

WESLEYAN HOLINESS STUDY PROJECT

May 10-11, 2004

Kevin Mannoia convened the meeting of the Wesleyan Holiness Study Project (WHSP) shortly after 8 am. After a brief devotion and introductions, Mannoia posed the question that had led to the meeting. How do we teach and pass on the holiness message?

Besides opening remarks the consultation included three substantial papers to help focus reflections. In the first paper, "Toward a Taxonomy of the Wesleyan Holiness Tradition," David Bundy drew of broad international profile of the holiness traditions while identifying several common themes. In effect Bundy observed the key issue is as much who "we" will be as who we have been or who we are.

In afternoon sessions Howard Snyder looked at the interaction between the Wesleyan traditions, in the persons of B. T. and Ellen Stowe Roberts, and Indian convert Pandita Ramabai. In a second paper Tim Erdel explored the case of the Missionary Church, a denomination actively redefining itself in more broadly reformed evangelical categories. Following Erdel's paper Craig Keen remind that for Wesleyans life of the mind cannot be abstracted from the life of the body. It is all about bodies. Others spoke of a historic memory that tied holiness with movements for social justice, such as prohibition and even labor radicalism. Howard Snyder noted that the British social historian Bryan Wilson had noted that religious bodies committed to conversionist models seem to assimilate more rapidly than other groups.

General Monday Discussion

Doug Cullum raised two other questions. What is the distinctive WH contribution to the historic mission of the church? How does the WH tradition represent the Center of historic Christianity?

Other questions included how does the holiness heritage relate to 'generic' evangelicalism and Pentecostalism?

What are obstacles to a compelling WH vision?

Jonathan Raymond asked what are the outcomes in the church and through the church? Are the means and the ends in relationship with each other?

Lynn Thrush suggested that WH message was a response to those who understand salvation narrowly. Salvation affects our behavior in response to the defeatism of much of contemporary evangelicalism.

"Holiness" is not a word of real currency in our culture.

Craig Keen observed that the Radical difference of God should not be ignored. God in Christ is in solidarity with this world and through the movement of the Spirit touches this world.

David Kendall challenged the church to be about the person and work of Jesus. He asked what kind of an ecclesiological culture welcomes and reproduces a holy people?

Howard Snyder indicated that we need heroes who reintroduce Christ and embody Christ.

Heather Ackley suggested that our group did not represent the real diversity of the holiness tradition.

Diane Leclerc wanted greater pluralism represented in the discussion and an acknowledgement of the sexism implicit in much traditional theological vocabulary.

Concern was expressed about the limits of traditional continental Reformation formulation of Christian concepts, such as the tendency to place Paul above Jesus. To what extent is the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition a corrective to excesses of the Reformation?

Participants were urged to discover new metaphors that more adequately express holiness experience in contemporary culture including the vocabulary of journey and encounter.

Tim Erdel encouraged participants to engage “seeker” churches without alienating traditional churches.

It was agreed that authentic ‘holiness’ expressions of Christianity would impress “evangelical” concerns with justification with “catholic” concerns of Wesley.

We came back to reaffirming need to articulate Wesleyan message with a new vocabulary.

It was agreed that the projected needed to meet needs of both pastors and scholars.

Kevin Mannoia—in the tradition of E. Stanley Jones, reminded those present of the Holiness tradition’s emphasis on looking for “truth in a person.”

On Tuesday May 11, general discussion continued. In the discussion several key theological themes were identified. Holiness as healing and salvation as restoration were identified as parts of a core message. Other themes included holiness as love, sin as distorted love (Augustine), the cross, atonement, justification and Jesus as the center of a Trinitarian faith.

The question was raised about the purpose of the gathering. We returned to core themes of renewed Wesleyanism—holiness as healing, doing as opposed to being, a

strong doctrine of creation, original sin, centrality of Jesus, Trinity and separation. It was suggested that a public proclamation might emerge from the conference

In discussing general structure of the project, it was proposed by Kevin Mannoia that a three-year cycle be established. Year one would see the establishment of a network of pastors. Year two would result in work on scholarly resources and publications. Year three would produce both scholarly and popular books. A website would be established and efforts to work with evangelicals and charismatically inclined Christians would be encouraged.

Jonathan Raymond pointed to the value of documents that help movements focus on a common goal. As he noted a call to Kingdom ends that points to identity, mission and purpose. As he noted the Salvation Army has issued two such centering documents; "Word Made Flesh" and "Move Forward in Freedom."

Discussion followed on what should come out of the meeting. These include perhaps an affirmation, preliminary reader, website and preliminary work on themes. A discussion followed concerning the missing voices from the discussion. Among the missing voices were Korean holiness groups, African, Caribbean, Hispanic and holiness pentecostals.

We returned to a discussion of what are the big issues that would be explored in a text. J. Raymond proposed that Biblical, Theological, personal and social holiness, missions and evangelism would be central concerns. Craig Keen suggested that we focus on issues raised in Wesley's sermon "On Zeal." As recalled by Craig these included the work of the church, works of piety, mercy, character (virtue) and zeal for what is good. Based on these others suggested that publications explore the following themes: mission, personal holiness, social holiness, political holiness and ecological holiness. A circle was drawn with personal at the center, the church, society, and creation surrounding it.

We were reminded of Ray Dunning's image of God as relational. Dunning moves from God to self, to others and to the world. How is each area related to the holy life.

We concluded with each person indicating special interests.

Don Thorsen—Holiness and Spirituality

Barry Callen--Holiness as Spirituality.

Heather Ackley—Holiness as Healing, new Vocabulary

Donald Dayton--Jesus over Paul.

Craig Keen--Trinity, Cross, Justice

Tim Erdel—Jesus, Sermon on the Mount

Diane Leclerc—W/H understanding of Sin and healing

Jesse Middendorf—Nature of the Church

David Bundy—Holiness crossing frontiers—boundaries

Douglas Cullum--Catholicity of Holiness Movement

Lynn Thrush--Making a holy people

David Kendall--The Gospel and Holiness

Jonathan Raymond—Social Holiness, New Holiness Metaphors

Roger Green—Social Holiness

Lyell Rader—Testimony

William Kostlevy—Sectarian impulse in spiritual renewal

Kevin Mannoia – Holy Character, Nature of the Church