



**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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Contributions related to the mission of the journal will be encouraged, and at times there will be a general call for papers related to specific subjects. The Salvation Army is not responsible for every view which may be expressed in this journal. Manuscripts should be approximately 12-15 pages, including endnotes. Please submit the following: 1) three hard copies of the manuscript with the author's name (with rank and appointment if an officer) on the cover page only. This ensures objectivity during the evaluation process. Only the manuscript without the author's name will be evaluated. The title of the article should appear at the top of the first page of the text and the manuscript should utilize *Word & Deed* endnote guidelines. All Bible references should be from the New International Version. If another version is used throughout the article, please indicate the version in the first textual reference only. If multiple versions are used, please indicate the version each time it changes; 2) a copy on a 3 1/2 inch floppy disk, using Microsoft Word format; 3) a 100-word abstract of the article for use at the discretion of the editor (e.g., on The Salvation Army's web page or in advertisements about the journal). Please note that neither the hard copies nor the disk will be returned to the author and that all manuscripts are subject to editorial review. Once articles have been selected for inclusion, the deadlines for submitting final material for the journal are March 1 for the spring issues and September 1 for the fall issues. A style sheet is available upon request.

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# Word & Deed

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Vol. 8, No. 2

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| <i>Editorial: Refining Our Theology, Pursuing Our Mission</i><br>Jonathan S. Raymond and Roger J. Green .....                                    | 1   |
| <i>Eucharist Among the Means of Grace</i><br>Paul W. Chilcote .....  | 5   |
| <i>The Doctrine of the Church in the Methodist Heritage</i><br>W. Douglas Mills .....  | 23  |
| <i>A Salvation Army Perspective on the Doctrine of the Church<br/>and the Sacraments</i><br>Lars Lydholm .....                                   | 45  |
| <i>The Church and the World:<br/>Christianity and Culture from a Wesleyan Perspective</i><br>Angela Shier-Jones .....                            | 61  |
| <i>Little Churches Within a Church:<br/>The Genius of Small Groups in Early Methodism and in the Korean Context</i><br>Wonjae Lee .....          | 83  |
| <i>Book Reviews</i>  |     |
| <i>Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures</i><br>By Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger<br>Reviewed by Amy Reardon ..... | 97  |
| <i>The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix</i><br>By Brian McLaren<br>Reviewed by Ian Swan .....                   | 102 |

## Refining Our Theology, Pursuing Our Mission

The Salvation Army's 141 years of existence since 1865 represents approximately seven percent (7%) of the two thousand years of church history. Reflecting on such a brief history, one might ask what Salvationists might bring to the table of theological dialogue. Nevertheless, we find ourselves in reflection and dialogue with the Methodists and rediscover a longer history and deeper grounding in a rich tradition of Christian orthodoxy. Some Salvationists might dare to believe that our "roots" began with the birthday of William Booth or the founding in 1865 in East London of the forerunner of The Salvation Army, the Christian Mission. More careful judgment, however, looks at the social, doctrinal, and spiritual underpinnings of Salvationism found in William and Catherine Booth. Their lives, thought, and callings were deeply grounded in Methodism and the enduring influence of John and Charles Wesley, the Anglican Reformation, and the long history of the church dating back to the Patristics and the early faith communities found in the book of Acts. In humility then, with such a brief theological and ecclesiological history, The Salvation Army finds itself standing on the shoulders of Wesleyan thinking peering into the future of its own emerging identity and mission from such a vantage point.

This issue is the second of two issues which attempt to capture the dialogue of The Salvation Army's International Doctrine Council with selected representatives of the World Methodist Council. Herein, this issue presents the remaining papers in a series which serves to help us understand The Salvation Army's

ecclesiological roots and its place within cultures with the help of Methodist scholar-friends. In the previous issue (November 2005), the papers and dialogues covered a potpourri of topics including Wesleyan Essentials of the Faith, Salvation Army Doctrines, Wesley and the Poor, The Witness of Early Methodist Women, and The Army's Priority on Evangelism. While the dialogues have been "comparative" in nature, they continue to provoke reflection by Salvationists on the rich, deep tradition of theological thought that underpins the mission and ministry action of the Army. This opportunity for reflection and further dialogue continues with this second set of papers presented in this issue.

The first three papers are particularly timely as The Salvation Army continues to wrestle with its identity and its mission in light of its Wesleyan heritage and its call for a deeper understanding of communal life together as a Salvationist faith community. The first three papers then may be read as a set. In the first article entitled "Eucharist among the Means of Grace," Paul Chilcote brings to the reader's attention the foundational idea of God's free grace and the key role of the Eucharist as a powerful means of grace operating within a community of faith. Here Chilcote reminds us of the whole relational process of salvation, the purpose of which is healing and the restoration of wholeness and holiness in our lives. The Eucharist is viewed as a powerful, key means of grace toward this end with a past dimension of remembrance—a memorial of the passion of Christ, a present dimension celebrating the present presence of the living Christ, and a future dimension of consummation anticipating the Heavenly Banquet to come.

Paul Chilcote's paper is followed by that of his colleague, Douglas Mills, whose paper entitled "The Doctrine of the Church in the Methodist Heritage" serves to complement the Chilcote paper. Doug Mills delivers a strong historical survey of the doctrine of ecclesiology in Methodist heritage and then offers a synthesis of present day Methodist ecclesiology permitting a comparison for Salvationists. In so doing, Mills affirms the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the church, but then adds the connectionalism embodied in *Koinonia* so characteristic of Methodism and its abiding concern for growth towards holiness as a people.

Salvationist Lars Lydholm enters into the dialogue applying a Salvationist synthesis of the themes of the first two papers. He entitled his contribution—"A Salvation Army Perspective on the Doctrine of the Church and the Sacraments."

With candor, speaking of The Salvation Army, Lydholm declares—“Traditionally ecclesiology hasn’t been seen as a very important theological theme ... One can accuse The Salvation Army of many things, but being clear on ecclesiology isn’t one of them.” Historically, the Army has not had a doctrine of the church though its ecclesiological orientation has been implicitly acknowledged in its eleven doctrines which all begin with the confession “We believe ...” More recently, the Army’s handbook of doctrine, *Salvation Story*, presents a more explicit ecclesiological self-understanding for Salvationists: With this in hand, Lydholm gives the reader his perspective on the sacraments beginning with clarity of the historical position of William Booth. This contribution alone will come as a surprise to many readers. Lydholm’s paper gives us much to ponder and discuss as we continue to grapple with this key topic and dialogue with friends and colleagues within The Salvation Army and with those in other faith traditions.

The second set of articles complements the first three articles by sharing perspectives on the church’s relationship to the world. Angela Shier-Jones’ paper, entitled “The Church and the World: Christianity and Culture from a Wesleyan Perspective” delivers a blast of light and insight into the importance of holding in tension the two doctrines of providence and perfection. It states that when they are not held in tension and the church is characterized by one over the other, it has “a negative if not damaging influence on world culture.” Shier-Jones unpacks this issue and goes on to discuss its importance for the church’s effort to bring about in the culture moral, educational, political, and social reform. Wonjae Lee gives a different look at the church in his article “Little Churches Within a Church: The Genius of Small Groups in Early Methodism and in Korean Context.” After providing historical background of the small group movement and the shaping and organizing of small groups in Early Methodism, Lee gives us insight into the contemporary small group phenomenon operating in the Korean context and the hope for the impact of small groups in addressing the problem of declining membership and loss of social trust in the Korean church today.

The five papers from the Salvationist-Methodist dialogues presented in this issue are complemented by two book reviews, one that is relevant to a focus on the church and ecclesiology and another that is important to contemporary min-

istry. Both book reviews share a personal response from Salvation Army officers serving in two different North American territories. Amy Reardon (USA West) reviews Fuller Seminary faculty Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger's recently published book, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Post Modern Cultures*. Ian Swan (Canada) gives an overview of Brian McLaren's book *The Church On the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Post Modern Matrix*.

This issue complements the previous one (November 2005). It gives a full picture of the content discussed together by leading Methodist and Salvationist thinkers on matters we believe to be key to envisioning the future identity and mission of The Salvation Army as a church. As a relatively young church, yet one that continues to be on the move, reflecting a continuing movement of the Holy Spirit, Salvationists will continue to wrestle with ecclesiological questions and focus reflection on matters central to our calling as a holy people of God. It remains our prayer that by standing on the shoulders of others, and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit among us, together we will continue to refine our theology and pursue our mission, in word and deed, in ways that are pleasing to God Our Father and Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

JSR

RJG

# Eucharist Among the Means of Grace

*Paul W. Chilcote*

The Wesleyan Revival in 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain was both evangelical and sacramental. The Wesleys and their followers rediscovered the centrality of the Sacrament at a time of serious neglect in the life of their church. Their spirituality was first and foremost Eucharistic. Early Methodism cannot be fully understood apart from this particular dimension of its common life and witness.

One of the important contributions the Wesleys made to their Protestant heritage of faith, in fact, was their insistence upon the complementarity of sacramental grace and evangelical experience. J. Ernest Rattenbury attested to the potency of this synthesis at a time when the sacramental emphasis of the Wesleys was just being rediscovered. "A new emphasis on Eucharistic worship," he wrote with great confidence, "would issue not in a dead ritualism but in a living evangelism and a commanding sense of constraining love."<sup>1</sup> He later documented how this was the case in the Wesleyan Revival; his confidence was built upon this historical fact. The theme "Eucharist among the Means of Grace" is so large that it will be necessary for us to back our way into it in order to fully understand its centrality and depth. What I propose to do, therefore, is to locate this rediscovery of Eucharistic devotion in the larger theology of grace proclaimed by the Wesleys, to examine the "means of grace" as an important theological category

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in their vision of the Christian life, and to explore their Eucharistic theology, primarily through the medium of Charles Wesley's hymns.

### The Foundation of Grace

The Wesleys proclaimed God's free grace received by faith and worked out in love. This was the central message of the gospel from their perspective. They built both their theology and their spirituality upon the foundation of grace.<sup>2</sup> Everything flows from grace and moves toward it. Wesleyan theology is a theology of "grace upon grace."

When Wesley defined "grace" in his *Instructions for Children*, he simply described it as "the power of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to believe and love and serve God."<sup>3</sup> The end of faith, as well as its beginning, is true self knowledge, humility, and absolute trust in God. Christian discipleship—the arena of God's continuing activity in the life of the believer—is, first and foremost, a grace-filled response to God's all-sufficient grace. No early Methodist woman was more widely acclaimed for her proclamation of grace than Grace Murray. Her dying testimony illustrates well just how deeply this understanding had penetrated into the rank and file of Methodism:

I would have no encomiums passed on me; I AM A SINNER, SAVED FREELY BY GRACE: Grace, divine grace, is worthy to have all the glory. Some people I have heard speak much of our being faithful to the grace of God; as if they rested much on their own faithfulness: I never could bear this; it is GOD'S FAITHFULNESS to his own word of promise, that is my only security for salvation.<sup>4</sup>

"All glory be to God for grace," proclaimed her contemporary Isabella Wilson, "free grace, continued to my soul! The friendship of Jesus, whose love is unspeakable, is my joy and crown of rejoicing."<sup>5</sup>

Isabella's statement points to another key element in the Wesleyan conception of God's grace, namely, the Wesleys' view of grace as *relationship*. Moving away from earlier dominant understandings of grace as substance, they reappropriated the biblical images of grace as God's offer of relationship. Always initiated from God's side, the whole process of salvation, for example, is reconceived as a rela-

tional process, the purpose of which is healing and the restoration of wholeness in our lives. In this regard they insist upon the inseparability of what John called the "two grand channels of God's grace." Whereas the work of Jesus Christ (the first channel) is the foundation of our new life with God (what God does *for us by grace*); the work of the Holy Spirit (the second channel) is the realization of God's love in our lives (what God does *in us by grace*).

Of central importance in this Wesleyan theology of grace was the view that the gospel is not only immediate, but mediated. In other words, in God's desire to enter into relationship with us, God's approach to us is not only direct or immediate; rather, God also comes to us through various media or signs, because God has created us as relational being for such things. Whereas we can commune with God "without anything between us," so to speak, more often, we encounter God through the myriad signs, symbols, and material that surrounds us day in and day out.

This sacramental principle, as it might be called, is closely linked for the Wesleys to the incarnational principle that stands at the heart of the Christian faith. God comes to us "in the flesh" in Jesus Christ. God enters human history and this material world in the second person of the Trinity. The material becomes the supreme manifestation of the spiritual. The Sacrament is a powerful symbol, therefore and helps to explain the fact that Christ comes to his own through material media as well as apart from them. Most of our life is lived among things we see and touch and smell—the material world. The sacramental principle teaches us that we do not need to get away from these things to get to God. It demonstrates to us that a piece of common bread can be the medium of divine encounter. God comes to us through means of grace as well as apart from them.

### The Means of Grace

The term "means of grace" can be defined as those outward signs, words, or actions, ordained by God to be the ordinary channels by which persons in search of life encounter God's grace.<sup>6</sup> Wesley described prayer and fasting, Bible study, Christian fellowship, and participation in the Sacrament of Holy Communion as "instituted" means of grace, as opposed to "prudential" means, such as doing all the good you can. The instituted means, in particular, not only nurtured and sustained growth in grace among the early Methodist people, but also provided the

"energy" which fueled the Wesleyan movement as a powerful religious awakening.

John Wesley wrote a sermon on "The Means of Grace,"<sup>7</sup> later published among his standard sermons.<sup>8</sup> He clarifies the difference between the proper use and possible abuse of the means in faithful discipleship. The sermon was a forceful attack against those who regarded all outward actions as superfluous, or even harmful, to the spiritual life; emphasizing a passive and interior spirituality. These so-called "quietists" were the audience he targeted in the sermon: Wesley's purpose was to argue both the validity and necessity of the means of grace. He proclaimed an "active faith" over against the passivity of those embroiled in this "Stillness Controversy."

Wesley's line of argument is quite simple. Christ provided certain outward means in order to offer us his grace. Some began to mistake the means for the end and focused on the outward works rather than the goal of a renewed heart. Because of the abuse of the means of grace, some began to assume that they were dangerous and should not be used. But, in spite of the abusers and the despisers, others correctly held true, inward and authentic, outward religion together. Wesley's conclusion is that whoever really wants to be in a vital relationship with God must "wait" for God by immersing him or herself in the means God has provided. We are to wait for and meet God in prayer, in searching the Scriptures, and in partaking of the Lord's Supper. To put it on a more intimate level, a relationship only grows if you put yourself into it. The relationship is a gift, but it also requires discipline. If you are going to "build a home," you have to commit yourself to staying around the table in the house.

Three principles, in particular, govern the use of the means of grace. First, it must be remembered that the means are never meant to be "ends in themselves;" they are means to spiritual ends.<sup>9</sup> To turn means into ends is a certain trajectory leading to idolatry. Secondly, the means are "ordinary channels" of God's grace. God is always "above" the means. But while God's grace and love may be offered freely in extraordinary ways, it would be a mistake to abandon those practices in which God has promised to meet God's beloved. Thirdly, the means should be viewed as places of divine/human encounter. It is in the means that we meet God anew, but the potency of our communion with God is not dependent upon our ability to find God; rather, the virtue of the means is in the ability of

God to find us. The wonder of it all to the Wesleys, and on the basis of their own experience, was that God meets us faithfully at the point of our need in the means of grace.

Wesley concludes the sermon by offering simple instruction for the proper use of the means. As a general rule, use all of the means. Remember that God is above all means, and apart from God, all means are useless. So seek God alone in the means and take no pride in your own effort or presumed success. Open your heart to the God's promise of grace; mercy, and love.

In April 1740, Charles Wesley wrote a hymn-poem, entitled "The Means of Grace," to counteract the teaching of the radical Moravians and their teaching of stillness. Originally published as a separate pamphlet, it was incorporated into the brothers' joint publication of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* in 1740, and later (with a reduction and different ordering of the verses) in the 1780 *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*. Several of the verses, as originally ordered, reinforce John's prose:

Long have I seemed to serve thee, Lord,  
 With unavailing pain;  
 Fasted, and prayed, and read thy Word,  
 And heard it preached—in vain,

Oft did I with th' assembly join,  
 And near thy altar drew;  
 A form of godliness was mine—  
 The power I never knew.

But I of means have made my boast,  
 Of means an idol made!  
 The spirit in the letter lost,  
 The substance in the shade!

I rested in the outward law,  
 Nor knew its deep design;  
 The length and breadth I never saw,  
 And height of love divine.

Where am I now, or what my hope?  
 What can my weakness do?  
 Jesu, to thee my soul looks up—  
 'Tis thou must make it new.

Still for thy loving kindness, Lord,  
 I in thy temple wait;  
 I look to find thee in thy Word,  
 Or at thy table meet.

Here in *thine* own appointed ways  
 I wait to learn thy will;  
 Silent I stand before thy face,  
 And hear thee say, 'Be still!'

'Be still—and know that I am God!  
 'Tis all I live to know!  
 To feel the virtue of thy blood,  
 And spread its praise below!'

The clear emphasis of both brothers is that we are called to "wait" for God, not passively but actively, by immersing ourselves in those means of grace in which God has promised to meet us. Their *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, to be explored more fully below, are filled with allusions to this important connection between the means of grace (the external form) and God's gracious offer of relationship to us (the internal gift).

Perhaps the most critical question in this regard, as David Lowes Watson has pointed out, is "how to permit God's grace to foster a maturity of constant obedience, so that sanctifying grace might work with an unimpeded love."<sup>10</sup> It is this connection between the means of grace and growth toward the *telos* of perfect love that is so distinctive in Methodist spirituality. An examination of the writings of the early Methodist people reveals constant reference to the means of grace and the way in which they facilitate growth toward maturity in Christ. In characteristic Wesleyan fashion, Hannah Ball provides an outline of those prac-

tices she had found most helpful to her spiritual growth:

I have received, I trust, an increase of patience: my soul rests in God. To the end that I may improve in the knowledge of Him, I read, write, and pray; hear the word preached; converse with the people of God; fast, or use abstinence; together with every prudential help, as channels only, for receiving the grace of God.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Ann Gilbert testified to the centrality of these “works of piety,” as they were also known, in her life. “Before I conclude,” she admonished her reader, “there is one thing I wish to be particularly remembered; during the course of my pilgrimage, I have always found that the more diligent I was in using the means of Grace, ... the more happiness I have enjoyed in my soul.”<sup>12</sup>

All of this is consistent with the emphasis that the early Methodists placed upon mutual accountability and the strength drawn from intimate fellowship, the celebration of classic spiritual disciplines as important means of growth (as well as conversion), and renewed interest in the sacramental life of the church—all part and parcel of growth toward the full stature of Christ and the renewal of his image in life. “Ye know that the great end of religion,” John Wesley would repeat on a number of occasions, “is to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parents.”<sup>13</sup> In similar fashion in a letter to William Law (dated January 6, 1756), Wesley argues that “All the externals of religion are in order to the renewal of our soul in righteousness and true holiness. But it is not true that the external way is one and the internal way another. There is but one scriptural way wherein we receive inward grace—through the outward means which God hath appointed.”<sup>14</sup> The means of grace were integral in this process of restoration.

### **Eucharist: The Primary Means of Grace**

No means of grace, however, was as important to the Wesleys as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Charles Wesley described the elevated status of the Eucharist in one of his hymns:

The prayer, the fast, the word conveys,

When mix'd with faith, Thy life to me;  
 In all the channels of Thy grace  
 I still have fellowship with Thee:  
 But chiefly here, my soul is fed  
 With fulness of immortal bread.<sup>15</sup>

These "feasts of love," as the early Methodists often described them, shaped their understanding of God's love for them and their reciprocal love for God.

*Early, Methodist Practice.* Many forces coalesced to shape the Wesleys' Eucharistic spirituality: the piety of the Epworth rectory; experiences in the Oxford Holy Club and the influence of the Anglican Non-Jurors; experimentation in the mission context of the colony of Georgia, the witness of the Lutheran Pietists, and the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*; among others. From a detailed comparison of John Wesley's early and later diaries, John Bowmer came to two clear conclusions.<sup>16</sup> 1) Throughout his lifetime there was a remarkable consistency and frequency in his observance of the Sacrament, Wesley probably communicating an average of once every four or five days. It was also his custom to administer the Lord's Supper every day, for example, through the Octave of Easter. From the time of his Oxford days, he rejected the word "frequent" and set himself and his followers to a rule of "constant" communion. 2) The practice habits he established were governed more by opportunity than by fixed or prescribed patterns. In other words, he either celebrated or participated in Eucharist as the opportunity presented itself. The high-frequency of Communion was determined primarily by Wesley's eagerness to celebrate the meal on every possible occasion, following, as he would certainly have argued, the practice of the earliest Christian community.

With regard to the place of the Sacrament among the Wesleys' followers, Bowmer's conclusion is once again instructive:

There can be little doubt that the high place which the Sacrament occupied in early Methodism was due to the precept and the example of the Wesleys, for it is not too much to say that, for them it was the highest form of devotion and the most comprehensive act of worship the Church could offer. As necessary as preaching was—and it would be unjust to attempt to

minimize its place in the Methodist revival—a preaching service was not, to the Wesleys, the supreme spiritual exercise. On the other hand, the Lord's Supper was completely satisfying.<sup>17</sup>

*Constant Communion.* John Wesley's sermon on "The Duty of Constant Communion," published late in his life, provides the most succinct statement of his Eucharistic doctrine and practice.<sup>18</sup> His first, and primary, objective is "to show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can." The reasons supporting this constancy include the fact that it is a plain command of Christ and that it is a blessing of God through which we receive the benefits of Christ's passion and love. As is his common practice in his published sermons, as we have already seen, he also answers objections to his argument. In this case, there are five.

First, against those who claim that their unworthiness disqualifies their participation, he claims that the root of this common attitude is the misinterpretation of St. Paul's purported prohibitions. Properly understood, our unworthiness, in fact, is the major criterion for inclusion. Secondly, whereas some claim that an elevated esteem for the Sacrament will necessarily elevate expectations with regard to holiness in life, Wesley simply replies, in essence, "absolutely." Anything else would be a denial of our solidarity with Christ in baptism. Thirdly, Wesley counters those who are worried about proper preparation by arguing that reverence for the command is no pretense for breaking it. Fourthly, against those who express concern about the deadliness of repetition, he argues that practices habituated within the community of faith need never lessen true religious reverence. Fifthly, he bears testimony to the imperceptible strengthening often associated with the Sacrament in response to those who "feel nothing" at the table. "No man can have any pretense to Christian piety who does not receive it (not once a month, but) as often as he can (II.21)," Wesley adamantly maintains. "He that when he may obey [the commandment] if he will does not, will have no place in the kingdom of heaven (II.3)."

*Hymns on the Lord's Supper.* In 1745 John and Charles Wesley jointly published 166 *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* along with an appended version of Daniel Brevint's *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, which functioned as a preface to the volume.<sup>19</sup> This publication is unquestionably the fullest possible expression



of the Wesleys' Eucharistic spirituality—a theology in hymns. The hymns are arranged under primary headings, closely following the pattern laid out by Brevint in his treatise:

1. As it is a Memorial of the Sufferings and Death of Christ.
2. As it is a Sign and a Means of Grace.
3. The Sacrament a Pledge of Heaven.
4. The Holy Eucharist as it implies a Sacrifice.
5. Concerning the Sacrifice of our Persons.
6. After the Sacrament.

I find it extremely helpful to organize a Wesleyan doctrine of the Sacrament around the dimensions of time, which correspond closely with the first three sections in the collection of hymns. Sections 4 and 5 focus attention on sacrifice. Before discussing the sacrificial imagery of the Lord's Supper, therefore, I will explore very briefly the themes of remembrance, celebration, and consummation in the hymns:

#### The Past Dimension: Remembrance

First, *the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the passion of Christ*. It is a remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf:

The opening hymn sets the somber tone of this section:

In that sad memorable night,  
When Jesus was for us betray'd,  
He left His death—recording rite.<sup>20</sup>

The Sacrament is a proclamation of "the Lord's death until he comes," St. Paul reminds the Corinthian community (1 Corinthians 11:26). So the "death imagery" of Charles in this past dimension should be no surprise. What is wondrous, however, is the fact that the redemptive suffering of Jesus procures eternal life for the believer:

The grace which I to all bequeath  
In this Divine memorial take,  
And, mindful of your Saviour's death,  
Do this; My followers; for My sake,

Whose dying love hath left behind  
Eternal life for all mankind.<sup>21</sup>

The Wesleyan view is far from a “bare memorialism.” It is a remembrance in the sense of *anamnesis*, i.e., calling the event to mind in such a way as to make it real in the present. This is how memory functions for the Jewish community at the time of Passover. The Passover Meal is celebrated, not simply to recall God’s deliverance of the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt, but to experience liberation in the present moment as well. Charles’ masterful use of imagery creates what Rattenbury called a “Protestant Crucifix,” poetry that brings the event of the cross to the forefront of our consciousness and into our experience:

Endless scenes of wonder rise  
With that mysterious tree,  
Crucified before our eyes  
Where we our Maker see:  
Jesus, Lord, what hast Thou done?  
Publish we the death Divine,  
Stop, and gaze, and fall, and own  
Was never love like Thine!

Never love nor sorrow was  
Like that my Jesus show’d;  
See Him stretch’d on yonder cross,  
And crush’d beneath the load!  
Now discern the Deity,  
Now His heavenly birth declare;  
Faith cries out, ‘Tis He, ‘tis He,  
My God, that suffers there!<sup>22</sup>

The most amazing fact about the cross, of course, is that this instrument of death should become the supreme symbol of God’s love. It is, after all, the “Lamb of God, whose bleeding love,” Charles reminds us, “We thus recall to mind.”<sup>23</sup> The anamnetic refrain of this hymn, “O remember Calvary, / And bid us

go in peace," points to God's mighty act of salvation in Jesus Christ and the way in which God's love "bursts our bonds," "sets us free," "seals our pardon," and restores God's very image in our lives.

### The Present Dimension: Celebration

Secondly, *the Eucharist is a celebration of the presence of the living Christ.* This present dimension is most closely associated with the Sacrament as a "sign and means" of grace. Without any question, the earliest Eucharistic feasts of the Christian community, at which the disciples of Jesus "ate their food with glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2:46), were characterized by joy and thanksgiving. One of the early terms for the Sacrament is drawn directly from the Greek word, *eucharistia*, meaning "thanksgiving." This was the "Thanksgiving Feast" of the early Christians; a celebration of the Resurrection and the presence of the living Lord. Charles captures that primitive Christian spirit:

Jesu, we thus obey  
 Thy last and kindest word,  
 Here in Thine own appointed way  
 We come to meet our Lord:  
 The way Thou has enjoin'd  
 Thou wilt therein appear;  
 We come with confidence to find  
 Thy special presence here.

Our hearts we open wide,  
 To make the Saviour room;  
 And lo! the Lamb, the Crucified,  
 The sinner's Friend, is come!  
 His presence makes the feast;  
 And now our bosoms feel  
 The glory not to be express,  
 The joy unspeakable.<sup>24</sup>

In one of his most powerful hymns, Charles plumbs the depths of this mystery of faith:

O the depth of love Divine,  
 Th' unfathomable grace!  
 Who shall say how bread and wine  
 God into man conveys!  
*How* the bread His flesh imparts,  
*How* the wine transmits His blood,  
 Fills His faithful people's hearts  
 With all the life of God!  
  
 Sure and real is the grace,  
 The manner be unknown;  
 Only meet us in Thy ways,  
 And perfect us in one.  
 Let us taste the heavenly powers;  
 Lord, we ask for nothing more:  
 Thine to bless, 'tis only ours  
 To wonder and adore.<sup>25</sup>

The key to this present dimension is faith. It is through faith that the outward sign transmits the signified. The grace of God is applied by the means of faith. And the heights to which faith can move us are immeasurable:

The joy is more unspeakable,  
 And yields me larger draughts of God,  
 Till nature faints beneath the power,  
 And faith fill'd up can hold no more.<sup>26</sup>

### The Future Dimension: Consummation

Thirdly, *Holy Communion is a pledge of the Heavenly Banquet to come.* The holy meal is anticipatory. As we gather around the table, we are not alone. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, and together look forward to God's promise of the heavenly banquet when all of God's children are reunited in one great feast of love. The Wesleys spoke often of the Sacrament as a foretaste of this banquet, an earnest, or pledge, of things to come. Their rediscovery of "the communion of the saints" in relationship to this Holy Communion was a signif-

icant contribution they made to the sacramental theology of their own day. The keynote of this future dimension, of course, is hope and the consummation of all things in Christ.

"By faith and hope already there," sings Charles, "Even now the marriage feast we share."<sup>27</sup> This is a "soul-transporting feast," that "bears us now on eagle's wings" and "seals our eternal bliss."<sup>28</sup> The amazing imagery in Charles' lyrical theology gathers us into a community of hope:

How glorious is the life above,  
Which in this ordinance we *taste*;  
That fulness of celestial love,  
That joy which shall for ever last!

The light of life eternal darts  
Into our souls a dazzling ray,  
A drop of heaven o'erflows our hearts,  
And deluges the house of clay.

Sure pledge of ecstasies unknown  
Shall this Divine communion be;  
The ray shall rise into a sun,  
The drop shall swell into a sea.<sup>29</sup>

The Wesleys employ these various dimensions in an effort to communicate the depth and breadth of meaning in the Sacrament and to enrich the experience of the participants. In this sign-act of love, the past, present, and future—faith, hope, and love—are compressed, as it were, into a timeless, communal act of praise. The fullness of the Christian faith is celebrated in the mystery of a holy meal and the people of God are empowered to faithful ministry and service.

*Eucharist and Mission.*<sup>30</sup> Finally, the connection between mission and the Sacrament is extremely intimate for the Wesleys, and can be discerned most clearly, I believe, in their concept of Eucharistic sacrifice. In Charles Wesley's sermon on Acts 20:7 (more properly what might be described as an introductory "treatise" to a larger, unfinished work on the Sacrament) we encounter a concept of sacrifice consonant with the view he espouses in his *Hymns on the Lord's*

*Supper* devoted to this theme. Charles, viëws the Lord's Supper as a "re-presentation" of the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>31</sup> As Rattenbury demonstrated, his stress is persistently on the two-fold oblation of the church in the Sacrament; the body of Christ offered is not merely a sacred symbol of Christ's "once-for-all" act of redemption, but is also the living sacrifice of the people of God.<sup>32</sup> The sacrificial character of the Christian life, in which the worshiper participates repeatedly at the table of the Lord, and its relationship to the sacrifice of Christ is clarified in Charles' hymns. In this regard, he adheres very closely to the position articulated in Daniel Brevint's *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, namely, "The main intention of Christ herein was not the bare remembrance of His Passion; but over and above, to invite us to His Sacrifice."<sup>33</sup>

While faith th' atoning blood applies,  
 Ourselves a living sacrifice  
 We freely offer up to God;  
 And none but those His glory share,  
 Who crucified with Jesus are,  
 And follow where their Saviour trod.

Saviour, to Thee our lives we give,  
 Our meanest sacrifice receive,  
 And to Thine own oblation join,  
 Our suffering and triumphant Head,  
 Through all Thy states Thy members lead,  
 And seat us on the throne Divine.<sup>34</sup>

As the faithful repeatedly participate in the Eucharistic actions of taking/offering, and thanking/blessing, and breaking, and giving—the constitutive aspects of an authentic, sacrificial life—God conforms us into the image of Christ. Our lives become truly Eucharistic as faith working by love leads to holiness of heart and life.

## Notes

1. See the definitive studies of John C. Bowmer, *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism* (London: Dacre, 1951) and *The Lord's Supper in Methodism, 1791-1960* (London: Epworth Press, 1961) and well as Olé E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1948) and more recent works, including Craig Gallaway, "The Presence of Christ With the Worshipping Community," Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1988, Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1992); and Mark W. Stamm, *Sacraments & Discipleship: Understanding Baptism and the Lord's Supper in a United Methodist Context* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2001). The present position of the United Methodist Church with regard to the Sacrament of Holy Communion is formalized in the document entitled "This Holy Mystery," adopted by the General Conference in 2004.

2. J. Ernest Rattenbury, "Worship and Sacraments," *The Expository Times* 49, 9 (June 1938), 395.

3. See Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 24-48.

4. One of Wesley's few catechetical publications, this small tract was a revised English "extract" from an early 18th century French work by the prominent mystic, disciple, and biographer of Antoinette Bourignon, Pierre Poiret, entitled *Les Principes solides de la Religion et de la Vie Chretienne* (1705). In Wesley's Works, it appears with the altered title, *Instructions for Children*.

5. William Bennet, *Memoirs of Mrs. Grace Bennet* (Macclesfield: Printed and sold by E. Bayley, 1803), 83.

6. John Pipe, "Memoir of Miss Isabella Wilson," *Methodist Magazine* 31:516. Diary entry of August 8, 1790.

7. This is, in essence, the definition that Wesley employs in his sermon on "The Means of Grace," in Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 395. This projected 35 volume collection is hereafter referred to as *Works*.

8. *Works*, 1:376-97.

9. See the incisive discussion of this issue in "Chapter 3. The Ends of the Christian Life," Knight, *Presence of God*, 50-91.

10. *Works*, 7:188–90; Hymn 88, vv. 1, 2, 6, 3, 7; Hymn 89, vv. 1, 2, 3, emphasis added.
11. *Works*, 7:188–90; Hymn 88, vv. 1, 2, 6, 3, 7; Hymn 89, vv. 1, 2, 3, emphasis added.
12. Joseph Cole, ed., *Memoir of Hannah Ball*, rev. John Parker (London: John Mason, 1839), 97–98.
13. "Experience of Ann Gilbert," *Arminian Magazine* 18 (1795): 45–46.
14. Wesley's sermon on "Original Sin" (III.5), *Works*, 2:185. Albert Outler has described the "recovery of the defaced image of God" as the "axial theme of Wesley's soteriology."
15. John Telford, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 3:332–70. See also *Works*, 1:376–97; cf. Paul W. Chilcote, *Wesley Speaks on Christian Vocation* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1983), 33–49.
16. John and Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (Bristol: Printed by Felix Farley, 1745), Hymn 54, v. 4. Cf. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 176–249. For a discussion of the sacrament as an "effective means of grace," see in particular Borgen, *Wesley on the Sacraments*, 183–217.
17. See Bowmer, *The Lord's Supper*, 55–61.
18. Bowmer, *The Lord's Supper*, 188–89.
19. *Works*, 3:427–39. This sermon was a distillation of at least two earlier tracts on the Sacrament, published by the Anglican divines, Robert Nelson ("The Great Duty of Frequenting the Christian Sacrifice") and Arthur Bury ("The Constant Communicant") in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but extensively edited, expanded, and adapted by Wesley to make them his own.
20. This collection of hymns is properly described as a liturgical classic. The volume went through nine editions during the lifetime of the brothers and was one of their primary means to revive the Eucharistic life of the Church of England. In addition to the full reprinting of the hymns in Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 195–249, see the facsimile reprint of the first edition, published by The Charles Wesley Society (Madison, New Jersey) in 1995 to mark its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, introduced by Geoffrey Wainwright. Daniel Brevint, Dean of Lincoln Cathedral during the Restoration, emphasized a high view of the sacramental presence of Christ, the sacrificial (albeit anti-Catholic) character of the Sacrament, and the benefits of Holy Communion.
21. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 195; Hymn 1, v. 1.
22. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 195; Hymn 1, v. 5.
23. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 201; Hymn 21, vv. 2, 3.



24. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 200; Hymn 20, v. 1.
25. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 220; Hymn 81, vv. 1, 2.
26. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 213; Hymn 57, vv. 1, 4.
27. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 212; Hymn 54, v. 5.
28. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 225; Hymn 93, v. 4.
29. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 225; Hymn 94.
30. Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 227; Hymn 101, vv. 1, 3, 4.

31. The concluding paragraphs here are based upon my earlier address, "Preliminary Explorations of Charles Wesley and Worship," 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of The Charles Wesley Society, Point Loma Nazarene University, September 30, 2004.

32. Kenneth G. C. Newport, ed., *The Sermons of Charles Wesley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 277–86. Cf. Bowmer, *The Lord's Supper*, 223–32.

# The Doctrine of the Church in the Methodist Heritage

W. Douglas Mills

Contemporary Methodists attempting to describe ecclesiology in the Wesleyan heritage are shackled by the oft-repeated urban legend that Methodists have no doctrine of the church, save a pragmatic one of utilizing whatever works best. According to this legend, professor of theology Albert Outler established the lack of definitive doctrine in his famous lecture at the Oxford Institute on Methodist Theological Studies in 1962. In response to the question that became the title of his lecture, "Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?", Outler acknowledged the trap of a simple answer. "The answer 'yes' says too much; 'no' says too little."<sup>1</sup> However, carefully read (or heard), Outler did not intend to equivocate. Instead, Outler aimed to explain, at least initially, why Methodist ecclesiology lacked distinction. "In the beginning the people called Methodists had no distinctive doctrine of the church for the very simple reason that they did not need one (and it is a clear rule in church history that Christians do not *think*—i.e., construct doctrines—unless they *have* to)."<sup>2</sup> Methodists then, as now, certainly did have a doctrine of the church, but it was a commonly held position, originally undifferentiated from the theological position of church folks who were not a part of the Methodist movement. The issue is one of emphasis. Early Methodists—and we might include John Wesley among them—did not lack a

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doctrine of the church; instead, they did not expound a doctrine that was distinctively different from the doctrine commonly articulated in the eighteenth century English milieu of early Methodism.

As early as 1743, John Wesley did *have to think* through his doctrine of the church and he shared his findings in *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*. In response to his critics, who charged him with secretly undermining the Church of England, John affirmed his acquiescence to the published doctrines of the church.

What do you mean by the Church? A visible Church (as our Article defines it) is 'a company of faithful (or believing) people: *coetus credentium*.' This is the essence of a Church, and the properties thereof are (as they are described in the words that follow), 'that the pure word of God be preached therein, and the sacraments duly administered.' Now, then, according to this authentic account, what is the Church of England? What is it, indeed, but the *faithful people*, the *true believers* of England? It is true, if these are scattered abroad they come under another consideration. But when they are visibly joined by assembling together to hear 'the pure word of God preached' and to 'eat of one bread' and 'drink of one cup', they are then properly 'the visible Church of England'.<sup>3</sup>

Staunch churchman that he was, John Wesley defended his movement by reference to what he took to be Anglican principles. If John did not give explicit articulation to a *distinctive* ecclesiology early in his ministry, it was because he did not need to. He assumed and operated within the ecclesiology of the Anglican Church and constantly maintained that he taught the scriptural doctrines of the apostolic church. Those true doctrines, he argued, were contained in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, the Homilies, and the *Book of Common Prayer*. The Church of England, John's church, knew scriptural Christianity, even if it did not practice the same, he maintained. When asked how he differed from the doctrines of the Church of England, John replied that he preached "the fundamental doctrines of the church;" and from other clergy he differed only from those who did dissent from the Church, "though

they own[ed] it not.”<sup>5</sup>

Likewise, contemporary Methodist and Wesleyan-related teachers and preachers agree to an historic formulation of the doctrine of the church. According to the “Wesleyan Essentials of the Christian Faith,” adopted by the World Methodist Council at its 1996 meeting in Rio de Janeiro, “Methodists profess the ancient ecumenical creeds, the Apostles’ and Nicene Creed.”<sup>5</sup> In turn, the ecumenical creeds declare our belief in “the one holy catholic and apostolic church.” For many teachers, these four commonly called notes or attributes of the church, enumerated here in the Nicene Creed, provide a frequent outline for explication of ecclesiology in the Methodist heritage.<sup>6</sup>

Because Methodism did not arise in response to a specific doctrinal dispute, it will be no surprise that Methodists affirm classical statements regarding ecclesiology. According to The United Methodist *Book of Discipline*, “the distinctive shape of the Wesleyan theological heritage can be seen in a constellation of doctrinal emphases that display the creating, redeeming, and sanctifying activity of God.”<sup>7</sup> When we look to our legacy for those particular emphases, we find that the doctrine of the church in Methodist heritage has at least three significant poles about which it pivots. It is rooted in John Wesley and his understanding of both the doctrine and his relationship to the existing church, principally the Church of England. The doctrine relies on the formulations provided by classic Methodist interpreters. And, of late, Methodist ecclesiology has gained clarity as a result of relationships with other churches.

The missionary context in the New World provided the opportunity for John Wesley to reiterate his doctrine and he continued to presuppose a relationship between Methodists in the American colonies and the Church of England. Apparently, John was at first taken by surprise by the very existence of Methodists in America. He had been unaware of any Methodist activity until he received a letter in 1768 asking for help from some laypersons who had organized Methodist societies in Maryland and New York.<sup>8</sup> John sent two missionaries to the colonies, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, the first of a series of pairs of preachers. The notable Francis Asbury arrived with Richard Wright in 1771 and additional partners joined the field in 1773 and 1774. Several suffered from poor health, some had greater affinities to Presbyterianism, and some were forced to return to England because of their royalist convictions. Asbury

remained virtually alone as leader as the revolution showed signs of success.

Like their British counterparts, those Methodists in America never intended to be a separate church, thus they had no reason to contemplate ecclesiology or many of the doctrines of systematic theology. Early Methodists understood themselves to be among the several religious revival movements in the eighteenth century, organized as a society (or societies) within the existing church establishment. Even in the colonies, prior to 1784, the Methodist movement took place within the Anglican Church and the very presence of the Church made possible the rapid growth of Methodism, especially in Maryland and Virginia. Methodists were "prototypically evangelical,"<sup>9</sup> offering salvation from sin, conceived mainly in moralistic terms, and cultivating Christian living. Doctrine was largely "practical divinity,"<sup>10</sup> to be preached, sung, and lived; it rested on certain pillars, including the reality of sin, the atonement of Christ, the need for repentance, the truth of free will, and the expectation of sanctification, or holy living. The specific terms of membership in a Methodist society, and thus the missionary enterprise at large, had no ecclesiological reference. Members came "to be saved from their sins and to flee from the wrath to come."<sup>11</sup> Methodists were known for their enthusiasm, their discipline, their preaching, but rarely were Methodists known for their exposition of the full range of Christian doctrine.

Before the American Revolution, Methodist leaders took it for granted that members of the Methodist classes or societies in the New World would take part in the existing rituals, particularly those of the Church of England. But the Revolution separated Methodists from the parent church, forcing the American branch of the movement to become a denomination. What began as a society of movement within an existing church, became a church more by accident than intent. To meet the exigencies of the immediate, John Wesley sent a revision of the Articles of Religion of the Church of England, adopted specifically for the American situation.

In his revision of the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion, John retained unchanged Article XIX on the Church. English Reformers composed Article XIX in 1553, likely drawing from Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, which uses nearly the same language. For the Methodists in America it became Article XIII:

The visible church is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments be

duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

Though the article defines church in Reformation or classically Protestant language, it is, in many ways, incomplete. It does not, for example, include the ministry in the definition of the church.

In a fashion similar to Albert Outler, Colin Williams claimed that John did not so much diverge from accepted doctrine when he sent new Articles of Religion for the Methodist people in America as he did re-order points of emphasis. John penned "a strong concern for the Classical Protestant objective vertical emphasis on the pure Word."<sup>12</sup> Again with reference to John's 1743 *Earnest Appeal*, Williams noted that John singled out three things Article XIX determined are essential to the visible church:

First, living faith, without which indeed there can be no church at all, neither visible nor invisible; secondly, preaching (and consequently hearing) the pure word of God, else that faith would languish and die; and thirdly, a due administration of the sacraments, the ordinary means whereby God increaseth faith.<sup>13</sup>

According to Williams, John chose neither to emphasize the administration of the sacraments ("defined in terms of the unbroken succession of the apostolic ministry") first, as Roman Catholics might; nor did he give priority to centers of living faith, as the Free Church tradition might. John placed greater emphasis "on the necessity for the Church to be continually formed by the 'event' in which faith is aroused by the true preaching of the Word."<sup>14</sup> Still, according to Williams, John may have made true preaching first in priority, but he did not do away with the other emphases.

John Wesley's adaptation of the Articles of Religion for the Methodists in America, including Article XIX, was not his only word on the doctrine of the church. In September of 1785, John preached on Ephesians 4: 1-6, a sermon entitled "Of the Church," in which he alluded to the four notes of the church. In the opening paragraph John admitted that the very word "church" was prone to misunderstanding. "A more ambiguous word than this; the 'church,' is scarce to

be found in the English language." John traced several usages of the word in the New Testament and deduced the true meaning of the term. The true meaning of the term "church:"

... is the church in general, the catholic or universal church, which the Apostle [Paul], here considers as 'one body'; comprehending not only the Christians 'in the house of Philemon', or any one family; not only the Christians of one congregation, of one city, of one province or nation; but all the persons upon the face of the earth who answer the character here given.

And again:

Here then is a clear unexceptionable answer to that question, What is the church? The catholic or universal church is all the persons in the universe whom God hath so called out of the world as to entitle them to the preceding character; as to be 'one body', united by 'one spirit'; having 'one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all.'<sup>15</sup>

Having defined the church, John considered other parts of the Ephesians text, specifically what it means to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called," and how members of the church can endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The former phrase provided the opportunity for John to instruct his hearers (and readers) on how "to think, speak and act, in every instance, in a manner worthy of our Christian calling." Faithfulness to the calling is a sign of the church's apostolicity. From the latter part, John explored the holiness of the church. The church is holy, John reasoned, because every member of it is holy, "though in different degrees!"<sup>16</sup>

Upon the foundation of John Wesley's words, his interpreters of successive generations built their structures of Christian doctrine. A review of four successors of the late nineteenth-century provide an appraisal of Methodist ecclesiology in what one writer has called the "last classical era of Wesleyan Methodism." Contemporary historical theologian, David Carter, recognized in some of these nineteenth-century Wesleyan disciples a "highly mature, articulate tradition of

Wesleyan reflection on ecclesiology with which it has been the misfortune of modern Methodism largely to lose touch.<sup>17</sup> The work of those four, Richard Watson, William Burt Pope, Benjamin Gregory, and James H. Rigg, relied on the underpinnings of John's thought to give a systematic articulation to Methodist ecclesiology. All anticipated important themes in the modern ecumenical discussions.

Richard Watson, considered "the most influential theologian within Methodism on both sides of the Atlantic during the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century,"<sup>18</sup> systematized John's thought. Watson's interest was mission (which he pursued in Wesleyan Methodism, then in the Methodist New Connection, before returning again to Wesleyan Methodism), an interest he revealed in his understanding of the doctrine of the church. Watson gave only a few sentences to a definition of the church, calling it the visible society of those who have been baptized in the name of Christ and who are vitally united to Christ. Watson's view included a sacramental element, though it, too, served the purpose of mission. The baptized in Christ are obligated to partake of the Lord's Supper, Watson wrote, "in order to testify their continued faith in that great and distinguishing doctrine of the religion of Christ, the redemption of the world by the sacrificial effusion of his blood."<sup>19</sup> Watson gave greater attention to the purpose of the society or fellowship: to proclaim the faith as necessary to salvation; to offer public prayers, through Christ the mediator; to hear God's word explained and enforced; and to hold members accountable to the discipline required by the laws of Christ.

Because the church existed for the purpose of mission, in Watson's view, he wrote extensively about the organization of the institution and its ministry. Clearly, Watson defended John Wesley, the Methodist orders of ministry, and the Methodist movement as a vital part of the universal church. The organization required order, and order supposed an executive (the clergy) to enforce it. Relying on his reading of the New Testament record, Watson asserted two orders of ministry, elder (presbyter) and deacon, and he recognized the organizational necessity of granting some presbyters pastoral oversight in order to accomplish the mission. Watson summarily defended the correctness of John Wesley's assumption of the power to ordain. Watson found no passage in the New Testament that gave to bishops the power of ordination to the exclusion of



presbyters. Each presbyter had the right of ordination, although it was best used by several together for security; but "even when the presence of a bishop came to be thought necessary to the validity of ordination, the presbyters were not excluded."<sup>20</sup>

In his rendering of a conventional Protestant doctrine of the church, Watson described the holiness of the church in terms of its faithful conformation to sound doctrine and discipline; a "faithfulness that secured its practical purity." He described the church's apostolicity in terms of its reliance upon the standard of the scriptural witness. The sacraments were a case in point. Watson acknowledged only two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, because he could "find no other 'instituted' in the New Testament, or practiced in the early church."<sup>21</sup> Though he did explicitly use the terms "catholic" or "universal," Watson implied that the universality of the church was found in all the places where a gathered community was faithful to sound doctrine. The issue of unity, Watson largely ignored. Although he quoted more from Protestant declarations of faith than he did from John Wesley, Watson believed that he offered a systematic interpretation of Methodist doctrine, albeit adapted to the ecumenical context in which he worked.

More than a half-century after Watson, William Burt Pope continued to interpret Methodist doctrines, though, again, those doctrines were contoured by Methodism's unique mission and its relation to the larger church. Pope explicitly described where he stood. Methodist theology, he wrote,

... is Catholic in the best sense, holding the Doctrinal Articles of the English Church, including the Three Creeds, and therefore maintaining the general doctrine of the Reformation. It is Arminian as opposed to Calvinism, but in no other sense. Its peculiarities are many, touching chiefly the nature and extent of personal salvation; and with regard to these its standards are certain writings of John Wesley and other authoritative documents.<sup>22</sup>

Curiously, Pope was moved by British Methodism's aim and purpose, but he seemed isolated from developments in British intellectualism, namely Darwinianism and idealistic philosophy. The twentieth-century American

Methodist, Thomas Langford, thought this separation due to Methodism's disassociation from the established church. "Whatever the cause, Pope was not engaged in the swirl of Victorian struggles with religious doubt, the new dynamic of biblical criticism, the changing philosophical scene with the rise of idealism, or the transforming power of evolutionary ideas."<sup>23</sup> Yet, because he was not caught in the funnel of intellectual developments, Pope provided us with a good sense of the historical sweep and enduring value of Methodist doctrine:

Pope preserved the Wesleyan perspective and gave it increased clarity, in particular with regard to the doctrine of the church. Pope reviewed biblical, historical, and dogmatic theology and concluded that "the church is the sphere as well as the organ of the Spirit's administration of redemption," invested with certain attributes and notes. But to the Nicene list of the notes of the church—unity, holiness, catholicity, apostolicity—Pope added other categories drawn from scripture, namely invisibility, indefectibility, and glory. Furthermore, these positive notes describe the church in its ideal character. In its earthly form, the notes of the church are always accompanied by their counterparts, or opposites: diversity, imperfection, visibility, localization, confessionalism, mutability, and militant weakness. "Hence we gather that the true church of Christ is a body in which these opposite attributes unite."<sup>24</sup>

Pope ranged broadly over the sweep of ecclesiastical history and theology and left little untouched in his description of the notes of the church. His resolution of ecclesiology was creative, yet restrained. It was Wesleyan, it was classically Protestant, and he addressed each of the most pressing questions posed to the Methodist movement by its relation to the church at-large. The unity of the church is the common salvation of the redeemed people, or "the blending of many believers in one common confession, and their participation in one common grace." Unity, though, went together with variety and Pope would not condone uniformity, but he did concede that the nearer to uniformity the whole of the church could be made, the better it would be for the church's dignity. "In due time Christ Who at His first coming *made both one*, uniting Jews and Gentiles, will blend all communions into unity, and his Church shall by His presence be in all its multitude of branches *made perfect in one*." The holiness of the church is God's purpose; it is a holiness realized only in degrees. The church is holy

because its Head is holy and its members live out their vocation of a holy calling. It is an imperfect holiness in this world, to be perfected at the coming of Christ. Importantly, Pope argued that the class meetings among Methodists, the *Ecclesiola in Ecclesia*, served to advance the holiness of the church. The church is both catholic and local. "The two expressions signify that the one church of the Redeemer, His body on earth, has such a universality in its design and destiny as is consistent with the local independence of individual churches. Nothing more is meant than this." The church is catholic because it is designed for universal diffusion. The church is apostolic because it is "ruled by the Apostolic authority living in the writings of the Apostles." While Pope conceded an uninterrupted succession of ministers within the church, which could be perceived by the eye of God, he called unsound the uninterrupted succession of ordinations from the hands of the Apostles: Pope's other attributes—indelectible and mutable; militant triumphant—attest to the perpetuity of the Christian community and faith, and to the church waging war with principalities and powers while at the same time triumphant.<sup>25</sup>

Pope also described the attributes of visibility and invisibility in a traditional Protestant manner, while admitting that it was a concept being reassessed. According to Pope, the church, as Christ's mystical body, is essentially invisible, but in its earthly manifestations it is "no other than the invisible Church taking visible form."<sup>26</sup> The matter of concern for Pope was the emphasis placed on one over the other. Catholicism exalted the church's visibility and suppressed its invisibility, while Protestantism, in Pope's view, strove to unite the two. Free Churches in England made this a central issue,<sup>27</sup> and Pope acknowledged the debate. "The Broad-Church theory holds that the distinction [between the visible and the invisible church] should never be made, except in extreme cases of apostasy and excommunication." Congregationalists drew a limited distinction, yet aimed, "at making the visible the measure of the invisible in every society." Pope leaned toward a compromise position:

that of the Society within the church, which is not a theory of the mystical within the visible body, but the attempt to save the general fellowship from some of the evils which are inseparable from the constitution and working of the visible fellowship as the apostles left it: an attempt that in some form

or other has been made in almost every earnest and faithful communion.<sup>28</sup>

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, British Methodism had begun a serious self-assessment, with ecclesiology at the center of the conversation. American Methodism, still divided, sought new presentations of Wesleyan theology that would take into account the separation. Southern American Methodism held on to more traditional Methodist doctrine, rooted in Wesleyan authority. Northern American Methodism, while traditional and cautious, felt more the influence of philosophical changes. Thomas Summers, a Southern American Methodist, re-presented Richard Watson, with little change. In the north, John Miley at Drew, aware of philosophical debates about free-will and divine sovereignty, emphasized the elements of human reason and moral responsibility.

Benjamin Gregory gave momentum and direction to Methodist developments of ecclesiology. Gregory delivered the Fernley Lecture in 1873, from which he developed his major work on the doctrine of the church. Gregory, also, distinguished between the visible and the invisible church, but expected the visible church to represent the true fellowship of the saints as nearly as possible. The visible church is the community of the redeemed, Gregory said, those who have had a genuine experience of redemption by the grace of God in Christ. "The Body of Christ represents a reality given by God; but it stands as an ideal, as a goal to be achieved, a character of holiness to be won."<sup>29</sup> Gregory defined the church primarily in terms of its mission to convey the redeeming power of Jesus Christ to the world. He noted, however, Christ assigned no standard pattern of church polity, and Gregory, likewise, focused on the spiritual nature of the church. Interestingly, however, Gregory concluded with a call for a voluntary federation of churches, united by a common faith in fundamental doctrines and in service to the world.

James H. Rigg, who served as principle of Westminster Normal School and twice as president of the British Conference, concentrated his writing on the structures of the church. Rigg frequently noted apparent contradictions in the thought of John Wesley. Indeed, Rigg claimed that John's own life could be divided into two, sharply contrasted periods before and after 1738. Prior to his

1738 Aldersgate experience; John was a High Churchman; and afterward John embarked on the vocation of evangelist and revivalist that would lead him to become Low Church.<sup>30</sup> Rigg surveyed church order in ecclesiastical history, beginning with the Primitive Church. He studied the developments of episcopal ministry, presbyterian order, and Free Church systems. He considered and defended American episcopal Methodism and British Wesleyan Methodism.

David Carter, a Methodist member of the English Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogué, digested the works of both Benjamin Gregory and James Rigg, and his synthesis will serve our needs here. Carter discerned six common strands in the two "highly mature" reflections on ecclesiology, and he noted that both Gregory and Rigg anticipated "important themes in modern ecumenical thought, such as the emphases on *koinonía* and diversity within the New Testament Church."<sup>31</sup>

The first of the six important strands, Carter identified as a "theologically principled pragmatism of the early Church, as after Pentecost it adjusted to the exigencies of its mission." So, Gregory, who did not discern a single pattern for church organization spelled out in scripture, argued that the church is best served by the organization that most adequately helped it achieve its goal. Likewise, Rigg argued that no single idea of church structure exists within the witness of scripture, but diversity endured in both the New Testament and the sup-apostolic churches. "Implicit in Rigg's claim is the notion that the Church, under the guidance of the Spirit and its apprehension of the nature and exigencies of its mission, can always adjust its ministry and structures (as of course happened in early Methodism)."<sup>32</sup> Diversity exists hand-in-hand with the idea of mutual recognition of Churches in which the same apostolic faith is evident.

The importance of the class meeting formed the second common emphasis. "Both writers, one might argue, [saw] the class meeting as the local Church in its most intensely concentrated form and as the fount of ecclesial consciousness, at least in Methodist, and as implicitly belonging to the *bonè esse* of the Church Universal."<sup>33</sup> Class meetings exist for the purposes of oversight, discipline, and spiritual enrichment, and are the most intensive form of Christian fellowship. This fellowship is integral to the maintenance of the Apostolic Tradition. The emphasis on the class meeting as the most concentrated manifestation of the local church integrates, and holds in balance, the relationship between lay and clergy leadership—the third common strand. Ministerial oversight is essential

and lay initiative and leadership is vital. The ordained ministry is an indispensable element to facilitate the church's mission, which is why neither Gregory nor Rigg accepted congregationalism. Carter noted that Rigg, in particular, argued that "pure congregationalism can never be an adequate basis for Church life since no purely congregational Church can allow itself authority, even temporarily, to send out ministers to found new Churches."<sup>34</sup> The true government of the church is the mean between episcopalian theory and congregational independency.

The fourth common strand, the link between theology and fundamental ecclesiology, meant, in short, that doctrine and fellowship must be maintained together. Carter explained this strand as:

... the ecclesiological consequences of what in modern times has come to be called by Albert Outler and others the "Epworth Quadrilateral," of sources of authority in teaching. The fundamental revelation of God is contained in the Holy Scriptures. Its meaning is unfolded and applied in successive generations by the Spirit-filled processes of Tradition, and the use of regenerate reason: Its truth is confirmed and proved in the experience of the faithful, as in faithful practice they discover the truth for themselves in their own experience.

Theology is the systematization of Christian experience, or, in the words of Anselm, *fides quarens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding.<sup>35</sup> Carter noticed, with regret, that neither Gregory nor Rigg took the opportunity to consider the role of the sacraments in the experience of ecclesial life.

Fifthly, both writers provided theological justification of the connectional system. For Gregory and Rigg (and contemporary scholars in this century), connectionalism is an authentic and appropriate development of the Apostolic Tradition and a witness to the unity and catholicity of the church. Rigg wrote:

The connexional union of Methodism is closer and more complete than could be the union of the Churches of distant regions in the apostolic ages. But such union is in strictest harmony with the spirit of primitive Christianity. The close mutual brotherhood of ministers, and their common responsibility

for the appointment of their colleagues and successors, for the exercise of spiritual and moral discipline over their fellows—these are points in which Methodism carries out the principles of apostolic Christianity.<sup>36</sup>

Connectionalism is an item to which we will turn more attention shortly.

The final common strand in Gregory and Rigg was what Carter called a concern with the cosmic dimension of ecclesiology. While there existed "no final normative structure for the Church discernible in the New Testament," nevertheless, "it is the nature of the church to progress towards a final perfection," while always faithful to scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. There can be no final distinction between the visible and the invisible church. Furthermore, the divinely given goal of the church is "organic unity," a phrase Gregory actually used; and "the pursuit of unity is inseparable from the holiness of the Church."<sup>37</sup>

Given this historical survey of the doctrine of ecclesiology in Methodist heritage, I might begin to offer a constructive synthesis, something approaching a contemporary understanding of Methodist ecclesiology. If the classical Wesleyan writers are a clue (and I think they are), a contemporary Methodist ecclesiology would revolve about the four notes of the church and would highlight particular Methodist emphases. Most importantly, a contemporary Methodist ecclesiology must take notice of the current Methodist self-understanding in light of ecumenical contact.

A classical Methodist doctrine of the church, then, affirms the unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the church. The unity of the church is based upon the Christian *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit. Members of the church, the Body of Christ, are expected to display a unity in which each is bound to one another in the measure of Christ's self-giving love. The church is holy because it is the Body of Christ and Christ is holy. It is a holiness, in part, being realized as its members, empowered by the Holy Spirit, live out their calling. The church continually receives the Holy Spirit, God's self-gift, in order that the church, in turn, and the members thereof, might make manifest the presence and holiness of God for the world. The church is catholic because it is intended to embrace all people through its mission. Like its holiness, the church's catholicity is not realized. The

apostolicity of the church involves both its message and its messengers. Apostolicity is measured by the faithful transmission and continuing interpretation of the original message of God's economy of salvation. The church's messengers, its ministers, are apostolic when faithful to the divinely given mission and when in, what Methodists call "connection."

The classical Wesleyan ecclesialogists did not claim that church organization itself is either a sign of the apostolicity of the church or an essential note of the church. Quite the contrary. Classical Methodist ecclesiology assumed that the structures of the church must serve the goal of the universal mission of evangelization and spiritual development. Brian Beck, a contemporary British Methodist phrased it this way: "Moreover the church's mission has to do ultimately with holiness, in the person and in the wider society. God's design in raising up the Methodist preachers was 'not to form any new sect; but to reform the nation, particularly the Church, and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.'"<sup>38</sup> The Methodist system of church organization arose out of pastoral need and its missionary context. Therefore, the Methodist form of church organization, described as connectionalism (connexionalism), became a distinctive emphasis of Methodist ecclesiology. In Methodism, connectionalism is "the conviction that all local Churches are interdependent, and that the idea of a totally autonomous church, at any level, is a contradiction in terms, since it denies the attracting force and unifying work of the Spirit as well as the reality manifested in the Eucharist."<sup>39</sup>

Connectionalism served as an organizational principle among the earliest Methodist adherents, who were themselves part of a larger church with its own organizational principles. Still, connectionalism referred to the particular relationship Methodists shared among themselves. Brian Beck claimed that connectionalism is essentially interpersonal. "Members, societies and preachers were in union with Mr. Wesley and thus, with one another." The principle extended the connection beyond the local band or society; connectionalism means also unity (in degrees) among the people called Methodist around the world: Connection facilitated unity by laying stress on accountability, which was the purpose of class, band, and society meetings. Beck wrote, "The primary concern of the meetings was not 'business' in the modern sense, but spiritual and theological oversight; they met to hold one another to the path in faith, prayer, obedience,



faithful pastoring, doctrinal fidelity, and continuing witness and mission."<sup>40</sup> No one in connection is autonomous; indeed, the orders of ministry, including the episcopate, provide necessary oversight within the connection.

American Methodist Bruce Robbins, working with David Carter, recently studied the concept of connectionalism as a significant contribution to ecclesiology. In summary, they found that:

*Connexionalism* emphasizes the essential interrelatedness of the Church and its universal interdependence. It witnesses to the catholicity of God's love for all people in the solidarity and interrelatedness of their humanity, in what Jean Tillard calls 'the total design of God.' It emphasizes the Wesleyan principle that there is no such thing as a 'solitary Christian' and extends this principle to the relationships of congregations. A local congregation is a Church only so far as it is related to the other Churches: To use again a phrase of Jean Tillard, it is 'porous' to the lives and concerns of others.

Connectionalism accounted for much of the growth of early Methodism and continues to be a principle of practical effectiveness. Methodist communities at large have a vital sense of relationship to one another, even on a world-wide level. Connectionalism provides a sense of cohesion that is reinforced by the assignment of churches to circuits, the associations of preachers and lay members in districts and regional conferences, and the use of common hymns and liturgies by churches within a connection. By virtue of connectionalism, ministers and churches alike are held accountable in both doctrinal and spiritual matters to a conference. In his study of connectionalism, British Methodist Brian Beck argued that the collegiality of ministry stems from the connective nature of the church: "The connexion does not arise out of a need for mutual ministerial oversight; rather, the connexion is primary, and the presbyterate emerges as the ministerial order which is precisely charged with the duty of representing the universal Church to the local Churches and thus exercising the ministry of *koinonia*, connecting the local level with the other levels."<sup>42</sup> Necessarily then, Methodist ministers are ordained within the connection and for service to the entire connection. This is a reminder of the catholic nature of

the Church.

Methodist connections around the world implement the principle of connectionalism and the orders of ministry in slightly different ways. In England, John Wesley wished to avoid any break with the Church of England and many early British Methodists shared John's desire. The British Methodist connection did not develop an episcopal system and clearly rejected any plan to establish a three-fold order of ministry (bishop, elder, deacon). Across the Atlantic, American Methodism implemented an episcopal system based on at least three justifications. Pragmatic need within American Methodism, as it evolved from society to denomination, caused a need for oversight, satisfied by the principle of connectionalism. Furthermore, American Methodists could not help but notice the action of John Wesley, who claimed the "scriptural *episcopos*" right to ordain in emergency situations and did, in fact, ordain Richard Watcoat and Thomas Vasey as elders and (problematically) Thomas Coke, already an elder, as superintendent. In addition; in his plain teachings, especially in the 1747 *Minutes*, John answered positively that the New Testament describes three orders of ministry. In the world fellowship, Methodist connections that originated as missionary outposts tend to implement the same pattern of ministry, typically choosing episcopal orders, or not, based on the relationship to the missionary-sending denomination. (However, in many of those autonomous churches that originated from American Methodism, the term episcopacy is widely practiced.)

Recently, world-wide Methodism has come to think about connectionalism in a new way. Ecumenical conversations have drawn the relationship between connectionalism and *koinonia* (community or communion). *Koinonia* has a strong Trinitarian foundation, used in scripture and in the tradition of the universal church to describe the relationships of the Father and the Son and relationships established by the Holy Spirit. It is also used to express the dynamic of the church of God; the *ecclesia tou theou*.<sup>43</sup> Connectionalism is the Methodist embodiment of *koinonia*, a dynamic relationship of parts within a whole. An as-yet-unreleased statement from the Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue team will describe *koinonia* at the very heart of the way both parties understand the nature of the church. The term has ecumenical implications and it has ecclesiological implications, especially if Methodism should be willing to describe its current relationship with ecumenical partners (including The Salvation Army) in

terms of emerging *koinonia*. Bruce Robbins and David Carter explained:

It is from this point that the dialogue about the relationship of connexionalism and *koinonia* needs to proceed. What are the structures that best enable mission? What are the structures that best express and communicate the richness of fellowship and sharing of insight between Christian persons within local congregations and Church, and between Christians and Churches at every level up to that of the entire *oikoumene*? We must examine anew both the fundamental theological rationales and the practical functioning of all our ecclesial systems. We must lay them on the line before our ecumenical partners for mutual inspections, reception and correction (this being an act of *koinonia* itself).<sup>44</sup>

Connectionalism and *koinonia* have become important terms in ecumenical conversations, especially as we become aware of whom we are in the process of dialogue.

Methodists have always had a doctrine of the church; in the late twentieth century, Methodists have become more articulate about it as a result of ecumenical dialogues. Some of the most descriptive understandings have come in the process of the Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogues, in part because those dialogues have had the greatest longevity among dialogues of which Methodists are a part. Certainly, Methodists confess together with Roman Catholic that unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity are gifts of God to the Church, notes that both mark the church and serve as a goal, present and not yet fully realized. For Methodists, this confession has an ecumenical imperative to see "church" in the other, to seek to manifest *koinonia* and connection that is our common gift from God, and, most significantly, to pray and work toward restoration of organic unity.<sup>45</sup> With Roman Catholics, Methodists have confessed "an essentially 'connectional' understanding of Christ's call to discipleship, to holiness, and to mission, always as God's gift and rooted in our sharing in the invisible *koinonia* that is the life of the Holy Trinity."<sup>46</sup> Methodists also affirm that our connection and communion with dialogue partners "serve our growth towards holiness, and our sharing in God's mission."<sup>47</sup> It is a connection and com-

munion that are real, though imperfect, and it is our holy vocation to seek perfection in love.

## Notes

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21. Watson, *Institutes*, 698
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24. Pope, *Compendium*, 3: 259, 267
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26. Pope, *Compendium*, 3: 280
27. Langford, *In Search of Foundations*, 164
28. Pope, *Compendium*, 3: 282
29. Following here, Langford, *In Search of Foundations*, 166
30. In Williams, *John Wesley's Theology*, 218, a thesis widely debated; Rigg also thought he found contradiction in John's early views on baptism and his later position
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32. Carter, "A Methodist Contribution," 166
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35. Carter, "A Methodist Contribution," 170-1
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# A Salvation Army Perspective on the Doctrine of the Church and the Sacraments

Lars Lydholm

Traditionally ecclesiology and sacramentology play very important rôles in the theological thinking and dogmatic formulations of Christian churches. This has however not historically been the case for The Salvation Army.

I usually say that the distinctiveness of Salvationism is one of style, method and terminology not of theology. Salvation Army doctrine is in its essence mainstream Christian theology. But precisely in these two very much interrelated areas of theology The Salvation Army has had its own sometimes lonely place among the churches. Ecclesiology and sacramentology has not traditionally been at the forefront of Salvationist thinking but in recent years this has changed. It is in these areas that new thinking and new formulations are breaking through. Some of the major changes in the new Salvation Army handbook of doctrine, *Salvation Story*, have been on these subjects. The next theological symposium The Salvation Army is planning has ecclesiology as its main theme.

The purpose of this paper is to give a small insight into the developments that have taken place.

## Ecclesiology

Traditionally ecclesiology hasn't been seen as an important theological theme.

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Other themes, for example holiness teaching, have played a much greater role.

If one starts off by reading The Salvation Army's eleven articles of faith he will find what we see as a classical condensation of basic Christian belief. But there are no articles of faith about the church and the sacraments. One can accuse The Salvation Army of many things but being clear on ecclesiology isn't one of them.

Part of the reason for this is the historical circumstances that brought The Salvation Army into being. William and Catherine Booth, like most other founders of new denominations, had no intention of founding a new denomination or church. But preaching the gospel brought new converts; these new converts needed a spiritual home; The Christian Mission/The Salvation Army became that home. The new converts were sent out on mission—saved to save! So The Salvation Army regarded itself as missionary battle stations—agencies of evangelism.

The Army certainly saw itself as something distinct from the other churches but there was great ambiguity about using the word church about ourselves. We thought of ourselves as an Army fighting alongside the other churches.

But over the years there has been a development from seeing ourselves as an agency of evangelism to seeing and speaking about ourselves as a church. But there is still in many places an ambiguity about using the label "church." Our current international mission statement shows the same ambiguity when it says:

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.

We are "an international movement," "an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church." The question arises, what kind of movement? If we are "part" of something else—what kind of "part" are we?

The mission statement comes close but it is reluctant and in the end it precisely misses out on the straight forward logical definition—The Salvation Army is a Christian Church!

I think that in many places the reluctance of using the word "church" about ourselves is due to the fact that we want to see ourselves as a missionary movement free of all rigid traditions and customs. And that we suspect that church is something institutional, static and less flexible.

Another very important thing is that we no doubt in many places have not emphasised the corporate dimension of faith. In the coming years this will be a very important challenge for our preaching and teaching. Nobody believes alone—we believe together. No story comes from nothing. The story has to be told. God has to be preached. The gospel has to be passed on from generation to generation. And here the corporate or communal element of faith is essential.

*Salvation Story* underlines this communal element of our faith. The Salvation Army has never formulated an explicit ecclesiology. But in *Salvation Story* there is for the first time a separate chapter on ecclesiology. This chapter "People of God" formulates an ecclesiology and leaves no doubt that The Salvation Army sees itself and should by others be regarded as a church.

The chapter starts off with a quotation from Bramwell Booth—the founder's son and the second General of the Army:

Of this Great Church of the living God, we claim and have ever claimed, that we of The Salvation Army are an integral part and element—a living fruit-bearing branch in the True Vine.<sup>1</sup>

This quotation basically says that we belong to the "great church of the living God." But of course ecclesiology is more than just saying that we are a church. Ecclesiology is about what we believe about the church, what kind of church we are and should be. But the quotation makes use of a biological imagery that is important. For by using this imagery it states from the beginning that the church should not be seen as something static and institutional rather the imagery presupposes a biological understanding of the oneness of the church in Christ as different "branches" that grow and develop in Christ.

As mentioned earlier The Salvation Army doctrines (11 articles of faith) do not formulate an ecclesiology, but there is an indirect doctrine of the Church. Each doctrine begins: "We believe"—the "We" implies a community of faith—a church.

The Church is understood as the "People of God." The ecclesiology follows the trend from contemporary ecclesiology that came out of the second Vatican council—the Church not seen as an institution or a hierarchy but a community of believers—the people of God. This is an important message for The Salvation Army which has a hierarchical heritage.

The explicit ecclesiology in *Salvation Story* is very important because it underlines the communal element of our faith, in a tradition and theology that can be individualistic and concentrate on the personal experience of faith and sanctification. This is an important corrective element.

The Church is defined as: "the fellowship of all who are justified and sanctified by grace through faith in Christ." It is a "double fellowship"—fellowship with Christ and with one another.

And The Salvation Army is defined as being part of the one, universal Church:

Salvationists are members of the one body of Christ. We share common ground with the universal Church while manifesting our own characteristics. As one particular expression of the Church, The Salvation Army participates with other Christian denominations and congregations in mission and ministry. We are part of the one, universal Church.

Different images about the Church are used in the ecclesiology in *Salvation Story*. One of them is the Church as the body of Christ meaning "that all believers are incorporated in spiritual union with Christ their head, and with one another as fellow members working in harmony." And then the text follows with quite a strong statement: "We mean that the Church is Christ's visible presence in the world; given life by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and called to grow in conformity to Christ."

The Church is as already mentioned seen as the people of God—a pilgrim people called out by God: The Church is also seen as a continuing community: It

... passes on the gospel from one generation to another.

While subject to authority of Scripture the Christian community, led by the Spirit, provides a consensus of interpretation that ensures the preservation of the gospel message. The Church is one, though diverse in its expressions.<sup>5</sup>

The ecclesiology expressed here in *Salvation Story* is fully in line with the "Nicene" signs of the Church—the Church as *unam, sanctam, catholicam* and *apostolicam*.

The theology expressed in *Salvation Story* has a stronger Trinitarian aspect than earlier handbooks of doctrine. This is also seen in the ecclesiology in the underlining of the Holy Spirit as the agent for the different aspects of the Church. This is clearly seen in the headings of different passages: The Church is created by the Holy Spirit for fellowship; the Church is created by the Holy Spirit for healing; the Church is created by the Holy Spirit for nurture; and the Church is created by the Holy Spirit to equip for ministry and mission.<sup>6</sup>

So the Church is basically called by God, created by the Holy Spirit and one in Christ.

But being true to our tradition and heritage the Church is not only seen as being called by God but also sent out on mission.<sup>7</sup>

The Church gathers that it may be sent out on mission. The Church is not a self-absorbed society brought together for security and socializing. It is a fellowship that releases its members for pilgrimage and mission. The Holy Spirit creates the Church not only for our benefit, but also to make our mission possible.<sup>7</sup>

As mentioned earlier there is no doctrine on ecclesiology in our traditional articles of faith. But in *Salvation Story* there is a summary of the ecclesiology. It states:

We believe in the Church, the body of Christ, justified and sanctified by grace, called to continue the mission and ministry of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

Here justification and sanctification have not only a personal but also a communal element as has mission. Overall I would say that the ecclesiology of The Salvation Army is a typical Protestant ecclesiology. That places the emphasis not on the Church as an institution or hierarchy but on the Church as a people of God gathered round the Word of God.

Our international mission statement puts the task of our Church like this:

... to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination."

The challenge for The Salvation Army is to find the right balance in theology between a personal, individualistic approach and the communal element, between an activist, mission-focused element and the nurturing fellowship with Christ and each other in the Church.

A traditional Protestant ecclesiology will usually define the Church as the place where the Word is preached and where the sacraments are administered. But here Salvationist ecclesiology differs and I am next going to look at sacramentology from a Salvationist perspective. But going in that direction I first want to draw attention to new formulations in Salvation Army ecclesiology that has great impact on how we think and formulate our sacramental theology.

In *Salvation Story* the Church is also defined as the sacramental community. This is expressed in a new terminology:

Jesus Christ is the centre of the Church which lives to be a sign of God's grace in the world. As the sacramental community, the Church feeds upon him who is the one and only, true and original Sacrament. Christ is the source of grace from whom all other sacraments derive and to whom they bear witness. He is what is signified in the sign of the sacraments.

As the body of Christ the Church is his visible presence in the world. It is God's sign (sacrament) of the life together to which Christ calls the world, the visible-expression of atoning grace. Rooted in the risen life of Christ, the one and only true, and original Sacrament, the Church daily discovers, celebrates—and is transformed by—his grace. It gathers around Jesus Christ, lives by faith in him and is blessed to be his sacramental community.

### A Salvationist Perspective on the Sacraments

As there has been an increased focus on ecclesiology in The Salvation Army there has also been an intensified discussion about The Salvation Army and the

sacraments. Much of the theological debate in recent years has centred on these two interrelated subjects.

The Salvationist perspective on sacramental theology has not always been entirely clear and it needs to be deepened and broadened. Sometimes we ourselves and others have labelled The Salvation Army as non-sacramental. This is in my opinion not very helpful or true. The Salvation Army is not non-sacramental or anti-sacramental. There is for the time being a non-observance of the traditional sacraments or sacramental signs. But The Salvation Army certainly has a sacramental theology and this theology is developing further in these years.

I think that it is extremely important to note that The Salvation Army was not founded because of disagreement with other churches about the sacraments. As we know from history—sacraments have been a source of disagreement among churches. The Catholic Church counts seven sacraments, Luther counted three and in the end two. Later on the reformers in continental Europe disagreed on the understanding of the Lord's Supper and years later on infant or adult baptism. But The Salvation Army did not come into being because of some controversy over the sacraments. In fact The Christian Mission and later The Salvation Army observed the sacraments. The Lord's Supper was celebrated and infant baptism practiced. But in 1883 the founder William Booth decided to change to a non-observance of the sacraments. There were different practical and theological reasons for this.

There was a fear of dissension and division within the movement and confusion about the mode of administration—could a woman administer the Lord's Supper? And theologically there was a conviction that sacraments are not essential for salvation. There was from the Booths a mistrust in something that could be seen as a ritualistic practice that lull people into a false sense of security. Based on holiness teaching the focus was more on the need for an inner transformation—an entire sanctification, than on observance of outward ritualistic practice. So William Booth wrote in 1883:

Now if the sacraments are not conditions of salvation; if there is a general division of opinion as to the proper mode of administering them, and if the introduction of them would create division and heart-burning, and if we are not professing to

be a church ... is it not wise for us to postpone any settlement of the question, to leave it over to some future day, when we shall have more light, and see more clearly the way before us?

Meanwhile, we do not prohibit our own people in any shape or form from taking the Sacraments. We say, "if this is a matter of your conscience; by all means break bread."<sup>10</sup>

So non-observance of the sacraments became our practice. And theologically it became important for The Salvation Army to underline that:

God's grace is freely and readily accessible to all people at all times and in all places: No particular outward observance is necessary to inward grace.<sup>11</sup>

This was the formulation of the International Spiritual Life Commission in 1998. If we have a dogma in sacramental theology then this comes close to it. And even if we in the future should start observing the traditional sacraments again then no sacramental practice or theology could be allowed to violate that basic axiom in Salvationist theology. Many Salvationists think of this as a kind prophetic witness to other Churches as a reminder that God's grace can reach people in many ways also outside the traditional sacraments. The Salvation Army however does not in any way reject or oppose other churches practice or observance of the sacraments.

Another basic Salvationist approach is also that all of life is sacramental. *Salvation Story* puts it this way:

A sacrament has been described as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace. It is a sign of grace that can be seen, smelled, heard, touched, tasted. It draws on the most common human experiences to express the most uncommon divine gifts. It takes what we take for granted and uses it to overwhelm us with the surprising grace of God.... It brings the Incarnation to our doorstep, invites us to swing open the door of our intellectual caution and calls us to allow God's incomprehensible grace to enter—and transform—our ordinary lives. We observe the sacraments, not by limiting them to two or

three or seven, but by inviting Christ to suppers; love feasts, birth celebrations, parties, dedications, sick beds, weddings, anniversaries, commissionings, ordinations, retirements—and a host of other significant events—and, where he is truly received, watching him give a grace beyond our understanding. We can see, smell, hear, touch, and taste it.<sup>12</sup>

These two insights are basic to Salvation Army theology and will probably remain foundational aspects of any Salvationist sacramentology.

In recent years there has been an intensified interest and discussion of this area of Salvation Army theology. In 1998 The International Spiritual Life Commission issued a report that dealt with different aspects of Salvation Army worship and spiritual life. The commission also had an extensive discussion on The Salvation Army's position regarding the sacraments. A majority in the commission upheld the traditional Army stance on the sacraments, but the commission encouraged greater variety in style and use of symbolic acts, love feasts, etc. without turning them into prescribed rituals. This has opened the door for further debate. In 2001 The Salvation Army held its first ever worldwide theology and ethics symposium in Winnipeg. One of the recommendations from this symposium was to look at the question of the sacraments again. So there has been an intensified debate about the stance on the sacraments and the real challenge for the future is to formulate a sacramental theology that can uphold the insights from our traditional view and at the same time formulate a theology that will be meaningful whether or not we keep our non-observance of the sacraments:

### **The Sacramental Life—The Sacrament of Serving**

The Salvation Army's emphasis on holiness and a life in service for Christ and our neighbour has given life to the thought of our life in holiness as a visible sign of the grace of God, our life in God's service as sacramental—the sacrament of serving! One of the most beautiful and poetic examples of this view is the following song written by Albert Osborne, a former general of The Salvation Army:

My life must be Christ's broken bread,