In these post-Watergate days you would not need binoculars or stilts to spot any pinnacles of hope on the horizon. If anything were protruding above the tangled mass of relativistic, self-serving, expediencies of the public scene it would be visible to the naked eye. Curiously enough a couple of structures, perhaps more parallel than we could have imagined, are appearing.

The Christian Century, in what must have been a surprising editorial selection to some of us, recently featured “The Holiness Churches: A Significant Ethical Tradition” (February 26, 1975). Its author, Donald W. Dayton, allows us to infer from the third paragraph that he had once left the holiness tradition. But he quickly identifies himself as having been “drawn back . . . in part by the discovery that at least the history (if not always the present reality) of the Holiness churches was a most significant incarnation of values” that he had discovered. Appearing at this time, the feature cannot be read without sensing that some kind of spotlight has been placed on the holiness movement which suggests that we may have some word for today’s moral vacuum. This movement, Dayton observes, is “more oriented to ethics and the spiritual life” than are other evangelicals and fundamentalists.

Newsweek (September 19, 1974, pp. 54-55) called wide attention to an experiment at Niantic (Connecticut) Prison. The “just community” program is not yet six years old, but has had the practical effect of reducing recidivism by 50 percent. In mid-December some 40 scholars and researchers from across North America trekked to Niantic for a consortium on “moral development.” They came from a dozen disciplines of knowledge, from graduate school faculties, from endowing agencies and from curriculum publishers. But they came because a new phenomenon in the human sciences had caught their imagination.

Dr. Joy is Associate Professor of Christian Education at Asbury Theological Seminary and resident host to the 1975 and 1976 Conferences on Human Development and Christian Education jointly sponsored by Asbury Theological Seminary and Michigan State University.
"Moral development theory is the 'Sputnik' of the Watergate era," one participant quipped. That theory, resting now upon cross-cultural research and a growing sophistication in analysis and measurement, sets down basic premises which run counter to mainlines of both popular practice and technical theory in human behavior: (a) There exists a core of definable human values which is culturally universal. (b) Human beings universally perceive those values in a series of different ways as they grow up biologically and socially. (c) Movement upward through these levels is not automatic, but is contingent upon the person's self-chosen response to his own experience and perceptions. The many Watergate defendants in recent trials turn out to be, by "moral development" measures, persons who were functioning at immature levels. They were stunted men behaving by moral motivations predictable in ten-year-olds, but embarrassingly inappropriate in national leaders. Their problem was not so much that they did not know right from wrong, but that they could dip into infantile kinds of motives to justify their behavior.

Then at the end of January, 1975, Asbury Theological Seminary and Michigan State University jointly sponsored a "Conference on Human Development, Conscience, and Values." It was the first conference to bring together the theological and human developmental issues. The conference content was chiefly orientation into developmental theory and research — but with the theological issues shaping the agenda and asking the questions. Roles of perception, authority, and justice were cited to illustrate how the growing person normally passes through a series of predictable stages in his understanding and expectation. "Pathologies in Personal Development" addressed a plethora of cases which populate the churches and which can be accounted for in terms of developmental arrest.

In this presentation I wish to fuse two of my deep commitments. (1) I am, by inheritance, but also by vigorous and thoughtful choice, a participant in the holiness tradition. More extremely, I am a dyed-in-the-wool, blown-in-the-bottle Free Methodist, a loyal son and vigorous critic, but gladly and hopelessly trapped in her loving arms. (2) I am, by vocational accident — also largely shaped by my denomination's decisions about me — a student of the human sciences related to learning and human development.

These two commitments are held in tension. In my early days I saw the sciences — the behavioral and social sciences in which I was dabbling — as a morass of stuff, mostly irrelevant to me or to the church, but as a sea of bits and pieces into which I could dip and "lift" anything
we could use around the church. I was doing the “plundering Egypt thing” — stealing the jewels and taking off. But in recent years I have discovered what better men than I already knew: that the God who revealed Himself in history and in His Son Jesus Christ is also the God who left a record of Himself in what He created, and that both disclosures can and must ultimately be reconciled. That discovery released me to take off my gloves and to wade into the evidences unafraid. I could look at the Freudian constructs and at Skinnerian models even though I was uneasy that they were working only on partial information or seeing things through a badly flawed human lens. And even while mastering their systems I could pray and hope that someone would come with a wider lens and a clearer one, with fewer biases and better tools to take a measure on this creature, man.

So what I do in this address may seem to be something that it is not: it may seem to be the effort of a deeply committed holiness churchman to reconcile a theory that he likes with the theology he is obligated to affirm. If I need to do that task, I should not need to do it here. Instead, I have come to share with you because, among the many painful and drab evidences I have turned over in the last 30 years, there now appears to be emerging an integrated theory for understanding man which stands to undergird and to facilitate the work of Christ in bringing men to wholeness. And that theory and its research evidence strikes remarkable parallels to the mainlines of John Wesley’s life and theology.

In this presentation I want to cite you to John Wesley’s developmental model which appears in a sermon and in his autobiographical disclosures. Then I will summarize the developmental model which is presently emerging from social science research and set down some of the generalizations which flow from it. We will then walk John Wesley’s autobiographical material through the developmental model, and in doing so probably we will all join him from our own personal memories and reflections. Then, finally, I want to suggest some implications for our theology of evangelism and nurture, growing out of all of this.

**John Wesley’s Three Levels**

In a yet unpublished dissertation, “Theology and Experience: A Re-appraisal of John Wesley’s Theology,” William James Stuart notes that “there appear to be three coinciding and well-marked periods in the religious development of Wesley.” Stuart finds Wesley’s own definitions and interpretations of those three periods in two places. In both sources, the dating of their writing and use becomes significant, since
both fall into the final or third period of his life. As in all development, one is able only to view his progress through the rear-view mirror. These “states” as Wesley tends to call them, compared and dated look like this:

| The Natural Man | “The natural man has neither faith nor love; one that is awakened, fear without love;” Birth to 1725 |
| The Legal Man | “... a babe in Christ, love and fear;” 1725 to 1783 Entry age: 22 |
| The Evangelical Man | “... a father in Christ, love without fear.” 1738 on. Entry age: 34 yrs. 11 mo. |

The categories or “states” natural, legal, and evangelical man form the main themes in his 1739 sermon, “On the Spirit of Bondage and Adoption.” The descriptions which seem to provide commentary on the states of man are from his comments on I John 4:18. In those comments he uses the language of Johannes A. Bengel for the syllogistic use of the terms faith, fear, and love. But Wesley originates the progressive steps from natural to awakened, then babe, then father. The Explanatory Notes were published in 1754.

Three Levels in Human Development Research Theory

In this discussion it will be necessary to coordinate language from two sources, and to define what we will be meaning by the single set of terms employed here. In Wesley materials, the word “state” is used to designate a person’s relationship to the moral universe at a given moment. Wesley sees three major states as alternatives; they are progressively more closely related to God and holiness. Wesley’s “states” do not divide the “sincere” from the “insincere.” “A man may be sincere in any of these states.”

In the contemporary research literature, a series of “levels” and “stages” form the construct of developmental moral thinking. There are three major “levels” each having two subdivisions called “stages,” making a total of six stages in all, and the stages are numbered seriatim across the levels, i.e., stage six is the second subdivision of level three.
Neither Wesley’s states nor the developmental levels (and stages) should be regarded as discreet, air-tight compartments. A person may be functioning partly in one and partly in an adjoining level. For example, Wesley says that “the evangelical state, or state of love, is frequently mixed with the legal.”3 Seen from a distance, the levels thus give us a reading on the trend line of a person, and a “level analysis” might be expected to indicate where the majority of the person’s responses to the moral universe might fall. But we would not be surprised to find some of his responses in a level above or below that majority.

I will be using “level,” then, as the dominant term and will regard it for purposes here as parallel to Wesley’s “states.” I will avoid fine lines of a discussion which would be made necessary by breaking down the three levels into the six sub-divisions or “stages.”4 The levels are regarded as dynamic trending tides rather than static plateaus.

Developmental theory, as an emerging science of human behavior and responsibility, rests chiefly on the work of Jean Piaget who at age 78 still lives and writes in Switzerland. His life-long work has been with children, triggered by his curiosity at wrong answers children gave on an intelligence test he was validating at the Binet Institute in Paris when he was a young man.

In getting at those wrong answers, Piaget stumbled into what no one else had taken the trouble to study: the fact that children do not perceive reality in the same way adults do, that human beings instead move through a series of “cognitive structures” — ways of viewing reality — which become increasingly complex and useful. All children pass through the same structures, in the same sequence, and at about the same point in their overall development — although the social setting appears to have accelerating or braking effects on the speed with which children pass from one structure to the next. Piaget’s work has had widespread influence upon schools and learning in general.

But one of Piaget’s early experiments was with children’s views of moral events. He discovered that children under age ten, for example, tend to have difficulty seeing “intention” as a factor in whether a child should be punished for breaking some of his mother’s best cups. Piaget published his report of extensive experiments in the moral and justice universes in 1932 (The Moral Judgment of the Child), but he himself has done little more with his findings since then. In 1958 Lawrence Kohlberg completed a doctoral research project at the University of Chicago extending Piaget’s research, and titled it The Development of Modes of Moral Thinking.
Whereas Piaget had worked only with pre-adolescent children, Kohlberg worked with 75 boys between the ages of ten and fifteen and put together plans for a longitudinal study that would follow those young men into future years. (My own work at Indiana University from 1966 to 1969 was actually an experiment in facilitating the movement of youngsters of ages nine to eleven through stage growth cued by Piaget). By 1970 Kohlberg’s research had been spawned from Harvard University and had encircled the earth in cross-cultural study and validation.

Mainlines of developmental growth. The following set of descriptors characterizes growth through the developmental levels in general:

1. Growth is one-directional; all movement is upward.
2. Growth is through all stages and all levels in sequence; no stages/levels are missed.
3. Growth is contingent upon biological ripening, but is not automatically produced by it. Research data indicate earliest ages at which level changes are likely to occur.
4. A person may be arrested, stop growing, at any point.
5. Growth is only marginally related to “taking thought about growing” but is the direct product of the person’s dealing with stress in distinctly personal transactions with events using the resources of his previous experiences of reality. “Intellectualized growth” (learning the stage system) tends to produce persons who know the jargon of maturity, but who tend to be delayed in actual growth by efforts to maintain a facade of maturity.
6. Growth, thus, tends to be facilitated by: (a) a just environment in which complete respect for a person’s worth assures him that he is accepted and that his responses to reality, whatever they may be, are also acceptable; (b) bestowing responsibility as quickly as possible for the person to make irrevocable moral choices, first in issues of minor consequence, then major; (c) granting him increasing responsibility for his own welfare and for the care of other persons; and (d) letting him deal freely, even though painfully, with stress, disequilibrium and increasing complexity in the moral universe as he grows older. In a just community — home, church, school — he will sense no lack of support or caring, but will know clearly that his choosing is distinctly his own, and that conflict and responsibilities are essential tools for growth.
7. Movement from one level to the next will involve an apparent disjunction with the past, a tendency even to repudiate the past as flawed, fraudulent or embarrassingly immature. Level changes,
thus, tend to be marked by a distinct crisis, a turbulence, and a "leap." In developmental analysis, however, the transition will be seen as a leap within a continuum, an integration of past structures with a newer and more adequate one. One's entire structural past remains his own, with its wide repertoire of responses still available. Immature responses come to be regarded with humor or embarrassment; more recent modes of response may persist in use until newer modes are developed.

8. The turbulence or disequilibrium which accompanies level changes tends to include pessimism, doubt, even agnosticism. Taken by themselves, these signals are often misread as symptoms of failure and regression instead of signs of life and promise. They are indicators, more often, that the person is processing data essential to growth, and that he may be on the verge of significant structural change.

Developmental levels. The three levels of moral thinking with examples of how issues are regarded are as follows:

Level One: Preconventional Moral Thinking – Orientation to Prudence

At this level prudence, that is, self-interest, dominates. It is preconventional in the sense that such thinking does not meet the general public's acceptable levels for moral thinking. Most people, though there are notable exceptions in professions which reward prudence, move to level two by adulthood if they reside in a morally complex society. Almost no one moves out of level one in preliterate or peasant societies.

**Right and Wrong** are determined by physical consequences.

a. If I get hurt or penalized, it is wrong.
   If I get rewarded, it is right.

b. If it satisfies my needs, it is right.
   If I can use someone else, I should do so.
   If I get nothing from it, it is wrong to waste my energy.

**Intention** does not figure in, because:

**Perspective** is egocentric. I cannot distinguish between my own view and anyone else's. My way of looking at things is the only way there is. At upper limit I may contemplate another person's viewpoint in order to use him.

**Justice** is immanent. People who do a bad thing get caught. If they don't get caught, it wasn't bad; if they get by, they are proud and boastful.

**Salvation** is being spared from physical consequences I de-
The Asbury Seminarian

served because I got caught. It is a deal I make to scratch God’s back so He will scratch mine. “It’s You and me, God!” characterizes an egocentric and hedonistic view of the salvation contract made here.

Level Two: Conventional Moral Thinking – Orientation to Authority

By “conventional” we mean what the public accepts as right. Here the considerations are those of external authority – what significance other people think and what the published codes demand. The concern here is to conform to those expectations and to give loyalty to them at any cost.

Right and Wrong are determined by:

a. The expectations of other people.

b. The law codes which dictate what I must do to maintain an ordered society.

Intention becomes all important, tends to be overworked. “But I didn’t mean to!” is frequent appeal for forgiveness when a law is violated.

Perspective is reversible. I know that another person can see things from my point of view, and I can see things from his view. This gives power to “what they expect,” especially when it is inflated with idealism.

Justice is reciprocal and equalitarian, demanding that “things be put right.” Thus, reciprocity dominates – an absolute kind of fairness for maintaining order. The concept of “justification” as balancing things out, paying the necessary price, becomes very important.

Salvation is (a) doing what good people, God, or even the Bible appeals to us to do; or, (b) accepting the reciprocal offer within the logically consistent order of God’s plan, of confessing my sins in exchange for His forgiveness. By doing this I conform to the terms of an authoritative appeal, and I give loyalty to maintaining the order, system, and plan which make it possible.

Level Three: Post-Conventional Moral Thinking – Orientation to Principle

“Post-conventional” denotes a way of viewing reality that lies above and comes after the most popular way of viewing moral events. In the first two levels the leverage on moral thought resided outside of the individual: first in terms of physical consequences of pain and reward, then in terms of the expectations and demands of per-
sons and codes having jurisdiction over the individual. Now in level three, the leverage moves to a new location — to internal control. The authority which once lay outside has been written on the motives or “the heart.” The person now discovers where the laws came from, the springs from which they originated: ultimate universal principles. He now can participate in codification of laws and can voluntarily place himself under their authority. But he also is formulating responses to this highest summons of universal principle in unique and solitary ways; he finds himself under the authority of conscience which is sometimes in conflict with the best corporate contracts he can help to formulate.

*Right and Wrong* are determined by:

a. universal principles on ultimate values codified by voluntarily contracting persons arriving at corporate consensus and implemented by them to protect the rights, dignity, and worth of individuals.

b. a solitary conscience responding to self-affirmed universal principles on ultimate values.

*Intention* is a high concern, but must not be used to justify the sins of omission — negligence, sloth, and insensitivity to the needs of persons.

*Perspective* is heightened by concern for multiple perspectives, including those of persons outside one’s own social order, and to those who do not accept the rules or values of one’s own order.

*Justice* is transcendent and equitable, and it includes the possibility of commutation. Justice is impartial and is derived from an absolute trust in an ideal model. Its object is not punishment or reciprocal payment for a crime, but a concern for the larger good and for the restoration of the offender.

*Salvation* is responding freely to the highest summons ever offered. It is divesting myself of self-interest: escape from hell, obedience for obedience’s sake. It is dying as a means of displaying love. It is being so responsive to the ultimate needs of the world as to lose my ego in reaching out to serve: but it is (homonomy) to discover that in doing so, I find my truest fulfillment, my best realization of my own identity. It is to be motivated by commitment to the highest values in heaven or on earth, and to spontaneously obey the inner conscience in which they reside. It is to be able to say,
"Blot out my name, but let these live," or "though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

With the exception of the "salvation" descriptions in the above section, the definitions are based on classical literature growing out of moral and values development research and theory.5

John Wesley: Development and Response to Grace

In this discussion it will be necessary to define rather special uses of two terms. Development will be the shorthand term for referring to cognitive-structural development and the development of modes of moral thinking. It will not be used as a synonym for "process" or "growth." Level of moral thinking will be assessed in the Wesley analysis by identifying peak perceptions which appear in his writings; in this usage I am departing from classical moral development usage whereby moral judgment is analyzed by "staging" a large number of instances of moral thought. A subject is then assigned a "typology" by identifying the level in which a majority of his responses fall.7 I justify my level analysis in Wesley's case by noting that peak perceptions are important clues to a man's potential, his trend line in moral thinking, and his entry into a higher level of moral perception.

When we lay the Wesley "states" alongside the "developmental levels" defined in the previous section, we find some surprising correlations. James Stuart's thesis posits Wesley's own personal development along the elevating plane of the three states in Wesley's sermon, "On the Spirit of Bondage and Adoption." I am using double-jargon headings to suggest that the mainlines of Stuart's conclusions and my own hypotheses are essentially parallel.

Level One: Orientation to Prudence — the Natural Man

In Wesley's 1739 sermon, preached repeatedly in the years that followed, "On the Spirit of Bondage and Adoption," he speaks of the lowest, or least-awakened state as that of "the natural man."8 He is "without fear or love."9 He accurately describes the irreligious natural man as one who "has no light in the things of God, but walks in utter darkness."10 Since he is "an unawakened child of the devil,"11 he "sins willingly."12 The unawakened natural man "neither conquers nor fights" sinning.

His soul is in a deep sleep: his spiritual senses are not awake: they discern neither spiritual good nor evil. The eyes of his understanding are closed; they are sealed together, and see not . . . . He is in gross, stupid ignorance of whatever he is most concerned to know. He is
utterly ignorant of God, knowing nothing concerning Him as he ought to know. He is totally a stranger to the law of God, as to its true, inward, spiritual meaning. He has no conception of that evangelical holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; nor of the happiness, which they only find, whose ‘life is hid with Christ in God.’

In 1754, when Wesley was preparing his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* he adds, borrowing from Johannes A. Bengle, a gradient “fear without love.” But this gradient may be more a sub-class under his “natural man” state than a distinctly different one. That is, the natural man’s self interest may simply have opened enough to sweep in the perception that he must act to protect himself from the certain wrath and destruction of God, hence the statements, “A natural man has neither faith nor love; one that is awakened, fear without love,” may both describe the person driven by self-interest.

Indeed, as Wesley’s sermon develops and elaborates on the “natural man” he illustrates with religious behaviors: persons who justify their sinning by distorting Scripture, and who comfort themselves by distorting theology. These are easily diagnosed as egocentric behaviors flowing either from deliberately distorted perceptions, or from immature and inadequate ways of viewing reality.

What Wesley does not explore in the sermon is the possibility that more orthodox modes of religious behavior and thinking may also be “egocentric.” In recalling his own childhood, he comes closer to this end of the prudence spectrum.

I believe, till I was about ten years old I had not sinned away that ‘washing of the Holy Ghost’ which was given me in baptism; having been strictly educated and carefully taught that I could only be saved ‘by universal obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God’; in the meaning of which I was diligently instructed. And those instructions, so far as they respected outward duties and sins, I gladly received and often thought of. But all that was said to me of inward obedience or holiness I neither understood nor remembered. So that I was indeed as ignorant of the true meaning of the law as I was of the gospel of Christ.

The next six or seven years were spent at school; where, outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eye of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said
my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by, was, (1) not being so bad as other people; (2) having still a kind-ness for religion; and, (3) reading the Bible, going to church, and say-ing my prayers.

Being removed to the University for five years, I still said my prayers both in public and in private, and read, with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of in-ward holiness; nay, went on habitually, and for the most part very contentedly, in some or other known sin: indeed, with some inter-mission and short struggles, especially before and after the Holy Communion, which I was obliged to receive thrice a year. I cannot well tell what I hoped to be saved by now, when I was continually sinning against that little light I had; unless by those transient fits of what many divines taught me to call repentance.15

Wesley would seem to grant immunity for final moral responsibility to himself from birth to ten based on innocence or on baptismal regen-eration or both. But the religion of his childhood up through age 21 appears to be motivated by the desire to “be saved” and he, in fact, engages in behavior calculated to save him. But these prudential fits to spare him from hell are only intermittent spurts along a path of behav-iors clearly under the dominion of an orientation to doing what the self wants to do. There is no question that John Wesley was “religious” by any observer’s clues in the years between ten and 22. Nor can there be any question that many adults practice their religion in a similar state: fits and starts at repentance motivated by prudence, egocentricism, and fear — that is, the “natural” man, the spontaneous response of the naive mind to reminders of the supernatural.

In diagnosing Wesley’s development, both Stuart and I take his high-est expressions of perceptions as the indicators that a new and better perspective is coming into place. Abundant “proofs” can be mustered to illustrate the fact that after the date on which we cite Wesley as having entered into the “authority-oriented — legal level” he continued to display prudence-oriented — natural level behaviors.

Wesley’s familiarity with the terrain of the “prudence — natural man” orientation stood him well in his early preaching. He was able to reach into men’s motivational levels which were almost entirely limited to those of prudence: saving themselves from the wrath to come, or re-sponding to the promise of everlasting life. He may have experienced perception at “authority — legal man” level himself, but his preaching
DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL THINKING

Ages indicate earliest and more probable age range limits. Quoted sub-heads are from John Wesley's 1739 sermon "On the Spirit of Bondage and Adoption."

LEVEL III
Post Conventional
PRINCIPLE
"the evangelical man"

6 Universal Ethical Principle Orientation
A solitary conscience guided by self-affirmed universal principles on ultimate values.

5 Social Contract/Consensus Orientation
Voluntarily contracting persons arriving at corporate consensus, implement contract/code to protect the rights, dignity, and worth of individuals.

4½ Cynical Ethical Relativism Orientation
Optional stage: Confronted with pluralistic values, person concludes all are relative, becomes disoriented, not yet able to perceive ultimate principles, consorts for security.

4 Maintenance of Order Through Law Orientation
Laws are regarded as glue which holds society together. They are sacred because of this maintenance function. Leads to Law for its own sake, legalism, and proliferation of laws.

3 Interpersonal Concordance Orientation
Concern for wishes and demands of other persons, outside locus of authority. "On my honor," characterizes this wish to live up to the expectations of significant others.

LEVEL II
Conventional
AUTHORITY
"the legal man"

2 Instrumental Relativist Orientation
Right action consists of doing that which instrumentally satisfies my own needs, I have limited ability to perceive the needs of others - only insofar as meeting those needs meets my greater satisfaction.

1 Punishment and Obedience Orientation
Physical consequences of an action define its goodness or badness, no concern for intentions or for any underlying moral order.

LEVEL I
Preconventional
PRUDENCE
"the natural man"

7 to 10
5 to 8
Donald Joy in "Human Development and Christian Holiness"
in Georgia and immediately after his return was strongly dominated, according to his Journal, by uses of texts which held the threat of physical consequences over those who failed to respond to his Gospel. And Wesley’s behavior in the Sophy Hopkey case and subsequent encounter with Georgia’s legal processes have every appearance of having been carried forward with a substantial element of level one, prudential, egocentric — natural man concern, however veiled he tried to keep it by citing Anglican authority. His citation of Biblical proofs to justify his own behavior are more oriented to prudence and the manipulation of Biblical resources to serve his purposes than they are of an orientation to authority in any universal, order-maintenance sense.  

Level Two: Orientation to Authority — the Legal Man  

“In my youth I was not only a member of the Church of England,” John Wesley wrote in a letter on June 2, 1789, at the age of eighty-six, “but a bigot of it, believing none but the members of it to be in a state of salvation.” He goes on to note, “I began to abate of this violence in 1729 . . . . But still I was as zealous as ever, observing every point of Church discipline, and teaching all my pupils so to do.” Commenting in the same entry on his ministry in America, he goes on, “When I was abroad, I observed every rule of the Church, even at the peril of my life . . . . I was exactly of the same sentiment when I returned from America.”

Another of his late reflections on his earlier life fixes 1725 as a transition point:

When I was about twenty-two, my father pressed me to enter into holy orders. At the same time, the providence of God directed me to Kempis’s Christian Pattern. I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart and that God’s law extended to all our thoughts, as well as words and actions. I was, however, very angry at Kempis for being too strict; though I read him only in Dean Stanhope’s translation. Yet I had frequently much sensible comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before; and meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I had never had till now, I began to alter the whole form of my convocation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness. So that now, ‘doing so much, living so good a life,’ I doubted not but I was a good Christian.

It is commonly agreed among Wesley scholars that prior to the tran-
sitional period of 1738 to 1742, if John Wesley had died, he would have won no significant place in Christian or English history. His encounters with the Moravians taught him one thing: "I was now properly under the law."\(^19\) Stuart says that

this sentence marked a significant change in Wesley's orientation. We can formulate it in the following way: the theological agreement of the true nature of religion with the law of God was contradicted by the experiential and existential disagreement of the law of God with the true nature of religion. This contradiction became later the experiential framework out of which Wesley established the theological relationship between justification and sanctification.\(^20\)

Wesley the churchman and administrator of the societies was a staunch "legal man." But Wesley the evangelist, the world-mover, was more than that. He, like St. Paul long before him, came to see that an important distinction intervenes between law (the legal man) and grace (the evangelical man). And in the same good tradition, Wesley seems to have faced honestly his own changing perception. With this candid acceptance of his own development, he was able to extend to others the luxury of progressing through developing perceptions of the grace of God and to document individual growth patterns carefully to inform his "theology."

An indication of the transition between "legal" and "evangelical" may be noted in his *Journal* record of a conversation on May 20, 1742:

> I overtook a serious man, with whom I immediately fell into conversation. He presently gave me to know what his opinions were; therefore I said nothing to contradict them. But that did not content him; he was quite uneasy to know whether I held the doctrine of the decrees as he did; but I told him over and over, 'We had better keep to practical things, lest we should be angry at one another.'

> I kept close to his side, and endeavored to show him his heart . . . .\(^21\)

Ten years before, Wesley would have imposed his own perspective on any conversant and might even have measured his effectiveness with the man by his ability to offend him. The "authority" orientation appears to be breaking up in favor of a more comprehensive, more sensitive, thus more mature perspective.

**Level Three: Orientation to Principle of the Evangelical Man**

Wesley records extended paragraphs of turmoil that preceded his transition to a better state. Peter Bohler continued to instruct and to contend with Wesley for his legalistic orientation. Then, finally, "in the
evening” of May 24, 1738, Wesley says,

I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death . . . . And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.  

Wesley by no means remained in this high “state” of his, and in several entries in his *Journal* and in letters to Charles and others raises the question of whether he was even a Christian. But what is important for us, developmentally, is to note the earliest occasion in which his perception incorporated even a fragment of level three orientation. And we seem to have it here: the battle is no longer “right action,” but grace. He would pass through the stress of being debarred from preaching in the churches and would finally mount his father’s tombstone to call men to accept adoption into the family of God.

Wesley’s notations of a changed perspective increase and continue:

(December 30, 1745, to Mr. John Smith) I am one who for twenty years used outward works, not only as ‘acts of goodness,’ but as commutations, (though I did not indeed profess this), instead of inward holiness . . . .

But I would rather say, Faith is ‘productive of all Christian holiness,’ than ‘of all Christian practice’: because men are so exceeding apt to rest in practice, so called — I mean, in outside religion; whereas true religion is eminently seated in the heart, renewed in the image of Him that created us.  

(June 25, 1746, to Mr. John Smith) Touching the charity due to those who are in error, I suppose we both likewise agree that really invincible ignorance never did nor ever shall exclude any man from heaven; And hence I doubt not but God will receive thousands of those who differ from me, even where I hold the truth. But still, I cannot believe He will receive any man into glory . . . *without such an inspiration of the Holy Ghost as fills his heart with peace and joy and love.*
(March 25, 1747, to Mr. John Smith) I am not careful for what may be a hundred years hence. He who governed the world before I was born shall take care of it likewise when I am dead. My part is to improve the present moment.25

But his growing commitment to universal principles occasionally wavered. In a letter to Charles, his brother, on December 15, 1772, he cries out wishing for the security of the old black and white days:

I often cry out, *vitae me redde priori!* (My former happy life restore!) Let me be again an Oxford Methodist! I am often in doubt whether it would not be best for me to resume all my Oxford rules, great and small. I did then walk closely with God, and redeem the time. But what have I been doing these thirty years?26

Wesley’s *Journal* and Letters are punctuated by what appears to be even worse regression than this reversion to level two security. From time to time John Wesley confesses to complete agnosticism as to his own salvation. In a 1766 letter to his brother Charles, writing his most regressive phrases in code, he discloses deep disequilibrium:

In one of my last I was saying I do not feel the wrath of God abiding on me; nor can I believe it does. And yet (this is the mystery) [I do not love God. I never did.] Therefore [I never] believed in the Christian sense of the word . . . .

And yet I dare not preach otherwise than I do, either concerning faith, or love, or justification, or perfection. And yet I find rather an increase than a decrease of zeal for the whole work of God and every part of it . . . . I want all the world to come to (what I do not know). Neither am I impelled to this by fear of any kind. I have no more fear than love. Or if I have [any fear, it is not that of falling] into hell but of falling into nothing.27

One is inclined to read such passages with pity or embarrassment for a man who reveals such flaws of faith. Yet cognitive developmental theory holds as its first premise that growth requires disequilibrium and the subsequent accommodation of structures if re-equilibration is to occur at more mature levels. A careful study of Wesley’s troughs of doubt might reveal that the high reaches of his moral perception may be directly linked to the turmoil of his working through crucial solitary doubts that would never have come to mind in a less complicated person.

**Implications: The Call to Holiness Today**

When the comprehensive empirical findings of developmental theory
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are fused with the concerns of deeply-committed Wesleyan/holiness churchmen today, the implications are enormous. Let me enumerate only six. They will suggest that scores of more finely focused implications might be spawned from each.

We appear to be under obligation to:

1. Acknowledge that all persons develop through levels of perception which are, in turn, egocentric then legalistic; some, but evidently not many persons, advance beyond a level two orientation to level three. It ought to be the goal of Wesleyan evangelism and discipleship to facilitate level three Christian response and maturity. The criteria now are clear for blueprinting such maturity. Personal characteristics which must all be present are:

1) Formal operational — that is, abstract — thinking,
2) Perspectivism — ability to see things subjectively from multiple points of view and to do so impartially,
3) Sensitivity — the capacity to feel what one sees from perspectivism,
4) Habitual reflective tendencies — consistent assessment of one’s own judgments, perceptions, and behaviors in the light of the highest values and principles,
5) Responsibility — willingness to make irrevocable moral choices, considering all perspectives and consenting to take the role of any person involved, and to live with the consequences and to take responsibility for interpreting them to others, and
6) Homonomy — not autonomy, but “the need for and tendency to involve oneself in other people, the community, and the world in a way that cannot be manifested or fulfilled by self-determination, self government, and mastery,” that is, losing oneself in the needs of others only to discover that in doing so one is himself fulfilled.

2. Observe that transition points between levels are normally accompanied by disequilibrium, assimilation, accommodation and re-equilibration in the nature of significant life crises. The transition from level one to level two is characterized by a disequilibrium which is resolved only by submitting to an outside authority acknowledged as having dominance and power over one’s behavior and values. The transition from level two to level three is characterized by embracing internalized principles as a governing control and by deliverance from the tyranny of external legalistic rules or laws. Thus, the two major transition points in
developmental theory correspond exactly with major orientations of justification and entire sanctification.

3. Note that Christian holiness, therefore, seen as an advanced response to God’s grace by which a transition is made from “the letter of the law” to “the spirit of the law,” from response to external demand to response to a summons written on the heart, is developmentally unlikely to occur before age 23 and more likely, if it occurs at all, in the early 30’s.

4. Calculate that explicit demands for conformity to the entire sanctification summons made by a person who himself is functioning either in early development or in arrested level two pathology will teach or preach Christian holiness as a codified legalism. He will inevitably contradict the essence of Christian holiness in entire sanctification as a level three reality by his own level two distortion. The contradiction to principled holiness will be disclosed by his manner, his preoccupation with language, and his motivational strategies which move by coercion, black-white logic, or levers of shame and guilt.

5. Accept the fact that children and adolescents and the morally naive cannot hear the abstract theological language of entire sanctification without processing it and distorting it to fit their orientations to “prudence” or “authority.” This distortion will render the highest summons known to man as either self-serving prudence: “Holiness or hell! Be sanctified if you want to go to heaven”; or codified authority: “God demands that I be sanctified; I must have a second work of grace.” These perils would seem to indicate that the best representations and appeals to discipleship are those stark summons to action: to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength; to lay down one’s life in order to find it; to rise up and follow Christ. These summons are readily processed without reifying theological categories and imagining that they are the essence of faith. To thus reify language is to produce a Christian who merely parrots theological verbalisms and who reduces abstract theological concepts to a mere codification of God’s demands — the well familiar plagues of a pathological holiness tradition.

6. Hold out the highest claim to entire sanctification in summons to action (on a bold assumption that Jesus was calling persons to at least as high a response as we will be hoping to represent): come, lay down your life if you would really live; love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself; and let this mind be in you which was also in Christ. It follows, then, that we will be less concerned with proper use of theological language
than with complete response to the summons of Christ. We may even
discover why John Wesley seems to have been reluctant to use our
cherished Wesley labels to describe his own spiritual pilgrimage. It seems
probable that level three perception is slow to attach elitist labels to it-
self, but is sensitive and reflective about its own emerging flaws in the
light of better perceptions. What a surprise it would be to discover that
spiritual stature may be inversely proportional to the language one
uses to describe it in himself.

Conclusion – Prospectus

There remain open to us, then, two kinds of alternatives — the “two
ways” between which we must choose to minister:

Salvation may be viewed as (a) consisting of responding to God’s
grace in strict adherence to theological categories laid down by mature
spiritual leaders; or as (b) consisting of responding to God’s grace in
modes appropriate to the respondent’s own immediate perception.

Evangelism may be seen as (a) consisting of imposing a formula
which will produce instantaneous Christian maturity of perception up-
on the naive and immature respondent, or as (b) consisting of retracing
or reconstructing the route to faith from the perspective of non-faith,
and as a task of facilitating response appropriate to progressing through
the immediately appropriate crises and processes.

Let it be noted that if we choose the first set of alternatives we are
“adultomorphizing” the young and the naive. We are imposing coercive
authority upon them, demanding that they conform to our present per-
ceptions, forgetting the long developmental path over which ours were
formed. We may even tell them: “How I wish someone had explained
all of this to me when I was young!” as if all we needed was information,
when more probably what was crucial was that we took time and gath-
ered experience and loving care. Such coercion is strongly reminiscent
of those who traversed land and sea to make one more proselyte, but
succeeded only in making the proselyte doubly sure of hell. The
“proselyte” always comes in by the short cut — he is given “instant
language,” he imitates kosher experiences and behaviors, and turns out
to have a distorted perception about the more subtle beliefs and values.
Witness the early moral maturity and sensitivity of my own denomina-
tion and of the holiness movement in general, and the rigor mortis of
legalism which set in and changed the character of the movement and
of my church at the end of 50 years. That phenomenon might be best
explained by noting that the founders’ well-developed moral sensitivity
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could not be transmitted in instant packages to the first generation of adherents (or probably any other). So the enthusiastic inheritors concretized and codified the founders' sensitivities and reduced us to a sterile legalism.

If we choose the second set of alternatives, we regard growth, development, and personal response to issues in the respondent's own time and sequence as of ultimate importance. We are confessing, by the second alternatives, that it cannot be for nothing that God has created us with perceptions which unfold sequentially and in an orderly fashion in fundamental matters of faith and morality.

An option for the first set destines us to operate in ministry out of a stance of superiority, and to communicate in authoritarian and insensitive modes. The second calls us to bestow respect upon every person, and to communicate in a questing mode characterized by mutuality, reflection, and compassion.

FOOTNOTES


3 Ibid., p. 84.

4 See a digest of the stages and levels correlated with Wesley's "states" in the table on page 17: "Development of Moral Thinking.”

6 For a cursory and perhaps overly simple description of the work of Lawrence Kohlberg, see his “The Child as a Moral Philosopher,” in *Psychology Today*, Volume 2, No. 4 (September, 1968), pp. 25-30. For a more comprehensive treatment see his “Stages of Moral Development as a Basis for Moral Education,” in Cline Beck, *et. al.*, editors, *Moral Education*, University of Toronto Press, 1970. His dissertation in print or in microfilm is available directly from the University of Chicago.

7 Hugh Oliver, editor, *How to Assess the Moral Reasoning of Students: A Teachers’ Guide to the Use of Lawrence Kohlberg’s Stage-Developmental Method*. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1972. Lawrence Kohlberg has published numerous tests and interpretations, but they are not easily accessible. James Rest of the University of Minnesota has also developed sophisticated testing procedures for the stages and levels. The OISE booklet is easily available and is a great help, I have found, to students just finding their way through the stage system through interviewing their friends.

8 Wesley, *op. cit.*, p. 75.


16 See, for example, Thorvald Kallstad, *John Wesley and the Bible*:
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A Psychological Study. Stockholm: Nya Bokforlags Aktiebolaget, 1974. See especially Chapter Nine: “John Wesley and Sophy Hopkey — Conflict Between Love and the Celibacy Demanded by the Radical Disciple Pattern.” Although three earlier authors have approached the psychological analysis of John Wesley from a psychoanalytic perspective, this is the first major work to use essentially cognitive theoretical models to analyze him. Leon Festinger’s “theory of cognitive dissonance” and dissonance reduction implications are used rather impressively in Kallstad.


19 Ibid., p. 470.

20 Stuart, op. cit., p. 53.


22 Ibid., Volume I, pp. 475-477.


24 Ibid., p. 69.

25 Ibid., p. 94.

26 Ibid., Volume VI, p. 6.

27 Ibid., Volume V, p. 16.

28 John S. Stewart, Toward a Theory of Values Development Education. East Lansing, Michigan: Office of Values Development Research, 1974, p. 433. This important work updates the theoretical aspects of Lawrence Kohlberg’s research even further than readily available Kohlberg materials.