

Jason E. VICKERS

Charles Wesley's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: A Vital Resource for the Renewal of Methodism Today

This essay is an extended argument in favor of a recovery of a robust doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Wesleyan-Methodist theology today. The argument develops in five stages. First, it shows the significance of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in Charles Wesley's understanding of revelation, the atonement, purification, sanctification and the like. Second, it suggests that contemporary Wesleyan theologians have often ceased attributing these things to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, opting to attribute them in a generic way to grace instead. Third, it provides a conceptual analysis of the difference between the Holy Spirit and grace. Fourth, the essay identifies four factors that have contributed to the domestication of the Holy Spirit in contemporary Wesleyan theology. Finally, the essay concludes by suggesting that the one key to the renewal of Methodism is a rediscovery of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in all its fullness.

KEYWORDS: Charles Wesley, Holy Spirit, grace

Jason E. Vickers is assistant professor of theology at United Theological Seminary in Trotwood, Ohio.

The idea that John and Charles Wesley were theologians of grace is commonplace in Wesleyan theology today. In fact, the idea is so prevalent among Wesleyan theologians that it would not be too great an exaggeration to say that grace is the center of gravity in contemporary Wesleyan theology.¹ There has even emerged in recent years a Wesleyan scholasticism of the doctrine of grace, with Wesleyan theologians carefully distinguishing between prevenient grace, revelatory grace, convincing or convicting grace, justifying grace, illuminating grace, sanctifying grace, and perfecting grace. In a less scholastic manner, many Wesleyan theologians are content simply to describe the Christian life as, from beginning to end, a matter of grace.

In what follows, I will do four things. First, I will show that, where contemporary Wesleyan theologians invoke grace, Charles Wesley persistently invokes the Holy Spirit. Thus I will show that Charles invokes the Holy Spirit as the divine personal agent who brings persons to faith initially, who empowers persons to love God and neighbor, and who indwells persons, enabling them to become “partakers of the divine nature.”² Second, I will show that, when contemporary Wesleyans attribute the various phases of the Christian life to grace rather than to the Holy Spirit, a serious conceptual error occurs. Thus I will clarify the difference between the concepts of grace and the Holy Spirit. Third, having clarified the conceptual difference between the Holy Spirit and grace, I will make some suggestions as to why contemporary Wesleyan theologians often attribute the various phases of the Christian life to grace rather than to the Holy Spirit. Fourth, I will maintain that a recovery of the vital connection between the Holy Spirit and the Christian life is essential for the renewal of Methodism today.

Charles Wesley’s Doctrine of the Presence and Work of the Holy Spirit

For Charles Wesley, the Christian life is from beginning to end a gift of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, human persons can not even acquire genuine knowledge of God apart from the activity of the Holy Spirit. Thus Charles says,

So our Lord assures us no man can come unto the Son except the Father draw him. No man cometh to Father, but by the Son. They only believe, to whom it is given to know the mind of Christ. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the

heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of man which is in him? *Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.*³

Charles underscores the revelatory role of the Holy Spirit in the well-known hymn, "Spirit of Faith, Come Down," adding powerful suggestions that it is the Holy Spirit who illumines the understanding and who makes efficacious the atoning blood of Christ. Charles writes,

Spirit of Faith, Come Down
 Reveal the things of God,
 And make to us the Godhead known
 And witness with the blood.
 'Tis thine the blood to apply
 And give us eyes to see,
 Who did for every sinner die
 Hath surely died for me.
 No one can truly say
 That Jesus is the Lord,
 Unless thou take the veil away
 And breathe the living Word.
 Then, only then, we feel
 Our interest in his blood,
 And cry with joy unspeakable
 "Thou art my Lord, My God!"⁴

For Charles, the Holy Spirit's revelatory activity is accompanied by an empowering activity that enables human persons to believe. Moreover, the Spirit's revelatory activity is accompanied by purifying activity. In bringing persons to faith, the Holy Spirit simultaneously illumines the mind and purifies the heart.

These and numberless other Scriptures demonstrate the impossibility of believing God hath given us the spirit of revelation. We can never know the things of God till he hath revealed them by his Spirit, till we have received the Son of God that we should know the things which are freely given us of God. For this cause Jesus is called the author of our faith, because we receive in one and the same moment, power to believe and the Holy Ghost, who is therefore called the Spirit of faith. *And a true faith we cannot have till God gives us the Holy Ghost purifying our hearts by faith.*⁵

In another passage that is well-worth quoting at length, Charles argues

that “divine faith” neither accompanies persons at birth nor stems from human reasoning. On the contrary, divine faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit. As we have just seen, this gift is accompanied by the purification of the heart. Thus Charles says,

You were not born with faith, where then and when and how did you come by it? Learned you it from books or men; by reasoning upon what you have read or heard? Hereby you might acquire a human but not a divine faith. You can demonstrate, as may every thinking man, that Christianity must be of God, but if you think you therefore believe, you deceive your own souls, and the truth is not in you. ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: faith is the gift of God; no man can call Jesus the Lord but by the Holy Ghost; flesh and blood cannot reveal it unto him. Faith standeth not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. It must be wrought by a stroke of omnipotence. *It is the Holy Ghost alone who purifies the heart by faith.*’⁶

Embedded in Charles’ understanding of the Spirit’s revelatory activity is a very intriguing epistemological suggestion. On this vision, knowledge of God is derived from the Spirit’s revelatory activity. The Spirit’s revelatory activity, however, is intimately connected to the Spirit’s purifying activity. Thus it appears that Charles’ conception of the Spirit’s activity includes an implicit appeal to conspicuous sanctity as evidence for the truthfulness of the Spirit’s revelation. The epistemological dimensions of Charles’ doctrine of the Holy Spirit clearly need further explication. For example, it would be interesting to compare the epistemological aspects of Charles’ doctrine of the Holy Spirit with the recent proposals in this area by Alvin Plantinga.⁷ Like Plantinga, Charles clearly appeals to the inner witness of the Spirit in divine revelation and illumination. Yet, in calling attention to the conspicuous sanctity that results from the Spirit’s revelatory and illuminating activity, Charles may actually point the way to an even more robust account of the epistemic significance of the work of the Spirit.

What exactly does Charles mean when he says that the gift of faith is accompanied by the purification of the heart? Charles explains that, in purifying the human heart, the Spirit enables all believers to keep Christ’s commandments in love by delivering them “not only from the guilt of sin but also from the power of sin.”⁸ Thus Charles’ doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit includes not only the gift of the power to believe but also the gift of power for living the Christian life, i.e., for keeping the commandments and for loving God and neighbor. Charles’ characteristic way of describing this aspect of the Spirit’s activity is to refer to the Spirit’s bringing about love in the human heart. We can see this clearly in the

following benediction.

Now to God the Father, who first loved us and made us accepted in the Beloved; to the Son who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to God the Holy Ghost who sheddeth abroad the love of God in our hearts, be all praise and all glory in time and in eternity.⁹

The next thing to notice about Charles' doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the concept of divine indwelling. Indeed, it is only in taking up the doctrine of divine indwelling that we are able to see how extensive the connection is between Charles' doctrine of the Holy Spirit and his understanding of the Christian life. For Charles, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit enables human persons to become "partakers of the divine nature."¹⁰ Thus he writes,

This is the greatest and most glorious privilege of the true believer: whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God: and hereby knoweth he that God abideth in him, by the Spirit which he hath given him. He that believeth hath the witness in himself, even the Spirit of God bearing witness with his Spirit that he is a child of God. Christ is formed in his heart by faith. He is one with Christ and Christ with him. *He is a real partaker of the divine nature.* Truly his fellowship is with the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son are come unto him and make their abode with him, and his very body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.¹¹

One of the things that immediately jumps out at the reader of this passage is the way in which Charles situates the doctrine of the indwelling activity of the Holy Spirit within a wider Trinitarian framework. Indeed, when Charles speaks of the Holy Spirit enabling us to become "partakers of the divine nature," he has in mind nothing less than our being caught up in the "fellowship" of God's Triune life. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit leads directly and immediately to the mutual indwelling of the Triune God in the believer and the believer in the Triune God.¹²

For Charles, the work of the Holy Spirit in enabling persons to become "partakers of the divine nature" is so important that he makes the reception of the Holy Spirit and the partaking of the divine nature the criterion of Christian identity and the distinguishing mark of "pure religion." He says,

Yet on the authority of God's Word and our own Church I must repeat the question, 'Hast thou received the Holy Ghost?' If thou hast not thou art not yet a Christian; for a Christian is a man that is 'anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power.' Thou art yet made a partaker of pure religion and undefiled. *Dost thou know what religion is? That it is a participation in the divine nature, the life of God in the soul of man: Christ in thee, the hope of glory;* 'Christ

formed in thy heart,' happiness and holiness; heaven begun on earth; a 'kingdom of God within thee,' 'not meat and drink,' no outward thing, 'but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'¹³

Once again, we see that Charles situates his doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit in a wider Trinitarian framework. Moreover, it is clear that the doctrine of divine indwelling is of crucial importance to Charles' understanding of the fullness of the Christian life. The result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is that persons are made saints here and now. Thus Charles adds,

Ye see your calling, brethren. *We are called to be 'an inhabitation of God through his Spirit'; and through his Spirit dwelling in us 'to be saints' here, and 'partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light'* The Spirit of Christ is that great gift of God which at sundry times and in divers manners he hath promised to man, and hath fully bestowed since the time when Christ was glorified. Those promises made to the fathers he hath thus fulfilled: 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.'¹⁴

We also find the doctrine of divine indwelling in Charles' hymns. In the following example, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit assures believers that they are truly born again.

I want the spirit of power within,
 Of love, and of a healthful mind:
 Of power to conquer inbred sin,
 Of love to thee and all mankind,
 Of health, that pain and death defies,
 Most vig'rous when the body dies.

When shall I hear the inward voice
 Which only faithful souls can hear?
 Pardon and peace, and heavenly joys
 Attend the promised Comforter.

O come, and righteousness divine,
 And Christ, and all with Christ is mine!

O that the Comforter would come!
 Nor visit as a transient guest,
 But fix in me his constant home
 And take possession of my breast;
 And fix in me his loved abode,
 The temple of indwelling God!

Come, Holy Ghost, my heart inspire!
 Attest that I am born again!
 Come, and baptize me with fire,
 Nor let thy former gifts be vain.

I cannot rest in sins forgiven;
 Where is the earnest of my heaven?
 Where the indubitable seal
 That ascertains the kingdom mine?
 The powerful stamp I long to feel,
 The signature of love divine!
 O shed it in my heart abroad,
 Fullness of love – of heaven – of God!¹⁵

Finally, if there remains any doubt concerning the central importance of the doctrine of divine indwelling of the Holy Spirit for Charles' understanding of the Christian life, then Charles himself removes it by making the indwelling of the Spirit the "criterion of a real Christian." Charles says, "He is a Christian who hath received the Spirit of Christ. He is not a Christian who hath not received him."¹⁶ Even more pointedly, he remarks,

He is Antichrist whoever denies the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or that the indwelling Spirit of God is the common privilege of all believers, the blessing of the gospel, the unspeakable gift, the universal promise, *the criterion of a real Christian*.¹⁷

The Appeal to Grace in Wesleyan Theology: An Exercise in Conceptual Clarification

At the outset of this essay, I suggested that Wesleyan theologians today tend to attribute each phase of the Christian life to grace. It is by grace that we come to know ourselves as sinners. It is by grace that we confess that Jesus is Lord. We are justified and sanctified by grace. The parallels are striking. The very things that Charles Wesley is careful to attribute to the Holy Spirit we now attribute to grace. This raises an obvious question. Are grace and the Holy Spirit conceptually interchangeable? Otherwise put, is anything of significance lost when we attribute the various phases or events in the Christian life to grace rather than to the Holy Spirit?

In order to answer this question, we need to engage in a bit of conceptual clarification. In other words, we need to determine just what sort of thing grace is and how, if at all, it differs conceptually from the Holy Spirit. To that end, it will help if we begin by considering the way the term 'grace' functions in everyday discourse.

In everyday discourse, we use 'grace' to describe a specific action or actions undertaken by a particular person. Thus we might say that a person's act of giving a gift to someone who had wronged them is a gracious act. If we observe that same person constantly engaging in gracious activity, we

might use the term ‘grace’ to describe that person’s character. In this case, we use ‘grace’ to describe a particular dispositional trait or virtue not unlike other virtues, e.g., courage, patience, temperance, and the like. Thus we often say that a person is *gracious*. These are two of the most common ways that we use the term ‘grace’ in everyday discourse.¹⁸

When we turn to our use of the term ‘grace’ in theological discourse, we find that we regularly use the term in exactly the same way that we do in everyday discourse. Thus we often say that God’s act of sending his only-begotten son is a gracious act, or we simply say that God is gracious. Of course, the strong interest in grace on the part of theologians stems from very old debates about the relationship between divine action and human freedom in salvation, especially in the light of total depravity. In the context of these debates, of which the Augustinian-Pelagian debate is the most famous, theologians have rightly used the term ‘grace’ to register the point that, because of humanity’s fallen nature, divine assistance is needed every step of the way. By extension, theologians from John Cassian in the late fourth century to John Wesley in the eighteenth century have labored to articulate the doctrine of grace in a way that does not negate or diminish human freedom and response to that grace, often developing and deploying the notion of cooperative grace.¹⁹ In the context of these debates, the concept of grace is indispensable in theology.

The origins of the appeal to grace in theology notwithstanding, the peculiar thing about our use of the term ‘grace’ in theological discourse today is the way in which we often speak of grace as though it were a personal agent rather than a type of action, a dispositional trait, or a way of registering the necessity of divine assistance.²⁰ There is a tendency, we might say, to personify grace. Indeed, when Wesleyans talk about grace, we can easily get the impression that grace is a personal agent. Thus we find ourselves being saved by grace, justified by grace, sanctified by grace, and the like, often without any reference to the Holy Spirit in the immediate area. The things that Charles attributes to the Holy Spirit, we attribute to grace. This is precisely what gives rise to the old joke about the child who, in the middle of a Methodist sermon about grace, asked, “Mommy, who is grace?”

By contrast, to attribute every phase or event in the Christian life to the Holy Spirit is to call attention to a divine personal agent who is, among other things, gracious. Indeed, the activity of the Holy Spirit is, from beginning to end, gracious activity. Thus, at this stage, it may seem like we are splitting theological hairs. We are not. Referring to the Holy Spirit as a living, breathing, divine personal agent who convicts of sin, reveals the true identity of Christ to the human heart and mind, applies the blood of Christ, and makes us partakers of the divine nature is far more robust

theological activity than attributing salvation in a generic way to grace.

When we attribute the Christian life from beginning to end to the Holy Spirit, we are indexing our lives to a divine personal agent who is capable of speaking, confronting, comforting, inspiring, encouraging, empowering, purifying, and the like. Moreover, in referring to the Holy Spirit, we speak of a divine agent who has a personal name that we can use to invite God to be present in worship, to ask God to guide us and to give us strength, and so on. Finally, there is the Holy Spirit's ability to give extraordinary gifts and skills such as prophecy or tongues. By comparison with all of this, the tendency to speak generically about grace rather than robustly about the Holy Spirit amounts to a regrettable domestication of our theological vocabulary, not to mention of our lives.

The Domestication of Wesleyan-Methodist Theological Vocabulary

At this stage, I want to make some suggestions concerning what might have caused Wesleyan-Methodists gradually to replace talk about the Holy Spirit with talk about grace. More specifically, I want to suggest four possible reasons for the disappearance of the Holy Spirit from Wesleyan-Methodist theological vocabulary. In doing so, I will call attention to possible theological, philosophical, historical, and liturgical factors.

The first explanatory factor is theological in nature, having to do with Wesleyan-Methodist sensitivity to Calvinist polemics. It may be that Wesleyans have come to place enormous stress on grace in response to Calvinist claims that Wesleyan theology revolves around a Pelagian doctrine of salvation by works. Stressing that the Christian life is a matter of grace from beginning to end is simply one way to counter these charges. This is hardly a sufficient explanation by itself, however, since stressing the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives would also effectively counter any charges that Wesleyans teach salvation by works. Indeed, Charles' doctrine of the Holy Spirit actually enables Wesleyans to attribute works to the purifying and empowering activity of the Holy Spirit.

The second explanatory factor is philosophical in nature. As with many other Christian traditions, serious talk about the Holy Spirit in the Wesleyan tradition might be explained as a casualty of modernity. On this explanation, the rise of historical criticism, materialism, and a preference for less overtly super-naturalistic ways of accounting for religious experience combine to make persons increasingly uneasy with talk about a divine personal agent who, without any trace of a body, speaks, inspires, enables, empowers, and the like. In the dim light of the modern age, appeals to the Holy Spirit are equated more or less with appeals to magic, ghosts, and UFOs. We do not know how to evaluate reports of experiences of the Holy Spirit anymore than we know how to appraise reports of ghosts or aliens. In the absence

of empirically verifiable evidence, Methodists of modern sensibilities learned, along with everyone else, to be skeptical of talk about the Holy Spirit.

It is worth noting that disbelief in the Holy Spirit is not a new problem. Charles himself registers concern over the fact that some persons simply do not yet believe in the Holy Spirit, saying,

Hast though the ‘witness in thyself,’ ‘the earnest of thine inheritance’? Are thou ‘sealed by that Spirit of promise unto the day of redemption’? Hast thou received the Holy Ghost? Or dost thou start at the question, not knowing whether there be any Holy Ghost?²¹

Of course, it is far from clear that Wesleyan-Methodists should have allowed the absurd demands of classical foundationalism — the epistemological position associated with the modern age — to prevent them from referring to the Holy Spirit. As things turn out, classical foundationalism in epistemology has proven highly difficult to sustain.²² Similarly, the metaphysical assumptions of historical criticism and materialism have come under sustained attack in recent years.²³ Taken together, these developments have opened the way for leading philosophers once again to take a sustained interest in reports of religious experience and even favorably to explore and to defend the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.²⁴

The third explanatory factory is historical, relating to the emergence of Pentecostalism in the modern period.²⁵ In the wake of Pentecostal and charismatic movements that were increasingly stressing the Holy Spirit’s gift of speaking in tongues, many Wesleyan groups became concerned to distance themselves from these movements. For example, the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene judged it necessary to drop the term ‘Pentecostal’ from its name. Out of a deep concern to distance themselves from tongues-speaking charismatic movements, it may be that Wesleyans gradually came to avoid talk about the Holy Spirit altogether, thereby allowing Pentecostal traditions to monopolize talk about the Holy Spirit.

If Wesleyan-Methodists ceased to talk about the Holy Spirit for fear that we would be perceived as charismatics or pentecostals, we may not be able to avoid talking about the Holy Spirit for much longer. The reason for this is simple. Pentecostalism is flourishing around the world, and it is rapidly becoming the dominant form of Christianity in the southern hemisphere.²⁶ Accordingly, it is increasingly difficult for persons in South America, Africa, and Southeast Asia to conceive of a form of Christianity that does not involve frequent references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. If Wesleyan-Methodists in the north Atlantic are committed

to dialogue and communication with Wesleyan-Methodists in the southern hemisphere, then those of us in the north will have once again to learn how to talk about the Holy Spirit.

The fourth explanatory factor is liturgical in nature. It is well-known and oft-lamented that Wesleyan-Methodist traditions are losing touch with one of their most valuable theological resources, namely, Charles' hymns. Over the years, the number of Charles' hymns in many Wesleyan-Methodist hymnbooks has been steadily dwindling. As we have seen, Charles was especially careful to ascribe the whole of our lives to the Holy Spirit. This is especially true of many of Charles' hymns, the loss of which by either omission from hymnals or neglect has no doubt played a role in the impoverishment of our theological vocabulary. Fortunately, there are signs that a recovery of the Methodist hymn tradition is underway.

Recovering the Connection between the Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: A Key for the Renewal of Methodism Today

In conclusion, I want to suggest that any genuine renewal of the Wesleyan-Methodist tradition today will depend in no small way on a recovery of the vital connection between the Holy Spirit and the Christian life in our theology and worship.²⁷ A word of warning, however, is in order. Any attempt to restore this connection will be risky, especially for local clergy. Should Wesleyan-Methodist clergy begin to preach and teach about the Holy Spirit as a living, divine personal agent who speaks, inspires, empowers, enables, equips, purifies, and the like, they will run the risk of losing control of their congregations. After all, to foster in persons a deep belief in the Holy Spirit as a living divine person is to encourage persons to listen to a voice besides our own, namely, the voice of the Holy Spirit. As the Nicene Creed reminds us, it is in the Spirit's very nature to speak.

Another risk involved in any effort to recover the vital connection between the Holy Spirit and the Christian life is the potential for messy pastoral work. In any congregation that is actively anticipating inspiration and empowerment from the Holy Spirit, there are bound to be exceptional cases in which there is some doubt regarding the authenticity of a person's claim to have a word from the Holy Spirit. Fortunately, there is a criterion available to us that can help clergy to discern authentic from non-authentic claims. Put simply, the criterion for testing such claims is the life of Jesus.²⁸ After all, Jesus is the best example that we have of someone fully anointed with the Holy Spirit. Thus when we have doubts about a purported message from the Holy Spirit, we can do worse than to ask, "Is this the type of thing that Jesus would condone?"

Finally, whatever the risks involved in invoking the Holy Spirit in theology and worship, the potential rewards are surely worth it. What

congregation would not benefit from an outbreak of the fruits of the Spirit, namely, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?²⁹ Best of all, when we give ourselves over to the Spirit who dwells within us, we invite the Spirit graciously to make us what we were originally intended to be, namely, partakers of the divine nature.

Notes

1. It is common, for example, to find grace emphasized in the titles of major works in Wesleyan theology. Four examples worth mentioning are H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1988); Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994); Thomas C. Oden, *The Transforming Power of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993); and Robert Johnson, L. Gregory Jones, and Jonathan R. Wilson, eds., *Grace Upon Grace: Essays in Honor of Thomas Langford* (1999).

2. 2 Pet. 1:4.

3. Kenneth G. C. Newport, ed. *The Sermons of Charles Wesley: A Critical Edition, with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Sermon 7, 201 (emphasis added). Hereafter SCW.

4. *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 332.

5. SCW, Sermon 7, 202 (emphasis added).

6. SCW, Sermon 5, 159-60 (emphasis added). The paraphrases of scripture include the following texts: Matt. 16:17, 1 Cor. 2:5, and Acts 15:8-9.

7. See especially Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

8. SCW, Sermon 7, 202.

9. SCW, Sermon 7, 210.

10. 2 Pet. 1:4.

11. SCW, Sermon 7, 203 (emphasis added). Charles paraphrases the following scripture texts: 1 John 4:15, 1 John 3:24; I John 4:13, I John 5:10, Gal. 4:19, 2 Pet. 1:4, I John 1:3, John 14: 23, I Cor. 6:19.

12. I would like to issue a word of caution concerning the temptation to draw parallels between Charles' doctrines of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, and the Christian life on the one hand, and the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of theosis on the other. There are, without question, surface level parallels. For example, Eastern Orthodox theologians are fond of quoting the "partakers of the divine nature" text in 2 Peter 1:4. Also, Eastern Orthodox theologians tend to interpret this text within the wider framework of the doctrine of the Trinity. However, despite these surface parallels, it is not entirely clear that Charles' understanding of the "partakers of the divine nature" text is identical to the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of theosis.

All that can be said at this juncture is that there is a Trinitarian pattern to Charles' theology and that Charles sees the end of the indwelling activity of the Holy Spirit as enabling human persons to become "partakers of the divine nature." The extent to which these themes in Charles' theology are similar to or even dependent upon Eastern Orthodox sources is a matter for further investigation. In my judgment,

Richard P. Heitzenrater's conclusion that there is a paucity of strong textual evidence to support the thesis that John Wesley was deeply influenced by Eastern Orthodox sources applies to Charles Wesley as well. For this judgment concerning John Wesley's knowledge and use of Eastern Orthodox sources, see Richard P. Heitzenrater, "John Wesley's Reading of and References to the Early Church Fathers," in S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., ed., *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 25-32. Also see Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences, and Differences," in *Asbury Theological Journal* 45.2 (1990), 29-53. For a fascinating look at possible Eastern Orthodox sources for Charles' theology, see S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. ed., *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, chps. 11-14. In my judgment, these chapters demonstrate interesting surface parallels between aspects of Charles' theology and similar aspects in Eastern Orthodox theology. In many cases, however, there is simply not strong textual evidence to support the thesis that Charles was under the direct influence of the Eastern Orthodox fathers. At best, such influence seems to be mediated through the revival of interest in patristics in seventeenth century Anglican theology.

13. SCW, Sermon 8, 218 (emphasis added). Scripture paraphrases include: Acts 10:38, Jas. 1:27, 2 Pet. 1:4, Col. 1:27, Gal. 4:19, Luke 17:21, Rom. 14:17, Phil. 4:7, and 1 Pet. 1:8.

14. SCW, Sermon 8, 220 (emphasis added). Scripture references include: 1 Cor. 1:26, Eph. 2:22, Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:2, Col. 1:12, Heb. 1:1, Ezek. 36:27

15. Hymn 365 in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 534-35. It is worth noting that many of the themes related to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that we have observed in the sermons from the early 1740s are present in this hymn, e.g., the Spirit as comforter, inspirer, and a robust doctrine of divine indwelling that leads to the "fullness of love" and "of God."

16. SCW, Sermon 8, 221.

17. SCW, Sermon 8, 222 (emphasis added).

18. We also use the term 'grace' in everyday discourse to describe the way a person or an animal moves.

19. There are also controversies in the Catholic tradition over the relationship between grace and the sacraments. For an introductory account of the role of grace in these controversies as well as in the controversies concerning the relationship between divine action and human freedom, one can consult almost any reliable theological dictionary or history of Christian doctrine.

20. In this paper, I am focusing on the understanding of grace that is most common in Western theological traditions, including the Wesleyan-Methodist tradition, i.e., grace as pardon. It is crucial, however, to note that there is available in Eastern Christianity an understanding of grace as power in which grace is intimately associated with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Further, Randy L. Maddox has rightly argued that John Wesley conceived of grace both as pardon and power, closely associating the latter conception of grace with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Yet, even on the conception of grace as power, it is not clear that grace is equivalent to the Holy Spirit as a divine personal agent rather than an effect of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, even if we agree with Maddox that John Wesley's concept of grace as power is intimately connected to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, it is not at all clear that this understanding is common among Wesleyan-Methodists today. On the contrary, I suspect that the conception of grace as pardon is the

dominant view within contemporary Wesleyan-Methodism. For Maddox's discussion of grace as power, see *Responsible Grace*, 86-90, 119-121.

21. SCW, Sermon 8, 218 (emphasis added). Charles here paraphrases the following scriptural texts: 2 Peter 1:4, 2 Cor. 13:5, 1 John 3:24; 4:12-13; 5:10, 1 Cor. 6:19, Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30, Acts 19:2.

22. For a lucid account of the problems with classical foundationalism, see Alvin Plantinga's now classic essay, "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 16-94.

23. For example, see William J. Abraham, *Divine Revelation and the Limits of Historical Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

24. The work of William P. Alston is especially noteworthy on this front. On religious experience, see William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). On the doctrine of the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, see William P. Alston's "The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit," in William P. Alston, *Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

25. See Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). For the Wesleyan origins of Pentecostalism, see Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987). Also see Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

26. The pioneering work on this is David Martin's *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (London: Blackwell, 1993). Also see Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Rise of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

27. Fortunately, there has been a revival of interest in the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Of the recent works on the Holy Spirit, the most important remains Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997). For a helpful analysis of Congar's work, see Elizabeth T. Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Also see Douglas Koskela, "Yves Congar's Vision of Ecclesiality: Pneumatological Development and Ecumenical Promise," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Southern Methodist University, 2003. Of the recent works on the Holy Spirit by Protestant theologians, the following are especially worth mentioning: Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2001) and Michael Welker, *The Holy Spirit* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1994). Also helpful is the recent work being done on a Spirit-Christology. See especially, Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

28. This is precisely the strategy that Yves Congar suggests repeatedly in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*.

29. For a standard list of "fruits of the Spirit," see Gal. 5:22-23.