

WORD & DEED

VOL. XVII NO. 1



NOVEMBER 2014

A JOURNAL OF SALVATION ARMY
THEOLOGY & MINISTRY

From What to What?

The Wesleyan Vision: Gospel-bearers

Cumulative Index of Articles

Cumulative Index of Book Reviews & Book Notes



Salvation Army National Headquarters
Alexandria, VA, USA

Word & Deed Mission Statement:

The purpose of the journal is to encourage and disseminate the thinking of Salvationists and other Christian colleagues on matters broadly related to the theology and ministry of The Salvation Army. The journal provides a means to understand topics central to the mission of The Salvation Army, integrating the Army's theology and ministry in response to Christ's command to love God and our neighbor.

Salvation Army Mission Statement:

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.

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Our Friends

It is evident that *Word & Deed* would not have moved beyond the first issue had it not been for all the friends who have supported this work, and thereby supported what we consider to be an important ministry in The Salvation Army. We are grateful indeed, and in this issue the works of four friends are highlighted.

The first article, presented in October, 2014 at The Salvation Army's Theology and Ethics Symposium in London, is entitled "From what? To What?" This article explains the full range of salvation, beginning with a biblical understanding of sin and moving both to salvation and the manifestation of salvation in good works—loving God and loving neighbor. Our friend of many years, Major H. Dean Hinson, the President of the Evangeline Booth College and the Principal of the School for Officer Training in Atlanta, Georgia, was asked to present this paper and we are delighted to include it in this issue of the journal. This is the first article that we have published from Major Hinson, and we are in debt to him for his biblical knowledge and his clear exposition of that knowledge.

The Salvation Army in Canada and Booth University College established a special lecture series to mark the many contributions of Colonel Earl Robinson to the establishment of Booth University College and to the larger Salvation Army world. Colonel Robinson was the founding president of Booth University College, then named the Catherine Booth Bible College,

and the first years of establishing the reputation of the College came largely through his creative skills as an administrator. We both were privileged to know Colonel Robinson through our association with Booth University College and through memberships in the The Salvation Army's International Doctrine Council, of which Colonel Robinson was the chair for many years.

The Earl Robinson Memorial Lectures on Christian Faith and the World were designed to stimulate serious reflection and dialogue on the intersection of Christian faith, Salvation Army mission and theology, and the world. This endowed lecture series created the opportunity for prominent lecturers to enrich the intellectual life of Booth University College. The first Robinson lectures took place in October of 2013 and were presented by Dr. Paul Chilcote of Ashland Theological Seminary.

Dr. Chilcote is also our friend. We both met him in connection with discussions that The Salvation Army International Doctrine Council had with the Methodists over several years. These Salvation Army/World Methodist Council dialogues were invaluable in finding common biblical and theological ground for the ministry of the Army and several Methodist denominations. And Paul Chilcote is a recognized leader and scholar in the Methodist community. His paper on the means of grace as outlined by the Wesleys is helpful from both a biblical perspective and a historical perspective, and William and Catherine Booth, both reared in Methodism, would have been readily familiar with these means of grace. This paper is a rich source for understanding Wesleyan theology.

We are indebted to our third friend, Robin Rader, the Library Director for The Salvation Army's College for Officer Training in the Eastern Territory of the United States. Robin has been a faithful supporter of *Word & Deed* for many years, but she has recently accomplished a great work for the journal. She and her library staff created two indices of the writings of the journal from the first issue to the most recent issue. These indices are an index of the articles and an index of the book reviews. The library staff worked out the best format and procedure for these indices, and now entries can easily be added to these indices. It is common for theological journals to include such indices and we thank Robin for helping us establish them. They help to

further the mission of the journal by making the articles and book reviews readily accessible.

Robin Rader also guided an independent study with Cadet Allison Cornish, a Gordon College graduate and now a commissioned officer in The Salvation Army. While she was a student at the College for Officer Training Allison indexed *Word & Deed* for the Christian Periodical Index database. This was labor-intensive work, requiring a thorough understanding of each article in order to do subject analysis, and knowledge of Library of Congress cataloging in order to assign subject terms. Now that Allison has been commissioned and has left the College for Officer Training, Robin has taken on this responsibility, for which we are grateful.

And our fourth friend, Don Burke, has been a tireless supporter of this journal from its inception. He served on the editorial board of the journal for many years, and has contributed both articles and book reviews frequently in the past years. His book review of *Calvin vs Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice*, by Don Thorson, will interest our readers because it takes a look at Calvinism from a significant book on that topic recently published—*Against Calvinism and For Calvinism*. It is impossible to understand our own theological heritage without understanding our approach to the broader subject of Church history, and especially to the Calvinism with which both the Wesleys and the Booths were familiar.

And so we would like this issue of *Word & Deed* be a tribute to all the friends who have supported the journal throughout the years. Their names are too numerous to mention, but the four friends who have been so helpful in shaping this issue of *Word & Deed* are represent of all friends of this ministry.

RJG

JSR

From What to What?

H. Dean Hinson

In the February 1920 *Musical Salvationist* these words by Charles Collier were published:

**Joyful news to all mankind, Jesus is mighty to save!
All who seek shall surely find Jesus is mighty to save!
Sinners may relinquish wrong, faltering hearts may now be strong;
Sound the tidings right along; Jesus is mighty to save!
Jesus is mighty to save! Jesus is mighty to save!
*From the uttermost, to the uttermost, mighty to save!*¹**

They would seem to answer the question, ‘From what to what?’ However, they don’t shed much light on from what we are saved and to what we are saved. Many of the songwriters in our songbook, from Charles Wesley to Lawley to Pearson to Sidney Cox (to name a few)², use the phrase ‘saved to the uttermost’ in describing the saving work of Jesus Christ in our lives. This phrase attempts to define the depths from which and the heights to which Jesus has rescued and redeemed believers. “Uttermost” is defined as “the most remote or farthest limit” and the “greatest or highest degree or quantity.”³ We simply run out of words to express the ‘from what to what’ of His saving work.

How would you fill in the blanks? Many ideas come to mind when we attempt to verbalize and visualize the change brought about by Christ’s death and resurrection. Some suggestions are: from sinner to saint, from guilty to pardoned, from broken to whole, from chained to free, from lost to found, from orphan to adopted, from disobedient to disciple, from despair to hope, from fear to peace, from dead to alive or, to use our doctrine language, from totally

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depraved to wholly sanctified⁴.

I propose to examine both sides of this question by presenting a description of the depths from which we have been saved and what ‘continued obedient faith’ looks like in our everyday lives. To establish a scriptural foundation for this paper, I begin with Paul’s word to the “holy people who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1:1 NLT⁵) in Ephesus where he states in the second chapter, “Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. But God is so rich in mercy and He loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead” (Ephesians 2:1, 4-5 NLT).

From What?

It would be easier to move past this half of the question and directly to an examination of “continued obedient faith” or “wholly sanctified.” But too much theology (and contemporary preaching) neglects a thoughtful discussion of sin or from what we are saved. By contrast, scripture presents a complex and detailed study of sin and our sinful nature. One problem is the multiple words used for “sin” in both the Old and New Testaments. Like “salvation” “sin” is multifaceted with nuances and descriptions such as disobedience, rebellion, transgression, trespasses, iniquity, and missing the mark or falling short. We combine all these ideas into the one word, “sin,” but the Bible uses many words to describe these human conditions.⁶

In examining the sinful human condition, we can easily verify our choice to obey or disobey. We have rebelled or waged war on God’s authority, and going our own way has led to captivity. We have broken God’s laws and the line He has established for our own good. We are born with the inclination to selfishness. In the New Testament, the most common word or concept of sin is “missing the mark” established by God for each of us. Paul tells the believers in Rome that this is a universal condition (Romans 3:23).

In the Old Testament, this condition of sin begins with the choice of Eve and Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, disobeying God’s specific instructions. The consequences of their actions leads to a thread of sin woven throughout history. From the murder of Abel, to the tower of Babel and the Flood, we are off to a bad start. Sin continues to appear in many forms beginning with the Patriarchs, to the Egyptian captivity, to the journey to the Promised Land

through the cycle of Judges, the repeated sins of the kings (Saul, David and Solomon established a pattern), the idolatry of the people and the unheeded warnings of the prophets.

In the New Testament, Paul is diligent in listing behavior as the outcome of sin in our lives.⁷ Reviewing these lists reveals the depths to which sin has brought us. They bring the iterations of sin to life, combining murder with gossip, adultery with jealousy, and stealing with lying, to name a few. The words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) are observed in both action and intention. It is not just what we do, or the sin we commit, but also why we do it, or a matter of the heart.⁸

Understanding what we have been saved from becomes even more complicated when we begin to study the various definitions of sin from theologians. Augustine said, “My sin was this: That I looked for beauty, pleasure and truth, not in Him, but in myself and in His other creatures.” John Calvin stated this: “Original sin, therefore, seems to be a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul, which first makes us liable to God’s wrath, then also brings forth in us those works which Scripture calls ‘works of the flesh’ (Gal 5:19).”⁹ Wesley’s famous definition of sin is critical in understanding his theology of salvation. He said that sin is a *willful* transgression of a *known* law of God. Our doctrine book states this in explaining total depravity in doctrine five.

In statements of doctrine, depravity is often called total depravity. This does not mean that every person is as bad as he or she can be, but rather that the depravity which sin has produced in human nature extends to the total personality. It is not concerned with the depth of sin but rather about the breadth of the influence of sin in human life. No area of human nature remains unaffected.¹⁰

Our best definition may come from John Wesley’s mother, Susanna, when he asked her for a definition of sin. She replied, “Take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.”¹¹

Just this abbreviated review of sin reveals the vast depth from which we have been freed. We can see that sin affects both who we are—our nature and what we do—our actions. It is both total and universal and should not be taken lightly. We are foreigners journeying through a dark, unholy, sinful world that serves to remind us on a constant basis from what we have been saved.¹² We must stay forever grateful for the saving grace of Jesus Christ, which paid the price for our sin and allows us to live the abundant life that Christ came to provide.¹³ But as our topic reminds us, we are not just saved *from* the depths of sin—we are also saved *to* something. Returning to the second chapter of Ephesians we read in verse ten, “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.”

To What?

We were created to do good works. That was and is God’s will for our lives. Our right actions flow from a transformed character which is God’s grace at work in our lives. As it says earlier in that second chapter of Ephesians, ‘It is a gift of God, so none of us can boast about it’ (Ephesians 2:8). The Bible is very clear that our good works are the product of God’s saving grace and not the cause. We are not saved by anything we do but we are saved to do works of righteousness. Our behavior is the outcome of the transformation that takes place through the atonement of Jesus Christ received by faith which is itself a gift of God. My task in this paper is not to explore the process or means of how this transformation takes place but to reveal from Scripture what life should look like once we have been ‘regenerated by the Holy Spirit’.¹⁴

Thomas Oden in his book *The Good Works Reader* begins with this warning.¹⁵

Some will reduce the question to practical outcomes alone, missing their motivation and meaning. Some will come to the question of good works with their eyes fixed only on their political implications, not their expression of life with God. Some will see good works only as human actions, missing their placement within the history of salvation. Some will see good works only in relation to moral choices, not in relation to God’s holiness. Some will come to the question of good works having in mind only the physical

needs of the needy, not the deeper human need at its tragic sweep. Some will come to the question of good works having in mind only the horizontal dimension of practical service and applicability not the vertical dimension of standing before God now and on the last day.

These are all relevant warnings when we concentrate on doing the good works planned for us by God. They will be avoided if we keep God's word as foundational to our study and if we remember that these are not just our works but God's Holy Spirit working through us. Jesus reminded His disciples, "*Apart from Me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5). In the Sermon on the Mount, in reference to us being salt and light, He said, "let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:16). Paul tells us in the portion of the passage we leave out of our tenth doctrine concerning the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified that, "God will make this happen, for He who calls you is faithful" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). When God is in control of our lives (when filled with the Holy Spirit), good works flow from our lives naturally.

We acknowledged earlier that sin is connected to our motives and intentions. It is important *why* we do what we do, not just our actions themselves. Jesus warned that it was not sufficient to cleanse the outside of the cup and neglect the more important inside.¹⁶ Outwardly obeying the law or acting the way God wills without an inner transformation of the heart (or will)¹⁷ leads to hypocrisy or just going through the motions. The Bible repeatedly warns about this condition which can so easily consume us. The Salvation Army also must remain clear on our motivation as we do good works around the world. General Clarence Wiseman in an article titled "Call to Renewal and Change," in the book *Creed and Deed*, said, "There is a tendency on the part of some authorities in our increasingly secularized society to disregard the fact that The Salvation Army is a Christian movement; treating us simply as another humanitarian agency engaged in good works from worthy, but not theological motives."¹⁸

This warning concerning motives is also given in the Old Testament. Isaiah chided the Israelites for their fasting because they were 'going through the motions of penance'. God says through him that 'This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with Me' (Isaiah 58:4-5). Outwardly doing the works

God calls us to while continuing to disobey by going our own way does not please God. This is the opposite of ‘continued obedient faith’ that God requires. So what does God require? “O people, the Lord had told you what is good, and this is what He requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

In what has been called The Salvation Army’s manifesto, Isaiah gives some more specific ways of “doing what is right” He says, “Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them and do not hide from relative who need your help” (Isaiah 58:6-7). William Booth caught the vision of what we are “saved to” by reaching out in love to a lost and hurting world. This is what Jesus meant by saying we are to be salt and light in the world. The social aspect of The Salvation Army’s ministry is not something pasted onto our mission; it is the outcome of the saving and sanctifying work of Jesus Christ. It is not an option that we can choose or reject; it is at the core of the Gospel. I have had ministers tell me that we (The Salvation Army) are doing what they (various denominations) used to do and should still be doing. The implication is that they have chosen some other way to fulfill God’s calling on their lives. As I look to scripture, I don’t believe there is another option.

Our founder, William Booth, came to understand this and expressed his thinking in an article published in *All The World*, January 1889, titled “Salvation for Both Worlds” and in his book *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890).¹⁹ Booth began to see the work of the Army as a “war on two fronts—the war for souls and the war for a rightly ordered society.” In a lecture to cadets on January 24, 1924 by Brigadier Fred Cox, formerly the personal secretary to William Booth, he summarized William Booth’s position this way: “He believed in keeping religion first. People used to say to him in the early days, ‘You know, General, we can do with your social operations, but we can’t do with your religion; we don’t want it.’ The General would say, ‘If you want my Social work, you have got to have my Religion; they are joined together like the Siamese twins; to divide them is to slay them!’”²⁰ More recently, N. T. Wright echoed the Founder’s position when he said: “Mission must urgently recover from its long-term schizophrenia. As I have said before, the split be-

tween saving souls and doing good in the world is a product not of the Bible or the gospel but of the cultural captivity of both within the Western world.”²¹

In a number of his books, N. T. Wright states that Western theology and thought focused on salvation as a path to heaven bypasses the beneficial work we are to perform in the broken world around us. By only viewing the resurrection as a source of life to come (in heaven) and not also as the abundant life promised by Jesus right now (John 10:10), much of Western Christianity has neglected the call for social transformation. In some places our officers and soldiers have abdicated this social responsibility to others, choosing instead to gather together in our Community Worship Centers enjoying the fellowship of believers, playing and singing about praising God and looking forward to being taken to heaven while the world outside our walls continues its consistent and predictable journey to eternal death and separation from God. This is not what we have been “saved to,” nor is it what our founder envisioned for The Salvation Army.

In his book *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*, Miroslav Volf begins with this warning.

The Christian faith has sometimes failed to live up to its own standards as a prophetic religion. Too often, it neither mends the world nor helps human beings thrive. To the contrary, it seems to shatter things into pieces, to choke up what is new and beautiful before it has a chance to take root, to trample underfoot what is good and true. When this happens, faith is no longer a spring of fresh water helping good life to grow lushly, but a poisoned well, more harmful to those who drink its waters than any single vice could possibly be – as Friedrich Nietzsche, a fierce critic of Christianity, put it in his last and angrily prophetic book, *The Anti-Christ*.²²

So how do we avoid this danger that has become so pervasive throughout Christianity and The Salvation Army? The answer is again found in God’s word, specifically Paul’s letter to the Galatians. In the fifth chapter, verses sixteen and seventeen, he says, “So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the

Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires.” This is followed by a description of the two forces at war within us and a list (mentioned in the first part of this paper) of the consequences of allowing the sinful nature to control our lives. Then he says, “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). When Christ is in us through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, these good works are the product. We are saved and sanctified to love, which, “fulfills the requirements of God’s law” (Romans 13:10). What is important is “faith expressing itself in love” (Galatians 5:6). When the Holy Spirit controls our lives (and desires) and these fruits are being produced, we will feed the hungry, give the thirsty a drink, invite the stranger into our home, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit those in prison. Jesus will say to us, “I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to Me” (Matthew 25:40).

Let me close with a quote from Adrian Plass, from N. T. Wright’s book, *Surprised by Hope*, who said,

But what is it all about? What does it mean to be saved: Saved from what? Saved for what? Should the whole business of salvation have a significant impact on my present as well as on my future? Speaking of the future, what can we expect from an eternity spent in heaven? How can we possibly make sense of heaven when our feet remain so solidly on Earth? Where is the interface, the meeting point between the flesh and Spirit? And when all strange religious terms and voices and patterns and mantras and man-made conventions have faded away, what will be left?²³

I look forward to exploring the answers with you.

Endnotes

¹ *The Songbook of The Salvation Army*, 1986. Song 249 “Mighty to Save” by Charles Collier.

² See these songs as examples: #915 by Charles Wesley, #413 chorus by James Connor Bateman, #430 by William James Pearson, #521 Anon, #335 by Sidney Cox and Tune #267 “To the Uttermost He Saves” by William Bradbury.

³ Dictionary.com

⁴ *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 2010. Doctrines 5 and 10.

⁵ Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

⁶ See Psalm 51 which combines many of these concepts of sin.

⁷ See examples Romans 1: 18-32, Galatians 5: 19-21, Ephesians 4: 17-31, Colossians 3: 5-9, and 2 Timothy 3: 1-9

⁸ See for instance Matthew 5: 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43 ‘You have heard . . . but I say to you’,

⁹ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II.1.8, LCC, 2 vols., trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 251 (page 217 of CCEL edition). Cf. Institutes of the Christian Religion at the Christian Classics Ethereal Library

¹⁰ *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, 2010. P. 114

¹¹ Susanna Wesley (Letter, June 8, 1725)

¹² 1 Peter 1: 17

¹³ John 10:10

¹⁴ Doctrine 7

¹⁵ Thomas Oden, *The Good Works Reader*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge United Kingdom. 2007. p. 2

¹⁶ Matthew 23: 25

¹⁷ Dallas Willard, *Transformation of the Heart – Putting on the Character of Christ*. NavPress, Colorado Springs, Colorado. 2002

¹⁸ Clarence D. Wiseman, *Call to Renewal and Change in Creed and Deed*, John D. Waldron. The Triumph Press, Oakville, Ontario Canada. 1986. p. 277

¹⁹ Roger Green, *An Historical Salvation Army Perspective in Creed and Deed*, John D. Waldron. p. 72

²⁰ Ibid p. 80

²¹ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope – Rethinking Heaven, and Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. Harper One, New York, New York. 2008 p. 265

²² Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith – How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. Brazos Press (a division of Baker Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan). 2011 p. 4

²³ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* p. 195

The Wesleyan Vision: Gospel-bearers

Dr. Paul W. Chilcote

John and Charles Wesleys' rediscovery of a "mission-church paradigm" in eighteenth-century England fueled the renewal of the church and offers a model of enduring significance for global Christianity today. In this paradigm, committed Christian disciples are drawn perennially to Jesus and to one another in community (centripetal movement). God then spins them out into the world in mission and service (centrifugal movement). The Wesleys believed that this paradigm reflected an ancient, that is to say apostolic, vision of the people of God. In this address, I will examine those aspects of Wesleyan theology and spirituality that provide a foundation for this vision and the hymns of Charles Wesley that inculcated missional praxis and commitment to gospel-bearing in the world.

At the outset of this discussion of gospel-bearing, I want first to lay down a theological foundation. One of the dangers in the church today is the false separation of theology and practice, as if our understanding of God has little connection to the way we live our faith day by day. Nothing could be further from the truth from a Wesleyan perspective. The Wesleys, in their lives and written legacy, emphasized the integrated nature of faith and life. So I begin with theology in this exposition of Christian practice, and the phrase "grace upon grace" encapsulates Wesleyan theology. The practice of Christianity begins in grace, grows in grace, and finds its ultimate completion in God's grace. God's grace, or unmerited love, restores our relationship to God and renews God's own image in our lives. God delights in relationships that lib-

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erate and restore the human spirit. Spiritual restoration founded upon God's unconditional love represents the cornerstone of all practices in the Wesleyan spirit. Christian discipleship—the arena of God's continuing activity in the life of the believer—is first and foremost, a grace-filled response to the free gift of God's all-sufficient grace.

Charles sings about the dimensions of this grace in a selection from his *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1749, building upon a favorite text from Ephesians 3:

What shall I do my God to love?
 My loving God to praise
 The length, and breadth, and height to prove,
 And depth of sovereign grace?

Thy sovereign grace to all extends,
 Immense and unconfined;
 From age to age it never ends;
 It reaches all mankind.

Throughout the world its breadth is known,
 Wide as infinity;
 So wide it never passed by one,
 Or it had passed by me.

The depth of all-redeeming love
 What angel tongue can tell?
 O may I to the utmost prove
 The gift unspeakable!¹

This grace that extends to all, reaches all people and even encompasses infinity implies mission. Communities founded upon this grace respond to God's grace faithfully as they embrace and engage God's mission in the world.

Mission, therefore, begins with God.² The Wesleys conceived a “missionary God” because the God they had come to know in Jesus Christ was a God of love reaching out to others. They described this expression of God's love as God's prevenient grace or action.³ The missional practices of the Wesleys

and of the Methodist Societies they founded mirrored this understanding of God's nature and character. Moreover, they firmly believed that God was active and at work in the world to save and restore all creation. These primary convictions led the Wesleys to reclaim mission as the church's reason for being and evangelism as the heart of that mission in the world.⁴ They developed a holistic vision of mission and evangelism that refused to separate faith and works, personal salvation and social justice, physical and spiritual needs.

The Wesleys anchored this missional vision in the fundamental affirmations of the Christian faith, namely, in the doctrines of Creation and Redemption, Incarnation, and Trinity, all of which point to the "centrifugal nature" of God's activity. They understood God's creation of all things out of nothing, for example, as a sheer act of grace, an extension God's love motivated by nothing but God's loving character.⁵ The Incarnation—God taking on human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth—demonstrated the same missional quality. In the fullness of time, God entered human history and reached out to the beloved through Jesus Christ in order to recreate and restore all things in Christ. God's evangelistic activity, His proclamation and embodiment of good news, in their view, begins in creation, continues through redemption and stretches out toward the consummation. This description of God's missionary character, in fact, reflects God's Triune nature.⁶

The Wesleys built their theology of mission upon this understanding of a Three-One God postured in perpetual, grace-filled, outward movement—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in perennial interaction with one another and the world in a great dance of love. While mission belongs to God, the Wesleys believed that all people have the privilege of participating in God's mission through their own proclamation and embodiment of the Good News of God's love in Christ. In the same way that God entered human history and took on flesh in the person of Jesus, the Wesleys sought to live incarnationally by investing themselves in the lives of God's children wherever they found them. Charles Wesley used a powerful image to communicate this understanding of mission and God's call to be gospel-bearers. He described the authentic disciple of Jesus as a "transcript of the Trinity." That means essentially that God writes God's self into our very being so that when other people "read" our lives, they perceive God in us:

Cloath'd with Christ, aspire to shine,
 Radiance He of Light Divine;
 Beam of the Eternal Beam,
 He in God, and God in Him!
 Strive we Him in Us to see,
 Transcript of the Deity.⁷

In one of the great Trinitarian hymns included in John and Charles Wesley's *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, the singer beseeches God:

If so low a child as I
 May to Thy great glory live,
 All my actions sanctify,
 All my words and thoughts receive:
 Claim me for Thy service, claim
 All I have and all I am.

Take my soul and body's powers,
 Take my memory, mind, and will,
 All my goods, and all my hours,
 All I know, and all I feel,
 All I think, and speak, and do;
 Take my heart—but make it new.⁸

The disciple of Christ asks the Three-One God to claim every aspect of his or her life in an oblation that can only be described as covenantal. In typical Wesleyan fashion, a series of “alls” characterizes the plea. All I have, all I am, all my goods, all my hours, all I know, feel, think, speak, and do. The all-encompassing sacrifice of self—the offer of one's whole being in service to God—rests secure, as Charles makes abundantly clear throughout, on the foundation of a heart transformed by God's prevenient action. In hymns like this one, Charles Wesley cultivates a profound vision of servant vocation, a missional conception of Christian discipleship summarized tersely in the simple phrase: “Claim me for Thy service.”

One can hear echoes of the baptismal covenant, perhaps, in Charles's use

of language. The sacrament of baptism in a Wesleyan understanding is that place where discipleship begins, that event in which God claims each person as God's own. It also signals the commitment of the individual and the community to God's mission. The ambience of many Wesley hymns elicits a profoundly missiological vision of Christian community and engagement with the reign of God in the world. It should be no surprise that Charles uses Jesus as the primary exemplar and mentor in his development of this vision. The language of St. Paul in his Letter to the Philippians (2:5-11, and especially verse 7) informs Charles' lyrical theology concerning the God of love and reminds the community to imitate the Christ of whom they sing in one of the earliest hymns of the church:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, *but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (5-11, ESV).

This image of a servant God undergirds his, as well as John's, vision of discipleship as a gospel-bearing life.

Four stanzas of an extremely significant hymn afford what may be Charles's most profound exposition of this *kenotic* – or self-emptying – theme. This portion of the hymn is essentially a lyrical exposition of the Philippians 2 text:

Arise, my soul, arise,
Thy Savior's sacrifice!
All the names that love could find,
All the forms that love could take,
Jesus in Himself has joined,
Thee, my soul, His own to make.

Equal with God most high,
 He laid His glory by:
 He th'eternal God was born,
 Man with men He deigned t'appear,
 Object of His creature's scorn,
 Pleas'd a servant's form to wear.

High above every name,
 Jesus, the great I AM!
 Bows to Jesus every knee,
 Things in heaven, and earth, and hell;
 Saints adore Him, demons flee,
 Fiends, and men, and angels feel.

He left His throne above,
 Emptied of all but love:
 Whom the heavens cannot contain,
 God vouchsafed a worm to appear,
 Lord of glory, Son of man,
 Poor, and vile, and abject here.⁹

The essence of *kenosis*, as this hymn so poignantly illustrates, and the key to the mystery of love, is self-emptying. The concept is everywhere in Charles's poetry. In his *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* we sing, "He came self-emptied from above, / That we might live through Him."¹⁰ In his famous hymn entitled "Free Grace," more popularly known by the opening line, "And can it be, that I should gain," Wesley condenses the whole *kenotic* doctrine into a single line:

He left His Father's throne above
 (So free, so infinite His grace!),
Emptied Himself of all but love,
 And bled for Adam's helpless race.
 'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
 For, O my God, it found out me!¹¹

No image of self-emptying impresses itself on our minds with greater veracity than the pervasive and distinctive phrase, “Emptied Himself of all but love.” This *kenotic* understanding of God in Christ provided the foundation for the Wesleys’ vision of the church and the life of the disciple. They stamped it into the very character of their movement.

The early Methodist people felt their servant role in the life of the Church of England very keenly. The Wesleys designed the Methodist Societies to function like catalysts of renewal within the life of the larger church. Having rediscovered a mission-church paradigm within the life of their own *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* (“little churches within the church”), their hope was that the leavening action of these small groups of committed missionaries—these cohorts of kingdom servants—would reawaken the Church of England to its primary vocation in the world, namely, the *missio Dei*. The Methodist Societies were like little dynamos, spinning inside the church and building momentum in order to reestablish a centrifugal force in the church itself, spinning it out, as well, in mission. There can be no doubt that the cell structure of the Methodist organism accounts for the dynamism and growth of the movement and its influence.¹²

It is not too much to claim that three concepts taken together—church, evangelism, and mission—defined early Methodism. A missional ecclesiology emanated directly from the Wesleys’ theological vision and method. God forms gospel-bearers in and through the community of faith which is itself a manifestation—imperfect though it may be—of the gospel in the world. The Wesleys concluded that the central purpose of the church is mission, God’s mission. They attempted to replicate the model of the church they discovered in the pages of the New Testament. The church, they believed, is not called to live for itself but for others. It is called, like Christ, to give itself for the life of the world. It is not so much that the church has a mission or ministries; rather, the church is mission. The church of Wesley’s England had exchanged its true vocation—mission—for maintenance, a confusion that often slips into the life of the church in every age. It desperately needed to reclaim its true identity as God’s agent of love and shalom in the world. The Wesleys firmly believed that God raised up the Methodists specifically for the task of resuscitating a mission-church.

If we were to develop a mental picture of this mission-church, it might

look something like this. Think of three concentric circles. For the Wesleys, everything begins with the message of God's good news in Jesus Christ, the story of His death and resurrection. This is the core, the center, the hub of the community of faith. The experience of the gospel immediately draws us into a community, however, where we can learn how to love. In the context of this new family, those who learn of Christ receive the discipline that is necessary for them to be nourished and grow in their faith. These three concentric circles – the good news of God's love in Jesus made known in the Spirit, the new family into which we are called, and the practices that shape us into loving people – constitute the fellowship of believers. But all authentic Christians find their ultimate purpose, their reason for being, in being spun out in service and mission into God's world. The church exists for others. This was the primary discovery of the Wesleys in their own day, and this is the paradigm of church they taught and lived.

Think for a moment about a wheel and the forces that are involved in its spinning action. The centripetal force, which persistently draws in toward the center or hub, is joined with an opposing centrifugal force that thrusts out toward the rim. The wheel of the Christian life turns as we are both centered in Jesus and sent in His name into the world in mission. The Wesleys knew intuitively that we need both forces in our discipleship if we are going to live out abundant lives in Christ. A student of mine in Florida, after I had presented this basic Wesleyan image of the church, asked, "You know what you've described, don't you?" "No," I replied. "What do you see?" "I see a hurricane," he exclaimed. And what a powerful image that is, not in terms of its destructiveness, but in terms of its power! The church is meant to be a force in the world for good, spinning with energy and vitality into the world in loving service and witness.

This vision finds important points of contact with one of Jesus' most poignant images for the church, namely, the vine and branches of John 15. In this passage Jesus presents His own picture of the church. As we abide in Christ—who is the true vine—we take nourishment from Him as the source of all life. We are constantly drawn into the center, to the core, to the source. There is something similar here to the centripetal force of the wheel, something that persistently draws us closer to Christ and closer to one another. However the purpose of the vine is not simply to be drawn in, to revel in our connectedness and

fellowship. The vine does not exist for its own benefit but for the benefit of others through its fruit. What continues to give vitality to the church is the centrifugal force that spins us out into the world with the fruit of the Spirit. As we share this fruit with others, they are enabled to taste and see that God is good.

The Wesleys came to believe that a church turned in on itself (that is only centripetal) will surely die, for it has lost its reason for being. But a church spun out in loving service into the world (that is also centrifugal) rediscovers itself day by day. “Offering Christ,” to use Wesley’s own terminology for the work of mission, involves both word and deed, both proclamation and action; it connects the gospel to the world. Jesus’ mission was characterized by healing those who were sick, liberating those who were oppressed, empowering those who stood on the margins of life and caring for the poor. In all of these actions He incarnated shalom, God’s vision of peace, justice, and well-being for all, and His disciples, the Wesleys taught, are called to do nothing less. The hymn of Fred Pratt Green expresses this conception of the mission-church in a powerful manner:

The church of Christ in every age
Beset by change but Spirit led,
Must claim and test its heritage
And keep on rising from the dead.

Then let the servant church arise,
A caring Church that longs to be
A partner in Christ’s sacrifice,
And clothed in Christ’s humanity.

We have no mission but to serve
In full obedience to our Lord:
To care for all, without reserve,
And spread His liberating Word.¹³

In this dynamic conception of a mission-church, the Wesleyan genius was to hold mission and evangelism together without pitting personal salvation against social justice. Mission for the Wesleys meant partnering with God

in the realization of shalom in the world. Such a task is necessarily rooted in Christ, for we cannot speak of God's reign apart from Christ, or of Jesus without God's reign. The way in which the Wesleys envisaged this essential connection between evangelism and mission is, perhaps, one of their greatest contributions to the life of the church today. In her attempt to present an authentic Wesleyan perspective on this relationship, Dana Robert has made recourse to St. Paul's image of the church as a body.¹⁴ In this paradigm, an organic relationship forms between these two crucial practices of the church; while evangelism is the heart, mission is the body itself. The body moves in different contexts, interacting, engaging, constantly at work. But the heart sends the life giving blood throughout the whole. Without the heart—without Jesus at the center—there is no vitality, no abundant life. But the body lives to continue the mission of Jesus in the world, namely, to announce and demonstrate the reign of God. The heart and the body, evangelism and mission, Christ and culture, are interdependent and interconnected, and this is the essence of the Wesleyan synthesis—simply another way to envisage the dynamism of the mission-church paradigm.

In his very last sermon, "On Faith," written in January 1791, John Wesley asked the all-important question about the goal of the Christian life: "How will [the faithful] advance in holiness, in the whole image of God wherein they were created!" He responded with reference to the dual foci of the Christian life and afforded a different language to contemplate the interface of evangelical piety and mission: "In the love of God and man, *gratitude* to their Creator, and *benevolence* to all their fellow-creatures."¹⁵ Benevolence, here, is Wesley's term for mission.¹⁶ But in his sermon "On Family Religion," he demonstrated how the family of God must build this mission upon the foundation of gratitude—the two being distinct but not separate. "And if any man truly loves God he cannot but love his brother also," Wesley maintains. "*Gratitude* to our Creator will surely produce *benevolence* to our fellow-creatures. If we love Him, we cannot but love one another, as Christ loved us. We feel our souls enlarged in love toward every child of man."¹⁷

The Wesleys believed that God calls the community of faith to live for others. The primary method of mission in the Wesleyan tradition is for those within the family of God to become God's partners in the redemption of the whole world. As I have written elsewhere:

The primary question for the Methodist “is not, am I saved? The ultimate question is, for what purpose am I saved? For the Wesleys, the answer was clear. My neighbor is the goal of my redemption, just as the life, death and resurrection of Christ are oriented toward the salvation of all humanity.”¹⁸

“Benevolence,” for the Wesleys, consisted in efforts to realize God’s shalom in the life of the world. This mission, this goodwill toward our fellow creatures, this ministry of reconciliation, this benevolence manifests itself in particular ways in the Wesleyan tradition, but none more distinctive than outreach to the marginalized and resistance to injustice, both actions expressed through works of mercy that bear witness to God’s rule over life.¹⁹ “The first Methodists, who intended to revive the life of the original Christian church,” as Tore Meistad demonstrates, “made a just distribution of economic, educational, and medical resources their top priority. This is evident in John Wesley’s sermons as well as in Charles’s hymns.”²⁰

In the first address we explored accountable discipleship through the lens of the so-called means of grace, or works of piety. We are brought back at this juncture to that central theme, but now through the lens of the works of mercy—those acts of compassion and justice that define the disciple of Jesus. One of the most important spiritual mentors in my life was a monk among the Cowley Fathers, an Anglican order known properly as the Society of St. John the Evangelist. Brother Mark Gibbard shared his own spiritual journey with me when we first met in Kenya. When he was a student at Cambridge University, studying chemistry for a career in the sciences, he attended a Bible study one evening and it changed the course of his life. The evening was simply devoted to an examination of New Testament texts that included the term “compassion.” It was the first day in his life, as he told me, that he came to know a compassionate God. Reflection on compassion changed his life, and it can change ours as well.

The word for compassion in the original Greek possesses particular power. *Σπλαγχνίζομαι* means literally to be torn apart in the gut. We use an expression in English drawn from this original term; we talk about a “gut-wrenching experience.”

To gather some sense of how critical this concept is to the Christian faith, think for a moment about three uses of this term just in Luke's Gospel. In Chapter 7 we encounter the story of Jesus and the widow of Nain. The scene opens with a procession at the funeral of this woman's only son. Jesus understood the weight of this moment in this widow's life. Essentially her life was over. She had no one and was at the end of her rope. Luke records: "And when the Lord saw her, He had *compassion* on her and said to her, 'Do not weep'" (7:13). He then raised her son from the dead. A second story from Chapter 15 provides an image of God that continues to revolutionize the world—the parable of the prodigal son. In contemplation of the welcoming act of the father, all have the seed of hope planted in their hearts. "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt *compassion*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him" (15:20). The prodigal nature of the father's love for his son—his compassion lived out in loving kindness and forgiveness—continues to transform and renew the lives of many.

Yet certainly none of the stories of Jesus personalizes compassion and implies its imperative nature more directly than His parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). This third story begins with the lawyer's question of the Master, "'But who is my neighbor?'" The question actually places the lawyer in the center of his world. It asks of Jesus, "Who around me is worthy of my concern?" And this self-centered posture is what really triggers Jesus' response in the form of the story. You know it well. As others pass by only the Samaritan, the despised and suspected outsider, has *compassion* on his wounded neighbor. The sting of the parable comes in Jesus' reversal of the original question. "'Which of these three,'" Jesus asks rhetorically, "'do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'" Jesus teaches us not to define ourselves on the basis of where *we* stand, but to redefine who we are by our action and by our relationship to those who surround us in life. "Demonstrate through your life," He essentially says, "what a true neighbor should be like. Have compassion. 'Suffer with' those who lie wounded around you."

The Latin *com passio*, from which the English derives, literally means "to suffer with." God in Christ "suffers with" the world. The Wesleys came to understand that nothing expresses the most central truth of God's essence more fully. Compassion is the outworking of God's self-giving love. The

Wesleys saw this kind of compassion lived out in many of their followers. They went to great lengths to specify the character of such a Christian attitude and the service that emanates from it. The servant simply offers to others what he or she has freely received from God. Harkening back to the episode in which Jesus washes His disciples' feet in the Upper Room, Charles reveals the heart of the gospel-bearing Christian:

O might my lot be cast with these,
The least of Jesu's witnesses!
O that my Lord would count me meet
To wash His dear disciples' feet!

This only thing do I require,
Thou know'st 'tis all my heart's desire,
Freely what I receive to give,
The servant of Thy church to live.²¹

Servants, in other words, engage in evangelism, offering God's grace to all in word and in deed.

The early Methodist people, like their leaders, took this "call to serve the present age" with utmost seriousness. They lived out their lives in solidarity with those people who were shut out, neglected, and thrown away. Charles admonished his followers to befriend the poor and needy. In one of his manuscript poems on Luke and Acts, he sings:

The poor as Jesus' bosom-friends,
the poor He makes His latest care,
to all His followers commends,
and wills us on our hands to bear;
the poor our dearest care we make,
and love them for our Savior's sake.²²

The practice of befriending the least in her community, according to Charles, shaped the character of Elizabeth Blackwell:

Nursing the poor with constant care,
Affection soft, and heart-esteem,
She saw her Savior's image there,
And gladly minister'd to Him.²³

He eulogized one such faith disciple in these simple but profound lines:

On [Christ] she fixt her single eye,
And steady in His steps went on,
Studious by works to testify
The power of God in weakness shown:
A quiet follower of the Lamb,
She walk'd in Him she had receiv'd,
And more, and more declar'd His Name
And more, and more like Jesus liv'd.²⁴

Personal acts of compassion often interface naturally with arenas of justice. While compassion represents the personal dimension of works of mercy, acts of justice engage the community more fully in the reign of God. The Wesleys believed that the quest for the authentic self was inextricably bound up with the rule of God in life. We pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” In praying this prayer we commit ourselves to offer God’s love to all and to oppose injustice wherever we find it. We are on a path that leads to growth in grace when we honor God’s name by waging peace and living in solidarity with those who are broken and alone. We come near to God’s reign through our active love, and we need to be close to God in order to be God’s agents of shalom, of peace, wholeness, justice and wellbeing in the world God loves.

The inner logic of the Wesleys’ commitment to acts of justice is clear. Friendship with God characterizes the Wesleyan vision of life.²⁵ Those drawn into this realm love both God and neighbor. Christ makes this kind of existence possible by breaking down all the barriers that divide people and disrupt God’s intended harmony in the created order. Reconciliation itself is a sign of God’s presence and the nearness of God’s rule. While the reconciliation of the believer in Christ to God is a fact, however, the reconciliation of the world—better, the

cosmos—is a continuing process into which the community of faith is invited as the representatives of God’s alternative vision in the world. We are called to stand in the juncture, as it were, between the old world that is passing away and the new world that is being birthed in Christ, despite all appearances. The Wesleys expanded the horizon of their followers, therefore, and encouraged all disciples of Jesus to embrace the larger vision of God’s shalom.

Two hymns in the Wesleyan corpus must suffice to illustrate this dimension of gospel-bearing. In this first hymn, Charles bears witness to the eschatological vision of the peaceable kingdom, a reality rooted in God’s act of reconciliation in Christ:

Jesu, Lord, we look to Thee,
Let us in Thy name agree,
Shew Thyself the Prince of Peace,
Bid our jars forever cease.

By Thy reconciling love
Every stumbling-block remove,
Each to each unite, in dear,
Come, and spread Thy banner here.

Let us each for other care,
Each the other’s burthen bear,
To Thy church the pattern give,
Shew how true believers live.²⁶

Responding to the insanity of human strife and warfare, and using language just as relevant today as in his own age, Charles also cries out in prayer for the healing of a broken world:

Our earth we now lament to see
 With floods of wickedness o’erflow’d,
With violence, wrong, and cruelty,
 One wide-extended field of blood,
Where men, like fiends, each other tear,

In all the hellish rage of war.

O might the universal friend
 This havoc of His creatures see!
 Bid our unnatural discord end,
 Declare us reconcil'd in Thee,
 Write kindness on our inward parts,
 And chase the murderer from our hearts.²⁷

At least three issues surface immediately as we seek to embrace this Wesleyan vision of gospel-bearing in its relation to justice in our own time. We are called to be *contextually attentive*. This means that we must be willing to listen, both literally and figuratively, to the people and the settings in which God has situated us. We are called to a much greater *cross-cultural engagement* than ever before. In the Wesleys' age, the "other" was often located far away. But we live in a world today where our neighbors live their day-to-day lives in cultures radically different from the ones in which we have been reared. Finally, there are many issues of injustice in our world that call for a *communal witness*. Every voice that speaks out against injustice and for God's reign of shalom is important. But many concerns that face our world require the voice of the people of God.

Works of mercy no less than works of piety connect the sharing of grace with the restoration of the mind of Christ in the believer. In a composite hymn, opening with a lyrical paraphrase of "Jesus and the woman at the well" (John 4:10-15), Charles Wesley weds the "mind" of Philippians 2 with the "action" of James 1 in his missional vision:

Thy mind throughout my life be shewn,
 While listening to the wretch's cry,
 The widow's and the orphan's groan,
 On mercy's wings I swiftly fly,
 The poor and helpless to relieve,
 My life, my all, for them to give.²⁸

To have the mind of Christ, therefore, includes caring for the poor.

Happy soul, whose active love
Emulates the Blessed above,
In thy every action seen,
Sparkling from the soul within:
Thou to every sufferer nigh,
Hearest, not in vain, the cry
of widow in distress,
of the poor, the shelterless:

Raiment thou to all that need,
to the hungry dealest bread,
to the sick givest relief,
sootheest hapless prisoner's grief:

Love, which willest all should live,
Love, which all to all would give,
Love, that over all prevails,
Love, that never, never fails.
Love immense, and unconfined,
Love to all of humankind.²⁹

A disciple with a living faith is the one whose whole heart has been renewed, who longs to radiate the whole image of God in his or her life *and therefore* hears the cry of the poor and wills with God that all should truly live! The Wesleyan vision of mission, thus understood, is *a life*, not just an act that unites piety and mercy, worship and compassion, prayer and justice. It involves a humble walk with the Lord that is lived out daily in kindness and justice. Gospel-bearers, shaped by their participation in a mission-church, offer Christ to all.

Endnotes

¹ Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 2 vols. (Bristol: Farley, 1749), 1:163-4; Hymn 92, stanzas 11, 13, & 15. All hymn texts are taken from Charles Wesley's Published Verse, Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition, <https://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/cswt/wesley-texts>, with grateful acknowledgment.

² This vision is consonant with a contemporary missiological consensus summarized in the term *missio Dei*, or the "mission of God." See Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998).

³ See the discussion of John Wesley's understanding of prevenient grace in Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 83-84.

⁴ It is important to note that the Wesleys made this discovery without ever using this more contemporary language concerning it. The words "mission" and "evangelism" hardly ever appear in the Wesleyan corpus, but the Wesleyan Revival was at once profoundly missional and evangelistic in nature. David Bebbington has argued that one of the "striking symptoms of discontinuity" between the Evangelical Revival under the Wesleys and the previous two centuries was "a new emphasis on mission" (David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989], 40).

⁵ See John Wesley's "Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty," in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols. (London: Mason, 1829-31), 10:361-63.

⁶ For an interesting discussion of the interface of God's mission and God's Triune being, see John Wesley's sermon, "On the Discoveries of Faith," in Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 4, Sermons IV, 115-151* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 29-38.

⁷ John and Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: Strahan, 1739), 178.

⁸ John and Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (Bristol: Farley, 1745), 155: stanzas 3 & 4.

⁹ *HSP* (1739), 165-68; stanzas 1, 2, 9, & 10.

¹⁰ *HLS* (1745), 44; Hymn 60, stanza 5.

¹¹ *HSP* (1739), 117-18; verse 3. Emphasis added.

¹² See Mike Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 1997), 127-60.

¹³ [Fred Pratt Green], *The Hymns and Ballads of Fred Pratt Green* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing Co., 1982), 17; "The Caring Church," stanzas 1, 3, & 5.

¹⁴ See Dana L. Robert, *Evangelism as the Heart of Mission*, Mission Evangelism Series, Number 1 (New York: General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 1997).

¹⁵ Outler, *Works of John Wesley*, 4:196. Emphasis added.

¹⁶ See Tore Meistad, "The Missiology of Charles Wesley: An Introduction," *Proceedings of The Charles Wesley Society* 5 (1998): 37-60.

¹⁷ Outler, *Works of John Wesley*, 3:336. Emphasis added.

¹⁸ Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision*, 101.

¹⁹ For a helpful discussion of “works of mercy” and their intimate connection to mission, see Rebekah Miles, “Works of Mercy as Spiritual Formation: Why Wesley Feared for the Souls of the Rich,” in Chilcote, *The Wesleyan Tradition*, 98-110.

²⁰ Meistad, “The Missiology of Charles Wesley,” 51.

²¹ *HSP* (1749), 2:336; Hymn 56, “Primitive Christianity,” Part II, stanzas 12 & 13.

²² S T Kimbrough, Jr., ed., *Songs for the Poor* (New York: GBGM, 1993), Hymn 3.

²³ Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Journal of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.*, 2 vols. (London: John Mason, 1849; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 2:386.

²⁴ Charles Wesley, MS Funeral Hymns (1756–87), 43; “On the Death of Mrs. Hannah Dewal,” Part I, stanza 4.

²⁵ The following paragraphs are drawn largely from my previous publication, “John and Charles Wesley on ‘God in Christ Reconciling,’” *Methodist History* 47, 3 (April 2009): 132-45.

²⁶ *HSP* (1749), 1:248; “For a Family,” stanzas 1, 2, & 4.

²⁷ [Charles Wesley.] *Hymns of Intercession for all Mankind* (Bristol: Farley, 1758), 4; “For Peace,” stanzas 1 & 3.

²⁸ *Scripture Hymns* (1762), 2:380; Hymn 738, stanza 2.

²⁹ Kimbrough, *Songs for the Poor*, Hymn 1.

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Book Review

Thorsen, Don. *Calvin vs. Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013. 158 pp.

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Winnipeg, Canada*

One of the ways in which we clarify our identity, what we believe and how we should live, is by contrasting our own views with those of others. This was true of John Wesley (1703-1791) whose Christian faith and practice was shaped profoundly not only by his native tradition within the Church of England, but also by his encounters (and controversies) with Christians of other traditions. Wesley's early contacts with the Moravians contributed to his journey toward a clearer understanding of justification by faith and assurance; and yet, at the same time, those encounters sharpened his own critique of aspects of Moravian theology and practice that Wesley found antithetical to scriptural Christianity. Similarly, the ongoing debates between Wesley and his Calvinist friends and adversaries, both sharpened Wesley's understanding of key issues that he held in common with Calvin and clarified those issues on which he had strong differences. The points of contention between Wesleyans and the followers of Calvin have been passed on through the generations.

Don Thorsen, in his book *Calvin vs. Wesley*, explores key differences between Wesley and Calvin and between Wesleyans and Calvinists. If the reader is looking for a theological brawl in which either Wesley or Calvin is beaten into submission, this book will disappoint; the tone is respectful throughout. Thorsen acknowledges the profundity and strengths of Calvin's systematic theology. Yet at the same time, the author repeatedly asserts that Wesley's theology more faithfully accounts for the complexity of Christian life.

The book opens with an introduction in which Thorsen sets out his argument that while many Protestant Christians may be more Calvinist than Wesleyan in their *theology*, they *live out* their faith in ways that are more compat-

ible with the theology of Wesley than that of Calvin. Thorsen, to his credit, does not set up Calvin as a kind of straw man who can be easily chopped down to size. He makes an earnest attempt to present Calvin's theology and its strengths clearly and fairly. However, it is also apparent throughout the book that the author is convinced that Wesley's theology holds greater promise to inspire the effectual living out of Christian faith. As Thorsen summarizes it, "A repeated theme throughout this book is that Wesley provides a better understanding of Christianity and the Christian life in *practice* that Calvin does in *theory*" (p. xiv). Thorsen develops his argument in eight chapters, and in each he identifies a point of contrast between Calvin and Wesley.

The first chapter, "God: More Love than Sovereignty," tackles one of the more striking differences between Wesley and Calvin. It is recognized universally that one of the characteristics of Calvin's theology is the emphasis he places upon the absolute sovereignty of God. When applied to the destiny of humans, Calvin asserts that no one is saved and no one is damned apart from the sovereign decision of God. For his part, Wesley also believes in the sovereignty of God, however, not with the same result. Wesley thinks about God's sovereignty in relationship to God's holiness, a holiness that includes truth and justice as well as love and mercy. This divine love and mercy is, for Wesley, expressed in God's willingness to limit divine sovereignty. As Thorsen expresses it, "Affirmation of the sovereignty of God does not preclude God from voluntarily restricting divine power, so to speak, so that people may exercise genuine freedom of choice, which is crucial for their relationship with God" (p. 8). Thorsen argues that, in this, Wesley is in concert with the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican traditions. For Wesley, love of God is the dominant emphasis in his theology. God is love and His actions are manifested most clearly in divine graciousness toward humanity. This is, for Thorsen, Wesley's counterbalance to the Calvinist emphasis on the absolute sovereignty of God. It is also this divine love that elicits from humanity a response of love and obedience. For both Calvin and Wesley, divine sovereignty and divine love are important; but Wesley places greater emphasis on God's love.

In chapter 2, "Bible: More Primary than Sole Authority," Thorsen explores the views of Calvin and Wesley regarding the nature and role of Scripture in the life of the Church and Christians. Both men and their followers shared similar views regarding the divine inspiration, authority and reliability of the

Bible. They also used the Scriptures daily to shape how they lived, taught and ministered. However, when one delves more deeply into their respective use of the Bible, important differences come to light.

Calvin asserts that the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit and their authority is confirmed by the Holy Spirit. This view sets him apart from the Roman Catholic position that the Church authorizes the Scriptures; for Calvin, the Scriptures authorize the Church. Furthermore, Calvin thinks the Bible can be interpreted independently of the magisterium of the Church. For Calvin, God's Spirit does not lead the Church beyond the Scriptures to reveal new truths; the Scriptures contain all that is necessary for salvation. As a result, for Calvin, only the Scriptures are the standard for Christianity.

Wesley, too, is shaped profoundly by the Scriptures. He affirms the Bible as the only and sufficient rule of Christian faith and practice. He also affirms that the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures and guides people in their reading of them. However, Wesley was part of an Anglican tradition that saw itself as a *via media* (middle way) between Luther and Calvin on the one hand, and Roman Catholicism on the other. As an Anglican he affirms that Scripture has a primary religious authority, but this is also brought into dialogue with reason (logic and critical reasoning) and tradition (especially the writings of Christians of the first centuries of the Church). Wesley goes even further, however, when he also draws upon experience as a contributing authority in matters of Christian faith and practice. For Wesley, the Christian experience of God and of God's salvation contributes to Christian understanding. Therefore, while for Wesley the Scriptures serve as the primary rule of Christian faith and practice, he also gives reason, tradition and experience important roles in theological discernment.

In his third chapter, "Humanity: More Freedom than Predestination," Thorsen comes to one of the most frequently cited points of disagreement between Calvin and Wesley. Yet, once again, Thorsen begins by setting out some points on which the two agree. For example, both Calvin and Wesley believe that humans were created in the image of God and that as a result of sin that divine image was corrupted. Both agree that humans are responsible for their disobedience. But Calvin sees this responsibility within the overarching sovereign providence of God. Wesley, on the other hand, understands God to have voluntarily limited the divine sovereignty to permit true human

freedom of choice. Further, both Calvin and Wesley believe in predestination. However, Calvin believes that it covers all that occurs. God predestines both the salvation of some and the damnation of others. In contrast, Wesley argues that, on their own, humans after the fall would be doomed. However, God has graciously provided a measure of freedom (through prevenient grace) that permits humans to respond to the grace of God. Wesley views human freedom as a gracious gift of God both before the fall and after it. He places greater emphasis on free grace, understanding it to refer, among other things, to the grace that makes human choice possible. While Wesley does not use the word synergism, he does believe that the offer of divine grace may be accepted or rejected by human beings. Salvation then comes as a result of a positive human response to the initiating grace of God. For Wesley, salvation is strongly relational. As Thorsen describes it, “God does not merely want to save people juridically from their sinful condition—to provide the sufficient cause for their justification. God wants reconciliation with people so that there may be renewed fellowship, characterized by love as well as by other fruit of the Spirit” (p. 43).

The fourth chapter examines the differences between Calvin and Wesley regarding grace. Entitled “Grace: More Prevenient than Irresistible,” this chapter begins by outlining Calvin’s view of grace. As noted previously, Calvin emphasizes God’s sovereignty to attribute all things, including human salvation, to God. Humans, because of their sinfulness, cannot contribute in any way to their salvation. If a human is to be saved, then it must be as a result of God’s sovereign decision to extend divine grace to that person and to save him or her. Given this view of absolute divine sovereignty, grace is irresistible. If God extends saving grace to a person, then that person cannot resist it.

Wesley, too, holds to the view that salvation is the result of divine grace. Left to our own devices, humans are incapable of contributing in any way to their salvation. However, God extends “prevenient grace” to all humans. Prevenient grace restores an ability to respond to God’s grace either by cooperating with it or resisting it. Thus, according to Wesley, God’s grace is not irresistible. If asked the question of whether God *could* irresistibly save someone, Wesley would answer affirmatively; but he would go on to say that God limits His sovereignty to permit humans to respond to God’s grace and thus to have a truly free relationship with God. Further, Wesley teaches that

not only does God extend prevenient grace, but He also offers convincing grace, justifying grace and sanctifying grace. For Wesley the entire way of salvation is grounded upon the grace of God to which humans have the choice of responding favorably or unfavorably.

The fifth chapter, “Salvation: More Unlimited than Limited,” explores the differences between Calvin and Wesley regarding the extent of salvation. That is, both men accept the traditional teaching about the death of Jesus being a substitutionary atonement for human sin. However, Calvin believes that this atonement is made effective only for those whom God predestines to be saved. In this sense, he teaches that the benefits of the atonement are limited to the elect. Wesley, on the other hand, teaches that through His death Jesus has made atonement for all humanity. Through prevenient grace that is extended to all persons, God makes it possible for people to respond positively to the offer of forgiveness. Therefore, the atonement is unlimited in terms of the benefits being available to all; it is only the human rejection of God’s prevenient grace—not divine predestination—that prevents some from receiving those benefits.

“Spirituality: More Holiness than Mortification” explores the contrasting views of the Christian life espoused by Calvin and Wesley. Calvin, with his emphasis on the role of divine grace and the sinfulness of human beings even after justification, stresses God’s “mortification” and “vivification” of the believer. Mortification refers to the constant reminder of the remaining sin in the life of the Christian with a corresponding emphasis on how the Christian life consists largely of minimizing the effects of sin on the believer’s life through the suppression of ongoing sin, temptation and any other evil influences upon them. The Christian life is a constant struggle because the effects of sin can never be mastered and sin itself remains in the life of the believer. In this way, Christians constantly are aware of their own sinfulness and that their vivification (new life) is entirely the result of grace rather than anything they might do. Thorsen points out that for Calvin Paul’s confounding passage in Romans 7:14-25 is interpreted as a description of the struggling Christian life.

In contrast, Wesley interprets the Romans 7 passage as a characterization of the life of someone before faith. Once someone has received justification and has been reborn (regenerated), sin no longer *reigns* in their lives, even though sinful actions may occur. Wesley understands that grace is always the

foundation of the Christian life; but he also goes on to assert that the Christian can respond to that grace positively and therefore be changed within. Growth in love, for Wesley, is the essence of holiness. In this growth, one becomes increasingly like Christ. As Thorsen summarizes, “In justification, God imputes righteousness because of the atoning work of Jesus Christ; in sanctification, God imparts righteousness because of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit” (p. 81). Thorsen characterizes Wesley as much more “optimistic” in his view of the Christian’s journey toward holiness. For Wesley, the Christian should continue to move forward toward the goal of having Christ not only as Savior, but as Lord over all aspects of life. This submission of life entirely to the lordship of Christ leads to entire sanctification, a thoroughgoing reformation of the character of the believer that is attributed to the sanctifying grace of God.

The next chapter, “Church: More Catholic than Magisterial,” discusses the nature of the church in the theologies of Calvin and Wesley. The two leaders are united in their fundamental understanding of the Church. They both affirm that the Church exists where the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered in accordance with their institution by Christ, but beyond this general agreement, there are profound differences.

According to Thorsen, Calvin was deeply concerned with correct belief. For him, orthodoxy is critical and should be enforced. His experience in Geneva, where under his influence the power of the Church was aligned closely with the power of the state, led Calvin to use the instruments of state power to enforce right belief and behavior in Geneva. Thus Calvin, at times, did not hesitate to have state officials pass judgment on those whose offences were essentially religious. Calvin also was so adamant in his theological and ethical views that debate often was halted by the use of this power. Thorsen characterizes this view of the church as “magisterial.”

Wesley, too, could hold strong theological views. Throughout his life, Wesley was engaged in controversies on issues that he considered essential to correct belief and Christian life. However, Wesley did not employ, or seek to employ, civil power against those with whom he disagreed. In fact, while he could hold strong views, Wesley was prepared to work alongside those with whom he often disagreed—as long as the views of the others did not jeopardize the heart of the gospel as Wesley understood it. Disagreements were to be worked through together, if possible, rather than simply separating from

others. For Wesley, more than right doctrine, the Church is to be characterized by its irenics and its love expressed toward those both inside and outside the church. In this fundamental way, Wesley viewed the Church as “catholic” (that is, universal, united) rather than magisterial.

In his eighth chapter, “Ministry: More Empowering than Triumphant,” Thorsen sets out what he sees as a final difference between Calvin and Wesley, this time focused on the ministries of the church. According to Thorsen, Calvin thinks of the ministry of the church primarily as the proclamation of the gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments. Particularly with regard to the proclamation of the gospel, Calvin places strong emphasis on preaching and on the triumph of the Reformed interpretation of theology over other views. Consistent with his view of ministry, Calvin considers two offices within the church to be continuing: pastor and teacher. Pastors are to preach and administer the sacraments; teachers are to instruct Christians in the Christian faith and to ensure that believers are sound in their beliefs. Calvin considers other offices (apostles, prophets, evangelists) to have been necessary in the early Christian decades but no longer so, or at least not necessary under normal circumstances.

According to Thorsen, Wesley’s view of ministry is shaped by his Anglicanism and by his belief in the continuing presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. In contrast to Calvin, Wesley thinks that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit to believers. These gifts and fruit are to be used in whatever way necessary to express love for God and for others. This results in greater flexibility in ministries than was characteristic of Calvin. Wesley was innovative when the exigencies of his mission required it. Thus he instituted lay preachers to respond to the ongoing needs of the Methodist societies; he gave women a role as lay leaders in the societies. Wesley also placed a high priority on caring for the poor both inside societies and beyond. Thorsen summarizes the contrast between Calvin and Wesley on the ministry of the church succinctly when he writes: “Calvin approached ministry in a more top-down, authoritarian, perhaps even triumphalist way that focused upon maintaining the church by means of a set-apart leadership specifically educated for preaching and administering the sacraments. His main concerns had more to do with preserving theological fidelity to the Bible, as understood by the Reformed tradition—through word and sacrament—than with creatively ministering

to the needs of diverse people...Conversely, Wesley approached ministry in a way that was more widely embracing of innovative, yet biblically sound, ways of meeting the needs of people and society. By empowering the laity as well as clergy, including the empowerment of women in leadership, Wesley vastly expanded the ministries through which churches minister, including ministry to those who are impoverished physically as well as spiritually” (pp. 115-116).

In his conclusion, Thorsen returns to his primary thesis: while many Christians find the systematic nature of Calvin’s theology to be appealing, these same people often live out their Christian lives in ways which are not consistent with Calvin’s theology. In other words, while Calvin’s theology is a coherent system, it does not necessarily match the messiness and mystery of the lived Christian life. For Thorsen, Wesley provides a theology that matches more closely the exigencies of life. He goes on to argue that Christians actually live their lives in ways that match more closely the *practical theology* of Wesley than the *systematic theology* of Calvin. According to Thorsen, Calvin emphasizes right belief (orthodoxy) while Wesley stresses right living (orthopraxy) and a good heart (orthocardia). He is careful to say that this distinction is a matter of emphasis only; neither Calvin nor Wesley ignores the other matters. However, they clearly place their emphasis on different aspects of Christian faith and life.

Thorsen continues his conclusion by summarizing each of the eight preceding chapters. This summary provides a helpful review of the primary point of each chapter and could be read profitably by those who wish to gain an overview of the book’s argument. On each point, the author concludes that Wesley’s view more closely aligns with the actual lived faith of most Protestant Christians than does the theology of Calvin.

In an appendix, Thorsen contrasts the common Calvinist acronym TULIP (Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, Perseverance of the saints) with a proposed corresponding Wesleyan acronym ACURA (All are sinful, Conditional election, Unlimited atonement, Resistible grace, Assurance of salvation).

This book is well written and clear. There is significant repetition in the book as the author moves from chapter to chapter. However, given the com-

plexity of the theologies of Calvin and Wesley, this repetition seems to be inevitable. The various points of contrast cannot be isolated from one another in any absolute way.

One of the strengths of Thorsen's book is his attempt to demonstrate that differences in theology actually make a difference in the way in which one thinks about *and lives* the Christian faith. His constant effort to connect the differences between Calvin and Wesley to their impact upon the lived Christian faith prevents these differences from becoming the domain only of those who wish to focus on the arcane minutiae of theological speculation. Wesleyans do think and live differently because of our grounding in Wesley's theology.

This is a softly partisan book. While the author attempts to provide a balanced interpretation of Calvin's theology, it is clear throughout that the author's sympathies lie with Wesley. Frequently, Thorsen points out the inadequacies of Calvin's theology and its implications; however, there is no corresponding critical evaluation of Wesley's theology. While Wesleyan readers will read this book feeling vindicated, Calvinist readers will feel that Calvin has been underappreciated and that Wesley has been given a free pass in many places.

Furthermore, Thorsen downplays the highly charged controversies in which Wesley engaged during his lifetime. Reading only Thorsen's volume, one could come away with the impression that Wesley was always a peace-making ecumenist.

These observations should not detract from the value of this book. It is a clear exposition of some of the fundamental contrasts between Calvinist theology and Wesleyan belief. If it is true that we learn more about ourselves by looking at others, then Thorsen has provided us with a valuable lens through which to understand more clearly our Wesleyan heritage.

I highly recommend this book to those who wish to understand the importance of The Salvation Army's Wesleyan theological heritage more broadly than with a single-minded focus on entire sanctification. Our Wesleyan roots go much deeper than many Salvationists realize and impact many aspects of our ethos. For this reason, this is a book that I plan to use when I teach Wesley and Wesleyan theology to cadets and other students.



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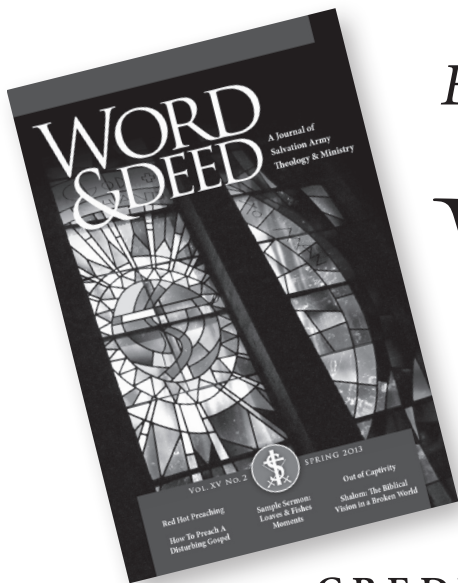
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