moment a man comes to Christ (by faith) he is justified, and born again; that is, he is born again in the imperfect sense, (For there are two [if not more] degrees of regeneration,) and he has power over all the stirrings and motions of sin, but not a total freedom from them. Therefore he hath not yet, in the full and proper sense, a new and clean heart But being exposed to various temptations, he may and will fall again from this condition, if he hath not attain to a more excellent gift.⁶²

The distinction that Wesley makes is that the babe "has power over all stirrings and motions of sin," but a servant does not. He is not talking about willful deeds but "stirrings and motions;" over which he himself did not claim victory, even by 1763, when he said: "Resentment of an affront is sin. It is ἀνομια, disconformity to the law of love. This has existed in me a thousand times. Yet it did not, and does not, reign... Here... there is sin with-out either guilt or power"⁶³ The "more excellent gift" that is necessary to keep one from falling is "sanctification, the last and highest state of perfection in this life. For then are the faithful born again in the full and perfect sense. Then is there given unto them a new and clean heart; and the struggle between the old and new man is over."⁶⁴ "Servants" are not outside the covenant of grace but are received "through Christ."⁶⁵ in fact, Wesley teaches in his "Minutes of Some Late Conversations...III" (1746) that since the Fall

All mankind were under the covenant of grace, from the very hour that the original promise was made. . . . [and] it will stand... even to the end of the world; that is, If we "do this;" we shall live; if not, we shall die eternally: If we do well, we shall live with God in glory; if evil, we shall die the second death.⁶⁶

"If we do well" defines a very broad category, which includes both those who earnestly look to Christ but have not yet found rest in Him as well as those who have never heard the Gospel or know only the law of Moses, or even those in the church to whom Christianity means little more than doing right. A distinction indicated in Fletcher's doctrine of dispensations needs to be made, a distinction between those "servants" who know nothing of the saving merits of Christ and those who do.

Many characteristics of a child of God are evident in the dialogue recorded in "Minutes... III," characteristics which Wesley ascribes to a servant but which are better identified with his stage of a babe. (He does, in fact, identify them thus at a later date.) In conversing with Jonathan Reeves, Wesley describes a kind of pre-Pentecost Christian who has "a degree of peace" and an "earnest" of "a low degree of justifying faith." "But this abides for a short

time only; nor is this the proper Christian faith: ' This faith is akin to that by which "the Apostles [were] clean before Christ died," which is "a Jewish faith: For 'the Holy Ghost was not then given.'" This pre-Pentecost Christian is "one in whose heart God hath not yet shined, to give him the light of the glorious love of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He is one whom Wesley, in this reference, calls "a servant of God: One who sincerely obeys him out of fear."⁶⁷

Not only is a low degree of justifying faith characteristic of such a person but also a "lowest species" of sincerity, which Wesley defines as "willingness to know and do the whole will of God" and "a constant disposition to use all the grace given." Such a person he also appears to call "a sincere believer" "One that walks in the light, as God is in the light." And yet the faith of such a person is not, he says, the proper Christian faith. It is not the faith which one cannot have . . . and not be justified."⁶⁸

In the same conversation the question was also raised, "[whether] some degree of the love of God [may not] go before a distinct sense of justification." Wesley answered, "We believe it may." Again it was asked, "Can any degree of sanctification or holiness [go before] a distinct sense of justification?" Wesley answered, "Many degrees of outward holiness may; yea, and some degree of meekness, and several other tempers which would be branches of Christian holiness, but," he adds, "they do not spring from Christian principles. For the abiding love of God cannot spring but from faith in a pardoning God."⁶⁹

Wesley includes two concepts with this "love of God... [springing] from faith in a pardoning God" which the modern holiness movement associates with Pentecost. The one who truly believes is not only "a new creature," he is also both "sanctified, pure in heart... and... a temple of the Holy Ghost." In the introductory question of this section of the conversations this latter pneumatological concept is referred to as "the inspiration of the Holy Ghost:"⁷⁰ a his sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," Wesley divided salvation that precedes "the proper Christian salvation" between "preventing grace" and "convincing grace:' The former he described as "the begin-fling of . . . deliverance," while the latter, which belongs to the state of a servant, he described in terms which contemporary evangelicals would apply to Christians: "convincing grace," he says, is "usually in Scripture termed repentance,' which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone."⁷¹

Wesley continued to re-evaluate Aldersgate Ah early distinction described the babe, the child of God, as having made a distinct advance over the servant in that a child of God has "faith in a pardoning God" (1746).⁷² The sermon 'On the Discoveries of Faith," published in 1788, gives indication that the "pardoning word" may belong not only to the stage of the babe but also to the stage of the young man. He states that " 'the word of God abiding in' them [I John 2:14].... may not improbably mean 'the pardoning word,' the word which spoke all their sins forgiven. In consequence of which they have the consciousness of the divine favour, without any intermission."⁷³ In this sermon Wesley describes a babe in Christ by concepts which he had previously applied to one who was a servant, or under the law, or experiencing "convincing grace": the babe is one in whom "many doubts and fears...

still remain... while he is weak in faith and the pardoning word is there but with intermission:⁷⁴ it is not constant. Constancy had previously been ascribed to the state of a son, though not to that of a servant. Here constancy is ascribed to the second evangelical stage, the stage of a young man, but not to the stage of a babe. Furthermore, the language of full assurance is now applied to the stage of the young man: "when his faith is strengthened, when he receives faith's abiding impression, ... when he has received the abiding witness of the Spirit, doubts and fears vanish away. He then enjoys the plerophory or 'full assurance of faith,' excluding all doubt, and all 'fear that hath torment: "⁷⁵

This application of the 'pardoning word' to the stage of the young man is a major change of view from that held while under the immediate influence of Aldersgate. However, even in 1738, Wesley attributed a kind of incompleteness to "the plerophory of faith (any or all of which I take to be the witness of the Spirit with our spirit that we are the sons of God)..."⁷⁶ Apparently what mattered was the object of faith, "faith in a pardoning God." Nevertheless, the characteristics once ascribed to the servant are now ascribed to the babe and the "consciousness... without any intermission;" which is ascribed to the young man, includes the "pardoning voice." This ascription suggests that Aldersgate could also belong to the stage of the young man.

What was the quality of Wesley's life (in terms of spirituality) before Aldersgate? We are well aware of his ministry to the poor and those in prison, his self-denial for the sake of these poor, his spiritual discipline, his evangelical ministry of bringing sinners to repentance and faith in Christ while at Oxford, and his very admirable life as a pastor while in Georgia, both at Savannah and Frederica. But what was the quality of Wesley's relationship with God before Aldersgate? What was his consciousness of God's presence?

Here, we turn to Wesley's diaries, recently decoded and published by Richard P Heitzenrater.⁷⁷ The decoding helps us understand what Wesley meant when he referred to "frequent rejoicing in hope, and touches of love often glancing upon the soul;" which, nonetheless, one may have without the abiding presence of "the Spirit of adoption:"⁷⁸ And it helps clarify the minute-by-minute record of spiritual feelings and devotional practices found in Wesley's Georgia diary. The diary contains frequent references to "lively zeal" and "fervent meditation." Added to this is the cross symbol (+), which, according to Heitzenrater, is "difficult to transliterate (representing [as it does] some positive spiritual blessing, usually in association with 'lively zeal')..."⁷⁹ State of "Grace" ratings are also included, with the possible range of 1-9, from "dead" to highest zeal.⁸⁰

How did Wesley rate himself? As Heitzenrater notes, "A 'temper of devotion' rating of 7 was about as good as Wesley would score himself, 4 was about the minimum; 6 seems to have been an acceptable level:"⁸¹ More important than the numbers is what Wesley associated with them. The numerical value of seven is almost always associated with the grace rating of "lively zeal." In my own perusal of the diary I noticed only one time that "lively zeal" scored as high as 8; yet there were frequent 7's. On the lower side of the scale, Wesley does not rate himself at 1, 2, or 3, even at the toughest times. Four was a symbol of wrestling with temptations. For example, on May 4, 1736, Wesley writes that he was "preserved from w4." The "w" is his symbol for group of questions which begins, "Have I felt, entertained, or appeared to

approve any un[chaste] thought?' "⁸² On another day (Monday, Jan. 5, 1736), when he was "Preserved from w4/1," the lowest rating given any point in that day was 6: "Grace: 7 rating thrice. . . ; 6 ten times?"⁸³

What is amazing, in light of the usual negative description of his spiritual state in Georgia, is how rare those "blue days" were. There was no emotional instability. There were struggles, but during his trip to Georgia, throughout his stay, and on his return trip he maintained a positive sense of God's grace. His relationship with Sophia Hopkey is a case in point.

Though Wesley's decision not to marry "Miss Sophy" is often portrayed as the result of the cast of the lot, his manuscript Journal describes it as occurring during a profound spiritual struggle. In fact, it resulted in a decisive religious experience, which Martin Schmidt labeled Wesley's 5 visionary experience⁸⁴ Wesley's own narrative taken from the manuscript Journal is as follows:

Tuesday the 8th [of Feb., 1737], I was obliged to go down to Savannah. There I stayed about an hour. And there again I felt and groaned under the weight of an unholy desire. My heart was with Miss Sophy all the time. I longed to see her, were it but at a distance and for a moment. And when I was called to take boat, it was as the sentence of death; but believing it was the call of God, I obeyed. I walked awhile to and fro on the edge of the water, heavy laden and pierced through with many sorrows. There, one came to me and said, "You are still in doubt what is best to be done. First then cry to God that you may be wholly resigned, whatever shall appear to be his will." I instantly cried to God for resignation. And I found that and peace together. I said, Sure it is a dream. I was in a new world. The change was as from death to life.⁸⁵

This was the decisive moment. Later his pastoral relationship with Miss Sophy again brought his longing for her to the fore. This occasioned the famous lot, which included three possibilities: " 'Marry'; ... 'Think not of it this year,' " and " 'Think of it no more.' "As is well known, the third was drawn. Wesley's important self-discovery came with the drawing of this lot: "Instead of the agony I had reason to expect, I was enabled to say cheerfully, 'Thy will be done.' "⁸⁶

Another factor we must consider if we are to evaluate Wesley's spiritual state prior to and after Aldersgate is whether certain statements in his journals and diaries, positive and negative, should be considered as exercises in devotion rather than objective descriptions in our contemporary sense. Self-abnegation, for example, was a recommended discipline. In 'A Scheme of self-examination: Used by the First Methodists in Oxford' (1729-1735), there is an exercise in dependency and humility which reads: "Have I at the beginning of every prayer or paragraph owned I cannot pray?"⁸⁷ Similarly, in "A Collection of Forms of Prayer For Every Day in the Week" (1733),⁸⁸ which Wesley used to teach his early followers to pray, he wrote:

Pour into me the whole spirit of humility; fill, I beseech thee, every part of my soul with it.... Herein may I exercise myself continually, when I lie down and when I rise up, that I may always appear poor, and little, and mean, and base, and vile in mine own eyes.

O convince me that "I have neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy." Give me a lively sense that I am nothing, that I have nothing, and that I can do nothing. Enable me to feel that I am all ignorance and error, weakness and uncleanness, sin and misery; that I am not worthy of the air I breathe, the earth I tread upon, or the sun that shines upon me. And let me be fully content when all other men think of me as I do of myself.⁸⁹

The practice of the positive mood of zeal was also recommended. Wesley's "Scheme of self-examination" asks, "Have I begged [my Redeemer's] assistance...? Have I done this deliberately... and fervently as I could?" Similarly, the "virtue of the day" is to be prayed for "deliberately, seriously, fervently." Zeal is especially applied to the Collects, which are to be used "at nine, twelve, and three." He asks: 'Have I used a Collect... deliberately, seriously, fervently?'"⁹⁰

That these exercises were not mere form is affirmed by John Gambold, Oxford companion of Wesley and later Moravian bishop.⁹¹ While the Wesleys were in Georgia, he wrote to a friend concerning Wesley: 'I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of countenance, which was next to shining

Again, Gambold reports that Wesley was "always cheerful, but never triumphing, he so husbanded the secret consolations which God gave him, that they seldom left him"; and "He used many arts to be religious, but none to seem so."⁹²

How should we evaluate Wesley's state of grace before Aldersgate? God's prevenient grace was as broad as humankind and His saving grace was inclusive of all who "fear him, and work righteousness."⁹³ This broad, inclusive view, affirmed in 1754, was held throughout his life except for that brief period around Aldersgate when he was under the immediate and intense influence of the Moravians. Thus in 1746, in his "Minutes of Some Late Conversations ...III" and in some of his sermons written in the same period, he refers to "a believer under the Jewish dispensation" who is "a servant of God," "one who sincerely obeys him out of fear."⁹⁴

Without denying Wesley's doctrine that God's prevenient grace operates as a saving work to those who respond and truly seek Him, it must be said that when Wesley ascribes the state of a servant to his followers, to pious Anglicans, and to himself, he does it not so much to describe prevenient as saving grace, and his description of the servant, when applied to such, better fits his concept of a babe in Christ. Similarly, his description of the stage of the young man better fits what happened at Aldersgate. At that stage, Wesley notes, God sends "the Holy Ghost to comfort them, to bear witness continually with their spirits that they are the children of God."⁹⁵ Furthermore, regarding the young man, he observes: "when his faith is strengthened, when he receives faith's abiding impression,... when he has received the abiding witness of the Spirit, doubts and fears vanish away. He then enjoys the plerophory or 'full assurance of faith,' excluding any doubt, and all 'fear that hath torment.'"⁹⁶ And again, "Ye have quenched the fiery darts of the wicked one, the doubts and fears wherewith he disturbed your first peace, and the witness of God that your sins are forgiven now 'abideth in your heart.'"⁹⁷

At this stage, that of the young man, there is a consistent emphasis upon the "abiding" and "continuous" characteristics of God's grace. Thus Wesley speaks of the abiding witness of the Spirit and states that the Holy Ghost is sent "to bear witness continually with their spirit..."⁹⁸ This concept of abiding, ascribed to the stage of the young man, is even extended to the concept of a witness to the forgiveness of sins. To "young men" he says, "the witness of God that your sins are forgiven now 'abideth in your heart.'"⁹⁹ Distinctions among the stages are maintained but not always consistently. Often, rather than drawing a radical distinction between stages, Wesley describes progression towards the goal, which suggests that Wesley's (and also Fletcher's) chief concern was not so much for the *ordo salutis* as it was for the *via salutis*.¹⁰⁰

Aldersgate was a further stage in Wesley's Christian life rather than the moment of his evangelical conversion. Wesley's own statement may suggest otherwise but does so because his order of salvation differs from modern evangelical terminology, including that of the holiness movement. Moreover, over time, he changed his description of some of the states and stages. Characteristics once identified with the state of a servant later were assigned to the stage of the babe in Christ, and those of the babe applied to that of the young man. Thus in terms of Wesley's own mature understanding regarding the characteristics of the babe, pre-Aldersgate would better be defined as belonging to the stage of babe and Aldersgate itself as belonging to the stage of the young man.

The content of Wesley's servant state (the identification he makes, after much reflection, of his own state prior to Aldersgate), when applied to earnest Christians of any century, describes characteristics which, instead of being prevenient to the Christian life, are, in fact, the first stage of it as the late twentieth century would define it. Wesley would refer to the first stage of the Christian life itself as the stage of a babe, but most twentieth-century holiness people would consider one who had entered upon that stage to be a pre-Pentecost Christian. Experientially, at least for Christian David, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley and others of like Christian commitment, it is a stage of striving for a further goal in the Christian life and of hungering for God to fulfill His promises. This waiting is closely analogous to the modern holiness exhortation, "Ye are witnesses off these things... but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:48-49, KJV).

Wesley's own Christian life prior to Aldersgate was fully in harmony with the modern holiness understanding regarding the pre-Pentecost Christian.

Thus Aldersgate, if placed descriptively in the context of the modern holiness movement, was Pentecost: a moment of cleansing and preparation for a life of service. This is not to deny its importance as an evangelical experience, because it was in that moment that the evangelical doctrine that it is by grace we are saved by faith was both intellectually and experientially verified. There a child of God, delivered from bondage to the law, testified: "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."

Notes

ABBREVIATIONS

- BE The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley. Editor in Chief, Frank Baker. Nashville: Abingdon, 1984ff (Volumes 7, 11, 25, and 16 originally appeared as the Oxford Edition of the Works of John Wesley, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975-1985).
- Jackson The Works of John Wesley. Thomas Jackson, ed. (14 vols.; 3d ed.). London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958-1959; Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1979.
- Curnock The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M. Nehemiah Curnock, ed. (8 vols.). London: Epworth, 1909-1916.
- Telford The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M John Telford, ed. (8 vols.). London: Epworth, 1931.
- NT Notes Explanatory Notes Upon the New testament 2 vol. London: Bowyer, 1755; reprint ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986.

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1. Journal, May 19, 1738 (BE 18:249-50).
2. William Ragsdale Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1946), p.68.
3. Francis J. McConnell, *John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1939), p.60.
4. *Ibid.*, pp.59, 63, respectively.
5. Maximin Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937), pp.306-07; Cannon, *ibid.*, p.67.
6. John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (London: Epworth, n. d.; reprint ed., 1960), p.102.
7. Cannon, *ibid.*, p.68.
8. Cf. McConnell, *ibid.*, p.59, where this accusation is levelled at Tyerman.
9. The first quotation is from Sermon: "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith" (1788)¹ (BE 4:49); the second is from Sermon: "On the Discoveries of Faith" (1761-1768)¹⁴ (BE 4:37). Where two dates are given for a sermon, the first is taken from Timothy L. Smith, "A Chronological List of Wesley's Sermons and Doctrinal Essays;" WTJ 17 (Fall, 1982), 88-110; the second is taken from BE 4:555-73.
10. "Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained" 6:1 (Jackson VIII:468-69). Charles, from the closer perspective of August 10, 1739, told William Law that "the reason why I did not come sooner to [Christ], was, my seeking to be sanctified before I was justified;" (Cf. Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Jour-*

nal of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M. A. [2 vols.; London: Wesleyan Methodist Book-Room, 1849], 1:159.) On October 19, 1739, Charles Wesley further described himself as "one who too plainly demonstrates... that his knowledge of the new birth is mostly in theory:' (Cf. *ibid.* 1:191).

11. BE 1:13. For a thorough discussion of Wesley's order of salvation see Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (London: Epworth, 1946), ch. 3; William Greathouse in Paul M. Bassett and William M. Greathouse, *Exploring Christian Holiness, Vol 2: Historical Foundations* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985), pp.208-24; and Albert Outler, BE 1:55-66 ("Introduction" and fun.); David Cubie, "Perfection in Wesley and Fletcher" *WTJ* 11 (Spring, 1976), 22-37.

12. Sermon: "The Wisdom of Winning Souls" (1731)11 (BE 4:315). Also see Sermon: "The Image of God" (1730) *passim* (BE 4:290-303).

13. Sermon: "The Circumcision of the Heart" (1733)11.1 (BE 1:409).

14. NT Notes: Romans 2:29.

15. Sermon: "The Circumcision of the Heart" 1.2 (BE 1:403).

16. Cf. *ibid.* 1.2-4 (BE 1:403-04).

17. As reported by Albert Outler. Cf. BE 1:248.

18. Letter: John Wesley to Susanna Wesley, February 14, 1735 (BE 25:418).

19. Sermon: "One Thing Needful" (1734)111.3 (BE 4:359).

20. Sermon: "The Trouble and Rest of Good Men" (1735)1.2 (BE 3:535).

21. Cf. *ibid.* 11.4 (BE 3:539). Also see *ibid.* intro. (BE 3:534), where Wesley states that "Death shall destroy at once the whole body of sin."

22. Cf. Sermon: "Christian Perfection" (1739, 1741)11.1 (BE 2:105). Also see E 2:97-98 concerning the Wesley's variation in dates for this sermon. See n9 *supra* regarding the general question of sermon dates.

23. "Preface," *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1740; Jackson XIV:327). Also see "Plain Account of Christian Perfection" 13 (Jackson XI:380-82).

24. See my article, "Perfection in Wesley and Fletcher," *WTJ* 11 (Spring, 1976), and my unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, *Wesley's Concept of Perfect Love: A Motif Analysis* (Boston University, 1965), pp. 253-270.

25. Most of these are included in Jackson 1:76-77. A few additional are noted in BE 18:214-15. This paper follows the latter edition. Wesley published his *Journal* serially. The first part was published at about the end of May, 1740, as a defense of his conduct in Georgia, against the accusations made on an affidavit sworn before the mayor of Bristol, England, March 14/25, 1740. Cf. BE 18:121n5.

26. Sermon: "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" (1732/1785)11.1 (BE 3:203-204). Although this sermon was not published until 1785, Outler, BE 3:199, notes that Wesley preached from this text (Phil. 2:1243) twice in 1732, twice in 1734, and only once thereafter (in 1781).

27. Sermon: "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" (1739, 1746; BE 1:250-263). From the perspective of the recipient of grace, e.g., intro 5 (natural man, one under the law, one under grace); II 1.8 (those asleep, those awake, and those believing); 11.9 (child of the devil, servant of sin, servant of the law); 111.1 (son of God). From the perspective of the quality of relation with God, e.g., 111.8 (the natural man, neither fearing nor loving; one under law, fearing; one under grace, loving; the unawakened child of the devil who sins willingly, etc.); From the perspective of the Evangelical Revival, cf. IV.1 (the natural, legal, and evangelistic states). Also cf. 1.7 and 11.9.

28. Sermon: "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" IV.1 (BE 1:264).

29. Cf. Letter: John Wesley to Alexander Knox, August 29, 1777 (Telford VI:272-273).

30. Sermon: "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" IV.3 (BE 1:266).

31. Cf. Sermon: "On the Discoveries of Faith" 15 (BE 4:37): "the pardoning word' . . . without any intermission."

32. Letter: John Wesley to Alexander Knox, August 29, 1777 (Telford VI:272-273).

33. Cf. NT Notes, Acts 10:35. Wesley's comment on the Apostle Peter's statement is as follows: "Is accepted of him-Through Christ, though he knows Him not. The assertion is express, and admits of no exception. He is in the favour of God, whether enjoying His written word . . . - or not."

34. Journal, June 6, 1738 (BE 18:254).

35. Journal, August 10, 1738 (BE 18:279-81).

36. Cf. Curnock II:35n4, 312n1.

37. Cf. Albert C. Outler, ed., John Wesley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.371.

38. A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections.... To Which Is Prefixed, A Sketch of the Life of the Author (Philadelphia: James Crissy, 1821), pp. xxu-xvi.

39. See John Wesley, "List of Works, Revised and Abridged From Various Authors With the Prefaces by Which They Are Accompanied," LXXXVII: A Treatise on Religious Affections. In Three Parts. By the Rev. Jonathan Edwards, Abridged by the Rev. John Wesley, "To the Reader," 2 (Jackson XIV:270).

40. CL Macarius, Homily XIV.5 in John Wesley, ed., A Christian Library (30 vols.; London: T. Cordeus, 1819), 1:111; also cf. Wesley's comment on Macarius, Sermon: "The Scripture Way of Salvation" (1758, 1765)1:7 (BE2:159); Journal, August 24, 1743 (Curnock 111:86). See his recantation of this view in 'A Plain Account of Christian Perfection' 13 (Jackson XI:379-380).

41. Cf. Sermon: "On the Discoveries of Faith" (1761, 1788)17 (BE 4:37).

42. See Whitefield's account of his conversion, quoted in Timothy L. Smith, *White field and Wesley on the New Birth* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan, 1986), pp.42-49.

43. Frank Baker says, 'The moment and the spiritual mechanism of Whitefield's conversion remain unknown Cf. BE 25:234n2.

44. For Whitefield's statements pertinent to the discussion see: Letter to John Wesley, Savannah, March 26, 1740 (BE 26:11); Letter to John Wesley, Boston, September 25, 1740 (BE 26:31-32); Letter from Charles Wesley to John Wesley, September 28, 1741 (BE 26:60), quoting some correspondence received by Charles Wesley; Letter to John Wesley, Aberdeen, September 28. 1741 (BE 26:66); Letter to John Wesley, London, March 11.1741/42 (BE 26:74); Letter to John Wesley, Edinburg, October 11, 1742 (BE 26:87); Letter to John Wesley, London, December 5,1742 (BE 26:93); Letter to John Wesley, London, December 21, 1742 (BE 26:97).

45. Letter from George Whitefield to John Wesley, December 21, 1742 (BE 26:97). Also see Jackson VIII:373-74, for this reference to "Principles of a Methodist" 29.3.

46. In the 1732 ed. of the sermon, "The Duty of Constant Communion" (published, with changes, 1789). Wesley distinguished between the Adamic covenant and that of fallen humanity: "Whereas the first agreement was, 'Do this and live,' the second was ['Do what thou canst']. "Try to do this and live!... Perfect obedience was made the condition of the first covenant; ear-nest, hearty obedience [the condition] of the second.' These are Wesley's own additions to the original, which was an abridgement of Robert Nelson's sermon, *The Great Duty of Frequenting the Christian Sacrifice*" (1707). Cf. BE 4:526-28. See John Clayton's letter to John Wesley, August 2, 1734 (BE 25:391-93) for a rather complete statement of an Anglican concept as it applies to varying degrees of being Christian.

47. "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection" 4 (Jackson XI:367).

48. Cf. BE 1:39n41. Also see "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection" 3-4 (Jackson XI:366-67), and *Journal*, May 24, 1738, (BE 18:244, 249-50) 5, 14, respectively. The quotation is from *Journal*, May 19,1738.

49. Cf. BE 18:244n39.

50. Cf. "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection" 4 (Jackson XI:367).

51. Cf. BE 1:39n41.

52. *Journal*, January 17,1736 (BE 18:141).

53. *Journal*, July 10, 1736 (BE 18:165).

54. *Journal*, February 1, 1738 (BE 18:215-16). This is the end of *Journal* "Number I."

55. Cf. the following correspondence between John Wesley and Samuel Wesley, Jr.: October 30, 1738; November 15,1738: and November 30, 1738 (BE 25:575-79, 594); Letter from John Wesley to the Rev. Arthur Bedford, Sep-

tember 28, 1738 (BE 25:562-66); and correspondence between John Wesley and John Smith between May, 1745 and March 22, 1748 (BE 26:1 38ff.). For John Wesley's letters to John Smith, cf. Jackson XII:56-105.

56. Sermon: "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" (1739,1746) IV.2 (BE 1:264-65).
57. Cf. Journal, August 1, 1742 (Jackson 1:384).
58. Journal, August 1, 1742 (Jackson 1:385).
59. Sermon: "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" IV.2 (BE 1:265).
60. Sermon: "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" IV.3 (BE 1:266).
61. Sermon: "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" IV.4 (BE 1:266).
62. "Principles of a Methodist" 29:2 (Jackson VII 1:373). Wesley quotes with approval here, as a "consistent account of my principles," a summary of his teachings set forth by an opponent named Tucker.
63. Sermon: "Sin in Believers" (1763) IV.10 (BE 1:331).
64. "Principles of a Methodist" 29.3 (Jackson VI 11:373-74). The use of the term "sanctification" to mean "entire sanctification" here is Wesley's own. It is not from Tucker's summary.
65. Cf. NT Notes, Acts 10:35.
66. Minutes of Some Late Conversations "Conversation III;" Question 24 (Jackson: VII 1:289). Hereinafter abbreviated Minutes Conv. III, Q. 24 (Jackson: VIII:289), etc.
67. Minutes Conv. III, Qq. 7-11 (Jackson VIII:286-87).
68. Minutes (Conv III, Qq. 12, 20,16, 21, respectively (Jackson VIII:288-89).
69. Minutes (Conv. III [10 a.m.], Qq. 5, 6 (Jackson VIII:290).
70. Minutes Conv. III [10 am.], Qq. 7, 1, respectively (Jackson VIII:290-91).
71. Sermon: "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" 11.1 (BE 3:203-04).
72. Minutes Conv. III [10 a.m.], Qq. 4-6 (Jackson VIII:290).
73. Sermon: "On the Discoveries of Faith" 15 (BE 4:36-37).
74. Ibid. 15 (BE 4:36-37).
75. Ibid. 15 (BE 4:36).
76. Letter from John Wesley to Samuel Wesley, Jr., October 30, 1738 (BE 25:577).
77. BE 18. Hearty thanks is due Professor Heitzenrater for his decoding and publication of Wesley's diaries.
78. Sermon: "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" (1739, 1746) IV.3 (BE 1:266).

79. BE 18:307.
80. BE 18:303.
81. BE 18:303.
82. BE 18:382. Cf. BE 18:306, 310, for Heitzenrater's explanation.
83. BE 18:337.
84. Cf. Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography* (Norman Goldhawk, tr.; 3 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:207.
85. "Manuscript Journals" February 8, 1737 (BE 18:478).
86. Cf. BE 18:480.
87. "A Scheme of self-examination 2 (Jackson XI:521).
88. Cf. Curnock VIII:265-268, esp. 268, where Curnock quotes a letter in which one of the Oxford Methodists describes Wesley's use of these forms and goes on to say, "He taught them (besides what occurs in his Collection of Prayers) to take account of their actions in a very exact manner, by writing a constant diary." Quotation in Curnock is from "A Letter from the Rev. Mr. Gambold to a Friend. Wrote about the time when Mr. Wesley was in America;" *Methodist Magazine* (1798), pp.117-21, 168-72.
89. "A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week" (1733) Tuesday Morning (Jackson XI:214).
90. "A Scheme of self-examination Sunday, 3.4 (Jackson XI:522).
91. Cf. Curnock I:439n2.
92. Curnock VIII:267-68.
93. Cf. NT Notes, Acts 10:35.
94. Minutes Conv. III, Qq. 10-11 (Jackson VIII:287-88). Also see e.g., Sermon: "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" (1739, 1746) Intro. 5, 11.1-10.
95. "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection" 13 (Jackson XI:381); italics mine.
96. Sermon: "On the Discoveries of Faith" (1761, 1788) 15 (BE 4:36); italics mine.
97. Sermon: "Christian Perfection" (1739, 1741) 11.1 (BE 2:105).
98. Cf. Hymns and Sacred Poems (1740) "Preface," 1 (Jackson XIV:327); italics mine.
99. Cf. Sermon: "Christian Perfection" 11.1 (BE 2:105).
100. I am indebted to Stephen Gunter for this helpful distinction, proffered at the Annual Meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society, 1988.

CONVERSION NARRATIVES: WESLEY'S ALDERSGATE NARRATIVE AND THE PORTRAIT OF PETER IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

by

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I. CONVERSION NARRATIVE IN WESLEY'S *JOURNAL*

Commemoration of the two-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of John Wesley's Aldersgate experience" has brought about both celebrations and reappraisals of that event. Aldersgate" is commonly celebrated as Wesley's conversion, but questions have been raised as to whether this is the appropriate way to understand it. These questions are not new. In fact, Wesley himself appears to have been the first to raise the issue.

The first published extract from Wesley's *Journal* ends in January, 1738 upon his return from Georgia. Wesley was thoroughly convinced he was not and never had been a Christian.¹ His own understanding of his experience in Aldersgate Street and consequently his Aldersgate narrative, published in the second extract, were conditioned by this conviction.² But in later editions (1774 and 1775) of the first *Journal* extract, Wesley added several foot-notes which indicate a changed perspective: he was no longer "sure" that he had never been converted, he had not after all been a "child of wrath," but he had "even then the faith of a servant, though not that of a son."³ Wesley appears to retreat from the conviction that Aldersgate was truly his conversion.

Wesley appended similar comments to later editions of the second *Journal* extract. Several are found in the Aldersgate account itself. Referring to his youthful response to reading William Law, the original edition of the *Journal* had cast doubt upon his belief that at the time he "was even then in a state of salvation." A later note however affirms, "And I believe I was."⁴ In 1738, Wesley saw his former efforts as "building on the sand!" He later corrected this, writing "Not so: I was right, as far as I went."⁵ Again he later

modified an original description of his pre-Aldersgate condition as "this vile, abject state of bondage to sin" to read, less categorically, "this state."⁶

Farther along in the second extract, Wesley listed several aspects of Count Zinzendorf's doctrine of justification, which he heard firsthand in Germany. Among these was the assertion that, "the assurance of it is distinct from justification itself." A handwritten note in Wesley's personal copy of the 1774 edition of the *Journal* reads, "Most true."⁷ By 1774, Wesley appears to have come to see Zinzendorf's statement in a new light, consistent with the view that his justification, and therefore his Christian conversion, had preceded the sense of assurance he experienced at Aldersgate regarding his justified state.

The effect of all of these comments is that Wesley's own mature understanding of Aldersgate differed from his earlier one. Earlier, he had believed that only then had he experienced a genuine Christian conversion. The biographical resume' prefaced to his account of the Aldersgate event tells how, in 1725, at the age of 22, his reading of Thomas a Kempis prompted him to "set in earnest upon a new life." In the same entry, he recorded that, upon reading William Law, "the light flowed in so mightily upon my soul, that everything appeared in a new view."⁸ Wesley's modifications of the first and second Journal extracts in 1774-1775 show that he did not continue to dismiss the importance of these two events as the Wesley of 1740⁹ did (e.g., referring to them as "building on the sand"). In fact, by the 1770's, Wesley's own account allows us to believe that these earlier events may fairly be called his conversion. As we see Wesley "editing himself,"¹⁰ the Aldersgate "conversion" narrative undergoes a subtle change before our eyes; the later Wesley might have written it quite differently.

Other modifications, however, appear to cloud the apparent retraction of Aldersgate as a conversion. Even the later Wesley distinguished his pre-Aldersgate faith as the "faith of a servant," rather than that of a "son."¹¹ The second extract cites a letter written to a friend shortly before Aldersgate in which Wesley described his woeful condition and his understanding of faith as complete peace and joy. In it he stated, "Let no one deceive us by vain words, as if we had already attained this faith!" In 1774, he added a comment to this exclamation, "I.e., the proper Christian faith,"¹² which gives the impression that he still perceived vital significance in the Aldersgate event. Finally, in describing his response to Peter Bohler's description of faith, Wesley originally wrote:

I well saw no one could (in the nature of things) have such a sense of forgiveness and not *feel* it. But I felt it not. If then there was no faith without this, all my pretensions to faith dropped at once.

Later he added, "There is no *Christian* faith without it."¹³

Although interpretations of the last pair of remarks vary, all three do seem to indicate that Wesley continued to understand Aldersgate as a turning point in his Christian pilgrimage. Whether or to what extent Wesley identified it as his "conversion" is no longer clear, however.

A certain degree of ambiguity is therefore attached to the significance of Aldersgate for Wesley in his own writings. This ambiguity is subsequently reflected in the divergent estimations of Aldersgate by Wesley's many biographers. Frederick Maser's survey of biographies¹⁴ describes views ranging

from an understanding of Aldersgate as Wesley's conversion and the beginning of Methodism to the understanding that Aldersgate is an event of no real significance in his life. Mediating interpretations credit the Aldersgate experience as the source of new spiritual power or new doctrinal ideas, making it a more or less significant element in his life.

Still other ambiguities are connected with the actual nature and effect of the Aldersgate experience. In 1738, Wesley was under the heavy influence of Moravian piety and clearly struggled with the realization that even Aldersgate did not fulfill what Bohler and others had led him to expect of a conversion experience. The preface to the second *Journal* extract seems to indicate that he was both defending and analyzing the Moravian views by the time of its publication in 1740.¹⁵ The formal break with the Moravians occurred in that same year, as the fourth *Journal* extract describes.¹⁶

When we ask Wesley's biographers what exactly did happen to Wesley at Aldersgate, and what was its lasting significance for him, we again receive a mixed response. Theodore Jennings, in a sharply-worded critique of "Aldersgatism," finds it merely one of a series of "moments of assurance" experienced by Wesley. He argues that its elevation to a narrative description of his "conversion" has resulted in a fundamental distortion of Wesley's own theology.¹⁷ Richard Heitzenrater, somewhat more moderately, allows that Aldersgate was a "crucial step" for Wesley, but finds that his subsequent theological development led him to "modify most of the theological premises" that had led him to the experience in the first place.¹⁸ Maser himself claims that Aldersgate effected a real change in Wesley's theological perspective and relation to God, and attributes Wesley's subsequent doubts to his "spiritual hypochondria," and to the psychological depression not uncommon following dramatic conversions.¹⁹ Maser reports it as the consensus view of scholars at the 1976 "Wesley Consultation" that Wesley experienced "many conversions."²⁰

These ambiguities and differences of scholarly opinion force an open question upon us: What are we to make of the Aldersgate experience? Were the ambiguities in Wesley's own analyses simply a by-product of his psychology, or were they perhaps endemic to an experiential faith like his? The issue in turn transcends our understanding of Wesley's own personal experience: what are we to make of conversion itself? Is the ambiguity more deeply rooted in the nature of Christian faith and of conversion itself? With these questions in mind, I wish to consider conversion narratives in the New Testament.

II. CONVERSION NARRATIVES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament writings not only serve as an authority for us in dealing with these matters, but they also contain other narratives which we may compare with Wesley's account of Aldersgate. Typically; New Testament "conversion narratives" are drawn from the Acts of the Apostles. These conversions were narrated by Luke as a series of isolated events (the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian jailer and his household, etc.), and there is not much description of the internal struggles or feelings that the converts may have experienced. Wesley's struggles and ambiguities find no clear parallel in Acts.

Not even the Apostle Paul, the only Christian convert for whom Acts offers a continuous account of sorts, is described as experiencing any conflicting feelings-neither before nor after his encounter with the Risen One

on the Damascus Road. Claims that "Saul the Pharisee" had experienced tremendous inner doubt and struggle before his "Damascus Road experience" are grounded in a traditional, autobiographical interpretation of Romans 7. Krister Stendahi has shown that this interpretation is conditioned more by the introspective struggles of Augustine and Luther (and, one might add, Wesley) than by anything that can be evidenced in Paul.²¹ It flies in the face of other affirmations by Paul (e.g. "as to righteousness under the Law, blameless." Philippians 3:441). And it finds support neither in his own actual references back to his conversion (e.g., Galatians 1:147 and 1 Corinthians 15:8-10), nor in the accounts in Acts.²²

The conversions recorded in Acts do not yield much information about the preceding conditions or subsequent effects of the events themselves. This, in turn, may lead to an over-simplified impression of what conversion entails. Significantly, in his *Journal* Wesley recorded the following when seeking proof of Bohler's argument for an "instantaneous work" of conversion:²³

I searched the Scriptures again, touching this very thing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles. But, to my utter astonishment, found scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous; scarce any so slow as that of St. Paul, who was three days in the pangs of the new birth.

For Wesley himself and for many others since, exclusive focus on Acts as the source of New Testament conversion narratives has had two effects. First, it encourages the notion that conversion is essentially a well-marked passing from "darkness into light," and not a matter shadowed by ambiguities. Second, it reinforces treatment of experiences like Aldersgate as isolated events by fostering the perception that this is the only way in which the New Testament describes conversions, and that therefore this is how conversions are to be understood. These effects are misleading.

Wesley's biographers, despite their mixed evaluations of the significance of Wesley's Aldersgate experience, agree that neither the experience nor his narrative account should be treated in isolation. The experience needs to be considered in light of Wesley's previous spiritual and intellectual development, his failed mission in Georgia and his link with the Moravians, as well as his subsequent reflections and activities. Wesley's Aldersgate narrative similarly needs to be read in light of his purposes for its composition and publication in 1740, and for its reissuance in several later editions down to 1775. Similar concerns for literary context and purpose must of course be brought to bear in reading New Testament conversion narratives such as those in Acts.

The conversion accounts in Acts were not primarily intended as paradigms for Christian conversion. Rather the narratives were selected and re-told in order to illustrate the universal character of the Christian faith and the dynamic spread of the Gospel.²⁴ The Ethiopian eunuch and the centurion Cornelius are classic examples of universality; the conversions of Paul and the Philippian jailer are important "reversals" of opponents which are necessary to or illustrative of the divine power at work in the Gospel's proclamation.²⁵ Neither the psychological state of these converts nor the character of their subsequent response to conversion are in Luke's purview. A differ-

ent source is therefore needed to provide insight into the dynamics of conversion as these appear in Wesley's experience and writings.

Only in the Gospel accounts of Jesus and His disciples does the New Testament provide connected narratives which may allow an examination of the circumstances leading up to conversion and its consequences. Despite major differences in genre between the Gospels and Wesley's *Journal*, study of a Gospel may provide a better perspective on understanding Wesley's Aldersgate experience and narrative than Acts does. This is primarily true because the ambiguities found in the relation of the first disciples to Jesus in the Gospels, particularly in the description of Peter in Mark's Gospel, provide a significant parallel to those we have uncovered in Wesley.

III. THE CONVERSION(S) OF PETER IN MARK'S GOSPEL

The role of Peter and the other disciples in Mark's Gospel has received a great deal of attention in recent scholarship. A forceful group of scholars has argued that Mark's treatment of the disciples is decidedly negative. Many have followed Theodore Weeden who claimed that the disciples are a mask for some heretical party whom the author of Mark opposed.²⁶ Robert Tannehill rejects this polemical approach, but still holds that Mark intends his reader to "distance himself from them and their behavior."²⁷

But, as Tannehill himself points out, the depiction of the disciples is not entirely negative. The disciples are portrayed positively at some points, as we shall see, and at the end Jesus declares His intention to restore His relationship with them.²⁸ Ernest Best undertakes a strenuous refutation of the polemical interpretation of Mark's portrait of Peter and the disciples.²⁹ Instead he finds Mark's purpose to be primarily pastoral and finds the problems of the disciples to be those which are issues for all faithful Christians.³⁰ For much of his argument, Best appeals to what Mark's (Roman) readers must have known about Peter outside the narrative.³¹ This has a certain force to it, although it remains uncertain too. Our approach will follow developments within Mark's narrative only.

The approach taken to Mark's Gospel here is primarily a literary one. The best analogy for understanding the composition of the Gospel is as the telling of a story. This process is similar to what standard redaction-critical approaches have argued, except that it rejects a mechanical, scissors-and-paste process of composition from the oral tradition. At the same time, neither the events nor the narratives are fresh literary creations of Mark's: he draws upon and "performs" the material of the tradition in his composition.

Oral tradition is both more fluid and more structured than Biblical scholarship generally considers it to be.³² Oral traditional narratives are not verbally fixed, so that Mark does not deal as an editor with the "text" or wording of the tradition in his composition; instead he retells the story or stories in words that were probably neither completely original nor completely provided by the tradition. At the same time, oral tradition is by no means as fragmentary as form and redaction criticism have often supposed. The idea that brief, fragmentary units originate anonymously among the "folk" or in "primitive" cultures, and only gradually evolve into longer, more complex compositions, was apparently taken over by Herman Gunkel from the folklore studies and anthropology of the late 1800's/early 1900's. Both these disciplines were then as "primitive" as the people whom Gunkel thought had originated

the Old Testament traditions! Biblical scholarship has generally assumed uncritically Gunkel's view of oral tradition and the form criticism based upon it.

It is better to take the "forms" as paradigms for the (oral or written) construction of particular kinds of expression, for which length and complexity are subject only to the skill and purpose of the composer. Narrative forms can in turn become the building blocks for longer, connected narratives.³³ In this way Mark's Gospel may be understood to exemplify a "performance" of the early Christian oral tradition about Jesus.

Mark's purpose may be polemical, pastoral, or evangelistic, or some combination of these and other interests to which our categories do not exactly correspond. The Gospel of Mark resists the kind of focused occasion which scholarship usually strives to achieve for Biblical literature. Most interpretations, from the early "Markan hypothesis" of Peter's diary and Wrede's "Messianic Secret," through Bultmann's form-critical dismissal of its significance as such, down to many current, sophisticated literary and redaction-critical treatments, seem forced.³⁴ What does seem to emerge is that it is an engaging narrative, a story with depths of meaning and signification disguised by its rough style and uneven plot progression. Several sub-themes and subplots have been delineated, however. Among these are the twin themes of the suffering Christ and discipleship and the sub-plot of the relationship between Jesus and His disciples, particularly Peter.

Mark's success as an engaging story is the best clue as to its nature. It was a popular account of Jesus, best understood by analogy as a narrative sermon, meant to be heard and to elicit a definite response from the hearers.³⁵ It presents invaluable historical information. However, an approach to Mark as a bare record of what happened robs the narrative of its true force and impact.³⁶

As a sermonic narrative, Mark calls for the response of the hearer to the Jesus whom it presents. The disciples, and particularly Peter, are foils by which Jesus' character and purposes are more clearly understood. But the disciples are more than stick figures in the Gospel. They too elicit response and identification from the reader.³⁷ It is true that they serve to highlight Jesus' identity and power. It is also true that their doubts and failures, as well as their faithfulness and participation, serve to focus Jesus' demands upon Mark's hearers and what is involved in their (our) response. The nature of the disciples' faith is to be the nature of our faith; the disciples' failures are the failures endemic to Christian faith.³⁸ The disciples then are paradigms for Christians and their conversions become paradigmatic as well.

Peter himself is not a fully rounded character in Mark. He only begins to emerge over against the rest of the disciples in the second half of the Gospel. Even then for the most part Mark presents him as the representative of the Twelve, or as one of an inner circle of three or four. But enough prominence is given Peter to sense his distinct importance to the narrative, and to create a growing sub-plot involving his interaction with Jesus, which comes to a head at Jesus' trial. This blend of distinctive and representative character makes an Everyman out of Peter. He is sufficiently distinct to elicit individual attention and concern, and sufficiently open to invite hearers to project themselves upon his character.

It is difficult to define in advance the "conversion" of Peter that we are seeking. As a presumably faithful, first century Jew, Peter need not be converted at all to begin following a particular Jewish teacher and messianic claimant.³⁹ Yet such a transition can be quite a significant step, deserving some such term as conversion.

Beverly Gaventa has suggested a threefold typology for conversion, based on social-scientific studies: (1) "alternation," a new experience or commitment growing out of one's own past and consistent with it; (2) "pendulum-like conversion," in which one totally rejects one's past in favor of a new "affirmed present" commitment; and (3) "transformation," in which "perceptions" of one's past and of the world are radically "altered" by new perceptions, although without a necessary rejection of the old.⁴⁰

This typology will prove helpful in our reading of Mark's account of Peter. We will examine the narrative "turning points" for Peter and evaluate them as candidates for Peter's "moment" of conversion.

The Gospel of Mark narrates four turning points for Peter in his relationship with Jesus. These are: (A) Peter's decision to follow Jesus, Mk. 1:16-20; (B) Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, Mk. 8:27-30; (C) Peter's declaration of loyalty at the Last Supper, Mk. 14:27-31; and (D) Peter's imminent encounter with the risen Jesus anticipated by Mk. 16:1-8. Each of these may initially be described as a conversion. What I hope to show is that the last event constitutes the event most comparable to Aldersgate, but that each turning point requires its successors and was made possible by its predecessors.

A. Peter's Decision: Mk. 1:16-20. Peter is called by Jesus to follow Him and become a "fisher of men." He responds immediately, leaves "all," and joins Jesus in His travels. This is clearly a turning point in Peter's life. That it was (or came to be) understood as such is made explicit later, in Mk. 10:28, where Peter declares, "We have left everything and followed you." The response of Jesus accepts this as true, although with a curious twist (10:29-31).

But what is the depth or the character of Peter's decision, considered as a conversion? Even Mk. 10:28 shows Peter reacting somewhat defensively, as if to remind Jesus of what he has done despite other problems. The event comes in the middle of the passage in which Mark emphatically describes the disciples' misunderstanding of Jesus and His message. Peter's loyalty and interest are indicated by his decision to follow Jesus, but there is no real indication of the content or character of his "faith."

The Gospels of Luke and John make their versions of Peter's decision to follow Jesus much more explicit regarding Peter's awareness of His significance. In Luke 5:1-11, Peter's first narrated encounter with Jesus occurs, as with Mark, as Peter was caring for his nets. Jesus has him go out in a boat, drop his nets and bring in a huge catch. Peter comes to shore, falls down on his knees, and exclaims, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Jesus promises to have him fishing for people from then on and Peter, James and John leave "all" to follow Him. Luke's version of the call of the first disciples, interestingly, comes *after* the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Lk. 4:38 *if.*), an incident which *follows* the call narrative in Mark. Several features of Peter's response in Luke find no parallel in Mark's narrative: Peter falls on his knees in a posture of worship, addresses Jesus as "Lord" (*kyrie*), and acknowledges his sinfulness. While these might have been implicit in Peter's

decision, such an attitude is hardly indicated by what follows in Mark's narrative. In any case, Luke narrates Peter's calling as a much more explicit experience of conversion than does Mark. John's account is likewise more explicit in that Peter's brother Andrew, who John alone tells us was a disciple of John the Baptist, introduces Peter to Jesus as the Messiah (Jn. 1:41f.). Mark gives no indication yet that Peter is aware of such a title for Jesus.

The following chapters of Mark do contain several episodes which cast Peter⁴¹ and the disciples into the sort of positive light one might expect for disciples to a great person.⁴² Jesus selects the Twelve in Mk. 3:13-19, with Simon "surnamed Peter" at the head of the list. They are designated as companions to Jesus, preachers and exorcists in Mk. 6:7-13, the Twelve are sent out on a preaching and healing mission whose success is described by Mark in terms similar to those used in summarizing Jesus' own activity.⁴³

The companionship of the disciples is displayed positively in contrast with Jesus' family in Mk. 3:20f., 31-35. Those "around him," which includes the disciples,⁴⁴ are Jesus' true family as they are doing God's will. Later in 4:10ff., the disciples are in position to receive the hidden meaning of the parable of the sower and the "mystery of God's kingdom." This is exactly the privilege one expects disciples to experience. Nevertheless, the passage also gives a hint of the negative image Mark portrays for them when Jesus criticizes their failure to have understood in the first place (4:13).⁴⁵

These positive depictions of the disciples stand in sharp, ironic contrast to the negative depictions that occur in Mk. 1-8. The negatives are portrayed so starkly as to overwhelm the positives. The first indication of a negative depiction comes early, in Mk. 1:35-39, shortly after the account of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus retreats to pray, but Peter tracks Him down.⁴⁶ Not only does Peter interrupt Jesus' prayer, but he urges Him to return "home" to town where everybody seeks Him. Jesus announces His intention to go elsewhere. Peter's agenda already diverges from that of Jesus himself.⁴⁷

Later, in Mk. 4-8, a series of events highlights the problems the disciples are having in comprehending Jesus' words and actions. One might expect a reaction of uncomprehending astonishment or fear from the crowds, but one entertains higher expectations of the disciples. Intriguingly the disciples' incomprehension is tied to three incidents in boats on the Sea of Galilee and to the feeding miracles which precede two of them. Tannehill, who points out this common setting, notes how these "boat scenes" serve to "isolate Jesus and the disciples from the crowds;" giving the events greater focus.⁴⁸ They underline Mark's intention for his hearers to perceive problems.

The stirring of the storm, Mk. 4:35-41, is the first unambiguous indication of the distance between Jesus and the disciples. First they doubt His concern for their lives (v.38), a doubt suppressed by Matthew and Luke. After "rebuking" the storm, Jesus sharply rebukes their fear and lack of faith.⁴⁹ The disciples' response to all of this is utter confusion over Jesus' identity, "Who is this?" Jesus asks if they have no faith "yet"; but the disciples do not seem ready to have faith at all.

The next negative depiction of the disciples comes immediately after their return from the successful preaching mission, 6:7-13, 30. Despite Jesus' attempt to provide them some rest, a crowd gathers. He tells the disciples to provide food for them (6:37). They do not think it possible, and He pro-

ceeds to do it himself, with five loaves and two fish. After the feeding miracle the disciples again find themselves at sea in a storm, this time without Jesus. Their fear of the storm and of Jesus' coming to them on the sea is well founded. But Mark closes the incident by citing their utter astonishment, their failure to understand the loaves(!), and their hardened hearts (6:51f.). Matthew (14:28-33), by contrast, has Peter try out walking on the sea himself, omits the loaves and the hardened hearts, and in place of the astonishment has a reaction of worship and the confession, "You are the Son of God." Luke describes no reaction at all. In Mark's view the disciples' astonishment is a failure of faith on their part.

The significance of what is going on here for Mark is seen even more clearly after the next feeding miracle and "boat scene" (8:1-21), in which the disciples' failure is reiterated in almost identical terms. Once again the disciples do not think it possible to feed a crowd in the desert. As Tannehill observed:⁵⁰

It is not surprising that the disciples do not know what to do in the first feeding, but when the very same situation arises again, the reaction of the disciples suggests a *perverse blindness* that must disturb the reader.

Here is one level, at least, at which the disciples did not "understand about the loaves" (6:52): how can they yet have no clue as to Jesus' ability? But there is still another level of incomprehension which appears in here Both the loaves (the word can also mean generically "bread") and the number of baskets of leftovers had some sort of symbolic significance which the disciples were missing (and which modern readers find difficult as well!). The figurative nature of the terms is indicated by (a) the interposition of the Pharisees' request for a "sign" (8:11-13) between the feeding and the boat scene; (b) the curious, contradictory wording of 8:14, "they had forgotten to bring bread ['loaves']; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat"; (c) the clearly metaphorical "leaven" of the Pharisees and Herod against which Jesus warns (8:15), but which the disciples somehow mistake; and (d) Jesus' mysterious emphasis upon the number of baskets left after each feeding, the highly suggestive numbers twelve and seven, respectively.

Jesus' attack (there is no other word) on the disciples' incomprehension here (8:17-21) is sharp and prolonged. He asks if their hearts are hardened. Mark had told us earlier that they were (6:52). He asks if they have eyes to see or ears to hear: this is what those on the "outside" lack according to Jesus' citation of Isaiah back in Mk. 4 when he was speaking about the parables. After getting them to recall that there were twelve and seven baskets of bread left after the feedings, Jesus asks one, last, rhetorical question, "Do you not yet understand?" There can be no answer other than "no."⁵¹

Matthew and Luke again have softened this attack considerably. Luke does not have the second feeding nor its boat scene, and he resolves the metaphor of the leaven, which occurs in a quite different context, simply as "hypocrisy" (12:1). He records no parallel to Jesus' attack. Matthew's version of the events (16:5-12) treats the disciples' misunderstanding as a simple case of confusion: when Jesus warns about leaven, they think He means bread, whereas He really meant the "teaching" of the Pharisees and Sadducees.⁵² (Note that this is a different understanding of the metaphor that Luke

offers!) The symbolism of the numbers of baskets is omitted, even though Matthew is known for his interest in symbolic numbers.

The first half of Mark's Gospel ends on this low note. Although few particulars are given about Peter, it is clear that he and his colleagues are united in a fundamental failure to understand Jesus in His identity and His actions. They are no better than those on the outside of their circle. Although they do remain in contact with Jesus, it is clear that a significant change in their understanding, a "transformation," still needs to occur.

This situation is underlined-and perhaps also qualified-by Mark's unique account of a blind man who comes to see in a two-stage miracle (8:22-26). The pericope occurs at a major turning point in Mark's narrative, just before the "Great Confession." Eyes and sight are frequent metaphors for understanding in Mark and the entire Bible, and were used as such in the immediately preceding conflict (8:18). It is not hard to find in this passage, with its curious limitation on Jesus' power, a transition from the apparently total blindness of the disciples to the partial sight of Peter, which is to be described next. We may also see a ray of hope that a good bit of "eye-opening" remains to be accomplished.

B. Peter's "Confession": Mk. 8:27-30. The dilemma of Peter's imperfect faith next comes into crisis at Caesarea Philippi. Peter makes the correct confession (in contrast to people at large, and also Herod, Mk. 6:1446), identifying Jesus as the Christ. From the standpoint of how the narrative has progressed, it comes as a surprise that when Jesus asks His question, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter has the right answer (8:29)! We might expect either no answer or an answer no better than the "outsiders" gave (8:27f.). A conversion has occurred for Peter (as Matthew's more elaborate account recognizes). He no longer asks, "who is this?"; he recognizes Jesus as the Christ, the Holy One of God.

But his confession is nevertheless seriously flawed, for he rebukes the Christ at the latter's first prediction of His coming passion and resurrection (8:31f.), a prediction delivered, as Mark stresses, "plainly." Peter's rebuke merits the well known, stinging reply: "Get behind me,⁵³ Satan. You are not on the side of God but of men!" One gets the impression that a good deal of "converting" remains to be achieved.

This flaw is reinforced in Mark's account of the transfiguration (9:243). Peter sees Jesus conversing with Moses and Elijah, and addresses Jesus as "rabbi:" thereby seeming to take Jesus as one of their students rather than as the Christ. Certainly the voice from heaven ("this is my Son, listen to him[!]") and the disappearance of Moses and Elijah, leaving, as Mark says pointedly, "no longer anyone but Jesus only." together indicate a status for Jesus even greater than parity with those esteemed Biblical figures. Peter thus knows the right title for Jesus, but has something to learn about the revelatory authority vested in that role as well as about the mode of his Messianic deliverance, which is the way of the cross.

One clue that helps us to understand Peter's situation here and which points forward to its final resolution is provided at the end of the transfiguration episode. Jesus commands Peter and the others to silence about this remarkable incident (as He does concerning other matters), but He qualifies the command with a time limit: "until the Son of Man be raised" (9:9). We are not told whether the disciples obeyed Jesus' command to silence about

the transfiguration, but we are told they were silent about their inability to understand what Jesus meant by the rising of the dead (9:10)!

Earlier, following Peter's confession, Jesus had predicted to Peter and the other disciples not only the passion of the Son of Man but also His resurrection.⁵⁴ The disciples' inability to accept the passion there was undoubtedly linked to an inability to comprehend the resurrection which is made explicit here in the transfiguration narrative. This underlines the crucial significance of Mark's brief account of the resurrection. Jesus' command also suggests that the transfiguration itself foreshadows the resurrection appearance, which Mark does not narrate. In Mark, no less than in Paul, the death and the resurrection of Jesus are necessarily connected.

Peter's resistance to Jesus' predicted death has implications not only for his view of the messianic role of Jesus, that is, for His "Christology," but also for the character of his own "discipleship." This connection is made clear in the well delineated, threefold repetition of a controversial passion prediction plus teaching on "suffering discipleship" which occurs in Mk. 8:31-10:45.⁵⁵ It is within this context that Jesus responds to Peter's declaration of commitment (noted above), with a list of the benefits for disciples who have "left all": the list concludes (10:30), "with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life."⁵⁶ Belief in a suffering Messiah entails suffering discipleship. Peter's resistance to the announced passion involves more than concern for Jesus alone!

This entire section is bracketed by two narratives of the healing of blind persons. The first blind person (8:22-26), as has been noted, has difficulty perceiving clearly until Jesus touches him a second time. The second, Bartimaeus (10:46-52), recognizes Jesus as "Son of David" as He leaves Jericho on the last stage of His journey to Jerusalem (the significance of this journey is clearly felt by the disciples and Mark's hearers, 10:32), and is commended for his faith. One cannot escape the impression that these healings comment metaphorically on the issues of misperception and faith raised by the enveloped material. Peter makes the correct confession, but the content of his faith is still dramatically deficient; he does not yet "see."

C. Peter's Declaration of Loyalty: Mk. 14:27-31. Peter's next turning point occurs when, after the Passover meal, Jesus predicts the failure of the disciples. This failure is connected with His coming death, to which Mk. 14 makes repeated references. Once again the coming passion is accompanied by reference to the coming resurrection (28): "But after I am raised I will go before you into Galilee." The point of this expression in itself is mystifying, even apart from lingering questions about what resurrection might mean. The nature of the connection between the disciples' failure and Jesus' travel "back" to Galilee after the resurrection is hardly obvious at this point, either to the disciples or to the hearer. That the connection is necessary in order to resolve their predicted failure is unmistakable however.

In any case, we now discover that Peter has once again become converted, this time to those twin ideas of suffering Messiahship and suffering discipleship at which he and the others had balked earlier. Peter declares (14:29), "Even if they all fall away, I will not!" When corrected by Jesus' prediction of his personal, triple denial, he responds (31) with a preliminary "denial" of that prediction here, "If necessary, I am ready to die *with* you!" Peter now clearly accepts the coming death of Jesus, and equally clearly indicates his

own acceptance of the implications of this death for himself (albeit with the qualification, "If necessary"). He has been converted to the "way" of Jesus for himself and His followers.

Of course it will become quite apparent that Peter is not empowered to carry out his declared intent! Having predicted the collective failure of the disciples, Jesus then predicts Peter's personal failure in detail. In the garden Peter, again singled out (14:37), cannot stay awake one hour. And finally Peter with an oath denies any knowledge of Jesus to the high priest's household (14:71), a denial uttered in juxtaposed contrast to Jesus' own direct, climactic confession to the high priest himself: "I am (the Christ)" (14:62).

So Peter's conversion is still not complete, if "conversion" means anything more than intellectual conviction. Yet only after his denial, as he goes off weeping bitterly, does Peter, in Mark, finally seem to realize any distance between his own understanding and truth, between his own self projection ("even if they all fall...") and his real actions. Only now perhaps (especially if repentance is a necessary ingredient of conversion) is Peter a candidate for a conversion in the now traditional sense of the term.

D. Peter's Coming Encounter: Mk. 16:1-8. Mark does not narrate an explicit resolution to the issue of Peter's relationship to Jesus. Such a resolution is foreshadowed, Mk. 13, for example, requires such a resolution because it contains warnings that can only apply to a faithful Christian community after the resurrection.⁵⁷ It may be significant that these predictions are addressed to Peter, James, John and Andrew (13:3), who were the disciples first called in 1:16-20. But this does not provide a satisfactory resolution to the situation of the disciples at the end of the Gospel.

However, the end of Mark itself does leave the hearer with an unambiguous confidence concerning the restoration of Peter, despite frequent claims to the contrary. Indeed, the restoration will entail the most thoroughgoing conversion of Peter yet. The key to this realization lies in the interpretation of Mk. 16:1-8.

The end of Mark's Gospel has been the cause of controversy for a century. The text-critical issue has been in little doubt for some time: Mk. 16:8 is the last verse that belongs to the original Gospel. Problems of grammar and style surrounding the verse have also been resolved: it is a complete sentence, stylistically characteristic of Mark, and it does end the pericope, 16:1-8, in a way not unusual for the Gospel.⁵⁸ Until recently, however, interpreting this passage as the formal ending of the Gospel has itself seemed quite risky. The risk was twofold: could one assume that an ancient, popular writing like Mark might end in such an open manner; and if one did assume so, how should the sense of the ending be interpreted? Such a "suspended ending" and its interpretation seemed too modern and sophisticated for a popular narrative like Mark's.

The numerous studies which argue that Mark deliberately portrays the disciples negatively have used Mk. 16:1-8 with considerable force. There is no resurrection appearance by Jesus to the disciples (or to anyone). Neither word of the empty tomb nor the words of the angelic figure appear likely to reach the disciples through the terrified women who, we are told, say "nothing to nobody" The disciples' failure is not redeemed.

A recent study by J. Lee Magness, *Sense and Absence*, has provided a number of analogous suspended endings in ancient popular literature. He

also offers some interpretive strategies which make for a better reading of the end of Mark. Magness finds such endings in Greek epics, plays and popular romances, in Old Testament writings, particularly Jonah and 2 Kings, and in New Testament writings, particularly the Acts of the Apostles.⁵⁹ Based on a general theory of creative interaction between a text and its reader, he argues that the reader may complete the suspended ending using clues provided in the text. This participation adds emphasis and existential force to the story's ending.⁶⁰

On the basis of his study of the suspended endings in this literature, he derives three principles for interpreting them which may be used for Mark: (1) interpretation may proceed along lines provided by internal suggestions that foreshadow unnarrated events; (2) interpretation may proceed along lines provided by structural patterns in the text that prepare one to fill in the "empty structure" at the end; and (3) interpretation may proceed on the assumption that synecdoche, a narrated element at the end which implies the absent ending "by substitution or analogy" may be in play.⁶¹ Magness devotes a chapter to the structure of Mark which I found unconvincing. The other two strategies are more fruitful, although I apply them differently.

Several instances of foreshadowing, as prediction, occur in the Gospel.⁶² Some, like the passion predictions, find a narrated fulfillment. Others remain open, that is, unfulfilled and unnarrated. The credibility of Jesus and the literary "narrator" enable the readers to construct the fulfillment for themselves. This is true, broadly, of Mk. 13, in which Jesus' predictions of the elect enduring persecutions carry the "total 'story' beyond [Mark's] actual 'plotted narrative.'"⁶³ The transfiguration episode foreshadows the resurrection itself, and gives a mode] for "understanding the nature of the experience for the disciples."⁶⁴ (A connection with resurrection is made explicitly at Mk. 9:9, as was noted.)

The most explicit example of foreshadowing in Mk. 16:1-8 is not recognized as such by Magness. In 14:28, Jesus had predicted, "After I am raised, I will go before you into Galilee." This prediction is reiterated, almost verbatim, by the figure at the empty tomb in 16:7, with the addition, "there you 'will see him, just as he told you." There can be little doubt that Mark's hearers are to accept this foreshadowing at face value and to anticipate such a reunion in the near future. Magness does assert that the "presence" of the prophecy and command to the women in Mk. 16:7 "overcomes the absence of their words and the absence of any narration about their report by speaking their words for them in the readers' minds."⁶⁵ The repeated prediction is directed specifically to "his disciples and Peter." Although the final turning point for Peter is still ahead, it is distinctly foreshadowed in the narrative.

Even more can be said about that turning point through the final strategy for interpreting absent endings, the assumption that Mark is using synecdoche.⁶⁶ The presence and flight of the "young man in Gethsemane (14:51L) has long intrigued interpreters.⁶⁷ It has often been overlooked that the young man reappears at the empty tomb in Mk. 16. An angel is a typical figure in such situations, and the young man is frequently understood as such.⁶⁸ But Mark has used the term "angel" elsewhere. "Young man" (*neaniskos*) is found only in these two places, and the descriptions of the figure are parallel. In 14:51-52, the young man was "wrapped" (*peribeblēmenos*) in a linen cloth, but flees away naked; here in 16:5, he is seated "on the right side" and

is once again "wrapped" in a white robe. The contrast is similar to the transformation that occurred in the Gerasene demoniac, from running wildly among the tombs, to seated, clothed, and in his right mind (5:15). The young man too has been transformed, his nakedness clothed, and his fear replaced by quiet certainty.

Arguably, the young man is a witness to the resurrection, the only one in Mark's Gospel. Magness' principles help us understand that the young man, whoever he may be, functions as a synecdoche for Peter and the disciples: before the resurrection appearance, frightened, fleeing, and (metaphorically) naked. Mark's hearer may anticipate a similar transformation, conversion, to occur in Peter when Jesus appears to him. This conversion will be the most thoroughgoing yet. The turning of the young man is not a simple "alternation," in Gaventa's terms, but a "transformation" of his perspective and character, and this is what we expect for Peter, too.

Magness makes much of the emphatic character of an absent ending and the audience's involvement and investment in concluding the narrative men tally. Jesus will be present to disciples, but He is also "most directly present in the readers' present, as they tell the absent ending of his story"⁶⁹ Our focus on Peter suggests something more: in contrast to the other Gospels, Peter is not (yet) a *witness* to the resurrection. Rather, because of the open ending he stands in need of an encounter with the Risen One. The audience's identification with Peter is not interrupted. As a "witness" to the resurrection Peter would stand apart from us as a unique historical figure necessary to our faith. However, as Ernest Best observed,⁷⁰

By emphasizing the empty tomb and the statement that Jesus is risen, Mark turns thought on the resurrection away from the idea of a number of isolated and discreet appearances which Jesus made to some or all of His historical disciples. He can be present at all times with all who believe in Him.

As a yet fearful disciple, Peter remains Everyman, in need of the transforming grace of his risen Lord, but promised to receive it. Peter, like the young man, will meet the risen Jesus. At that encounter, the nakedness of his denial is to be clothed with affirmation and witness; the running feet of his fear will be replaced with the unhurried rest of his faith.

Even so, as Mark ends, this last of Peter's conversions, while clearly foreseen and foreshadowed, is yet unrealized. The story is open-ended; both for the resurrected Jesus and for the "in-the-process-of-being-converted" Peter. Peter could not have come to the final conversion without the initial and the succeeding ones. The drama must have all its parts to be complete. Even this last and most important of Peter's conversions to which Mark clearly points us does not constitute the finale of Peter's life with Jesus, as we know, and as perhaps Mark's hearers also knew, from other stories. In this sense conversion may be understood (like Mark's narrative) as an open-ended matter.

As Best points out, Mark's narrative description of discipleship, with its setting on the "journey" of Jesus and His disciples, "is capable of indefinite extension."⁷¹ Although Best is referring to the ability of Mark's concept to transcend the delay of the parousia, the indefinite extension may also relate to our idea of conversion and the Christian life. The crucial elements are: (1) that Peter continued to "follow Jesus," that is he remained in an on-going

"engagement" with Jesus, even during the times of his greatest doubt and disagreement with Jesus; and (2) that Jesus in turn proves faithful to him in the middle of and beyond his own failings. Peter's conversions are milestones along the way of discipleship.

IV. CONCLUSION

We may now return to the "ambiguities" of Aldersgate for John Wesley. Viewed as a single, once-for-all experience of conversion, Aldersgate raised many problems. Wesley himself wrestled with these immediately afterward as it failed to satisfy his Moravian-bred expectations. Later, in open controversy with Moravian teaching on conversion, he developed his idea of "degrees of faith," this development entails, it seems, experiencing more than one moment of "conversion."

Aldersgate certainly remains a significant element in his theological and spiritual formation, even if only as the catalyst to a way of thinking quite different from that which led to the experience in the first place. Initially, Wesley appears to have understood Aldersgate as a "pendulum-like conversion," entailing the rejection of all that he had undergone before, including his earlier commitments. Subsequent editions of the *Journal* indicate that later a "transformation" of Wesley's understanding of Aldersgate itself occurred, even though it is not easy to pinpoint this post-Aldersgate conversion. As with Peter, we find that conversions occur at several points along Wesley's journey. Conversion is, as L. D. McIntosh affirms, a "continuum"; this is clearly to be observed in Wesley's life.⁷²

It would not be wise to press a point for point analogy between Peter and Wesley, but parallels exist. Wesley's early attempts to achieve holiness and assurance by "methodism" find a certain analogy to Peter's early determination to follow, and also to direct, Jesus. Wesley's sense of failure upon returning from Georgia is paralleled by Peter's ultimate realization of his failure in the denial of Jesus. Aldersgate may or may not be analogous to Peter's encounter with the risen Jesus. We may only idealize that encounter, as Wesley idealized conversion or "faith" immediately prior to Aldersgate.

The "degrees" of Peter's faith in his engagement with Jesus certainly answer to the degrees experienced and taught by Wesley. Similarly, Mark's narrative demonstrates Jesus' faithfulness to Peter all along the way, and Wesley had a firm belief in that same faithfulness through all the degrees of faith. As he wrote in his sermon "On Faith:"⁷³

It might have been said, "Hitherto you are only a *servant*, you are not a *child* of God. You have already great reason to praise God that he has called you to his honorable service. Fear not. Continue crying unto him, 'and you shall see greater things than these.'

And, indeed, unless the servants of God halt by the way, they will receive the adoption of sons. They will receive the *faith* of the children of God, by his *revealing* his only begotten Son in their hearts.

The Christian life may well be initiated and sustained by crises of conversion, but no one such experience stands alone or completes the process of conversion, as Mark's narrative of Peter and Wesley's *Journal* both appear

to affirm. Initial Christian conversion is entering into a continuing engagement with Jesus involving the whole person, which is the nature of discipleship. The ambiguity that attaches itself to this or that particular religious experience may be resolved only in the context of the larger course of the journey with the God who is faithful. A conversion narrative is properly the narrative of one's whole life.

Notes

1. See entries for Sun., Jan. 8, 1738 ["p. 208f.]; Thes. 24 ["p. 211f] and Sun. 29 ["p. 214f.]. Page numbers in brackets for this note and others refer to the new critical edition of Wesley's *Journals and Diaries~ I (1735-38)*, eds., W. Reginald Ward and Richard P Heitzenrater, vol.18 of *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988).

2. This is clearly indicated in the remarks prefaced to the Wed., May 24, 1738 entry, especially sections 8-10 ["p. 246f.].

3. All three of these were attached to the *Journal* entry for Jan.29, 1738 ["p. 214f.]. They first appeared on an "errata" sheet to his collected *Works* (1771-1774) and then as footnote to the *Journal* in 1775: Frank Baker, 'Aldersgate' and Wesley's Editors," *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 191(1966), 312.1 am indebted for this and several other references in periodical literature to my friend, Dr. Randy Maddox.

4. See the fifth numbered section in his prefatory remarks to the Wed., May 24,1738 entry ["p. 244f.]. The footnote was added in the 1775 edition.

5. See the sixth numbered section to the May 24 entry [". 245]. The footnote was added in the 1775 edition.

6. See the tenth numbered section in the May 24 entry [". 247]. The revision was done in the 1775 edition.

7. In the Sun., July 9, 1738 entry [".261].

8. Cf. note 4 above. "The publication date of the second extract, Baker," 'Aldersgate,' "312.

10. The phrase is Frank Baker's, " Aldersgate,' " 312.

11. See note 3, above.

12. See the Fri., May 19,1738 entry [".242].

13. Section 11 of the May 24, 1738 entry [".248]. The footnote was added in 1775.

14. "Rethinking John Wesley's Conversion," part 2 of "Second Thoughts on John Wesley;" *The Drew Gateway* 49 (1978), 31-35.

15. It is interesting to observe that immediately after listing the beliefs of Zinzendorf regarding justification , Wesley listed beliefs of Peter Bohler;

see *Journal* entry for Sun., July 9, 1738 [261]. The lists conflict: Wesley seems to be implying that the perfectionist views of Böhler were not authentically Moravian. Cf. John A. Vickers, "The Significance of 'Aldersgate Street'; *Epworth Review* 15, no. 2 (May, 1988), 9f., who sees the extract as a response to "Moravian 'stillness.'"

16. The fourth extract covers the period November 1, 1739, to September 3, 1741, and was first published in 1744: Albert Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 353f. Events seem to have come to a head beginning on June 22, 1740, when Wesley decided "to strike at the root of the grand [Moravian] delusion": cf. Outler, pp. 360ff.

17. "John Wesley *against* Aldersgate," *Quarterly Review* 8, n~ 3 (Fall 1988), 4, 19f.

18. 'Aldersgate: Evidences of Genuine Christianity;' *Circuit Rider* 12, no. 4 (May, 1988), 4-6.

19. Maser, "Rethinking;" 44-49.

20. *Ibid.*, 35.

21. *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 747, 22.

22. The nature of the "conversion" of Paul and of Luke's account of it has been much debated. A good recent treatment of conversion in the New Testament, including Paul's, is that of Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). She concludes, p.40, that Paul's conversion, as described in his letters, should be understood as "transformation"; that "the revelation of Jesus as Messiah brought about in Paul a transformed understanding of God and God's actions in the world." She convincingly rejects Stendahl's notion that "conversion" cannot even be applied to Paul. The accounts in Acts successively describe Paul's conversion as the miraculous "reversal" or "overthrow of an enemy" (Acts 9, pp. 65f.), the "call of the faithful Jew" (Acts 22, p.76), and his "encounter" with Jesus that constituted him as "servant and witness" to the Risen Lord (Acts 26, p.90).

23. Sat., Apr.22, 1738 [p. 234].

24. Gaventa, pp. 65, 124.

25. *Ibid.*, pp.106 (the eunuch), 122 (Cornelius), 675 (Paul)..

26. Theodore Weeden, *Mark-Tradition in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). See the list of writings in Ernest Best, *Mark: the Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983), pp. 76ff., fn. 158.

27. Robert Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: the Function of a Narrative Role;" *Journal of Religion* 57 (1977), 393f.

28. *Ibid.*, 394.

29. Best, pp. 34ff., 45-52, 76ff.

30. *Ibid.*, p. Sif; cf. pp.115, 138, 146f.

31. *Ibid.*, pp.47f., e.g.

32. I have argued this case in my Edinburgh doctoral thesis, "Oral Traditional Literature and the Composition of Mark's Gospel" (1983), based on the Homeric studies of Albert B. Lord, *Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), and on studies of narrative folklore. See now Best, *Mark*, pp.100-114. Best seems somewhat inconsistent on this point, often working from a straightforward redaction-critical perspective.

33. Albert Lord in the *Singer of Tales* has argued that this is the basis for the composition of the Homeric epics, based upon field study of epic minstrels in Eastern Europe.

34. Cf. Best, pp. 137f. on the difficulty of reducing Mark to a "kerygmatic" outline: the whole story of Jesus is needed to make Mark's point.

35. Best, p.39, prefers to call it "a preaching" rather than a sermon in order to describe the relationship and to preserve a cautious distinction from the modern category.

36. Cf. Best, pp.39, 51, 93, 146.

37. Tannehill, "Disciples;" 386, 392f.

38. Cf. Best, pp.32, 46.

39. Stendahl has argued that this was the case for Paul: he was called to be an apostle of Jesus, but not really "converted" from Judaism; see his *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, pp.7-23.

40. Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, pp.4-12, esp. pp. 10ff.

41. Peter himself does not figure largely in Mark's narrative until after 8:27.

42. Cf. Tannehill, "Disciples;" 396f., who suggests the following passages.

43. Compare Mk. 6:12f. with 1:14f., 1:34, 3:10f.

44. Tannehill, "Disciples," 397, cites 4:10 where the same phrase, *noi peri auton*, explicitly includes the Twelve.

45. *Ibid.*, 398.

46. The verb *katadioko*, 1:36, is a strong one, frequently used in a "hostile sense;" as in "track down": Vincent Taylor, *Gospel according to Saint Mark*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1966), p.183. But the negative sense here is not certain according to C.E.B. Cranfield, *SL Mark*, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p.89.

47. Cf. Eduard Schweizer, *Good News according to Mark*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976), p.56.

48. "Disciples," 398f.

49. The "rebuke of the storm uses language associated with exorcisms and with sharp commands to silence others (as in 8:30-33) in Mark. The word used

to describe "fear;" *deilos*, occurs only here in Mark, suggesting an emphatic accusation. This rebuke of the disciples is omitted by Matthew (8:26) and softened by Luke (8:25).

50. Tannehill, "Disciples;" 399 (my emphasis).

51. The difficulty the modern reader has with the significance of these numbers may arise from some key that was more clear to Mark's original audience. The possibility that they were *equally* obscure for the audience has not been given much weight. Much is made in literary readings of Mark of the privileged position of the "implied reader" over the characters within the Gospel, particularly the disciples. If these numbers were not clear, however, the audience would have the uneasy sense of being in the same "boat" as the disciples: a significant possibility!

52. Matthew's version of events reflects his dominant interest in the relation of Jesus' teaching to the majority Jewish positions, a concern apparently grounded in the conflicts experienced by his own audience.

53. This might also be translated, "follow me;" the verb is frequently used in Mark with the sense of a commission to act in a certain way.

54. This is a point not generally emphasized in Markan studies, but see Best, pp.44, 76ff.

55. Mk. 8:31-33 plus 8:34-9:1; 9:30-32 plus 33-50; and 10:32-34 plus 35-45.

56. Tannehill, "Disciples." 401.

57. This is commonly noted: cf., e.g., Tannehill, "Disciples;" 404. Some have tried to make Mark 13 the hinge of the gospel, as the part most relevant to the time of Mark's audience. But this is to ignore the power and universality of Mark's narrative.

58. See the review of this discussion in J. Lee Magness, *Sense and Absence* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), pp.1-9.

59. *Ibid.*, pp.28-47, 55-62, 83 ff., respectively.

60. *Ibid.*, pp.8, 13-22.

61. See his summary statement of these, e.g., *Ibid.*, p.87.

62. Cf. Magness, pp. 108-113.

63. Amos N. Wilder, "Gospels as Narrative," *Interpretation* 34 (1980), 296-299, cited by Magness, p.109.

64. Magness, p.112.

65. *Ibid.*, p.115.

66. Magness, pp.1 14f., interprets the "announcement" of 16:7 as synecdoche. This is true enough, but there is more than this to the pericope, in my view.

67. The discussion of views in Best, pp. 26f.

68. Even by Magness, pp.1 14f.

69. Magness, p.116; cf. pp. 123f.

70. Best, *Mark*, p.74.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 146f.

72. L. D. McIntosh, "John Wesley: Conversion as Continuum." *Mid-Stream* 8:3 (Spring, 1969), 50-65.

73. *Sermons, ILL 71414*, ed. Albert Outler, vol.3 of *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986). The quotation is from sections 11-12 [p.497]; emphasis Wesley's. I am indebted to my friend and colleague, Dr. Laurie Braatan, for this reference.

THE HOLY REIGN OF GOD

by

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Psalm 96 says: "Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns'" (96:9-10).

This whole psalm is a call for all the earth to praise God as Savior and Ruler over all. "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples" (v.3). God reigns; He has created all things; and "he will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth" (v.13).

A number of the psalms sound the same theme:

The Lord reigns
let the nations tremble
he sits enthroned between the cherubim,
let the earth shake.
Great is the Lord in Zion;
he is exalted over all the nations.
Let them praise your great and awesome name-
he is holy.
The King is mighty, he loves justice-
you have established equity;
in Jacob you have done what is just and right
Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his footstool;
he is holy (Ps. 99:1- 5).

Psalm 47:8 says, "God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne." Psalm 29 also speaks of the holiness and the kingship of God (Ps. 29:2, 10). And we read in the Song of Moses and Miriam in Exodus 15 that God, who is "majestic in holiness," will "reign for ever and ever" (Ex. 15:11,18).

Though other examples might be given, these are enough to lift up what I believe is a significant Biblical theme: the holy reign of God. These passages in fact tie together two themes I would like to address this evening: the holiness of God and the kingdom or reign of God.

Both these themes are important for us in the Wesleyan tradition. Most of us are, first of all, in some way part of or heirs to the Holiness Movement. Also, we stand in a tradition which has stressed the sovereignty of God—though a tradition which, with a few exceptions, has not given much attention specifically to the theme of the Kingdom of God.

In last year's meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society we focused on the theme, "The Kingdom of God and the World Parish." We had some excellent papers exploring several dimensions of the theme. I see my presentation tonight as bringing some closure to that discussion and indicating some of its practical dimensions, both theologically and in terms of our every-day discipleship as believers.

My purpose in this paper is fairly simple: to explore the relationship between two Biblical themes which I believe are of concern and interest to all of us: the holiness of God and the Kingdom of God. My central thesis is this: Taking these two themes together leads us to a fuller apprehension of our faith and what it means to be faithful Christian disciples in the present age.

The principal problematic of this study can be posed as a series of questions: What is the relationship between the Biblical themes of the holiness and the kingdom or reign of God? In what ways does each truth help us to understand, and respond appropriately to, the other? And particularly, how might posing these questions illuminate our own Wesleyan tradition?

I. THE HOLY REIGN OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE

As we have seen from the references just cited, the holiness and the reign of God are intimately linked in Scripture. The Old Testament reveals a holy God who is the sovereign Ruler over all He has made. Much more could be said about this theme in the Old Testament; suffice it to say that this perspective is assumed by the New Testament writers.

Jesus and the Kingdom. It has become increasingly recognized that the kingdom of God is a key theme in the New Testament, and especially in Jesus' own life and teachings. Jesus' initial announcement was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Mt. 4:17; cf. Mk. 1:15), the same message John the Baptist had proclaimed (Mt. 3:2). We read that as Jesus began His public ministry He "went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Mt. 4:23; cf. Mt. 9:35; Lk. 8:1).

The Sermon on the Mount is full of kingdom themes and kingdom imagery. The Beatitudes begin and end with references to the kingdom. The sermon includes the key injunction not to be preoccupied with food and clothing but to "seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness," or justice (Mt. 6:33).

Jesus sent out His disciples to proclaim, "The kingdom of heaven is near" and to heal and drive out demons (Mt. 10:7; cf. Lk. 9:1-2, 10:9-11). He spoke of the kingdom of God "forcefully advancing" (Mt. 11:12), and said the exorcisms He performed were evidence that "The kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt. 12:28, Lk. 11:20). Jesus' parables of the kingdom speak of its small, seemingly insignificant beginnings, its supreme value, and its growth (Mt. 13; Mk. 4; Lk. 13). Jesus said, "Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Mk. 10:15); in fact, it is next

to impossible ""for the rich to enter the kingdom of God"! (Mk. 10:23). To those who followed Him Jesus said, ""Fear not, little flock, for your Father delights to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12:32). Jesus said the kingdom of God is "within you" or "among you" (Lk. 17:21). He told Nicodemus, "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (Jn. 3:5).

Even during the forty days following His resurrection, Jesus' theme with His disciples was the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Yet He linked the kingdom, not with times and dates but with the powerful filling with the Holy Spirit which would make them effective witnesses of the Gospel throughout the earth.

Simply looking at the Biblical references, one would have to say that Jesus spoke much more about the kingdom of God than He did about the holiness of God. He didn't come proclaiming God's holiness but God's reign.

This assertion must be qualified, however, in two or three ways. First, Jesus explicitly links the holiness and the reign of God in the Lord's prayer: "Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:9-10). Christians are to pray that God's name be held holy, that His holiness be recognized and honored, and that God's reign be manifested fully on earth. Here, certainly, is a glimpse of the holy reign of God and it comes in the setting of prayer.

We may note also Matthew 6:33, where seeking the kingdom of God is linked to God's righteousness and justice, thus pointing to the ethical character of God's reign and at least indirectly to God's holiness.

The Lord's Prayer seems clearly to be modeled on King David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10-13. Here David, near the end of his reign, praises God for his greatness and his provision for the temple to be built under Solomon. David prays,

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom;
you are exalted as head over all.

Wealth and honor come from you, you are the ruler of all things (1 Chron. 29:11-12).

David goes on to speak of the temple to be built for God's "Holy Name" (v.16). Clearly this passage, so symbolic of the Messianic reign of Christ, is a picture of the holy reign of God and thus adds significance to the Lord's Prayer, and the Sermon on the Mount generally, as grounded in the holy reign of God.

We might also note that the Lord's Prayer (especially the phrase, "Forgive us our debts") and the Beatitudes can be linked with the Jubilee passages of Isaiah 61:1-2 and Leviticus 25:8-55 (Cf. Psalm 146:7-10). This relates to our theme at several levels. The Jubilee is a recognition and manifestation of God's sovereign reign and, as a sabbath of sabbaths, recalls the commandment to keep the sabbath day holy (Ex. 20:8-11, Dt. 5:12-15). Here the holiness and reign of God have specific ethical content: justice for the poor; release for the oppressed.

Jesus does, then, in the Sermon on the Mount, connect holiness with the kingdom of God.

A *second* qualification to my earlier statement that Jesus speaks little about the holiness of God is this: In a real sense, Jesus' whole life and teaching were an explication of God's holiness. As H. Newton Flew says, "For the early Christian the Kingdom was indissolubly bound up with the person of Jesus Himself... The Kingdom was perfection because He was at the center of it. *Ubi Christus, ibi Regnum Dei.*" He adds, ... the proclamation by Jesus of the Reign of God carried with it a doctrine of the ideal life which might be lived out in the present world.¹

Jesus demonstrates what it means to say that God is holy. He himself is the Holy One (Lk. 1:35). When Jesus said, "'Be perfect, ... as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48), or "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful" (Lk. 6:36) He was showing what holiness means. And His life was a demonstration of that meaning. Perhaps most importantly, Jesus says the greatest commandment is, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself,'" (Mt. 22:37-40). This certainly is a preaching of what it means for "the children of the kingdom" to reflect God's holiness in their lives.

Jesus, then, came proclaiming the kingdom of God and embodying God's holiness. He demonstrated both the power and the ethical meaning of the kingdom in His own life, death, and resurrection. He empowers us with the Holy Spirit that we may live the life of the kingdom now, serving as kingdom witnesses throughout the earth.

Other New Testament References. The Apostle Paul, in his several references to the kingdom of God, links God's reign with righteousness and holiness. In our tradition, perhaps the most familiar of these texts is Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit;" Wesleyans no doubt have gravitated to this text when they speak of the kingdom especially because of its reference to the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? ... But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:9, 11). In I Thessalonians Paul refers to the "holy, righteous and blameless" life he lived among the people, and says he urged the believers "to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (I Thess. 2:10, 12). While these may be considered somewhat incidental references, they show that in Paul's mind the kingdom of God was certainly linked with holiness in these passages, not so much with God's holiness as with holiness as the Christian's quality of life, but a life which is a reflection, of course, of God's holiness.

Two other New Testament references may be noted in passing. Hebrews 12:28 tells us: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire' " (Heb. 12:28; cf. Dt. 4:24). Here the holy character of God our King is pictured.

The final reference is from the book of Revelation. In a real sense, the holy reign of God is the fundamental theme of the whole of the Apocalypse.

God's holiness and sovereignty are graphically pictured here as the key to understanding history and the present meaning of Christian discipleship. In many ways the key verse is Revelation 1 1:15-"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." The passage goes on to picture a scene of reverent worship of the holy God. The victory of the kingdom of God is proclaimed in a setting of worship.

Summary. From the perspective of the holy reign of God, the Biblical revelation may be summarized as follows: God is holy and is sovereign over all He has made. The alienation of sin constitutes a fall from God's holiness and a rebellion against His reign. Yet God continues to exercise His sovereignty over His people and among the nations. He reveals His holy character through the law, the sacrificial system, and the prophets; He exercises His sovereignty both through and in spite of Israel's kings. Jesus comes as the messianic king, embodying in himself the holy character of God. As holy God and yet finite human, Jesus offers himself as an atonement and rises in triumph over all principalities and powers. He reigns now both as head of all creation and head of the church, His body, called to live now the holy character of God. Christians are called to serve Jesus Christ as their sovereign Lord and their example for life, empowered by Jesus' Spirit among them. They are called to continue the liberating works of the kingdom which Jesus began, living in the certain hope of the final manifestation of God's reign over all things, a reign in which the holiness of God will be reflected in a new heaven and new earth of universal shalom.

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION

We turn now to examine the ways the kingdom of God theme has been handled in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, beginning with Wesley and running on through to the present.

John Wesley. For John Wesley, the key Biblical text on the kingdom of God was Romans 14:17-"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." The reason for Wesley's preference for this text is clear: He interpreted the kingdom of God, at least in its present dimensions, primarily in terms of the experience of sanctification in believers and especially in the community of believers. One can see this by noting the comments in his Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament regarding the kingdom of God. Almost always the meaning of the kingdom is associated with holiness or sanctification (in contrast to Bentel's comments in the Gnomon).

For example, regarding Jesus' initial proclamation of the kingdom (Mt. 4:17), Wesley says, "It is the peculiar business of Christ to establish the kingdom of heaven in the hearts of men."² Commenting on Matthew 13:24, Wesley says that the kingdom of heaven "sometimes signifies eternal glory; sometimes the way to it, inward religion; sometimes, as here, the gospel dispensation."³ To say the kingdom of God is within or among you means the kingdom "is present in the soul of every true believer: it is a spiritual kingdom, an internal principle."⁴ The kingdom of God mentioned in Romans 14:17 is "true religion"; its righteousness is "the image of God stamped on the heart; the love of God and man, accompanied with the peace that passeth all understanding, *and joy in the Holy Ghost.*"⁵

The Sermon on the Mount is the way to the kingdom.⁶ This is so primarily because it teaches the meaning of true Christianity, what it means to be holy and happy; to live a life of all inward and outward holiness. The kingdom of God referred to in the first Beatitude is "the present, inward kingdom; righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; as well as the eternal kingdom, if they endure to the end"⁷ To seek first God's kingdom means: "Simply aim at this, that God, reigning in your heart, may fill it with the righteousness above described."⁸ Wesley gives perhaps his fullest explication in his comment on the Lord's Prayer. "Thy kingdom come" means, "May Thy kingdom of grace come quickly, and swallow up all the kingdoms of earth! May all mankind, receiving Thee, O Christ, for their King, truly believing in Thy name, be filled with righteousness and peace and joy, with holiness and happiness, till they are removed hence into Thy kingdom of glory, to reign with Thee for ever and ever."⁹

Wesley saw the kingdom of God in terms of the present operation of God's grace in believers' lives, especially, but also in society. A progressive, dynamic understanding of salvation underlies all of Wesley's thought. Nevertheless, one detects a tension between the static and dynamic elements in Wesley. Even though he saw sanctification as dynamic and progressive, he was not entirely free of the classical Greek notion of perfection as changelessness, and salvation as the attainment of an eternal blessedness which is essentially static. This is seen also in his view of the kingdom. The kingdom is fundamentally the direct experience of God through Jesus Christ (the "kingdom of grace").

Wesley was quick to stress the present implications of the gospel and the requirement of the obedience of good works. But underlying this seems to be the suspicion that the only ultimate significance of good works and of the present life is their function in preparing us for eternity, conceived in somewhat static terms. Yet one must remember here Wesley's imaginative descriptions of what the new heaven and new earth might be like, for instance in his sermons "'The General Deliverance;' 'The General Spread of the Gospel;' and 'The New Creation.'"

I think Donald Dayton is right in this regard when he says Wesley's "perfectionist soteriology tended . . . to an optimistic social vision. The result [eschatologically] was an ambiguous position that could easily move in the direction of postmillennialism. . .

"Wesley was so oriented to soteriology;. Dayton continues, "that his followers could combine a basically Wesleyan scheme of salvation with a variety of eschatologies without an obvious sense of betrayal. But the basic thrust of Wesley's thought was probably better captured by the less apocalyptic and more postmillennial schemes of thought. Thus, while Wesley himself did not self-consciously adopt a millennial scheme, he helped to unleash forces that could and would move in that direction"¹⁰

Wesley did, of course, pass on much of Bengel's postmillennial scheme in the Revelation portion of his Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament.

In terms of our two themes here--the holiness and the reign of God--Wesley clearly interpreted the latter in terms of the former. That is, holiness and sanctification were Wesley's chief concern, and became his paradigm for understanding the kingdom of God. One must remember, however, that for Wesley holiness named both the character of God as perfect love and the whole

way of salvation (*via salutis*), embracing, in effect, a whole theology of history, or history of salvation. In this sense there is perhaps a more fundamental, historical kingdom theology in Wesley than is generally recognized.

From Wesley to the Holiness Movement. A number of people, including several WTS members, have investigated the question of the transition between John Wesley and the theology of the nineteenth century Holiness Movement in North America. In general, a certain narrowing of focus specifically to the doctrine of entire sanctification, and an increasingly individualizing tendency, have been noted, with at times an almost exclusive focus on the second crisis experience, in contrast to the wider sweep of Wesley's soteriological framework.

And of course the question of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of Spirit-baptism language has received considerable attention.

Without retracing those discussions, I would like simply to state in summary form what I see as the meaning of this transition for the themes of the holiness and the reign of God, and then cite a few examples.

1. The kingdom of God played a smaller role in nineteenth-century Methodist and Holiness theology than it did in Wesley's thought. This was part of both a theological systematization (in the case of Methodism generally) and a theological narrowing (in the case of the Holiness Movement) evident in this period of transition.

2. Where the kingdom of God was treated, it was interpreted almost always in terms of holiness and the experience of entire sanctification, as was true with Wesley.

3. The question of the kingdom of God inevitably arose to some degree in Holiness circles toward the end of the century with the upsurge of interest in premillennialism. Discussion of the kingdom here is almost totally limited to the millennial question.

By and large, the kingdom of God was simply not a theme of nineteenth century Methodist and Holiness theology. It is intriguing, for instance, to find virtually no discussion of the kingdom of God in such books as Richard Watson's *Theological Institutes* (1823-29), Thomas Ralston's *Elements of Divinity* (1847), Benjamin Field's *Student's Handbook of Christian Theology* (1869) and Amos Binney's *Theological Compend* (1858). Daniel Steele's "Improved" edition of his father-in-law's *Compend* (1875) devotes merely two pages to "Messiah's Kingdom-Its Progress and Ultimate Triumph" in the general section ""Last Things"; clearly the kingdom of God played no formative theological role.¹¹

Watson's *Theological Institutes*, which had great impact in North American Methodism and was described in 1877 as ""the standard of Methodist theology for a full half century"¹² seems to have largely set the pattern here. Watson has no chapter or section on eschatology, or on the kingdom of God. The only reference to the kingdom I could find was an incidental one in the discussion of infant baptism, where Watson says Jesus more frequently used the phrase ""kingdom of God" ""to denote the Church in this present world, than in its state of glory"¹³

It appears, then, that whatever stress on the kingdom of God was present in Wesley's theology largely dropped out in nineteenth-century North American Methodism. An exception would be those Wesleyans around the time of Finney's revivalism who, like Finney, saw social reform as in some

sense part of the first fruits of the coming kingdom. Significant discussions of the kingdom emerged toward the end of the century as the theological climate was shifting. On the more conservative Holiness Movement side, the precipitating issue was millennialism. On the more "liberal" side within Methodism, the precipitating cause was the influence of German theology and the rise of the Social Gospel around the turn of the century Robert Chiles in *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935* notes,

Study abroad brought back not only German Biblical research but also the philosophies of Schleiermacher, Lotze, and Ritschl. Ritschlianism in particular penetrated the English-speaking world. Commenting on the time, a Methodist wrote, "'theological seminaries in America are filled with professors who have either sat in the Ritschlian lecture rooms in Berlin, Marburg, Gottingen, etc., and have come back devotees of the faith, or have imbibed at Ritschlian springs nearer home:' [This influence] encouraged the further moralization of theological categories and also gave support to the emphasis on the Kingdom of God in the Social Gospel movement which helped polarize growing liberal conviction, inherited from revival and perfectionist traditions, that the whole of life must be brought under God's rule."¹⁴

Millennialism and the Kingdom. It is instructive in this connection to look at two figures in the Holiness Movement just one hundred or so years ago as they dealt with the upsurge of premillennialism but came out at opposite points. Here we see kingdom theologies being articulated within the Wesleyan Holiness milieu-emerging, however, not from the internal dynamic of the Wesleyan message but rather due to external pressures of prophetic and millennial discussions and, more broadly, pressures from the social-cultural climate of the times.

The first of these is Daniel Steele, who had written the holiness classic, *Love Enthroned*, in 1877. In 1887 he published his *Antinomianism Revived, or the Theology of the So-called Plymouth Brethren Examined and Refuted*.¹⁵ The book is in large measure an attack on dispensational premillennialism as promoted at the Prophecy Conference in New York City in 1878.

Steele criticizes premillennialism for its extreme literalism and particularly for its pessimism, "the hopelessness of the world under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit"¹⁶ He believes such pessimism dishonors and undercuts the role of the Holy Spirit and is incompatible with Scripture. Premillennialism, he says, "gives a Jewish and highly materialistic turn to the kingdom of Christ, and leads to a depreciation of the spiritual manifestation of Christ by the Comforter in this life."¹⁷ He adds, "I believe that the general prevalence of pre-millennialism would be disastrous to the best interests of the Kingdom of Christ, now being spread over the earth by the joint agency of the Holy Spirit and consecrated believers."¹⁸

In this connection Steele has some sharp criticism of the evangelist D. L. Moody:

Several years ago, D. L. Moody learned his method of Bible-study and Bible-readings from the English Plymouth Brethren.... He adopts their millennarianism, and preaches the personal reign of Christ on the earth as a substitute for the present agency of the

Spirit and of preaching, which are regarded as inadequate for the successful evangelization of the whole world, and the reconstruction of society on a Christian basis. His declaration that the world is like a ship so hopelessly wrecked that it cannot be gotten off the rocks, but must be left to perish, while Christians rescue as many of the passengers as possible, is a pessimistic Plymouth idea.¹⁹

In this book and in some passages in Milestone Papers, published the next year (1888), Steele goes beyond mere critique to sketch a positive Holiness kingdom theology which is moderately dispensational and is postmillennial, maintaining Wesley's optimism of grace. As Donald Dayton and others have shown, Steele here is consciously reaching back to John Fletcher's terminology and doctrine of three dispensations. Dayton notes, "Steele showed signs of the shift that would take place in Holiness thought late in the nineteenth century. Fletcher's doctrine of dispensation was regularly analyzed in Steele's works, and these expositions were widely reprinted in various Holiness periodicals. We have already noted Steele's call for an adoption of the vocabulary of Pentecost."²⁰

Steele wrote, "We object to the pre-millenarian theory because its definition of the kingdom of Christ makes it an institution altogether different from the Church, and entirely in the future.... The Chiliast represents the kingdom as coming only at the descent of the King in person, and as then set up suddenly by almightiness without the aid of human agency. But when we look into the New Testament, we find no such difference in the use of the terms 'Church' and 'kingdom.' They seem to be used interchangeably. The kingdom is to be established by preaching, and it is to develop gradually till its ultimate triumph."²¹ Thus, "The Church is the kingdom begun."²²

Steele thus affirms the growth and gradual progress of God's kingdom. He criticizes a negative interpretation of the meaning of "heaven" in Jesus' parable, noting, "Christ himself spoke of the kingdom of God as within, or among, His hearers. The disciples were taught to pray for its complete triumph on the earth. Parables illustrative of its slow progress, but ultimate universality, were spoken.... The astonishing development of Christ's kingdom from small beginnings through long ages is here plainly taught."²³ Steele adds, "In Christ's comparison of the kingdom to leaven deposited in the meal, He intended to teach the gradual diffusion, the pervasive and assimilative power, and the universal prevalence of the kingdom of heaven."²⁴

It is evident that, in reaction to premillennialism, Steele closely associates the kingdom of God with the church and sees it in highly spiritual terms. He speaks of Christ's "present spiritual reign in the Church."²⁵ There is, he says, "but one kingdom of Christ on earth, and that is spiritual, ... the Church is the spiritual kingdom of Christ and the only kingdom which He will establish on earth."²⁶ We are now in the Dispensation of the Spirit, the time in which the Holy Spirit by Pentecostal lower builds the church:

That was not a mere dash or rhetoric which fell from the pen of John Fletcher, when he spoke of the Pentecost as the opening of "the kingdom of the Holy Ghost." He has the signet ring of our glorified King Jesus, and reigns over the family on earth as the Son of man reigns over the family above. He has not shut

himself up as an impersonal force in the tomb of uniform law, but he walks through the earth, a glorious personality, with the keys of divine power attached to his girdle, and with the rod of empire in his right hand. He works miracles in the realm of spirit, as did Immanuel in the realm of matter.²⁷

Steele foresaw a sort of new Pentecost, perhaps the dawning of the authentic, Biblical millennium, through the heightened interest in the sanctifying and empowering work of the Holy Spirit. He saw 'indications of the dawn of that returning day of Pentecost, when the Spirit shall be poured out in his fullness upon all who know the exceeding greatness of Christ's power to us-ward who believe.' The eastern sky has streaks of light betokening the sunrise of a day of power. Christians of every name, lone watchers on the mountain-tops, now see the edge of the ascending disk, and are shouting to the inhabitants of the dark valleys below to awake and arise, and behold the splendors of the King of Day."²⁸

It is clear that Steele's view of the kingdom does maintain Wesley's optimism of grace and his 'evangelical synergism.' But it seems to me that, Biblically, it is open to three criticisms: 1) it is overly spiritualized; 2) it too closely identifies the kingdom with the Church; and 3) it distinguishes too sharply between the agency of Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Spirit. Here Steele is tripped up by the very kind of dispensationalism he criticizes. At all these points, it seems to me, Wesley is more balanced and more Biblical. Steele is also much closer to Pentecostalism at these points than was Wesley.

Other people in the Holiness Movement went the opposite direction of Steele, adopting premillennialism, and not all of these became Pentecostals after 1900 or 1906. I have chosen a somewhat obscure but intriguing example, Thomas H. Nelson, who until 1894 was a Free Methodist. In 1896 he published a book entitled *The Midnight Cry or The Consummation of All Things as Shown by Fulfilled Prophecies and the "Signs of the Times"* in which he fully adopted the premillennial viewpoint.

Nelson had been an associate of Vivian A. Dake in the work of the Pentecost Bands, an aggressively evangelistic youth movement within Free Methodism which in the late 1880s and early 1890s started dozens of new churches and turned them over to the denomination (eleven in one year alone, according to Dake).²⁹ The Pentecost Bands were teams of young men or young women committed to a radical holiness discipleship, and the movement became controversial within the Free Methodist Church. Nelson succeeded Dake as leader of the Pentecost Bands when Dake died in Africa in 1892.

Following the Free Methodist General Conference of 1894 the Pentecost Bands left the Free Methodist Church, becoming an independent organization. Nelson served as their superintendent and apparently immediately founded the Pentecost Training School in St. Louis that same year.³⁰ The Bands eventually united with the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

In his book *The Midnight Cry*, Nelson called postmillennialism a "heresy" and said, 'we fail to find any scripture for the dogma that is becoming so popular these days that the 'world is rapidly growing better,' and that the prevailing principles and influences will be successful in converting it and bringing about the millennium."³¹ In Nelson's view, Christ's millennial reign will be literal and physical on a 'renewed and glorified earth':

We see no reason why this earth, when purged from sin, should not be the seat of Him who thus redeemed it? [sic] There is nothing essentially vile in physical substance. With sin and all its effects destroyed, this earth would be an Eden, and in a very literal sense the meek could inherit the earth. . . - thank God that sin is to be expunged and all its train of concomitant evils to be destroyed and righteousness, peace and plenty to be enjoyed, a universal Eden, presided over by [Jesus Christ].³²

With only four years remaining until the year 1900, Nelson calculated that the world was then over 5,990 years old. "The seventh thousand year day, the Lord's millennial sabbath, ... is at hand. We are living in the Saturday evening of this world's history."³³ "All orthodox Christians, especially believers in the premillennial doctrine, expect that the kingdom of Christ is to come upon the earth and exist under His personal reign for 1,000 years," he said.³⁴

Such views were not eccentric or unusual in the context of the times. The Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times, published in New York, with a circulation of 250,000, regularly carried articles supporting premillennial views during this period. A dozen years or so before the publication of Nelson's book the Reverend Michael Baxter in an article in the Christian Herald (which he edited) proved through a series of calculations that 1893 was the latest possible date for Christ's return and the beginning of the millennium.³⁵ It now appears he made some error in his calculations.

Significantly, Nelson's millennialism fit well with a movement which named itself after Pentecost and was engaged in front-line battle with the forces of darkness. The missionary spirit of Nelson and the Pentecost Bands is well captured in the most popular of Vivian Dake's many hymns, which articulates a kind of radical holiness view of the reign of God:

We'll girdle the globe with salvation,
With holiness unto the Lord;
And light shall illumine each nation
The light from the lamp of His Word.

The last verse:

The watch fires kindle far and near,
In every land let them appear,
Till burning lines of gospel fire,
Shall gird the world and mount up higher.³⁶

In some ways Nelson's view of the kingdom of God is the reverse image of Steele's, and yet both considered their views Wesleyan and Biblical. One might argue that Nelson's views are more christocentric and less pneumatocentric, though more apocalyptic, than are Steele's in that his focus was more on the return and reign of Jesus Christ than on the present work of the Holy Spirit in believers. In fact, Dake's hymns are highly christological, with few references to the Holy Spirit. The emphasis is on radical Christ likeness for the sake of evangelism and missions.

Yet over all, it seems to me that the premillennial eschatology of Nelson and people like him moves even further away from the breadth and depth of Wesley. There is a kind of apocalypticism in this mentality that is foreign

to the sense of growth and process one finds in Wesley. To a large degree, Wesley takes his cue from the life of Christ; Steele, from Christ's gift of the Spirit at Pentecost; and Nelson, from the Second Coming of Christ.

From 1900 to Today. I would argue that in general the Holiness Movement put major stress on the holiness of God to the neglect of the kingdom of God as a central organizing theme of theology and ethics. "Holiness or Christian perfection is the central idea of Christianity" argued Jesse T. Peck in his 1856 book, *The Central Idea of Christianity*. The key fact about 'the kingdom of grace' is holiness: "God... reigns in holiness, immaculate and infinite."³⁷ Very little else need be said about the kingdom of God.

Yet as Holiness churches and associations moved into the twentieth century, they found themselves affected in various ways by the Modernist-fundamentalist controversy, in which two radically divergent views of God's kingdom were advocated. Almost to the same degree that the Social Gospel argued that the kingdom of God was a present, this-worldly, social reality to be achieved largely by human effort, the Fundamentalists insisted that the kingdom was a future reality totally dependent upon God's sovereignty. Though it would be literal and earthly in the future, its only present relevance was spiritual, other-worldly, and largely individual.

The various Holiness bodies were affected by these currents in differing degrees, some of the newer Holiness denominations officially adopting premillennial positions. Virtually no one in the Holiness Movement, however, made the kingdom of God a central theological theme or attempted to articulate a theology of the holy reign of God.

A major exception to this, as we learned at the WTS Meeting last year, was E. Stanley Jones, the noted Methodist missionary to India whose book on Mahatma Gandhi influenced the young Martin Luther King. In many ways Jones was a man much like Wesley: an evangelist at heart; a folk theologian; a man with a world parish; a popularizer and yet profound; interested in all of life, including health and psychology; a radical who stayed in the mainstream.

The unique thing about Jones (at least from the perspective of this paper) is that his central theological paradigm shifted from holiness to the kingdom of God, and yet he remained fundamentally within the Holiness ethos. He is perhaps the only twentieth-century figure to articulate what might properly be called a theology of the holy reign of God. I would argue that some of the most appealing and dynamic aspects of Jones' kingdom theology are grounded precisely in his Wesleyanism. Conversely, Jones' teaching regarding discipleship and the Christian life escape much of the narrowness, parochialism, and compromising enculturation of most North American Holiness teaching precisely because of its grounding in a Biblical theology of the kingdom.

It is clear that the kingdom of God became the central organizing principle of Jones' theology especially after his experiences in the Soviet Union and in India in the 1930s. That story was detailed for us last year in David Bundy's excellent paper on E. Stanley Jones.

Jones wrote, "The Kingdom of God is the master-conception, the master-plan, the master-purpose, the master-will that gathers everything up into itself and gives it redemption, coherence, purpose, goal."³⁸ For him it is God's kingdom, not holiness, that is the central idea-or, rather, the central fact-

of Christianity. Jesus is the meaning and embodiment of the kingdom: "As He is the Incarnation of God, so He is the Incarnation of the Reign of God. . . to have relationship with Christ is to have relationship with the new Order embodied in Christ."³⁹

Jones insisted that the kingdom of God "is redemption for the individual and for the whole of society."⁴⁰ Jesus, said Jones, "was so interested in the individual that those who are impressed with this fact have often forgotten the framework of a world-kingdom in which this interest was manifest. To be able to hold a world-vision with detailed interest in the individual-this is a realism that extends from the macrocosm to the microcosm-the whole range of life."⁴¹ Jones especially insisted that the kingdom "is not an idea-it is fact, a present, pressing, all-demanding Fact"; it is "the ultimate environment."⁴² People and nations may or may not acknowledge God's kingdom, but the kingdom is. It is built into the fabric of the universe.

The church has lost sight of the kingdom of God, Jones said, but is ripe for a rediscovery. "If the Christian Church should become a disciple of the Kingdom of God there would be a new burst of creative activity that would set herself and the world ablaze."⁴³

Jones applied his understanding of the kingdom to all areas of life-economics, psychology, medicine, international relations, the environment, and the life of the church. "The kingdom of God is Christ likeness universalized," he said.⁴⁴ Jones carefully distinguished between the kingdom and the church; yet he said the church must exist for the kingdom. He sounds like Wesley when he applies the meaning of the kingdom to church life: "The Kingdom was to be given to a little flock and not merely to individuals. The Kingdom would come through group action. If these Kingdom-of-God groups are to be effective, they must be unreservedly committed to Christ and unbreakably committed to each other. They must enter a conspiracy of love to keep each other up to the highest."⁴⁵

While one might point to certain limitations in Jones' theology, I find it at once the most creative, relevant, and Biblically based kingdom theology to emerge so far in this century. I would like to suggest it as a key paradigm-though not the only one-for understanding in our age the meaning of the holy reign of God.

III. INTERPRETING THE HOLY REIGN OF GOD

This brings us to my final section. What do we learn from the interplay of these two themes, the holiness and the *reign* of God? What are some of the practical implications for life and theology today? I would like to make several concluding comments.

Models of the Holy Reign of God. First of all, it seems to me there are four possible models for understanding the relationship between the holiness of God and the reign of God:

1. *The experience of holiness IS the kingdom of God.* Here the kingdom is viewed as essentially spiritual and historical; the primary meaning of the kingdom is the personal experience of God's sanctifying presence in one's life. It is very easy for this view to make little or no distinction between the church and the kingdom.

This is, fundamentally, the model of John Wesley and of the Holiness Movement generally. It is perhaps best represented in the views of Daniel

Steele, as presented above. While I would identify this as Wesley's primary model, his conception of the kingdom was broader than this, as we have seen.

2. *The kingdom of God IS holiness*, understood as justice, wholeness, *shalom*. This is, in effect the opposite of the first model: the kingdom is the key to understanding holiness, rather than the other way around. This might be seen as the Social Gospel understanding, where the primary focus is on society and social meaning of holiness and the kingdom. Clearly there are elements of this view in Wesley and in E. Stanley Jones.

3. *Holiness is now; the kingdom is future*. Here there is a sharp dichotomy between the present and the future. The kingdom has to do with "last things;" and so is of little concern in the present. Our present focus should be on holy living, and on the life of the church. We might see this as the Holiness variant of premillennial dispensationalism; one certainly sees this in people like Thomas H. Nelson, or in Seth Cook Rees' book, *The Ideal Pentecostal Church*.⁴⁶

4. *Holiness is the ethic of the kingdom*. The kingdom is God's reign, both present and future, and we are called to live a life that reflects the character of the King. Jesus Christ is the key to understanding the meaning of both holiness and the kingdom. Thus holiness is Christ-likeness, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and the kingdom of God is the "grand design" for personal life and for society which shows us what God is doing in the world through Jesus Christ. I think E. Stanley Jones best represents this model, though elements of it are found also in Wesley. It perhaps is the model closest to the revival-and-reform vision of mid-nineteenth-century figures like Charles Finney.

These four models are not necessarily mutually exclusive; yet they do represent distinctly different ways of understanding the reign of God.

Implications for Christian Discipleship. Finally, I believe this whole discussion of the holy reign of God suggests several implications for the meaning of Christian discipleship today. Here I am attempting to be both Biblically faithful and relevant to the world in which we must live out our daily Christian commitment.

1. *Christian discipleship must be understood in terms of BOTH the holiness and the reign of God*. Both themes point to fundamental and mutually supportive Biblical truths which are needed in our world today. As Christians, and as the Christian community, we need to experience both Christ in us and Christ over and ahead of us.

I think it is important in this connection to maintain a trinitarian understanding of holiness and the reign of God-particularly as a safeguard against subtle dispensational tendencies which may over-emphasize one person of the Trinity at the expense of the others or of the unity of the Three.

2. *The holiness theme accents the elements of ethics, personal experience, and Christian character* in one's conception of the kingdom of God. Holiness stresses the *character* of the God who is King, not just His power or sovereignty. Holy, personal love becomes the controlling center, not mere power, authority, or order. This is one point where the Wesleyan Holiness tradition ought to be making a key contribution to contemporary discussions of the kingdom of God.

The Wesleyan and Pietist traditions have stressed the moral change brought about by regeneration and sanctification-Christ *in* us as well as

Christ for us; the renewed image of God as well as the Word of God. This is important if the contemporary church is really to embody the character of Jesus Christ and build kingdom communities which witness authentically to both the love and the power of Jesus Christ.

3. *The kingdom of God theme accents the broader historical, cultural, and social dimensions of holiness.* The theme of the kingdom of God brings in the global, cosmic perspective in ways that the theme of holiness too often does not. Wesley's understanding of "social holiness" makes more sense and can be more solidly grounded when interwoven with Biblical kingdom themes. Here is the basis for an ethic of liberation and social transformation.

4. *Both holiness and the kingdom of God embody the already not yet character of God's redemptive action.* Christians already are "saints," are being sanctified, and yet have not fully attained perfection or maturity. The kingdom of God is here, is coming, and will come. God has acted decisively in Jesus Christ and yet continues to act through Christ the Spirit and will act finally in the Second Coming of Christ. The all read not yet tension is similarly present in both themes precisely because both reflect the truth about God's saving, liberating action. Practically, this is both a caution against pride and triumphalism and also our source of hope and confidence as we face the future.

5. Finally, when Biblically grounded, *both themes reflect a powerful optimism of grace* which can be a vital motive force for evangelism, social reform, and the building of authentic church life. The dynamism which Timothy Smith points to in his *Revivalism and Social Reform*⁴⁷ can become a key mechanism when the holiness and kingdom themes are combined with Biblical integrity. Part of the challenge before us today is to build communities of faith where the hope of the Gospel is soundly grounded in God's holiness and God's reign.

Much more could be said about these themes and about their interaction, but I think this overview identifies the major issues involved and the fruitfulness of accenting and combining these two strands of truth. May God help the church today truly to seek first His reign and righteousness, and to pray in faith, "May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven:" This is the meaning of the holy reign of God.

NOTES

1. R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology: An Historical Study of the Christian Ideal for the Present Life* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), 5, 3.

2. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 27.

3. *Ibid.*, 70. Note the general sense of "gospel dispensation" here, in contrast to Fletcher's concept of the dispensation of the Spirit. See John Fletcher, "The Portrait of St. Paul or, The True Model for Christians and Pastors;" *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher*, 4 vols. (New York: Lane and Scott,

1851), 3:7-241, esp. pp. 116-97; Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press-Zondervan, 1987), 51-54.

4. *Ibid.*, 269.

5. *Ibid.*, 57.

6. John Wesley, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the First;" *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker. Vol 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 470.

7. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes*, 25.

8. *Ibid.*, 41.

9. *Ibid.*, 37. Cf. Wesley's sixth sermon on the Sermon on the Mount, which contains virtually the same wording.

10. Dayton, 152-53.

11. Amos Binney and Daniel Steele, *Binney '5 Theological Compend Improved*. . -- (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1875,1902), 139-41.

12. Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935* (New York: Abingdon, 1965), 47.

13. Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes: Or a View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity*, new ed., 2 vols. (New York: Lane and Scott, 1851), 2:637.

14. Chiles, 63.

15. Daniel Steele, *Antinomianism Revived, or the Theology of the So-called Plymouth Brethren Examined and Refuted* (Boston: McDonald, Gill & Co., 1887).

16. *Ibid.*, 169.

17. *Ibid.*, 168.

18. *Ibid.*, 265.

19. *Ibid.*, 55-56.

20. Dayton, 164.

21. Steele, 246.

22. *Ibid.*, 250.

23. *Ibid.*, 247.

24. *Ibid.*, 248.

25. *Ibid.*, 251.

26. *Ibid.*, 252.

27. Daniel Steele, *Milestone Papers, Doctrinal Ethical and Experimental on Christian Progress* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1878), 146.

28. Ibid, 148-49.

29. Thomas H. Nelson, *Life and Labors of Rev. Vivian A. Dake, Organizer and Leader of Pentecost Bands* (Chicago: T. B. Arnold, 1894), 470. Dake wrote in 1891, ""During the past year we have given the Illinois conference one new society, the Central Illinois, five new societies, with one church dedicated and three under process of erection; the Wabash conference, five new societies with three churches dedicated and one under way, in addition to lots for two more churches. These are all dedicated to the church and the societies handed over to the respective conferences" (Ibid., 470).

30. Byron S. Lamson, *Venture! The Frontiers of Free Methodism* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Press, 1960), 129438.

31. Thomas H. Nelson, *The Midnight Cry or The Consummation of All Things as Shown by Fulfilled Prophecies and the "Signs of the Times"* (Indianapolis: Pentecost Band Publishing Company, 1896), 16, 18.

32. Ibid., 24.

33. Ibid., 163.

34. Ibid., 164.

35. M. Baxter, "The Focus Year of Prophetic Chronology," *The Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times*, 17:18, New Series (May 3, 1883), 278.

36. *Free Methodist Hymnal*, 1910, No.650. 37Jesse T. Peck, *The Central Idea of Christianity*, abridged (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1951), 7, 12.

38. E. Stanley Jones, *Is the Kingdom of God Realism?* (New York:Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1940), 53.

39. Ibid., 54.

40. Ibid., 56.

41. Ibid., 24.

42. Ibid., 72, 77.

43. Ibid., 262-63.

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45. Ibid., 272. 46Seth Cock Roes, *The Ideal Pentecostal Church* (Cincinnati: M. W Knapp, The Revivalist Office, 1897).

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(THE) CHURCH AND (THE) CULTURE: A LITTLE REFLECTION ON THE ASSUMPTIO CARNIS

by

CRAIG KEEN

I

The little essay which follows is offered before the reader as an experiment in theology. That means that from beginning to end it traces a discourse (Proslogium) of praise and gratitude. But the gratitude and praise that issue here are not finally offered to you, my fellow readers; for if you read me correctly, then you too will not read toward yourselves, but toward the One whom the attentive reader even now expects.¹ To put it a bit more simply, this essay is but an inscription of the truth: Jesus, the one Head of all things in heaven and on earth (Ephesians 1:10). Whether this discourse fares well or not has finally to do with the way it will come to join all those other things brought together under that one Head.

II

The life that human beings live is not given to them beforehand. Their options, of course, are limited by the environments into which they stumble as well as by the organic structures with which they stumble. But what their lives come to be is not exhaustively preprogrammed, e.g., instinctually.² And so humans begin as quite uncertain about where they are going. Further, when they choose a way to go, they have to take themselves there. If there are no alternative routes and they do not choose to go elsewhere and there are things in the way, then they have to move them. If those things are too heavy for the muscles in their arms and legs, then they must invent tools to move them. If the weather turns bad, they must clothe themselves and make shelters. To minimize conflict and to maximize the efficiency of a family or larger group, rules must be made. And all of this takes language, perhaps the most impressive of all human inventions. In other words humans make their own way, and the way that they make is called culture.³

Culture is an artificial world only partially determined by geography and climate and vegetation and the migration patterns of animals. Culture is a world shaped to a surprising degree by human hands and ideas. It is a world of tin plates and huts and paths and clans and villages. It is a world of alliances and national laws and city governments and police forces and sales tax; a world of etiquette and customs and honors and classes and races and languages; a world of definite work and a world of indefinite play.

III

Culture then is the way humans live their lives. And since the Christian life is also quite obviously a human life, it is very easy to conclude that the church is *in toto* a species, perhaps even the best or purest species, within the comprehensive genus "culture," i.e., it is very easy to conclude that the church is purely cultural. But where such a very easy conclusion wants to take us and whether or not we should make the journey are not immediately settled. Consider two of the ways this easy conclusion approaches its goal.

On the one hand the church might be taken as an assembly within the last remaining fortress of a land invaded by an evil people, a people who have corrupted the laws and customs that only *we* have purely preserved; we might believe that the church is huddled within an ark awaiting the rain, while the perverters of that true culture which only we carry seal their own doom by their foolish obsession with the passing pleasures of today. On the other hand the church might be taken as the assembly which provides the example for those around it; we might believe that it shows people what they are to be and perhaps to some extent are already, but which along with the church they can now fully be; we might believe that it is the best and the truest and the most beautiful, even by the standards of those who observe it from outside (but never really outside) its wide, open doors. On the one hand then, the church is regarded as a sphere of culture diametrically opposed to another sphere of culture (the world). On the other hand the church is regarded as a kind of institutional reminder within (a) culture of how we all really ought to live, a kind of purified essence of the larger, less than perfect cultural world. Here are two different positions that are essentially the same: they both affirm emphatically that the church is purely cultural.⁴

Since the church claims that Jesus Christ is its reason for being, the adequacy of these views or any view can be evaluated with depth only if one attends to his meaning. But the tools of hermeneutics provide escape routes, if one but look. The Christ can be understood, analogously to the understanding of the church just presented, as the completion of what we all should be, as the One who possesses perfection, as the One who is humanity fulfilled, as the One who has arrived. Then, depending on how bad the rest of us are taken to be, either He is the One who is sharply contrasted with those of us (probably most of us) who remain under the curse of sin—the corrupt, the diseased, the spiritually dead—or He is the One who is an example to the rest of us of what we can become, perhaps by valiant effort. Grace is perhaps needed more in the one case than in the other, but again Jesus Christ functions the same way in both: as a kind of flesh and blood platonic form, the complete One whom we are to imitate from a distance: *imitatio Christi*. Of course, if one wishes to be Chalcedonian, one can quite easily explain that His being fulfilled humanity is what constitutes His full deity.

IV

And yet is this what is to be said of Jesus Christ? Does the New Testament go to so much trouble to explain His humble birth, His homelessness, His rejection by the people of His nation and by His closest followers, His being arrested by the officials of a foreign occupying power, and His humiliating crucifixion. . . does it do all this in order to explain His fullness? Is it out of His fullness that He sweats drops of blood at Gethsemane? Is it out of His fullness that He prays "*Ebi, Elot, lama Sabachthani?*"

The whole of the life of Jesus Christ is not a fullness,⁵ it is an emptying in which He does not assert himself, but rather asserts the other.⁶ And yet His relationship to culture is not simple. Just as culture-Christianity stops far short of Jesus Christ, so also does a Christianity which keeps Him detached from culture. Since He asserts the other, one can never see Him as either unrelated to human life as a kind of docetic phantom, or related to it simply as the destroying agent of divine wrath. In Christ, human life is neither simply pulled up by the roots and cast into the fire, nor allowed to be as it is. In Him, life is *aufgehoben*, the old is ended, but in such a way that it becomes new.

Among the old ideas that become new in Jesus Christ are two that already speak of novelty, or which at least point at it. The first is the idea that some-thing comes to be only as a series of events is established and bound together in continuity by God.⁷ The second is the idea that something comes to be only from beyond itself, from beyond what it has been; that what it comes to be is given to it in discontinuity with the past, i.e., out of nowhere; and this too by God.⁸ The wandering people of Israel move beyond their dwelling, their camp is broken, their settlement is interrupted. It is this interruption⁹ that is the breaking in of the new, the occurrence of the unprecedented, the movement into the open. The new is in its first movement the nihilation of the old, the denial of whatever is given, even of potentiality, because it is the radically other. But these people remain those who dwelt here, who settled, for the novel embraces the old. But in so doing it at the same time makes it new. This is the historicizing of reality that takes place as God acts.

In Jesus Christ the historicizing of reality becomes both more comprehensive and more nihilating. There is no level of human reality excluded by Him.¹⁰ Not only does He show love and compassion toward both the powerful and the powerless during His public ministry (speaking with authority to the former, weeping with the latter); but He, the Christ, God the Son, through whom all things were made, joins thieves on Golgotha and is accursed. Jesus Christ therefore embraces all the living.¹¹ And yet as His hands stretch out to embrace, He dies. Now this death is not merely bodily, it is not that only the building which housed His immaterial soul has perished. He is dead, His life is gone, He has ceased to be. Therefore His embrace takes in the living and the dead, and among the dead whom He embraces are to be numbered those who died accursed. This descent, this humiliation, this emptying "unto death, even death on the cross," is itself embraced by God the Father, embraced and exalted above all things (Philippians 2).¹²

Here indeed God turns to the world, and the world is redeemed, but-and this is crucially important-not simply as it is. Jesus Christ is indeed

resurrected. But His resurrection takes place only with His crucifixion. Further His resurrected body is not imply a repetition of the body that reclined at the Last Supper. It is that body certainly. Otherwise Jesus Christ would not have been raised. But the resurrected body is that body transformed, not resuscitated. It is the old, certainly; but the old has become new.¹³ The redemption of the world therefore takes place only as it moves with Jesus Christ beyond what it is, only as it ceases to grasp at the status it wishes to possess and reaches rather for the other, only as it embraces the humiliated and shares in that humiliation, i.e., only as it is nihilated, only as it comes to be a servant, only as it gives itself up to the other,¹⁴ only as it joins Jesus Christ on the cross. The resurrection which follows cannot be guaranteed, since it comes from the outside, i.e., it is resurrection *ex nihilo*. And yet in Jesus Christ everyone is resurrected, i.e., in Him the old human life is made incomparably new. Thus culture enters into this discourse explicitly once again.

V.

The light of the cross and resurrection shines back on culture. Culture happens as people take a world that in itself is just there and make it something else. They take a stone and make it into an axehead. They take seed and turn it into a crop. They take trees and turn them into shelters, tables, carvings. They take grunts and clicks and whistles and turn them into language. The products of culture, however, immediately become part of the world that in itself is just there. They then await further cultural activity; further change. Insofar as this activity is done non-possessively, i.e., done toward the other, doxologically, awaiting God's yes or no, then it reflects the light of the cross and resurrection, it shines as history. But of course axes can become weapons; shelters, tables, and carvings can become possessions; language can become slander. Such a perverted culture is in itself opaque. And yet even opacity does not overcome the cross and resurrection (John 1:5).¹⁵ Indeed the cross and resurrection are themselves the overcoming of opacity (Matthew 4:16), but only as the opaque is emptied, and that happens only with time.

It is in Jesus Christ that human life becomes the church.¹⁶ It is not essential that there be many or few human lives gathered together. It is not essential that the gathering manifest one sociological structure rather than another. It is essential only that human life be in Jesus Christ, and that means that it pass through His death and resurrection. And yet where there is the church there is also to be found a whole world that is not gathered together in Jesus Christ. The church is not the Kingdom of God. It is not the absolute, universal embodiment of God's rule over His creation. The church therefore must struggle, it can never stop, it will not arrive, until the reality which it only anticipates has been established by its Lord and Saviour.¹⁷ Of course the hostile world that is not gathered together in Jesus Christ has been broken by Him.¹⁸ But in a sense the breaking is still to be done. Already and not yet.

The people gathered together in Jesus Christ continue to be related to the institutions of this world. The difference between these people and those who are not gathered is that the former have been granted freedom.¹⁹ They are to be subject to rulers, but only insofar as that subjection can be lived out in that freedom that arises in subjection to the true Lord (Romans 13);

wages are to be earned, but only insofar as doing so makes clear that the gospel is "free of charge" (I Corinthians 9:1-18); taxes are to be paid, but only insofar as those taxes are "things that are God's" (Mark 12:13-17); customs are to be observed, but only insofar as that leads toward liberating others to the freedom in Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 8:1-13,10:14-11:1). Unfortunately there are institutions that cannot be preserved in a kingdom of love. The church is about the conversion of these institutions, but conversion takes time. Therefore it is inevitable that followers of the crucified Lord will be required to suffer. But the hope that such unconverted systems cannot finally stand in the presence of the one who raised that Lord from the dead weakens their oppressive hold and places one in a position to do a redemptive work (I Peter 2:11-3:9, 4:7-11; Ephesians 5:21-33; I Corinthians 11:2-16).

Therefore those people who are gathered together in Christ, i.e., the church, will inevitably undertake the task of transforming the cultures in which they move, whether they know it or not. They will inevitably see not only that the world as it is now given is the focus of God's profoundly redemptive resolve, but also that the world as it is now given is passing away and is far from ultimate.

The course to be taken in this transformative enterprise must follow the lead of what emerges in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What emerges there is (1) the nihilation of everything that is, and (2) the embrace of everything that is. What emerges is redemptive love in the midst of absolute loss.

The church therefore is to stand with everyone, not only or primarily with the best or most deserving, not with the majority, not with one sex or race, but with all; and in particular with those who stand closest to the cross: the neglected, the poor, the homeless, the deprived, the outcast, the sinner, the forsaken. The church therefore is to make clear that the crucified and resurrected One is Lord, to walk with everyone to the cross, to hang there with everyone, to rise with everyone to newness of life. The church therefore is to make clear that individuals and institutions are never acceptable merely the way they are, and that they can never make themselves acceptable; this is to say that acceptability has everything to do with the One who is beyond.

Therefore the church's stance toward the institutions of the culture in which it moves must in the first place be critical. The self-deification to which institutions (including religious institutions) are inclined must be unmasked. No institution is complete in itself, nor is it in a position to guarantee its own survival, nor does it have its reason for being in itself. The Lordship of Jesus Christ means that every institution must come to be what it is not yet; that God alone grants reality and that film the outside; that every reality has its reason for being only in the other.²⁰

Racism or sexism is to be condemned, for they exempt one race or sex from the cross and bar another from the resurrection. The church is to condemn systems which imprison persons in social or economic classes and which perpetuate poverty disease, ignorance, isolation, and despair, for they deny the hope that is in Jesus Christ. The church is to condemn the expenditure of resources for the production of weapons which for the sake of national self-preservation threaten to destroy all life on earth, for such expenditure reverses and thus perverts what emerges in the life of Christ, the revelation that life is to be poured out, given away for the other, and never for oneself.

On the other hand the church is to support even non-Christian institutions which help clarify the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It will join hands with organizations which pursue the same general goals as it does, recognizing that those organizations have different reasons for acting. The church therefore would find much with which to agree in peace movements, civil rights movements, economic reform movements, educational institutions, and institutions which seek physiological, psychological, or social welfare.²¹ It will of course take wisdom and deliberation to decide how to distinguish between institutions that are relative allies and those that are not, and every such alliance cannot be uncritical. But to make clear that Jesus Christ is Lord requires that we not let the given order be.

The church is enfleshed in culture; and yet it is the church only as it lives according to the Spirit. It cannot therefore simply be taken as a species of the genus "culture." And yet every move it makes is to make clear that not only is this world passing away but it is the focus of God's profoundly serious redemptive resolve. The life of love carries the church into the miseries and hopes of real flesh and blood human beings. It is not for the sake of some ideology that the church cannot confine itself to an inner, private sphere; it is because Jesus Christ has awakened mercy and compassion in our midst, because our Lord poured out His life for those who are lost and forsaken and impoverished, because no servant is above his/her master.²²

Notes

1. Anselm, "An Address," in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, trans. Eugene R. Fairweather (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1970), 72-73 [chapter I]: "Teach me to seek thee, and when I seek thee show thyself to me, for I cannot seek thee unless thou teach me, or find thee unless thou show me thyself. Let me seek thee in my desire, let me desire thee in my seeking. Let me find thee by loving thee, let me love thee when I find thee." Cf. Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, trans. Ian W Robertson (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1960).

2. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 27-42.

3. This is of course not to say that God is uninvolved in human life. God is the Creator of all (die alles bestimmende Wirklichkeit, to use the phrase Pannenberg picked up from Bultmann). But God creates in human cultural activity always as humans create, i.e., human creativity reflects God's creativity T. S. Eliot, "Choruses from 'The Rock,' " in *The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1971), 111 [IXJ]: "The soul of Man must quicken to creation.! Out of the formless stone, when the artist united himself with stone, I Spring always new forms of life, from the soul of man that is joined to the soul of stone; I Out of the meaningless practical shapes of all that is living or lifeless I Joined with the artist's eye, new life, new form, new colour. / Out of the sea of sound the life of music.! Out

of the slimy mud of words, out of the sleet and hail of verbal imprecision's, I Approximate thoughts and feelings, I There spring the perfect order of speech, and the beauty of incantation! Lord, shall we not bring these gifts to Your service?! Shall we not bring to Your service all our powers! For life, for dignity grace and order, I And intellectual pleasures of the senses? I The Lord who created must wish us to create! And employ our creation again in His service I Which is already His service in creating:' This is illustrated in Adam's naming of the animals in the garden (without a name book): "and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name" (Genesis 2:19b).

4. What I am discussing in this paragraph and more indirectly in the next one are the first two "types" of H. Richard Niebuhr's classic *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1951). But unlike Niebuhr, who shapely contrasts what he calls 'Christ against culture' and "the Christ of culture," I am saying that they are variants of the same position. For "Christ against culture" see Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heresies*, especially 7. For "the Christ of culture" see Adolf von Harnack's attacks against Karl Barth, trans. Keith R. Crim, in *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1968), 165-166, 171-174, 186-187 (especially question 10 on p.166); and John B. Cobb, Jr., *Liberal Christianity at the Crossroads* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973), especially 11-16. It also seems clear that Niebuhr's types three and four, "Christ above culture" (Thomas Aquinas) and "Christ and culture in paradox" (Luther), fall under the same heading. The added grace which brings holiness, according to Thomas, is the fulfillment of culture and in no sense contrasts with the good, the true, and the beautiful of even fallen humanity. What distinguishes this position is that the supernatural adds a certain complexity but the whole is subsumed under the same ahistorical aristotelian (platonic) archal. (See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II: Providence, part II, trans. Vernon J. Bourke [Notre Dame:

University of Notre Dame Press, 1975], 223-225 [chapter 147], 230-233 [chapter 150].) The position of Luther, "Christ and culture in paradox," begins by contrasting Christ and culture (even more extremely than Tertullian does). But for the sake of guarding against chaos and the destruction it would bring, Luther strongly advocates Christian involvement in worldly affairs. This involvement is not to transform the world; Luther is much too pessimistic to expect that. Rather, the Christian is involved in worldly (sinful) society to keep things from getting any more overtly evil than they already are. One should live one's life where God puts one, expecting no great improvement on the outside, but internally trusting in God, loving one's neighbor, and enjoying the peace that God sheds abroad in one's heart. (See Luther's *Secular Authority To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*, trans. J. J. Schindel, in *Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger [New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., Anchor Books, 1961]; Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther* trans. Robert C. Schulz [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972]; Niebuhr's excellent discussion in chapter five of *Christ and Culture*; and Robert Webber, *The Secular Saint* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979], 113-127.) The fifth position is called "Christ the transformer of culture." This position at least begins to "historicize.' It can contain ahistorical elements,

as it does in Augustine, who makes the archal of reality eternal, i.e., changeless. But even Augustine breaks out of the static view of at least the created order and expects novelty (See *The City of God*, XXII:13-14, 20; and Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1949], 160-173, especially 163-164.) If this position can free itself from platonic dualism and an equally static aristotelian schema of potentiality-actuality and if it can give itself to genuine novelty (including die Weltoffenheit), then it would be rather close to what is argued below. To the extent that it gives itself to genuine novelty it not only frees itself from subsumption under the genus "culture," but it provides a basis for evaluating culture, and accounting for it. The reader might also want to consult Geoffrey Wainwright's discussion of the church and culture in his *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 357-398; see in particular 386-387 for a proposed sixth type, "the pluralistic type," which may in fact be a variant of the second type, "the Christ of culture."

5. This is written with the recognition that the Old and New Testaments give a very prominent place to the idea of being filled with the Spirit, and I do not have any desire to challenge Scripture. How could I write such a thing therefore? Well, because being filled with the Spirit is not like filling a flour sack with flour. It is not being completed or finished (cf. John 19:30). It is movement. One might note that H. W. Wolff defines the nepes that Adam becomes when God breathes into Him (Genesis 2:7) as "neediness" which is free to hope in and to praise Yahweh; not a completeness which is in itself well situated with Yahweh. (See H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. Margaret Kohl [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974], 10-25, cf. 59-60.) Notice also Paul's sarcasm (in I Corinthians 4:8-13) to the Corinthians who believe they have arrived: "Already you are filled! . . . - [But] we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all things" (vv. 8a, 13b). Of course the most obvious text for this argument is Philippians 2. In other words, being filled with the Spirit is, when compared to other kinds of filling, an emptying.

6. The word "assert" means literally "to join to?" But its etymology becomes immediately even more interesting. It means "to put one's hand on the head of a slave, either to set him free or claim him for servitude, hence, to set free, protect, defend in light of the cross and resurrection one might change the "either-or" to a "both-and?" (See the OED.)

7. There is an excellent discussion of this idea in Gerhard von Rad's *Old Testament Theology* trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962, 1965), 11:105-112. Among other things, von Rad writes the following; Israel "did not stop short at basing her existence on a single historical event: she went on to specify a whole series of them, and it was this series of events as a whole which called the people of Israel into being" (105). "At the same time, . . . the whole . . . was itself very much more than the sum of all its various parts" (106). "Jahwism too experienced Jahweh as a power who established fixed orders, but with a difference. In the other religions the deities exercised their functions and received their worship *within* these orders-they in fact embodied the orders on which the cosmos and the state

rested-whereas for the faith of Israel Jahweh was outside of these. He was their creator and guarantor; but he could not be identified with them" (111-112).

8. This of course is the other side of the first idea. Von Rad's discussion of this is perhaps even more important (see 11:115-118). Again some selections: The notion of the eschatological in the Old Testament is that there is a historical "break which goes so deep that the new state beyond it cannot be understood as a continuation of what went before. It is as if Israel and all her religious assets are thrown back to the point of vacuum [my emphasis], a vacuum which the prophets must first create by preaching judgment and sweeping away all false security, and then fill with their message of the new thing" (115). "The prophetic teaching is only eschatological when the prophets expelled Israel from the safety of the old saving actions and suddenly shifted the basis of salvation to a future action of God it is reduced to the extremely revolutionary fact that the prophets saw Jahweh approaching Israel with a new action which made the old saving institutions increasingly invalid since from then on life or death for Israel was determined by this future event" (118). Cf. this from Wolff: "Now, for the first time, the concept of the 'future' can also consequently be formed in Hebrew: . . . what is to come. . . Future events themselves move first in the direction of man; only the person who has heard the promise who turns expectantly towards the things that have up to then lain invisibly behind him. Now the future is defined as 'what is new' . . ." (88-89).

9. See Eberhard Jungel, "The Truth of Life: Observations on Truth As the Interruption of the Continuity of Life," trans. Richard W. A. McKinney, in *Creation and Christ: Studies in Honor of T F Torrance*, ed. Richard W. A. McKinney (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1976), 231-236.

10. If one understands that human reality embraces non-human reality, then in him is gathered together everything. "Thus man's creation has a retroactive significance for all non human creatures; it gives them a relation to God" (Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972], 60). "The being created in this [divine] image is man. The rest of creation has this character of a copy or image only insofar as it has found its conclusion and climax in the creation and existence of man" (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol.111: *The Doctrine of Creation*, part I, trans. J. W Edwards, O. Bussey, Harold Knight [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958], 184).

11. Cf. the recapitulation theory of Irenaeus.

12. Perhaps the most eloquent theological explication of this is Jurgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God*, trans. R. A. Wilson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974). See also Moltmann's essay "The Crucified God and Apathetic Man," in *The Experiment Hope*, ed. And trans. M. Douglas Meeks (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975). Cf. the following from Gunter Bornkamm, "On Understanding the Christ Hymn: Philippians 2:6-11," in *Early Christian Experience*, trans. Paul H. Hammer (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969): The way of Christ "bursts all bounds of earth and yet precisely in so doing opens the horizon by which alone there can be real life in faith"

(112). Further "the 'form of a servant' is not a role he plays, but the very nature that he assumes. But then it is surprising that humanity and servant hood here are identified so directly" (115). Christ's "subsequent exaltation as Lord is founded only in his obedience even to death" (116). "The Lordship of Christ means the complete and full turning of God to the world. The exaltation of the humiliated One is God's victory over the world" (118). "But this means at the same time that humiliation and obedience are now henceforth the kingly way of faith, the seal of the liberated, the pledge of coming redemption. Therefore, the congregation already now joins in the hidden praise of the world and makes it manifest-vicariously for the world for whom the truth of God is not yet open: 'Jesus Christ is Lord-to the glory of God the Father' " (12).

13. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: The Westminster- Press, 1974), 74-81, 86-88, 98400.

14. The transcendence that living is, and that cannot be satisfactorily expressed in life itself as survival (a surpassing of life), is rather the pressing demand of an other life, the life of the other. From this life everything comes, and turned to it, we cannot turn back" (Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 105.

15. "Apparently, the key mark of Jesus in the image form of God is that he did not grasp after equality with God but became obedient. God is the one who does not grasp. And human persons in his image are those who do not grasp. Grasping power cannot create. Grasping power cannot enhance creation ... grasping brings death" (Walter Brueggeman, *Genesis* [Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1982], 34).

16. K. L. Schmidt, 'ekklesia;' in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, vol III, trans. Geoffrey W Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965?, 509, 512.

17. *Ibid.*, 522, 534.

18. Bornkamm, "Christ and the World in the Early Christian Message," in *Early Christian Experience*, 21-22: "Into this world over which as it were the gigantic shadow of guilty man lies, and which has marked the vanity of its coming and going by this guilt, even to the sighing of the creation; into this world, which has become the sphere of power of the forces which, though exalted on the throne by man himself, reproach him in his imprisonment in guilt; into this world, which I am myself, God has sent his Son in the form of sinful flesh, in the form marked and disfigured by sin-made sin for us.... What makes the world this world, what makes man this man is borne and conquered by Christ. On the cross which the world sets up for him and on which he dies, the world itself finds its end."

19. "What characterizes and differentiates believers is just that in their ties and obligations to the world they stand as the children of freedom, no longer as the enslaved who seek life in it, but as those in Christ, liberated

by Christ by his dying and rising and transplanted into the lordship of his love. As those at home with a heavenly citizenship, they recognize the time and know that the night is retreating and the morning approaches" (ibid., 24). "A thing can be purely secular only to a man who thinks of it in this way. As nothing is charisma in itself, so nothing is secular in itself. For, in the time of the Eschaton, this sphere of the 'in itself,' this demilitarized zone, this 'indifference' exists no longer" (Ernst Kasemann, "Ministry and Community in the New Testament;" in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague [London: SCM Press, 1964], 72).

20. "To be converted is to know and experience the fact that, contrary to the laws of physics, we can stand straight, according to the Gospel, only when our center of gravity is outside ourselves" (Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson [Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973], 205).

21. See also Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 330-335.

22. Paul Tillich has developed one of the most impressive theologies of culture in this century. Central to his view is his distinction between 'autonomy,' 'heteronomy' and 'theonomy.' "Autonomy asserts that man as the bearer of universal reason is the source and measure of culture and religion-that he is his own law. Heteronomy asserts that man, being unable to act according to universal reason, must be subjected to a law, strange and superior to him. Theonomy asserts that the superior law is, at the same time, the innermost law of man himself, rooted in the divine ground which is man's own ground: the law of life transcends man, although it is, at the same time, his own" (Paul Tillich, "Religion and Secular Culture," in *The Protestant Era*, trans. James Luther Adams [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957], 56-57). He is saying that there is something fundamentally wrong with autonomy and heteronomy. The first fails to recognize that the truth of human life cannot be taken directly from the conditioned things around us, not even from ourselves. The second fails to recognize that the truth of human life emerges out of the depths of human life itself, out of the unconditioned richness in which even fallen human life is rooted, and therefore it fails to see that the truth always brings integrity, wholeness, health, to human life. These two are destructive, demonic. The third, theonomy, sees that "religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion" (57). It sees that no matter how mysterious and frightening the truth may seem, it is always also fascinating, the truth with which we were connected all along, the truth that was there all along. It has not come out of nowhere, it does not disturb closure, it vibrates up from below, where it was vibrating all along, in the eternal now. Theonomy means healing, integrity, wholeness. The ground in which we are rooted, from which our life emerges, is of course God.

I find that I cannot accept this view, and for the following reasons. First, it is a delusion to maintain that an open relationship with God will bring health, completeness, wholeness. In fact in light of the cross (which remains the cross even on Easter) it seems that an open relationship with God is just that: open, as in "open wound." Tillich can talk about novelty, and he does so in terms of cultural activity (see his *Systematic Theology* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951, 1957, 1963], 1:181482). But because there

is an analogia entis between us and God, i.e., because what we are and can become are both our possession as potentiality and in unbroken (even if twisted) continuity with God (Cf. *The Courage to Be* [New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1952], 89, 155-490), there is only the relatively new, the new that was "latent" before it became "manifest" (see *Systematic Theology*, 111:220: cf. 94-98). Thus Tillich can write: "The human heart seeks the infinite because that is where the finite wants to rest [!]. In the infinite it sees its own fulfillment" (*Dynamics of Faith* [New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Harper Torchbooks, 1947], 13). In turning to God one re-turns to the essential, the original, the old (see his discussion of the fall in *Systematic Theology II*).

Further the fulfillment which Tillich's theology of culture longs for is, as far as I can see, incompatible with the notion that faith, hope, and love are self-effacing, self-emptying, self-denying. Thus Tillich sees faith as centeredness" (*Dynamics of Faith*, 4-8), and as "self-affirmation" (*The Courage to Be*). Barth's alternative seems far superior at this point (see, e.g., Karl Barth, "Rudolf Bultmann: An Attempt to Understand Him," in *Kerygma and Myth*, vol.2, ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald Fuller [London: S. P. C. K., 1962], especially 86-88).

EMPOWERED FOREMOTHERS: WESLEYAN/HOLINESS WOMEN SPEAK TO TODAY'S CHRISTIAN FEMINISTS

by

SUSIE STANLEY

Women in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries possessed the power of the Holy Spirit which enabled them to minister. Amanda Smith and Hulda Rees are just two examples. Methodist Bishop James M. Thoburn attributed Amanda Smith's evangelistic success to "that invisible something which we are accustomed to call power, and which is never possessed by any Christian believer except as one of the fruits of the indwelling Spirit of God"¹ Likewise, Hulda Rees preached "in the power of the Spirit" after experiencing entire sanctification.²

Christian feminist literature abounds with references to empowerment. For example, Lynn Rhodes in *Co-Creating* speaks of "feminist visions of the promise of a new creation" where "God is envisioned as advocate, as the spirit of empowerment."³ Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, who is among the feminist theologians exploring the potential of the power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen women, says:

The power which is renewing women today in opposition to patriarchal structures and their own insecurity and discouragement, the power which liberates them and enables them to stand upright like the healed crippled woman, the power which enables them to discover their sisters, is the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴

While Christian feminists today are examining empowerment by the Holy Spirit, for the most part they are unaware of the important role of empowerment in the lives of Wesleyan/Holiness women. Christian feminists, other than the few who research the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement,⁵ never mention the doctrine of entire sanctification and the power that accompanied it in their discussions of empowerment. There is a usable past within the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement that has not yet been explored by feminists.

The possibility of appropriating women's experience in the Wesleyan tradition as a usable past for feminists has been suggested by Rosemary Keller. Keller notes the spiritual empowerment possessed by Wesleyan women. She mentions the work of the Holy Spirit as "a fruitful focus for constructive theology;" yet Keller (mistakenly) locates the possibility of Christian transformation within the conversion experience.⁶ An examination of the lives of women in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement discloses, however, that empowerment actually resulted from the second work of grace or entire sanctification rather than conversion.

My purpose is to highlight the emphasis Wesleyan/Holiness women placed on empowerment and to suggest that their experience can serve as a usable past for the contemporary Christian feminist quest for empowerment. In a recent issue of Wesleyan Theological Journal, Randy Maddox compared Christian feminism and Wesleyan theology; I agree with his assessment that "Wesleyanism presents to Christian feminists a theological tradition with which they will find strong affinities and on which they can build."⁷ The doctrine of empowerment as articulated by women in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries affords a basis on which Christian feminists can build their own understanding of empowerment.

Sometimes, it is incorrectly assumed that the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement has not stressed power. Winthrop Hudson represents those who describe Wesleyan/Holiness doctrine as emphasizing purity with no focus on empowerment.

Wesleyan holiness leaders had long been committed to the idea that conversion should be followed by a baptism of the Spirit, the primary effect of which was purity of life. The higher Christian life leaders, in contrast, thought of this second transforming religious experience as energizing and empowering believers to witness for Christ and thus serve the church and society.⁸

An examination of the Wesleyan/Holiness doctrine does not support Hudson's contention that it is a doctrine concerned solely with purity.⁹

Phoebe Palmer, the mother of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement who popularized John Wesley's doctrine in the United States, made power a central element of her doctrine of holiness.¹⁰ Her theology refutes Hudson's generalization. While Palmer affirmed that the outcome of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was heart purity, she emphasized power. Palmer articulated a doctrine of holiness in which purity and power for service were intimately intertwined.

HERMENEUTIC OF EMPOWERMENT

Just as Palmer equated purity and power, likewise she proclaimed: "Holiness is power."¹¹ For Palmer, power was synonymous with holiness: "heart holiness and the gift of power should ever be regarded as identical."¹² Adopting the theology of John Fletcher, Palmer equated holiness with the baptism of the Holy Ghost experienced by Jesus' followers at Pentecost.¹³ Acts 2 records the events of Pentecost when the believers were clothed with power from on high, fulfilling Jesus' promise of Luke 24:49. At Pentecost, "newly energized men and women, whose talents had before been dormant, became valiant in holy warfare."¹⁴ Palmer and other holiness women recognized that

the Holy Spirit empowered both men and women at Pentecost.¹⁵ The Holy Spirit did not discriminate on the basis of one's sex. An editorial on entire sanctification and woman's work in *Guide to Holiness* affirmed: "He [God] fulfills His prophecy by Joel, and sheds upon her the Holy Spirit for all the varieties of her work"¹⁶ According to Palmer, the "endowment of power" which accompanied this baptism was not restricted to the New Testament era but was still available to Christians through the experience of holiness or entire sanctification.¹⁷

Frances Willard referred to the Woman's Crusade against alcohol during 1873-1874 as a modern Pentecost. She explicitly connected the power received by the followers of Jesus at Pentecost with the power which enabled women to inaugurate the Woman's Crusade which culminated in the organization of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union,

Born of such a visitation of God's Spirit as the world has not known since tongues of fire sat upon the wondering group at Pentecost, cradled in a faith high as the hope of a saint, and deep as the depths of a drunkard's despair, and baptized in the beauty of holiness, the Crusade determined the ultimate goal of its teachable child, the W.C.T.U., which has one steadfast aim, and that none other than the regency of Christ, not in form but in fact.¹⁸

Annie Wittenmyer described the Crusade as "the Pentecostal baptism that sent the women of all denominations out to plead the cause of God and humanity, with tongues of fire."¹⁹

Christian feminists also focus on Pentecost as the event when Christians first experienced empowerment. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza describes the theological self-understanding of the early Christians or, as she prefers to call them, the Christian missionary movement. She lists Acts 2 along with other texts to support her contention that "the experience of the power of the Spirit is basic for [the ministry] of the Christian missionary movement."²⁰

AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Wesleyan/Holiness Movement sought to model the early church by affirming prophetic leadership which based its authority on the Holy Spirit. Holiness leaders were explicit about their intention to imitate the prophetic leadership style of the New Testament era. They documented the role of women in primitive Christianity²¹ and sought to restore to women the prominent place they had filled in the life of the early church.

While the prophetic authority of the Holy Spirit held sway initially in the early church, by the second century priestly leadership in the form of a hierarchy composed of presbyters, deacons and bishops emerged and began to squelch prophetic authority. The developing institutional hierarchy situated all authority in its offices. Authority came to be associated with the priestly position rather than flowing directly from the Holy Spirit to individuals.

Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel has summarized the continuing conflict between prophetic and priestly authority:

In the long history of the patriarchal church women were able again and again to breach the dominant structures in the power of the Holy Spirit. But the church constantly distrusted both the

women and the Spirit, condemning their works as extremism, heresy, paganism. The Holy Spirit was chained to official ministries and robbed of the renewing power.²²

The Holy Spirit authorized Phoebe Palmer's preaching, thus transcending the male ecclesiastical structure of the Methodist Episcopal Church which, for the most part, opposed women preachers. Re A. Lowrey, a eulogist, commented on Palmer's credentials:

Her license came from no subordinate source. She was accredited from on high. Her authority and credentials were conferred by the Holy Ghost. She was set apart and gifted as a gentle leader. ... She was vested with a remarkable power to produce immediate results. Nor were these fruits evanescent. They were lifelong and permanent.²³

Palmer would have agreed with the understanding of authority as empowerment for service which Letty Russell advocates in *Household of Freedom*. Likewise, she would concur with Russell's description of the source of authority: "The self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ and through the Spirit is the source of authority in our lives as Christians."²⁴

Lynn Rhodes speaks of the need for Christian feminist women to understand the source of their authority as they begin working within church structures. She asks:

What gives them courage for acting on their convictions? When they are confronted by the principalities and powers that are pervasive in Christian institutions and traditions as well as in the culture in general, what is the basis for their sense of authority?²⁵

These are questions that Wesleyan/Holiness women such as Phoebe Palmer could have helped answer because of their understanding of the Holy Spirit as the source of their authority to preach and minister. Wesleyan/Holiness women claimed the authority of the Spirit in an environment that valued prophetic authority. This often is not the case today as evidenced in the account of one woman clergy recorded by Rhodes:

One woman said that she does not talk about the deep mystical experiences she has had. When she tries to communicate them, she is seen as either weird or more holy, depending on the context. The tendency of others to see her mystical experience as "special revelation" makes her wary of exposing it. She is careful, therefore, never to claim that the Holy Spirit is the source of her authority, even when the image of the Holy Spirit seems appropriate for expressing her experience.²⁶

An awareness of the experience of Wesleyan/Holiness women would offer a precedent for this woman. Rather than being made to feel "weird," she would realize that her experience of the authority of the Holy Spirit parallels that of many Wesleyan/Holiness women.

The authority or command of the Holy Spirit superseded any command by mere man. The Biblical injunction of Acts 5:29 to obey God rather than man became the basis for Wesleyan/Holiness women to challenge the authority of those who attempted to prevent them from preaching. Employ-

ing this verse, Palmer explicitly challenged male ecclesiastical authority: "Where church order is at variance with divine order, it were better to obey God than man."²⁷

Other women shared Palmer's conviction. Asked to leave her religious society or refrain from praying and exhorting, Mary Taft reflected: "I counted the cost, but concluded to obey God rather than man."²⁸ Evangelist Julia Foote rallied her sisters in Christ: "Sisters, shall not you and I unite with the heavenly host in the grand chorus? If so, you will not let what man may say or do, keep you from doing the will of the Lord by using the gifts you have for the good of others,"²⁹ Mary Cole, another evangelist, encouraged women: "But if you are certain of the leadings of the Lord, even if God does not make it plain to others, you may do as God bids you with certainty of success."³⁰ Wesleyan/Holiness women relied on Acts 5:29 to support their preaching despite opposition.

Armed with Biblical support and the authority of the Holy Spirit, women still faced a formidable barrier, a "man-fearing spirit." Many women spoke of the "man-fearing spirit" that inhibited them prior to their sanctification experience. Empowerment which accompanied sanctification enabled women to overcome the "man-fearing spirit" which had caused them to restrict their religious activities. Strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit, women broke through the barrier created by their fear and initiated their public ministries.

Empowerment by the Holy Spirit often resulted in a dramatic personality change. Evangelist Sarah Smith affirmed: "When God sanctified me He took all the shrink and fear of men and devils out of me."³¹ Smith further testified:

Everybody that knew me before I received this great blessing knew how fearful I was, and then when I came out with such boldness, everybody, preachers and all, that knew me before were astonished and wondered how I came into such a blessed experience.³²

Alma White spoke of the "man-fearing spirit" which prevented her from speaking in a church service in 1890.³³ Even though she felt led by God to speak, she was paralyzed by fear and sat in silence. It wasn't until her sanctification, three years later, that White overcame this fear and initiated her preaching career.

The empowerment of the Holy Spirit not only enabled women to overcome the fear of men but rearranged women's priorities. Rachel Peterson advised: "The Lord tells us not to be man-pleasers, but to fear God."³⁴ The Christian woman's first duty was to God not to men. Women asserted their autonomy as they claimed their allegiance to God rather than to men. The belief that women ultimately had to answer to God for their actions opened the way for women to challenge attempts to restrict their religious activities. A comment by the compiler of Phoebe Palmer's letters illustrates the implications of this conviction: "It is always right to obey the Holy Spirit's command, and if that is laid upon a woman to preach the Gospel, then it is right for her to do so; it is a duty she cannot neglect without falling into condemnation."³⁵

ETHIC OF EMPOWERMENT. EMPOWERED FOR SERVICE

Neither Wesleyan/Holiness women nor Christian feminists perceive power as an end in itself. Phoebe Palmer insisted that sanctification insured usefulness.³⁶ Her work in the Five Points district of New York City witnessed to her belief that empowerment enabled one to serve others. Door to door visitation in this poverty stricken area convinced Palmer of the need for a mission. She was instrumental in the establishment of Five Points Mission which contained a chapel, twenty apartments for families and a school.³⁷ She and other Wesleyan/Holiness women embodied the ethic of empowerment; their lives exemplified the ethic in action.

Palmer was not the first to voice the conviction that the empowerment which accompanied the experience of holiness resulted in reaching out to serve others. John Wesley had articulated an ethic of empowerment which Leon Hynson describes as 'a social ethic conceived largely in pneumatological terms.'³⁸ Hynson emphasizes the function of the Holy Spirit as the source of power in Wesley's ethics:

The ethics of the Spirit also amplifies the empowering presence of the Spirit. The whole field of social ethics is merely abstract theory unless an adequate resource is found for reaching its value goals. So much effort in social ethics is promising, carefully planned, correct theoretically, but without the dynamic drive that carries it off. This is the spiritual force that is given in the Holy Spirit's presence. "You shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you" (Acts 1:8).³⁹

Hynson elaborates on the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit:

An ethics of the Spirit emphasizes the Spirit's empowering work. There is a moral force that the wind of the Spirit brings to the ethical spheres of life. Without this force creativity and sanctity remain lifeless concepts, structure without substance, body without breath....

In this empowerment we may see believers undergirded to carry out the world-transforming mandate that has been given to the Christian church. "You are the salt of the earth," Jesus said. "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13,14).⁴⁰

Wesley never intended that the doctrine of holiness should lead individuals to focus solely on themselves and to neglect the needs of those around them. Hynson emphasizes this point: "Wesley's ethical message was as thoroughly social as it was individual. His doctrine of love is at the heart of his lifelong effort to reform the nation and the church."⁴¹

Alma White shared Wesley's and Palmer's conviction that empowerment leads to action. "He [the Holy Spirit] illuminates and empowers, bringing all the faculties of one's being into action, using them in the service of the Lord."⁴²

Jennie Fowler Willing elaborated on the consequences of holiness power: "The 'endowment of power' is the Holy Spirit filling the soul with His own love, and giving zeal, skill, success. This love fills with the divine 'go.' "⁴³ The women who Initiated the Temperance Crusade of 1873-1874 in Hiram, Ohio illustrate the impetus of the divine "go." Women, strengthened by the Holy

Spirit, besieged tavern owners and their customers, demanding that they forsake alcohol. Willing recounted the witness of one activist in the Crusade:

The lady spoke of the call that came to her to go out with the Crusade Band. She had to wait two weeks in prayer before she so surrendered and trusted that the Holy Spirit filled her soul. After that she could kneel on the sidewalk in front of a saloon, while brutal men leveled loaded guns at her, and wretched women threatened to throw boiling water from the windows above-and all without the slightest fear.⁴⁴

Annie Wittenmeyer compiled a history of the Temperance Crusade which consisted of accounts of Crusade activities from throughout the United States. Several reports explicitly credited the Holy Spirit with empowering the crusaders to battle tavern owners. For example, in Cireleville, Ohio, "the Spirit descended in power" while in Providence, Rhode Island, "the presence and power of the Holy Spirit was manifest, and all felt that God was calling to action."⁴⁵ Sarah Strothers of Findlay, Ohio reported: "The baptism of power came upon us."⁴⁶ Whether all of the participants in the Crusade understood the "baptism of power" as the experience of entire sanctification is difficult to determine. However, it is probable that a number of the women were products of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement. The crusade in New York City was inaugurated at a Holiness prayer meeting. Two women volunteered when another member of the group begged for assistance.⁴⁷

Wesleyan/Holiness women such as Phoebe Palmer and Annie Wittenmeyer reflected John Wesley's ethics. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they addressed societal issues and worked to alleviate social problems.

ETHIC OF EMPOWERMENT: EXPANSION OF WOMAN'S SPHERE

During the last half of the nineteenth century, guardians of popular culture glorified woman's role in the home as her only appropriate arena of service: "The canon of domesticity . . . constitut[ed] the home as a redemptive counterpart to the world."⁴⁸ Nancy Cott claims that the cult of domesticity "might almost be called a social ethic" Cott continues, "this ethic made women's presence the essence of successful homes and families."⁴⁹ The doctrine of domesticity allowed no room for women to act in the world outside the home. Wesleyan/Holiness women preachers directly challenged the doctrine of domesticity by extending their calling outside the home. Likewise, temperance women, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, spoke in public and attacked the evils of alcohol. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they moved outside the home to fulfill their calling. The ethic of empowerment was in direct opposition to the ethic of domesticity. It authorized women to expand their influence beyond the four walls of their homes.

Palmer did not directly challenge the doctrine of woman's sphere but extended it by redefinition. While claiming to approve of woman's sphere by explicitly affirming women's important function in the home, Palmer's preaching engagements often took her outside the home. Along with her example, Palmer's theology also defied the widely-held belief that woman's highest calling was in the domestic realm. To experience sanctification, Palmer advised that a woman lay everything on the symbolic altar of Christ, including one's husband and children. For Palmer, this meant that God, and God's

will, must come first. A sanctified woman must keep her priorities straight.⁵⁰ Palmer advised: "Home, on the whole, or speaking in general terms, is the sphere of woman's action; and yet she must not be unmindful of the example of [Christ] who lived not to please himself."⁵¹ The implication was that while a woman might prefer to be home, she must be willing to sacrifice her domestic obligations to do God's bidding. Religious duties come first.

Jarena Lee kept her priorities in order by following Palmer's advice. She left her sickly son with a friend while she spent a week preaching thirty miles away from home. During that time, she reported, "Not a thought of my little son came into my mind, it was hid from me, lest I should have been diverted from the work I had to do, to look after my son."⁵² Lee's calling to perform God's work came first.

The ethic of domesticity provided the rationale for limiting women's activities to their homes. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Wesleyan/Holiness women challenged attitudes and customs that impeded their ministry. While many clergy sanctioned a narrow understanding of women's sphere, Kathleen White of the Pillar of Fire Church found no evidence of divine approval for woman's sphere: "Jesus had nothing to say about woman's place: 'Never, so far as we know, did He utter a single sentence in abridgement of the domestic, social, or religious privileges of women; and never by His actions or words did He show any discrimination against them.'"⁵³ Jennie Fowler Willing pointed out Jesus' parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) to fortify her contention that God did not limit women to a prescribed sphere.⁵⁴ God expected women to use their talents wherever appropriate, rather than hide them in the home. Alma White attacked the limitations of the popular understanding of woman's sphere: "Should not old traditions and customs be forgotten and every effort be put forth in this new era to place woman in her intended sphere that she may help start society on the upward grade?"⁵⁵ In her sermon, "Woman's Place," Alma White contended that woman's place was beside man as his social and mental equal.⁵⁶ Contrary to Palmer and most of her own contemporaries, White explicitly renounced any boundaries imposed on women by advocates of the doctrine of woman's sphere.

Alma White's life illustrates the thesis that the empowerment of the Holy Spirit "compelled women to burst the cocoon of 'woman's sphere.'"⁵⁷ The doctrine of holiness provided an alternative social ethic to the ethic of domesticity. Empowerment by the Holy Spirit enabled women effectively to challenge the confining strictures of domesticity. Women in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement appealed to a higher authority to break down barriers intended to inhibit their activities. Sanctified women left their assigned sphere to perform the ministry they believed God called them to accomplish.

Sarah Smith related how attaining entire sanctification involved a willingness to challenge cultural norms: "I could say yes to everything until God said, 'Are you willing to work for Me?' Then the Devil saw his last chance and said, 'If you promise to work for God you will have to leave home, and your husband will not let you go.'" Smith recalled that "the death struggle commenced" but the victory ultimately was hers: "All that man-fearing spirit was taken away, and my heart was overflowing with perfect love that was so unspeakable and full of glory."⁵⁸ Smith later traveled throughout ten states and Canada as a member of the first evangelistic team of the Church of God (Anderson).

CONCLUSION

Sarah Lankford, Phoebe Palmer's sister, advised a correspondent: "Get the blessing of holiness, and it will be a gift of power"⁵⁹ Wesleyan/Holiness women testified to the fact that empowerment accompanied the experience of holiness. Their ministries demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they effectively challenged the ethic of domesticity which sought to confine them within the walls of their homes. Armed with the gift of power, women overcame the "man-fearing spirit;" and moved outside their homes, refusing to limit their ministries to their immediate families. Christian feminists' discussions of empowerment can be enhanced by the awareness of their foremothers in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement who relied on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to minister as evangelists and social reformers. Their lives provide a usable past to inspire their daughters as they articulate a theology of empowerment that will enable them to fulfill their calling in the world today.

Notes

1. Amanda Berry Smith, *An Autobiography, The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith the Colored Evangelist, with an Introduction by J. M. Thoburn* (Chicago: Meyer & Brother, Publishers, 1893), p. vi. Amanda Smith's (1837-1915) ministry extended to England, India and Africa

2. Byron J. Rees, *Hulda, The Pentecostal Prophetess or a Sketch of the Life and Triumph of Mrs. Hulda A. Rees, Together with Seventeen of Her Sermons* (Philadelphia: Christian Standard Co. Ltd., 1898), p.20. Hulda Rees (1855-1898) was a Quaker preacher who conducted evangelistic campaigns along with her husband, Seth Rees.

3. Lynn N. Rhodes, *Co-creating: A Feminist Vision of Ministry* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), p.54.

4. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann, "Becoming Human in the New Community;" in *The Community of Women and Men in the Church: The Sheffield Report*, ed. Constance F. Parvey (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. [1983]), pp. 29ff.

5. Nancy A. Hardesty stated the connection between sanctification and power in her discussion of Holiness women in her dissertation. "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy": Revivalism and Feminism in the Age of Finney" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1976), pp.55, 78. Another author to recognize the relationship is William L. Andrews who edited the autobiographies of Holiness evangelists Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw and Julia Foote: "We cannot understand the special sense of empowerment that Lee, Elaw, and Foote discovered in Christianity unless we examine the idea of 'sanctification Sisters of the Spirit" (*Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986*), p.14.

6. Rosemary Keller, "The Transformed Life in Jesus Christ: Toward a Feminist Perspective in the Wesleyan Tradition;" in *Wesleyan Theology Today*:

A Bicentennial Theological Consultation, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1985), pp.197, 200.

Keller's article appeared along with eight other papers in the section entitled "Constructing a Feminist Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition." Several contributors mentioned the Holy Spirit and empowerment yet none pursued the doctrine of sanctification and its relationship to power.

My work parallels Keller's approach in that theological reflection results from a study of women's lives rather than a survey of holiness theological treatises. James McClendon advocates this approach to exploring theology in *Biography as Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974).

7. Randy Maddox, "Wesleyan Theology and the Christian Feminist Critique," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22 (Spring 1987): 107. See his article for a systematic comparison of the two theologies.

8. Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America* (4th ed.; New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), p.256.

9. The role of empowerment in the theology of the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement raises several issues. First, did women emphasize power more than men? While my research has focused on the role of empowerment in the lives of Wesleyan/Holiness women, there is evidence that men addressed the doctrine of empowerment as well. John Fletcher observed, "Upon the whole, it is, I think, undeniable, from the first four chapters of the Acts, that a peculiar power of the Spirit is bestowed upon believers under the gospel of Christ." (John Fletcher, *Christian Perfection* [Nashville, Tenn.: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1917], p.29.) In light of this observation, he advised; "Constantly wait for full 'power from on high' " (*Christian Perfection*, p.83). After his sanctification, B. T. Roberts reported: "I received a power to labor such as I had never possessed before." (Quoted by Benson Howard Roberts in *Benjamin Titus Roberts: A Biography*, [North Chili, New York: "The Earnest Christian" Office, 1900], p.51.) A. M. Hills, a Congregational pastor who later became known as a prominent theologian in the Church of the Nazarene, authored *Holiness and Power* (Cincinnati: Revivalist Office, 1897). In the preface, Hills speaks of the "doctrine of the instantaneous 'baptism with the Holy Ghost,' with its consequent 'holiness and power'" (*Holiness and Power*, p. 5). Power obviously accompanies holiness in the theology of this author. Later in the book, Hills lists the enduement of power as one of the results of entire sanctification or holiness and briefly relates the stories of over thirty people (*Holiness and Power*, pp.326-343).

The second issue bearing upon the discussion of empowerment has already been introduced with the statement by Hudson contrasting the higher life or Keswick formulation of holiness doctrine with Wesleyan/Holiness theology; Once Hudson's thesis has been refuted, the next question is how the two groups understood the role of power, not only in terms of power for service but in terms of combating sin in the Christian's life. The women whose writings were consulted for this article focused on power for service rather than the role of power in rooting out sin or keeping the sinful nature under control.

Last, did many in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement abandon the doctrine of empowerment along with other Pentecostal language when the Pentecostal Movement emerged in the twentieth century?

Each of these questions, while outside the scope of this article, deserves further investigation.

10. Charles Edward White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer As Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), p.128. Phoebe Palmer (1807-1874) was a Methodist Episcopal laywoman whose evangelistic efforts resulted in approximately 25,000 conversions. White documents the pivotal role of Palmer in the Wesleyan/Holiness Movement in his biography.

To test White's statement, a survey of *Four Years in the Old World* (New York: Foster & Palmer, Jr., 1865) reveals Palmer used power 38 times and mentions purity or cleansing six times. In *The Promise of the Father* (Boston: Henry V. Degen, 1859; reprint ed., Salem, Ohio, Schmull Publishers, n.d.), Palmer uses power 90 times and purity or cleansing 21 times.

11. Palmer, *Promise*, p.206; *Four Years*, p.33.

12. *Guide to Holiness*, 64 (1873):24 quoted in *Beauty of Holiness*, p.286.

13. White, *Beauty of Holiness*, p.122.

14. Palmer, *Four Years*, p.151. See also Phoebe Palmer, ed., *Pioneer Experiences or the Gift of Power Received by Faith* (New York: W C. Palmer, Jr., 1868), p. xi.

15. [Phoebe or Walter Palmer], "The Doctrine of Sanctification and Woman's Work;" *Guide to Holiness*, March 1879, p.85. Alma White, "Woman's Chains," *Woman's Chains*, Jan-Feb. 1924, p.4.

16. "The Doctrine of Sanctification and Woman's Work;" p.85.

17. Palmer, *Four Years*, pp.96,122, 127; Palmer, *Promise of the Father*, pp. 257-8.

18. Frances Willard, "Work of the W.C.T.U.," in *Women's Work in America*, ed. Annie Nathan Meyer (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1981; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1972), p.408.

19. Annie Wittenmyer, *History of the Woman's Temperance Crusade* (Philadelphia: Office of the Christian Woman, 1878), p.771. Annie Wittenmyer (1827-1900) served as the first president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. She also wrote a holiness tract, "The Valley of Blessing." Charles E. Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867-1936*. ATLA Monograph Series, no.5 (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1974), p.38.

20. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), pp. 184-5.

21. See Susie Cunningham Stanley, "Aima White: Holiness Preacher with a Feminist Message" (Ph.D. dissertation, Iliff School of Theology/University of Denver, 1987), pp. 305-321 for a brief overview of the work of Wesleyan/Holiness

ness exegetes in documenting the prominent role of women in the New Testament. B. T. Roberts voiced the consensus:

"In the New Testament church, woman, as well as man, filled the office of Apostle, Prophet, Deacon or Preacher, and Pastor. There is not the slightest evidence that the functions of any of these offices, when filled by a woman, were different from what they were when filled by a man. Woman took a part in governing the Apostolic church." (B. T. Roberts, *Ordaining Women* [Rochester, N.Y.: Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1891], p.159.)

Rosemary Radford Ruether also discusses prophetic versus priestly traditions in *Sexism and Godtalk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), pp.194-9.

22. Moltmann-Wendel and Moltmann, in *Sheffield*, p.41. Moltmann summarized briefly the transition from prophetic to priestly authority in the early church: "The church quite early in its history tied the Holy Spirit to the successive holders of the episcopal office, especially in the old doctrine of the monarchical episcopate" (p.41).

The decline of women ministers in the Wesleyan/Holiness movement can be attributed to this same sociological process. As churches became institutionalized, leaders de-emphasized prophetic authority.

23. Wheatley, *The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer* (New York: W C. Palmer, Publisher, 1881; reprint ed., New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984), pp.631-632.

24. Letty Russell, *Household of Freedom: Authority in Feminist Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), p.23.

25. Rhodes, *Co-Creating*, pp.26-27.

26. *Ibid.*, p.46.

27. Paimer, *Promise*, p. vi.

28. *Ibid.*, p.75.

29. Julia A. J. Foote, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* (Cleveland, Ohio: By the Author, 1879), p.112. Undaunted by the refusal of the African Methodist Episcopal Church to ordain her, Julia Foote (1823-1900) conducted evangelistic campaigns from Massachusetts to Ohio and up into Canada

30. Maiy Cole, *Trials and Triumphs of Faith* (Anderson, Ind.: Gospel Trunipet Company, 1914), p.191. Mary Cole (1853-1934) was an evangelist in the Church of God (Anderson). She also worked for ten years in the slum district of Chicago.

31. Sarah Smith, *Life Sketches of Mother Sarah Smith* (Anderson, Ind.: Gospel Trumpet Company, 1901), p.55. Sarah Smith (1822-1908) led a holiness band in Ohio before affiliating in 1882 with what is now the Church of God (Anderson).

33. *Ibid.*, p.17.

34. Alma White, *The Story of My Life and Pillar of Fire* (5 vols.; Zarephath, N.J.: Pillar of Fire, 1935-1943), 1:364. Alma White (1862-1946) began her ministerial career as an evangelist in Colorado. She founded the Pentecostal Union (now the Pillar of Fire Church) in 1901 and served as its first bishop. See Stanley, "Alma White" for further information.

34. Rachel Wild Peterson, *The Long Lost Rachel Wild?; Seeking of Diamonds in the Rough: Her Experience in the Slums of Denver* (Denver: Reed Publishing Co., 1905), p.264. Rachel Peterson (1860-?) was a gospel worker in Denver. Working independently and with holiness missions, she conducted street meetings and visited jails and hospitals. She ministered to alcoholics and prostitutes, often taking them into her home.

35. Wheatley, *Life and Letters*, p.614.

36. Paimer, *Promise*, p.248.

37. White, *Beauty of Holiness*, pp.64-5, 224.

38. Hynson, *To Reform the Nation* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), p.12.

39. *Ibid.*, p.59.

40. *Ibid.*, p.119.

41. *Ibid.*, p.28.

42. Alma White, *The New Testament Church* (Zarephath, N.J.: Pillar of Fire, 1929), p.74.

43. Jennie Fowler Willing, "Amounting to Something," *Guide to Holiness*, May 1893, p.140. Jennie Fowler Willing (1834-1916) was a licensed local preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Illinois until the Church recalled all women's licenses in 1880. She advocated temperance and other reforms. In 1895, she established the New York Evangelistic Training School which incorporated settlement work in its ministry. See Joanne Elizabeth C. Brown, "Jennie Fowier Willing (1834-1916): Methodist Churchwoman and Reformer" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University Graduate School, 1983) for more information.

44. Jennie Fowler Willing, "The Women's Christian Temperance Union," *Guide to Holiness*, March 1896, p.102.

45. Wittenmyer, *History of the Crusade*, pp.331, 582.

46. *Ibid.*, p.106.

47. *Ibid.*, p.534.

48. Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p.98.

49. *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

50. Nancy Hardesty, Lucille Sider Dayton, and Donald W Dayton, "Women in the Holiness Movement: Feminism in the Evangelical Tradition" in *Women*

of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions, ed. Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p.242. See also Anne C. Loveland, "Domesticity and Religion in the Antebellum Period: The Career of Phoebe Palmer;" *Historian*, May 1977, pp. 460, 465.

51. Wheatley, *Life and Letters*, p.597.

52. Andrews, *Sisters of the Spirit*, p.45.

53. Kathleen M. White, "Should Women Have Full Ministerial Responsibilities?" *Woman's Chains*, July-August 1944, p.2; no source given for quotation. Kathleen White was Alma White's daughter-in-law.

54. Jennie Fowler Willing, "Woman and the Pentecost: Salome," *Guide to Holiness*, September 1989, p.87.

55. Alina White, "Woman and the New Era;" *Woman's Chains*, November-December 1940, p.4.

56. Aima White, "Woman's Place;" *Woman's Ministry* (London: Pillar of Fire [1921]), p.5.

57. Hardesty, Dayton and Dayton, "Women in the Holiness Movement;" p.244.

58. Sarah Smith, *Life Sketches*, p.16.

59. Wheatley, *Life and Letters*, p.67.

EXPERIMENTAL METHOD IN THE PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY¹

by

DONALD A. D. THORSEN

INTRODUCTION

Some contemporary Wesley scholars suggest that the emerging paradigm of practical theology offers a helpful way of describing the unique theological contribution of Wesley. If this be so, then the experimental character of his writings best describes the methodology he employed in reflecting upon, formulating, and implementing his theology.

Wesley inherited a rich tradition of theology and theological method from seventeenth-century Anglicans. From them he received a concern to apply his theology practically to the immediate needs of the Church and to apply his theology theoretically and analogously to the experimental philosophy prevalent at the turn of the eighteenth century. Wesley stated this dual concern in the preface to his "Sermons on Several Occasions." He intended to present "plain truth to plain people" in description of "the true, the scriptural, experimental religion"²

Scholars recognize that Wesley intended to be a Biblical theologian. But few scholars have investigated what Wesley meant by "experimental religion." In this phrase we discover a clue to Wesley's theological method—a method which Wesley applied theoretically to his theology and practically to his life and ministry.

In this paper we will elucidate what Wesley meant by experimental religion. We will begin by tracing the term's dual roots in the practical divinity of seventeenth-century Anglican theology and in the experimental philosophy of the British empirical tradition. From Anglican theology Wesley inherited the concern to apply theology to practical needs as well as to salvation and holy living. From the British empirical tradition he inherited the concern to apply theology to the theoretical aspects of our knowledge of true religion—knowledge that comes from our empirical experiences of the world as well as from our religious experiences of God. Wesley combined in this theological method an approach to religion which he believed would "unite

the pair so long disjoined, knowledge and vital piety"³-piety which did not represent an end in itself but which served as a means to loving God and to loving one's neighbor-with a holistic understanding of what that means.

BACKGROUND OF THEOLOGICAL METHOD IN WESLEY

A. Anglican Theological Method

By Wesley's day, questions of religious authority and theological method had been prominent topics of debate for over a century. Internally and with each other Roman Catholicism, Protestantism in its various manifestations, Anglicanism and the many Nonconformist offshoots vying for recognition in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England all debated the issues. The Anglican heritage in which Wesley had been raised and educated provided an especially fruitful yet controversial history of debate. With a special debt to Richard Hooker, Anglicans sought to incorporate reason into a balanced understanding of theological method, one which would give due respect to scripture and tradition as authorities in reflection upon and formulation of theology.

Summarizing the long Anglican debate over the question of religious authority, Francis Paget reminds us of the distinctive approach taken by Anglicans in addressing the immediate needs of the Church of England: ". . . on equal loyalty to the unconflicting rights of reason, of Scripture, and of tradition rest the distinctive strength and hope of the English Church."⁴ The appeal to this threefold source of religious authority varied in popularity and intensity throughout the seventeenth century, but for the most part Anglicanism recognized the need to respect all three in theological endeavors. This recognition resulted in a generally consistent approach to theological method. In fact Henry McAdoo concludes that the overall consistency of the Anglican approach to theological method represents the distinctiveness of its theology.

If the distinctiveness of Anglicanism lies not in a theology but in a theological method, the distinctiveness of the method lies in the conjunction of these elements in one theological instrument. The impression of basic unity in writers of the seventeenth century is accounted for by concurrence in the use of this common theological method. Party theology in the later sense did not exist until the latter part of the century but there were differing emphases in theology. These were minimized by means of a shared method, so that, on occasion, Hammond will take a characteristically Latitudinarian line while Stillingfleet will make use of ideas usually associated with the Laudian point of view.⁵

During the seventeenth century, Anglicans viewed the inclusion of reason in theological method as a boon to Christianity. Biblical authority remained central to their theology, but a new sense of freedom emerged in their understanding of doctrinal beliefs, as for example, Hooker had found in the formulation of ecclesiastical polity. To cite another example, reason had the freedom to renew the study of natural theology in a way which Protestantism had discouraged.

But Anglicans did not want to slip back into a revised form of Roman Catholicism. They prided themselves in presenting a theological alternative

or via media which, as McAdoo comments, "was not in its essence compromise or an intellectual expedient but a quality of thinking, an approach in which elements usually regarded as mutually exclusive were seen to be in fact complementary. These things were held in a living tension, not in order to walk the tight-rope of compromise, but because they were seen to be mutually illuminating and to fertilize each other."⁶

In this tension were held not only the primacy of scriptural authority and the necessary role of reason in theological method but also the ongoing need to retain a historical, traditional understanding of Christian beliefs. References to Christian antiquity were not to be arbitrarily evoked to stifle a reasonable understanding of Scripture, but rather to identify central motifs of Scripture and thus affirm the catholicity of those beliefs. Consensual creedal formulations from the early church were to be understood, valued, and followed as closely as reasonably possible. Non-essentials in Christian beliefs—both ancient and contemporary—were also to be identified and tolerated, but not required for orthodoxy. Nevertheless, one needed to consider antiquity with the same seriousness with which one considered new knowledge derived from the burgeoning scientific studies of nature and corollary philosophies of experimentation.

If reason was free to supplement studies of scripture and tradition, it also was free to incorporate new knowledge which might confirm and illuminate Christian beliefs from intellectual disciplines other than theology. Certainly a sense of tension existed between reason and the other sources of religious authority, namely, Scripture and tradition. But, as McAdoo describes it as a healthy, living tension which neither accepted authoritarianism nor uncontrolled liberty, he says:

An over-all characteristic of Anglican theological method is then this polarity or quality of living tension, which goes far towards explaining how the element of reason did not for the most part become over-weighted during the seventeenth century since it never existed in a vacuum, theologically speaking, but operated in conjunction with other elements such as the appeal to Scripture and antiquity.⁷

Despite inevitable differences in theological emphases, Anglicans generally assumed this distinctive approach to theology up through the time of Wesley. Wesley himself assumed this approach and did not question its reliability or relevance in responding to his immediate pastoral and theological needs. Although he felt free to draw eclectically from any theological tradition which proved expedient in a particular situation, he generally turned to his Anglican heritage, readily accepting the parameters of theological method prevalent within it.

However, Wesley did not inherit an untroubled tradition. The triad of Scripture, reason, and tradition was volatile. During the latter part of the seventeenth century and the early part of the eighteenth century, reason progressively gained ascendancy over scripture and tradition in certain theological pockets of Anglicanism. As the threefold cord of scripture, reason and tradition began to fray in these areas so did the balance of Anglican theological method. The emphases placed upon the authority of reason were varied in its ascendancy: Cambridge Platonists uplifted an intuitive knowledge

which supplanted all others, Latitudinarians uplifted the freedom of human reason over traditional religious authorities, and eventually deism sought only to affirm a rational religion devoid of the supernatural. These theological groups were not dominant in the Church of England, but they definitely had an effect. As William Cannon says, "the point is that rationalism had penetrated the ranks of orthodoxy; Christianity was viewed as nothing more than a correct set of opinions, a group of propositions which offer themselves to man's reason for acceptance or rejection"⁸ Maxin Piette further observes that from this religious crisis a moral crisis arose due to the reduction of Christianity to a formalistic affirmation of orthodox doctrine.⁹

In the midst of the theological and moral crises of early eighteenth century England, Wesley sought to revive a vital understanding of Christian faith, particularly within the Church of England. He had experienced a spiritual revival in his own personal life, so he endeavored to provide the same opportunity for revival to others. Piette observes that Wesley had been profoundly affected by a kind of personal experimentation in the areas of spiritual growth and self-discipline. Perhaps the insights which resulted from his experience would be of benefit to others. Piette says, "Since practical experience and experimentation had been triumphant in the field of natural science, Wesley was led to transport it to the religious domain-to the field of the supernatural life."¹⁰ Piette primarily conceives of Wesley's use of practical experience and experimentation in the area of personal spirituality. But Wesley's use of practical experience and experimentation may also be applied to his working knowledge of theological method.

Wesley had been influenced by the development of experimental philosophy, though not directly in terms of articulating a new approach to theological method. On the contrary Wesley understood his task in the more practical terms of evangelism, church renewal, and ministering to the needs of the poor and dispossessed. He did not personally see the need to work with syllogistic theological propositions or systematic theologies. Anglicanism already provided an established way of approaching speculative and practical theological issues which positively appreciated theological system but limited its role, and Wesley simply worked within the flow of that thought. He did not perceive himself as formulating anything distinctively new and certainly nothing innovative in the history of orthodox Christian thinking. Yet working within the parameters of theological method which he inherited from Anglicanism, Wesley not only assumed but in important ways surpassed his own heritage.

B. Experience in Anglican Theological Method

We will come to understand Wesley's contribution and method best by introducing here the element of experience as a source of religious authority. We do this not because it played an explicit role in Anglican theological method, but because it came later to play a profound methodological role in the thought of Wesley. To understand this we must examine its seventeenth-century status at some length.

Without formally stating the importance of experience in reflecting upon and formulating Christian belief, the presence of religious or religiously related experience was tacitly assumed in much that was written by Anglican theologians during the seventeenth century. Hooker, without explicitly intend-

ing to make it a part of his theological method, considered experience alongside the study of scripture and nature in his discussion of ecclesiastical polity. For example:

What success God may give unto any such kind of conference or disputation, we cannot tell. But of this we are right sure, that nature, scripture, and experience it self, have all taught the world to seek for the ending of contentions by submitting it self unto some judicial and definitive sentence, whereunto neither part that contendeth may under any pretence or color refuse to stand.¹¹

The appeal to experience was not contended by subsequent Anglican theologians for they too assumed that experience should confirm and elaborate Christian truths established by the generally accepted standards of scripture, reason and tradition. In the historical development of theological method in the Christian church, reason represented the formal newcomer to Anglican theological method. But informally experience played an important supportive role in theology.

In the century preceding Wesley, one does not find in formal Anglican theology frequent references to experience even in a theologically supportive role. But appeals to experience do seem frequent and significant in the practical divinity of devotional and sermonic literature. Jeremy Taylor, for example, described how his personal pastoral experience aided him in formulating *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651). Taylor claimed that he "drew the rules and advices [of holy dying] from the fountains of Scripture, and the purest channels of the primitive Church, and was helped by some experience in the cure of souls:"¹² Moreover he measured the success of his labors "not by popular noises or the sentences of curious persons, but by the advantage which good people may receive."¹³

Taylor's appeal to experience should not be minimized because of the pastoral nature of these writings. Much of seventeenth-century Anglican theology specifically attended to questions of morality and practical divinity. Apparently Anglicans such as Taylor saw no conflict in including experience as a source of theology alongside "the fountains of Scripture, and the purest channels of the primitive Church." The quotation from Taylor also reveals how experience may serve as a confirmation of theology in that Taylor measured the success of his labors "by the advantage which good people may receive.

The abundant sermonic literature from the seventeenth century reveals the pervasive concern for both founding and confirming Christian beliefs in the crucible of day-to-day experience.¹⁴ The great number of preached and published sermons almost of necessity had to resonate with Christians' real life experiences of salvation and of moral living. Wesley later followed this noteworthy Anglican tradition of using practical divinity, e.g. sermons or homilies, for theological instruction by using his own sermons as one of the primary sources of Christian instruction for the Methodist movement.

The emergence of experimental philosophy at the end of the seventeenth century produced an interest in sense data, but not necessarily in the kind of experience which is of a more personal and distinctively religious nature. John Locke had undertaken an inwardly oriented analysis of human understanding in addition to the outwardly oriented analysis of nature supplied

by the physical sciences. But most Anglicans who embraced reason as a source of religious authority, including Locke, became distrustful of individual religious experience. "Enthusiasm" was a charge often directed against those perceived as having a private inspiration or of exhibiting extravagance in religious devotion, and Locke dedicated an entire chapter in definition of enthusiasm—a definition which became normative for eighteenth century usage.¹⁵ Parenthetically, we note at this point that Wesley was often accused of being an enthusiast, but he vigorously rejected that label. He based his defense primarily on his concern for presenting Christian beliefs in a way that is consonant with reason as well as with scripture and the best of Christian antiquity.¹⁶

Peter Browne represents the early Anglican critics of Locke. He criticized Locke for his tendency towards deism.¹⁷ But while criticizing Locke's philosophy, Browne recognized that Locke was a great genius and he endeavored to extend Locke's ideas theologically so that they would include a more complete understanding of the nature and extent of experience, including religious experience. In *The Procedure, Extent and Limits of Human Understanding*, Browne argued:

I propose rightly to state the whole Extent and Limits of human Understanding; to trace out the several steps and degrees of its Procedure from our first and simple Perception of sensible Objects, through the several operations of the pure Intellect upon them, till it grows up to its full Proportion of Nature: And to show, how all our Conceptions of things supernatural are then grafted on it by Analogy; and how from thence it extends it self immensely into all the Branches of Divine and Heavenly Knowledge.¹⁸

By means of "the true nature of Divine analogy,"¹⁹ Browne maintained "that the things of another World are now the Immediate Objects of our Knowledge and Faith."²⁰

Although Browne did not gain lasting recognition for his work, he articulated a growing interest among Anglicans to incorporate into their theological thinking a broadened understanding of that which may be investigated as integral to their religious beliefs. Richard Brantley argues that "Browne's spiritual theology, then pivotal in Anglican thought, signals the Anglican emphasis on spiritual experience during the rest of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth"²¹ Wesley was quite familiar with the work of Browne, and although he gained some of his understanding and appreciation for experience from non-Anglican sources,²² his primary source remained the Anglican tradition. From it, Wesley drew an increasing concern for incorporating an experientially or experimentally oriented approach to theology.

C. Influence of Experimental Method on Wesley

Anglican theologians such as the Latitudinarians and the Cambridge Platonists were influenced by the growth of science and of scientific or experimental method, though each in different ways. Wesley was also impressed with the products of knowledge garnered from the employment of experimental method in the natural sciences. For example, he was intrigued by scientific experiments in the area of electricity, especially those done by

Benjamin Frimidin and Richard Lovett.²³ Wesley even published a work entitled *The Desideratum: Or Electricity made plain and useful By a Lover of Mankind, and of Common Sense*, which he distilled from numerous scientific articles.²⁴ In the preface to this work Wesley extolled the highly probable health benefits of electricity, even though hypotheses had not yet been developed to explain many of the data derived from experimentation.²⁵ Wesley did not think that a complete philosophical or conceptual understanding of electricity was necessary in order to undertake further experiments which might reveal immediate and practical benefits of electricity. Wesley's practicality overrode the need for theoretical understanding if useful results were already being achieved.

Many Anglican theologians appreciated Locke's experimental philosophy as the source of conceptual framework for a universal methodology which could be employed in all intellectual disciplines, including theology. A prominent example among these was Peter Browne, who, although a critic of Locke, contributed greatly to the growing interest in the philosophy of Locke among Anglicans. Browne also influenced Wesley's appreciation and broadened understanding of the applicability of Locke's philosophy to theology.²⁶ Clifford Hindley suggests that Wesley not only "imbibed" Lockean philosophy from his readings of Browne, but that Browne supplied the needed conceptual extrapolation of Locke's philosophy which enabled Wesley to include religious experience as a crucial part of theological method.²⁷

Wesley's interest in experience predisposed him, for example, to the message of the Moravians concerning the personal assurance of salvation. Thus the Lockean concern for experimentation affected more than Wesley's interest in the natural sciences; it influenced his entire approach to theology and, correspondingly, to the practical applications of his ministry. For this reason Wesley claimed that he "endeavored to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion."²⁸ Certainly Wesley wished to present his theological work in a way that was consonant with the best in contemporary scientific investigation rather contrary to it.²⁹

In this regard Wesley naturally reflected the trend in Anglican theological thinking which sought to bridge-though not obliterate-differences between theology, philosophy and science. Of course, Wesley's references to "experimental" referred to more than mere empirical experimentation; they included the felt awareness or witness of God's Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Nevertheless, Locke provided a conceptual clue or tool for Wesley in undertaking the task of theology just as he has done for others both inside and outside Anglican theological circles. Without accepting all that Locke argued for in his experimental philosophy, Wesley praised Locke's work and general support for traditional Christian beliefs.³⁰ In trying to understand Wesley's theological method, we will need to consider the extent to which ideas of experimental philosophy affected his methodical approach to theology.

WESLEY'S EXPERIMENTAL AND PRACTICAL APPROACH TO THEOLOGY

Wesley's various references to experience or religious experience reflect his belief that scriptural truths are confirmed and illuminated for all who reasonably reflect upon that which is revealed to them through God's natu-

ral and divine revelation. At first glance, the term experimental captures the experiential potential of knowing God in creation as well as in our personal lives. Of course, Wesley's description of his work as experimental includes more than our religious experiences and religious knowledge.³¹ In substantial agreement with British empirical thinking which was prevalent in his day, Wesley believed that there is an experimental dimension to all knowledge, natural as well as supernatural. In fact, Wesley draws striking analogies between how we gain knowledge through our physical and spiritual senses.³² The pervasiveness of the experimental character of knowledge, including spiritual knowledge, represents a crucially important aspect of Wesley's theology-an aspect long recognized by Wesley scholars.³³ It relates to every part of our lives and thus has an immediate and practical effect upon us, Wesley did not articulate or deploy theological method in a systematic fashion; his concerns were too practical and ministry-oriented to motivate him to develop a whole system of theology. And Wesley was not apologetic about not being systematic in the traditional understanding of systematic theology, just as Anglican theologians had not been apologetic about their methodological approach to theology. Both Anglicanism and Wesley were secure in their theological methods. For example, Wesley often claimed to be consistent in the theology that he wrote.³⁴ Wesley was aware of methodological considerations which impinged upon his understanding and implementation of true, scriptural religion, and he endeavored to write in accordance with his theological method.

A. Experimental Method

The term experimental derives from the growing appreciation and incorporation of experimental method during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Experimental method primarily influenced the work of science and philosophy, but it slowly became an instrument of Anglican theological method as well.³⁵ Samuel Johnson defined experimental as "1. Pertaining to experiment. 2. Built upon experiment; formed by observation [and] 3. Known by experiment or trial."³⁶

Wesley did not use the term often, but he used it in places critical to our understanding of his methodological approach to theology. As we have already noted, Wesley stated an experimental concern in the thesis paragraph to his "Sermons on Several Occasions," which we now quote:

I have accordingly set down in the following sermons what I find in the Bible concerning the way to heaven, with a view to distinguish this way of God from all those which are the inventions of men. I have endeavored to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto which is not.³⁷

Here Wesley affirmed the primacy of scripture in discovering that which is reasonably true concerning religious beliefs, but he also introduced this methodologically potent phrase: "experimental religion." The phrase suggests that his sermons-and the theology contained therein-were somehow related to or based on experience.

Although Wesley did not elaborate upon what he meant by describing "the true, the scriptural, experimental religion," the phrase is pregnant with

insights or clues to understanding his theological method. By true religion or Christianity, Wesley meant inward religion—the essence of religion, namely, our spiritual relationship with God and all that relationship implies for our life.³⁸ In Discourse X "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount," Wesley wrote:

our great Teacher [Jesus Christ] has fully described inward religion in its various branches. He has there laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity; the tempers contained in that holiness 'without which no man shall see the Lord'; the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God.³⁹

By scriptural religion or Christianity, Wesley meant the religion described by scripture, which, he believed, best communicates the essence of true, inward religion. Wesley dedicated an entire sermon to the discussion of "Scriptural Christianity"⁴⁰ and in another sermon, while discussing with a deist the probability of scriptural truths, Wesley described how God graciously demonstrates the truth of scripture to all who believe. He said:

Considering these things we may well cry out, How great a thing it is to be a Christian, to be a real, inward, scriptural Christian! Conformed in heart and life to the will of God! Who is sufficient for these things? None, unless he be born of God. I do not wonder that one of the most sensible deists should say: "I think the Bible is the finest book I ever read in my life, yet I have an insuperable objection to it. It is too good. It lays down such a plan of life, such a scheme of doctrine and practice, as is far too excellent for weak silly men to aim at, or attempt to copy after" All this is most true upon any other than the scriptural hypothesis. But this being allowed, all the difficulty vanishes into air. For if "all things are possible with God," then "all things are possible to him that believeth?"⁴¹

By experimental religion or Christianity, Wesley meant that religion in which the stated truths of scripture concerning inward religion become verified in the life of a believer, a religion in which people may test the truths of scripture for themselves. In agreement with the psalmist, who said, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" Wesley wrote the following (in reference to those who had experienced the new birth of faith in Jesus Christ):

But the moment the Spirit of the Almighty strikes the heart of him that was till then without God in the world, it breaks the hardness of his heart, and creates all things new. The Sun of righteousness appears, and shines upon his soul, showing him the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He is in a new world. All things round him are become new, such as it never before entered into his heart to conceive. He sees, so far as his newly opened eyes can bear the sight,

The opening heavens around him shine,
With beams of sacred bliss.

He sees that he has "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," and that he has "redemption in his blood, the

remission of his sins."...At the same time he receives other spiritual senses, capable of discerning spiritual good and evil. He is enabled to taste, as well as to see, how gracious the Lord is. He enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and tastes of the powers of the world to come.⁴²

Not only the truths of salvation but also other Biblical truths prove to be true in our observation of and reflection upon experience.⁴³ So Wesley undertook the method of experimental philosophy, already prevalent through Britain, in fully investigating the truths of scripture and of experience as well. George Eayrs points out that "Wesley's method had these features: observation, investigation, written record, comparison, and induction from experiments. He knew and acted upon Bacon's dictum (Novum Organum, Preface) 'not to dispute upon the very point of the possibility of experience.'⁴⁴ Eayrs thus draws attention to the experimental or inductive character of theological reasoning which Wesley wove into his Biblical hermeneutics as well as into his conceptualizations and applications of theology.⁴⁵ Brantley goes so far as to argue that as early as 1730, Wesley had in mind "if not a synthesis of revelation and rational empiricism then an intellectually as well as passionately experimental emphasis in religion both revealed and natural."⁴⁶

We may question the degree of consistency with which Wesley carried out his theological method or we may question the degree of critical awareness he possessed concerning theological method as a whole. But we cannot question the fact that Wesley understood his methodology to reflect the kind of experimental methodologies prominent within early eighteenth-century England.

Randy Maddox rightly points out that, although Wesley understood his theological method to reflect an experimental or inductive character, he fell short of achieving that goal.⁴⁷ Maddox further notes that Mark Horst presents a similar argument when he says that-in practice-Wesley did not so much use experience as a foundation for doctrines, as he used doctrines to shape believer's experience.⁴⁸ Despite inadequacies we may find in Wesley's method logical perceptivity from our contemporary vantage point, we may not discount the intentionality of Wesley's approach to theology.

Wesley sought to emulate much that he found in the experimental method of such English philosophers and theologians as Locke and Brantley. But even Locke was criticized by later empiricists such as David Hume for not undertaking his empiricism with sufficient methodological criticalness. For example, Locke argued that we have intuitive knowledge of our own existence and subsequently of the existence of God.⁴⁹ Wesley did not consider it empirically inconsistent to appeal to the kind of knowledge which we experience intuitively as well as to the kind of knowledge which we experience concretely in the world. Nor would Wesley consider it appropriate to reduce his study of scripture to a kind of deductive enterprise. Although in practice it may appear as though Wesley used scripture (or doctrine) to shape believers' experience, it was his theoretical understanding that experience should never conflict with scripture because scripture would never conflict with experience.

A.1. Empirical and Experiential Knowledge. The experimental study of religion is concerned with knowledge that is both empirical and experiential. Wesley does not make this distinction himself, but it does reflect a ten-

sion that occurs within his writings. Because Wesley does not distinguish between empirical and experiential knowledge, we do run the risk of imposing an unnecessary bifurcation upon his thought by using such categories. Nevertheless, the distinction helps to clarify aspects of Wesley's theology which otherwise might remain unclear without more precise categories with which to analyze his writings.

Empirical knowledge pertains to knowledge founded on experience, observation, sensation, practice, concrete situations, and real events. It represents *a posteriori* knowledge derived from sense experience and it is generally capable of public assessment. Examples of this kind of knowledge include arguments from classical natural theology for the existence of God.⁵⁰ It also includes *accounts* of miracles and the testimonies of Christian believers both from the past and the present.⁵¹ These examples have to do with experiences where no direct sense or impression of the presence of God occurs, or at least where the intensity of the awareness of God tends to be little marked. Nevertheless, they serve as potential evidence for cumulative case arguments on behalf of the reasonableness of Christian belief.

Experiential knowledge relies upon understanding, insights or information that derive from personal or interpersonal sense experiences. It contrasts with empirical experience, which is confined to sensation, perception, or observation of types of experiences that are shared. Experiential knowledge is obtainable by such means as introspection, self-analysis, private conscious states, and so on. It is not the same thing as *a priori* knowledge, which is derived from the function of reason without reference to sense experience.⁵² Experiential knowledge, on the contrary is based upon sense experience, but not upon the kinds of empirical experiences that provide knowledge easily capable of public assessment. Personal experiences are difficult to assess publicly because they are so individualistic as to prevent others from fully comprehending the significance of the experience for a particular person. For example, it is not always possible to articulate why you love one person and hate another, or why you act one way rather than another. Personal experiences tend to be very private and meaningful only to the individual or individuals involved in the given experience. The difficulties noted are especially critical in the analysis of religious experiences in which there occurs a direct awareness or impression of God—that personal Being whose very existence transcends our ability to verify on the basis of empirical experience alone. Although this kind of knowledge involves the personal participation of the knower, it is not purely psychological or subjective because we genuinely come into contact with an objective, albeit empirically hidden, reality. Brantley argues that Wesley's "analogy of proportionality between physical and spiritual senses] helped Wesley to think that what is felt is a theologically satisfying substitute for what is seen philosophically—that as the intellect remains convinced of what the senses have to tell, so the intellect trusts emotion to be not illusory but spiritual veridical, i.e., to correspond to religious fact."⁵³ Thus Wesley believed that Christians may in fact attain certain experiential knowledge of God and of God's salvation for one's life.

A.2. Hypothetical Nature of Human Knowledge. Wesley's use of the term experimental also reflects a willingness to admit the hypothetical nature of human knowledge. That is, human knowledge-in contrast to God's knowledge-is provisional or tentative. It is subject to change as additional

information is gathered and/or new theories and laws-theological, philosophical or scientific-are advanced. This is true because human knowledge stems from reflection upon that which we or others first experience rather than upon knowledge we might receive through innate ideas. Again, this phenomenal approach to knowledge resembles the experimental philosophy reminiscent of Locke.⁵⁴ From a conceptual perspective, we must recognize the experiential-or experimental-dimension in all human knowledge.⁵⁵ This experimental dimension includes our knowledge and use of Scripture. Scripture, in a sense, represents a provisional or tentative proposal(s) for the explanation of phenomena-religious or otherwise-that has some degree of empirical substantiation of probability. For example, Wesley referred to the hypothetical way in which he understood Scripture when he appealed to the "Scripture hypothesis" in the following passage:

If you ask, "Why then have not all men this faith, all, at least, who conceive it to be so happy a thing? Why do they not believe immediately?"-we answer (on the Scripture hypothesis), "It is the gift of God." No man is able to work it in himself. It is a work of omnipotence.⁵⁶

Of course, from Wesley's personal experience, the truth of Scripture represented no mere hypothesis. On the contrary, Wesley believed Scripture with complete certainty. Because he experienced God speaking to him through Scripture, an experience coupled with the confirming testimony of the Holy Spirit in his life,⁵⁷ Wesley believed that all may hear God speak to them by listening to scripture. Yet, when it came to theological reflection, Wesley recognized the phenomenal process people follow in coming to knowledge and faith in God.

Strictly speaking, faith is a hypothesis-at least initially.⁵⁸ From a human perspective, our knowledge is incomplete; it can only be completed by God. Stanley Frost discusses the hypothetical nature of faith evident in Wesley in his treatment of Wesley's understanding of the authority of God. He says:

It means that even God's authority is only relatively final, that is, final only so long as we accept the hypothesis which we call the Christian Faith. But this limitation is more apparent than real, for never, except in abstract discussion, do we go beyond the scope of that hypothesis, and then it is always with a conscious effort, made possible only by the firm conviction at the back of our mind that our Faith is an accurate account of Reality. We live, and move and have our being within the realm of that hypothesis and this philosophical limitation of God's authority no more affects our attitude to him, than do our philosophical doubts concerning the existence of the physical universe affect our attitude to the shelf on which we have just knocked our head. In acknowledging that the basis of certainty lies in faith and not in knowledge, we in no way lessen the significance of God's authority, as Wesley himself shows, both by his words and his deeds.⁵⁹

All people follow a hypothetical or experimental path in coming to faith-a faith which in turn comes to understand that which is true, including that which is scripturally or spiritually true.

A.3. Emphasis on Religious Experience. Given the experimental nature of human knowledge, Wesley gave special attention to the area of religious experience or the experimental knowledge we personally have of the divine presence in our lives. Wesley strongly emphasized the privilege Christians have in personally experiencing the reality of Christ in their lives. He said, "This experimental knowledge, and this alone, is true Christianity. He is a Christian who hath received the Spirit of Christ."⁶⁰ Again, Wesley said, "For in the scripture language to say, or to believe, implies an experimental assurance. The sum is, none have the Holy Spirit but Christians: all Christians have this Spirit."⁶¹ While such participatory experience of the Spirit of Christ adds nothing to the substance of Biblical truth, it confirms and vitalizes such truths in the believer. Thus the experimental dimension contributes to a more holistic understanding and formulation of Christian theology, which respects the ongoing witness of the Holy Spirit. This intimate and vital dimension of the Christian life precludes a purely formal or rationalistic conception of Christian doctrine. The very affirmation of Scripture by an individual generally follows a kind of experimental appropriation of its truth. Salvation makes a real difference in a person's life, and Christian doctrine must likewise reflect its dynamic character or else Christianity as a whole lapses into formalities inappropriate both to Scripture and the Christian experience of salvation. Immediately following the passage quoted above from the preface to the "Sermons on Several occasions;" Wesley warned against two common misconceptions found in Christianity:

And herein it is more especially my desire, first, to guard those who are just setting their faces toward heaven (and who, having little acquaintance with the things of God, are the more liable to be turned out of the way) from formality, from mere outside religion, which has almost driven heart-religion out of the world; and secondly, toward those who know the religion of the heart, the faith which worketh by love, lest at any time they make void the law through faith, and so fall back into the snare of the devil.⁶²

Although experience adds little to the substance or content of Biblical truth, it confirms, illumines and vitalizes such truths in the believer. Wesley expected such experience to occur concomitantly with our recognition of the truths of Scripture. Such experimental truths concur with the propositionally stated truths we find in Scripture. For this reason, Mildred Wynkoop argues that Wesleyanism should interpret Scripture experimentally rather than philosophically. In theology, according to Wynkoop, "The illogicalities and lack of practicality and realism and moral seriousness arise, not because men are not serious or devout or Christian, but because the Bible has been interpreted philosophically and not experimentally."⁶³

A.4. Summary of Experimental Method. Overall experience contributes to a more holistic formulation of Christian theology. Experience which respects the ongoing witness of the Holy Spirit prevents one from overly systematizing or institutionalizing the core of Christian truth. It also helps Christians to keep in touch with the actual pulse of people's needs of both a spiritual and social nature. This is why Brantley describes Wesley's methodology as serving "as the model for putting experience into words"; thus, Wesley's writ-

ings could not help but reflect the sometimes nonsystematic character of our experiences, even our experiences of God.⁶⁴ Truths concerning God, God's relationship with believers, and believers' actions towards others should not and, in fact, cannot be demystified or compartmentalized by human theological endeavors. As with the Anglican heritage which preceded him, it was a matter of principle for Wesley not to articulate theology so rigidly or systematically that it denied the participatory activity of God in the world or the creative response to perceived needs on the part of believers. Without explicitly saying so, Wesley presented an asystematic theology which avoided the formalistic tendencies of theological system building, yet he did it in a way which allowed for coherence and consistency over years of theological writing.

B. Practical Application of Wesley's Theology

Throughout Wesley's writings one finds an ongoing concern for both ministering to the spiritual needs of people and to the practical aspects of their personal and social needs. With regard to people's spiritual needs, Wesley sought to proclaim the gospel message and to spiritually nurture those who believe. In order to accomplish all of this Wesley was willing to listen to experience when deciding upon courses of action, even when those courses of action had no explicit warrant in Scripture and church tradition. Wesley's methodological approach to theology influenced the way in which he applied that theology to life, and his consciousness of those applications (or related experiences he observed) conversely influenced Wesley's theological theory. Thus Wesley was willing to experiment with the unorthodox practices of preaching outdoors, establishing extended intra-church group meetings, singing hymns to popular tunes, appointing lay preachers, and eventually ordaining them to the effective work of the ministry. When Wesley saw the immense numbers of people seriously searching for religious truth, he considered it expedient to preach to them, pointing out that he disobeyed no explicit Scripture or law in preaching outdoors.⁶⁵ After all, Wesley observed positive results to his efforts, and some became Christians who otherwise might never have heard the gospel message.⁶⁶

The societies and bands were, as Colin Williams describes them, "important experiments . . . essential to translate faith into forms of discipline, in order to relate the faith to the common concerns of daily life and to provide for the mutual growth of the members."⁶⁷

The experiment of singing Christian poetry to the then-contemporary tunes proved very successful. Wesley described the eventual compilation of lifelong work in the development of popular hymnody as "a little body of experimental and practical divinity."⁶⁸ Although the modern editors of "A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists" consider the terms "experimental," "practical," and "scriptural" to be interchangeable, they recognize that "Experience is not a separate second source of authority; it finds out (*ex-periri*) the external truth of the Word of God."⁶⁹ Such external truths may be observed and incorporated into a body of experimental and practical divinity.

In his defense of lay preaching, Wesley made the results of ministry the primary focus of his argumentation-experiential proof of their call to serve God in whatever way possible.⁷⁰ Wesley admitted that lay preaching might

conflict with ecclesiastical law, but argued that it should be considered an exempt case because of his experience and that of his associates in having a clear conscience about field preaching.⁷¹

Wesley's first experiment in actually ordaining lay ministers proved disastrous. Vivian Green comments on this experiment: "Already, in 1764, a visiting Greek prelate, Erasmus, Bishop of Arcadia (in Crete), had at his request ordained some of his preachers; but the experiment had been a very dubious success, arousing Charles Wesley to consternation and irritating others who suspected the obliging bishop's credentials."⁷² Wesley later ordained lay ministers himself, though he still refused to consider schism from the Church of England. He recognized that past experience proved schisms to be undesirable, and commented on his own desire not to create yet another: ". . . the experiment has been so frequently tried already, and the success never answered the expectation."⁷³

Wesley is well known for his emphasis upon salvation, holiness and other aspects of religious life, but his care for people extended beyond their spiritual well-being. Considering his time and place in history, Wesley was in the forefront of meeting the social needs of eighteenth-century England. His care for souls extended to the whole person. He especially recognized the importance of caring for people who were poor, uneducated, and sick, and for those who-for various reasons-were dispossessed by society, for example, slaves and prisoners. Wesley especially sought to care for the poor. It was toward them that Wesley directed his primary evangelistic thrusts and his social actions. For example, Wesley provided basic medical care and wrote simple medical manuals in order to aid those who could not afford professional care.⁷⁴ He also established what came to be known as "The Poor House" for those, especially widows, who could not care for themselves, and he founded an orphanage.⁷⁵ Wesley took it upon himself to educate those who otherwise did not have the means to be educated. He originally intended to teach the children himself. But Wesley said that "after several unsuccessful trials;" he found better people "of sufficient knowledge, who had talents for, and their hearts in, the work."⁷⁶ At the Kingswood School, Wesley recognized that he needed to make variations in the educational structure after many years of trial and error in its development.⁷⁷ Wesley even made it possible for people to receive money who had immediate needs for small loans by establishing a benevolent loan fund. The only stipulation was that borrowers should repay the loan within three months.⁷⁸

Wesley's concern for the poor extended beyond actual acts of good will toward the poor. Whole sermons-and many of them-were written for the purpose of instructing the Methodists on how to handle their money for the expressed goal of both aiding the work of the ministry and for helping the needs of the poor-those whom Outler describes as "Wesley's self-chosen constituency: 'Christ's poor.'" ⁷⁹

Of course, Wesley's best known sermon dealing with money is entitled "The Use of Money." Here Wesley exhorted Christians to gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.⁸⁰ Wesley soon discovered that his Methodist followers were good at the first two principles, but ignored the third principle, which was to stand against surplus accumulation. Wesley considered surplus accumulation to be the leading sin of Christian praxis.⁸¹

So concerned was Wesley over this misuse of money and corresponding injustices against the poor that he wrote his sermons warning about the spiritual and social dangers of accumulating surplus wealth.⁸² Outler aptly recognizes that Wesley's sermons were

in clear contrast to the notion, proffered by the Puritans, but approved by others, that honestly earned wealth is a sign and measure of divine favors. What is interesting is that Wesley's economic radicalism on this point has been ignored, not only by most Methodists, but by the economic historians as well.⁸³

Although Wesley may not have been able to find sufficient scriptures or church tradition to convince the Methodists of the dangers of accumulating surplus wealth, he thought that experience provided ample proof of its dangers both to the spiritual well-being of the would-be giver of money and to the physical well-being of the would-be recipient of money.

Most Wesley scholars recognize that Wesley's teachings on social holiness or social responsibility concentrate on the renewal of society rather than on its reformation or transformation.⁸⁴ Wesley lived in an era which did not possess the same social consciousness shared by modern Christians, so we must not expect from Wesley the kind of theological sensitivity and praxis expected by Christians today. But in his religious and economic radicalism Wesley laid the conceptual or methodological framework for later involvement's by Methodists, especially their place in the growth of the British liberal party and in the rise of socialism. In the words of Green, Wesley's "Religious radicalism had acted as a midwife to political reform."⁸⁵ Thus we are not surprised when for example, Williams finds in Wesley's abolitionist support of Wilberforce, a belief that God appoints times (*kairoi*) when an attack on great social evils can succeed, but that for their success the complete obedience of his followers and the leaders he has appointed is required.⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

Wesley employed an experimental approach to his conceptual understanding of theology and to its application. The term experimental included recognition of the awareness or witness of God's Holy Spirit in our lives. It also included an experimental or inductive approach to understanding life experiences as a whole in order to understand and implement theology better. In other words, Wesley's self-styled attempt to describe and live out "the true, the scriptural, experimental religion" reflects his willingness to extend inductive investigation beyond the study of scripture to include the study of all experiences that may be relevant to theology and its practical application. In this way Wesley thought that he developed a holistic, dynamic and relevant understanding of Christian theology and praxis.

Wesley distilled his methodology from the dual Anglican concerns for practical divinity and for incorporating the popular experimental philosophy of British empiricism. In his theology; Wesley was willing to investigate experience, along with tradition and reason, as genuine sources of religious authority in the confirmation, illumination and application of scriptural truths. For Wesley, experience included more than personal religious experience, He was also willing to consider phenomena which might enhance our knowledge of such doctrines as sin, salvation, sanctification, and ministry.

In the practical application of his theology, Wesley was further willing to experiment in order to discover the most effective means of service. This experimentation primarily had to do with the ways in which he communicated the gospel through such unorthodox practices as field preaching, lay ministers, ordination of lay ministers, and so on. But it also included ways in which to minister holistically to the needs of people Wesley's care included experimentation with alternative forms of health care, housing and education for the poor and aid to those dispossessed by society. It also included a radical economic view of how Christians should avoid surplus accumulation of money-an accumulation which was equally dangerous to the spiritual well-being of the wealthy and to the social neglect of the poor.

While Wesley did not live in an era which shared the modern awareness of the need for challenging social structures as well as for providing for basic human needs, he supplied a theological method which provides the frame-work for creatively approaching such problems. His radicalism in both ecclesiastical and economic matters challenges us to observe the world in which we live and respond to every social as well as spiritual need that we encounter. Moreover we must not rest from experimenting with ways in which to meet those needs as effectively as possible because it is only in doing so that we will be faithful in realizing love for our neighbors as well as for God.

Notes

1. This article was first presented as a paper at the Wesleyan Studies Group at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, 20 November 1988.

2. John Wesley, preface, __3, 6, "Sermons on Several Occasions," The Works of John Wesley, ed. Albert C. Outler, The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley, 33 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:104, 106. The Bicentennial Edition completes the edition of Wesley's Works begun by Oxford Univ. Press.

3. Here I borrow the phrase from a hymn by Charles Wesley. See Charles Wesley, "A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists, 1780," hymn 462, 1.5, The Works of John Wesley, ed. Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver Beckerlegge, The Oxford Edition of Wesley's Works, 33 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 7:644.

4. Francis Paget, Introduction to the Fifth Book of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907)284. Cf. Charles Gore, Roman Catholic Claims, 4th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), 6.

5. Henry R. McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism (New York: Charles Scribner's Press, 1965), vi.

6. McAdoo, Spirit of Anglicanism, 312.

7. McAdoo, Spirit of Anglicanism, 313.

8. Willam Ragsdale Cannon, *Theology of John Wesley* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1946), 19.

9. Piette states that the whole of Europe "experienced a formidable moral crisis, which itself originated in a religious crisis. This religious crisis in the last analysis was the result of a disorder in the dogmatic sphere. For is it not always the case that ideas rule the world? . . . While remaining rigidly orthodox, the Churches seemed to have lost the power of giving life to souls." See Maximin Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, tr. J. B. Howard (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937), 181-182.

10. Piette, *Evolution of Protestantism*, 436.

11. Richard Hooker, preface, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker, ed. W Speed Hill, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 1:29.

12. Jeremy Taylor, *Epistle Dedicatory, The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1864), xxi.

13. Taylor, *Holy Dying*, xxi.

14. Wesley included a wide sampling of both ancient and modern sermons in *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from, and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which have ever been Published in the English Tongue*, 50 vols. (Bristol: Farley, 1749-1755 (-84). Cf. esp. vols. VII-IX.

15. See the chapter "Of Enthusiasm" in John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1959), 2:428-441, esp. 432. Cf. Samuel Johnson's entry under "enthusiasm" in his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755; New York: Arno Press, 1979), which attributes its primary definition to the writings of Locke.

16. See Wesley's defense against charges of enthusiasm in *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*; _1-36, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 11:45-58, and "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part I," V.26-27, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 11:169-171. Cf. "Doctrine of Original Sin, according to Scripture, Reason, and Experience;" Works (Jackson ed.) 8:432-434; and the letters "To William Law;" 6 January 1756, 1.1, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 3:332-335; "To the John Downes;" 17 November 1759, _14-17, Letters (Telford ed.) 4:333-334; and "To Dr. Home;" 10 March 1762, Letters (Telford ed.) 4:172.

17. In writing against Toland, Browne also criticized what he considered to be Locke's limited view of evidence in trying to understand the mysteries of Christianity. see Peter Browne, *A Letter in Answer to a Book Entitled, Christianity Not Mysterious; As also to All Those Who Set Up for Reason and Evidence in Opposition to Revelation and Mysteries* (London: R. Clavell, 1697).

18. Peter Browne, *The Procedure, Extent and Limits of Human Understanding* (1728; New York: Garland Publishing, 1976), 33.

19. Browne, *Procedure, Extent and Limits of Human Understanding*, 34. Cf. the development of Browne's ideas of analogy in *Things Divine and Supernatural Conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human* (1733; New York: Garland Publishing, 1976).

20. Browne, *Procedure, Extent and Limits of Human Understanding*, 462.

21. See Richard E. Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1984), 34.

22. For example, Wesley was aware of Jonathan Edwards' work in *A Treatise on the Religious Affections*, but his evaluation of Edwards was mixed at best. See the preface to Wesley's abridgement of the *Treatise* in *A Christian Library*, quoted in the *Works* (Jackson ed.) 14:269-270.

23. See Wesley's various remarks upon electricity in *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock, 9 vols. (1909-1916; London: Epworth Press, 1938), 3:320, 16 October 1747; 4:53-54, 17 February 1753; 4:190-191, 9 November 1756; 4:357, 30 October 1759; and 5:247, 4 January 1768.

24. See the preface to this article in *Works* (Jackson ed.) 14:241-244.

25. Preface, "The Desideratum: Or, Electricity made plain and useful. By a Lover of Mankind, and of Common Sense;" *Works* (Jackson ed.) 14:241-244.

26. Wesley made references to having read Browne's philosophical commentaries on Locke as early as 1729. See references to Browne's writings in the series of letters between Wesley and Mary Pendarves in "To Mrs. Mary Pendarves," 3 October 1730, 28 December 1730, 4 February 1731, *Works* (Oxford ed.) 25:250, 261, 269; and "From Mrs. Mary Pendarves;" 13 February 1731, *Works* (Oxford ed.) 25:271. In an editor's note, Telford states, "Many references in the diary for Sept. 1730 show how diligently Wesley was reading the Bishop of Cork's book at this time." See Telford, *Letters* (Telford ed.) 56, n. 1.

27. See Clifford J. Hindley, "The Philosophy of Enthusiasm: A Study in the Origins of Experimental Theology;" *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 182 (1957): 99-109, esp. 108; and Brantley, *Locke, Wesley*, 27-102, esp. 30, 34.

28. Preface, _6, "Sermons on Several Occasions," *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 1:106.

29. Hindley convincingly argues that it is only in this empiricist atmosphere that we can rightly understand the epistemological thought of Wesley and his method of investigating the truths of Christian belief. See Hindley, "The Philosophy of Enthusiasm;" 99.

30. See "Remarks upon Mr. Locke's 'Essay on the Human Understanding,'" *Works* (Jackson ed.) 13:455-464. The complete series of Wesley's remarks may be found in vols. 5-7 of the *Arminian Magazine*. Cf. Mitsuo Shimizu's discussion of Wesley and the philosophical traditions of Locke, Brone and Malebranche in "Epistemology in the Thought of John Wesley" (diss., Drew University, 1980), 111-154.

31. For example, see various instances of Wesley's use of or reference to experimentation in the following places: Preface, _6, "Sermons on Several Occasions;" Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:106; "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered" (1781, sermon 70), 11.3, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 2:594-595; "Hypocrisy in Oxford" (1741, Sermon 150), 11.13, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 4:406; and "To Dr. Lavingren, Bishop of Exeter," _13, December 1751, Letters (Telford ed.) 3:302.

32. For example, see "Awake, Thou That Sleepest" (1742, Sermon 3), 1.10, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:145-146; "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" (1746, Sermon 9), 1.1, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:251; "The Witness of the Spirit, I" (1746, Sermon 10), 11.12, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:283; "The Witness of Our Own Spirit" (1746, Sermon 12), __11, 18, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:306-307, 311; "The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God" (1748, Sermon 19), 1.1-10, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:433-435; "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, X" (1750, Sermon 30), _17, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:658; "The New Birth" (1760, Sermon 45), 11.4, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 2:192-193; "The Signs of the Times" (1787, Sermon 66), 11.4, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 2:526; "On Conscience" (1788,

Sermon 105), 1.8-9, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 3:483-484; "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith" (1788, Sermon 119), __2-3, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 4:49; "On Living without God" (1790, Sermon 130), __941, 15, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 4:172-173, 176; "On Faith, Heb. 11:1" (1791, Sermon. 132), __2, 7, 18, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 4:189, 192, 200. Cf. Outler's comments on Wesley's "spiritual sensorium" in Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:117n, 276n.

33. Roderick Leupp rightly observes that commentary on Wesley's thought has long recognized his empirical tendencies, though scholars have varied widely concerning the degree to which his thought was genuinely empirical. See Roderick Thomas Leupp, "The Art of God: Light and Darkness in the Thought of John Wesley" (diss., Drew University, 1985), 223; cf. 192-206.

34. One of the best examples of Wesley's professed self-professed consistency may be found in the preface to his "Sermons on Several Occasions": "The following sermons contain the substance of what I have been preaching for between eight and nine years last past....Every serious man who peruses these will therefore see in the clearest manner what those doctrines are which I embrace and teach as essentials of true religion:" See the Preface, _1, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:103. Another excellent example may be found in Wesley's treatise, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as believed and taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, from the year 1725 to the year 1777;" Works (Jackson ed.) 11:366-445. Concerning his doctrine of Christian perfection, Wesley affirmed: "These are the very same words wherein I largely declared, for the first time, my sentiments of Christian perfection. And is it not easy to see, (1.) That this is the very same point at which I aimed all along before the year 1725; and.... (2.) That this is the very same doctrine which I believe and teach at this day; not adding one point; either to that inward or outward holiness which I maintained eight-and-thirty years ago? And it is the same which, by the grace of God, I have continued to teach from that time turn now; as will appear to every impartial person from the extracts subjoined below:" See "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection;" Works (Jackson ed.) 11:373.

For further references concerning Wesley's self-professed consistency see "Principles of a Methodist," _29, Works (Jackson ed.) 8:374 and n.; and "To the Countess of Huntingdon," 19 June 1771, Letters (Telford ed.) 5:259.

35. This may be seen to a degree in the works of Cambridge Platonists and Latitudinarians. Experimental method, of course, became very apparent in the scientifically oriented philosophy and theology of Boyle, Locke and Bentley. But it also influenced a growing number of Anglicans such as Browne and Vincent Perronet.

36. Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language n.p. (see definition of "Experimental"). Although Wesley used the term experimental long before Johnson compiled his dictionary, the definition reflects common usage contemporary with Wesley. Examples of how the term was used in context, provided by Johnson, were drawn from such diverse sources as William Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, Isaac Newton's *Opticks*, and Richard Bentley's *Eight Sermons preached at the Honorable Robert Boyle's Lectures in the first year*.

37. Preface, _6, "Sermons on Several Occasions," Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:106.

38. To this understanding of true religion, 'led Campbell adds "that John Wesley conceived of Christian antiquity as a period in which an ideal of Christian individual and community life was realized. The 'ideal' Wesley believed to have been realized in Christian antiquity was that to which Wesley referred as 'true' or 'genuine Christianity and whose paradigm Wesley found in Christ and in the Christianity of the New Testament" See 'led Allen Campbell, "John Wesley's Conceptions and Uses of Christian Antiquity" (diss., Southern Methodist University, 1984), 14. Although Wesley's references to true religion do not primarily pertain to his view of Christian antiquity, Campbell rightly reminds us that Wesley always understood his theology within the context of orthodox church history

39. "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, X" (1750, Sermon 30), _2, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:651. Cf. "On Divine Providence" (1786, Sermon 67), _18, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 2:543; and "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith" (1788, Sermon 119), _18, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 4:57-58.

40. "Scriptural Christianity" (1744, Sermon 4), Works (Bicentennial ed.),159-180.

41. "On a Single Eye" (1789, Sermon 125), _3, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 4:121-122.

42. "On Living without God" (1790, Sermon 130), __9, 11, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 4:172, 173. Cf. "'Awake, Thou That Sleepest'"(1742, Sermon 3), 1.10, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:145.

43. Wesley often argued for Christian doctrine by observing, interpreting and evaluating empirical evidence on its behalf For example, Wesley began his monograph on the doctrine of original sin by empirically observing "The Past and Present State of Mankind" (Part I). He continued by interpreting

observations of sin in accordance with scripture (Part II) and then by evaluating his observations in relationship to the writings of John Taylor entitled *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin, Proposed to Free and Candid Examination* (Part III). See "The Doctrine of Original Sin, according to Scripture, Reason, and Experience," *Works* (Jackson ed.) 9:191-352. And in his letter to the Rev. Conyers Middleton, Wesley sought to investigate "the surest and most accessible evidence" of genuine Christianity-evidence that included personal religious experiences and religious experiences of others and of Christianity as a whole which could be empirically observed. See the letter to "The Rev. Dr. Middleton;" VI, *Works* (Jackson ed.) 10:67-79, esp. 78. Cf. Harold Lindstrom's study of Wesley and sanctification and how 'In later years, clearly actuated by his experiences in the Methodist revival, Wesley altered some of the extreme statements he had made on the state of the entirely sanctified in 1740 in the preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems*." See Harold Lindstrom's, *Wesley and Sanctification*, tr. H. S. Harvey (London: Epworth Press, 1950), 139-140.

44. George Eayrs, *John Wesley: Christian Philosopher and Church Founder* (London: Epworth Press, 1926), 58-59.

45. Cf. the analysis by R. Larry Shelton of Wesley's hermeneutics as being "primarily inductive, historical-literal, and soteriologically motivated" in "John Wesley's approach to Scripture in Historical Perspective;" *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 16.1 (1981): 23-50, esp. 41-42.

46. Brantley, Locke, Wesley, 43.

47. Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley-Practical Theologian?" Wesleyan Studies Group, American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, 20 November 1988.

48. Mark H. Horst, "Christian Understanding and the Life of Faith in John Wesley's Thought" (diss., Yale University, 1985), 285.

49. See Locke's discussion of the sense in which the idea of God is innate and necessary in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1959), 1:95, 100-101, and how the existence of God is demonstrable in 2:306, 312, 324, 327.

50. Although Wesley did not make natural theology and arguments for the existence of God an essential part of his theology, he maintained that we do have experientially related knowledge that God exists. In this regard, Wesley's view resembled views of the cosmological and teleological arguments affirmed by Locke, Calvin and others. See "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge" (1784, Sermon 69), _4, *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 2:571; 'A Farther Appeal;' 111.21, *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 11:268; and "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VI" (1748, Sermon 26), 111.7, *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 1:580-581.

51. For some of Wesley's views concerning miracles see "The Principles of a Methodist farther explained: Occasioned by the Rev. Mr. Church's Second Letter to Mr. Wesley: In a Second Letter to that Gentleman;" V, *Works* (Jackson ed.) 8:460-468; and "A Letter to the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Gloucester;" 11.3-8, *Works* (Jackson ed.) 9:157-163.

52. Some refer to a priori knowledge as notional knowledge, that is, knowledge that is abstract and non-experiential. Notional knowledge contrasts with empirical and experiential knowledge which involves varying degrees of personal participation of an individual in the knowing process. Empirical knowledge involves personal experiences which are relatively easy to communicate, whereas experiential knowledge involves personal experiences which are relatively difficult to communicate, if in fact it is fully possible to communicate personal experiences at all.

53. Brantley, Locke, Wesley, 46.

54. Wesley describes his general agreement with the epistemology of Locke in his "Remarks upon Mr. Locke's 'Essay on Human Understanding: 'For example, Wesley said, "I think that point, 'that we have no innate principles,' is abundantly proved, and cleared from all objections that have any shadow of strength:' See "Remarks upon Mr. Locke's 'Essay on Human Understanding;" Works (Jackson ed.) 13:455; cf. n. 29.

55. Cf. the connection scholars have long drawn between the experimental philosophy of Locke and the theology of Wesley, for example: George Croft Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), 84-86, 168470; Hindley, "The Philosophy of Enthusiasm;" 99409, 199-210; and Brantley, Locke, Wesley, 27-47.

56. "An Earnest Appeal," _9, Works (Oxford ed.) 11:47-48. Cf. reference to the "scriptural hypothesis" in the passage quoted above from "On a Single Eye" (1789, Sermon 125), _3, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 4:121-122.

57. Eayrs comments, "It is admitted that he [Wesley] regulated and used his method upon a master principle or hypothesis; but every investigator is guided, more or less, by some principle or some assumption. . . . It seems to the present student that Wesley's working hypothesis may be found in a statement in the remarkable preface which he issued, in 1747, with the first volume of his *Standard Sermons* (Works, v. Preface). There Wesley utters this impressive confession: 'I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: This simple but profound statement includes his belief as to the origin, nature, consciousness, and conscience of man, and the purpose of his existence:' See Eayrs, *John Wesley: Christian Philosopher and Church Founder*, 59-60.

58. Cf. Wesley's distinction between "the faith of a servant" versus "the faith of a son" in "On the Discoveries of Faith" (1788, Sermon 117), esp. _13, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 4:35.

59. Staniey Brice Frost, *The Doctrine of Authority in the Works of John Wesley* (London: n.p., 1938), 104405. The English translation is by the author from his book entitled *Die Autoritätslehre in den Werken John Wesleys* (Munche: E. Reinhardt, 1937).

60. "Awake, Thou That Sleepest" (1742, Sermon 3), 111.6, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:154. Cf. Wesley's quotation of the Marquis de Renty as having said, "I bear about with me continually an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity." See "On the Trinity" (1775, Sermon 55), _17, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 2:385.

61. Wesley, Wesleyan New Testament, 433, quoted by Cell, Rediscovery of John Wesley, 65. Cell does not specify from which edition he quoted Wesley, but the quotation probably does not come from the original 1790 edition but from either the 1815 or 1818 editions. In the introduction to his own edition of Wesley's translation, Cell confirms the experimental theme in Wesley by concluding his introduction in the following words: "Beyond controversy the primary resource of the Protestant faith has been the experimental and experiential knowledge of the Word of God." See George C. Cell, Introduction, *John Wesley's New Testament; Compared with the Authorized Version* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1938), xiv. This statement implies both a methodological study of Scripture as well as the experiential confirmation of its truths.

For further references to "experimental assurance" or the "experimental knowledge of pardoning love," which represents the privilege of all Christians, see Wesley's commentary on I Cor. 12:3 and Eph. 6:17 in the Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), 622, 722.

62. Preface, _6, "Sermons on Several Occasions;" Works (Bicentennial ed.) 1:106.

63. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), 221.

64. Brantley, Locke, Wesley, 2. Brantley further states that "Wesley verbalized his experience. And experience, throughout this study, is conceived as a continuum from things, through ideas, to words" (p.23).

65. See Journal (Curnock ed.) 3:231, 27 December 1745; and 4:54, 23 September 1759.

66. See Journal (Curnock ed.) 3:373, 28 August 1748; and 4:13, 20 May 1759.

67. Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 140.

68. Preface, _4, "A Collection of Hymns," Works (Oxford ed.) 7:74.

69. Hildebrandt and Beckerlegge, Introduction, "A Collection of Hymns;" Works (Oxford ed.) 7:3.

70. See Wesley's extended defense of lay preaching in "A Farther Appeal;" especially __10-25, Works (Bicentennial ed.) 11:296-308.

71. See Journal (Curnock ed.) 3:231, 27 December 1745.

72. Vivian H. H. Green, *John Wesley* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), 148.

73. "Reasons Against a Separation from the Church of England;" 1, Works (Jackson ed.) 13:226; cf. the eleven other reasons given by Wesley for refusing to separate from the church of England.

74. In 1747 Wesley first published *Primitive Physic, or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases* (1747; London: Epworth Press, 1960).

This simple medical manual was reprinted twenty-one times by 1785. Cf. references to it in the *Journal* (Curnock ed.) 8:273, 4 December 1746; 3:301, 6 June 1747; 3:329, 1647 January 1748; and "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," XII.1-6, *Works* (Jackson ed.) 8:263-265.

75. See "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," XIII-XIV, *Works* (Jackson ed.) 8:265-267.

76. "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists" XIV.2, *Works* (Jackson ed.) 8:266.

77. See "A Plain Account of Kingswood School," _1, *Works* (Jackson ed.) 13:289.

78. See "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," XV, *Works* (Jackson ed.) 8:267-268.

79. Outler, introductory comment, "The Use of Money" (1760, Sermon 50), *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 2:263.

80. "The Use of Money" (1760, Sermon 50), *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 2:263-280.

81. See Outler's comments in the introductory comment to "The Danger of Riches" (1781, Sermon 87), *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 3:227.

82. See "The Danger of Riches" (1781, Sermon 87), *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 3:228-246; "On Riches" (1788, Sermon 108), *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 3:519-530; and "The Danger of Increasing Riches" (1790, Sermon 131), *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 4:178-186.

83. Outler, introductory comment, "The Danger of Riches" (1781, Sermon 87), *Works* (Bicentennial ed.) 3:228.

84. Cf. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today*, 194-498; Green, *John Wesley*, 152-160; and Henry Carter, *The Methodist Heritage* (London: Epworth Press, 1951), 178-487.

85. Green, *John Wesley*, 158.

86. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today*, 197, n. 13.