THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

A Wesleyan View of the Good Life

By

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"The following Sermons contain the substance of what I have been preaching. . . . Every serious man who peruses these will therefore see, in the clearest manner, what these doctrines are which I embrace and teach as the essentials of true religion. . . .those truths which are necessary to present and future happiness."[1]

--John Wesley

…I was made to be happy; to be happy I must love God; in proportion to my love of whom my happiness must increase. To love God I must be like him, holy as he is holy; which implies both the being pure from vicious and foolish passions and the being confirmed in those virtues and rational affections, which God comprises in the word "charity." In order to root those out of my soul and plant these in their stead I must use (1) such means as are ordered by God, (2) such as are recommended by experience and reason.[2]

--John Wesley

[1]From the preface to John Wesley's sermons, appended to each collection published.

[2]From a letter to "Aspasia" of July 19, 1731.

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PREFACE

I began this project with a practical aim in mind. I had been aware for some time that John Wesley, the 18th century father of Methodism, virtually identified holiness and happiness and my purpose was to explore this thesis and its relation to the life of faith. To do this I set out to read Wesley's sermons with a greater thoroughness than I had hitherto done, focusing on this theme. Although it was not my intention to develop a full-scale study of his theology, the project of necessity mushroomed into a rather wide-ranging survey of most of Wesley's distinctive theological themes since virtually all of them impinged on the topic of happiness. My approach was to read Wesley himself before looking at secondary studies of his theology. My initial read was in the older Jackson edition of the sermons. I then consulted, and profited much from the Bicentennial edition of the sermons edited by Albert Outler, which included several relevant sermons not in the earlier edition.

This work is simply my own construal of Wesley's interpretation of a major ethical theme based primarily on my reading of the sermons. The analysis of Wesley's own views is prefaced by a somewhat cursory survey of the theme of happiness as the highest good (*summum bonum*) in classical philosophy, the response of two pivotal Christian theologians and the idea of happiness in the Hebrew-Christian scriptures. In no sense are these surveys complete but they do provide valuable background that sets an important context for the exposition of Wesley's understanding.

INTRODUCTION

My early career as a pastor forced me to begin to think critically about the ethical dimension of the Christian life. The context in which I grew up and the ethos of the denominational context in which I began pastoral ministry were committed to a strict code of conduct quite legalistic in nature. Young people of my congregations were often pushing the boundaries and posing questions of rationale for the prohibitions of the Church. Pressed to offer them an apology for those standards of behavior, I came to see that their questions about the "rightness" and "wrongness" of the rules was not the best way to approach the issue. The real issue concerned the impact that following the ethical guidelines had on their Christian life and consciousness. Thus, I had early come to a preliminary understanding of the nature of Christian ethics that became more solidly grounded as a result of later studies.

When I began pursuing graduate studies in the field of philosophical ethics, I was soon drawn to the belief that regardless of how much an ethical philosopher protested otherwise, he ultimately (and inevitably I came to believe) appealed to some goal as the motivating factor in living the ethical life. This type of approach to ethics is technically referred to as "teleological," from the Greek word *telos* (end) and meaning "goal oriented." Even the great Immanuel Kant whose rigorous ethical philosophy was based on the universal concept of duty, finally made the "teleological" appeal as the motivation for doing one's duty. The major question seemed simply to be, what is that "telos" that is the driving force involved in ethical motivation?

From Socrates to John Stuart Mill (Utilitarianism) and John Dewey (Pragmatism) the consensus among many philosophers seemed to be that *happiness* was the highest good for human life, the *summum bonum*. The basic difference between the various views was how happiness should be defined, and how it was to be achieved. This approach to ethics is commonly referred to as *eudaimonian* since this is the Greek word traditionally translated as happiness. Since the concern of this way of thinking is for the development of character (virtue) rather than providing rules for behavior, it is more frequently termed a "virtue ethic." Modern virtue ethicists tend to use the term "flourishing" rather than "happiness," chiefly due to the popular

implication of the latter term. Their intention is to emphasize that the goal of the good life is to produce more fully human persons.[3] As we shall see, this is also the primary implication of John Wesley's understanding of holiness, which he consistently defined as the "renewal of human persons in the image of God."

Since my primary interest was in *Christian* ethics, the teleological approach appeared to have significant problems. Paul Ramsey's statement that "no more disastrous mistake can be made than to admit self-love [which he apparently viewed as the basis for the desire for happiness] onto the ground floor of Christian ethics as a basic part of Christian obligation"[4] apparently invalidated this approach so widely pursued in philosophy. Others have criticized the pursuit of happiness as self-serving and/or anthropocentric rather than theocentric and thus unworthy of *Christian* ethics.

The fallenness of humanity centrally manifested as egocentricity seemed to validate such criticisms. By contrast, it has been suggested that Christian ethics is characterized by obedience to Divine law, an approach that has been termed in ethical theory as "deontological." This approach emphasizes law and duty, doing what is "right" rather than life being ordered by the pursuit of a "good."

The apparent implications of the deontological approach, when applied to Christian ethics, appeared to support the popular view that Christianity imposes a truncated view of human life. Interpreted this way, Christian ethics limits one from the full manifestation of our divinely endowed giftedness. The popular picture of the stern-faced preacher whose mission in life was to impose limiting restrictions on young people as often portrayed in Hollywood's hedonistically oriented distortions seemed to be accurate.

Still, I could not get away from a different picture. I thought perhaps there is a two-level understanding at work here. If we approach the Christian life from an apologetic perspective,[5] it provides

[3]A contemporary example of this approach to ethics from a Christian perspective is N.T. Wright, *After You Believe* (N.Y.: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010).

[4]*Basic Christian Ethics* N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 101.

[5]I am using the term "apologetic" here in the same sense that Paul Tillich spoke of apologetic theology, a theology that answers the existential questions raised by the human situation. It has nothing to do with the traditional meaning of the term that refers to a defense of the faith.

a "point of contact" with the human *eros*[6] that with growth and development may be transcended by a more theocentric view of the Christian life. While there may be some justification for this analysis, we still ultimately come full circle to a teleological interpretation of humanity's *raison d'être*. That seems to be implied by the familiar response to the question of the Westminster Catechism, "What is the chief end of man?" Answer: "To love God and enjoy Him forever." "Enjoy" feels a lot like "happiness."[7]

My doctoral dissertation involved an in-depth study of John Wesley's ethics and it became abundantly clear (at least to me) that his understanding of ethics was "teleological" in nature.[8] In this context, Wesley's understanding of discipline (including the Rules for the Methodist societies) and other "means of grace" was oriented toward achieving a goal. They functioned as means to the end (*telos*) of facilitating growth in both inward and outward holiness.[9] When this perspective was related to the discovery that Wesley himself was completely committed to the correlation of "holiness and happiness,"[10]

[6]*Eros* is the Greek word for love that is attracted to the object of love out of need. The assumption is that what (or who) is loved will fill that need. The classic analysis of *eros* in Greek philosophy is found in Plato's *Symposium*, which some scholars have compared with Paul's ode to love in 1 Cor. 13.

[7]John Wesley interprets this catechetical response in precisely this way. Cf. *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872. Reprint, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978), 7:267.

[8]H. Ray Dunning, "Nazarene Ethics as seen in a Historical, Theological and Sociological Context," Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1969. This thesis was presented in a paper to the Wesleyan Theological Society in 1969: "Ethics in a Wesleyan Context," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 5, No. 1, Spring, 1970, 3-9. Throughout my research on the dissertation I was overwhelmed with the similarity of Wesley's ethics to Aristotle's but only discovered in pursuing this project that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* was the standard text in ethics at Oxford where Wesley studied [see Albert Outler, ed. of volumes on the Sermons, *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984-85), 4:209]. That possibly might explain the similarity of structure and perspective.

[9]For a scholarly analysis of Wesley's "moral psychology" that informed this understanding, see Randy L. Maddox, "Reconnecting the Means to the End: A Wesleyan Prescription for the Holiness Movement," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 33, No. 2, Fall, 1998, 29-66.

it reinforced my belief that this was a consistent Wesleyan position. This theme was explored in a cursory fashion in an earlier work[11] but now I want to attempt to work out a more fully developed analysis of Wesley's "theology of happiness" as a way of gaining deeper insight into his understanding of holiness.

[10]The light of this truth first fully broke into my consciousness while reading Albert Outler's small treatise on *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* when he confessed: ". . . take a closer look at Wesley and a surprising fact emerges (at least it surprised me when I first realized what I was seeing, after all these years!). This man was a *eudaemonist*, convinced and consistent all his life. All his emphases on duty and discipline are auxiliary to his main concern for human *happiness* (blessedness, etc.)." (Nashville: Tidings, 1957), 81.

[11]*Reflecting the Divine Image* (Downers Grove, ILL: Intervarsity Press, 1998).

Chapter 1

HAPPINESS—-THE UNIVERSAL QUEST

The Declaration of Independence of the United States proposes the ideal that every human person has the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Is this only an American ideology or does it reflect a particular view of human nature? What was Thomas Jefferson's rationale for such an optimistic vision when he wrote the founding document? It is a truism in political philosophy that the political ideal that informed the original American documents was the philosophy of John Locke. But Locke affirmed the "natural right" of persons to "life, liberty, and property," not the pursuit of happiness, although they may not be unrelated.

Locke's vision was informed by the presuppositions of "natural religion," which assumed that all meaningful knowledge could be acquired by reason. It held no place for revelation as the communication of supernatural knowledge. Along with several other philosophers, Locke's political philosophy was developed on the basic principle that the world was governed by the laws of nature, which the person of reason could understand and master. These Enlightenment thinkers believed that "society had an obligation to advance the happiness of its people" and advocated reforms in various areas to implement this ideal. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke "asserted that happiness is what all people desire, and that in the long run private happiness and public good would coincide."[12]

Jefferson, like Locke, was a deist. Contrary to popular opinion, he was not an evangelical Christian. As the Wikipedia encyclopedia summarizes his religion, "He was not an **orthodox Christian** because he rejected, among other things, the doctrines that Jesus was the promised Messiah and the incarnate Son of God. Jefferson's religion is

[12]Milton Meltzer, *Thomas Jefferson, The Revolutionary Aristocrat* (N.Y. Franklin Watts, 1991), 38-40. For an incisive analysis and critique of the developments in the 18th century Enlightenment contemporary with John Wesley, see Christian sociologist Anthony Campolo, *A Reasonable Faith* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Pub., 1983). It is more than coincidental that John Wesley held a very positive view of the work of John Locke.

fairly typical of the American form of **deism** in his day." Thus, his rationale would be restricted to the limitations of empirical knowledge, or assumptions based on a high view of human nature, but considered strictly within the mundane world. But there was an obvious ambiguity in Jefferson as, on the one hand he deplored the institution of slavery and on the other owned many slaves on his own plantation.

Apparently, Jefferson may have taken with some seriousness his words in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal," but there is considerable evidence that this implicitly excluded women and included only white males of the aristocracy. This disparity was explained by holding that every child was *born* equal but it was social institutions that made various groups unequal, which could only be addressed by the government removing barriers and restrictions.[13]

Whatever Jefferson may have thought, or the Declaration of Independence implies, the fact that multitudes have sought residence in America may reflect an innate desire for happiness and this has driven them to seek its reality in the "American dream," either legally or illegally. Unfortunately, the facts are that there are not enough pieces of the pie to go around, especially when so many are seeking a place at the table. Nevertheless, that does not invalidate the quest.

The quest for happiness apparently goes back to the dawn of history. The pre-Christian philosopher, Aristotle, began his analysis of the good life by exploring the question, "what is the highest good?" Being an empiricist, he first examined the varied opinions held in his day and finally concluded that everyone agrees that the highest good is happiness. After dismissing as inadequate several popular concepts of what produces happiness, he proceeds with one of the most insightful analyses in the history of philosophy. In his treatise on *Rhetoric*, Aristotle says,

> It may be said that every man and all men in common aim at a certain end, which determines what they choose and what they avoid. This end, to sum up briefly, is happiness and its constituents. . . . All advice to do things or not to do them is concerned with happiness, and with the things that make for or against it; whatever creates or increases happiness or some part of happiness, we ought to do; whatever destroys or hampers happiness, or gives rise to its opposite, we ought not to do.[14]

[13]Ibid, 66-67.

We shall return to Aristotle later to examine this theme.

St. Augustine, who was one of the most influential theologians in Christian history, affirmed in several of his numerous writings that everyone seeks after happiness (beatitude). In *The Morals of the Catholic Church,* he declares: "We all certainly desire to live happily; and there is no human being but assents to this statement almost before it is made."[15]

Even Immanuel Kant admitted, "To be happy is necessarily the wish of every finite rational being, and this, therefore, is inevitably a determining principle of its faculty of desire."[16] Nevertheless, he refused to allow happiness to be the basis for any morality.

I recall hearing many early evangelists make their appeal based on the assumption that everyone desires to be happy and the way to experience that happiness was to turn your life over to Jesus Christ and be saved. As children in the church, we were taught to sing: "I'm on the happy side of life; I'm on the happy side of life; With Jesus as my Savior, I've found the way; I'm on the happy side of life." In a word, this seems to have been a common interpretation of the Christian life as the answer to what all of us seek. Thus, philosophical and popular thought spoke with the same voice.

What is Happiness? Happiness is one of the more ambiguous words in the English language. The average dictionary largely defines it in more or less emotional terms and suggests the implication that it depends on happenings or circumstances such as "prosperity" or "pleasurable satisfaction." This clearly is the popular concept of it. If we have money, or health, or other means to a carefree life, we can expect to be happy. However, experience demonstrates in numerous cases that this is a faulty expectation. These material and physical benefits do not guarantee happiness. On the contrary, many people are "happy" when these are absent.

[14]Quoted in V.J. Gill, *The Idea of Happiness* (N.Y.: Frederick A. Praeger, Pub., 1967), 15.

[15]Chapter III.

[16]*Critique of Practical Reason*, Part I, Book I, ch. III, p. 112.

The classical Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, both related happiness to the proper functioning of one's rational nature. As we have seen, the Greek word translated happiness is *eudaimonia*, which can best be rendered as "well-being." This understanding informs both philosophers' interpretation and thus is grounded in their construal of human nature. Aristotle's definition of man as a "rational animal" captures their general philosophical perspective on human nature. Thus, happiness results from living rationally.

Plato's *magnum opus*, *The Republic*, explores the meaning of "justice" in the individual by expanding the picture of the individual to the state, which is the individual "writ large." Justice, the all-encompassing virtue that might be considered equivalent to "happiness" in Plato's thought,[17] is the consequence of the various groups that constitute the state performing their proper role under the guidance of the "philosopher-kings" who embody wisdom. By extrapolating this to the individual, justice at the personal level is the proper functioning of the various aspects of the human person as guided by reason.

Such a superficial survey brings clearly to light a fundamental principle regarding happiness. Its reality is directly related to the nature of personhood. Who we are reveals the secret of true happiness. This will become a key to our further investigation.

[17]So W.T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy*, Vol. 1, *The Classical Mind* (N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), 162.

Chapter 2

CLASSICAL VIEWS OF HAPPINESS

Arguably, the most formative figures in the history of philosophy are Plato and Aristotle. They attempted to address virtually every issue pertinent to human inquiry. Both gave special consideration to human nature and the good life, or ethics. At the center of their ethical inquiries was the subject of happiness. Each in his own way argued that pleasure could not qualify as the source of happiness. In this and other areas, Plato was concerned to refute the claim of a group of philosophers known as Sophists. These teachers held that pleasure was the sole good and conduct was to be evaluated in terms of how effectively it produced pleasure. Plato argued that they did not understand the complexity of the human organism and therefore had a defective view of human nature. He insisted that all aspects of the person must be functioning properly for happiness to become a reality but the Sophists recognized only the physical aspect of the person.

Aristotle likewise rejected pleasure as the highest good. One reason was that this goal is appropriate to beasts but not to the higher order of beings represented by humans. Furthermore, on the premise that the highest good must be an end in itself, he argued that pleasure cannot qualify since it is always desired as a means to happiness but not as an end in itself. Another candidate Aristotle rejected was honor, which depends on those who bestow honor rather than "on him who receives it." Other possibilities, such as wealth, are likewise unacceptable since they are all desired as means rather than ends.

On the assumption that all persons desire and pursue happiness, Plato explained the failure to achieve this goal as the result of ignorance. Samuel Stumpf summarizes Plato's view like this:

> ". . . . men always think that whatever they do will in some way give them pleasure and happiness. No one, says Plato, ever knowingly chooses an act that will be harmful to himself. He may do 'wrong' acts, . . . but he always assumes that *he* will somehow benefit from them. This is false knowledge, a kind of ignorance, which men must overcome in order to be moral.[18]

Two presuppositions inform Plato's theory of happiness. One is that there is an inherent desire for happiness within each individual. This is a love (the Greek word is *eros*) that reaches out for fulfillment through union with the highest good.[19] The other assumption was his belief that there is in fact a transcendent ultimate reality that embodies all Truth, Goodness and Beauty. This "Good" lies beyond the world of material things and cannot be apprehended by the senses. It is the ultimate reality for which the universal *eros* longs. Failure to rightly identify this "Good" and participate in it through intellectual vision is the source of unhappiness. Thus, ignorance is the major problem.

Since only reason has the inherent capability of being united with the "Good," that fact explains why it is crucial that one's life be controlled by reason rather than some lower function of the person. When reason is in control, it results in a harmonious function of the various aspects of the person (or the state). The outcome is the well-being (happiness) of the person (or state).

Plato thought that by this analysis he could overcome the moral relativism of the Sophists he was seeking to refute. Morality would be grounded in an objective reality (the "Good") rather than in public opinion. He "wanted to show that virtue is not a matter of custom or opinion but is rather grounded in the very nature of the soul."[20] The Sophist maxim, stated by the philosopher Protagoras, that "man is the measure of all things," is rejected in favor of a reality that is beyond finite human beings amenable only to an intellectual vision.

Aristotle's analysis was quite similar to Plato's but his understanding of how one achieved the knowledge requisite to the harmony necessary for happiness was much different. Plato was a "rationalist," which means that he believed reason could apprehend "truth" that lay beyond the reach of the senses. Aristotle, by contrast, restricted knowledge to the senses. For him, the "Good" that provided the unity and meaning for human persons was resident within themselves, not in some transcendent realm beyond. However, despite

[18]Samuel E. Stumpf, *Philosophy, History and Problems* (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1971), 66.

[19]One might note the similarity of this concept to John Wesley's teaching about prevenient grace.

[20]Stumpf, *Philosophy*, 68.

this difference, both defined happiness in relation to an absolute norm that defined human nature. They referred to this norm as a "form," or "essence." For Plato it was above and beyond the mundane world; for Aristotle, it was immanent within the world. W.T. Jones' summary captures the substance of this classical philosophical understanding: "Happiness, then, is what we experience when we are living at our best and fullest, when we are functioning in accordance with our nature, when our end is realizing itself without impediment, when our form is being actualized."[21]

Several factors contributed to the decline of these magnificent visions. The inability of Plato to provide a solid answer to how one could actually ascend to the knowledge and vision of the "Good" led to skepticism that there was in fact an objective truth. Political and cultural changes further influenced the understanding of happiness among philosophers of the pre-Christian era.

The Epicureans and the Stoics represented the two dominant perspectives that emerged in the period after Aristotle. The former taught that happiness is to be found in pleasure. However, this is misleading since the popular notion that they enjoined one to "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die" is completely off the mark. Rather, true happiness is to be found in the higher, intellectual pleasures, not the pleasures of the flesh. Perhaps more accurately, it is absence of pain or *repose*. As Epicurus himself said: "When . . . we maintain that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of profligates and those that consist in sensuality, as is supposed by some who are either ignorant or disagree with us or do not understand, but freedom from pain in the body and from trouble in the mind."[22]

The Stoics were both more popular and more populous. Their understanding of the world was deterministic although it was an ordered determinism and not merely chaotic. Happiness was the result of recognizing this fact and adapting to it. In a word, happiness was *apathy* or *serenity*. These qualities meant the peace of mind that comes though accepting the universe as it is. The famous Stoic prayer,

[21]Jones, *The Classical Mind*, 285.

[22]Quoted in Ibid., 319.

often mistakenly attributed to a Christian source, embodies the ideal attitude:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change
Courage to change the things I can
And wisdom to know the difference.[23]

This attitude results in an indifference to the course of events since nothing can be done about it. This ideal of *apathy*, or absence of emotion, is what has been preserved as the meaning of *stoic*. Possibly John Wesley had the Stoic ideal in mind when, exploring the third beatitude of Jesus, he said, "Apathy is as far from meekness as from humanity."[24]

The eventual failure of the philosophical ideal highlighted the weakness of attempting to discover ultimate truth from below and correspondingly to find happiness from within the limits of time and space. Historically, there emerged a development that spoke about a reality that transcended the outstretched fingers of the wise man and came to humanity from beyond in a revelation that was embodied in the emergence of Christianity.

[23]The substance of this prayer derives from the Stoic philosopher Epictetus.

[24]"Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse II," *Works*, 5:262.

Chapter 3

CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

Two influential Christian philosopher/theologians took up the challenge to explain the secret of happiness. The two classical philosophers discussed in the previous chapter provided the form and basic insights for their response. A religious form of Plato's thought, known as neo-Platonism, influenced St. Augustine while St. Thomas Aquinas took Aristotle's philosophical vision as his model. Each added a distinctive Christian dimension based on three convictions: 1) God has disclosed a truth that transcended merely human discovery, first through the law and finally by the Incarnation of His Son; 2) the distinctiveness of humanity is their having been created in the image of God; 3) the recognition of a major deterrent to perfect happiness in human nature itself, to which Augustine referred as "original sin." Aquinas was more optimistic about human nature so the obstacle to happiness in his view was more intellectual than distorted affections.

Neo-Platonism was formulated by a philosopher named Plotinus. There were many similarities between his understanding and Christianity so that Augustine's discovery of this philosophy enabled him to accept the Christian faith intellectually. Like Plotinus, Augustine believed that there was a universal *eros* in human nature that longed for happiness through union with Ultimate Reality. He experienced this longing in his own experience that manifested itself in a search for truth and contentment. He expressed this longing in the famous lines found in the opening of his *Confessions*: "Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."[25] Thus, humankind is more than a natural being and restricted to that area as the earlier philosophers had assumed, even though the highest of the natural order. Humanity, Augustine came to understand, is the creation of God and has a kind of affinity to Him that longs for union with Him. This created character of humanity is the basis for Augustine's famous statement that "We all certainly desire to live

[25]*The Confessions*, in *The Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, 2 vols. Ed. By Whitney J. Oates (N.Y.: Random House Publishers, 1948), 1:3.

happily; and there is no human being but assents to this statement almost before it is made."[26]

How does one explain this universal desire (*eros*) for happiness? The Platonic tradition inherited by St. Augustine had insisted that it was inherent in human nature because of the presence of a kind of knowledge. Socrates had raised the perplexing question, "How can we be aware of our ignorance of something unless we already know it?" Put in the terms of our inquiry, "how can we desire happiness unless we already know what it is and that it is desirable?" Socrates' answer, followed generally by Plato, was that we were born with an awareness of "the Good," to which we were exposed in a previous existence. Thus, learning was a process of remembering what we had forgotten at birth.

Augustine could not follow this reasoning because of his Christian beliefs but he did make use of the typology of memory to explain the universal phenomenon of a desire for happiness, which he equated with "knowledge" of God (see below). In exploring the question he asked, ". . . where shall I find Thee? If I find Thee not in memory, then am I unmindful of Thee. And how now shall I find Thee, if I do not remember Thee?"[27] He believed that the phenomenon of memory is not an accidental feature of human nature but of the very nature of who we are as created by God. In fact, Augustine equated memory with our essential self: "This I myself am."[28]

We generally understand memory to be the capacity to recall something that we previously learned but this is not how Augustine interpreted it. He is suggesting neither that we knew the Good in a previous existence nor learned it from some prior experience early in life, but that this universal experience is the result of the prevenient grace of God vouchsafing a knowledge of God for all persons. As he puts it, "It is then known to all, and could they with one voice be asked whether they wished to be happy, without doubt they would all answer

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[26]*The Morals of the Catholic Church* in *Basic Writings,* 1:320-1.

[27]*The Confessions*, in *Basic Writings*, 1:160.

[28]Ibid.

that they would. And this could not be unless the thing itself, of which it is the name, were retained in their memory."[29]

If happiness is the enjoyment of man's chief good, it is important to understand the nature of this good. In essence, it is in correlation with the nature of humanity. Hence, Augustine must explore the question, "what is man?" His approach to this question presupposes a kind of dualism. Man is composed of both body and soul. The belief in the goodness of creation does not allow a Platonic-type depreciation of the body but recognition of the importance of both. Nonetheless, the chief good is related to the soul as Augustine concludes:

> So the question seems to me to be not, whether soul and body is man, or the soul only, or the body only, but what gives perfection to the soul; for when this is obtained, a man cannot but be either perfect, or at least much better than in the absence of this one thing."[30]

Philosophical ethics up to this time had generally believed that the happy life was the result of knowledge of the Good. This, we noted earlier, had resulted in skepticism about the possibility of both knowledge and the good life. Augustine moved beyond this rationalistic explanation to the idea that we are united with the Good (God) by love via the instrumentality of Christ and the Spirit. Here is the heart of his understanding of "sanctification." He says, "To this we cleave by sanctification. For when sanctified we burn with full and perfect love, which is the only security for our not turning away from God, and for our being conformed to Him rather than to this world."[31]

Happiness thus is "nothing else than the perfect love of God." Loving anything other than God can only be disordered love and productive of unhappiness. He explores the various options of love: "For one who seeks what he cannot obtain suffers torture, and he who

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[29]Ibid., 162-3.

[30]*The Morals of the Catholic Church*, 1:323. Ultimately this discussion is more akin to Greek philosophy than Hebrew anthropology but it does reflect an important aspect of the Christian view of humankind.

[31]Ibid., 330.

has got what is not desirable is cheated, and one who does not seek for what is worth seeking for is diseased. Now in all these cases the mind cannot but be unhappy, . . ."[32]

Ultimately, however, Augustine is pessimistic about the possibility of perfect happiness in this "unhappy world." This leads to his teaching that the *telos* of perfect happiness lies beyond this life. Here he argues for the inadequacy of all the previous philosophical discussions of the classical virtues since each virtue assumes some evil to be overcome. Since they are interpreted in a naturalistic fashion, they cannot envision an ultimate transcendence of this realm.

> Salvation, such as it shall be in the world to come, shall itself be our final happiness. And this happiness these philosophers refuse to believe in, because they do not see it, and attempt to fabricate for themselves a happiness in this life, based upon a virtue which is as deceitful as it is proud.[33]

There are factors always present that contribute to the "misery" of this present life, including the constant struggle with inward desires that would lead us astray.[34] Furthermore, since we live in a society, the necessity of living in relation to others militates against a perfect happiness. Augustine describes our earthly societal life as taking place in the context of 3 circles, the family, the state or city and the world. The smaller the circle, like the family, the greater the possibility for a happy relationship but as the circles enlarge the possibility diminishes.

While this stipulation may seem like taking away with one hand what has been given by the other, it actually reflects a realistic view of human life in society. Anyone who has experienced the debilitating consequences of domestic disharmony, or interpersonal

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[32]Ibid., 321.

[33]*City of God*, in *Basic Writings*, 2:478.

[34]Augustine cites St. Paul's description of the struggle between flesh and spirit in Romans 7. Quite probably he also has in mind his own early struggles with sexual desires that clearly colored his perception of the Christian life.

conflict at other levels knows the way this militates against the feeling of fulfillment and well-being that is the hallmark of happiness.[35]

St. Thomas Aquinas, like Augustine, interpreted the character of the Christian life in terms of the purpose for which humanity was created. Living in a more "Christian" period of history, Aquinas was more optimistic than Augustine about the possibilities of the happy life in the "natural" realm. He structured his understanding of the moral life after Aristotle whose ethical theory was developed on the premise that happiness was the result of fulfilling one's purpose. Whereas Aristotle described a *naturalistic* morality in which humanity fulfilled their natural capacities, Aquinas declared that there was an additional *end* (telos) of human life that was supernatural. This *telos* was achieved by the development of the theological virtues of faith, hope and love.

Aquinas believed that law appropriately orders human life. There is a natural law that relates to man's rational capacity, which means that it can be discovered by reason. This law is based on God's creativity. When followed it leads to the fulfillment of one's natural life. However, more significant is the divine law, the purpose of which is to direct man to his supernatural end. This law is given by revelation and is found in scripture.

Samuel Stumpf summarizes Aquinas' perspective like this:

> The difference between the natural law and divine law is this: The natural law represents man's rational knowledge of the good by which the intellect directs the will to control man's appetites and passions, leading men to fulfill their natural end by achieving the cardinal virtues of justice, temperance, courage, and prudence. The divine law, on the other hand, comes directly from God through revelation, a gift of God's grace, whereby men are directed to their supernatural ends, having obtained the higher or theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, not through any of man's natural powers, for these virtues are "infused" into man by God's grace.[36]

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[35]This situation may partly lie at the root of the monastic impulse dominant in the Middle Ages, a phenomenon that was profoundly influenced by Augustine's thought.

[36]*Philosophy, History & Problems*, 192.

However, Thomas' theory of knowledge limits his optimism about present happiness. The ultimate *telos,* which is the basis for happiness, is the result of *knowledge* of God. Perfect happiness depends on the possibility of perfect knowledge. However, since finite human beings do not have the capacity to have such knowledge of the essence of God, Thomas concluded that such happiness or beatitude is not possible in this life but awaits the Beatific Vision that can occur only when mortality has been transcended.[37]

[37]*Summa Contra Gentiles*, IX.48.

Chapter 4

HAPPINESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

At first blush, it seems odd at best to speak of happiness in the Old Testament. We have been influenced to think of these Hebrew Scriptures in terms of law with the law viewed in a negative light as an unbearable burden. This implication is partly the result of a misreading of the New Testament emphasis on the law as a "burden too heavy to bear" (Acts 15:10). However, a more careful analysis of the normative Old Testament response to the law will reveal a profound concern by the Creator for the "happiness" of his creatures. In fact, this ideal is expressed in a number of central Old Testament concepts.

Shalom and Happiness. No word more fully captures the Creator's intentions for humanity than the word *Shalom*, which is commonly translated as "peace." However, it is far richer than that English word suggests. Old Testament scholars have come to understand its richness as expressing the idea of "well-being" for human life. One Old Testament theologian depicts the pre-Fall situation described in Genesis as the paradigm for this wide-ranging meaning: ". . . in Eden . . . . Man is in tune with God. Adam and Eve are unashamed with each other; they live in harmony with themselves as well as with animals. Not only their needs but also their desires are fully met. Here is the perfect state."[38]

There are three dimensions to the use of *shalom* in the Bible. Its most frequent use refers to a material and physical state of affairs. It also refers to relationships between persons and further carries a moral sense. The latter is used less frequently than the first two.

Old Testament scholar Claus Westermann has suggested that the significance of the term can be conveyed by the colloquial word, "okay." When we ask someone if they are "okay," in the Biblical sense we are inquiring if they are in a state of well being. Is everything all right? In this way, it goes beyond the general understanding of "peace" in the English language. As Perry B. Yoder summarizes it, ". . . shalom is a positive idea. It points to the *presence* of something like

[38]Elmer Martens, *God's Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 28.

well-being or health, rather than having mainly a negative focus like English peace which points to the *absence* of something like war."[39]

If we can identify the state of well being described by *shalom* with happiness, we can see a significant difference between the Biblical perspective and that of Greek philosophy and those theologians whose thought was formed by this philosophical perspective. The Old Testament recognition of the importance of the physical and material aspect of life is different from the more "spiritual" thought of classical Greek thought. This in large part accounts for the heavy emphasis in the Hebrew Scriptures on the importance of land. The covenantal provision was for every family to own property and enjoy the sustenance and dignity conveyed thereby.

Furthermore, as St. Augustine had recognized, good personal relations were also an important ingredient in the happy life. This is the basis for the prophetic emphasis on the importance of social justice. Even though the state might enjoy prosperity and cessation of war, the prophets declared that not everything was "okay" because the rich were oppressing the poor and there was a debilitating economic disparity in the country. The provision for the "Year of Jubilee" every 50 years was one way of restoring the conditions that made for happiness. Unfortunately, there is no record that it was ever observed.

In summary, *shalom* describes the conditions requisite for happiness to occur. It becomes an ideal for human life and an alluring possibility toward which all sensitive human beings will strive.

Happiness and the Law. The heart of the covenant relation the Lord established with Israel at Mt. Sinai was the law. It is crucial to recognize how the law functioned in this relation. It was given, not as the basis or ground of the covenant but as a description of the lifestyle Israel was to follow as a manifestation of their response to God's redemptive action on their behalf. In a word, it was a response to grace.

The law represented the second aspect of God's redemptive activity of grace extended to Israel as the model of His universal saving purpose. First, they needed to be delivered from slavery in Egypt. After being granted their freedom by "a mighty hand," and accepting the invitation to become the people of Yahweh, this second

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[39]Perry B. Yoder, *Shalom: The Bible's word for Salvation, Justice, and Peace* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1987), 13.

aspect was to restore them to His original creative intention for the human race. This goal was embodied in the law.

Thus, the law was the reflection both of the nature of God and the nature of human personhood as the Creator intended it should be. This meant that the law was a "humanizing" instrument. Conformity to the law in no way inhibited or limited one's humanity but rather, when followed, liberated one to be most fully him or herself.

This understanding informs the proper response to the law in the Old Testament where it is to be joyfully embraced. While teaching in Switzerland on temporary assignment, I was invited to a display of Jewish art in a small German village just over the border from the school. This village had had a strong Jewish presence prior to World War II but the Nazis had decimated it during Hitler's purge. The black and white art display depicted representations of strategic moments in the life of the Jewish community. I had heard about it before but now saw it represented there in one of the paintings. The joyful priest was pictured "dancing with the Torah."

While visiting this area, our guide told us a moving story about the events surrounding the removal of the Jewish people from the village. When the Nazis marched the people away, they also bombed their synagogue. An inhabitant of the village was poking through the rubble afterwards and found the Torah intact and undamaged hidden under the debris. He hid it under his coat, took it to his home and concealed it under his bed. After the war was over, he returned it to the Jewish community. However that may be explained, it spoke to me about the eternal validity of the law of God.

Rightly understood, the law was obviously viewed as the way to happiness. Nowhere is this more clearly expressed than in the Psalms, which some have interpreted as a devotional response to the law. The preface to the Psalter sets the tone as the psalmist declared that "Blessed (happy) is the man [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night." The lengthy Psalm 119 is a sustained affirmation of the joy to be found in following the law of the Lord.

No passage more clearly illustrates the truth that the law embodies the ideal of essential human nature and thus the way to happiness than the words ascribed to Moses in Deut. 30:11-14: "Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you

should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe." These words are a response, almost word for word, to the conditions laid down in a contemporary pagan religion for finding a right relation to God. Paul quotes this passage in Romans 10:5-8 and refers it to the confession that "Jesus is Lord."

Wisdom and Happiness. The wisdom literature of the Old Testament (Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes) is quite different from the rest of Biblical literature. It has not inappropriately been referred to as Hebrew philosophy. Others have called it "maverick literature." This suggests that it has to be interpreted in a special way. To do this requires that we understand its nature.

The premise that informs the positive parts of this literature (primarily Proverbs) is that there are certain principles of successful living that are built into the structure of the universe and these may be discovered by experience. This explains why there is continuity between Hebrew wisdom and that of other peoples of the ancient world. In fact, some of the Proverbs included in the Bible come from pagan sources (e.g. ch. 31). Thus the deliverances of the wise man take the form, "thus says experience," not "thus says the Lord."

Unlike religious thought influenced by Greek philosophy, which tends to disparage the body, Hebrew thought recognizes and celebrates the various aspects of the material world. This attitude is based on belief in the goodness of creation. The series of love poems found in the Song of Solomon mirror this premise as they rejoice in the pleasures of sexual love. The fact that these poems are almost universally allegorized by Christian interpreters to refer to the relation between Christ and the church (or Israel) simply reflects the influence of a perspective alien to the Biblical viewpoint. In the light of our inquiry, the Song of Songs symbolizes the happiness of marital bliss at the sensual level. It gives no support to such behavior outside the marriage commitment. Such activity almost universally results ultimately in some form of unhappiness.

The uniqueness of the wisdom found in the Bible is its belief that God (Yahweh) is the source of these principles that are built into His world. That is why Proverbs prefaces its instructions with "the fear

of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." (1:7) Thus wisdom may be appropriately referred to as "creation theology."

Like all conclusions drawn from experience, the findings of wisdom have the character of probability, not necessity. That is, experience shows that a certain action will normally and usually have a certain result but not necessarily. John Wesley recognizes this characteristic in his sermon "On the Education of Children," based on Proverbs 22:6. He says, "We must not imagine that these words are to be understood in an absolute sense, as if no child that had been trained up in the way wherein he should go had ever departed from it."[40]

With this character, proverbs are obviously prudential in nature. While the outcome is not necessary or automatic, experience shows that certain consequences usually result. Their purpose is to provide an epigrammatic form of guidance to the young and inexperienced as to how to achieve "happiness" in life. These instructions take both positive and negative forms. Certain behaviors and involvements have destructive outcomes. Others generally bring success.

Proverbs 3:13 declares "Happy is the man who finds wisdom," and 3:18 refers to wisdom as a "tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her." The specific character of Hebrew wisdom comes to expression in the proverbial emphasis on happiness being in right relation to God, one's brother and sister, and keeping the law (see Proverbs 14:21; 16:20; 28:14; 29:18).

One of the unique features of Biblical wisdom is its recognition of its own limitations. One exception to its own understanding of the happy life is explored in the saga of Job, the good man who suffered in contradiction to the conventional wisdom that success follows goodness and suffering is the result of sin.

The most sustained analysis of the limitations of experience in finding happiness is the enigmatic book of Ecclesiastes. In this book, the perspective of wisdom is described by "the Preacher" with the words, "under the sun." This phrase does not refer to a cosmological position but a way of knowing. Human knowledge is restricted to what can be learned by experience, i.e. through the senses. This view of knowledge is termed "empiricism." John Wesley recognized the same limitation. In arguing that the body is indispensable to the soul, he

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[40] *Works*, 7:86.

says, "For an embodied spirit cannot form one thought but by the mediation of its bodily organs."[41] Limited to what can be learned by experience, the writer of Ecclesiastes describes life as "vanity," or "emptiness." (1:2)

The early chapters of Ecclesiastes reflect the philosophy of history in the ancient world that was derived from the observation of nature. Since nature manifests a circular pattern, history was viewed as likewise cyclical. This means that history simply repeated itself in an endless round of cycles. The writer describes this pattern explicitly: "That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9). This implies that according to the cyclical view of history life is condemned to a round of repeated events that are deterministic in nature and we, as a part of nature, are not free. The result is that life can have no meaning. Hence, the best that it can offer is a very pessimistic outlook.

However, the writer does not leave his audience in this hopeless, miserable existence. He offers another source of wisdom that comes from above, rather than below, in 7:11—"Wisdom is good with an inheritance, And profitable to those who see the sun."[42] The symbolism employed here implies that there is a truth given by Divine revelation that provides an answer to the quest for happiness.

[41]"The Fall of Man," *Works*, 6:219.

[42]T.M. Moore argues that the phrase, "under the heavens" (used twice in the book: 1:13 and 3:1) carries the same implications. *Ecclesiastes* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 11.

Chapter 5

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HAPPINESS

My initial intention was to balance the discussion of happiness in the Old Testament with a similar analysis of happiness in the New Testament. A cursory survey of the material seemed to indicate that the major sources would be found in the Synoptic Gospels, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount. Since the dominant theme in the teaching of Jesus found in these sources was the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven (synonyms) and since John Wesley equated the Kingdom with "true religion" which implies "happiness as well as holiness,"[43] it seemed more feasible to explore the theme of the Kingdom through the lens of Wesley's interpretation.

James Stalker makes the relation between happiness and the teaching of Jesus explicit:

> . . . the desire for happiness is too deep-seated and truly natural to be argued away. . . . Jesus, ever true to nature, acknowledged this as one of the primordial forces of our being, and endeavored to enlist it among the motives of goodness. Only He employed the word 'blessed' in the place of 'happy'—a simple yet a radical change; for blessedness is a happiness pure and spiritual, reaching down to the profoundest elements of human nature and reaching forth to the illimitable developments of eternity.[44]

Wesley recognizes that the concept of the Kingdom refers to the "rule or reign of God," rather than the place where God rules.[45] This is the generally accepted interpretation among contemporary New Testament scholars. However, consistent with his emphasis throughout his sermons, Wesley lays primary stress upon the inwardness of this reign. Such an emphasis created opposition from those of his

[43]"The Way to the Kingdom," *Works*, 5:80.

[44]*The Ethic of Jesus* (N.Y.: George H. Doran Co., 1909), 38.

[45]*Works*, 5:81.

contemporaries whose theology interpreted it in terms of what Wesley would call "nominal Christianity."[46]

The Sermon on the Mount is central to Jesus' teaching and has been appropriately referred to as the "constitution of the Kingdom of God." Its most overt relation to the theme of happiness appears to be the use of "blessed" in connection with what we call "the Beatitudes," a term directly derived from the Latin word for happiness. Wesley says that "happy" is the way the word should be rendered[47] although most modern interpreters of the Sermon feel that "happy" is too easy an identification. The reason most often given is the dissonance between Jesus' descriptions and the generally understood meaning of happiness. That is precisely the point.

There is something more profound here than a new set of moral principles or even a new definition of happiness. This is suggested by Wesley's emphasis on the inwardness of religion as the essence of the Kingdom of God throughout his expositions of the Sermon. To be sure, Jesus *is* teaching His followers about the life that is to be manifested by Kingdom people but He is more than a Teacher. As Oswald Chambers emphasizes, "He did not come to give us a new code of morals; He came to enable us to keep a moral code we had not been able to fulfill. Jesus did not teach new things; He taught 'as one having authority'—with power to make men into accordance with what He taught."[48] By implication, the understanding of happiness that informs the Sermon will make no sense to "common sense." It becomes meaningful only by a transformation of the person. Chambers is right to claim that

> The teachings and standards of Jesus, which are so distasteful to modern Christianity, are based on what our Lord said to Nicodemus: 'Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again': otherwise our Lord was a dreamer. The reason we do not see the need to be born from above is that we have a vast capacity for ignoring facts.[49]

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[46]Cf. the experience recorded in his Journal for Nov. 24, 1739. *Works*, 1:250-1.

[47]*Works*, 5:252.

[48]*The Highest Good* (London: Simpkin Marshall, Ltd., 1941), 13.

James Stalker also reflects this implied aspect of Jesus' message:

> This is the point at which the ethical teaching of Jesus differs most widely from the similar teaching of philosophy. The ethics of the philosophers bear a considerable resemblance to the teaching of Jesus in so far as the setting up of an ideal of character and conduct is concerned; but little or nothing is said by the philosophers about the inability of men to attain to the standard, or of the manifold forms of failure exhibited in actual experience.[50]

The understanding of happiness that conforms to the theological interpretation of Wesley *and* Jesus is on an entirely different plane. W. Clyde Tilly's observation is a good analysis of it:

> "blessed". . . . is closely related to our idea of "happy." However, it does not refer to happiness from the standpoint of the inner state of elation, which we feel when we are happy; it refers rather to happiness as a state of blessedness from God's point of view. It speaks of that state of well-being, which one has because God looks upon him with approval.[51]

Happiness as True Religion. However, there is a line of reasoning that brings the entire content of the Sermon solidly into interface with the higher view of happiness. What Jesus is teaching, says Wesley, is "the true way to life everlasting; the royal way which leads to the kingdom; and the only true way,[52] or as he frequently describes it, "true religion."[53] And true religion is a heart right toward God and man and "implies happiness as well as holiness." He further

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[49]Ibid, 21-21.

[50]Quoted in Ibid.

[51]W. Clyde Tilley, *The Surpassing Righteousness* (Greenville, SC: Smyth & Helwys Pub. Co., 1992), 46.

[52]*Works*, 5:248.

[53]Cf. "The Way to the Kingdom," *Works* 5:76.

declares, "this holiness and happiness, joined into one, are sometimes styled in the inspired writings, 'the kingdom of God'."[54]

Since the Sermon is an exposition of the ethics of the Kingdom, it may be interpreted as a description of the life that is the embodiment of happiness. The Beatitudes in particular depict one who is "happy in the end, and in the way; happy in this life; and in life everlasting."[55] It is significant that the consequence of the first and last beatitude is the Kingdom of Heaven. This bracketing of the other beatitudes with a reference to the Kingdom further suggests that they *all* have to do with the Kingdom.

Applying the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes may legitimately be interpreted either as steps taken to enter the kingdom, or as guides in the process of growing toward the perfection Jesus enjoins in Matt. 6:48. They may also be seen as characteristics present at every stage of the journey.

The initial step in any phase of the spiritual life is "poverty of spirit," which refers to "the humble; they who know themselves; who are convinced of sin; those to whom God has given that first repentance which is previous to faith in Christ."[56] "It is a just sense of our inward and outward sins, and of our guilt and helplessness."[57]

It may also be the first step in coming to terms with those affections and tempers that constitute inward disconformity to perfect love and are present throughout the Christian journey since "The more we grow in grace, the more do we see of the desperate wickedness of our heart."[58] This awareness is the basis for the second Beatitude (mourning) that produces the spirit of meekness. "This divine temper is not only to abide but to increase in us day by day."[59]

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[54]Ibid, 80.

[55]*Works*, 5:251.

[56]Ibid, 253.

[57]Ibid, 255.

[58]Ibid, 257.

[59]Ibid, 263.

With the first three Beatitudes, the Lord is "removing the hindrances of true religion," pride, levity and thoughtlessness.

> Once these hindrances are removed, the native appetite of a heaven-born spirit returns; it hungers and thirsts after righteousness, . . . which is the mind which was in Christ Jesus. It is every holy and heavenly temper in one; springing from as well as terminating in, the love of God, as our Father and Redeemer, and the love of all men for his sake.[60]

This alone is the condition for true happiness.

Here again we find Wesley's definition of holiness as involving love for God and neighbor. The former involves delighting oneself in the Lord, "seeking and finding happiness in Him." The love of the other person means loving all persons "with the same thirst after his happiness as for yourself."[61]

The Sermon and the Image of God. One additional element is needed to round out the picture. Since holiness, the essence of the Sermon, is the renewal of persons in the image of God and we have already seen that holiness and happiness (as well-being) are the twin goals of God's redeeming work, the Sermon is rightly understood as Jesus' description of how the image of God is to be lived out in the redeemed and happy life.

In the light of these relations, the image of God provides us with a grid with which we can structure the ethical emphases in the Sermon. Wesley's traditional interpretation of the *imago* is three-fold. It involves the natural image, the moral image and the political image.[62] Salvation in the broader sense is primarily concerned with the restoration of the moral image that was lost in the Fall. As Wesley explicated it, this aspect *explicitly* includes the two relations noted above, which he repeats almost *ad infinitum*. However, it also

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[60]Ibid, 267.

[61]Ibid, 79.

[62]"The New Birth," *Works*, 6:66. Maddox insists that "Wesley's anthropology recognized four basic human relationships: with God, with other humans, with lower animals, and with ourselves." The reader will notice a difference from our proposal in the third relation.

implicitly involves two other relations: to possessions and to oneself. This four-fold complex of relations constituting the *imago dei* has virtually become standard in contemporary scholarship.[63] This structure clearly emerges in the explicitly ethical sections of the Sermon.

The love of God is the "root of all holiness,"[64] which "lies in the heart, in the inmost soul;" and involves "the union of the soul with God, the life of God in the soul of man. But if this root is really in the heart, it cannot but put forth branches."[65] This implies that the relation of the Kingdom person to God is assumed throughout the Sermon while the fruit of holiness is manifested in the relation to the other person and possessions, both of which are given special attention. For example, "blessed are the merciful" is developed in terms of the attitude and behavior of love toward others and its content, Wesley often avers, is elaborated in detail by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.

It is beyond the purpose of this study to explore the numerous applications of these principles the Lord makes but Wesley's series of sermons on this unit of scripture are filled with descriptions of how love for God will manifest itself in human relations and in the use of material goods and, by implication, what is the proper self-estimate.

Happiness and the Affections. A further implication of the Kingdom of God defined as "true religion" arises from the affectional characteristics or "dispositions of the soul." These dispositions are identified by St. Paul in Romans 14:17: "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (RSV). Wesley frequently refers to this trilogy and seems to identify them with the happiness that is the correlative of holiness. He refers to Matthew 5 as laying before us

> those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity; the inward tempers contained in that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;" the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through

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[63]Cf. Dunning, *Grace, Faith & Holiness*, 277-283.

[64]Works, 5:115.

[65]Ibid, 303-4.

> Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God.[66]

We explored the concept of righteousness above as involving love for God and neighbor. The "affections" of peace and joy may be viewed as being closely related to happiness. Wesley identifies them with "inward feelings" and argues that their reality depends upon their being "inwardly felt." In response to a critique of his emphasis on inward holiness, he says, "You reject all *joy* in the Holy Ghost. For if we cannot be *sensible* of this, it is no joy at all. You reject the *peace* of God, which if it be not *felt* in the *inmost soul* is a dream, a notion, an empty name. You therefore reject the whole *inward kingdom* of God, that is, in effect, the whole gospel of Jesus Christ.[67]

Peace. Like other "fruit of the Spirit," this affection is quite different from the "worldly" concept. It does not necessarily involve absence of tumult or disturbance.

> It is a peace that banishes all doubt, all painful uncertainty; the Spirit of God bearing witness with the spirit of a Christian, that he is "a child of God." And it banishes fear, all such fear as hath torment; the fear of the wrath of God; the fear of hell; the fear of the devil; and, in particular, the fear of death: He that hath the peace of God, desiring, if it were the will of God, 'to depart and be with Christ'.[68]

Joy. Of all the religious affections characteristic of the Kingdom of God, joy is the most unlike the natural expression of it. Wesley emphasizes that it is quite compatible with affliction and even sorrow. Of St. Paul's reference to his "tears and trials" in Acts 20:19 he says: "joy is well consistent therewith. The same person may be 'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing'."[69]

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[66]Ibid, 328.

[67]Quoted in Collins, *Scripture Way of Salvation*, 125-6.

[68]"The Way to the Kingdom," *Works*, 5:80.

[69]*Notes on the New Testament*, 477-8.

This is because "it does not arise from any natural cause: Not from any sudden flow of spirits. This may give a transient start of joy; but the Christian *rejoiceth always*." This joy arises from the assurance that we have been the recipients of the unmerited favor of God in justification and experienced the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the soul. "I rejoice, because the sense of God's love to me hath, by the same Spirit, wrought in me to love him, and to love for his sake every child of man, every soul that he hath made." Thus Christian joy is "joy in obedience; joy in loving God and keeping his commandments."[70]

[70]"The Witness of Our Own Spirit," *Works*, 5:141-143.

CHAPTER 6

JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY OF HAPPINESS

The theme of happiness runs like a golden thread throughout the sermons of John Wesley. It played a central role in his first recorded sermon entitled "Death and Deliverance" from Job 3:17 (1725). In this sermon he affirmed that "the desire of happiness is inseparably [bound] to our nature, and is the spring which sets all our faculties a-moving."[71] A reference to happiness appears in his discussion of virtually every central Christian doctrine and several sermons that do not speak directly about it have relevance to the subject. His fundamental premise about happiness was that it was the essence of God's creative intention for the human race. This premise is the basis for his identification of happiness with holiness, an emphasis he makes throughout his sermons,[72] since the essence of holiness involves the restoration of humanity to its original condition lost in the Fall. Based on these two premises, the two major branches of theological reflection inform Wesley's understanding of happiness, namely creation and redemption.

Creation. The outcome of God's creative activity is expressed by the term "good," which the Creator pronounced to be the character of His handiwork. Each individual item in the created world is "good" and the whole taken as an integrated system is "very good." It is helpful to recognize that "good" is a purpose word. That is, the creation is "good" because it fulfills the purpose of the Creator. All aspects of the created order were marked by "the most perfect order and harmony." Every element of ugliness, natural danger, and eruptions in nature that cause destruction and death were absent in the

[71]*The Works of John Wesley*, Vols. 1-4 ed. Albert Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 209. Subsequently referred to as Outler, *Works*. This sermon is prior to his Aldersgate experience and reflects a rather morbid outlook about the possibility of happiness in this life.

[72]Outler notes that the relation of holiness and happiness appears in at least 30 of Wesley's sermons. Ibid, 35, n. 28.

primeval state "before they were disordered and depraved in consequence of the sin of man."[73]

Wesley's fascinating speculations about the state of the pre-Fall creation are clearly influenced by the cosmology of Sir Isaac Newton and the speculation of pre-Socratic philosopher, Empedocles. Newton had depicted the universe as a giant machine with all parts fitting together in a well-ordered, perfectly functioning pattern. This is how Wesley interpreted the "goodness" of creation. Empedocles' cosmological speculation had posited the thesis that everything is composed of four elements: earth, air, fire and water in varying proportions and mixtures. Hence, Wesley says: "[God] first created the four elements, out of which the whole universe was composed, earth, water, air, and fire, all mingled together in one common mass. . . . They were all essentially distinct from each other; and yet so intimately mixed together, in all compound bodies, that we cannot find any, be it ever so minute, which does not contain them all."[74]

Even though "every part was exactly suited to the others, and conducive to the good of the whole," God created a hierarchy of beings extending from the lowest to the highest with humanity being the apex of this "golden chain let down from the throne of God." As the crown of God's creativity, humanity was created in the image of God and "designed to know, to love and enjoy his Creator to all eternity."[75] This defines the basic condition for human happiness.

Wesley explicitly rejected the popular notion that God created out of need, that is, the rationale for creation that says he was lonely and desired fellowship so created humanity for this purpose. If we understand love as *agape*, meaning essentially outgoing and self-giving love, it would be appropriate to say that God created out of love. However, this does not imply an anthropocentric, in contrast to a theocentric, view of creation since the goodness of creatures is a manifestation of the glory of, and brings glory to, God.

As an expression of his outgoing love, "[God] made all things to be happy. He made man to be happy in Himself. He is the proper

[73]"God's Approbation of His Works," *Works*, 6:206ff.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Ibid, 213.

centre of spirits; for whom every created spirit was made." This means simply that human happiness is the consequence of love for God with all that this entails.[76] Wesley frequently affirms this point: "You are made to be happy in God, as soon as ever reason dawns;" "He made *you*; and he made you to be happy in him; and nothing else can make you happy." This is the creational basis for his oft-repeated quote of St. Augustine's famous confession, "Thou hast made us for thyself; and our heart cannot rest, till it resteth in thee."[77]

One may be tempted to raise the question, "if this was God's purpose in creation, why did He not provide a safeguard to keep it from being disrupted?" Wesley's answer makes it clear that the possibility of happiness is at the same time the possibility of misery. Unless humanity were *free* to love the Creator, and by implication free to not do so, happiness as Wesley understood it would be impossible.

> Were human liberty taken away, men would be as incapable of virtue as stones. Therefore (with reverence be it spoken,) the Almighty himself cannot do this thing. He cannot contradict himself, or undo what he has done. He cannot destroy out of the soul of man that image of himself wherein he made him: And without doing this, he cannot abolish sin and pain out of this world.[78]

This analysis gives us a clue as to how Wesley understands "happiness." It emerges in connection with his interpretation of the uniqueness of human nature. Above all the other superior qualities that characterized the pre-Fall state of humankind is the fact that "he was a creature capable of God; capable of knowing, loving, and obeying his Creator. . . . From this right state and right use of all his faculties, his happiness naturally flowed."[79] *This implies that happiness is the*

[76]This principle becomes the basis for Wesley's equation of holiness with love and consequently with happiness. We will explore this in greater depth later on.

[77]*Works*, 7:266-7.

[78]*Works*, 6:318. Cf. Also 6:227, 242, 311.

[79]Ibid, 243.

proper functioning of one's essential nature, a principle that applies to every level of created beings.

Of considerable interest is Wesley's interpretation of the original state of humanity. He seems to be more in agreement with the Eastern Church on this subject than the Western. The latter held that Adam and Eve were created perfect and complete whereas the former taught that they were innocent but capable of increased perfection. Consistent with his uniform insistence on the dynamic (in contrast to static) character of human existence he held that the first pair were capable of continuous growth and development. In fact, this was the Divine plan. "It was also the design of their beneficent Governor herein to make way for a continual increase of their happiness; seeing every instance of obedience to that law would both add to the perfection of their nature, and entitle them to an higher reward, which the righteous Judge would give in its season."[80] No wonder he came to reject the idea of a "static state" of holiness that would have stultified the Christian life.

Happiness and the Fall. Unfortunately, this happy condition was interrupted by sin and God's creative intention was thwarted. The natural world itself was negatively impacted by human rebellion and distorted from its original beauty, order and congeniality to human habitation. Thus misery, the antithesis of happiness, is the result of sin.

In defense of the thesis that the Fall produced a universal corruption of the human race, Wesley appeals to the universality of unhappiness:

> Universal misery is at once a consequence and a proof of this universal corruption. Men are unhappy, (how very few are the exceptions!) because they are unholy. . . . Why is the earth so full of complicated distress? Because it is full of complicated wickedness. Why are not you happy? Other circumstances may concur, but the main reason is, because you are not holy. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that wickedness can consist with happiness.[81]

[80]"The Original, Nature, Property, and Use of the Law," *Works*, 5:436.

[81]"The Doctrine of Original Sin," *Works*, 9:235.

It is obvious that gross vices produce misery, whether in the individual, the family, the village or the state. Further, when sinful attitudes such as envy, malice, revenge, covetousness are present "a man can no more be happy while they lodge in his bosom, than if a vulture was gnawing his liver." However, less gross sins such as pride, anger, self-will and foolish desires also "prevent the generality of men, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, from ever knowing what happiness means." A case can be made that "self-will" is the very essence of "original sin," and Wesley is certainly on the mark when he responds to the question, "Can a man be happy who is full of self-will?" He concludes, "not unless he can dethrone the Most High." In a word, "it is unholiness which causes unhappiness."[82]

Nevertheless, after the fall, there remains the inherent, universal desire for happiness, which is by its very nature a longing for God. This phenomenon is explained by what Wesley referred to as "preventing grace," and contemporary Wesleyans call "prevenient grace."

Happiness and Prevenient Grace. Prevenient grace is such a central concept for the Wesleyan understanding of both human nature and the redemptive work of God that it deserves a more careful analysis. It can be most clearly seen in relation to the question of the preparation for the gospel and when placed in juxtaposition to the Calvinistic view. These two theological traditions can be most fruitfully contrasted by examining their understanding of the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation). We must admit that for most modern practitioners in the Reformed tradition, there has been considerable "Arminianising" so that contemporary evangelicalism reflects more the Wesleyan order than that of pure Calvinism. Consequently, we are speaking about the pristine, more consistent understanding of the Reformed position that prevailed in Wesley's day.

Consistent with its views on predestination, original sin and grace, Calvinism sees the human condition as being completely "dead," inert so far as any pre-conversion sensitivity to the Divine is concerned. Thus, the first movement of grace in the order of salvation involves regeneration, the unilateral generation of life in the dead soul.

[82]Ibid, 236-7.

Hence, faith and repentance are both subsequent to regeneration.[83] By contrast, for Wesleyan thought, the process of salvation begins with *awakening,* which is made possible by prevenient grace and occurs in some measure with all persons everywhere. Then, normatively, follows *repentance,* which is also made possible by prevenient grace, and is interpreted by Wesley as self-knowledge,[84] and is not to be interpreted as a good work in any sense of the word. Repentance prepares the way for and is the basis for *faith,* which is the acceptance of the offer of forgiveness.

In the light of the contrast between these two theologies, one can immediately see that for Wesleyan thought there is a universal preparation for the gospel that we are here identifying with a universal desire for happiness. There are three lines of development in Wesley's thought on prevenient grace that impinge on this matter. The first has to do with a general awareness of the "existence" of God and the second involves the concept of "moral law," embodied in the "conscience." The third has to do with the implications of Wesley's understanding of human nature as defined by the *imago dei* (image of God), particularly as it may be developed systematically in more contemporary terms.

Universal Knowledge of God. In his comment on Acts 14:17, Wesley notes: "For the heathen had always from God Himself a testimony both of His existence and of His providence." The opening lines of his sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" read: "Some great truths as the being and attributes of God, and the difference between moral good and evil, were known in some measure, in the heathen world. The traces of them are to be found in all nations. . . ."[85] While we may grant a measure of optimism in Wesley's judgment about the content of this universal knowledge, we must agree--on empirical evidence--to the general truth of a universal awareness of an infinite dimension of reality impinging on human consciousness.

[83]See R.C. Sproul, *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1990) for a clear and consistent presentation of this position.

[84]Oswald Chambers concurs by saying "Self-knowledge is the first condition of repentance." *The Highest Good*, 35.

[85]W*orks*, 6:512.

In Wesley's sermon on "The End of Christ's Coming," he implies an important distinction regarding the nature of "knowledge." His thesis in this sermon is that the purpose of Christ's coming is to destroy the work of the devil and that entails a series of steps, the first of which is to reverse the effects of the Fall. The first step in the Fall was unbelief and thus the first step back is belief, enabled to occur by the work of the Son of God. Here

> He both opens and enlightens the eyes of our understanding. Out of darkness, he commands light to shine, and takes away the veil, which the 'god of this world' had spread over our hearts. And we then see not by a chain of *reasoning* but by a kind of *intuition*, by a direct view, that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses;' . . . .[86]

It is clear from the context that Wesley is here reciting the distinctive truths of the gospel, but it is his recognition of the possibility of intuitive knowledge that is important. While we must confess some inconsistency within Wesley himself (as this passage betrays), he generally affirms that knowledge of particular truths comes only through experience. Since he is deeply influenced by John Locke's empiricism,[87] it seems feasible to make a distinction between intuitive knowledge and empirical knowledge. Of the second, and its nature, he says in exploring the consequences of the Fall: ". . . an embodied spirit cannot form one thought but by the mediation of its bodily organs. For thinking is not, as many suppose, the act of a pure spirit; but the act of a spirit connected with a body, and playing upon a set of material keys."[88]

One may now make a systematic statement regarding the universal knowledge of God, a form of "awakening." If one speaks philosophically, this awakening can be described as intuition; if one speaks theologically, by the activity of prevenient grace. However it is described, there is a direct apprehension of an Ultimate Reality

[86]*Works*, 6:274-5.

[87]See his positive reference to Locke's work, *Works*, 6:352.

[88]Sermon 57, "The Fall of Man," *Works*, 6:219.

vouchsafed to all persons everywhere. This point of contact is explicitly assumed by St. Paul in his encounter with the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill. Our conclusion would be that the *awareness* of God, however described, is universal and noncognitive. On the other hand, the "truths" of the Christian faith are indeed apprehended by reason[89] but nonetheless must be communicated to the person empirically. This has tremendous implications for a theology of mission.

Universality of Conscience. The second line of development relating to this universal preparation for the gospel is reflected in Wesley's note on John 1:9. The enlightening of every person is "By what is vulgarly termed natural conscience, pointing out at least the general lines of good and evil."[90] This concept is carefully addressed in his sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" where he says:

> Allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural: It is more properly termed *preventing grace*.[91]

An interpretive issue may be raised here. When Wesley describes the work of God in the soul, he normally does so in the context of the gospel. That is, he assumes that the *ordo salutis* is operative with persons who have heard the gospel and are responding to it in terms of the knowledge of the "truths" of the Christian faith. Only occasionally does he address the situation of persons who have not been so privileged, and usually only in an oblique and negative fashion so as to emphasize how far short his supposedly enlightened hearers are from the normative Christianity that they ostensibly know. The result is that he appears to give no positive significance to the measure of light and understanding present among the unenlightened. However, if we keep in mind the context of his comments, we can

[89] *Works*, 6:354.

[90] *Explanatory Notes*, 303.

[91] *Works*, 6:12.

legitimately ascribe positive value to those otherwise negative evaluations. Since our purpose here is to note the more general implications of prevenient grace, we should recognize that there are at least two levels of application of Wesley's comments about both heathen and adherents of other religions.

It seems important to recognize in the light of these comments that "conscience," as Wesley defined and applied it, is abstract in its nature. That is, he is not suggesting that a certain content, e.g. the Ten Commandments, are given immediately and intuitively to all persons. There is rather some similarity to Immanuel Kant's analysis of human reason in that "form without content is empty but content without form is blind." It is the "form" of conscience that is universal as the work of prevenient grace, whereas the "content" is given in experience.

Another way of expressing this same truth is in terms of the condition of "natural man." Natural man is devoid of any knowledge of God or truth, as well as incapable of responding to the Divine impulses toward salvation. However, Wesley insisted, natural man is a logical abstraction since there are no persons devoid of grace, prevenient grace. Nature is so graced that the universal consequences of the Fall are mitigated by the universal manifestation of God's love and mercy toward all His created human persons. What we are suggesting is that this universal *eros* takes the form of a desire for happiness even though, as with conscience, the way to achieve happiness may be informed by many, even distorting, factors. The way to true happiness is to be found only in the gospel.

Image of God. The third line of development in speaking about the universal preparation for the gospel is found in a Wesleyan understanding of the *imago dei*. As we have previously noted, Wesley reproduces the traditional Protestant understanding of this teaching, with one modification. In addition to the moral and natural aspects of the image, common to most descriptions, Wesley added a "political image." Thus, the image in which God created man included a three-fold dimension: the natural image, the political image and the moral image. In the Fall, the moral image was lost resulting in total depravity *before* God whereas the natural and political aspects were retained in a distorted manner.

Colin Williams is on solid ground in affirming that Wesley defined original righteousness in terms of man's relation to God. Wesley says that "man was created looking directly to God, as his last

end [*telos*]; but, falling into sin, he fell off from God, and turned into himself."[92]

The real essence of the *imago* is found in Wesley's oft-repeated affirmation that man alone of all created beings is "capable of God."[93] While including reason in his definition of the so-called natural image, Wesley denies that this is the real distinction between men and brutes on the basis that brutes have a certain reasoning capacity. "We may as well deny that they have sight or hearing. But it is this: Man is capable of God; the inferior creatures are not. We have no ground to believe that they are, in any degree, capable of knowing, loving, or obeying God. This is the specific difference between man and brute; the great gulf which they cannot pass over."[94]

What is critical here is the fact that if this capacity was lost in the Fall, it is restored by prevenient grace. Thus, the practical consequences of "total depravity" are mitigated so that man still remains, in a sense, in the image of God in terms of his capacity for God. The history of Christian thought has been all but unanimous in affirming this fact with only a few exceptions. This is why almost all theories of the *imago* have a two-fold aspect, recognizing what G.C. Berkouwer calls the image in a wider sense as well as in a narrow sense.[95]

Following Irenaeus' exegesis of Gen. 1:26, Catholic theology general distinguished between the "image" and the "likeness." While Luther rejected this way of doing it and affirmed a total loss of the image of God in an effort to remove any basis for salvation other than grace alone, he affirmed a relic that remained. This led to the traditional distinction between the "natural" (misnamed, incidentally) and the "moral" image referred to above.

N.T.Wright said about fallen humanity: "Human beings know in their bones that they are made for each other, human beings know in

[92]*Works*, 9:456.

[93]Cf. Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (N.Y.: Abingdon Press, 1960), 48.

[94]"The General Deliverance," *Works*, 6:244.

[95]G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Pub. Co., 1962), 59-60.

their bones that they are made to look after and shape this world and human beings know in their bones that they are made to worship someone whom they resemble. In a word, human beings are made for relationship, worship and stewardship."[96]

The implications for the proclamation of the gospel are obvious. When one declares the "good news" to people in darkness, that message does not come as an alien word but one indigenous to the very structure of their personhood manifested, among other ways, in the universal quest for happiness. One can only see the gospel, from this angle, as a message of fulfillment. This is the logical implication of Wesley's oft-repeated emphasis on happiness as the concomitant of a right relation to God.

Humanity's Distorted Pursuit of Happiness. Humanity continually seeks happiness in ways that are counterproductive. "A scorner of happiness in God seeketh happiness, but findeth none."[97] We have seen how the key to true happiness, for Wesley, is the result of an unreserved, exclusive, love for God and disinterested love for one's neighbor. Thus, whatever becomes a competitive object of ones love militates against true happiness. In fact, attempting to find happiness in any way other than in God is idolatry.[98]

One of the most insidious of such diversions is the "deceitfulness of riches." Wesley traces in broad strokes the course of church history, demonstrating how recurrent revivals of vital piety soon degenerate into the loss of the original vitality through what in contemporary jargon we would refer to as "upward mobility." This was true even in the earliest days of the Christian faith as sin intruded into the midst of the followers of Christ by the desire for riches that led Ananias and Sapphira to "lie to the Holy Spirit."

Wesley's safeguard against "the love of money, which is the root of all [kinds of] evil" (1 Timothy 6:10) is his well-known three-fold pattern regarding the use of riches. He was concerned that his Methodist people were taking seriously the first two steps ("make all

[96]N.T. Wright, "Jesus and the World's True Light," Intervarsity Press Conference, January 1999.

[97]"*Spiritual Idolatry,*" *Works*, 6:442.

[98]Ibid, 437.

you can" and "save all you can") but ignoring the third that advised one to "give all you can." It is this third step that keeps one from "laying up treasures on earth." If the accumulation of wealth is not avoided, "they must needs grow more and more earthly-minded. Their affections will cleave to the dust more and more; and they will have less and less communion with God. . . . There is no other way under heaven to prevent your money from sinking you lower than the grave!"[99] In his sermon on "The Danger of Riches" he observed that "during an observation of over sixty years, I do not remember one instance of a man given up to the love of money, till he had neglected to employ this precious talent according to the will of his Master."[100]

In apparently referring to the revival that accompanied his own ministry, he spoke of the quality of the men who were the instruments of this awakening: "These also were simple of heart, devoted to God, zealous of good works; desiring neither honour, nor riches, nor pleasure, nor ease, nor anything under the sun; but to attain the whole image of God, and to dwell with him in glory."[101] Unfortunately, he laments, various consequences of upward mobility, especially the "deceitfulness of riches" impacted them until their ministry became less fruitful and less vital.

Some seek happiness in the pleasures of eating and drinking; others in "pretty or elegant apparel, or furniture, or in new clothes, or books, or in pictures, or gardens." Although not necessarily harmful in themselves, none of these can give true happiness but may make one "more dead to God, and more alive to the world."[102] True happiness can only be found when we seek it in none of these, but in God alone.[103]

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[99]"The Wisdom of God's Counsels, *Works, 6:332.* Wesley was almost obsessive about the matter of money, virtually insisting that poverty was essential to piety. He was very sensitive about his own financial matters going to great pains to demonstrate that although he inadvertently became rich due to the unexpected success of his writings, he gave much of it away to meet the needs of others. (*Works*, 7:9) His studied conclusion seems to be that "riches have, in all ages, been the bane of genuine Christianity." "The Mystery of Iniquity," *Works*, 6:266.

[100]*Works*, 7:4

[101]Ibid, 330.

[102]Ibid, 332.

The three aspects of worldliness identified in 1 John 2:16 define, for Wesley, the fruitless ways one may seek happiness. The "lust of the flesh" is seeking happiness through the senses, particularly of taste; "The desire of the eyes" is a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies the internal sense, the imagination, either by things grand, or new, or beautiful; the pride of life seems to mean a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies the sense of honour. To this head is usually referred 'the love of money;' one of the basest passions that can have place in the human heart."[104]

Positive Benefits of the Fall. In giving advice about the education of children, Wesley demonstrates his belief that, as a result of the Fall, all children are born with propensities that are contrary to godliness. He offers guidance to parents as to how these may be counteracted in ways that develop a mentality that would be responsive to the gospel at the proper time.[105] Oddly, he also taught that the Fall created the opportunity for the increase of happiness since it made possible the cultivation of certain virtues that are of the essence of holiness.

This unusual conclusion is based on his conviction that holiness and happiness are inseparably united. The Fall created the condition for the increase of happiness since it made possible the cultivation of certain virtues that are of the essence of holiness. Furthermore, it created the possibility of being happier in heaven, than otherwise humanity could have been.

Consistent with the position of the Western church, Wesley taught that if there had been no Fall, "Christ had not died," and we would not have the experience of "faith in God thus loving the world, giving his own Son for us men, and for our salvation." In consequence, we would have known only the love of God as Creator, but not as Redeemer because the chief ground, and definitive instance of this love is manifested in the Christ event. More to the point of our interest is Wesley's claim that we have gained much from the Fall with regard to both the love of God and of our neighbor and these are at the heart of happiness.

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[103]"An Israelite Indeed," *Works,* 7:40. Cf. Also *Works* 7:6, 267;

[104]*Works, 6:332;* "On the Education of Children," *Works*, 7:90.

[105]Ibid.

Since pain and suffering result from the Fall, these too become the occasion for the cultivation of holiness through our response to them. "For how much good does he continually bring out of this evil! How much holiness and happiness out of pain!" This is so because suffering provides a "thousand opportunities" of "exercising all those passive graces which increase both [ones] holiness and happiness."

This most unusual argument is summarized in these words:

> As the more holy we are upon earth the more happy we must be; (seeing there is an inseparable connexion between holiness and happiness;) as the more good we do to others, the more of present reward redounds into our own bosom; even as our sufferings for God lead us to rejoice in him 'with joy unspeakable and full of glory;' therefore, the fall of Adam,-- First, by giving us an opportunity of being far more holy, Secondly, by giving us the occasions of doing innumerable good works, . . and Thirdly, by putting it into our power to suffer for God, whereby "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon us,"—may be of such advantage to the children of men, even in the present life, as they will not thoroughly comprehend till they attain life everlasting."

The forgoing makes it possible for the children of God to attain a superior holiness than would have otherwise been the case, "and on account of this superior holiness, they will then enjoy superior happiness," both in this life and in eternity.[106]

Logically this position raises the question of the sovereignty of God in relation to knowledge (omniscience). This traditional attribute of God becomes difficult to maintain if one also affirms human freedom and Wesley repeatedly insists that this freedom cannot in any way be compromised. "Indeed, if man were not free, he could not be accountable either for his thoughts, words, or actions. If he were not free, he would not be capable either of reward or punishment, he would be incapable either of virtue or vice, of being either morally good or bad."[107] As a good logician, Wesley would obviously recognize that if there is genuine freedom, there couldn't be a

[106]Ibid, 232-240.

[107]"On Predestination," *Works,* 6:227.

legitimate foreknowledge. He attempts to avoid this tension between freedom and determinism with the same ploy used by St. Augustine. God does not experience history as do humans but knows the entirety of history as an "eternal now:" "All time, or rather all eternity, being present to him at once, he does not know one thing before another, or one thing after another; but sees all things in one point of view from everlasting to everlasting."[108]

The specific issue that emerges out of this discussion concerns whether or not God knew if the first pair would sin and thus disrupt His creative purpose. Since God's foreknowledge was "unitary" in nature, He clearly knew that the Fall would occur and also had the power to prevent it but, Wesley argued, He knew that "it was best, upon the whole, not to prevent it. . . . He saw that to permit the fall of the first man was far best for mankind in general."[109]

True versus Temporary Happiness. Wesley realistically recognizes that there is a kind of "happiness" to be found in ways other than in the pursuit of holiness but these are always contrasted with true happiness, which alone is enduring because it alone is the fulfillment of mankind's essential nature.

The sense of happiness that comes from the "vigour of youth and health," the applause of others, the comfort of wealth, or possession of the conveniences of life is but dream-like. "It cannot continue; it flies away like a shadow; and even while it does, it is not solid or substantial; it does not satisfy the soul."[110]

The natural man is in a state of "deep sleep" and thus "has no conception of that evangelical holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; nor of the happiness which they only find whose 'life is hid with Christ in God.'" Out of this state of ignorance there can arise

[108]Ibid, 226. Contemporary Wesleyan thought finds this view less than satisfactory. Randy L. Maddox points out a tension in Wesley between this view influenced by Greek thought and the more Hebraic view of timefulness rather than timelessness and argues that the latter is more fundamental in Wesley's thought based on his "assumptions of God's particular interest in individuals and God's action in the world." *Responsible Grace* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 52

[109]"God's Love to Fallen Man," *Works*, 6:232. Note the language of "permission" in contrast to "coercion."

[110]"Spiritual Worship," *Works*, 6:431; cf. also 7:300.

a "kind of *joy*, in congratulating himself upon his own wisdom and goodness" and if he possesses a measure of wealth with the pleasurable accompaniments thereof, he may be viewed as a happy person. "For, indeed, this is the sum of worldly happiness; to dress, and visit, and talk, and eat, and drink, and rise up to play."[111] However, when such a person is awakened from this "deep sleep" by the providence of God, "the shadows of happiness flee away, and sink into oblivion; So that he is stripped of all, and wanders to and fro, seeking rest, but finding none."[112]

Happiness and Virtue. The reason for Wesley's insistence that true happiness can only be found in relation to God may be further seen in his understanding of the role of "virtue" in the happy life. Virtue was a dominant term in the ethical reflections of classical Greek philosophers with whom Wesley seemed to be quite familiar. He recognized and accepted the principle that informed their theories about the way to happiness: "With equal care they have placed in a strong light the happiness that attends virtue, and the misery which usually accompanies vice, and always follows it." However, as we observed in chapter 2, they were never able to bring this vision to consummation because of both the limitations of reason and the "weakness" (fallenness) of human nature. Wesley's analysis speaks to this point: "Nature points out the disease, but nature shows us no remedy."[113]

Both these shortfalls that limited the philosophical approach are addressed by "The End of Christ's Coming." The first is overcome by the revelation of God in Christ and the second by grace, prevenient grace, in granting the liberty to believe and accept the offer of forgiveness and transforming grace available through faith in Christ.

The transformation of the human person, the renewal of humankind in the image of God, is the true meaning of genuine virtue. Its essence is "contained in the love of God and man, producing every divine and amiable temper."[114] Hence, Wesley agrees with the

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[111]"The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption," *Works*, 5:99-101.

[112]Ibid, 103.

[113]"The End of Christ's Coming," *Works*, 6:267-8.

[114]*Works,* 8:513.

philosophers about the connection between virtue and happiness but in his alternate version of the essence of humanity as "capable of God," offers a more satisfactory explanation about how they may become actual in human life.

Beyond the false forms of happiness noted above there is a measure of authentic happiness to be found in Wesley's distinction between the "faith of a servant" and the "faith of a child." The former is "such a divine conviction of God, and the things of God, as, even its infant state, enables everyone that possesses it to 'fear God and work righteousness.'" This measure of grace brings such persons into a "state of acceptance" by God but they have not yet begun to love God and their neighbor with their heart, but are motivated by fear and duty. They are not truly holy or happy, but they have a form of faith acceptable to God and thus experience what might be called a "preliminary" happiness.[115]

Eschatological Happiness. By implication, the fallen state of the universe results in a context in which obstacles to perfect happiness are rampant. While Wesley is doggedly optimistic about the possibility of "freedom from sin" in this life, he also repeatedly explains the limits of "perfection." Since the work of Christ has for its purpose the destruction of the "works of the devil," (1 John 3:8) its provision extends beyond the limits of this life to the life to come. In addition, since final redemption includes the whole creation, which "groans for that redemption" (Rom. 8:22), when this hope becomes a reality, "sin, and its consequences, pain, shall be no more: Holiness and happiness will cover the earth."[116]

His many references to eternal happiness apparently assume a heaven where the citizens who have completed successfully the "time of their trial," will experience degrees of happiness correlated to the degree of holiness they have achieved in this life.[117]

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[115]"On Faith," *Works* 7:189-190.

[116]"The End of Christ's Coming," *Works*, 6:267; see especially 6:249.

[117]*Works*, 6:44, 142, 193, et. al.

Chapter 7

HOLINESS AND HAPPINESS

In the previous chapter, we explored the creational basis for Wesley's identification of holiness and happiness along with the devastating effects of "original sin" on this relationship. In this chapter, we propose to explore more fully the redemptive activity of God in seeking to reunite these two realities. As Wesley himself put it quite simply, this involves two gracious activities. In his sermon on "The End of Christ's Coming," based on 1 John 3:8, which defines the purpose of the manifestation of the Son of God to be to "destroy the works of the devil," he says:

> Here then we see in the clearest, strongest light, what is real religion: A restoration of man by Him that bruises the serpent's head, to all that the old serpent deprived him of; a restoration, not only to the favour but likewise to the image of God, implying not barely deliverance from sin, but the being filled with the fulness of God.[118]

This statement highlights Wesley's repeated emphasis that the "holiness" to which he refers as productive of happiness is more than outward conformity to certain behavioral disciplines. It includes both "inward and outward holiness." He emphatically asserts "without inward as well as outward holiness, you cannot be happy, even in this world, much less in the world to come."[119]

Wesley's understanding of the Christian life is so marked by an emphasis on continuity that he cites scripture indiscriminately to refer to every stage of the Christian experience.[120] Even though he

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[118]*Works*, 6:276.

[119]"The New Birth," *Works*, 6:76. See 6:261 where he expresses sympathy to both Montanus and Tertullian who were considered heretics because they emphasized this belief. Of Montanus he says: "I believe his grand heresy was, the maintaining that 'without' inward and outward 'holiness no man shall see the Lord."

[120]This reflects his recognition that the scripture does not explicitly distinguish levels of experience as some of his 19th century successors have done.

formulated several categories of religious experience (e.g. "faith of a servant," "faith of a son," etc.) the fluidity of experience, which he clearly recognized, resisted the hardening of these categories into a stereotype of stages in the Christian life.[121] With regard to holiness, the same characteristics are present at every stage of the process, only in different degrees. The one exception to this pattern is a qualitative distinction made in terms of love between the pre- and post-entire sanctification stage of one's pilgrimage, to be explored below.

These aspects of Wesley's teaching have been examined almost *ad infinitum* but I know of no study that explores them from the perspective of their relation to human happiness, a theme central to Wesley's understanding of salvation.[122]

As one works through Wesley's sermons, a number of unique emphases strike the reader. One that recurs, and is relevant to the focus of our investigation, is the fact that central to his message is the belief that authentic Christianity is experiential in nature.[123] This correlates with his emphasis on love as the essence of Christianity, which we shall explore later, and has a logical (and psychological, to say nothing of theological) relation to happiness. Of incidental interest is the fact that most of the sermons are composed of a veritable collage of scripture language reflecting an amazing familiarity with the content of the Bible.[124]

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[121]In referring to his categories of *natural, legal and evangelical* states of grace, he says "these several states of the soul are often mingled together, and in some measure meet in one and the same person. "The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption," *Works,* 5:109.

[122]The excellent work of Henry H. Knight, III, *The Presence of God in the Christian life* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1992) has some references to happiness and the Christian life but his primary focus is elsewhere. Albert Outler's editorial work in connection with the Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's Sermons has numerous helpful comments on the subject and Maddox's *Responsible Grace* repeatedly recognizes the importance of this relation.

[123]Wesley uses the term "experimental," which is the British equivalent of "experiential" in modern American usage. The former term would carry a significantly different connotation to the contemporary American reader.

[124]The editors of the Bicentennial edition of Wesley's sermons have identified and footnoted all of these innumerable references.

Although concerned for theological adequacy, he recognized that genuine religion could co-exist with all sorts of aberrant opinions.[125] On the contrary, pristine orthodoxy is no substitute for a personal relationship to God. He likewise makes an important distinction between the *circumstantials* of religion and the *essentials* of religion. The former has to do with "rites and ceremonies" while the latter has to do with "an entire change of men's *tempers* and *lives*;" having "'the mind that was in Christ,'" and "'walking as he also walked.'" He criticized the Protestant Reformation for not going far enough in this direction. He felt that it was limited to the reform of "opinions, as well as their modes of worship."[126]

Justification: The First Movement of Grace. In our earlier discussion of prevenient grace, we noted that the initial movement of grace in human life took the form of *awakening.* This was necessary because "natural man" was unaware of his real condition "till the voice of God awakes him. . . . He knows not that he is a fallen spirit, whose only business in the present world is, to recover from his fall, to regain that image wherein he was created."[127] Awakening ideally is followed by repentance as one responds to the work of the Holy Spirit. By "repentance," Wesley means primarily self-knowledge,[128] but it includes also "conviction,"[129] which is substantially the same thing.

Awakening and repentance are preparatory for "faith," which is the "*only necessary* condition" for justification. Wesley takes great pains to reject the possibility that one can be justified, that is, declared right before God, by good works. Simply put,

> The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father, whereby for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son, he

[125]"For, how far is love, even with many wrong opinions, to be preferred before truth itself without love!" Preface, *Works*, 5:6. Cf. his sermon "On the Trinity," *Works*, 6:199ff.

[126]"The Mystery of Iniquity," *Works*, 6;263.

[127]"Awake, Thou That Sleepest," *Works*, 5:25-6.

[128]"The Way to the Kingdom," *Works,* 5:81.

[129]"Minutes of Some Late Conversations," *Works*, 8:275.

> 'showeth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past.' This is the easy, natural account of it given by St. Paul.[130]

This quotation reflects Wesley's accurate perception of one of the scriptural meanings of "righteousness" (which is the root meaning of "justification") as being equivalent to mercy manifested as God's attitude toward needy and helpless humanity.[131] It is a virtual equivalent of "grace."

He furthermore distinguishes the scriptural view from the dominant Reformed interpretation of justification as being the imputation of Christ's ethical righteousness to the believer, who remains unrighteous so that he is, in Luther's famous formula, *simul justus et peccator* (at the same time justified and a sinner). God, he argued, is not involved in a self-deception so that "He thinks them to be what, in fact, they are not; that he accounts them to be otherwise than they are."

At the same time, he recognizes that justification "is not the being made actually just and righteous [the Roman Catholic interpretation]. This is *sanctification*; which is, indeed, in some degree, the immediate fruit of justification, but, nevertheless, is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature."[132]

Wesley's rejection of these two prevailing interpretations left him in somewhat of a dilemma since he knew that righteousness was a requirement for acceptance by God but the only options apparently open to him were unacceptable. His distinction between justification as a "relative change" and sanctification as "a real change" suggested another way that has become widely recognized by contemporary Biblical scholars as better scriptural understanding has emerged. The "righteousness" that is the basis of one's acceptance with God is a relational righteousness that is neither ethical in nature nor imputed but

[130]"Justification by Faith," *Works*, 5:57.

[131]For a fuller discussion of the multiple meanings of the term involved and their relation to the doctrine of justification see H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness* (K.C.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988), 205-7; 343-348.

[132]For a brief critique of both of the positions Wesley rejects see "On God's Vineyard," *Works*, 7:204-5.

is based on faith in the promise of God embodied in the cross, hence justification by grace through faith.[133]

What does this discussion have to do with happiness? Wesley explores this question in his sermon on "Free Grace," his all-encompassing phrase for the universal provision of the Atonement offered to all who believe. The Atonement so understood makes possible "the full assurance of faith," which is the "true ground of a Christian's happiness."[134] This conclusion can best be seen against the background of the alternative view of the Atonement, which Wesley rejects, namely the Calvinistic doctrine of limited atonement with its corollary of predestination.

Predestination is based on the assumption that God in His sovereignty has chosen certain persons to be eternally saved and the remainder of humanity to be eternally lost. The logical implication of this position is that Christ died only for the elect. Even though the New Testament is filled with promises to "whosoever will," they do not really apply to the non-elect.

The result is that there is always an uncertainty as to whether or not one is among the elect. On this basis, Wesley concludes that

> this doctrine [predestination] tends to destroy the comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity. This is evident as to all those who believe themselves to be reprobated, or who only suspect or fear it. All the great and precious promises are lost to them; they afford them no ray of comfort: For they are not the elect of God; therefore they have neither lot nor portion in them. This is an effectual bar to their finding any comfort or happiness, even in that religion whose ways are designed to be "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace."

Even if a person gives evidence that they may be one of the elect, they can only have a hope, "a notion, . . . a speculative belief, . . . a bare opinion." Why is this? As John Calvin explained in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, if a person falls by the wayside,

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[133]For a full discussion of this understanding with abundant supporting evidence, see Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 343-47.

[134]*Works*, 7:377.

because of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints (once in grace, always in grace) it can only be concluded that they were not really in grace to begin with. Hence present assurance of acceptance is impossible, only a hope that one will "persevere" until the end and this will be the final verification of one's election.

However, based on the universal provision of salvation in Christ, made available to all who have faith in the promise of God, there is the possibility of a "full assurance that all your past sins are forgiven, and that you are *now* a child of God." This "witness of God's Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God" is what Wesley means by the "true ground of a Christian's happiness."[135]

In response to a question about the "immediate fruits of justifying faith," Wesley replies, "Peace, joy, love, power over all outward sin, and power to keep down inward sin." All these subjective qualities are certainly characteristics of happiness. To the question, "Do we ordinarily represent a justified state so great and happy as it is?" he replies, "Perhaps not. A believer, walking in the light, is inexpressibly great and happy."[136]

Sanctification: The Second Movement of Grace. In referring to sanctification as a second phase of God's gracious activity in human life, Wesley did not imply a discontinuity with justification chronologically, but theologically. Wesley's distinction, noted earlier, between justification as a relative change and sanctification as a real change seeks to avoid the confusion of these two gracious actions of God for theological reasons. If we understand sanctification as "making ethically holy," we must avoid making sanctification the basis of our acceptance with God since that would destroy the Biblical teaching of salvation by faith alone. Hence, although sanctification in this sense is chronologically simultaneous with justification it is theologically subsequent. Only in that sense is it a "second phase."

This "real" transformation of the person is generically defined as the "renewing of human persons in the image of God," and thus is the ultimate goal of what Wesley would call "The Scripture Way of

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[135]Ibid. Wesley is careful to avoid saying that this *present* assurance is a guarantee of final salvation. We remain in a state of probation until the end, our final salvation contingent on continuing faith and obedience.

[136]*Works*, 8:276, 284.

Salvation." This goal begins to be implemented with prevenient grace but is only actually effective at the initial moment of conversion in "regeneration."[137] It ideally continues to be implemented through the whole course of the Christian pilgrimage as one "grows in grace," and potentially involves a distinctive moment in what Wesley occasionally termed "entire sanctification," or more frequently "Christian perfection."

It now becomes possible to see more clearly why Wesley so often joined holiness and happiness. Holiness is essentially to be equated with "love." In fact, the "entire, connected system of Christianity: . . . [is] love enthroned in the heart." "The sum and the perfection of religion [is] the *love* of God and man." He exhorts his auditors to "be most zealous of all for *love*, the queen of all graces, the highest perfection in earth or heaven, the very image of the invisible God, as in men below, so in angels above. For 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him."[138] It is fair to infer from his numerous references that his dictionary for the meaning of this love is 1 Corinthians 13. He counseled one Ann Loxdale "to read and meditate upon the 13th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. There is the true picture of Christian perfection."[139]

As we established in the previous chapter, God's creative intention was that the human creation would enjoy happiness but when this intention was thwarted by sin, God immediately began to pave a way of return to that pristine state. The happiness of the first pair was found in their perfect love for the Creator and this becomes the key to Wesley's understanding of holiness as well as sin.[140] The centrality of

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[137]Wesley says inward sanctification begins "in the moment we are justified. The seed of every virtue is then sown in the soul. From that time the believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace. Yet sin remains in him; yea, the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout in spirit, soul, and body." "Minutes of Some Late Conversations," *Works, 8:285.*

[138]"On Zeal," *Works*, 7:61, 65, 67.

[139]Cited in Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 244, n. 109.

[140]He defines "dissipation" as "the uncentring the soul from God," and adds, "whatever uncentres the mind from God does properly dissipate us. This validates as consistently Wesleyan Mildred Bangs Wynkoop's suggested definition of sin as

love is the window through which every aspect of the Christian life is described, with no attempt to distinguish levels of completeness except in relation to "Christian Perfection." Since the foundation of the Christian experience is faith and its essential outworking is love, Wesley adopts the formula of St. Paul in Galatians 5:6 to embody his holistic theology of salvation: "faith working by love."

The Centrality of Love. The very essence of religion is to be found, not in correct theological formulations ("notions") or the observance of religious duties but in "the knowledge and love of God, as manifested in the Son of his love, through the eternal Spirit."[141] This essential mark of authentic Christianity is not a self-generated affection but is a response to the love of God manifested in the Christ-event. "There is no motive which so powerfully inclines us to love God, as the sense of the love of God in Christ."[142] In similar fashion, love of neighbor originates from the same stimulus. "This earnest, steady good-will to our fellow-creatures never flowed from any fountain but gratitude to our Creator."[143]

Randy Maddox has demonstrated that Wesley's "moral psychology," influenced by the philosophy of British Empiricism, held that humans are "moved to action only as we are experientially affected." This means "rational persuasion of the rightness of loving others cannot of itself move us to do so," thus "we are ultimately enabled to love others only as we experience love ourselves."[144]

The dynamic of this love, which is the essence of both inward and outward holiness, is the enabling work of the Holy Spirit who is the giver "of holiness and happiness, by the restoration of that image of God wherein we are created."[145] Wesley laid strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life but always interpreted this

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"love locked into a false center, the self." *A Theology of Love* (K.C.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), 158.

[141]"Spiritual Worship," *Works*, 6:432.

[142]"The Law Established Through Faith," *Works*, 5:465.

[143]"The Case of Reason Considered," *Works, 6:359.*

[144]"Reconnecting the Means to the End," 39.

[145]"The Discoveries of Faith," *Works*, 7:233.

work in Christological terms. In his sermon on Acts 4:31 relating to the initial giving of the Spirit to the early church, he makes this point clear: "It was, therefore, for a more excellent purpose than this [gifts including tongues-speaking], that 'they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.' It was to give them the mind which was in Christ, those holy fruits of the Spirit which whosoever hath not, is none of his; . . ."[146] Thus, the Holy Spirit is operative in the believer's life from the initial moment of justification. At this point, the "power of the Spirit" takes place within so that "now we can perform through God, what to [ourselves] was impossible . . . a recovery of the image of God, a renewal of soul after His likeness."[147]

The love that is the essence of holiness is not an abstract reality. Rather, as quoted above, the "entire, connected system of Christianity" is "love enthroned in the heart,"[148] which manifests itself in outward behavior. Henry Knight's insightful observation emphasizes this point:

> Wesley never talks of love in general, but always of love of God, of neighbor and, in both appropriate and inappropriate forms of the love of self and the world. This means the religion of the heart is not "inward" in the sense of being unrelated, but is only found in and maintained by ongoing relationships of love to those outside the self. Christian affections are either social or nonexistent.[149]

In his sermon "On Patience" Wesley makes his point abundantly clear: "Love is the sum of Christian sanctification; it is the one *kind* of holiness, which is found, only in various *degrees*, in the believers who are distinguished by St. John into 'little children, young

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[146]"Scriptural Christianity," *Works*, 5:38.

[147]"On the Witness of Our Spirit," *Works,* 5:141. For an extended treatment of Wesley's understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit see H. Ray Dunning, "A Wesleyan Perspective on Spirit Baptism," *Perspectives on Spirit Baptism*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004), 181-239.

[148]Ibid, 61.

[149]*The Presence of God*, 19.

men, and fathers,' The differences between one and the other properly lies in the degree of love."[150]

Focused Love the Essence of Christian Perfection. If love is the essential characteristic of the Christian life from its beginning in justification and the new birth, how does Wesley identify the distinctive mark of "entire sanctification" or "Christian perfection?" Unlike some of his successors, he does not do so by a depreciation of the new birth, or the Christian life prior to the moment in which "God cuts short His work in righteousness" and delivers one from "all sin."

Wesley's descriptions of the new birth seem to depict the highest possibilities of grace in human life. In the moment that one is justified,

> there is as great a change wrought in our souls when we are born of the Spirit, as was wrought in our bodies when we are born of a woman. There is, in that hour, a general change from inward sinfulness, to inward holiness. The love of the creature is changed to the love of the Creator; the love of the world into the love of God. Earthly desires, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, are, in that instant, changed, by the might power of God, into heavenly desires. . . . In a word, the earthly, devilish mind, gives place to "the mind that was in Christ Jesus".[151]

The distinction between that exalted stage of the holiness pilgrimage and entire sanctification can be identified both positively and negatively. Negatively one's love is "mixed" prior to the moment of entire sanctification. Positively, it can be described as "focused love." In the summation of the commandments, which Wesley uses so often in defining this level of grace, it is "loving God with *all* one's heart, soul, mind, and strength and one's neighbor as oneself." This focused love results in the highest level of happiness possible for humanity under the conditions of fallen existence. As Wesley admonished, "Singly aim at God. In every step thou takest, eye Him alone. Pursue one thing: Happiness in knowing, in loving, in serving

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[150]*Works*, 6:488.

[151]Ibid.

God." Alternatively, "till their eye is single, they are as far remote from happiness as from holiness."[152]

This profound level of Christian experience does not result in an absolute perfection that does not admit of growth. Wesley is always insistent that there is no level of experienced grace in this life that does not allow continued growth and development in love. He declares, "there is no *perfection of degrees*, as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increase."[153] In exploring the implication of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, he says, "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." He emphasizes this point: "As long as [the mind] is steadily fixed thereon, on God in Christ, . . . we are more and more filled with the love of God and man," and this "implies . . . happiness, as well as holiness."[154]

[152]"On a Single Eye," *Works,* 7:300.

[153]"Christian Perfection," *Works,* 6:5.

[154]*Works,* 5:363.

Chapter 8

The Higher Happiness

If Christian Perfection refers to the experience of perfect love directed toward God and neighbor, and this is the precondition for happiness, it would seem to logically follow that if this stage of grace is possible in this life, it would usher the believer into a degree of happiness (well-being) greater than Christian experience at "lower" levels, perhaps even "perfect happiness." In this chapter we intend to examine carefully Wesley's thinking on this issue, especially since this is undoubtedly the most controversial aspect of his theology.

We have noted that, for Wesley, a measure of happiness is present at every stage of the Christian journey because holiness is present at every stage and happiness is the direct correlative of holiness. There is happiness in the realization that we have been fully accepted by God based on faith and not because we have qualified ourselves by good works. This addresses the problem of anxiety that seems to generally accompany the belief in works-righteousness. Sounding a lot like Martin Luther, Wesley declares "it is not a saint but a sinner that is forgiven, and under the notion of a sinner. God justifieth not the godly, but the ungodly; not those that are holy already, but the unholy."[155] This point removes the necessity of concern over whether one has qualified him or herself for acceptance.

In addition to the benefits of God's gracious mercy demonstrated in justification, there is also the transformation that begins in the new birth, the initial moment of God's work in renewing us in the image of God, a process that continues throughout life. This involves a lifestyle reorientation that Wesley refers to as outward holiness. However, Wesley insists, this transforming power is most centrally operative in reorienting those affections, attitudes and dispositions that are antithetical to perfect love and therefore destructive of happiness. In fact, the very essence of true religion is nothing short of *holy tempers*.[156]

[155]"Justification by Faith," *Works*, 5:58.

[156]"On Charity," *Works*, 7:56.

Wesley sees both these restorative Divine actions in terms of grace and explicitly refers to both in his sermon on "The Witness of Our Own Spirit."

> By "the grace of God" is sometimes to be understood that free love, that unmerited mercy, by which I, a sinner, through the merits of Christ am now reconciled to God. But in this place [2 Cor. 1:12] it rather means that power of God the Holy Ghost which "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." As soon as ever the grace of God (in the former sense, his pardoning love) is manifested to our soul, the grace of God (in the latter sense, the power of his Spirit) takes place therein. And now we can perform through God, what to [ourselves] was impossible. . . . a recovery of the image of God, a renewal of soul after His likeness.[157]

The "renewal of soul" that is the goal of God's transforming grace is described in these terms:

> It is not only a deliverance from doubts and fears but from sin; from all inward as well as outward sin; from evil desires, and evil tempers, as well as from evil words and works. Yes, and it is not only a negative blessing, a deliverance from all evil dispositions, implied in that expression, "I will circumcise thy heart;" but a positive one likewise; even the planting all good dispositions in their place; clearly implied in that other expression, "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul."[158]

Wesley explains why it is so important to deal with the disordered affections resulting from the Fall if the Divine intention for humanity is to be realized:

> All unholy tempers are uneasy tempers; not only malice, hatred, envy, jealousy, revenge, create a present hell in the

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[157] *Works*, 5:141. This passage also reveals one of the major ambiguities in Wesley's thought. As a result of not doing a systematic analysis of the Atonement, he continued to use the legal language of the prevailing satisfaction theories such as referring to the "meritorious" work of Christ. This is in contradiction to the understanding of grace as stated in the quote since, as P.T. Forsyth once said, "procured grace is a contradiction in terms."

[158] "The Discoveries of Faith," *Works*, 7:237.

> breast; but even the softer passions, if not kept within due bounds, give a thousand times more pain than pleasure. . . . All those general sources of sin—pride, self-will, and idolatry—are, in the same proportion as they prevail, general sources of misery [unhappiness].[159]

This analysis suggests that the whole scope of Wesley's understanding of inward holiness can be surveyed in terms of affections, tempers, and passions. In fact, this is the aspect of grace that seems of greatest interest to Wesley in his interpretation of salvation. If we can trace this theme through the various "stages" of Christian experience, it will provide a handle with which to address more adequately the question we are exploring since this is the way in which Wesley consistently emphasizes the inward or experiential aspect as the essential note of true religion.[160] Clapper concludes "Wesley's theological discourse, especially as found in the sermons, is so laden with affection-terms that it is possible to describe the entire pattern of salvation in terms of the process of gaining and deepening the pattern of affections which manifest the saving presence of God in human being." The presence of acceptable or unacceptable affections correlates with happiness and misery (unhappiness). This is the basis for his claim that "none but a Christian is happy; none but a real inward Christian," and conversely, "every Christian is happy; and . . . he who is not happy is not a Christian."[161]

A Glossary of "Affection" Terminology. It is important to understand Wesley's terminology if we are to follow his interpretation of religious experience. The key is found in his construal of the "natural" aspect of the *imago dei*. It includes the faculties of understanding, will and liberty, a trilogy that he utilized throughout his life from the beginning to the end. The most important distinction for our purposes is his use of will to refer to the "affections." This use of "will" can be confusing since in contemporary usage the term refers to the power of self-determination. Wesley's analysis of "will" implies

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[159] "The New Birth," *Works*, 6:72-73.

[160] *John Wesley on Religious Affections* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.), 123.

[161] "Spiritual Worship," *Works*, 6:432-3.

that the "emotions" constitute the motivating disposition of the person.[162] "Liberty" is quite consistently used for the capacity for contrary choice, although sometimes "will" is used in this way also, thus creating some ambiguity (see below).

Two other pivotal terms are necessary for a complete Wesleyan glossary of experience. "Tempers," are similar to affections but refer to an "enduring disposition." Maddox points out that this was a common eighteenth-century use of the word to affirm that human affections need not be simply transitory; they can be focused and strengthened into enduring dispositions.[163] "Passions" are primarily used in a negative sense as a "pejorative description of some affective state."[164] Apparently, "passions" are seen as the dominant motivations in fallen humanity.

The Affections prior to the Fall. Wesley often describes, usually with considerable imagination, the state of the first pair fresh from the hand of God. In an unpublished sermon from early in his career entitled "The Image of God," he identifies the three faculties of understanding, will and liberty in humanity's original state.[165] The understanding was infallible; it never made a mistake in distinguishing truth from falsehood. "Far greater and nobler was his second endowment, namely, a will equally perfect. . . . His affections were rational, even, and regular—if we may be allowed to say 'affections', for properly speaking he had but one: man was what God is, Love. Love filled the whole expansion of his soul; it possessed him without a rival." These untarnished qualities were accompanied by liberty, "the perfect freedom implanted in his nature, and interwoven with all its parts." The result of all these—an unerring understanding, an uncorrupted will [affections], and perfect freedom—gave the last stroke to the image of God in man, by crowning all these with happiness.[166]

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[162]Although Wesley spoke in strongly negative terms of David Hume, his understanding here is very close to what Hume taught.

[163]"Reconnecting the Means to the End," 41.

[164]Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections*, 54.

[165]Outler, *Works*, 4:292-303.

From these references, it becomes obvious that the primary affection was love of God and neighbor. Once again, we see the rationale for Wesley's equation of holiness with love.

The Impact of the Fall on the Affections. With the unfortunate use of their liberty to choose to disobey the one prohibition in the "garden," humanity experienced devastating consequences. Wesley uses what to contemporary thought is a strange theory to explain how the understanding became distorted and darkened. His commitment to an empiricist theory of knowledge (a la John Locke) led him to say that since the understanding is informed by the bodily senses, the body was first corrupted leading to distorted communication to the understanding. As a result, "it mistook falsehood for truth, and truth for falsehood."[167]

In addition to the blinding of the understanding, the will [affections] was corrupted. Whereas there was but one affection in the state of integrity, [love] and that directed toward God, "it was *now* seized by legions of vile affections. Grief and anger and hatred and fear and shame, at once rushed in upon it; the whole train of earthly, sensual, and devilish passions fastened on and tore it in pieces." Furthermore, without the light of right understanding, the affection of love, unable to discover its proper object [God] "reclined itself upon the painted trifles, the gilded poison of earthly enjoyments." This explains why people seek happiness in the creaturely world, only to find ultimate disappointment. Their love is focused on the wrong object. Wesley's conclusion is that "the consequence of his being enslaved to a depraved understanding and corrupted will could be no other than the reverse of that happiness which flowed from them when in their perfection."[168]

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[166]Ibid, 293-295.

[167]Ibid, 298. Wesley proposed the theory, strange to modern ears, that the forbidden fruit contained a "juice" that when ingested into the human body began a process that in modern terms would be termed the hardening of the arteries and the accumulation of cholesterol in the bloodstream. This is what distorted the instrument of the body so that it could not contribute true information to the "soul." But in fact he was really ahead of his day in recognizing these factors as limiting the human life span.

[168]Ibid, 299.

In addition to these distortions of the *imago dei*, freedom was gone. "Liberty went away with virtue; instead of an indulgent master it was under a merciless tyrant. The subject of virtue became the slave of vice." This fact is the reason why it is impossible for a person to effect his own salvation since outward behavior is an expression of an inward condition. If the only obstacle to acceptance by God were the discontinuance of sinful acts and to do so was within the power of the will, one could simply quit performing wrong actions and begin obeying the commandments. However, as Wesley said, "it is impossible to be done, unless first thy heart be changed. For so long as the tree remains evil, it cannot bring forth good fruit."[169]

The heart condition that is at the root of the problem is wrong "affections." In the unregenerate person the "affections are alienated from God, and scattered abroad over all the earth. All thy passions both thy desires and aversions, thy joys and sorrows, thy hopes and fears, are out of frame, are either undue in their degree, or placed on undue objects."[170] This explains why it was so important to emphasize the necessity of the new birth, or regeneration as the essential accompaniment of justification, which is a relative, but not a real [ethical] change.

Transforming Grace and the Affections. Even in justification, "the Son of God strikes at the root of that grand work of the devil,--pride; causing the sinner to humble himself before the Lord, to abhor himself, as it were in dust and ashes. . . . He saves them from seeking, or expecting to find, happiness in any creature. . . .restoring . . . the sinner in whom dwelleth no good thing, to love and holiness; the burdened, miserable sinner, to joy unspeakable, to real, substantial happiness."[171]

Justification by faith further saves one from the subjective feeling of guilt and thus from fear since the justified have received the "Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father: The Spirit itself

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[169]"The Way to the Kingdom," *Works*, 5:84. This argument makes clear that those who accuse Wesley of Pelagianism are wide of the mark.

[170]Ibid, 82. Wesley uses the word "frame" in the same way contemporary use is expressed in the phrase, "a frame of mind," meaning a disposition or "affection."

[171]"The End of Christ's Coming," *Works*, 6:275.

also bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God."[172]

Based on scripture, tradition and experience, Wesley contends that after the moment of justification/new birth/regeneration these "affections" remain in the converted but not entirely sanctified. He defines them as "inward sin," meaning "any sinful temper, passion, or affection; such as pride, self-will, love of the world in any kind or degree; such as lust, anger, peevishness; any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ." However, through the new birth, the believer gains the power to overcome these wrong affections even though they remain.[173] In a discussion of Paul's use of "flesh" (*sarx),* which, he says, means "corrupt nature," he challenges the prevailing translation of Rom. 7:16 that says, "ye cannot do what ye would" as being more properly translated as "ye may not do what ye would." The "flesh" does not overcome the Spirit. Although one may "feel the root of bitterness in themselves, yet are they endued with power from on high to trample it continually under foot"[174]

Nevertheless, all these fall short of "perfect" love and hence carnal dispositions and attitudes are present. Before the perfection of love in entire sanctification, the believer "was humble, but not entirely; his humility was mixed with pride: He was meek; but his meekness was frequently interrupted by anger, or some uneasy and turbulent passion. His love of God was frequently damped, by the love of some creature; the love of his neighbour, by evil surmising, or some thought, if not temper, contrary to love. His will was not wholly melted down into the will of God."[175]

Christian Perfection and the Affections. In the higher stage of grace, which Wesley correlates with those to whom St. John refers as"fathers" (1 John. 2:12), one has matured to the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." His sermon on "Christian Perfection" spends much of its energy in defending the thesis that "a Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin," which is familiarly defined as a

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[172]"Salvation by Faith," *Works*, 5:10-11.

[173]"Sin in Believers," *Works*, 5:146-7.

[174]"The First Fruits of the Spirit," *Works*, 5:88., see also 91, 107.

[175]"On Patience," *Works*, 6:489.

"willful transgression of a known law of God." This applies to all levels of Christian maturity, but apparently, the fathers have also been freed from evil thoughts and tempers. He says in another place that at this level of relationship the Holy Spirit "purifies the heart from pride, self-will, passion; from love of the world, from foolish and hurtful desires, from vile and vain affections. Beside that, sanctified afflictions have, through the grace of God, an immediate and direct tendency to holiness." In a word, the Spirit deals redemptively with all those tendencies that hinder us from seeking "all our happiness in God."[176] This deliverance does not need to wait until death but is "wrought *in this world*" since the scripture promises of cleansing from *all* sin are in the present tense.[177]

On the positive side there is now present the fruit of the Spirit including those most directly related to happiness: peace and joy. The happiness for which we were made "begins when we begin to know God." As soon as his love is shed abroad in our hearts, we are happy but not before. As a result of this gracious gift

> we are happy, first, in the consciousness of his favour, which indeed is better than life itself; next, in the constant communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; then, in all the heavenly tempers which he hath wrought in us by his Spirit; again in the testimony of his Spirit, that all our works please him; and, lastly, in the testimony of our own spirits, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world."

In the light of this, the "real free Christians 'rejoice evermore pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks.' And their happiness still increases as they 'grow up into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ'."[178]

All these positive affections are the result of the presence of the one definitive affection, namely love. In his note on Gal. 5:22 he recognized that "love is the root of all the rest" of the fruit of the

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[176]"Heaviness Through Temptations," *Works*, 6:101.

[177]"Christian Perfection," *Works, 6:19.*

[178]"The Unity of the Divine Being," *Works*, 7:269-70.

Spirit. In another place he said, "From the true love of God and man directly flows every Christian grace, every holy and happy temper. And from these springs uniform holiness of conversation [manner of life]."[179]

In his sermon "On Zeal," he draws an imaginative picture of the sanctified person as a throne room with love the absolute monarch on the throne and holy tempers as the court attendants with good works as the foot soldiers:

> In a Christian believer, *love* sits upon the throne, which is erected in the inmost soul; namely love of God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival. In a circle near the throne are all holy tempers;--longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity, temperance; and if any other were comprised in "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." In an exterior circle are all the *works of mercy*, whether to the soul or bodies of men. By these, we exercise all *holy tempers*; by these, we continually improve them.[180]

However, there is an explicit qualification of this optimism of grace: "the Son of God does not destroy the whole work of the devil in man, as long as he remains in this life. He does not yet destroy bodily weakness, sickness, pain, and a thousand infirmities incident to flesh and blood. He does not destroy all that weakness of understanding, which is the natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in a corruptible body."[181] This obviously mitigates the possibility of "perfect happiness" in this life.

Few would question this qualification, but what about the claim that "affections and tempers" are purified? Throughout his sermon on "Christian Perfection," he was repeatedly making clarifications and qualifications to avoid the charge of "sinless perfection." In addition, according to Albert Outler, there were three other sermons written as qualifiers to this sermon: "Wandering Thoughts," "On Sin in

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[179]Quoted in Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 178.

[180]*Works*, 7:60. Notice that there is an explicit recognition of an incompleteness even in the "entire sanctified" that can be "continually improved."

[181]"The End of Christ's Coming," *Works*, 6:275.

Believers," and "The Repentance of Believers."[182] Two other sermons, "The Wilderness State" and "Heaviness through Manifold Temptations," provided a realistic portrayal of the fluctuations of the human psyche. In the latter he allowed the possibility of "heaviness of spirit," but insisted that "it did not at all interfere with that 'sanctification of the Spirit' which is the root of all true obedience; neither with the happiness which must needs result from grace and peace reigning in the heart."[183] Did Wesley indeed take away with one hand what he had given with the other? Alternatively, has the claim of perfection died the death of a thousand qualifications? Perhaps a careful clarification of what Wesley really taught can be helpful.

Many of Wesley's contemporary successors have expressed reservations about those affectional areas in which he seems to be firm in his conviction about their purification and/or perfection. Wesleyan theologian Henry Knight suggests, "our present appreciation of the role of unconscious motives in our lives makes Wesley's talk of Christian perfection seem hopelessly naïve, if not dangerously presumptuous."[184] Even Wesley himself admitted the universal presence in the entirely sanctified of manifestations that were less than perfect expressions of the law of love. In his "Plain Account of Christian Perfection", he allows, "The best of men still need Christ in his priestly work, to atone for their omissions, their short-comings, their mistakes in judgment and practice, and their defects of various kinds. For these are all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement." However, on the premise that such are entirely consistent with "perfect love," he resists classifying these as sin.[185]

Nevertheless in the light of this significant qualification one might further press the question, does Wesley's belief in the possibility of "perfect love" in this life lead to a life of "perfect happiness?" Before I attempt to offer a response to these questions, it might be

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[182]See Albert Outler's introduction to "Wandering Thoughts," Bicentennial Edition, 2:125-126.

[183]*Works*, 6:93-94.

[184]*The Presence of God*, 1.

[185]*Works*, 11:394-397.

helpful to a contemporary reader to explore the way some of Wesley's successors who were committed to his teaching about entire sanctification responded to this issue.

From my own experience that extends back over 70 years in the holiness movement, I recall considerable optimism about the sanctified life expressed in the gospel songs we would frequently sing. One familiar song affirmed, "From my errors and faults, Jesus saved even me." This line was early on rewritten in subsequent hymnbooks for obvious reasons. Quite often, there was a poetic representation of the sanctified life as free from difficulties and marked by "cloudless skies." One example that remains in current collections pictures the experience of holiness in terms of Old Testament imagery of the Promised Land (badly distorted, I might add):

> "I've reached the land of corn and wine,
> And all its riches freely mine;
> Here shines undimmed one blissful day,
> For all my night has passed away."
> "A sweet perfume upon the breeze
> Is borne from ever vernal trees,
> And flow'rs that never fading grow
> Where streams of life forever flow."

Another using similar imagery pictures "Beulah Land" as a place where one is protected from all the tumult of life: "Here the sun is always shining; here there's naught can harm me, I am safe forever in Beulah Land." The refrain exults: "I'm living on the mountain, underneath a cloudless sky."

While one might dismiss these pictures as the result of poetic exuberance, made popular more by the lilt of the melody than the content of the message, what about the more prosaic theological statements. In a dissertation project surveying the history of holiness theology in the Church of the Nazarene, Mark R. Quanstrom summarizes the early teaching of "19th century holiness orthodoxy" as emphasizing "entire sanctification as an instantaneous second work of grace that eradicated the sinful nature, conditioned only by faith and consecration which resulted in almost glorified human persons." In an article in "God's Revivalist," offering his own explanation for the "death of the Holiness movement," Richard S. Taylor suggested one reason being the excessive claims made for the movement: "In the

pristine fervency of the movement, it was easy for preachers to promise too much. . . . holiness preachers often held before the people an experience of almost absolute perfection, which conscientious, sensitive souls were always seeking but could never quite reach. In some radical circles, sex was taboo even in marriage, except for procreation. A number of moral lapses in high places awakened them to that error. But other misapprehensions persisted, such as that the sanctified person would always be sweet and calm and perfectly poised in all circumstances. In short, the experience, *if really obtained*, would virtually create overnight a finished saint."[186] Quanstrom goes on to describe the decline in these optimistic expectations, which became "less and less credible in the light of the apparently intractable nature of sin," resulting in an "increasing dissatisfaction with traditional formulations of the doctrine." This phenomenon, he found, resulted in a reexamination of the teaching of John Wesley by holiness scholars in search of a more viable understanding.[187] This brings us to an attempt to address this difficult question.

One line of response may be found in Wesley's understanding of the relation between understanding and will. We noted earlier how Wesley taught that prior to the Fall man's understanding was capable of infallibly distinguishing truth from falsehood. When this unerring understanding was joined with an uncorrupted will and perfect liberty the result was perfect happiness. Because of the Fall the understanding was darkened and distorted so that it became very fallible which, even with the best of intentions, made mistakes.

However, his curious explanation of the fallibility of understanding (see footnote 167) cannot be the final answer to the problem. Actually, it is based on a dualist view of human nature contrary to biblical anthropology. Even Wesley recognized, as we have seen, that the "affections and dispositions" were corrupted and distorted. Thus with the best of understanding, the debilitating effect of "total depravity" would militate against the "perfection" of both external behavior and inward dispositions. It is this fact that is the basis for much contemporary skepticism about his exalted claims for sanctifying grace. The solution would be the "purifying" of the

[186]March, 1999.

[187]"Introduction," *A Century of Holiness Theology* (K.C.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2004), 11." March, 1999.

affections; hence, the crucial issue revolves around this possibility. How might the Wesleyan claim be justified in the light of this dilemma?

The Affections and Intention. If we take seriously the classical understanding of original sin, the debilitated state of human nature resulting from the Fall is not ever restored to its pristine state in this life. Hence, there is always the possibility, even certainty, of falling short of the perfect law of God. Wesley's response to this problem is to anticipate Sören Kierkegaard's familiar affirmation that purity of heart is to "will one thing." His definition of "purity" as "desiring nothing more but God; 'crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts;' 'setting my affections on things above, not on things of the earth" seems to concur with this definition.[188] However, this only guarantees intention, not performance.

Wesley professed to have first discovered this paradigm in reading four works early in his Christian pilgrimage: Jeremy Taylor's *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*, Thomas a'Kempis' *Imitation of Christ,* and William Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.* From the first two in particular he came to see the importance of "simplicity of intention and purity of affection." On this basis, he shifted the emphasis on sanctification from law keeping to intentionality and this came to focus in terms of "love." Thus, he came to uniformly define "entire sanctification" or "Christian Perfection" as "loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself." "Such a love as this engrosses the whole heart, . . . Takes up all the affections, . . . fills the entire capacity of the soul and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties."[189] This reflects what we have previously referred to as "focused love."

A number of Wesley's emphases explicitly suggest this way of interpreting the higher Christian life. One phrase that occurs with frequency is "the single eye," a phrase taken from the Sermon on the Mount and the title of one of his sermons. Here the influence of the books mentioned above comes into view. A "single eye" includes both simplicity and purity, the former being the intention and the latter

[188]"The Witness of Our Own Spirit," *Works*, 5:141.

[189]"The Almost Christian," *Works*, 5:21.

referring to the affections. This means that it is the believer's "intention in all things, small and great, in all thy conversation [manner of life], to please God, to do, not thy own will, but the will of Him that sent thee into the world." When referred to the affections it clearly means loving God with *all* one's being. In commenting on this same experience, he says, "By that simplicity you always see God, and by purity you love him."[190] When both intention and focused affections are present, they direct the "understanding, passions, affections and tempers," because of which the soul "shall be filled with holiness and happiness."[191]

The sermon on "Dissipation" carries the same accent. The common understanding of that term refers it to those "who are violently attached to women, gaming, drinking; to dancing, balls, races, or the poor childish diversion of 'running foxes and hares out of breath.'" However, Wesley defines it as "the uncentring the soul from God." Here he admits that this "uncentering" may be present in the believer in whom there remains the "carnal mind" and declares, "The radical cure of all dissipation is, the 'faith that worketh by love'."[192]

One of the most insightful analyses of the possibility of perfection in this life is found in the writing of St. Thomas Aquinas. Based on the view that perfection is the correlative of knowledge, Aquinas denies that it is possible to be perfect here and now both because of the nature of God that transcends human comprehension and the limitation of human knowledge to the senses (like Wesley).

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[190]"On Dissipation," *Works*, 7:449.

[191]"On a Single Eye," *Works*, 7:297-299. Somewhat oddly Wesley makes an "all or none" judgment about the "single eye": "It is certain there can be no medium between a single eye and an evil eye; for whenever we are not aiming at God, we are seeking happiness in some creature," which is idolatry. This is reflective of the Stoic philosophy who took the same exclusivistic view of virtue. It seems to leave no room for growth, which is clearly contrary to Wesley's oft repeated emphasis along with his denial that there is any "perfection of degrees" that does not admit of continual increase. The answer may lie in the dynamic involved in the concept of "habituated affections" similar to Thomas Aquinas, which seems to be Wesley's understanding of development in holiness. See discussion immediately following.

[192]*Works,* 7:449.

However, there is another sort of perfection that excludes "everything contrary to the motive or movement of love for God." This sort of perfection is possible in this life in two modes: "in the exclusion from the will of anything contradictory to love, that is mortal sin, and in the will's rejection of anything that prevents the disposition of the soul toward God from being total."[193]

Wesley's description of the relation between affections inconsistent with the mind of Christ and the will appears to have the same implication. In exploring the "sins of the sanctified" to which no culpability attaches he says: "In proportion as a sinful desire, or word, or actions is more or less voluntary, so we may conceive God is more or less displeased, and there is more or less guilt upon the soul."[194] Conversely, sin cannot reign in the believer because his will is "utterly set against all sin. . . . and any tendency to an unholy desire, he, by the grace of God, stifleth in the birth." Furthermore, no falling short of the perfect law of God due to infirmity is properly sin because it has "no concurrence of his will."[195]

This makes clear that "perfection" does not mean that less than perfect affections, motives, tempers or dispositions may not rise up within one. It does mean that when the less-than-perfect affections emerge from within, we are aware of the fact that they fall short of the "mind that was in Christ" and *will* that they not be present. This way of reading the possibility of "perfection" opens the door to two very practical, but related matters that can meaningfully enhance the Christian in the journey toward wholeness and happiness.

Regulating the Affections. In a remarkably helpful discussion of the third Beatitude ("Blessed are the meek"), Wesley argues that grace does not extinguish the passions but enables us to "regulate" them. "It does not destroy but balance[s] the affections, which the God of nature never designed should be rooted out by grace, but only brought and kept under due regulations." The meek "do not desire to

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[193]See Paul Bassett and W.M. Greathouse, *Exploring Christian Holiness, The Historical Development* (K.C.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985), 137-138.

[194]"The First Fruits of the Spirit," *Works*, 5:93.

[195]"Salvation by Faith," *Works*, 5:11. Note here the ambiguity in Wesley's use of the term "will" referred to earlier in this study.

extinguish any of the passions which God has for wise ends implanted in their nature; but they have the mastery of all: They hold them all in subjection, and employ them only in subservience to those ends."[196]

Albert Outler finds here a reflection of the influence of St. Thomas Aquinas but the way Wesley elaborates this principle of regulating the affections is very similar to the way Aristotle explains a moral virtue. But then, Thomas' ethics was built on Aristotle. Aristotle defined a moral virtue as a mean between the extremes of excess and defect, between too much and too little (moderation). This was not a mathematical mean since persons differ so much; it was a "mean relative to me." Using this principle he explored the various virtues of courage, temperance, justice, prudence, generosity, etc.

Wesley describes "meekness" in a similar fashion: "It poises the mind aright. It holds an even scale, with regard to anger, and sorrow, and fear; preserving the *mean* in every circumstance of life, and not declining either to the right hand or the left."[197]

Whereas Aristotle developed the "Golden Mean" in a quantitative way, Wesley taught that the affections should be regulated in a qualitative way. For instance, for Aristotle, the mean of courage was a mid-point between cowardice (defect) and foolhardiness (excess). Wesley, on the other hand, acknowledged that emotions like anger were not to be eliminated but controlled by Christlike criteria. After all, Jesus manifested anger in driving the moneychangers out of the Temple, hence "all anger is not evil."[198] He explains: "And thus even the harsher and more unpleasing passions are applicable to the noblest purposes; even hatred, and anger, and fear, when engaged against sin, and regulated by faith and love, are as walls and bulwarks to the soul, so that the wicked one cannot approach to hurt it."[199]

One might even detect this principle at work in his advice about the use of money, very much like Aristotle's description of generosity as a mean between extravagance and stinginess. The three rules Wesley advocated are quite familiar: make all you can, save all

[196] *Works,* 5:263.

[197] Ibid. Emphasis added.

[198] "Christian Perfection," *Works*, 6:17.

[199] *Works*, 5:263.

you can and give all you can. However, all three have qualifications. The third rule is not interpreted to recommend poverty but a regulated use of wealth that involves a judicious distribution of surplus possessions to oneself, family and the community of faith and then beyond if there is sufficient. He virtually advocates the principle that "charity begins at home," rather than reducing oneself to poverty by indiscriminately giving everything away.

The Means of Grace. We have sought to demonstrate that Wesley's ethic is "teleological" in nature, that is, it is goal oriented with the goal being holiness of heart and life centrally defined as "having the mind that was in Christ," resulting in happiness. This approach to ethics has a means-end structure. The practices of the Christian life are ordered with the purpose of enabling the believer to achieve the goal.

The popular way of using the term "means of grace" tends to restrict its application to two rituals or ordinances (for Protestants), baptism and Eucharist. Wesley broadens the concept considerably and interprets it to mean "outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end—-to be the *ordinary* channels whereby [God] might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace." These include prayer, "searching the Scriptures," (whether reading, hearing [preaching] or meditating thereon) as well as the two regular sacraments.[200] While the means may become an end in themselves, this is a distortion. As long as one keeps his eye on the goal, they ideally function to create an ever more intimate conformity to the perfection of love.

The Affections and Self-Deception. This raises the very relevant question of the possibility of self-deception, a challenge with which Wesley was frequently faced and one that has been urged against the possibility of perfection by recent critics. In spite of his repeated insistence on the centrality of "purity of intention" in the holy life, he also affirmed that "sincerity was not sufficient, even citing the aphorism that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions."[201] The intentions must have direction. In the most general sense, it is the

[200] "The Means of Grace," *Works*, 5:187.

[201] "The Almost Christian," *Works*, 5:24.

purpose of love to direct the understanding, passions, affections and tempers.[202] Nevertheless, since love is affection it too may be susceptible to self-deception. So there needs to be a means of clearly and solidly distinguishing the subjective feelings from "the presumption of a natural mind, and from the delusion of the devil."[203]

Wesley's answer is captured in a kind of formula that says, "Truth and love united together are the essence of virtue or holiness." Truth alone is important but it is not the essence of holiness. Love, in spite of its centrality, is not sufficient but the two joined together. What is the source of truth? It is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.[204]

In addition to this general principle, Wesley offered some specific criteria for guarding against self-deception based on Phil. 1:10-11. The sincerity that is acceptable to God has three properties:

> (1) It must bear fruits, the fruits of righteousness, all inward and outward holiness, all good tempers, words, and works; and that so abundantly that we may be filled with them. (2) The branch and the fruits must derive both their virtue and their very being from the all-support, all-supplying root, Jesus Christ. (3) As all these flow from the grace of Christ, so they must issue in the glory and praise of God.

Aware of the potentiality of self-deception in individualistic experience, especially when religion was understood in terms of affections, Wesley formed his followers into classes, societies and bands where the Christians could examine each other and openly and honestly share with each other their personal growth and spiritual struggles. This was reinforced by his recognition that Christianity is a social religion and "to turn it into a solitary religion, is indeed to destroy it."[205]

Reorienting the Western Legal Perspective. Another important consideration is the context in which Wesley was working. The

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[202]"On a Single Eye," *Works*, 7:301.

[203]"The Witness of the Spirit," *Works*, 5:117.

[204]"An Israelite Indeed," *Works*, 7:45.

[205]*Works*, 5:296. [205]Outler, 2:98

theological tradition he inherited was native to the Western church, which generally interpreted the Christian life in legal categories. Sin, in this setting, was seen to be any violation or falling short of perfect conformity to the law. Consequently, as Albert Outler points out, in this Western theological context "'Christian Perfection' came to be the most distinctive [but] also the most widely misunderstood of all Wesley's doctrine."[206]

In fact, Wesley's understanding of the Christian life was more influenced by the perspective of the Eastern Church, which viewed the transformation of the human person more in terms of love. He struck an authentic Eastern note in identifying true religion as a participation in the Divine nature.[207] This meant that Wesley was interpreting the sanctifying work of the Spirit in terms of a different paradigm than prevailed in the theological culture of his context in 18th century England. That same tension is present in the 21st century among evangelicals who largely view sanctification as increasing conformity to the law and thus as never achieving "perfection." If interpreted in this context, Wesley would fully agree with their conclusion, as must all realistic persons.

We may now be in a position to address the question with which we began this chapter and the answer ultimately seems quite simple. It can be put in the form of a complex hypothetical syllogism, a type of argument with which Wesley as a logician was certainly familiar and used himself. If perfect happiness was the consequence of the relation to God that existed in the pre-Fall state of humanity and the present state of humanity suffers the deprivation and resulting depravation from that tragedy resulting in the loss of happiness, and both scripture and experience demonstrate that there is no state of grace in this present life that restores humanity to "Adamic perfection,"[208] then there is no possibility of *perfect happiness* until the final consummation. This is what both St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas concluded as well.

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[207]"Awake Thou That Sleepest," *Works*, 5:30. He read this passage from 2 Peter 1:4 for his devotions on the morning of May 28, 1738, the day of his Aldersgate experience.

[208]See sermon on "Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels," Outler, *Works, 162-167.*

Having said that, Wesley's identification of happiness with holiness and holiness with the restoration of the *imago dei* and his emphasis that this restoration is a process that begins with prevenient grace and continues through the whole of our mortal life, he would certainly agree with an adaptation of Proverbs 4:18: "The path of the righteous is like the light of the dawn, which shines happier and happier until full day." (RSV)

Chapter 9

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

We have briefly explored the "quest for happiness" in the most influential pre-Christian Greek philosophers, in two of the most creative early Christian theologians, in both Old and New Testaments and more extensively in the sermons of John Wesley. We have discovered many fruitful insights in this survey. Our primary focus has been Wesley but if we are to meaningfully appropriate his insights, we must keep in mind that he was a child of the 18th century. He articulated many of his ideas in terms of the prevailing views of science and anatomy, many of which have been superseded by further developments in these fields. His views on knowledge and human nature were, oddly enough, influenced by both dominant major philosophical schools of thought that stood at opposite ends of the spectrum regarding how knowledge is acquired: Continental Rationalism represented chiefly by Rene DesCartes and British Empiricism, particularly the work of John Locke.

From DesCartes he received philosophical support for his dualist view of human nature, and struggled with the same mind/body problem that plagued the Cartesians. With better knowledge of Biblical anthropology, modern scholars do not share the radical dualism of DesCartes but have a more unitary view of human nature.[209] With Locke, he shared the belief that all knowledge comes through the senses. Consequently, this led him to the conclusion that there is a special set of senses, described under the rubric of "faith," that apprehended "spiritual" truths and realities. God has "appointed *faith* to supply the defect of sense; to take us up where sense sets us down, and help us over the great gulf. Its office begins where that of sense ends."[210]

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[209]Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (K.C.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972) argues that one of the major issues of the American Holiness Movement that created a "credibility gap" between theory and experience was this "Greek" concept of man in contrast to the Hebrew view that man was a unitary being, 50.

[210]"The Discoveries of Faith," *Works*, 7:232. This is very similar to the Medieval Synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages. Kevin Twain

Many of his arguments were directed against religious teachings current in the 18th century that he considered to be inconsistent with scripture and holy living. Many of these do have their modern counterpart but some do not. The context of the state Church of England (Anglican), of which he was always a part, also shaped many of his comments.

All of this aside, his basic commitments to the central Christian beliefs with special emphasis on holiness of heart and life balanced with faith as the basic human requisite for experiencing the grace of God have enduring qualities that can speak to the present age. In the light of these central Wesleyan insights, I want to suggest some thoughts on happiness in human experience.

Light from Kant. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was a younger contemporary of John Wesley but there is no indication that Wesley took any notice of his work. Kant's essay on ethics entitled *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*, published in 1785, has been described as "one of the most important ethical treatises ever written."[211] Even though, in principle, it stood oceans apart from Wesley's perspective, some of Kant's emphases provide helpful insights into our inquiry.

Our previous brief references to Kant noted that his approach focused on the concept of duty, for duty's sake. In taking this position, he explicitly rejected the long ethical tradition that had interpreted the good life in terms of happiness. He recognized that there was a universal desire (he called it instinct) for happiness but insisted that "it is a very different thing to make a man happy from making him good. . ."[212] But it must be admitted that Kant equated happiness with emotion and circumstances, with which Wesley would stoutly disagree.

Kant's most helpful insight with regard to happiness is his observation that to choose happiness as the highest good and make achieving it our primary pursuit is to fail to achieve it. "In fact," he says, "we find that the more a cultivated reason deliberately devotes

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Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2008) offers sharp criticism of Wesley's theory of the "spiritual sense."

[211]Louis Beck White, "Introduction," to *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*(N.Y.: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc.,1959), vii.

[212]Ibid, 61.

itself to the enjoyments of life and happiness, the more the man falls short of true contentment."[213] Of this phenomenon, someone has coined the phrase, "the threshold of happiness recedes." This helps us to see that happiness is a by-product of seeking a higher *telos*.

Clearly, Wesley would agree with this. Although he joined inseparably happiness and holiness, he would insist that to make the "pursuit of happiness" one's primary preoccupation would be to fall into an idolatry of the self. Since holiness was the pre-condition for happiness, this means that one's dominant goal in life would be to "follow after holiness, without which no one could experience true happiness."

This truth came home to me early in my Christian life. I became a Christian in the context of a religious community that fostered strict introspection. Constant self-examination tended to produce instability and many of my peers were regular seekers at the altar to fortify their faith and stabilize their religious feelings. However, that seemed only to further de-stabilize them. During one summer between college terms, a friend and I joined forces to engage in evangelistic work and we were given an assignment to spend a month in a small town in the mountains of East Tennessee in an effort to establish a church. The circumstances and situation of that summer forced me to focus my attention outside myself and immerse my interests in other people. The result was revolutionary in my own spirit. I learned a little bit about the secret of happiness being other-oriented. Some of the unhappiest persons I have known were at the same time the most self-centered.

When one considers the hunger, devastation from natural disasters, ravages of brutal war and oppressive regimes that are rampant in our world, it seems a little foolish to talk about happiness as a possibility. It may even appear to be self-serving. Is there any real happiness to be found apart from being able to insulate oneself from the realities of this unhappy world? The religion known as Christian Science teaches that pain and misery are merely figments of the imagination and right thinking will elevate one above all this. My university professor of church history made the astute observation in a class on modern religious cults that Christian Science has survived by

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[213]Ibid, 11.

restricting itself to "the pay streak of America." Most of us could not do that, even if we believed it proper.

However, Wesley was not an ivory tower dreamer and he certainly knew much about suffering and deprivation.[214] He was no Marie Antoinette who was so isolated from the realities of her kingdom that when her people complained that they had no bread, she said, "Let them eat cake."

In his exposition of the third beatitude, he explicitly recognized the way the widespread misery of the human race moderated the happiness of the people of God. While there is a joy in the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life of the believer

> There is another . . . mourning . . . which abides in the children of God. They still mourn for the sins and miseries of mankind: They "weep with them that weep." They weep for them that weep not for themselves, for the sinners against their own souls. They mourn for the weakness and unfaithfulness of those that are, in some measure, saved from their sins. . . . At all times they have an awful sense of this, which brings a deep seriousness upon their spirit; a seriousness which is not a little increased, since the eyes of their understanding were opened, by their continually seeing the vast ocean of eternity . . . which has already swallowed up millions of millions of men, and is gaping to devour them that yet remain.[215]

This point is emphasized in his essay on "original sin" where he recognized that the sin of others prohibits one from experiencing happiness. Hence, even if its source is in others, it is unholiness that causes unhappiness.[216]

Nevertheless, he knew that there was a dimension of the human person that could transcend to some extent all those debilitating forces and find a measure of real happiness even in the midst of deprivation

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[214]See "Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions," *Works*, 11:53-59.

[215]*Works*, 5:260-61.

[216]*Works*, 9:236-7.

and death by reaching out to that which was the only real fulfillment of their essential nature.

In an earlier chapter, we referred to a quotation from St. Augustine that described three situations that inevitably produce unhappiness. He said, "For one who seeks what he cannot obtain suffers torture, and he who has got what is not desirable is cheated, and one who does not seek for what is worth seeking for is diseased. Now in all these cases the mind cannot but be unhappy,"

If we turn these upside down, we can see the validity of Wesley's claim that true happiness can be found only in seeking God and loving Him with our whole being. They might look something like this: (1) The one who seeks what can be obtained is happy; (2) One who possesses what is desirable is happy; and (3) One who seeks what is worth seeking finds happiness.

All three of these require a complete reorientation of one's thinking but more fundamentally, a reorientation of ones very being that is nothing short of being "born again." That is Jesus' point to Nicodemus. You cannot *see* the rule of God without this transformation from above. Otherwise, we seek happiness on our own terms and that always turns out to be a false pursuit. Wesley recognizes this qualification in his sermon on "The Wisdom of Winning Souls." Persuading a bad man to be happy, he says, "is the persuading him out of his fancy, judgment, and inclinations, all which must take an entirely new turn, must undergo such a change as is that from death to life."[217]

There may be several ways in which one could elaborate this three-fold "criteria" for happiness but it seems to me that the most comprehensive way is to think of them in terms of seeking what conforms to our essential nature. Theologically speaking, this implies fulfilling our human nature as defined by the Biblical concept of the image of God. On this score, Wesley was right on the mark.

Seeking anything less in order to be happy can, at best, produce what Wesley insisted was a shadow reality, temporary and unsubstantial. History provides innumerable examples of persons seeking happiness in wealth, popularity, or sensual pleasure with

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[217]Outler, *Works*, 4:13-15. This sermon was never published and is presently found only in Charles Wesley's hand with a note, "transcribed from my brother's copies."

resulting disillusionment. False expectations, even religious ones, can be destructive to the human spirit producing bitterness and cynicism. Alternatively, they can lead one to God and truth.

Seeking to satisfy the soul with other than spiritual reality is cumulative, it always calls for more, which in turn creates greater hunger. When our children were small, we acquired a record for them of imaginative stories, one of which reinforced this lesson. When I began attempting to recover it I discovered that the fairy story we heard was an adaptation of one of the famous Grimm's tales and that there were several versions of it.[218] The moral was the same in all, however. A fisherman caught a flounder in the sea that pled with him to throw it back with the offer to grant him a wish. The fish explained that he had been a prince whose greed had caused him to suffer the fate of becoming a fish swimming in the sea. The fisherman agreed and made a request, which was immediately granted. The fulfillment of one wish led to another and the fisherman repeatedly returned to the sea to request ever-grander blessings until, overwhelmed with the possibility of power, he asked to control the "sun, the moon and the stars." The flounder said, "Then you want to be God." When the fisherman agreed the voices changed and the flounder, returning to humanhood, said, "now you will become the fish swimming in the sea because you have become the greediest man in the world." Wesley's analysis of self-will as a sinful affection is similar to the moral of this story. The one who is self-willed must have his own way in everything. That plainly means, "you would rule over God and man; you would be the governor of the world."[219]

Only God Himself can qualify as the one desirable Reality that can fully satisfy the longings of the human spirit for happiness and fulfillment.

Happiness and the Will of God. There is both an ultimate and a penultimate sense of fulfillment as a concomitant of true happiness, both of which are directly related to conforming to the will of God in our lives. The ultimate fulfillment is the result of experiencing God's

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[218]Apparently the original was titled "The Fisherman and His Wife," according to the two written versions I discovered. I am here recounting the best remembrance I have of the recorded version because it is simpler.

[219]*Works*, 9:235-236.

will in our salvation and restoration to the image of God. He "is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Within this larger, all-encompassing circle of God's will that includes all human persons, there is a more personal fulfillment found in living within God's will in terms of our life's work, personal relations and other matters that are distinctive of our own unique humanity.

This is not to suggest that there is a rigid pattern of life to which each individual must conform in order to be within God's will. There may be a number of careers in which we may find God's personal purpose for us; there certainly is not a specific individual to which we must be married in order to find marital fulfillment. However, all must be within the larger circle of God's redemptive purpose.

Somewhere, Oswald Chambers made a comment that has been helpful to me along this line. He said, "Watch the things that exhaust you, for those are things you are doing that are outside the will of God." There is a difference between being tired and being exhausted. I found the truth of this observation in my own experience. Even though feeling a call to preach, in beginning to pastor a church, I found myself struggling with certain aspects that really did "exhaust" me. Looking back, I think that this could be partially explained by the results of a personality inventory we were given in high school. I was evaluated as being an ambervert, almost an introvert and temperamentally unfit for a career in ministry. While I experienced a measure of success as a pastor, and left every church stronger than when I came, when the door was opened to begin a career in teaching, a career I had come to realize was more in accord with my gifts and temperament, I experienced an unbelievable sense of fulfillment. I was able to teach heavy loads, carry on other educational responsibilities, and perform my other obligations for over 30 years without ever having a feeling of "exhaustion."

After retirement, I accepted an invitation to teach a semester at what was then called European Nazarene Bible College in Switzerland. While there, my friends, Rick and Bonnie Ryding came to the regional mission center to do a training session with new missionaries and were invited to spend some time with the College faculty. They gave us a personality inventory and to my surprise, I turned out to have become an extrovert. No one could convince me

that the happiness [fulfillment] I experienced over the years was unrelated to finding the penultimate will of God for my life.

Since one cannot really develop a theology of happiness inductively, that is, by drawing implications from particular experiences, let me turn, in wrapping up this book, back to the concept of the image of God. It is this theme that I believe is the key to happiness since happiness implies becoming fully human and it is the image of God that embodies the Christian concept of humanness.

In an earlier discussion, we suggested that it has become almost universally accepted that the *imago dei* involves a four-fold relation. Randy L. Maddox argues that John Wesley himself understood it in this way. He says, "Wesley's anthropology recognized four basic human relationships: with God, with other humans, with lower animals, and with ourselves. A holy (and whole!) person is one in whom all these relationships is properly expressed."[220]

E. Stanley Jones, in his powerful devotional book, *Abundant Living*, highlights the same four relations and seeks to lead his reader into the importance of having each of them intact in order to have "abundant life." "You have to relate yourself to four worlds: (1) yourself, (2) things; (3) your brother; (4) God." One could make a case that the order in which we establish these relationships existentially is the order Jones lists here. Nevertheless, he rightly recognizes that "until you relate yourself to God in fellowship and obedience, none of the other three relationships will come out right."[221]

A popular science fiction novel of some years ago provides us a picture, I believe, of the practical outworking of the truth of Jones' statement. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* depicted a situation in which scientific positivism had become the dominant ethos. Any form of "religion" that remained was purely naturalistic. Literature and studies that are traditionally associated with the liberal arts, that is, those things that are uniquely human in nature, were anathema and carefully censored. Any expression of purpose for human existence was avoided. As one character put it, "God is manifested by his absence." The traditional family was nonexistent, human fetuses were conceived in test tubes, and natural birth was looked on as obscene.

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[220] *Responsible Grace*, 68.

[221] *Abundant Living* (N.Y.: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942), 41.

There was no enduring commitment of male to female and vice verse; in fact, a long-term sexual relation between two persons was considered unacceptable.

This picture brings to mind the question, can human beings continue to exist as humans in this kind of ethos? Whatever Huxley intended by this Marxist-dominated representation of the future, in light of the theological vision of biblical faith, the answer is NO? One character in this novel ultimately becomes the focal point and reflects the result of such a less-than-human way of life. He is referred to in the story as "the savage" and was an accident resulting from his mother's failure to protect herself with the prevailing method of birth control. He was an embarrassment to her and to the culture as he constantly longed for maternal love and family relationship and revolted against the indiscriminate sexual activities in which everyone was engaged. In the end, he hanged himself because he could not cope with it. He, I believe, is a paradigm of the human race when it turns away from its divinely intended destiny, which centrally entails a relation to God.

Wesley identifies a number of "affections" that create unhappiness and offers the hope that the sanctifying work of the Spirit can, in the process of life through faith, deal redemptively with these affections. A relation of love to God and others and a proper sense, in that light, of the appropriate role of things and our selves will offer an alternate way of being and thus lay a solid foundation for true happiness in this life with hope for perfect happiness in the final consummation.

It must remain for another project to demonstrate from Wesley's works how holiness, understood as a relation of "openness" to God and others, the loving God with all ones heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves will provide healing for the distorted affections of envy, malice, revenge, covetousness, pride, anger, self-will and foolish desires. In the meantime, let us heed Wesley's often-repeated admonition to "find all your happiness in God." One of John Newton's great hymns expresses the truth we are seeking to explore:

Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting pleasure,
None but Zion's children know.

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