

JESUS, THE INCARNATION AND HOLY LIVING

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The holiness of God is revealed fully in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. This has significant implications for the sanctification of believers as it tells us that God has affirmed a positive attitude toward the material creation. Christ is "God with us" opening up the possibility of human holiness through contact with God's own holiness by the Spirit. Christ's sanctifying work is known by his immediate presence in the believer's life and the believer's participation in Christ's life. Jesus assumed human nature in order to heal it through this union with God, an idea that is found in Early Church writers as well as in Wesleyan theology. Entire sanctification is the application of Christ's healing presence and power to every part of the personality. It is the reverse of total depravity. To be "entirely sanctified" does not mean that a Christian is as holy as it is possible to be, but that the Holy Spirit is at work in every part of the personality, making that one increasingly like Christ. Without glossing over significant differences on this point, Christians of every tradition support the position that the sanctified life is essentially a life in vital union with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Incarnation shows that holiness belongs not to some other plane of existence, but within daily life in a real world. Wesleyans have exhibited a commitment to incarnational ministry and service which seeks to make Christ known through word and deed, such service being seen as the sacramental expression of God's holiness at work in the lives of believers.

A.M. Alchin writes,

Holiness is about a festival of joy, a dinner party to which all the most unlikely people are invited. For holiness is about God giving his life and love to men, and men giving their life and love to one another in a movement of joy which overflows in thankfulness to God the giver. The Gospels are full of stories about meals taken together, about great ceremonial feasts, about family celebrations with music and dancing, when someone who has been missing turns up, about breakfast by the lakeside in the summer dawn, with fish and bread cooking on the stones.

The holiness of God is always what we least expected. It works itself out in flesh and blood.¹

This “outworking in flesh and blood” applied to Jesus Christ during his earthly life and continues so to do as by his Spirit he seeks to express his holiness in our lives. Christianity is founded on Jesus Christ, described by John in the prologue to his Gospel as “the Word who *was* God and who *was* made flesh and dwelt among us.” This remarkable statement affirms at one and the same time: “Jesus Christ is God; God was made flesh.” Since Bible times, “God” and “flesh” have by many devout souls been seen as mutually exclusive terms. God is holy. Flesh is sinful. Holiness and “the flesh” have nothing in common and indeed can never have any point of contact. But the New Testament writers persisted with this revolutionary (and for many, blasphemous) idea. Faced with the paradox of the Incarnation the author of the Pastoral Epistles exclaimed, “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). Paul says that God sent “his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom.8:3). The writer to the Hebrews says that Christ “partook of the same nature” as those whom he came to save (Heb. 2:14). And prior to his birth it was said to Mary, “the child to be born will be called holy, and the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). He would “be born,” i.e. he would be truly human, and he would be truly “holy.”

Since Post-Apostolic times Christians have debated the question, “Why did Christ become incarnate?” The Eastern Church tended to hold that Christ would have become incarnate even had there been no need for redemption, because in the Incarnation God accomplished certain things that were needed even had there been no sin for which to atone. By and large the Western Church (both Catholic and Protestant) has argued that Christ entered the stream of human history to accomplish redemption, with the focus being on the Cross.² I suggest that both positions are correct, but not in isolation. In addition to providing the means for our redemption on Calvary, the Incarnation has several other important purposes, all of which have a bearing upon our understanding of the sanctification of the believer.

¹ A.M. Allchin, quoted by Marina Chavchavadze, ed. *Man's Concern with Holiness* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), 37.

² In recent times scholars such as T. F. Torrance and J. McLeod Campbell have seen the whole of Christ's earthly ministry – life, death, resurrection – as being part of God's saving purpose, with the latter even coining the term “vicarious repentance” to describe Christ's work on earth on our behalf.

The Incarnation Reveals God's Holiness.

Holiness *is* the very character of God. In Old Testament times God employed various means to display his holiness, but “in these last days has spoken in a son” (Heb.1:1). In other words, the clearest depiction of divine holiness is that seen in an earthly life. It was seen not only on the Mount of Transfiguration but at dinner parties, weddings, fishing trips and within the context of friends enjoying each others’ company. All these things Jesus did without in any sense ceasing to reveal God’s holiness. The Docetist notions of later years which sought to rob Jesus of his authentic humanity opened the door to rejection of holiness (antinomianism) on the one hand and legalistic “holiness” (asceticism) on the other.³ These notions are still with us and must be seen as quite unbiblical and dishonouring to Christ, the one who is “truly and properly God and truly and properly man.” As T. F. Torrance observes,

It is only by keeping close to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Offspring of the Father’s Nature, that we may in some measure know and speak of God in accordance with what he is in his Nature in a way that is both godly and accurate.⁴

In Jesus we encounter God. Jesus is the final Revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-2). Thus we are in error if we seek that revelation outside of Christ. Even God’s handiwork in creation cannot provide it to us. Thus we must not look outside of Christ to understand the holiness of God. At times that holiness, as revealed in Jesus, elicited much the same response as when it was encountered in Old Testament times.⁵ But as we see from the story of Isaiah’s encounter with God and his holiness (Is. 6), the experience was in itself transformative. Holiness is the property of God himself, and truly to encounter him is to be transformed by his holy presence (2 Cor. 3:18). Orthodox scholar Michael Pomazansky says,

Holiness consists not only in the absence of evil or sin; holiness is the presence of higher spiritual values, joined to purity from sin. Holiness is like the light, and the holiness of God is the purest light. God is the

³ Docetism is a heresy tracing to early Christianity which taught that the body of Christ was not real but only seemed to be (Greek, *dokein*, ‘to seem’).

⁴ T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 134.

⁵ Compare Isaiah 6:6 with Luke 5:5

“one alone holy” by nature. He is the Source of holiness for angels and men. Men can attain to holiness only in God, “not by nature but by participation, by struggle and prayer” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem).⁶

The Incarnation affirms God’s positive attitude toward his creation

By entering the course of human history in human form, God gave clear indication that he had not written off his creation. Nor had he rejected those made in his image. In Christ God became a part of that which he had made, and a member of a race which had rebelled against him. By this means he was making it clear that creation in general, and humankind in particular, is capable of redemption and restoration to its former glory.

The salvation which God made possible by entering the human race was to be a full salvation in the sense that it would affect the entirety of the human personality. In particular the Incarnation makes the point that God is concerned not just with “spiritual things”; he seeks to redeem and transform our bodies as well as our spirits. In this regard it is instructive to note that in key verses in which Paul is speaking of the believer’s dedication and sanctification he specifically mentions the body (e.g. Rom.12:1; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 5:23). He speaks of Christ being “revealed in our mortal bodies” (2 Cor. 4:10, 11) and of the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.6:19). And it is noteworthy that each of these verses comes from letters addresses to churches surrounded by the grossest forms of sexual misconduct. Later generations would produce well-intentioned people who saw a morally bankrupt society as the reason for downplaying the significance of the human body or by punishing and abusing it with the view to keeping it under check. These saw God as concerned only with our spiritual nature and either indifferent or hostile to our bodies. Not only medieval monks but many evangelical Christians have held such views. Biblical Christianity stands with the Apostles both in marvelling that “the Word was made flesh” and that it was God’s purpose to manifest his holiness in the bodies and souls of frail human beings. The Incarnation says, in effect, God not only calls his people to have clean hearts; he also calls them to have clean bodies (Heb. 10:22).

⁶ Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Platina, CA: St Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1994), 66f.

The Incarnation builds a bridge between God and humankind

Karl Barth says,

Certainly in *Jesus Christ*, as He is attested in Holy Scripture, we are not dealing with man in the abstract: not with the man who is able with his modicum of religion and religious morality to be sufficient unto himself without God and thus himself to be God. But neither are we dealing with God in the abstract: not with one who in His deity exists only separated from man, distant and strange and thus a non-human if not indeed an inhuman God. In Jesus Christ there is no isolation of man from God or of God from man. Rather, in Him we encounter the history, the dialogue, in which God and man meet together and are together, the reality of the covenant *mutually* contracted, preserved, and fulfilled by them. Jesus Christ is in His one Person, as true *God*, *man's* loyal partner, and as true *man*, *God's*. He is the Lord humbled for communion with man and likewise the Servant exalted to communion with God. He is the Word spoken from the loftiest, most luminous transcendence and likewise the Word heard in the deepest, darkest immanence. He is both, without their being confused but also without their being divided; He is wholly the one and wholly the other. Thus in this oneness Jesus Christ is the Mediator, the Reconciler, between God and man. Thus He comes forward to *man* on behalf of *God* calling and awakening faith, love, and hope, and to *God* on behalf of *man*, representing *man*, making satisfaction and interceding. Thus He attests and guarantees to man God's free *grace* and at the same time attests and guarantees to God man's free *gratitude*.⁷

Christ, as “truly and properly God,” comes to us as God to reveal God's holiness to us. And he comes to the Father, as our representative, “truly and properly man,” to open up the way for us to enter into the holy place, and to encounter, experience and reflect God's holiness. The Incarnation is the manifestation of “Emmanuel, God with us” (Matt.1:23). What was true during Christ's earthly life is still true. God, in Christ, by his Spirit, is still “with us.” And this is the key to living a life in which God's holiness is implanted. It is because God is “with us” that we can experience anything of him and his salvation. It is because of his presence by his Spirit that we experience that which we term “holiness.” Wesley, who exclaimed toward the close of his life, “the best of all is - God is with us”, shared with his brother Charles the conviction that Christ's sanctifying work

⁷ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1960), 46-47.

was known by his immediate presence in our lives and our participating in his. Charles Wesley wrote:

Come Holy Ghost, all quick'ning fire,
Come, and in me delight to rest;
Drawn by the lure of strong desire,
O come and consecrate my breast;
The temple of my soul prepare,
and *fix they sacred presence there.*

If now thine influence I feel,
If *now in thee begin to live,*
Still to my heart thyself reveal;
Give me thyself, forever give;
A point my good, a drop my store,
Eager I ask, I pant for more.

Eager for thee I ask and pant,
So strong the principle divine
Carries me out with sweet constraint,
Till all my hallow'd soul is thine;
Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
*And lost in thy infinity.*⁸

Here Charles Wesley is at one with the Christian mystics and the saints of the Eastern Church. To experience God's holiness is to be "plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea and lost in his infinity." Such sentiments take us far beyond the shallow interpretations often placed upon "deeper life" teaching to a profound vision of a human being sharing in the very life and character of God. Wesley the poet speaks of being "plunged" into God. This is baptismal language – the language so often employed by those who have had a deep, sanctifying experience of God's Spirit. Metaphor it may be, but it aptly describes an experience which is "too deep for words."

The Incarnation makes possible a *full* salvation

God, in Christ, was "made flesh" in order to accomplish his redemptive purposes. The early church Fathers understood this when they affirmed "that which is unassumed is unhealed." This position is reflected in later Wesleyan thought, which saw Christ's saving work as therapeutic. This is noted by Randy Maddox: "Wesley

⁸ *Methodist Hymn Book* (New York, 1860), 330, italics added

characterized the very essence of religion as *therapeia psukas* – a therapy by which the Great Physician heals our sin-diseased souls, restoring the vitality of life that God intended for us.”⁹ Torrance writes

...God has joined himself to us in our estranged human life in order to sanctify it, to gather it into union with his own holy life and so lift it up above and beyond the downward drag of sin and decay, and that he allows simply by being one with man in all things. Thus the act of becoming incarnate is itself the *sanctification* of our human life in Jesus Christ, an elevating and fulfilling of it that far surpasses creation; it is a raising up of men and women to stand and have their being in the very life of God...¹⁰

Jesus assumed our nature in order to heal it. The sanctifying work which today becomes a reality in the life of a committed believer was initiated by the Incarnation. Salvation addresses “the infection” of sin of which the Anglican *Thirty Nine Articles* speak and provides the remedy for this disease. Wesley’s belief that God can do more with our sins than simply forgive them applies here. The healing work of salvation in its initial stage is known in justification which deals with our past sins in terms of pardon and forgiveness. But it immediately begins the work of sanctification, which deals with the infection of sin that remains in the life of the believer.¹¹ What Wesleyans call “entire sanctification” is the application of Christ’s healing presence and power to every part of the personality.¹²

The therapeutic understanding of Christ’s saving work, which makes possible a “full salvation,” was emphasised by the Eastern Church Fathers and within the Wesleyan/Salvationist tradition. This emphasis is seen in the hymnody of that tradition in words such as these:

Lord, here today my great need I am feeling,
Wilt thou not visit my soul once again?
I long to feel thy sweet touch and its healing;
Wonderful Healer, touch me again.

⁹ Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 145.

¹⁰ Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 66.

¹¹ *Articles of Religion* (Anglican), IX.

¹² This is suggested in 1 Thess. 5:23 by the use of *holokleros*

Often I've pressed through the throng for the blessing
Which, through my doubting, I've failed to obtain;
Here once again to thy feet I am pressing;
Wonderful Healer, touch me again.

Only in thee can I find liberation,
Cleansing and freedom from sin's hidden stain;
Only in thee can I find full salvation,
Wonderful Healer, touch me again.¹³

In similar vein, words by Charles Wesley link the ideas of healing, incarnation and atonement to holiness of life:

Saviour from sin, I wait to prove
That Jesus is thy healing name;
To lose, when perfected in love,
Whate'er I have, or can, or am:
I stay me on thy faithful word, -
The servant shall be as his Lord.

Didst thou not in the flesh appear,
sin to condemn, and man to save?
That perfect love might cast out fear?
That I thy mind in me might have?
In holiness show forth thy praise,
And serve thee all my happy days?

Didst thou not die that I might live
No longer to myself but thee?
Might body, soul and spirit give
To Him who gave himself for me?
Come then, my Master and my God,
Now take the purchase of thy blood.¹⁴

At this juncture we need to say a word regarding the concept of "Full Salvation." This is another designation for "entire sanctification." The use of the terms "salvation" and "sanctification" in these designations to refer to the same experience reflects the fact that sanctification is not to be divorced from salvation. The other place in which this sort of language is employed in Christian belief is

¹³ William Woulds, *The Song Book of The Salvation Army* (London, 1986), no. 610.

¹⁴ Charles Wesley, *Methodist Hymn Book* (New York, 1849), no. 488.

in the doctrine of total depravity.¹⁵ Some interpret this concept intensively, seeing human beings as corrupted in an absolute sense. This does not, however, seem to square with the facts. All people continue to bear the image of God, even though that image is defaced. God's common grace¹⁶ is at work in all the world, restraining evil and making possible all those qualities which make for a just society. Thus many of us would understand total depravity to be extensive, rather than intensive in human lives. That is, although a person is not as evil as it is possible to be, sin infects every part of the personality. This means that a person may be a reasonable, kind and honest person but if left unchecked by God's grace has the proclivity to become increasingly sinful. Thus we could say that a person outside of Christ is infected by sin in every part of the personality, and has the capacity to move toward the point where they could be described as intensively depraved. Entire sanctification, or full salvation, is the reverse of total depravity. To be "entirely sanctified" does not mean that a Christian is intensively holy, i.e. as holy as it is possible to be, but that the Holy Spirit is at work in every part of the personality, making that one increasingly like Christ.

The Incarnation demonstrates that holiness continues to be expressed in the context of humanness

"God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim.3:16). It was *God himself* who appeared "in the flesh." This is the God of absolute holiness (Is. 6). Jesus Christ did not just display God's holiness. God himself "was in Christ" revealing his holiness in and through the humanity of Christ.

Such holiness is not merely an attribute of God; God's very nature is holiness. God does not just "possess" holiness; He *is* holy - without qualification. Thus there was a time when true, perfect, ultimate holiness, was seen here on earth. And it was not seen by the repudiation of the "flesh" but in and through human flesh. This is the starting point for our understanding of the life of holiness. In

¹⁵ See The Doctrines of The Salvation Army, no. 5; the Articles of Religion of the United Methodist Church (USA), VII; the Articles of Faith of the Church of the Nazarene, V.

¹⁶ This term, which comes from Reformed theology, speaks of the grace of God at work in all of God's creation, and in particular in the lives of people. It is not saving grace, but it is nevertheless God's way of accomplishing his purposes on earth. The concept of common grace bears similarities to Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace.

the context of an authentic human life, one which was “at all points tempted as we are” (Heb. 4:15), perfect holiness was “fleshed out.” The great paradox of the Incarnation is that Jesus Christ was and is truly God and truly man.

As a man he experienced suffering, sorrow, joy, disappointment, temptations, peace, anger, joy, loneliness pain, and all the other emotions that are known to us. At the same time he lived a consistently holy life so that those who looked at the one who was “made flesh” and who “dwelt among” them could say that as they observed his life they “beheld his glory, the glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-14).

The event of the Incarnation says that holiness and “the flesh” are compatible. It says that a human being can be holy. It says that holy living is for this life as well as the next. As the fifth-century monk, Hesychios of Jerusalem, once said, “Through his incarnation God gave us the model for a holy life.”¹⁷ Thus Jesus is seen as our example for living rightly (John 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:21; 1 John 2:6). But the holiness set forth in scripture is more than the following of an example. The seventeenth-century Puritan and Calvinist Henry Scougal called it “the life of God in the soul of man,” and the twentieth-century “high” Anglican A. M. Allchin says “Man was made by God to find this unbelievable fulfilment in union with him. He was made in God’s image and likeness, in order that he might share in the divine nature and be partaker of God’s holiness.”¹⁸ These quotations serve to remind us that the teaching of holy living is not the private domain of any one Christian tradition. It certainly occupies a place of significance within Wesleyan thought, but others not within the Wesleyan community have had much to say on the subject, including, for example, John Calvin:

Holiness is not a merit by which we can attain communion with God, but a gift of Christ, which enables us to cling to him, and follow him.

Scripture not only shows the principle of holiness, but also that Christ is the way to it.

The Lord has adopted us to be his children, on the condition that we reveal an imitation of Christ who is the mediator of our adoption.

¹⁷ *The Philokalia*, Vol. 1. (London: Fisher and Faber, 1979), 164.

¹⁸ *Philokalia*, 41.

Since the Holy Spirit has dedicated us as temples of God, we should exert ourselves not to profane his sanctuary but to display his glory.

Perfection must be the final mark at which we aim, and the goal for which we strive.

Let us steadily exert ourselves to reach a higher degree of holiness till we finally arrive at a perfection of holiness which we seek and pursue as long as we live, but which we shall attain then only, when, freed from all earthly infirmity, we shall be admitted into his full communion.¹⁹

Where zeal for integrity and holiness is not in force, there neither the Spirit of Christ nor Christ himself are present.²⁰

Calvin's theology is solidly Christocentric. He and his sixteenth-century co-workers saw all of Christian life and experience – including election – as being “in Christ”. He told his followers: “there is no sanctification apart from communion with Christ.”²¹ At this point those in the Wesleyan/Salvationist tradition are in accord with Calvin when they affirm:

Holiness in men is possible only when Jesus, who once lived among men, lives in them in the transforming power of His Spirit.

This transformation is concerned with the sanctifying work God does *in* and *through* men by:

- (i) *delivering* from self and sin;
- (ii) *purifying* from defilement
- (iii) *transforming* their lives in holy love so that devotion to God takes the place of devotion to self, and wrongdoing is replaced by holy conduct.

¹⁹ John Calvin, *Golden Book of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952), 11 – 19. These fine words do not suggest that there is no difference between Wesleyans and the Calvinists regarding holiness of life. But they do indicate that the two theologies converge at a number of points (even Wesley affirmed that he was but “a hair’s breadth removed from Calvinism”!). They also remind each of the communities represented by these theological traditions that it is quite wrong to create a man of straw in order to denigrate the other’s position. To do so in the name of holiness is to deny the very holiness we seek to uphold.

²⁰ Quoted by Donald Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit, Works and Gifts* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 318.

²¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeil (Louisville: Westminster, 1960), Bk. III:14:3.

...holiness in man is the moral quality of character and conduct shown by those who, through the indwelling Spirit, share Christ's conduct and consent to be ruled by Him.²²

It would be possible to provide quotations from Christians of every tradition to support the position that the sanctified life is essentially a life in vital union with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification, seen as "a work of grace," is thus the expression and outworking of a relationship with Christ made possible by the presence of his Spirit. Nothing in the Christian life is somehow "external" to Christ. All of Christian life and experience is "in his Son" (1 John 5:10). Even grace itself is not to be seen as a sort of fluid or essence, as is sometimes the case when some traditions speak of ordination and sacraments.²³

Wesley understood this. For him grace was not an essence external to Christ. Rather, grace was none other than the presence of The Holy Spirit. For him grace was "the power of his Holy Spirit, which alone worketh in us all that is acceptable in his sight."²⁴ In passing it is worth noting that Karl Barth, who asserted that Christ is the one true sacrament, developed what has been described (particularly by Roman Catholic scholars) as a non-sacramental theology in which he denied that baptism was capable of conveying grace. Barth says that the humanity of Jesus Christ "is the one true *mysterium*, the one sacrament, and the one existential fact before and beside and after which there is no room for any other of the same rank."²⁵

Commenting on Barth's sacramental position, William Stacy Johnson says that Barth holds "that there is only one true sacrament, Jesus Christ, and one true sacramental sign, the baptism in the Holy Spirit." This, of course, echoes Salvationist theology, which avers that Christ does not require sacramental "means of grace" to work in our lives; he works directly, in grace, through his Spirit.²⁶

²² *Handbook of Doctrine* (London: The Salvation Army, 1969), 151.

²³ William Stacy Johnson, *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1977), 167.

²⁴ Quoted by Maddox, 120.

²⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 286.

²⁶ There are those who argue that Salvationism is incompatible with Wesleyanism because of Wesley's sacramental views. However Wesley's view of the immediacy of grace lends support to the former's position which sees baptism and communion not as rites but as experiences of God the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4 – *humeis de*

God's holiness was demonstrated for all to see in the person of Jesus Christ. The Incarnation shows that holiness belongs not to some other plane of existence, but within daily life in a real world. Donald G. Bloesch says,

Biblical faith upholds a this-worldly holiness that is lived out in the midst of the pain and conflict of the world. Among mystics the aim is frequently to rise above the afflictions of life into an eternal repose that makes life bearable...We do not simply endure but we overcome through the anointing and empowering of the Holy Spirit. Oppression, pain, sickness and destitution are not to be sublimely accepted in the hope that they will be made to serve vicarious redemption. Instead they belong inescapably to the old order of existence that serves sin and death. The forces that maim and enslave are to be counteracted and dispelled through the redeeming power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ manifested in his cross and resurrection and poured out on his followers at Pentecost.²⁷

This article began with a quotation by Anglican Scholar A. M. Allchin which described holiness as a “festival of joy, a dinner party to which the most unlikely people are invited.” The words just quoted by Reformed scholar Donald Bloesch speak of a “this-worldly holiness that is lived out in the midst of the pain and conflict of the world.” Both are correct. The joy of the Lord is not diminished by the burdens of life. The holiness of Jesus was expressed in his joy and his sorrow. Holy living has to do with the whole of life. It is full salvation both in terms of affecting the whole of our personalities and the whole of our existence. And from that point it reaches out in holy love to the whole of society and this is the reason why some of the keenest advocates of holy living have been the most committed Christian social reformers and why most movements which give a significant place to this doctrine are also at the forefront of social ministries. At the same time these movements have not, in the main, been much concerned with the finer points of eschatology. Whereas some conservative and evangelical groups give a large place to “end times” teaching, Wesleyans have usually been more concerned with the challenge of serving “the present age.” This also means that instead of seeing the present life as a vale of tears which must be endured in preparation for the life to come, they, like

baptistesesthe en Pneumati Hagio; 1 Cor. 12:13 – en eni Pneumati hemeis pantes eis en soma ebaptisthemen; 2 Cor. 13:14 – he koinonia Hagiou Pneumatos), etc.

²⁷Bloesch, 320.

Wesley, have adhered to a form of realised eschatology which is this-world-affirming and which rejoices now in the blessings of heaven, at least as a significant foretaste. This in turn has proven to be effective in giving such Christians a commitment to incarnational ministry and service which seeks to make Christ known through word and deed. And such service is seen as the sacramental expression of God's holiness at work in the lives of believers. Russian Archbishop Anthony says

...just as God became man, just as his holiness was present in the flesh in our midst, living, acting and saving, so now, through the mystery of the Incarnation, the Church participates in the eternity, the holiness of God, and at the same time in the salvation of the world. The holiness of the Church must find its place in the world of crucified love, and in an active and living presence. But essentially, it is the holiness, the presence of God, that we should manifest to the world. This is what we are for.²⁸

The Incarnation was not God in disguise. It *really* was God – in the flesh. Nor is Christian holiness a disguise. It is the outward and visible sign – in human flesh - of an inner, a spiritual, grace which cleanses from sin and imparts God's holy love.

²⁸ Metropolitan Anthony, *God and Man* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), 85f.