

THE CURRENT TENDENCIES
OF THE WESLEYAN-HOLINESS MOVEMENT AND
THE GROWTH OF PENTECOSTAL-
CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY

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1. Introduction

Where is the Wesleyan-Holiness movement going? Since John Wesley produced the standard of Christian perfection in the eighteenth century, the movement has expanded globally, with the Wesleyan-Holiness groups discussing many issues of sanctification theories.

The most remarkable phenomenon in the twentieth century is the Pentecostal revival, which is rapidly extending to the whole world. It is nearly half a billion strong world-wide, and has been, and continues to be, the fastest growing Christian segment in the world. It has made inroads, not only in third-world regions like Africa and Latin America, but it also continues to attract huge followings in the western world.

More and younger Pentecostals are becoming scholars through reputable universities. There are several hundred Pentecostal scholars with doctorates, and that, of course, changes the breadth and depth of Pentecostalism. Most of them have maintained their roots in Pentecostalism, but this increase in education has led, in many places, to more ecumenical openness. There is now an on-going worldwide dialogue between Pentecostals and Roman Catholics.

One unique characteristic of Pentecostalism is its oral orientation. It is not defined by the abstract language that characterizes, for instance, Presbyterians or Catholics. Oral language is a much more global language than that of the universities or church declarations. Oral

tradition is flexible and can adapt itself to a variety of circumstances.¹ Such style of expression causes much curiosity among modernists, who want to pursue a simpler and more popular experimental faith.

Both the Pentecostal movement and the Charismatic renewal do not deal with traditional doctrine and statements so heavily, but, rather, have expanded resolute movement of unity through the common experimental sentiment of faith. In former days, believers who were in traditional denominations didn't want to dialogue with the Pentecostals; but, then, neither did Pentecostals. But they were communicating with each other in mutually equal relationships, in every aspect. The Pentecostal's nearest neighbor for dialogue was the holiness group, and the recent tendencies leaning towards the holiness movement have been made by the process of mutual dialogue and communication.

2. The Acceptable Tendencies toward the Charismatic Movement

Since the 1960s, the Charismatic renewal, which has widely exploded in America and in England, has been one of the most important issues in twentieth-century church history.² In Africa and Mexico, speaking in tongues and physical healings are not considered extraordinary. Tongues are not even spoken in a lot of third-world Pentecostal churches.

Many mainline denominations, evangelicals and traditional Pentecostals are upset about the Charismatic movement and are only too willing to tell horror stories about its excesses, whether be they theological, financial, or sexual in nature or simply a matter of disappointed hopes for healing and acceptance.³

Peter Wagner highlighted the theological value of the Third Wave movement world-wide with the influence of John Wimber. Inviting Wimber as a visiting lecturer, Wagner opened the lecture "Signs and

¹ Walter J. Hollenwener, "Pentecostalism's Global Language," *Church History* 6 (July, 1998), pp. 42-44 (42-43).

² Howard A. Snyder, *The Divine Flame: Wesleyan and the Charismatic Renewal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury, 1984), p. 37.

³ Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, "Charismatic Churches in South Africa: A Critique of Criticisms and Problems of Bias," in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, ed. Karla Poewe (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 50-69 (51).

Wonders,” and more than 800 students were attendants in the class,⁴ in which they could experience the supernatural gifts.

Wagner differentiated the Third Wave from the first decade of twentieth century classical Pentecostalism and from the Charismatic renewal in the 1960s. The Third Wavers believe that the Spirit baptism occurs not in the second experience following regeneration, but just in regeneration, and that the subsequent experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit makes one a fully consecrated believer,⁵ and that speaking in other tongues is not necessary.⁶

The Vineyard theology, the representative stream of the Third Wave, depends in many parts on George Eldon Ladd. Ladd explains the kingdom of God, not just in the terminology of evangelism, but also as the power of God that demolishes the power of Satan.⁷ Thus the emphasis of the “power encounter” or “power evangelism” is offered as its theological and biblical foundations.

Pentecostal and charismatic churches are growing amazingly fast in every part of the world. This phenomenon apparently announces that the gospel of Christ is now expanded, not by doctrinal contention or argument, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Poewe shows Yoido Full Gospel Church and Sung Rak Baptist Church in South Korea as the typical models of the charismatic church growth.⁸ John A. Sims states that we receive the power that can win souls, even in the complicated context, by using the manifestations of the Holy Spirit.⁹

The charismatic tendency is coming as a huge influence, not only upon classical Pentecostals, but also to the Wesleyan-Holiness groups

⁴ B. J. Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh: The Holy Laughter Phenomenon Examined* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), pp. 65-66.

⁵ C. Peter Wagner, “A Third Wave?” *Pastoral Renewal* (July-August 1983), pp. 1-5.

⁶ C. Peter Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit* (Ann Arbor: Vine Books, 1988), p. 13.

⁷ Oropeza, *A Time to Laugh*, p. 67.

⁸ Mark R. Mullins, “The Empire Strikes Back: Korean Pentecostal Mission to Japan,” in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, pp. 87-102 (89-91).

⁹ John A. Sims, “Postmodernism: the Apologetic Imperative,” ed., *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1995), pp. 315-42 (330-31), esp. p. 342 n. 12; R. Larry Shelton, “A Wesleyan/Holiness Agenda for the Twenty-First Century,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33:2 (Fall, 1998), pp. 67-100 (93).

without exception. It is the globally and inter-denominationally, almost common phenomenon. While the radical charismatic or indiscriminate use of gifts is always censured by evangelical theology, evangelical churches, including Wesleyan-Holiness groups, must prepare of using gifts with sharpened discernment.

Some Third Wavers tend to identify Jonathan Edwards as a defender of the physical manifestation of the Toronto Blessing. The most detailed argument for Edward's support is found in the work of Guy Chevreau, a pastor and teacher in the Toronto Airport Vineyard. The essence of Chevreau's point is that Edwards stood in marked contradiction to the Puritan tradition¹⁰ that he inherited, as he rejected the Puritan's faulty psychology, following the insight of Locke. Thus, instead of stressing the centrality of the mind and the rational faculties, Edwards elevated the role of experience. For example, the central thesis of "religious affections," a treatise on the nature of conversion, is that true religion in great part, consists in holy affection. Religion is not confined to the realm of the mind or the lair of dispassionate knowledge, but singularly embraces the affectionate side of humans.¹¹

On the surface, Edwards appears as a prime historical precedent for the phenomena of the Toronto blessing. But we must not forget that he said religious affection is only a possible experience of conversion. He seems to not support the enthusiasm of the Toronto blessing any more. Miraculous spiritual manifestations, whether they are prophetic visions or supernatural empowerings, are not a vital part of true religion. Edwards argued that divine grace comes through the ordinary gifts, as the extraordinary has ceased, and counseled his readers not to expect these miraculous gifts in the approaching glorious times of the church.¹² Edwards believed that the extraordinary gifts were inferior to the ordinary gifts or fruit of the Spirit, and only the latter should be sought; and, that the extraordinary gifts had no relationship to the end times and the glorious renewal and triumph of the church. Edwards further believed that the power or enablement of the saints for service to God was to be found in prayer and proclamation, not in the extraordinary gifts.¹³

¹⁰ J. E. Smith, *Jonathan Edwards: Puritan, Preacher, Philosopher* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), p. 14.

¹¹ John D. Hannah, "Jonathan Edwards, The Toronto Blessing, and the Spiritual Gifts: Are the Extraordinary Ones Actually the Ordinary Ones?" *Trinity Journal* 17 (Fall, 1996), pp. 167-89 (171).

¹² Hannah, "Jonathan Edwards," pp. 181-82.

¹³ Hannah, "Jonathan Edwards," p. 185.

The Wesleyan-Holiness group does not fully agree with Edwards in their views of sanctification and of supernatural gifts. However, Edwards, who stressed the event of conversion more than the experience of spiritual gifts and also objective revelation more than physical manifestation, stands in the general way of evangelism. This model gives more effective measure to the Wesleyan-Holiness group, which is more apt to accept charismatic tendencies.

3. Tendency Unifying in Sanctification Experience

Does the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition actually do the ecumenical vocation with the Pentecostals? Some factors would seem likely to influence the shape and character of things to come, such as, the degree to which an ecumenical vocation is seen as organic to the tradition, theologically, missionologically and morally.¹⁴ Since the early 1980s, the Wesleyan Theological Society has made itself into an arena for dialogue, through presentations at its meetings by persons from beyond the Wesleyan-Holiness circle, many by special invitation.¹⁵

As a collector and bibliographer of a wide range of English-language materials, documenting developments in nineteenth and twentieth-century popular Christianity, Donald Dayton has helped build a basis for a more catholic appreciation of the church today.¹⁶ Earlier developments had prepared the way for the formal proposal, and ground-breaking work by Vinson Synan and Donald Dayton had shown the close relationship between the Wesleyan-Holiness churches and Pentecostalism. The related question about whether Wesley and early Methodism made use of Pentecostal language, in relation to entire sanctification or whether that was a nineteenth-century development, was widely researched and debated in the Wesleyan Theological Society from 1973-1980.¹⁷

¹⁴ Elizabeth H. Mellen, "An Ecumenical Vocation for the Wesleyan/Holiness Tradition?" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34:1 (Spring, 1999), p. 102.

¹⁵ William Kostlevy, "An Historical Overview," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30:1 (Spring 1995), pp. 212-21 (214); John G. Merritt, "Fellowship in Ferment: A History of the Wesleyan Theological Society, 1965-1984," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 21:1/2 (1986), pp. 185-203.

¹⁶ Refer to Donald W. Dayton, "The Holiness Witness in the Ecumenical Church," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23:1/2 (Spring-Fall, 1988), pp. 92-106.

¹⁷ Merritt, "Fellowship in Ferment," pp. 197-98.

In 1987, the year his significant monograph *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* was published, Donald Dayton was the vice-president and program chair of the Society for Pentecostal Studies. He arranged for that society to meet on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. The program included exchanges with Wesleyan-Holiness scholars.¹⁸ Thus, the first meeting between holiness groups and the Pentecostals began merely as a test, and since then, both of them have tried to continue and develop a close relationship, expecting a bright future together.

There is a model of unity between Wesleyan-Holiness and Pentecostals in Wesley's relations with Fletcher. Wesley had a rich variety of terms for perfection, and he more often used these as metaphors to speak of full sanctification, instead of laboriously using the technical, abstract terms of entire sanctification and Christian perfection. Some of the metaphors include "the image of God," "love enthroned," "gladness and singleness of heart," "all of one heart and of one soul," "the mind of Christ," "the kingdom of God within" and "glorious liberty," to name only a few expressions.

The History of Methodism written by Jesse Lee and Nathan Bangs shows that the baptism with the Holy Spirit was a common theme in early Methodism.¹⁹ Phoebe Palmer was to become a significant spokesperson for the baptism with the Holy Spirit, beginning around 1837, and it was only because she was representing what she had learned as part of her heritage. Bangs was Palmer's first theology teacher.²⁰

The recovery of the real Wesley was initiated in 1935 with George Craft Cell in his book, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley*.²¹ But Outler has noted that Cell's studies "is sorely ignorant" about the last twenty years of Wesley's thinking.²² Yet, these were, in many ways, the most productive years of Wesley's life. This was the Wesley which was

¹⁸ Donald W. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury, 1987), pp. 105-106.

¹⁹ Dayton, *The Theological Roots* p. 59. Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America: Beginning in 1766, and Continued till 1809* (Baltimore: Magill & Clime, 1810), p. 57; Nathan Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: G. Lane & C. B. Tippet, 1845), vol. 2, p. 75.

²⁰ Dayton, *The Theological Roots*, pp. 59-60; Laurence W. Wood, "Pentecostal Sanctification in Wesley and Early Methodism," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 24:1 (Spring, 1999), pp. 24-63 (59-60).

²¹ Wood, "Pentecostal Sanctification," pp. 60-61.

²² Wood, "Pentecostal Sanctification," p. 63.

understood and preached by the early Methodists until the end of the nineteenth century. This was the Wesley which the early Methodists learned about through reading the *Arminian Magazine*. This was the Wesley which Fletcher helped to nuance in his “checks to antinomianism.” And, this was the time for a “Pentecostal Wesley.”

Simply relying on Wesley’s standard sermons will not provide a better understanding of Wesley’s theology. His later sermons, which *The Arminian Magazine* published after 1771, reveal the close personal partnership between Wesley and Fletcher. They formed the ideas of their preachers as they traveled and preached together at Methodist preaching houses and in annual conferences. The preaching and writings of his key preachers and assistants must all be brought together into a single puzzle if a true picture of Methodism is to be seen. Only in this way can a reliable, historical explanation of original Methodism be achieved. What will be seen through this historical reconstruction of the later Wesley, will be one of distinctive and lasting contributions to early Methodism, with emphasis on the “suddenness” of a Pentecostal experience of sanctifying grace in the life of a justified believer.²³

Wesley no longer feared Fletcher’s view of the Holy Spirit, but, rather, approved Fletcher’s link between entire sanctification and Pentecost. Wesley included Fletcher as the only other source of Methodist doctrine in the minutes of the Conference.²⁴ At least, no one had ever done that in Methodist history, until some began doing so in the Wesleyan Theological Society in the 1970s. The Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection will continue to sink into neglect until its relationship to Pentecost is once again restored.

4. Tendencies That Pursue Love and Christ-likeness

Some issues that are apt to cause mistakes in the holiness movement have been indicated. Questions are raised in the areas of pneumatology, while contemporary Wesleyan pneumatology appears not providing sufficient answers to the contemporary questions.

²³ Dayton, *The Theological Roots*, pp. 60-61.

²⁴ Dayton, *The Theological Roots*, p. 63.

4.1 The Relation between Sanctification and Sin

The most dangerous belief which has been spread among modern Christians is that they see themselves as sinners, made in the holy image of God. And they so much emphasize the grace of salvation, that they believe “salvation even in sin.”²⁵ But, any teaching that permits sin is far removed from the sound spirit of the holiness movement.

4.2 The Relation between Sanctification and Gifts

As we see the faults of some charismatics, to be supernatural, it does not need to be miraculous and need not be a true language. To be supernatural, it is sufficient if the natural capacity is exercised under the power and inspiration of the Spirit, directed toward the building up of the body of Christ and toward the kingdom of God.²⁶

4.3 To Believe in the Indwelling Spirit

There are some difficulties, as we believe in the indwelling Spirit personally. First, we may have no concern about the outward government of God, while we focus on our inner life. Secondly, we may overlook the foundation of Christ’ redemption, while we have concerns with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Third, excessive inner searching can harm normal psychological health.

However, a perfect answer for all those questions is prepared in the midst of the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. Wesley self-consciously appropriated this empiricist-inspired affectionate moral psychology. It is reflected in his typical list of the faculties that constitute the Image of God in humanity: understanding, will, liberty and conscience. “Will” is used in this list as an inclusive term for various affections. These affections are not simple feelings. They are the indispensable motivating inclinations behind human action.

²⁵ Bonjour Bay, *Gaishingyo Sungnyungnon-ui Yoksa* [A History of Protestant Pneumatology] (Anyang, Korea: Sungkyul University Press, 2003), p. 211.

²⁶ Kilian McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches* (New York: Seabury, 1976), p. 155.

In what Wesley held as the crucial instance, it is only in response to our experience of God's gracious love for us by the Holy Spirit, that our affection and love for God and others is awakened and grows.²⁷

He came to see the importance of "simplicity of intention and purity of affection." He shifted the emphasis on sanctification from law-keeping to intentionality and this came to focus in terms of love.²⁸

Love's knowledge, a form of knowledge that is received as a gift—that is, a response that involves a complex form of life—was the quest of John Wesley. He understood love as the unifying force and life-giving energy of the Christian life.²⁹ Thus he came to uniformly define entire sanctification or Christian perfection as "loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself."³⁰

"The question of entire sanctification, then, is not so much a question of subsequence or eradication. Rather, it becomes a question of the kind or measure of love appropriate for the one who "so loved the world."³¹ If God is love, the love of Christ who "so loved," then the fulfillment of the law and all righteousness in Christ is unto holiness, which is, in this life, essentially wholehearted devotion to God and one's neighbor.

There is no dichotomy between the command to love one's neighbor and the Great Commission to disciple the nations. These commands are to be neither confounded nor dichotomized, because love is the character of God and of the Christian in God.³²

²⁷ Randy L. Maddox, "Reconnecting the Means to the End: A Wesleyan Prescription for the Holiness Movement," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33 (Fall, 1998), pp. 29-66 (40).

²⁸ Ray Dunning, "Christian Perfection: Toward a New Paradigm," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33 (Spring, 1998), pp. 151-63 (158).

²⁹ Mildred Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1972), p. 105.

³⁰ John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," in *Wesley's Works* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1979), vol. 11, p. 394.

³¹ Steven J. Land, "The Triune Center: Wesleyan and Pentecostals Together in Mission," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34:1 (Spring, 1999), pp. 83-100 (95).

³² J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 289-336.

Henry W. Spaulding said that Christian perfection is not purely a matter of thinking, but of life, of embodiment in the forms of life.³³ The deep heart of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition and also the Pentecostal tradition is a passion for God.³⁴

Thus, Shelton says, "a Wesleyan-Holiness agenda for the twenty-first century must radically proclaim that holiness is the operation of Christ-likeness in the world."³⁵ Therefore, the Wesleyan-Holiness movement which grows in Christ-likeness will be the effective answer for postmodern spiritual aspirations.

5. Conclusion

Now is the time for the heirs of Wesley and Fletcher to partner in offering a new paradigm for evangelicalism. The Wesleyan-Holiness group, with the Pentecostals, must develop special theology for encouraging the church in the new century. Both of the two traditions are called "experiential religions."

Wesleyan and Pentecostal movements have each been centered on Jesus Christ and a kind of functional Christology which emphasizes the present power of Christ to save, sanctify, heal, empower, direct and enable the believer to participate in missions. Both movements share the Arminian position with regard to the possibility of apostasy, the correlative need for perseverance, and a salvation which is a responsive participation in the life of God. What follows, then, is a Wesleyan-Pentecostal suggestion as to the direction a further collaboration might take in producing a Christocentric missionary theology with a pneumatological starting point.³⁶

³³ Henry W. Spaulding, II, "To Shew the Fly the Way Out of the Fly-Bottle: A Reconstruction of the Wesleyan Understanding of Christian Perfection," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33:2 (Fall, 1998), pp. 145-71 (157).

³⁴ Cheryl Bridges Johns, "Partners in Scandal: Wesleyan and Pentecostal Scholarship," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34:1 (Spring, 1999), pp. 7-23 (21).

³⁵ R. Larry Shelton, "A Wesleyan/Holiness Agenda for the Twenty-First Century," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33:2 (Fall, 1998), pp. 67-100 (70).

³⁶ Land, "The Triune Center," p. 86.