

. . . here in the order I thought we had hit the bottom of the barrel for sure Sanctification was something that theologians of 100 years ago used to talk about when they got in their system of abstraction, and yet I'm not sure how it has come to you lately, but for me that word has started to smoke. a little bit and the document that the priors did and the weekend that we spent on sanctification here and the seminary session it's beginning to smoke a little bit and you begin to get the feel that there is something going on there-- that there is a reality that that word is pointing to, and it is not that reality, or maybe it is, but that there is something going on there that we are using that word to point to. and in accordance with our method of going about doing theology, as you know the first step we usually take is to articulate for ourselves the way we see life today, now. That is a prevention of abstraction, but just to get as much clarity as we can on the dynamics of what is going on, and then to take up our fathers in the church and see what they have to say about it what will help us to fill out our picture. Maybe uncover a corner of that reality that we have not seen. And I would suggest that that is where we are in the process of our work on sanctification right now, we have expressed our insights deeply and have gotten the feel that there is reality there, and now we want to take a look at some of the classical writings of the fathers and see what they have to say for us. What I am talking about is essentially the next six weeks Friday mornings collegiums. Three of them have to do with fathers of the church, today we will be looking at John Wesley and what he has to say about it, next time it will be somebody out of the Middle Ages, perhaps Ignatius or St. Thomas, maybe St. John of the Cross, and then we'll go back to an earlier period and look at Augustine, and we see what they have to say about the holy life. Then after we get clarity about that we pull back to the present and we will have three more collegia on drawing together the insights that have come out of our work there. The format will basically be to have a few minutes presentation, and then do some talkback or some feedback into what

for what insights into what is being said here and- by our fathers and what questions you might have or how that might be useful to us. So I want to talk about John Wesley this morning and do that under the rubric of his ~~literial~~ historical position, his major thrust, a critique and implications for us. These will be the four guiding rubrics, and before we get into that I would like to share with you a word from a colleague of the 18th century.

"I would consider first, who is the Christian, indeed? What does the term imply properly? It has been so long abused I fear

I want to talk a little about the times in which Wesley showed up, and it was the 18th century, and HRN gives a sort of pattern ~~to~~ for understanding the situation of the church and the culture, he talks about it as alternating on-going periods of penetration into culture as the social pioneer, and then periods of withdrawal from its pioneering activities to sort of re-group and revitalize itself and renew its spirit. Using that sort of image as a pattern that the 18th century was a time of drawing back and regrouping and renewing its forces. You could go so far as to say that in the 17th century what happened was that the church got itself booted out of culture, you had the wars of religion there in which in the name of holiness Christians marched back and forth all over Europe, decimating the civilization, wars of religion, and it finally came to the point where men of good sense finally said the hell with it, what we need are is to construct human community all over again, let those churchmen go over in a corner and do their thing but be out of society. You can talk about that as the plight of the church as it got into the 18th century, and then you would want to talk about the 18th century as a period of revitalization, and then you lookd at the 19th century and back in she went, that was a century of great mission, in which the obviously the motivyt or revitalization got done because Christianity got literally spread all over the globe in the 19th century. Now a key figure in the midst of that sort of church renewal that went on the 18th century was one John Wesley, an Oxford educated Anglican priest who for the first 38 years of

his life was a rank failure by whatever standards you would like to use. The sort of popular image of Wesley is that of Susanna's boy who got prayed with once a week and had a heart-warming experience and preached and rode horses a lot and founded the Methodist church. That sort of a stereoetype of the popular stereotype. More important for us that to argue over against that would be to see John Wesley as the originator, the organizer/^{the guru} the head of a renewal movement that saw itself as a religious order within the Church of England, and he held that position for some 53 years. That is a clue that this is a guy we might need to listen to. Just a quick word about the person, you want to talk about him as a religious seeker for the first part of his life, you know he was serious about this religion, what-~~he~~ while he was at Oxford they formed a club, "Holy Club" that came to be known as-~~the~~ derisively as the-~~H+liness-club~~, met daily, early in the morning for prayer and meditation and scripture reading and then when out to do good works periodically and that is where the name Methodist was given to them, but then he found that ver disatisfying, or it did not do anything but hold up a form of behavior, it did not have spirit to it, so he took himself and a couple of his friends to Georgia to be missionaries to the Indians there, and here was this Oxford educated scholar over conducting liturgical reform using Eastern Orthodox tradition in the wilds of back Georgia, and it was a rank flop, he finally got booted out in the midst of a lawsuit over defamation of character, to a girl he had jilted and subsequently debarred from communion, and so far as we know there is still a lawsuit on the books in the state of Georgia--he left. But he was not seeking--in the midst of that travel back and forth across the Atlantic, there were stormy seas and he was terrified and in the midst of that he found a bunch of German Moravian pietists calmly having ^{sings} hymn ~~sings~~ and being very tranquil in the face of the raging sea, and that was something that struck him very deeply as a possibility for humanness that he had not achieved. You want to say another word about him was that he was a revival preacher--reluctantly. It is like, he read one time Jonathan Edward's description of the religious revivals that had taken place in the U.S. and it sounded like obviously something was going on there ~~he~~ and he got himself persuaded by George Whitfield and some other in the Holy Club to go out and give it a try,

to preach out in the field, out side of the pulpit, and nobody wanted to do it, so they cast lots and it was his assignment, and he argued quite profoundly against it, and you know how assignments go, and he got out and preached to a buch bunch of coalminers, and the amazing thing to him that ph happened was that people heard the Word th in the midst of his preaching. He began to sense some of the smae manifestation that Edwards had reported, and that started him off on the revival. And once you touch that, it can not be let loose. The other thing you would want to say aobut him was that he was a practical genius. In the midst of conducting revival, he formed himself a core of lay preachers, that were his men. Set up religious houses, although I think he called them meeting houses, all across England, organized ecclesiolas and teams, although he called them gae- general societies and bands.

And with each one of those he set up a rigid accountability structure, an agenda, and a rules for entry and for staying in, organized to the hilt and then yearly he would pull in his priors and hva a recontexting session, record the minutes, pass them out to everybody, reassign them, and go back about the business again. The parallels are just incredible. In the midst of all that the other thing he did was he sketched out the resistance to temptation or the pressures to pull off and become another sect. The notion that John Wesley founded the Methodist Church--you would want to say that it was founded over his dead body, literally. He was a renewal movement within the church of England, the way he embodied that was that he would not allow his lay preachers to give sacraments to anybody. He insisted in the rules to everything that you had to be a regular participatn in sacraments. So hemanaged to shove people into the local church. You could spin on that on how the folowess later withdrew in the midst of giving sociological form ot their spirit, and you would want to held up things to look into, but not now, that is another topic. We ant to look now at Wesley's notion of sacntification. In the first place you would want to say something like no renewal movement has ever got off the ground and done anything significatn that did not have a clearly articulated ideal, towards which it was moving, an ideal of humanness. Bu That it was out to produce. And I would suggest that the key note of Wesley's ideal of humanness was in that passage I read to you. The Christian is one who in his

total consciousness is actively directed to loving God and neighbor. Just period. That is who he is. Now I think the key to Wesley that makes is sort of different and gripping is that he ~~is~~ -w says that is perfection, and furthermore that every Christian has a rightful expectation to be made perfect in this life. You get that? The ideal that he is holding up is not something abstract, it is a possible dream. That you have a rightful expection of fulfillment. Did you know--well you methodists know it, that every United Methodist clergyman, as he comes up to his ordination is faced with two questions-- are you going on to perfection, and two, do you expect to ~~be~~ made perfect in this life? I answered both of the YES. And many is the man who has made 40 flips before he ~~got~~ dealt with that question and -- Bill Bingham was just telling me=~~yep~~= yesterday of a friend of his who refused and dropped out just over that very question-- but you understand the depths of it, if you say no then the answer that gets thrown back at you is all right, what are you going on for, what do you expect out of this life? And you begin to smell around that one a little bit and you get a sense that there is something deeply at stake here. So, Wesley's Christian perfection is a key concetp for him and something that we have got--that we can learn from I would suggest.

I want to go on to say a word about what it is not, and what it is, and then how ~~you~~ get it. What it is not. Perfection for John Wesley has nothing to do with the absence of error, ignorance, infirmity, or temptation. The perfected Christian is not perfect in that sense. ~~That~~ He is just as subject to error, that creates harm, to ignorance, no special knowledge, temptation, I suspect Wesley would have liked Tillich's thing that we got off of that paper last night of the battle field between the saints and --- between the demonic and the divine. I think ~~we~~ would have differed with Tillich a little bit in suggesting that that battle can be won, but still, that life is a perpetual battlefield, the sanctified life is a battlefield. It is not an essence of any of those things. Secondly, it is not static. The way we use the word perfect usually means that than which you can not go any higher than. The way Wesley used it was different than that--it was just being on the journey. Being at the rightful place for this moment, or the moment is fulfilled, or in accordance with all of your present consciousness your thoughts and actions are directed toward the love of God and neighbor.

No notion of any kind of an Omega point that you cannot move beyond, life is a journey --he is clear about that. What is Christian perfection? It is growth in grace. Just a quick diagram would be something like the Christian life begins with the hearing of the-Word, which declares the sinner ~~is~~ justified. Still a sinner but justified. The rest of life is a process of growth in grace, and at every moment along the journey there is a distinct possibility of falling all the way back down to the first, and yet as you move along the journey your struggles are different, your temptations are different. There is a kind of development there, growth, -not static. Second thing it is --it is being without sin. And that is probably the most offensive to most people. Every Christian has a rightful expectation of being made without sin in this life. It is possible in a given ~~in~~ moment so far as anybody can know himself, to be totally directed toward the love of God and neighbor. Or acting out of the Word. The next moment he may know more, and have the decision to make all over again, but at this moment he is without sin. You see there that what is talking about as sin has to do with a conscious decision and acting out of a conscious decision to go contrary to the way you know life is. And we will come back and talk about that some more in a minute. The next thing it is is leading the disciplined life. Christian perfection has to do with leading the disciplined life very actively. The rule he set up for his societies and bands are just incredible. You ought to read them sometime. Basically 3 for the society -- do no evil, do good, and attend the sacraments. But then he spells them out in great detail: do no evil, such as using the Lord's name in vain, wearing much jewelry, talking at great length, on and on, just the whole gamut of human foibles are laid out there that is to be avoided. Use of money--he has got a sermon on the right use of money -- very practical. The way the Christian uses money is he gets all he can I mean it would be ridiculous to waste away your opportunities. Secondly, he saves all he can, no squandering. Third, and here's the sticker, he gives all he can. I see the development team beginning to appreciate that a bit. But the Christian perfection has to do with leading the disciplined life -- it is an active sort of engagement. The next thing, it has to do with receiving an assurance of your own salvation. Wesley is often

accused of being a pietist and coming down hard on the the religious experience pole on the mystical pole, and that element was in his thought, or in his works. He was very clear that there is a dimension of life that has to do with being assured, or receiving confidence, or attaining some kind of tranquility. OK how do you receive it--Wesley might say something like this: how do you become perfect? You might say something like this in our day--you go to RS-1, you join a cadre, you take pedagogy, you organize courses, you budget your time and money, you take Academies, Odysseys, summer programs, sojourn, go to the sacraments daily, and that won't do it. But you do that, and you do that as evidence that you want it. You sit around and say gee I'd like to be a perfected Christian and just sit there waiting for grace to strike--no. Wesley's notion is that you actively put yourself in the midst of those situations where grace is likely to strike, but that does not guarantee it. Grace-is- for him is every gift a gift, much as for anyone else in the Reformation, it comes as a free gift, no pride. It either happens or it doesn't happen, and when it happens is no grounds for pride. OK, a word about his critics--just very quickly, two classes of critics, one his opponents, and the other his friends. His opponents hit him on the side of being legalistic, you know he was very particular in his rules of the society, he says that not every Christian has to obey these rules, just those who decide to be in these societies have to obey these rules and then he gave the rationale for that as evidence of desiring grace. Today the way that criticism comes out is that people say he doesn't take sin radically enough as the total estrangement. I suggest that he takes sins ~~radial~~ radically enough but he uses another name for that sort of thing, he calls it error, or infirmity or some of these other things and reserves the name sin for those conscious decisional acts of rejection of the way life is. That is a point of some contention particularly with him and the Lutherans and Calvinists. The other side of that from his enemies are -- with the criticism of self-righteousness or enthusiasm are putting experience over above discipline, but you look at his rules for his society, that is not the case, he refused to be divisive within the church, that was never his intention nor I suspect the function of the Methodist movement when it was

a movement in the 18th century. Then the friends I would say that were his enemies were those who were developed out of those who took that notion of perfection and perverted it and all the way to where you and I when we hear the word perfection take it to mean. It might be those who are professed to have received perfection and thereby first class citizen whereas everybody else is a second class citizen, and somehow inferior and unable to receive grace save --- you know the perversions, it is the kind of things that have resulted in split off sects from the Wesleyan movement and this country, emphasis on second blessing or particular complete holiness that once received is always yours to contain. the friends were his enemies in that phase of taking the position and pushing it way out beyond the limits of reason.

A word about what might be some of his possible implications for us. One would be I think his notion of perfection as achievable in this life, is a great protection against spirit laziness. You know, once you and I get it said to ourselves that the word comes in the midst of brokenness, then it sure is tempting to sit back and be broken
 tape over

particular decision that we make. SEcond, thing would be that he shows us what is like to hold up a concrete possibility of fulfillment now. I don't know if that speaks to you but we have been noticing in the writing post lately about the way the seminaries are going in this country, and the ones that were once bastions of the theological renewal movement are now every one in trouble, and the ones you have got on the rise that are speaking to people now are the more fundamentalistic things that dare to hold up a vision of what is possible for man. And dare to proclaim that that is achievable. I would suggest that Wesley gives us a clue that the kind of ideal that we need to be holding up is that which is possible. The third thing is that he pulls --he shows us something about the dynamics of resurgence. You know, the way this kind of movement operated is just about incredible. The dynamics of it--what happens is you hold up an ideal that is possible., Now that way that gets the man in the pew is he says my lord, I'm not there, it convicts you, so to speak, which drives you to justification and-- which moves you into sanctification. In other words, it is holding up the

we talked about those who are asleep--what wakens those who are asleep is this picture of the ideal. It is possible, and they know it is possible, but when you see that you are here and you-know- not where you can be you are ~~fr~~ driven to repentance, which is the first step under the word, declaring you whole in your brokenness which then moves you laong. Now th implicatio~~s~~ of that for LENS are something like phenomenal. That as Joe was spelling ~~it~~ out the other day --the pciture of the resurgent man that we need to hold up is that which is possible, but the way that that attracts people, I don't know if you've experienced it in those lectures, but to realize that thatis possible and to see that I am not there and then be driven again to the Word. Something like that. The other th~~ing~~ I would like to h~~old~~ up as a possible implication for us is something that--~~maybe~~ he helps us to have a clue to talk about what we are doing here. Very de concretely. When we have open house--you know, people from the neighborhood came through the other day and commented on why do you work so hard here. This is the msot highly motivated group I have ever seen. I don't know how that ^{does} oc es to you when somebody says it, but they ask why, how do you account for that and I say Uh, ah it needs to be done, is usually my first response, and if they are persistent, you bee- they come back -- sure, if you are living out of the word, whether you respond to the need or not, you are life is approved, Why bother? And that is/~~whye~~ when I for one begin to flounder. I don't know how you talk about it--it is a reality in our midst that we embody, how do you talk about that? I have been attempted, after stewing with Wesly awhile, to think that an answer of one kind might be something like "I'm going on to peffection." Well, what would be your reflections, Wesley, you comments , insights, where ~~do~~ you think we need to push him around a bit?

___ Did he see a distinction in consciousness in the journey of the struggle with justification and sanctification? out of ---

Ans. Very much, over here, or prior to receiving justification, two categories basically that he uses are those who are asleep --he talks about it as being very contented in the midst of their sin, and those who are under conviction, which means you are aware of

the discrepancy between my-is and theyis and you are working to express your desire to move from there to there, so to speak, but you anc't brigg it offff The Wrod happens, it is a great happening, and when it happens to you, that is no longer the problem. The problem there is just continued growth, or persistence. You always have got that possibility, or trying to avoid sin at every point, but it is no longer the say struggle as "Am I accepted?"

with your sin
---if you say that it is your discontent/before that moves you to justification, what is it that moves you -- did he say, in the area of perfection?

ANSW. Probably, just your increasing consciousness. I don'

knwo that he every dealt with it at much length, but somebody else might want to speak to that. But the way I experienced it is that you have more experience and you know more, or it comes back to you that an action that you thought at the time was great, and then you bounce it off of somebody and you see it --are aware of a whole other dimension.

--= I would like to extend that second point that you made about what it is that being about sin, or being contrary to the way that life is, at this Man of La Manch there,

I wonder what he is getting at there.

ANSW. Welsey's point I think is something like it is possible for life to be as it should be. Your life or my life to be as it should be. Whatever error or ignorance or imfirmy of temptation, --- but this sort of deliberate conscious defiance of the way reality is can be wiped out. It's not I wiped it out either, it's that that is a gift. And he means there both active and internal -- he talks about thoughts and feelings and deeds. can be lived out of the Word.

- - -Doesn't a lot of Wesley's appeal on the question of sancitification have to do with the coalminers and the thing that he was talking about concerning their whole catastrophe to be in control of their situation?

AWNS. You mean in the sense inthat they were politically impotenet at the time, but he had they had had control over thier own morals. Yeah, and one of the things going on in England at the time was the gin crisis. If I understand that, but this