

**HOLINESS OF HEART AND LIFE:
LESSONS FROM NORTH AMERICAN METHODISM¹**

Randy L. Maddox

Near the end of his life, John Wesley proposed that propagation of the message of entire sanctification was the chief reason why God had raised up his Methodist movement.² Whatever one makes of this claim to providential purpose, the doctrine of Christian Perfection clearly became the focus of Methodism's most vigorous early debates, both with opponents and within the movement. Nowhere were the internal debates more polarized than among North American Methodists. Partisan factions emerged in the early nineteenth century, dividing on a spectrum that ran from denial of any need for or possibility of entire sanctification to insistence that it was a state of Christian victory that could be entered instantaneously by any believer (however young in their Christian life) who simply claimed it in faith.

There have been several attempts to account for this divergence among Wesley's American descendants. Some have ascribed it primarily to the impact of incompatible temporal variations in Wesley's views on entire sanctification that are reflected in the materials he bequeathed to his movement.³ Others (who often assume more consistency to Wesley's own understanding) highlight tensions between his teachings on Christian Perfection and those of some of his coworkers and early followers.⁴ The question that either of these suggestions leaves is how the character and dynamics of the early Methodist experience in North America may have itself contributed to divergence over the issue of entire sanctification. In one of the first con-

siderations of this question, John Peters attributed deviation from Wesley's understanding to a (claimed) omission of his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* from American Methodist publication and influence in the crucial years of 1812–32.⁵ A more widely held suggestion is that the Enlightenment optimism and stress on individual human liberty that permeated culture in the new United States of America made it increasingly difficult to maintain the traditional Protestant assumption of original sin—the eradication of which was (supposedly) Wesley's defining purpose for entire sanctification.⁶ In some contrast, the other major proposal is that the alien influence of subtly Reformed models of divine/human interaction in sanctification heightened the tendency of the “holiness” wing of American Methodism to equate Christian Perfection with the event of the “baptism of Holy Spirit,” thereby accenting its instantaneous character at the expense of growth—in significant contrast from Wesley.⁷

While there is much that is helpful in these various suggestions, I have become convinced that there was another significant factor involved that has not received due attention. Put briefly, early American Methodists decisively (though, initially, without recognizing it!) abandoned Wesley's basic understanding of how humans make moral choices and enact them (i.e., his “moral psychology”) for a very different model. On the terms of this new model, Wesley's central emphases concerning sanctification and Christian Perfection no longer made sense or held together. As a result, his American descendants were left to fight over fragments of their heritage, or to turn elsewhere for views more congenial to their adopted moral psychology.

To develop this suggestion, I will need to outline Wesley's assumptions about moral psychology and their connection to his understanding of sanctification. I will then turn attention to the abandonment of this moral psychology in American Methodism. Finally, I will suggest how this change helps account for the debates over entire sanctification among Wesley's American descendants. I believe this process will put us in an enlightening position to reflect on what lessons we might learn from this American Methodist saga about the dynamics of spiritual growth and the possibility of Christian Perfection.

I. WESLEY'S “AFFECTIONAL” MODEL OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Let me begin with some observations about Wesley's eighteenth-century British context.⁸ Early Anglican moral thought was dominated by an “intellectualist” model, where virtue was a matter of reason suppressing the distractions of the (irrational) passions to enable morally free and correct acts of will. This reigning model was aggressively challenged in the eighteenth century by the empiricist turn in English philosophy. For empiricism truth is something experienced receptively by the human intellect, not imposed by it, or simply preexistent within it. In relation to moral psychology, this philosophical conviction led to the insistence that the human will can likewise be moved to action only by being experientially affected. While intellectual assessment of the conditions and consequences of a proposed course of action may take place, personal action will ensue only if the “affections” are also engaged, inclining the person toward the action.

This emphasis on the indispensable contribution of the affections to human action was not limited to philosophers in eighteenth-century England. It found strong advocates as well among theologians seeking to counteract the emerging deistic reductions

of religion to mere reverence for the truths of natural revelation and reason. One of the strongest voices arguing that reason alone was not sufficient to motivate or enable spiritual life was Isaac Watts. Wesley agreed strongly enough with Watts' argument in this regard to abridge it and republish it for his Methodist people.⁹

When Wesley's endorsement of Watts is combined with his lifelong commitment to an empiricist epistemology, the natural expectation is that he would have been dissatisfied with an intellectualist moral psychology, preferring the model which had a deep appreciation for the contribution of the affections to human action. Such a preference is easy to demonstrate.¹⁰ More to the point, this preference was not simply a tangential concern for Wesley. It found central expression in his understanding of human nature, the human problem, and the Way of Salvation.¹¹

Consider first his understanding of human nature. Wesley's typical list of faculties that constitute the Image of God in humanity included the understanding, the will, liberty, and conscience. In evaluating this list one must recognize that Wesley was not using "will" to designate a human faculty of rational selfdetermination, as is typical in current usage; rather, he specifically equated the will with the affections. And how did he conceive these affections? To begin with, they are not simply "feelings," they are the indispensable motivating inclinations behind all human action. On the other hand, they are neither mere intellectual assent nor blind attraction; rather, in their ideal expression, the affections integrate the rational and emotional dimensions of human life into a holistic inclination toward particular choices or acts. Finally, while provocative of human action, the affections have a crucial receptive dimension as well. They are not selfcausative, but are awakened and thrive *in response* to experience of external reality. In what Wesley held forth as the crucial instance, it is only in response to our experience of God's gracious love for us, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that the human affection of love for God and others is awakened and grows.¹²

While the affections are responsive, they need not be simply transitory. Wesley was clear that they can be habituated into enduring dispositions. Drawing on a characteristic eighteenthcentury use of the term, he called such habituated dispositions "tempers." The major positive example of such a temper (or habituated affection) for Wesley was precisely love of God and neighbor. Indeed, he summarized holiness itself in terms of this temper. As he once put it, "From the true love of God and [other humans] directly flows every Christian grace, every holy and happy temper. And from these springs uniform holiness of conversation."¹³

Wesley's language of holy actions flowing from holy tempers suggests that he appreciated the sense in which habituated affections bring "freedom" for human actions—the freedom that comes from disciplined practice (e.g., the freedom to play a Bach concerto).¹⁴ Yet, he was also aware that some contemporary thinkers (e.g., Hume) were presenting the influence of our affections on our actions as invincible, thereby undermining human freedom. To avoid such implications Wesley carefully distinguished "liberty" from will. He understood liberty as our capacity to enact (or refuse to enact!) our desires and inclinations. This capacity is what allowed Wesley to appreciate the contributions of habit, education, and argument to human willing, without rendering such willing totally determined.

It is because our actions are not totally determined that Wesley took the issues of

human sin and salvation so seriously. The role of the affections was central to his understanding of both of these topics. In the case of sin, Wesley insisted that the issue was more than individual wrong actions. He frequently discussed sin in terms of a threefold division: sinful nature or tempers, sinful words, and sinful actions. The point of this division was that our sinful actions and words *flow from* corrupted tempers, so the problem of sin must ultimately be addressed at this affectional level. This point is also reflected in the way that the mature Wesley shifted his discussion of the classic Western doctrine of Original Sin away from questions of inherited guilt, focusing instead on the present disordering impact of Inbeing Sin.¹⁵ While some have occasionally accused Wesley of viewing this Inbeing Sin as a foreign substance or entity that causes sinful actions, it was really more relational in character. The most basic cause of our present infirmity for Wesley was not some “thing” that we inherit, but the distortion of our nature resulting from being born into this world already separated from the empowering Divine Presence. *Deprived* of the affect of this essential relationship, our various faculties inevitably become *debilitated*, leaving us morally *depraved*. For one particular, our weakened affections take on unholy tempers.

As a corollary of his understanding of our human problem, Wesley’s chief complaint against the models of Christian salvation which he discerned among his fellow Anglican clergy was that they restricted themselves to outward matters, neglecting the affectional dimension of human life. His own typical definition of Christian life placed primary emphasis on renewing this inward dimension, described in such terms as: “the life of God in the [human] soul; a participation of the divine nature; the mind that was in Christ; or, the renewal of our heart after the image of [God who] created us.”¹⁶ Involved here would be both an awakening of the affections in response to the affect of God’s gracious empowering Presence, and a shaping of those affections into holy dispositions (tempers). Since holiness of thought, word, and action would flow from such renewal, Wesley once identified the essential goal of all true religion as the recovery of holy tempers.¹⁷

But how does this recovery take place? How are our sin-debilitated affections reempowered and the sinful distortions of their patterning influence reshaped? Wesley was quite clear that we cannot accomplish this through our human efforts alone. Its possibility lies instead in the regenerating impact of God’s graciously restored pardoning Presence in the lives of believers. Yet God’s grace does not infuse holy tempers instantaneously complete. Rather, God awakens in believers the “seed” of every virtue.¹⁸ These seeds then strengthen and take shape as we responsively “grow in grace.”

It is crucial to note that Wesley assumed this growth would be a “co-operant” affair, because it is grounded in God’s *responsible grace*, which both enables our ability to respond and respects our integrity in that response. This assumption is central to Wesley’s recommended set of “means of grace.” He valued the means of grace both as avenues by which God conveys the gracious Presence that enables our responsive growth in holiness and as “exercises” by which we responsibly nurture that holiness. Since holiness is rooted in the affections, he also highlighted the way in which various means of grace serve to enliven our affectional motivation and/or to shape our affectional disposition. Indeed, Wesley’s developed set of recommended means of grace manifests a conscious concern to balance these two effects.¹⁹

This leaves only the question of how far the recovery of holy tempers can be realized in this life. Probably Wesley's most well-known claim is that *entire* sanctification is a present possibility for Christians. What exactly did he mean by this? Perhaps the best place to start an explanation is to make clear that entire sanctification (or Christian Perfection) is not an isolated reality, but a dynamic level of maturity within the larger process of sanctification, the level characteristic of "adult" Christian life. We noted above that Wesley considered love to be the essence of Christian life. Thus, when he wanted to be more specific, he would define Christian Perfection as "the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbor, ruling our tempers, words, and actions."²⁰ It is important to notice that love is not only said to be present, it is *ruling*. God's love is shed abroad in the lives of all Christians, awakening their responsive love for God and others. But this love is weak, sporadic, and offset by contrary affections in new believers. In the lives of the entirely sanctified Wesley maintained that it rules "to the point that there is no mixture of any contrary affections—all is peace and harmony."²¹

Affections contrary to love would be "inward sin." Wesley believed that this inward sin was overcome in entire sanctification. In a few instances he described this overcoming as a "rooting out" or "destruction" of inward sin. As he came to realize, this language is problematic, because talk of the destruction of sinful affections can connote the impossibility of their return. By contrast, Wesley became convinced of the sad reality that sinful affections (and resulting outward sins) may reemerge in lives that had been ruled by love. How could one express the benefits of Christian Perfection without obscuring this fact? When Wesley was pressed directly on this point he offered the alternative account that in the soul of an entirely sanctified person holy tempers are *presently* reigning to the point of "driving out" opposing tempers (although these may return).²²

At this juncture, I must reemphasize that Wesley's focus on affections in describing Christian Perfection was not intended as an alternative to actions. He understood that acts of love flow from a temper of love. Yet, he also recognized that ignorance, mistakes, and other human frailties often distort the passage from affection to action. It was in this sense that he tired of the debate over whether Christian Perfection was "sinless." He did indeed believe that it consisted in holy tempers, but not that it was characterized by infallible expression of those tempers in actions.

Perhaps the best way to capture Wesley's affectional view of entire sanctification, then, is to say that he was convinced that the Christian life did not have to remain a life of perpetual struggle. He believed that both Scripture and Christian tradition attested that God's loving grace can transform sinful human lives to the point where our own love for God and others becomes a free response. Christians can aspire to take on the disposition of Christ, and live out that disposition within the constraints of our human infirmities.²³ To deny this possibility would be to deny the sufficiency of God's empowering grace—to make the power of sin greater than that of grace.

II. EARLY AMERICAN REJECTION OF WESLEY'S MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

If the preceding discussion has been successful in establishing a connection between Wesley's moral psychology and his characteristic emphases concerning entire sanctification, it will provide good perspective for considering any divergence of early American

Methodists from Wesley. One clear divergence is the broad rejection of Wesley's moral psychology among his American descendants. It would be helpful to place this rejection in historical context.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century the empiricist emphasis on the role of the affections in human willing found some extreme formulations in British philosophy. The most notorious example was David Hume, who essentially reduced all human sense of moral obligation and inclination to functions of the physical passions. The deterministic implications of Hume's position called forth strong reactions—most notably, that of Thomas Reid. In an attempt to rebut Hume, Reid championed an account of duty and obligation that returned to an intellectualist moral psychology, with emphasis on rational control of the passions or affections.²⁴ Central to his argument was the insistence that the psychological faculty of the will should not be identified with the affections, but was instead our free rational ability to choose between (or suppress) the various stimuli that motivate action. In this distinction, Reid removed rational intentionality from the affections, implying that they were actually irrational. Moreover, his maxim that only *intentional* acts have moral status led him to depict habituated tendencies (tempers) as strictly amoral—if not indeed opposed to truly moral acts—since they operate with minimal conscious intentionality.

The importance of Reid to our topic is the consistency with which his basic position was adopted in North American circles to critique theological expressions of a deterministic affectional moral psychology. The leading target for such criticism was, of course, Jonathan Edwards. An affectional moral psychology was central to Edwards' *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746). His major purpose in this treatise was to defend the role of appeals to the affections in current revival efforts by arguing that the affections were integral to Christian life—as the “springs” from which holy actions flow.²⁵ It should not be surprising that John Wesley found this basic affectional psychology congenial enough to republish an abridged edition of Edwards' treatise for his Methodist people.²⁶ This congeniality was heightened by the fact that the edition of this treatise that Wesley read and republished omitted the passages in Edwards' original edition that most explicitly characterized the holy affections as an “infused *habitus*,” i.e., a gift from God that unilaterally represses evil affections and effects holy acts.²⁷ Edwards' background conviction hinted at in these omitted passages became central to his later essay on *Freedom of the Will*, where he argued that the will is not itself a real entity, but simply an expression of the strongest motive (affection) in a person's character. Thus a sinful human nature cannot desire to please God unless God—by a miraculous infusion of created grace (i.e., holy affections)—changes the sinner's character.²⁸ Edwards develops this point in extended contrast with Arminianism, arguing that the Arminian stress on human liberty results in a psychology that cannot explain why we would ever make choices, and a moral philosophy that does not value virtuous habits and inclinations. In his posthumously published thoughts “Concerning Efficacious Grace” Edwards gave this the sharpest edge, repeatedly rejecting the (Wesleyan!) use of Philippians 2: 12–13 to teach co-operant grace.²⁹ In a concern to argue that God was solely responsible for our holiness and salvation, Edwards had to reject any notion that virtues are “habits” that are developed in a gradual and insensible way. He was not even content to say the Spirit infuses the potential for virtuous habits;

rather God infuses the fully-formed holy habits or disposition of the heart immediately. As a result, the change from being a vicious person to having a virtuous character is instantaneous.

Such a strong model of Divine grace operating unilaterally through the human will inevitably gave rise to debate, even within New England Calvinism.³⁰ In their attempt to develop a more compatibilist model of Divine grace and human action, revisionary (or “New Divinity”) Calvinists typically turned from Edwards to the intellectualist moral psychology of Thomas Reid and his disciples.³¹ The theological voices among early American Methodists were drawn into this intra-Calvinist debate. They found themselves in an awkward position. On the one hand, they criticized the New Divinity theologians as being inconsistent with their Reformed tradition. On the other hand, they insisted that both the New Divinity model and Edwards’ model resulted in a determinism that undermined the moral integrity and love of God.³² Throughout, their theological concern was focused much more on how to avoid any infringements on human freedom in the emotional/intellectual dynamics of spiritual life than on Wesley’s focal issue of how to awaken affectional commitment in persons who were already conventional (i.e., merely intellectual) Christians.

The crucial thing to note, for our purposes, is that these American Methodist theologians also appropriated Reid’s intellectualist psychology to articulate their alternative model of the dynamics of spiritual life.³³ This move took nearly “official” status with the publication of excerpts from two prominent expositors of Reid’s moral psychology in the first volume of the *Methodist Review* (1818), and the release of an American edition of Reid’s *Works* from the Methodist publishers in 1822.³⁴

There is no better indicator of the extent of this appropriation of Reid’s moral psychology than the consistency with which these early American Methodist theologians distinguished the affections from the will, and defined the latter as the principle of independent rational choice.³⁵ In place of Wesley’s enumeration of our psychological faculties as understanding, will, liberty, and conscience, the typical American Methodist list became that of Reid: understanding, affections (or sensibilities), and will.³⁶ In further consonance with Reid, these American theologians demonstrated a tendency to portray the affections as inherently irrational, needing regulation by the more primary human faculty of understanding.³⁷ Likewise, they typically judged habits and inclinations to have moral status only when voluntarily embraced, and were prone to evaluate them more as obstacles to—than as facilitators of—free action.³⁸

It must be admitted that these changes from Wesley appear to have taken place with little initial consciousness of the fact. The first instance that I have found where debate erupted over how Wesley’s faculty psychology might relate to that assumed in American Methodist dialogue was in 1842!³⁹ And it was 1888 before there was the clear concession that Wesley identified the will with the affections, while contemporary American Methodist theologians did not. However, this was assumed to be only a semantic difference—Kant had taught contemporary theologians to use “will” to designate what Wesley called “liberty.”⁴⁰

III. IMPLICATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

In reality, the difference between Wesley and Reid (or Wesley and Kant!) was more

than a matter of semantics. It involved alternative emphases concerning the role of the affections in processes of human choice and action. As such, it was inevitable that the switch in moral psychology that we have traced in early American Methodism would have effects on their appropriation of Wesley's "affectional" understanding of Christian Perfection. It is time to turn our attention to these effects.

A. Impact Through Mid-Nineteenth Century

The fortunes of Wesley's understanding of entire sanctification during the initial generation of American Methodism (1772–1816, the tenure of Francis Asbury's ministry) can be summarized in several generalizations. First, even if their preoccupation was with calling sinners to conversion, the concern for holiness of heart and life pervaded the preaching of the early Methodist itinerants.⁴¹ Second, the status of early Methodism as a counter-cultural movement within the dominant "culture of honor and deference" in the surrounding society fostered a social coherence that minimalized doctrinal debate.⁴² Third, the most defining influence on early American Methodism was actually Asbury, but his characteristic emphases on sanctification reflected the "mature" balance of Wesley, valuing preaching the possibility of entire sanctification as much for how it fosters present growth in holy affections as for any actual attainment.⁴³ Yet, fourth, Asbury could also affirm proclaiming Christian Perfection because of the way it distracted the early Methodists from contending for the right of their (unordained) preachers to serve eucharist!⁴⁴ In this evaluation one senses that the central role of the means of grace to Wesley's understanding of sanctification was beginning to slip among his American descendants.

The role of the means of grace would be further diminished in the years following Asbury's death, as the impact of the switch to an intellectualist moral psychology spread among American Methodists. This impact might seem hard to discern, since nineteenth-century American Methodism remained heavily dependent upon British treatments of Christian Perfection through mid-century.⁴⁵ However, there was a noticeable increase of influence of British voices other than Wesley—and in some tension with Wesley—as this period progressed, an increase that can be correlated with the shifting moral psychology traced above.

The first case to consider is John Fletcher. As one of Wesley's closest coworkers, Fletcher imbibed and echoed many of Wesley's major themes. In particular, he strongly endorsed the point that the goal of sanctification (Christian Perfection) is not merely a deliverance from the power of sin, but most properly a recovery of the holy tempers.⁴⁶ At the same time, Fletcher was more defined by controversial dialogue with the Calvinists than Wesley. As a result, in his attempt to counter Edward's deterministic equation of affections with the will Fletcher moved toward identifying the will as the power of rational self-determination, and emphasized that true freedom comes from rationally controlling the affections, appetites, and passions.⁴⁷ When this move is combined with Fletcher's association (in direct contrast to Wesley) of the entrance into Christian Perfection with the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," the framework was laid for a model of entire sanctification focused largely in one volitional event.⁴⁸ While Fletcher himself continued to affirm the importance of growth throughout the Christian life, he could also advise believers not to "wait idly" in the means of grace for the perfecting work of God, but to "take it by force"

in prayer.⁴⁹ This latter advice found a growing audience among American Methodists in the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ By mid-century it could vie for authority with Wesley's own treatments.⁵¹

Another British voice that gained an increased hearing by mid-century was Adam Clarke.⁵² Clarke's somewhat ambiguous position further heightened the contrast with Wesley's affectional model of sanctification. To begin with, Clarke was even more explicit than Fletcher in equating the will with liberty.⁵³ At the same time, he described both sin and holiness in nearly deterministic terms: as long as unholy affections were present in our life we cannot live truly holy lives; but once God fills us with holy tempers such lives will flow forth naturally. Most importantly, both the destruction of the unholy tempers and the filling with holy tempers were presented as God's unilateral and instantaneous acts (reminiscent of Edwards!). Clarke strongly rejected any notion of gradual purification from unholy tempers.⁵⁴ The result was a model of Christian Perfection as instantaneous purification, with little or no role of "character formation" in overcoming vice, though it may play some role in developing the implanted seeds of virtue.

The major tendencies we have been noting continued (though with some moderation) in our other major British voice, Richard Watson. Watson is of particular importance to our story because his *Theological Institutes* became the standard text in American Methodist theological education for the middle five decades of the nineteenth century. As such, it is significant that Watson clearly turned to an intellectualist moral psychology (apparently drawing on Reid) to critique Edwards' model of Christian life.⁵⁵ Given his dependence upon Wesley, Watson did keep affection language in his descriptions of sanctification. But, like Clarke, he portrayed the deliverance from all unholy affections and the introduction of the seeds of holy affections as an instantaneous event.⁵⁶ At the same time, Watson stressed more than Clarke the necessary development of holy habits and virtues that must *follow* this event, and could talk of the period between regeneration and entire sanctification as "advancing" toward this event.⁵⁷ While this would seem to keep Watson more in line with Wesley's model of how holy character is developed, it must be balanced by the recognition that Watson's intellectualist psychology also led him to evaluate the means of grace primarily in terms of "duty." For example, he treats the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper as signs that confirm (but do not convey!) God's grace, and argues in specific relation to prayer that it is not an instrument of grace but a "condition" of grace.⁵⁸ As such, his warning about missing the Lord's Supper habitually is not that one loses its empowering and formative benefits, but only that it is a violation of Christ's plain command.⁵⁹

To test the extent to which these additional British voices were congruent with (and influential on) American Methodism in the first half of the nineteenth century, we need only note characteristic emphases of those American writers who addressed Christian Perfection in this period. First, the Americans clearly use the intellectualist moral psychology of the will controlling the affections as the interpretive framework for discussing Christian Perfection.⁶⁰ Second, there is a growing openness among the American writers to identification of entire sanctification with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and portrayal of this event as a time when evil affections are instantly removed and holy tempers instilled.⁶¹ Third, given this more instantaneous focus, if means of grace are mentioned, it is often only a call to attend preaching on entire sanctification and to pray earnestly for it.⁶² Even when

the broader set of means of grace are invoked, it is more in terms of duties than as formative disciplines.⁶³ In light of this reconception, the noticeable decline in the use of means of grace among Methodists through the nineteenth-century is less surprising.⁶⁴

As this summary demonstrates, differences were developing in nineteenth-century American Methodism with central assumptions of Wesley's understanding of Christian Perfection. These differences would spark open debates in the second half of the century. I will consider the debates in the Northern and Southern churches separately. In each case my main concern is not to give an exhaustive survey, but to suggest how the change in moral psychology that we have been tracing contributed to them.⁶⁵

B. Debates over Christian Perfection in Northern Methodism, 1850–1900

American debate over the authentic “Wesleyan” understanding of entire sanctification broke out first in the Northern church. Importantly, the majority of participants on all sides of this debate accepted an intellectualist moral psychology as self-evident, differing only on its implications for Christian Perfection. Such dominance by the intellectualist psychology is not hard to explain. It continued to be used in influential apologetic responses against the Calvinists.⁶⁶ It was the perspective defended in the texts on moral philosophy placed on the required Course of Study for traveling elders.⁶⁷ And it remained central to discussions of anthropology in standard Methodist systematic theologies.⁶⁸

The first shots in the Northern debate actually began their flight from outside. In 1839 Asa Mahan (a Congregationalist) published a defense of Christian Perfection articulated rigorously within the assumptions of the intellectualist moral psychology of Thomas Reid.⁶⁹ On these terms, perfection became the full and perfect voluntary discharge of our rational duty to God and all other beings! More specifically, it was the ever vigilant use of our will to impose rational control on our passions, appetites, and propensities, so that our every choice might be freed for obedience to God's command.⁷⁰ When it was protested that such an ideal was impossible, Mahan responded that it becomes possible when Christians accept (subsequent to justification) the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, for this baptism strengthens their rational self-control.⁷¹

At first glance the gap between Mahan's understanding of Christian Perfection and that of Wesley would seem unbridgeable. Holiness is no longer a matter of the graciously empowered and guided progressive transformation of our affectional nature into the holistic disposition of Christ, it is the simple maintenance (with some help by the Holy Spirit) of an ongoing series of “free” (i.e., regardless of inner inclinations) rational choices to fulfill our duties. The only means of grace central to the latter model would be ones that are conditions of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, or that exhort us regularly concerning our duty—e.g., sermon, Scripture reading, and prayer.

Despite these differences, Mahan's model of Christian Perfection proved congenial to many Methodists.⁷² Surely its most enthusiastic appropriation was in the writings of Phoebe Palmer. While Palmer “lowered the standard” of our duty to the single matter of total surrender or devotion to God, she kept Mahan's emphasis that such devotion is possible by a perpetual rational exercise of will.⁷³ The congruence of Palmer's model of holiness with Reid's intellectualist psychology is best evidenced by its appropriation in Thomas Upham, who had become a leading exponent of this psychology.⁷⁴

The strong intellectualism of Upham's model of Christian Perfection is most clear in his claim that those entirely sanctified would experience temptation only "theoretically," not sensibly. This claim sparked a prolonged rejoinder from Merritt Caldwell, explicitly based on disagreement over spiritual/moral psychology.⁷⁵ Caldwell took it as obvious that no Christian reaches the point of not being occasionally "sensibly" tempted or inclined to sinful acts. But drawing on the Reidian tradition of moral psychology, he argued that such inclinations, tempers, passions, or affections are only natural "feelings" and have no moral status. As such, one can indeed be delivered from all sin and still feel these temptations.

Caldwell's attempt to correct Upham served to ignite debate over the nature and possibility of Christian Perfection in the Northern church. On one side of this debate were those who insisted against Caldwell that inward inclinations to sinful acts were indeed of moral character—they are the "evil constitutional principle" of Original Sin that remains in believers following justification.⁷⁶ On this reading, the very purpose of entire sanctification became the eradication of this constitutional principle. Importantly, those who developed this reading were heavily influenced by Fletcher and Clarke. As such, they connected entire sanctification to the dramatic event of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and argued that in this event all unholy inclinations are instantaneously destroyed and (at least the seeds of) holy inclinations instilled.⁷⁷

Partisans to this position understood themselves to be defending "Wesleyan" Holiness. But while they were indeed defending the possibility of entire sanctification, their dependence upon an intellectualist moral psychology led them to a very different understanding of its nature than Wesley.⁷⁸ This is most evident in their uncomfortableness with any emphasis on the role of discipline and nurture in "untwisting" our sinful inclinations. They insisted that all such efforts are fruitless, that the constitutional principle of evil can only be removed unilaterally by God, and that any role for nurture or growth would only come after this had taken place. On these terms, Christian Perfection is distinguished sharply from character formation—a distinction they drew by contrasting "purity" and "maturity" in the Christian life.⁷⁹ Christian Perfection, for them, was a state of simple purity entered instantaneously when all evil inclinations are destroyed. Maturity awaited subsequent growth in the holy virtues. Not only is this quite different from Wesley's identification of Christian Perfection with the full "disposition" of Christ, they typically give little guidance on how subsequent growth in character is nurtured (often portraying it as inevitable). While they championed the holiness meeting as a means to the crisis experience of entire sanctification, one finds little emphasis on formative means of grace or discipline.⁸⁰ At times it appeared that their interest lay more in determining just which "imperfections" could *remain* in a person who was pure. Given their moral psychology, arguments over this issue focused on actions and frequently degenerated into legalistic moralism.

I hasten to add that those reacting to this overall model of entire sanctification could be just as moralistic. These reactions were particularly concerned to deny that Christians must await a second work of grace before they can be expected to live holy lives. As one example put it, "The Christian may, and is required by God, to be perfect every day of his life in the sense of keeping the whole moral law as the fruit of his [or her] regeneration."⁸¹ Given the terms in which the holiness camp had framed the argument, these writers ended up arguing that the liberating and empowering benefits of sanctification all come in

our initial regeneration.⁸² This allowed (some of) them to emphasize the process of growing in grace after regeneration, and to highlight the contribution of the means of grace to such growth. But what was the character of this growth? They insisted against the holiness camp that nothing in the believer's "nature" needed fundamental change, in order for free obedience to be possible. Yet they were also clear that believers struggle to control temptation or inclinations to sinful acts. Their main concern was to maintain (echoing the argument, and intellectualist psychology, of Caldwell) that these inclinations should not be seen as having moral status, or subject to salvific transformation. If Wesley had disagreed on this point, it was because of his inadequate psychology!⁸³ And if there was any sense in which Christian Perfection is a distinct state in the process of sanctification, it is only in the heightened ability that practice brings to repress our lower (affectional) nature and live in unreserved rational consecration to God.⁸⁴

It is hard to imagine how such strongly contrasting readings could be reconciled, though there were some valiant efforts to do so.⁸⁵ I would suggest that the major reason these efforts failed is that they continued to assume the intellectualist moral psychology.⁸⁶ It strikes me as no accident that, operating within this psychology, leading theologians of the nineteenth-century Methodist Episcopal Church were often reduced to admitting that they simply could not explain the dynamics of entire sanctification!⁸⁷ Nor is it surprising that folk who were confident of their ability to explain these dynamics (in "holiness" terms) increasingly found themselves in new denominational contexts.

C. Debates over Christian Perfection in Southern Methodism, 1850–1900

Vigorous debate over Christian Perfection in the Methodist Episcopal Church South came a generation later than in the North, and largely echoed the earlier Northern debates. One of the clear similarities is that it was again fought against the background of an assumed intellectualist moral psychology. The particular prominence of this psychology in Southern Methodism can be attributed to one man—Albert Bledsoe. Bledsoe was a convert to Methodism from Congregationalism, and his conversion had come through a detailed critique of Edwards' affectional psychology. His standard in this critique was the intellectualist psychology of Thomas Reid.⁸⁸ Thus, it is no accident that the same psychology is represented in the moral philosophy texts on the course of study for the Southern church.⁸⁹

From its beginnings through the mid-1880s, the "holiness" reading we encountered in the Northern church appears to have enjoyed quiet privilege in the Methodist Episcopal Church South.⁹⁰ The quiet was shattered when Jeremiah Boland published a feisty critique of this reading in 1887.⁹¹ His points basically repeat those of the Northern critics: regeneration brings all the purification of our nature necessary for enabling growth in holiness; there is no residue of Original Sin remaining in believers; the inclinations to sin that remain in believers are natural and have no moral culpability; and Christian Perfection is simply the consistent obedient free exercise of our wills that comes with maturity. If there is anything new in Boland, it is the clarity with which he grounds his position in an intellectualist psychology, and criticizes Wesley for the inadequacy of his alternative psychology (calling it a "blot on our Arminian Methodism!").⁹²

As one might expect, Boland's argument called forth a string of defenses of the "holi-

ness” claim that Christian Perfection marks the eradication of evil inclinations remaining in believers—arguing that it was the biblical position, the position confirmed by experience, Wesley’s position, and the “standard” position of the Methodist Episcopal Church South.⁹³ A more unique response to Boland was offered by George Hayes, who argued that the debate could be solved by modifying the claims of both sides. Against Boland, Hayes insisted that an inherited depravity remains in believers which is not simply “natural”; while against the eradicationists, he argued that this depravity is not sin in itself and will never be removed in this life. Holiness then becomes a process (made possible by regeneration and discipline) of increasing our ability to resist this depravity through strengthening of our character, and Christian Perfection the mature establishment of that character.⁹⁴ While this sounds a little closer to Wesley, it does not take long to see that Hayes views character in intellectual terms, defining it as “doing the best we know.”⁹⁵

This is particularly disappointing, because there were at least a few in the Southern church who were uncomfortable with the reigning intellectualist psychology and struggled to articulate an alternative in connection with the nature of holiness.⁹⁶ Overall, such voices were rare. More common were protests about the way that some were reducing holiness to “mere emotionalism,” protests that often carried themselves the tone of legalistic moralism.⁹⁷ Against this background, the truly surprising thing is that Southern irenic attempts to mediate between competing groups were somewhat more successful than in the North.⁹⁸

D. Twentieth-Century Developments?

The next logical step would be to carry our story on through the twentieth century. But there is actually very little to tell! To borrow an image that I believe Albert Outler first used, Christian Perfection, which was a cornerstone of Wesley’s theology, had become by the twentieth century an annoying pebble in the shoe of American Methodism. While a few sought to remove it, most studiously ignored it as they limped along. In part this was due to exhaustion with the infighting that we have been tracing. But it also reflected the fact that none of the competing sides had been able to articulate a compelling model of the dynamics of sanctification and the ideal of Christian Perfection.

I have argued that a major obstacle to the nineteenth-century attempts to retrieve Wesley’s understanding of Christian Perfection was the intellectualist moral psychology that they all assumed. If this was indeed the case, then we can understand why the notion of Christian Perfection became even less conceivable or attractive to American Methodists in the twentieth century. It is true that by the turn of the century the influence of Reid’s philosophical and moral tradition was fading. But it was widely replaced by neoKantian assumptions that were as intellectualist in their moral psychology as Reid had ever been. If anything, the new trends heightened the “decisionistic” aspect of this psychology—locating moral value in the independence of each choice from any personal inclinations or desires. Such neo-Kantian assumptions were particularly prevalent in Methodist theology, due to the dominance of Boston Personalism in these circles. A leading theme of this school of thought was the need to rationalize religion by purifying it of all mystical and ceremonial overlays.⁹⁹ Thus, it should be no surprise that they found Wesley’s conception of Christian Perfection difficult to appreciate, or that they (and most others) offer in its place largely an emphasis on rational control of our emotions and fulfillment of our duty to God and others.¹⁰⁰

IV. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Such is the American Methodist saga with the notion of Christian Perfection. What lessons might we learn from the journey? I would suggest that the first lesson is simply to recognize how integrally connected models of spirituality are to assumptions about moral psychology. We cannot presume that every model can be convincingly translated into different sets of assumptions. Likewise, we cannot presume that every set of assumptions about moral psychology is equally adequate for understanding spiritual life or models of its development.

A second lesson is the insight that this case study provides into some of the characteristics that an intellectualist moral psychology imposes on conceptions of spiritual life. For example, emotions or affections enter into such a spirituality primarily as adversaries to overcome or hindrances to be controlled. Likewise, spiritual victory becomes a result either of increased rational competence cultivated by careful discipline, or of a decisive purgative event. Either option creates significant tensions concerning Divine/human interaction in salvation. On the first account, Divine grace may be affirmed as the source of our power, but the accent is on what we do with it. On the second account, there is typically the suggestion of a requisite act on our part before God's gracious purgative work in our lives, and an emphasis on our obligation to "retain" the blessing. Thus, both accounts are open to a subtle Pelagianism and to degenerating into legalistic moralism. This is because neither has a compelling answer to what *attracts* or *inclines* us toward obedient response.

This leads to my third lesson, which is that a recovered appreciation for the role of habit and character in action is not necessarily a sufficient response to the limits of the "decisionistic" model of morality and spirituality prevalent in the Western world. We encountered more than enough examples to know that an emphasis on character can be constructed within the constraints of the intellectualist model—conceiving character as the strengthening of a rational tendency through repetition and modeling. But such a model would still lack an appreciation for the affective dimension of inclination.¹⁰¹

I am convinced that the fourth lesson the history of American Methodist discussion of Christian Perfection should teach us is the necessity of recovering a positive appreciation for the affectional dimension of human life and spirituality. I use the word "affection" here purposefully in an attempt to retain a connection between two emphases that are sometimes separated in terms of emotions and passions. Emotions are often construed with primary emphasis on their *motivating* role as inclinations to action.¹⁰² The defining characteristic of passions, by contrast, is their *receptive* nature, responding to external stimuli or agents. While an intellectualist model would see such receptivity in negative terms as loss of control, it can be seen instead as a positive trait—allowing the person to be responsively empowered and shaped (for example, by encounter with God's gracious Presence).¹⁰³ On this reading, emotions and passions would be inherently intertwined, for our motivating inclinations would be grounded in and shaped by responsive interaction with God and others.

This leads me to a final lesson: an increased appreciation for the affectional dimension of spiritual life is necessarily connected to a recognition of the contribution of the full range of the means of grace in empowering and shaping our affections. This connection was suf-

ficiently demonstrated (in reverse) in the history of American Methodism; as an intellectualist model of spirituality took over, Wesley's recommended pattern of means of grace was progressively trimmed down to those that address folk intellectually—e.g., Word, sermon, and prayer.

All of this leads me to say that American Methodists will only begin to understand anew what Wesley meant by Christian Perfection as they sense the limitations of the intellectualist models of human action that surround them and recover Wesley's appreciation for the affections and the means of grace. If this ever happens, then they will find that Wesley meant something very much like Benedict, in his description of a monk who has ascended the steps of discipline in humility:

The monk will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God which casts out fear. Through this love, all that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue. All this the Lord will by the Holy Spirit graciously manifest in his workman now cleansed of vices and sins.¹⁰⁴

Notes

1. This study admittedly focuses only on the Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Protestant Church, Methodist Episcopal Church South, and their later unions. I believe the account would be similar among the African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, and Christian Methodist Episcopal traditions. For one thing, the Course of Study for traveling preachers in these traditions was largely shared with the MEC, MPC, and MECS through the nineteenth century. Beyond that general point, I did not have sufficient resources to trace a distinctive course in the African American traditions. There would also be strong similarities (that I did not have room to develop) in the Evangelical Association and the United Brethren. For some orientation to theological discussions in these groups, see William H. Naumann, "Theology and German American Evangelicalism" (Yale University Ph.D. thesis, 1966); and J. Wesley Corbin, "Christian Perfection and the Evangelical Association Through 1875," *Methodist History* 7.2 (1969): 28–44.

2. Letter to Robert Carr Brackenbury (15 Sept. 1790), *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931) 8: 238.

3. Perhaps the earliest example of this explanation is A.S. Graves, "Wesley's Variations of Belief, and the Influence of the Same on Methodism," *Methodist Review* 69 (1887): 192–211.

4. The best analysis of these tensions is M. Robert Fraser, "Strains in the Understandings of Christian Perfection in Early British Methodism" (Vanderbilt University Ph.D. thesis, 1988).

5. John Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 98. For a detailed rebuttal of this claimed omission, see Allan Coppedge, "Entire Sanctification in Early American Methodism: 1812–35," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (1978): 34–50.

6. This theme is central to Myung Soo Park, "Concepts of Holiness in American Evangelicalism, 1835–1915" (Boston University Ph.D. thesis, 1992).

7. The most accessible entrance to this interpretive approach is Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 71ff.

8. The following summary draws on two helpful studies that place Wesley in this context: Robin W. Lovin, "The Physics of True Virtue," in *Wesleyan Theology Today*, ed. Theodore H. Runyon (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1985), 264–72; and Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660–1780* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1991).

9. The work in question is Watts, *Treatise on the Love of God and On the Use and Abuse of the Passions* (London, 1729). See Wesley's comment on abridging this work in *Journal* (17 Feb. 1769), *Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984ff), 22:171. This abridgement was later published in serial form in *Arminian Magazine* 5 (1782): 200–2, 587–93, 648–51. Note the comments Wesley retained in his abridgement on the affections (for Watts, passions) assisting the feeble influences of our reason in the practice of duty, and helping make the duties of life and religion easier and more delightful (587–91).

10. This point has been demonstrated conclusively by Richard B. Steele, "*Gracious Affections*" and "*True Virtue*" according to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994); and Gregory S. Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989).

11. For further discussion and documentation of the following summary of Wesley, see Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994).

12. This point permeates Wesley's works. For a few examples, see *The Character of a Methodist*, §13, Works 9: 39; *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, §61, Works 11: 70; *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Pt. I, §I.3, Works 11: 106; Sermon 10, "The Witness of the Spirit I," §I.8, Works 1: 274; and Sermon 120, "The Unity of the Divine Being," §17, Works 4: 67.

13. *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Baily of Cork*, §III.1, Works 9: 309. Wesley is using "conversation" here in the eighteenthcentury sense of all manner of human interaction.

14. Note how perfect love and Christian liberty are equated in Letter to Joseph Benson (5 Oct. 1770), *Letters* (Telford) 5:203.

15. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 74–75.

16. *Journal* (13 Sept. 1739), Works 19: 97.

17. Sermon 91, "On Charity," §III.12, Works 3: 306.

18. E.g., *Minutes* (2 Aug. 1745), Q. 1, in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 152. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 178–79 for a discussion of two passages where Wesley argues that holy tempers can be implanted in a fully mature state.

19. This thesis is ably defended in Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1992). See also, Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, Chapter 8.

20. "Brief Thoughts on Christian Perfection" (1767), *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 11: 446. Similar descriptions abound in his writings, from as early as *Minutes* (26 June 1744), Q. 6, *John Wesley*, 141.

21. Sermon 83, "On Patience," §10, Works 3: 176.

22. Letter to Joseph Benson (5 Oct. 1770), *Letters* (Telford) 5: 203–4. Note also the definition of Christian Perfection as "love filling the heart, expelling pride, anger, desire, self-will..." in *Farther Thoughts Upon Christian Perfection*, Q. 12, *Works* (Jackson), 11: 418.

23. Note the description of Christian Perfection in terms of taking on the disposition of Christ in Sermon 76, "On Perfection," §I.5, Works 3: 74.

24. Cf. Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (Edinburgh: John Bell, 1788; reprint, New York: Garland, 1977). For the following summary see especially 59–60, 75–76, 88, 117–19.

25. Cf. *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, Part I, §1, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, edited by E. Hickman (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), 1: 236–37.

26. As Richard Steele has demonstrated, Wesley's abridged republication of Edwards' *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* is based on a previous abridgement by William Gordon (London: T. Field, 1762). The first appearance of Wesley's version was in Volume 23 of the 1773 edition of his *Works*. I will refer to the reprint of it in the second edition of *A Christian Library*, 30 vols. (London:

Cordeux, 1819–27), 30: 310ff.

27. The best examples are references to a “divine seed implanted in our heart” in *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, Part III, §7, Works 1: 302 (compare Gordon abridgement, 188; and Wesley, *Christian Library*, 30: 353); and to “a new heavenly nature infused” in Part III, §12, Works 1: 318 (compare Gordon abridgement, 221; and Wesley, *Christian Library* 30: 364) (I am grateful to Richard Steele for making a copy of Gordon’s rare abridgement available to me for consultation). See also the discussion of Edwards’ view of infused grace in Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 36.

28. I.e., *A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of the Will which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame* (1754), in Works 1: 1–93. The essential claims summarized here can be found in 4–12.

29. See *Miscellaneous Remarks on Important theological Controversies*, Chapter IV, in Works 2: 543–65.

30. The best survey of these debates is Allen C. Guelzo. *Edwards on the Will: A Century of American Theological Debate* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).

31. Reid and his disciples are typically grouped as “Scottish Common-Sense philosophy.” Two studies that highlight the impact of their moral psychology and philosophy in America are Donald H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience: The Shaping of the American National Ideal* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972); and Thomas Edward Frank, *Theology, Ethics, and the Nineteenth-Century American College Ideal* (San Francisco, CA: Mellon Research University Press, 1993).

32. See especially, Asa Shinn, *An Essay on the Plan of Salvation* (Baltimore, MD: Neal, Wills & Cole, 1813); Nathan Bangs, *The Errors of Hopkinsinianism* (New York: Totten, 1815); Nathan Bangs, *The Reformer Reformed* (New York: Totten, 1818); Willbur Fisk, *Calvinistic Controversy* (New York: Mason & Lane, 1837); Francis Hodgson, *An Examination of the System of New Divinity* (New York: Lane, 1840); and Asa Shinn, *On the Benevolence and Rectitude of the Supreme Being* (Philadelphia, PA: James Kay, Jr. & Brother, 1840).

33. See the explicit appeal to Reid in Shinn, *Plan of Salvation*, 109, 334; and Nathan Bangs, *Letters to Young Ministers of the Gospel, on the Importance and Method of Study* (New York: Bangs and Emory, 1826), 84–85. One might also note studies that have stressed the contribution of Scottish common sense philosophy to early Methodist theology (though with a focus on issues of epistemology): Leland H. Scott, “Methodist Theology in American in the Nineteenth Century,” *Religion in Life* 25 (1955): 87–98 (esp. 92–94); Scott, “Methodism and New England Calvinism,” in *History of American Methodism*, edited by E.S. Bucke (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1964), 346–57 (esp. 352); Philip Wesley Ott, “The Mind of Early American Methodism, 1800–44,” (University of Pennsylvania Ph.D. thesis, 1968), 43ff; and James E. Hamilton, “Epistemology and Theology in American Methodism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 10 (1975): 70–79.

34. I.e., James Beattie, “Essay on Truth,” *Methodist Review* 1 (1818): 129–36; Samuel S. Smith, “Of Volition,” *Methodist Review* 1 (1818): 309–12, 344–48, 388–92; and *The Works of Thomas Reid*, 3 vols., edited by Dugald Stewart (New York: N. Bangs & T. Mason, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1822).

35. E.g., Shinn, *Plan of Salvation*, 329–34; Bangs, *Reformer Reformed*, 45, 338–39; and Fisk, *Calvinistic Controversy*, 158, 197–98, 243–45.

36. Conscience is usually subsumed into one of the other three among American Methodists—as either an aspect of the understanding, or the moral sensibility, or the deliberative power of the will.

37. See especially Shinn, *Plan of Salvation*, 410–16; Fisk, *Calvinistic Controversy*, 197–98; and Shinn, *Benevolence of Supreme Being*, vi.

38. The clearest example is Shinn, *Plan of Salvation*, 297–98, 319–29.

39. The debate in question is a series of exchanges on “Theory of Temptation” between

Merritt Caldwell and Abel Stevens published between 1842 and 1844 in *Methodist Review*. For interaction over Wesley's faculty psychology, see *Methodist Review* 24 (1842): 444–45, 25 (1843): 398, & 26 (1844): 59.

40. This concession and attribution to Kant is found in Thomas Summers, *Systematic Theology* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1888), 2: 66.

41. This is the explicit retrospective judgment of Nathan Bangs in *A Semi-Centennial Sermon, Delivered at the Request of and Before the New York East Conference, June 12, 1852* (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1852), 17–18.

42. On the counter-cultural status of early Methodism, see Russell Richey, *Early American Methodism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 47–64; and the early chapters of A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993).

43. See Asbury's Journal entry for (14 Apr. 1778) in *Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, ed. Elmer Clark (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1958), 1: 298; and the discussion in Peters, *Christian Perfection*, 86; and Fraser, "Understandings of Christian Perfection," 407. Compare Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 189–90.

44. Asbury, Journal (18 May 1780), *Journals*, 1: 351.

45. For example, Timothy Merritt's *The Christian Manual, a Treatise on Christian Perfection with Directions for Obtaining that State* (New York: Bangs & Emory, 1825) relies heavily on Wesley and Fletcher in the expository chapters. Again, American Methodists chose to respond to Calvinist criticisms in 1838 by publishing *Entire Sanctification; or, Christian Perfection, stated and defended by Rev. J. Wesley, A. Watnough, A. Clark, R. Watson, and R. Treffry* (Baltimore: Armstrong & Berry); Watnough (the apparent editor) was the only American contributor. Likewise, George Peck's influential *The Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection Stated and Defined* (New York: Lane & Sanford, 1842) was primarily an exposition of Wesley, Fletcher, and Watson. The major contemporary book-length publications that were more independently American were Timothy Merritt, *An Address to Christians and Ministers on Gospel Perfection, especially to such as Deny that State to be Attainable* (New York: Bangs & Mason, 1821); and Aaron Lumas, *Essays on Holiness* (Boston: Timothy Ashley, 1826).

46. See especially *The Last Check to Antinomianism*, §I & §VII, *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher*, 4 vols. (Salem, OH: Schmul, 1974), 2: 492, 523; and the quotes in Peters, *Christian Perfection*, 78–79.

47. See esp. *Second Check to Antinomianism*, Letter 2, §I, Works 1: 90–91; *An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism*, Part I, Sec. IV, §VII, Works 1: 545–48; and *Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism*, Part III, §VII, Works 2: 186–92.

48. On Fletcher and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, see *Last Check on Antinomianism*, §VI, Works 2: 523; and Fraser, "Understandings of Christian Perfection," 355ff.

49. Compare *Last Check on Antinomianism*, §II, Works 2: 499; to *Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense*, Concluding Address, §IV, Works 3: 355. Note also that the only means of grace that he recommends to those seeking the sanctifying Spirit is communal prayer, in *Last Check on Antinomianism*, §XIX, Works 2: 648.

50. An American edition of Fletcher's *Treatise on Christian Perfection* (the Seventh of his *Checks*) was published in 1791 and reissued twice by 1820. An abridged edition was released in 1837 that was reprinted regularly to 1917.

51. Remember that Fletcher was used to "supplement" Wesley in Merritt, *Christian's Manual*; Watnough, *Entire Sanctification*; and Peck, *Scripture Doctrine of Perfection*. When the first American Methodist text for theological instruction was published, it chose simply to reprint Fletcher (rather than Wesley!) for the chapter on Christian Perfection; cf. Thomas Neely Ralston, *Elements of Divinity* (Louisville, KY: E. Stevenson, 1854), 382ff.

52. A collection of Clarke's comments on Christian Perfection was printed in *Methodist Review* 11

(1828): 103–5, 141–46; and then included in the broader selected compend from his works edited by Samuel Dunn and titled *Christian Theology* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1835).

53. See his insistence that “If man has a will at all, it must be free; any other kind of will is an absurd contradiction,” in *Miscellaneous Works*, ed. James Everett (London: T. Tegg & Son, 1836–37), 5: 237–38.

54. See Clarke, *Christian Theology*, pp. 182–209, esp. 207–8; as well as the discussion in Peters, *Christian Perfection*, 105–6; and Fraser, “Understandings of Christian Perfection,” 404.

55. On these points, see Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes* (New York: Lane & Tippett, 1848), 1: 278–79, 2: 9–11, 2: 439–42.

56. Cf. Watson, *Institutes*, 2: 450–52, 16. Note he uses one of the two amenable quotes in Wesley (discussed in note 17 above) in his support.

57. Cf. Watson, *Institutes*, 2: 452–54.

58. Watson, *Institutes*, 2: 487ff, 611ff. For the comment on prayer, see 489–90.

59. Watson, *Institutes*, 2: 671.

60. The best example is A. Watnough’s “Essay on Entire Sanctification” that he uses to preface Wesley, *et al.* in *Entire Sanctification*; see esp. 14, 25–26, 33–34.

61. The best example (and earliest American use of baptism language) is Merritt, *Address on Gospel Perfection*, esp. 8, 12–13.

62. E.g., A Preacher, “Letter to the Editors of the *Methodist Magazine*: The Perfecting of the Saints,” *Methodist Review* 2 (1819): 342–46; Merritt, *Christian’s Manual*, 31–65 (his original material); and [George Peck], “Christian Perfection,” *Methodist Review* 23 (1841): 123–56, esp. 150ff.

63. Cf. John Lindsey, “Sermon on Gospel Purity,” *Methodist Review* 17 (1835): 22–45; and Watnough, “Entire Sanctification,” 87ff.

64. I have traced significant aspects of this decline in Maddox, “Social Grace: The Eclipse of the Church as a Means of Grace in American Methodism,” in *Methodism in its Cultural Milieu*, ed. Tim Macquiban (Oxford: Applied Theology Press, 1994), 131–60.

65. The most comprehensive attempt so far to identify the different strands in these debates is Park, “Concepts of Holiness.” Park notes the importance of the Scottish CommonSense moral psychology to some schools in the debate (especially Oberlin Perfectionism and the Progressive Methodists), but appears to portray the Wesleyan Holiness school as mainly resisting this influence. I would contend that they were shaped as much by it as any of the other groups!

66. The most significant apologetic work would be Daniel D. Whedon. *The Freedom of the Will, as a Basis of Human Responsibility and a Divine Government* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1864).

67. Relevant texts found on the course of study in the MEC, MPC, and UBC include Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (Boston, 1821); Francis Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science*, 2nd ed., (Boston, 1837); Thomas Upham, *Elements of Mental Philosophy*, 2nd ed., (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1840–41); and Noah Porter, *The Elements of Intellectual Science* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1871).

68. For example, Samuel Wakefield made this psychology more evident in his update of Watson: *A Complete System of Christian Theology* (Pittsburgh, PA: J.L. Read and Son, 1869), esp. 314–16. It was also central to the first full original systematic theology by an American Methodist, Miner Raymond, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1877–79), esp. 2: 151, 3: 17–23; and the later, but more influential, John Miley, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1892–94), 1: 410–12, 2: 272ff.

69. The book in question is Asa Mahan, *Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (Chicago, IL: W.B. Rose, 1918). For an extended articulation of his moral psychology see Mahan, *Doctrine of the Will* (New York: Newman, 1845). For an analysis of his reliance on Reid, see James E. Hamilton, “Nineteenth Century Philosophy and Holiness Theology: A Study in the Thought of Asa Mahan,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (1978): 51–64.

70. Cf. Mahan, *Doctrine of Perfection*, 7–12.

71. Cf. Asa Mahan, *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (New York: George Hughes & Co., 1870), 89–92.
72. Note the positive review of Mahan (by George Peck?) in “Christian Perfection,” *Methodist Review* 23 (1841): 307–19.
73. Palmer’s views are best expressed in *The Way of Holiness* (New York: Lane & Tippett, 1845), see 19–38; and *Present to my Christian Friend* (New York: Palmer & Hughes, 1853).
74. See especially Upham, *Principles of the Interior or Hidden Life* (Liverpool: Howell, 1857), 139ff. Upham became a regular participant in Palmer’s Tuesday meetings.
75. The initial rejoinder was Caldwell, “Theory of Temptation,” *Methodist Review* 24 (1842): 142–61 (continued in 25 (1843): 377–401 and 26 (1844): 311–16). He pulled the argument into book-length form in *The Philosophy of Christian Perfection; embracing a Psychological Statement of the Principles of Christianity on which the Doctrine rests; together with a Practical Examination of the Peculiar Views of several Recent Writers on this Subject* (Philadelphia, PA: Sorin & Ball, 1848), 117–55 on Upham.
76. The strongest early arguments to this effect are Abel Stevens, “Theory of Temptation,” *Methodist Review* 24 (1842): 421–57 & 26 (1844): 32–61; and George Peck, “Philosophy of Christian Perfection,” *Methodist Review* 30 (1848): 293–322, esp. 307–8.
77. The major examples of this reading would include Nathan Bangs, *The Necessity, Nature, and Fruits of Sanctification* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1881 [1851 original]); Randolph Sinks Foster, *Nature and Blessedness of Christian Purity* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1851); Foster, *Christian Purity; or, the Heritage of Faith* (New York: Carlton & Lanahan, 1869); John Allen Wood, *Perfect Love* (Philadelphia, PA: Samuel Burlock, 1861); Wood, *Purity and Maturity* (New York: Palmer, 1876); Lewis Romaine Dunn, *Holiness to the Lord* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1874); Daniel Steele, *Love Enthroned* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1875); William McDonald, *The Scriptural View of Holiness* (Philadelphia, PA: Association for the Promotion of Holiness, 1877); George Watson, *Holiness Manual* (Boston: McDonald & Gill, 1882); Asbury Lowrey, *Possibilities of Grace* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1884); and Samuel Keen, *Pentecostal Papers* (Cincinnati, OH: Cranston & Curts, 1895).
78. Perhaps the clearest articulation of this psychology in Daniel Steele, *MileStone Papers* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1878), 134: “The great work of the Sanctifier by his powerful and usually instantaneous inworking, is to rectify the will, poise the passions aright, hold in check all innocent, and eradicate all unholy appetites, and to enthrone the conscience over a realm in which no rebel lurks.” See also Foster, *Christian Purity*, 74.
79. See especially Wood, *Purity and Maturity*, 29ff; Dunn, *Holiness to the Lord*, 56–57; Steele’s remarks about habits in *Love Enthroned*, 44; and Foster’s distinction between habits and the “soul-nature” (which God alone can change) in *Christian Purity*, 328–63.
80. See especially Wood, *Purity and Maturity*, 186ff (which stresses maturity but gives no guidelines for cultivating it); and Keen, *Pentecostal Papers*, 118–21. Somewhat more positive are Dunn, *Holiness to the Lord*, 181ff; and Foster, *Christian Purity*, 217–18.
81. Samuel Franklin, *A Critical View of Wesleyan Perfection* (Cincinnati, OH: Methodist Book Concern, 1866), 571.
82. In addition to Franklin, *Critical View of Perfection*, others arguing this basic line include Daniel Whedon, “Doctrines of Methodism,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 19 (1862): 241–74, see 269–70; DeWitt Clinton Huntington, *What is it to be Holy?; or, The Theory of Entire Sanctification* (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings & Pye, 1898 [first edition, 1869]); Jonathan Townley Crane, *Holiness the Birthright of All God’s Children* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1874); James Mudge, *Growth in Holiness Toward Perfection* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1895); and James Mudge, *The Perfect Life in Experience and Doctrine* (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings & Graham, 1911).
83. Note the extended defense of the intellectualist psychology in explicit contrast with Wesley in Huntington, *What is it to be Holy?*, 13–18, 35ff, 133.
84. Cf. Daniel Whedon, “Review of Crane,” *Methodist Review* 56 (1874): 490–92; Mudge, *Growth*

in *Holiness*, 155; Mudge, *The Perfect Life*, 209–10; and Huntington, *What is it to be Holy?*, 152–53 (note his insistence that love is not an emotion, though it may be accompanied by emotion, 164). Interestingly, Crane correlates this heightened state with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (*Holiness the Birthright*, 113)!

85. The clearest attempts at irenic mediation were Jesse Truesdell Peck, *The Central Idea of Christianity* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1858); J.O.A. Clark, “Holiness,” *Methodist Review* 59 (1877): 505–22; Charles W. Rishell, “The Doctrine of Sanctification Psychologically Developed,” *Methodist Review* 74 (1892): 513–29; and Stephen Merrill, *Sanctification: Right Views and Other Views* (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings & Pye, 1901).

86. This became specifically clear in the case of Charles Rishell in his subsequent essay, “The Sanctification of the Passions,” *Methodist Review* 75 (1893): 380–92.

87. See especially Miner, *Systematic Theology*, 2: 383; and Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2: 365.

88. See Albert Bledsoe, *An Examination of President Edwards’ Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will* (Philadelphia, PA: H. Hooker, 1845); and Bledsoe, *A Theodicy* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1856), 61–72, 114–25, 132ff. On the influence of Bledsoe in Southern Methodism, see Wilbur F. Tillet, “Albert Taylor Bledsoe,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 37 (1893): 219–42.

89. Richard H. Rivers, *Elements of Moral Philosophy* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1871) (on 1878–86); and Porter, *Elements of Intellectual Science* (on 1882–98).

90. While not polemic, central elements of this reading can be found in Thomas O. Summers, *Holiness* (Richmond, VA: John Early, 1850), an influential early text. Later works which are more distinctly “holiness,” but present the position as standard for Southern Methodism would include J.H. Collins, *Sanctification: What it is, When it is, How it is* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1885); William B. Godbey, *Christian Perfection* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1886); and Leonidas Rosser, “Sanctification,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 26 (1887): 230–46.

91. The book in question is Boland, *The Problem of Methodism: Being a Review of the Residue Theory of Regeneration and the Second Change Theory of Sanctification and the Philosophy of Christian Perfection* (3rd ed., Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1888). For a taste of the debate this sparked, see John E. Edwards, “The Problem of Methodism,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 28 (1888): 25–45; Josephus Anderson, “The Problem Examined,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 28 (1888): 373–93; W.P. Harrison, “The Problem of Methodism,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 28 (1888): 414–18; J.M. Boland, “*The Problem* and its Critics,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 36 (1893): 339–53; and H.R. Withers, “Problem of Methodism,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 39 (1894): 338–60.

92. This point is made most graphically in Jeremiah M. Boland, “A Psychological View of Sin and Holiness,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 35 (1892): 342–54. See also Boland, *Problem of Methodism*, 34–56.

93. Cf. Beverly Carradine, *Sanctification* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1891); Leander Lycurgus Pickett, *The Book and Its Theme* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1893); Leander Lycurgus Pickett, *The Pickett-Smith Debate on Entire Sanctification, a Second Blessing* (Louisville, KY: Pickett Publishing Co., 1897); John Rives Brooks, *Scriptural Sanctification, an Attempted Solution to the Holiness Problem* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1899); and S.L.C. Coward, *Entire Sanctification from 1739–1900* (Louisville, KY: Pentecostal Herald Press, 1900).

94. See George Hayes, *The Problem Solved* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1892), esp. 73, 167.

95. Cf. Hayes, *Problem Solved*, 29. A similar intellectualist model of character formation is found in R.H. Mahon, “The Nature of Sin and Holiness,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 30 (1890): 21–35; and W.M. Leftwich, “The Law of Sanctification,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 37 (1893): 370–85.

96. The best examples are Thomas Ralston, “Holiness and Sin—New Theory Noticed,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 18 (1881): 441–51; and J.C. Granbery, “Dr. Mudge on Growth in Holiness,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 43 (1896): 198–210.

97. The most lively example is L. Pierce, *A Miscellaneous Essay on Entire Sanctification: Showing how it was lost from the Church, and how it may and must be Regained* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1892), esp. 4–16.

98. Two significant irenic expositions were W.P. Harrison, “Wesley and Christian Perfection,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 36 (1893): 396–405; and (Bishop) E.R. Hendrix, “The Perfecting of the Saints,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 42 (1895): 54–67.

99. For articulations of this theme by the founder of Boston Personalism, see Borden Parker Bowne, *The Immanence of God* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1905), 146–47; and Bowne, *Studies in Christianity* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1909).

100. Note first the perplexing reading of Wesley on Christian Perfection in Francis J. McConnell, *John Wesley* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1939), 196–210. Then compare the accounts of spiritual life and sanctification in Francis J. McConnell, *The Essentials of Methodism* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1916), 22ff; Albert C. Knudson, *The Doctrine of Redemption* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1933), 411ff; and Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *The Spiritual Life* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1942), esp. 65–66, 191. Given this ambience, even those less directly connected to Personalism expounded Christian Perfection primarily in intellectualist terms of control and duty—cf. G. Ernest Thomas, *The Holy Habits of the Spiritual Life* (Nashville, TN: Tidings, 1951); and Marshall R. Reed, *Achieving Christian Perfection* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Evangelistic Materials, 1962).

101. Note in this regard the criticism of the character ethic of Stanley Hauerwas in Patricia B. Jung, “Sanctification: An Interpretation in Light of Embodiment,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 11 (1983): 75–95. Perhaps this helps explain why Hauerwas is ambivalent about Wesley’s model of Christian Perfection; cf. Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1975), 179–228.

102. One of the best discussions of emotions, which balances this emphasis, is Robert C. Roberts, “Emotions Among the Virtues of the Christian Life,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 20 (1992): 37–68.

103. This case is best presented in G. Simon Harak, *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993).

104. *RB* 7.67–80, in *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, ed. Timothy Fry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982), 38.