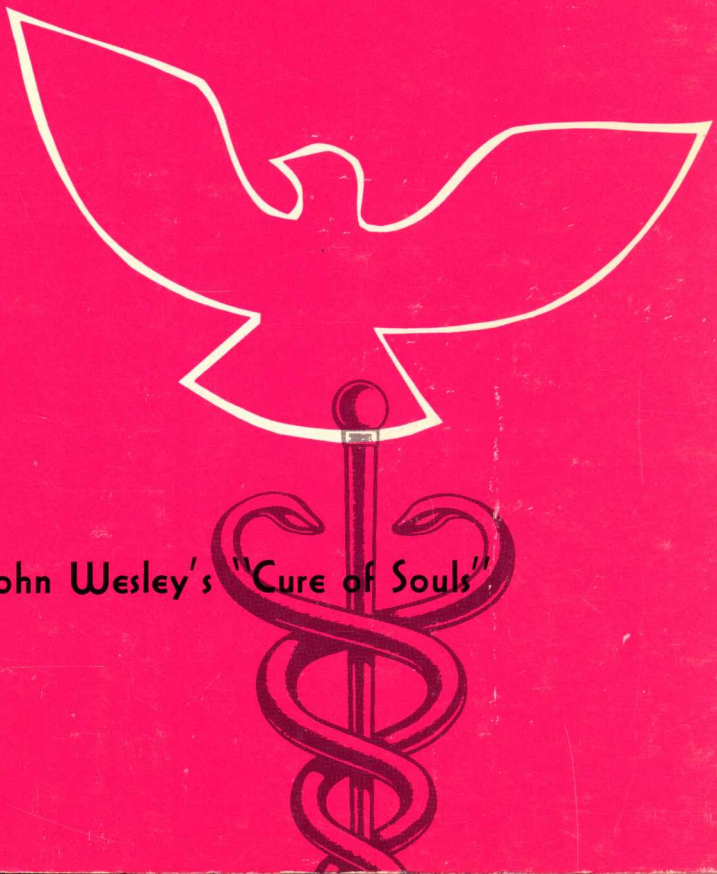
HEALING

THE HURT OF MAN

J. GLENN GOULD



A Study of John Wesley's "Cure of Souls"

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Preface

These chapters were prepared as lectures which were delivered in March, 1965, at the Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo. They were given under the auspices of the lectureship maintained annually in memory of Dr. J. B. Chapman. As one who had known Dr. Chapman intimately and who revered his memory, it was a great honor and joy for me to fulfill this assignment. The numerous courtesies extended to me by the then president, Dr. Lewis T. Corlett, and his staff during the brief period of my stay are still remembered fondly.

The lectures have been revised somewhat for the purposes of this book, but the personal characteristics of the lecture format have been retained. It is obvious that their appeal is largely limited to the holiness fellowship, and chiefly to the ministers of that fellowship. I speak as one of them—for now well over a half-century and the problems addressed are mine as well as theirs.

It is my conviction that John Wesley, in whose train we seek eagerly to follow, has much to say to us regarding the pastoral office. I have tried to suggest in part what these Wesleyan contributions are. I must leave it to the judgment of my readers to determine whether or not I have succeeded.

J. Glenn Gould

Contents

1 The Cure of Souls

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the pastoral office in the Church has from the beginning of Christian history commanded much serious attention. But surely the times in which we live have enhanced the sense of concern for this area of Christian responsibility beyond anything within the memory of living men. To be sure, our current thinking is highly colored by the new emphasis upon counseling, a development which, within limits, is occasion for gratitude. In some quarters, it must be admitted, we have carried this new development so far that the couch threatens to replace the mourners' bench. If such substitution were ever to be accomplished, we would be compelled to regard this

new development as a malaise, well deserving the name "psychologitis," which Dean Mulder, of Boston University School of Theology, has applied to it. It is not our present purpose to offer an appraisal of these new techniques, but only to rejoice that, for good or ill, the importance of the pastoral ministry has again become a matter of major concern in the Church and particularly in our theological institutions.

My major interest at present lies in another, though related, area. I would recall to your minds the ancient characterization of the pastoral ministry as the "cure of souls." Here is an expression that is, to say the least, archaic. There was a time when it was commonly employed to describe the chief business of a pastor, and it is still thus employed and understood in Britain more so than in America. But properly understood, it defines, with an accuracy of which no other term is capable, the genuine thrust of a true minister of Christ.

Furthermore, I am convinced that no man in the past 300 years has understood the significance and importance of the cure of souls quite so thoroughly as did John Wesley. It must be admitted that Wesley had little experience in the role of a parish minister as that office is usually envisaged. He served as curate at Epworth and Wroote, in Lincolnshire, between August, 1727, and November, 1729, where he assisted his aging father. For two years in Georgia he served as pastor of the Anglican church at Savannah, with indifferent success. These were the only parochial responsibilities he ever held. Yet Wesley became the most conspicuously successful pastor in the English-speaking world during the eighteenth century. As he himself declared, the world was his parish; and no man in Christian history acquitted himself more commendably. He knew the cure of souls in both theory and practice. No man has been more articulate on this subject than Wesley, and no one has ever excelled him in his practice of this essential art. It will be our task, then, to examine

the idea of the cure of souls and to discover what Mr. Wesley has left us that might illuminate this theme.

Only in recent years has there appeared a volume devoted to an extended treatment of the cure of souls. This is the book entitled *A History of the Cure of Souls,* by Dr. John T. McNeill.[1] But this is a history of the practice of the pastoral ministry in the various periods and branches of the Church, and does not major on the discussion of the cure itself. Dr. John Watson, better known as Ian Maclaren, published his Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching, delivered at Yale in 1896, under the title *The Cure of Souls.*[2] But this is a general treatment of the work of the pastoral ministry, with no attempt to analyze the particular significance of this art considered as the cure of souls. Somewhat more adequate from our point of view is the recent book by the principal of Didsbury College, Dr. Frederic Greeves, entitled *Theology and the Cure of Souls.*[3]

Dr. McNeill points out that "in the phrase 'cure of souls' the word 'cure' has something like the range of meaning of the Latin *cura* from which it comes."[4] Basically it means the care of souls, though at times it means cure in the sense of healing. It suggests that the true pastor is in a sense the physician of souls, diagnosing the afflictions of the soul, prescribing remedies, engaging in minor spiritual surgery, and seeking to promote healing and health throughout the entire body of Christ.

Not alone in the pastor's house-to-house ministry is this saving enterprise carried forward, but in his pulpit ministrations as well. As a faithful shepherd it is his task to feed the flock of God. They are to be nourished by the eternal Word of God and thus will its saving health be imparted to them. The separation of the work of preaching from the work of the pastor is an arbitrary and artificial one, and to be justified only for the purpose of furthering an intensive study of the preacher's manifold responsibility. These two aspects of the

cure of souls are joined together by God and cannot be put asunder.

While it is true that the ministers of Christ are responsible agents in this task, we must never assume that we ourselves, apart from God, are the healers of the hurts of men. Ever and always the healing is ultimately God's work. Dr. Greeves remarks that

> . . . in the distinctive work of the cure of souls it is of especial importance that this should never be forgotten, yet it is both obvious and mysterious that God, who alone is the source and sustainer of life, has given to human beings great (but not unlimited) responsibility for the welfare, and for the very existence, of themselves and of each other. It is only as we fully recognize this fact that the urgency of pastoral care is fully appreciated; it is only if we are confident that all life and health depend upon God that we can believe in the human ministry of a cure of souls.[5]

Nevertheless God has called some of His servants to undertake this task of Christian pastoral ministry. When one becomes the pastor of a Christian congregation, he assumes more than an obligation to preach the gospel in the pulpit of the church which contracts for his services. He becomes as well the trusted consultant and confidant of the people of his parish and to some extent the people of his community.

Dr. Greeves expresses the opinion that in Britain it is no longer true that the fact that a man is a minister gives him the status of a trustworthy adviser in things spiritual; that it is only after a man has established the fact of his personal integrity and reliability that he is likely to be approached by those in need of guidance. But Greeves opines that in America the situation is just the reverse of this, that the minister is much more readily accepted as a counselor simply because he is a minister. He wonders, however, if our American ministers are not being consulted primarily as psychologists rather than as pastors.[6] If Dr. Greeves's conclusion concerning the enhanced status of American clergymen is a sound one, it could well be that its significance is vitiated by our willingness to deal on the psychological level with psychological

needs, while overlooking the deeper levels of spiritual hunger.

We need to emphasize the fact that our ministry is the cure of souls, and both terms of this definition are important. I am convinced that the sickness of our times is a soul sickness far more really than it is a personality maladjustment. At the root of most of the inner disturbance that afflicts our fellowmen is not some strange psychotic complaint, but rather that conflict between the self and the will of God which goes by the old-fashioned name of sin. Here is to be found the sickness of our times. An intelligent course in pastoral counseling could well supplement a minister's spiritual qualifications for dealing with those in need of guidance; but we cannot afford to forget this basic spiritual nature of the complaint with which we are dealing, nor consent to forego the traditional techniques of sincere penitence, frank confession, and prevailing prayer.

John Wesley has a sermon entitled "On Obedience to Pastors," based on the text: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch over your souls, as they that shall give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief" (Heb. 13:17). Wesley construes the word "rule" as properly meaning "guide." What such pastoral guidance means for the minister he spells out in these words:

> . . . [Pastors] are supposed to go before the flock, (as is the manner of the eastern shepherds to this day,) and to guide them in all the ways of truth and holiness; they are to "nourish them with the words of eternal life;" to feed them with the "pure milk of the word:" applying it continually "for doctrine;" teaching them all the essential doctrines contained therein;—"for reproof;" warning them if they turn aside from the way, to the right hand or to the left;—"for correction;" showing them how to amend what is amiss, and guiding them back into the way of peace;—and "for instruction in righteousness;" training them up to outward holiness, "until they come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."[7]

Here is an essential ingredient in the practice of the

cure of souls. The true pastor must watch over the souls of his people as one who shall render account to God in the last great day. No pastor should ever accept the idea that a person is lost to the church until every expedient for his restoration to Christ and Christian fellowship is exhausted. It seems to me that we must confess with sorrow that this has not always been our procedure.

When a man comes new to a pastorate, he may find a considerable list of members who are "inactive"—persons who have drifted away from the church's fellowship. To the new pastor they are merely names, associated with no face or personality or immortal soul. The line of least resistance is to cut off at a stroke all such names, pruning the church roll to the living quick. In this way the gains in numbers and strength which he anticipates from his own ministry will show statistically, thereby enhancing his reputation as a "go-getter," and perhaps conveying the subtle suggestion that his predecessor in this new pastorate was a slipshod, untidy sort of fellow in his administration of the church. But what has actually happened is that a considerable group of people who once loved the church enough to accept the obligations of membership, and who probably deep in their hearts still love it, have been severed from its fellowship and to all intents have been abandoned to Satan.

The motive which prompts the new pastor to such a summary procedure may be a by-product of the exaggerated emphasis on statistics which has characterized recent years. Or it may stem from a disinclination for the difficult, and at times messy, task of seeking to bring these lost ones back to Christ and their true Christian heritage. But the end result, whatever the motive may be, is that some who might have been recovered for Christ are cut off from Him, perhaps forever.

John Wesley was a fine mixture of compassion and severity in dealing with those who defected from his societies.

But any analogy we might draw between the societal organization of early Methodism and the church as we know it today would be so inexact as to render comparisons largely useless. Wesley never organized his followers into a "church" as that term is defined today. The only "church" he knew was the Church of England, and to this institution, as he conceived it ideally, his loyalty never wavered. The term "church" was so completely the monopoly of Anglicanism that even today in Britain it is unusual for the meetinghouses of non-Anglican sects to be called "churches."

However, Wesley did organize his converts into societies, the pattern for which already existed throughout England in rich profusion. Within the total organization of the Church of England there had been found room for the existence of religious societies of varied types. It is probable that whatever vital spirituality still existed in the decadent Anglicanism of the eighteenth century was nourished in these societies. They were regarded, not as conventicles, but rather, in Count Zinzendorf's favorite expression, as *ecclesiola in ecclesia;* that is, as churches within the one Church of England. The evidence all points to the fact that the meeting in Aldersgate Street in which Wesley's own heart was so "strangely warmed" was a meeting of one of these religious societies, and not a Moravian meeting, as has been so often maintained.

Clear precedent there was, therefore, for the establishment of Methodist societies in the wake of the surge of Wesleyan evangelism—societies which in nowise represented a break with Anglicanism either by Wesley or by any of his followers. Within these societies Wesley erected subdivisions which came to be known as classes, made up usually of 12 persons, one of whom was designated as the class leader.

It is a curious thing that the class meeting did not come into existence primarily as a device to foster the spiritual lives of its members, but rather as a scheme for raising mon-

ey to pay for one of Methodism's earliest building projects. It had its origin in Bristol, where Wesley had launched his first building program—the construction of the so-called "New Room" located in the Horsefair. This had saddled him with a heavy financial obligation, a debt which he felt the Bristol society should share. A brief paragraph in his *Journal* tells the story:

> Monday, [Feb.] 15.—Many met together to consult on a proper method for discharging the public debt; and it was at length agreed, (1) that every member of the society who was able should contribute a penny a week; (2) that the whole society should be divided into little companies or classes—about twelve in each class; and (3) that one person in each class should receive the contribution of the rest, and bring it in to the stewards, weekly.[8]

Years later (in 1786, to be exact) Wesley tells how this money-raising device evolved into a spiritual instrument. Not long after this penny-a-week plan was put into effect, one of the class leaders

> . . . informed Mr. Wesley that, calling on [one of his class members] in his house, he found him quarrelling with his wife. Another was found in drink. It immediately struck into Mr. Wesley's mind, "This is the very thing we wanted. The Leaders are the persons who may not only receive the contributions, but also watch over the souls of their brethren." The society in London, being informed of this, willingly followed the example of that in Bristol; as did every society from that time, whether in Europe or America. By this means, it was easily found if any grew weary or faint, and help was speedily administered. And if any walked disorderly, they were quickly discovered, and either amended or dismissed.[9]

This device proved to be the most useful that could be conceived for Wesley's day. Every member of the United Societies, which was the organizational form Methodism took during Wesley's lifetime, was assigned to one of the classes, meeting weekly. The individual believer was thus placed under the supervision of a class leader who presumably was a mature Christian, and was surrounded by 10 others who had an earnest "desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins," as Wesley expressed it in his Rules of the United Societies.

There was no test of membership in terms of Christian experience, nor indeed in terms of credal statement. It was not required even that a member be in a state of grace; only that he be an earnest seeker after the grace of God. He might differ from Wesley theologically and yet be acceptable as a member. There were a number in the early societies who adhered to the doctrine of the decrees, that is, to Calvinism; yet this did not become an issue unless such persons attempted to force their opinions upon others.

It might seem to us in our day that such a broadly tolerant attitude on questions of doctrine and the absence of a minimal demand in terms of Christian experience could hardly be expected to produce a cohesive and closely knit fellowship. And we must admit that this was an inherent weakness. Yet it was more than offset by other factors. One was contained in the detailed rules of the societies. As Wesley puts it: "There is only one condition previously required in those who desire admission into these societies,—a desire 'to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins:' But," continues Wesley,

> wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind; especially that which is most generally practised: Such as . . .

And then follows a list of "don'ts" which goes far beyond the advices contained in some of our modern denominational disciplines. But Wesley then proceeds to emphasize the positive note:

> It is expected of all who continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, Secondly, by doing good, by being, in every kind, merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as possible, to all men.

He then outlines the duties of the Christian life in meticulous detail. The matter does not end there, however, for the third

way in which society members are "to evidence their desire of salvation" is

> . . . by attending upon all the ordinances of God. Such are, the public worship of God; the ministry of the word, either read or expounded; the supper of the Lord; family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures; and fasting, or abstinence.[10]

Now such a regimen as this may begin as an "evidence of desire of salvation," but the strict practice of it could hardly fail to bring one shortly to his goal.

Still another factor which helped to offset whatever inherent weakness there may have been in the organization of the early Methodist societies is to be found in the fact already mentioned that the individual seeker after God was surrounded by 10 fellow members of his class who to some degree propped him up spiritually until he had developed spiritual strength sufficient to the task of standing alone. Moreover, if the class leader was faithful to his trust, the wavering class member had one near at hand who watched over his soul with a godly concern.

Nevertheless the system had its weaknesses, and at times the rolls of the societies underwent a drastic pruning. This was made inevitable by the type of society which Wesley maintained, with its emphasis upon the society's function as a workshop in which many society members were in various stages of Christian development, with some scarcely roughed out while others were relatively advanced in Christian maturity. The casualty lists in such an organization were bound to be relatively long. As early as December 9, 1741, we read in the *Journal* concerning the society at Bristol:

> God humbled us in the evening by the loss of more than thirty of our little company, whom I was obliged to exclude, as no longer adorning the gospel of Christ. I believed it best openly to declare both their names and the reasons why they were excluded. We then all cried unto God that this might be for their edification, and not for destruction.[11]

Wesley's godly concern over this disciplinary necessity is clearly revealed in the concluding sentence of this entry.

Throughout the more than 50 years of his apostolic labors in the three kingdoms, Wesley's concern for the well-being of the societies was never abated. In the early days of the revival he was meticulous in stating and enforcing the rules of the societies. On March 6, 1743, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, he writes:

> I read over in the society the rules which all our members are to observe; and desired every one seriously to consider whether he was willing to conform thereto or no. That this would shake many of them I knew well; and therefore, on Monday the 7th, I began visiting the classes again, lest "that which is lame should be turned out of the way."[12]

In time, Newcastle became one of the three pivotal centers of the Methodist revival, the others being London and Bristol. The years witnessed amazing progress, especially at Newcastle, but always Wesley's concern was for the health of the societies. An entry in the *Journal* for Sunday, July 10, 1748, reads thus:

> I began exhorting all that loved their own souls solemnly to renew their covenant with God; the nature of which I explained at large on the mornings of the ensuing week. . . . On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday I examined the classes, and found not only an increase of number, but likewise more of the life and power of religion among them than ever I had found before. The same thing I observed in all the country societies, among which I spent one or more nights every week.[13]

There were occasions when the societies were placed under grievous pressures and temptations, situations with which Wesley had the deepest sympathy and which he reports with understanding and compassion. A case in point is his entry in the *Journal* concerning the society at Coleford, dated Tuesday, March 16, 1756:

> Examining the little society, I found them grievously harassed by disputations. Anabaptists were on one side and Quakers on the other; and hereby five or six persons have been confused. But the rest clave so much the closer together. Nor does it appear that there is now one trifler, much less a disorderly walker, among them.[14]

It was not always well with these societies, and Wesley was no "Pollyanna," but reported matters as he saw them,

and applied heroic remedies. Take this *Journal* entry, for instance, dated Wednesday, September 3, 1760:

> I reached Launceston, and found the small remains of a dead, scattered society; and no wonder, as they have had scarce any discipline, and only one sermon in a fortnight. On Friday the 5th I found just such another society at Camelford. But their deadness here was owing to bitterness against each other. In the morning I heard the contending parties face to face; and they resolved and promised, on all sides, to let past things be forgotten. Oh how few have learned to forgive "one another, as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven" us![15]

There were times when radical surgery was necessary, and Wesley did not hesitate to employ it where needed. But in every situation which he encountered in the supervision of his societies, he reveals the true pastor's heart. He is always a man engaged in the cure of souls. And this, I take it, is the principal task of a minister of God even yet.

A man who is a minister of Christ and the pastor of a Christian congregation today is subjected to pressures and programs beyond anything in the history of our ministry. There is a competitiveness evident in our churches which places every church in competition with every other in matters of Sunday school attendance, church attendance, offerings—regular, special, Easter, Thanksgiving. A pastor is competing with his brother pastors not only in all these areas we have mentioned, but in the number of accessions to his church, and especially the number received by profession of faith. But above all, he is competing with himself, living under the constant necessity of making this year's achievements greater than those of any previous year.

When viewed alongside these massive compulsions, Wesley seems to be the most deliberate of men; a man with only one driving urge—to win men and women to Christ. His one passion was a passion for souls. He was competing with no one—not his brother Charles, nor George Whitefield, nor John Fletcher, nor with any of his many helpers. In theory the world was his parish, and in a very real sense he

was the pastor of all Britain. He was better known in the three kingdoms than any other Englishman in the eighteenth century, and he knew England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland better than any other man of his time. But one thing kept him going—his hunger to preach Christ and to see his fellowmen won to Him.

The cure of souls was his one business in life. But he coupled with it a concern for other aspects of men's lives. He fed the hungry. He carried on a small-loans business in which no interest was charged. He had a remarkable understanding of what was known in his time as primitive physic—the art of medicine. To be sure, some of his remedies were fantastic. Yet in other respects he was ahead of the physicians of his day. In a time when bleeding was universally employed as an antidote for every malady, he never ceased to inveigh against it. His ridicule of current medical practice becomes barbed at times. For instance, on one of his trips to Ireland, he remarks in his *Journal:* "The grand fashionable medicine for twenty diseases (who would imagine it?) is mercury sublimate! Why is it not a halter or a pistol? They would cure *a little* more speedily."[16]

The pastoral ministry is thus properly to be understood as the cure of souls; and, accordingly, the pastor becomes the spiritual physician of his people. He is responsible for the spiritual well-being of his church, and all that he does must contribute to this end. To be sure, this sounds on the face of it like a counsel of perfection, and therefore to be subjected to the discount which such counsels normally receive.

But before dismissing this idea as another cliché, deserving of little attention and no respect, let us consider whether we may not find ways for making this ideal of pastoral care once again a living possibility. Our age is characterized by complexities not even dreamed of 200 years ago, and the effort to recover some of the blessed simplicities of the eighteenth century may seem utterly hopeless. Never-

theless, the young man who enters the ministry stalwartly determined that the cure of souls shall be basically the task to which he commits himself may have a better chance for survival than he imagines.

If this be his estimate of the pastoral task, then three necessities must control him. One is the necessity that he be a man of God, one who regularly and often beholds steadfastly the face of God as that face is glimpsed in prayer. This alone gives hope of survival. Otherwise, the burdens will become so staggering that one will be tempted to cry out with Moses: "Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?" (Num. 11: 12)

But prayer is not alone a device designed for the preacher's survival; it is also the priestly obligation which rests upon us on behalf of our people. We must pray for them unfailingly. For there is nothing we can do for them through our direct ministry which can be compared in importance with that which God will be able to do for them through the channels opened wide by our intercessory prayers. This priestly task requires time and priority. It burns up nervous energy. It is physically and emotionally exhausting. But it must be done. I am reminded of that intercessory prayer of Moses when he pled with God for the forgiveness of Israel's sin. Moses prayed, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—" At that point the prayer is interrupted by a dash, which stands, I think, for a sob; after which the prayer continues: "And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exod. 32:32). Such prayer as that cannot be a thing unknown to the physician of souls.

The second necessity which must captivate the preacher's soul is that of proclaiming the gospel. He is a messenger, standing in the stead of Christ, bearing urgent tidings. "Thus

saith the Lord"—this must be often on his lips and always in his heart. The mysteries of the grace of God are in his custody. The feeding of the "flock of God" is his prime responsibility, and the medicine of the healing Word is his to administer. He is charged with the administration of the sacraments, as Sangster expresses it, the "mannered handling" of holy things, than which, no means of grace is more hallowed or so calculated to minister to faith. To stand forth in the house of God and speak on His behalf is a task of overwhelming significance.

Something more is required than a certain way with words, a "gift of gab," or the capacity for glib utterance. It is one thing to speak fluently the language of the sanctuary and quite another to speak under the burden of a message from God. When the worshiping congregation, seated before us in the pews, see us rise to speak, there is one question trembling in their hearts if not on their lips—the question of King Zedekiah to the prophet Jeremiah: "Is there any word from the Lord?" We had better know that word for sure and be able effectively to speak it in such an hour.

The third necessity is that of personal ministry to the individuals and families which make up his parish, both actual and potential. To know his people, to face the crises in their lives with them; to see them in prosperity and amid reverses, in health and sickness, in youth and age, and to be all things to all of them—this is the minister's shepherd task. If one could see clearly the heavy responsibility involved in this phase of his work, surely no man living would have the courage to assume the obligations of the Christian ministry. But if we could sense the rewards that follow such a ministry, rewards of gratitude, friendship, and love—which are utterly priceless—no man called of God could yield to the folly of missing it.

My days of pastoral service are over. But the treasures of memory that enrich my life most of all are related to the

experience of shepherding the flock of God. Our task is indeed the cure of souls. Other things unrelated to this will make clamorous demands upon our time and attention. But as men upon whom God has laid His hands for the work of the ministry, let us purpose solemnly that the cure of souls will be our foremost responsibility.

2 The Double Cure and the Cure of Souls

THE TERM "CURE" in the expression "the cure of souls" literally means the spiritual charge or care of souls such as a pastor might exercise. A person so engaged would be a curate, a term which now refers to one who is the assistant or deputy of a rector or vicar. And the person so engaged would be properly described as holding a curacy. In the topic of this chapter I have brought into conjunction with this sense of the word "cure" still another meaning which comes to its most familiar expression in the lovely hymn "Rock of Ages," written by Augustus Montague Toplady:

Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.

Whatever Toplady may have meant by this line, it expresses so perfectly the deep concern of Mr. Wesley and of all who follow in his train that it has been adopted by the holiness movement as its own. When, in 1887, there was issued a book of sermons preached in the camp meetings of the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness, it was given the title *The Double Cure*, with the subtitle, "Echoes from National Camp Meetings." The "double cure" in this context meant the twofold healing which God has prepared for the twofold hurt which sin has inflicted on the hearts and lives of men. The cure of souls therefore, for all who follow in Wesley's train, involves the proclamation of this twofold healing which is offered men in Christ.

To us who consider ourselves a part of the modern holiness movement the propagation of this message of full salvation is a matter of prime importance. We feel it to be our duty, as Wesley proclaimed it to be his and his brother Charles's duty, to "spread scriptural holiness over the land." The theology of this great truth has undergone vast changes in the years since Wesley was hammering it out on the anvil of group discussion in his Methodist conferences 200 years ago. The result has been a stylized theology of holiness which might be described as a "camp meeting theology" or a "folk-theology" which seems rather far removed from the careful, rather astringent theology we find in the minutes of his conferences. It is quite possible that a theology that is preachable must possess something of this "folk" character. But the great danger we face is that in so stating our theological position we will give what amounts to a false view of the position we hold.

There is considerable evidence, it seems to me, that many of our people hold a very inexact, if not garbled, view of what we actually believe and teach on this theme of Christian holiness. I served for 13 years as the pastor of a college church, where the congregation was made up largely of

young people from a considerable number of local churches throughout our educational zone and beyond. The downright ignorance of many of them respecting the most elementary aspects of our holiness teaching, to say nothing of the atrocious distortions of our position which their testimonies and conversations revealed, led me to believe that our pastors have a monumental difficulty in communicating with their younger parishioners. Yet this is the point at which we should be articulate above all others.

Take the terse but very misleading cliché "Holiness or hell." I have seen persons, afflicted with that strange insanity which prompts people to stick signs on their automobiles, choose this as one of the signs worthy of such display. I must confess that I shudder to see such a sign displayed, just as I wince when I hear these words uttered. Whatever meager grain of truth they may contain is canceled out completely by the almost inevitable misconception they engender. It is true, of course, that nothing unholy can enter heaven, and by logical deduction all that remains for unholiness is heaven's precise opposite.

But the inference drawn by one who sees this expression, "Holiness or hell," is that in our view only those who have clearly entered into the experience of entire sanctification as a second work of grace have any hope of getting to heaven, and this is an inference which in my considered judgment is totally false. Every soul who is sincerely walking in all the light that God has given him is on his way to heaven. It may be that he will not have discovered the possibility of a complete inner cleansing before reaching the gates of the glory land, but the glorious provisions of the atonement are such that in that moment what is still wanting in his preparation for heaven will be instantly supplied and he will enjoy an abundant entrance in.

Again, I have heard testimonies as the aftermath of altar services which ran along this line: "When I came to the

altar I knew I had not lost 'my sanctification.' But God has shown me that there are some things I have never yielded to Him [or have taken off the altar]. I realize that my attitudes have been unchristian, and jealousies and resentments have crept into my heart." But all of this spiritual disarray has been set right again, just by a trip to the altar! We are expected to believe that spiritual mayhem of this character can exist in the heart of a sanctified Christian without disturbing his basic relationship to God. I find it easier to believe that the person so involved knows nothing of the deeper aspects of the Christian life than to accept the idea that disorder of the sort we have described can exist in the heart of one who enjoys the fullness of God.

Or what shall we say of the admixture of Pelagianism which has been allowed to creep into our Christian communication? In testimony and to a considerable degree in our preaching there is a trend toward what might be called egocentricity which, if it were conscious and deliberate, would be deplorable. In bearing our Christian witness it often happens that God, who initiates and makes possible all Christian experience and through whose compassion and grace we enjoy this glorious deliverance, receives all too scant attention and little praise. Too often the ego becomes the subject rather than the object of our report.

This tendency is particularly marked in some of the songs we sing (I forbear referring to them as hymns), and particularly our altar songs. Perhaps the most Pelagian of all is the familiar chorus:

I'm going through;
I'm going through.
I'll pay the price
Whatever others do;
I'll take the way with the Lord's anointed few.
I'm going through, Jesus;
I'm going through.

Now I think I understand the intent of this chorus. It seeks to express the determination of our hearts that, so much as in us lies, we will be faithful to our vows of devotion. And this is a most commendable sentiment. Simon Peter was moved by a similar sentiment when, in the Upper Room the night before our Lord's crucifixion, he said to the Master, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. . . . Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." It is not our *purpose* to ignore the all-essential grace of God apart from which neither we nor Simon Peter can hope to perform such solemn vows. But the fact remains that not one hint is given in this chorus that anything more than the fixed determination of our hearts is necessary to the performance of such a vow.

Admittedly, I have chosen an extreme example to illustrate this point. But so often in spoken testimony have I heard affirmations of Christian experience and of fixed purpose of heart to pursue to the end the Christian way, but with no acknowledgment of God's enabling grace, that I fear we are conspicuously lacking in a proper awareness that every move we make toward God is only a response to a prior move on His part toward us. We seem little to realize our utter worthlessness apart from Christ, and are not clearly aware that the best thing that the best of God's saints ever did for Christ on the best day of his life is, in itself and apart from Him, only dust and ashes. It is only for Jesus' sake that any of our service is acceptable, and only for His sake that any one of us dare lift up his head in God's presence.

Let me say emphatically at this point that I do not think we are deliberately and intentionally Pelagian. But the language we employ in testimony and to some extent in preaching, when heard by those who are not of our company and who therefore are unable to supply the essential frame of reference which alone would make our witness to be properly understood, gives the impression that we are utterly egotis-

tic and consider ourselves quite self-sufficient. Years ago I heard from a newly converted person a disturbing account of her impressions in listening to Christian testimony. Such testimony seemed to her to be an account of "how bad these people used to be, how good they were now, and how long they had been so good"!

Now for none of these trends in the modern holiness movement are we indebted to John Wesley. Indeed, he would be shocked by such tendencies and instant in his rebuke of them. They have appeared among us chiefly because we have not been as highly sensitized in these danger zones as we should be. And this, in turn, is the result of the fact that, though we are Wesleyan in name, we have drifted away from Wesley in a number of respects. It will be rewarding, therefore to examine afresh the holiness teachings of this master of practical theology in hope of finding some corrective to these tendencies among us.

Mr. Wesley saw clearly the true objective of Christian experience and character a number of years before he came to a clear enunciation of the road which leads to this goal. In his first university sermon, preached in St. Mary's Church, Oxford, on January 1, 1733—over five years before his heart-warming experience at Aldersgate Street—and entitled "The Circumcision of the Heart," he defines the meaning of his topic as follows:[1]

> It is that habitual disposition of soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies, the being cleansed from sin, "from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit;" and, by consequence, the being endued with those virtues which were also in Christ Jesus; the being so "renewed in the spirit of our mind," as to be "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect."

After stating the goal of Christian experience thus, and largely in biblical language, he goes on to state more particularly that "circumcision of the heart implies humility, faith, hope, and charity." The next few paragraphs are devoted to an exposition of these four Christian virtues.

Having thus set forth the basic significance of this Christian standard, he turns in his second main division to "some reflections that naturally arise from such an inquiry, as a plain rule whereby every man may judge of himself, whether he be of the world or of God." Following this close and searching discussion, he concludes thus:

> Here, then, is the sum of the perfect law; this is the true circumcision of the heart. Let the spirit return to God that gave it, with the whole train of its affections. "Unto the place from whence all rivers come," thither let them flow again. Other sacrifices from us he would not; but the living sacrifice of the heart he hath chosen. Let it be continually offered up to God through Christ, in flames of holy love. And let no creature be suffered to share with him: For he is a jealous God, His throne will he not divide with another: He will reign without a rival. Be no design, no desire admitted there, but what has Him for its ultimate object.

Thus did he spell out the New Testament standard of piety, and at a time when his own entrance into an experience of justification by faith was still more than five years in the future. Concerning this sermon, Wesley, writing in 1765, declared that "this sermon contained all that I now teach concerning salvation from all sin, and loving God with an undivided heart."

The summer following Wesley's evengelical conversion on May 24, 1738, was taken up largely with a visit to the headquarters of the Moravian society in Germany. Since his spiritual deliverance was due in large part to the influence of the Moravians on shipboard en route to America, in Georgia, and especially in London, where he came under the tutelage of Peter Böhler, it was natural that he would make a pilgrimage to the Moravian establishment in hope of drinking deeply of this fountain at its very source. While there he received much light, but on some points was deeply perplexed. The most impressive thing by far was the preaching of Christian David. Of the preaching of this man Luke Tyerman reports:

> The four sermons which Wesley heard Christian David preach were peculiarly appropriate to his present religious experience. It is a notable fact, however, that instead of instructing Wesley to expect the witness of the Spirit immediately, he taught him "that many are children of God and heirs of the promises, long before they are comforted by the abiding witness of the Spirit, melting their souls into all gentleness and meekness; and much before they are pure in heart from all self-will and sin." Christian David told Wesley, in private, that he himself had "the forgiveness of sins, and a measure of the peace of God, for many years before he had that witness of the Spirit which shut out all doubt and fear." This is not *Wesleyan* doctrine [Tyerman is at pains to point out], but it was the doctrine which Wesley was taught in Germany. . . .
>
> Wesley elicited the religious experience of Michael Linner, the oldest member of the [Moravian] Church, which was to the effect that Michael believed to the saving of his soul two years before he received the full assurance of faith. . . . David Nitschmann, one of the four public teachers of the [Moravian] Community, told Wesley that, for years after he was delivered from the bondage of sin, he was troubled with doubts and fears. Martin Dober stated: "It is common for persons to receive justification through faith in the blood of Christ before they receive the full assurance of faith, which God many times withholds till he has tried whether they will work together with him in the use of the first gift." . . .
>
> Wesley eagerly listened to the recital of these religious experiences at Herrnhut, and became bewildered; and hence those puzzling declarations [in his *Journal*] concerning his own religious state, even down to the beginning of 1739. . . . The truth is [and here Tyerman is surely correct]—both Wesley and the Moravians seemed to confound the doctrine of the Spirit's witness with the doctrine of sanctification. Because they were not, for the season, wholly sanctified, they declare that they had not the witness of the Spirit.[2]

Wesley did not emerge fully from this confusion until the years 1740 and 1741, when he rebelled against the quietism of Molther and became completely disenchanted with the Moravian movement.

Dr. George Allen Turner has divided Wesley's life into its several periods, in a scheme which designates the years from 1738 to 1744 the "years of discovery"; the years 1744 to 1762, the "years of definition"; and the years 1762 to 1791, the "years of defense," or, as A. S. Graves expressed it in the *Methodist Review*, "pressing the instantaneous blessing."[3] The period of discovery was the period during which Wesley

was finding out that, so far as he was concerned, Moravianism was not the wave of the future. In protest against the growth of quietism in the Fetter Lane society, with which Wesley had been associated for the first months of his new evangelical experience, a quietism which was nourished by the Moravian leader Molther, he had withdrawn his followers and organized them in a new fellowship in the Foundery, famous as the London center of Methodism for some 35 years.

Moreover, the controversy over Calvinism, triggered by Whitefield's attack upon Wesley's position, had prompted Wesley to preach and publish his sermon on "Free Grace,"[4] the most impassioned sermon Wesley ever published. But even this early, the theme of Christian perfection was finding its place in Wesley's ministry; for in the bill of particulars which Whitefield drew up against Wesley, he chides him with "talking of sinless perfection"—a theme with which Whitefield had no sympathy whatever.

The doctrine does not begin to become truly articulate, however, until the year 1744, when the first Methodist conference was held in the Foundery at London. Among other pronouncements, the conference defined sanctification as "a renewal in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness; to be a *perfect Christian* is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, implying the destruction of all inward sin; and faith is the condition and instrument by which such a state of grace is obtained."[5]

The second conference was held in Bristol in 1745. On the subject of sanctification, it was here laid down

> . . . that inward sanctification begins in the moment we are justified; that, from that time, the believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace; and that the seed of all sin remains in him, till he is sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body. . . . It was further agreed, that sanctification should scarcely be preached at all to those who were not pressing forward; and when it was, it should always be by way of promise,—by drawing, rather than by driving. And, further, it was determined, that the *general* means which God has ordained for our

> receiving his sanctifying grace are keeping all his commandments, denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily; and that the *particular* [means] are prayer, searching the Scriptures, communicating, and fasting.[6]

It is evident that the doctrine was taking shape, though its definition lacks the sense of urgency which was to invest it in later years.

The subject of sanctification came up again in the conference of 1747, held in Bristol. It was agreed,

> (1) That many of those who have died in the faith were not made "perfect in love" till a little before death; (2) that the term "sanctified" is continually applied by St. Paul to all that are justified, but that, by this term *alone*, he rarely, if ever, means saved from all sin, and consequently, it is improper to use it in such a sense without adding the word "wholly" or "entirely"; and (3) that the inspired writers very rarely speak either of, or to those who are wholly sanctified, and that therefore it behooves us, in public at least, rarely to speak, in full and explicit terms, concerning sanctification.[7]

It is evident that there was still a marked sense of restraint in the handling of this theme for which the movement ultimately was to become notable.

The conference of 1753, held at Leeds, exhibits a somewhat chastened mood for having failed to preach "concerning both inward and outward holiness so strongly and closely as they ought."[8] But in 1758, in a conference at Bristol, account had to be taken of extravagances which had been preached by some of Wesley's younger helpers, especially in Ireland. The minutes deal with the issues in the usual question-and-answer fashion:

> *Question.*—Do you affirm that perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistake?
> *Answer.*—We continually affirm just the contrary.
> Q.—Do you say, "Every one who is not saved from all sin is in a state of damnation"?
> A.—So far from it, that we will not say any one is in a state of damnation, that fears God and really strives to please him.
> Q.—In what manner would you advise those who think they have attained, to speak of their own experience?
> A.—With great wariness, and with the deepest humility and self abasement before God.

Q.—How should young preachers, especially, speak of perfection in public?
A.—Not too minutely or circumstantially, but rather in general and scriptural terms.
Q.—What does Christian perfection imply?
A.—The loving God with all the heart, so that every evil temper is destroyed, and every thought, and word, and work springs from, and is conducted to the end by the pure love of God and our neighbour.[9]

During the year following this conference, Wesley was under fire constantly, especially from his Calvinist critics, who plied him with loaded questions designed to show that he had modified his earlier position on Christian perfection. The issue was made more acute by the fact that during the years from 1758 to1762 there had been a marked increase in the number of persons in the societies who believed they had entered into the experience of perfect love. To clarify the issues, Wesley wrote and published a tract entitled *Thoughts on Christian Perfection.*[10] His purpose, as set forth in its introduction, is simply "to declare what my sentiments are on this head; what Christian perfection does (according to my apprehension) include, and what it does not; and to add a few practical observations and directions relative to the subject." The question-and-answer format is maintained throughout.

Wesley begins with his favorite definition. To the question, "What is Christian Perfection?" he answers: "The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul and that all the thoughts, words and actions are governed by pure love."

The next, and oft repeated, question is: "But do you affirm that this perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance and mistake?" To which Wesley gives the usual reply: "I continually affirm quite the contrary, and always have done so." He then quotes at some length from his sermon on "Christian Perfection," published in 1741.

The third question is really an objection which had been raised against his teaching: "But is not this scheme contradictory to itself? How can every thought, word and work be governed by pure love and the man be subject at the same time to ignorance and mistake? This we think is not Christian perfection but imperfection, and is not a pin different from Calvinism."

> So [answers Wesley] one of my correspondents writes. But I see no arguments therein. I see nothing contradictory here. "A man may be filled with pure love and still liable to mistake." Indeed, I expect not to be free from actual mistakes till this mortal puts on immortality. I believe this to be a natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in flesh and blood. For we cannot now think at all but by the mediation of those organs which have suffered equally with the rest of our frame. And hence we cannot avoid sometimes thinking wrong till "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption."
>
> But [continues Wesley] we may carry this thought farther. A mistake in judgment may possibly occasion a mistake in practice. . . . Yet where every word and action springs from love, such a mistake is not properly a sin. However, it cannot bear the rigour of God's justice, but needs the atoning blood.

Question 5 carries this important consideration a little farther: "But still, if . . . [those who enjoy the grace of perfect love] live without sin, does not this exclude the necessity of a mediator? At least, is it not plain that they stand no longer in need of Christ in his priestly office?" Wesley's answer is memorable:

> Far from it. None feel their need of Christ like these; none so entirely depend upon him. For Christ does not give life to the soul separate from, but in and with, him. Hence [these] words [of his] are equally true of all men, in whatever state of grace they are; "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. . . . Without," or separate from, "me, ye can do nothing."
>
> The truth is, [continues Wesley] in a state of perfection every desire is in subjection to the obedience of Christ. The will is entirely subject to the will of God and the affections wholly fixed on him. Now what motive can remain sufficient to induce such a person to a transgression of the law? Surely none that can induce him to do any that is formally evil, although he may, through human infirmity, speak and

do what is materially so and, as such, condemned by the perfect law. And the soul that any way deviates from this would, without an atonement, be lost for ever. Yet these deviations are not properly sins.

Wesley's "Thoughts on Christian Perfection" deal, moreover, with the question of the propriety of public testimony to the experience of heart holiness. This is a point concerning which, in Wesley's own conduct, he has been exposed to serious misunderstanding. Many of his biographers report of him, and some of them, one suspects, do so with considerable satisfaction, that he nowhere testifies that he has himself entered into the experience of Christian perfection. We must concede that, if one looks in Wesley's writings for a categorical witness to such an experience, he will look in vain. But Wesley is not bound by convention in the matter of personal testimony any more than in other aspects of his life. His report of his Aldersgate experience is not characterized by the conventional language of Christian testimony. If this predilection for non-conventional speech be conceded, then we may find several passages in his *Journal* which could be, in effect, a testimony to a second crisis experience. The most significant of such passages is found in a group of *Journal* entries clustering around Christmas Day, 1744.[11] Let me quote:

Sunday, Dec. 23—I was unusually lifeless and heavy, till the love-feast in the evening; when, just as I was constraining myself to speak, I was stopped, whether I would or no, for the blood gushed out of both my nostrils, so that I could not add another word: but in a few minutes it stayed, and all our hearts and mouths were opened to praise God.

Yet the next day I was again as a dead man; but in the evening while I was reading prayers at Snowfields, I found such light and strength as I never remember to have had before. I saw every thought, as well as action or word, just as it was rising in my heart; and whether it was right before God, or tainted with pride or selfishness. I never knew before (I mean as at this time) what it was "to be still before God."

Tuesday, Dec. 25—I waked, by the grace of God, in the same spirit; and about eight, being with two or three that believed in Jesus, I felt such an awe and tender sense of the presence of God as greatly confirmed me therein: so that God was before me all the day long. I

> sought and found him in every place; and could truly say, when I lay down at night, "Now I have *lived* a day."

Here are the essential ingredients of the second crisis experience: the heaviness of heart, the discovery of the pride of spirit which the faithful Holy Spirit is at pains to reveal, the uttermost surrender which is suggested by the being "still before God," followed on Christmas Day by the glorious fullness of God. All of this language is unconventional, yet it is powerfully descriptive and possesses the unmistakable mark of authenticity. Dr. Olin Alfred Curtis cites this passage as Wesley's testimony to entire sanctification[12] and I am compelled to agree with him. Wesley could press on others the importance of this experienced deliverance because he enjoyed it himself.

In his "Thoughts on Christian Perfection" he faces the question: "Suppose, then, one had attained to this. Would you advise him to speak of it?" Here is Wesley's reply:

> At first, perhaps, he would scarce be able to refrain, the fire would be so hot within him; his desire to declare the loving kindness of the Lord carrying him away like a torrent. But afterwards he might; and then it would be advisable not to speak of it to them who know not God. It is most likely it would only provoke them to contradict and blaspheme. Nor to others without some particular reason, without some particular good in view. And then he should have especial care to avoid all appearance of boasting, to speak with the deepest humility and reverence, giving all the glory to God. Meantime, let him speak more convincingly by his life than he can do by his tongue.[13]

This is not Wesley's complete answer, however, for he faces the further question: "But would it not be better to be entirely silent? Ought he to speak of it at all?" To which he replies:

> By silence he might avoid many crosses which will naturally and necessarily ensue, if he simply declare, even among believers, what God has wrought in his soul. If therefore, such an one were to confer with flesh and blood, he would be entirely silent. But this could not be done with a clear conscience; for undoubtedly he ought to speak. Men do not light a candle to put it under a bushel: much less does the all-wise God. He does not raise up such a monument of his power and

> love to hide it from all mankind. Rather he intends it as a general blessing to those that are simple of heart. He designs thereby not merely the happiness of that individual person, but the animating and encouraging others to follow after the same blessing. His will is that many should see it and rejoice and put their trust in the Lord. Nor does any thing under heaven more quicken the desires of those who "are saved by faith" than to converse with those whom they believe to have experienced a still higher salvation. This places that salvation full in their view and increases their hunger and thirst after it: an advantage which must have been entirely lost had the person so saved buried himself in silence.[14]

These advices from Mr. Wesley are certainly in accord with his own practice. They suggest the reverence and caution which should characterize testimony to full salvation, and they ascribe all glory and praise to God, which is the proper corrective to Pelagianism. Wesley pressed upon his societies the importance of holding before their eyes this great promise of Christian perfection and urged that they make it the object of their restless seeking until they have entered in. But the standards he holds avoid the dangers of cheapening the great grace of heart holiness and making it an experience which can be arrived at quickly, easily, and with the minimum of personal inconvenience. And as we, who are the physicians of souls, seek to bring to our people the double cure for their twofold hurt, some guidance and possibly some corrective may be found in Wesley's teaching and example.

This must of necessity involve us in a deeper study and understanding of the precious truth of heart holiness than we have hitherto undertaken. It is so easy for our people to parrot, "Saved and sanctified," without the remotest understanding of the deep and hallowed meanings these terms are intended to express. Perhaps this is the bitter fruit of a tendency among us which I can recall from my earliest childhood —the tendency to insist upon the express term "sanctified," as the *sine qua non* of correct testimony. When a seeker, newly risen from the altar, stood up to give testimony to the

Holy Spirit's work in his heart, if he appeared to be faltering in his use of this precise term, someone was almost sure to call out, "Call it 'John,' brother; call it 'John,'" This, of course, is an allusion to the naming of John the Baptist.

I am impressed, however, by Wesley's wide latitude in his use of terms, each of which was descriptive of some aspect of the experience and, when taken together, serve to illuminate amazingly the many facets of this jewel of Christian grace. What I am really pleading for is a far more profound understanding of the doctrines of grace, including the grace of "the great salvation" (to use one of Wesley's expressions), than any we have yet achieved. To be sure, this is our distinguishing doctrine, but how tragically undistinquished at times has been our advocacy of it! On every hand we witness a shallowness of understanding at this point which cries out for correction.

This is perhaps the most urgent task which confronts us in our pastoral ministry. It could well involve the extensive re-evangelization of our people, especially the newer generation which is appearing among us. It might be necessary to begin with our ministry! But it must be done if "the double cure" is to continue to be the crucial therapeutic in our practice of the cure of souls.

3 | Wesley's Spiritual Therapeutic

THE CHURCH is charged with a two-fold ministry in the world. One phase of that ministry is evangelism—the task of reaching and winning people for Christ, making known the glad news of the gospel, observing and furthering the awakening ministry of the Holy Spirit, and witnessing the continuing wonder of those who are translated from darkness to light by the renewing power of Christ.

The other phase is that of cultivating the spiritual lives of those who are already awakened and renewed, seeking to see realized in one and all the total implications that inhere in this new life in Christ. This involves growth in grace with the ultimate intent of bringing every one to the moment of

second and deeper crisis when the fundamental issues of the Christian vocation are faced in their entirety, and are accepted in a consecration to God's complete will, and faith in the shed blood of Christ for perfect and present cleansing. The first of these ministries will be the subject of our final chapter. But the second of them we want to consider now.

There are many who regard the church as a museum in which finished saints are placed on display. If this view were held in its absolute form, those in the church who are still in the process would have to be considered as liabilities in the total estimate of the church's strength. I can recall the view of one of our leaders of the past generation that every unsanctified member of a local church was a weakening factor in that church, and that a spiritually strong church was one in which all were in the enjoyment of "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." Frankly, I doubt if our churches at any time in their history were churches of this type. I doubt, moreover, if any local church in the history of Christianity was ever so constituted.

One of the most conspicuous factors in the Visible Church is its frail humanity. This was clearly true of the church at Corinth. Here was a church which was a real heartbreak to St. Paul; yet in the salutation to his First Epistle to them, he addresses them as "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." I have now been a member of the Church of the Nazarene for over 60 years and an ordained minister in her ranks since 1917. But I have never seen a local church for which the museum idea would be a fair analogy.

It seems more nearly correct, therefore, to regard the church as a workshop where Christian character is being produced. Some of its members may be well along toward the ultimate goal, but others—and they the vast majority—would be in the process at some point or other. Some may be well started in their development but others would have to be described as hardly roughed out as yet, indeed only beginners

in the Christian life. The church is the matrix of Christian character. It is here that the Christian life in its various individual expressions originates and develops.

In the discharge of this essential function it is not improper to think of the methods and disciplines by which the Christian life is nurtured and nourished as a therapy designed to promote religious health and growth. This is an area where Mr. Wesley has much to teach us. It may appear that some of his therapeutic is definitely dated with the brand of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless the underlying principles which inform his procedures are as valid today as they ever were. His was a life of organized discipline before it was a life of grace consciously enjoyed. Indeed the genius of the so-called "Holy Club"—the earliest phase of Methodism and the phase which prompted their being dubbed with this particular nickname—was a legalistic organization of each day into a pattern of duties to be meticulously performed and amenities to be rigidly observed.

The extremes to which these practices were carried is indicated by an admittedly hostile account of the Holy Club, written in 1735 by Richard Morgan:

> They imagine they cannot be saved if they do not spend every hour, nay minute, of their lives in the service of God. And to that end they read prayers every day in the common jail, preach every Sunday, and administer the sacrament once every month. They almost starve themselves to be able to relieve the poor and buy books for their conversion. They endeavour to reform notorious whores and allay spirits in haunted houses. They fast two days in the week, which has emaciated them to that degree that they are a fearful sight. . . . They rise every day at five of the clock, and till prayers, which begin at eight, they sing psalms, and read some piece of divinity. They meet at each other's rooms at six of the clock five nights in the week, and from seven to nine read a piece of some religious book.[1]

Morgan's hostility is clearly evident in this account, but there is no reason to believe it is not factual.

There is a world of difference between the Oxford "Methodism" and the Methodism of the great revival. Yet there are some similarities, too. While the austerities incul-

cated by Wesley as the leader of the awakening were not performed as a means of personal salvation, they still had their place. Wesley held himself to the most rigorous of standards, and required of his assistants and helpers an equally exacting devotion. For instance, note the rules laid down for a "helper":

> (1) Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment. Never be trifflingly employed. Never while away time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.
>
> (2) Be serious. Let your motto be, "Holiness unto the Lord." Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.
>
> (3) Converse sparingly and cautiously with women; particularly, with young women.
>
> (4) Take no step toward marriage, without first consulting with your brethren.
>
> (5) Believe evil of no one; unless you see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on everything. You know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.
>
> (6) Speak evil of no one; else your word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast, till you come to the person concerned.
>
> (7) Tell every one what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, as soon as may be; else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom.
>
> (8) Do not affect the gentleman. You have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. A preacher of the gospel is the servant of all.
>
> (9) Be ashamed of nothing but sin: Not of fetching wood (if time permits) or drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes, or your neighbour's.
>
> (10) Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And in general, do not mend our Rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.
>
> (11) You have nothing to do but save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those that want you, but to those that want you most.[2]

In 1788, Wesley observed his eighty-fifth birthday and remarks, as was his custom on his birthday, on the remarkable state of his health. While admitting that physical decay has set in, yet he insists that he does not feel any weariness

either in traveling or in preaching. The reasons he assigns for this are these:

1. Constant exercise and change of air.
2. His never having lost a night's sleep, sick or well, at land or at sea, since he was born.
3. To be able to sleep at will, night or day.
4. To his having constantly, for above sixty years, risen at four in the morning.
5. To his constant preaching at five in the morning for above fifty years.[3]

It was Wesley's established custom to preach at five o'clock in the morning whenever possible. The *Journal* entry for Friday, February 21, 1746, is typical: "We breakfasted at Bradbury Green, whence we rode on to Marsden; and the next day, *Saturday* the 22nd, to Leeds. I preached at five."[4] This could be duplicated hundreds of times in his *Journal.* The initial reason for such a rigorous procedure was that men worked a 12-hour day, from six in the morning to six at night. The only times they could assemble for preaching were before six in the morning or after six at night. Other hours of service were determined largely by the worship hours observed by the parish churches. Wesley clung to the idea, which later became a fiction, that his was a movement within the structure of the Church of England. He determined never to hold Methodist services at hours which would place them in competition with Anglican services.

The five in the morning preaching hour, however, took on with Wesley a significance wholly unrelated to the reasons I have suggested. He seemed to feel that the rigors of attending services at such a sacrificial hour were somehow good for Methodist souls. In his later years, when lovers of ease were more plentiful in Methodist ranks than in the beginning years, Wesley found numbers of societies that had left off the custom of the early morning preaching hours. In his view this was always a mark of declining grace. In March, 1779, he visited Worcester. "Upon inquiry," he remarks, "I found

there had been no morning preaching since the Conference! So the people were of course weak and faint."[5] In 1784, we find this entry:

> Leaving Bristol after preaching at five, in the evening I preached at Stroud; where, to my surprise, I found the morning preaching was given up, as also in the neighboring places. If this be the case while I am alive, what must it be when I am gone? Give this up, and Methodism too will degenerate into a mere sect, only distinguished by opinions and modes of worship.[6]

The organization of Wesley's followers was itself a part of the spiritual therapy he sought to apply. Dr. J. S. Simon tells us that

> in 1744 the people who had placed themselves under the care of John and Charles Wesley were arranged into the following groups: "The United Societies," "The Bands," "The Select Societies," and "The Penitents." The United Societies, the largest of all, consisted of "awakened persons." Then the members of the United Societies who were supposed to have remission of sins were gathered into the Bands. Those in the Bands "who seemed to walk in the light of God" composed, in some places, the Select Societies. Members of those sections who had made "shipwreck of faith" met apart as Penitents. With the exception of the Penitents, each section of the larger Society had its own special rules.[7]

Concerning the conduct of the Bands, Wesley laid down some specific directions. There was to be no mixing of the sexes, but there were Bands for men and Bands for women. Concerning the rules of procedure, Wesley says:

> In order to "confess our faults one to another," and pray one for another that we may be healed, we intend, (1) To meet once a week, at the least. (2) To come punctually at the hour appointed. (3) To begin with singing or prayer. (4) To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our soul, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting. (5) To desire some person among us (thence called a Leader) to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations.[8]

Now this is a heroic measure, to say the least. If it is possible to assume that all present are truly actuated by the spirit of Christ, it might be a safe and wholesome procedure. But one is reminded at once of the meeting in which each person

present was confessing his principal fault, one person in particular admitting that his great fault was gossiping. He said he could hardly wait for the meeting to end so he could get on with his favorite activity! How sacrosanct would be the information shared in a meeting such as this? It is evident that the method was not a flawless one even as carried on by the early Methodists. But we must admit that the idea is biblical; for St. James admonishes us: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." For most of us, it is to be feared that this is a spiritual regimen too severe for our abilities. Nevertheless, it would be an experience which would contribute significantly to a mood of humility.

A further spiritual therapeutic which Wesley employed freely and by which he set great store was what he calls the renewal of the covenant. He based this practice on what he understood to be the example of the Early Church. Writing in 1781 his *Short History of the People Called Methodists,* Wesley describes this

> . . . means of increasing serious religion, which had been frequently practiced by our forefathers,—the joining in a covenant to serve God with all our heart, and with all our soul. I explained this for several mornings following: And on Friday many of us kept a fast unto the Lord; beseeching Him to give us wisdom and strength, that we might "promise unto the Lord our God, and keep it." On Monday, at six in the evening, we met for the purpose at the French church in Spitalfields. After I had recited the tenor of the covenant proposed . . . all the people stood up, in token of assent, to the number of about eighteen hundred. Such a night I scarce ever knew before. Surely the fruit of it shall remain for ever.[9]

It was in a *Journal* entry for Christmas Day, 1747, that notice of this practice first appears. "The London Society," says he, "met at four, and solemnly rejoiced in God our Savior. I found much revival in my own soul this day; and so did many others also. Both this and the following days I strongly urged the wholly giving up ourselves to God, and renewing in every point our covenant that the Lord should be our God."[10]

It was particularly at the year's end that this practice seemed most appropriate, though it was by no means confined to that season. Wherever Wesley found a slackening of zeal and devotion to God in his societies he was apt to resort to this service of renewal as an effective antidote. For instance, in Dublin, on Friday, April 16, 1756 (being Good Friday), he records this: "Near four hundred of the society met, to follow the example of their brethren in England, and renew their covenant with God. It was a solemn hour. Many mourned before God, and many were comforted."[11]

Two years later (and again in Dublin) he repeated his favorite prescription. On Sunday, April 9, 1758, the *Journal* entry reads: "I exhorted the society to follow the example of their English brethren by jointly renewing their covenant with God." Again the Thursday following he reports: "I explained at large the nature and manner of entering into covenant with God, and desired all who were purposed so to do to set Friday apart for solemn fasting and prayer. Many did so, and met both at five in the morning, at noon, and in the evening."[12] On Friday, February 29, 1760, the *Journal* reports: "A great number of us waited upon God, at five, at nine, and at one, with fasting and prayer; and at six in the evening we met in the church in Spitalfields to renew our covenant with God. It was a blessed time; the windows of heaven were open, and the skies poured down righteousness."[13]

One more *Journal* entry of this character concerns this same society at Spitalfields, and is dated January 1, 1771: "A large congregation met at Spitalfields in the evening, in order to renew, with one heart and one voice, their covenant with God. This was not in vain; the Spirit of glory and of God, as usual, rested upon them."[14]

I can well recall a custom in our churches which had an effect somewhat comparable to this practice. It was hoped

that each Sunday evening service would conclude with an altar service in which one or more seekers would find God. But in services where there were no seekers the custom was to conclude the service by calling all of the "saints" to gather around the altar for a service of general prayer. This practice did much to stimulate a flow of seekers as well as to quicken and nourish the spiritual lives of the people of God. It was truly a means of grace.

An all-important phase of Wesley's therapy was his steady pressure upon his societies to preach, teach, and urge upon all the Methodist people "the glorious hope of perfect love." In the so-called *Large Minutes,* revised by Wesley and reissued for the last time in 1791—the year of Wesley's death—he makes clear the fact that heart holiness was the prime objective of Methodism from the first. Wesley confirms this as follows:

> In 1729, two young men, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others so to do. In 1737 they saw holiness comes by faith. They saw likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified; but still holiness was their point. God then thrust them out, utterly against their will, to raise a holy people. When Satan could no otherwise hinder this, he threw Calvinism in the way; and then Antinomianism, which strikes directly at the root of all holiness.[15]

We have already noted the fact that it was not until 1744 that Wesley became sure of the theology of entire sanctification. Yet his concern for its propagation became evident some years prior to this date. A *Journal* entry for Saturday, November 17, 1739, records that "on Saturday evening I explained, at Bristol, the nature and extent of Christian perfection."[16]

During the early 1760's there was a considerable revival of the doctrine and experience of Christian perfection. This occurred in areas as widely scattered as Otley, located in the West Riding of Yorkshire near Leeds, and in London itself. Wesley's *Journal* for these years takes account of these movings of the Spirit and rejoices in them. For instance:

> Monday, July 6, 1761. . . . In the evening I preached at Otley, and afterwards talked with many of the society. There is reason to believe that ten or twelve of these are filled with the love of God. [This, with Wesley, is a synonym for "wholly sanctified."] I found one or two more the next day at Fewston, a few miles north of Otley (where I preached at noon), whom God had raised up to witness the same good confession. And, indeed, the whole congregation seemed just ripe for receiving all the promises.[17]

He had a vital interest in the detailed experiences of those who enjoyed God's grace and especially of those who had entered into the Spirit's fullness. Under date of June 23, 1761, we read:

> After meeting the society I talked with a sensible woman,whose experience seemed peculiar. She said: "A few days before Easter last I was deeply convinced of sin; and in Easter week I knew my sins were forgiven, and was filled with 'joy and peace in believing.' But in about eighteen days I was convinced, in a dream, of the necessity of a higher salvation; and I mourned night and day, in an agony of desire to be thoroughly sanctified, till, on the twenty-third day after my justification, I found a total change, together with a clear witness that the blood of Jesus Christ had cleansed me from all unrighteousness."[18]

Here was a classic instance (as doctors say, a textbook example) of the grace that Wesley preached. The same week—June 26—Wesley "rode to Hull, and had there also the comfort of finding some witnesses of the great salvation."[19]

Wherever there are those who bear witness to the "great salvation," Wesley is concerned to examine and validate their testimonies. In October, 1761, in the Bristol society, he says: "I desired all those to meet me who believed they were saved from sin. There were seventeen or eighteen. I examined them severally as exactly as I could, and I could not find anything in their tempers (supposing they spoke true) any way contrary to their profession."[20]

Further evidence of the revival of holiness appeared in London in November of the same year. The *Journal* entry for Sunday, November 29, 1761, reads thus:

> We had a comfortable love feast, at which several declared the blessings they had found lately. We need not be careful by what *name*

to call them, while the *thing* is beyond dispute. Many have, and many do daily experience an unspeakable change. After being deeply convinced of inbred sin, particularly of pride, anger, self-will, and unbelief, in a moment they feel all faith and love—no pride, no self-will, or anger; and from that moment they have continual fellowship with God, always rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks. Whoever ascribes such a change to the devil, I ascribe it to the Spirit of God. And I say, let whoever feels it wrought, cry to God that it may contimue; which it will, if he walks closely with God; otherwise it will not.[21]

Wesley found, moreover, that any decline in the spiritual health of his societies was associated invariably with a failure to insist on the quest for heart holiness. He visited the Bristol society in September, 1765, and reports: "I . . . was surprised to find fifty members fewer than I left in it last October. One reason is, Christian perfection has been little insisted on; and wherever this is not done, be the preachers ever so eloquent, there is little increase, either in the numbers or the grace of the hearers."[22]

In 1776, Wesley utters the same judgment respecting the need for pressing the issue of Christian perfection. The entry for Wednesday, August 14, of that year reads:

I preached at Tiverton; and on Thursday went on to Launceston. Here I found the plain reason why the work of God had gained no ground in this circuit all the year. The preachers had given up the Methodist testimony. Either they did not speak of Perfection at all, (the peculiar doctrine committed to our trust), or they spoke of it only in general terms, without urging the believers to "go on unto perfection," and to expect it every moment. And wherever this is not earnestly done, the work of God does not prosper.[23]

The deep concern he carried for the perpetuation of this emphasis is further evident from a letter to his brother Charles, dated May 14, 1768. It read in part:

I am at my wit's end with regard to two things,—the Church [that is, relations with the Church of England], and Christian perfection. Unless you and I stand in the gap in good earnest, the Methodists will drop them both. Talking will not avail. We must *do*, or be borne away. Will you set shoulder to shoulder? If so, think deeply upon the matter, and tell me what can be done.[24]

Yet Wesley was fully aware that the full understanding and appreciation of the truth of Christian perfection called

for a sensitivity to the mind of Christ and an awareness of His purpose and will for God's people which many would never attain. In his sermon on "The More Excellent Way" he has a paragraph which deals so frankly with this fact that many have never dared to face it. So far as I know, Thomas Cook, eminent holiness evangelist in Britain a generation or two ago, is the only writer who has ventured to quote this paragraph, and he does so without comment in his book entitled *New Testament Holiness.*[25] Here is the controversial passage:

> From long experience and observation, I am inclined to think, that whoever finds redemption in the blood of Jesus, whoever is justified, has then the choice of walking in the higher or the lower path. I believe the Holy Spirit at that time sets before him the "more excellent way," and incites him to walk therein; to choose the narrowest path in the narrow way; to aspire after the heights and depths of holiness, after the entire image of God. But if he does not accept this offer, he insensibly declines into the lower order of Christians. He still goes on in what may be called a good way, serving God in his degree, and finds mercy in the close of life, through the blood of the covenant.[26]

It should be noted that Wesley arrives at this judgment after quoting from an unidentified source the idea that

> . . . there have been from the beginning two orders of Christians. The one lived an innocent life, conforming in all things, not sinful, to the customs and fashions of the world; doing many good works, abstaining from gross evils, and attending the ordinances of God. They endeavoured, in general, to have a conscience void of offense in their behaviour, but did not aim at any particular strictness, being in most things like their neighbours. The other Christians not only abstained from all appearance of evil, were zealous of good works in every kind, and attended all the ordinances of God, but likewise used all diligence to attain the whole mind that was in Christ, and laboured to walk, in every point, as their beloved Master. In order to this, they walked in a constant course of self-denial, trampling on every pleasure which they were not divinely conscious prepared them for taking pleasure in God. They took up their cross daily. They strove, they agonized without intermission, to enter in at the strait gate. This one thing they did, they spared no pains to arrive at the summit of Christian holiness.[27]

Here, then, are two classes of Christians who participate in the same church. But how different their attitudes toward

the high demands of vital godliness! Can any one of us who is a pastor say that this distinction does not appear in his church? Many of our people love God to a considerable degree; they live clean and wholesome lives; they attend our services regularly and support with their means the program of the church; they believe in everything for which the church stands. Yet, in our hearts, we who are pastors know that we cannot count on these people to support and carry through the church's spiritual ministry. The major share of the spiritual load of the church is carried by a slender minority of our people. And the great burdenless majority of the church is content to have it this way. Let us not think that this is a new phenomenon in our fellowship. As far back as I can remember this is the way matters have stood. The only noticeable difference is that today the burden-bearing minority is proportionally smaller than it used to be.

These are the people to whom we preach Sunday mornings and in fewer numbers Sunday nights. They have heard the holiness message again and again, but somehow it never gets through to them. I used fondly to think that it took only one of my clear forthright (?) messages on holiness to bring every such person to a point of crisis where he would move on into the fullness of God or turn back into the ways of the world. But I have discovered that light comes to the heart only when the Holy Spirit's voice is heard and not necessarily when it is only the voice of the preacher.

Perhaps God is more tolerant and understanding than we are, and it is possible that His compassion far exceeds our limited understanding of it. If so, then Wesley could be right, and those who seem to have chosen this lower road may indeed find "mercy in the close of life, through the blood of the covenant." If, as St. Paul suggests in I Cor. 3:15, some who have built of "wood, hay, stubble" may be saved, "yet so as by fire," though all their "work shall be burned," then there

may be hope in the last day for those who have elected the less heroic way.

In what spirit should this problem be met by those of us who expect to spend our lives as the physicians of souls? It *can* be met in a manner that would cut the heart out of our holy endeavors and reduce us to the status of mere timeservers. Since there will always be a considerable segment of our people who seem content simply to vegetate spiritually, incapable apparently of responding with daring faith to the high appeal of the gospel of full salvation, we can drift unconsciously in the direction of taking the caretaker attitude toward our responsibilities. Since so many are chronically dull of hearing, why should we keep on assaulting them with the high challenges of the gospel? Surely to react thus would be to betray every responsibility which God, in His sovereign wisdom, has laid upon us.

There is no evidence that Wesley was ever tempted to adopt this supine and inglorious attitude. To the end of his days he pressed the instantaneous experience of full salvation, and exhorted his assistants and helpers to do likewise. In writing to Robert C. Brackenbury in 1790—in the last year of his life—Wesley said: "This doctrine is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people call Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appears to have raised us up."[28]

If I may speak for myself, as one who began his Christian life as a Methodist and who became a Nazarene with the conviction that thereby in very truth he was remaining a Methodist, let me say that I am irrevocably committed to this truth and propose to preach and propagate it so long as I have breath. If some of our people fail to press into it as a personal experience, it must not be because of our failure to make the truth known. And I ask all those who may read these words to join me in this holy enterprise and, in true Wesleyan spirit, renew our covenant with God.

4 Wesley and Evangelism

IF AND WHEN there is a calling of the roll of the great evangelists of the Christian centuries, there can be little doubt that the name of John Wesley will stand very close to the top. Surely no one lived a life more dedicated than he, and certainly no one could have labored more industriously than he. During the 53 years of his itinerant ministry, Wesley's travels, mostly on horseback, covered over a quarter of a million miles—a distance roughly equal to 10 times around the world. He preached over 52,000 times between 1738 and 1791, and his last sermon was preached only eight days before his death. He organized and supervised

hundreds of societies throughout England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.

During these same years his literary output was phenomenal, including the writing of some 230 books and pamphlets and the editing of 200 more. From his university days down to the end of his life, he kept a private shorthand diary from which, in the main, his published *Journal* was compiled. His letters, as brought together by John Telford, fill eight large volumes. He displayed a social consciousness which was rare for the eighteenth century, organizing numerous undertakings for the relief of the poor. Though always busy, he was never too hurried to talk or pray with any who needed him.

His travels and labors took him into every part of his native land. He was known by sight to more people in Great Britain than any other Englishman of the eighteenth century, and he knew eighteenth-century Britain better than any man of his time. He visited 30 times and more in more than 50 towns and villages, and reports more than 40 visits to Sheffield, Bolton, Salisbury, and Chester; over 50 visits to Newcastle-on-Tyne, Leeds, Birmingham, and Manchester; over 100 visits to Kingswood, 175 to Bristol; and over 200 visits to London. His travels and labors in Ireland were equally incredible. He covered the island, preaching once, twice, or three times a day in Anglican churches, Presbyterian chapels, and in many nondescript meeting places, to say nothing of his open-air preaching.

One of his recent biographers, Oscar Sherwin, outlines a typical day in Wesley's life:

> He rose at four o'clock, read his devotional books until five, preached in the open air to the colliers or other workers who had to go to their tasks at half past six. After breakfast at seven he mounted his horse and drew rein for a few minutes from time to time to read a page in some book he was analyzing. After a twenty or thirty mile ride, he preached in the public square or some churchyard at noon. He dismissed his hearers at one o'clock that they might return to

> work, then rode rapidly, often twenty miles, to his next appointment where he preached at five. After supper, when evening twilight fell, he preached again or held a service that lasted until nine or ten o'clock.[1]

Did ever any man before him or since labor more prodigiously than he? And yet in 1786 he could write in his *Journal*, "I have entered upon the eighty-third year of my age. I am a wonder to myself. I am never tired either with preaching, writing, or traveling."[2]

Wesley's work as an evangelist was slow in starting, but once under way, it was carried on at an increasing tempo. His heartwarming experience occurred in May, 1738. That summer was taken up largely with a visit to the Moravian headquarters in Herrnhut, Germany. Back in England there seemed little opening for his ministry until, in the spring of 1739, his friend Whitefield summoned him to Bristol to preach in the fields to the multitudes of Kingswood miners, for whom there was no place at all in the churches of the Establishment. He took on this assignment with the deepest misgivings, such were his high-church prejudices. But he soon recognized this enterprise as divinely appointed, and he pursued this method throughout the three kingdoms.

Wesley had no evangelistic "slate," as do evangelists today. Indeed, his itineraries seem to have been of his own planning. Word of his coming at a certain day and hour was sent out ahead, and a congregation was usually awaiting him when he arrived. This was the method followed in more recent years by Dr. W. B. Godbey. I can well recall the coming of this little man to my father's home and pulpit on at least one occasion. He impressed me at the time as a most extraordinary, spiritual oddball, though I think of him now with the deepest veneration.

This method of self-propelled itineration is hardly feasible for our day and situation. But I cannot help wondering if we have not carried our scheduling to unreasonable ex-

tremes. Some years ago I asked a young pastor who was to be his evangelist the coming fall. He responded by telling me his scheduled evangelists, fall and spring, for the next four years. I remarked that he had managed to discover God's will for quite a period ahead. I shall never forget how oddly he looked at me, as much as to say, "Just what does God's will have to do with it anyway?"

The work of evangelism, whether carried forward by evangelists engaged in full-time labors or by pastors in their regular ministry, calls for a mighty concern for the lost and a sense of burden for souls that enlists all the passion of one's heart. And this John Wesley exhibited in his ministry to a marked degree. But he rarely speaks introspectively of this deep sense of concern which obviously lay at the root of his own tireless labors to reach the lost. He did, however, express his sentiments forthrightly enough in 1758 in a paper entitled "Address to the Clergy." After detailing the gifts which ministers should exhibit and the careful intellectual training they should receive, he comes to the questions of the motives that actuate a minister of Christ and the driving energies of love without which the work of the ministry must be a mockery indeed. Says Wesley of men who undertake the tasks of the ministry,

> As to his intention both in undertaking this important office, and in executing every part of it, ought it not to be singly this, to glorify God, and to save souls from death? Is not this absolutely and indispensably necessary, before all and above all things? "If his eye be single, his whole body," his whole soul, his whole work, "will be full of light," "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness," will shine on his heart; will direct him in all his ways, will give him to see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. But if his eye, his intention be not single, if there be any mixture of meaner motives, (how much more, if those were or are his leading motives in undertaking or exercising this high office!) his "whole body," his whole soul, "will be full of darkness," even such as issues from the bottomless pit. Let not such a man think that he shall have any blessing from the Lord. No; the curse of God abideth on him. Let him not expect to enjoy any settled

peace, any solid comfort in his own breast; neither can he hope there will be any fruit of his labours, any sinners converted to God.

As to his affections, ought not a "steward of the mysteries of God," a shepherd of the souls for whom Christ died, to be endued with an eminent measure of love to God, and love to all his brethren? A love the same in kind, but in degree far beyond that of ordinary Christians? Can he otherwise answer the high character he bears, and the relation wherein he stands? Without this, how can he go through all the toils and difficulties which necessarily attend the faithful execution of his office? . . .

He therefore must be utterly void of understanding, must be a madman of the highest order, who, on any consideration whatever, undertakes this office, while he is a stranger to this affection. Nay, I have often wondered that any man in his senses does not rather dig or thresh for a livelihood, than continue therein, unless he feels at least . . . such an earnest concern for the glory of God, and such a thirst after the salvation of souls, that he is ready to do anything, to lose anything, or to suffer anything, rather than one should perish for whom Christ died.[3]

As to Wesley's manner of preaching in hope of winning sinners to Christ, we really know very little. The sermons of Wesley which have been preserved to us are literary and theological productions for the most part, designed for the guidance of his lay preachers in biblical theology, rather than sermons stenographically reported. A few of them—notably the sermon on "Free Grace"—seem to have caught a little of the fire which must have characterized his spoken messages. It is clear that Wesley differed profoundly from his friend George Whitefield when it came to public address. Whitefield's preaching was eloquent in a fiery sort of way, though, be it acknowledged, it was a fire that usually gave out more heat than light. On one occasion when Whitefield preached for Wesley in London in 1750, Wesley made the following revealing and whimsical entry in his *Journal:*

I read prayers, and Mr. Whitefield preached. How wise is God in giving different talents to different preachers! Even the little improprieties both of his language and manner were a means of profiting many who would not have been touched by a more correct discourse, or a more calm and regular manner of speaking.[4]

It is well-known that Wesley was always the Oxford don, always properly attired in cassock and bands when standing up to preach, and always with his eyes open to the amenities of the situation. Perhaps not every man could carry on his work by such meticulous standards. But we surely are not justified in discounting the effectiveness of those who do maintain such standards.

One thing that is made clear in the records of his life which Mr. Wesley has left to us is the texts from which he preached in his busy, variegated ministry. Not all of his texts are recorded, but enough of them appear in the record for us to form a clear idea of the type of biblical truth he felt led to enforce. His texts were vigorous and forthright, designed to face his hearers with the reality of sin and the certainty of judgment to come, the need for repentance and the abandonment of one's sins, the promise of pardon and peace with God through Jesus Christ. In these days when theologians have rediscovered the *kerygma*, the basic proclamation of the gospel, it is appropriate to observe that Wesley made the proclamation of that basic *kerygma* his main reliance. One of Charles Wesley's favorite expressions descriptive of his own ministry could be applied with equal appropriateness to the preaching of John Wesley: "I stood up and offered them Christ."

On the face of it, there appears to be no fundamental difference between evangelism 200 years ago and evangelism today. There must have been the same message, the same deep concern, the same passion for the lost then as now. But there are some respects in which we differ from Wesley, and in some cases these differences perhaps represent weaknesses in our effort to carry on in this great task.

There seems to have been with Wesley no such concern about the techniques of "drawing the net" as agitate us today. So much of his preaching was in places completely une-

quipped for the proper worship of God that he usually was without benefit of a suitable "mourners' bench." But, strangely enough, he never seems to have missed it. His sermons rarely, if ever, led up to formal "altar calls," as they have come to be called. Such was the Spirit's anointing upon the preacher that men and women were deeply stricken by the power of God while the message was being preached, often dropping in an agony of conviction where they stood or sat, and crying out mightily for mercy. Many a soul was converted in this fashion during the great days of the Methodist revival.

Despite the fact that little is left us to indicate what was the precise content of Wesley's evangelistic message, we are not left without evidence of his opinions along this line. Under date of December 20, 1751, he wrote what is entitled "A Letter on Preaching Christ." He says in part:

> I think the right method of preaching is this: At our first beginning to preach at any place, after a general declaration of the love of God to sinners, and his willingness that they should be saved, to preach the law, in the strongest, the closest, the most searching manner possible; only intermixing the gospel here and there, and showing it, as it were, afar off.
>
> After more and more persons are convinced of sin, we may mix more and more of the gospel, in order to "beget faith," to raise into spiritual life those whom the law hath slain; but this is not to be done too hastily neither. Therefore, it is not expedient wholly to omit the law; not only because we may well suppose that many of our hearers are still unconvinced; but because otherwise there is danger, that many who are convinced will heal their own wounds slightly; therefore, it is only in private converse with a thoroughly convinced sinner, that we should preach nothing but the gospel. . . .
>
> According to this model, I should advise every preacher continually to preach the law; the law grafted upon, tempered by, and animated with the spirit of the gospel. I advise him to declare, explain, and enforce every command of God; but, meanwhile, to declare, in every sermon, (and the more explicitly the better,) that the first and great command to a Christian is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" that Christ is all in all, our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" that all life, love, strength, are from him alone, and all freely given to us through faith. And it will ever be found, that the law thus preached both enlightens and strengthens the soul; that it

both nourishes and teaches; that it is the guide, "food, medicine, and stay," of the believing soul.

Thus all the Apostles built up believers; witness all the Epistles of St. Paul, James, Peter, and John. And upon this plan all the Methodists first set out. In this manner, not only my brother and I, but Mr. Maxfield, Nelson, James Jones, Westell, and Reeves, all preached at the beginning.

By this preaching it pleased God to work those mighty effects in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Yorkshire, and Newcastle. By means of this, twenty-nine persons received remission of sins in one day at Bristol only; most of them, while I was opening and enforcing, in this manner, our Lord's Sermon upon the Mount.[5]

This presents a fairly clear picture of the sort of evangelistic preaching upon which Wesley relied. But the subject of the particular emphasis to be made in preaching came up frequently, particularly in the annual conferences. In August of 1745, one such conference was held at the New Room in Bristol, and a portion of the Minutes read as follows:

Question 15. Is there not a defect in us? Do we preach as we did at first? Have we not changed our doctrines?

Answer. (1) At first we preached almost wholly to unbelievers. To those therefore we spake almost continually of remission of sins through the death of Christ, and the nature of faith in his blood. And so we do still, among those who need to be taught the first elements of the gospel of Christ.

(2) But those in whom the foundation is already laid, we exhort to go on to perfection; which we did not see so clearly at first; although we occasionally spoke of it from the beginning.

(3) Yet we now preach, and that continually, faith in Christ, as the Prophet, Priest, and King, at least as strongly and as fully as we did six years ago. . . .

Q. 17. Do not some of our assistants preach too much of the wrath, and too little of the love of God?

A. We fear we have leaned to that extreme; and hence some of their hearers may have lost the joy of faith.

Q. 18. Need we ever preach the terrors of the Lord to those who know they are accepted of him?

A. No: It is folly so to do; for love is to them the strongest of all motives.

Q. 19. Do we ordinarily represent a justified state so great and happy as it is?

A. Perhaps not. A believer, walking in the light, is inexpressibly great and happy. . . .

Q. 30. Should we not have a care of depreciating justification, in order to exalt the state of full sanctification?

A. Undoubtedly we should beware of this; for one may insensibly slide into it.

Q. 31. How shall we effectually avoid it?

A. When we are going to preach of entire sanctification, let us first describe the blessings of a justified state, as strongly as possible.[6]

All of this has a strangely modern ring, for the problems and dangers and trends which they faced then, are those which beset us in our time. In this manner Wesley kept a checkrein on himself in his work of evangelism and a heavy, guiding hand on his preachers (or "assistants," as they were called). He kept tirelessly at it without regard to the comforts or discomforts of the passing seasons; never planning his winter itinerary for the warmer south coast of England, or his summer travels for the cool and comfortable Midlands. Often through weather not fit for man or beast, and in storms that halted all other traffic, he pressed on, never disappointing a waiting congregation when it was physically possible to make his appointment.

Wesley had the help, in his labors, of a rich and noble hymnody which added immeasurably to the appeal and effectiveness of his services. He would never have tolerated for a moment the sort of meaningless doggerel and rhythmic atrocities which pass for "gospel music" today. Indeed, the Methodist hymnody undoubtedly made a decisive contribution to the success of the revival.

Wesley was fortunate to have a brother Charles who is recognized in retrospect as the greatest hymn writer of all time. But John himself was a hymnist of no mean ability. It is true, his greatest contributions in this area were in the form of translations of the great hymns of the German Pietist movement. But these translations were so free as to amount, in most cases, to virgin productions.

The particular advantage of this hymnody was its firm and comprehensive theological structuring. Most of the doctrines of the Christian faith were given chaste and reverent expression in the hymns, and most of the emotions incident to personal experiences of divine grace. Yet the hymns were never egocentric, with "I," "me," and "mine" as the center of particular interest. Rather, they were Christocentric, designed to stimulate faith in Christ and to establish the worshiper in Christian grace and character.

Some of the preachers were men untrained for the ministry and lacking the ability, possessed so outstandingly by the Wesleys, to build up their hearers through a strongly theological preaching of the Word. But what the preaching lacked was abundantly supplied by the hymns. In large part, these hymns were learned by heart by the worshipers, for hymnbooks were in short supply. In some areas most of those attending the services would have been unable to read anyway, such was the prevailing illiteracy in England in the eighteenth century. This had distinct advantages, of course; for a hymn learned by heart became the permanent possession of the one so favored, to be invoked in every time of need.

A hymnody of this quality is one of the greatest needs today in our movement. Indeed, we could do no better than to recover the Wesleyan hymnody for our use in this century. It was ours in the beginning, as a glance at some of our earlier hymnbooks will reveal. The comparison of our present hymnal with the books we used in the beginnings of our movement makes clear the fact that we have almost completely lost this treasured hymnody. What is worse, we have nourished an appetite for a jingly, razzle-dazzle type of gospel music in our services which speaks to neither the mind nor the heart, and finds expression in a rhythmical form conducive to the stimulation of emotions far removed from those that should characterize a holy religion.

The problem faced in a discussion such as this is one of selection: what to include out of the vast congeries of Wesley material which demands a voice. One thing more must be explored, however, and that is the place that the emphasis upon Christian perfection held in Wesley's evangelism. Wesley had a great concern for the element of process in the Christian life, as well as crisis. In his society organization, as we have already noted, no subscription to any formal creed was required and no profession of the present enjoyment of any definite experience of divine grace. The one qualification for society membership was that one must be hungry to know God and eagerly seeking for Him. Wesley wisely discerned that the beginnings of faith in a man's heart could be incubated into saving faith more effectively in the warm Christian atmosphere of the society than in the chill of the world. This led to a fairly high percentage of dropouts, of course; but the amount of clear-cut good accomplished far outweighed, in his judgment, the incidence of failure.

In the gracious nurture of the society and in its subdivision, the class meeting, the hope of bringing the hungry-hearted through to the place of clear assurance was greatly enhanced. This point of view had its bearing, too, on the degree of attention paid to the preaching of "the great salvation," or Christian perfection. Wesley believed that the experience of perfect love would be attained more readily in the matrix of Christian fellowship than through active promotion in a general preaching ministry.

Wesley had a firm understanding of Christian perfection as the norm of Christian life and experience long before he achieved a clear grasp of the method by which the soul entered into this grace. In his Oxford sermon on "The Circumcision of the Heart,"[7] preached before the university on January 1, 1733—more than five years before his evangelical conversion—he declared this norm as forthrightly as ever in later years. But the road thither became clear only after his

Aldersgate experience, though not immediately following even this memorable event.

As we have noted previously, Dr. G. A. Turner, in his book *The Vision Which Transforms,* has characterized the years 1738 to 1744 as the years of "discovery" of the experience of scriptural holiness, the years 1744 to 1762 as the years of "definition," and the years 1762 to 1791 (the latter being the year of Wesley's death) as the years of "defense." The period of discovery was the period during which Wesley was extricating himself from the morass of Moravianism into which he so nearly toppled. But the period of definition was equally important, for during these years Wesley was working out by group discussion the correct expression which should be given to the doctrine of entire sanctification. The earliest conferences of Wesley and his friends and assistants gave the most earnest and prayerful attention to this theme, coming at length to a clear and precise determination of this all-important biblical truth.

But it must be pointed out that in his general evangelistic preaching he rarely dealt with the theme of Christian perfection. Yet in his cultivation of the Christian life in the members of his societies, his emphasis upon Christian perfection as their only proper goal was invariable. A letter to one Mr. Merryweather, dated February 8, 1766, makes this concern very clear. "My dear Brother," he writes, . . .

> Where Christian perfection is not strongly and explicitly preached, there is seldom any remarkable blessing from God; and, consequently, little addition to the Society, and little life in the members of it. Therefore, if Jacob Rowell is grown faint, and says little about it, do you supply his lack of service. Speak and spare not. Let not regard for any man induce you to betray the truth of God. Till you press the believers to expect full salvation *now*, you must not look for any revival.[8]

Observations of this sort are frequent in both his *Journal* and his letters.

It would appear, in view of the cautions he has placed around the subject of Christian perfection in order to en-

courage its proper promotion, that he gave larger place than we do to a complete reliance on the Holy Spirit to bring about this work of complete cleansing in the hearts of believers. It is true, Wesley held, as we do, that this full deliverance is wrought by faith and therefore may be wrought in an instant. But he was more aware than we seem to be that a process is associated with this crisis of faith. The time factor is an essential element in the experience of entire sanctification.

To be sure, there are no longer any dispensational reasons for a specified period of 10 days of waiting for the Spirit's coming, as at Pentecost. But the fact remains that the fullness of God can come only when the seeking soul reaches the end of the dominion of self, and the road to that end is often a long road indeed. Our evangelistic procedures have tended unduly to simplify this process, and have construed the issues as of such a nature that they may be managed successfully by "two trips to the altar." I would be the first to admit that in some cases the Spirit's dealings have coincided so closely with our procedures that a genuine, unmistakable crisis ensued. But too often—perhaps more often than not—it has worked out otherwise. The second trip to the altar came long before the seeking soul was prepared for the facing of the deeper issues.

Nevertheless, our altar techniques have carried the seeker through to a premature profession that the work was done, when, in sober fact, all that happened was the taking of one or two of the many necessary steps which, hopefully, would lead ultimately to the real moment of crisis and deliverance from inner sin. The result often is that the seeker accepts a rather disillusioning substitute for a real experience of perfect love. We have succeeded only in inoculating him with a mild case of Christian holiness which may prevent his ever catching the real thing.

Let us not think lightly or discount the seriousness of this problem. Every pastor knows that he faces precisely this

issue in the lives of many of his people, especially those who have come up from infancy among us. Our evangelistic methods have the effect of shaking down unripe fruit. We bring to our altars many who are far from being made ready by the faithful ministry of the Spirit. God by His Spirit brings light to men as they are capable of receiving it. I believe that the Spirit appoints His ministers as agents in this matter, and am in full agreement with Wesley that the truth of Christian perfection must be strongly pressed upon our people. Thus do we become the allies of the Holy Spirit and enable Him more effectively to carry forward His work.

But let us never forget that it is *His* work and that we are only His helpers in this all-important matter. Wesley's method provides a valuable corrective to ours, therefore, in seeking to spread the truth of full salvation over the land. Let us sit humbly at his feet in this matter and profit by his wisdom.

In many ways our evangelistic task is different from Wesley's. It was over two centuries ago, on May 24, 1738, that his heart was "strangely warmed" and the great evangelical revival was about to begin. These two centuries have seen the greatest changes of any period in the history of the world. But it is possible to exaggerate these changes out of all proportion to their real significance. For there are constant factors amid this steady flux of change. One of them is the basic need of men's hearts, and another is the faithful ministry of the Holy Spirit. These constants encourage us to believe that by a careful study of Wesley's message, goals, and methods the real success of our labors may be greatly enhanced.

I venture to hope that in the years ahead we shall achieve what might properly be called a "Back to Wesley Movement." Then, perhaps, from being nominally Wesleyan we shall become genuinely Wesleyan, the true followers of this man who, in my humble judgment, was the greatest Christian leader since St. Paul.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

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