

Holiness and Harmony

A Wesleyan recipe for contemporary spirituality from the perspective of Hong Kong, China

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G. Howard Mellor

For two interesting years I have lived and worked in the vibrant city of Hong Kong. It is a 'gateway city' where cultural, racial, political and religious streams meet. For years now I have been concerned to describe, in contemporary terms, Wesleyan holiness for the British Church which I have come to see is an 'earthed holiness'. From the perspective of Hong Kong I begin to see how that might now be possible though, as you will discover, I am only at the beginning of the journey. Let me make clear that I am not attempting to contrast Wesleyan holiness teaching with Confucianism, Daoism or Buddhism. Rather I have been searching for a new kind of language with which to explore and explain Scriptural Holiness and this is my first attempt to place those thoughts on paper for others to engage with.

The Grand Design

Late in Wesley's life, he described holiness in the following manner: 'Full sanctification is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly He appeared to have raised us up.'¹ This suggests that it is the main and overall theme which comprehensively includes the various aspects of Wesley's view of what he and the fledging Methodist Church had as the main purpose. It was the theological and spiritual lens through which he viewed the mission and ministry of the work of the people called Methodist.

Sadly it quickly became a romanticised notion and marginalised in most Methodist theology, misunderstood in ecumenical circles and almost entirely rejected in British Methodism.

To mark the celebrations of the centenary of Wesleyan Methodism, a series of sermons were preached across World Methodism, most of them in October 1839. The Rev Thomas Jackson preached the first sermon in the series at the Wesleyan Methodist Conference at Liverpool. His purpose was deliberately to explain the Wesleyan position but the description of the 'grand depositum' is reduced to one short paragraph in 62 pages of the published sermon. 'It begins with the new birth, which is immediately consequent upon justification. After this there is a gradual mortification of sin, and growth in holiness; but there must be a point of time at which sin ceases to exist in the heart, and love is made perfect. Sanctification therefore is instantaneous, as well as gradual. That this state of entire sanctification is attainable in this life, we think is manifest from the Scriptures of

¹ John Telford (ed.), Letter to Robert Carr Brackenbury, 15 September 1789 in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, Standard Edition (London: Epworth Press, 8 Vols, 1931), Vol.8, p.238.

truth: and to this state every believer is bound to aspire.’² This brief mention suggests that holiness was not the most significant issue before the church, though it was written only 48 years after Wesley died.

At the turn of the century the Congregationalist Robert William Dale^{3,4} indicated, ‘There was one doctrine of John Wesley’s, the doctrine of perfect sanctification, which ought to have led to a great and original ethical development; but the doctrine has not grown; it seems to remain where John Wesley left it.’⁵ Years later Stephen Seamands would agree with this reflecting ‘Holiness of heart and life has become the lost treasure of Methodism’.⁶

Worse than that – the very vehicles which were designed to promote Wesleyan Holiness in British Methodism came under severe criticism. The Southport Holiness Convention and Cliff College retained proclamation of Scriptural Holiness. The *Methodist Times* indicated that many ministers were very concerned when some of their members had received ‘the blessing’ at the Southport Convention, and asked why of all the people in Methodism these seemed the ‘most difficult, awkward, cantankerous, obscurantist and touchy people.’⁷ The Baptist church historian Ian Randall concludes that holiness teaching had at the turn of the century not been prominent in Methodism for decades, and in this regard both Southport and the Cliff holiness tradition ‘conveyed a picture of a lonely school of prophets at odds with Methodist progressiveness.’⁸ It is curious that the doctrine should be abandoned so soon when Wesley clearly thought of it as highly significant. Why was that?

A Plain Account:

The doctrine was discussed at the first Methodist Conference in 1744 where the question was raised, ‘What is implied in being a perfect Christian?’⁹ The answer given was, ‘The loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and soul, and strength (Deut, 6:5; 30:6; Ezek 36: 25-9)’.¹⁰ In a letter to Hannah Ball, the pioneer of Methodist Sunday Schools, Wesley wrote, ‘All that is necessarily implied therein (i.e. in Christian Perfection), is

² Thomas Jackson, ‘Wesleyan Methodism a Revival of Apostolic Christianity’, in *Wesleyan Centenary Sermons*, p.35.

³ George Jackson, *The Old Methodism and the New – An address delivered at the Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., U.S.A., on June 28, 1903 on the occasion of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of John Wesley’s birth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), p.57.

⁴ According to the Rev George Jackson, President of Conference in 1903, the chief Methodist theologian at that time was Dale. George Jackson, *The Old Methodism and the New – An address delivered at the Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., U.S.A., on June 28, 1903 on the occasion of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of John Wesley’s birth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), p.57.

⁵ Robert William Dale, *The Evangelical Revival and Other Sermons* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1880), p.39.

⁶ Stephen Seamands, ‘Submitting to be more Vile – the Quest of Holiness and its cost’ in Paul Chilcote, *Wesleyan tradition A Paradigm for renewal* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), p.125.

⁷ *Methodist Times*, 24 June 1926, p.10. The meetings of the Convention were reported in summary in the *Joyful News* and in detail in *The King’s Highway*. The Primitive Methodists then started a holiness convention each summer at Scarborough, which was also reported in *The King’s Highway*.

⁸ Ian Randall, *Evangelical Experiences*, p.81.

⁹ Thomas Jackson (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, Third Edition (London: John Mason, 14 Vols 1829-31), Vol.8, p.65.

¹⁰ *Works*, Vol.8, p.65.

humble, gentle, patient love, love regulating all the tempers and governing all the words and actions.’¹¹

This simple and clear exposition became complicated by the range of terminology that he used: ‘Perfection’, ‘Christian perfection’, ‘holiness’, ‘second blessing’, ‘perfect love’. In the process of sanctification, Wesley referred to the crisis in a number of ways: a ‘second change’, ‘farther change’, ‘blessed change’, ‘the instantaneous blessing’, ‘the second awakening’, ‘second work of grace’, ‘second blessing’, and ‘the second blessing’.¹² Wesley wrestled with opponents in formulating the doctrine but ‘Christian perfection’ was not one of his choices. ‘I have no particular fondness for the term,’ he explained to Dr Dodd, ‘it is my opponents who thrust it upon me continually, and ask me what I mean by it.’¹³ However he used and defended the term ‘perfection’ because it was a biblical word and concept.¹⁴

A glimpse of Wesley’s understanding of the importance of holiness to his scheme of theology comes in a circular letter which he sent in April 1764 to the ‘converted Clergy in England’.¹⁵ He invited them to unite with him and each other to ‘spread holiness through the nation.’¹⁶

A more detailed statement of Wesley’s theology was set out in his *Brief Thoughts* published in 1767. The introduction is evidence that certain issues to do with Christian Perfection had been concerning him. ‘Some thoughts occurred to my mind this morning concerning Christian perfection, and the manner and time of receiving it, which I believe may be useful to set down.’¹⁷ He then went on to identify three areas for reflection:

1. By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbour, ruling our tempers, words, and actions. I do not include an impossibility of falling from it, either in part or in whole. Therefore, I retract several expressions in our hymns, which partly express, partly imply, such an impossibility. And I do not contend for the term *sinless*, though I do not object against it.
2. As to the manner. I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith; consequently, in an instant. But I believe a gradual work, both preceding and following that instant.
3. As to the time. I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before. I believe it is usually many years after justification; but that it may be within five years or five months after it, I know no conclusive argument to the contrary.¹⁸

¹¹ *Letters*, Vol.6, p.266.

¹² *Letters*, Vol.5, p.215; *Sermons*, Vol.2, p.391; *Sermons*, Vol.2, p.395; *Works*, Vol.8, p.329; *Letters*, Vol.5, p.16; *Letters*, Vol.6, p.144-5; *Letters*, Vol.4, p.133; *Letters*, Vol.3, p.212, Vol.5, p.315; *Letters*, Vol.6, p.116.

¹³ *Letters*, Vol.3, p.167.

¹⁴ *Letters*, Vol.4, p.212.

¹⁵ William Myles, *A Chronology of the people called Methodists* (London: W. Myles, J. Butterworth and J. Bruce, third edition, 1803), pp.93-4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ ‘Brief Thoughts on Christian Perfection’, London, 27 January 1767, *Works*, Vol.11, p.446.

¹⁸ *Works*, Vol.11, p.446.

Wesley had a distinctive account for the process of salvation which Henry Rack describes as ‘an extended scenario for the drama of salvation’.¹⁹ This was a process of experiencing God’s offer of salvation which Rack describes as a ‘pilgrim’s progress from sin through conviction, through conversion, to perfection and beyond’.²⁰ Wesley ‘laid great stress on human dependence on grace in all its manifestations – prevenient, justifying, sanctifying, sacramental and universal.’²¹

There is another element found in Wesley’s doctrine, which needs to be understood. Henry Rack highlights the paradox of Wesley’s doctrine of ‘perfection which was not perfect.’²² Rack came to the conclusion that Wesley’s doctrine is only understandable and plausible because he operated with two definitions of perfection which in turn related to his doctrine of sin. Christian perfection was attainable in this life as long as the believer had not committed a known transgression. The perfection which was not attainable in this life was one in which the believer did not contravene the perfect law of God either consciously or unconsciously. Wesley defined sin as a ‘voluntary transgression of a known law.’²³ Wesley considered ‘involuntary transgressions’ did not undermine the relationship of a ‘person filled with the love of God’ and he did not identify this as sin.²⁴ In this same passage he reasoned that, ‘Therefore, *sinless perfection* is a phrase I never use.’²⁵

Wesley’s sermon on the ‘The Scripture Way of Salvation’ (1765) was identified by Arthur Skevington Wood as a key text in the exposition of Wesley’s doctrine: ‘He spoke of entire sanctification, of expressions like “full salvation” and “perfection” as used in the letter to the Hebrews. “But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the same.”’²⁶ Wesley makes the same emphasis in a letter to Walter Churchey in 1771: ‘Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, is neither more nor less than pure love - love expelling sin and governing both the heart and life of a child of God. The Refiner’s fire purges out all that is contrary to love, and that many times by a pleasing smart. Leave all this to Him that does all things well and that loves you better than you do yourself.’²⁷

Wood’s conclusion was that the terms to be employed in relation to Christian perfection or holiness, if we are to follow Wesley, are, “Love” – “pure love” – “love expelling sin” – “perfect love”: these were the descriptions, which Wesley employed to express the heart of what he meant.²⁸

Wesley’s theology and views on holiness depended both on the necessity and efficacy of the grace of God; prevenient?, justifying, sanctifying, sacramental and universal (or

¹⁹ Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast* (London: Epworth Press, 1989), p.398.

²⁰ Ibid, pp.398-9.

²¹ David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p.58.

²² Ibid, p.399.

²³ John Wesley, ‘The Plain Account of Christian Perfection’, in Wesley and Fletcher, *Entire Sanctification, Attainable in this Life* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1898), p.53.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Arthur Skevington Wood, ‘Love Excluding Sin’ in Mellor and Taylor, *Travelling Man* (Calver: Cliff College Publishing, 1994), p.66, quoting Wesley, *Sermons*, Vol.2, p.448.

²⁷ *Letters*, Vol.5, p.223.

²⁸ Wood, ‘Love Excluding Sin’, p.67.

general) grace, and also that repentance and the works of repentance are necessary. Holiness was not just an idea in the mind or theology but issued forth in changed lives and works of goodness.

This becomes a crucial point for us. What Wesley described as the acts of piety and acts of mercy were the outward expression of the inner experience of love expelling sin. This holiness becomes earthed in the range of work in which he threw himself and encouraged his preachers to do likewise. It is not surprising therefore that Wesley opened schools, founded orphanages, wrote a book on medicine, visited prisons, urged the few buildings they had to allow women to weave and knit so they had products to sell and did not need to engage in prostitution. All this, and preaching regularly that men and women would 'flee from the wrath to come'.

This wide range of activities is not surprising. At the 1744 Conference the question is posed: 'What may we reasonably believe to be God's design, in raising up the Preachers, called Methodist?' The answer is illuminating: 'To reform the nation, more particularly the Church, to spread scriptural holiness over the land.'²⁹ The notion of scriptural holiness was never simply about a spiritual experience, it always had implications beyond the personal to the community of the Church and Nation. This opinion is confirmed in 'Marks of a Methodist' point 9; 'And while he thus exercises his love for God, by praying without ceasing, rejoicing evermore, and in everything giving thanks, this commandment is written in his heart, "that he who loveth God, loves also his brother"For he "loves his enemies"'³⁰

This notion of reform did not include a political scheme that Wesley had in mind, he was politically conservative, but it does suggest that the contemporary notion of transformation of both persons and communities is not outside the realm of contemporary Wesleyan theology and ministry. However within half a century, the grand design had apparently been overlooked. The advocates of holiness at the end of the nineteenth century would further diminish its influence.

Romanticised Notions of Holiness

In 1872 the doctrine of Wesleyan holiness was given a new sponsor through the publication of *The King's Highway*, a journal dedicated to scriptural holiness. The key editors of the journal were John Brash and Isaac Page who would go on to edit the *Local Preacher Magazine*. The distinct purpose of *The King's Highway* was the 'promotion of belief in the doctrine, and attainment of the experience and life of Scriptural holiness: meaning by that term full consecration of heart and life to God, purity of nature affected by the Holy Spirit through the atonement – perfect love to God and to man.'³¹

The editors saw the experience of sanctification as a second work of grace, and God's specific will for every Christian. Holiness was to be experienced by the believer through

²⁹ Minutes of the Methodist Conference 1744, Vol 1 (London: Thomas Cordeux, 1812), p.9.

³⁰ Richard P. Hietzenrater, *The Elusive Mr Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), p.147.

³¹ *The King's Highway*, Vol.1 January 1872, p.1. *The King's Highway*, launched in 1872, was edited by a group of four able and respected Wesleyan ministers; John Brash, Isaac E. Page (who became co-editor of the *Local Preacher's Magazine* for fourteen years from 1895), J. Clapham Greaves and W.G. Pascoe. Through *The King's Highway* they were to have a profound influence on the thinking of Wesleyan Methodists in relation to Christian Holiness.

‘faith, working by love’.³² Page and Brash were confident that God required his people to be holy and this was possible because ‘the Lord Jesus, by His death, procured for believers complete deliverance from sin; that the Holy Spirit is given to accomplish in them the deliverance; and that it is realised through simple faith in the Saviour’.³³ It was the aim of *The King’s Highway* not only to explain and illustrate the fullness of this Gospel blessing but also to ‘enjoin its attainment upon their readers as an obligation and privilege.’³⁴

One of the criticisms of the views of holiness was that this was a recent theology and experience. The editors of *The King’s Highway* sought to undermine this criticism by indicating that the doctrine of perfect love, though it finds full expression in Wesley, does have antecedents. John Brash wrote five articles on ‘Madam Guyon and her hymns’,³⁵ and the editors also made reference to the writings of the Church Fathers and the witness of seventeenth-century writers.³⁶

A compelling exponent of holiness towards the end of the nineteenth century was the Wesleyan Connexional Evangelist, the Revd Thomas Cook. It was to be a particular theme of Cook’s life and preaching, based on his early experience of holiness. He was an accepted candidate in 1882 and immediately became the first Connexional Evangelist.

Cook came to the view that God’s offer involved both forgiveness leading to conversion, and cleansing which imparted holiness. This was not a shadowy ideal but could be a living experience. And so it was that three years after his conversion, after struggling and striving that he accepted ‘by simple faith’ that God wished him to be holy: ‘at last, by a simple effort of faith, deliverance came, the last enemy was cast out, sin’s stain was cleansed away, and great peace filled his soul.’³⁷ What he had experienced, he preached.

Cook gave an analysis of what he called the ‘twofold character’ of sin in a sermon published under the title *Entire Cleansing*,³⁸ The distinction Cook pressed is that ‘we must discriminate between guilt and depravity...sin committed is the transgression of the law, but depravity is in-bred, inherited.’ He built an argument in the sermon that not only can God cleanse from all unrighteousness, but also impart entire cleansing: ‘the heart is cleansed by the Holy Spirit taking full possession, and it is only kept clean by His remaining...We preach, therefore, a moment by moment salvation, maintained by a perpetual faith in the cleansing blood.’³⁹

In a somewhat sentimental illustration he explained his point; ‘A mother puts upon her child a clean pinafore, and says, “now this is not to be soiled”. But the child disobeys. She may forgive the child for her disobedience, but she cannot forgive the pinafore clean; she

³² Page, ‘Scripture Teaching’, p.29.

³³ *The King’s Highway*, Vol.1 January 1872, p.2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ *The King’s Highway*, 1874, pp.11-14; 171-175; 235-9; 302-7, 411-16.

³⁶ *The King’s Highway*, 1876, Clement, Ignatius, Macarius the Egyptian, Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Augustine, pp.256-260; and Ralph Cudworth, John Arndt, William Bates, Dr. Witsius, Archbishop Leighton, and Bishop Jeremy Taylor, pp.355-8.

³⁷ Ibid, p.46.

³⁸ Henry T. Smart, *Thomas Cook’s Early Ministry* (London: Charles Kelly, 1892), pp.134-151. Unusually for a biography the sermon is reproduced in full. The sermon was also produced as a tract by the editors of *The King’s Highway*, where it was called *A Perfect Cleansing* and available at price 2d. The sermon was more recently republished, entitled *Entire Cleansing*, undated, by the Revival Movement, N. Ireland.

³⁹ Smart, *Thomas Cook’s Early Ministry*, pp.144-5.

must wash it. So God may forgive the wrong that we do, but He cannot forgive a depraved heart. Heart-sin must be cleansed away, and it is to this cleansing the text refers - the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanseth us from all sin'.⁴⁰ This is the eradication theory in which not only is the Christian strengthened to resist sin, but the root of sin is taken out. It is true that Cook considered that temptation remained possible and would come, but his concept of entire cleansing is predicated on the belief that such temptation will be resisted because the experience of 'blessed assurance' is lived in a continuing way.

He interpreted cleansing as a continuing process: 'We teach, therefore, not a *state of purity*, but a *maintained condition of purity*, a moment-by-moment salvation consequent upon a moment-by-moment obedience and trust.'⁴¹ Therefore the Christian should be a 'God-possessed Soul',⁴² seeking the love and grace of God which is '*bestowed*, imparted, given to us as a gift'.⁴³ This experience would bring the Christian to evangelical perfection, by which he meant those who are 'fully fitted and equipped for the service of God.'⁴⁴ This experience would then be in the fullness of the Spirit, a conscious walking with God, and experience of intense spirituality (which he sometimes called Beulah land⁴⁵), a serenity and peace in the midst of life which he referred to as 'soul rest'.⁴⁶ Cook maintained throughout that this is a blessing which all Christians may and should enjoy, and which would give power for service. The theme of consecration is present but what makes his view of holiness distinctively Wesleyan is his insistence that perfection is attainable and that sin may be eradicated. His book concludes with advice to enable those who know the experience of perfect love to maintain that state, which is characterised by a desire for greater illumination, a life of simple trust, times of prayer and bible meditation, active Christian work, and always a desire for more.⁴⁷

What was dramatically missing from Cook's writing and ministry was the social impact of holy living which was so much part of Wesley's theology and ministry. Cook was highly influential in British Methodism, as Connexional Evangelist he toured South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Ceylon preaching for Holiness⁴⁸ and became the first Principal of Cliff College.

Another key person in the nineteenth century holiness tradition was the Revd Thomas Champness. During the twenty years he published the *Joyful News*⁴⁹ he promoted his views on holiness. Champness was a down-to-earth preacher and teacher, and in *Plain Talks on Christian Perfection*,⁵⁰ he set out his views in which perfection is described as growth in sanctification. He cautioned against impatience: 'perfection is not a question of a moment.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.135.

⁴¹ Thomas Cook, *New Testament Holiness* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1902), p.43. The italics are his.

⁴² Ibid, p.46.

⁴³ Ibid, p.52.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.60.

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.82-7.

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp.88-95.

⁴⁷ Cook, *Holiness*, pp.139-46.

⁴⁸ Thomas Cook, *Days of God's Right Hand, Our Mission Tour in Australia and Ceylon* (London: Charles Kelly, 1896).

⁴⁹ First published on 20 February 1883, *The Joyful News*

⁵⁰ Thomas Champness, *Plain Talks on Christian Perfection* (Rochdale: Joyful News Book Depot, 1897), the pages of this short book are not numbered.

It is growth, not a leap'.⁵¹ He illustrated his approach by reference to a photograph and its likeness to the real person; as the Christian grows in sanctification so they become more like the real thing, Christ. The call to perfection, he wrote, is to be like Christ: 'What is needed, is a Christianity that is Christ like...(that) is Christian Perfection.'⁵² He did not agree with Cook's teaching about the eradication of sin which he thought owed more to the hymns of Charles Wesley than the Bible.⁵³ Champness maintained that such expressions as the eradication of 'the root of sin' do not occur in the Scriptures and he thought they led to misunderstanding.⁵⁴

Holiness for Champness was more than a spiritual experience. He led the campaign against alcohol and controversially sought to ensure that no person who was engaged in the 'liquor trade' should be nominated for office in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The Joyful News was full of stories of redeemed drunkards and calls for Temperance. He also edited and published a temperance magazine *Banner of Hope*. He saw the social evils brought about by alcoholism. This does seem to be the extent of his social action.

Rather more radically Champness not only trained young men as Joyful News Evangelists (from 1883) but also young women as Joyful News Evangelists as itinerant preaching evangelists establishing a second training base for this purpose. Moreover he trained and sent female missionaries to Ceylon. When Cook took over his work, this commitment to the ministry of women came to an abrupt end.

The most significant Wesleyan theological work in this period was from the respected Rev W.B. Pope, a tutor at Didsbury College, and whose *Compendium of Christian Theology* became the standard text book on theology for Wesleyans.⁵⁵ Chadwick would preach his way through the chapters of the book when in Leeds and use it at Cliff. Brash and Page used the text from Pope's *Compendium* without any commentary, revealing they were in complete agreement with him. Pope introduces a section 'Purification or Entire Sanctification', indicating a view identical to the editors of *The King's Highway* on the eradication of sin.⁵⁶ Perfect love is not only possible but commanded.⁵⁷ This state is effected through the 'completeness of the Saviour's work' and brings about the 'complete destruction of sin'. Pope did also emphasise a gradual deepening of the experience of perfect love through the 'entireness of consecration to God' and that holiness was the state in which 'character of the saint may be formed in the present life'.⁵⁸

Much later Skevington Wood had come to the conclusion that holiness was primarily a process. He explained his reasoning with clear awareness of Wesley's teaching: 'The verbs in his description of the Christian's life are all in the present continuous tense. "God is continually breathing, as it were, upon the soul, and his soul is breathing into God. Grace is

⁵¹ Champness, 'Perfection a matter of Growth' in *Perfection*.

⁵² Champness, 'What is meant by Perfection' in *Perfection*.

⁵³ Henry Smart, *The Life of Thomas Cook* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1913), p.281.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.281.

⁵⁵ William Burt Pope, *Compendium of Christian Theology*, 3 Volumes (London: Wesleyan Book Room, 1880). The section on Sanctification is found in Vol.3, pp.27-100.

⁵⁶ *The King's Highway*, 1876, pp.344-9 and 369-72.

⁵⁷ *The King's Highway*, 1876, p.369.

⁵⁸ *The King's Highway*, 1876, p.344.

descending into his heart; and prayer and praise ascending to heaven; and by this intercourse between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of spiritual respiration, the life of God in the soul is sustained; and the child of God grows up, till he comes to the “full measure of the stature of Christ”. Elsewhere Wesley speaks about the continual inspiration of the Spirit filling the heart with love like a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’⁵⁹ Wood was a classic pietist evangelical, scholarly, kind to all people, desiring the best for others but making no connection with social action.

Other Streams

At the same time as Champness, Cook and other Wesleyans were teaching and preaching holiness in Britain, there were other strands of holiness teaching developing. Two sisters had a remarkable effect upon the holiness movement in North America. Sarah Lankford and her younger sister Phoebe Palmer both married affluent Methodist laymen and worshipped in the prestigious Allen Street Methodist Church in New York. They had experiences of entire sanctification between 1835 and 1837. This so affected them that they moved into the same spacious house in the fashionable Stuyvesant Square near the church. They began their ‘Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness’, which continued for half a century.⁶⁰ They edited *A Guide to Holiness* and Palmer published *The way to Holiness*, and the meetings and the literature reshaped holiness teaching in the late nineteenth century.⁶¹ Palmer popularised what she called ‘altar theology’ which emphasised human consecration and the desire of holiness. She urged people who wanted to be sanctified to lay their desire for holiness on the ‘altar’ and trust God to deliver entire sanctification:

The hymn ‘When we walk with the Lord’ comes from this period, with verse four:

But we never can prove,
The delights of his love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favour he shows,
And the love he bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey;⁶²

Palmer’s expectation that holiness was available to every consecrated believer, changed the thinking of traditional Methodists. Formerly they had understood holiness to be elusive and only expected after a long period of waiting but according to Palmer there was no need to wait. Following the publication of her writings in Britain, many people indicated their indebtedness to *The Way of Holiness* in testimonies in *The King’s Highway*.⁶³

⁵⁹ Wood, ‘Love Excluding Sin’, p.76 quoting *Sermons*, Vol.2, p.234.

⁶⁰ Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Second Edition, 1996), pp.15-77.

⁶¹ Phoebe Palmer (ed), *A Guide to Holiness*, editor from its inception in 1864 until her death in 1872 and then by her sister Sarah Lankford until her death in 1896. Palmer wrote *The Promise of the Father: Or a Neglected Speciality of the Last Days* (New York: Foster and Palmer, 1866) and *The Way of Holiness* (New York: Palmer and Hughes, 1867).

⁶² John Henry Sammis, hymn No. 687 in *Hymns and Psalms* (London: Methodist Publishing House, 1983).

⁶³ *The King’s Highway*, 1872, pp.5, 44 and 67.

Critics, both Home and Away

Champhess and Cook were friends but on the matter of sinlessness they did not agree. Champhess taught that perfection was a matter of spiritual growth, rather than the eradication theory. 'Mr Cook's view was that sin is a sort of microbe, and that it is to be destroyed by the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Champhess could not accept this 'microbe theory'.⁶⁴ When confronted by the Wesleyan holiness hymns which speak about the 'root of sin' Champhess simply indicated they were not biblical, and 'after all the Methodist Hymn Book is not of equal authority with the Word of God.'⁶⁵

The influential scholar R. Newton Flew criticised Wesley's teaching on the eradication of sin. Flew argued that sin could not be expelled or rooted out like a cancer or a rotten tooth, because sin was more like a poison in every part of a person's system.⁶⁶ Whilst he conceded the possibility of emancipation from certain easily recognisable kinds of sins, he did not think it likely that the subtler sins which Wesley's colleague John Fletcher called the sins of 'Christian Pharisees'⁶⁷ would be removed instantaneously. Flew rather believed in a process of change, as Christians were changed by the companionship of the indwelling Spirit of God gradually, 'a new and transforming experience'.⁶⁸

In the UK was the development of the Keswick Convention, promoted by the Moody and Sankey missions of 1874-5 and consolidated at meetings in Brighton and Oxford. Many of its leaders were highly critical of Wesleyan Holiness teaching.

The Rev H.W. Webb-Peploe, vicar of St. Paul's Onslow Square, one of the founders and the principal speaker at the first Keswick, was highly critical of the Wesleyan doctrine of eradication and in 1895 distanced Keswick from Methodism. 'When I read such words as dear John Wesley's, 'The evil root, the carnal mind, is destroyed in me; sin subsists no longer,' I can only marvel that any human being, with the teaching of the Holy Ghost upon the Word of God, can thus deceive himself, or attempt to deceive others. It is, I think, a miracle of blindness that we can study God's word, and imagine that any man can be free from sin experimentally while here in the mortal body.'⁶⁹

Methodists were similarly critical of Keswick. In a thinly disguised attack on the Keswick movement the Revd Samuel Chadwick (minister of Oxford Place 1890- 1905 and principal of Cliff College 1912-1932) criticised its preachers as teaching 'Christian Perfection as "metaphysically attainable"', and yet which denied 'the fact of actual attainment...but regards it as an imputed perfection and not an actual possession. In this teaching inbred sin is not eradicated but repressed, and holiness is not imparted but imputed.'⁷⁰ Dunning reported that Chadwick contrasted Keswick with the Southport Convention, which stood 'for the doctrine of eradication of inbred sin and imparted holiness, as against the Keswick

⁶⁴ Smart, *The Life*, p.281.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), p.335.

⁶⁷ John Fletcher, 'Practical Application to Christian Pharisees' in *Entire Sanctification*, pp.146-58.

⁶⁸ Flew, *The Idea of Perfection*, pp.335-6.

⁶⁹ W.E. Sangster, *The Path to Perfection* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1943), p.81.

⁷⁰ Chadwick, *Christian Perfection*, p.75.

teaching of repression of sin and imputed holiness.’⁷¹ In a passage which was highly critical of Keswick, Chadwick accused the Keswick speakers of proclaiming a theological fiction, ‘a process of sheer make believe, by which God shuts his eyes to our real state and agrees to accept a fiction for a fact.’⁷² However he contrasted the Methodist interpretation of eradication, with the Calvinist (which is how he saw Keswick) understanding of counteraction but concluded: ‘There is a very real difference, but there is no essential antagonism’.⁷³

The teaching of Keswick, though much criticised by Chadwick did deal with the Wesleyan doctrine of ‘eradication’ and give holiness an acceptable face for many English evangelicals.⁷⁴ The Keswick Convention took the fundamental objectives and emphases of the holiness, broadened their appeal to a wider section of the evangelical constituency.

The call to holiness at Keswick had in the 1870’s been described as the ‘higher Christian Life’ but in the early twentieth century the heart of the message was described as the ‘normal Christian Life’.⁷⁵ This Bebbington describes as the democratisation of holiness teaching.⁷⁶ The Convention still maintained the theme of holiness by faith and stressed the believer’s consecration to Christ.

The Revd Samuel Chadwick set out his views on holiness in the *Joyful News* and shortly after his death a selection of these, edited by Joe Brice, were produced entitled *The Call to Christian Perfection*.⁷⁷ This collection of articles is written with detailed and clear biblical scholarship and in a blunt and straightforward manner. He admitted that ‘It is easier to prove the doctrine of a Second Blessing from John Wesley, than from the Bible.’⁷⁸ Like Cook he made a call for Christians to follow the scriptural pattern and to seek perfection, holiness and sanctification for, ‘Christ redeems, that He may cleanse and restore.’⁷⁹

One additional emphasis which he brought to holiness teaching related to *katartizō*, translated as ‘fitness’ or ‘readiness for service’.⁸⁰ He explored the uses of *katartizō* in the New Testament: the mending of nets to make fit for use (Matthew 4:21), the praise which is set in order so that the discordant notes are eliminated in the harmony (Matthew 21:16), the restored company of believers who are of the same mind and judgement (1Corinthians 1:10), to supply or complete what is lacking (1Thessalonians 3:10) and the bringing into being of the physical world, which was pronounced ‘good’ (Hebrews 11:3). He considered that holiness was to be purposeful, that is, prompting Christians to further mission and ministry.

⁷¹ Dunning, *Samuel Chadwick*, p.148.

⁷² Chadwick, *Christian Perfection*, p.76.

⁷³ *Joyful News*, 16 June 1932, p.3. He cannot resist the temptation, however, to contrast the views of the two conventions and describe Keswick theology as absurd: ‘the definitely and immediately attainable and the eternal approximation to the unrealisable’.

⁷⁴ Charles Price and Ian Randall, *Transforming Keswick* (Carlisle: OM Publishing, 2000), p.188.

⁷⁵ Ian Randall, *Evangelical Experiences*, p.27.

⁷⁶ David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p.173.

⁷⁷ Samuel Chadwick, *The Call to Christian Perfection* (London: Epworth Press, 1936). Joe Brice had begun to edit the material before Chadwick’s death. They were based on articles first published in the *Joyful News* 1912.

⁷⁸ Chadwick, *Christian Perfection*, p.68.

⁷⁹ Chadwick, *Christian Perfection*, p.71.

⁸⁰ Chadwick, *Christian Perfection*, p.31.

There is a debate about Chadwick's teaching concerning the reception of baptism of the Spirit. In an article in the *Joyful News* in 1914 he expounded a sequence of four points – ask, repent, receive, obey.⁸¹ When Joe Brice edited *The Way to Pentecost*, he changed the order to 'repent, ask, receive, obey'.⁸² Randall concludes with Dunning, who though aware of editorial changes writes, 'The language is Mr Chadwick's; the style is Mr Chadwick's'.⁸³

Chadwick was aware of the limitations of holiness teaching. There is no romanticised theology here. He made clear that perfection 'does not lift a man above the possibility of temptation...neither can it bring immunity from frailty, limitation, and ignorance, for humanity is sanctified without being absorbed. It cannot be final for it is still probationary...It is a restoration of relationship, a renewal of nature, a sufficiency of grace that makes it possible to live in all things according to the will of God.'⁸⁴

In 1874, The Southport Holiness Convention began as 'A Convention for the promotion of the Christian life'.⁸⁵ The speakers who included Thomas Cook, Thomas Champness, Hugh Price Hughes and Isaac Page, represented the young and influential Wesleyan ministers of the day. By 1893 the Southport Convention had achieved 'a Connexional importance...from the fact that a large number of people, Methodist and others, have been able to gain from the meetings of this Convention, clearer views of holiness and a new inspiration for the attainment of the blessing.'⁸⁶

Tindall was concerned to ensure that this holiness movement was recognised by Methodism and among the speakers were many of the famous Methodist preachers of the day: Dr T. Bowman Stephenson, Dr W. Fiddian Moulton and John Hornabrook, who for many years was the Secretary of the Chapel department for the Wesleyans. Along with these also came some of the finest Central Hall preachers including Scott Lidgett and Luke Wiseman. There was not, as such, a 'Southport theology' but the preachers thought of sanctification as a definite second experience. 'The blessing was not only definite, but desirable for the 'freedom from bondage of inbred sin',⁸⁷ necessary for 'radiant Christian living',⁸⁸ and promised and available to all who have faith.⁸⁹

The romanticism of Cook, and Chadwick's irritation with what he saw as Keswick Calvinism, contributed to the development of a holiness theology at Cliff College and Southport which was distinct from the Keswick tradition. As a result Cliff and Southport were, as the church historian Bebbington indicates, a marginal feature of twentieth-century Methodism.⁹⁰

⁸¹ *Joyful News*, 28 May 1914, p.5 (note that Randall, incorrectly, has 1912, p.91).

⁸² Samuel Chadwick, *The Way to Pentecost* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932). The article forms the final chapter of the book, 'The Way into the Blessing', pp.104-110. James M. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1991), p.263 and p.279, n.14 considers order transposed to fit contemporary teaching. Randall, *Evangelical Experiences*, pp.90-1.

⁸³ Randall, *Ibid*.

⁸⁴ Chadwick, *Christian Perfection*, p.35.

⁸⁵ J. Baines Atkinson (ed.), *To The Uttermost* (London: Epworth Press, 1945), p.15. Published to commemorate the diamond jubilee of the Methodist Holiness Convention, 1885-1945.

⁸⁶ A Skevington Wood, *Let Us Go On*, (Ilkeston: Moorleys Print and Publishing, 1985) pp.15-16.

⁸⁷ Atkinson (ed.), *To The Uttermost*, p.64.

⁸⁸ Atkinson (ed.), *To The Uttermost*, p.65.

⁸⁹ Atkinson (ed.), *To The Uttermost*, pp.66-7.

⁹⁰ D.W. Bebbington, 'Holiness Movements in British and Canadian Methodism' in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, October 1996, Vol.50, p.227.

Baines Atkinson, a tutor at Cliff, was closely associated with the Southport Holiness Convention, being its President for fourteen years. His considered reflections on holiness were published in the book *The Beauty of Holiness* in which Atkinson brought together the best from his predecessors, but without their romanticism.⁹¹ His is the finest of the extended works from Cliff writers and it was the forerunner of Arthur Wood's shorter and influential article, 'Love Excluding Sin'. Atkinson is deeply Wesleyan especially in his insistence that holiness is a gift of God and it is attainable now.⁹² He put forward a different element from either Cook or Chadwick, in his insistence that holiness has a 'social, ethical and practical ideal'.⁹³ Atkinson does not go so far as to suggest that holiness impinges on social or political theory, but like Wesley and Chadwick he saw the beneficial effects to society emerging from the changed lives of individuals. 'The environment or atmosphere of holiness in Scripture is always communal. It deals with the individual, but it is related to society'.⁹⁴

After Atkinson's book there was no significant contribution until in 1964 the Revd Tom Meadley reflected towards the end of his time as Principal of Cliff College.⁹⁵ Meadley had found at the College a definition and style of holiness preaching with which he was clearly uncomfortable, and dealing with that he considered 'the profoundest challenge'. He set out the issue as he saw it: 'The Wesley doctrine of Entire Sanctification, which has largely disappeared from Methodism, has been preserved at Cliff, expressed in terms of Second Blessing, a casual phrase of Wesley's which has become a technical term. The idea is that the root of sin can be removed completely in a moment of time, and this experience can be known and testified to as a continuous blessing of perfect fellowship with God and perfect love towards our fellowmen.'⁹⁶

Meadley called for a more open discussion; 'The truth of this matter needs much more sober and searching investigation, and a willingness to tolerate varieties of interpretation. The whole separatist supposition that it is possible to cut oneself off from the actual world of events and responsibilities, is alien to the Gospel and fatal in its spiritual consequences, but so also is the almost complete absorption in the spirit of the world of the average church life. The challenge to full commitment, and a total work of grace in the soul is one of the requirements of effective mission, but how to state this truth and exhibit it in relevant terms is one of the supreme challenges to Cliff.'⁹⁷

In 1969 Tom Meadley published his own thinking about holiness in *Top Level Talks: The Christian Summit Meeting*, in which with characteristic style he gave the doctrine a restatement.⁹⁸ Meadley had the knack of splicing Wesleyan doctrine with contemporary biblical exposition, and at the same time helping the reader to consider ideas in a new and

⁹¹ J. Baines Atkinson, *The Beauty of Holiness* (London: Epworth Press, 1953).

⁹² Ibid, pp.77-93.

⁹³ Ibid, p.94.

⁹⁴ Atkinson, p.103.

⁹⁵ Tom Meadley, 'The Challenge to Cliff College Today'. Archive document, which appears not to have been published. This paper, dated July 1964, came at the end of his time as Principal, and may have been written for the College Committee.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p.2.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ T.D. Meadley, *Top Level Talks: The Christian Summit Meeting* (London: Epworth Press, 1969).

creative way. The title of his book came from a statement in which Winston Churchill called the leaders of the world's most powerful nations to hold an unfettered and wide-ranging 'conference on the highest level'.⁹⁹ In the book Meadley deplored the tensions of his day. 'A whole set of associations has gathered round the subject and rendered it for many either taboo or touchy.'¹⁰⁰ When preachers latched onto the language of second blessing as a necessary second experience before Christian maturity, and quoted Wesley, they did not, according to Meadley, take hold of the breadth of Wesleyan theology at this point.

What is achieved in the book is a refreshing explanation of a practical holiness. Meadley wanted a holiness which is 'not righteous overmuch',¹⁰¹ he cautioned against 'finicky censoriousness',¹⁰² 'doctrinal fastidiousness',¹⁰³ 'morbid introspection', and using the doctrine as a 'tranquillizer', a kind of comforting providential coma, to avoid the hard realities of Christian discipleship in the modern world.¹⁰⁴

Meadley contended for a holiness which affected every part of life and the church's liturgy. He called for an outworking which can be visible in the Christian's life, which he referred to as the 'Holiness highway code',¹⁰⁵ and for a quality of love which remained mature and enduring in the midst of difficulty, a 'weather proof love'.¹⁰⁶ The doctrine was firmly placed as the key element of the evangelical revival which led to 'most of the great humanitarian reform movements of the nineteenth century in Great Britain.'¹⁰⁷ He used Wesley's oft used quote: 'the Bible knows no holiness but social holiness',¹⁰⁸ pleading that within the Church, holiness doctrine should not be individualised; 'true sanctification is corporate', it was for the benefit of the whole community of God's people.¹⁰⁹ With the arrival of the Charismatic movement the phrase 'second blessing' disappeared entirely being replaced by the experience of 'being filled with the Spirit', being 'open' to the Spirit.

The Scope of Scriptural Holiness

Wesley had no clear sense of a comprehensive social programme, that beyond his horizon. He was concerned about the conversion of men and women but there were social implications. Holiness sects have tended to withdraw from the world, 'warning their members to avoid its corruption.'¹¹⁰ Typically Wesleyanism had not retreated into that position, preferring to engage with the needs and problems of society, but this had not made Wesley nor his followers into reformers. Wesley's doctrine of holiness 'led him to be concerned about anything that was a barrier to the growth of the soul.'¹¹¹ As a result he

⁹⁹ Ibid, p.x. Winston Churchill, House of Commons, 11 May 1953.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.2.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p.109.

¹⁰² Ibid, p.96.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.100.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pp.98-9.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p.184.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p.187.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.106.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p.107.

¹⁰⁹ Meadley, *Top Level Talks*, pp.107-8.

¹¹⁰ Georgia Harkness, *The Methodist Church in Social Thought and Action* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), p.116.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.18.

wanted to deal with the sins of society. He deplored and attacked distilled liquors as they contributed to the misery of the poor. He preached to the inmates in the filthy prisons which he visited, and encouraged collections for blankets, mattresses and clothing to relieve their suffering; he regarded poverty not as the result of idleness or delinquency, insisting that the people called Methodist should seek to help the poor, and he opened the first free dispensary in London; he preached boldly against slavery in Bristol and supported Wilberforce in his many attempts to bring about the abolition of slavery; he warned against the dangers of wealth and encouraged a frugal life and a stewardship of goods which enabled Methodists to give to the needy.¹¹² In all of this he did not have a social policy as such but was simply seeking to overturn any stumbling blocks that would prevent people finding salvation and knowing sanctification. Moreover as we have noted; “Holy solitaries” is a phrase no more consistent with the Gospel than holy adulterers. The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness.’¹¹³ Wesley profoundly argues that holiness is to be found and lived in the community of God’s people who together are using the ‘means of grace’.¹¹⁴

Another example of the impact of holiness teaching on social thought and action is found in North America where the teaching on holiness changed attitudes to the slave trade. Methodists from the North denounced slavery but the theology of perfection also had an impact on the slaves. David Hempton shows that the Methodist denunciation of slavery offered the African-Americans a social standing in the community, ‘a sense of community, an extended family, an opportunity to meet neighbours, and a way of building some kind of ethnic solidarity.’¹¹⁵ Moreover the Wesleyan theology of sanctification offered slaves the prospect of perfection now: ‘nothing could offer a more complete recasting of the slave’s sense of diminished humanity than the possibility of Christian perfection on earth as in heaven.’¹¹⁶

There is no doubt that Wesley taught that ‘perfection was the natural consequence of the total process of salvation, and he saw it as God’s special gift to the Methodist people.’¹¹⁷

Albert Outler considered that in effectively abandoning the teaching of scriptural holiness, Methodism had lost an essential component of its theology and life. ‘The doctrine of holiness of heart and life that had been the key-stone of the arch of Wesley’s doctrine, by the turn of the century had become a pebble in the shoe of standard bred Methodists. And

¹¹² Harkness, pp.8-23.

¹¹³ John Wesley, preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems, paragraph 5, *Works*, Vol.14, p.322. See also Sugden’s comments and similar analysis in the introduction to The fourth Sermon on the Mount, *Sermons* Vol.1, p.378.

¹¹⁴ The ‘means of grace’ were the outward forms which conveyed the grace of God. At the Conference of 1763 the ‘means of grace’ were identified as: ‘1. Prayer, private, family, public: consisting of Deprecation, Petition, Intercession, Thanksgiving. 2. Searching the Scriptures, by reading hearing and meditating on them. 3. Receiving the Lord’s supper at every opportunity. 4. Fasting and abstinence at least one day in every week. 5. Christian Conference’. The 1763 *Minutes* are set out in William Myles, *A Chronological History of the People called Methodists* (London: Butterworth, Baynes and Bruce, 1803), p.88.

¹¹⁵ David Hempton, *Methodism*, p.24.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, *Methodism*, p.25.

¹¹⁷ Gerald R. Cragg, *Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp.168-9.

presently they took off the shoe, threw out the pebble, put the shoe back on and kept walking, with the same labels but without the same equipment. And this has been an uncomprehended and immense tragedy for all who claim John Wesley as their father in God.¹¹⁸

Scriptural Holiness is not just the title of a particular experience; it is for Wesley the overarching description of his theology and ministry. It relates to the conversion of a person as well as their continuing discipleship. Despite his lack of a social theory the effect of his preaching of the good news of Jesus brings transformation of the individual but also offers the transformation of communities and nations.

Conversion may be considered as the moment when the love of God entered a person; Sanctification as the process in which the love of God filled that person; Holiness as the continuing experience of being filled by God's love "to the exclusion of Sin". Holiness in this understanding is not earned, but is the gift of God imparted to the Christian and gives rise to a manner of life of total devotion and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally in this section there are some negative phrases which reveal the positive nature of holiness: Christian holiness is not absolute (God's perfection is unequalled), not sinless (only Jesus was without sin), not infallible (not free from ignorance or mistakes), not free from temptation (even Jesus was tempted), not free from infirmities (such as dullness of thought or slowness of speed), not final (there is always room for growth).

Language from the East

It is my contention that we need to search for a new language to convey the burden of this theological and spiritual part of our Wesleyan heritage. A new language to convey the theological scope and practical implications of scriptural holiness could be very effective on the mission and ministry of Methodism. This is especially vital in the British Methodist Church that has for generations considered the doctrine to be the curious emphasis of people stuck in nineteenth century romanticism. It is for that reason I am attempting to employ the language of the east to suggest a way of speaking about Wesleyan holiness:

- At its heart is the simple notion that Christian people should be filled so full with the love of God so there is no room for anything else.
- That assumes there is **openness** to God's word, willingness to respond to God's Spirit, commitment to follow in God's way.
- To follow the **Tao** (pronounced Dao), the **Way** of Jesus in all things.
- Following means being **transformed** by God's grace in the whole of our being.
- Whilst such devotion is personal it has **cosmic** implications, for from the **wellsprings of spirituality** come the grace and justice of God which overflow for all people.

¹¹⁸ Albert Outler, 'Whither Wesleyan Theology', a lecture delivered at Asbury College, 14 March 1974.

- A **dynamic force** of God's challenging and transforming love is released through persons. This is God's radical way of being involved in the affairs of humanity.
- God is the **transcendent** source of all things and through this triune God comes an inexhaustible spring out of which all life and movement flow.
- We will only find **wisdom** and **harmony** as we are exposed to God, and shaped by God's truth and love.
- There is a dilemma that holiness requires us to be **empty**, so that we may be filled, as a cup is empty, as the window can only be there if there is no wall. Holiness calls us to find **true humanity** by being **empty of self**.
- Such holiness has implications for our responsibilities to live in **harmony** with the created order, to be good stewards of the world's resources, to ensure that all have enough, that the poor and marginalised are cared for. Such **harmony** is individual and social.
- Faith is risking everything with God, **entrusting** ourselves to God's call upon us, seeking a deepening understanding of God, reducing our **self-enclosure** and allowing God's grace to mould and shape our being and actions.
- All notions of being filled with the love of God require a **deep self-awakening**, an on-going deepening process, which **heightens our consciousness** to the world around us, the needs of others.
- God's grace **agitates** our deep rooted **self-centeredness** and brings about a **transformation** of the way we see ourselves, the way we think of others and the actions that flow from that.
- Such transformation inevitably leads to dynamic change – where people move from passive acceptance to creative growth, to a new **self-realisation** of what is possible and achievable.
- A clearer self-understanding will lead to **humility** that reminds us we are not self-reliant, independent beings, but made in the image of God on whom our existence depends.
- The love of God filling a person will lead to actions that are **noble**, and **just** in relationships and community affairs.
- People are filled with **compassion** for others.
- Whether at work, or in leisure a person will seek to be **conscientious** and have **integrity** in all dealings.

- Seeking **harmony with heaven**, with God, will inevitably lead to **harmony with social order** with people fulfilling their **obligations** for the welfare of society.
- Harmony also infers a proper **balance – concern and respect** for others, with concern and respect for self.
- The outcome of holiness, being filled with the love of God, leads to **human flourishing** which has an impact among the community in which people live and work.
- Such flourishing leads to **human-heartedness** in relationships from which springs respect, and concern for the welfare of the people.
- The outworking of God’s love alive in a person will lead to **filial piety** in relationships with others.
- Sincere **good behaviour** which shows itself in politeness and consideration which in dealings with others leads to **harmony** in community.
- A **welfare for others** in public life where the person seeks to put themselves in the place of others.
- The outworking of being filled with love is a **conscientiousness** in the work place.
- In the public arena such love is revealed in the moral power of **virtue**, in which it is the responsibility of (Church) leaders to challenge governing bodies.
- We are familiar with the notion of seeking the common good, but we should consider that in a world where evil crouches near, there can be a **conspiracy of good**. A goodness (virtuous life) which overcomes evil and structural, systemic sin.
- Being in the process of dynamic love of God gives confidence in relation to the **destiny of human kind**.
- To take seriously the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness and find a new language would **honour** Methodist ancestors who handed this notion to us as a main purpose for the people called Methodist.
- The **rituals** of the means of grace bring people consciously and deliberately within the orbit of God’s truth and life.

In contrast Holiness is not:

- a series of rituals aimed at longevity and prosperity.
- a method of avoiding death by attaining physical immortality (at least very long longevity) through exercises, breathing and diet, or simply not eating.

Holiness does not close down options, rather it brings enlightenment because it exposes us to a deepening awareness of the triune God and opens us to greater awareness of what God is doing in the world. Being closer to the holy being of God, gives us greater clarity to the issues of the secular world of politics, trade and financial dealings. Holiness propels us to engage prophetically and pastorally with the big issues of the day.

Holiness then is not simply a notion for theologians to consider or devotees to focus on – it covers the whole drama of life. There is no thing, no person nowhere that is beyond the capacity of God to bring holiness and harmony, often using ordinary people. We should therefore seek to retrieve this Holiness from the shadows of church history and give people a vision of what might be, and what people might become. Engaging in such a task will require wisdom and creative thinking. Exploring the language and images will lead to visible expressions of holiness and harmony.

G Howard Mellor
Methodist International Church
Wanchai, Hong Kong

Brief Personal Bio:

Howard is presently Superintendent Minister of the Methodist International Church in Hong Kong, SAR. He has ministered in London (Deptford, Greenwich and Croydon) and Winchester. For 21 years he served at Cliff College where he was Director of Evangelism, and Principal. Briefly he served the Connexional Team where among his responsibilities were Candidates for Ministry.

MIC is a vibrant international community, with people from every continent and at least two dozen nations, with eight congregations using four languages, English, Tagalog, Ilocano and Putonghua. Among the normally 1,400 people each weekend is a significant community of Filipino domestic workers for whom the church offers hospitality, worship, training, a place to meet and celebrate and a place of sanctuary.

Howard and Rosie love living and working in Wanchai (Rosie has been teaching in a number of schools in HK), tasting the wide range of offered food and swimming in the S China sea. Howard's only regret is that he had to leave behind his beloved Citroen 2CV!