

THE MASTER

The life and work of Edward H. Sugden

EDITED BY RENATE HOWE



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 Australia 1892, died 1977. Oil on canvas.
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National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Felton Bequest, 1935

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by Glen O'Brien

Introduction

On Sunday 5 August 1888, the Rev. Edward Sugden, a third-generation Wesleyan minister, climbed into the pulpit at Wesley Church in Lonsdale Street to preach at the inaugural People's Service. Clothed in his academic robes, he told the congregation, 'Why he believed in Jesus Christ'. He was thirty-four years old and spoke from the heart, and 'therefore straight to the hearts' of his hearers. Afterwards the congregation solemnly partook of Holy Communion.¹ It was an Edwardian Methodist service – the delivery of plain truth for plain people, spoken by an educated man whose learning was seen as an asset rather than a liability, only because he spoke with a directness that commended him to the ordinary person. The service was attended by many who lived in the immediate neighbourhood. There was plenty of music and the congregation listened attentively to Mr Sugden's 'happy way of placing truth' before his audience.²

The Edwardian era was a very religious one which, at least for A. N. S. Lane, produced far more interesting religious figures than those of the Victorian age that preceded it.³ It was the age of religious controversialists such as G. K. Chesterton, and of such figures as William James and H. G. Wells who, though not themselves religious, gave Christians much to think about and contributed significantly to public religious discourse. Though the term 'Edwardian' technically refers to the reign of King Edward VII (1901–1910), it is possible to identify a long Edwardian era extending to the end of the Great War.⁴ Sugden came to Queens early in 1888, retired at the end of 1928 and died on 22 July 1935.⁵ Though his life extends well beyond the Edwardian period, Sugden was in many ways an Edwardian figure and the designation 'Edwardian' is a legitimate description of his social, cultural, ecclesiastical and theological milieu, and more than simply a play on words.

Late-Victorians and Edwardians were a people who loved preaching, at least those who made up the constituencies of the free churches. In 1891, a correspondent to the *Methodist Times* was positively enthusiastic about the revolution that had come to the Methodist pulpit.

Elaborate rhetoric has been succeeded by a simple, direct and expository style, and the old spiritual ideas of Methodism are once more in the ascendant... There was a revival of expository preaching because the people thirsted to know what the Word of God really said and meant. No doubt those in charge of our ministry will note these signs of our times. It is to be regretted that our Theological Tutor is not oftener heard in the pulpit ...⁶

This sounds like an honest attempt to preserve doctrinal integrity, yet the church had no legal procedure in place to deal with a situation in which any of these questions might be answered in the negative. Just how much of a paper tiger this rule may have become in Methodism is indicated by the following comment from Sugden.

No question is raised as to [a minister's] personal belief ... he may believe what he likes, provided he does not preach anything contrary to the Standards, and he is at perfect liberty to preach new doctrines, provided they are not contrary to the Standards ... [T]he trustees of the churches ... cannot exclude any one from the pulpit on suspicion or even a certainty that he is not orthodox in his *belief*. They can only judge by what he says in the pulpit, and if that is not contrary to the Standards, they cannot take any action.¹⁴

Clearly Sugden would not be likely to engage in any heresy trials. His Methodism is a broad church. In the generation previous to Sugden, the Conference of 1814 did add more specific doctrinal tests to which 'unequivocal assent' should be given and then, in 1827, as a result of Adam Clarke's (c. 1760–1832) controversial teaching on the Eternal Sonship of Christ, a question specifically on this point was added. Dr Clarke protested this strongly.

Such tests of church fellowship and ministerial communion never disgraced Methodism until now. Mr. Wesley would have abhorred such as he would have abhorred the devil, whatever attachment he might have had to the general sense of the doctrine.¹⁵

As for Sugden's own view of such a step - 'It was an unfortunate step, taken in a moment of panic, which happily has had no successors, and, I trust, never will'.¹⁶ Now, to Sugden's own edition of Wesley's Sermons.

Sugden's Critical Edition of the Sermons

The fact that Sugden's work is still in print is perhaps a testament to an ongoing interest in Wesley's *Sermons* rather than to Sugden himself. The description in the Preface to the American edition of 1986, published by Zondervan, describing Sugden's work as 'the best existing edition of Wesley's standard sermons' cannot be taken seriously and is certainly not the case. It had already then been replaced by the superior critical edition of Albert C. Outler published in 1984.¹⁷ Outler saw Sugden's edition of the Sermons as 'focused on the legal status of the "mature Wesley's" sermons (the others are quietly ignored)' and his annotations as 'largely for Methodist eyes only'.¹⁸ While somewhat helpful in placing each sermon in its context in Wesley's life and ministry and the eighteenth century world in general, they add nothing to the more far-reaching critical work done on the *Sermons* since Sugden's time. Here and there, the work is marred by needless repetition of anecdotes and ideas.¹⁹ The Master would perhaps have benefited from a careful editor. Sugden's annotations are perhaps most valuable

When Sugden misplaced his diary of preaching engagements in June of 1892, those who had invited him were urged to 'send him a swift reminder ... lest someone else lay hold upon him.'⁷ Given his passion for preaching it seems natural that Sugden would develop a keen interest in John Wesley's *Standard Sermons*. Thirty-two years after his first People's Service at Lonsdale Street, Sugden having become a well-known, much loved, and sometimes controversial church leader, a note appeared in the *Spectator* announcing that the Master of Queen's College was preparing for the press an annotated edition of John Wesley's sermons, an event said to be 'awaited with interest by Methodists generally'.⁸

The Place of Wesley's Sermons in Nineteenth-Century Methodism

John Wesley's *Standard Sermons*, along with his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* and, in American Methodism, the *Twenty-five Articles of Religion* have historically been considered the doctrinal standards for Methodist preaching.⁹ The placing of sermons among theological standards is not unique to Methodism but has strong precedent in the Anglican tradition, in which Cranmer's *Homilies* were understood to be a model for Anglican preaching. According to Richard Heitzenrater, 'Wesley no doubt had the function of the Book of Homilies in mind as he designed these volumes - homiletical material that provided a solid doctrinal basis and boundary for ... proclamation by uneducated preachers'.¹⁰

The Canadian Methodist, Nathaniel Burwash, produced an annotated edition of Wesley's Sermons in 1881.¹¹ It followed a very similar plan to Sugden's but predated it by forty years. To what extent Sugden may have relied on this earlier work is uncertain. I have not yet uncovered a reference to it in any of Sugden's writings, though it is hard to imagine that he was unfamiliar with this earlier work. Burwash is glowing in his praise of the *Sermons* and of their status as Methodist doctrinal standards.

The Sermons set before us that great, distinctive type and standard of gospel preaching, by which Methodism is what she is as a great living Church. When she ceases to preach according to this type and standard she will no longer be Wesleyan Methodism ...¹²

As we will see, Sugden's praise for the doctrines contained in Wesley's Sermons is decidedly less enthusiastic. Methodist preachers were obliged to read the *Standard Sermons* and to preach nothing contrary to the doctrines contained in them. In Edwardian Methodism, every ministerial candidate was required to state before the Superintendent that he (for then it was always 'he') had read and approved the sermons. He was required to pass an oral exam on Wesley's works, including the *Sermons* and the *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*. He was asked to promise that if his views became contrary to this he would 'quietly retire from the ministry'. At ordination, he would be asked again whether he had read the *Notes*, and whether he believed 'that the system of doctrine therein contained is in accordance with the Holy Scriptures'. He was required to revisit this commitment annually when the District Synod asked, 'Does he believe and preach our doctrines?'¹³

in providing insights into the practices of the Methodist Church of Sugden's day and there are many interesting sidelights for the reader.

Sugden lists his own methodology, stating that he purposes to give:

- 1) Some account of the occasion of the first preaching of each sermon, as far as that could be ascertained from the Journal and other sources;
- 2) An attempt to show the relation of Wesley's teaching to more modern developments in theology;
- 3) Corrections of his exegesis, where the progress of biblical study has made them necessary;
- 4) Identification of the many quotations from classical and English literature which occur in the Sermons;
- 5) Occasional interpretations of words and usages which have become more or less obsolete;
- 6) Some indication of the development of Wesley's own views, as shown by differences between the earlier and later sermons.²⁰

My concern in this chapter is primarily with the second point.

Clearly Sugden had a passionate interest in Wesley's *Sermons*. He amassed an impressive collection of first editions that is today housed at Queen's College. His critical edition of the Sermons has been referred to as 'his chief memorial'.²¹ There are passages in the annotations that glow with admiration. Yet it remains true that the overwhelming tone of the work is critical of Wesley, especially of his exegetical method, and of those features of Wesley's teaching that are markedly pre-modern and thus by Sugden's standards to be soundly rejected. One is left wondering whether Sugden's appreciation of the Sermons may have been driven at least as much by his collecting interest as by his passion for Wesley's theology.

Sugden's most trenchant criticisms of Wesley are made in reference to his exegetical method. He notes and approves Wesley's conviction that textual criticism does not threaten scriptural authority (for example Wesley affirms 'the documentary theory' of the books Joshua to Esther).²² Whilst Wesley believed in the full, verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture, he also believed in the use of reason in interpreting it. 'Moreover', says Sugden, 'he is not foolish enough to suppose (as some of his followers have done) that the A.V is infallible'. He noted many invalid emendations to the Greek text in the A.V and corrected them in his own translation from the original, often anticipating the *Revised Version* of 1881.²³

Yet Wesley's interpretive skills are continually called into question. Frequently terms such as the following reoccur:

'The interpretation ... cannot be sustained.'²⁴

'The passage quoted will not bear the weight of this statement.'²⁵

'It is hardly necessary to point out that the text [Acts 26:28] will not bear Wesley's interpretation ... Wesley attempts no exegesis of his text; it is used merely as a motto.'²⁶

'[T]o an impartial reader, it must be clear that this is not what St. Paul meant ...'²⁷

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'It seems a pity that a sermon so clear, convincing and effective should have been based on a misinterpretation of the text but so it is.'²⁸

'Wesley's premisses are all wrong ...'²⁹

Wesley's interpretation is 'not justifiable.'³⁰

'The reading ... is certainly wrong.'³¹

The text is wrenched from its context.'³²

'This interpretation of 2 Cor. iii. 18 can hardly be justified ...'³³

'By divorcing his text from his context, Wesley was led into a fanciful exegesis ...'³⁴

'All that Wesley says is true; but it has little or nothing to do with his text ...'³⁵

'The text [John 3:8] is unfortunately chosen for this sermon. The context is entirely disregarded and the passage taken merely as a motto.'³⁶

Wesley's 'easily besetting error' in exegesis is in 'over emphasizing certain passages ... in separation from their context ...'³⁷

'This paragraph, finely and impressively composed as it is, is a defiance of all sound exegesis ...'³⁸

In summary, 'The outstanding weakness of Wesley as an interpreter of the Scriptures is his disregard of the particular context; he takes just the words of the particular passage he is considering without reference to what precedes or follows; and so often falls into error ...'³⁹ This is, in my view, a valid enough criticism, though to be fair to Wesley, his approach was not atypical among eighteenth century preachers

I want now to give a brief introduction to Sugden's theological world and then attempt to describe what I will call the 'modernist chauvinism' that appears to be Sugden's primary hermeneutic in reading Wesley.

Sugden's Theological World

To some, the term 'liberal-evangelical' may sound like an oxymoron. In the early twenties, however, many Methodists were appropriating the findings of the higher criticism of the Bible, without jettisoning their evangelical convictions. They thought it possible, and indeed necessary, to accept the findings of the most recent biblical criticism whilst preserving a passion for soul winning. Sugden was profoundly influenced by his father's 'glowing evangelical zeal for the salvation of souls', believed it to be the preacher's first business 'to bring men to a definite decision for Christ', and always considered himself to be 'at heart, first and foremost, a Methodist preacher'.⁴⁰ At the same time, he was culturally literate, 'worldly' in the positive sense of that word, an evolutionist, and a man with a keen interest in the findings of the natural sciences.

Sugden's colleague, A.E. Albiston, was appointed principal of the Theological Hall and professor of theology at Queen's in 1920 after having served for twenty-seven years in active circuit ministry and then in 1919, as President of the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference. Owen Parnaby's description of Albiston as 'a liberal Protestant, a humanist, and an evangelical', would be an equally accurate description of Sugden.⁴¹

David Bebbington has identified the 1920s as a time of deep division between liberal and conservative British Evangelicals, writing that

the movement had always been marked by variety in doctrine, attitude and social composition, but in the years after the First World War it became so sharply divided that some members of one party did not recognise the other as Evangelical - or even, sometimes, as Christian.⁴²

Indications are that this played out in the wider British world also. Some Australian Methodists considered the liberal humanism of Queen's College to be a threat to the evangelical vitality of Methodism. Sugden was often attacked for holding to the higher criticism of the Bible, and for his liberal views on such questions as dancing on church property, which Methodist law forbade.⁴³ Certain delegates at the Conference of 1898 launched an attack on what they called Sugden's 'latitudinarianism'. His students quickly rose to his defence, but after the Conference 'a concerned Methodist' from Fitzroy wrote to the President of the Council, William Quick, that 'some of the young men that go in [to Queen's] are full of love and zeal for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom but when they leave they have lost all ardour and become mere talking machines ...'⁴⁴

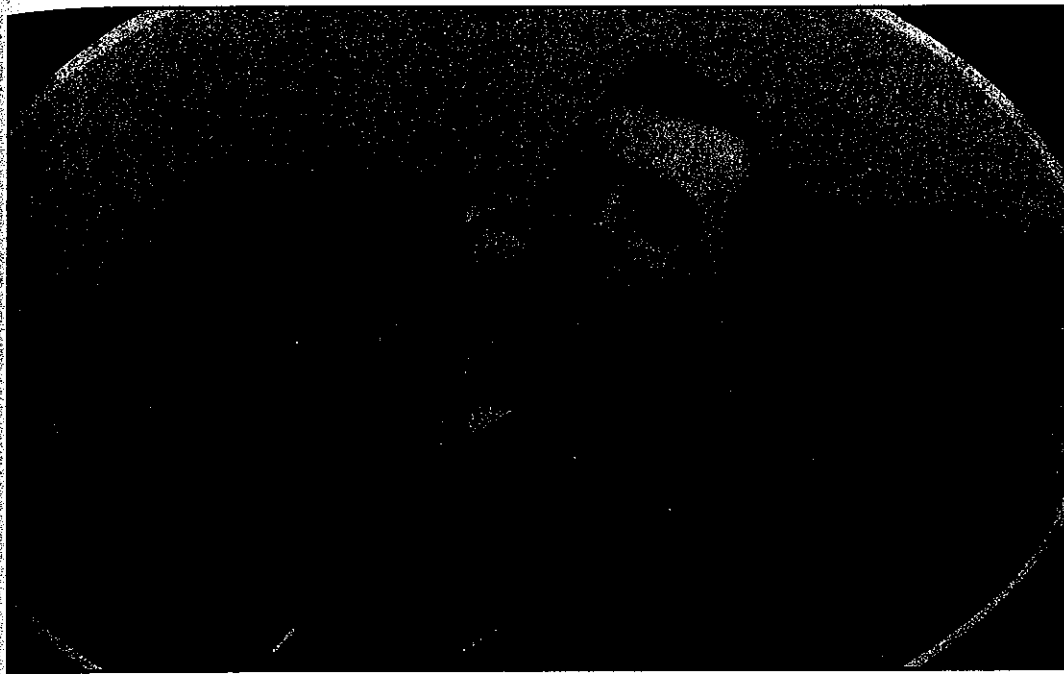
A significant storm of controversy broke out at Queen's over the use of Arthur S. Peake's *Commentary on the Bible*, first published in 1919. Peake was a layman, the doyen of Primitive Methodist theologians in England, and held primary responsibility for that Church's ministerial training. A student of the Oxford Hebrew professor S. R. Driver, he championed the newer critical approach to Scripture and was committed to what he considered to be a more 'scientific' doctrine of inspiration than the Church traditionally held.⁴⁵ The Victorian Conference placed his *Commentary* on the list of books used for the training of probationers, and this was to become the eye of the storm in the controversy between conservatives and liberals. In 1922, W. H. Fitchett (1841-1928), a respected Methodist leader and the founder and principal of Methodist Ladies' College, published at his own expense a booklet entitled *A Tattered Bible and a Mutilated Christ* in which he stated that the introduction of modernism would 'be for the Methodist Church a disaster, deep, far reaching and enduring, which it will scarcely survive.'⁴⁶

Fitchett moved that the Victorian Conference remove Peake's *Commentary* from use but the work was retained by a vote of 82 for and 107 against its removal and Albiston's and Sugden's revisionist liberalism became the dominating influence in the Victorian Conference.⁴⁷

The specific theological influences on Sugden are relatively easy to identify on the basis of the citations he gives in the annotations. When deciding upon matters of critical biblical scholarship, the work of B. F. Westcott and of William Sandlay and Arthur C. Headlam is often referred to.⁴⁸ He cites his 'old school-fellow', W. E. B. Ball's work on *St. Paul and the Roman Law*,⁴⁹ W. T. Davison's Fernley Lecture on *The Christian Conscience*⁵⁰ and John Shaw Banks' *Manual of Christian Doctrine*.⁵¹ When discussing psychology, theological anthropology, and conversion, he frequently cites Edwin Diller Starbuck's *Psychology of*

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Religion (1889) and William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).⁵² Starbuck's work may have seemed especially useful to Sugden because, of the approximately two hundred, mostly Protestant, people from whom the Harvard scholar's research was drawn, 'members of the Methodist community preponderated'.⁵³ A more personal influence is found in the Rev. Benjamin Hellier whom Sugden describes as 'my beloved master' and whose 'Essay on Holiness' he praises.⁵⁴



In expansive mood [Courtesy, Ken Foster]

It appears that Sugden's theological world is primarily a British one. Starbuck and James are American, it is admitted, but are not theologians. There is no reference in the annotations to the major American theologians of this period such as John Miley (1813–1895), Miner Raymond (1811–1897) or Thomas Ralston (1806–1891). Perhaps the two theologians worth mentioning here in more detail are William Burt Pope and John Scott Lidgett whose work may be characterised, respectively, as classical and constructive. In Pope, Sugden found catholic moorings; in John Scott Lidgett, he found exploration toward fresh horizons.

Sugden tells us that William Burt Pope's *Compendium of Christian Theology* was always at his elbow as he prepared his annotations.⁵⁵ Pope (1822–1903) was, according to David J. Carter, 'the outstanding [British] Methodist theologian of the nineteenth century'.⁵⁶ Albert Outler, in noting the absence of really important theologians drawn from the ranks of Methodism, refers to Pope as the 'the only Methodist theologian since [John] Fletcher who might be nominated for inclusion in a *Who's Who* among the outstanding theologians in the past two centuries ...'.⁵⁷ Canadian by birth, but a resident of England from the age of seven, Pope was British Methodism's most catholic theologian of the period.⁵⁸

Pope was a brilliant theologian, committed to affirming classical Christian orthodoxy. He was not, however, a particularly *constructive* theologian, in the

sense of one seeking to make an advance on the tradition. He was by nature conservative, pre-critical in his outlook and did not add anything to the views already articulated in the earlier work of Wesley, Adam Clarke, or Richard Watson.⁵⁹ Thomas Langford summarises Pope's stance well.

[W]ith all his brilliance and disciplined study [Pope] was isolated from the newer currents in British intellectual life ... caused in part by Methodism's place in British society [and] in part because of Pope's own conservative disposition and his tight focus on biblical truth ... [He] was not engaged in the swirl of Victorian struggles with religious doubt, the new dynamic of biblical criticism, the changing philosophical scene with the rise of idealism, or the transforming power of evolutionary ideas. His position was formed prior to the 1860s, the critical period for many of the issues [and] he was not responsive to these new currents.⁶⁰

Pope's work represents a bridge back to an earlier time. That of John Scott Lidgett points forward to future developments in theology. Lidgett was a leading turn-of-the-century British Methodist. A person with a keen social conscience, he established the Bermondsey Settlement for the poor and served as its Superintendent from 1892-1949. He was president of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in 1908 and then the first Conference President after the 1932 Union of Methodists. According to some, 'the greatest Methodist since Wesley,' his remarkable career included serving as leader of the Progressive Party on the London City Council and as Vice-Chancellor of London University. His life was almost equally divided between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries being born in 1854 and dying in 1953.⁶¹ Well acquainted with the currents of German liberal theology, especially the work of Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf von Harnack, he did more than any other British Methodist to set forth Protestant liberalism.⁶²

Rather than stressing God's omnipotence, Lidgett's work made much of the fatherhood of God. Sugden's familiarity with Lidgett's 1902 book *The Fatherhood of God*⁶³ is suggested by his rejection of Wesley's view, in the sermon *Salvation by Faith*, of God as an 'absolute sovereign.'⁶⁴ Certainly Sugden knew Lidgett's 1897 Fernley Lectures on the Atonement published a few years later as *The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement*, and commends the 'wonderfully enlightening theory' found there as 'different from any view that is formulated by Wesley; but it is a development, not a contradiction, of Wesley's teaching.'⁶⁵ In essence, this theory is that God's sovereignty must be interpreted in light of God's Fatherhood, that the obedient life of the Son renders satisfaction for sin and restores fallen human beings to God's favour. This moral influence theory contrasts to some extent with the more penal substitutionary views one finds in Wesley.

The following statement from Lidgett, made in 1943, seems to anticipate the later emergence of process theology among liberal Protestants and 'open theism' among evangelicals.

The doctrine of Evolution in philosophy and science, accompanied by that of Divine Immanence in theology has raised a new problem that is alike religious, theological, and philosophic... The grace that bestows rather than the will that ordains becomes determinative of religious thought, while the faith that aspires, rather than the will that submits, becomes the highest concern of religious life.⁶⁶

Modernist Chauvinism

One feature of classic liberalism is an attitude that might be referred to as 'modernist chauvinism'. This is the view that older, pre-critical ways of interpreting the Bible are, by definition, inferior, to more modern approaches. This stance is clearly operative in Sugden's reading of Wesley. Over and again, Sugden dismisses an interpretive approach not with reasoned argument but with a more or less arbitrary decision based on its chronological inferiority, not with arguments drawn from the Christian theological tradition but based on the canons of psychology and the natural sciences.

Certainly he cannot be faulted in rejecting the obscurantist idea that theological development may go no further than John Wesley. This, says Sugden, is the same position taken by Pius X's 1907 encyclical *Pascendi gregis* that theological development ended with Thomas Aquinas.⁶⁷

To think such a thing possible comes perilously near to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, who has been given to guide the Church into all truth, and assuredly did not close His work in 1791 when Wesley died. The Church that finalized its doctrine at any point in its history has sealed its own death warrant.⁶⁸

Time and again Sugden allows the most recent findings, not only in theology, but in cognate fields such as psychology, as well as in the natural sciences, to be the arbiter of what can or cannot be appropriated from Wesley's sermons for the use of modern Methodists. He exhibits a fascination with the relatively new science of psychology and a special interest in theological anthropology.⁶⁹

Wesley asserts that the 'corruption of nature does still remain' in the children of God but Sugden prefers 'more modern language' and offers 'the appropriate stimuli still provoke response in the physical and psychical nature'.⁷⁰ One notes how clumsy and dated Sugden's words sound and how, by comparison, the classical Christian language of the 'corruption of nature' stands up quite well. Sugden's preference for 'psychic' man rather than 'natural' man (1 Corinthians 2:4) would certainly never work today, as the samples he gives make clear. The 'psychic man' receives not the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14); our present body is a 'psychic body' (1 Corinthians 14:44) and our resurrected body will be a 'pneumatic one'. The mockers of Jude 19 are 'psychic, not having a pneuma'.⁷¹ The unintended humour is a reminder to us of how the introduction of novel language into theology can often remain only 'of its time'.

Sugden calls for the teaching of 'a course in spiritual therapeutics' in theological colleges.⁷² This, of course, will later take shape in today's 'Christian counselling' courses. The interest in spiritual psychology, typical of Methodism in this period, perhaps takes its fullest shape in the mid-twentieth writings of Leslie Weatherhead (1893-1976) who was the first Methodist to fully apply the insights of Freud and Jung to Christian pastoral care.⁷³

Sugden accepts Wesley's view of faith as a disposition of the heart because 'the view that faith is rather emotional than intellectual is entirely in accord with the conclusion of the most recent psychologists.'⁷⁴ The idea that conversions may be gradual and need not all be sudden is accepted not (as may have been the case) by an appeal to biblical texts, or to the classical Christian consensus, but rather because it is 'quite in harmony with the teaching of recent students of the psychology of the Christian life.'⁷⁵

'The psychology of St Paul receives much light from the theory of evolution.'⁷⁶ The possibility that light might shine in the other direction does not seem to be allowable for Sugden.

The flesh, i.e. the body and (animal) soul, was first developed; then when a certain point of development had been reached, the spirit, or moral, self-conscious, personal self was super-added. The flesh is not 'corrupt' but non-moral; sin emerges as the result of the inevitable conflict between the deep-seated instincts and the desires of the flesh and the law of duty ... By his flesh man is akin to the lower animals and shares their instincts and desires; by his spirit he is a partaker of the divine nature.⁷⁷

There is a clearly Freudian influence here as well as in Sugden's comments on self-flagellation, made in connection with the mortifications of Madame Guyon. 'Modern research makes it clear that this love of bodily tortures is really a perversion of the sexual instinct, and tends to insanity.'⁷⁸

Sugden draws support for Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification almost exclusively from psychology. One might expect Sugden to quibble with the doctrine of Christian perfection as 'enthusiasm'. It is in fact something he embraces with great enthusiasm. In 1928, he spoke of entire sanctification at a lunch-time address given to ministers entitled *Our Doctrines*.⁷⁹ Recognising a tendency in Wesley to accept the ideal as if it were the ordinary experience of all, Sugden nevertheless insists that 'we have in the New Testament an ideal set before us, to which we can more and more approximate, until we are perfected in love, but which is not at once attained when we are born again.'⁸⁰

The first support given for the doctrine is on logical grounds. 'Wesley's doctrine of the definite consummation of entire sanctification at a single moment as the result of an act of faith is logically unanswerable.'⁸¹ The second line of support is from psychology. One should read 'chapter ix in part II of William James's *Principles of Psychology*; and he will no longer think that it is a trifling thing that a man should not sin habitually.'⁸²

Psychological supports are also given for the concept of the carnal mind as a kind of 'instinct' rather than a 'thing'.

Recent psychological investigations have shown that the strongest instincts can be completely inhibited by a dominating emotion, so that they are not even felt... Now, of all such inhibitions, love is the strongest; and of all loves, the love of God. The destruction of the carnal mind thus means its total inhibition by the love of God ruling in the heart; it is what has well been called 'the expulsive power of a higher affection'. In the overwhelming sense of the love of God, no other feeling can as much as rise into consciousness. And Wesley was right in saying that this effect is often instantaneous.⁸³

Sugden illustrates this with an anecdote from trench warfare.

Many of our boys who have been at the front in the late war have told me that though beforehand they were horribly afraid, yet when the time came to 'go over the top' all fear vanished, and the only thought present to their minds was the exhilarating sense of a duty to be done.⁸⁴

This experience of one primary instinct overcoming all others does not lead to a permanent state of entire sanctification from which it is impossible to fall, as Wesley makes clear. 'Still', says Sugden, 'the tendency is for the experience to become more and more habitual, until it is practically continuous.'⁸⁵

[S]in is not a thing; it is a condition of balance amongst our motives. As long as by faith we realize the presence of Christ through the indwelling Spirit, the balance will always tip the right way ... [W]e may hope and be certain the sense of God's indwelling presence will *now*, and *now*, and again *now* overbalance [sinful motives] so that they have no power over us; and these '*nows*' will become, as we grow in grace and faith, a practically continuous chain. Let us listen to Wesley's wise counsel: 'Expect it by faith, expect it as you are, and expect it now'. Why not?⁸⁶

While psychological theories offer support for Wesley's view of holiness, evolutionary theory is set over against Wesley's theological anthropology. Sugden sets out an evolutionary doctrine of the natural and moral image of God in humanity and asserts that 'Had Wesley been alive today, he would assuredly have admitted his mistake' [in thinking that physical death is due to the fall] in light of the findings of palaeontology and geology.⁸⁷ In commenting on the sermon 'Justification by Faith', Sugden rejects Wesley's literal reading of Genesis and of Romans 5 in favour of biological evolution. The sermon needs 'some restatement in order to bring it into harmony with modern thought ... as to the origin of sin.'⁸⁸

It is 'harmony with modern thought' that functions here as authoritative. 'Biology and anthropology will not allow [the] literal interpretation' that the first human pair were morally and spiritually perfect as Wesley claims. The first humans evolved from 'lower animals of the vertebrate type' until they developed a 'moral sense and the idea of duty'. Only at that point, and not until then, 'could

the race be properly described as human'. Before this stage of development our pre-human ancestors were non-moral beings – 'innocent as a dog or horse is innocent'. The newer moral sense came into conflict with the older instincts 'inspiring in the sinner shame and remorse, and a dread of God who was conceived as the ultimate source of the moral instincts'. The biblical story of the fall is a symbolic representation of this evolutionary and psychological process. The serpent is not to be taken as a literal serpent (much less as a manifestation of the devil) but as the 'most subtle of all the lower animals [it] stands for the lower nature in its highest development'.⁸⁹

Paul is not to be blamed, says Sugden, for interpreting Genesis literally for in so doing he was only following the exegetical methods in which he had been trained.⁹⁰ Sugden would no doubt assert that he and his contemporaries must do the same in their own day. Wesley's (and Paul's) view that death did not occur until after the fall must be rejected because 'the geological record, the successive strata, which are the graveyards of innumerable forgotten species of animals, conclusively disprove this'.⁹¹ Nor could the first humans have lived forever if sin had not entered the picture. '[F]rom the biological point of view, it is impossible that under any circumstances the body of man should have lasted longer than from seventy to a hundred years'.⁹² The idea in Wesley of a fair weather antediluvian world is 'an absurd fancy without the slightest warrant'.⁹³ On the long age of the patriarchs, Sugden says, 'Until some further light from the Babylonian tablets comes to explain how these numbers arose and what they really mean, it is a waste of time to discuss the matter'.⁹⁴

Conclusion

Sugden's annotations on Wesley's *Sermons* remain of value now, not so much for the Wesley scholar, as for the historian looking for insights into Edwardian Methodism and Sugden's theological context. The world of an eighteenth-century Anglican priest and that of an early twentieth century Methodist minister were very different worlds indeed. Conservative Methodists were holding to the earlier world; liberal-evangelicals were pushing forward to a new one. Sugden's annotations are symptomatic of this development. To study Sugden's notes on Wesley is to see two worlds in collision, as the 'reasonable enthusiasm' of Mr. Wesley meets the rational modernism of Mr Sugden.⁹⁵

Few Methodists today would make much fuss over theistic evolution or biblical criticism. At the same time, while we have not entered a post-critical world, we do seem to have entered a post-liberal one. A post-liberal reading of Wesley would, I think, be willing to accept his 'storied world' without the need to dismantle it. A reader need no longer share the worldview of his subject in order to enter into a sympathetic understanding of it. Sugden cannot resist the need to 'correct' Wesley, yet he makes little effort to read him in light of Wesley's own Anglican theological tradition or the wider Christian interpretive tradition. He exhibits the rhetoric of modernist dismissal of all things ancient and pre-Darwinian. One may read Wesley today with a less defensive posture. Though some twentieth-century Evangelicals hardened into Fundamentalism, Evangelicalism itself continued as the thoroughly modern movement it had always been, despite its own claim to be resistant to all things new. Sugden's

edition of Wesley's *Sermons* reflect a recurring pattern in Evangelical religion – the unsettling tension between engaging with modern thought and holding to 'the faith once delivered'.

ENDNOTES

- 1 'Editorial,' *The Spectator* 14 (10 August 1888): 379.
- 2 *Southern Cross* 17 (August 1888):
- 3 Wilson, A. N. *After the Victorians: the decline of Britain in the world*. (London: Picador, 2006), 80–81.
- 4 Brooks, David. *Age of upheaval: Edwardian politics 1888–1914*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Hattersley, Roy. *The Edwardians*. (St. Martins Press, 2005); Kingston, Beverley. *The Oxford history of Australia vol. 3. 1860–1900: Glad, confident morning*. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993); McIntyre, Stuart. *The Oxford history of Australia vol. 4. 1901–1942: the succeeding age*. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993); Rose, J. *The Edwardian temperament 1895–1919*. (Athens, Ohio, and London: Ohio University Press, 1986); For helpful material on the theological and ecclesiastical landscape of the Edwardian period see David Bebbington, 'The growth of voluntary religion,' in *World Christianities, c. 1815–1914*. Editors Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 53–69; Davies, Horton. *Worship and theology in England, vol. 4: from Newman to Martineau, 1850–1900*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962); Edwards, Maldwyn. *Methodism and England: a study of Methodism in its social and political aspects during the period 1850–1932*. (London: Epworth, 1943). William Strawson, 'Methodist theology 1850–1950,' in *A history of the Methodist Church in Great Britain vol. 3*. Editors Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1983), 197–231; Thomas, Terence. *The British: their religious beliefs and practices, 1800–1986*. (London: Routledge, 1988); Munsey Turner, John. *Conflict and reconciliation: studies in Methodism and ecumenism in England 1740–1982* (London: Epworth, 1985) see especially chapter 9 'From Lunn to Flew – Methodism and the Wider Ecumenism 1890–1955,' 173–193; Wolffe, John. *God and greater Britain: religion and national life in Britain and Ireland, 1843–1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 5 Sugden, E. H. *Wesley's Standard Sermons consisting of forty-four discourses published in four volumes, in 1746, 1748, 1750, and 1760 (fourth edition, 1787) to which are added nine additional sermons published in vols. I to IV of Wesley's Collected Works, 1771 edited and annotated by Edward H. Sugden, M.A., B. Sc, Litt. D. (Master of Queen's College, University of Melbourne)* 2 vols. First annotated edition. (London: The Epworth Press, 1921).
- 6 *The Methodist Times*, 27 August, correspondence in 'The Spectator' 18 (16 October 1891): 1006.
- 7 'Brief Notes,' *The Spectator* 19 (17 June 1892): 545.
- 8 'Brief Notes,' *The Spectator* 47 (9 June 1920): 424.
- 9 Thomas Oden has traced the use of Methodist doctrinal standards in the polemical context of an ongoing debate in the United Methodist Church over doctrinal authority. Oden, Thomas C. *Doctrinal standards in the Wesleyan tradition*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988).
- 10 Heitzenrater, Richard P. *Wesley and the people called Methodists*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 177.
- 11 Burwash, Nathaniel. *Wesley's doctrinal standards part I: the Sermons, with introductions, analysis, and notes*. (Toronto: William Briggs 1881; Salem: Schmull, reprint 1988). See also Margeurite Van Die, *An evangelical mind: Nathaniel Burwash and the Methodist tradition in Canada* (Montreal, Quebec and Kingston, Ontario: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1989).
- 12 Burwash, 11–12.
- 13 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:18.
- 14 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:18. Italics in original.
- 15 Adam Clarke cited in I: 23. See Barry W. Hamilton, 'The 'eternal Sonship' controversy in early British Methodism,' *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40:2 (Fall 2005): 220–38.
- 16 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:23.
- 17 *The Works of John Wesley, vols. 1–4*. Editor Albert C. Outler. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984); Outler's work on the sermons was helpfully revisited and revised in 1991 by Richard P. Heitzenrater in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*. Editors Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991).
- 18 Outler, *Works of Wesley*, I:67, fn. 3.

- 19 For example, the illustration of grasping infants 'growing up into the head,' (Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:240), of the 'greedy ox lapping up the water,' (II:271) and the argument for banking as furthering the common good (II:323-24) are all repeated in different places unnecessarily.
- 20 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I: 7-8.
- 21 O'Connor T. Max and Vickers John A. 'Sugden, Dr. Edward Holdsworth (1854-1935),' *A dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* [Hereinafter referred to as DMBI]. Editor John A. Vickers. (London: Epworth, 2000): 340.
- 22 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:21-22.
- 23 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:93, fn 4 on Gal. 5:22-24; I:99, fn. 3 on Acts 16:30; I:153, fn. 11 See also I:250.
- 24 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:42.
- 25 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:47-48.
- 26 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:54.
- 27 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:128.
- 28 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:131.
- 29 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:132.
- 30 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:165.
- 31 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:204.
- 32 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:219.
- 33 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:227.
- 34 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:230.
- 35 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:233.
- 36 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:280.
- 37 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:209.
- 38 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:402-3.
- 39 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:249. The kind of misuse of texts of which Sugden accuses Wesley he is sometimes guilty of himself. For example, in I:219 Sugden says, in reference to different experiences of conversion, 'But all these worketh that one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will'. In fact, Paul is speaking here, not of conversion at all, but of the distribution of spiritual gifts.
- 40 Sugden, E. H. 'Some reminiscences of my life' *The Magazine of the Wesleyan Methodist Church* 145 (October 1922): 727.
- 41 Minutes, Queen's College Council (15 June 1900), in Parnaby, Owen. *Queen's College, University of Melbourne: a centenary history*. (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1990), 147.
- 42 Bebbington, David. *Evangelicalism in modern Britain: a history from the 1730s to the 1980s*. (Grand Rapids: Baker), 181.
- 43 Parnaby, op. cit. 136.
- 44 Letter to W. A. Quick (8 April 1898), from 56 Rose St., Fitzroy, signature illegible, *The Sugden papers*, cited in Parnaby, 99.
- 45 In spite of his reputation as a modernist, Peake accepted the historicity both of the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ. An appealing portrait of Peake as a humble, devoted Methodist is found in *Arthur Samuel Peake 1865-1929: essays in commemoration and selections from his writings*. Editor John T. Wilkinson. (London: Epworth Press, n.d.); See also Henry Rack's A. S. Peake Memorial Lecture, 'A. S. Peake - Liberal Evangelical,' *Epworth Review* 31:3 (July 2004): 48-53; Strawson, 201-202.
- 46 Cited in Betts, Rev. W. F. *The drift: tracing the drift in modern Methodism, leading up to my resignation in 1954* (Melbourne: People's Church Publishers, n.d.), 1-3.
- 47 Breward, Ian. *History of the churches in Australasia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), 258. It was in the midst of this combative atmosphere that Kingsley Ridgway, a young ministerial candidate who would go on later to be the founder of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia in 1945, withdrew from Queen's to join up with the Canadian Holiness evangelist Alfred Benson Carson in his Holiness tabernacle at Coburg. See O'Brien, Glen. *Kingsley Ridgway: pioneer with a passion* (Melbourne: Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia, 1996), 15-22.
- 48 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:169; I: 180, 191 and elsewhere.
- 49 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:209.
- 50 W. Theophilus Davison (1846-1935) taught at Richmond College (classics) and Handsworth College and London University (theology), and faced a heresy charge early in his career connected to his advocacy of modern biblical scholarship. John A. Vickers, 'Davison, W. Theophilus.' DMBI, 90.

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- 51 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:371. Dr. John Shaw Banks (1835-1917) was a pioneer missionary in India (1856-65) and held the Chair of Theology at Headingley College from 1880-1910. His *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (1887) was widely used among Methodists. He gave the Fernley Lecture on *Christianity and the Science of Religion* in 1880 and was president of the British Conference in 1902. John A. Vickers, 'Banks, Dr. John Shaw.' DMBI, 18.
- 52 Starbuck, Edwin Dillar. *The psychology of religion: an empirical study of the growth of the religious consciousness*. (London: Walter Scott, 1899). William James' more famous work, *The varieties of religious experience: a study in human nature: being the Gifford Lecture on natural religion delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902* (London, New York and Bombay: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902) drew on Starbuck's research and James wrote the Preface to the latter's published work, the first book to use the expression 'psychology of religion' in its title. The excellent *Routledge Centenary Edition of Varieties of religious experience* (London: Routledge, 2004) has been fully reset from the 1902 edition.
- 53 Morrison, W. D. 'Review of *The psychology of religion: an empirical study of the growth of the religious consciousness* by Edwin Diller Starbuck,' *International Journal of Ethics* 11:2 (January 1901): 261-264. Sugden explains Wesley's spiritual depression in terms of Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion*, Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:245.
- 54 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:168-69.
- 55 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I: 8; Pope, William Burt. *A compendium of Christian theology* 3 vols (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book-Room, 1880).
- 56 Carter, David Jay. 'Pope, William Burt.' DMBI, 276.
- 57 Outler, Albert C. 'Methodism in the world Christian community,' in *The Wesleyan theological heritage: essays of Albert C. Outler*. Editors Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 244.
- 58 Pope's *Compend* was also widely read among American Methodists, being in the Methodist course of study from 1880-89. *Leading Wesleyan thinkers*. Editor Richard S. Taylor. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1985), 137-8.
- 59 Langford, Thomas A. *Practical divinity volume one: theology in the Wesleyan tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 59-63.
- 60 Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 62-3.
- 61 John D. Beasley, 'Lidgett, Dr John Scott,' DMBI, 205. For a good recent biography see Turberfield, Alan. *John Scott Lidgett: archbishop of British Methodism?* (London: Epworth Press, 2003).
- 62 Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 62-3, 134.
- 63 Lidgett, John Scott. *The fatherhood of God in Christian truth and life* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902).
- 64 "The conception of God as an absolute sovereign which underlies [the first paragraph] fails to recognize the true relationship between God and man which our Lord reveals to us, when He teaches us to call God 'Our Father.' The children do have certain claims upon their heavenly Father, who is bound to provide their needs.' Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:37.
- 65 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:23. Lidgett, John Scott. *The spiritual principle of the atonement as a satisfaction made to God for the sins of the world*. 27th Fernley Lecture delivered in Leeds, July 1897 (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1901).
- 66 Lidgett, John Scott. *God and the world* (London: Epworth, 1943), 9.
- 67 *Pascendi dominici gregis*, 'On the doctrine of the modernists,' Encyclical of Pope Pius X, 8 September 1907. <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10pasce.htm> accessed 9 May 2008.
- 68 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:24.
- 69 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:181.
- 70 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:169.
- 71 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:180.
- 72 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:256.
- 73 Travell, John C. *Doctor of souls: Leslie Dixon Weatherhead* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1999).
- 74 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 1:39-40.
- 75 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:239.
- 76 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:164.
- 77 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:164.
- 78 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:290.
- 79 *Spectator* 54:13 (28 March 1928): 299.
- 80 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:286.



- 81 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:390.
- 82 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:286-87.
- 83 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:148-49.
- 84 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:149.
- 85 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:148-49.
- 86 Sugden's most extensive discussion of entire sanctification is given in his comments on Sermon 50, 'The Scripture Way of Salvation.' II:457-60. 'I strongly recommend all students of this subject to read my old chief - the Rev. Benjamin Hellier's - essay on 'the Scriptural Doctrine of Holiness,' and his address on 'The Preaching of Holiness,' both contained in his *Life* by his son and daughter. I know nothing so sane and stimulating; and it was my great privilege to hear from his own lips the arguments there set forth, and to see his doctrine daily illustrated in his life.' Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:150.
- 87 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:228, 230.
- 88 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:112.
- 89 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:113.
- 90 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:113.
- 91 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:117.
- 92 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, I:117.
- 93 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:212.
- 94 Sugden, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, II:213.
- 95 The term 'reasonable enthusiasm' is drawn from the book title of Rack, Henry D. *Reasonable enthusiast: John Wesley and the rise of Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).