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John Wesley's Approach to Mission¹

Abstract

John Wesley's theology is noted for its soteriological emphasis. Most of his life was spent in England ministering among marginalized people. Much of his practical ministry, publications, prison reform, healthcare interest, education, etc., occurred while trekking through the island. Yet, Wesley's thoughts and writings reflect the broader world. Although he was not as swift at putting Methodist missionaries abroad as Thomas Coke would have liked, Wesley had a plan in place that took in reaching those populations that claimed other religions as their faith. Thus, he wanted "Moslems," "Hindoos," "Hottentots," "Native Americans," or more inclusive of every part of the world, the "heathen," to have an encounter with the vital gospel of Christ.² This paper explores what John Wesley had to say about these groups and his approach to bringing the gospel of Christ within their reach.³

Keywords: John Wesley, mission, world religions

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Introduction

John Wesley (1703-1791) spent his lifetime of loving pastoral care responding to the desperate conditions faced by the poor in whatever country, city, village, or open-air venue he found them. Wesley's application of love integrated the elements of holy attitudes that motivated the words and the tangible works (healing, salvation, food, money, etc.) provided for the beneficiary. John Wesley believed that God's broad love for individuals was for "the healing of the nations." Wesley's optimistic theology elucidated the bleak human condition without betraying Christian hope and grace as he discerned it:

It is certain that "God made man upright;" perfectly holy and perfectly happy: But by rebelling against God, he destroyed himself, lost the favour and the image of God, and entailed sin, with its attendant, pain, on himself and all his posterity. Yet his merciful Creator did not leave him in this helpless, hopeless state: He immediately appointed his Son, his well-beloved Son, "who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person," to be the Saviour of men; "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" the great Physician who, by his almighty Spirit, should heal the sickness of their souls, and restore them not only to the favour, but to "the image of God wherein they were created." (*WJW* Sermon 61, 2:452)⁴

Wesley had to look no farther than London and the surrounding countryside to see life's many jagged edges. The laws favored the elite and wealthy. The major English political, financial, and social systems labored for their own good, often with little or no regard for those who served them, and many people mistreated one another. When Wesley reasoned and drew conclusions about the brutal behaviors and attitudes conveyed by the system toward individuals, particularly the poor, he turned to the Bible and the Church to see what God had to say about the matter. Reflecting on the generally negative state of affairs that he observed, Wesley declared plainly in "The Mystery of Iniquity,"

I would now refer it to every man of reflection, who believes the Scriptures to be of God, whether this general apostasy does not imply the necessity of a general reformation? Without allowing this, how can we possibly justify either the wisdom or goodness of God? According to Scripture, the Christian religion was designed for "the healing of the nations;" for the saving from sin by means of the Second Adam, all that were "constituted sinners" by the first . . . The time is coming, when not only "all Israel shall be saved," but "the fullness of the Gentiles will come in." The time cometh, when "violence shall

no more be heard in the earth, wasting or destruction within our borders;” but every city shall call her “walls Salvation, and her gates Praise;” when the people, saith the Lord, “shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.” (Isaiah lx. 18, 21) (*WJW* Sermon 61, 2:466).

Wesley deliberately chose a positive view of life as he exhorted in 1781, “Rest not till you enjoy the privilege of humanity—the knowledge and love of God. Lift up your heads, ye creatures capable of God. Lift up your hearts to the Source of your being! Let your ‘fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ’ [1 John 1:3]!” (*WJW* Sermon 60, “The General Deliverance” 2:450).

John Wesley’s realistic outlook on the discord of humanity produced in him the desire to be a part of God’s symphony. This was a result of his confident hope in the Creator’s grace to heal the disharmony through the redeeming Son, applied by the sanctifying Spirit, to make wholeness possible for all humanity. Neither the necessary power, nor the love from God’s side was lacking. The mission, then, is to persuade humanity individual-by-individual, and group-by-group to accept God’s diagnosis and to avail themselves of the cure imbedded and offered in the work of Christ for full salvation.

Mission in John Wesley’s Heritage

Wesley came by his evangelistic zeal for ministry and mission in his own pedigree. Since his father and both grandfathers were ministers, he experienced this example in many parts of his heritage. Theodore Doraisamy, drawing from T. E. Brigden, emphasizes the missionary spirit in the Wellesley family by suggesting that the scallop shells in the Wesley coat-of-arms was derived from a forefather crusader and pilgrim to the Holy Land (Doraisamy 1983:5). Furthermore, “John Westley, the paternal grandfather of John Wesley, had a burning desire to go to Surinam,” and John’s own father, Rev. Samuel Wesley, Sr., promoted a “missionary spirit and published a comprehensive scheme of missions for India, China, and Abyssinia”⁵ (Doraisamy 1983:5, Schmidt 1958:19). The missionary emphasis and impact on John Wesley was lasting. A year after his own missionary learning experience in Georgia, Wesley wrote to James Hervey on March 20, 1739, regarding his desire to be a real Christian and following God’s lead being “ready now (God being my helper) to go to Abyssinia or China, or whithersoever it shall please God by this conviction to call me” (Outler 1964:71).

John Wesley grew up in the rectory environment in Epworth where he saw his father and mother care for people of their parish and pray for missionaries. Susanna intentionally instilled this kind of disposition into young John. In a letter dated February 6, 1712, from Susanna to her husband

Samuel, she writes of a growing conviction of a missionary-minded ministry under the inspiration of the Spirit:

But soon after you went to London last, I light on the account of the Danish Missionaries. I was, I think, never more affected with any thing; I could not forbear spending good part of that evening in praising and adoring the divine goodness, for inspiring them with such ardent zeal for his glory. For several days I could think or speak of little else. I thought I might pray more for them, and might speak to those with whom I converse with more warmth of affection. I resolved to begin with my own children; in which I observe Thursday, with Jacky [John] to advance the glory of God, and the salvation of souls. (*WJW Journals* 1:386-7)

Some of the content of Susanna's weekly sessions with her children included "translated accounts of the labors of the earliest Protestant missionaries to India, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Plutschau" (Doraisamy 1983:5; c.f. Schmidt 1958:19). This early instruction grounded Wesley's understanding of *missio Dei*³ in a motivation of *gloria Dei*. For example, in his Journals for Thursday, 24 March 1785, Wesley reflects,

I was now considering how strangely the grain of mustard seed, planted about fifty years ago, has grown up. It has spread through all Great Britain and Ireland; the Isle of Wight, and the Isle of Man; then to America, from the Leeward Islands, through the whole continent, into Canada and Newfoundland. And the societies, in all these parts, walk by one rule, knowing religion is holy tempers; and striving to worship God, not in form only, but likewise 'in spirit and in truth' for the glory of God. (*Works* [Jackson] Journals 4:298-9).

Although many factors entered into Wesley's missional praxis, his mother's fervency, after being affected so deeply by the above account, certainly is an important connection between "missions to the *peoples* and missions to the *people*" (Schmidt 1958:25 [my emphasis]).

Christian Spirituality Inspires Mission

Wesley offered the fullness of Christ to those who would accept the multidimensional work of the gospel. One of his major emphases dealt with the spiritual dimensions of life. As was his custom, Wesley began with sacred Christian Writ for his understanding and pattern of life and ministry. Wesley's was a deep commitment to Scripture resting his other practices squarely upon its foundation. Randy Maddox affirms this interpretation, "it is no surprise that Wesley consistently identified the Bible as the most basic authority for determining Christian belief and practice" (1994:36).⁴

Another fundamental building block for Wesley's deep convictions included his practice of personal and corporate prayer. John Wesley learned to pray to God early in life as a result of the prayer lives of his godly parents in the home and at church. His parents held daily devotions in their home. Wesley, himself, read prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Bible at home and at church. The liturgy of the Church of England included many written and recited prayers, and allowed extemporaneous prayer. During his education at Charterhouse and in his professional ministry training at Oxford, Wesley further developed skills in prayer, especially in the ministrations and duties of religious office (Telford 1959:37-39, Higgins 1960:15).

As an ordained Anglican clergyman, Wesley expected to pray on behalf of the people to whom he ministered. Wesley's dedication was affirmed with the surprised joyful response of the parishioners to being prayed for by their cleric as a part of the role and function of a minister, which was often contrary to the common practice of his contemporary Anglican priests. He believed, "To be an instrument for making people whole [is] the minister's sacred duty" (Higgins 1960:15). He regularly prayed for others, especially those who needed salvation.

In Wesley's ministry over the years, many people wrote letters asking him to pray for their souls. He prayed for thousands of people concerning their relationship to the Lord and their other specific needs.⁵ Prayer, for Wesley, served as an avenue to put people in touch with the presence of God. His personal practice of prayer coupled with Bible reading and regular attendance at the means of grace kept him in tune with Jesus. Wesley's practice of prayer was an avenue that especially enabled the revival work to progress. It is no small comment to say that he was a man of prayer. Prayer was an avenue of open communication with God. Wesley prayed as easily as he breathed. This close communion with the Lord permeated all that Wesley did, was the cutting edge of the effectiveness of his works, and was one of the primary prongs on which the Methodist revival hung. God transformed his life and ministry through prayer.

John Wesley understood priestly care in broad parameters. Clearly, Wesley ministered to the inner spiritual needs of people, but he conceived Christian spirituality to encompass ministry to external needs as well. For example, John Cule asserts, "There were scores of ordinary clergy who showed a practical interest in the health care of their parishioners, firmly rooted in the Church's long established teaching of *caritas*?" (1990:44; cf. Macdonald 1982:106, Schmidt 1958:9). This was especially the case with Wesley.

Again, John Wesley believed that personal inward works of the Spirit should find an outward form of expression that helps others. Prayer for others can lead to personal involvement in the answer. For example, those who are sick in body need health care. Often in the eighteenth-century, some of this kind of care involved the church, or at least, specialized clergy.

“Physic,” the term for the physical care related to the health of persons, although not a primary (or official) function of the clergy in Wesley’s century was one aspect of some ministers’ activities (see below).⁶ The job of parish priests was to meet the needs of the parishioners. Their watchword, derived from the New Testament, was “doing good” (Schmidt 1958:19).⁷⁷ Wesley explains this in more detail in a letter to Richard Morgan, 18 October 1732. In his sermon “On Pleasing All Men,” Wesley emphasized this point,

Weep with them that weep. If you can do no more, at least mix your tears with theirs; and give them healing words, such as may calm their minds, and mitigate their sorrows. But if you can, if you are able to give them actual assistance, let it not be wanting. Be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame, a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless. This will greatly tend to conciliate the affection, and to give a profitable pleasure, not only to those who are immediate objects of your compassion, but to others likewise that “see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” [Matt. 5:16]. (*WJW* Sermons 3:424)

This is how John Wesley viewed “all the world as my parish.”⁷⁸ His explanation of this phrase, previously written to a friend and recorded in his Journal for Mon, 11 June 1739, declared,

A dispensation of the Gospel is committed to me; and woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel. But where shall I preach it, upon the principles you mention? Why, not in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America; not in any of the Christian parts, at least, of the habitable earth. For all these are, after a sort, divided into parishes. If it be said, ‘Go back, then, to the Heathens from whence you came?’ Nay, but neither could I now (on your principles) preach to them; for all the Heathens in Georgia belong to the parish either of Savannah or Frederica. “Suffer me now to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to; and sure I am, that his blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I, therefore, to be faithful in fulfilling the work He hath given me to do. His servant I am, and, as such, am employed according to the plain direction of his word, ‘As I have opportunity, doing good unto all men.’ And his providence clearly concurs with his word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, ‘and go about doing good.’ (*Works* (Jackson) Journals 1:201-2).

A key to bringing glory to God was “doing all the good” one could to others. Wesley intended to take care of the people within his charge in any and all the ways at his disposal appropriate to the gospel.⁹ In his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, concerning Jesus’ raising to life a little dead girl (Mark 5:43), Wesley clarifies, “[Jesus] commanded something should be given her to eat—So that when either natural or spiritual life is restored, even by immediate miracle, all proper means are to be used in order to preserve it” (Wesley 1954:157). Wesley’s rationale for his extensive discipleship emphasis can also be seen in this above comment. The emphasis is that life is to be taken as a whole, or holistically. Even in the account of physical wellness being restored to the girl, with no direct mention about her spiritual condition by Jesus, Wesley infers it, because he believed that Jesus works multi-dimensionally.¹⁰

Love Produces Mission

For Wesley, the loving God who created us in his image now wants to restore the original image of God in us, so that we may recover the loving relationship with God by being conformed to the image of His Son. This, in turn, enables people to love one another. In God’s final provision, all creatures will be reconciled (Col. 1).

John Wesley’s involvement in the lives of the common people, that is, his zeal, was to help them find wholeness in Christ.¹¹ This is Wesley’s prime motive for himself and for others.¹² In 1738, after Wesley returned from Georgia and was transformed through his experience at the society meeting on Aldersgate Street, he intensified his efforts to help others experience vital salvation. Wesley gave clarity to himself and the whole movement in these words,

This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Such a work this hath been in many respects, as neither we nor our fathers had known. Not a few whose sins were of the most flagrant kind, drunkards, swearers, thieves, whoremongers, adulterers, have been brought “from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Many of these were rooted in their wickedness, having long gloried in their shame, perhaps for a course of many years, yea, even to hoary hairs. Many had not so much as a notional faith, being Jews, Arians, Deists, or Atheists. Nor has God only made bare his arm in these last days, in behalf of open publicans and sinners; but many “of the Pharisees” also “have believed on Him,” of the “righteous that needed no repentance;” and, having received “the sentence of death in themselves,” have then heard the voice that raiseth the dead: Have been made partakers of an inward, vital religion; even “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” The manner wherein God hath wrought

this work in many souls is as strange as the work itself. It has generally, if not always, been wrought in one moment. “As the lightning shining from heaven,” so was “the coming of the Son of Man,” either to bring peace or a sword; either to wound or to heal; either to convince of sin, or to give remission of sins in his blood. (*Works* (Jackson) Journals 1:150-1).

In “A Paraphrase on the Lord’s Prayer” from Sermon 26, “Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount” (6th discourse) Wesley writes,

Son of thy Sire’s eternal love,
Take to thyself thy mighty power;
Let all earth’s sons thy mercy prove,
Let all thy bleeding grace adore.
The triumphs of thy love display;
In every heart reign thou alone;
Till all thy foes confess thy sway,
And glory ends what grace begun.
Spirit of grace, and health, and power,
Fountain of light and love below;
Abroad thine healing influence shower,
O’er all the nations let it flow.
Inflame our hearts with perfect love;
In us the work of faith fulfill;
So not heaven’s host shall swifter move
Than we on earth to do thy will.

(*Works* (Jackson) Sermons 5:342-3, par. 4-5)

The God, who created the world in the first place, is at work recreating it in the present. Physical healing is one signal that the behind-the-scenes, loving Creator is still involved with creation. Yet, God is not content to work alone. As noted above, this is the work of the church in tandem with the Holy Spirit.

Christians in Mission

People listened to Wesley, because they could observe in his life, and the Methodists in general, going about doing good, as consistent with the glad tidings of the gospel message that he brought to them—deeper than they knew in the main Anglican Church.¹³ Wesley’s optimistic hopes for the universal redemption of a world marred by sin’s effects remained high. He believed the Methodist Revival was both a sign of hope and a pattern of God’s design for “the general spread of the Gospel”.¹⁴ Wesley recorded preaching from Isaiah 11:9 seven times from 1747 to 1755 and wrote the sermon “The General Spread of the Gospel” from Dublin, Ireland, in April 1783, as a reminder that God is at work in the world so that “The earth shall

be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:9). Wesley concluded, “The loving knowledge of God, producing uniform, uninterrupted holiness and happiness, shall cover the earth; shall fill every soul of man” (*WJW* Sermon 63, 2:488). Wesley practiced what he preached—a gospel that encompassed the needs of the people in the fullness of Christian love!

Mission among Other Faiths

John Wesley’s plan for reaching the ordinary citizen in Britain was not conceptually different than reaching others around the globe. Although after his mission to Georgia, Wesley poured more of his time and effort into the local landscape closer to home, his thoughts continued to take in the rest of the world. Wesley notes, “But, blessed be God, he hath not yet left himself without witness” (*WJW* Sermon 79, “On Dissipation” 3: par. 9).¹⁵

From current ways of talking about people and religions encountered throughout the world, Wesley’s terms would seem disparaging. As mentioned above, his general sentiment concerning all approaches to God was covered under the archaic term “heathen.”¹⁶ He was not denying that God’s grace was at work among them, but more notably, he was expressing the universality of sin being manifested.

Although John Wesley was restricted from working among the American natives as much as he would have liked, he was able to make some observations. As the quotations below illustrate, Wesley also picked up stories of variable accuracy from other colonists, travelers, and other Native peoples. Wesley remarked,

As gross and palpable are the works of the devil among many (if not all) the modern heathens. The natural religion of the Creeks, Cherokees, Chicasaws, and all other Indians bordering on our southern settlements (not of a few single men, but of entire nations) is to torture all their prisoners from morning to night, till at length they roast them to death; and upon the slightest undesigned provocation to come behind and shoot any of their own countrymen. Yea, it is a common thing among them for the son, if he thinks his father lives too long, to knock out his brains; and for a mother, if she is tired of her children, to fasten stones about their necks, and throw three or four of them into the river one after another.¹⁷

It were to be wished that none but heathens had practiced such gross, palpable works of the devil. But we dare not say so. Even in cruelty and bloodshed, how little have the Christians come behind them! And not the Spaniards or Portuguese alone, butchering thousands in South America. Not the Dutch only in the East Indies, or the French in North America, following the Spaniards step by step. Our own countrymen, too, have

wantoned in blood, and exterminated whole nations: plainly proving thereby what spirit it is that dwells and works in the children of disobedience. (“A Caution against Bigotry,” *WJW* CD-ROM)¹⁸

John Wesley went to great lengths in his sermons to establish that those who practice other faiths have neither a natural advantage nor disadvantage to those in so-called Christian lands, because all people are equally condemned under the law and in need of Christ. In his sermon, “Wandering Thoughts,” he made this point inadvertently¹⁹ when he wrote sarcastically, “. . . See how *these* Christians love one another. Wherein are they preferable to Turks and pagans? What abomination can be found among Mahometans or heathens which is not found among Christians also?” (*WJW* Sermon 41, 2:128).

More explicitly, however, Wesley wrote in “Original Sin” Sermon 44,

‘They are all gone out of the way’ of truth and holiness; ‘there is none righteous, no, not one’ [Ps 14:4 BCP]. And to this bear all the prophets witness in their several generations. So Isaiah concerning God’s peculiar people (and certainly the heathens were in no better condition): ‘The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores’ [Isa 1:5-6]. The same account is given by all the apostles, yea, by the whole tenor of the oracles of God. From all these we learn concerning man in his natural state, unassisted by the grace of God, that ‘all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart’ are still ‘evil, only evil’, and that ‘continually’.²⁰

As Wesley continues to compare the Christian and non-Christian, he adds this about morality

But it is equally certain that all morality, all the justice, mercy, and truth which can possibly exist without Christianity, profiteth nothing at all, is of no value in the sight of God, to those that are under the Christian dispensation. Let it be observed, I purposely add, ‘to those that are under the Christian dispensation’, because I have no authority from the Word of God ‘to judge those that are without’. Nor do I conceive that any man living has a right to sentence all the heathen and Mahometan world to damnation. It is far better to leave them to him that made them, and who is ‘the Father of the spirits of all flesh’; who is the God of the heathens as well as the Christians, and who hateth nothing that he hath made. But meantime this is nothing to those that name the name of Christ: all those being ‘under the law’, the Christian law, shall undoubtedly be judged thereby. And of consequence, unless

those be so changed as was the animal above mentioned, unless they have new senses, ideas, passions, tempers, they are no Christians! However just, true, or merciful they may be, they are but atheists still. (*WJW* on CD-Rom Sermon 130, “On Living Without God,” par. 14).

Mission in a Wesleyan Mode

The implications of Wesley’s view of culture and other non-Christian religious traditions were that all societies exhibit the natural bent of humanity toward fear, anxiety, despair, and desire for release from their torments. In contrast, the kingdom of God offers grace to people of all cultures that make their interpenetration a creative reality of God’s reign in the midst of the peoples of the world. Wesley held the negative and positive aspects of cultures in tension. Thus, this kind of cultural assessment has important implications that bear on mission, in general, and a Wesleyan approach to mission in particular.

John Wesley’s mission interests extended beyond his local context. When following his mission training by his mother, supplemented by the missionary scheme supplied by his father, and given John Wesley’s personality to initiate, construct, expand, and follow a routine to maintain his work by using his theological source elements to understand his own personal patterns of ministry, it is possible to see a scriptural skeleton inside Wesley’s actions. The New Testament expansion of the early church moved from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and then to “the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8NIV). This analogy relates to Wesley’s discernable general plan of progressive mission: London and the surrounding regions of the British mainland, the outer islands and colonies, and beyond British limits to the ends of the earth. Wesley’s main sphere of personal mission did not reach to “the ends of the earth” before the end of his life, but it was ever on his heart and by his prayers continually sought its healing, as noted earlier.

Wesley contributed a comparatively more holistic view and practice of mission to convey God’s intention and acts of renewing the created order in God’s image. This personal conveyance of God’s personal involvement, grounded in God’s nature of holy love displayed uniquely in the person and work of Jesus Christ, appealed to the masses of eighteenth-century England.

It would be presumptive to claim that all Protestant mission endeavors since Wesley bear direct marks derived from Methodist revival influences. Yet, just as William Carey’s ringing call to mission is heard beyond his Baptist circles and the direct influence of the Baptist Missionary Society (est. 1792), so K. S. Latourette reminds the contemporary mission worker that the Wesleyan revival “gave rise to currents of life which were increasingly to mould human culture in art, literature, thought, government, economics, morals, and religion” (Latourette 1953:839).²¹ Wesley’s theology and practice of ministry

spoke as a metanarrative through which the people could find God, and find meaning and value in their lives and surroundings. This careful attention to work for godly structures, means, and processes of life provided a methodical, consistent way of change and direction for the goals of reaching people with the gospel.

John Wesley cautiously approached committing immediate resources to distant lands. He continually assessed Methodist ability to supply discipline, catechesis, and connection to geo-social groups at great distances. So, when Thomas Coke provided a *Plan of the Society for the Establishment of Mission among the Heathen* (1783), Wesley, though whole-heartedly in favor of the enterprise, in his practical caution, was more judicious with the timing (Hylson-Smith 1997:298). Meanwhile, the recurring theme of the salvation of the whole world remained a part of Wesley's personal, corporate, and instructional prayers (Wesley 1738:46).

Latourette's above comment, made over a half-century ago, points to the flavor of evangelistic mission that holds in tension the comprehensive elements necessary for a complete abundant life in Christ. Latourette attributed to Wesley and his followers a radical, if subtle, influence on the general shape of mission, especially those arising from within Protestantism. A correlative voice for this interpretation, professor of Church History Heather Curtis, notes anti-Calvinist currents provided an "increasingly ubiquitous Arminianism that was steadily transforming the character of both American and British Protestantism" (Curtis 2007:59).²²²² Although Curtis is writing specifically about the Faith Cure Movement of the late nineteenth century, she connects Dr. Charles Cullis, M.D., homeopathy, and the Holiness Movement with "Arminian sensibilities, [propagated through Methodist heritage,] about human nature to offer an active alternate position about health and resisting affliction" in contradistinction to a passive resignation to sickness as God's will that reflects a Calvinistic view (Curtis 2007:60, 62-63).

Conclusion

John Wesley's approach to mission was encompassing enough to be described accurately as holistic. Its features and sound theological components continue to offer the contemporary practitioner an approach to ministry to emulate, because it often reaches people in mission contexts (Snyder 2002:24). John Wesley's practical approach to mission provides an important resource for faithful and relevant contemporary missiological thought and practice. His example for the church had seminal impact on his immediate context, but also influenced a wider audience.

A Wesleyan-flavored Christian mission demonstrates a universal love for people of all lands and for particular people in their need for Christ. A Christ-centered mission, as Wesley demonstrated, must be grounded in vital personal

and corporate Christian spirituality, flow from the love of Christ to others, point them to God wherever we are in the world-parish. Like Wesley, our lives need to consist of loving pastoral care responding to the desperate conditions faced by the poor in whatever country, city, village, or open-air venue, or faith tradition we find them. Application of love-in-mission integrates the elements of holy attitudes, motivated words, and the tangible works (healing, salvation, food, money, etc.) for the beneficiary. God's broad love for individuals is for "the healing of the nations."

Endnotes

¹ The content of this article was presented as a paper at the annual Wesleyan Theological Society meeting held in March 2012. It is also excerpted primarily from Chapter 4 of my D.Miss dissertation.

² In the quotations from John Wesley, the eighteenth-century British syntax and cultural sensitivities have been retained without amendment.

³ A few of the places that give insight to his views are: JWJ Feb. 17, 1787; Ser. 28 'Sermon on the Mount VIII' mentions the Hottentots; Ser 38 'A Caution against Bigotry' speaks of the Laplanders of arctic Europe; and Ser. 63 'The General Spread of the Gospel' covers more generic thoughts.

⁴ In this short paragraph from "The Mystery of Iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7), Wesley is drawing on at least Ecclesiastes 7:29, Hebrews 1:3, 1 John 2:2, Colossians 3:10, and Revelation 13:8 for his remarks.

⁵ This is contemporary Ethiopia, Eritrea, and southern Yemen.

⁶ This is the activity of the Creator God restoring rebellious humanity and marred creation to fulfill their original purposes reflected in Genesis 1:26; 2:7; 5:3. The Father sent the Son (John 3:16-17), the Holy Spirit, and the Church (Acts 2) into all the world to call all people into the kingdom of God to be a new creature in Christ and conformed to Christlikeness.

⁷ See Scott J Jones "John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture." Ph.D dissertation. SMU, 1992, for an extensive bibliography in support of this point.

⁸ For further illustration, cf. Gill, Fredrick C., ed. 1951, *John Wesley's Prayers*. Nashville: Abingdon.

⁹ *Physic* is the eighteenth century word for medicine. Wesley stated in Sermon 95, "On the Education of Children," "physic may justly be called the art of restoring health" (*WJW* 3:349).

¹⁰ Wesley explains this in more detail in a letter to Richard Morgan, 18 October 1732.

¹¹ It is interesting that while Wesley was in Georgia (1737), embroiled in the Williamson Case that one of the issues he used in defense of his actions was that *his* parishioners were married by an 'irregular' minister outside *his* parish without *his* permission, thus violating *his* ministerial rights. One wonders if this may have later influenced part of his thinking and "inveterate" practice of ministry beyond the "legal" Anglican boundaries assigned to him.

¹² See the letter of Mar. 28, 1739. Outler noted that tradition incorrectly dated this letter as Mar. 20 and written to James Hervey. He suggested, however,

it was addressed “to some clergyman (possibly John Clayton) who had already raised the issue of Wesley’s right to invade other men’s parishes without invitation (see Letters, Vol. 25 in this edition, pp. 614, 616). See also the carefully edited account of Wesley’s conversation with Bishop Butler of Bristol, Aug. 16, 1739, in WHS, XLII.93-100” (*WJW* (Bicentennial Edition) CD-ROM. Richard P. Heitzenrater, ed. “Introduction”, Part 1, footnote 47).

¹³ *Wellness* refers to that quality of life that we experience lived in Christlikeness and the image of God. A right relationship with God centers us, makes us whole, and brings healing. This is a relationship of love that entails God justifying us, regenerating us, adopting us, sanctifying us, and making us whole persons.

¹⁴ Wholeness in Christ is related to how Wesley speaks of “religion.” In “On Former Times” (1787) Wesley clarifies, “By religion I mean the love of God and man filling the heart and governing the life. The sure effect of this is the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth. This is the very essence of it; the height and depth of religion, detached from this or that opinion, and from all particular modes of worship” (*WJW* Sermon102, 3:448).

¹⁵ “Tuesday, October 14, 1735. — Mr. Benjamin Ingham, of Queen’s College, Oxford, Mr. Charles Delamotte, son of a merchant, in London, who had offered himself some days before, my brother Charles Wesley, and myself, took [a] boat for Gravesend, in order to embark for Georgia. Our end in leaving our native country was not to avoid want, (God having given us plenty of temporal blessings,) nor to gain the dung or dross of riches or honour; but singly this,—to save our souls; to live wholly to the glory of God.” (*WJW* Journals 1:17)

¹⁶ For Wesley, this is a work of mercy. He supports this practice in these words, “[Our Lord] has laid 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 Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God. He proceeds to show... how all our actions likewise... may be made holy, and good, and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention. Whatever is done without this, he largely declares, is of no value before God. Whereas, whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God, they are, in his sight, of great price. The necessity of this purity of intention, he shows, first, with regard to those which are usually accounted religious actions, and indeed are such when performed with a right intention. Some of these are commonly termed works of piety; the rest, works of charity or mercy. Of the latter sort, he particularly names almsgiving; of the former, prayer and fasting. But the directions given for these are equally to be applied to every work, whether of charity or mercy. [W]ith regard to works of mercy, “Take heed,” saith he, “that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.” “That ye do not your alms:” —Although this only is named, yet is every work of charity included, everything which we give, or speak, or do, whereby our neighbour may be profited; whereby another man may receive any advantage, either in his body or soul. The feeding the hungry, the clothing the naked, the entertaining or assisting the stranger, *the visiting those that are sick* or in prison, the comforting the afflicted, the instructing the ignorant, the reproving the wicked, the exhorting and encouraging the well-doer; and if there be any other work of mercy, it is equally included in this direction (*WJW* Sermons 5:328-9) (My emphasis).

¹⁷ In the following paragraph, Wesley provided a snippet of the spread of Methodism as the renewal work of the Spirit through the church for the transformation of the world: “From Oxford, where it first appeared, the little leaven spread wider and wider. More and more saw the truth as it is in Jesus, and received it in the love thereof. More and more found “redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins.” They were born again of his Spirit, and filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It afterwards spread to every part of the land, and a little one became a thousand. It then spread into North Britain and Ireland; and a few years after into New York, Pennsylvania, and many other provinces in America, even as high as Newfoundland and Nova-Scotia. So that, although at first this “grain of mustard-seed” was “the least of all the seeds;” yet, in a few years, it grew into a “large tree, and put forth great branches.”

¹⁸ See Dt 31:26 (Book of the Law); Jos 22:34 (Lord’s altar); Job 16:19 (character), Ps 89:37 (moon); Isa 20:42 (the Lord), Isa. 30:8 (scroll); Lk 23:48 (observation); Jn 1:7-8 (proclamation); Rom. 2:15 (conscience); Rev 1:5 (Jesus).

¹⁹ Wesley uses this term about 431 times in his works.

²⁰ Wesley had been frustrated in his intentions to go to the Native Americans as a missionary. Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees wanted his work restricted to Savannah. His first-hand contacts with the Indians were, therefore, limited. Here, obviously, he is passing on hearsay about them to readers who would have had no way of knowing that later scholars would conclude that his condemnations of the Indians ‘were extremely harsh and unrealistic’; cf. J. Ralph Randolph, ‘John Wesley and the American Indian: A Study in Disillusionment’, *Meth. Hist.*, X.3:11 (Apr. 1972). See also Randolph’s fuller study of Wesley on the Indians in his *British Travelers among the Southern Indians* (Norman, Oklahoma, Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1973). For further comments by Wesley on the Indians, cf. No. 69, ‘The Imperfection of Human Knowledge’, II.6; and JWJ, Feb. 18, 1773.

²¹ One might observe how Wesley imitates the biblical pattern of how the Minor Prophets spoke judgment, all the while pointing to repentance, as they started with people far off from Israel/Judah and worked their way closer and closer until they drove home the point among their own people.

²² He was making the point of how one thought can lead to another and lead away from the original line of thinking to something quite different, but I believe he was expressing his own true sentiment on the issue at hand.

²³ Cf. No. 9, ‘The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption’, §5 and n.

²⁴ Other areas also affected that Latourette does not mention directly are hymnody and “homeopathic medicine.”

²⁵ Although Curtis is writing specifically about the Faith Cure Movement of the late nineteenth century, she connects Dr. Charles Cullis, M.D., homeopathy, and the Holiness Movement with “Arminian sensibilities, [propagated through Methodist heritage,] about human nature to offer an active alternate position about health and resisting affliction” in contradistinction to a passive resignation to sickness as God’s will that reflects a Calvinistic view (Curtis 2007:60, 62-63).

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