

W.E. Sangster – Herald of Holiness

**A Critical Analysis of the Doctrines of Sanctification and Perfection
In the Thought of W. E. Sangster**

A thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Andrew John Cheatle

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DECLARATION

The work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any degree qualification or course.

Signature

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Abstract

This study focuses uniquely on one of twentieth-century Methodism's most famous and influential figures: the Rev. Dr. William Edwin Sangster (1900-1960). Sangster was and is primarily remembered as a preacher; indeed he was deemed 'the Prince of Preachers' following his untimely death in May 1960 (*Methodist Recorder*, 2 June 1962, p.4). Sangster is probably the only preacher within living memory to hit the headlines of the national newspapers due to the content of a sermon (January 1953). During the period 1940-1960 Sangster was one of the most well known religious personalities both in his own country and the USA, famous not only for his oratory but also his numerous publications. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, that so little scholarly attention has been paid to this central figure of Methodism. This thesis in part fills that gap.

Therefore, the first major contribution this study will make is to bring together and collate, for the first time, a vast archive of Sangster's work, including many forms of published material; books, articles, letters and also a number of recordings. At present the painstaking research and collecting process of eighteen years, comprises all Sangster's books and pamphlets, nearly four hundred published articles, twenty-four letters and twenty tape recordings, a record and a film. It is this collection, which contains substantial but previously untapped primary material, that forms the basis of the theological analysis within this thesis.

Over and above this in itself significant contribution to research, this study will address critically and comprehensively the thought of W.E. Sangster, and in particular his understanding of the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian holiness. This has never been done before. Throughout his ministry Sangster's main theological agenda was to understand and critically restate John Wesley's views concerning Christian holiness, which was arguably Methodism's most distinctive doctrinal contribution to the history of Christian theology. As is shown here Sangster felt that John Wesley's pre-scientific philosophical assumptions were primarily responsible for making his views untenable to the modern mind.

It is also argued that Sangster should be considered as a forerunner of modern Wesleyan studies. Whereas many of the modern studies adopt a modified 'humanistic' approach, searching for Wesley's sources and influences in order to restate (state again) what Wesley actually did say, Sangster attempted to discover the assumptions Wesley brought to his theology and to uncover the logical framework upon which his conclusions were based with a view of ascertaining whether Wesley's doctrine of Christian holiness could be restated (stated anew) based on modern philosophical assumptions.

This thesis contains six chapters, a bibliography (with unique primary material) and a collated and annotated appendix of Sangster's articles and letters. Chapter one serves as a brief introduction to Sangster's life and work and provides an important survey of Sangster's literary contribution. The chapter adds to, and departs from, Paul Sangster's biography at numerous points and focuses in particular on the theological development of Sangster's thought as seen in his writings. This issue lay outside Paul Sangster's agenda. Chapter two analyses the main formative influences on Sangster's thinking and in particular the significance of the Oxford Group in the period 1930-1937, leading to his personal re-discovery of the doctrine of assurance, which instigated his study into the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness. It is suggested that this chapter contains significant new insights that help us better to understand Sangster's development. Chapter three examines the theological landscape of the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness from 1838-1938, the hundred year period before Sangster embarked on his study and which therefore sets the context for Sangster's own work. Three major interpretations were identifiable: the

Classical Wesleyan, the Pentecostal/Experiential and the Critical view. These formed the immediate theological background of his own survey. Chapter four examines the change in theological viewpoint evident in Sangster's writings from 1939 onwards, in which he begins to employ modern scientific thought in his theology, a distinct contrast to his earlier devotional and pastoral emphasis. As we shall see this leads Sangster to depart from John Wesley on significant points that were essential to John Wesley's understanding of holiness. Again, it is suggested that this chapter provides significant new material and hence makes a major contribution to knowledge. Chapter five traces Sangster's understanding of the human condition - the doctrines of grace and sin; key components in his understanding of holiness, with the doctrine of sin being a major point of disagreement with Wesley. Chapter six analyses Sangster's main writings on the doctrine of holiness, identifying developments of thought. Sangster's more modern views of the after-life, sin, and psychology led to a restated or reshaped understanding of Christian holiness, this is then subject to critical analysis. The thesis concludes with a statement of Sangster's contribution to the Wesleyan holiness tradition.

Therefore, this thesis claims uniqueness and originality not only in the scope and comprehensiveness of source material but also in its agenda of presenting critically for the first time the theological essence of Sangster's life-long quest to understand and restate the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness.

This thesis contains....97,524 words

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PREFACE

This thesis is the culmination of my life-long interest in the thought of W.E. Sangster, whose voice was first introduced to me by my father Harold Cheatle, who took great delight in playing the LP recording of his preaching when I was a boy. My mother's recollection of hearing Sangster preach at the Southport Convention, shortly after her conversion, left an indelible impression on her. I would like to take the opportunity to thank my parents for bringing me up in a devout Christian home. Those early home memories inspired me to read Sangster's critiques of John Wesley's theology when studying Wesleyan Theology at under-graduate level. A decision taken then to study Sangster's writings led me to begin the task of creating a unique and comprehensive collection of his work. It is my hope that these efforts will lead to a greater engagement with his life and thought.

A special debt is due to my father who not only started me on the path but also shared my interest in Sangster and who spent numerous hours looking through newspaper microfilm for 'long-lost' articles. My thanks also go to Paul Sangster for answering important questions at the start of the research. Revd Professor Kenneth Newport of Liverpool Hope University has been a supportive and expert Wesleyan ear, whose supervision has been crucial in guiding me through the research process. His decision to accept me as a student when I was much debilitated by a road accident will never be forgotten.

Research has required time being spent in five libraries, Liverpool Hope University, John Rylands Library, Manchester, Manchester Central Library, Nazarene Theological College Library and St Deiniol's Library. In all places I have received unfailing help and cooperation.

I'm also indebted to Rev. Bill Raines and Rev. Gisela Raines. Their generosity allowed me to set up office in their home for more than two years. Their friendship is precious to me and my family.

My greatest tribute, however, goes to my own family who had to live with this project for many years. My children Jonathan, Rebekka and Daniel have often had to carry a load beyond their years because of my unavailability. As always, my wife Lisbeth has been a constant support, at times aiding me in research, gladly listening to my chapters and providing invaluable criticisms of style and content. She has constantly believed in me and supported my efforts. After my motor accident, she was responsible for finding me a place at the Pain Management Service in Wythenshawe, Manchester, through whom I began to reclaim my life. It was her encouragement during that difficult time that inspired me to embark on this project. We have been fortunate to find a love that has stood through good times and bad; a true testimony to our desire and commitment to face everything together.

Having said all that, the responsibility for what is written rests with me and any remaining imperfections are mine. The work is original. The structure, arguments and conclusions are those to which my research has led me and the final form of the thesis now submitted is entirely mine.

Quotations, where given, are in the words and style of the authors concerned and no responsibility for non-inclusive language and ideas rests with me.

By the nature of the research, there are many quotations from William Sangster, John Wesley and other Wesleyan scholars. The convention followed here is that all references to books, articles, films, records and tapes are in the present tense. For purposes of style both the past tense and present tense are used when citing Sangster.

Abbreviations used in the thesis

- BE (With Volume number) The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley.
- Vol. 1. Sermons I, 1-33, edited by Albert C. Outler, Abingdon Press, 1984
 - Vol. 2. Sermons II, 34-70, edited by Albert C. Outler, Abingdon Press, 1985
 - Vol. 3. Sermons III, 71-114, edited by Albert C. Outler, Abingdon Press, 1985
 - Vol. 4. Sermons IV, 115-151, edited by Albert C. Outler, Abingdon Press, 1987,
 - Vol. 7 The Methodist Hymn Book edited by F. Hildebrandt & Oliver A. Beckerlegge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988)
 - Vol. 9. The Methodist Societies, History, Nature, and Design, edited by Rupert E. Davies, 1989
 - Vol. 11. The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters, edited by Gerald R. Cragg, Abingdon Press, 1975
 - Vol. 25. Letters I (1721-1739), edited by Frank Baker, Oxford University Press, 1980
 - Vol. 26. Letters II (1740-1755), edited by Frank Baker, Oxford University Press, 1982

Localised abbreviations are used in chapter 6 with footnotes as reference.

INTRODUCTION

W.E. SANGSTER: HERALD OF HOLINESS

This thesis critically addresses the thought of one of British Methodism's most important mid-century figures: W.E. Sangster. Perhaps no other twentieth-century British Methodist has written or spoken as much about the 'Methodist distinctives'¹ as did this figure. This study claims uniqueness by focusing primarily on Sangster's contribution to the Wesleyan understanding of sanctification and perfection.

For a person who was so obviously central to the shape of mid-century British Methodism it is surprising that so little has been written about his thought. In fact, beyond his son's biography which does not seriously address Sangster's thought,² only one thesis of any substance,³ one scholarly article⁴ and a short biography⁵ have been written. It has to be admitted that Sangster was and is known almost exclusively for his preaching. The work that has been done on Sangster, therefore, has been largely concerned with him as a preacher although Graham Slater in his article makes a brief attempt to analyse aspects of Sangster's thought. Although Susan J. White correctly, yet anachronistically calls his preaching out of date,⁶ his taped sermons are still brilliant examples of scholarly preaching. It is hence a truism that Sangster, in life and in death was and is primarily remembered as a preacher. The tributes which flowed into *The Methodist Recorder* following his untimely death on 24th May 1960 all pay homage to his preaching, some

¹ These were commonly understood to be the doctrine of Christian Perfection and the experience of assurance of salvation. With the rising tide of ecumenicalism and inter-church dialogue, these are now often referred to as Methodist characteristics.

² This particular point will be discussed at length in chapters 1 & 2.

³ Luther Maxwell Dorr, 'A Critique of the Preaching of William Edwin Robert Sangster' (unpublished D.Theol. Thesis: New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968)

⁴ Graham Slater, 'Voices From the Past,' *Worship & Preaching* 7:6, (1977), pp.30-36.

⁵ S.R. Valentine *William Edwin Sangster* (Peterborough: Foundry Press, 1998).

⁶ Susan J. White, 'The Craft of Sermon Illustration Revisited,' *The Epworth Review* 24:1 (1997), pp.49-64.

even designating him ‘the prince of preachers.’⁷

This neglect of study into Sangster’s thought is perhaps due to the tendency within Wesleyan studies to focus on the more distant past when assessing its theological legacy. Much of mid-twentieth-century Methodist theological scholarship has, been largely forgotten, or at least neglected - that is twentieth century British Methodist thought. There are perhaps, however, a number of justifiable reasons for this phenomenon. First, the simple but unfortunate fact that more recent history does not seem to carry the same ‘romantic’ appeal as more distant events. Second, twentieth-century British Methodism has not been known for a distinctive theology. In fact, Langford goes so far as to say, ‘The time of separable Methodist thought may be past in Great Britain. Biblical, historical and systematic theology do not claim unique denominational character or status.’⁸ In other words, it is difficult to find a typical or unified Wesleyan theology in twentieth-century British Methodism. Third, neo-orthodoxy⁹ and the responses to its agenda captured much of the theological attention of mid-century scholarship. The apparent disinterest in Twentieth century British Methodism has, consequently, had detrimental effects for future studies in this area as much important material has already been lost. A significant body of material on Wesley’s thought and especially its implications for the Methodism of the era was written during the period 1930-1955 as British Methodism asked questions about its identity and reason for existence¹⁰ and Sangster was arguably the strongest voice in British Methodism during this period for a restatement of John Wesley’s doctrine of holiness.

⁷ *Methodist Recorder*, 2 June (1962), p. 4.

⁸ Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), p.169. An important aspect of mid- twentieth century Methodist thought was the work produced within the area of Church history and the Reformation by such figures as Flew, Rupp, Davies and George.

⁹ Although there is no unequivocal definition of this term, it is normally used to designate the theologies of Barth, Brunner, Reinhold and Richard Neibuhr, Gustav Aulén and others whose agenda was to seek a new grounding for protestant theology in reaction to the categories of Schleiermacher and Ritschl. At the centre of much of their theology was the priority of revelation.

¹⁰ Perhaps, Langford’s assertion concerning British Methodism’s lack of distinctiveness is true insofar that it has not produced a unique theology but he fails to see that the distinctive agenda of British Methodism has been to determine its own identity in relation to other churches, especially the Church of England.

Perhaps the most important theological reason for this neglect is that within the field of Wesleyan theological studies the overwhelming interest and attention since 1960 has focused on the thought of John Wesley. Since the publication of Albert Outler's book *John Wesley* in 1964¹¹ Wesleyan studies have undergone somewhat of a renaissance. Almost coinciding with its publication was the establishment of a working group whose task it was to gather a critical and definitive edition of John Wesley's writings¹² which it planned to publish in thirty-four large volumes. Much of the interest within Wesleyan studies has, consequently, been centred upon the theology of John Wesley and has led to the publication of a stream of scholarly books and theses on various aspects of Wesley's thought, especially during the late 1980s and 1990s.¹³ An important focus of some of the American studies of Wesley has been the influence of the Eastern Church Fathers on Wesley's view of man and sanctification, perhaps further reflecting the historical/patristic agenda of the Outler school.¹⁴ This emphasis on the patristic roots of Wesley's thought, now promoted particularly strongly by Maddox, has not been received without qualification in Britain where Wesleyan scholars such as Henry Rack and Herbert McGonigle prefer to see the primary influences on Wesley as being of a much later date.¹⁵

Scholarly interest, therefore, in the theology of the founder of Methodism is thriving, albeit often with a 'humanist' agenda of tracing ancient sources within Wesley's thought

¹¹ A. C. Outler, *John Wesley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

¹² Albert Outler, Richard Heitzenrater and Frank Baker being the most notable contributors.

¹³ These include: A. Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Debate* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Wesley Heritage Press, 1987). Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994). Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley & Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision & Cultural Change*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991); Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997).

¹⁴ Maddox, *Responsible Grace*. Also:

Randy L. Maddox, 'John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences, and Differences,' *Asbury Theological Journal* 45:2 (1990), pp. 30-53. Also strongly representing this view is Kelly S. McCormick, 'John Wesley's Use of John Chrysostom the Christian Life: Faith Filled with the Energy of Love' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Drew University 1984).

¹⁵ Henry D Rack *The Future of John Wesley's Methodism* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965). Herbert B. McGonigle, 'John Wesley-Evangelical Arminian,' (Ph.D. thesis: University of Keele, 1994).

rather than subjecting his thought to modern criticism, which Sangster saw as his main task.

Alongside this resurgence of attention to Wesley has been a keen concern for Wesley's contemporaries of the eighteenth century and the developments within Methodism in the nineteenth century. Even a fleeting glance through the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* will provide ample supportive evidence.

Little scholarly attention has been given subsequently to mid-twentieth century Wesleyan scholarship. Perhaps a slow redressing of this problem is starting with the recent establishment of the Leslie Weatherhead collection at Birmingham University Library and the long-awaited publication of the 'Exploring Methodism' series¹⁶ and has received some impetus from the recent, excellent work by Ian Randall.¹⁷ This thesis intends to be a part of the redressing of the balance by not only providing a valuable and comprehensive bibliography and appendix of Sangster's numerous writings representing years of research, but also by providing a theological framework and context for his work before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the most central part of his thought.

Agenda and Purpose

This study is important to theological studies, then, especially Wesleyan studies, in that it is the first extensive attempt to examine critically W.E. Sangster's understanding of sanctification and perfection – his own main contribution to theological studies. The conclusions reached will not only identify the significance of W.E. Sangster's contribution to the area of Wesleyan holiness studies but also indicate areas worthy of further study.

¹⁶ Relevant to this study are: Barrie Tabraham, *The Making of Methodism* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1995); J. Munsey Turner, *Modern Methodism in England* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1998); Thomas A. Langford, *Methodist Theology* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1998); Gordon Wakefield, *Methodist Spirituality* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2000).

¹⁷ Ian M. Randall, *Evangelical Experiences* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999).

This thesis will critically delineate, uniquely, the views of one of the twentieth century's most important Methodist figures concerning John Wesley's and Methodism's formulation of the doctrine of Scriptural holiness.¹⁸ Shortly after Sangster's death in late spring 1960 Eric Baker, President of the British Methodist Conference acknowledged Sangster's contribution to the study of Christian sanctity, '[...]no one has done more than he to set the doctrine of Christian perfection free from its narrow pietistic interpretation and expound it as the measure of the salvation that is available to men in Jesus Christ.'¹⁹ It is the hope of this study that it will clarify in detail the truth or falsity of Baker's assertion.

Primary Source Material

The research for this thesis is based on a unique collection of written and recorded material which includes the approximate two hundred sermons of Sangster, his critically important Ph.D thesis, which represents his first and most comprehensive analysis of John Wesley's thinking on holiness,²⁰ twenty-four letters, almost four hundred articles from newspapers and other periodicals both religious and secular, plus twenty-four taped sermons,²¹ all gathered over a period of eighteen years. This makes the research material itself unique in scope and a major contribution to scholarship, also providing invaluable collated material for further scholarly research.

Methodology

Although a large measure of this study will be of necessity descriptive, Sangster's views

¹⁸ The 1932 'Deed of Union' constitutes a historic core and defining document of modern British Methodism.

¹⁹ Eric Baker, 'President's Tribute,' *Methodist Recorder*, 2 June (1960), p. 4.

²⁰ See Bibliography.

²¹ The author is also aware of the apparent one-time existence of a number of unpublished manuscript sermons referred to in Luther Maxwell Dorr's thesis. It has not been possible to locate these manuscripts and regrettably no one seems to have any knowledge of their existence. Paul Sangster categorically denies any knowledge of the family supplying manuscripts even for study. (Private letter to A. Cheatle, 5 November 1997).

will be subjected to critical analysis. The author is aware of the vast spectrum of literary types present in Sangster's writings. Due allowance will, therefore, be made for the differences between, for example, his Ph.D. dissertation and diverse popular newspaper articles. Throughout the thesis close attention will be given to trace the development of Sangster's thought and place it within its historical and theological context. There are six chapters within the thesis.

Chapter 1 is a biographical and literary survey, that focuses on the main events of Sangster's life, placing his life and work within the framework of twentieth century history and his British Methodist context, focusing in particular on his output on holiness.

Chapter 2 analyses the formative influences that shaped Sangster's views, including his early life within the context of the Methodist Mission, his time in the Army, his University education and his crisis of 1930. This latter point emphasises the impact of the Oxford Group Movement on his recovery through whom he discovered for himself the experience of assurance. This in turn instigated his study of John Wesley's theology and the doctrines of sanctification and perfection.

In Chapter 3 reference is made to the main scholarship on the doctrine of holiness with British Methodism from 1838-1938 providing an invaluable understanding of the theological traditions Sangster encountered as he embarked on his own attempts to understand Wesley's theology. Three emphases or interpretations of Wesley are identified, all of which were present in the British Methodism of the era: the Classical Wesleyan Emphasis, the Pentecostal Emphasis and the Critical Emphasis. This is the immediate theological context for his own work.

Chapter 4 moves on to an analysis of changes that become apparent in Sangster's writings from 1939 onwards. By adopting more 'modern' views of the after-life, of the Scriptures and, of the creation of humankind by the evolutionary process, Sangster would

of theological necessity depart from Wesley on key points, some of which were crucial to Wesley's understanding of sanctification and perfection.

Chapter 5 addresses Sangster's understanding of the human condition and his attempt to redefine sin in a way consistent not only with a evolutionary understanding of human origins but also with modern psychology. Developments within his understanding of sin are identified, with a move away from individual categories to more corporate and even suprapersonal ones being employed in the period 1939-1953.

Chapter 6 analyses the most important writings and recordings of Sangster on Christian holiness. Developments of thought are critically evaluated, revealing three related yet distinct periods of Sangster's engagement with the doctrine of holiness. Sangster's writings in the period 1936-1938 carry a devotional emphasis with a growing questioning of his Wesleyan holiness heritage. Between 1942 and 1953 his attention focuses on defining the doctrine of holiness, a period in which he challenges major parts of Wesley's understanding of sanctification and perfection using modern theological thought. Attention is given to the restatement of the doctrines of sanctification and perfection that he constructs as a consequence. The third and final period from 1954 to the end of his life Sangster modifies his understanding of holiness, using more Catholic terminology and drawing from Catholic mysticism not only in his understanding of saintliness but also in the method he advocates for the pursuit of holiness of life.

The conclusion draws together the main issues that emerge from this study and gives an indication of where further work needs to be undertaken on the questions raised by the conclusions of the thesis.

Thus this thesis examines the way William Sangster understood and restated John Wesley's doctrines of sanctification and perfection. It is not a general survey of Sangster's life, nor is it just an analysis of the historical and theological influences that shaped his

thought although these are, at times, important to the discussion. For this particular study the primary material is the writings and recordings of W. E. Sangster. It is contended that Sangster has been primarily remembered as a preacher and his thought has, as a consequence been a neglected area of study.

The thesis argues that Sangster should be regarded as an important scholar within the area of Wesleyan theological studies. Furthermore the thesis contends that he was not only a forerunner of the modern studies of Wesley but was also a scholar who constructed a unique restatement of the Wesleyan understanding of sanctification and perfection, resulting in a view of holiness that is: more relevant to modern thought, more desirable, accessible and attainable.

CHAPTER 1

W.E. SANGSTER 1900-1960: Biographical and Literary Survey

To this day the figure of William Edwin Sangster appears intermittently in religious periodicals, most often in the form of personal memories concerning the impact of his authorship, preaching or personality on the lives of the respective authors.¹ Obviously, since his untimely death in 1960 the number of people who encountered Sangster personally are falling. However, the Centenary celebrations of his birth held at Westminster Central Hall, which occasioned the attendance of some two hundred people, illustrate he is still held in high regard by those who knew him or came under his ministry or have come under the influence of his authorship.² On that occasion a room at the 'head' church of British Methodism was also dedicated and named in his honour. For insights into his life, however, the best source remains the biography by his son.³ Indeed for the period before 1932 when William Sangster began his own authorship, the biography is really the only source for our knowledge of his early life, apart from short reflections by his daughter⁴ and the brief biographical chapter in *Sangster of Westminster*.⁵

It is exceedingly unfortunate that Sangster himself requested that all his diaries and journals be destroyed after his death, although a small amount found its way into the biography. Written as it was for a more popular readership, Paul Sangster's biographical account is, in places, limited in its usefulness in constructing an accurate

¹ David Guy, 'William Sangster Remembered,' *The Flame*, 73.1 (2007), 13-14. Norman Armistead, 'Recalling Dr Sangster', *The Flame*, 72.3 (2006), 3-4. Reginald Mallett, 'W.E. Sangster as I Knew Him,' *Contact*, 11.8 (1986), 4-5.

² This was held at Westminster Central Hall on 5-6 June 2000.

³ Paul Sangster, *Doctor Sangster* (London: Epworth Press, 1962). A few extra biographical details are recorded in the short book published by his son just two years after the official biography: Paul Sangster, *Doctor Sangster: The Closing Years* (London: Epworth Press, 1964). A biographical article on Sangster also appears in a contemporary dictionary of evangelicalism. Cf. Timothy Larsen, *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals* (Leicester: IVP, 2003), pp. 578-580. This article adds little to Paul Sangster's account.

⁴ Margaret Sangster, *A Daughter's Tribute* (London: Epworth Press, 1961), Margaret Sangster Phippen, 'My Father, W.E. Sangster,' *Religion in Life*, 30.4 (1961), 610-615.

⁵ Anon, *Sangster of Westminster* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1960).

chronological and comprehensive account of Sangster's authorship and is of little use in charting the development of his theological mind, offering, as a result, no critical analysis of his father's thought.

This survey will attempt to delineate the key events in Sangster's life and will provide, for the first time, a chronological and comprehensive survey of his authorship, not only bringing to light previously unmentioned sources but also placing all within their historical context. Significant developments within his thought, although briefly mentioned, will be discussed at greater length later in the thesis in order to provide a sense of continuity.

The life of William Sangster spanned nearly the first sixty years of the Twentieth Century. This short era would encompass two world wars, economic and industrial depression, the rise of the Labour movement, the forming of the welfare state, the decline of the British Empire, the initiation of the nuclear age and the gradual encroachment of technology into everyday life. The changing world would also lead to important developments in theological thinking and would impact on the life of the Church in innumerable ways. Sangster's life and thought can be only truly understood from within the context of the changing face of British history and the ideological, theological and ecclesiastical influences of the era.

William Edwin Robert Sangster was born on 5th June 1900 into a close-knit family situated in the heart of London, the third son of four boys and one sister.⁶ Most of his early years were spent north of London Wall within a short walk of City Road and encompassing Bunhill Fields.⁷ The family were representative of the area and times living in small, closely built poor quality housing and were acquainted with the inherent health problems of the poorer areas of the Capital. The City was then notorious for its pollution: 'pea soupers' and a dead and rancid river. Within walking distance of the more polished and respectable areas of Westminster the working-class population often existed on low pay, most families being familiar with social deprivation, high

⁶ Leslie Weatherhead, 'The New President of Conference', *Methodist Recorder*, 13 July 1950, p.9.

⁷ *Doctor Sangster*, pp. 17-20.

unemployment and a significant level of alcoholism.⁸ The Sangsters belonged firmly to the working class yet were 'Christian enough' to be respectable. Later in life Sangster would say of his family's Christianity, 'they were devoted Church of England...but just stayed away.'⁹

Early in Sangster's life two events around 1909 came to have a great impact on him. Aged nine he was awarded a scholarship to Hoxton Central School in recognition of his budding academic potential having attended the local school: Holy Trinity Church, since the age of three. Almost simultaneously, he followed his great friend Cecil Hodges to Radnor Street Mission in the parish of St. Luke's.¹⁰ This was the first meeting of his curious and gifted mind with a rigorous, Wesleyan evangelicalism, termed 'ultra evangelical' by William Barclay.¹¹

At the mission he became actively involved in the Band of Hope - a movement against drink that took its message to the industrial heartlands and was very popular and influential in evangelical circles.¹² Gradually during the next four years his life and thought became more and more centred upon the principles and practices of the mission.¹³ Although Leslie Weatherhead incorrectly attributes Sangster's conversion to Spring 1913,¹⁴ and Paul Sangster does not date his father's conversion, it can be established that it was on 19 October 1913¹⁵ by which time he had adopted a puritan otherworldliness that would follow him for the rest of his life.¹⁶ For Sangster the call to follow Jesus Christ involved a radical separation from all that detracted from that relationship.

⁸ 'London in 1900,' *The Encyclopaedia Britannica 2004 Deluxe Edition CD*.

⁹ *Doctor Sangster*, p. 26.

¹⁰ *Doctor Sangster*, pp.24, 29.

¹¹ Luther Maxwell Dorr, 'A Critique of the Preaching of William Edwin Robert Sangster', p. 15. See Chapter 2 & 4 for accounts of Sangster's evangelicalism.

¹² W.E. Sangster, *Why Jesus Never Wrote A Book* (London: Epworth Press, 1932), p.51. & *Doctor Sangster*, pp.27-32.

¹³ A flavour of the Mission, its life and of the neighbourhood can be gained from Westerdale's enlightening history: Thomas E. Westerdale, *Centenary of the Radnor Street day, Sunday, ragged schools and mission, in the parish of St. Luke's, London E.C. 1798-1898*, 2nd edn., [London]: [pr. By Hazel, Watson and Vincy], [c.1899].

¹⁴ *Methodist Recorder*, 13 July 1950, p.9.

¹⁵ *Doctor Sangster*, p. 32.

¹⁶ cf. W.E. Sangster, 'The Peril of Expediency,' *Why Jesus Never Wrote a Book*.

Although strictly speaking, and by today's standards, Sangster always remained somewhat puritanical, forty years after his conversion, during his tour around the country in 1953 with the *Daily Express*, he shows that his puritan attitude to the world had undergone subtle changes. Although slamming seedy West End shows and pantomimes in a *Daily Express* article entitled, 'Let's be clear about what we're doing when we pay to see a smutty show,'¹⁷ he still attended and appreciated both decent theatre and cinema productions, very much against the contemporary standards of the holiness churches of the time.¹⁸ There were limits, however, to this more liberal position. His daughter records, for example, an instance when as a teenager her father marched the family out of a cinema exclaiming, 'I will not stomach it – it makes me sick.'¹⁹

It was also at the Radnor Street mission that on 11 February 1917 he preached his first sermon and by his seventeenth birthday he was a regular preacher there.²⁰ It was also through the mission that he met his future wife Margaret Conway. In a natural development of his ability and Methodism's use of lay preachers, Sangster preached his trial sermon as a local preacher at Wesley's Chapel aged seventeen. Although he remained a member of Radnor Street Mission until he enlisted in the Army, he had now embarked upon, although fleetingly, his preaching ministry in Methodism.²¹

By the time Sangster joined the army on his eighteenth birthday, therefore, a simple foundation of belief had been laid. At this point of his life, Sangster bore the marks of an evangelical of the 'Nineteenth Century' type: 'He believed in and had experienced a conversion; he actively preached the gospel in order to let others know of the good news of personal salvation; he had developed an attitude of separation from the world

¹⁷ *The Daily Express*, 5 February 1953, p.11.

¹⁸ Samuel Chadwick, perhaps the most influential exponent of the strict holiness position within Methodism had famously said, 'If you want a short cut to hell, dance.' *Bolton Evening News*, 26 February, 1907: Quoted from *Bolton Evening News*, 26 February 2007, p. 33. For a comprehensive analysis of Chadwick's understanding of holiness, see Chapter 3.

¹⁹ *A Daughter's Tribute*, p.11.

²⁰ *Doctor Sangster*, p.33.

²¹ *Doctor Sangster*, p.37.

seeing the present life primarily as a preparation for eternity.’²² Although it cannot be substantiated unequivocally, he had also, probably, adopted a high reverence for the text of the Scriptures which was typical of the lay led missions of the era.

After joining the Queen’s Royal West Surrey Regiment Sangster continued his preaching ministry while his unit prepared for occupational duties in defeated Germany. Although maintaining rigidly his religious standards even in the barracks, attending and leading prayer meetings and finding time for a deeper study of his New Testament,²³ the months spent in the army seem to have produced a marked tempering of his evangelicalism. ‘I abandoned, so far as my own judgement was concerned,’ comments Sangster years later, ‘the simple dichotomy of sheep and goats[...]I fell to looking for the fine traits in my comrades, and there grew up in my heart a double passion: a fierce hatred of evil and a fierce affection for the men themselves.’²⁴

By a strange set of circumstances Sangster was accepted as a candidate for the Methodist ministry in the autumn of 1919.²⁵ Given the significance of this event it is disappointing that despite extensive research little information can be discerned from Sangster’s authorship or recordings concerning the exact circumstances. Paul Sangster seems somewhat confused also. According to him, a Methodist army padre had visited Sangster when stationed in occupied Germany. The two spent a day together and being duly impressed the chaplain had, through their conversations, formed the distinct impression that Sangster wished to enter the ministry and, therefore, applied on Sangster’s behalf for the Methodist ministry. According to his son, Sangster admitted that he never gave his consent, although it was certainly his real desire.²⁶ This interpretation is confirmed by what appears to be an excerpt from a personal letter from Sangster to Leslie Weatherhead:

During Army days a powerful sense of call to the ministry came upon me which I

²² R. Ensor, *England 1870-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp.137-139.

²³ *Doctor Sangster*, pp. 40-41.

²⁴ *Doctor Sangster*, p.47.

²⁵ *Doctor Sangster*, p.46.

Anon, *Sangster of Westminster*, (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1960), p.14.

²⁶ *Doctor Sangster*, p.46.

confided to one or two friends and by some mysterious process I have never understood, I was put forward as a candidate for the ministry without my knowledge and even provisionally accepted by the Synod without my appearance or awareness that my name had come up. I was never examined. While on leave from Germany, I appeared before a committee at the old Mission House, gave the story of my conversion, call to preach, and experience of Christ in the Army, and was sent, on demobilisation, to Handsworth.²⁷

It is clear, therefore, that Sangster was convinced of his calling to the ministry and desired to follow such a course on leaving the Army, and that he had related this to people close to him. The Methodist padre having heard a similar story was perhaps just being over zealous in carrying out what had been related to him.

Shortly after passing his final ministerial examinations in late 1919, Sangster was officially demobbed. In January 1920, therefore, he embarked on his academic career, somewhat hesitantly at first, having left school aged fifteen to work as an office boy with the aim of being an accountant and also having not even matriculated.²⁸ Sangster filled in as supply preacher during his time of ministerial study at Handsworth, the main part of his studies being completed, however, at Richmond College. Sangster was initiated into full pastoral ministry at a small congregation in Littlehampton, Sussex in August 1923.²⁹ Almost three years later on the 27 July 1926 Sangster was ordained at Priory Street Wesley Chapel, York followed just over two weeks later by his marriage to Margaret Conway on Thursday, 12 August 1926 at Ealing Wesleyan Church.³⁰ Their twins, Paul and Margaret arrived while ministering in Conway, his second appointment but the first as an ordained minister. Here he served two small congregations from 1926-29: St John's English Methodist Church, Conway and Rhos-on-Sea Methodist Church.³¹

²⁷ *Methodist Recorder*, 13 July 1950, p.9.

²⁸ Leslie D. Weatherhead, 'Dr.W. Edwin Sangster,' *The Sunday Times*, 29 May 1960.

²⁹ *Doctor Sangster*, p. 60.

³⁰ *Doctor Sangster*, p. 67.

³¹ *Doctor Sangster*, Chapter VII.

The more tranquil and picturesque life of the Conway estuary and the North Wales coastline, which was then one of the favourite holiday destinations of the Industrial North, soon gave way to life and service in those very industrialised regions. Liverpool was the first, truly urban ministry to which he was appointed. Although not mentioned in Paul Sangster's account, years later his father admitted to serious reservations about ministering in the great Northern Industrial Cities. Speaking at Junaluska, USA in 1956, Sangster recounts his thoughts during his own ordination:

Years ago in the City of York, when the fathers of the church placed their hands on my head and I was ordained to this holy ministry and I took vows; and I said I would obey those who were placed in authority over me, and I would go anywhere where they sent me, and would go without question – all that I said and I meant it. And then I discovered really, even though I didn't say it aloud, that what I was saying to the Lord under my breath was this: 'Anywhere Lord, anywhere, but not Manchester or Leeds!'³²

Obedying the call of his Church, however, he served from 1929 at Aintree Wesleyan Church and Fazakerley Methodist Church, living in the shadow of the Aintree racecourse in truly deprived conditions.³³ Worldwide economic downturns had already begun to affect most industrialised nations and the inner city areas were experiencing deep economic problems, accompanied by an almost universal attitude of gloom. The need for extra money and also as a direct result of a personal crisis in 1930³⁴ through which he was aided by the Oxford Group Movement, Sangster published his first book whilst in Liverpool, *Why Jesus Never Wrote A Book*.³⁵ Supposedly selected sermons requested by church members, they drew the attention of one of British Methodism's leading theologians: George Jackson. Writing in the *Methodist Recorder* Jackson mixes praise of Sangster's illustrative skill with criticism of his pithy English style. On the whole, however, Jackson predicts a great future for Sangster in the pulpit but warns him

³² W.E. Sangster, 'Unconditional Surrender.' A sermon preached at Ocean City, prior to the World Methodist Conference in Junaluska, USA in 1956. See Bibliography.

³³ *Doctor Sangster*, pp. 84-85.

³⁴ *Doctor Sangster*, pp. 90-92. The full nature of this crisis and its importance for Sangster's theological development will be discussed in chapter 2.

³⁵ W.E. Sangster, *Why Jesus Never Wrote a Book*.

of the trappings of fame.³⁶ For their evidence of Sangster's early thought and the influence of the Oxford Group Movement on his life and thinking these sermons denote an important time in Sangster's theological development.³⁷

Sangster's next move saw him assuming responsibility of four churches: one of a country chapel, two of the Methodist mission variety and finally the large and well attended Central Hall in Scarborough. It was during this demanding circuit in East Yorkshire that Sangster embarked on his writing to religious and secular periodicals and newspapers, a characteristic of his ministry that continued until the very last days of his life.

His two books of sermons published during his time in Scarborough, *God Does Guide Us*³⁸ and *He Is Able*³⁹ reflect an emphasis on the sufficiency and providence of God. In both books Sangster focuses on the practical application of the Gospel perhaps reflecting the practical spirituality of the Group Movement. The thought of the Group Movement is especially evident in the former book, which, while not being published as a direct defence of the practices of the Group, it does, however, seek to address the importance and reality of divine guidance, a belief and practice central to the identity of the Oxford Group.⁴⁰ The second book contains material consistent with his growing involvement with the Fellowship of the Kingdom, and carries a focus centred on the person of Christ, typical of the Fellowship.⁴¹ He was later destined to become a prominent and influential leader of the Fellowship.

In 1936 Sangster also had his first pamphlet published entitled *-Prayer*⁴² which reflects typical Oxford Group terminology including one of its central themes, the idea of submission. Another early pamphlet also defends the emphasis of the Oxford Group

³⁶ 'A Parson's Log. An Open Letter to a Young Minister who has Published His First Book,' *Methodist Recorder*, 1 September 1932, p. 15.

³⁷ This will be discussed at length in chapter 2.

³⁸ W.E. Sangster, *God Does Guide Us* (London: Epworth, 1934).

³⁹ W.E. Sangster, *He Is Able* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936).

⁴⁰ A full discussion of Sangster & the Oxford Group follows in Chapter 2.

⁴¹ See *Evangelical Experiences*, Chapter 5 for a study of The Fellowship of the Kingdom.

⁴² W.E. Sangster, *Prayer* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936).

on divine guidance. Entitled *Providence*,⁴³ this again illustrates that Sangster was far more influenced by the Oxford Group than his son allows. Indeed, as will be seen later, much of Sangster's early writing, including his articles in the *Methodist Recorder*, seeks to defend the Group and later to interpret them in relation to earliest Methodism, the conclusions of which reach their culmination in his book *Methodism Can be Born Again*.⁴⁴ Altogether, therefore, the Group captured Sangster's attention for at least seven years.

Towards the end of his time in Scarborough Sangster became convinced that God was calling him to become a leader in Methodism with the goal of rediscovering its original power and influence. In a note found after his death Sangster says, '...God does not want me only for a preacher. He wants me also for a leader - a leader in Methodism. I feel a commission to work under God for the revival of this branch of His Church.'⁴⁵ This became the passion and direction for the remainder of his life: The quest to rediscover, re-interpret and revive Methodism.

In September 1936 Sangster was appointed to follow Leslie Weatherhead at Brunswick Methodist Church in Leeds. Compared to the rest of his life his three years in Leeds show little literary activity beyond the continuation of his articles on Methodism and their subsequent publication as *Methodism Can Be Born Again*.⁴⁶ As was typical of Sangster this does not reflect inactivity as it was during these years that he finally completed his MA studies in philosophy, consequently becoming an external examiner to Richmond College in the area of Ethics and Religion.⁴⁷ He was also a member of the BBC Northern Region Religious Advisory Committee reporting on the merits or otherwise of religious broadcasts.⁴⁸

In September 1938 Sangster attended the General Conference of the Canadian

⁴³ W.E. Sangster, 'Providence', *Little Books of the Kindly Light* (London: Epworth, 1936), XVI.

⁴⁴ W.E. Sangster, *Methodism Can be Born Again* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938).

⁴⁵ *Doctor Sangster*, pp.109-110.

⁴⁶ Dorr is incorrect in attributing Sangster's next book: W.E. Sangster, *These Things Abide* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1939) to his time in Leeds. Although some of the material may have been prepared in Leeds, the book clearly refers to events of the period called the Phoney War. See for example: p.112.

⁴⁷ *Doctor Sangster*, p.118.

⁴⁸ *Doctor Sangster*, p.118.

Methodist Church as the British representative. Aged only thirty-eight this responsibility begins to show that Sangster's leadership qualities were becoming recognized within the higher circles of British Methodism. This was more than confirmed when he was selected as successor to Dinsdale Young as the minister of Methodist Central Hall, Westminster – the heart of British Methodism, to which he moved in late summer 1939.

Sangster's first six years of ministry at Westminster Central Hall were served in the shadow of World War II. Indeed his first official announcement was to inform the congregation of the declaration of war.⁴⁹ Within a few months the deep basement of Central Hall was converted into an air raid shelter with benches and markings still remaining in the sub-basement to this day. Sangster was to assume leadership of the shelter which opened on 9 September 1940 and stayed open for just over seventeen hundred nights, giving refuge to nearly 450,000 people during its existence.⁵⁰ Numerous articles in the *Methodist Recorder* and one in the *British Medical Journal* testify to his leadership skills in running the endeavour and holding up morale, especially during the Blitz.⁵¹ The Sangster family moved from their Wandsworth home to take up residency in the shelter and slept during the worst periods in one room – the Gents' Toilets.⁵²

It was during this time that Sangster embarked upon his PhD studies on the subject of sanctification and perfection. The writer of *Sangster of Westminster* describes those days:

Mr Sangster spent his days running his church, fulfilling his duties as Superintendent of Shelters, and his evenings in the shelter, talking to his people, comforting the many bereaved, and finally, when all was peaceful and the shelterers slept, he crept away to his office high up in the Central Hall and studied theology, for he was writing...a treatise on the Doctrine of Christian Perfection.⁵³

⁴⁹ *Methodist Recorder*, 7 September 1939, p.5.

⁵⁰ 'When London Methodism Went Underground', *Methodist Recorder*, 14 June 1945, p.3.

⁵¹ *Methodist Recorder*, 3 October 1940, p. 5; 7 November 1940, p. 4; 5 December 1940, p.12; 30 January 1941, p. 3; 6 February 1941, p. 4; 22 May 1941, p. 3: Also for reference to *British Medical Journal* of 20 September 1941, see *Doctor Sangster*, p.191.

⁵² *Doctor Sangster*, p.197.

⁵³ *Sangster of Westminster*, p. 24.

The conviction he had expressed at the end of his years in the military, ‘that he had lost his distinction between sheep and goats’, was reaffirmed during the years in the shelter. In an article, entitled ‘Blasting Barriers’,⁵⁴ Sangster reveals how the apparent evil of war had led to a challenge to the given norms of society as regards class and denominational bias. It would appear that Sangster also reassessed his own views during the war years. His publications from 1939 to 1957 reveal him bringing his philosophical and psychological paradigms, combined with an ever-increasing catholicity, to the fore in sermons, his dissertation, and other writings.⁵⁵

A direct consequence of these changes was his greater involvement in inter-denominational causes, some connected with addressing social and moral issues, like his deep involvement in a crusade which attacked the government of the day on the issue of drink, others with joint areas of interest. He participated heavily in the Free Church Federal Council and the National Sunday School Union. He was also invited to speak at St. Botolph’s, Bishopgate, St. Peter’s, Vere Street and at St. George’s Garrison Church, Queen’s Avenue – not a common trend at the time in the Church of England.⁵⁶

In 1942 Sangster was awarded his PhD for his work at the University of London on John Wesley’s concept of perfection, entitled, ‘John Wesley’s Doctrine of Christian Perfection critically examined in the light of the biblical, theological and psychological knowledge of the present time’,⁵⁷ later published in 1943 under the title *The Path to Perfection*⁵⁸

Following in the wake of this book Sangster also wrote two articles on Methodism,⁵⁹ became General Secretary of the Fellowship of the Kingdom and became a regular contributor to the ‘What’s Puzzling You?’ section of the *Methodist Recorder*.⁶⁰ On 10 May 1944 he was elected to the Senate of the University of London,

⁵⁴ See *Doctor Sangster*, pp.133-137.

⁵⁵ The influences involved in this change of thought will be critically examined in Chapters 4 & 5.

⁵⁶ *Doctor Sangster*, pp. 142-143.

⁵⁷ University of London: Thesis No: DX193815.

⁵⁸ W.E. Sangster, *The Path to Perfection* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1943).

⁵⁹ *Methodist Recorder*, 2 September 1943, p. 3; 9 September 1943, p. 3.

⁶⁰ His first appearance being on 30 September 1943, p.3.

a position he was proud to hold for twelve years.

His inter-denominational activities continued with his participation in the 'Faith for Our Time' campaign alongside Baptist and Church of England leaders. In October 1944 Sangster was made President of the Free Church Federation, a position that he valued highly due to his deep feelings for the Non-Conformist tradition.⁶¹

He continued to write for various newspapers especially *The Empire News*, for whom he started on 19 November 1944, continuing for nearly two years, authoring some terse and direct proclamations of the gospel characterized by denunciations of moral and social evil. During the War years, over and above the publication of his doctoral thesis, Sangster wrote two other books. The first, *These Things Abide*,⁶² written primarily in 1939, was a series of sermons which sought to comfort the reader by emphasising the permanence and unchangeableness of God and the enduring values of Christian truth during the upheavals caused by the events of war. The second, *Ten Statesmen and Jesus Christ*⁶³ took the statements of ten political leaders concerning Britain's war aims and used them as a point of reference, placing them in the light of the Christian message in order to show that the greatest aim is relationship with Jesus Christ and adherence to his message.

Following the conclusion of the war Sangster became more and more well known, part of which was due to his involvement in most of the cross denominational campaigns, which were so common in the years after the war. The 'This is the Victory' campaign was typical of this variety and it boasted famous names such as C.S. Lewis, Field Marshall Montgomery's mother and Gipsy Smith, who was a well-known evangelist especially in evangelical circles. Also of note was the 'Youth for Christ' campaign, which drew thousands to the Royal Albert Hall.⁶⁴ His appearances at these large, well-publicized campaigns gave many people the opportunity to hear him preach

⁶¹ He was passionately in favour of Cromwell and was republican in sentiment. Ref: *Doctor Sangster*, p.145.

⁶² W.E. Sangster, *These Things Abide* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1939).

⁶³ W.E. Sangster, *Ten Statesman and Jesus Christ* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1941).

⁶⁴ *Doctor Sangster*, pp. 146-147.

for the first time. What had been known within his own congregations concerning his talent and power of oratory now became almost national knowledge.⁶⁵

Coupled with the spreading fame of his preaching, perhaps even caused by it, was the attention his articles received in the national press, particularly his denouncements of evil and moral decline. His son speculates that it was the apparent contradiction between the colourful exuberance of his preaching and his utter contempt for moral 'filth', that was a possible reason for his growing national renown. It was certainly unusual at the time to be given a lesson from the pulpit on London's sewage disposal. Paul Sangster continues:

Chiefly, perhaps he was interesting because he was a 'character'. He loudly assisted every cause which aimed at decency in national life, and led many of them. He opposed drink and gambling, for instance, through every medium he could use. There was nothing unusual in this; so did many parsons. What was unusual was the apparent inconsistency of his pride in the label 'puritan' and his keen sense of humour. He rarely preached a sermon which did not contain humorous stories as illustrations, or failed to lead any company in which he found himself into roars of laughter.⁶⁶

Renowned as he now was, especially for the illustrative art of his preaching, 1946 saw the first of his books given over to the art and skill of preaching.⁶⁷

The pattern of his future ministry at Westminster Central Hall was established during these three first-post war years. First, he continued to work for the renewal of Methodism. Second, he involved himself in many interdenominational causes, especially the campaigns, with the goal of true Christian unity. Third, he persisted in his writing in the newspapers and other publications on all varieties of subjects but always with a spiritual purpose in view.

On the first point, now being a recognized authority on the subject, Sangster continued to write about Wesleyan doctrines, of particular note being two articles in the *Methodist Recorder* on Methodism's unfinished task, the first focusing particularly on

⁶⁵ *Doctor Sangster*, p.149.

⁶⁶ *Doctor Sangster*, p.150.

⁶⁷ W.E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Illustration* (London: Epworth, 1946).

the doctrine of Christian perfection.⁶⁸

In July 1946 Sangster again wrote on the subject of Wesley and sanctification,⁶⁹ an article of the same title, motivated by the recent publication of Harald Lindström's highly influential study of Wesley's doctrine.⁷⁰ 1947 saw Sangster founding 'The Wesley Club',⁷¹ writing a monthly article in the *Methodist Magazine*,⁷² and travelling to the US in September and October to participate in the Methodist Ecumenical Council. Of particular significance for the year was the publication of his second book on the subject of Methodism itself, entitled *Methodism Her Unfinished Task*.⁷³ The book emphasised yet again Sangster's belief that the Church Catholic is best served if Methodism recognizes and lives up to its own calling, which he maintains is the stress on holy living, an evangelism which goes beyond the individual to include changing the social order, and being a bridge church between the Church of England and the Free churches. Methodism's history and development, contends Sangster, also enables it, perhaps uniquely, to take a special role in working in rural areas, using lay workers and teaching the use of money.

What Sangster saw as the absolute priority of the Methodist heritage was forcefully stated in his own words in an inconspicuous article in the *Methodist Recorder* entitled, 'A Plea for Priority' in early 1949:

A cogent argument could be stated for almost every activity the church fosters. I do not plead for a revival of the old S.S.S.S. (The society for the suppression of superfluous societies), but for such a sense of priority...as would keep the quest for holiness and the deepest evangelism ever to the fore, and save any zealous man from feeling with Charles Wesley that he spreads his wretched strength for nought.⁷⁴

On the subject of holiness Sangster wrote an influential and widely-read article in

⁶⁸ *Methodist Recorder*, 8 February 1945, p.3; 22 February 1945, p.7.

⁶⁹ W.E. Sangster, 'Wesley and Sanctification' *London and Holborn Review*, July 1946, pp. 214-221.

⁷⁰ Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Wilmore: Francis Asbury, 1945).

⁷¹ A club where visitors and employees could relax in the Central Hall.

⁷² These were primarily directed at family issues and the importance of service and spiritual disciplines. See appendix for full survey.

⁷³ W.E. Sangster, *Methodism Her Unfinished Task* (London: Epworth, 1947).

⁷⁴ W.E. Sangster 'A Plea for Priority', *Methodist Recorder*, 13 January 1949, p. 8.

Religion in Life entitled 'The Church's One Privation' in which Sangster extols the Wesleyan emphasis on holiness as the most pressing need of the Christian Church both in its witness to the world and in its own efforts at Union.⁷⁵

His passion for evangelism and was underscored by his invitation to America to deliver the Sam Jones Lectures on evangelism at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia in early 1948. The substance of these lectures was published towards the end of 1948 under the title *Let Me Commend*.⁷⁶ Over a thousand people heard the lectures, which addressed the issue of 'Realistic Evangelism'. For Sangster this subject naturally involved the holiness/evangelism axiom: that true evangelism should have the goal of decision in view, including, however, as an integral part, the moral transformation of converts into 'new creatures'; and a 'Kingdom emphasis' which carries the New Testament insistence upon a social and world changing vision; all through a focus on the whole work of Christ, revealed in the Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection and Pentecost.⁷⁷ Evangelism was again the focus on Wesley Day 1949 which found Sangster presiding over a gathering of over two thousand at Central Hall to celebrate the Aldersgate experience of John Wesley, but with a particular focus on a realistic appraisal of the present state of individual Methodist witness; the emphasis again on 'saving souls'.⁷⁸ Also in 1949 Sangster was designated President of the Methodist Conference for the coming year 1950-1, thereby becoming the youngest President of the Conference since the 1932 Methodist Union. At a united service the evening before the Conference of 1950, when he was to take office, Sangster addressed the need for 'Schools for Preachers', the implementation of which his son argues 'became one of the

⁷⁵ W.E. Sangster, 'The Church's One Privation' *Religion in Life*, 18:4, 1949, pp. 493-502.

⁷⁶ W.E. Sangster, *Let Me Commend* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949).

⁷⁷ This is a paraphrased summary of the lectures.

⁷⁸ *Methodist Recorder*, 2 June 1949, p.5.

most valuable uses of his office'.⁷⁹ His second book on preaching, published only nine months earlier, making him the ideal candidate and authority to lead such a venture.⁸⁰

The dual theme for Sangster's presidential year was almost obvious – Holiness and Evangelism. His first speech as President focused on the need for evangelism. If Methodism had a role in the modern world it was to be 'aggressive in evangelism'.⁸¹ Throughout the address Sangster continually referred back to the historic inheritance and calling of Methodism, attempting throughout to relate it to the nuclear world. Sangster concluded:

It is time to advance. The gravity of world affairs, the moral rot which has afflicted our nation, the awful consequences of the neglect of God – all call us to put forward a concerted effort. Let the whole line advance. Let us go to the great unchurched mass of people in this country and call them to God in Jesus Christ. This is our task – by Royal Appointment! Ours historically, ours still. We are challenged both by blatant unbelief and by the cool arrogance of the indifferent. We accept the challenge. We will be aggressive in evangelism.⁸²

It is only in this context that his message of the previous evening concerning the 'Schools for Preachers' can be understood, for, according to Sangster, 'nothing compares with evangelism in importance'.⁸³ His own contribution to this, apart from writing consistently on the theme of evangelism throughout his presidential year was, to initiate and participate in the 'Schools for Preachers' programme in an attempt to redress the decline in local preachers throughout the denomination.

In his address to the ministerial session of the Conference on 24 July, 1950 Sangster picked the second part of his dual theme: Holiness. The address reads almost like a lament, as he attempts to battle what he saw as the apparent reluctance and lethargy among Methodists ministers in preaching the doctrine of holiness. Acknowledging the problems of definition associated with the doctrine as a possible reason for its lack of

⁷⁹ *Doctor Sangster*, p.204.

⁸⁰ W.E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Construction* (London: Epworth, 1949). This volume was later combined with *The Craft of Sermon Illustration* and published under the title *The Craft of the Sermon* (London: Epworth, 1954).

⁸¹ Cf: *Methodist Recorder*, 20 July 1950, p. 3

⁸² *Methodist Recorder*, 20 July 1950, p. 3.

⁸³ *Methodist Recorder*, 20 July 1950, p. 3.

propagation Sangster says:

Today, I plead with you to preach holiness. Let us, so far as we are able, leave controversies aside[...]Let us look at the positive things he [Wesley] wanted to say and let us ask ourselves if we don't want to say them too[...]One of the greatest services[...]which John Wesley rendered our fathers was that he was all the time holding a goal before the people. We do not, to the same extent, hold a goal before our people. Our danger is tacitly to accept both for ourselves and our people a lower standard than we ought...highly respectable is not good enough.⁸⁴

The themes of his presidential addresses on evangelism and holiness were followed up and re-emphasized throughout his presidential year both in articles,⁸⁵ particularly in his weekly column 'The President's Quarter Hour' in the *Methodist Recorder*, and at the 'School for Preachers' held at Birmingham, London, Plymouth, Bristol, Manchester and York, which occasioned considerable interest, attracting nearly one thousand to each of the venues. Throughout his year he also delivered a series of lectures at the Methodist Colleges on the life of the preacher, which although highlighting his vision of pastoral ministry, under the published title *The Approach to Preaching* reads like a guide to successful pastoral ministry.⁸⁶

Immediately on taking up the Presidency, Sangster organized the distribution of the second edition of his book *Methodism Her Unfinished Task*⁸⁷ to all Methodist ministers. Accompanying and enclosed with the book was a duplicated personal letter in his own hand, a number of which he wrote during his presidency. This letter contained the comment, 'I need hardly say that I do not intend it as a Presidential "pronouncement". These are just my convictions, from some of which you may differ, but it did not seem wrong to let you know my thoughts at the beginning of the year in which you called me to leadership'.⁸⁸

This would indicate that this book in particular is a good indicator of Sangster's views for the period 1947 when it was first published and to the end of his period as

⁸⁴ *Methodist Recorder*, 3 August 1950, p. 1.

⁸⁵ This includes a rare and little known article on holiness in the Pharos Paper series: W.E. Sangster, *Holiness* (London: Epworth Press, 1950)

⁸⁶ W.E. Sangster, *The Approach to Preaching* (London: Epworth, 1951).

⁸⁷ W.E. Sangster, *Methodism Her Unfinished Task* (London: Epworth, 1950).

⁸⁸ Presidential letter dated July 1950 : Andrew Cheadle archive.

President of the Methodist Conference i.e. July 1951 – views he thought as important to Methodism. At the end of the year he also had a small book about prayer published under the title *Teach Us to Pray*.⁸⁹

He concluded his year of Presidency in a way consistent with its beginning and with its emphases as he extols, in a series of articles,⁹⁰ the need for evangelism and the life of holiness, even suggesting ways in which Cliff College could be used as an instrument in their progress.⁹¹ At the close of his Presidential year a good number (30+) voted for him again, against custom, bringing to the fore the issue of one year Presidential terms. A short debate ensued in the *Methodist Recorder* with the 28 June edition devoting its leading article to the subject. The Rev J.G. Jones in a letter to the editor stated his concern that Sangster's leadership, so short yet profound, would be terminated after just one year. 'It seems', he comments, 'almost sinful to dispense with his leadership at the next conference'.⁹² The *British Weekly* concluded that, 'Dr. Sangster has stirred Methodism more than most of his predecessors in living memory'.⁹³

Gauging his success at promoting what he saw as the essence of Methodism, i.e. Evangelism and Holiness, is impossible. Methodism became, however, very active in evangelistic concerns throughout the early to middle 1950s, especially in 1953. Church attendance after a short lived increase, however, continued to decline in the long run, social adjustment after the war probably being the most important factor in this tendency along with what Grace Davie calls 'believing without belonging'.⁹⁴

Sangster's emphasis and vital concern for the Methodist doctrine of holiness did not seem to be shared by many within his own tradition. One minister wrote, however:

Christian Holiness has been much in our minds of late. We have seen a revival of something which ought never to have suffered eclipse. Dr. Sangster gave the lead

⁸⁹ W.E. Sangster, *Teach Us to Pray* (London: Epworth, 1951).

⁹⁰ *Methodist Recorder*, 7 June, p.3; 14 June, p.3; 21 June, p.3; 28 June 1951, 3.

⁹¹ See especially: *Methodist Recorder*, 21 June 1951, p.3.

⁹² *Methodist Recorder*, 12 July 1951, p. 11.

⁹³ See *Doctor Sangster*, p. 219.

⁹⁴ For an enlightening discussion of such tendencies from a Durkheimian sociological perspective, see Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

when he published his presidential manifesto at the Bradford Conference. Since then, as a prophet among his people he has insistently called for a reevaluation of this great element in our Christian faith.⁹⁵

Few seemed, however, to share his sentiments within mainstream Methodism. Just a cursory reading of the *Methodist Recorder* from 1951-1960 reveals that practically all the articles devoted to the issue were written by Sangster himself and the last book of the pre - 1960 era wholly devoted to the subject of holiness within British Methodism was written by Sangster.⁹⁶ This contrasts with the situation in America where a number of works on Wesleyan holiness studies were being published, one in particular taking issue with many of Sangster's views.⁹⁷ Much of the other interest in the doctrine of holiness both in Britain and the USA was associated with the 'Holiness Movement' in Great Britain and the Church of the Nazarene in America. Both groups were, at the time, more in line with the 'Pentecostal/Experiential' emphasis of the doctrine as linked in British Methodism most closely with Cliff College.⁹⁸ Indeed some of the most prominent leaders of the 'Holiness Movement' in Great Britain had been trained at Cliff under the immediate influence of Samuel Chadwick.⁹⁹

A partial answer to this lack of engagement or interest in this part of the Methodist legacy, especially within mainstream Methodism, was perhaps British Methodism's growing involvement in the initial movements toward unity with the Church of England. Its theological agenda, therefore, was directed away from theological distinctives towards things the Churches had in common. Another cause was the distaste for some of the excesses and emphases of the 'Cliff School' of thought.¹⁰⁰ The former found Methodism involved at a practical level in evangelism on a grand scale together with leading Church of England ministers and bishops and the leaders of the Baptist and the other Free churches.

Sangster was also an integral part of these inter-denominational movements, more

⁹⁵ *Methodist Recorder*, 29 May 1952, p. 9.

⁹⁶ W.E. Sangster, *The Pure In Heart* (London: Epworth, 1954).

⁹⁷ G.A. Turner, *The More Excellent Way* (Indiana: Life & Light Press, 1952).

⁹⁸ This viewpoint will be discussed in Chapter 3 and Sangster's theological relationship to it in Chapter 5 & 6.

⁹⁹ These included: Clifford Filer, Jack Ford, Maynard James, Albert Lown.

¹⁰⁰ See *Evangelical Experiences*, chapters 4 & 5.

particularly as a preacher at the large rallies and campaigns, for his participation was always guaranteed to draw a crowd. Immediately following his year of Presidency, Sangster was one of the principal speakers at the 'For Such a Time as This' campaign in September 1951. This was specifically directed towards evangelism and was held as part of the Church's contribution to the 'Festival of Britain'.¹⁰¹ He was again speaker at the follow up meetings in October and December at the Royal Albert Hall and at the 'Universal Week of Prayer' in the following January.

On 6 September 1951, Sangster was a major contributor at the Ecumenical Methodist Conference in Oxford, a gathering of world Methodism. Sangster's message asserted that the Methodist contribution to ecumenicity is best served by proclaiming a relevant gospel and emphasizing its doctrine of Christian holiness. Sangster's point being that only as Methodism rediscovers and restates its own distinct heritage does it truly contribute positively towards Christian unity.

The immediate result of this conference was the plan for a year of 'World Methodist Mission' to be held in 1953. It becomes clear in Sangster's numerous articles written in 1952 in preparation for the forthcoming year of evangelism that he felt, as did a number at the Methodist Ecumenical Conference, that only as Methodism set its own house in order, especially in its evangelistic zeal, could it have any serious impact on the furtherance of Christian Unity,¹⁰² for, as Sangster says, 'There is nothing denominational in the effort. All the Evangelical Churches know that a blessing visiting one of them would overflow to all'.¹⁰³

For Sangster, at least, the culmination of these plans was his sermon of 4 January 1953, preached in the evening at Westminster Central Hall before his own congregation and released to the press. Even for the early 1950s the attention the sermon received was exceptional. Nearly all the daily papers printed it or large portions of it. Some of

¹⁰¹ A record was produced containing one of his messages from the campaign: 'Addresses by Rev. Dr. W.E. Sangster', (London: Evangelical Recordings, no date). See bibliography for further details.

¹⁰² See articles: *Methodist Recorder*, 10 January 1952, p. 4; 7 February 1952, p. 7; 6 March 1952, p. 4; 3 April 1952, p. 4; 1 May 1952, p. 4; 5 June 1952, p. 4; 3 July 1952, p. 3; 7 August 1952, p. 4; 4 September 1952, p. 7; 2 October 1952, p. 7; 2 November 1952, p. 4.

¹⁰³ *Methodist Recorder*, 7 August 1952, p. 4.

the headlines read: 'Britain Called to Drive Out Vice' - *Daily Herald*; 'Foul Traffic Stains Britain' - *Daily Dispatch*; '10 point preacher signposts way to a Better Britain' - *Daily Express*.¹⁰⁴ The sermon was at its heart an appeal for a revival of religion of the variety seen in Wales, at the start of the Twentieth century. According to Sangster it would affect Britain in ten crucial ways: It would pay old debts; reduce sexual immorality; disinfect the theatre; cut the divorce rate; reduce juvenile crime; lessen the prison population; improve the quality and increase the output of work; restore to the nation a sense of high destiny; make us invincible in the war of ideas; give happiness and peace to the people.¹⁰⁵

Three examples which illustrate the impact of the sermon include: first, the response of the *Daily Express* readers which asked its readers who would be interested in joining such a revival. On the 13th January 1953 the paper printed the following statistic, 'NINETY-TWO per cent of letter writers said, "We would join".' Of the remainder there were some church-goers who did not think a revival was necessary'. Second, that all British churches and religious bodies publicly associated themselves with it, with the *Church of England Newspaper* calling for a day of national repentance.¹⁰⁶ Third, even people in the ordinary workplace were discussing it. One worker from Dartford wrote:

I have worked at the largest engineering firm within the borough and for six years I have been Convenor of Shop Stewards. My activities for the Labour and Trade Union Movement bring me into contact with many people, but I have never heard so much talk among these people concerning the Churches and their message as there is now, since Dr. Sangster's sermon on 'What a Revival of Religion Might Do For Britain.'¹⁰⁷

The *Daily Express* took especial interest in the cause and although Sangster suspected their interest might be in his personality, he duly accepted their offer of inviting him to campaign throughout Britain under their wing, as he thought it would at least give a

¹⁰⁴ All: 5 January 1953.

¹⁰⁵ The sermon was printed in full in: *Sangster of Westminster* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1960), pp.79-90.

¹⁰⁶ *Doctor Sangster*, p.174.

¹⁰⁷ *Methodist Recorder*, 15 January 1953, p.11.

unique opportunity to publicize his beliefs.¹⁰⁸ The 'Find Your Faith' campaign was, therefore, underway. From 5 January until 19 March 1953 Sangster figured repeatedly in that paper as it reported on his campaigns and visits and published his articles. He preached in the major cities and visited areas of moral decay and various theatrical productions. In all this, most of the Christian churches supported his endeavour. The *Daily Express* even published support from the Scottish Churches and from the bench of Bishops.¹⁰⁹ It appears that Sangster was expressing the views and feelings of many religious leaders about the moral decline of the country and the falling congregations.¹¹⁰ Apart from his regular articles in the *Daily Express* which followed the attention of the New Year sermon he featured regularly in the *Sunday Times*.

On 24 September after a brief holiday in Switzerland, Sangster collapsed while preaching in Hull. Those who knew him best had been aware for some time of the strain he was putting himself under but this was perhaps the very first indication of the sickness that eventually would take his life nearly seven years later.

At the end of the year Sangster assessed the effects of the year's efforts and of the Methodist year of evangelism¹¹¹ in two articles in the *Methodist Recorder*. His conclusion was, basically, for bigger thinking and a larger long-term strategy.¹¹² This year was, to a degree, probably what lay behind his agonizing decision less than a year later to consider seriously his nomination to the position of Secretary of the Home Mission Department.

Sangster departed on a world tour on 12 January 1954, setting sail from Southampton bound for Bombay. There he spent six weeks preaching, lecturing and performing baptisms including his own grandson, as his daughter and son-in-law lived in India. On 22 March, Sangster and his wife departed for Ceylon (Sri Lanka) for one

¹⁰⁸ *Doctor Sangster*, p.175.

¹⁰⁹ *Doctor Sangster*, p.175.

¹¹⁰ For a historical survey and analysis of the issues of decline in British church attendance in the twentieth century, see Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹¹¹ J. Munsey Turner mistakenly dates this as 1952. J. Munsey Turner, *Modern Methodism In England 1932-1998* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1998), p.19.

¹¹² *Methodist Recorder*, 19 November 1953, p.3; 24 December 1953, p.3.

week before continuing their journey to Australia.¹¹³ He spent the many days and weeks on board ship writing a journal, composing a hymn¹¹⁴ and learning a new method of meditation,¹¹⁵ probably inspired by some of his reading in the Catholic mystics, into which he had delved deeply during the preparation of the lectures he was to give in Australia. Also on his journey he authored several articles about his travels, which were duly printed in the *Methodist Recorder*.¹¹⁶

On arriving in Australia Sangster addressed as ‘the world famous preacher’¹¹⁷ spoke to overflowing audiences in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, Canberra, Queensland and New South Wales. The chief engagement was, however, the delivery of the ‘Cato Lecture’ to the Australian Methodist Conference. The lectures later published under the title *The Pure In Heart – A Study in Sanctity* were delivered before at least 1500 people. The book was published in Britain in his absence and made available just over a month after the lecture.¹¹⁸ The essence of the book was the question, ‘What Makes A Saint?’ Sangster addressed the question from the point of view of scripture, and the perspective of the major church communions but with special reference to the views of John Wesley.¹¹⁹ The book marks the beginning of a more Catholic and mystical approach to pursuit of holiness.¹²⁰

Stopping off at New Zealand and Fiji, Sangster flew to Los Angeles for the final part of his tour where he often preached to large audiences of more than two thousand especially during his five days at Lake Junaluska to where he was to return only two years later for the Ninth World Methodist Conference.

On returning home from his journey in late August 1954, Sangster was almost simultaneously made a member of the ‘All Souls Club’, which gave him the

¹¹³ *Doctor Sangster*, p.258.

¹¹⁴ *Doctor Sangster*, pp. 258-259.

¹¹⁵ *Doctor Sangster*, p. 253.

¹¹⁶ *Methodist Recorder*, 15 April 1954, pp. 5,7; 17 June 1954, p. 1; 12 August 1954, p. 7; 2 September 1954, p. 7.

¹¹⁷ *Doctor Sangster*, p.259.

¹¹⁸ W.E. Sangster, *The Pure In Heart* (London: Epworth, 1954).

¹¹⁹ These views will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

¹²⁰ His synthesis of Catholic mysticism and psychology combined with a Protestant view of faith will be discussed in chapter 6.

opportunity of mixing and debating with distinguished clerics and layman from other denominations and the Church of England.¹²¹ The membership, by invitation only, was a source of great joy to Sangster, a fact acknowledged by his son, 'If he had been inclined to boast of any distinctions that had come to him, I think he would have put membership of the "All Soul's Club" first'.¹²²

The year of 1954 concluded, however, on a much heavier note as Sangster's name was put forward as leader of the Home Missions Department upon the retirement of Rev. Dr. Colin Roberts. Paul Sangster portrays vividly his father's torment concerning what Sangster, not wholly unquestioningly, accepted as God's will mediated through the Methodist Conference and his own desires to continue in his pastoral ministry at Westminster Central Hall:

He was a puzzle even to his friends, for he would never commit himself. One prominent minister, impatient of his apparent lack of interest in the matter, burst into his office a few weeks before Conference and said, 'Now look here Sangster. Do you want the job or don't you?' My father replied very simply, 'I want what God wants for me', and that was as much of an answer as he ever gave....He did not refuse to stand for the office when his name was put forward in March...At the last Leaders' Meeting of the Central Hall he said, after announcing that he had been nominated in committee as General Secretary of Home Missions, 'As a minister of the gospel I am in the hands of Conference', and he never mentioned the subject again.¹²³

Perhaps the nearly five months of almost no literary activity, from early November 1954 to late April 1955, reflect the true scale of his dilemma. On the one hand, he was feeling fulfilled at Central Hall yet, on the other hand, he felt he could bring his views and vision to a wider audience in the proposed role as leader of Methodist Home Missions.

His article of 28 April entitled 'Bible Basis of all We Believe' in the *Methodist Recorder*, however, brought his name back to the fore. Appealing from the standpoint of what Sangster called 'A Simple Statement of Common Belief', which was in fact a mildly conservative view of revelation and the authority of the Bible, he asked for

¹²¹ *Doctor Sangster*, pp.182-183.

¹²² *Doctor Sangster*, p.183.

¹²³ *Doctor Sangster*, p.184.

‘Cooperation in evangelism’:

We believe that it is in co-operative evangelism that we shall learn to understand each other's point of view; to see more in that point of view that we thought was there; to love each other more and to grow closer as together, we see the sinners coming home. This is how, we think, God will bring us to one mind....Few experiences of my life have been happier than those of united evangelism with folk of different ecclesiastical traditions.¹²⁴

Whether Sangster was intending this article to be a political manifesto for the forthcoming elections at Conference or otherwise, the article stirred up passionate responses, illustrated by the flow of letters to the *Methodist Recorder* in subsequent weeks, only to the first of which Sangster responded.¹²⁵

At the Methodist Conference in July 1955, he was duly elected as leader of Home Missions for British Methodism. This would be the first time Sangster would be a minister without a particular pastoral charge. Speaking to the press after the election about his feelings concerning the appointment, ‘I have been struggling against the impulse to withdraw my name from the list of nominations’, Sangster admitted, ‘but I have to live with myself afterwards and so I let my name go forward, praying that God's will might be done, and this is the result.’¹²⁶ Asked by the press as to his new duties, Sangster outlined in brief what he saw as his agenda, ‘Let us say, the leadership of all that makes for spiritual advance in Methodism in this country. I have a conviction that there is a possibility of real religious revival in England within the next few years.’¹²⁷ Referring to the recent relatively successful Billy Graham campaign Sangster continues, ‘It proved a hunger among the people. I do not regard those campaigns as having finished the job in any sense of the word. The task of evangelising Britain is a task for Britishers.’¹²⁸

It appears, therefore, that in broad outline Sangster aimed at continuing the dual focus of evangelism and holiness. It seems, however, that these comments and those

¹²⁴ *Methodist Recorder*, 28 April 1955, p.3.

¹²⁵ *Methodist Recorder*, 12 May 1955, p.7.

¹²⁶ *Methodist Recorder*, 14 July 1955, p.15.

¹²⁷ *Methodist Recorder*, 14 July 1955, p.15.

¹²⁸ *Methodist Recorder*, 14 July 1955, p.15.

from his important article of April, suggest that he now saw evangelism as being only truly effective if it was carried out beyond the bounds of one's own religious tradition. This could be the lesson learned from the 1953 Methodist Year of Evangelism, which had only produced a limited impact despite massive effort. The term 'revival' figures more and more in his religious vocabulary, indicating perhaps that Sangster had broadened his understanding of the need and task of evangelism, from being something he had seen as a distinctive yet not exclusive task and calling of Methodism. A similar subtle shift can be seen in the expression of his views concerning holiness. Both his book of 1954 on the subject of sanctity, namely *The Pure In Heart* with its more 'catholic approach' and the emphasis on 'the things we have in common' as expressed in his article of 28 April 1955, seem to suggest that Sangster was beginning to temper the stress on the language of 'distinctives' for the greater cause of united action for the good of Britain,¹²⁹ an example being his more extensive use of the more 'catholic' terms of saintliness, sainthood and saint.

During this period there was a real hope of progression in inter-church relations. Methodism itself had also just passed a resolution at the July Conference to enter into conversations with the Church of England. Answering questions of the implications of these conversations, Dr. Harold Roberts stated, '[...] it was hoped that as a result of the conversations, certain definite proposals with a view to inter-communion based on a mutually acknowledged ministry would be made to the Church of England and to the Methodist Church.'¹³⁰

It is in this context of Methodist and Church of England relations, the growing mutual participation of the Churches in evangelism, and the real sense of the numerical decline of the Churches in the face of public apathy that the rest of Sangster's life can be understood, most particularly within the context of his work for the Methodist Home Mission Department. Indeed, in his farewell message to the Central Hall congregation, Sangster expresses in the aforementioned language his hope for the Church and the

¹²⁹ These subtle changes in vocabulary will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6

¹³⁰ *Methodist Recorder*, 14 July 1955, p.15.

future:

We want a revival – of course we do; and if we had more saints in our midst it would be given to us; the Church would be more impressive if we had more saints!...People say we want a new Christian philosophy to answer the sceptics and atheists; but nobody can answer unbelief like a saint.¹³¹

Holiness and evangelism were, therefore, to continue to be his theme but the language used most often would be the need for ‘saints’ and ‘revival.’ Sangster threw himself, therefore, into all areas of activity both inside and outside of Methodism that sought to promote these goals. He became one of the chief preachers at the Evangelical Alliance campaigns held annually at Filey,¹³² the first being held from 10 –17 September 1955. Sangster’s sermons centred on holiness and prayer; the latter of which was to become Sangster’s chief way of achieving the great ends of holiness and revival, a dominant theme in his final years. This was brought further to the attention of Methodism and perhaps other interested parties by his articles in the *Joyful News*, the first of which was entitled ‘Revival In Our Time’, which yet again calls for more prayer, for, ‘The One thing you cannot have revival without is a great volume of deep, and corporate, and beseeching prayer.’¹³³

The following six months saw him also writing regular articles in the *Methodist Recorder* in which he interviewed distinguished scholars and politicians, continuing his weekly column in *The Sunday Times* and releasing a devotional book for lent, typical of the emphases of the Fellowship of the Kingdom, entitled *They Met At Calvary*¹³⁴ which looks at the lives and responses of the various people who met at the Cross. Sangster’s final question to the reader being, ‘What must I do if the Cross is to benefit me’?

It was also during this time that his association with Cliff College was firmly established, being a regular contributor to the column ‘From the Home Front’ in the *Joyful News* and a speaker at the college, his preaching during Whitsun being a

¹³¹ *Methodist Recorder*, 1 September 1955, p.7.

¹³² A short book of some of his Filey messages were published after his death *Sangster at Filey* (West Croydon: New Mildmay Press, 1961).

¹³³ *Joyful News*, 29 September 1955.

¹³⁴ W.E. Sangster, *They Met At Calvary* (London: Epworth, 1956).

highlight attracting around 1400 to the Sunday evening service at the Pentecost weekend celebrations in 1956-58.¹³⁵ The content of nearly all his articles and messages continued in the vein of prayer, saintliness and revival.¹³⁶

In July 1956, Sangster presented his first report to Conference as Secretary of Methodist Home Missions in which he included his plans for the coming year, which, once again, stressed the importance and need for evangelism. Following the pattern of Schools for Preachers, Sangster suggested training days for evangelism entitled 'Schools of Evangelism', the first being held in November 1957. Each of the participants, sometimes up to 1000 in total, were taught and advised by a panel of experts with Sangster playing the leading role. The participants were challenged and encouraged to look at their own spiritual condition.

Sangster's pamphlets, including *A Spiritual Check-Up*,¹³⁷ his most successful pamphlet which was originally prepared for the Methodist Year of Evangelism of 1953 alongside *Twelve Ways of Evangelism*,¹³⁸ were printed for use in the Schools. The former booklet together with *You Can Be a Saint*¹³⁹ were used regularly as simple inspirational and devotional tools during the 'Schools of Evangelism' and were later found on the desks of many Methodist ministers. Altogether twelve of this type of short booklet were written or republished by Sangster during his years in leadership of the Home Mission department, which received all the profits.¹⁴⁰

Also in July 1956 he departed for America where he was to spend over two months, principally to attend the Ninth World Methodist Conference at Lake Junaluska and to hold a number of services at the Tabernacle in Ocean City¹⁴¹ where he presented a

¹³⁵ A recording of his message at the 1958 celebrations reveals the changes to his voice caused by his sickness – sounding slow and deliberate.

¹³⁶ E.g. *Joyful News*, 8 March 1956, p.1; 14 June 1956, p.2; 12 July 1956, p.5.

¹³⁷ This booklet sold over 100,000 copies within eighteen months of its publication and totalling over 150,000 by its thirteenth printing in 1956. W.E. Sangster, *A Spiritual Check Up* (London: Epworth, 1956). See: G. T. Brake, *Policy and Politics in British Methodism 1932-1982* (London: Edsall, 1984), p. 741.

¹³⁸ This booklet was numbered 3 in the series of twelve: W.E. Sangster, *Twelve Ways of Evangelism* (London: Epworth, 1959).

¹³⁹ W.E. Sangster, *You Can be a Saint* (London: Epworth, 1957).

¹⁴⁰ For a complete list, see W.E. Sangster/ BIBLIOGRAPHY

¹⁴¹ *Doctor Sangster*, p.265.

series on the subject of holy living, the latest systematic presentation of his thought on the subject of holiness.¹⁴² Before leaving Ocean City for the Conference he was invited by the Columbia Broadcasting Corporation to be part of a T.V. programme in which he was to answer questions on the philosophy of religion.¹⁴³

At the Conference itself, Sangster, speaking again on the subject of holiness, threw out the challenge to the representatives of World Methodism to rediscover their calling, exclaiming, 'We are called to be Saints'! Continuing, he asserted that Methodism once saw the goal of holiness; it knew the way to holiness; and reached the heights of holiness. In his conclusion he contrasted his three main points with the present state of Methodism, starting with the indictment, 'We fail, I think, at every point[...] today we (Methodism) don't so clearly see the goal;[...] we don't know the way;[...] we stumble in the foothills[...]May God have mercy on us all'!¹⁴⁴

Sangster had again been heard and seen by thousands at the Camp Meetings, his sessions exceptionally well attended. The CBC interview was said to have been seen by two million people. He had become, by this time in late 1956, a world-renowned name in Methodism and was becoming well known in other parts of Christianity, both in Britain, America and beyond. Even Billy Graham referred to Sangster as 'a preacher without peer in the world.'¹⁴⁵

On returning to England, Sangster was interviewed by the *Methodist Recorder* in which he stated, that the prerequisite for the revival for which he prayed and hoped was the recovery of the doctrine of sanctification. Looking back over his own ministry he comments:

Some think it is my theological obsession because I have tried for twenty years to stir Methodism to a new valuation of its own neglected treasure...We need more

¹⁴² The tapes of these messages are in the possession of A. Cheatle. During the first of these messages, entitled *Unconditional Surrender* Sangster asserts that it is the first time he has preached systematically on the subject of holiness.

¹⁴³ According to Sangster's son he was in possession of this film: See: *Doctor Sangster*, p. 265. A soundtrack is in possession of A. Cheatle and will be referred to later in the thesis, see Appendix.

¹⁴⁴ E.T. Clark & E.B. Perkins, *Proceedings of the Ninth World Methodist Council* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1957), p.365. A. Cheatle is in possession of a tape of this message.

¹⁴⁵ *Doctor Sangster*, p.265.

saints. This is the way to get them....I still believe Methodism has an unfinished task. I believe that by her history, polity, and doctrine she has a peculiar usefulness to God at this time of spiritual renaissance and I tremble lest she fail in her high destiny.¹⁴⁶

It is no accident, therefore, that Sangster wrote his devotional treatise on the doctrine of sanctification during this period. Published in January 1957, *The Secret of Radiant Life*¹⁴⁷ set out to describe in devotional form, the essence of his message at the World Methodist Conference, concentrating in Part 1 on 'THE LIFE –the person I could be' ('The Goal and Heights of Holiness'); in Part 2 'THE TRUTH – the person I am' ('A Spiritual Check up'); in Part 3 'THE WAY – the path between' ('The Way').¹⁴⁸

Between Autumn 1956 and the end of 1957 Sangster continued writing regular articles in the *Methodist Recorder*, the *Joyful News*, and *The Sunday Times*, over and above which he had two large articles published in *Christianity Today* entitled 'Can We Get Peace of Mind?'¹⁴⁹ and 'The Christian Use of Leisure'.¹⁵⁰

His writing of the time was aimed mostly towards the revival for which he longed although by the Methodist Conference of 1957, though seeing what he thought as encouraging signs, Sangster reported to Conference, 'There is no obvious revival of religion in the nation as a whole.'¹⁵¹ He held firmly the belief that such a revival would be only truly possible if the Church closed its ranks more, and as wide Church re-union still seemed far off, a start could be made by co-operation in evangelism – a view, he stated, which was shared by the British Council of Churches.¹⁵² He followed up his convictions by allowing his name to be put forward to the Methodist Ecumenical Committee which was to represent the Methodist Church at the British Council of Churches, to which he was subsequently appointed alongside such distinguished

¹⁴⁶ *Methodist Recorder*, 20 September 1956, p.1.

¹⁴⁷ W.E. Sangster, *The Secret of Radiant Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957). This book was translated into Afrikaans: W.E. Sangster, *Die Geheim van Ware Lewensvreugde*, trans. By P. Beukes (Kaapstad: Naweekpos-Uitgewers, [1961?]).

¹⁴⁸ *The Secret of Radiant Life*.

¹⁴⁹ *Christianity Today*, 29 October 1956, pp.5-17.

¹⁵⁰ *Christianity Today*, 10 June 1957, pp.11-13.

¹⁵¹ *Methodist Recorder*, 18 July 1957, p.5.

¹⁵² Paraphrase summary from: *Methodist Recorder*, 18 July 1957, p. 5.

scholars as Dr. Harold Roberts, Dr. Gordon Rupp and Dr. Benson Perkins.¹⁵³

In *The Sunday Times* he continued to argue the case for Christian belief, taking to task what he saw as common reasons for unbelief, attacking ‘democratic humanism’,¹⁵⁴ ‘staunch unbelief’,¹⁵⁵ ‘nominal Christianity’,¹⁵⁶ and ‘agnosticism’.¹⁵⁷

His efforts in the Methodist publications focused on evangelism, more and more the need for prayer, and for a revival within the church which emphasized, in practice, the life of scriptural holiness and, what Sangster saw as its obvious consequence – ‘social righteousness.’¹⁵⁸ Sangster ended the year stating his firm conviction that British Methodism could double its membership within ten years just by keeping hold of its own young people, but this would only happen if the Methodist Church had a two pronged attack; essentially ministry to those outside the church i.e. evangelism and to lift the quality of life within it – holy living.¹⁵⁹ As a result of his endeavour in this direction he produced two more pamphlets for use at the Schools of Evangelism and beyond to emphasize this approach, the first being basically a summary of his ‘Sermon for Britain’ of 4 January 1953 but with an additional section.¹⁶⁰

Towards the end of 1957, however, his strength had begun to wane. His son provides information that ‘the disease that was to kill him was upon him during the last months of 1957.’¹⁶¹ By this time his left leg had become weak, his whole body was twitching and his throat seemed tight.¹⁶² Although he rigidly kept all his appointments until July 1958, even taking time to deliver the Fondren Lectures at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas in January 1958, later published as *Power In Preaching*,¹⁶³ his fourth and last book on the subject. He unrelentingly continued to contribute regularly

¹⁵³ *Methodist Recorder*, 1 August 1957, p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ *The Sunday Times*, 31 March 1957, p.14.

¹⁵⁵ *The Sunday Times*, 19 May 1957, p.16.

¹⁵⁶ *The Sunday Times*, 4 August 1957, p.13.

¹⁵⁷ *The Sunday Times*, 6 October 1957, p.26.

¹⁵⁸ See for example: *Joyful News*, 5 September 1957, p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ *Methodist Recorder*, 5 December 1957, p.1.

¹⁶⁰ W. E. Sangster, *The Need and the Way* (London: Epworth Press, 1957).

W.E Sangster, *How to Live in Christ* (London: Epworth Press, 1957).

¹⁶¹ *Doctor Sangster*, p. 341.

¹⁶² *Doctor Sangster*, p. 341

¹⁶³ W. E. Sangster, *Power In Preaching* (London: Epworth Press, 1958).

to the *Methodist Recorder*, the *Joyful News* and *The Sunday Times* and was made Secretary Emeritus of the Home Mission Department at the 1958 Methodist Conference, where it was evident Sangster's strength was fading even to the point of markedly affecting his speaking voice.¹⁶⁴ At the Conference he was unable even to recognize good friends. The Sunday following Conference, Sangster preached his last sermon in Sunderland.¹⁶⁵

From shortly after Conference, therefore, he was unable to carry out his normal duties, being left primarily to work through his pen, completing his Westminster Pamphlet series, writing responses to one hundred regularly asked questions, published in 1959 under the title *Give God a Chance*.¹⁶⁶ This book, basically a work of apologetics, reflected, in style, some of the questions and answers on the philosophy of religion from his CBC T.V. interview. During his illness he also edited two volumes of sermons from his time at Westminster Central Hall, which were published posthumously in 1960 and 1961, but reflecting his thought from the years 1939-1955.¹⁶⁷

Perhaps his most noteworthy achievement during his final years of debilitating sickness was the effort he put into the building and promotion of the Prayer Cell Movement, which a year after its re-inauguration on 18 December 1958 had over two thousand registered cells in one hundred countries. The quarterly publication of the movement entitled the *Prayer Cell Messenger* carried articles by Sangster from its first appearance in March 1959 until shortly after his death, all of which were concerned with the centrality of prayer. *The Pattern of Prayer*,¹⁶⁸ a short book published two years after his death reprinted these articles and further ones written by his successor, Leslie Davison.

In September 1959, Sangster officially resigned from the Home Mission Department and later in the year from the ministry itself. He continued to write

¹⁶⁴ A tape of his address at Cliff College during Whitsun reveals this clearly.

¹⁶⁵ *Doctor Sangster*, p. 346.

¹⁶⁶ W.E. Sangster, *Give God A Chance* (London: Epworth Press, 1959).

¹⁶⁷ W.E. Sangster, *Westminster Sermons* (London: Epworth Press, 1960/62), I & II.

¹⁶⁸ W.E. Sangster & Leslie Davison, *The Pattern of Prayer* (London: Epworth Press, 1962).

regularly, however, to the *Methodist Recorder*, the *Joyful News*, the *Prayer Cell Messenger*, and *The Sunday Times* until his untimely death on 24 May 1960 (Wesley Day).

Sangster was cremated at a private service and a memorial service was held on 3 June 1960 at Westminster Central Hall with 1500 attending. Cecil Pawson, one of Sangster's great friends, gave the memorial address, describing Sangster as a 'master craftsman in preaching, the scholar – evangelist with the widest range of evangelism', his principal emphases of his ministry being evangelism and holiness.¹⁶⁹ Together with well-known names, tributes from recognized churchmen poured in and were printed in numerous Christian publications, all stating what they saw as his legacy. The Right Honourable The Viscount Tony Pandy stated, 'Dr. Sangster was the outstanding Evangelist of the century.'¹⁷⁰ Simon Ross Valentine follows this line years later calling him, 'the scholar evangelist'.¹⁷¹ Writing in the *Expository Times*, C.L. Mitton called him, 'one of the really great preachers of our day'.¹⁷² Leonard Tudor designated him 'Prince of Preachers', a sentiment echoed by William Barclay.¹⁷³ Derrick Greeves, the minister of Westminster Central Hall at the time of Sangster's death asks the question about Methodism, 'Have we had a greater religious journalist since Wesley?'¹⁷⁴ The sheer number of articles written (almost four hundred) to over seventeen different publications, on top of which he published twenty books and twelve pamphlets suggests Greeves's assessment is accurate. Comparing Sangster to Dinsdale T. Young and Leslie Weatherhead, one of modern Methodism's foremost historical scholars, Rupert E. Davies, sees Sangster's legacy of being of a more profound nature that continues to affect British Methodism:

Who then is the Methodist preacher in modern times...who has done most to mould our thinking and influence our lives....My nomination is Will Sangster, partly

¹⁶⁹ *Sangster of Westminster*, pp.58-59.

¹⁷⁰ Private letter to A. Cheatle, 16 July 1994.

¹⁷¹ *Methodist Recorder*, 1 June 2000, p.15.

¹⁷² *Expository Times*, 72, October 1960, pp.8-9.

¹⁷³ *Expository Times*, 73, July 1962, p. 320.

¹⁷⁴ *Methodist Recorder*, 2 June 1960, p. 5.

because so far as I can tell he has had a longer – lasting influence on Methodism than either of the other two, an influence that continues into the present day.¹⁷⁵

Dr. Kenneth Slack, general secretary of the British Council of Churches said of Sangster:

Dr. Sangster exemplified to all churches the richness of the Methodist heritage. His evangelical preaching with its characteristic emphasis on scriptural holiness made him an outstanding figure in British church life.¹⁷⁶

Little doubt can be left, therefore, that William Edwin Sangster was one of the greatest and most influential British Methodists of the Twentieth Century and a very significant figure in British Church life.

It is remarkable, therefore, considering his centrality and importance to Methodism, his national renown, his extensive and widely read authorship and his continual stress on the characteristic doctrines of Methodism from pulpit, by book, pamphlet, and numerous articles, that so little has been done to provide an accurate, detailed, chronological and comprehensive overview of his written and other work. This chapter claims uniqueness by filling such a gap. Furthermore, this chapter contributes to scholarship by providing a distinctive biographical survey of Sangster's life and literary legacy that lays the foundation not only for the theological work within the rest of this thesis but also provides a comprehensive reference work for future study, supplemented by the exhaustive appendix.

The central focus of the remainder of this thesis is the Methodist doctrine of holiness, which was in Sangster's own words his, 'theological obsession'. This doctrine, as has been demonstrated, he addressed continually throughout his life, through sermon, book, article and pamphlet. It is, therefore, necessary, to examine the formative influences that shaped his understanding of this element of the Christian faith and the developments of his enunciation of those views.

¹⁷⁵ *Methodist Recorder*, 16 August 1984, p. 9.

¹⁷⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 25 May 1960, p.14.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL ROOTS & DEVELOPMENTS

Having delineated the biographical background of Sangster's life and writings, this chapter will seek to analyse the most significant formative influences on his thought. The survey begins with Sangster's roots in the Radnor Street Methodist Mission, briefly touches on his time in the Army, and progresses to his theological education with its strong emphasis on philosophy and psychology. Sangster's crisis or breakdown in Liverpool will introduce the crucial influence of the Oxford Group Movement. Its agenda not only aided Sangster out of his crisis and led him to a personal discovery of John Wesley's doctrine of assurance, also encompassing a driving passion for holiness, but also, perhaps negatively, discouraged him from integrating the modern paradigms of his education into his theological thinking until around 1939. The chapter concludes by placing Sangster within the context of British Methodism as it sought to come to terms with its identity, immediately prior to and following the Methodist Union of 1932.

The Context of the Methodist Mission

The starting point for gaining an understanding of William Sangster's thought is the evangelicalism of the type espoused by the Radnor Street Mission. In 1909 until his departure for the Army, Sangster's religiosity was formed in the context of the Methodist Mission. Indeed, shortly before his death Sangster penned an article expressing his indebtedness.¹

The missions were not, by this time, affected by the growing impact of the liberal theology of the late Victorian and pre-Great War era. Indeed the missions were typical

¹ 'Those Back-Street Missions', *Methodist Recorder*, 12 May 1960, p.11.

of the type of evangelicalism of the nineteenth century. This pattern of religious faith expressed itself generally by setting great store on external observance. Although characterised by a lower view of the sacraments, the missions placed great stress on the pulpit ministry. Indeed, theologically speaking, preaching was 'the sacrament.' Every service would contain some sort of Scriptural exhortation and young people who showed any sort of calling or gifting were encouraged to preach. The Bible was to be understood literally though with a soteriological intent.

The questions presented by biblical criticism and the modern findings of science were either not yet felt within the missions or were else ignored. This was primarily due to the fact that the Scriptures were seen as the source of the truth and were, after all, the Word of God. Sermons were typically used as evangelistic tools with the goal of pressing home the claims of the gospel. The Scriptures were also the ethical codebook, and ethical sermons abounded. Much was, therefore, also made of children attending Sunday school to learn the stories of the Bible and to be confronted, at an early age, with the need to 'decide' for Christ.

The chapels and missions of the day organised regular prayer meetings during the week and on an annual basis had at least one evangelistic drive in order to reach the lost. To the external observer this brand of religion seemed stiff and joyless as most of this expression of evangelicalism saw people focusing all of their lives upon the chapel or local mission, whilst staunchly holding the Sabbath, bitterly opposing drink and gambling and, in most places, they were adverse to dancing or other 'worldly pleasures.' When reflecting on the many positive influences of the Mission upon his own life, Sangster criticised the religion of the Missions as being, at times, coarse and

somewhat vulgar.²

Behind this world-denying religion and to an extent motivating it, was a profound belief in the life to come. Life was commonly seen primarily as preparation for the hereafter, including Judgement Day with its rewards and punishments. Therefore, one had to be 'saved from the wrath to come' (1 Thess.1.10) and to prepare to be fit for heaven. This other-worldliness, although common outside of Methodism, probably owed much to the evangelical revivals of the Eighteenth century under Wesley and Whitefield. Indeed, the Puritan ideal of life as a pilgrimage was crucial to the brand of spirituality propagated by these great preachers. Wesley expressed as much in the preface to his Sermons:

I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing – the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book!...Let me be homo unius libri.³

The way to 'eternal life' was, therefore, critical and the knowledge derived from the Bible was its source. Salvation from sin: living as much as possible away from sinful influences, and propagating 'holy living' in preparation for eternity, were the essential tenets of evangelical faith.

Over and beyond these general influences of evangelicalism, Sangster would have imbibed the very essence of Wesleyan Arminianism.⁴ The austere Calvinist understanding of total depravity; unconditional election; limited atonement; irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints met their Arminian counterfoil in Methodism and particularly vigorously in the Methodist Missions.

² 'Those Back Street Missions', *Methodist Recorder*, 12 May 1960, p.11.

³ BE Vol. 1, pp.104-105.

⁴ For an in depth discussion of John Wesley's Anglican, Arminian heritage, see: Donald A. Bullen, 'John Wesley – A Man of One Book? (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2007).

First: human sinfulness was a given, although a particular formulation of this would be difficult to trace. For most there was a taking for granted of original sin and a more or less conscious commitment to Wesley's definition of sin: a voluntary transgression of a known law of God. The latter is even evident in the Methodist Sunday School literature of the era.⁵

Second, the doctrine of unconditional election was rejected for the belief that God had determined that all who freely responded to His grace would be saved and, correspondingly, all who did not would be lost. Personal decision, particularly understood as conversion, was critical in this view of salvation.

Third, the Work of Christ was therefore for all and not limited to those who were already pre-ordained to be saved. Methodism, including, the missions did not, officially, favour or restrict themselves to a particular theory of the atonement, whereas its Calvinist counterparts mainly opted for substitutionary viewpoints.⁶

Fourth, grace was understood not to be irresistible but truly resistible. Salvation only occurs in the space opened up by a positive human response to the initiations and empowerment of grace which can overcome the bias or power of sin. Here, John Wesley's revision of Arminius' understanding of 'preventing' or 'prevenient' grace is crucial in not only understanding Methodism's⁷ but also Sangster's own views.⁸

Fifth, based on Wesley's view of grace, salvation became a precarious road. Bebbington observes, 'Here was the teaching of the defectibility of faith; a person

⁵ The official Wesleyan Methodist Sunday school notes continually express a firm belief in the classical notion of original sin but balanced by an emphasis on sin as deliberate action against a known law. See especially *The Methodist Sunday School Notes 1911*, ed. by J. Williams Butcher (London: Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Department, 1911), pp.21-27, 159-220.

⁶ Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 337.

⁷ See Hebert B. McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace* (Carlisle: Paternoster Pub., 2001) for a comprehensive survey of Wesley's Arminianism. Also Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994) for an alternative approach to Wesley.

⁸ Sangster never relinquished or down played the importance of the human response in salvation. See for example: *God Does Guide Us*, pp. 90-98; *The Pure in Heart*, pp.234-235.

might possess saving faith and yet subsequently lose it. Real Christianity, according to Wesley, was entirely incompatible with sin. Hence any deliberate breach of the divine law destroyed the life of God in the soul.⁹ It is at this point, however, that the Wesleyan doctrines of holiness and assurance of faith are meant as alternatives to the doctrine of ‘preservation’. Both find their foundation in Wesley’s understanding of grace as aiding and empowering the individual and bringing a corresponding knowledge of his presence. The classes and societies were the important means by which both the quest and experience of holiness and the corresponding assurance of faith were encouraged, and testified to, in the context of mutual accountability. All of the above emphases were constantly reinforced in chapel and mission by the enthusiastic singing of Charles Wesley’s hymns which, for most at the missions in particular, was the primary source of Methodism’s distinctive views, both in its anti-Calvinistic polemic and its propagation of John Wesley’s theology.

Sangster was thoroughly an evangelical moulded in this brand of the Methodist tradition. He experienced a conversion, aged thirteen. The language of Sangster’s own account of this experience as he is approached by Frank Wimpory, one of the leaders of Radnor Street Mission, highlights some of the above-mentioned beliefs of the Mission:

‘Now, Will, would you like to decide to be a Christian ? Have you given your heart to Christ ‘?’

‘No ‘!

‘Do you want to’?

I hesitated a little. I did – and I didn’t. Half of me was eager and half afraid. I think my chief hesitancy turned on ‘whether I could keep it up’[...]The best part of me won.

‘I think I do’, I faltered.

He led me into another room and knelt with me in prayer. He prayed with me and for me, and invited me to pray myself. I spluttered out my little prayer. It had one merit. I meant it. That day I handed over my life to Christ.¹⁰

⁹ David Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), p. 52.

¹⁰ *Doctor Sangster*, pp.32-33.

Evident is the language and practice of 'decision' and the importance of living the life of a Christian. Presupposed is the importance of Sunday school and evangelism.

His time at the Radnor Street Mission also involved being a leading member of the Band of Hope, a society against drink, underlining the world-denying ethic of this brand of evangelicalism. He also began to preach and take meetings, later becoming a local preacher. To Sangster, even in his teen years, religion was the all-encompassing passion of his life. Dorr, referring to Paul Sangster's account, contends that seven major emphases were adopted by Sangster at this time:

1. Nothing except religion matters.
2. One should militantly propagate the gospel message that Christ died for the sins of the world
3. One should deny the world.
4. Salvation is personal.
5. God is the Centre of life and the church is secondary.
6. The doctrine of assurance...one can know that he is saved.
7. The doctrine of perfection...one can live in perfect love to God and man.¹¹

This description of Sangster's adopted views seems, however, more consistent with his more mature thought, and though it is true that his life cannot be truly understood without this background, and, that he was definitely strongly influenced by the evangelical Wesleyan emphases at the mission, it appears that the term 'adopted' used by Dorr is too strong and, therefore, too much is being projected onto, at this time, a young teenage boy. Also, we know from his son that Sangster's keen interest in the Wesleys, both the hymns of Charles and John Wesley's doctrine of perfection, really

¹¹ *A Critique of the Preaching of William Edwin Robert Sangster*, p.17.

only became central to his conscious beliefs during his ministerial training,¹² with his personal experience and adoption of the doctrine of assurance coming as result of his crisis of 1930.

The Effects of Army Life

Sangster left the auspices of the Radnor Street Mission when he was called upon to serve in the Army in 1918 towards the end of World War I. As with many of his generation this global conflict left not only its scars on William Sangster, but also led to significant changes in his beliefs. Sangster was particularly affected when a significant number of those with whom he had trained were dispatched to France in a different Company and annihilated within days. Although Sangster was fortunate enough to be mainly involved in the Army of Occupation following the Armistice of 11 November 1918, he was profoundly affected by what he saw. Writing over twenty years later Sangster says:

The war virtually came to an end on November 11th, 1918. Peace was not made for many months but hostilities had ceased. The last bullet found its billet, and there was a great calm....Then began the steady march of the Allied Armies over the blasted fields of Northern France and Belgium, and into the zones appointed for occupation on the Rhine. The cost of war unrolled itself in two tremendous and hideous ways. The awful desolation of Flanders none can imagine who did not see. Everything made by human hands appeared to have been destroyed. The very earth seemed to have lost terrestrial form, and to have been shot up from the pit of hell. And in Germany itself – the cowed and starving population. Those are the two things etched on the memory of the men who made that journey.¹³

Prior to the 'Barthian Revolution' in theology, many, including Sangster, were left with unresolved questions and images from the war that cut to the chase of their religious beliefs, ones that would not be readily answered. In the same sermon as the one just quoted, delivered at Westminster Central Hall in autumn 1939, Sangster continues in what must have been a controversial message to accuse the victors of the Great War of

¹² *Doctor Sangster*, pp. 49-51.

¹³ W.E. Sangster, 'God Forgive Us', *These Things Abide*, p.54.

the dreadful mistreatment of the German Army and populace. Although written over two decades after the events, this sermon expresses strongly the ideas of corporate guilt and repentance – a far cry from the personal or individualistic categories of his mission days. These changes in thought would later have far-reaching implications for his view of sin.¹⁴

The most immediate and more subtle shift in his beliefs during his Army days was the previously mentioned ability clearly to discriminate between his genuine love of the people and his hatred of sin. This led him to being both popular and respected within his Regiment. Sangster later recalled an important lesson he learned within this context:

In my Army days I was in charge of a billet that the troops used as a centre for gambling, and I was much exercised in my own mind as to what I should do. And the Regimental Sergeant Major gave me this advice. He said, 'Don't notice it. It is wise not to see some things.' So I took his advice. I feigned not to notice it. But the men knew that I knew, and I knew that they knew that I knew, and one day one of them came to me to borrow some money. He was in debt. It must be paid at once. He had lost heavily at gambling and when I spoke to him of the blind and stupid folly of the whole silly business, he said, 'Well ! you knew that it was going on and you didn't object.' Ah ! he took my silence as consent. I'd been too smart. I'd followed the dictates of policy and not of principle and this was the result.¹⁵

Sangster learnt his lesson and in continuity with the puritan ideals of the Mission he became an unrelenting campaigner against moral and social evils but combined it with a great passion and genuine love for people. The next major influences on his thought were brought about by his years of study on leaving the Army.

Theological Education

The early part of his time in full-time higher education saw him caught in the reshuffling of the Methodist Colleges. In 1920 theological education in Methodism was undergoing radical changes following the interruptions caused by the First World War.

¹⁴ Sangster's view of sin is discussed extensively in Chapter 5.

¹⁵ 'The Peril of Expediency', *Why Jesus Never Wrote a Book*, p. 52.

Didsbury, Handsworth and Richmond Colleges all reopened in 1919 but it was first by late 1920 that internal re-assignment of students and staff ceased and a relatively normal college life resumed.¹⁶

Richmond College, to which Sangster was sent after one term at Handsworth College, had already been a school of divinity under the auspice of the University of London prior to WWI and was in a process of cementing the relationship.¹⁷ The Academic Diploma in Theology was established in 1923 and the first fully internal B.D. was awarded in 1924.¹⁸ In 1931 the Methodist professors Dr. Waterhouse and Dr. Ryder Smith were granted full University of London status.¹⁹ In this new academic climate the studies and emphasis of the curriculum were directed away from a defensive obscuritism, typified by the earlier narrowness of Thomas Jackson,²⁰ towards a scholarship centred upon the requirements of an accredited university degree in theology. The students would, therefore, have been confronted with the latest Christian and secular scholarship in all areas of the curriculum, although a slot for Methodist doctrine and polity naturally retained its place.²¹ Paul Sangster correctly observes that it was at this point that his father's curiosity and admiration for the work of the Wesleys was born:

It was at this stage in his career that he came fully under the spell of Charles Wesley's hymns, largely through Willie Horner, who had been brought up in Methodism. My father persuaded him to expound at length the hymns so closely associated with the Church's history. Hours were spent reading them to each other.²²

Citing Willie Horner, Paul Sangster continues regarding the influence of John Wesley's doctrine of perfection on his father:

¹⁶ W. Bardsley Brash, *The Story of Our Colleges* (London: Epworth, 1935), pp.103-104.

¹⁷ Frank H. Cumbers, *Richmond College 1843-1943* (London: Epworth Press, 1944), p.126.

¹⁸ *Richmond College*, p.126.

¹⁹ *Richmond College*, pp.126-127.

²⁰ cf. *Richmond College*, p.124.

²¹ *Richmond College*, p.127.

²² *Doctor Sangster*, p. 49.

Even then, John Wesley's doctrine of 'perfect love' strongly appealed to him, and his own quest for personal holiness was very earnest. He was often disturbed by his own sense of failure in prayer and devotion. He would reproach himself for what he called his 'lack of poise.' Cant, hypocrisy and insincerity were utterly foreign to his soul and were only regarded with loathing.²³

With regard to the rest of his ministerial and academic education Sangster went on to pass his intermediate exams in Arts in November 1922 but had to postpone his studies for the B.A. due to the demands of circuit work. He finally achieved a B.A. in Philosophy in 1927, attaining the grade of Second Class honours, lower division.²⁴ The account of his college life reflects a man determined to catch up with his colleagues, regularly 'burning the candle at both ends.'²⁵ His grades in Theology and his positioning in the class clearly show the progress made. In his Theology exams of April 1922 he scored 52% and was at the lower end of the class. Only one year later, however, he scored 85% and finished joint top.²⁶ He retained a high regard for Rev. Dr. C. Ryder Smith, his professor of Theology whom he often consulted later in life when preparing his own academic work.²⁷

Although the above results reflect Sangster's own hard work in the area of theology, the subject which captured his mind was philosophy. Eric Waterhouse wrote of him:

The Philosophical studies, for which I was responsible, attracted him most of all and with eager zeal he worked by day and late into the night to equip himself. In all the thirty-one years I spent at Richmond, he was the only student who ever begged for extra teaching!²⁸

This area of knowledge was indeed Richmond's chosen area of speciality²⁹ and Sangster

²³ *Doctor Sangster*, p. 51.

²⁴ cf. letter, 15 May 1995 from University of London Library, Archives, Special Collections.

²⁵ *Doctor Sangster*, pp. 49-50.

²⁶ Exam Results 1920-1941, Richmond Wesleyan Theological Institution, MARC, The John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Special Collections Division.

²⁷ See for example the acknowledgement to Smith : *The Path to Perfection*, p.7.

²⁸ *Doctor Sangster*, p.51.

²⁹ *The Story of Our Colleges*, p.104.

drew on it to the full. Some idea as to the actual content of the Philosophy curriculum taken by Sangster is provided by Waterhouse: 'Studies & Students,' *Richmond College 1843-1943*. A more detailed view of the Intermediate Courses taken by Sangster and the B.A. honours courses' regulations and requirements through the University of London show that Sangster's progression from the Intermediate Course to the B.A. in philosophy demanded that he take Logic at Intermediate level.³⁰ For his B.A. honours in Philosophy he was examined as follows:³¹

1. Logic & Methodology (One Paper)
2. Psychology (Two Papers)
3. Ethics (One Paper)
4. Social Philosophy & Comparative Ethics (One Paper)
5. The General History of Ancient & Modern Philosophy (Two Papers)
6. Economics or Experimental Psychology or Sociology (One Paper)
7. Two essays of choice in any field (One paper)

Attention needs to be drawn to the high component of psychology within this degree, revealed by the weighting of examination and reflecting perhaps the growing impact of psychology on modern thought. The full content of the Syllabus in Social Philosophy and Comparative Ethics shows clearly the influence of the evolutionary theory on moral evolution and its relation to religion, which later laid the philosophical

³⁰ The content of this course was: Scope of Logic, Laws of thought: Terms. Formal Division and Definition, Predicables, Propositions and their import; Forms of Immediate Inference; Syllogism and other varieties of deductive reasoning; Trains of Reasoning: Functions of Syllogism, Inductive Inference, Postulates of Induction, Induction and Analogy; The relation of Induction to Deduction; Theory of Scientific Method: Observation and Experiment, Hypothesis Empirical and Causal Laws; Methods of Scientific Explanation: Elimination of Chance, Scientific Definition and Classification: Nomenclature and Terminology. Fallacies. University of London, Faculty of Arts Regulations for Internal Students, Intermediate Course 1922, p.89.

³¹ Faculty of Arts Regulations and Requirements for the B.A. Honours Degree in Philosophy, 1927. University of London.

foundations of Sangster's anthropology and his view of sin.³²

Reading Sangster's earliest works does not, however, show much evidence of his philosophical studies. It is somewhat peculiar that a subject that grasped his mind to the extent noted by Waterhouse, particularly philosophy, which normally would be an area of study paramount to the structuring of one's own thought, that in his earliest writings between 1932-1936, Sangster, although presupposing the truth of the evolutionary theory, only explicitly refers to it once, never drawing out its implications for theology and only tentatively alluding to a view of created reality that includes pain and suffering.³³ In other words, his early published sermons and articles reveal that these influential aspects of modern thought do not seem to impact his thinking.

In his first book Sangster used some of the principles and methods of psychology pastorally as a means of aiding people spiritually³⁴ but only uses psychological categories or a scientific world view once in relation to Christian doctrine when referring to man's sinfulness.³⁵ This reticence seems, therefore, at first glance, to be an anomaly. Although the actual use of psychology in pastoral practice was not widespread at this time, the graduates of Richmond College, under the strong influence of E.S. Waterhouse, were leading the way in propagating it. One would expect Sangster's writings, therefore, to bear more evidence of its influence.

One could perhaps explain Sangster's reticence in applying his modern philosophical and psychological understanding to his theology if there were a general antagonism towards psychology in Methodism at the time of these early writings. There

³² Although, as will be demonstrated, Sangster's writings of 1932-1936 contain little evidence of the impact of his learning in these areas, he explicitly constructs his anthropology on an evolutionary and scientific view of man in his first major publication on holiness: *The Path to Perfection*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1943), p.120. For discussion of Sangster's view of sin, see Chapter 5.

³³ W.E. Sangster, 'Making Pearls,' *Why Jesus Never Wrote a Book*, pp.56-57.

W.E. Sangster, 'When Worn With Sickness,' *He Is Able*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), p. 30.

³⁴ W.E. Sangster, *Why Jesus Never Wrote A Book*, pp.28,29,41,132.

W.E. Sangster, 'God Does Guide Us, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1934), p.93

³⁵ 'Does it pay to be a Rogue,' *Why Jesus Never Wrote a Book*, p.34.

is some evidence for the case. During the late 1920s and early 1930s Methodism was increasingly forced to address the implications of psychology for pastoral practice and later for theology itself in this very period. In 1935 A.E. Whitham expressed a negative viewpoint in an article in the *Methodist Recorder* entitled 'The Limits of Psychology,' in which he contrasts the approach and effects of Christian experience (conversion) with those of psychology. He denounced sharply the sell out of Christian theology to the principles of psychology.³⁶ Whitham says:

The point I want to make is that the first method (conversion)³⁷ does work, the second too often breaks down; and the psychologist remains a psychological problem, if not always to himself, certainly to his friends. Our fathers would say the first is of Grace, the second of Works; and perhaps they were not far wrong.³⁸

Only one month later Sir H.B. Brackenbury wrote a spirited defence of the new findings and techniques of psychology, concluding with the assertion:

In all this [...] religion has become not of less importance but of greater...By religion in this connection I mean rather the possession of a worthy object, outside ourselves, to which our whole life may be directed, and to the continuous pursuit of which we may be guided by worthy motives [...] Christianity is the purest, best, and most satisfying of such religions.³⁹

Perhaps the focal point of this wedding of psychology and theology was the work of Leslie Weatherhead, also a graduate of Richmond College. For eight years Weatherhead had propagated his views on the positive use of psychology, originally introducing them in a talk at a Fellowship of the Kingdom retreat in Swanwick in 1927.⁴⁰ His most famous book of the era *Psychology and Life* came onto the market in early 1935 and did much to introduce psychology to the ordinary man within the

³⁶ *Methodist Recorder*, 17 January 1935, p.9.

³⁷ Italics: mine

³⁸ *Methodist Recorder*, 17 January 1935, p.9.

³⁹ *Methodist Recorder*, 14 February 1935, p.17.

⁴⁰ *Methodist Times*, 7 July 1927, p. 6.

Methodist Church,⁴¹ and represented his more mature views on the subject. It was based on a Christocentric premise which allowed that there were, 'spiritual forces in the universe capable when released, and when operating in suitable conditions, of "curing" any of the diseases and disharmonies to which mind and body are liable'.⁴²

There is a distinct possibility, therefore, that Sangster's reluctance to integrate his modern philosophical and psychological knowledge into his theology in his early works was partly due to the still innovative nature of such knowledge within the general church, particularly Methodism, at the time of his first publications in the early to middle 1930s.

This explanation does not sufficiently account for the phenomenon, however. When taking into consideration Sangster's academic background in philosophy with the high component of psychology, his ongoing studies in philosophy for his MA, combined with the hesitant, but at this point growing, acceptance of psychology in British Methodism, it would be natural to assume that Sangster's early thought should contain a substantial psychological/philosophical component. It is apparent, however, that, as with his learning about evolution, Sangster's acquaintance with philosophy and psychology seems to have made little impact on his theological understanding in the years 1932-1936 when he published his first three books and wrote his articles in the *Methodist Recorder*.

Sangster's writings of the period seem, rather, to suggest other important influences which seem largely responsible for this depreciation of philosophy, psychology and modern, scientific paradigms within his thought. Ultimately they would be largely responsible for a seven year delay in Sangster's academic career. More positively,

⁴¹ Leslie D. Weatherhead, *Psychology and Life*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1934). Although Weatherhead had already published *Psychology in Service of the Soul*, (London: Epworth Press, 1929) his latter book did more to legitimise psychology in Methodist circles.

⁴² *The Methodist Times and Leader*, 13 September 1934, p.8.

however, they triggered his life long study of the saints and of sanctity itself.

The Crisis of 1930 and the Oxford Group Influence

Sometime in his early ministry in Liverpool, Sangster experienced a serious inner crisis, somewhat like a breakdown, that brought him even to doubt his call to the ministry. Although Paul Sangster attributes this crisis to a combination of being seriously overworked, striving to complete his M.A. studies, and his wife's lengthy sickness in the spring of 1930,⁴³ on closer examination of Sangster's writings of the time, it seems rather that Paul Sangster vastly underestimated the intellectual reasons behind his father's crisis.

When failing through exhaustion to sit his M.A. examinations in July 1930, Sangster became very despondent, repeating over and over again, 'I'm a failure.'⁴⁴ Paul Sangster records a private paper found after his father's death which clearly expresses the crisis in his life. Written in the form of a list, Sangster divides his thought into three sections although it falls, literally speaking, more naturally into four.⁴⁵

In the first section Sangster confesses what he regards as sin in his life, including impatience, irritability, deceitfulness, wrong motives for study, envy and ineffectiveness in ministry and witness. The second part addresses the area of feelings and attitudes. He admits to having lost peace, joy, his taste for work and to feeling a failure. In the third section, Sangster, although convinced of a physical basis for his condition, sees prayer as the way to the restoration of his spiritual happiness and health, reiterating his belief in an underlying spiritual ailment. The fourth division expresses his expectations for recovery, including peace, inward joy, zest and happiness in his

⁴³ *Doctor Sangster*, p.89.

⁴⁴ *Doctor Sangster*, p.89. Sangster took the M.A. examinations seven years later and passed with honours.

⁴⁵ *Doctor Sangster*, pp.90-92.

work with an accompanying sense of success.

Graham Slater is incorrect in his claim that this crisis was not publicly known before the printing of the biography in 1962,⁴⁶ for there is a clear reference to the crisis in Sangster's sermon entitled 'He Is the Hunger as well as the Food,' which was printed in his first book *Why Jesus Never Wrote A Book* (1932). In this sermon, Sangster reveals the darkness of those days, but more importantly the moment that turned things round and brought about a spiritual renewal. Sangster says:

I felt I had lost God. Spiritual things had become unreal to me. Doubts darkened my mind. I lost appetite for the holy vocation to which I believed God had called me. The conviction grew in my heart that the one thing an honourable man could do would be to give up. And yet I wanted God. In those months of awful darkness, nothing was more sure to me than my hunger for Him. All the varied wants of my heart had become resolved into the one great cry of the questing soul, 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him!' One night I had reached breaking point. My mind was weary with the effort of pondering these problems over and over again. My heart was sick with hope long deferred. I sat at midnight in the darkness of my study on the border of despair, when a friend came to me with the words of unsurpassed comfort. He knew my need. He said, 'You are chasing your shadow: that hunger within you is a mark of His presence.'To my poor soul they were the authentic words of the living God. I grasped the truth of what he had said. This hunger! - the one consuming passion of my soul - a mark of his presence. Why! I was sure of nothing so much as I was of my longing. The God I sought afar was here at home. He was in my heart: the hunger as well as the food....In that moment I knew the trembling joy of having God in my heart and knowing He was there. And that was the real beginning of an intimate experience of God in me.⁴⁷

Clearly, even Sangster's best efforts at finding the answers to his own despair had failed. His academic studies and acquired knowledge of philosophy and psychology up to M.A. level proved inadequate in providing him with the answers to the dilemma of his own life. Although the allusions to Wesley's Aldersgate experience in this text are probably unintentional, this inner crisis and the resultant apparent experience of assurance, after months of despair led Sangster to a personal rediscovery of John Wesley's theology.

⁴⁶ Slater, *Worship and Preaching*, p.31.

⁴⁷ *Why Jesus Never Wrote a Book*, pp.85-86.

Prior to this experience, Sangster would obviously have been well exposed to the mind of John Wesley having his early religious roots at the Radnor Street Mission and already having shown much interest in John Wesley during his education at a Wesleyan College. We also know that he was captivated by the hymns of Charles Wesley as a student.⁴⁸ The developments resulting from the crisis of 1930 were, however, very different. The evidence of Sangster's writings points to the fact that at this point he discovered, for himself, the essence of Wesley's personal religion and later adopted as his own the agenda of Methodism's founder.⁴⁹ The medium for Sangster's rediscovery of the heart-warming religion of the Wesleys seems not to have been, however, Methodism itself, but the Oxford Group. Paul Sangster acknowledges this influence on his father's recovery:

It was at this period that my father came directly under the influence of the Oxford Group, and I have little hesitation in affirming that it was with their help that he formed again his estranged relationship with God....he always stressed his personal gratitude, and there can be no doubt that they met his particular need just then, when perhaps no other help was possible.⁵⁰

Sangster himself delineates the positive role of the Oxford Group, the experiential and, importantly, the theological inferences of this experience in an article about this new-found assurance written in 1933:

Won to a fuller surrender through the influence of the Group Movement, keeping the morning watch with the strictness of good soldiers, and prosecuting the search for certainty with the zeal of those who feel it is at hand, we became aware of an impression on the mind, a 'comfortable voice,' an inward assurance (these are poor phrases, but the truth breaks through language and escapes), yet as 'absolute and luminously self-evident' as Newman says the Creator was to his child mind. And with it a sense of peace to which we were foreign before, but richer in quality and reaching to the very heart of our need and making us feel that the search was at an end...In possession of this inward witness the pursuit of reasons for oneself would

⁴⁸ *Doctor Sangster*, p.49.

⁴⁹ Cf. W.E. Sangster, *Methodism Can be Born Again*, (Hodder & Stoughton: London, 1938). This book consists articles and excerpts of articles printed in the *Methodist Recorder* on 8 October 1936, p.17; 4 February 1937, p.22; 8 April 1937, p.15; 5 August 1937, p.15; 6 January 1938, p.15; and *The Christian World*, 27 January 1938, p.1.

⁵⁰ *Doctor Sangster*, p.92.

be mere academics. Small wonder that those early Methodists hymns are full of such abounding confidence and make such frequent use of the word 'know.'[...]Clearly, this experience lies behind Wesley's Sermon X.⁵¹

It seems, therefore, that through the practices and influence of the Oxford Group,⁵² Sangster had rediscovered experientially the heart of early Methodism's personal religion. He clearly indicates this by his concluding reference to Wesley's sermon on assurance, entitled 'The Witness of the Spirit'.⁵³ The direct implication of this for Sangster was to provide an experience of God which led him out of his crisis of 1930 and would also appear to have provided an experience of assurance and certainty upon which to construct his theology - one which he had not found in all his studies at University and the Methodism of his time, yet which began to turn his attention to the experiential core of John Wesley's theology. In this little known but highly significant article, Sangster delineates the intellectual problems of his generation and the crucial influence of the Oxford Group in leading to a way out:

John Wesley, a better man than any of us, was thirty-five before the experience came to him. And after all, had we not been born into an age when the very structure of society rocked with the greatest war in history, and the Church was making heavy weather after sixty years of Biblical criticism? We grew up in a generation in which the pulpit lacked the note of confidence. No wonder we were left in ignorance of our birthright and suspected ourselves when the experience came. But it has come!So we preach Assurance, like the early Methodists, as 'the common privilege of Christians'. To many in our generation it has come as a by-product of the Group Movement, but we know its real source...The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.⁵⁴

Sangster states clearly the link between the Oxford Group and his own experience of John Wesley's doctrine of assurance and some of the barriers which prevented him and others from discovering this experience earlier. Special note must be given to

⁵¹ 'The Search for Certainty,' *Methodist Recorder*, 14 September 1933, p. 7.

⁵² 'The morning watch' was typical language of the Oxford Group and refers to the practice of a morning devotional session in which the person ran through the coming events of the day in prayer.

⁵³ BE Vol. 1, pp.267-284.

⁵⁴ 'The Search for Certainty,' *Methodist Recorder*, 14 September 1933, p.7.

Sangster's use of the term 'like the early Methodists' which suggests that such an experience was not indicative of the Methodism of his day. Indeed, the kind of religion that relied on or held 'experience' highly was itself undergoing a sustained attack from a number of important directions, including the aftermath of the Great War and the doubts raised by historical criticism.⁵⁵

Methodism itself, however, was not primarily to blame for the experiential and intellectual disillusionment common to many of Sangster's generation. The most important factor underlying such disenchantment was the carnage of the War of 1914-18, the impact of which disturbed the whole foundation of modern society. The Great War not only changed the political map, but also shocked the world by the scale of its devastation. In retrospect, World War One signalled, theologically, the death-blow to the inherent confidence which typified the dominant liberal theology of the era under which Sangster received his major academic influences. Constructing its thought on the foundation of Ritschl and Schleiermacher, starting with categories such as ethical consciousness or religious experience and progressing directly to the reality and character of God, the still prevalent, optimistic, nineteenth century theology, often followed by a romantic notion of post-millennium bliss, seemed blind to the more sinister side of human nature. It assumed that by following man's experience of God and his own ethical consciousness the ideal society could eventually be constructed. Great forward movements also transpired from these efforts e.g. Labour Laws, Education Laws etc, in which Methodism took its full part.⁵⁶

The Great War undermined the whole structure and agenda of liberal theology by discrediting its fundamental premise - religious experience and natural goodness with

⁵⁵ Biblical criticism and Methodism will be discussed in chapter 4.

⁵⁶ *A History of the Methodist Church*, ed. by R.Davies, A.R. George, G. Rupp, 4 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1983),III, p.310.

its consequential notion of progress. As humankind could no longer be trusted, theology must begin from God's side. The equation resulted in the affirmation of humankind's sinfulness in opposition to God. God must, therefore, be acknowledged as judge and saviour not ethical teacher.

This new era was heralded theologically by the printing of Barth's first commentary on Romans in 1919, the implications of which only really began to affect Methodism over a decade later. Many insightful scholars and students, however, especially those who could easily recall the vivid pictures of the carnage and slaughter and injustices of the Great War, like Sangster, were already feeling the tension between their Liberal theological education and the multiplying evidence of the sin of humanity, even societal sin and corruption.

The problem for many of Sangster's generation was therefore, two-fold. In the 1920s, under the influence of historical criticism and the discoveries of science, including the evolutionary hypothesis, many young men were leaving the traditional evangelical theology of Methodism, with its rigid plan of salvation and its high regard for the text of Scripture, and were migrating towards the more intellectually satisfying position of liberal theology. Retrospectively, it is apparent, however, that these men were actually entering a theological cul-de-sac for the very paradigms upon which they sought intellectual integrity began to come under sustained attack. Although the shift brought 'liberation to many thoughtful people who found the old dogmas hard to accept,'⁵⁷ theological liberalism itself was beginning to crumble as its main premises based on an optimistic view of humankind was gradually undermined as the carnage and devastation of the First World War became apparent. By the end of the decade many were seeking new frameworks of belief.

⁵⁷ Rupert E. Davies, *Methodism* (London: Epworth, 1985), p.158.

To contextualise if not altogether correct Pauls Sangster's perception of his father's crisis of 1930-31, it is necessary to place it within this broader theological and intellectual context. The crisis can certainly not be attributed primarily to 'a false motivation for his M.A. studies,' as Slater suggests.⁵⁸ Both from his own comments concerning his generation's theological dilemma, the shift from evangelical views to the more 'liberal' positions of the then theological education in Methodism and the subsequent undermining of those views by the carnage of World War I, it appears that Sangster's crisis contained a high intellectual component.

Sangster was searching for the foundation for his religious belief that he had not found in his studies or in the Methodism of the era but which came as a result of his experience of assurance, via the Oxford Group. Sangster was not alone in his positive experience of the Group. Over and above the personal rediscovery of the certainty of faith, which many found via the Group, its success in propagating the Christian faith itself at a time of slow progress, or even recession, within the churches, brought a renewed sense of confidence and outward endeavour to many who were disillusioned. This also applied to Methodism. Randall asserts that, 'For many progressive Methodists in the early 1930s the influence of the evangelistically-minded members of the Oxford Group was crucial in stimulating a new passion for evangelisation.'⁵⁹ Also at Swanwick at the annual get together of the Fellowship of the Kingdom in 1933, the ministers gave much time to discussing the emphases of the Oxford Group, especially the subject of 'guidance' which was one of the key elements in the beliefs and practice of the Group.⁶⁰ Perhaps in response to what Sangster saw as the undue negativity of some of his colleagues' attitudes to the Group, Sangster deliberately produced the book

⁵⁸ Slater, *Worship and Preaching*, p.31.

⁵⁹ *Evangelical Experiences*, p. 124.

⁶⁰ *The Bulletin*, June 1933, p.3.

God Does Guide Us staunchly defending the belief and practice of guidance as emphasised by the Group but providing a more ecclesial corrective.

The debate within Methodism concerning the Oxford Group continued. In 1932 eleven articles and letters were printed in the *Methodist Recorder* about the Group, with one entitled ‘The Group Movement and Methodism’,⁶¹ which drew parallels between the relationship of the Group to modern Methodism with the relationship of earliest Methodism with the Church of England. In 1933, twelve articles or letters were published in the same paper, one by Weatherhead,⁶² which proclaimed that revival was being brought to the churches through the Group. Of particular note, which shows how much interest the Group had stirred within Methodism, even the Cambridge scholar, R. Newton Flew felt the need to write in his assessment of Warfield’s newly published work on perfectionism, ‘At a time when all of us are interested in the Oxford Group Movement, with its stress on an “absolute” standard of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, we may find it salutary to study previous Holiness movements in the nineteenth century.’⁶³ The following year four articles were published in the *Methodist Recorder*, which highlighted and briefly critiqued the beliefs of the Group, entitled ‘The Secret of Surrender’,⁶⁴ ‘Discipleship and the Oxford Group’,⁶⁵ ‘The Oxford Group’,⁶⁶ and ‘Can a Man know the Will of God?’.⁶⁷

The 1935 and 1936 *Methodist Recorder* carried few articles on the Group with the culmination of its interest being 1937 and 1938, the latter of which contained weekly reports on the activities of the Group. The assessments inside and outside of Methodism were often polarized, ranging from seeing it as an instrument of revival to waken the

⁶¹ *Methodist Recorder*, 27 October 1932, p.8.

⁶² *Methodist Recorder*, 18 May 1933, p.11.

⁶³ *Methodist Recorder*, 24 August 1933, p.7.

⁶⁴ *Methodist Recorder*, 4 January 1934, p.13.

⁶⁵ *Methodist Recorder*, 11 January 1934, p. 8.

⁶⁶ *Methodist Recorder*, 1 March 1934, p.10.

⁶⁷ *Methodist Recorder*, 23 August 1934, p.8.

churches to it being unbiblical; from the 'Holy Spirit in our midst'- to it being 'pitiable'.⁶⁸ Even Barth and Brunner were divided on the value of the Group, a discussion Sangster summarized and commented on; taking sides with Brunner in general favour of the Group.⁶⁹

Until mid to late 1938 when it became clear that some of its political views and goals associated it too closely with the dictatorial fascism of the era, the Oxford Group provided a vital spur to the Christianity of the inter-war period. In the early to mid 1930s, in particular, the emphases and power of the group to bring renewal and hope to many disillusioned Christians cannot be underestimated. Methodism, in particular, was confronted by the ethos, agenda and practices of the Oxford Group which reminded many of the historical origins and enthusiasm of their own denomination.

Although Paul Sangster asserts that his father was never formally a member of the Oxford Group and never took a lead in it, even calling his relationship with it a 'tenuous connection',⁷⁰ this appears to be something of a retrospective disassociation with the Group because of its later vague stance on Nazism. Sangster's own reference to 'the keeping of the morning watch'⁷¹ is definitely the language of the Group and was one of their fundamental practices. According to Paul Sangster, his father's main link with the Group was a photographer in Brighton named Richard Haile whom Sangster originally met while ministering in Littlehampton.⁷² Whatever his relationship to the Group, Sangster was indebted to it, for it provided him with a credible and experiential way out of his crisis of 1930. This consequently initiated a process of theological development that led him to re-discover the vital power of his Wesleyan heritage and

⁶⁸ Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990* (London: SCM, 1991, p.288.

⁶⁹ W.E Sangster, 'Brunner Versus Barth: The Group Movement and the Churches' *Methodist Recorder*, 4 February 1937, p.22. Also: E. Brunner, *The Church and the Oxford Group* (London: Hodder, 1937).

⁷⁰ Private letter to Andrew Cheatle dated 22 July 1994.

⁷¹ *Methodist Recorder*, 14 September 1933, p.7.

⁷² Private letter from Paul Sangster dated 22 July 1994.

which six years later, during his early studies into Methodist history and theology, would as a result provide the motivation to search for the reasons for its demise in Methodism and to form the basis for his reevaluation of the Methodist doctrine of perfection.

At the time of Sangster's early writings, therefore, his new found certainty of faith is reflected in the fact that his sermons and articles concern themselves, primarily, with devotional applications of the 'simple gospel' and show little attempt at using or integrating his philosophical and psychological knowledge into his presentation of the Christian faith. Almost all his messages were devised to encourage and inspire a faith that could stand the pressures of real life. Few sermons of this period were devoted, therefore, to doctrinal issues.

This seeming down playing of doctrine and the emphasis upon preaching a simple gospel was a typical trait of the Group Movement,⁷³ who following in the footsteps of their founder and leader John Buchman showed little interest in theological definition and clarity, as the agenda and force of the Group was placed on 'life-changing.' This tendency was particularly highlighted at the 'sharing' meetings which almost exclusively focused on the experiences of the members and rarely, if ever, dealt with theology, as such. When the Group was at its peak in Denmark, for example, Gunner Engberg, a leader of the Danish holiness movement within the Lutheran State Church, criticised the Group on this point, 'Perhaps we dare guess that the "sharing" group's discourse will only remain fresh and of worth when it changes from being testimonies about experiences to being what we understand as Bible-discourse, - so the written Word becomes the centre, and not the self.'⁷⁴

⁷³ *Evangelical Experiences*, p.242.

⁷⁴ Gunner Engberg, *Oxford Bevaegelsen* (Aarhus: De Unges Forlag, 1934), pp.91-92. Translation by Andrew Cheadle.

By the time of the publication of Sangster's next book in 1936 the presence of the Group's emphases was not as evident and his sermons were gradually becoming more doctrinal, showing the influence of another important group in the development of Sangster's thought. A number of his sermons from *He Is Able* contain characteristic emphases of the Fellowship of the Kingdom.⁷⁵ Of particular note is the presence of Abelardian/Moral Influence theories of the Atonement⁷⁶ which characterised the Christology of the Fellowship of the Kingdom. One of the chief characteristics of the Fellowship was an unequivocal belief that a 'contemporary experience of Jesus was available through the gospels'.⁷⁷ All the sermons in this volume call clearly for the reader to 'seek both as *a*⁷⁸ motive power and as an end in itself that large and transforming fellowship with God in Jesus Christ'.⁷⁹ Each sermon delineates a human problem, concern or vice and then places the reader before the person of Christ and asks whether Christ is able to help. The answer always returns: HE IS ABLE.

Increasingly from 1936 Sangster's sermons were constructed on crucicentric premises characteristic of the Fellowship of the Kingdom of which he had been a member since his mid – twenties.⁸⁰

Sangster's re-discovery of the Wesley inheritance mediated through the Oxford Group in answer to his quest for certainty yet progressively showing the Christological influence of the Fellowship of the Kingdom, must also be placed, however, within the broader ecclesial context of the era, especially with regard to Methodism.

⁷⁵ For an excellent discussion of The Fellowship of the Kingdom, see *Evangelical Experiences*, chapter 5

⁷⁶ *He Is Able*, pp.18,34,59,60,82,104,116,163,238.

⁷⁷ *Evangelical Experiences*, p.120.

⁷⁸ Italics are mine. For original quote substitute 'our' for 'a'.

⁷⁹ *Evangelical Experiences*, p.121 quoting *Quest and Crusade*, p.44.

⁸⁰ 'When I Survey the Wonderous Cross' *He Is Able* is a classic example of the F.K.'s emphases.

The Theological Context of Methodist Union

The Methodism to which Sangster belonged at the time of his first writings⁸¹ was in the process of attempting to come to terms with its own identity, following the final stages of Methodist Union, which was completed in 1932.

Although the first results of union occurred in 1907 when the Methodist New Connexion, the Bible Christians and the United Methodist Free Churches joined to become the United Methodist Church, perhaps the vital step towards full reunion occurred on 9th January 1918 when the three remaining denominations met for the first time to contemplate reunion.⁸² Throughout the 1920s the differences between the groups were debated vehemently. The main force of the debate was political and ecclesial rather than theological. The addresses at the Methodist Church Congresses held in Bristol in 1929 and in Sheffield in 1931 show a high degree of unanimity in theological content and social goals.⁸³

The full union of the Primitive Methodists, the United Methodist Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Church was consummated on 20 September 1932 by the signing of the Deed of Union.⁸⁴ Numerous articles by leading Methodist scholars were published in the following years concerned with the identity of Methodism as the new united church began to ask questions about its *raison d'etre*. With the new success of reunion within its own ranks, Methodism began naturally to ask questions about its relation to other churches, especially the Church of England,⁸⁵ a vision already anticipated by the inclusion of a series of talks on the topic at the Methodist Congress

⁸¹ 1932-36

⁸² George T. Brake, *Policy & Politics in British Methodism 1932-1982*, (London: Edsall, 1984), pp.1-47.

⁸³ *Methodism: Its Present Responsibilities* (London: Epworth, 1929). *Methodism: Its Message for Today* (London: Epworth, 1931).

⁸⁴ *Policy and Politics*, p.43.

⁸⁵ cf. J.M. Turner, *Conflict & Reconciliation: Studies in Methodism and Ecumenism in England 1740-1982* (London: Epworth, 1985), p.193.

in Bristol three years prior to Methodist Union.⁸⁶ The new status of Methodism after Union and its relationship with the other branches of Christendom implied a process of theological self-appraisal.

The major question related to the specific ‘distinctives’ of Methodism.⁸⁷ In other words, ‘What distinguishes Methodism from other churches?’ ‘The force of a common and continuous spiritual experience,’ was Scott Lidgett's answer in microcosm in 1909, when commenting on the distinctiveness of Methodism.⁸⁸ His more comprehensive response points to a normative self-understanding of all Methodist groups of the era:

All attach the same importance, at least in theory, to church fellowship[...]All enforce the duty of increasing evangelism[...]All admit the right, and enforce the duty, of the laity to take part in evangelism, and in the pastoral supervision of the church. Above all, the emphasis is everywhere laid on the importance of experimental religion, and therefore on conversion, on the possibility of the direct witness of the Spirit of adoption giving the assurance of present salvation, and on the calling to the life of entire sanctification which is brought about by the reign of perfect love in the heart.⁸⁹

By the middle of the 1930s, however, some important revisions had become necessary to the five traits identified by Lidgett, due mainly to the change in theological atmosphere.

First, evangelism, although continually stressed within the Methodist churches, was obviously not a Methodist distinctive and by the end of the decade it was common for evangelism to be carried out in partnership with other Churches. The advent of the ‘Christian Commando’ campaigns following World War II was a natural progression of this involvement.

Second, the involvement of the laity, although common in Methodism, was also

⁸⁶ *Methodism: Its Present Responsibilities*, pp.287-307.

⁸⁷ At the ‘Unmasking Methodist Theology’ Conference held at Liverpool Hope University College in September 2004 the issue of distinctive doctrines was discussed. In contemporary Methodism these are largely referred to as ‘characteristic’ doctrines, probably highlighting the more ecumenical context of today’s Church.

⁸⁸ *A New History of Methodism*, ed. by W.J. Townsend, H.B. Workman and G. Eayrs, 2 vols (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), II, pp.423.

⁸⁹ Quoted from *Policy and Politics*, p.12.

common in other branches of the Christian Church and could be interpreted as a natural consequence of Scriptural principles (the Priesthood of all Believers) rather than a particular Methodist trait, although Sangster certainly saw this as a particular Methodist strength and characteristic.⁹⁰

Third, and perhaps crucially, the Methodist emphasis on experimental religion was by this time also undergoing a substantial revision. With the undermining of 'Liberal theology', with its high view of man's ethical consciousness, by the growing anthropological pessimism that came as a result of the Great War, Methodism's emphasis on religious experience became the subject of profound theological scrutiny, especially by the increasing potency of Barthian theology. Indeed Henry Rack goes so far as to say, that in focusing its faith on the doctrine of assurance as its final source of religious authority, a stance typified by Workman, Methodism was even going against Wesley's view. Rack commenting on this error says, 'For the Methodist tradition it was perhaps...unfortunate that the threat to Biblical authority which devout criticism had only partially answered should have made Methodist scholars fall back on a sophisticated presentation of religious experience as one of the ways of finding a new source of authority in religion'.⁹¹ Methodism was going out of the flames and into the fire, so to speak.

In his Bohlen Lectures of 1932, Walter Lowrie castigated what he believed to be the Methodist position on religious experience:

Barth's polemic is not directed against one sort of religious experience rather than another, but against the assumption that religious experience of any sort is a way to God - that by our experiences the existence of God can be proved or His character known, or our relation to Him attested....With regard to the value of religious experience (and the 'Christian experience' most of all) we are as yet troubled by no doubts. We have all become Methodists - without our knowing we have all become

⁹⁰ See *Methodism Her Unfinished Task*, pp.105-118.

⁹¹ *Conflict and Reconciliation*, p. 35.

disciples of Schleiermacher, the father of modern theology.⁹²

The truth of Lowrie's claims could be conceded on two points. First, Methodist scholars were obviously influenced by the theology of liberalism associated with Schleiermacher. Such a claim could, however, be made of any theologian since Schleiermacher, not just Methodist. Second, Methodism did use 'religious experience' as a means of attesting the relationship of the Christian to God. Even when taking into consideration Wesley's high use of Scripture within his understanding of assurance, there is still a strong element of 'attesting' by some measure of religious experience.⁹³

The Methodism of the first three decades of the Twentieth century did, however, go beyond Wesley and sought to construct religious experience almost as an independent philosophical category.

This approach to religious experience was typified by the addresses of Dimond and Waterhouse at the Methodist Congress of 1929, entitled, 'The Psychology of Religious Experience' and 'The Validity of Religious Experience', respectively.⁹⁴ This contrasts with the more Barthian emphases of Brewis and Maltby only two years later with their respective addresses entitled 'Christ – the Revealer God' and 'Christ the Saviour of Man',⁹⁵ both of which speak of God as 'over and against man'.

Methodism could hardly avoid the charge considering the 'mystical' nature of Wesley's Aldersgate experience, which in Methodist theology was often understood as an archetypal experience, expressed as, 'the controlling image for understanding our

⁹² 'The Witness of Christian Experience: The Barthian Challenge to Methodism,' *Methodist Recorder*, 19 January, 1933, p.9.

⁹³ Wesley wrote four important essays on this subject seeking to clarify his views against the charge of 'Enthusiasm'

'The Witness of the Spirit I' (1746)

'The Witness of the Spirit II' (1767)

'The Witness of our own spirit', (with postscript 1771)

'On Conscience' (1788), BE Vols. 1 & 3.

⁹⁴ *Methodism: Its Present Responsibilities*, pp.156-181.

⁹⁵ *Methodism: Its Message for To-day*, pp.21-29, 42-50.

own patterns of spirituality', by Roberta Bondi, or at the very least, the real starting point of Methodism.⁹⁶ Although Lowrie inaccurately asserts that Methodism endorses religious experience as a way to God or a proof of His existence, he is correct in asserting that Methodism has historically placed great value on religious experience. Two Methodist scholars in particular, who later we shall see had great bearing on Sangster, placed a high emphasis on religious experience in their theories of knowledge.

E.S. Waterhouse, Sangster's philosophy tutor, endorses the position that all our knowledge must be based on a 'continuity of experience.' Reacting to exclusively metaphysical theories of knowledge, Waterhouse posits a view that all our knowledge must ultimately find its starting point in psychology i.e. in man's consciousness of self and others.⁹⁷ Although knowledge goes beyond psychology, humankind's only ultimate frame of reference is his own experience. Waterhouse accuses Barthianism of falling into deism by asserting the vast gulf between the finite and the infinite.⁹⁸ For the purpose of our discussion, Waterhouse's position espouses two main points. First, experience is the primary realm of philosophical inquiry. Second, religious knowledge is fundamentally connected to and inseparable from other forms of knowledge as all have the same ultimate frame of reference - man's self-consciousness. Essentially, this could be termed a Schleiermachian view.

Although, in his book *The Christian Experience: A Study in the Theology of Fellowship*, C. Ryder Smith, Sangster's theology tutor, retains some elements of

⁹⁶ For a critical survey of the interpretation of Wesley's Aldersgate experience: *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, ed. by Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990). For Reference to Bondi: *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, p.21.

⁹⁷ E.S. Waterhouse, *The Philosophical Approach to Religion* (London: Epworth Press, 1933), p.59.

⁹⁸ *The Philosophical Approach to Religion*, p.191.

Waterhouse's position by affirming the importance of religious experience in any theory of knowledge and by adopting a psychological approach, he posits a more corporate understanding of experience. In Smith's view, truths of religious experience must, firstly, be common experiences i.e. group or societal. Sangster takes an almost identical position in his apologetic and evangelistic message at the 'For Such A Time As This' campaign in 1951.⁹⁹

Second, religious experience, rather than being the starting point of our view of knowledge, is seen as continuous with the rest of human knowledge and a fulfilment of it. Smith, thereby, avoids the extremes of Barth's theology of transcendence by attaching value to mankind's experiences of reality. Smith appears to succeed in affirming the importance of common experiences as real data for human knowledge asserting also that religious experience must harmonize with the rest of human experience and complete it.¹⁰⁰

Waterhouse and Smith, therefore, with their broad philosophical interests, but drawing especially from psychology, address religious experience as a genuine and important form of religious knowledge or data. From the perspective of Barth's critique, these positions would, therefore, take the full blow of his attack. Barth saw man and all his philosophical systems, experiences and knowledge in actual opposition to God and expressive of his alienation and rebellion rather than being, at the least, complimentary.

As a natural consequence of the discussions on religious experience, Methodism's final and, perhaps, most distinctive doctrine – Christian holiness, was to become the subject of theological exploration as the churches attempted to identify the core of their

⁹⁹ A sermon delivered in September 1951 at Westminster Central Hall at the World Evangelical Alliance Campaign: 'For Such a Time as This,' W.E. Sangster reveals the influence of Smith's position, his one-time lecturer. A tape of this sermon is in possession of the author.

¹⁰⁰ C. Ryder Smith, *The Christian Experience: A Study in the Theology of Fellowship* (London: Epworth, 1926), pp.10-15.

raison d'etre.

Historically, Randall identifies two distinct theological approaches to the doctrine. The first, primarily represented by the Chadwick school,¹⁰¹ called the Methodist church to go back to Wesley but interpreted the doctrine of holiness primarily in revivalistic and pneumatological categories. Broadly speaking Randall designates this 'Traditional Wesleyan Spirituality'¹⁰² or, theologically, the 'conservative Wesleyan holiness' position.

The second is represented by the Fellowship of the Kingdom whose agenda was not to revive a particular understanding of Christian Perfection but to go forward from Wesley and find new ways of expressing the essence of Wesley's agenda of holiness. The members of the Fellowship of the Kingdom focused their attention on the person and work of Christ and the importance of fellowship with Him. Their spirituality was Christological, combining a crucicentric view of faith with a higher sacramentalism and a stress on the Kingdom of God rather than the more individualistic paradigms of the Chadwick school.¹⁰³

It is only within this context of Methodism seeking to find its raison d'etre, its message and agenda, that the rest of Sangster's life can be understood. Increasingly from August 1936, as his diary bears witness, Sangster identifies his task 'To call Methodism to its real work.'¹⁰⁴

His own experience of assurance mediated through the Oxford Group combined with the evangelistic zeal and success of the Group led Sangster, during his early studies of Methodism, to see in the Group many of the attributes of early Methodism. In

¹⁰¹ This refers to those in this period who followed closely the views espoused by Samuel Chadwick. See: *Evangelical Experiences*, chapter 4 for an excellent historical discussion.

¹⁰² *Evangelical Experiences*, p.77.

¹⁰³ *Evangelical Experiences*, Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Doctor Sangster*, pp.109-110.

his articles about Methodism printed in the *Methodist Recorder* in 1936-37, later supplemented and published as *Methodism Can Be Born Again* in 1938, Sangster argues that the Group had won converts when many said it was impossible; had created an appetite for spiritual things among pagans; and had brought about interest in personal holiness.¹⁰⁵ According to Sangster these were, at one time, the strengths of Methodism. Continuing Sangster asserts:

Students who are intimate with the early history of Methodism, and familiar with the Group Movement, have often remarked on the similarity. There are some not unimportant differences, but the similarities are striking. Many of the features of early Methodism are characteristic of the modern Group Movement, and not characteristic of modern Methodism.¹⁰⁶

Sangster goes on to draw the comparisons: Confessional fellowship, assurance, holiness, and personal evangelism.¹⁰⁷ The recovery of these attributes, so successfully implemented by the Group from 1928-38, albeit in their particular language, would according to Sangster, correspondingly recover the ailing power of Methodism. This belief was crucial to Sangster's life long quest to recover and restate, in modern paradigms, the distinctives of Methodism, the core of which was the recovery of the unshaken certainty of faith –the doctrine of assurance, the starting point of his own recovery. Sangster boldly asserts to his Methodist readers, 'Nothing would so defeat the defeatism of the present times as the recovery of Christian assurance'. The Oxford Group is, therefore, of particular significance in the study of Sangster's life and more particularly his motivation to understand the doctrine of Christian holiness for it provided him experientially with the way out of his crisis of 1930. As a direct consequence he also made the theological association of this experience with the

¹⁰⁵ *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, p.60.

¹⁰⁶ *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, pp.60-61.

¹⁰⁷ For an entry into the study of the Oxford Group, see *Evangelical Experiences*, Chapter 9. For two extensive studies, see: D.C. Belden, 'The Origins and Development of the Oxford Group (Moral Rearmament)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1976). Also, A. Jarlet, *The Oxford Group Revivalism and the Churches in Northern Europe, 1930-1945* (Lund: Sweden, 1995).

Methodist doctrine of assurance, which in turn, as he begins to study Methodism, led him to the belief that recovering the attributes of early Methodism and restating them in modern paradigms would recover the lost power of Methodism. In relation to his study of holiness this became the essence of his methodology – to go back to Wesley in order to go forward from Wesley.

Already by 1938 Sangster's approach, therefore, to the doctrine of holiness was established, being a synthesis of the conservative holiness idea of 'back to Wesley' and the approach of 'forward from Wesley' as represented by the Fellowship of the Kingdom, although his own unique understanding of the doctrine was yet to be formed.

In order to fulfil what Sangster saw as his God appointed mission, to call Methodism to its real work, he felt that he would first have to 'go back' which would involve him acquiring, in his own words, 'a full and exact knowledge of Methodism's history and teaching.'¹⁰⁸ He, therefore, embarked on a life long study of sanctity that took him far beyond the bounds of Methodist scholarship. His immediate concern, however, was the study the experience of holiness within his own tradition in order to understand the specific doctrines of sanctification and perfection.

¹⁰⁸ *Doctor Sangster*, pp.109-110.

CHAPTER 3

SANCTIFICATION AND PERFECTION IN METHODISM: 1838-1938

William Sangster's formal study of the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness started in 1936, evidenced by his diary entry of 7 August 1936. His first written contribution to the Methodist doctrine of Christian perfection, however, is contained in an article written approximately eighteen months prior to his diary entry. The content of this article, entitled 'Can the Empty Church Problem Be Solved'? suggests that as early as January 1935 Sangster was increasingly showing concern about the future of Methodism.¹ For the first time, Sangster joined the chorus of those inquiring as to the *raison d'être* of Methodism and tentatively answering by referring to Wesley's *Twelve Rules of a Helper*. The focus of Methodism should, according to Sangster, be evangelism: 'having nothing to do but save souls.' While commenting on the priority of evangelism, however, Sangster touches on the doctrine of Christian Perfection, saying, 'It is sometimes said - with what justice I am not able to judge - that Methodism has left her doctrine of Perfect love to the cranks. If it were so, it was a grievous fault - though perhaps they were only called cranks because they believed it.'² This short comment reflects in miniature the status of the doctrine of Perfection in mid - 1930's Methodism. For the most part, as was true of Sangster, there was only scant interest in the subject and those who claimed perfection, or emphasized it, were regarded as slightly eccentric or, at the least, religiously presumptuous.

This chapter will trace the developments of thought concerning the doctrine of

¹ *Methodist Recorder*, 24 January 1935, p.15.

² *Methodist Recorder*, 24 January 1935, p.15. The term 'cranks' was used by Sangster on a number of occasions to describe the proponents of the Pentecostal/Experiential view of Wesleyan holiness as described in this chapter, who often made excessive claims to freedom from sin and described holiness as a series of negations. See chapters 5 & 6 for a comprehensive discussion.

holiness from 1838-1938 taking in the major Methodist theologians of the Nineteenth Century, the enunciation of holiness doctrine moulded by the Holiness Movement of America with its revivalistic emphasis and will then follow the more academic studies of the doctrine around the second and third decades of the Twentieth Century. The analysis will be theological and will seek to provide a base from which to understand the motivation and thought of William Sangster in the rest of the thesis.

At the time of Sangster's early writings the revivalistic enunciation of the doctrine³ was gaining some ground in remote quarters of Methodism, mainly through the influence of Samuel Chadwick of Cliff College, who during the 1920s was the most vigorous exponent of the doctrine. Although some found a renewed spiritual vitality through this particular understanding of perfection, for the most part it was viewed with suspicion in Methodism and its corresponding scriptural conservatism, experiential rigidity and world-denying spirituality alienated many moderate Methodists.⁴

As Methodism began to ask questions about its identity and calling immediately prior to and following the Union of 1932, its distinctive doctrines began to be the focus of scholarly attention, the direction and thrust of which differed significantly from the 'Pentecostal/experiential emphasis' of Chadwick and Cliff College. The specially organised Congresses for the branches of Methodism seeking the Union of 1932 are of particular historical significance as the views stated at these gatherings would not only seek to be conciliatory but also forward looking. The messages from these gatherings should, therefore, provide a clear indication of the beliefs and emphases of Methodism in that determinate period.

There were four messages dedicated to the doctrines of sanctification and perfection

³ This will later be delineated as the 'Pentecostal/experiential emphasis.'

⁴cf. Strawson's comments in: *A History of the Methodist Church In Great Britain*, III, p.229. Also cf: *Evangelical Experiences*, p.92.

at the Bristol Congress of 1929⁵ and three messages at the 1931 Congress in Sheffield, which also concerned themselves with the doctrines of perfection and assurance.⁶ Significantly, all used Christological paradigms and the language of ‘love being made perfect’ when speaking of the Wesleyan distinctives. The significance of these messages for the study of British Methodism and its distinctive doctrines becomes clear when read in the light of the stated agenda of the Congresses and which by implication would seem to distance itself from the Chadwick school. This is clearly summed up in the foreword of the Bristol Congress:

...we had recognized from the first the necessity of facing the obligations of our time in harmony with our Methodist history and tradition, and in accordance with our specific contribution to the spread of the gospel. We were not unmindful, therefore, that Methodism arose in the eighteenth century with the conscious vocation to ‘spread Scriptural Holiness throughout the land’. But we felt it still more imperative to insist that its present pressing responsibility is not only to possess again in their fullness the spiritual forces which gave birth to the Evangelical Revival, but also to interpret afresh, in the living speech of to-day, their vital significance and divine compulsion, and to apply them under the changed conditions of the modern world.⁷

Immediately prior to and following the Methodist Union of 1932 these published messages together with the more substantial studies of H.W. Perkins and R.N. Flew, published at the end of the 1920s and early 1930s respectively,⁸ brought a renewed scholarly legitimacy to the Wesleyan doctrines of sanctification, Christian perfection and assurance.

When W.E. Sangster embarked on his study of Methodism, therefore, on 7 August 1936, there were a number of interpretations of the doctrine of Christian perfection present in Methodism, all of which were developments of Wesley's understanding of the doctrine.⁹

⁵ *Methodism: Its Present Responsibilities*, pp. 57-64, 183-214.

⁶ *Methodism: Its Message for Today*, pp.191-198, 214-222, 266-275.

⁷ *Methodism: Its Present Responsibilities*, p.10.

⁸ These will be studied under the section ‘The Critical Emphasis’.

⁹ Strawson's division of these into two traditions follows a more phenomenological approach rather than a theological analysis. Its division between ‘official and scholarly’ tradition and ‘that of the people’ (meaning working class or less educated?) injects unsustainable distinctions into the discussion: *A History of Methodism in Great Britain*, III, pp.225-231.

These can be classified theologically under three headings:¹⁰

1. The Classical Wesleyan Emphasis
2. The Pentecostal/Experiential Emphasis
3. The Critical Emphasis

In order fully to understand these enunciations and developments of Wesley's understanding of sanctification and perfection it is, first, necessary to return to the origin of their views, namely John Wesley's own understanding of holiness. At this point, however, a methodological decision must be taken, for none of the following exponents of perfection had at their disposal the wealth of theological material that has followed in the wake of Albert Outler's work on Wesley, which includes the continually expanding Bicentennial edition of Wesley's Works. As a consequence the methodology of approaching Wesley's theology pre-Outler and post-Outler differ significantly. Since Outler, practically all scholars have approached the writings of Wesley with the distinct agenda of presenting Wesley as a serious eclectic theologian steeped in the theology of Eastern orthodoxy, the Reformation, the Anglican divines and the Puritans. Before Outler the most common method of approaching or understanding Wesley's theology was to present him as the founder evangelist of Methodism with a unique passion for the presentation of Scriptural holiness although Flew, Rupp and Lindström are the most notable exceptions. This meant that Wesley's

¹⁰ The critical analysis presented in this chapter is primarily theological and differs, therefore, from the methodology of Randall, *Evangelical Experiences*, Chapters 4 & 5 and Bebbington in the 1998 Didsbury Lectures, whose focus is primarily historical: D. Bebbington *Holiness in Nineteenth Century England* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 200), pp.51-72. Wakefield combines an interest in the historical outworkings of spirituality in his brief survey but does not subject the major Methodist theological voices to a theological analysis: Gordon S. Wakefield, *Methodist Spirituality* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1999), pp.24-70. This study addresses primarily the more systematic treatment of the doctrine by Methodist theologians and the leading proponents of Perfection in Methodism. It is recognized that the boundaries between any interpretation of a common tradition or doctrine will be somewhat fluid. An example of which is the case of Thomas Champness whose sentiments would appear to place him squarely within the Pentecostal/experiential interpretation but whose actual theological formulation places him in the classical Wesleyan category.

thought was best understood through the grid of Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, as this was understood almost as a microcosm of his views. This short book was perceived, therefore, to present the normative understanding of Wesley's doctrine of perfection, a stance supported, to a large extent, by Wesley himself at the conclusion of the book:

I have given a plain and simple account of the manner wherein I first received the doctrine of perfection, and the sense wherein I received and wherein I do receive and teach it to this day. I have declared the whole and every part of what I mean by that scriptural expression. I have drawn the picture of it at full length without disguise or covering.¹¹

Published for the first time in 1765, its fourth edition of 1777 remained the definitive statement of his understanding of perfection. By the time of Wesley's death in 1791 the book went through six editions. Not only does Wesley maintain that his views are stated comprehensively in this publication but Outler also implies as much, 'Wesley asserted that his doctrine of Christian Perfection had been the creative focus of his understanding of the Christian life from his first conversion to "serious" religion in 1725, and that it had continued as such without substantial alteration.'¹²

As the exponents of the three emphases of Perfection almost exclusively follow the second method of understanding Wesley, his book *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* will be the point of departure for this study.¹³ This has the added advantage of providing the vital background for understanding Sangster's interpretation of Wesley's doctrine of perfection for it was from this source he later derived most of his material for his own study of Wesley in *The Path to Perfection*, his first major engagement with the topic.¹⁴

¹¹ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: Epworth, [n.d.]), p.131.

¹² Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley*, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), p.251.

¹³ In chapter 5 and 6 due attention will be given to the more modern approaches and interpretations of Wesley and will form a valid standpoint for a critical appraisal.

¹⁴ It is important to avoid judging Sangster anachronistically who was seeking to answer questions of his

Wesley's own eleven-point summary at the end of *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* is a concise presentation of the main facets of the doctrine:¹⁵

1. There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.
2. It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to 'go on to perfection' (Heb.4.1).
3. It is not so late as death; for Paul speaks of living men that were perfect (Phil.3.15).
4. It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone.
5. It does not make a man infallible: None is infallible, while he remains in the body.
6. Is it sinless? It is not worthwhile to contend for a term. It is 'salvation from sin.'
7. It is 'perfect love' (1 John 4.18). This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits, are rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks (1 Thess.5.16 & c).
8. It is improvable. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before.
9. It is amissible, capable of being lost; of which we have numerous instances....
10. It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work. But is it in itself instantaneous or not?[...]
11. It is often difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies: yet there is an instant when life ceases. And if ever sin ceases, there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it.

These basic propositions underlay the efforts of Methodist preachers, teachers and theologians to seek a coherent theology of the Christian life, supported by Wesley's Sermons, Diaries and Journals, the 1780 Methodist Hymn Book and including the many testimonies to perfection from Wesley's followers and adherents. By the time of Sangster's study of Wesleyan holiness theology, the passing of over one hundred and fifty years had led to the development of various interpretations of Wesley's understanding of Christian holiness. All would claim support from the Founder of Methodism and from Scripture. The interpretations share many characteristics and all could genuinely be regarded as 'Wesleyan', their differences perhaps being rooted in

day using the tools and principles available to him and did not have the wealth of scholarly research and material available to the modern Wesleyan scholar.

¹⁵ *Plain Account*, pp.128-130.

diverse theological moods, leading to the placing of emphasis at different points, which actually lead to real theological divergence. Three moods or emphases of the doctrine of perfection were present in Methodism at the time of Sangster's study; the Classical Wesleyan, the Pentecostal or Experiential and the Critical emphasis.

The Classical Wesleyan Emphasis of Perfection ¹⁶

The scholars belonging to this enunciation of the doctrine of Christian Perfection attempt and succeed in maintaining the overall thrust of Wesley's view although some minor differences and points of sympathetic critique are voiced. Representative of this interpretation are Richard Watson, W.B. Pope, Thomas Champness and J.A. Beet.

Richard Watson's (1781-1833) importance to Methodism is undeniable, his *Theological Institutes*, designed to aid students in their theological studies, became a standard systemization of Methodist doctrine both in Britain and the U.S.A. and remained so for nearly fifty years. Langford goes so far as to call him 'the most influential theologian within Methodism on both sides of the Atlantic during the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century.' ¹⁷

In his rendition of Wesley's doctrine, although accused of departing from Wesley by having a tendency to 'merge' sanctification with regeneration,¹⁸ Watson could claim a measure of support for such a view from Wesley himself who was careful not to underestimate the work of regeneration in order to posit a high view of Christian

¹⁶ This designation differs significantly from Randall's similar category of 'Traditional Wesleyan Spirituality,' which is termed 'The Pentecostal/experiential emphasis' in this study. Theologically Randall's term is inaccurate for it describes a position which is not traditionally Wesleyan in the strictest sense but a hybrid of theological accents which only appeared, at the very earliest, in British Methodism fifty to sixty years after Wesley's death and which was only adopted by a minority of Methodists. This position is described under the 'Pentecostal/ experiential' section of this chapter.

¹⁷ Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), p.58.

¹⁸ John L. Peters, *Christian Perfection in American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), p.109.

Perfection.¹⁹ Perhaps the marked difference between Watson and Wesley's view is that by emphasizing the primary place of regeneration within the whole scope of sanctification, with Christian Perfection as the ultimate goal, the working out of that initial moral transformation in real life receives a greater weight than in Wesley.

Although Greathouse and Peters²⁰ rightly see a clear difference in emphasis between the systematic presentation of *Watson's Institutes*, which highlight the moments of regeneration and perfection, and his other writings,²¹ which mainly address the gradual aspect of sanctification and rarely mention Christian Perfection, they incorrectly suggest a change of view on Watson's part. The difference seems more likely to be a consequence of his understanding of regeneration when applied to the moral theology of his sermons. If initial sanctification is highly emphasized in the instigation of moral transformation which has subsequently to be worked out in real life, then, consequently, the processes of time and experience become crucial to the furthering of moral development. Although Wesley allowed this, he could not see why the process could not be 'cut short', as Christian perfection was received in response to faith which itself could be received at any moment.

Even Watson's clearest statements of the instantaneous nature of entire sanctification seem to be somewhat of a concession to what he sees as the clear witness of Scripture, for to deny it:

...is to say, that God, under the Gospel, requires us to be what we cannot be, either through want of efficacy of his grace, or from some defect in its administration; nether of which has any countenance from Scripture, nor is it at all consistent with the terms in which promises and exhortations of the Gospel are expressed.²²

This concession is, however, not a logical necessity of his view of sanctification but a

¹⁹ 'The Marks of the New Birth,' BE Vol.1, pp.417-430.

²⁰ Paul M. Bassett & William M. Greathouse, *Exploring Christian Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1985), II, p.254. Also: *Christian Perfection in American Methodism*, p.108.

²¹ Richard Watson, *The Works of the Rev. Richard Watson* (London: John Mason, 1836), II & IV.

²² Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 3 vols (New York: Emory & Waugh, 1828), III, p.187.

submission to an a priori use of scripture.

Watson's soteriology shows, therefore, a shift in the understanding of moral transformation within the whole process of sanctification, weighting regeneration and the gradual outworking of this moral change in all arenas of life. This contrasts with Wesley's tendency to weight the instantaneous attainment of full sanctification with a willingness to sacrifice some of the process to that end. As we shall see, like Watson, Sangster also stresses the importance of moral transformation at conversion and the outworking of that change in real life situations, although he never wholly denigrates the possibility of instantaneous sanctification, mainly due to his understanding of faith.²³

Apart from this difference in enunciation, Watson is still close to Wesley. His understanding of sanctification is strictly Christocentric and holiness is portrayed in terms of love towards God and neighbour,²⁴ the power of which is conferred by the Holy Spirit.²⁵ Watson's thought is teleological, in that perfect holiness is constantly the goal of present holiness, because according to Watson, 'complete renewal in holiness, must (according to Scripture)²⁶ take place in this world.'²⁷

Almost half a century later W.B. Pope (1822-1903) published his *Compendium of Christian Theology* (1875) which contained a notable and influential treatment of Methodist thought, which to Pope was primarily 'scriptural, catholic and orthodox.' This attempt to emphasize the catholic rather than sectarian nature of Methodist theology characterizes Pope's whole approach to Methodism within his *Compendium* and explains his fleeting references to Wesley, although perhaps capturing the essence

²³ This will be discussed at length in chapter 6.

²⁴ Watson, *Institutes*, II, pp.280-281.

²⁵ Watson, *Institutes*, II, pp.456.

²⁶ Brackets mine.

²⁷ Watson, *Institutes*, II, p.451.

of Wesley's methodology and agenda in the process.

It has previously been observed that W.B. Pope belongs to the school of Watson with regard to his exposition of the doctrine of Christian perfection.²⁸ Indeed, Pope also carries sympathies for Watson's view of regeneration, presenting it with a marked emphasis even when referring to Christian perfection:

The Spirit of entire sanctification is only the Spirit of the beginning of grace exerting an ampler power. Never do we read of a HIGHER LIFE that is other than the intensification of the lower; never of a SECOND BLESSING that is more than the unrestrained outpouring of the same Spirit who gave the first.²⁹

Christian perfection is, therefore, 'the perfection of the regenerate state.'³⁰ Pope also places much importance on the process of sanctification which is expressed, negatively, as the gradual mortification of sin³¹ and, positively, as the consecration of the individual to God by the Spirit of love.³²

This latter emphasis on the role of the Spirit is central to Pope's thought. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of perfect consecration, moving the believer towards the perfect love of God. Although the place of the Spirit is highly developed in Pope's understanding of sanctification and perfection, it must not be confused with the then contemporary pneumatology of the American holiness movement which used pentecostal nomenclature in its description of Christian perfection.³³ Pope seems more to be evidencing familiarity with Augustine's understanding of the Trinity, in which the Spirit is the love bond between the Father and the Son. This would also explain Greathouse's observation of Pope's use of love as being Augustinian rather than

²⁸ *Christian Perfection in American Methodism*, p.154.

²⁹ W.B. Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book Room, 1880), III, p.44.

³⁰ *Compendium*, III, p.89.

³¹ *Compendium*, III, p.37.

³² *Compendium*, III, p.37.

³³ For a point of departure into of this brand of holiness theology: cf: Andrew J. Cheatle, 'The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Evidence of Acts' (unpublished master's thesis, Nazarene Theological College, Manchester, 1993).

particularly Wesleyan:

In his understanding of love as the core of Christian Perfection [Pope] is more Augustinian than Wesleyan. The Christian's 'real and essential obligation' is to God alone, neighbour being loved in Him. Every act is an act of love, 'as love is the return of the soul to its rest.' He consistently uses 'charity' interchangeably with love (see *Compendium*, p.217) clearly reflecting Augustine's doctrine of *caritas*, viewed as a combination of *agape* and *eros*. For Wesley, love to neighbour is distinct from love to God, although flowing from the latter; and perfect love is 'pure love to God and man.'³⁴

According to Greathouse, therefore, Pope's concept of love is more restricted, being less social in character than that of John Wesley.³⁵ Although Sangster certainly stresses the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification and develops a far more social gospel than either Wesley or Pope, when speaking of personal salvation Sangster was not afraid to use the language of Pentecost.³⁶ For Pope Christian perfection is the goal of Christian life, its content being love fulfilling the law which is also attainable in this life.³⁷ This love carries, however, a more mystical and individual understanding than in Wesley because of its root in Augustine's understanding of the Trinity.

Pope displays, however, all the traits of a classical Wesleyan position. He is thoroughly Christocentric in his presentation of the doctrine,³⁸ the development of Christlikeness being the goal of all moral transformation with Christian perfection as the determining goal of all moral change which can be received instantaneously by faith³⁹ As with Watson, his thought is, therefore, teleological.

A final important development is that for the first time a major Methodist theologian takes issue with the 'experiential evidences' of the doctrine. Whereas Wesley recommended people to profess to perfection and look for an accompanying

³⁴ *Exploring Christian Holiness*, II, pp.262-263.

³⁵ *Exploring Christian Holiness*, III, p.263.

³⁶ See chapter 6 for a fuller discussion of Sangster's use of pneumatological language.

³⁷ *Compendium*, III, pp.57-58, 96.

³⁸ cf. *Compendium*, III, p.58.

³⁹ *Compendium*, III, pp. 43-44.

assurance, Pope, affected by the growing climate of Romanticism, insists on a more conservative view highlighting aspiration rather than attainment. Pope goes even so far as to say, that the perfect man will of necessity be unaware of his own perfection, a position held firmly by Sangster throughout his writings on the subject:

The recorded experience and character of the saints should have its weight: their experience; not their testimony, which in the nature of things is not to be expected, as there is no mystery more deeply hid in God, no consciousness more unconcious of self than that of perfect holiness and love.⁴⁰

Pope represents, therefore, what R.W. Moss calls 'a theologian at the parting of the ways.'⁴¹ He was prepared to follow Wesley in the main, yet brought the seeds of new emphases, especially his Augustinian and Trinitarian emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, Him being the Spirit of consecration, also by departing from Wesley on the subjective evidences for the experience of entire sanctification.

Thomas Champness the founder of Cliff College and the *Joyful News* strikes a more devotional note in his *Plain Talks on Perfection* (1897).⁴² Although less scholarly than Watson and Pope he follows closely their lead, especially that of Pope. Champness defines perfection as Christlikeness and throughout adopts a Christocentric approach similar to that of Wesley.⁴³

Although Champness addresses the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, he does not waiver in his Christological orientation.⁴⁴ The central focus of Champness's view is love being made perfect, placing a high emphasis on the process of sanctification towards the goal of perfection rather than the actual attainment of perfection. He goes even so far as to say, 'Perfection is not a question of a moment.

⁴⁰ *Compendium*, III, p. 56. For Sangster's view, see chapter 6.

⁴¹ *A New History of Methodism*, I, p.479.

⁴² Thomas Champness, *Plain Talks on Perfection* (London: Joyful News Book Room, 1897).

⁴³ *Plain Talks on Perfection*, p.13.

⁴⁴ *Plain Talks on Perfection*, pp.31-32.

It is a growth, not a leap.'⁴⁵

The general emphases of John Wesley are retained,⁴⁶ departing, however, from the Father of Methodism by insisting on not testifying to the experience. Here, he explicitly follows the romanticism of W.B. Pope.⁴⁷ Essentially, however, Champness's presentation fits firmly within the classical Wesleyan interpretation of Christian perfection.

Along with Champness, J.A. Beet, although associated with the holiness movement in Methodism,⁴⁸ displays theologically more affinity with the classical Wesleyan enunciation of Christian perfection. Along with the other representatives of this interpretation Beet also describes holiness as the goal of Christian living.⁴⁹ Beet recently referred to as, 'one of the forgotten theological giants of Wesleyan Methodism,'⁵⁰ underlines the ideas of complete obedience, consecration and devotion to God within the process of sanctification⁵¹ although Beet's view of man's consecration seems to lack the dynamism of Pope's view by focusing on the 'act' of consecration rather than the 'Spirit of consecration' aiding man's response.

Although the instantaneous reception of Christian perfection is seen as a distinct possibility,⁵² his primary concern is the continual and gradual reception and constant aiming towards Christian perfection.⁵³

In Beet's thought the process of sanctification is again determined by the goal of

⁴⁵ *Plain Talks on Perfection*, p.61.

⁴⁶ *Plain Talks on Perfection*, p.70.

⁴⁷ *Plain Talks on Perfection*, p.76.

⁴⁸ *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, III, pp.227-228.

⁴⁹ J.A. Beet, *Holiness as Understood by the Writers of the Bible*, 4th edn (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1886), p.59.

⁵⁰ David Carter, 'Joseph Edgar Beet & the Eschatological Crisis,' *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 51:6, p.197.

⁵¹ *Holiness As understood by the Writers of the Bible*, pp.55,56,57.

J.A. Beet, *Holiness Symbolic and Real* (London: Robert Culley, 1910), pp.76-83,119.

⁵² *Holiness as Understood by the Biblical Writers*, pp.56-57.

⁵³ *Holiness As Understood by the Biblical Writers*, pp.56-59.

Holiness Symbolic and Real, pp.118-139.

Christian perfection which is defined as love but is understood significantly as entire devotion.⁵⁴ Although Wesley's teleology is, therefore, apparent, Beet sacrifices some of the dynamics of Wesley's view by over emphasizing man's response in sanctification, sometimes bordering on Pelagianism.

Watson, Pope, Champness and Beet, although differing on minor points of enunciation, belong to the classical Wesleyan position. Each highlights the importance of Christian perfection as the goal of Christian life and defines its content as Christlikeness. The teleological focus of Wesley's thought is maintained and love is used as a synonym for holiness. Each in their presentation shows a greater reticence than Wesley in stressing the instantaneous reception of Christian perfection. Under the influence of Pope, the testimony to, or witness of, Christian perfection is separated from the doctrine. The corresponding weight of their presentation falls onto the gradual growth towards perfection. Perfection is still important to their theology, however, as this defines and determines the entire process of moral transformation.

Regeneration is the crucial starting point of sanctification which is seen as a gradual aspiring growth towards Christian perfection through the trials of daily living in the real world.

Sangster would later evidence many of the traits of this emphasis, including an emphasis on Christlikeness, gradual growth in grace, with the possibility of instantaneous perfection and living in the real world, rather than separation from it. He would also adopt Pope's reticence in testifying to perfection, especially as 'freedom from sin.'⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Holiness Symbolic and Real*, pp.128-130.

⁵⁵ These points will be discussed at length in chapter 6.

The Pentecostal or Experiential Emphasis

To this grouping belong three men,⁵⁶ William Arthur, Thomas Cook and Samuel Chadwick, the latter two belonging to the holiness movement in Methodism which became strongly associated with Cliff College.

William Arthur (1819-1901), known for his able refutation of Positivism in two books written in 1887 and entitled *Religion without God* and *God without Religion*,⁵⁷ was probably best known in Methodism and beyond for his more devotional book *The Tongue of Fire*.⁵⁸ Reflecting, perhaps, some of the developments occurring within diverse holiness groups in America, Arthur's central concern is the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

In this influential book Arthur mourns the impotence of the Church and asks each believer and the Church to be filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit. He advocates that all be cleansed and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Holiness is obtainable now in a baptism of fire.⁵⁹ 'Be filled with the Spirit' is understood to be a sacred duty and whatever is a sacred duty must be the will of God, therefore, all can be baptized in the Holy Spirit now.⁶⁰ This syllogistic argument is typical of the trans-Atlantic developments of the doctrine of entire sanctification, especially prevalent in the 'altar

⁵⁶ The roots of this interpretation can be traced to John Fletcher and Adam Clarke. Although neither would probably have agreed with the narrowness of this view, Fletcher's emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, especially his near association of Spirit Baptism with entire sanctification probably contributed to such developments within Methodism.

Adam Clarke's stress on the instantaneousness of entire sanctification in which he even criticises sanctification by 'graditum' gave a basis for such an interpretation in Methodist theology. Indeed, Grider asserts that the American holiness movement preferred Clarke's view to that of Wesley. cf. J. K. Grider, *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1980), p.99. Both, Fletcher and Clarke, however, lie outside the limits of this study, the thrust of their thought belonging decidedly to the eighteenth century.

⁵⁷ William Arthur, *Religion without God* and *God Without Religion* were initially published in three parts: (London: 1885-88).

⁵⁸ William Arthur, *The Tongue of Fire* (Winona Lake: Light & Life Press, [nd]). Original date: 1856.

⁵⁹ *Tongue of Fire*, pp.30-33.

⁶⁰ *Tongue of Fire*, pp.32-33.

theology' of Phoebe Palmer.⁶¹

Although Arthur does not explicitly refer to a 'second blessing experience,' this would seem to be implied by his distinction between receiving the Spirit and being filled or baptized in the Holy Ghost. The latter is seen to usher in the life of spiritual power and holy living.⁶² This empowered holy living should lead naturally to Christian service in the world, especially in the combating of social evils.⁶³ Although guarding against the charge of Christian isolationism by stressing the importance of service in the world he is, however, reflective of the evangelicalism of his era by being explicitly world-denying with regard to pleasure; the body almost seen as a distraction to holy living.⁶⁴

From the point of view of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection, Arthur's unsystematic treatment highlights the instantaneous reception of the gift. His position is thoroughly pneumatological, focusing attention on the work of the Spirit, the power of the Spirit and the central importance of Pentecost to holiness. The characteristic association of Spirit baptism and second blessing holiness becomes more explicit a decade later around the time of Arthur's presidency, where he distinguishes clearly between salvation and full salvation.⁶⁵

Thomas Cook writing in 1902 published his influential book *New Testament Holiness* which by the end of World War II went through ten impressions, marking the interest and influence of this line of thought within holiness circles in the early decades of the century.

⁶¹ Cf: *Exploring Christian Holiness*, II, pp.299-300.

⁶² *Tongue of Fire*, p.33.

⁶³ See Chapter 6 of this thesis for Sangster's contribution to this area.

⁶⁴ *Tongue of Fire*, p. 221.

⁶⁵ J. Munsey Turner is, therefore, correct in associating Arthur with an understanding of entire sanctification as a gift to be received in a moment of awareness: John Munsey Turner, *Conflict and Reconciliation* (London: Epworth, 1985), p.52.

For textual evidence in Arthur see Norman W. Taggart who concurs with Munsey Turner's view: Norman W. Taggart, *William Arthur: First Among Methodists* (London: Epworth, 1993), p.38.

The origin and development of this understanding of the doctrine of perfection belong to a period of vital religious fervour stretching primarily from 1835-1875 in America. Deiter traces this new blend of holiness thought to the introduction of Rev. Timothy Merritt's work on Christian Perfection⁶⁶ Distributed primarily within the Methodist Episcopal Church, this short paper had the intention of encouraging the 'many', who at the time were eager for the experience, to seek full sanctification and, thereafter, to publish the testimonies of the newly sanctified. The paper openly challenged ministers and preachers to hold special meetings with the aim of reviving the doctrine of holiness. Deiter asserts that one of the effects of Merritt's work was to combine a revivalistic emphasis with Wesleyan perfection.⁶⁷ Also around 1835, Phoebe Palmer, who was to become one of the most prolific representatives and exponents of the doctrine, received entire sanctification and started promoting the experience at Tuesday holiness meetings.⁶⁸

Almost simultaneously Charles Finney and Asa Mahan from Oberlin College in Ohio began to teach and preach the doctrine of perfection. Two significant new emphases came to be associated with the doctrine through these scholars. First, the doctrine received a pneumatological orientation, connecting the experience of the first disciples on the Day of Pentecost with the experience of perfection. A new terminology of holiness began to take shape identifying the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with entire sanctification or perfection. Later, in Mahan's book *Baptism of the Holy Ghost*⁶⁹ a definitive stress on the idea of a 'second work of grace' is propounded. At conversion the believer receives the Holy Spirit but not in his baptismal fullness. His understanding

⁶⁶ Melvin. E. Deiter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1980), p. 3. Timothy Merritt, *The Christian Manual, a treatise on Christian Perfection: with directions for obtaining that state* (New York: N. Bangs & J. Emory, 1829).

⁶⁷ *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, p.3.

⁶⁸ This practice remained in some quarters of the Church of the Nazarene in Britain until the 1970s and beyond.

⁶⁹ Asa Mahon, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* (New York: George Hughes & Co.,1870), p.60.

of this second work of grace emphasizes the aspect of empowerment over cleansing, although the latter is present.⁷⁰ Second, this attempted synthesis of New School Calvinism with Wesley's doctrine of perfection introduced into the doctrine an emphasis upon 'decision.' The application of Finney's decision-orientated evangelism to the doctrine of perfection could not avoid focusing on the central role of the will in sanctification, thereby leaning towards semi-Pelagianism.

Another major influence on the reshaping of Wesley's doctrine of perfection was caused by the philosophical environment of middle to late Nineteenth century America which carried a particular air of optimism. This led many to believe that all of God's promises could be experienced personally and in the present. American Transcendentalism of the form represented by figures like Emerson and Whitman combined with American idealism 'created a tendency in American Christianity (to emphasize) the spiritual and ideal side of life.'⁷¹ Quoting Deiter, Greathouse summarizes the influence of transcendentalism:

When the transcendentalist spoke of "the normal development, use of discipline, and enjoyment of every part of the body and every faculty of the spirit; the direction of all natural powers to their natural purposes," he was speaking a language that could easily translate into a Wesleyan explanation of entire sanctification as an experience freeing a person to be all that a loving God originally intended him to be.⁷²

The American idealism that spoke of the creation of a new society, a kind of promised land that was free from societal evils was easily combined with the optimistic message of the holiness movement. The witnesses to entire sanctification could sing of entering 'Beulah Land.' The language of heaven was absorbed into the language of earth.

Another important influence in this blend of holiness teaching was the 'shorter way' associated with Phoebe Palmer, although probably originating from James Caughey, an

⁷⁰ *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost*, iv-vi.

⁷¹ Timothy L. Smith, *Revival and Social Reform* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1957), pp.104-105,113,142.

⁷² *Exploring Christian Holiness*, II, p. 297 and *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century*, p.6.

American self-educated revivalist, who as early as 1841, was propagating this view.⁷³ The 'shorter way' for both Caughey and Palmer involved dispensing with the preparatory process before entire sanctification, which otherwise involved a deep conviction of indwelling sin and wrestling towards the experience. Second, they maintained that Christians were to believe that God is obliged to keep the promises of his word if they, correspondingly, only do their duty. Third, both Caughey and Palmer replace the Wesleyan concept of the direct witness of the Holy Spirit to the experience of entire sanctification with a simple 'trust that it is done because the Bible says so.'

For Palmer, in particular, the idea of consecrating all on the altar became the focus of this 'shorter way.' As Greathouse comments, 'The Christian who is consciously "all on the altar" may at that moment claim the blessing of entire sanctification.'⁷⁴ This became commonly known as 'altar theology.' The theological accent which in fact asserted that, 'Action upon a divine promise in faith constitutes the assurance that the promise is fulfilled,'⁷⁵ is, however, a syllogistic argument which confuses the act of faith with its assurance. Both Caughey and Palmer vigorously preached this brand of holiness teaching both in America and Britain. Its revivalist tones made it ideal for 'preaching for decision,' thereby affiliating it with the ethos of Finney and, as Bebbington observes, making it suitable 'for mass consumption.'⁷⁶ This revivalist context and stress on 'decision' also led to the tendency to reify certain metaphors with regard to the doctrine of sin. Sin was often spoken of and conceived almost as a substance, reflecting the hamartiology of John Wesley. Terms like the 'root of bitterness,' 'the evil root,' 'the old man' had also been used by John Wesley and led

⁷³ Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth Century England*, p.65.

⁷⁴ *Exploring Christian Holiness*, II, p. 299.

⁷⁵ M.Dieter, Hoekema, Horton, McQuilkin, Walvoord, *Five Views On Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p.40.

⁷⁶ *Holiness In Nineteenth-Century England*, p. 66.

easily to the common use of the term 'eradication' when speaking of the cleansing of sanctification. By the turn of the century the use of the language of eradication was widespread.⁷⁷

Thomas Cook's understanding of holiness followed closely the American enunciation of the doctrine. References are also given to some of these leading figures in the development of this interpretation of holiness theology e.g. Thomas Upham, Asa Mahan, Phoebe Palmer, Charles Finney and Daniel Steele, all of whom stressed the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the moment of entire sanctification.⁷⁸ Cook, similarly, after stating what holiness is and is not, addresses most of his attention to the circumstance of holiness which he calls the 'double cure.'⁷⁹ The reasoning behind Cook's belief in a second blessing is his assertion that sin exists in two-fold character, as an act and a state.⁸⁰ Forgiveness is therefore, understood to deal with the guilt of sin whereas depravity needs a cleansing, second work of grace.⁸¹ Although Cook allows that holiness begins in regeneration the thrust of his thought has a distinct tendency to minimise the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration in order to posit a high view of sanctification. Entire sanctification represents the 'extirpation of sin' and analogies of 'plucking out the weeds' are used to express the completeness of the removal of sin.⁸² Entire sanctification is to be received instantaneously by a definite act of consecration and faith.⁸³ Consecration is understood as a voluntary act in which the

⁷⁷ Theologically this school of thought offered a substantial solution to a substantial problem; sanctification is the uprooting of sin. Wesley could never really free himself from offering a relational/moral notion of sanctification as the solution to a substantial view of sin. Chapters 5 and 6 will focus on these issues, especially Sangster's attempt to offer a new solution.

⁷⁸ Thomas Cook, *New Testament Holiness*, 10th imp (London: Epworth Press, 1943), pp. 31,62,89,133,155.

⁷⁹ *New Testament Holiness*, p. 25.

⁸⁰ *New Testament Holiness*, pp.24-26.

⁸¹ *New Testament Holiness*, p.26.

⁸² *New Testament Holiness*, p.38.

⁸³ *New Testament Holiness*, p.76.

whole will is surrendered to God as a prerequisite of entire sanctification.⁸⁴ The baptism of the Holy Spirit is used as a synonym for entire sanctification, the effect of which is the removal of all sin from the believer and his/her empowerment for service.

Although elements of the 'classical Wesleyan' interpretation are mentioned i.e. growth in holiness, and love as the core of holiness,⁸⁵ Cook's agenda is 'the blessing' of entire sanctification. Cook also concludes his book with a chapter on personal testimony in which he confesses to his own experience of 'the blessing.'⁸⁶ In this context, Cook repeats his substantial language when referring to sin, the use of the terms 'Old man' and 'eradication' being two examples which came to characterize this viewpoint.⁸⁷

Samuel Chadwick, the latest of these scholars and well known and influential principal of Cliff College in the 1920s, became the leading representative of the experiential or Pentecostal interpretation of holiness within British Methodism. His book *The Way to Pentecost* (1932) was considered a classic enunciation of the 'second blessing' variety of holiness theology and his book was still widely available in 'holiness circles' until the late 1980s.⁸⁸

In similar vein to that of William Arthur, Chadwick bemoans the impotence of the Church⁸⁹ which, according to Chadwick, is caused by the want of belief in the Holy Ghost,⁹⁰ especially the failure to preach or testify to a 'second gift of grace.'⁹¹ Grouping together Modernism, Mysticism, and Sacerdotalism 'as products of a religion

⁸⁴ *New Testament Holiness*, p.76.

⁸⁵ *New Testament Holiness*, p. 53.

⁸⁶ *New Testament Holiness*, p. 157.

⁸⁷ *New Testament Holiness*, pp. 153-154.

⁸⁸ Chadwick's book was still advertised and sold in the catalogue of The Nazarene Publishing House until 1989.

⁸⁹ Samuel Chadwick, *The Way to Pentecost*, 12th imp (Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1964), p.12.

⁹⁰ *The Way to Pentecost*, p.12.

⁹¹ *The Way to Pentecost*, p.12.

that is not baptized of the Holy Ghost' but as 'works of the Flesh,' Chadwick asks for a demonstration of a supernatural religion effected by the abiding presence of the Spirit of God.⁹² The Church must be defined experientially with the validity of church life judged by its dependence on the 'Pentecostal fire' for its work. Chadwick's special target seems to be the institutionalised church and scholarship void of the Holy Spirit.⁹³

Chadwick emphasises the importance of Spirit Baptism for the life of the Church and of the individual Christian as both are sanctified and quickened by the experience.⁹⁴ The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is presented as a definite and distinct experience, later than regeneration, and which is always assured and verified by the witness of the Spirit.⁹⁵ Although in true Wesleyan fashion Chadwick sees love as the last word in religion and the true content of holiness,⁹⁶ the overall thrust of Chadwick's presentation falls on power. This is then defined in its different manifestations as: victory over sin, the quickening of body, the illumination of the mind and the source of spiritual passion.⁹⁷

By emphasizing the secondness of entire sanctification in such distinct terms Chadwick posits a militant Wesleyan division of regeneration and entire sanctification with little or no growth in holiness in between. In fact, growth, in Chadwick's estimation, seems to be associated with human achievement or works:

Another mistake made by many earnest Christians about holiness is that it comes by a gradual growth in grace and a steady progress of spiritual discipline. They are always growing toward it, but they never get into it, always struggling and striving to attain, but never entering into possession. The positive expectation is always seen to be afar off, and they die without having possessed. The hopeful future never becomes the positive now. The time never comes that calls for a definite step and a positive act of faith. But holiness does not come by growth; neither is it identified

⁹² *The Way to Pentecost*, p.13.

⁹³ *The Way to Pentecost*, pp.15-16.

⁹⁴ *The Way to Pentecost*, p. 32.

⁹⁵ *The Way to Pentecost*, p. 33.

⁹⁶ *The Way to Pentecost*, pp. 77, 80.

⁹⁷ *The Way to Pentecost*, chapters 10,11,12 and especially pp.81-86.

with growth. Growth is a process of life; holiness is the gift of abundant life. Growth is the result of health; holiness is health. Holiness implies a crisis, a new experience, a transformed life. It is not an achievement or an attainment, but a gift of grace in the Holy Ghost. It comes not by works, but of faith.⁹⁸

The precondition of the experience of the second blessing is total consecration,⁹⁹ an emphasis borrowed from the American holiness movement and probably stemming from Phoebe Palmer's 'shorter way' to holiness.¹⁰⁰ Although in his final chapter entitled 'The Way into the Blessing', Chadwick briefly recovers Wesley's mature emphasis on the repentance of believers¹⁰¹ as a pre-requisite for entire sanctification, this is still presented within the overall framework of consecration, with sanctifying faith being pendent upon total consecration.¹⁰² Although Greathouse concurs with Jack Ford that Wesley would have found it inconceivable that 'anyone unwilling to consecrate his life completely to God could expect to receive sanctifying faith,' it could be convincingly argued both from Scripture and Wesley¹⁰³ that it is inconceivable that anyone could even become a Christian at all without such a consecration.

The result of Chadwick's interpretation of the doctrine of Christian perfection is a sharply bifurcated *ordo-salutis* devoid of Wesley's dynamic teleology. Chadwick represents, therefore, perhaps the most extreme form of holiness theology within British Methodism.

William Arthur, Thomas Cook and Samuel Chadwick clearly represent the experiential interpretation of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection. Their thought is characterized by a pronounced pneumatology, the accent of holiness falling on the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a 'second definite work of grace.' The Scriptural basis for

⁹⁸ *The Way to Pentecost*, p. 75.

⁹⁹ *The Way to Pentecost*, p.76.

¹⁰⁰ cf. *Exploring Christian Holiness*, II, pp.299-300.

¹⁰¹ *The Way to Pentecost*, p.108.

¹⁰² *The Way to Pentecost*, p.109.

¹⁰³ cf: Romans 6 and 'The Marks of the New Birth', BE Vol.1, pp.415-430.

the views expressed become increasingly dependent on the evidence of Acts, especially the Pentecostal narratives. Entire sanctification is viewed as a 'Pentecostal experience' of power available to all believers instantaneously, providing the human condition of total consecration is present. Growth in holiness is more and more minimalised and in Chadwick almost denied. There is, therefore, a disjuncture between regeneration and entire sanctification. This position has, consequently, a tendency to undermine the reality of moral transformation in regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit prior to entire sanctification. This is exactly what Wesley sought to avoid. Although Arthur, Cook and Chadwick still seek to portray love as the essence of holiness, their overall emphasis falls on power. When applied to moral categories the focus is on power over sin rather than love excluding sin, a nuanced difference which ultimately erodes the relational root of Wesley's theology.

This rendition of Wesley's doctrine of holiness, although still claiming its roots in Wesley, is really a hybrid, highly influenced by the transatlantic theology of the American holiness movement.¹⁰⁴ Although each in his own right perhaps tried to avoid a world-denying ethic, the tendency of Cook's and Chadwick's views is dogmatism, and when coupled with the undermining of Wesley's relationally rooted theology, a world-denying spirituality is inevitable. Strawson correctly asserts that this became the case with the excesses of this emphasis of holiness alienating many in Methodism.¹⁰⁵

Although Sangster would later be critical of this enunciation of the doctrine, his primary problem was the excesses of some of its proponents, calling them 'cranks'.¹⁰⁶ His main objections were the testimonies of its adherents to being 'free from sin' and

¹⁰⁴ Greathouse sees the particular American influences as being transcendental philosophy, American idealism and pragmatism. cf. *Exploring Christian Holiness*, II, pp.296-298.

¹⁰⁵ *A History of The Methodist Church in Great Britain*, III, p.229.

¹⁰⁶ A term he used as early as 1935 (see p.77) and was still using at Lake Junaluska in 1956 during his talks on holiness (see chapter 6).

its defining of holiness as a series of negations.¹⁰⁷ He did, however, accept that the human heart can be cleansed instantaneously and that the Holy Spirit brings power for service and for victory over sin.

The Critical Emphasis

Three Methodist theologians are responsible for subjecting the doctrine of Christian Perfection to the inquiry skills and methods of early, twentieth century, 'modern' scholarship and provide the immediate background to Sangster's study. F.W. Platt, H.W. Perkins and R.N. Flew address the doctrine from the perspective of the latest biblical, historical and philosophical scholarship of their era. Although this at first seems consistent with the methods of Watson and Pope, the growing influence and importance of philosophical/psychological study during the early to middle twentieth century combined with the findings and methods of Biblical criticism, meant that this particular type of scholarly investigation became much broader in scope.

F.W. Platt, Professor at Handsworth College in the early decades of the Twentieth century was approached by the editorial committee of the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* to contribute the article on perfection.¹⁰⁸ Published in 1917, in Volume IX, Platt follows a similar method to that of Pope, tracing the biblical foundations and the historical developments or expressions of the doctrine.

The change in historical context is evident throughout, especially in the biblical exposition where Platt uses the tools of historical criticism to place the doctrine within a broader exegetical framework.¹⁰⁹ Due attention is given to the context within which the term 'perfect' is found, thereby ending the erroneous limitation of the term to

¹⁰⁷ See chapter 6 for further discussion.

¹⁰⁸ F.W. Platt, 'Perfection,' *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: T.T. Clark, 1917), IX, pp.728-737.

¹⁰⁹ Platt, p.728.

'ethical perfection' characteristic of Wesley.¹¹⁰ Platt sees the scriptural use of the word as giving a range of definitions.¹¹¹ Platt's conclusions concerning the New Testament background of the doctrine are, however, close to Wesley, the essence of which is perfect love towards God and man.¹¹² The basis of the doctrine is the grace of God, which is received by faith as a gift of God.¹¹³ This gift does not, however, exclude the cooperation of man with the grace of God.

According to Platt, some confusion as to the extent of the 'negative' side of Christian perfection is inevitable as sin and sinfulness are difficult to distinguish scripturally and in practice. Platt opts for a typical Wesleyan view that 'Christian perfection is compatible with infirmity of knowledge and with other natural and inevitable human limitations.'¹¹⁴ Hence no Christian is exempt from the constant application of the atoning work of Christ, or the possibility of further growth in holiness.¹¹⁵

The scriptural account of Christian perfection is followed by an historical survey, which highlights the presence of the doctrine within the broad history of the Christian Church. The survey of the Methodist development shows general agreement with Wesley although highlighting, more particularly, his mature evaluation of the doctrine i.e., that it is rare and generally occurs in the instant of death, although it can occur earlier.¹¹⁶ Platt also emphasizes the reticence of Wesley and Methodism to profess to the possession of this 'state' of Christian Perfection.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ This use was dominant, however, within the Pentecostal/Experiential Emphasis.

¹¹¹ Platt, pp.728-729.

¹¹² Platt, p.729.

¹¹³ Platt, p.729.

¹¹⁴ Platt, p.729.

¹¹⁵ Platt, p.730.

¹¹⁶ Platt, p.731.

¹¹⁷ Platt, p.731.

Platt addresses the doctrine critically in his final paragraph.¹¹⁸ He starts by lambasting the developments of the doctrine affected by Mahan, Finney and the Oberlin school which carry Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian tendencies by highlighting ‘perfection as full consecration or an entirely surrendered will,’¹¹⁹ and implicitly quite a severe attack on this brand of holiness teaching in British Methodism. Platt continues by presenting one particular development in biblical/theological scholarship, which he sees as cutting at the root of the doctrine: the extent to which the doctrine is reliant on a pre-scientific cosmology and anthropology. Here Platt sees the evolutionary theory as potentially undermining the doctrine, which historically has been based on the literal fall of man from an original state of righteousness and holiness. Platt also points out the need to readdress theologically the distinctions between voluntary and involuntary sin and human nature itself, in the light of modern scientific evidence, a relationship taken up and discussed at length by Sangster.¹²⁰

Second, Platt stresses the central importance of ‘Kingdom’ terminology within the teaching of Jesus which when coupled with the findings of psychology should also bring about a change to the ‘exaggerated individualism’ and ‘unsocial habit of life’ of many proponents of the doctrine.¹²¹

A fusion of individual and corporate elements of holiness expressing themselves dynamically in spiritual fervour and social engagement, would seem to be a more Scriptural and modern interpretation of Christian Perfection.¹²²

Harold Perkins, a student of Platt, writing a decade later and using a similar methodology to his tutor, continues in the established tradition of presenting a biblical

¹¹⁸ Platt, p.736.

¹¹⁹ Platt, p.736.

¹²⁰ Sangster’s particular contribution to this will be discussed in Chapter 5.

¹²¹ Platt, p.736.

¹²² Platt, p.739.

and historical survey of the doctrine before an attempt is made at a critical reconstruction of the doctrine. In his chapter on definitions, however, Perkins introduces some creative changes to the doctrine of Perfection in an attempt to answer some of the problems raised by modern scientific knowledge and which he later elucidates in his constructive section.¹²³

Christian perfection is to be understood as 'perfection in love,'¹²⁴ as love is the supreme attribute of God Himself, and is, therefore, the fulfilment of every movement, which turns towards Him.¹²⁵ According to Perkins, however, this is best understood as a 'State of Life.'¹²⁶ Drawing from Aquinas' distinction between the 'beginning, middle and perfect' when describing the states of the Christian, Perkins sees the concept of 'State of Perfection' as expressive of the Biblical and theological content of Christian Perfection yet communicating the idea of a more secure spiritual condition, which, although not guaranteeing eternal salvation offers a more fixed and steadfast assurance than 'the more transient moods of the soul' offered in the Methodist understanding of assurance. This idea appears to be built on the assumption that Wesley's doctrine of assurance was, at a significant level, pendent on feeling.

For Perkins, the term 'State of Perfection' has the additional advantage of offering the idea of limitless possibilities of further advance. The characteristics of the 'State of Perfection' are freedom, joy, expansion and Lordship.¹²⁷ Freedom includes deliverance from the bondage of sin and the burden of the world.¹²⁸ Joy accompanies this higher life although its fullness will only be realized in eternity.¹²⁹

In discussing the idea of 'expansion,' Perkins introduces the most radical aspect of

¹²³ H.W. Perkins, *The Doctrine of Evangelical Perfection* (London: Epworth, 1927).

¹²⁴ Perkins, p.255.

¹²⁵ Perkins, p.257.

¹²⁶ Perkins, p.257.

¹²⁷ Perkins, p.258.

¹²⁸ Perkins, p.258.

¹²⁹ Perkins, p.259.

his thought concerning Perfection; the concept of eternal progress.¹³⁰ Although, in this life, we are limited in our progress by our 'human frame,' our present progress in holiness is only a promise of the future progress in eternity.¹³¹ Perkins alludes, at this point, to his demand for a re-statement of the Doctrine of the Future Life.¹³² Sangster appears to follow Perkins on the need for such a re-statement but at times introduces a tempered universalism into his concept.¹³³ In a radical departure from Wesley, Perkins quoting Weldon, asserts that there must be attainment beyond the grave:

There is no warrant in Holy Scripture for the assumption that death is an absolute dividing-line between one state and another; still less that on one side of the line all is preparation, and on the other all recompense or penalty.¹³⁴

It appears at this point that Perkins is more consistent with Aquinas than Wesley but this apparent Catholic understanding of holiness and sanctification is based on more modern theological considerations. His presuppositions are two-fold and represent attempted answers to the two main critiques of Platt, from 1917, concerning the doctrine of Perfection. First, he presupposes a scientific view of the world, more particularly, the evolutionary hypothesis. From this he concludes that man has not fallen from a state of original righteousness, but as part of the evolutionary programming of all nature, has and is always in a process of development.¹³⁵ God's total agenda with man is, therefore, one of 'perfecting.' Second, the means of God's 'perfecting' is through ethical choices taken in relationship with other souls. Perkins says:

We must not of course, think of the relations of earth as transferred to the future. The intimacies of marriage, for instance, will be abrogated. But as we have learnt here to know and love God through His creations, so there our progress will be

¹³⁰ Perkins, p.260.

¹³¹ Perkins, p.261.

¹³² Perkins, p.273.

¹³³ See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of Sangster's understanding of progress in the afterlife. The impact this has on his understanding of sanctification and perfection will be discussed in Chapter 6.

¹³⁴ Perkins, p.273.

¹³⁵ Perkins, pp.11-13.

through relationships more beautiful and perfect, with other creature souls.¹³⁶

The 'State of Perfection' must, for Perkins, have the most far-reaching ethical, social, and ecclesial consequences, as its very essence is the genuine love of God, whose ultimate earthly goal must be peace in the world and the full union of His Church.¹³⁷

Perkins rejects 'entire sanctification' as a synonym for 'Perfection' as it is too limited in scope and conveys the idea of 'spiritual proficiency.'¹³⁸ Perkins falls, however, into the same trap by referring consistently to perfection as 'attainment.'¹³⁹

At his clearest, however, Perkins refers to his 'State of Perfection' as the vision of the perfection of Christ on earth being realized in the life of the Christian by faith, through the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁰ This could, according to Perkins, be defined as Christian maturity, for:

What the mature Christian is seeking for is some term which shall bear witness to the fact that he is assured that he has passed out of his nonage, and that he has arrived at a stage of firm confidence that the Divine purposes of love will be fulfilled in him, to his own eternal welfare, and through him to the blessing of many others.¹⁴¹

The term which best describes this whole process is, according to Perkins, the 'State of Perfection.'¹⁴²

Perhaps the most influential proponent of the critical emphasis is Robert Newton Flew whose ecumenicity was renowned both inside and outside Methodism. Flew's theological agenda was orientated towards comparative ecclesiology in an attempt to find common ground and to debate openly differences between traditions. His book *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology*¹⁴³ is an attempt to apply his comparative

¹³⁶ Perkins, p.274.

¹³⁷ Perkins, pp.263-264.

¹³⁸ Perkins, p.282.

¹³⁹ E.g. Perkins, p.282.

¹⁴⁰ Perkins, p.283.

¹⁴¹ Perkins, p.282.

¹⁴² Perkins, p.282.

¹⁴³ R.N. Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology* (London: Oxford Press, 1934)

ecclesiology to the distinctive doctrine of Methodism, with a view to placing it within the boundaries of Catholic Christianity. Flew is careful to state clearly from the start that his subject is the 'content' of the ideal, not the circumstance, i.e., the means or methods of attainment.¹⁴⁴

In his biblical survey, which fills one quarter of the book, Flew finds four important emphases of perfection. First, the teaching and preaching of Jesus contains, within a pronounced apocalyptic framework, a clear doctrine of the ideal life, which might be lived out in the present world. This finds its origin in the apocalyptic idea of perfect communion with God in the age to come, the implications of which are experienced now and which transcend the realm of individualism to a society knit together by communion with God in the present.¹⁴⁵

Flew sees Paul as following closely the direction of Jesus' s teaching although casting his thought of the ideal in the terminology of faith, love and hope. Summing up Paul's understanding of the Christian ideal in terms of love, Flew says:

Love is communion with God
 Love points towards a perfected society
 Love admits of infinite progress
 Love sees goodness but is not blind to the real world
 The source of love and the love of Christian's to one another is Christ's love
 Love is inextricably linked to the Cross¹⁴⁶

In Hebrews, Flew discovers the emphasis of the 'perfect worship' of Christ, which implicates man's relationship to God and the world.¹⁴⁷ Finally, in the Johannine writings, the Christian ideal is expressed in terms of 'unbroken communion,' making sinning impossible.¹⁴⁸

According to Flew, therefore, the New Testament, although using a number of

¹⁴⁴ Flew, p.XI.

¹⁴⁵ Flew, p.40.

¹⁴⁶ Flew, p.72.

¹⁴⁷ Flew, pp.73-91.

¹⁴⁸ Flew, pp.92-117.

paradigms to express the Christian ideal, presents a view of moral perfection that is capable of infinite progress yet is realisable in the world of the individual and society.

In his historical survey of the idea of Perfection, apart from attributing too much credence to the Hellenisation of the Christian message in his analysis of the Early Church, Clement of Alexandria and Origen,¹⁴⁹ Flew sees the first three centuries of the Church as of great value. He succeeds in placing the idea of Perfection within the whole framework of Catholic tradition, as a common inheritance, even fearlessly proclaiming Monasticism as ‘the boldest organized attempt to attain to Christian perfection in all the long history of the Church.’¹⁵⁰

Flew views the Protestant Reformation’s expression of the ideal being limited to an ‘imputed perfection.’¹⁵¹ It was to this restricted understanding of the ideal that Wesley applied his own agenda. Borrowing from the ideas of the mystics to formulate the ideal and seeing it confirmed in the lives of the Early Methodists, Wesley posited an understanding of perfection, which he attempted to summarize in *The Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Flew summarizes it as follows:

1. It is necessary for the Christian to aim at perfection.
2. Perfection is love filling the heart.
3. Love includes keeping all the commandments.
4. Perfection is freedom from sin.
5. Sin is to be defined as a voluntary transgression of a know law of God.
6. Perfection can be experienced instantaneously.
7. Assurance accompanies this experience.
8. All grace is rooted in the cross of Christ.
9. Perfection expresses itself in relationships and is, therefore, not merely individualistic.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ A common assumption of Flew's generation of scholars was that much pure Christian doctrine was destroyed by Hellenistic philosophy, especially Platonism. Although early theologians such as Origen and Clement were obviously affected by their Greek world view, they were not uncritical of many of its presuppositions. Flew, perhaps following the lead of Harnack and Loofs is too sceptical of their ability to be critical and discerning.

¹⁵⁰ Flew, p.158.

¹⁵¹ Flew, p.254.

¹⁵² Quoted from Flew, pp.324 -341.

In his final, critical analysis of Wesley's viewpoint, Flew takes issue with the founder of Methodism on three counts. As with Platt and Perkins, Flew criticizes the view of sin Wesley carries into his argument for Perfection. Although Flew correctly sees Wesley at pains to stress the 'depths of sin' in the hymns of Methodism, he asserts that Wesley's main definition of sin is limited to the level of voluntary acts of intention and conscious awareness.¹⁵³ Flew's critique is aimed particularly at the Augustinian inheritance of Wesley which, he asserts, tends to speak of sin as an 'hypostasis' about which we can be aware.¹⁵⁴ A deeper understanding of sin would, according to Flew, be linked closer to the whole personality of man and should take more account of spiritual blindness, as 'our worst sins are often those of which we are unconscious.'¹⁵⁵

Second, Flew, in common with Platt and Perkins, objects to Wesley's enunciation of assurance. Here Flew agrees in principle with the 'classical Wesleyan emphasis' by playing down the idea of testimony to the experience of Christian Perfection. His reasoning reflects, however, a more modified view. Instead of warning against triumphalism or spiritual presumption, Flew distinguishes clearly between two forms of assurance: 'the awareness of the presence of God' and the assurance that 'all sin has been destroyed.'¹⁵⁶ The latter viewpoint cannot be sustained in the light of Flew's critique of Wesley's understanding of sin, for if a man is blind to his worst sins, then any testimony about deliverance from sin is ultimately a statement about his knowledge of self.¹⁵⁷ Sangster took up this point showing the two types of testimony to be of different theological and psychological natures.¹⁵⁸

Flew's final critique addresses the latent world-denying spirituality of Wesley's

¹⁵³ Flew, p.333.

¹⁵⁴ Flew, p.335. Sangster directs a sustained critique to this substantial understanding of sin: See Chapter 5.

¹⁵⁵ Flew, p.333.

¹⁵⁶ Flew, p.337.

¹⁵⁷ Flew, p.337.

¹⁵⁸ For Sangster's contribution to the discussion of 'testimonies to perfection', see Chapter 6.

doctrine. Although Flew sees Methodism as more guilty of this than its founder, the hymns of the Wesleys have a tendency to bypass 'the relations of men with one another.'¹⁵⁹ Life, for John Wesley and his followers, was ultimately seen as a pilgrimage. Drawing together the witness of Scripture and the long history of the idea of Perfection into a final summary and conclusion, Flew says:

[...]the seeking of an ideal that is realizable in this world is essential to Christianity. It is essential to the corporate life of the Church that this principle should be enshrined at the heart of its doctrines, its hymns, its confession of faith, its institutions. It is essential for the individual Christian that the goal set before him should be not merely conversion, not merely a life of service, but perfection....Christianity is not Christianity if it is not aiming at Perfection.¹⁶⁰

As has been demonstrated Platt, Perkins and Flew approach the Methodist doctrine of Perfection with a different agenda than the Classical Wesleyan Emphasis and the Pentecostal or Experiential Emphasis. Rather than seeking a clearer enunciation of a given tradition, or a revivalistic interpretation, these scholars attempt to place the doctrine as a common Christian heritage and to subject it to the latest scholarship with a view to showing its modern relevance. This process, however, uncovered three major areas of weakness, according to these scholars:

1. Its reliance on a pre-scientific cosmology and anthropology, more particularly its consequences for an understanding of sin.
2. A tendency to focus too much on the individual and to neglect the more corporate and social elements of Christian living.
3. The undermining of the accompanying doctrine of assurance by the findings of psychology, especially the whole question of the knowledge of self.

Sangster's own work should be seen as essentially continuing the theological agenda of the 'Critical Emphasis'; attempting to answer these exact questions.

By the time of Sangster's decision to study the Doctrine of Perfection, the 'Pentecostal or Experiential Emphasis' was gaining supporters both from within Methodism and from without. Few Methodist ministers preached about the doctrine,

¹⁵⁹ Flew, p.340.

¹⁶⁰ Flew, p.398.

perhaps due to some of the extremes of the Pentecostal emphasis and its followers. The doubts cast by the questioning of Platt, Perkins and Flew left many ministers unsure of the doctrine, and many of the laity overwhelmed by the detailed scholarship and unanswered questions.

It appears Sangster saw it as his peculiar task of reappraising this doctrine and especially of bridging the gap between the 'Critical Emphasis' and the ordinary people of Methodism. In an article submitted to the *Methodist Recorder* Sangster says:

The gulf between the scholar and the ordinary Church member should be bridged....The actual pursuit of the holy life by the people called Methodists is our aim. By sermon, pamphlet and handbook we need to lead our people on this quest....Harder thinking at this part of our message, and a plea to our people to pursue the Holy life is urgently called for.¹⁶¹

It was to this task, 'to call Methodism to its real work,' that Sangster embarked upon his study of Methodism's history and teaching in August 1936 as his diary bears witness.¹⁶² By the time of writing the above article in the *Methodist Recorder* in April 1937, Sangster had studied Perkins and Flew and had become more aware of his particular task: to be a bridge between the scholar and the people in order to promote holiness in Methodism. Therefore, Sangster would have to engage theologically Wesley's own thoughts on holiness and the three emphases that had developed subsequently. This chapter provides therefore the immediate theological background for Sangster's study.

¹⁶¹ W.E. Sangster, 'Is Christ only a Partial Saviour?' *Methodist Recorder*, 8 April 1937, p.15. This was reprinted in W.E. Sangster, *Methodism Can be Born Again* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), pp. 86-94.

¹⁶² Paul Sangster, *Doctor Sangster*, pp.109-110.

CHAPTER 4

CHANGES IN PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWPOINT

In the previous chapter, three theological responses to John Wesley's understanding of holiness were investigated. Each of these responses carried emphases which were either consistent with John Wesley's thought or else the result of later developments. These three understandings were the immediate theological hinterland of Sangster's quest to examine and restate John Wesley's understanding of sanctification and perfection. This present chapter critically examines Sangster's broader theological understanding, starting from his first attempts to examine the doctrine of holiness.

The early evidence of Sangster's study of Methodism and its distinctive, or characteristic doctrines, especially that of Christian perfection, indicates that he was confronted with certain elements of the doctrine which he found untenable or unsustainable in the light of twentieth-century thought. In his first major article on the subject of holiness, 'Is Christ Only a Partial Saviour?' (1937),¹ Sangster raises objections concerning the 'claims' of individuals to being sanctified instantaneously, a position which he says, 'seems to savour more of magic than religion,'² a clear attack on the 'Pentecostal Emphasis' of the doctrine of holiness. Sangster posted three objections: first, such claims to entire sanctification seem impossible to verify. Second, the claim leads easily to spiritual pride, and third, and for Sangster most significantly, the finest people he had known had never uttered such professions.³ The evidence seems to indicate that his criticisms were rooted in theological, philosophical and psychological concerns.

His theological criticism centred upon the area of hamartiology, taking particular issue with the Holiness tradition's use of the language of 'eradication' and the understanding of sin as a 'thing'. At this point of his study of Methodism, however, Sangster has no

¹ *Methodist Recorder*, 8 April 1937, p. 15.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

constructive alternatives. Although theological objections to Wesley's view of sin had been raised previously in Methodism, particularly by Flew, Platt and Perkins, Sangster infers that more study is needed, therein perhaps implying his own future endeavour.⁴ The subsequent publication of the revised version of this article, one year later, in *Methodism Can Be Born Again* reveals some of the work he had done in the interim, especially with reference to his study of hamartiology. Of note is his use of Henry Bett's study of Methodism,⁵ which was published as Sangster prepared the final draft of his book, a fact that reflects Sangster's desire to follow the most recent Methodist scholarship. Of more significance, however, is his reference to the work of F.R. Tennant, perhaps the most prolific writer and respected authority on the subject of sin at the time.⁶ Although Sangster in his doctoral thesis would later take issue with Tennant's view of sin, his reference to Tennant's work at this point seems to have been derived from and limited to a footnote in Bett's book on Methodism. Bett acknowledges the criticism of Flew regarding Wesley's view of sin and suggests Tennant's thesis of restricting the word 'sin' to voluntary transgression alone, and the need to distinguish clearly between sin and sinfulness as a possible avenue for a solution.⁷

Immediately following these first attempts to address his Methodist heritage, little came from the pen of Sangster regarding the doctrine of holiness in the period 1939-1941. A number of reasons seem apparent. First, the Sangster family moved from Leeds to Westminster in the summer of 1939 to commence ministry at Westminster Central Hall. Second, war was declared during his inaugural service, which quickly saw him deeply engaged in leading the preparations for the development of an air-raid shelter under the

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ H. Bett, *Spirit of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1937), p.113.

⁶ When this article was revised and published in *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, Sangster had added a brief section dealing with sin, in which he alludes briefly to the views of Henry Bett and F.R. Tennant and their demarcation of sin and sinfulness. W.E. Sangster, *Methodism Can Be Born Again* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), p. 93. F.R. Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), pp.105-115. H.Bett, p.113. Sangster's understanding of sin will be discussed in chapter 5. Here, it is mentioned to indicate the direction of his reading from the publication of his article on 8 April 1937 until its revision and publication one year later in his book

⁷ Although Sangster adopted this distinction at this time, he developed it further. Cf. chapter 5.

Central Hall and shortly afterwards, taking charge of the shelter.⁸ Third, he was studying for his doctoral degree at London University. His literary output continued, however, in the form of sermons, publishing *These Things Abide* in late 1939.⁹ This volume of sermons, preached and written in late 1939 is of great significance in tracing Sangster's theological development, for it reveals Sangster beginning to apply modern philosophical and psychological thought to his theology for the first time. The change in philosophical outlook, evident in these sermons, may be a result of his continuing attempts to study and reshape the Methodist doctrines of sanctification and perfection, with the earlier Oxford Group influences proving inadequate. Another contributing factor seems to be the result of him seeking to address, as he said himself, 'the theological perplexities which war throws into such dark relief.'¹⁰ The evidence of his writings clearly indicate, however, a marked difference in philosophical outlook and application from this point forward. The categories of philosophical thinking are very evident, especially concerning cosmology and anthropology, particularly when compared with his writings of 1932-1936. While the theological content of his early writings would have pleased even the most conservative evangelical, many of his assertions in these sermons would have sounded the alarm bells for many conservative evangelicals of his era.

More important for the study of Sangster's understanding of sanctification and perfection, however, is the change in theological and philosophical outlook away from that of John Wesley, whose doctrines he was seeking to understand and evaluate. From the time of the publication of this book of sermons at least three major changes in thinking become evident when compared to his previous writings: First, his understanding of death and the after-life; Second, his use of higher criticism; Third, his acceptance of the evolutionary

⁸ Much of his writing of the period addressed life in the shelter. W.E. Sangster, 'God in the Shelters' *Methodist Recorder*, 7 November 1940, p.4; 5 December 1940, p. 12; 30 January 1941, p.3; 22 May 1941, p.3.

⁹ W.E. Sangster, *These Things Abide* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1939).

¹⁰ *These Things Abide*, p.10.

origins of mankind.¹¹ All of these developments, it could be argued, were radical departures from the theology of John Wesley.¹²

The Understanding of Death and the After-Life

In his sermon 'And After Death-What ?' (1939) Sangster expresses a tempered soteriological universalism:

Every day thousands of souls pass into eternity, many of them with a minimum of preparation. Some are from lands unlit by the light of the gospel, and some are from the dark slums of modern cities. Some are hurtled into eternity from the battlefield, and others sink to a watery grave in the wide ocean. God has not finished with them in the instant of death[...] Is it fanciful to suppose that He makes glad use of His obedient and trusty servants to minister to those immature souls on the other side[...] If we knew all the "work" of God's wide Kingdom, we might be thrilled at the prospect of the creative and redemptive service which awaits us there.¹³

Sangster appears reluctant to condemn the unrepentant or unknowing to hell, an opinion at odds with the conservatives of his time and still highly controversial in conservative evangelical circles today. Although he reluctantly concedes that some may be eternally lost, he does so in an attempt to affirm the sanctity of free will rather than in defence of a particular understanding of God's holiness and justice. 'Theoretically,' he says, 'I must believe that some men may turn their back on Him for ever,' before qualifying it immediately, by saying, 'but the resources of divine love are beyond the measuring of man's mind, and sin will be more cunning than I have seen it yet if it can defeat every artifice of Calvary love.'¹⁴ Having served in the Army and seen the devastation, slaughter and suffering of the Great War and preaching weekly to people whose family might be serving on the battlefield, or who might lose their own life, or a loved one in the bombing of London, it seems the context demanded such a view. He committed himself more firmly to

¹¹ One more significant difference was his use of Jungian psychology in his restatement of the doctrine of sin and the human condition. This, however, will be discussed in Chapter 5.

¹² For obvious reasons John Wesley could not be expected to deal with the second and third of these points, developments that occurred after his death. It could also be argued that Sangster was following in the 'eclectic' footsteps of the founder of Methodism. This highlights the problem of constructing a definitive Wesleyan theology. Some chose to use the term 'Wesleyan' as faithfulness to the theology of Wesley. Others use the term more liberally to denote thought in the general eclectic spirit of Wesley. The difference is illustrated clearly by the different approaches taken in the formulation of the Methodist doctrines of sanctification and perfection mentioned in Chapter 3.

¹³ *These Things Abide*, p.187.

¹⁴ *These Things Abide*, p.185.

the position in an address entitled, 'Spiritual Things' (1941), written in the aftermath of the Blitz. Reflecting on the experience of his army days, Sangster relates the common experience of those who seek to stand for Christ amongst the common soldier:

Their worst comrades often have the most amazing elements of nobility in them. The courage and sacrifice of which some of the most foul-mouthed men are capable are simply beyond praise. You cannot consign them to the devil. Just when you are satisfied that a certain man is a blackguard without a redeeming trait, he will go and risk his life to do something so incredibly unselfish that you know God cannot let him go.¹⁵

This tempered soteriological universalism is rooted in Sangster's view of God's grace not in an implicit antinomianism, for his belief in the absolute authority and unchangeableness of God's law remained constant.¹⁶ In contrast to the late Victorian period and Edwardian era, the lives of the people of George V's reign were again dominated by death and the threat of death. His two books of sermons from the war period,¹⁷ more than any other of Sangster's publications, reveal the ever-present expectation of death. Compared to previous eras, the media coverage of the events of war, with its casualties and sorrows, brought grief and fear into the living room of the average person. Sangster's sermons aim, therefore, to address these issues and events and the resultant anxieties. The first book of sermons focuses on the gospel within a world of loss and suffering with recollections from: Titanic;¹⁸ the suffering of Warsaw,¹⁹ a fate many feared would befall London; the pre-War sinking of the *Thetis*; the torpedoing of HMS *Courageous*;²⁰ and the shocking destruction of HMS *Royal Oak* in harbour at Scapa Flow.²¹ The closeness of death seemed very real to many people and after years of declining mortality rates and longer life spans, in which the church had tailored its message to the idea of Christian living rather than dying, the church was confronted again with carnage and the reality of untimely death.

¹⁵ W. E. Sangster, *Ten Statesmen and Jesus Christ* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1941), p. 156.

¹⁶ W. E. Sangster, *Westminster Sermons* (London: Epworth Press, 1960), I, pp. 58-67.

¹⁷ These were *These Things Abide* and *Ten Statesmen and Jesus Christ*, although the latter were not strictly speaking "Sunday sermons", but addresses from the air-raid shelter.

¹⁸ *These Things Abide*, p.15-16.

¹⁹ *These Things Abide*, p.99.

²⁰ *These Things Abide*, p.112.

²¹ Sangster's sermon entitled 'Does God have Favourites?' addresses the feelings surrounding why some die tragically while others survive. In the case of the sinking of the *Royal Oak* on 14 October 1939, 400 men were saved while 800 drowned. *These Things Abide*, p.151.

Although views concerning the afterlife had been changing since the second half of the Nineteenth century, especially with regard to heaven,²² the issue of hell was far more contentious and had a rather 'fiery' history. The first major figure of modern, British ecclesiastical history that challenged the traditional views of hell was F.D. Maurice, when, in his *Theological Essays* of 1853²³ he not only suggested that the New Testament concept of eternity referred to a quality of life rather than a duration, but also denied the idea of eternal punishment.²⁴ The First World War reinforced the doubts about hell, with a variety of responses being made by senior churchmen to the idea that men, who had suffered immensely and had given their lives for their comrades and country, should be condemned to eternal suffering. Some opted for the suggestion that the soldiers were following in the self-sacrificial footsteps of Christ by giving their lives for others.²⁵ Others stressed the singular necessity of the cross of Christ and that the unrepentant were damned.²⁶ The progression in Sangster's thinking regarding hell is, therefore, significant for it illustrates a radical departure from an important tenet of conservative evangelicalism and, it could be suggested, from mainstream evangelicalism.²⁷ His decision to preach and publish such views about the after life, which also included the ideas of growth, employment and progress,²⁸ was brave, for Westminster was the heart of Methodism and was publically known to be, after all, the foremost pulpit in British Methodism with a powerful recent history of strong conservative evangelicalism.

Within Methodism, particularly those with roots in Wesleyan Methodism, the case of Revd. J. Agar Beet was still within memory, being twice disciplined by the annual

²² Doreen Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.267-273. Rosman asserts that instead of the traditional idea of heaven as a place of joyful worship of God, the idea of heaven as home came to the fore. p. 268.

²³ F.D. Maurice, *Theological Essays* (Cambridge: MacMillan & Co., 1853), pp.442-478.

²⁴ Among the Early Church Fathers, Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa held similar views.

²⁵ *The Evolution of the English Churches*, p.271.

²⁶ *The Evolution of the English Churches*, p.271.

²⁷ Evangelicalism continues to this day to emphasise the necessity of conversion and salvation in this life alone. It could be argued from an evangelical position that Sangster's view ultimately undermines the necessity of the atonement.

²⁸ *These Things Abide*, p.188.

conference for propagating unorthodox views about hell.²⁹ From a theological perspective Sangster's views are critically at variance with those of John Wesley. One of John Wesley's fundamental and incontrovertible presuppositions in his understanding of sanctification and perfection was that salvation was restricted to this life.³⁰

This departure from Methodism's founder by Sangster places him broadly within the liberal methodology which attempted to engage Christian faith with modern scientific thought and the crucial changes in human outlook or worldview rooted in the explosion of knowledge in practically all areas of life in the Nineteenth century. Philosophical developments, new scientific discoveries, industrialisation, the study of the natural world, new interpretations of history, social theory and the impact of other religions, all confronted the Christian faith with a challenge of immense proportions, many of which could not have even been contemplated by John Wesley. Virtually none of the presuppositions of traditional theology could claim immunity. Of particular significance was the development of historical science. It was inevitable that the Bible would be subjected to the methodology of historical research, like any other historical source. Such an examination, however, proved devastating to age-old assumptions regarding the historical accuracy and inerrancy of the Christian scriptures. Also, with the methodology of historical criticism being primarily formulated within the context of the natural sciences, those aspects of the Bible incompatible with naturalistic presuppositions, for example miracles, were the target of profound scepticism. The period from the death of John Wesley in 1791 until Sangster's initial application of modern ideas in 1939 could be largely described, therefore, as the story of the Christian Church attempting to come to terms with the emerging outlook and how to understand its own message and make it meaningful for modern people. More than ever before, the Bible itself became the focus of intellectual inquiry. This change in hermeneutical context provides, therefore, the background to the second major change in

²⁹ *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal*, ed. by Clive Calver, (London: SPCK, 1995), p.142.

³⁰ John Wesley, *Plain Account*, pp.40-41, BE Vol.9, p. 178.

Sangster's thought compared to his earlier writing and, again, is significantly at odds with the thought of John Wesley – the critical study of the Bible.

The Use of Higher Criticism

Although Albert Outler somewhat hagiographically infers that Wesley was well acquainted with biblical criticism, even asserting, 'Wesley was not indifferent to historical and literary questions in exegesis; he was living in the early days of the new biblical criticism, and he had a lively interest in the commentators (old and new),'³¹ there is little evidence in Wesley's writings, however, that he utilised the methods of biblical criticism or even recognised their value. His concern was with the clear understanding of the text itself, interpreting the text selectively, sometimes to confirm or support a point he already maintained or wanted to make. Donald Bullen, in his comprehensive study of Wesley's use of the Bible, maintains that Wesley was thoroughly pre-critical and was unmistakably typical of an eighteenth century High-Church Arminian Anglican, often interpreting scripture as though it was written directly to him or his audience, and often mirroring or confirming his own prior beliefs.³² Of course, Wesley cannot be blamed for being a man of his day, but occasionally because of his agenda to portray John Wesley as a significant theologian, Outler resorts to hagiographical hyperbole in his assessment of his work.³³

Only one generation after John Wesley the implications of Biblical criticism began to be felt. Applying the methods of historical criticism to the Bible, as to any other ancient text, scholars identified underlying sources and changes to the given perceptions of authorship, with some Biblical imperatives being classified as belonging to the culture in which they were written and no longer perceived as binding on Christians in a different age. The pioneering work in this field of F. C. Baur and D. F. Strauss was originally met with some

³¹ BE Vol. 1, p.58.

³² Donald Alfred Bullen, 'John Wesley – A Man of One Book'? (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2007,) pp.100-140.

³³ For a typical example: BE Vol.1, p. 92.

Also: Albert Outler, *Evangelism And Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1996), p. 78.

scepticism due to its over-reliance on Hegelian categories, although gradually this approach to the Bible, using the methods of the scientific historian, gained ground in academic circles.

The mid-Victorian period, however, saw somewhat of an ecclesial backlash, occasioned by the famed publication of *Essays and Reviews* in 1860.³⁴ The controversy arose after the stinging comments of an agnostic, Frederick Harrison, were printed in the October edition of *Westminster Review*, paraphrased admirably by Bernard M. G. Reardon:

What [...] had happened to traditional faith when clergymen in responsible positions could reject most of its basic articles, leaving only (as he put it) 'a revised Atonement, a transcendental Fall, a practical Salvation, and an idealized Damnation'? Such a reduced creed might suffice for learned divines but not for the ordinary man who could never accept that the Bible is 'a medley of late compilers', full of errors and untruths, 'and yet remains withal the Book of Life'. Orthodoxy had been sold from within, a group of eminent 'believers' having given clear proof of their unbelief.³⁵

The reaction from some quarters of the church was overtly hostile particularly from Samuel Wilberforce, who pressured the Synod to condemn the publication. As a protest against the book eleven thousand clergymen declared their belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures and in the eternity of punishment. Typical of the conservative views and genuine fears expressed are those of the then Bishop of Manchester:

The very foundations of our faith, the very basis of our hopes, the very nearest and dearest of our consolations are taken from us when one line in that Sacred Volume on which we base everything is declared to be unfaithful or untrustworthy.³⁶

The negative feelings towards higher criticism were exacerbated by the appearance of John William Colenso's study entitled *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined* in which he denied Mosaic authorship.³⁷ Again, the reaction of the religious press was hostile and the book was seen again as an attack upon the truth and reliability of the Bible.³⁸

³⁴ For an excellent discussion of the impact of *Essays and Reviews*, see *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Gerald Parsons, 3 vols (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), II, pp.98-214.

³⁵ Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore*, 2nd edn, (London: Longman, 1995), p. 251.

³⁶ Quoted from: *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age*, p. 253. Original quote: Bishop Lee of Manchester, *Guardian*, 1863, pp. 302, 323.

³⁷ J. W. Colenso, *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (London: Longmann, Green, Longmann, Robert and Green, 1862).

³⁸ *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age*, p. 254.

By the early 1880s, however, the tide had begun to turn and the initial controversies and legal furies died down leaving the mild liberalism expressed in the essays to assert a widening influence. The unfortunate case of W. Robertson Smith being the exception, who in 1881 was removed from his chair of Free Church College, Aberdeen for his support of higher criticism.

British Methodism did not escape the controversy and by the end of the first decade of the Twentieth century Wesleyan Methodist evangelicalism was broadly divided into liberal and conservative camps. In 1913 opposition arose from conservative quarters to the appointment of George Jackson to an academic chair at Didsbury College, Manchester, having aired views in favour of biblical criticism the previous year. The appointment, to be authorised by the Wesleyan Conference of 1913, was challenged by his detractors. Defending himself, Jackson was cleared of the charges of doctrinal unsoundness. Unhappy with the outcome, his opponents organised themselves into a radical group opposed to higher criticism and modernism, calling themselves the Wesley Bible Union.³⁹ In an effort to pressure Conference to stamp out heterodoxy and heresy, the group published a monthly journal, demanding attention to the cause of Biblical fidelity.⁴⁰ Their aggressive approach lost them potential support and unfortunately had the opposite effect of consigning the cause of the more fundamentalistic expressions of evangelicalism to the backwaters of Methodism, although it is of interest that Dinsdale Young, a proponent of similar views, was appointed to British Methodism's foremost pulpit only one year after the George Jackson affair.⁴¹

Less than twenty years later a general softening of attitudes towards higher criticism within Methodism is evident, perhaps mainly due to the pioneering and conciliatory work of

³⁹ This appears to be a Wesleyan version of the already existing Bible League, whose manifesto was, 'to promote the Reverent Study of the Holy Scriptures, and to resist the varied attacks made upon their Inspiration, Infallibility, and Sole Sufficiency as the Word of God.' *The Record*, 25 June 1909, p. 673.

⁴⁰ David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 217. For a comprehensive study of the debate: David W. Bebbington, 'The persecution of George Jackson: a British Fundamentalist controversy', in *Persecution and Toleration*, Studies in Church History, vol. 21, ed. W. J. Sheils (Oxford, 1984).

⁴¹ *Eight Essays*, ed. Paul Sangster (London: Westminster Central Hall), pp. 12 & 34.

A.S Peake, and is reflected by the comments of Herbert B. Workman, president of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, shortly before the Union of 1932:

Do not be frightened of modern thought as applied to the Bible. Believe me, the Bible is much more real to-day than it was fifty years ago, when it was looked at under what I call the typewriter theory of inspiration. To-day we see that it is the record of the upward struggle of the human spirit, slowly developing, but ever mounting higher. Modern criticism has made the Bible more real, because it has brought it more into touch with human life and history.⁴²

It seems reasonable to assert that such a senior figure at such a delicate time would not raise an issue that would be highly contentious. His words would seem to indicate, therefore, a general mellowing of attitudes towards modern biblical criticism in Methodism by 1931, at least within the clergy and senior lay leadership, who were the majority of representatives at the conference.

A little over ten years later, all the columnists in the 'What's Puzzling You?' section of the early 1940s editions of the *Methodist Recorder* presuppose familiarity with higher criticism in answer to questions from the public. It would appear, therefore, that by the early fifth decade of the century, the official publication of Methodism not only assented to higher criticism but was happy to choose scholars who propagated such ideas.⁴³

Sangster's theological education, being under the auspices of the University of London, would have contained up-to-date scholarship and obvious familiarity with the historical criticism of its time.⁴⁴ The period 1932-36, when Sangster published his first writings, contains little indication of modern, critical thought however, and due to the intellectual elements of his crisis of 1930 and the subsequent influence of the Oxford Group on his thinking, his adoption of more liberal thought, of all varieties, was conspicuously missing. By the time Sangster began to engage modern critical thinking, with a view to evaluating and restating Wesley's holiness doctrine, the first clear indication of which is evident in

⁴² Author/editor not supplied, *Methodism: Its Message for To-day* (London: Epworth Press, 1931), p. 282.

⁴³ As a typical example, see Vincent Taylor's exegesis of Psalms 51. 5f, 'What's Puzzling You?', *Methodist Recorder*, 11 November 1943, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Of particular influence in Sangster's education in this area was Ryder Smith.

These Things Abide of 1939, many Methodist clergy had accepted the methods of higher criticism. One major and notable exception was Dinsdale Young, Sangster's predecessor at Westminster Central Hall (1914-39), an avid opponent of higher criticism and also a distinguished member of the Bible League. As Sangster's writings prior to his arrival at Westminster in 1939 were all of a conservative evangelical ethos, it is highly unlikely that his arrival caused any consternation among the more austere evangelicals. Even his comments in support of historical criticism, published sixteen months prior to his arrival in London, are veiled in a damning attack on the arrogance and insensitivity of some of its proponents, whom he further blames for some of the decline in Methodism:

The pulpit grew unsure of the Book of God. At one time only four epistles of Paul were felt to be authenticated, and the number of sayings of Jesus that could be "relied" upon were absurdly few. It was considered smart at one period to employ the precious moments in the pulpit to tell people what *not* to believe, and "having a smack" at obscurantism became a homiletical fashion. The bill came in for that. For those scholars whose reverent researches have made the Bible a new volume to this generation, we have nothing but gratitude, but we share the conviction that some responsibility for the decay of faith is to be laid at the door of those who lost the positive note in preaching, did their thinking aloud, and thought it laid upon them to give currency to the latest extravagances of German criticism. Recent vagaries of "Form Critics" do not encourage the hope that this period is quite past.⁴⁵

The indication is that Sangster saw the benefit of higher criticism, and used it in his own preparation, but felt that its place was in the study, not the pulpit. This is confirmed by two facts. First, although Sangster's sermons are nearly always based on a Biblical text, they belong broadly to the realm of spiritual application,⁴⁶ the background, historical and textual work having been done as preparation. Giving advice on preaching Sangster says:

Get the background of the epistle, and understand the historical setting of the minor prophet. You need not burden your people with all you know. What you say at any time

⁴⁵ W. E. Sangster, *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁶ Attention needs to be drawn at this point to the work of Luther Maxwell Dorr in categorising Sangster's sermons, following Sangster's own method. The categories used are Biblical interpretation – 6%, ethical and devotional – 70%, doctrinal – 11%, philosophic and apologetic – 6.5%, social and evangelistic 3.5%. This division of sermons relates, however, to the intention of the sermon rather than Sangster's method of Biblical interpretation. Dorr's breakdown is undermined, however, by the dubious issue of the missing sermons. Luther M. Dorr, 'A Critique of the Preaching of William Edwin Robert Sangster,' (unpublished doctoral thesis, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968), pp. 47-84.

W. E. Sangster, *The Craft of the Sermon* (London: Epworth, 1954), pp. 20-52.

will be but a tithe of your knowledge. Parading scholarship is an unpleasant vanity in the pulpit. To help people is your ruling aim.⁴⁷

Although higher criticism, therefore, was not deemed appropriate for the pulpit, Sangster used modern Biblical scholarship in his own studies. A cursory glance at the Biblical scholarship used by Sangster in his PhD reveals, however, that while he supported the methods of higher criticism, his selection favoured commentaries which had a tendency to offer more conservative conclusions. This is evidenced by the choice of five commentaries in the Moffatt New Testament Commentary series and one commentary by James Moffatt himself, out of a total of eleven.⁴⁸ In the editor's preface to each volume in the Moffatt series, an agenda echoing that of Sangster is revealed:

The aim of this commentary is to bring out the religious meaning and message of the New Testament writings. To do this, it is needful to explain what they originally meant for the communities to which they were addressed in the first century, and this involves literary and historical criticism; otherwise, our reading becomes unintelligent. But the New Testament was the literature of the early Church, written out of faith and for faith, and no study of it is intelligent unless this aim is kept in mind. It is literature written for a religious purpose. 'These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.'⁴⁹

Although the need to understand the historical background and literary agenda of the original authors of the Scriptures would be normative for most conservative evangelicals today, Moffatt's work proved too liberal for some evangelicals of his day, on both sides of the Atlantic.⁵⁰

In his own mind Sangster was evangelical, a fact clearly illustrated by the definition of David Bebbington, for Sangster's life and work clearly held as central, the need for salvation, a stress on activism, a devotion to the Bible and the centrality of the Cross.⁵¹ In his manifesto for Central Hall, published in the *Christian Herald*, shortly before his first Sunday, Sangster promises, among other things, 'to maintain at the heart of the Empire an

⁴⁷ W. E. Sangster, *The Craft of the Sermon*, p. 153.

⁴⁸ W. E. Sangster, *The Path to Perfection* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1943), pp. 203-204.

⁴⁹ Theodore H. Robinson, 'The Epistle to the Hebrews', (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933), p. vii.

⁵⁰ *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. James D. Douglas, (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), p. 669.

⁵¹ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 1-19. Although Bebbington's categories are useful, the range of difference between proponents perhaps demands a more thorough categorisation. A typical example of the problems of definition also must include the fact that in the USA there is a tendency towards a very literal understanding of the Bible as being an essential characteristic of evangelicalism. *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*, ed. Randal Balmer, (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), pp. 196-197. For a British approach that takes issue with Bebbington's definition, see John Stott, *Evangelical Truth* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999).

expression of the Christian religion which shall be:- [...]Intellectually honest and satisfying [...]A witness that shall be earnestly evangelical.’⁵²

What Sangster understands as evangelical is problematic, however, for there was a broad range of evangelical groups and beliefs, a situation not totally foreign to modern day evangelicalism. There are many characteristics of evangelicalism with proponents of differing opinion being willing to deny the use of the term to others of different viewpoints, especially on key issues.⁵³ Bebbington incorrectly places Sangster firmly among the more obscure conservative evangelicals with regard to the Bible,⁵⁴ failing to recognise that Sangster was certainly not a fundamentalist. Sangster regarded the Christian Scriptures as authoritative but vehemently denied any theory of verbal inspiration. Sangster saw the authority of the Bible as lying in the Gospel message itself, not in any theory of inspiration, as evidenced in his article ‘On Certainty by Authority’:

*The Bible is still authoritative, not (for most of us) because of any theories of verbal inspiration, as though God dictated His divine word to the sacred writers as a business man dictates to a stenographer, but because herein we have found the word of the living God, and on all major questions of our life it speaks clear, God: His Being and Nature, Jesus: His Deity, atoning Death, Resurrection and Ascension, The Holy Spirit: Inspirer, Guide, and Comforter, Man: his nature, need, and destiny, Eternal life, The consummation of all things.*⁵⁵

As is evident, Sangster repudiates the fundamentalist belief in verbal inspiration and remained constantly against Biblical literalism, reiterating his views in April and May 1955,⁵⁶ June and July 1957,⁵⁷ and 1959.⁵⁸

⁵² W. E. Sangster, ‘What I intend to do at Westminster,’ *The Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times*, 31 August 1939, p. 195.

⁵³ A typical example today is the issue of homosexuality. Many evangelicals would be certain that no ‘real’ evangelical could support the rights of practising homosexuals to marriage or ordination, some, even to eternal life.

⁵⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 252.

⁵⁵ W. E. Sangster, ‘On Certainty By Authority’, *Methodist Recorder*, 12 April, 1951, p. 3.

⁵⁶ W. E. Sangster, ‘Bible Basis Of All That We Believe,’ *Methodist Recorder*, 28 April 1955, p. 3. This was followed by a reply two weeks later to two letters challenging his views, *Methodist Recorder*, 12 May 1955, p. 7.

⁵⁷ W. E. Sangster, ‘Hindrances to Revival’, *Joyful News*, 13 June 1957, p. 2; *Methodist Recorder*, 18 July 1957, p. 5.

⁵⁸ W. E. Sangster, *Give God A Chance* (London: Wyvern Books, 1959), pp. 21, 58. Although Sangster only seems to apply critical methods to his study of the Bible from 1939 onwards, as early as 1934 he repudiates a hard literalist interpretation of the Scriptures: *God Does Guide Us*, p. 91.

Sangster clearly saw his position as being on the middle ground between the liberal and conservative evangelical poles.

From 1955 until 1957 Sangster deliberately attempted to forge a common consensus between the two evangelical poles for the sake of cooperation in evangelism. In 1955 he published, 'A Simple Statement of Common Belief,' as an attempt to find common ground concerning the scriptures. The statement was mildly conservative; terms that represented the extreme poles i.e., 'literal', 'verbal,' 'inerrant' were deliberately excluded and statements that opened the door to various interpretations of the texts were conspicuously present, hoping to draw people from both camps:

We take the whole Bible seriously – as God's own appointed channel of communication with men; as the record of man's predicament (sin) and God's remedy (salvation); as the sufficient rule for Christian faith and practice.

We affirm that the Scriptures owe their existence to an activity of the Holy Spirit, whose illuminating power is essential for their understanding.

We believe the Bible to be true; consistent with this, we allow variation between passages in respect of :-

(1.) The fullness of revelation. God's self-manifestation is partial and veiled in the Old Testament; full and final in the New. Further while all parts are of value, we rely most upon those scriptures which bear witness to the Person and Work of Christ.

(2.) The channel of revelation. God's truth comes to us in different forms – poetical, historical, allegorical. No one approach unlocks the meaning of the whole.

(3.) The interpretation of revelation. Men are not infallible: hence their expositions are not always identical. Therefore, we will endeavour to let Scripture speak for itself, by refusing to let presupposition blind us to its message.

We find the fundamental truths of our faith to be clear to those who read with reverence and devotion; and the Bible's guidance in these matters to be utterly reliable. Such fundamentals we judge to be:-

GOD – the Creator; the final Judge; the present Redeemer. JESUS CHRIST – His only Son; our only Saviour; the only Lord. HOLY SPIRIT – regenerating; sanctifying; glorifying. SALVATION – from sin; for all; by grace; through faith; with assurance; to holiness. CHURCH – people of God; body of Christ; temple of Holy Spirit.⁵⁹

The high regard for the Bible is evident, as is the stress on the major tenets of evangelical, more particularly, a Protestant and Methodist soteriology, thereby hoping to draw in the conservative evangelicals from Methodism. The openness of interpretation, the mention of

⁵⁹ W. E. Sangster, 'A Bible Basis For All that We Believe', *Methodist Recorder*, 28 April 1955, p. 3.

literary genre, and the fallibility of human interpreters would hopefully encourage the more liberal evangelicals.

By the summer of 1957 Sangster was showing signs of frustration with both camps with little progress having been made. In the *Joyful News*, a Methodist periodical widely read by evangelicals in and outside Methodism, he encourages the extremists in both camps to ‘go their way’, encouraging the remaining ‘80%’ of evangelicals to ‘draw closer to one another’, for the sake of ‘united evangelism.’⁶⁰ Sangster regarded himself clearly as a centrist, a position not too dissimilar to that of Max Warren or Bryan Green.⁶¹ He specifically stated his mediating position at the Methodist Conference of 1957. Again, speaking of the need for cooperation in evangelism, Sangster says:

There are conservative evangelicals and liberal evangelicals; I have friends in both camps. It is a disgrace that some of them live on opposite sides of the gulf and called one another names. I am tired of hearing liberal evangelicals say about conservatives, “They have no scholarship,” and conservative evangelicals say about liberals, “They have thrown the Gospel away.” There is no hope in this generation for the real extremists on either side. We should never work with Biblical literalists – it was not possible to do it.

But conservative evangelicals are not biblical literalists and some of us have been mistaken in supposing it. Nor do I think we could work with extreme liberals – I do not mean liberal evangelicals – who changed their view on the deep things of the Gospel with every passing month and were uncertain about the deity of our Lord, sometimes about the necessity of the Atonement. But eighty per cent of the true evangelical people in this country could work together in co-operative evangelism.⁶²

This expressed centrist position, which excludes literalists and extreme liberals, seems, to be constructed on an evangelical understanding of salvation rather than a specific view of scripture, a position similar to ‘A Simple Statement of Common Belief’ of 1955 and almost identical with his ‘On Certainty by Authority’ of 1951.

Sangster’s personal faith and his preaching presupposed, therefore, a high view of the Bible. This did not, however, infer any sort of obscure fundamentalist view of verbal inspiration with its inherent inerrancy claims. For Sangster the Bible was the primary

⁶⁰ W. E. Sangster, ‘Hindrances to Revival’, *Joyful News*, 13 June 1957, p.2.

⁶¹ Both men attempted a middle way between the liberal and conservative expressions of evangelicalism.

⁶² W. E. Sangster, ‘The General Secretary of the Home Mission Department Report’, *Methodist Recorder*, 18 July 1957, p.5.

witness to the revelation of Jesus Christ and therein was its authority. He firmly believed that the Bible is the Word of God with a timeless and always relevant message. Sangster believed in the usefulness and relevance of higher criticism and felt that its methods had actually saved the Bible for many. The place for its use, however, was in the study and not the pulpit. This meant, for Sangster, that the text was not just written for its original recipients but also should be applied spiritually today. The message at the heart of the Bible was one of salvation, the elements of which correspond closely to the content of the historic creeds of Christianity, interpreted through the grid of Protestant and Methodist theology.⁶³

Sangster differed, therefore, from John Wesley in the methods used to interpret the Bible, being reliant on the methods of historical criticism in which the original meaning and context of its readers was axiomatic to its present day interpretation and application, whereas for Wesley the Scriptures spoke directly to the needs he encountered and would have provided him also, to great extent, with his view of created reality. This latter point introduces the third area in which Sangster departed categorically from John Wesley, an area that would have a direct and critical impact upon his formulation of the doctrines of sanctification and perfection - an evolutionary view of the world, definitively introduced into his writings in 1939.

Sangster's acceptance of theistic evolution

There is much evidence to suggest that from 1939 onwards W.E. Sangster held to a view of created reality consistent with the findings of modern science. Sangster accepted the view that humankind finds its origin in the most primitive forms of life and evolves like other species, through the ages, into what it has become. In a sermon published under the title '*Gold From Dross*' Sangster sees God's method of creation as being one of transformation:

All creation is transformation. We begin with a speck of protoplasm and, aided by our biologists, we watch the vast transforming process through the ages that have gone. We study the origin and differentiation of species. We see form transformed to form. The diplodocus, and the brontosaurus, and pelycosaur have all disappeared, but more

⁶³ On this point Sangster comes close to the position of John Stott in *Evangelical Truth*.

wonderful forms take their place and man who once, in half-brutish fashion, crawled out of the primeval slime, now turns his telescope to the stars and measures the miles to the moon.⁶⁴

This obvious reliance upon the Darwinian theory of evolution to describe humankind's derivation was common to the liberal theology of the era and its off-shoot - liberal evangelicalism. However, this positive assessment of evolution was by no means universal in the Christian Church, for from its very beginning in the mid-Nineteenth century, many Christians, of all persuasions, took exception to Darwinism and its implications for Christian thought. The impact of Darwin's theory on the religious community cannot be underestimated, often causing, or at least combined with the impact of biblical criticism, widening theological divisions within many churches.

Building, primarily on the uniformitarianism of Charles Lyell⁶⁵ and in answer to Linnaeus' theory of the 'fixity of species,' Charles Darwin proposed in his two major works: *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1871) that all species derive from a long, complex process of biological evolution. Although offering a credible and relatively coherent explanation of the observable data of nature, the theory was seen originally by many to conflict with Christian faith on at least two points. First, traditional Christian thought regarded humanity as being different from and set apart by God from the rest of nature. The assertion that humankind had gradually evolved from lower life-forms appeared to contradict the biblical and normative Christian understanding of man's origin and special relationship with God. Second, the vast amounts of time being referred to appeared to undermine the central role of Judeo-Christian redemptive history within the total history of humankind, for there was now seen to be no common biological and spiritual link to a chain of descent from Adam and Eve. Both points related to the uniqueness of humanity as created in the 'image of God.'

⁶⁴ *These Things Abide*, p. 42.

⁶⁵ C. Lyell, *Principles of Geology* (London: John Murray, 1830). Lyell argued that the observable forces at work in the natural world should be understood to have been active over enormous lengths of time in the past.

Reaction from the Church was not slow in coming, both positive and negative. From the British context a whole folklore has grown up around the supposed conflict between T. H. Huxley and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce at the meeting of the British Association at Oxford on 30 June 1860,⁶⁶ an encounter often credited as being the primary source of conflict between the theory of evolution and religion. The reaction of the Christian Church to Darwin's theory was mixed, to say the least.

The Roman Catholic Church was not slow in rejecting Darwinism and only one year after the publication of *Origin of Species* a local Catholic synod in Cologne explicitly denounced the theory of human descent.⁶⁷ The *First Vatican Council* (1869-1870) specifically affirmed monogenism against the theory of human descent, drawing particular attention to the problems caused to the doctrine of original sin and its concomitants by Darwin's theory.⁶⁸ Almost forty years later the Catholic Church's response showed no signs of mellowing, thoroughly rejecting evolution and higher criticism of the Bible at the Pontifical Bible Commission of 1909. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's attempts to understand original sin in the light of the theory of evolution led to his removal from the Institute Catholic in Paris in 1926, showing ecclesial opposition to the theory to be undiminished. Nearly a quarter of a century later and close to a century since the publication of the *Origin of Species*, the Encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950) reaffirmed opposition to the evolutionary theory stating unequivocally that monogenism is a revealed teaching of the church with the theological emphasis again being placed on the critical importance of the doctrine of original sin. Pius XII takes issue with what he sees as the polygenism of Darwin's theory; a view inconsistent with revealed truth:

⁶⁶ This legendary account probably finds its source in an article printed in 1898 in *Macmillan's Magazine* and relates the autobiographical account of Isabella Sidgwick, apparently present at the meeting. For an extended discussion the history behind this story, cf. J.R. Lucas. 'Wilberforce and Huxley: A Legendary Encounter.' *Historical Journal* 22 (1979): 313-30.

⁶⁷ Karl Rahner, 'Evolution,' in Karl Rahner, ed., *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp.475-88, (p.486).

⁶⁸ These are often regarded as: the possession of preternatural gifts in Adam's original state, the loss of these gifts through Adam's sin, and the resultant condition of original sin as the privation of sanctifying grace.

Now it is in no way apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with that which the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the Teaching Authority of the Church propose with regard to original sin, which proceeds from a sin committed by an individual Adam and which through generation is passed on to all and is in everyone as his own.⁶⁹

For the first hundred years, therefore, the largest branch of the Christian Church remained hostile to the evolutionary theory, mainly, however, due to the theological problems the theory was seen to cause to the doctrine of original sin.

This wholesale rejection of the evolutionary theory was by no means universal within the Christian Church. Two traditions in particular not only accepted Darwin's evolutionary theory but also sought to realign Christian doctrine with the findings of modern science. In the late Nineteenth century, Modernism, a movement within the Roman Catholic Church mainly comprising theologians, adopted a critical attitude towards the scholasticism of Roman Catholic doctrine and attempted to bring the beliefs of the church in closer relation to the modern outlook in philosophy, science, history and social ideals. The movement arose independently in several countries, its proponents having few common ideas and no official agenda. Perhaps, more than any other common area the modernists agreed in their strong support of Darwin's theory of evolution. Modernism took the truth of the theory as self-evident and often designated 'supernatural significance'⁷⁰ to the theory, seeing within it a cosmic pattern applicable to all of life and resting on the idea that the evolutionary process was guided by a 'vital impulse (*élan vital*).' This force within nature caused all things to strive upwards towards unachieved goals.⁷¹ This notion fit well into the Romanticism of the era with similar views being held by George Tyrrell and Lyman Abbott, who also argued that religion, like nature, was always moving forward, asserting that the Scriptures recorded

⁶⁹ Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, in Cluadia Carlen, I.H.M., ed., *The Papal Encyclicals 1939-1948* (Raleigh: McGrath Publishing Co., 1981), pp. 175-84, (p. 181).

⁷⁰ Alistair E. McGrath, *Science and Religion: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p.37.

⁷¹ *Science and Religion: An Introduction*, p.37.

the gradual but always incomplete understanding of God and the world. Science was portrayed as an essential part in correcting and developing this process further.⁷²

Initially the movement was tolerated by the Roman Catholic Church but in the first decade of the Twentieth century the movement was condemned by a series of ecclesial actions, most particularly the decree *Lamentabili* and the encyclical *Pascendi* of 1907 and carried into effect by the *Sacrorum Antistitum* (1910) which required all suspect clergy to conform to an Anti-Modernist oath. All dissenting clergy were excommunicated, whereas laymen such as von Hugel and Blondel were on the whole left in peace.⁷³

The second school of thought that took a positive stance towards Darwin's findings was theological liberalism. Broadly defined this movement, with roots in the post-Enlightenment views stemming from Schleiermacher and Ritschl in theology, Kant and Hegel in philosophy, and Baur, Wellhausen and Strauss in biblical studies, sought to reconstruct the substance of Christian faith in light of modern knowledge. Using the methods of historical criticism these scholars encountered difficulties in anchoring the Christian faith in the traditional authoritative appeal to Scripture, for the biblical statements were now perceived not as infallibly revealed truths but human interpretations of religious experience. Likewise the phenomenology of Kant undermined the whole idea of revelation and with it an exclusive epistemological appeal to the person of Christ. Liberalism attempted, therefore, to anchor its theology in human consciousness, interpreting the faith in ways that were understandable to the contemporary worldview. This agenda and method was easily reconciled with Darwinism. The evolutionary theory inspired liberal theologians to view the history of humanity as a gradual but sure ascent into higher forms of intellectual, moral and social progress and prosperity.

Within the English context, theological liberalism can trace its roots to *Essays and Reviews* (1860) and the thought of F.D. Maurice, but with its most potent early use of

⁷² *Science and Religion: An Introduction*, p.38..

⁷³ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. by F.L. Cross (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), p.926.

evolutionary thought being a number of articles in *Lux Mundi*, the publication of which Ian Markham deems as the true start of theological liberalism in England.⁷⁴ The primary purpose of *Lux Mundi* was to serve as a corrective to the evangelical tendency to isolate the doctrine of the atonement as the supreme and defining Christian doctrine. Focusing on the incarnation the scholars sought to explore in the light of modern thought the implications of the Christian claim that God assumed human nature. Chapters five and six attempted in particular to bring together the doctrine of the incarnation with the principle of evolution. Throughout the publication Darwin's theory is not only taken for granted but also receives rich praise for its contribution to theology. Aubrey Moore in the second essay lauds the contribution of Darwin in recovering God from the occasionalism of the deists:

Science had pushed the deist's God farther and farther away, and at the moment when it seemed as if He would be thrust out altogether, Darwin appeared, and under the guise of a foe did the work of a friend. It has conferred upon philosophy and religion an inestimable benefit, by shewing us that we must choose between two alternatives. Either God is everywhere present, or He is nowhere. He cannot be here and not there.⁷⁵

Although this positive attitude towards the evolutionary theory was by no means characteristic of the Christian church as a whole, adherents were also found within evangelicalism. Bebbington asserts that before 1920 only a few individuals took issue with Darwin, with the evangelical popular press being broadly untroubled by evolution. This view seems, however, rather overstated and betrays the fact that there was much underlying resistance to Darwin's theory. The Methodist historian, William Strawson contends that most evangelical Christians held an 'antagonistic and prejudiced' attitude toward the theory of evolution.⁷⁶

A more plausible picture of the period 1890-1920, is that those who accepted the principles and findings of historical criticism, and with it an understanding of the Genesis

⁷⁴ Ian Markham, 'The Liberal Tradition and its Conservative Successors', in *Theological Liberalism*, ed. by Ian Markham and J'annine Jobling (London: SPCK, 2000), pp. 1-14 (p.2). *Lux Mundi* (London: John Murray, 1889), p.99.

⁷⁵ From: Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Longman, 1995), p. 323.

⁷⁶ *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, III, p. 186.

narratives of creation as highly symbolic or written in the genre of myth, found the theory of evolution more easily compatible with their evangelical faith. Those who felt the need to defend more literal interpretations of the Bible, therefore, either did not believe in the truth of Darwin's theory for scriptural reasons or they did not fully comprehend the challenge the theory presented to the Christian faith. The majority of the initial reactions to evolution within evangelicalism centred initially, therefore, upon issues concerning the authority and trustworthiness of the biblical witness, reflecting the rough division of British evangelicalism into liberal and conservative wings.⁷⁷

A shift in this pattern is evident, however, from the 1920s onwards. The dominating force of theological liberalism and romanticism with its inherent optimism was shattered by the events of the First World War. In particular the moral and social agenda of liberal thought, resting confidently on the ideas of the constant evolution of mankind and of universal moral progress, was perceived by most to be thoroughly discredited. When Canon E. W. Barnes, therefore, at the British Association meeting of 1920, accepted Darwin's theory without question, and rounded on the historicity of the Fall of man it seems that evangelicalism as a whole began to realise that more was at stake than previously anticipated. The one-time friendly evangelical publication *The Christian* claimed that Barnes 'not only surrenders the Fall but with it the doctrine of the vicarious Atonement.'⁷⁸ Many evangelicals began to realise that the acceptance of Darwin's theory could undermine the idea of the Fall, the ideas surrounding original sin or depravity and, consequently, the need for salvation. The primary focus of conservative evangelical resistance towards the evolutionary theory began to shift, therefore, from biblical issues to theological doctrine, with many feeling that the heart of evangelical faith was threatened. Although some argued

⁷⁷ The history of the SCM and the Church Missionary Society supports this interpretation, both groups being initially conservative but gradually adopting a 'modern' view of the Bible eventually leading to clear splits and a theological demarcation into liberal and conservative evangelical camps by 1922.

⁷⁸ *The Christian*, 9 September 1920, p. 3.

admirably against the theory of evolution on scientific grounds,⁷⁹ there is little evidence of wholesale conflict with the theory even among conservative evangelicals, provided it was understood and limited to being a theory that gave a credible biological explanation of human origins. The memories of the barbarity and losses of the First World War necessitated the importance of maintaining the theological doctrines of humankind's fall, sinfulness and need for salvation, which consequently meant that few conservative evangelicals would assent to the wholesale acceptance of the evolutionary theory, most specifically the idea of moral evolution. The more liberal evangelicals although aware of the issues surrounding Darwin's theory and the doctrine of the Fall, on the whole saw the need to reinterpret the Christian hamartiology rather than adopt or maintain a scepticism towards evolutionary science.

From the 1920s onwards, therefore, the evangelical responses to evolutionary theory, both liberal and conservative, began to focus on the Fall of man and the doctrine of sin. Although motivated by vastly different theological agendas, the evangelical concern reflected essentially that of Roman Catholicism; to uphold the theological truths of the Fall.

The history of Methodism's reaction to the evolutionary theory follows quite closely that of evangelicalism. Initially the Methodist people on the whole took a similar stance to those of Gladstone and Samuel Wilberforce opposing the theory. Many of the church's scholars, however, accepted the general principles of evolution although Pope expressed reservations, feeling that the theory undermined the integrity of man's spiritual and exalted origins⁸⁰ In contrast, a thoroughly positive approach was taken by William H. Dallinger who accepted the science of Darwin's theory, positing an early version of theistic evolution; that life could only proceed from an Eternal Mind.⁸¹ Another, positive, attitude was illustrated by a leading article in the *Methodist Times* in 1890 which saw in the theory an important and timely

⁷⁹ The most famous representative being Sir Ambrose Fleming, a leading member of the Evolution Protest Movement, renowned scientist and Professor at University College, London.

⁸⁰ *Compendium of Theology*, III, pp. 430-433.

⁸¹ W. H. Dallinger, *The Creator and What We May Know of the Method of Creation* (London: [n.p.], 1887), p. 11.

assertion of both the transcendence and immanence of God,⁸² a position also typified by the approach of Scott Lidgett.⁸³ A more progressive approach was taken by the main speaker at the Ecumenical Conference of 1891 who was assigned the task of speaking on 'The Influence of Modern Scientific Progress on Religious Thought'. In his address Percy Bunting proceeded not only to accept fully the theory of evolution, but also to apply it to Christian doctrine.⁸⁴ This typical liberal Protestant position is also reflected in the thought of W.F. Lofthouse who in 1906, accepting evolution with little reluctance, expresses admiration and indebtedness to Herbert Spencer's views on moral evolution and human progress, seeing no conflict with the Christian faith.⁸⁵

Following the Great War and by the 1920s, even the more conservative Methodist writers seem relatively untroubled by the theory of evolution. This does not appear, however, to be due to a wholesale agreement with the theory but rather to an underlying Methodist theological pragmatism that was prejudicial to speculative thought. Typical of this position is W. Bardsley Brash who, writing in 1928, suggests that Methodism's true nature is to 'preach the fundamentals of Evangelical truth' and not to preoccupy itself with speculative theology – a position echoing the ethos of John Wesley's theological agenda.⁸⁶ This non-speculative pragmatic position was adopted by many conservatives within Methodism, either deliberately or by the fact that most were fully engaged in the daily work of the church and felt that such issues were not of chief concern to their lives.

The most trenchant view in opposition to evolutionary theory within Methodism was found in the holiness movement. Although Samuel Chadwick, its most prominent leader, showed openness to modern critical thinking, the tendency of the movement as a whole was

⁸² *Methodist Times*, 29 May 1890, p.5.

⁸³ J. Scott Lidgett, *The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement* (London: Charles Kelly, 1897), pp.330-335.

⁸⁴ Maldwyn Edwards, *Methodism and England* (London: Epworth Press, 1943), pp. 224-225. The reaction of the American Methodists to Darwin's theory was less appreciative.

⁸⁵ W.F. Lofthouse, *Ethics and Atonement* (London: Methuen & Co., 1906), pp.59-69.

⁸⁶ W. Bardsley Brash, *Methodism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1928), p.181. A similar position is taken by Wilfred R. Wilkerson, who contends that Methodism's task is to concern itself with the possession of religious experience. Wilfred R. Wilkerson, *Religious Experience: The Methodist Fundamental* (London: Holborn Publishing House, 1928), pp.6-8

towards a strict form of conservative evangelicalism. In many respects those within the movement felt a closer kinship to other Wesleyan holiness groups than to the liberal evangelicals of mainstream Methodism.⁸⁷ This affinity with the other holiness groups was largely based on the common experience of entire sanctification and the call to propagate the doctrine. Although the Methodist branch of the holiness movement never fully embraced opposition to evolution, the leaders of the most influential Wesleyan holiness groups were strictly opposed both to modern approaches to the Bible and to evolutionary theory.⁸⁸ The publications of the holiness groups were widely read within the Methodist holiness movement⁸⁹ and there can be little doubt that the holiness groups had a significant theological impact upon this wing of British Methodism. David Thomas, leader of the International Holiness Mission, showed little interest in the current American debates about biblical inerrancy but insisted on what he saw as being vastly more significant - 'full salvation from sin.'⁹⁰ This was, however, a distinct understanding of sin and this definition was considered essential to the Wesleyan understanding and experience of entire sanctification. As a consequence, evolution was rejected for it undermined this particular conception of sin. The reliance and emphasis of this group upon a particular definition of sin would become apparent later, for Sangster's restatement of the Wesleyan doctrine of sin in 1942-43, attracted openly hostile and personal attacks from the Wesleyan holiness movement.⁹¹

As with liberal evangelicalism, by the late 1920s some Methodist scholars were becoming aware of potential areas of conflict between Darwin's theory and traditional

⁸⁷ *Evangelical Experiences*, p. 101.

⁸⁸ *The Holiness Mission Journal*, October 1924, p.4; April 1927, p. 4. Jack Ford in his study of the British holiness movement says, 'The findings of Higher Criticism have made little impact in holiness circles, except to arouse indignation and vociferous opposition.' Jack Ford, *What the Holiness People Believe: A Mid-Century Review of Holiness Teaching* (Birkenhead: Emmanuel Bible College, 1956), p.vii.

⁸⁹ The writings of the Salvationist Samuel Logan Brengle were widely read by all associated with the holiness emphasis. *The Flame*, written by Maynard James, one of the leaders of the holiness movement, enjoyed a circulation of 18,000 in 1940, vastly more than the members of the Calvary Holiness Church and the I.H.M., indeed, over ten times their own membership. See *Evangelical Experiences*, p.87.

⁹⁰ *The Holiness Mission Journal*, September 1925, p.4.

⁹¹ *The Flame*, May-June 1943, pp.2 & 27.

Christian hamartiology. In 1927 H.W. Perkins briefly addressed the problems the theory of evolution presented to the doctrine of original sin but affirmed significantly that it was the doctrine of sin that needed reconstruction, acknowledging the work of F.R. Tennant in the field.⁹² A combination of a liberal evangelical desire to restate outmoded doctrine coupled with a more conservative desire to protect the essentials of the tradition were evident at the 1929 Bristol Congress. In his address entitled *Methodism and Tradition* the United Methodist R.H.B. Shapland expresses the fears of some that the approaching Methodist Union of 1932 would make the church highly conservative. In response Shapland argues that theological liberalism asks for a restatement of doctrine to meet the demands of modern thought, a pursuit he favours, yet he warns, that to be truly Methodist the church's theology must continually derive from a vital religious experience, asserting that, 'This experience is constitutive of Methodism. When it dies, Methodism will die with it.'⁹³ S.G. Dimond, another United Methodist, takes a similar position to Perkins seeing clearly the need to restate the doctrine of original sin but also affirming the traditional emphasis upon the evangelical experience of conversion.⁹⁴

At the Sheffield Congress of 1931, which carried the significant agenda of seeking a 'fresh interpretation' of the Methodist message for the reuniting Methodism,⁹⁵ two scholars in particular drew attention to the theory of evolution. J. Parton Milum of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, while accepting the general scientific truth of the theory, rejected its randomness in favour of an evolution structured around species 'learning by experience'.⁹⁶ This view would safeguard the idea of moral choices essential to a Christian doctrine of sin.⁹⁷ E.G. Braham, also of the Wesleyan branch of the church, accepting the evolutionary theory in principle, rejects its inherent atheism and particular advancement of the idea of

⁹² *The Doctrine of Christian Perfection*, p.11.

⁹³ *Methodism: Its Present Responsibilities*, p. 225.

⁹⁴ *Methodism: Its Present Responsibilities*, pp.159-160.

⁹⁵ *Methodism: Its Message for To-day*, p.9.

⁹⁶ *Methodism: Its Message for To-day*, p.135.

⁹⁷ *Methodism: Its Message for To-day*, pp.136-143.

determinism. Braham asserts that humankind must have real moral choice in its relation to a Supreme Being, otherwise the Christian notions of sin and the reality of forgiveness are undermined.⁹⁸ Within Methodism, this approach, that accepts the science of the evolutionary theory, yet is aware of potential areas of conflict with traditional Christian thinking and in particular the doctrine of sin, continues throughout the 1930s.

In 1934 Sydney Dimond asks for an interpretation of life that is unafraid of science yet takes into account the major tragedies of human experience including the First World War. The Christian religion, he asserts, best fills the void.⁹⁹ Waterhouse,¹⁰⁰ Dimond¹⁰¹ and Lidgett¹⁰² all decry the notion of conflict between science and religion on the popular level, asserting that there is no real conflict, just a challenge to thinking. Although accepting the science of Darwin's theory, H. Maldwyn Hughes specifically rejects the idea of moral evolution associated with the evolutionary theory, mainly again due to the history of the Great War.¹⁰³

By the late 1930s, therefore, a number of viewpoints concerning the theory of evolution were prevalent in Methodism. On the whole Methodist scholarship accepted the scientific value of the theory but concluded that the history of mankind necessitated a rejection of the ideas of moral evolution and continual human progress, the First World War being of major significance. The Christian faith was seen as necessary for the moral dimension of man's being, although, by this time, many of Methodism's scholars felt that the science of evolution coupled with biblical criticism necessitated a re-evaluation and restatement of Christian hamartiology. Among the more conservative Methodists a tension existed between accepting the science of evolution and the perceived problems the theory presented to the validity of the biblical story of the Fall, especially its perceived anchoring of the sinfulness

⁹⁸ *Methodism: Its Message for To-day*, pp.168-178.

⁹⁹ *Methodist Recorder*, 5 April 1934, p.13.

¹⁰⁰ *Methodist Recorder*, 29 June 1934, p. 15.

¹⁰¹ *Methodist Recorder*, 22 November 1934, p.15.

¹⁰² *Methodist Recorder*, 25 April 1935, p.13.

¹⁰³ *Methodist Recorder*, 28 November 1935, p. 19.

of humankind, and its evangelical consequence: the need for salvation. The necessity of upholding and promoting the need for the real Christian experience of forgiveness, while leaving theological speculation to others, was perceived as a genuine Methodist way forward, a method claiming some support from John Wesley. A more obscure position was taken by many within the holiness movement of Methodism, who on the whole attempted to support a more literal interpretation of the Scriptures and would, therefore, reject Darwin's theory primarily on biblical grounds. Some would come to oppose vehemently the evolutionary theory, however, because of its view of humankind and the belief that the theory roundly contradicted the doctrine of original sin, a particular understanding of which was seen to be essential to the Methodist holiness movement's doctrine of entire sanctification.

The evidence of Sangster's writings from 1939 onwards places him in harmony with a mild liberal position and, therefore, in line with the majority of British Methodism's scholars. While accepting the science of the evolutionary theory Sangster rejects in the strongest terms any talk of inevitable human progress. Writing at the start of World War Two, shortly before the onset of hostilities, Sangster says, 'All this talk of "inevitable progress" is seen for the patten that it is, for we are watching now for the wings of enemy planes.'¹⁰⁴ Two years later, following the Blitz, Sangster sets out his own programme for progress, rejecting in no uncertain terms the idea of inevitable moral evolution, while asserting a Christian alternative:

And the first step [...] is the abandonment of the idea that men *must* improve: that there is something automatic in "progress": that just as planes get faster, men get better: that it is certain as sunrise and as inevitable as the tides. The widespread dissemination of that false idea was much older than Darwin, but took new impetus from men's interest in evolution. So sure were they that form evolved from form in some ascending spiral of perfection that they carried the idea over into the realm of freedom and asserted it with the same confidence there. Herschel committed himself to the statement: "Man's progress towards a higher state need never fear a check," and Herbert Spencer was "certain that man must become perfect."

¹⁰⁴ *These Things Abide*, p.19.

Of course, it is *not* certain. If men are free, they are free to choose evil. *If* there is a mechanical development in things, there can never be a mechanical development in persons. The evil in the world will not just *come* right: it has got to be *put* right. There is no escalator to perfection on which the untoiling race can rise by steady degrees to spiritual distinction: only by redemption, grace, discipline, and effort will the height be made.¹⁰⁵

It could be argued that such a pessimistic position regarding man's innate possibilities was inevitable during the conflict of war and more mellow positions would naturally develop as life returned to normal in the years of peace. Sangster's view, however, remained unchanged. Writing in 1951 as President of the Methodist Conference Sangster, referring back to two wars of 'unprecedented scale', says that 'the facile optimism of the later nineteenth century has given place to a realistic mood which forbids complacency.'¹⁰⁶ Six years later, while recalling a debate with a democratic humanist, Sangster dismisses again the idea of inevitable human progress:

[...] he seemed to think that, despite the ups and downs, our race was steadily improving. He appeared to believe that it *had* to. This inner necessity had no relation to religion in his mind. It seemed semi-mechanical. As planes get faster men get better. I reminded him of Dachau and Belsen, and our stock-piling of hydrogen bombs. I told him again that if he could believe in this kind of perfection he could believe in anything.¹⁰⁷

For Sangster the history of humankind argues against any claims to inevitable progress, with the two world wars as the ultimate proof. His writings post 1945, assert the Christian belief in the sinfulness of humankind, believing firmly that recent history supported his view. Writing in the late 1950s, Sangster says:

In the middle years of the last century there was a sharp controversy between the philosophers and the theologians of the Western world over man's perfectibility. The philosophers were saying that man *must* become perfect; perfect on his own. They thought there was some kind of ethical revolution at work in our race, unrelated to any particular religion. 'Man must become perfect', Herbert Spencer said. The theologians (who were having the worst of the argument then) were quoting the Scriptures and saying that man was 'carnal, sold under sin'. That was nearly a hundred years ago, and now most people are willing to concede that the theologians were right. There is no escalator to perfection. There is no mechanical progress. In this century we have had two world wars, and live in the shadow of a third. Man by himself cannot become perfect.

¹⁰⁵ *Ten Statesmen and Jesus Christ*, pp.113-114. Also, p.142.

¹⁰⁶ W.E. Sangster, 'Message to the Methodists of the World', *Methodist Recorder*, 3 May 1951, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ *Sunday Times*, 31 March 1957, p.14.

Some of the philosophers themselves are saying now that, maybe, the theologians were right! Man is carnal, sold under sin.¹⁰⁸

In his latest published sermons Sangster's position remains unchanged, dismissing the futility of human optimism and reasserting that humankind is lost in sin. Apart from its modern allusions the text could have been taken from John Wesley, who insisted on the utter hopelessness of natural man.¹⁰⁹ Sangster writes:

It was nice to be told that there was no truth in the old doctrine of original sin; in fact there was no sin at all – just a bit of selfishness which time would correct; that the Golden Age was inevitable and that, by gradual steps, man would move unaided to perfection.

I say it flattered the egotism in us. It made redemption unnecessary. It emptied the cross of meaning[...]And then we woke up ! First in 1914 and then again in 1939, we found ourselves in hellish war. The mid-years of the century find us still unsure of peace. This, then, is the perfect world we had been promised by the men who sneered at original sin; a world of atomic submarines, air-raid shelters, gas-masks for babies, guided missiles, and hydrogen bombs.

A world of television, plastics, possible trips to the moon – but also the possibility of radiation poisoning, and mass death ! The incredible folly of it; the ignorant conceit; the puffed – up egotism.¹¹⁰

Sangster, therefore, although accepting the science of evolution, wholly rejects any notion of humankind's inherent goodness or innate ability to progress towards moral or societal perfection. He thereby affirms belief in a form of the doctrine of original sin, a doctrine that was axiomatic to the Catholic Church and, for the thought of John Wesley.¹¹¹ When Sangster embarked on his study of John Wesley's doctrine of perfection in the years 1938-1942 his modern view of created reality based on evolutionary theory, led him to realise the necessity of reinterpreting the doctrine of original sin. In doing so, Sangster was taking on the task deemed necessary by the scholars of British Methodism: to marry a modern view of humanity's derivation with a biblical view of human sinfulness. Sangster's formulation would of necessity represent a radical departure from John Wesley for Wesley was totally pre-modern, accepting the biblical account of human origins as factual.

¹⁰⁸ W.E. Sangster, *Westminster Sermons*, 2 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1960), I, p.81.

¹⁰⁹ See for example: BE Vol.4, pp.152-153.

¹¹⁰ W.E. Sangster, *Westminster Sermons*, 2 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1961), II, p.3.

¹¹¹ John Wesley felt that the doctrine of original sin was a non-negotiable essential tenet of the Christian faith. See: BE Vol.2, p.183.

In conclusion, therefore, it appears that from 1939 onwards W.E. Sangster began to use modern twentieth-century thought in expressing his theology and to restate Christian belief. The agenda was rooted in theological liberalism's quest to make the Christian faith comprehensible to modern people. Three particular issues represent radical departures from John Wesley's thought and would have significant consequences for his reformulation of the doctrines of sanctification and perfection. First, Sangster posited a tempered universalism based on the infinite love of God which allowed for salvation and growth after death. Second, he accepted and used the principles of biblical criticism, adopting a centrist evangelical position; using the tools of higher criticism to understand better and present the gospel. Third, he believed in the evolutionary origins of humankind and the consequent necessity of reinterpreting the doctrine of sin. Although these changes are reflected in numerous sermons and articles after 1939, Sangster's unique contribution for his time was that he applied this liberal agenda to John Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection with a view to making it comprehensible in the modern world.

By the time Sangster embarked on attempting to reinterpret the human condition, the Catholic Church, liberal and conservative evangelicals and most British Methodist scholars were agreed on the importance of affirming human sinfulness. All were aware that acceptance of the evolutionary theory raised significant problems for traditional understandings of the doctrine of sin. In order to restate Wesley's doctrine of perfection for the modern world Sangster had to wrestle first with the problems of understanding and upholding the concept of human sinfulness and the necessity of salvation, while at the same time doing full justice to modern science and critical thinking.

CHAPTER 5

THE HUMAN CONDITION

There can be little doubt that the doctrine of sin was of central concern to W.E. Sangster both pastorally and practically. His writings evidence throughout that Sangster saw sin as mankind's chief malady and the source of most, if not all its problems.¹ As with other areas of his thought Sangster's understanding of the human condition underwent interesting and significant changes during his life. From a primary interest in the pastoral ramifications of sin, with sin carrying a particular individual emphasis in his writings of 1932-1936, Sangster begins, to show a greater theological interest in the doctrine, gradually developing a view that embraces the ideas of corporate and systemic evil.

In the period 1932-1936 following the more pastoral agenda of his early works Sangster seems to cast the idea of sin in individual terms. Broadly dividing sin into 'sins of flesh' and sins of mind'² Sangster addresses particular sins in his sermons, including jealousy,³ greed,⁴ sloth,⁵ gossip,⁶ pride,⁷ hypocrisy,⁸ and bigotry.⁹ These and others he also includes in classic lists of sins.¹⁰ Although Sangster affirms the Godwardness of sin¹¹ he locates its source exclusively in the individual human heart:

I believe that all problems are problems of human nature in the end. If we get behind the most complex international situation, we are forced to conclude that the really obstinate part of the difficulty is not the intellectual part (however flinty that may be), but the jaundiced spirit in which men come to it. If human nature was at its best, human ingenuity would find a way. If the heart of man was right, the mind of man would not fail him. Where is the spirit that makes war? It is not dispersed through the world like some vapour: it is not just existent in what the psychologists calls the

¹ E.g. *Ten Statesmen And Jesus Christ*, p.25.

² *Why Jesus Never Wrote a Book*, pp.34-35.

³ *Why Jesus Never Wrote a Book*, pp.77-78; *He Is Able*, pp.136-149.

⁴ *Why Jesus Never wrote a Book*, p.150.

⁵ *He Is Able*, p.111.

⁶ *He Is Able*, pp.150-163.

⁷ *He Is Able*, pp.164-180.

⁸ *He Is Able*, pp.225-239.

⁹ *He Is Able*, pp.240-255.

¹⁰ *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, p.86 and p.94.

¹¹ *Why Jesus Never Wrote A Book*, p.110.

“group mind.” Trace it to its source, and you will find it in the heart of *individual* men and women.¹²

Sin must be dealt with, therefore, in the individual human heart, for ‘All the trenches of sin,’ asserts Sangster, ‘are in the human heart.’¹³

Increasingly from 1937 onwards there is a growing indication that Sangster was battling with the issue of sin.¹⁴ In 1939, one sermon in particular, ‘God Forgive Us’,¹⁵ explores the theme of corporate sin and repentance, focusing on the Allies’ unjust treatment of the German nation after World War I. Although Sangster begins to touch on links between human sinfulness and society, politics and economics, he never fully explores the relationship¹⁶ and, as might be expected for the times, there is a latent pessimism about human history and its institutions.¹⁷ In this period Sangster occasionally speaks of sin as though it were an inanimate force – ‘the real enemy’¹⁸ or even a malignant growth – ‘Sin is not a growing pain: it is a cancerous growth.’¹⁹ Sangster seems reluctant, however, at this stage to recast his view of sin altogether and reiterates strongly his belief that sin finds its only source in the individual:

Where else can sin be met but in individual hearts? Sin shapes circumstances, but it is not, in the strict sense, *in* circumstances. It can no more reside *in* ‘things’ than virtue can. Nor does it exist as some rarified gas in the air, nor yet in the psychologist’s ‘race-mind.’ Its entrenchments are all dug in individual hearts, and he who would fight sin must fight it there.²⁰

Aware of the utter sinfulness of mankind,²¹ Sangster appears to be attempting to delineate the boundaries between the individual or personal elements of sin and the suprapersonal. During these early years of the Second World War he was seeking to

¹² *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, p.109.

¹³ *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, p.110.

¹⁴ The differences between the article ‘Is Christ A Partial Saviour’, 8 April 1937, p.15 and the edited version published in his book *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, p. 93 show the first fruits of his study.

¹⁵ *These Things Abide*, pp.51-59.

¹⁶ *Ten Statesmen and Jesus Christ*, pp.25, 63

¹⁷ As a typical expression of Sangster’s thinking on this point: ‘Justice,’ *Ten Statesmen and Jesus Christ*, pp.44-55.

¹⁸ *Ten Statesmen and Jesus Christ*, p.25.

¹⁹ *Ten Statesmen and Jesus Christ*, p.114.

²⁰ *Ten Statesmen and Jesus Christ*, p.115.

²¹ *These Things Abide*, p.21.

understand John Wesley's view of perfection, researching for his Ph.D. This more academic and theological engagement of Sangster with the doctrine of sin came as a direct result of his own study of Wesley's theology and his attempt to understand and reinterpret the traditional understanding of the human condition which he found in Wesley.

The era of his study in the early nineteen-forties was particularly rife with interest in the area of hamartiology with many scholars attempting to make sense of the human condition in the light of evolutionary science, the continuing barbarity of humankind and the advent of influence of the New Psychology of Freud and Jung.²² The combination of the influence of Darwin's theory of human origins and the slaughter of WW I had already thrown the traditional understanding of the doctrine of original sin into the theological spotlight and by the 1930s most scholars, including Roman Catholics, liberal protestant, and liberal evangelicals which included many Methodist scholars, thought that the Christian doctrine of sin was in dire need of reinterpretation.

With his agenda of seeking a modern interpretation of Wesley's doctrines of sanctification and perfection, Sangster realised that his task of necessity implied a reinterpretation of the human condition and of the doctrine of sin. Indeed, Sangster's interest was only focused on and limited to those aspects of the doctrine of sin that impinged on his ultimate task; restating Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection for the modern world. He never attempted or claimed to be writing a comprehensive study on the subject of sin. His specific quest would, therefore, lead him to engage John Wesley's particular understanding of actual sin and original sin.

²² A large number of influential studies of the doctrine of sin were published in the period 1900-1930, perhaps the best known being: F.R. Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1903), F.R. Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1906), W.E. Orchard, *Modern Theories of Sin*, (London: James Clark, 1909), James Orr, *Sin As A Problem Today*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), F.J. Hall, *Evolution and the Fall*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910), E.J. Bicknell, *The Christian Idea of Sin and Original Sin In the Light of Modern Knowledge*, (Longmans, Green & Co., 1922), N.P. Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1927).

From the point of view of systematic theology it is incumbent to follow Sangster's reinterpretation of the Christian doctrine of sin in order to understand the changes he later makes to the doctrines of sanctification and perfection which result in his enunciation of the moral dimensions of Methodist soteriology. It is impossible to understand Sangster's view of sin, however, without relating it first to his conception of the workings of God's grace, necessitating therefore, a prior discussion of Sangster's view of grace and human volition. Secondly, his understanding of sin will be assessed, with a particular concern to elucidate his distinctions between sin and sinfulness.

Sangster and the Inviolability of the Will

Emphasized repeatedly throughout all Sangster's writings is his belief in the inviolability of the human will. Alluding to the Wesleyan concept of prevenient grace drawing the individual toward God,²³ Sangster finds it incumbent to define the limits of God's influence upon the human will. 'Never does He violate the personality that He has made. With infinite patience, He seeks to win the wayward and the wicked by all the dear inducements of love.'²⁴ While upholding the transforming power of God, Sangster articulates more accurately the limits of God's influence upon the individual, 'Mighty as the Spirit of God is to work swift revolutionary changes, no method which God uses, and which respects our personal freedom, can bring the Kingdom to the hearts of men overnight.'²⁵ Sangster, consistently maintained, that at some level of personality, humankind must have true freedom towards God and be able to refuse the offers of God's grace.²⁶

His views on the inviolability of the will seem, however, from deeper study to show a nuanced development from his first written indications of his view in his article 'Why

²³ For the classic presentation of this doctrine in John Wesley's thought, see 'The Scripture Way of Salvation', BE Vol.2, pp. 156-157. For a recent discussion of Wesley's distinctive contribution, see Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, pp. 83-93.

²⁴ 'When Hope is Dead – Hope On!', *These Things Abide*, p.70.

²⁵ 'Security', *Ten Statesmen and Jesus Christ*, p.63.

²⁶ *Path to Perfection*, pp.122-123; *The Pure In Heart*, p.235; *Give God A Chance*, p.75.

is it some people cannot find God?' (1934)²⁷ when compared to his comments after 1939. Sangster clarifies his early position clearly in a letter written in response to an objection raised by Rev. Will Horner to the aforementioned article.²⁸ Sangster asserts that human barriers within the human heart effectively close God out. Using the analogy of a lost child hidden by a barrier from its seeking parent, Sangster says:

How gladly he would break down the barrier if only he knew what it was that was hiding them from one another! And seeing that those barriers are in *us* and not in God, and that God always respects our personality, God cannot really 'find us' till we surrender that barrier and find Him.²⁹

Similarly, two years later, Sangster when writing about prayer says, '[...] the most precious things God has to give can only be imparted to responsive minds. He cannot force soul-culture on a barricaded heart.³⁰ It seems probable that Sangster is here reflecting his Arminian roots, seeking to maintain human freedom and not conceding to Calvinism's assertion of the overwhelming sovereignty of God in salvation which led to the doctrines of irresistible grace and predestination.

By 1940, however, when he next wrote on the subject, there is a distinct change in mood in his theology. His MA studies in philosophy, and the research for his doctorate on John Wesley's view of perfection, engaged him again in a detailed study of psychology.³¹ As in other areas of his thought, already discussed, his studies entailed marked developments in his thought. Here however, the change is subtle. Addressing those who perceive themselves as good without religion, Sangster implies a manifestation of grace upon the individual unconnected with their freedom:

The very ideals our critics boast about were shaped by Him. The community which nourished and educated them is, in its best manifestation, the product of that same holy power. When we add to this all the secret interior ministries of His grace which work on, even in the hearts of those who deny Him – the counsel of conscience, the warnings against evil, the quickened longing for higher things – and then make a

²⁷ *Methodist Recorder*, 8 March 1934, p.15.

²⁸ *Methodist Recorder*, 15 March 1934, p.19.

²⁹ *Methodist Recorder*, 22 March 1934, p.19.

³⁰ W. E. Sangster, *Prayer* (London: Epworth Press, 1936), p.9.

³¹ He had previously read in this field to a high level between 1924-1930 during his undergraduate studies and particularly his MA studies, although he failed to sit his final MA exams at that time. (see Chapter 2).

sum of the outside influence and the interior constraint, it is astonishing that men should deny the debt they manifestly owe.³²

Of particular significance is Sangster's reference to the 'secret interior' ministry of the Holy Spirit for the obvious implication is that he understands there to be an influence of God within the individual that by-passes his freedom to choose or allow that influence, for according to Sangster, this is at work even in those who deny Him. Sangster is not referring, however, to an influence that overrides the will and of itself will lead to salvation. In a strongly worded article in the *Christian Advocate*, Sangster addresses those who ultimately choose to reject the offer of salvation:

Far be it from me to put any limit to the resource of the love of God, but honesty compels me to declare that God always respects our freedom. He will not force salvation on anyone. He will not save us against our will.

The awful responsibility of being alive is just – that our freedom in its measure is real and inviolable. Within a tiny orbit we can withstand God.³³

Two years later, in his second major work on holiness, Sangster repeats the same sentiments. 'Moreover, God respects the personalities He has made. He stoops to deal with us as a Person with persons. He does not bludgeon or overwhelm us. A mind set on unbelief is not forced to faith.'³⁴ It appears, therefore, that Sangster wishes to maintain human freedom at one level: the level of accepting or rejecting the offer of salvation; yet at another level he wishes to allow the workings of grace within the individual without implications, it would seem, for personal freedom. Sangster resolves this tension by working within a framework of Jungian psychology. Consequently, the direct dealings of God with the individual must be situated, according to Sangster, in the conscious mind, which is also where he locates the will. God's 'secret' dealings with personalities occur, therefore, below the conscious level; the unconscious and subconscious levels. Addressing the mechanics of temptation and the aiding grace of God, Sangster illustrates the relationship between the levels of consciousness, 'He will

³² *These Things Abide*, p.92.

³³ 'A Question God Can't Answer', *Christian Advocate*, 6 March 1952, p.7.

³⁴ *The Pure In Heart*, p.219.

not invade the freedom which He has made. Therefore, though the gracious influence of God presses, doubtless, upon children and adults in their subconscious mind. His direct dealings with us must be in the conscious mind.’³⁵ Sangster is in no doubt, however, that God ministers unbeknown to the individual and that His influence is so great and should not be underestimated, occasionally implying a view that threatens the heart of his argument. In his sermon ‘You Can’t *Make* People Good’ Sangster, after asserting that even God cannot *make* people good, argues for a ministry of grace upon the individual that directs and motivates them toward goodness:

Out of the heart, fashioned in freedom, the fine fruit of constraint, though never of compulsion, arises this warm desire of the soul for what we call virtue. Precisely how God begets it in us, and from what secret springs of aspiration He contrives that the waters rise, we do not know. This only we know. He does not compel us, and we cannot compel others. Far deeper than surface thoughts which fret our mind, God conducts that holy traffic with our souls by which He saves us and makes us good.³⁶

It appears, therefore, that Sangster wishes to affirm the inviolability of the human will in its relations with God, an affirmation he makes throughout his writings. After 1940, however, using Jungian psychological paradigms, Sangster limits this affirmation to the conscious level of the mind; the place God deals directly with the individual and where, significantly, Sangster places the will. Within the lower levels of the mind, beyond the conscious level, the unconscious and subconscious mind, Sangster understands God to be active, drawing the individual to Himself and creating a desire for and a movement towards goodness.

Sangster’s concern to stress the inviolability of the will appears to be motivated by his Arminian theological heritage. His understanding of the internal ministry of God’s grace drawing man towards Himself and creating a desire for goodness certainly carries many of the attributes of John Wesley’s understanding of prevenient grace.³⁷

³⁵ *The Pure In Heart*, p. 234.

³⁶ W. E. Sangster, *Westminster Sermons*, 2 vols (London: Epworth, 1960), I, p.135.

³⁷ For comparison, see ‘Working Out Our Own Salvation,’ BE Vol.3, pp.199-209, (pp.202-203).

Sangster's View of Sin and Volition

There can be little doubt that human volition was a central tenet in Sangster's view of sin, yet it was the nature of the relationship of sin to human volition that interested Sangster and led him into contention with John Wesley's formulation of sanctification and perfection.

Human volition was indubitably also a crucial element in John Wesley's theology and in particular his well-known definition of sin. Throughout Wesley's writings on perfection, sin is continually defined as 'a voluntary transgression of a known law.'³⁸ Indeed, for Wesley, the voluntary nature of action or intention was axiomatic to his understanding of sin. Although Wesley did attempt to address aspects of human behaviour that fell short of God's perfect law in his deliberations of sin, he was consistently reluctant to include them within his actual definition of sin due to the absence of volition.³⁹ Wesley says, 'Not only sin, properly so called (that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law), but sin, improperly so called (that is, an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown), needs the atoning blood.'⁴⁰ Although this definition stressed the need of the atonement for all sin, wilful and unwilful, it was the definition of sin itself (properly so called), constructed around the premise of volition, that in particular caught the critical attention of R.N. Flew in his study of Wesley's thought. 'The stress on the consciousness and deliberate intention of the agent', asserted Flew, 'is the most formidable defect in Wesley's doctrine of the ideal.'⁴¹ This particular criticism was carried much further by Sangster.

Flew's criticism applied the concepts of modern psychology to Wesley's thought, in particular the notion of the unconscious from Freud and Jung. Wesley could not perhaps

³⁸ *Plain Account*, p.53.

³⁹ Richard S. Taylor is therefore correct in criticising W.T. Purkiser's assertion that John Wesley had a threefold conception of sin: Richard S. Taylor, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, 3 Vols. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1985), III, p.60 footnote.

⁴⁰ *Plain Account*, p. 90.

⁴¹ *The Idea of Perfection*, p.333.

be expected to anticipate the findings of psychology, especially with regard to degrees of consciousness but Wesley's definition of sin was significantly and broadly in line with certain contemporary and highly influential evaluations of human sin prevalent in the first third of the Twentieth Century, most particularly the conclusions of F.R.Tennant in his remorseless investigations of the doctrine of sin, whose work became the focus of Sangster's analysis of sin.

In his philosophical investigation of sin Tennant asserted that 'Sin must connote, only transgression of a moral law by a moral agent.'⁴² Flew's contention that, 'Our worst sins are often those of which we are unconscious',⁴³ opened up an area of moral inquiry, though not completely foreign to the thought of both Tennant and Wesley, it was certainly one that lay beyond their specific horizons or agenda. For Tennant the issue of accountability was programmatic and central to his concept of sin⁴⁴ and John Wesley, even in his late thinking,⁴⁵ still regarded deliberate intention as axiomatic to his definition of sin. Writing in 1772 Wesley says, 'Nothing is sin, strictly speaking, but a voluntary transgression of a known law of God. Therefore, every voluntary breach of the law of love is sin; and nothing else, if we speak properly.'⁴⁶ Although it is certainly true that Wesley spent much effort attempting to clarify the relationship of 'proper sin' to 'improper sin', with the latter including the ideas of weakness and omission and incorrect judgment, he was always insistent that the difference resided in the deliberate intention of the agent.

Sangster, though resolute on the inviolability of the human will, attempts to address and clarify the issues raised by Flew on the one hand and Wesley and Tennant on the

⁴² F.R. Tennant, *The Concept of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912),p.98.

⁴³ *The Idea of Perfection*, p. 333.

⁴⁴ *The Concept of Sin*, p. 245.

⁴⁵ Broadly speaking Wesley's theological development can be roughly divided into three periods: 1. 1725-1735: His serious study of Religion. 2. 1738-1763: Religion Defined. 3. 1765-1791: Late and Revised.

⁴⁶ *The Letters of John Wesley*, ed. John Telford, 8 vols, (London: Epworth Press, 1931),V, p.322.

other. Sangster first takes issue with the imprecise use of the term 'unconscious', being used at the time and as used by Flew, a problem he feels clouds the debate:

Now, it will be clear to any reflective thinker that the term 'unconscious' is often loosely used, particularly in connection with this subject. Sometimes it is used of sins which really are unconscious, but quite as frequently of sins which are subconscious, and which, in part at least, are plainly objects of moral judgment. The word 'unconscious,' if we are to have clear distinctions at all, cannot be used of sins which trouble the conscience even a little, and which a disturbed mind is afraid to examine with care because of a dim awareness that the matter will not bear examination.⁴⁷

Sangster insists on a clear definition of the term unconscious, dismissing R.E.D. Clark and F.W. Newman's use of 'provoked' and 'unprovoked'⁴⁸ sins as too inaccurate, for, as Sangster says, 'Provoked sins are those which are committed after a struggle, or in a moment of passion, while unprovoked sins are those which are done thoughtlessly and without temptation.'⁴⁹ Both, however, cannot truly be said to be unconscious in the strict sense of the word. Sangster appears to be saying that unconscious sin refers to actions of which the agent is completely unaware of having moral significance. In an attempt to clarify his position Sangster continues:

Men, at a certain stage of moral development, do things with a conscience void of offence towards God and man which they come afterwards to regard as wrong, but which could not be called, in the strict sense, a sin when they did it, because they did not know it was sin, and had no means of discovering its true nature.⁵⁰

In answer to the question as to whether such imperfect knowledge of the good would constitute sin, Sangster asserts that Wesley's logic would lead him to be in harmony with Tennant's assertion that, 'unconscious sin is a contradiction in terms'.⁵¹ Sangster's particular contention and contribution to the issue, however, is his assertion

⁴⁷ *The Path to Perfection*, p. 73.

⁴⁸ R.E.D. Clark, *Conscious and Unconscious Sin: A Study In Practical Christianity* (London: William & Norgate, 1934), p.3.

⁴⁹ *The Path to Perfection*, p. 73.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Path to Perfection*, p.74. Although Turner disagrees with Sangster on this point, his response will be discussed under the discussion of Human Sinfulness. G.A. Turner, *The More Excellent Way* (Indiana: Winona Lake, 1952), pp. 238-241.

that between the two poles of deliberate, actual sin and truly unconscious sin, there was, a vast area worthy of ethical and psychological enquiry:⁵²

[...]it is clear that the students of sin had not really focussed their problem while they held to the ill-defined terms “conscious” and “unconscious” and neglected the wide area which lay between.

Plain sin and plain innocence – in so far as they are ever plain – present no theoretical problem. But the broad borderlands bristle with problems. How shall we estimate the degree of guilty neglect ? – or assess responsibility for that half-induced blindness ? – or measure the pull of inherited disposition and early environment ?- or (allowing due weight for ignorance) decide how much a man is accountable for his ignorance when knowledge was at hand ?⁵³

For Sangster, therefore, a number of highly important moral issues lay between the extremes of conscious sin and unconscious sin, some related to social conditioning, psychological development and the consequences of previous decisions or actions. Wesley did not, according to Sangster, in any way anticipate these moral problems and the complexity of these influences upon human personality and action, a subject really only raised by modern psychology, and the founder of Methodism was practically ignorant of the idea of the ‘unconscious motive.’⁵⁴ For Sangster this implied that in defining sin, “Racial,” “corporate,” or “unconscious” sin would all have been to Wesley a misuse of the word.⁵⁵ According to Sangster, however, all these elements, that lie in between the volitional and the truly unconscious, belong, not to the realm of ‘a sin’ or actual sin but to the area of sinfulness, an area Sangster accuses Wesley of neglecting in pursuing the voluntary nature of sin.⁵⁶ This particular criticism, however, did not go unchallenged.

Human Sinfulness: Personal

Consistently from 1937 when Sangster first tentatively suggested there could be a potential area of weakness in John Wesley’s doctrine of sin in his article ‘Is Christ Only A Personal Saviour?’, he maintained steadfastly that Wesley attempted no definition of

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *Path to Perfection*, p.75.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

sinfulness and that such a deficiency must be corrected.⁵⁷ This specific criticism by Sangster occasioned lengthy responses from contemporary American Wesleyan scholars, most particularly Leo George Cox and George Allen Turner.

In his study of Christian perfection written ten years after Sangster's doctoral study of John Wesley, Turner accuses Sangster of showing 'little attempt to focus attention on what Wesley called "inward sins"'.⁵⁸ Turner contends that Sangster's use of the terms sin and sinfulness corresponds to Wesley's division of the idea of sin into outward and inward sin; Sangster's concept of sinfulness being synonymous with Wesley's understanding of inward sin.⁵⁹ Identical sentiments are shared by Cox, who asserts, 'For some reason Sangster thinks that Wesley never attempted a definition of "sinfulness" but only of "a sin" which was a voluntary transgression. [...]But Wesley did define sinfulness.'⁶⁰ In similar fashion to Turner, Cox refers to John Wesley's concept of inward sin, pointing the reader to a passage in Wesley's sermon 'Sin In Believers':

By sin, I here understand inward sin; any sinful temper, passion, or affection; such as pride, self will, love of the world, in any kind or degree; such as lust, anger, peevishness; any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ.⁶¹

Turner and Cox misunderstood Sangster however, and are incorrect in identifying Sangster's concept of sinfulness with Wesley's understanding of inward sin. First, Sangster was perfectly aware of John Wesley's category of inward sin and was, therefore, not referring to this when speaking of human sinfulness. When referring to Wesley's view of sin, Sangster says:

Sin is not necessarily an *act*. He was too close a student of the New Testament to miss the inwardness of sin but, in Wesley's view, it always included volition: there was a willing identification of the self with the idea. He attempted no definition of sinfulness.⁶²

⁵⁷ *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, pp.93-94, *The Path to Perfection*, pp.30,76, 160-167,183, *Methodism Her Unfinished Task*, p.59, *The Pure In Heart*, p.227 'From the Home Front', *Joyful News*, 27 June 1957, p. 5, 'On Our Definition of Sin', *Methodist Recorder*, 14 April 1960, p. 10, *Westminster Sermons*, I, p. 151.

⁵⁸ *The More Excellent Way*, pp.236-237.

⁵⁹ *The More Excellent Way*, p. 237.

⁶⁰ L.G. Cox, *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1964), p. 54.

⁶¹ 'Sin In Believers', BE Vol.1, p.320.

⁶² *Path to Perfection*, p.76.

Sangster correctly identifies the fact that for Wesley inward sin belonged to the category of personal sin or actual transgression, containing within it the ideas of volition and responsibility. Inward sins manifest themselves in sins such as pride, wrath, and foolish desire, revealed as an inordinate love of something other than God, and in seeking fulfilment in the creation rather than in God. It carries the idea of being misdirected love.⁶³ For Wesley, inward sin is a prior stage in a chain of sin leading to full blown outward sin. Inward sin, according to Wesley, grows like a root of bitterness and darkens the soul of the individual.⁶⁴ Inward sin begins when the individual yields to temptation, either by neglect or decision and rejects the grace of God that would preserve him. Wesley describes the process of inward to outward sin:

You see the unquestionable progress from grace to sin: Thus it goes on, from step to step. (1.) The divine seed of loving, conquering faith, remains in him that is born of God. 'He keepeth himself', by the grace of God, and 'cannot commit sin'. (2.) A temptation arises; whether from the world, the flesh, or the devil, it matters not. (3.) The Spirit of God gives him warning that sin is near, and bids him abundantly watch unto prayer. (4.) He gives way, in some degree, to the temptation, which now begins to grow pleasing to him. (5.) The Holy Spirit is grieved; his faith is weakened; and his love of God grows cold. (6.) The Spirit reproves him more sharply, and saith, 'This is the way; walk thou in it'. (7.) He turns away from the painful voice of God, and listens to the pleasing voice of the tempter. (8.) Evil desire begins and spreads in his soul, till faith and love vanish away: He is then capable of committing outward sin, the power of the Lord being departed from him.⁶⁵

Inward sin, therefore, precedes outward sin, but presupposed throughout the process, at every stage, is human volition, illustrated by such phrases as 'He gives way', and 'He turns away'. In the process by which the individual gradually heads towards outward sin, Wesley constantly attributes responsibility to the individual, casting it in a framework of obedience and disobedience.⁶⁶ Turner and Cox are incorrect, therefore, in their critique of Sangster for his concept of sinfulness referred almost exclusively to the non-volitional and the borderlands of volition.

⁶³ 'The Wilderness State', BE Vol.2, pp.210-211.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ 'The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God', BE Vol.1, p.440.

⁶⁶ Sangster has a similar analysis of a similar spiral that leads from temptation to sin: *He Is Able*, p.185.

This criticism of Sangster on this point by those associated with the American Holiness Movement continued even after his death. Referring to Cox and Turner in his treatment of sin, William M. Arnett reiterated the same criticisms of Sangster's view at the National Holiness Association seminars held in autumn 1961, referring students of Wesley to three sermons of the Wesley Corpus; 'On Sin in Believers', 'The Repentance of Believers', and 'The Scripture Way of Salvation,'⁶⁷ again stressing Wesley's concept of inward sin. Once more, however, the impression is given that these American Wesleyan scholars have not fully understood Sangster or they are perhaps talking at cross purposes.⁶⁸

Arnett, Cox and Turner are clearly working within the framework of the traditional Western depiction of salvation history – creation, fall and redemption which located the universality and pervasiveness of sin in an inheritance of sin traced back to the creation and fall story of Adam and Eve. This is precisely where their interpretive framework differs; for those who accepted the data of evolutionary development and human origins, like Sangster, were constructing their theology on radically different premises.

Sangster posits a view of sinfulness based on the acceptance of the findings of modern scientific thought. Presupposing, therefore, an evolutionary view of the world yet wishing to retain the Christian ideas of the universality and solidarity of sin, Sangster looked to the science of psychology for paradigms upon which to construct his anthropology. His view of human sinfulness drew in particular from the study of the conscious and unconscious mind, derived specifically from the analytical psychology of Carl Jung rather than Freud.

⁶⁷ *Insights Into Holiness*, ed. Kenneth Geiger (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1962), pp.55-72 (p.61).

⁶⁸ At the 1962 seminars of the National Holiness Association Leo Cox concedes some ground to the issues concerning unconscious sin, admitting that their effects could be far graver than wilful sin and that it could be hazardous to ascribe innocence to such sins. He does, however, guardedly call them 'failures in the area of moral action', may be taking refuge in Wesley's use of 'sin improperly called.' *Further Insights into Holiness*, ed. Kenneth Geiger (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1963), pp.187-188.

Sangster rejected unequivocally the pessimism of the Freudian School regarding the unconscious, who by segregating the mind into two distinct parts; the unconscious mind which is morbid and evil and which pours out fiendish influences, and the super-consciousness which is good, create an unnecessary dualism within the mind.⁶⁹ Other well known proponents of Christian holiness were also delving into the area of psychology to understand human sinfulness at this time. Sangster took issue with one of popular evangelicalism's most respected writers E. Stanley Jones whose book *Victorious Living* propagated a psychological analysis of the human condition, significantly however, focused on the instincts.

Jones speaks of 'unconverted instincts'; 'instincts polluted by the streams of racial tendencies poured into them for ages'; and even 'the poison of the old instincts.' Sangster rejected this analysis, for human instincts were, for Sangster, part and parcel of human createdness and belonged to the essence of human nature and his being in the world. They could not, therefore, be inherently sinful and did not belong to Sangster's category of sinfulness, although, he admits, they could become occasions for sin.

Sangster says:

Are the instincts polluted? Can they, in any accurate sense, be poisoned? Is it devout – or even sensible – to pray that the grace of God will deliver us from the instinct of flight, repulsion, curiosity, pugnacity, self-abasement, self-assertion, sex, gregariousness...or any other innate psychological disposition which has been classified as instinct? All these may be motives to sin, and that they may not be overpowering motives might well be the substance of an earnest prayer, but no-one would argue that these instincts could be "eradicated" from human nature and leave the personality unimpaired. To be human is to have life on these terms, and in these forms.⁷⁰

Sangster appears to understand the instincts to be amoral, only becoming the subject of ethical enquiry when they become the occasion of wilful sinful acts. Speaking of our distant evolutionary ancestors Sangster delineates the relationship between instinct and sin:

⁶⁹ *Path to Perfection*, pp.118-119.

⁷⁰ *Path to Perfection*, p.114.

If we run back through time and dimly descry our truly primitive ancestors, before the emergence of self-consciousness and when life was regulated only by reflexes, we may call that life “amoral” but never “immoral.” The morality, as Jung has said, may be potentially “within himself” but only volition can make it explicit. Nor does it need to be stressed that volition emerges as a shy and limited thing. At this stage of his development, man is still largely a creature of reflex: he does not acquire at once a wisely and widely legislating will, still less does he escape from his past into a world of whimsy and libertarianism. But within a narrow orbit he can choose – and because he can choose, he can sin.⁷¹

From the very beginning of human existence the instincts, according to Sangster, are morally neutral; humankind’s capacity to choose being the locus of ethical enquiry. What was true of our primitive progenitors also applies today. When addressing the moment when temptation becomes sin, Sangster asserts, ‘Temptation becomes sin when the self is identified with out. As life bubbles out of the subconscious, it bubbles out raw: amoral: just animal life. It were best to regard it as no more than instinct and “reaction” at this stage.’⁷² The instincts can, therefore, become the occasion of sin if the conscious self identifies itself with the end desired, which for Sangster was not limited to deeds but included thoughts.⁷³

This amoral understanding of human instincts distanced Sangster again from the scholarship of the holiness movement. C.E. Brown of the American Holiness Movement concedes that human instincts were not originally sinful but became so after the Fall. Once again the difference in theological contexts and presuppositions clouds the debate. Replying to Sangster, Brown says:

[...] it can be said that these impulses of human nature, which make life possible both in its beginning and in its continuance, were not essentially sinful in themselves at the beginning. This can be conceded, because we believe that Adam possessed these natural urges at the beginning of his existence. What we hold is that these urges have been infected and poisoned by the nature of sin, just as if a man should get arthritis in his hand, which would cause his hand to swell and be painful and deformed. Such a man would not want his hand cut off, but, in popular language, he would want ‘something taken out’ of it, namely, the fever and the disease. That figure fairly well describes the infection of sin in the impulses of human nature.⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Path to Perfection*, p.120.

⁷² *The Pure In Heart*, p.234.

⁷³ *The Pure In Heart*, pp.234-235.

⁷⁴ Charles E. Brown, *The Meaning of Sanctification*, (Anderson: The Warner Press, 1945), p.93.

Brown's contention, that instincts became sinful as a consequence of the Fall, might contain some validity if one is working within the traditional hamartiology based on Adam's sin and original sin. This particular discussion continued among writers within the holiness movement in America with some theologians even identifying inbred sin as an instinct.⁷⁵ E. Stanley Jones went so far as to suggest an equating of the subconscious with original sin itself, the instincts of self, sex and the herd being purged by the Holy Spirit in entire sanctification.⁷⁶

Sangster rejected such an analysis that confounded the categories of modern psychology with those of traditional understandings of sin, opting instead for a Jungian account of human experience. Sangster follows Jung's division and stratification of the mind⁷⁷ into the conscious, the subconscious and the unconscious, with the unconscious being further divided into the primary unconscious and the secondary unconscious.⁷⁸ The first, according to Jung, holds patterns, images and influences from racial memory and as a store of primordial images, otherwise known as the collective unconscious – Jung's famous contribution to the study of psychology.⁷⁹ The secondary or personal unconscious is thought of as a type of store of individual images and repressions from the person's life.⁸⁰ It seems that the heart of Sangster's understanding of human sinfulness as it relates to the individual is located here in the various influences of the unconscious mind. This is not to equate any level of the unconscious mind with sin but rather that the multifaceted influences of the unconscious and sub-conscious mind place demands, influence motives and pull strongly upon the individual, even blinding him

⁷⁵ *The Word and the Doctrine: Studies in Contemporary Wesleyan-Arminian Theology*, ed. Kenneth Geiger (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1965), pp.110-111.

⁷⁶ 'My Testimony' by E. Stanley Jones, from C. E. Brown, *The Meaning of Sanctification*, p.ii.

⁷⁷ It is important to remember that this language is metaphorical and is not meant to portray distinct and unrelated levels of the mind or undermine its essential unity. Perhaps the idea of levels of conscious awareness best illustrate the concept.

⁷⁸ *Path to Perfection*, pp.118-119.

⁷⁹ C.G Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, (London: Bailliere, Tindall and Cox, 1928), pp.94-115.

⁸⁰ *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, pp.65-82.

from vast areas worthy of moral investigation.⁸¹ As with the instincts, however, only as the individual willingly identifies himself with an influence known to be wrong can it truly be called sin. This view he held consistently from his first elucidation of the subject in 1943 in his doctoral thesis until his latest writings on the subject in 1957 - 1959.⁸²

For Sangster, however, the levels of the mind with their many hidden influences led him to reject the notion of sin as a 'thing,'; the substantive understanding of sin prevalent at the time within Wesleyan holiness circles. It was necessary, therefore, for him to engage John Wesley's understanding of original sin; one of the most difficult and theologically hazardous areas for the interpreter of John Wesley.

The Nature of Sin

One of the most contentious issues of the last century within Wesleyan studies was related to John Wesley's understanding of original sin; in essence whether he held to a substantive or relational view of sin. The original source of the controversy⁸³ appears to derive from the accusation of Sugden that Wesley spoke of sin as though it were a 'thing which has to be taken out of a man like a rotten tooth.'⁸⁴ This interpretation was then repeated by Flew,⁸⁵ and Rattenbury,⁸⁶ before being taken up on numerous occasions by Sangster.⁸⁷ Commenting on what Sangster believed to be Wesley's view, he says:

Dr. Sugden is surely right in his contention that Wesley 'never quite shook off the fallacious notion that sin is a *thing* which has to be taken out of a man, like a cancer or a rotten tooth.' Full of practical concern for the improvement of men's character,

⁸¹ *The Path to Perfection*, pp.114-115.

⁸² *The Path to Perfection*, pp.120-123; *Teach Us to Pray*, p.31; *The Pure In Heart*, pp.233-237; Sangster *At Filey*, pp.20-25; W.E. Sangster, 'Fresh From the Home Front,' *Methodist Recorder*, 24 April 1958, p.2.

⁸³ A related controversy has continued since Wesley's day relating to the best way of understanding what actually happens to sin in sanctification; suppressed or eradicated? This aspect of the discussion will follow. Here, the focus will be on the nature of sin.

⁸⁴ *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, ed. Sugden, 2 vols (London: Epworth, 1921), II, 459 (footnote).

⁸⁵ *The Idea of Perfection*, p.335.

⁸⁶ J. E. Rattenbury, *The Conversion of the Wesleys*, (London: Epworth, 1938), p.203.

⁸⁷ *Methodist Recorder*, 8 April 1937, *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, pp.91-92, *The Path to Perfection*, pp.60, 81, *The Pure In Heart*, pp.225-228.

but without much technical interest in psychology (even as it was understood in his day), it is dubious if he ever scrutinised his own mind on the matter or proposed himself the question, ‘What are the psychological elements involved in the concept of sin?’ If he had been asked where sin came from in men, he would probably have been content to answer, in the words of the New Testament, ‘Out of the heart of men....’ and leave the word ‘heart’ as undefined as his Lord did. But that he continued to think of sin as a ‘*thing*’ far the larger part of his writing on holiness bears witness.⁸⁸

Sangster rejects outright this notion that sin can have a quasi-physical existence, but refers more properly to a condition of balance or imbalance among human motives.⁸⁹

According to Sangster, the instincts, the many influences of the unconscious and subconscious may provide many motives, sometimes pulling forcefully at the individual, but they only become sin when the self identifies with a motive seen to be wrong. It is fallacious, therefore to cast the personal or intrapersonal ingredients of this process in substantive terms; speaking of this so-called sinful inclination as a *thing* to be eradicated or rooted out.

The question naturally arises, however, whether Sangster can provide evidence from John Wesley’s writings to support his contention and whether that evidence stands up to scrutiny. First, Sangster quotes from six letters from the period 1763 – 1789 in which, in answer to questions relating to the experience of sanctification, Wesley uses substantive language. In the first letter, addressed to Mrs Maitland, Wesley attempts to answer the question whether sin is extinguished or suspended. Reluctantly, when forced to choose, he opts for the former,⁹⁰ a fact for which Sangster finds additional support in Wesley’s reference to Romans 6.6 in a letter to Joseph Benson:

Are not the love of God and our neighbour good tempers? And, so far as these reign in the soul, are not the opposite tempers, worldly-mindedness, malice, cruelty, revengefulness, destroyed? [...] I use ‘destroyed’ because St. Paul does; ‘suspended’ I cannot find in my Bible.⁹¹

⁸⁸ *The Path to Perfection*, p.113.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Letters :IV, 12 May 1763, pp.212-213.

⁹¹ Quoted from *Path to Perfection*, p.82, Letters: V, 5 Oct 1770, pp.202-204.

Sangster's other four references from Wesley's letters are quoted because of his use of the term 'inbred sin.'⁹² The terms 'extinguish' and 'inbred sin' both seem to suggest, according to Sangster, that Wesley understood sin in substantive terms, interestingly failing to see in the letter to Joseph Benson that the antithesis of 'extinguish' is 'love for God and neighbour;' a relational/moral category.⁹³ On the whole, however, Sangster's observations concerning substantive terminology in the Letters of Wesley seem to carry a great deal of validity.

Second, Sangster demonstrates that the hymns of Charles Wesley are also full of language that speaks of sin as a 'thing.' Again, the first six quotations refer to the term 'inbred sin,' and its complete removal in entire sanctification,⁹⁴ one example being:

Speak the second time, "Be clean!"
Take away my *inbred* sin.

Examples of another variety used by Sangster to illustrate Wesley's use of substantive language in the hymns are taken from those which speak of complete deliverance from sin:

1. Able Thou art from sin to save,
From all indwelling sin.⁹⁵
2. Come, Saviour, come, and make me whole;
Entirely all my sins remove.⁹⁶
3. Seize on our sins, and burn up all,
Nor leave the least remains behind.⁹⁷

The final examples taken from the hymns use both the language of the destruction of sin and speak of sin as a 'thing:'

1. Slay the dire root and seed of sin!⁹⁸

⁹² Letters: VI, 15 March 1775, pp. 144-145, VII, 19 Jan 1782, pp. 101-102, VII, 21 June 1784, pp.222-223 and VIII, 29 Oct 1789, pp.181-182.

⁹³ This points to Wesley's relational understanding of sanctification, which Sangster does appreciate (see next chapter) but Sangster does not seem to fully grasp the relationship, at least in this letter.

⁹⁴ Hymns 348, 353, 357, 372, 377, 386, BE Vol.7, pp.512-513, 520-521, 526, 543, 550, 560.

⁹⁵ Hymn 346, BE Vol.7, p.510.

⁹⁶ Hymn 396, BE Vol.7, pp. 572-573.

⁹⁷ Hymn 400, BE Vol.7, p.576.

⁹⁸ Hymn 332, BE Vol.7, p. 489.

2. Scatter the last remains of sin.⁹⁹
3. Enter my soul, extirpate sin,
Cast out the cursed seed.¹⁰⁰
4. The Original offence
Out of my soul erase.¹⁰¹
5. Rooting out the weeds of sin.¹⁰²

Without doubt Sangster is correct in seeing numerous examples of substantive nomenclature with reference to sin both in John Wesley's letters and the Methodist hymns.

Two obvious objections can be raised at this point to Sangster's contention, however. First, the vast majority of the hymns of Methodism were written by Charles Wesley and, therefore, cannot be reliably used as a guide to the theology of John Wesley. Although the most recent studies of Charles Wesley's thought trace a number of differences in thought between the two brothers,¹⁰³ John Wesley took not only a particular interest in the wording of the hymns but also had the final say in their approval for the Methodist Hymn Book. Sangster, aware of this very objection, meets it head on:

But though the hymns were Charles', they may be said to express in their wholeness, and as finally approved and published, the mind of John even more than the mind of Charles. The elder brother 'censored' them. His annotations on the hymns are always clear, quite often trenchant, and sometimes caustic. When he finally approved he did so whole-heartedly, but his enthusiastic commendations always waited on a careful judgment. What he could not approve found no place in the chief of all editions – the "large hymn-book" published in 1780.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Hymn 338, BE Vol.7, p. 497.

¹⁰⁰ Hymn 352, BE Vol.7, p. 519.

¹⁰¹ Hymn 356, BE Vol.7, p. 525.

¹⁰² Hymn 387, BE Vol.7, pp. 560-561.

¹⁰³ Kenneth Newport mentions as examples: ordination, lay-preaching and eschatology. K.G.C. Newport, *The Sermons of Charles Wesley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.48-70 (p.53). J.R. Tyson, *Charles Wesley on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), pp.54-55. J.R. Tyson, *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (New York, London: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.3-57 (p.25). Frank Baker, *Charles Wesley's Verse*, 2nd edn (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1988), Barrie W. Tabraham, *Brother Charles*, Exploring Methodism Series (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁴ *The Path to Perfection*, p. 57.

According to Sangster, the published hymns of the Wesleys contained in the large hymn-book of 1780 are, therefore, a reliable reflection of the thought of John Wesley. The second objection that could be made is that the substantive language present in the hymns and letters is obviously metaphorical in character and that Sangster falls into the trap of reifying terms rather than seeking to interpret them. Two points of truth speak for the validity of this particular criticism. First, there can be little doubt that this substantive language belonging as it does to the whole area of religious language is often, therefore, metaphorical in nature. This criticism, however, would not only apply to the substantive use of language in Wesley but also to the language of healing preferred by many contemporary Wesley scholars when referring to Wesley's view of sanctification.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, this criticism raises more questions than it answers; surely all speech about God involves a large degree of metaphorical language.¹⁰⁶ Related to this argument is that the hymns of Methodism, being poetry, are not meant to be understood literally but by their very genre contain a vast abundance of literary images. Again, the truth of this is self-evident on one level, however, their inclusion by Wesley, as an integral part of his theological works to be used alongside the Sermons and Notes as primers for theology, suggests he took the language quite literally. This is supported by the fact that he not only used the same or similar substantive language in the Letters, often to give guidance to those with genuine concerns about the nature of sin, but he also opted for this language because it was scriptural, and therefore, according to him, accurate.¹⁰⁷ This appeal to the Scriptures for his particular selection of the very words of theological doctrine and debate was a characteristic of Wesley, illustrated by his response when criticised for his use of the word 'perfect.' Wesley retorts:

¹⁰⁵ See for example: 'On Original Sin,' BE Vol.2, p.184. Also, R. L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), pp.84-85, 157-180.

¹⁰⁶ This issue is highlighted by the publication of the recent debate between N.T. Wright and The Jesus Seminar: John D. Crossan and N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of Jesus: John D. Crossan and N.T. Wright in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁷ See footnote 62. It should also be noted that given a choice Wesley would always opt for scriptural terminology, even if this caused misunderstandings or problems.

And hence some have advised, wholly to lay aside the use of those expressions, 'because they have given so great offence.' But are they not found in the oracles of God? If so, by what authority can any messenger of God lay them aside, even though all men should be offended.¹⁰⁸

A number of more recent Wesleyan scholars have rejected this substantive interpretation of Wesley's view of the sinful nature, almost exclusively, however, due to his dynamic and relational conception of sanctification. Logically, the core of the argument would appear to be that a relational solution to sin would necessitate and indicate a relational understanding of sin;¹⁰⁹ working back from cure to ailment. From the point of view of systematic theology this is certainly a much preferable approach, for in simple terms, the person and work of Christ reveal the condition of human kind, not vice-versa,¹¹⁰ a fact supported by the prominent place given in the major creeds to the person and work of Christ, with only minor space for comments on sin, and with no significant definition of sin being present. Although this method of theological analysis is preferable today, it easily disguises the fact that John Wesley on the whole, though also using relational imagery when speaking of sin, for the most part never freed himself of substantive language in his discussions of the human condition. Although in his early writings Sangster also used substantive metaphors to describe sin, including such expressions as 'this rank weed',¹¹¹ 'this evil growth',¹¹² 'He plucks it out,'¹¹³ his later writings avoided such terms and the construction of his hamartiology upon Darwinian and Jungian premises necessitated the rejection of substantive terminology altogether, for his theology was specifically at odds with the major underlying theological cause of Wesley's inability to free himself from a substantive view of sin; the traditional Augustinian framework of his hamartiology.

¹⁰⁸ 'On Christian Perfection,' BE Vol.2, pp. 99-100.

¹⁰⁹ This argument was first championed in American Holiness circles by Milfred B. Wynkoop. M.B. Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), pp.149-164.

¹¹⁰ Jane Mary Zwerner, 'The Discovery of Christian Meaning in Suffering: Transformation and Solidarity', in *Evil and the Response of World Religion*, ed. by William Cenkner (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1997), pp.43-55.

¹¹¹ *He Is Able*, p.144.

¹¹² *He Is Able*, p.148.

¹¹³ *He Is Able*, p. 148.

Lindström in his monumental work on John Wesley places him squarely in the Augustinian camp with regards to the doctrine of sin.¹¹⁴ Although Wesley did not follow Augustine on key concepts such as inherited guilt and the issue of concupiscence, he insists on the total corruption of human nature as a result of original sin. In his discussions of original sin, most particularly his view of natural man being totally depraved, Wesley draws heavily on the influence of Augustine as mediated through the Thirty-nine Articles.¹¹⁵ The Neo-Platonic and Manichaean influences in Augustine's thought steer him towards a negative evaluation of human physicality which intrude into his arguments concerning the human condition.¹¹⁶ Augustine's view of concupiscence in particular, closely attached sin to the lust present in sexual intercourse the means by which depravity was inherited. Wesley's language when speaking of the heritage of human sin as 'inherited depravity,' the 'sinful nature', the 'carnal nature', 'adamic corruption,' 'inbred sin,' and the 'dire root' carries an almost identical meaning within his theology to that of concupiscence in Augustine, albeit without the sexual link and tends towards a substantive view of sin or 'a metaphysic of sin,'¹¹⁷ Sangster not only rejects this typical Augustinian framework but also the associated theological sequence when describing the Fall and its consequences so prevalent throughout Wesley's writings; original righteousness and holiness, the loss of both through sin, humankind becoming totally depraved.

Sangster appears correct, therefore, in his assertion that Wesley never frees himself from the idea of sin as being a 'thing'. Those within British Methodism who followed the American Holiness Movement's enunciation of the doctrine of holiness - the

¹¹⁴ H. Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, (Wilmore: Francis Asbury, 1945), pp.20,27,51.

¹¹⁵ *The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, ed. E.C.S. Gibson (London: Methuen & Co., 1902), pp.357-377.

¹¹⁶ Although Wesley explicitly denies the link between sin and the human body, his use of language and the logic of his arguments about its removal, with death of the human body being its ultimate point of termination, necessitate the substantival viewpoint i.e. something has to be removed before death.

¹¹⁷ Leon O. Hynson, 'Original Sin As Privation: An Inquiry into a Theology of Sin and Sanctification,' *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 22.2 (1987), 65-83 (p.69).

Although Augustine associated sin with the neo-Platonic notion of nonbeing, this only meant that sin had no positive ontological standing before God, not that it has no reality.

'Pentecostal emphasis' and the Holiness movement of the era used this substantive language liberally not only in describing humankind's sinful condition but also in reference to sanctification, with the term 'eradication of sin' becoming a watchword of orthodoxy within holiness camps. In theological nomenclature, they offered a substantival solution to a substantival problem; something had to be removed from man in sanctification.¹¹⁸ Sangster's criticism of Wesley on this point put him at odds with most proponents of holiness doctrine at the time, a fact evidenced by a stinging attack on Sangster's view in the official publication of the British Holiness movement upon publication of Sangster's doctoral thesis under the title *The Path to Perfection*. Maynard James comments:

While we hold steady to the Bible doctrines of the fall of man; of inbred sin as a deadly but **foreign** principle in human nature, and the uttermost power of Christ's blood to deal with sin in this life, we shall be saved from toying with the dangerous teaching of Darwinism, with its subtle phraseology of Psychology in its treatment of sin.[...]We are compelled to regard Dr. Sangster's book as 'a path to confusion' and not as 'the Path to Perfection.'¹¹⁹

Sangster's critique of the substantival language of Wesley and his contention that its use led to a confusing and unhelpful understanding of the human condition, although pilloried by the holiness movement of the time, actually anticipated future developments within the study of the doctrine of holiness. Mildred Bang Wynkoop, the 'theologian in residence' at Nazarene Theological Seminary in the 1970's is often attributed with being responsible for the rejection of the substantival paradigms within the Wesleyan holiness tradition.¹²⁰ As early as 1942, while discussing the idea of perfect love as the best description of Christian Perfection,¹²¹ Sangster was already

¹¹⁸ Jack Ford, *What the Holiness People Believe: A Mid-Century Review of Holiness Teaching*, (Birkenhead: Emmanuel Bible College and Missions, 1955), p.5

¹¹⁹ Maynard James, 'Dr. Sangster's New Book,' *The Flame*, May-June (1943), 2,27.

¹²⁰ T.A. Noble, *Called to Be Saints: A Centenary History of the Church of the Nazarene in the British Isles 1906-2006*, (Manchester: Didsbury Press, 2006), p.295.

¹²¹ It is almost universally accepted today that the late Wesley also preferred the designation 'perfect love' and shaped his enunciation of the doctrine accordingly. A comparison of his 1741 sermon 'Christian Perfection' with his sermon of 1784 entitled 'On Perfection' reveals a shift of emphasis from defining holiness with reference to sin to defining it in terms of 'love filling the heart.' Thomas Oden describes

highlighting Wesley's inadequate view of sin and suggesting a relational alternative, better suited to the essence of the doctrine of perfection:

[...] we have noticed [...] that his definition of sin is defective. He held that it was a voluntary transgression of a known law. But this ill-assorts with the idea of perfect love as the mainspring of holiness. Sin is more adequately and extensively defined as a failure in perfect love.¹²²

This definition of sin, according to Sangster, framed in the categories of personal relationships, would avoid the misapprehension of sin as being a 'thing' to be removed and would circumvent any misunderstandings of Christian perfection being synonymous with sinlessness, a problem that constantly plagued Wesley. This focus on love might not resolve all the difficulties in defining sin but it would certainly address those two particular problems, for as Sangster says:

If, indeed, it seems to fail as a definition, it fails (if that were possible) by excess and not by defect, but, whatever be the truth about this, Wesley would not have been led off into sterile discussions about whether sin could be eradicated or not. The weight of the doctrine would have rested elsewhere and 'sinlessness' would have been thrust from the forefront of thought simply as a happy consequence, if God so gave it, of something positive and more important still.¹²³

An added benefit of defining sin as 'a failure of perfect love', according to Sangster, would also be that it would recast the problematic area of sins of omission, for he saw sins of omission as being a particular weakness in Wesley's definition of sin, an issue perhaps more fully illuminated by modern psychology with its analysis of hidden and programmatic areas of consciousness:

[...] Wesley's defective doctrine of sin is nowhere more defective than in its failure to deal with the sins of omission. How could it? If sin is a voluntary transgression of a known law, the sin is the positive thing and the holiness (reversing Browning) 'is null, is nought, is silence implying sound.' Those subtle, sometimes chronic and always deeply serious sins of omission have slipped through the net. No known law has been transgressed. Yet they remain a deadly leprosy of the soul and fruitful of the most terrible penalty which can overtake humankind.¹²⁴

this latter sermon as 'the most penetrating precis of Wesley's matured doctrine of perfection.' Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), p.323.

¹²² *The Path to Perfection*, p.155.

¹²³ *The Path to Perfection*, p.155.

¹²⁴ *The Path to Perfection*, p.155.

Sangster is clearly asserting that too much can slip through Wesley's definition of sin, and whether Sangster is inferring it or not at this point, writing as he was during the Blitz, the treatment of Germany after the First World War was a prime, contemporary and most terrible example of dire consequences resulting from sins of omission. Recasting the sins of omission in a framework of love rather than duty seems preferable to Sangster, for love, he asserts, having a keener vision than duty, could not continue to neglect the needs of others year in year out.¹²⁵ It is doubtful, however, whether this solution is a real improvement for it appears that Sangster fails to see that even this definition breaks down at the point of the limits human knowledge, awareness and intention, for a person filled with perfect love towards God and neighbour might never know that they are falling short of the mark in some dreadful way, or that even their best intentioned actions might carry dire consequences for others e.g. by their choices destroying someone else's environment resulting in a consequent inability to feed their family, global warming due to overuse of fossil fuels in the West being a prime example.

Sangster opts, however, for a definition of sin based on the negation of love or its corruption and, as will be discussed later, a view of perfection defined as perfect love, casting the whole doctrine, therefore, in relational terms. It is of significance to the study of the Wesleyan doctrine of holiness, therefore, that Sangster's rejection of the substantive formulation of sin and his recasting of it in relational categories pre-dates Wynkoop's relational hermeneutic by approximately three decades¹²⁶ and even anticipates the direction of contemporary scholarship of the doctrine of holiness, illustrated most particularly by Gordon Thomas, who in 1998 pointed to the problems inherent in the substantial approach to sin:

¹²⁵ *The Path to Perfection*, p.155.

¹²⁶ Sangster's views of sanctification are also thoroughly relational and best expressed as perfect love. Again Sangster's development of this theme pre-dates Wynkoop's study by thirty years.

In my opinion my own Wesleyan-Holiness theological tradition has suffered from a certain theological incoherence. Wesley offered a relational solution (perfect love) to a substantial or substantival Augustinian sin-problem. The 19th century American Holiness Movement resolved that dilemma by changing the wrong term in the equation. They touted a substantial solution (eradication) to a substantial sin-problem. Perhaps this generation will have the wit and courage to match a relational description of sin with a relational solution.¹²⁷

Unbeknown to Thomas, the connection had already been made by W.E. Sangster.

The fruit of Sangster's study of sanctity was also evident in another important area of hamartiology and one that marked a significant revision of his own thought concerning the relationship of the individual to sinfulness; the suprapersonal nature of sin.

Sinfulness: Suprapersonal

The publication of Sangster's first major work on Christian holiness in 1942-1943 revealed for the first time a movement away from a view of sinfulness confined to the individual. Although, as has already been demonstrated, Sangster had been tentatively exploring the relationships between sin and the individual and their connection to politics, society and economics, especially in the first years of the Second World War, when speaking of sin he consistently limited it to the individual human heart. As Sangster began to attempt to relate Wesley's doctrine of holiness to the modern world, however, he begins to criticise the way the quest for holiness has often been followed as an individual pursuit,¹²⁸ seen often as a pilgrimage towards heaven that ultimately seeks to escape this world,¹²⁹ and although at its best it has done much 'social salvage' work,¹³⁰ it has on the whole, Sangster asserts, ignored social and economic evil. Such an assertion that includes elements beyond the control of the individual certainly challenges his earlier individual limitation of the concept of sin; man being both individual and social in nature necessitates also that sin must carry a wider meaning:

¹²⁷ Gordon J. Thomas, 'Towards a Biblical Theology of Sin' A paper delivered at the *Tyndale Fellowship Biblical Theology Study Group*, (Cambridge: Tyndale House), 2 July 1998, p.14.

¹²⁸ *The Path to Perfection*, p.182.

¹²⁹ *The Path to Perfection*, p.182.

¹³⁰ *The Path to Perfection*, pp.172-175.

Consequently, for the modern pilgrim of perfection, the word “sin” takes on a wider connotation. It is seen in social guises too: the selfishness which clings to dubious theories of economics, and which refuses to examine criticism directed against them, because these theories serve as a protective cushion to the conscience: the jealousy which guards existing privileges and will not meet a challenge concerning their legitimacy: the wilful ignorance of the circumstances of other people’s lives though it is acknowledged that they share an equal place in God’s regard.¹³¹

For Sangster, the Christian who pursues holiness in the modern world has to be aware of sin as it expresses itself in social and economic guises, not just the favourite sins of the era; drunkenness and the use of the cinema on Sundays.¹³² The pilgrim of perfection must, therefore, according to Sangster:

[...] see sin also in an evil social system, some of the buttresses of which may be set in their own class and in their own soul. And when they confess sin, they have need now to ask forgiveness, not only for the sins which they have long recognised as such, but also for their failure to follow their Master in the redemption of social life.¹³³

This extension of the idea of sin to the suprapersonal elements of human existence is further illustrated in his second major treatise addressed to Methodism: *Methodism Her Unfinished Task* (1947), in which Sangster again takes issue with the failings of Methodism to move beyond social salvage work and with its restricted understanding of holiness as personal piety:

Odd as it would sound to our spiritual forebears, we are compelled to say that personal piety is not enough. Though on one definition of the word it can be said that sin belongs only to persons and cannot inhere in a ‘system’, yet a deeper scrutiny of modern life shows that it does attach to systems and that, in many spheres, man’s ‘sin’ becomes involuntary.¹³⁴

It is plainly evident, therefore, that from 1942 onwards Sangster had expanded his view of sinfulness from one confined to the heart of each individual to an understanding that included human relationships, and their social and economic structures and systems. In his presidential year of 1950-51 Sangster even admits in a revealing article published in the *Methodist Recorder* that he had revised and expanded his understanding of sin. ‘Sin

¹³¹ *The Path to Perfection*, p.183.

¹³² Paraphrase *The Path to Perfection*, p.183.

¹³³ *The Path to Perfection*, p.183.

¹³⁴ *Methodism Her Unfinished Task*, p. 59

is a larger word than I thought it was,'¹³⁵ he says, before asserting that God must have a will for communities not just individuals.¹³⁶ This expansion of the idea of sin is also seen in his list of sins which correspondingly began to carry suprapersonal elements, including class prejudices, a fondness for dubious theories of economics which promote the interests of the few, wilful ignorance of the needs of others at home or overseas, contentment with the wide inequalities of life, and fierce defence of one's own privilege.¹³⁷

Sangster infers that the power of sin can also be suprapersonal, seemingly forcing humankind into a universal experience of bondage to sin, in which further sin is inevitable:

Even with our myopic vision we can see the wide havoc of sin. Sin has so invaded our nature that it twists our own cleverness, and every step in science becomes a step in sin. The plane, the radio, and the splintered atom (all of them so fecund with goodness!) have been twisted to Satanic use. Sin spreads like an obscene tide over all this fair earth. It has so completely tainted our nature that even when we half-recognize it and want to escape it, we cannot. We realize, for instance, that race-war would be race-suicide, and yet we move that way. Not merely as persons but as peoples, we seem hopelessly lost, and drift to the things we dread. 'The good we would do, we do not: the evil we would not, that we do.'¹³⁸

It appears, therefore, that Sangster understood the inevitability of sin to be both connected with the hidden depths of the personality and the interconnectedness of the person with the world of human systems of life. This view of sinfulness included within it a pessimistic evaluation of the possibilities of freedom from all sin, for no matter how holy, the individual will still be involuntarily involved in racial and social sin and dubious forms of economic politics. Such external influences also carry internal consequences, shaping the intellect, attitudes and emotions and manifesting themselves often at the unconscious level.

¹³⁵ 'Holy – In Part,' *Methodist Recorder*, 1 Feb. 1951, p.3.

¹³⁶ 'Holy – In Part,' *Methodist Recorder*, 1 Feb. 1951, p.3.

¹³⁷ 'Holy – In Part,' *Methodist Recorder*, 1 Feb. 1951, p.3.

¹³⁸ W.E. Sangster, *They Met At Calvary* (London: Epworth, 1956), pp.85-86.

Sangster's quest, therefore, to examine and restate Wesley's understanding of holiness using the tools and methods of modern psychological, philosophical and theological thought, led him to reject Wesley's view of sin. Sangster believed that the definition of sin that Wesley carried into his argument for perfection was too limited. Sangster asserted that Wesley's stress on the voluntary nature of sin was a fundamental flaw, laying too much stress on the consciousness of sin. Sangster's particular contention and contribution to the issue was his assertion that between the two poles of deliberate, actual sin and truly unconscious sin, there was a vast area worthy of ethical and psychological enquiry. Basing his view of personal sin on Jungian psychology, Sangster insisted that a person's worst sins are often hidden from them. Sangster also criticised Wesley for never freeing himself from a substantial view of the nature of sin; understood as a 'thing' that could be removed. Sangster's critique of the substantial language of Wesley and his contention that its use led to a confusing and unhelpful understanding of the human condition, was criticised seriously by the holiness movement of the time. Sangster cast his own definition of sin in relational categories; understood primarily as the negation of love, which anticipated future developments within the study of the doctrine of holiness. A more individualistic understanding of human sinfulness in his writings before 1942-43 gave way to a view that included the idea of suprapersonal sin; the sin attached to human systems and manifested through them. According to Sangster, this aspect of human sinfulness, seemingly forces humankind into a universal experience of bondage to sin in which more sin is inevitable. Two important factors influenced Sangster's view of the human condition. First, Sangster's acceptance of the evolutionary theory of human origins led him to reject literal interpretations of the Creation/Fall narrative. Second, the carnage of two world wars made a pessimistic interpretation of human sin inevitable.

How Sangster moved from such a negative assessment of the human condition to a positive assessment of the possibilities of holy living will be the subject of the final part of this investigation.

CHAPTER 6

SANCTIFICATION & PERFECTION

The evidence of William Sangster's numerous writings have clearly indicated that he was a man firmly committed to the theology and principles of Methodism. Although his published sermons and his many short newspaper articles were meant for a wider public the overwhelming majority of his theological writings were aimed at his own denomination or the wider dissemination of what he believed to be valuable Methodist truths that could benefit the whole Church.¹ As has been demonstrated, throughout his entire ministry,² Sangster's two central concerns were evangelism and holiness. Indeed, for Sangster the quest to 'go out into all the world making disciples' (Matt. 28.19) was, in practice, inseparable from the need for Christians to live holy lives. The interconnectedness and importance of these two aspects of the Christian life were reiterated numerous times in books, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and sermons.³ From 1936 onwards, it became apparent that Sangster's primary theological focus of interest and study was the doctrine of Christian holiness, especially the Methodist enunciation of sanctification and perfection, and it is Sangster's particular contribution to the doctrine of holiness that remains to be explored.

This chapter firstly delineates a chronological analysis of the most significant publications on the doctrine of holiness in Sangster's numerous writings. Secondly, this survey then leads into an exploration of the important developments concerning Sangster's understanding of holiness in the period 1936-1960. This includes a theological analysis that seeks to explore how his more modern understanding of the after-life, sin

¹ See appendix for a comprehensive survey of his articles.

² Chapter 1 traces this theme extensively.

³ Chapters 1 & 2 should provide an accurate guide to the most important extant literary examples. It appears, however, that Sangster wrote numerous other short articles on this subject that now only appear by chance as no formal records are available. Eg. See Sangster's comments in the foreword to *The Logic of Righteousness* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), pp.v-vii.

and psychology impacts on his view of sanctification and perfection. Sangster's views on holiness are subjected to a critical analysis in order to evaluate his theological contribution to the study of Christian holiness.

A Chronological Analysis of Sangster's Major Publications on Holiness

Most scholars when referring to Sangster's work on the doctrine of holiness limit their theological survey to *The Path to Perfection* (1943).⁴ Those more acquainted with his work also mention *The Pure In Heart* (1954), a pattern followed by even the most sympathetic of writers.⁵ Although it is true that these are his two most lengthy works on holiness and arguably his most scholarly and important, these publications indicate only particular points in the enunciation of his views. This type of limited analysis ignores at least four major factors in seeking to understand Sangster's concept of holiness.

First, the significant period of development between 1932 and 1942 when he wrote *The Path to Perfection* is overlooked. A number of critical shifts of emphasis and changes in Sangster's thought took place in this period, especially after 1939; from a primarily devotional and conservative point of view, very much influenced by the Oxford Group Movement, to a full engagement with the paradigms and language of modern theological study including an overt acceptance of the evolutionary beginnings of humankind, historical criticism, a nuanced soteriological universalism and the application of Jungian psychology.⁶

Secondly, the important writings between his two major works on holiness are ignored, especially the numerous articles on holiness written during his presidential year of 1950-1951, including his presidential address and a major series on holiness in the *Methodist Recorder*. His engagement in the 1953 evangelistic drive, including his *Sermon*

⁴ George Allen Turner, *The Vision Which Transforms* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1964); Leo Cox, *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection; Insights In Holiness*, ed. by Kenneth Geiger; *Further Insights Into Holiness*, ed. by Kenneth Geiger.

⁵ Ford, *What the Holiness People Believe*: Valentine, p.29.

⁶ This is explored at length in chapter 4.

For Britain also showed marked interaction with holiness themes and a surge in writing about the subject, showing a concern for the application of holiness beyond the individual to society.

Third, Sangster's final six years of life, most without a pastoral charge and engaged in more interdenominational relations, especially during his time as Secretary of Home Missions (1955-1958), is thereby not subject to critical analysis. Consequently, the important developments of his understanding of holiness, which were rooted in both the post-war context of inter-church dialogue and his own interdenominational activity, are overlooked. Significant output on the doctrine of holiness from this period includes, over and above *The Pure In Heart*, the unique series on holiness from Ocean City prior to the World Methodist Conference of 1956.⁷ A number of similar points and emphases to those of his Ocean City sermons were later printed in the *Westminster Pamphlet Series*, especially relevant being 'You Can Be A Saint' (1957), 'How To Live In Christ' (1957), 'How Much Are You Saved?' (1959).⁸ Also belonging to this period and reflecting the same themes and emphases of the above pamphlets and the messages from Ocean City is *The Secret of Radiant Life* (1957).

During the final two years of his life he wrote little directly on the subject of holiness. The value of prayer and contemplation come more to the fore in his writings, especially in the *Prayer Cell Messenger*.

The analysis presented in this thesis is therefore a unique and important contribution to scholarship in seeking to understand how William Sangster's thinking on holiness developed and changed through the period of 1936-1960 and is, therefore, representative of the fullest possible understanding of his thought on the subject.

⁷ Sangster says in the first of these messages on holiness that it is the first time he has delivered a systematic series on the subject.

⁸ W.E. Sangster, *You Can Be A Saint* (London: Epworth Press, 1957), W.E. Sangster, *How To Live In Christ* (London: Epworth Press, 1957), and W.E. Sangster, *How Much Are You Saved* (London: Epworth Press, 1959).

Sangster's most notable publications or sermons dealing with Christian holiness are as follows:

1936	Chapter 13 of <i>HIA</i> ⁹	'When Evil Thoughts Molest'
1937	Article <i>MR</i> ¹⁰	'Is Christ Only A Partial Saviour?'
1938	Chapter 8 of <i>MCBBA</i> ¹¹	'Is Christ Only A Partial Saviour?'
1938	Article <i>MR</i> ¹²	'Methodism as A Way of Personal Living'
1943	Book	<i>The Path To Perfection</i>
1945	Article <i>MR</i> ¹³	'Has God A Use For the Methodist Church?'
1946	Article <i>LHR</i> ¹⁴	'Wesley and Sanctification'
1947	Chapter 2 of <i>MHUT</i> ¹⁵	'In Spreading Scriptural Holiness'
1949	Article <i>RL</i> ¹⁶	'The Church's One Privation'
1950	Paper ¹⁷	'Holiness'
1950	President's Address ¹⁸	'On Holiness'
1951	Article <i>MR</i> ¹⁹	'The Way of Holiness'
1951	Article <i>MR</i> ²⁰	'Are There Two Ways To Holiness?'
1951	Article <i>MR</i> ²¹	'Discipline In Holiness'
1951	Article <i>MR</i> ²²	'Holy – In Part'
1952	Pamphlet ²³	'A Spiritual Check-Up'
1953	Sermon ²⁴	'Sermon For Britain'

⁹ *He Is Able*, pp.181-194.

¹⁰ *Methodist Recorder*, 8 April 1937, p.15.

¹¹ *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, pp.86-94.

¹² *Methodist Recorder*, 19 May 1938, p.17.

¹³ *Methodist Recorder*, 8 February 1945, p.3.

¹⁴ *London and Holborn Review*, Vol.171, July 1946, pp.214-221.

¹⁵ *Methodism Her Unfinished Task*, pp.22-36.

¹⁶ *Religion In Life*, 18:4, Autumn 1949, pp.493-502.

¹⁷ *Pharos Papers* No.5, pp.2-8.

¹⁸ *Methodist Recorder*, 3 August 1950, pp.1,3.

¹⁹ *Methodist Recorder*, 11 Jan. 1951, p.3.

²⁰ *Methodist Recorder*, 18 Jan. 1951, p.3.

²¹ *Methodist Recorder*, 25 Jan. 1951, p.3.

²² *Methodist Recorder*, 1 Feb. 1951, p.3.

²³ *Westminster Pamphlets*, (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 1.

1954	Book	<i>The Pure In Heart</i>
1956	Sermon ²⁵	'Unconditional Surrender'
1956	Sermon ²⁶	'The Doctrine of the Indwelling Christ'
1956	Sermon ²⁷	'How To Covet the "We Life"'
1956	Sermon ²⁸	'Called To Be Saints'
1957	Pamphlet ²⁹	'You Can Be A Saint'
1957	Pamphlet ³⁰	'How To Live In Christ'
1957?	Sermon ³¹	'The Daily Walk in the Life of Victory'
1957	Book	<i>The Secret of Radiant Life</i>
1958	Pamphlet ³²	'How Much Are You Saved'
1959	Pamphlet ³³	'The Greatest of These'

Although there are many other articles and sermons that contain references to holiness and its importance, these sources are those more or less wholly dedicated to the doctrine. Those that indicate particular developments of thought or an expansion of certain emphases will be analysed in more depth. For obvious reasons his two major books on holiness will demand more attention. Where little there is little or no change of significance a cursory mention will be attempted.

²⁴ *Methodist Recorder*, 8 Jan. 1953, p.3.

²⁵ The first sermon of his series on holiness, preached at Ocean City in late August 1956. See Bibliography for details. A tape of this is in possession of the author.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ A sermon delivered at the World Methodist Conference at Junaluska on 9 Sept.1956. A printed version is available in: *Proceedings of the Ninth World Methodist Conference*. Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, USA, 27 August – 12 September 1956, ed.by Elmer T. Clark & E. Benson Perkins (Nashville: Methodist Pub. House, 1957).

²⁹ *Westminster Pamphlets*, VI.

³⁰ *Westminster Pamphlets*, VIII.

³¹ A sermon delivered at the Filey camp under the auspices of the Movement for World Evangelization, probably in 1957. A tape of this sermon is in possession of the author. For the full text see; *Sangster at Filey* (Croydon: New Midway Press, 1961), pp.38-50.

³² *Westminster Pamphlet*, XI.

³³ *Westminster Pamphlet*, XII.

Developments In His Understanding of Christian Holiness

After bringing together for the first time an extensive collection of Sangster's writings and recordings and after close scrutiny of all the available material³⁴ it is possible to identify three closely related yet distinct periods of Sangster's engagement with the doctrine of Christian holiness. First, his writings on holiness from 1936-1938 reveal a devotional emphasis with a growing sense of questioning about his Wesleyan heritage, especially the doctrine of holiness. Second, from 1942 until 1953 there is a primary emphasis on defining, evaluating and applying the doctrine of holiness to the individual and society. Third, from 1954 onwards a nuanced shift towards more Catholic language and themes is evident, including an emphasis on the method of pursuing and living the holy life using an uneasy and strange synthesis of Catholic mysticism and psychology, combined with a stress on a Protestant understanding of faith.

1936-1938: Holiness: Devotional and Questioned

As has been established elsewhere in this thesis Sangster's early writings are primarily devotional in nature and contain little evidence of modern theological engagement.³⁵ From 1932 through 1936 Sangster's major source of inspiration was the Oxford Group Movement with a gradual tailing off of this influence from 1936 until the publication of *Methodism Can Be Born Again* in 1938. However, the importance of the Group Movement for Sangster in his recovery from the deep personal crisis of 1930 must not be underestimated and it was through them primarily that he discovered for himself the experience of assurance, which in turn motivated Sangster to engage intellectually with John Wesley's theology.³⁶ From 1936 as the Oxford Group's influence diminished in Sangster's writings he employed patterns of thought typical of the Fellowship of the

³⁴ See Appendix.

³⁵ See chapter 2.

³⁶ For a full account of this influence see chapter 2.

Kingdom, particularly evident in *He Is Able* (1936), from where Sangster's first writings on holiness become evident.

Although it could be argued that the whole of *He Is Able* relates to the doctrine of holiness, especially with sermons carrying titles such as 'When Revenge My Heart Invades', 'When Sloth Would Filch My Zeal Away', 'When Jealous Thoughts Invade My Heart', 'When Sin Strives To Cloak Itself', and 'When The Proud Man From His Pride Stoops...', all the sermons are devotional meditations upon the power of Christ to help in all of life's difficulties, including the moral. The sermon entitled 'When Evil Thoughts Molest' provides, however, a fuller indication of Sangster's early dealings with the doctrine of holiness.

Sangster argues for the first time against the view that instincts, can be essentially unholy. Speaking of the sex drive Sangster says, 'To condemn an instinct as deep and wide as this, is to condemn the Creator who made us, and to desire a swift extinction of the race'.³⁷ This understanding of the instincts, as has been already illustrated,³⁸ was carried through unchanged and was expanded upon seven years later in *The Path to Perfection*.³⁹ Of particular interest in this sermon is the method Sangster proposes in dealing with the problem of evil thoughts and temptations. Sangster sees the whole moral battle occurring in the mind, 'This battle must be won in the mind. It is imperative that the imagination be healthy, and the thought stream filtered. Success here ensures success all round. So Christ aims to occupy the mind'.⁴⁰ For Sangster this involves welcoming and enthroning Christ in the person's life and then building a clear picture of Christ in the mind through reading, meditation, and prayer. When confronted by temptation, therefore, the believer must redirect his attention towards Christ:

³⁷ *He Is Able*, p.183.

³⁸ Cf: Chapter 5.

³⁹ *Path to Perfection*, pp.113-117. This is discussed at length in chapter 5, pp.157-161.

⁴⁰ *He Is Able*, p.185.

Evil thoughts are not driven out by dwelling on them, even guiltily or prayerfully. It is bad tactics to direct sustained attention to them even in penitence, or as one plans improvement. The longer they are in the focus of attention, the deeper they are burned on the memory, and the more mental associations they make[...] Hence the wisdom of knowing Jesus as a personal Friend, and turning the mind at once to Him. He is the centre of all things pure. To think of Him is to summon His aid. The heat of unbridled passion abates in the steady gaze of His searching eyes. The sin that seemed so seductive a moment before looks loathsome with Jesus consciously present.⁴¹

Although not a theological engagement with the doctrine of holiness as such, this pastoral counsel reveals two aspects of Sangster's early understanding of holiness. First, perhaps drawing from his study of psychology, he realises and stresses the importance of the 'attention of the mind' in combating sin. The mind, however, must not be focused on the evil thoughts themselves but the attention directed to Christ. Second, therefore for Sangster, it is crucial to the success of the Christian life that the believer deliberately builds a clear picture of Christ within their mind; built by Bible study, attendance at Church, prayer, meditation and the reading of Christian biography.⁴² Freedom from defeat, says Sangster is only possible by unwearying vigilance, a clear aim and constant effort.⁴³ At this stage of his thinking, therefore, Sangster portrays many of the facets Margaret Jones designates as 'holiness as the product of work and struggle'.⁴⁴

The first direct engagement of Sangster with the doctrine of holiness is his article in the *Methodist Recorder* entitled 'Is Christ Only A Partial Saviour? The Holy Life: A source of Ineffectiveness in the Church'(1937), the edited version of which became the chapter 'Is Christ Only A Partial Saviour?' in *Methodism Can Be Born Again*. The general theme and content of the texts are the same. Sangster accuses the Church of impotence, rooted in the lack of difference between the people inside the Church and those outside. Holy lives are needed to show what Christianity truly represents and give

⁴¹ *He Is Able*, pp.188-189.

⁴² *He Is Able*, p.189.

⁴³ *He Is Able*, pp.192-194.

⁴⁴ *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, ed.by Clive Marsh, Brian Beck, Angela Shier-Jones and Helen Wareing (New York & London, Continuum, 2004), pp.158-160.

the Church power in its witness to the world. Sangster asserts that at one time saints were common in Methodism but in modern Methodism the emphasis on holy living is neglected, even feared. Furthermore he acknowledges the presence of different interpretations of the doctrine within Methodism, without elaborating or naming them, although he takes exception to the instantaneous reception of holiness with its claim that sin can be eradicated in a moment. Sangster finishes both texts by admitting that many questions remained unanswered and demand more work, especially the relationship between the claims of the sanctified and the knowledge of the self and sin. Both texts show evidence of his reading from John Wesley and Charles Wesley on holiness and further engagement with the modern studies of Perkins and Flew on the subject.⁴⁵ These first beginnings of theological engagement with the doctrine came as a direct consequence of and were motivated by his belief that God desired him to be a leader within British Methodism.⁴⁶

The intervening year from article to chapter reveals two changes to the text which illuminate developments within his thinking. First, a whole paragraph in the article suggests that the moral emphases of the Oxford Group Movement express, for all intent and purposes, the same as the Methodist understanding of perfection. Comparing the Group to the early Methodists, Sangster says:

Nor can it be denied that the Oxford Group Movement has turned the thoughts of thousands of modern disciples in a similar direction. Only the phraseology has changed. The ideal of holiness is set out in the 'four absolutes,' and enquirers are urged to examine themselves in the light of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love. There is a craving after perfection at the heart of all serious discipleship. Neglected in one place, it bursts out in another.⁴⁷

This comparison of the Methodist understanding of holiness with the four absolutes of the Group Movement is conspicuously missing, however, from the book version. Although

⁴⁵ See Chapter 3 for a detailed study of the views of Perkins and Flew.

⁴⁶ See Chapter 1, p.17 and Paul Sangster, pp.109-110.

⁴⁷ 'Is Christ Only A Partial Saviour?' *Methodist Recorder*, 8 April 1937, p.15.

almost identical statements occur in his earlier chapter entitled 'The Significance of the Oxford Group'⁴⁸ the fact that they are removed from his more formal analysis of the doctrine of holiness probably indicates that he had deliberately chosen in the interim to follow Methodist interpretations of the doctrine. Of particular note, however, is that by not clearly distinguishing between the two viewpoints Sangster betrays an individualistic interpretation of holiness, one of personal betterment.

The second difference between the article and later version reveals Sangster's reading in the interim concerning the doctrine of sin, with reference being made to F.R. Tennant and Henry Bett's demarcation between sin and sinfulness, a distinction Sangster would later develop more fully.⁴⁹

These two texts reveal, therefore, the initial work of Sangster on the doctrine of holiness. He believes in the importance of holiness for the life of the Church and that the early Methodists pursued it and experienced it and was the source of their power. He feels Methodism is neglecting its own inheritance due to fear and perhaps suspicion of the claims of some of its proponents. He is aware of different interpretations of John Wesley's understanding of holiness, and expresses discomfort with the instantaneous emphasis and the claims being made concerning sin's eradication. At this point he leans heavily towards an individualistic understanding of holiness. More study is needed, according to Sangster, especially concerning the nature of sin, with a possible solution being found in a distinction being made between sin and sinfulness.

Also in this period Sangster contributed an article to the *Methodist Recorder* for the bicentennial celebrations of Wesley's Aldersgate experience. Belonging to the 'Wesley

⁴⁸ In this chapter Sangster uses the Group Movement as evidence that God is still at work and able to reinvigorate the Church. As with confession, fellowship and evangelism Sangster is saying that while many reject the importance of these emphases in the larger Church they are being successfully pursued in the Group Movement under a different label; the same is true of holiness.

⁴⁹ This was discussed at length in Chapter 5. How this impacts his understanding of holiness will be the subject of the next section of this chapter.

and the Modern World' series, Sangster's article entitled 'Methodism As A Personal Way of Living'(1938) is an attempt to define the nature of a Methodist and, as was the case with John Wesley, this was really a description of Christian Perfection.⁵⁰ Although he admits that more study is needed, he mentions a number of qualities that should be characteristic of Methodists. Firstly, they will not be censorious, sanctimonious or narrow-minded. The context indicates again distaste for the more rigorous forms of holiness doctrine being propagated, especially as a series of negations. Second, Sangster posits a number of positive characteristics of the Methodist: he is a man who has God at the centre of his life; his highest activity is worship; he enjoys a sense of God's love; he is free of the burden of sin; his chief ambition is to do his Father's will; he longs day by day to be more like Jesus; he seeks the constant guidance of heaven; he is a happy man with interior peace; he is calm within; he is not jealous or resentful; much of his leisure is given in service to others; he is not proud, ostentatious, or mean; he is generous in his judgements of others; he does not criticise people; he fights evil with resource, zeal and without quarter; he never engineers a jest from things unclean; he has a special joy in speaking about Christ; he lives victoriously; he is keenly interested in world affairs; he is keenly devoted to the Church and serves God through her; he is particularly attached to Methodism but looks for full reunion; he has a deep faith in God's ultimate triumph and in heaven.⁵¹

This definition of the character of a Methodist or of Christian Perfection certainly sets the bar high as far as personal behaviour is concerned but at this point in Sangster's thinking it is cast almost exclusively in individualistic categories. Although he asserts that such lives by their example would impact on society, his view is too personalised and is devoid of any real sense of the social and global ramifications that the doctrine should

⁵⁰ This agenda echoes, of course, John Wesley's in his tract entitled *The Character of A Methodist* (1742)

⁵¹ Paraphrase from 'Methodism As A Personal Way of Living' *Methodist Recorder*, 19 May 1938, p.17.

carry. This aspect becomes an important part of his thinking after the publication of his doctoral thesis.

His early engagement with the doctrine of holiness in the period 1936-1938, therefore, reveals a movement from a devotional and pastoral approach with little evidence of critical scholarship towards a progressive engagement with the more theological side of the doctrine. His reading of the Wesleys, testimonies to perfection, and modern scholarly approaches to the doctrine of holiness identifies a number of problems, especially in the area of hamartiology and psychology with particular regard to the claims of individuals being free from sin and the complexities surrounding the knowledge of self. Although he has a clear idea of the characteristics of Christian Perfection, his view is primarily defined in personal, behavioural terms. At this point his own understanding of holiness is thoroughly individualistic and cast in terms of moral betterment. The need for more study is identified.

As has been mentioned elsewhere, by the end of this period, it becomes evident that Sangster took up the mantle to bridge the gap between the scholar and the ordinary church member, and took the task upon himself to lead the people in the pursuit of the holy life 'by sermon, pamphlet, and handbook.'⁵² Perhaps he was also indicating his own future calling, when in this last article he says:

'Earnest efforts will probably be made in the near future to lead our people to its deeper understanding and rigorous pursuit.'⁵³

1942-1953: Holiness Defined

From 1939 onwards Sangster's sermons and writings evidence a distinct change in character. Although broadly speaking devotional, for the first time modern philosophical and theological thought is evident. One particular sermon already mentioned elsewhere is

⁵² *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, p.90. Also see Chapter 3, p.111.

⁵³ *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, p.90.

reflective of this change in emphasis and content, namely 'And After Death – What?' (1939).⁵⁴ The previous discussion indicated that Sangster's idea of progress after death, even for the 'unsaved', was a radical departure from Wesley and on this issue put him arguably outside the evangelical fold also. In the present context, however, the importance of this sermon lies in the implications his views have for the doctrines of sanctification and perfection. Although probably written to bring hope to those who had or would lose loved ones during the war, his thoughts on the after-life have important ramifications for the doctrine of holiness.

First, Sangster asserts that sanctification continues after death:

I believe that in heaven we shall develop. No static life will be ours. God entertains the highest purposes for His children. He aims to bring us to perfection, to the 'measure of development which belongs to the fullness of Christ' – and this task is not a task for earth alone. Busy in His royal service for others, by which alone selfishness and pride of our nature is subjugated, He fosters our growth in all things good.⁵⁵

Indeed, Sangster finds support for his position in John 14.2 where Jesus tells his disciples that his Father's house contains many dwellings. Sangster finds significance in the Greek word used for 'dwelling':

It normally referred to stations on a journey, places of comfortable accommodation for a night. Two ideas are implicit in it – rest and *progress*. A picture is given of a place where travellers rest and refresh themselves, before they continue their course. The fact of progress and development, therefore, lies hidden in this most treasured phrase of John's.⁵⁶

Sangster's interpretation is appealing and does correspond to the Greek and the immediate context of travelling but it certainly strains the exegesis to breaking point to carry all the meaning given to it by Sangster. Although it could be argued that John Wesley also allowed for progress and growth after death, this certainly did not include sin because for him perfection had to occur on this side of the grave. Sangster explicitly takes

⁵⁴ *These Things Abide*, pp.179-190. See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of the change in paradigms within Sangster's thought.

⁵⁵ *These Things Abide*, p.188.

⁵⁶ *These Things Abide*, p.189.

a step away from Methodism's founder by suggesting that believers are not perfected at death. Sangster asserts:

Devout souls are not made perfect in the instant of death by some stroke of power. Perfection can never be given: it can only be co-operatively attained. But that is God's ambition for us all, and the end He will pursue through all eternity.⁵⁷

To all intents and purposes it appears that Sangster is saying that sin continues to be dealt with after death. This is also confirmed by his comments concerning unbelievers who either never heard the gospel or who had a minimum of preparation for eternity. 'God has not finished with them in the instant of death', he says.⁵⁸ Sangster shows some inconsistency, however, on this point for he later asserts that in heaven there is no sin.⁵⁹ In this sermon the particular problem of the relationship of sin, perfection and the after-life remains unresolved.

This issue is taken up again at the start of his first major treatise on holiness *The Path to Perfection*. Sangster's explicit aim in this book was to analyse, assess and where needed restate John Wesley's understanding of holiness.⁶⁰ In addressing the important theological presuppositions that underlay Wesley's understanding of holiness Sangster identified the common soteriological view of the eighteenth century; 'that every one must be entirely sanctified in the article of death', as a major barrier to the modern mind. Sangster attempted to solve the relationship of sin to the after-life by the idea of continual progress, practically positing the idea of an intermediate state. Without unambiguously committing himself to the views expressed by the various theologians quoted, Sangster comments on the idea of purgatory:

The name is still scorned among Protestants and it is not thought of only as penal and disciplinary, as with Roman theologians, but it is now generally allowed that

⁵⁷ *These Things Abide*, p.185.

⁵⁸ *These Things Abide*, p.187.

⁵⁹ *These Things Abide*, p.190.

⁶⁰ In the Abstract of his doctoral thesis (Thesis No. DX193815: University of London, 1942) Sangster claims that 'this thesis is the first book of which a University would take notice that is given wholly to Wesley's doctrine.'

something precious was lost to Protestantism when all idea of progress was eliminated from the life after death. Dr. A.E. Garvie pleads for this idea of eternal progress[...] He even cherishes the hope that God will pursue with His grace even those who die impenitent. The late Canon Streeter put in a similar plea for progress after death[...] Mr Emmet is not less emphatic. Talking of those in whom there is 'the faintest spark of the divine life in the soul,' he says, 'We dare not abandon the hope of progress and forgiveness after death for such a soul.'[...] Dr. J.H. Leckie affirms that 'the idea of a continued ministry of grace in the state between death and judgment is supported not only by the direct statement of St. Peter, but by a great mass of indirect evidence.'[...] So something of the concept of purgatory has worked itself back into Protestant thought. Not the name, and certainly not the seven sharply divided ledges of Dante's mountain *Purgatorio*, but the idea of discipline, of grace vouchsafed, of enrichment, and of progress.⁶¹

Sangster readily admits that such a viewpoint that allows progress after death even for the impenitent was far from the thought of John Wesley and would have been considered 'rank heresy' in the eighteenth century.⁶² Indeed the leadership of the British holiness movement, who saw Wesley's doctrine of 'perfection in this life' under threat, were quick to condemn what they saw as Sangster's capitulation to Popish ideas.⁶³ Sangster maintained this view unchanged, however, for the rest of his life. Writing in 1959 in answer to a question about why Christ descended into hell, Sangster not only reveals that his views remained unaltered but also uncovers his underlying reasons:

Millions die never having heard of Him. Millions more have heard of Him, but He is little more than a name to them; they have never felt the unconscious impact of His love, nor traced some of the loveliest things in the world to His influence. Even in countries classified as 'Christian', thousands of children grow up in homes from which Christ is virtually excluded, and hear His name only in blasphemy. It is unthinkable that the God whom Christ came to reveal could allow these multitudes to miss their highest bliss because of the accident or misfortune of their birth. A God of love is compelled by His nature to pursue with the offer of salvation all creatures made in his own image.⁶⁴

As has been mentioned earlier, it is apparent that Sangster's understanding of God's infinite grace leads him to a tempered soteriological universalism. He never commits, however, to a full universalism for his unswerving belief in the inviolability of the human

⁶¹ *Path to Perfection*, p.69.

⁶² *Path to Perfection*, p.70.

⁶³ *The Flame*, Vol. IX: 3, p.27.

⁶⁴ *Give God A Chance*, p.54.

will leaves the door open to any person's decision to ultimately refuse the offer of God's grace.⁶⁵ The different context of twentieth-century history, with its devastating wars, posed questions and demanded answers that Wesley could have never realistically anticipated.⁶⁶

Apart from this obvious difference in historical context part of Sangster's departure from Wesley on this point is rooted in a different understanding of sin. As has been demonstrated here, Sangster took issue with Wesley's substantial idea of sin, almost a foreign entity that could be extirpated and which had to be removed before death.⁶⁷ By the time of writing this book Sangster's view of sin had developed and was connected far more to the hidden depths of the personality and the interconnectedness of the person with the world of human systems of life. As has been demonstrated,⁶⁸ this view of sinfulness included within it a pessimistic evaluation of the possibilities of freedom from all sin; no matter how holy the individual, they will still be involuntarily involved in racial and social sin and dubious forms of economic politics. Such external influences also carry internal consequences shaping the intellect, attitudes and emotions and manifesting themselves often at the unconscious level. Addressing the debate between the Methodists and Calvinists of the eighteenth century concerning the moment of perfection, with Wesley and Fletcher arguing for the possibility of perfection before the last minute of life, Sangster argues, 'Neither side thought very clearly of the relationship of God and the individual soul as a relationship of persons. Both thought of sin as a *thing* which could be ripped out by an act of omnipotence.'⁶⁹ For Sangster, therefore, the emphasis of perfection is placed on God's grace addressing persons, with death being no real barrier.

⁶⁵ This was discussed at length in Chapter 5 under the subtitle 'The Inviolability of the Human Will'.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 4 for further discussion of Sangster and his understanding of the after-life.

⁶⁷ See previous Chapter.

⁶⁸ This was discussed in chapter 5.

⁶⁹ *Path to Perfection*, p.68.

This view is not only rooted in Sangster's relational view of sin but also represents a thoroughly relational view of God's perfecting grace.

This relational concept of God continually addressing persons and carrying with it an understanding of progress, growth, and discipline both before and after death, with the possibility of perfection after death, logically implies that the ultimate shape of Sangster's view of sanctification and perfection would be radically different from that of John Wesley. This is the focus of the rest of his analysis.

Sangster's critical treatment of John Wesley's thought proceeds through a biblical survey of the texts on which he based his understanding of perfection, a theological appraisal of his views, and a philosophical and psychological investigation of certain key features, including self-knowledge, the unconscious, the 'moment by moment' life and whether it is possible to live a perfect life in an imperfect world.

After surveying the thirty passages of scripture on which Wesley chiefly relied for his view of holiness, Sangster says, 'As we have surveyed Wesley's textual foundations, we have noticed the shadows of dubiety cast by scholarship on a translation, or interpretation, here and there, but, for the most part, the stones stand.'⁷⁰ Sangster goes on to point out that modern biblical scholarship supports Wesley's concern for the holy life:

A modern scholar like Dr. Flew can conduct an independent survey of the biblical evidence for this doctrine, and find it more extensive in certain directions than Wesley supposed, while Dr. Vincent Taylor, writing still more recently and with particular heed to New Testament exegesis, says: 'Beyond doubt the New Testament teaches the absolute necessity of ethical and spiritual perfection[...]It would, indeed, be difficult to find any important doctrinal theme which is more broadly based or more urgently presented.' The considered conclusion of these scholars is that the New Testament plainly teaches that the Christian need not sin.⁷¹

Sangster finds, therefore, twentieth-century biblical support for the main thrust of Wesley's doctrine. His own contribution to the biblical evidence which did not form one

⁷⁰ *Path to Perfection*, p.52.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

of Wesley's chief texts, however, is Paul's doctrine of the indwelling Christ and the Christian being 'in Christ'.⁷² These two aspects of Paul's thought became the major focus of his own view, which he used extensively in preaching and his writings on holiness after 1954, his sermons 'The Doctrine of the Indwelling Christ' (1956), 'How To Covert the 'We Life' (1956), the final section of *The Secret of Radiant Life* (1957) with his pamphlet *How to Live In Christ* (1957), being prime examples.

Sangster's theological analysis begins by focusing on how Wesley defined Christian Perfection. Summarising his research Sangster says:

It is indwelling love, banishing all conscious sin, received by faith in an instant, and maintained from moment to moment by humble dependence on God. It is aware of itself, attainable in this life, and yet ascetically detached from the normal life of men.⁷³

The major weakness of Sangster's survey, however, is that by focusing his attention on Wesley's view of perfection he often misses the significance of the overall process of sanctification, which became the central focus of the studies on Wesley from Outler onwards. Perhaps with the scholarship available to him, he cannot be blamed for missing the Eastern paradigms of divinisation at work in Wesley's soteriology, but Sangster's focus on perfection tends, at certain times, to remove the doctrine from its broader soteriological context. In a later article he pays tribute to Harald Lindström for contributing specifically to this issue.⁷⁴

His major point of contention with Wesley's theology, however, focuses at length on his understanding of sin and identifies what he sees as its limitations.⁷⁵ As already demonstrated, Sangster rejected Wesley's construction of the human condition in terms of the consciousness of sin especially when applied to his argument for perfection.

⁷² *Path to Perfection*, p.44.

⁷³ *Path to Perfection*, p.91.

⁷⁴ W.E. Sangster, 'Wesley and Sanctification', *London & Holborn Review* Vol.171, July 1946, pp.214-221 and Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Wilmore: Francis Asbury, 1945)

⁷⁵ Although this is illustrated and discussed in detail in chapter 5, here a brief recap is needed in order to understand how it may relate to his understanding of sanctification and perfection.

Sangster maintained that modern psychology had demonstrated the complexities involved in the knowledge of self and that often the worst sins of people were hidden to themselves. With Wesley being committed to the traditional Augustinian paradigm of the human condition, Sangster accused him of never fully escaping a substantial understanding of human sin. Sangster posits in response a relational definition of sin understood as 'any failure of perfect love'. In this treatise on holiness Sangster also explores for the first time the area of suprapersonal sin; the sin attached to systems of thought, economics and societies, a definite change in thought compared to his earlier individual categories.⁷⁶

This reshaping of the doctrine of sin obviously carried consequences for the doctrines of sanctification and perfection. First, by accepting the evolutionary theory of human origins, Sangster does not follow the pattern of Fall and restoration upon which Wesley constructed his view of original sin and ultimately his view of sanctification as restoration in the image of God. Sangster reinterprets the myth of the Fall existentially so that original righteousness is the destiny to which God is shaping humankind, not a condition to which humankind is restored. Therefore, the twin hamartiological truths of the Genesis narrative; the inevitability of sin and human responsibility are retained. This attempt to reinterpret Wesley's understanding of original sin and sanctification and creating a completely different shape to this aspect of soteriology was unique for his time and anticipated the later attempts of Colin Williams⁷⁷ and Albert Outler⁷⁸ by eighteen and thirty three years respectively.

Understanding the workings of sin primarily from a Jungian perspective Sangster saw sanctification occurring on two levels with particular reference to sin and the individual.

⁷⁶ These relationships between sin and sinfulness are fully explored in chapter 5.

⁷⁷ Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), pp.55-56.

⁷⁸ Albert C. Outler, *Theology In the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Abingdon: Discipleship Resources, 1975), pp.20-32.

First, the work of the Holy Spirit occurs both in the subconscious and unconscious levels of the mind bringing to the conscious level of the mind desires, impulses and thoughts where they are to be challenged and cleansed. Secondly, the positive response to the Holy Spirit at the conscious level carries the cleansing influence back to continue healing and renewing those hidden depths of personality. Sangster illustrates this process of sanctification:

Whatever lies in the sub-conscious capable of rising to consciousness and inciting the will to evil, can rise also to consciousness to be defeated by the willingly received grace of God. So – if a mechanical metaphor may not seem too absurd in this connection – one can imagine a rotary movement of the mind in which desires and impulses clamour to consciousness only to meet the cooling, cleansing Breath of God and sink away again to carry health and purity to whatever level of our mental life becomes their home.⁷⁹

Drawing primarily from R. Scott Frayn's Christian interpretation of these Jungian concepts,⁸⁰ Sangster asserts that the Holy Spirit ministers at all levels of the mind 'never doing violence to our personality but constraining and wooing us to a higher life'.⁸¹ This interpretation of the human condition, leads Sangster to the rejection of one of the fundamental aspects of Wesley's view, namely the matter of testifying to the experience of instantaneous entire sanctification. It is a well known fact that John Wesley encouraged his people to write down their experiences of God, many of which were published in the *Arminian Magazine*. Therein is a wealth of testimony to an instantaneous blessing of God that not only resulted in a common experience of overwhelming love and an immediate sense of God's presence but also of victory over and freedom from sin.⁸² Although Herbert McGonigle asserts that Wesley only really started stressing the instantaneous deliverance from sin because of the many testimonies to the experience⁸³

⁷⁹ *Path to Perfection*, p.123.

⁸⁰ R. Scott Frayn, *Revelation and the Unconscious* (London: Epworth Press, 1940).

⁸¹ *Path to Perfection*, p.123.

⁸² *Arminian Magazine*, 1779, pp.34,245,427,594-596; 1780, pp.274-276; 1781, pp.192,305.

⁸³ Herbert B. McGonigle, *Scriptural Holiness: The Wesleyan Distinctive* (Ilkeston: The Flame Trust, 1995), pp. 16-17.

the fact remains that testimony was encouraged by Wesley and formed an important part of subsequent Wesleyan spirituality, especially within the later Holiness Movements of America and Britain, and by those of the Pentecostal emphasis within British Methodism. Sangster's reinterpretation of the human condition led him to oppose testimonies concerning freedom from sin. If, as Sangster believed that self-knowledge is very limited, with the conscious mind representing only a fraction of the true self, then such a testimony to freedom from sin can only really carry a meaning that refers to a present knowledge of self, i.e., that is fragmentary and limited to the very moment it is spoken, and is, therefore, of little real worth. The danger of such testimonies is that they often did carry an implication beyond the present. They were accordingly, says Sangster, shaped in ignorance for, as he continues, 'no man knows what is in him'.⁸⁴

Sangster saw a major danger in this kind of testimony. First, the person testifying to freedom from sin, and believing the work done, will have a tendency to ignore later promptings of conscience, feeling that it may be the devil bringing them to doubt their sanctified state. Referring to facets typical of the Pentecostal emphasis and having previously mentioned the tragic fall of Robert Pearsall Smith, Sangster warns of the danger of testifying to entire freedom from sin:

It belongs to the militancy of faith when seeking this experience to rise from one's knees asserting that the miracle has been wrought. All doubt is of the devil. It must be beaten down by the affirmations of faith. To believe and to have are synonymous. Any dubiety is guilty unbelief. And it is just at *that* point that the greatest danger lurks. When uncertainty concerning the health of my soul troubles my mind, it does not normally come from the devil but from my conscience. I recall the stab of jealousy – I may be conscious of it at that very moment – or I feel flush of petty pride. To call the regret and repentance which this sinful awareness quickens in me 'the devil,' is to slander one of my best friends. To silence that admonitory voice by bawling louder that I am holy will damage me in the most sensitive part of my soul-life, and wound the most trusty mentor I have on the path of spiritual progress. And this, surely, is what some of these unbalanced teachers and false guides have done. They have blunted their own conscience, believing that what they were doing was to the glory of God. When the inner monitor of the

⁸⁴ *Path to Perfection*, pp.160-167.

soul stirred in disapproval, they flung 'a promise' at it, and called the warning 'unbelief.' With passing time the conscience ceased to function with any accuracy or power and they are found proclaiming themselves free of sin while guilty of conduct which a worldling would know to be wrong.⁸⁵

Sangster, while dismissing testimonies focused on freedom from sin because of the inherent dangers to conscience, wished to affirm the reality of the experiences being testified to. He believed, however, that the stress should be placed on the impartation and experience of God's love, not on testimonies of being freed from sin. Indeed, a focus on love rather than sin would, according to Sangster, avoid these problems and would lead to a better understanding of the doctrine of Christian perfection. Sangster's definition of sin as 'any failure in perfect love' was a good corrective avoiding almost by definition a focus on freedom from sin and placing the emphasis on love and its outworking. In defence of John Wesley, however, his later writings came more and more to focus on love and less on sin and even to define sin in terms of love⁸⁶, the development of which is admirably traced and described by Herbert McGonigle.⁸⁷ The Holiness Movement and those of similar viewpoints, however, still actively encouraged such testimonies during Sangster's era and came out in defence of their position, forwarding arguments such as 'ought the leper to have kept silent about his cleansing lest his leprosy should show again?' and 'the world has a right to know if God can effect a perfect cure'.⁸⁸ Sangster responded to George Allen Turner's more extended critique of his position by saying, '[...]if people hear us say "I am cleansed from all sin" they will remember the claim a month later when we may be petty or irritable, and in this way holy things are brought into disrepute. The heart of Wesley's doctrine can be taught without this!'⁸⁹ On this issue

⁸⁵ *Path to Perfection*, pp.139-140.

⁸⁶ A fact that Sangster acknowledges: *Path to Perfection*, pp.146-147.

⁸⁷ Herbert McGonigle, *Scriptural Holiness*, pp.20-25.

⁸⁸ Jack Ford, *What The Holiness People Believe*, p.47. Also, G. A. Turner, *The More Excellent Way*, pp.253-254.

⁸⁹ *Religion In Life*, 22:2, Spring 1953, 310-311.

Sangster is clearly following in the footsteps of Pope and Flew, who both objected to this part of the Wesleyan tradition.

Sangster argued, therefore, that sanctification and perfection are best defined in relational terms. In his restatement of Wesley's doctrine he spends much time debating the many terms used by Wesley and those who followed in his footsteps, taking particular issue with the word 'perfection'. Sangster chooses the term 'perfect love' – a term Wesley had used, as the best way of describing the highest goal of Christian living and, therefore, the goal of sanctification. This definition would, according to Sangster, avoid the pitfalls of most of the other terms which tend to speak of holiness in negations:

But few will doubt that Wesley had a better term in 'perfect love' than in 'Christian perfection.' To begin with, it is positive. The common idea of perfection as sinlessness gave a picture of the ideal in terms of negation. It never grappled with the sins of omission. Even the words 'sanctified' and 'holy' are no better in this regard. They certainly carry the idea of being purged from impurity but no hint of being robust in active goodness. 'Perfect love' reverses that: it is a spirited principle no more to be confined within the narrow limits of the individual heart than a perfume can be gathered up and returned to the bottle once it has escaped.⁹⁰

For Sangster, therefore, it is apparent that the term 'perfect love' turns the focus of attention away from a fixation on a person's own joy, peace, or victory over sin. It focuses instead on the positive, manifesting itself in Christlikeness and carrying with it an inherent social dimension.⁹¹ This definition of perfection certainly does not take sin lightly but lets 'purgation be the by-product and let(s) love crowd sin out.'⁹² Sangster then moves on to show the importance of working out this dynamic of love in society and the broader world, where it must be engaging in politics and economics, not just social salvage work.⁹³ His thought-provoking discussion of 'Perfection in an Imperfect World' illustrates the complexities of applying this 'higher-life' to the modern world, showing as an example how there might be a number of contradictory responses of individuals to the

⁹⁰ *Path to Perfection*, p.147.

⁹¹ *Path to Perfection*, pp.142-149.

⁹² *Path to Perfection*, p.156.

⁹³ *Path to Perfection*, pp.148, 168-184.

call to war. The close relationship between sin and sinfulness asserts itself at this point. All the individuals concerned are at some important levels involved in the most dubious compromises but all of them may 'love God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength.'⁹⁴ This view of perfection adopted by Sangster seems best defined, therefore, as a perfection of motive. An absolute perfection of performance would seem impossible in this life.

Sangster concludes his analysis by affirming the significance of the Wesleyan doctrine of perfection. First, this high view of the moral life is, according, to Sangster consistent with the whole tenor of the New Testament. Biblically and theologically the Christian must not place limits on the possibilities of grace:

We must insist again that no man can put a limit to what grace can do with a soul on this terrestrial plane, and, while our self ignorance should prevent any mortal from claiming that the work has be done, it would do despite to the whole spirit of the New Testament (as we read it) to affirm categorically that it *cannot* be done. 'Can God do nothing with sin but forgive it?' John Wesley asks; and his brother exultantly answers:

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free.

God has called us to holiness, 'Be ye holy for I am holy' saith the Lord. Does God command the impossible?⁹⁵

According to Sangster this New Testament doctrine has been neglected by the Church, especially within Protestantism. The wide-scale pursuit of this experience would have three major consequences.

First, it would change the Church. Too many Christians live on a sub-Christian level, below the offer and promise of the New Testament.⁹⁶ A Church experiencing this type of 'perfect love' would impact the world. Second, it would give church members a goal for their Christian lives bringing a conviction that God is able and willing and eager to deal

⁹⁴ *Path to Perfection*, pp.168-184.

⁹⁵ *Path to Perfection*, p.189.

⁹⁶ *Path to Perfection*, p.193.

with all their sins and a genuine hope and belief in present salvation.⁹⁷ Third it would re-balance the (then) present neglect of the work of the Holy Spirit, with the work of sanctification and perfection being His *supernatural* work, cleansing and empowering the believer.⁹⁸ This final point is of particular interest as until this stage of his analysis of John Wesley's thought he has consistently rejected in the strongest terms the emphases of the Holiness Movement and those who propagated the Pentecostal emphasis of the doctrine in Methodism. Here, however, he speaks of the *supernatural* work of the Holy Spirit in terms of Pentecost, although guarding himself against the assertion that Christians do not receive the Spirit at conversion.⁹⁹ This view allows him, therefore, to be able to frame perfection as a deeper work of the Holy Spirit and leave the door open to the idea of 'second blessing' paradigms.

Finally Sangster returns to the stress on discipline and effort in the spiritual life but developed and modified when compared to his early period. The devotional life must involve 'the faithful attending on God to receive.' This is not, however, the 'toilsome, straining, failing effort to be good'¹⁰⁰ but a continual waiting on God, energized by the contemplation of holiness (perfect love) in Christ and in the lives of the saints.¹⁰¹

Following Sangster's extensive critical engagement with Wesley's doctrine of holiness in *The Path to Perfection* he published a number of articles in the *Methodist Recorder* promoting the doctrine. In a two-part series: 'Has God A Use For the Methodist Church?'(1945) and 'Methodism Her Unfinished Task'(1945), he addressed what he saw as Methodism's unfinished business. The Methodist enunciation of the doctrine is unique in Christendom, he claimed, being 'an original and unique synthesis of the Protestant

⁹⁷ Paraphrase: *Path to Perfection*, pp.193-194.

⁹⁸ *Path to Perfection*, pp.196-197.

⁹⁹ *Path to Perfection*, pp.195.

¹⁰⁰ *Path to Perfection*, p.197.

¹⁰¹ *Path to Perfection*, pp.198-201.

ethic of grace with the Catholic ethic of holiness'¹⁰² Although Sangster expressed some wariness of this description in the *Path to Perfection*, mainly because of Wesley's view of sin,¹⁰³ he repeats it numerous times when promoting the doctrine.¹⁰⁴ Sangster's contention is that Methodism has a neglected treasure about which Methodism should become acquainted and then pass on to the rest of the Christian Church. Sangster argues his case:

If sanctity is the great end of God for us all, and the strivings of aeons move towards this speechless consummation¹⁰⁵ [...]If, moreover, in adoring wonder the claim is made by humble, holy men to have discovered in the Scriptures the source of new power for holiness, and to attest their claim by a succession of living witnesses who file unbroken through half a dozen generations, then this witness simply cannot be ignored. It is not a denominational idiosyncrasy; it matters to the whole Church of God.¹⁰⁶

Sangster's concern is that Methodism does not appreciate or recognise its task to pass on this important truth, a mission Sangster believes the Methodist Church is committed to by its own standards:

No other branch of the Church is so committed by its divine commission or standards of doctrine to this precise emphasis[...]Methodism's task will remain unfinished until all the ransomed Church of God has seen this gleaming facet of truth.¹⁰⁷

Similar sentiments were made by Sangster in 1946 when reviewing Harald Lindström's new work on Wesley's doctrine.¹⁰⁸ This article became, with minor edits, the chapter entitled 'In Spreading Scriptural Holiness' in *Methodism Her Unfinished Task* (1947). Speaking of his own denomination and their apparent lack of interest in the doctrine of holiness, Sangster says:

¹⁰² W. E. Sangster, 'Has God A Use For the Methodist Church?' *Methodist Recorder*, 8 Feb.1945, p.3. and quoted from George Croft Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: H. Holt & Co., 193), p.347. The validity of this designation was discussed in a series of articles in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* between 1989-1991.

¹⁰³ *Path to Perfection*, pp.102-103.

¹⁰⁴ These references are present in the next three articles to be discussed.

¹⁰⁵ 'Has God A Use For the Methodist Church?' *Methodist Recorder*, 8 Feb.1945, p.3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *London and Holborn Review*, Vol.171, July 1946, p.219.

One of the tragedies of this branch of the Church is to be found in her neglect of the very doctrine God raised her up to recover. It is not understood, seldom preached, half hidden by some (who apologize when they mention it) and left, alas! to people who have been labelled (justly or unjustly) as 'cranks'. Many Ministers in Methodism do not even esteem the doctrine as a treasure, and would part with it with a yawn.¹⁰⁹

Sangster takes the opportunity of the review to argue for the theological and practical importance of the Wesleyan understanding of holiness. He outlines the weaknesses in Luther's understanding of the Christian life in which the imputation of righteousness is stressed practically to the exclusion of imparted righteousness, leaving a dim view of the possibilities of holiness in this life, with some of his followers even rejoicing in their sin.

Wesley's genius was to apply the Protestant understanding of faith not only to justification but also to sanctification, contended Sangster. Holiness was therefore not an achievement but a gift of God that could be given in a moment. It is best described as 'perfect love'. Its recipients are filled with the energy of love and experience mastery over sin, although subject to mistake, ignorance and infirmity. They are dependent on God for their salvation and rely on God every moment.¹¹⁰ The widespread reception of this kind of holiness would, according to Sangster, have four practical results. It would bring revival and spiritual power to the Church, and would answer unbelief and be the highway to Church reunion.¹¹¹

A similar tone is struck in 'The Church's One Privation'(1949),¹¹² citing the same beneficial practical results of holiness as the previous article: spiritual power, an answer to atheism and agnosticism, an aid to church reunion. Sangster then turns to a slightly less invective discussion of the weaknesses of various common understandings of holiness but with the whole article almost reading like a 'feeler' towards the Catholic Church. Again he argues against the widespread Protestant view which restricts holiness

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Paraphrase summary of *London and Holborn Review*, Vol.171, July 1946, pp.218-219.

¹¹¹ *London & Holborn Review*, Vol.171, July 1946, pp.214-215.

¹¹² *Religion In Life*, 18:4, Autumn 1949.

to the imputation of righteousness. He then dismisses the view that defines holiness in terms of 'don't do this' and 'don't do that', which he says confuses sanctity with sanctimoniousness. Third, he rejects the expression of holiness that withdraws people from the world and their neighbours and speaks about it at conventions rather than living it in real life situations. Turning to a short theological discussion Sangster asks what the *summum bonum* of this mortal life is and whether it is God's will that we achieve it? After discussing some of the general shortcomings of both Protestant and Catholic approaches to sanctity, he presents in one paragraph a brief summary of Cell's argument that Wesley's view is a synthesis of Protestant and Catholic perspectives. He concludes by tentatively stating that 'Protestant and Catholic spirituality are nearer to one another than their denominational debaters believe.'¹¹³

This more 'catholic' article with its greater use of anecdotes from Catholic sources and the more frequent use of the term 'saint' seems to indicate that Sangster was trying to demonstrate the theological and practical importance of an emphasis on holiness within the broader Church and suggesting lines of convergence. One comment in particular is possibly a veiled hint at his own future endeavour, 'What inviting theological work awaits the man who will seriously compare Catholic and Protestant spirituality!'¹¹⁴

The paper entitled 'Holiness'¹¹⁵ reads like a lengthy tract and is addressed to Christians who have a desire to improve and be truly good and is of particular interest to this study because it is the first real written attempt of Sangster to apply pastorally his restatement of the doctrine of holiness.

He asks three questions 'Is it possible for ordinary people to be perfect on earth – to do the will of God always and do it with delight? Were the saints like that? Did they get past sin? The rest of the tract sets about answering those questions. Sangster lays aside

¹¹³ *Religion In Life*, 18:4, Autumn 1949, pp.500-501.

¹¹⁴ *Religion In Life*, 18:4, Autumn 1949, p.500. His book *The Pure In Heart* (1954) took up this task.

¹¹⁵ W.E. Sangster, 'Holiness' *Pharos Paper No.5* (London: Epworth Press, 1950).

the problematic questions concerning the definitions of sin and perfection focusing rather on the fact that some Christians seem to live at a higher level than others; they exude goodness, inner happiness and seem to have an inexhaustible capacity for love; listening and caring for others and not preoccupied with self.¹¹⁶ This quality of life is holiness, he asserts, and its experience is open to ordinary people. The rest of the tract focuses on how this may be experienced.

First, assuming he is writing to Christians, he asks them to review their conscience for any sin, to surrender it to God and to claim forgiveness.¹¹⁷ Sangster consistently held that 'all dealings with God on man's side begin in penitence.'¹¹⁸ Sangster then asserts that this quality of life is a gift of God not something that is worked up from within, and that God is eager to give the gift to anyone who will daily put themselves in the way of receiving it. He then progresses to give counsel how to receive it, by bringing together a clear picture of themselves with these qualities of life and the thought that God is able and willing to make them holy:

Hold it in mind that God is both able and willing to make you holy. Murmur to yourself; as Charles Wesley was fond of doing: 'He wills that I should holy be.' Carry a picture in your mind of yourself as God could make you – good, truthful, wise, happy, poised, loving, virile – and don't see it as some wild fancy, like an elf or a leprechaun; but hold the picture in a yearning heart and remember that nothing but your own unwillingness can prevent it.¹¹⁹

This technique of creating a clear picture in your mind of 'your future self in the present' certainly sounds like the use of auto-suggestion from his background in psychology, but is justified by what Sangster saw as God's ultimate will for all people. Such methods of contemplative spirituality were common in Eastern Christianity¹²⁰ and in Catholic mysticism but focused on the holiness of Christ, Mary and the Saints. Whether Sangster

¹¹⁶ Paraphrase summary, 'Holiness', p.4.

¹¹⁷ Paraphrase summary, 'Holiness', p.5.

¹¹⁸ See also: *Sangster At Filey*, p.32 and *Westminster Sermons*, 1,p.20.

¹¹⁹ 'Holiness', p.6.

¹²⁰ The magnificent art work in, for example, the Museum (Church) of Chora, Istanbul testifies to this type of spirituality.

appreciated the parallels is doubtful at this point but his later work certainly draws from these patterns of spirituality.

The final part of this tract reveals a clearer relationship between the instantaneous and gradual elements of holiness than that given in *The Path to Perfection*.¹²¹ There are, asserts Sangster, instantaneous moments that may have a revolutionary impact on life but all these belong to the larger process of life, using the metaphor of breathing to illustrate the gradual transformation from sin to holiness:

Don't think that God can make you holy for ever in one stroke. The willingness to have it so may come in one moment, and a complete revolution of thought in a moment, too. It is true also that in the very moment one accepts Christ, one accepts forgiveness and (by implication) holiness also, for all fullness is in Him. But it is better to think of life in Christ under the metaphor of breathing, rather than of surgical operations aiming to eradicate sin by one deft use of the knife. It is a moment-by-moment life in God: an in-breathing of the Spirit; an out-breathing of the breath devitalized by use or tainted by a sub-consciousness not yet completely interpenetrated by the Spirit of God.¹²²

This whole process of being penetrated by the cleansing of the breath of God is rooted in the discipline of prayer; taking time to cultivate a prayer life of meditation and mental prayer.¹²³

In Sangster's presidential year of 1950-51 he sought in numerous articles to bring the attention of Methodism to the pursuit of holiness. His first contribution on holiness in this year was his presidential message to the Ministerial Session, which reads like a lament on the neglect of the doctrine in British Methodism with Sangster appealing for attention to this part of John Wesley's heritage;¹²⁴ that explicitly held a goal before the people:

One of the greatest services, therefore, which John Wesley rendered our fathers was that he was all the time holding before them a goal. We do not, to the same extent, hold a goal before our people. Our danger is tacitly to accept both for ourselves and our people a lower standard than we ought. Because we are afraid to

¹²¹ The narrow focus of that work has a tendency to isolate the doctrine of perfection from the whole process of sanctification, which in turn underplays the gradual or process elements of sanctification.

¹²² 'Holiness', p.6.

¹²³ 'Holiness', p.7.

¹²⁴ 'The President On Holiness', *Methodist Recorder*, 3 Aug. 1950, p.1.

say, 'The perfect is possible,' we are in danger of implying that to be 'highly respectable' is enough. It isn't.¹²⁵

The problems that prevent many ministers from preaching the doctrine can be overcome, for the greatest need of the Methodist Church is holiness, which would invigorate its witness to the world, provide power in evangelism and foster reunion. He asks of himself and all the ministers to examine themselves in the light of Wesley's definition of a Methodist.¹²⁶ Practically every article in the 'President's Quarter-Hour' column contains some reference to holiness and encouragement to seek it. Some carry the aforementioned pastoral advice for the reader to create a mental picture of themselves possessing the qualities of the perfect life,¹²⁷ with the importance of prayer being regularly emphasised.¹²⁸

Sangster's four-part series on holiness in January and February 1951 starts again as an apologetic, arguing for the importance of this aspect of Methodist thought; that the experience of a higher quality of life with victory over sin was once common in Methodism and needs to be pursued by modern Methodists.¹²⁹ His second article contrasts the expression of holiness in the Roman Catholic Church (monasticism and canonization) with that of the early Methodists, highlighting daring faith to receive God's gift of holiness and the 'moment-by-moment' life in the real world as the major difference.¹³⁰ Discipline in holiness is the subject and title of the third article. Written against the accusation that 'believing for holiness' savours of magic and cuts away the need for a disciplined spirituality, Sangster argues that discipline is certainly needed but is better understood in terms of attending to God:

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ 'The President On Holiness', pp.1-3.

¹²⁷ 'A Vision For The Ordinary Methodist', *Methodist Recorder*, 12 Oct.1950, p.3; 'On Meditation', *Methodist Recorder*, 14 Dec.1950, p.3.

¹²⁸ 'Our Neglect of Prayer', *Methodist Recorder*, 26 Oct.1950, p.3; 'Sincerity Is Not Enough', *Methodist Recorder*, 2 Nov.1950, p.3.

¹²⁹ 'The Way of Holiness,' *Methodist Recorder*, 11 Jan.1951, p.3.

¹³⁰ 'Are There Two Ways To Holiness'? *Methodist Recorder*, 18 Jan. 1951, p.3.

Here is the place of discipline! That we unshakably firm with ourselves in going to the fountain to drink. We cannot strike the water from the rock but (thank God!) it is flowing like a river, and we have only to go and drink. *But go!* He, who would be holy, guards his tryst with heaven as she would guard his life. If he is too busy for his meeting with his Lord, he is *too* busy. He takes time to be holy. He opens himself to the life of God. He lives recollected in God's presence.¹³¹

What is remarkable about the pastoral advice Sangster has given for the pursuit of the holy life in this and the earlier articles is that it is almost exclusively portrayed as a personal, individualistic pursuit. There is little, if no mention of the importance of the class meeting, fellowship, Holy Communion, liturgy or even corporate worship. This seems very strange for someone so engaged in every aspect of Church life and a supporter of the Sacramental Fellowship. Whether Sangster is taking for granted such participation – which is likely, the fact that these highly significant corporate elements are missing in his formal method of pursuing holiness must surely constitute a major weakness in his thought. Although Sangster admits that both sin and holiness are larger terms than he once thought¹³² and he now sees the wider application beyond the individual to communities and the world, this more corporate view does not seem at this point to have played a significant part in his method of pursuing holiness of life.

The first of the *Westminster Pamphlet* series entitled 'A Spiritual Check-Up' is another example of Sangster's attempt to turn people's thoughts to the pursuit of holiness. Throughout the twenty-five page pamphlet the reader is led through a process of self-examination. Again, the pursuit is cast in individual terms, with the advice of the instructions saying, 'Get alone, and arrange to be undisturbed.' Without labouring the point unfairly, for this pamphlet was meant to be used for self-examination, the limitations of such an individual pursuit have already been raised. Although Sangster does ask questions about the individual's attendance at worship and participation in

¹³¹ 'Discipline In Holiness', *Methodist Recorder*, 25 Jan. 1951, p.3.

¹³² This change of thought with reference to sin is traced in chapter 5.

church activities, there is little sense of the importance of the corporate pursuit of holiness. Indeed, considering his own views concerning the limited possibilities of the knowledge of self, it may be asked whether Sangster is inconsistent at this point in placing weight on self-examination in the pursuit of holiness. Surely with such a view of sin, that is dubious about the prospects of self-knowledge, the task of self-examination should rather be placed within a broader ecclesial setting, perhaps within a cell or mentor setting. His defence probably lies in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and his belief that the promptings of the Spirit will uncover hidden sins, bringing them to the conscious mind, in order to be cleansed.

Sangster's New Year's sermon that introduced the Methodist Year of Evangelism in 1953, sometimes entitled 'What A Religious Revival Might Do For Britain',¹³³ or 'Sermon For Britain',¹³⁴ or 'Revival – The Need and the Way',¹³⁵ represents the drawing together of his twin themes of evangelism and holiness. Sangster's message reveals how he saw widespread conversions with a concomitant pursuit of holy living would affect the social life of Britain. This message is important for the study of Sangster's views of holiness for it reveals the social consequences of the holy life on a large scale. It would:

1. Pay Old Debts.
2. Reduce Sexual Immorality.
3. Disinfect the Theatre.
4. Cut the Divorce Rate.
5. Reduce Juvenile Crime.
6. Lessen the Prison Population.
7. Improve the Quality and Increase the Output of Work.
8. Restore to the Nation a Sense of High Destiny.
9. Make Us Invincible in the War of Ideas.
10. Give Happiness and Peace to the People.

Although it could be argued this view, that sees the wider pursuit of holy living as having national consequences, is too simplistic as a social theory, the experience of many

¹³³ *Methodist Recorder*, 8 January 1953, p.3

¹³⁴ *Sangster of Westminster*.

¹³⁵ *Westminster Pamphlet No.7* (London: Epworth Press, 1957).

ministers in prisons, family counselling and the workplace etc., is that Christ does make a difference, both to the individual and their immediate relationships.¹³⁶ For the purpose of this study, though, it reveals how important the holy life was for Sangster and how wide-ranging he saw the consequences of its pursuit; it carried individual, relational, social and national, even global consequences.

The period 1942-1953 has evidenced Sangster defining, evaluating and applying the doctrine of holiness to the individual and society. For Sangster the great end for all humankind was perfection, best defined as Christlikeness. God's grace from birth to death, and significantly beyond death, engages each person to this end. In a sense, therefore, all of life and beyond is a process of continual progress towards perfection in the image of Christ. Within this overall process there are key moments. An attitude of contrition is the starting point of all human response. The Wesleyan paradigm of justification as forgiveness, rather than imputed righteousness, with a corresponding initial sanctification through the reception of the Holy Spirit is the first step in the Christian life. A deeper work of the Holy Spirit is also possible which fills the human heart with perfect love towards God and neighbour. Although such a person may not feel the presence of sin, by virtue of Sangster's understanding of sin and self-knowledge, such a person should not claim to be free from sin. This type of holiness is best defined in terms of love, rather than the absence of sin. Such a deeper work of sanctification is available instantaneously by faith to all who seek it. This deeper work of sanctification, (sometimes called entire sanctification) is best pursued by an active waiting on God through the dedicated use of the mind especially in meditative prayer, particularly through the contemplation of Christ and the lives of the Saints. God's grace combines with the ardent desire of the seeker of holiness to bring about God's will – perfect love.

¹³⁶ Even church growth studies speak of 'social-rise' as a result of Christian commitment: Cf. Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980)

The wider reception of this higher spiritual life would, according to Sangster, bring revival, spiritual power to the Church, answer unbelief in all its forms, be the highway to Church reunion and would bring many social benefits to wider society and the Nation. Although the more corporate, social and global ramifications of this type of holy life are acknowledged and to a limited degree explored, Sangster's method of its pursuit is primarily focused on the individual. Theologically Sangster's restatement of Wesley's doctrine of holiness comprises elements of all three theological interpretations of Wesley's understanding of holiness within British Methodism. Elements from the 'Classical Wesleyan Emphasis' are a Christocentric focus, a teleological understanding of sanctification, and a stress on working out the holy life in the real world. The 'Pentecostal Emphasis' is represented by his insistence on the real possibility of an instantaneous reception of a deeper work of grace, cleansing the heart from all conscious sin. Sangster sees this as a deeper work of the Holy Spirit than that of conversion, thereby leaving the door open to a greater use of pneumatological language. Finally, Sangster's attempts to restate in modern terms various aspects of Wesley's view places him within the overall scheme of the 'Critical Emphasis'. Elements taken up by Sangster include, first: the acceptance of the evolutionary beginnings of humankind, thereby dropping ideas of Creation and Fall that formed an essential part of Wesley's view. Second: the redefining of the human condition including sin and sinfulness, thereby discarding testimonies to freedom from sin. Third: positing a view of the after-life that includes progress, growth and work even for those who die 'outside' faith in Christ.

In the context of contemporary debate of holiness within British Methodism, Sangster still displays elements of 'holiness as work and struggle' in this period, especially seen in the focus on self-examination. However, this theme is no longer predominant. Sangster's

main thrust has been shown to combine elements of 'holiness as the instantaneous gift of the Spirit' and 'holiness as the outworking of responsible grace'.¹³⁷

1954-1960: Holiness Modified and Pursued

Sangster's second major book on holiness *The Pure In Heart* (1954) remains faithful on the whole to the definitions laid down in *The Path to Perfection*. This latter book explores the subject of holiness by a different method. Perhaps influenced by the changing ecclesial context of the post-war period, Sangster's agenda is far more catholic both in method and nomenclature. He examines holiness with particular reference to the person of Christ and the lives of the saints. First, Sangster addresses the development of the idea of the Holy,¹³⁸ from its beginnings in the sense of the numinous in primitive humankind to a fuller ethical appreciation of God's requirement for holy living as expressed in the New Testament, and as embodied in the person of Christ. Sangster finishes this survey by tracing the idea of 'saint' through Church history as it moves away from the original New Testament use for all who had received the Holy Spirit. A division developed, according to Sangster between the few who could be called saints and the overwhelming majority for whom saintliness was an impossibility. Sangster traces this difference between the New Testament understanding of 'saint' and the widespread pessimism about the possibilities of saintliness within the Christian Church to a general neglect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁹

Sangster's continues by reiterating his contention that the Church needs saints:¹⁴⁰

Nothing but an increase in saints will make the church powerful in the world. The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life. As He comes to sanctify, so He comes in

¹³⁷ *Unmasking Methodist Theology*, pp.155-165.

¹³⁸ Sangster draws primarily from four authors: Kenneth Kirk, *The Vision of God* (London: Longmans, 1931); Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926); Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (London: Epworth Press, 1951); Norman Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1944).

¹³⁹ *Pure In Heart*, pp.49-52.

¹⁴⁰ This emphasis of Sangster even found its way into national newspapers: *Sunday Times*, 20 March 1955, p.8.

power. The world could not long ignore a holy church. The church is not despised because it is holy: it is despised because it is not holy enough. There is not enough difference between the people inside the church and those outside to be impressive. A church in which saints were as common as now they are rare would convict the world, if only by contrast. Sanctity cannot be ignored.¹⁴¹

From speaking about the Church's need for saints in its witness to the world he turns to address the importance of saints for the internal life of the Church. Holding up the saints before the people would inspire the pursuit of the holy life, showing how the life of Christ can be interpreted in human nature.

Sangster progresses through a discussion of the way the Roman Church, the Eastern Church, the Anglican Church and the Protestant tradition have understood the term 'saint,' with a view to discovering what is common to the saints in all Communion. Rather than opting for the Roman Catholic theological virtues (faith, hope and charity) and moral virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance) Sangster chooses a biblical starting point in Paul's concept of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance (Gal. 5.22f).¹⁴² Sangster continues with an analysis of each of these characteristics of the holy life, illustrating each by examples from the lives of the saints.

According to Sangster love encompasses all the fruits mentioned, being primary with all the other aspects dependent on it. Sangster says, 'Having love, we have all the fruit of the Spirit. Without love, we are nothing.'¹⁴³ Only in the person of Christ is love displayed perfectly. Sometimes, however, the majesty of his divinity overwhelms the seeker of holiness and even excuses the lack of progress – for He is God. It is beneficial, therefore, to see love in the lives of the saints. This love is, according to Sangster, foreign to our human nature and is a gift of God, which can be received. This type of supernatural love is best evidenced in the lives of the saints by examining their relationships to God, to

¹⁴¹ *Pure In Heart*, p.60.

¹⁴² *Pure in Heart*, pp.95-99.

¹⁴³ *Pure in Heart*, p.101.

their neighbours and those who would do them harm.¹⁴⁴ Richly illustrated by examples of saints from all Church traditions overcoming resistance, hostility, and persecution he concludes by saying, 'That is how the saints love; with heart and mind and soul and strength – and their neighbours as themselves.'¹⁴⁵

The saint is also characterised by joy. After stating the differences between pleasure and joy, with the saint not being wholly ignorant of pleasure, Sangster locates the source of the saint's joy in their wholehearted trust in God. This surety in God precludes worry, fear, anxiety, fretfulness, apprehension, freedom from guilt and the fear that God's cause will not prevail.¹⁴⁶ Such claims seem somewhat overstated and foreign to twenty-first century ears, with the threat of terror and global disaster forever being pictured in the media. His over-simplistic agreement with the field-preacher who said, 'If you worry you do not trust: if you trust you do not worry'¹⁴⁷ makes this type of holiness seem remote. Indeed from a biblical point of view, the question of Jesus' use of hyperbole within a context of 'the already and the not yet' comes to mind, and whether his words 'Do not fear', 'Do not worry' are better interpreted as 'Do not be consumed by fear and worry' (Matt. 6.25).

Peace, the third of the characteristics of the saint, should not, according to Sangster, be confused with passivity, withdrawal from the world, escapism and should not depend on circumstances.¹⁴⁸ The saint has 'utter faith in God', believing that 'nothing can happen in the universe but by the permission of God.'¹⁴⁹ Although unshakable in their belief in God's providence the saints do not sit impassively and watch events unfold. They are involved in fighting evil, in doing good and in seeking to change the world. Sangster

¹⁴⁴ Paraphrase from *Pure In Heart*, p.102.

¹⁴⁵ *Pure In Heart*, p.108.

¹⁴⁶ *Pure In Heart*, pp.112-115.

¹⁴⁷ *Pure In Heart*, p.112.

¹⁴⁸ *Pure In Heart*, pp.116-119.

¹⁴⁹ *Pure In Heart*, pp.119-120.

appears to infer that this quality of peace is best understood as a serene unshakable trust in God and abandonment to God's will and manifested in their lives and reaching out to the world.¹⁵⁰

Longsuffering is another attribute of the saints and rooted in their utter trust. It seems, says Sangster, that the saints suffer more than most. Quoting the examples and writings of St. Teresa, Richard Baxter, John Fletcher, Francis of Assisi, St. Gerard Majella and Thérèse of Lisieux, Sangster finds a uniform witness to suffering as the experience of many saints. Although Sangster admits to not fully understanding why God seems to stand 'a hands-breadth off at times' while the saints suffer, he hints that a seed of an answer is found in the clash between the burning presence of their purity and the sin in the world.¹⁵¹ Their longsuffering consists, however, in the saints remaining free of bitterness, and resentment and being brave and patient through their many trials. Such a view concerning the highest qualities of the holy life is a far cry from the health, wealth and success theology being propagated so freely in some radical evangelical circles today.

Kindness, according to Sangster, has often been sentimentalised and been made rather vague. Although its biblical roots convey the meaning of a 'kindly disposition' or 'gentleness,' the essence of kindness when seen in the lives of the saints is 'supernatural love disclosing itself in costly affection towards fellow-men.'¹⁵² Sangster illustrates this by reference to the self-sacrificial work of, among others, Wilberforce and Livingstone in the fight against slavery.

Goodness refers to a quality of life that reminds people of Jesus Christ. This quality of goodness is rooted in the fact that the life of the saint is all Christ-centred, which was, for Sangster, the most crucial aspect of saintliness:

¹⁵⁰ *Pure In Heart*, pp.120-122.

¹⁵¹ *Pure In Heart*, pp.123-124.

¹⁵² *Pure In Heart*, pp.132-136.

The fact, and the permanence, and the importance of this, it would be impossible to exaggerate. This, more than anything else, makes him a saint. The fruit of the spirit only appears in him in perfection because the whole centre of his life has shifted from self to Christ.¹⁵³

This quality of life, that has Christ rather than self at the centre, echoes the confession of Paul: 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' This text, more than any other, was used by Sangster to illustrate the holy life as 'the life of the Indwelling Christ.'¹⁵⁴ The result of living such a Christ-centred life is that the saint 'glows with a light not of this earth' and is 'utterly guileless.'¹⁵⁵

The life of the saint is also characterised by a deep faithfulness to God that is victorious through the worst trials of life. The faith of a saint survives through humiliation, suffering, bereavement, estrangement and treachery, doubt, the failure of their life-work, the feeling of having lost God (dereliction) and a slow, painful, and unilluminated death.¹⁵⁶

Meekness is discussed within a context of humility and dependence on God. Pride is its opposite. Sangster asserts that the nearer the saints grow to God and the clearer they see Him, the more they see of their own unworthiness:

The saints see God. The blessing promised to the pure in heart is theirs. They see God. The life of prayer is all planned for a clearer perception of God. Seeing God, how can they help but see themselves as contemptible, polluted, and with no worth but the worth He chooses to place upon them? [...] The vision of God begets humility in his soul as naturally as our eyes blink when we step into strong sunshine.¹⁵⁷

This humility that manifests itself in the realisation of personal unworthiness in the light of God's holiness correspondingly brings a greater experience of God's holiness.

Sangster sums up this mechanism, 'The more humility, the less pride. The less pride, the

¹⁵³ *Pure In Heart*, p.141.

¹⁵⁴ This was brought up originally under the section on *The Path to Perfection* and is prominent in his publications and sermons on holiness after 1954.

¹⁵⁵ *Pure In Heart*, pp.144 -146.

¹⁵⁶ *Pure In Heart*, pp.147-157.

¹⁵⁷ *Pure In Heart*, p.164.

more of God. The vision of God begets humility in the soul, and the more humility the clearer one's eyes become to see Him as He is.¹⁵⁸

Finally, the idea of temperance is investigated. The main thrust of Sangster's investigation of this aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control, discipline and obedience in all areas of life.¹⁵⁹ The body must be disciplined, asserts Sangster, including the areas of sex, the consumption of food and drink, sleep, and unnecessary luxuries and comforts.¹⁶⁰ The saints mastered their bodies with their desire for God being all encompassing. Although some saints maltreated their bodies, this aspect of the lives of saints, maintained Sangster, served as an important corrective to the excesses of the era. Speaking of the example of the saints Sangster says:

So they kept the body under, and if, at times, in their extravagant way, they 'controlled' it to the point of mutilation, we must remember that they lived with the five bleeding wounds before them and longed to share the fellowship of His sufferings[...] but in an age when there is such clamour for comfort, and the health of the body is sometimes exalted above the health of the soul, the example of the saints is most salutary and their rigours the very challenge that we need.¹⁶¹

Using the fruit of the Spirit as a template, Sangster has painted a rich and colourful picture of the saint. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance define the character of a saint. These qualities of the saint are really aspects of the person of Christ, rooting this view of holiness in Christology. This illustrative investigation of the lives of the saints within the Christological framework of the fruit of the Spirit leads Sangster to conclude that beneath the phraseology and explanations, there is a kinship between the saints of all church traditions. Having citing numerous examples of men and women who had these qualities Sangster has also managed, perhaps as a by-product, to make this quality of life desirable and attainable.

¹⁵⁸ *Pure In Heart*, pp.164-165.

¹⁵⁹ *Pure In Heart*, p.168.

¹⁶⁰ *Pure In Heart*, pp.169-180.

¹⁶¹ *Pure In Heart*, p.180.

The rest of Sangster's analysis of holiness is devoted to the ways it has been pursued within the Christian Church with the specific goal of finding similarities in method. Indeed the results of this quest dominate his presentations of holiness until the end of his life. The final part, therefore, of this chapter will focus on how Sangster came to understand the pursuit of holiness.

Sangster contends that the 'secret of the saints' is the way of worship, comprising two principles: absorbing attention to God and utter obedience to God's will.¹⁶² Citing numerous examples from all Christian traditions, including among others: St John Bosco, St Aloysius Gonzaga, John Fletcher, St Francis of Assisi, Alexander Grant, Thomas Collins, St Gerard Majella, Sadhu Sundar Singh, St Thérèse of Lisieux, Catherine Booth, Henry Martyn, and Jeremy Taylor, Sangster asserts that prayer is the way of fixing attention on God.¹⁶³ Each of these great saints, according to Sangster invested vast amounts of time and attention to prayer. On deeper study, however, it appears, according to Sangster, that the type or method of prayer was the key to their saintliness. These saints had learnt to remove self-interest and requesting from prayer; focusing instead on being in God's presence and communing with Him. Sangster describes their method of prayer:

A saint does not *use* prayer. To gaze fixedly on God is an end in itself [...] thanksgiving, praise, and worship comprise most of his praying. And chiefly worship! Sheer adoration! He just gazes on God in love and longing, and can think of no bliss in eternity which will exceed the bliss of gazing still.¹⁶⁴

It is this selfless, adoring contemplation of God that is the source of their holiness. As the saints gaze on God, the Holy Spirit transforms their nature. Sangster sums up this process:

All their holiness is a by-product of this. They look at God, and He looks at them. They grow in holiness as they grow in the steadiness and fixity of their

¹⁶² *Pure In Heart*, p.197.

¹⁶³ *Pure In Heart*, pp.197-198.

¹⁶⁴ *Pure In Heart*, p.199.

gazing[...]And, all the time, by the blessed agency of the Holy Spirit, and all unaware of it himself, that dedicated mortal is being made a saint. He asks for nothing. He only looks on God in Jesus. But it is enough! God uses his steady gazing and gives him Himself. The Holy Spirit effects that blessed by-product and a saint is made.¹⁶⁵

Sangster's reading in Carmelite spirituality seems very evident, reflecting in particular Teresa of Avila's understanding of a state of prayer beyond discursive meditation and ecstasy.¹⁶⁶ It could easily be deduced from this form of Catholic mysticism used by Sangster that detachment from real life would be the inevitable consequence. The magnificent physical efforts and practical achievements, however, of Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and even Sangster himself contradict such an interpretation. The relational core of love towards God leads almost by definition to the outworking of love to the world.

The second principle of worship which characterises the saint is utter obedience. According to Sangster the saint follows the will of God without question, no matter the cost. Drawing from J. P. de Caussade's *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence*¹⁶⁷ and through this devotional classic accessing John of the Cross in particular, this obedience is described as a moment-by-moment trusting in God in all things. Sangster admits that this form of glad abandonment to the will of God is not for the beginner in faith but for the more spiritually mature.¹⁶⁸ Sangster then investigates how a person might progress to this stage of spirituality.

Progress to this higher and seemingly difficult level comes via the exercise of faith and the death of self. Sangster understands faith not only to be the faculty by which the

¹⁶⁵ *Pure In Heart*, pp.199-200.

¹⁶⁶ Teresa of Avila's classic book *The Way of Perfection* was Sangster's primary source for his reading of Teresa: Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection and Conceptions of Divine Love* (London: Thomas Baker, 1901).

¹⁶⁷ J.P. de Caussade, *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence*, ed. by P.H. Ramière (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1933).

¹⁶⁸ *Pure In Heart*, pp.203-209.

believer discerns the unseen but also the active use of that faculty.¹⁶⁹ Although strictly speaking Sangster still sees faith as a gift of God, its growth and development derives from understanding, vision and insight and the use of the will. The more faith is exercised the more it grows.¹⁷⁰ Although this definition of faith goes beyond simple trust, it is not understood as meritorious and remains essentially a Protestant understanding.

The saint is, according to Sangster, also dead to self.¹⁷¹ Their self-centredness is killed by their continual adoration of God; desiring God only. Although always subject to temptation the saint 'assesses every desire and aspiration instantly in the pure presence of God and identifies himself for or against it, according to that swift assessment in the light of heaven.'¹⁷² Sangster's emphasis is again based on his belief that God primarily deals with humankind in the conscious mind and what rises up from the subconscious must be dealt with at the conscious level. Frederic Greeves criticised Sangster on this point saying that Sangster should have given more place to the hidden action of God.¹⁷³ From Sangster's logic it seems that he does in fact allow for God's hidden activity in the soul, evidenced by very fact of hidden sins rising to the conscious level i.e., being revealed in order to be cleansed.¹⁷⁴

Finally, his in depth survey of sainthood concludes by returning to love as the chief outworking of the life he has described. The result is probably best understood as a life filled with the energy of love. The saint has a 'blinding realization of God's love,'¹⁷⁵ and an outpouring of love in response, both back to God and to the wider world, so that:

¹⁶⁹ *Pure In Heart*, p.221.

¹⁷⁰ *Pure In Heart*, pp.222-224.

¹⁷¹ Sangster was not afraid of speaking of sin in his newspaper columns, both declaring it as an offence to God and consisting mainly of self-centredness: *Sunday Times*, 3 July 1955, p. 10 and 30 Oct. 1955, p.10.

¹⁷² *Pure In Heart*, p.234.

¹⁷³ Frederic Greeves, *The Meaning of Sin* (London: Epworth Press, 1956), p.168.

¹⁷⁴ *Pure In Heart*, pp.234-236. See also p.195-197 of this thesis for a more detailed account of the Holy Spirit's work in the subconscious and unconscious levels of the mind. Sangster seems also to have changed his mind with regard to the ownership of temptation when compared to *The Path to Perfection*, p.228, where Sangster seems to have too closely identified temptation with human nature itself.

¹⁷⁵ *Pure In Heart*, p.239.

In the rapture of *this* love, he loves the world. To know himself loved like that is an experience so transporting that he can deny his love to no one. So rich is he in the consciousness of God's love that man's hate or coldness is a trifle, and both can be conquered by love.¹⁷⁶

Although the type of saintliness Sangster describes carries strong corporate and social consequences, as with his earlier thoughts on the pursuit of holiness Sangster seems reluctant to move beyond individual categories. The whole pursuit of holiness seems to be between the individual and God. His two central principles of worship: attending to God and utter obedience, as illustrated, are almost exclusively discussed as an individual pursuit. Worship surely carries heavy corporate elements – a fact not investigated by Sangster.

From this point forward the evidence of Sangster's writings and sermons indicate that he saw his chief task as promoting the pursuit of holiness and making it desirable and accessible. He used pamphlet, sermons and one self-help book to fulfil this task. The first results of this engagement with the subject of holiness were his series of sermons at Ocean City in 1956.¹⁷⁷ The first in the series and entitled 'Unconditional Surrender' continues the themes of total abandonment to the will of God no matter the consequences. This, asserts Sangster, is the precondition and starting point of progress in holiness.¹⁷⁸ The second message 'The Doctrine of the Indwelling Christ' focuses on having Christ dwell within the human heart by his Spirit. Emphasis is placed on 'starting clean'; asking God to forgive and wash away any sin. This reiterates his view that all dealings with God begin in contrition. The seeker for holiness must then 'claim' forgiveness in Christ and believe God's promise of forgiveness.¹⁷⁹ His third message, entitled 'How to Covet the "We Life"' used the 'we' passages of the book of Acts as inspiration. After claiming

¹⁷⁶ *Pure In Heart*, p.247.

¹⁷⁷ It has not been possible to discover the exact order of these sermons, although from the very few internal clues the order in the bibliography seems likely.

¹⁷⁸ This was again a central point of his Pentecost sermon at Cliff College in 1957. See: *Joyful News*, 13 June 1957, p.6.

¹⁷⁹ The essence of this sermon is found in chapter 24 of *The Secret of Radiant Life*.

forgiveness the seeker for holiness should see the opposite of their sins in Christ and 'attend to them'; building a clear picture of the holiness desired. This picture should be supplemented by studying the lives of the saints and developing a longing (ardent desire) for their qualities of life. Sangster suggests the discipline of living as though Christ is a constant companion throughout daily life; using the idea of 'we'.¹⁸⁰

Shortly after these sermons in Ocean City, Sangster preached on holiness at the World Methodist Conference, his sermon being essentially an apologetic for renewed attention to holy living. Entitled 'Called to Be Saints',¹⁸¹ the core of the message was that the early Methodists had heard: the call to holiness; they knew the way to holiness; and they reached the heights of holiness. Sangster concluded by suggesting that Methodism no longer hears the call clearly, does not know the way, and flounders in the foothills of holiness.¹⁸² He admonished and encouraged the World Methodist Conference to turn their minds to the pursuit of holiness.

The individual pursuit of holiness was addressed again in *The Secret of Radiant Life* (1957) - a classic 'how to' book on holiness. This book, though a valuable devotional tool, reveals little of significance to further the understanding of Sangster's ideas concerning the pursuit of holiness. The contribution of this book to Sangster's dealings with holiness is the attempt to make holiness accessible and desirable, holding forth the idea of a 'radiant personality' as something possible for anyone who seeks it. The book is an attempt to show unbelievers and believers alike that faith in Christ can create a radiant life for anyone seriously devoted enough to follow the steps. Stress is placed again on self-examination,¹⁸³ the divine indwelling,¹⁸⁴ holiness as a gift of faith,¹⁸⁵ and meditative

¹⁸⁰ A brief version of this message is found in chapter 25-26 of *The Secret of Radiant Life*. Westminster Pamphlet No.8 entitled 'How to Live In Christ' carries identical emphases. 'The Daily Walk in the Life of Victory' Sangster At Filey is for all intents and purposes the same sermon.

¹⁸¹ *Proceedings of the Ninth World Methodist Conference*, pp.358-365.

¹⁸² *Proceedings of the Ninth World Methodist Conference*, p.365.

¹⁸³ *The Secret of Radiant Life*, pp.71-165.

prayer.¹⁸⁶ This latter point highlights yet again the use of the psychology of visualisation combined with contemplative imagination in prayer, with the devotional use of the Bible being an important aid.

Sangster wrote the pamphlets, 'You Can Be A Saint' (1957), 'How Much Are You Saved?' (1959), and 'The Greatest of These....'(1959), in order to continue the agenda of making holiness desirable and accessible. The life of holiness is again described as out-flowing radiant love; a love that is attractive and strong, the possession of which would impact society for the good.¹⁸⁷ Once again the social consequences of the holy life are emphasised but the pursuit is again cast in individual categories.

This ends Sangster's direct dealings with the subject of Christian holiness. A steady flow of articles continued on the subject of prayer in *The Joyful News* and *The Prayer-Cell Messenger*, in which he constantly advocates prayer as the way to revival and holiness. His mammoth efforts during his illness in promoting the formation of prayer-cells certainly testify to the idea that he understood the significance of corporate prayer. Sangster's publication 'How to Form A Prayer-Cell'¹⁸⁸ also underlined his commitment to the gathering of God's people in prayer. It was particularly through this means that God could change society and the nation.

For nearly twenty-five years, as has been shown, Sangster's chief concern in his writings was the importance of holy living. The conviction that holiness was the most fundamental need of not only his own denomination but also of the wider Church, led Sangster to engage with his own Wesleyan heritage in an attempt to recover and restate the essence of John Wesley's concern for holiness. Sangster subjected Wesley's thought,

¹⁸⁴ *The Secret of Radiant Life*, pp.64-65.

¹⁸⁵ *The Secret of Radiant Life*, pp.23-31.

¹⁸⁶ *The Secret of Radiant Life*, pp.233-234

¹⁸⁷ 'How Much Are You Saved?' *Westminster Pamphlet No.11*, p.13 and 'The Greatest of These....' *Westminster Pamphlet No.12*, pp.13-14.

¹⁸⁸ 'How to Form A Prayer-Cell' *Westminster Pamphlet No.10* (London: Epworth Press, 1958).

and the developments of it within the Methodism of his day, to a critical analysis using the principles and knowledge of modern scholarship. Sangster's restatement of Wesley's understanding of Christian holiness dispensed with aspects of thought which he found untenable in the modern world; the definition of sin and human sinfulness being the focus of much of his attention.¹⁸⁹ Later, Sangster modified his views concerning sanctification and perfection by not only using catholic nomenclature but also by drawing from the spirituality of the Catholic mystical tradition. Combined with a Protestant view of faith the result was a broader ecclesial enunciation of the holy life. For Sangster, dynamic unselfish love was the essence of holiness. His final efforts were invested in propagating the pursuit of holiness, advocating the methods of contemplative prayer including living the 'we life' (the life of the indwelling Christ) and the building of prayer-cells – all to the one end: Holiness.

¹⁸⁹ The official publication *Message and Mission of Methodism* carried an emphasis on holiness almost identical to that of Sangster. *Message and Mission of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1946).

Some Conclusions

This thesis has been a study of the way in which William Edwin Sangster understood the idea of Christian holiness. Throughout, the chief concern has been to trace the development of his views of sanctification and perfection from his first dealings with the subject of Christian holiness in 1936 until his untimely death in 1960. It has been argued that Sangster restated the Wesleyan view of holiness in modern terms. Throughout his ministry, especially from 1936 onwards, Sangster felt that holiness was the dire need of the Church and its pursuit needed recovering. Numerous times, Sangster requested for greater attention to be given to the study and pursuit of holiness. He took the task upon himself, and became an avid student and herald of holiness.

The central focus of this thesis has been, therefore, to discover and critically evaluate William Sangster's understanding of holiness, particularly the doctrines of sanctification and perfection. It has been shown that throughout the period of his engagement with the subject of holiness his views underwent subtle changes.

His writings on holiness between 1936-1938 revealed a devotional emphasis with a growing sense of questioning about his Wesleyan heritage. His idea of holiness from this period is very much limited to the idea of personal betterment through work and struggle, with little indication of the corporate, social or global dynamics that the doctrine might carry.

The period 1942-1953 saw Sangster defining and applying his understanding of holiness. Picking up unanswered questions raised by Platt, Perkins and Flew, Sangster subjected John Wesley's doctrine of perfection to a modern biblical, philosophical and theological investigation with a view to restating it in modern terms. Sangster's reinterpretation of sin based on an evolutionary understanding of human origins coupled

with a Jungian analysis of the human condition resulted in a new shape to the doctrines of sanctification and perfection. Rather than positing a soteriology based on a 'Fall-Restoration' paradigm Sangster understood the whole of God's purpose with humankind as one of perfecting.¹⁹⁰ On this point, for his time and ecclesial tradition, Sangster was original, anticipating later developments in the Wesleyan understanding of holiness. The process of perfecting was, for Sangster, a relationship between persons; God and the individual. Within this context of perfecting, death was not an insurmountable and final barrier between the loving perfecting purposes of God and each person. This view of Sangster allowed for progress and growth after death, for everybody except the finally impenitent. This was a reinterpretation of the idea of purgatory. This particular part of his restatement drew strong criticism from those who held the Pentecostal/Experiential view of holiness. Sangster's view of sin and sinfulness also led him to reject the idea of testifying to freedom from sin; for 'no one knows what is in him.'

According to Sangster, sanctification occurs by the work of the Holy Spirit, bringing hidden sins and motives to the conscious level to be cleansed, carrying goodness back to the hidden levels of the mind. A relative perfection is possible in this life, defined as perfect love towards God, self and neighbour. This is a limited perfection, for each person is inseparable from sinfulness, which for Sangster contained a suprapersonal element. This sin was attached to systems of life and contained political, social, racial and economic elements. Each individual person belongs to and is inextricably caught up in these systems, making unconscious sin, in some ways, inevitable. Sangster's preferred term 'perfect love' avoids the focus on sin, turning attention instead to the qualities of Christlikeness; categories preferred by those of the 'classical Wesleyan emphasis' within

¹⁹⁰ There are some inconsistencies in Sangster's thought at this point. Although in his formal analysis of holiness he certainly holds to this position, in his answer to questions concerning theodicy he shows reticence in allowing the presence of pain and suffering in the original plan of creation. See: *Give God A Chance*, p.74-81. Whether Sangster, wary of his audience, answers more conservatively, or whether his more conservative tone is evidence of a change of view, it is certainly worthy of further study.

his own denomination. Sangster saw 'perfect love' as a deeper work of the Holy Spirit which could be received instantaneously by faith and which was to be lived in moment by moment dependence on God.

In the context of post-war interdenominational cooperation, Sangster began to modify his views, exploring the relationship of the Wesleyan understanding of holiness to other traditions, showing particular interest in Roman Catholicism and attempting to find lines of convergence. Sangster also began to further develop his method of pursuing holiness by contemplative prayer, using a technique from psychology; auto-suggestion and visualisation, focusing on Christ and the lives of the saints. For Sangster, devotional study of the Bible and reading biographies of the lives of the saints was an invaluable part of creating a larger and more colourful picture of the qualities of saintliness, upon which the mind could focus.

The period 1954-1960 saw Sangster adopting a more inclusive ecclesial terminology, speaking of holiness predominantly using the term 'saint.' Using the Pauline concept of the fruit of the Spirit, Sangster constructed a biblical view of the qualities of a saint, characterised by the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance. These qualities of the saint were richly illustrated by examples from the lives of saints from a broad selection of ecclesial traditions. The fruit of the Spirit derive from the nature of Christ, making his focus of holiness Christocentric. In his examination of the method of pursuing holiness Sangster drew heavily from Catholic mysticism, particularly from Spanish Carmelite spirituality. This contributed to his understanding of contemplative meditative prayer, understood now as 'gazing on God'; seeking Him for Himself, coupled with utter abandonment to the will of God. According to Sangster, this led to the 'death of self' and a life filled with the energy of love, all received by faith moment by moment. This love, being the love of

God, reaches beyond the individual, leading to the outworking of God's purposes in society and the wider world.

The wider propagation of the pursuit of holiness became the focus of the final years of his life, through book, sermon, article and pamphlet. Sangster's publications and sermons of the period stressed the attractiveness and availability of saintliness. The qualities of the saints make their lives radiant. This radiance is the result of the indwelling Christ and is available to all who truly seek it. The method propagated is to start clean by contrition, to look at the qualities of Christ and the saints, to ardently desire such qualities and to attend to them. This latter point involved the aforementioned meditative prayer of gazing on God combined with the use of auto-suggestion and visualisation from psychology.

His understanding of holiness from 1942 onwards contained a strong social element. Sangster believed that the wider reception of this quality of life would benefit the Church in numerous ways; invigorating its witness to the world, providing power in evangelism and fostering reunion. His 'Sermon For Britain' also revealed numerous ways in which the moral change of sanctification, would bring goodness to wider society, even the world. Perhaps his own efforts, living for five years in the Westminster air-raid shelter among the people, exemplified the holiness he was advocating.

Sangster's understanding of the pursuit of holiness throughout the whole of his engagement with the doctrine was limited to an individual pursuit, showing little evidence of corporate categories. Within his writings on holiness little attention is given to the place of the sacraments, the significance of the body of Christ, and corporate worship. This raises the question whether his writings on this issue were consistent with his ecclesiology and his practice. There is even a tendency for his understanding of the function of the prayer-cell to be atomistic; a gathering of individuals, rather than a

community together seeking holiness and by virtue of that interaction or journey being changed together.¹⁹¹ The area of Sangster's ecclesiology is, therefore, worthy of further study. Whatever the case, such a task lies beyond the agenda of this thesis.

Accepting this weakness in Sangster's understanding and method of the pursuit of holiness does not detract, however, from the fact that his writings and preaching made holiness understandable within the modern world. He avoided the stress on holiness as a series of negations, which characterised many of the groups belonging to the Holiness Movement. Sangster showed the qualities of holiness to be positive and desirable. Sangster's method of pursuing holiness, though limited, provided an accessible, appealing and historically-tested way forward.

In conclusion, therefore, this thesis has argued, that Sangster should be regarded as an important scholar within the area of Wesleyan theological studies. Furthermore the thesis contends that he was not only a forerunner of the modern studies of Wesley but was also a scholar who constructed a unique restatement of the Wesleyan understanding of sanctification and perfection, resulting in a view of holiness that is: theologically relevant to modern thought and ecumenically appealing; portrayed as desirable, accessible and attainable. The evidence of this thesis has pointed to the truth of Eric Baker's tribute to Sangster:

[...]no one has done more than he to set the doctrine of Christian perfection free from its narrow pietistic interpretation and expound it as the measure of the salvation that is available to men in Jesus Christ.'

William Sangster has always been remembered as a preacher. This thesis has made the case that within the Wesleyan tradition he should also be considered to be a significant theologian. Both in and beyond his own tradition he was in word and deed a true: **'herald of holiness.'**

¹⁹¹ 'How to Form A Prayer-Cell', p.15.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND APPENDIX

This bibliography contains a unique and original collection of primary material including rare LP, audio cassette recordings and one film. All Sangster material is listed first, apart from the collection of four hundred articles which follow in the appendix. In the main bibliography the primary Sangster material is followed by a section on Methodist works. The writings of John Wesley are listed under secondary sources.

The appendix which follows the main bibliography is not only the first chronological survey of Sangster's articles but is also annotated with the specific intention to aid in the further study of William Sangster.

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Article/letter	Publication	Date	Comments
Letter: To Simon Thwaite	Private: UMJRL	2 Jan. 1920	Acknowledgment of letter of thanks for services as a local preacher.
'Something to Get Hot About'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	15 Sept. 1932, p.8.	Hopes for British Methodism following the 1932 Union.
'The Search for Certainty'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	14 Sept. 1933, p.7.	Stresses the importance of the doctrine of assurance, including personal testimony to his own experience. Reprinted in edited form in <i>MCBBA</i> , at the close of Chapter 7.
'Why is it Some People Cannot Find God?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	8 March 1934, p.15.	The importance of personal surrender to breaking down barriers to Christian experience.
Letter: 'Finding God'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	22 March 1934, p.19.	Response to Rev. Will Horner's letter of (<i>MR</i> : 15 March 1934, p.19) who objects to Sangster's use of the phrase 'Finding God' in his article of 8 March 1934 in the same publication.
'The Oxford Group'	<i>Methodist Times & Leader</i>	5 July 1934, p.7.	Defence of the Oxford Group Movement: Similarities to the origins and success of early Methodism. Guidance defended.
'Life-Changing'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	15 Nov. 1934, p.9.	Positively questions the reasons for the success of the Oxford Group Movement and questions the steady decline of Methodism. Thoughts later expressed in <i>MCBBA</i> .
'Can the Empty Church Problem Be Solved?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	24 Jan. 1935, p.15.	Questions the falling numbers in Methodism. Requests for a stress on personal evangelism and a re-visit of the Methodist doctrine of perfect love.
'Problems of the Practice of Prayer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	16 Jan. 1936, p.15.	On barriers to an effective life of prayer. Reprinted in <i>HIA</i> , Chapter 15 and <i>Prayer</i> .
'Has Methodism Lost Distinctiveness?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	8 Oct. 1936, p.17.	Addresses decline of Methodism & possible reasons. Looks at successes of the Oxford Group Movement in contrast. These comments are mostly edited out of the chapter of the same title in <i>MCBBA</i> .
Letter: 'Our Methodist Home'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	22 Oct. 1936, p.23.	Reply to Rev. R. L. Wilbridge's response (<i>MR</i> : 15 Oct. 1936, p.23) to the above article. Sangster stresses John Wesley's definition of a Methodist rather than the term 'Methodist' as a denominational label.
'Seekers Who Get No Further'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	26 Nov. 1936, p.17.	Addresses the limitations of mass evangelism and advocates that the whole life of the church should be one of mission.

Letter: 'Trifling with Evangelism'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	17 Dec. 1936, p.25.	In response to the letters of Rev. Johns, Mr A. Nelson and Rev. Boughey who criticise his views on evangelism and mission (<i>MR</i> : 10 Dec.1936, p.25). Sangster re-emphasises the importance of personal evangelism.
'Brunner versus Barth: The Group Movement and the Churches'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	4 Feb. 1937, p.4.	A summary of the debate between Barth and Brunner on the Oxford Group Movement. Sangster defends in Group, for people are being added to the Church. Reprinted with further thoughts in <i>MCBBA</i> , Chapter 5 but with new ending.
'Is Christ Only A Partial Saviour?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	8 April 1937, p.15.	Sangster asks whether Methodism has neglected the doctrine of sanctification and requests a greater effort in restating it for today.
'Methodism-A Machine or a Message?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	5 Aug. 1937, p.15.	Advocates returning to the essentials of Methodism; worship, the pursuit of holiness, the culture of the soul and evangelism. He laments that the machinery of church programmes sometimes prevents this.
'Method in Prayer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	30 Oct. 1937, p.8.	Book review of J. H. Bodgener, <i>A Man Praying</i> (London: Epworth, 1937).
'Methodism in the Bicentennial Year: A Chastened Church'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	6 Jan. 1938, p.15.	Seeks to address the reasons for the decline in Methodism and possible cures. Prayer should lead to practical outworking in evangelism.
'Three True Stories of Divine Guidance'	<i>Sunday Circle</i>	22 Jan.1938, p.85.	Defends the concept of divine guidance. Sangster asserts that God not only guides in general ways but also in the details of life.
'Personal Evangelism: A Plea to the Ministry'	<i>Christian World</i>	27 Jan. 1938, pp.1-2.	Stresses the dire need of personal evangelism and personal salvation.
'Has Mass Evangelism Had its Day?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	7 April 1938, p. 17.	Criticises the results of mass evangelism, advocating strongly the importance of personal evangelism and personal salvation.
'Methodism As A Personal Way of Living'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	19 May 1938, p.17.	On the Methodist doctrine of sanctification.
'Methodism in Canada's United Church'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	27 Oct. 1938, p. 9.	A report from Sangster's visit to the General Council of the United Church of Canada held in Toronto, as the fraternal delegate of the Methodist Church of Great Britain and in Ireland.
'Forward! Our Captain Leads the Way'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	31 Aug. 1939, p.3.	The task facing the churches in London with the shadow of war looming.

'What I Intend to do at Westminster'	<i>The Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times</i>	31 Aug. 1939, p.195.	Sangster sets forth the plans for his ministry at Methodist Central Hall.
'I Believe...In Wartime as in Peace'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	5 Oct. 1939, p.3	Convictions not opinions are needed in times of war. The Christian Faith offers strong, life-long convictions.
'God in the Shelters'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	7 Nov. 1940, p. 4.	Sangster writes of the opportunities for Christian ministry within the air-raid shelter
'Christmas in the Shelters'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	5 Dec. 1940, p.12.	Sangster relates the homelessness of the many to the Christmas story.
'God in the Shelters'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	30 Jan. 1941, p.3.	Drink and its consequences are a common problem in the air-raid shelter, reports Sangster. God does effect a cure but often after a long and tiresome process.
'God in the Shelters'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	22 May 1941, p.3.	A report of the common neglect and ignorance of the Christian faith within the shelter.
Letter: 'Wesley Day'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	10 June 1943, p.9.	Wesley day should be used to promote reconsecration and reflection on the springs of spiritual power, writes Sangster.
'Methodist Church in the Post-War World'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	2 Sept. 1943, p.3.	Analyses the particular strengths of the Methodist Church, including the Methodist Hymn Book, a reasonable equality in ministerial pay, elasticity in polity and a commitment to holiness.
'Methodist Church in the Post-War World'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	9 Sept. 1943, p.3.	Advocates: the recovery of the class meeting, the gift of assurance from God, the passion for holiness, and the duty of personal evangelism within Methodism and asks whether a nationwide policy for evangelism is needed alongside a re-distribution of manpower.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	30 Sept. 1943, p.3.	As a columnist in this section Sangster is asked whether Methodist churches should be open every day with a bookstall stocked with propagandist literature so that visitors may be encouraged to study the foundations of belief.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	14 Oct. 1943, p.3.	Sangster answers the question whether the historic creeds should be restated in modern terms, answering in the negative.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	4 Nov. 1943, p.3.	Answers a question about the duties of a class-leader.

'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	23 Dec. 1943, p.3.	Answers a question concerning the relationship of the Kingdom of God to the Church
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	6 Jan. 1944, p.3.	Answers a question concerning the sincerity of printed prayers.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	20 Jan. 1944, p.4.	Answers a question concerning the type of book referred to in Luke 4.17.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	10 Feb. 1944, p.3.	Answers a question concerning the meaning of Hosea 7.8.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	24 Feb. 1944, p.3.	Answers a question concerning Methodism's attitude towards Lent.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	6 April 1944, p.4.	Answers a question concerning the interpretation of Luke 10.18.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	18 May 1944, p.4.	Explains the meaning of 'Lead us not into temptation'.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	1 June 1944, p.3.	Answers a question concerning the need for the baptism of infants if the parents are already baptised and free from the guilt and stain of original sin.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	22 June 1944, p.4.	Answers a question concerning the nature of the resurrected body of Christ.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	3 August 1944, p.3.	Addresses the issue of women local preachers and Paul's dictum that women should be quiet in church.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	7 Sept. 1944, p.3.	Answers a question concerning the deaths of Ananias & Sapphira in Acts 5 and whether such hasty burials were the norm
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	19 Oct. 1944, p.3.	Answers a question concerning the physical appearance of Christ based on Is. 53.2.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	2 Nov. 1944, p.4.	Addresses the issue of mid-week communion and whether hard work immediately before the service is adequate preparation or a distraction.
'They Offer Aid to All With Tangled Lives'	<i>Empire News</i>	19 Nov. 1944, p.2.	A plea for greater use of the parson in aiding people with their problems.
'Happiness Is Not Just A State Affair'	<i>Empire News</i>	10 Dec. 1944, p.4.	Stresses that real change in society starts with the individual.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	14 Dec. 1944, p.4.	Answers a question concerning Christ's perfection and his obedience & suffering.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	21 Dec. 1944, p.3.	In answer to the question, 'What incident in the Christmas story appeals to you?', Sangster answers – the place of the animals in the stall, making room for the Christ-child.
'Don't Raise Your Glass and Forget Bethlehem.'	<i>Empire News</i>	24 Dec. 1944, p.4.	Encouraging readers to remember the true meaning behind Christmas: the Christ story.

'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	4 Jan.1945, p.3.	Answers the question as to whether Jesus believed that Jonah was an historical figure.
'Soldiers' Wives'	<i>Empire News</i>	7 Jan. 1945, p.4.	Encouraging soldiers' wives to live lives of fidelity.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	18 Jan. 1945, p.3.	Sangster answers a question concerning the literal method of interpreting the Bible, rejecting fundamentalist notions.
'Marry in Church Only If You Mean it to Last'	<i>Empire News</i>	21 Jan. 1945, p.4.	Argues for the sanctity of marriage and that only those who truly believe in God and wish to marry 'before God' should be allowed to marry in Church.
Letter: In Defence of Dr. Bett.	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	25 Jan. 1945, p.11.	Sangster defends Dr. Bett's reply to the Vicar of Wilton-under-Wychwood concerning church union. Sangster is sceptical of anything more than cooperation and federation.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	1 Feb.1945, p.3.	Addresses the issue of kneeling during worship.
'Is it Cowardly to Fear Death?'	<i>Empire News</i>	4 Feb.1945, p.4.	Addresses the various types and reasons of the fear of death.
'Has God A Use For The Methodist Church?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	8 Feb.1945, p.3.	In answer to the question of the article, Sangster asserts that Methodism's purpose is evangelism, to spread holiness and to Christianise the social order. Part 1 of a survey of the purpose of Methodism.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	8 Feb. 1945, p.4.	Questioned about the meaning of Matt.18.6-9.
'Wipe Blasphemy Off Your Lips'	<i>Empire News</i>	18 Feb. 1945, p.4.	Divides bad language into blasphemy, obscenity and cursing. Sangster abhors the former two but just dislikes the latter.
'Methodism: Her Unfinished Task'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	22 Feb. 1945, p.7.	Part 2 of his survey from 8 Feb. 1945.
'Conscience Should Be Compass For Life'	<i>Empire News</i>	4 March 1945, p.4.	Explores the nature of conscience and how conscience develops.
'When Peace Comes to Europe'	<i>Empire News</i>	18 March 1945, p.4.	Asks for patience and realism in the period following the end of war.
'An Empty Tomb Has the Critics Defeated'	<i>Empire News</i>	1 April 1945, p.4.	Criticises the theories of the sceptics regarding the resurrection.
'If His Letters Disappoint'	<i>Empire News</i>	15 April 1945, p.4.	Encourages the wives of servicemen whose letters perhaps display little emotional involvement.
'I Lived Four Years In a Shelter'	<i>Empire News</i>	29 April 1945, p.4.	Recollections and lessons from the shelter.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	10 May 1945, p.3.	Answers a question concerning the relationship of the Jews as the 'chosen people' to the mission of Christ.

'Thanks Be To God'	<i>Empire News</i>	13 May 1945, p.4.	Thankfulness for the end of war. Stresses that the same intensity used to fight the war must now be applied to building a lasting peace.
'There's a Lot in a Name'	<i>Empire News</i>	27 May 1945, p.4.	The importance of calling things by their proper names. Applied particularly to the issue of stealing.
'Do Men Need the Church?'	<i>Empire News</i>	10 June 1945, p.4.	Suggests reasons for the serious decline in male church attendance.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	14 June 1945, p.3.	Seeks to interpret the meaning of the 'wheels' in Ezekiel.
'Majority Rule Is Democracy'	<i>Empire News</i>	24 June 1945, p.4.	Addresses the importance of majority rule but stresses the vital impact of highly committed minorities.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	12 July 1945, p.3.	Answers the question concerning the reason the man with the ten talents received the talent from the unprofitable servant (Matt.25.28).
Letter: 'Evangelism by Advertising'	<i>The Spectator</i>	20 July 1945, p.60.	Concurs with Canon Roger Lloyd that the cause of Christianity can be forwarded by skilful advertising. Sangster mentions four difficulties.
'Why Men Won't Go to Church'	<i>Empire News</i>	5 August 1945, p.4.	Further thoughts on this subject in response to numerous letters.
'NOW We Must Win Youth'	<i>Empire News</i>	19 August 1945, p.4.	Writes of the importance of reaching young people for the Church.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	23 August 1945, p.4.	Answers a question concerning the relationship of Peter as the rock upon which Christ will build his Church and 1 Cor.3.11.
'Religion Isn't Dope, It's Dynamite'	<i>Empire News</i>	16 Sept. 1945, p.4.	Argues for the dynamism of true Christian faith – as opposed to the 'dope' to keep the poor in place.
'You Can't Dismiss This Faith in God'	<i>Empire News</i>	30 Sept. 1945, p.4.	Argues for the rationality of faith.
Letter: 'Is This the Victory?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	11 Oct. 1945, p.9.	Defends the 'Is This the Victory?' campaign against its detractors.
'Where Are The Dead?'	<i>Empire News</i>	14 Oct. 1945, p.4.	Seeks to comfort those who have lost loved ones in the war. Speaks of growth, gainful employment and enjoyment as aspects of the after-life.
'God Does Care'	<i>Empire News</i>	28 Oct. 1945, p.4.	An article written in response to the charge that crime and cruelty cancel out any belief that a good God is in charge of the universe.
'What Are You Here For?'	<i>Empire News</i>	11 Nov. 1945, p.4.	Argues that God has a purpose both for the whole race and each individual.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	18 Nov. 1945, p.4.	Argues that 'Central Halls' are true churches, in response to a questioner.

'Is There A Limit?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	18 Nov. 1945, p.5.	Speaks of the problems and strains of having Westminster Central Hall taken over by the Government to house the United Nations' Conference.
'Are YOU Really Alive?'	<i>Empire News</i>	25 Nov. 1945, p.4.	Life is not just a matter of fact but also of degree. The Christian faith offers abundant life.
'Why Do People Pilfer?'	<i>Empire News</i>	9 Dec. 1945, p.4.	Addresses the problem of stealing from public services. Importance of Sunday School for the teaching of morals.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	13 Dec. 1945, p.4.	Answers a question concerning the meaning of Matt.16.20.
'Magic Season'	<i>Empire News</i>	23 Dec. 1945, p.4.	Focuses on the Christmas message of 'peace & good will' against the background of discussions concerning world peace at the Preparatory Session of the United Nations.
'Time Please!'	<i>Empire News</i>	6 Jan. 1946, p.4.	A News Year's meditation on the importance of utilising time.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	10 Jan. 1946, p.4.	Seeks to interpret 'For I am become like a bottle in the smoke' (Ps.119.83).
'Bury the Hatchet – and forget the spot'	<i>Empire News</i>	20 Jan. 1946, 4.	Gives advice that wives should forgive the husbands who have strayed while serving as soldiers during the war.
'Scared to Mix'	<i>Empire News</i>	3 Feb. 1946, p.4.	Encourages people to show courage to move beyond their social circle; the parson to the pub and the non-church-goer to church.
'Don't Slang Churchgoers'	<i>Empire News</i>	17 Feb. 1946, p.4.	Asserts that the often heard comment that church people are unwelcoming is, for the most part, untrue.
'Thou Shalt-'	<i>Empire News</i>	3 March 1946, p.4.	Ten positive commandments
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	14 March 1946, p.4.	Answers a question concerning the meaning of Is.14.7.
'Religious "Mania" is a Myth'	<i>Empire News</i>	17 March 1946, p.4.	Stresses the benefits of faith in God and church attendance.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	28 March 1946, p.3.	Interprets the meaning of 'dumb' in Luke 1.
'Don't Forget This Festival'	<i>Empire News</i>	31 March 1946, p.4.	Promotes the importance of Mothering Sunday at a time when it was being neglected.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	11 April 1946, p.4.	Answers a question concerning how Jesus could be made perfect through suffering (Heb.2.10).
'Praising Father'	<i>Empire News</i>	17 April 1946, p.4.	In response to letters concerning his previous article, Sangster stresses the importance of fatherly love.
'Parsons Aren't Parasites'	<i>Empire News</i>	28 April 1946, p.4.	Defends the role of the parson who he terms as 'workers in character'.

'These Can Be Your Good Days'	<i>Empire News</i>	12 May 1946, p.4.	An article for the middle-aged. The good days can still lie ahead.
'If You've Never Had A Chance'	<i>Empire News</i>	26 May 1946, p.4.	An article that deals with the severe disappointments of life. Great good can, however, be found in adversity.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	20 June 1946, p.4.	Sangster responds to a question about the contention of many ministers that prior to the coming of Jesus there was no satisfying knowledge of God, yet the Psalms seem to express the opposite.
'Oranges Or Diamonds?'	<i>Empire News</i>	23 June 1946, p.4.	Using the illustration of 'oranges and diamonds' from his first published sermon, Sangster enquires of the relative worth of the things that people regard as precious.
'Wesley And Sanctification'	<i>London and Holborn Review</i>	July 1946, Vol.171, pp. 214-221.	A review of Harald Lindström, <i>Wesley and Sanctification</i> . (see main Bibliography)
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	18 July 1946, p.12.	Answers a question concerning the difference between divine guidance and superstition.
'Pain – A Friend'	<i>Empire News</i>	25 August 1946, 4.	Superficially pain is a foe but on closer reflection it is also a friend.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	12 Sept. 1946, p.4.	Seeks to answer the 'problem passage' of Mk.4.11-12.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	28 Nov. 1946, p.3.	Answers a question concerning the nature of the unforgivable sin from Mk.3.29.
'On Secret Service'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX Jan. 1947, pp.6-8.	On the value of serving God behind the scenes, often without human recognition.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	16 Jan. 1947, p.4.	Answers a question concerning John the Baptist's proclamation and baptism.
'Sick...And Ye Visited Me'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX Feb, 1947, pp.54-56.	Encourages the reader to visit the sick. Not only is this emphasised by Jesus but it benefits one's own soul and can be an opportunity for evangelism.
'He Missed the Best Things'	<i>Daily Graphic</i>	1 Feb. 1947, [p.8]	On the true priorities of life.
'Given to Hospitality'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX March 1947, pp.103-105.	The blessing and power of hospitality is emphasised, encouraging housewives to use it in service of the Church.
'In the Hidden Part, Make Me to Know Wisdom'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX May 1947, pp.197-199.	An exhortation to seek the wisdom of God through prayer and meditation on God.
Letter: 'Wesley Day at Westminster'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	15 May 1947, p.11.	Invitation to Whitsuntide holiday makers to attend the Wesley Day celebrations at Westminster Central Hall.

'Extend the Arms of Mighty Prayer'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX June 1947, pp.245-247.	The importance of prayer both for family, church and the world.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	12 June 1947, p.3.	Interprets Matt.20.23.
'Staying Away from Church – For Others'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX July 1947, pp.293-295.	The grace of God blesses those who for good reason cannot be at Church.
'Youth Astray'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX Aug. 1947, pp.341-343.	Expresses concern over the rising tide of juvenile problems. Families need to pray for and encourage young people in spiritual things.
'Suffer the Little Children'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX Sept.1947, pp.388-391, 397.	God loves children: value them. Let the Church teach them goodness. Bring them to Jesus.
'Bring the Books'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX Oct. 1947, pp.437-440.	Stresses the importance of reading good inspiring literature.
'Yea, Even When I Am Old'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX Nov. 1947, pp.485-487	God's grace remains faithful throughout life, bringing more peace and rest as the years pass.
'The Business Mind In the Spiritual World'	<i>Methodist Magazine</i>	CLXX Dec. 1947, pp.538-541.	On bringing discipline and method to spiritual life.
'And Is It Very Far to Bethlehem?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	24 Dec. 1947, p.5.	A Christmas message on how to experience the miracle of Bethlehem.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	3 June 1948, p.3.	Answers a question about the 'brush-like' symbol above the dome of Westminster Central Hall.
'What's Puzzling You?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	28 Oct. 1948, p.3.	Interprets Eph.6.15.
Letter: 'Westminster Central Hall'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	18 Nov. 1948, p.9.	Concerning the renting of Westminster Central Hall to various political and interest groups.
'A Plea For Priority'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	13 Jan.1949, p.2.	A plea for Methodism to avoid being distracted by a multitude of programmes and to focus on the essentials of evangelism and holiness.
'The Church's One Privation'	<i>Religion In Life</i>	1949, 18.4, pp.493-502.	On holiness.
'Roman Catholics Make Day Schools an Election Issue'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	16 Feb. 1950, p.3.	An interview with Sangster about the Roman Catholic Church's attempt to secure the repeal of the 1944 Education Act.
'Holiness'	<i>Pharos Papers</i>	28 Feb. 1950, V, pp.1-8.	On holiness; the possibility for every Christian.

'Can Man Find Out God?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	16 July 1950, p.6.	Faith, not reason, is the condition which God has laid down to discover God's self-disclosure.
'Offering Christ to the People'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	20 July 1950, pp.3-4.	Delivered on 14 July 1950 at the Representative Session of Conference. On the task and importance of evangelism.
Letter: No title		July 1950	Duplicated hand written letter enclosed with <i>Methodism Her Unfinished Task</i> & distributed at the Conference of 1950 to all ministers. Either this letter or a similar one was handed out at Conference to all including the young people.
The President on Holiness	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	3 August 1950, p.1.	Delivered on 24 July at the Ministerial Session of Conference. Stresses the need for and centrality of holiness to the future of Methodism.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'About These Articles'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	31 August 1950, p.3.	Sangster, the new President, introduces the purpose of his column. Apart from dealing with general questions about the role of the Church in the modern age, he will seek to specifically address the place and task of Methodism.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'About Church Reunion'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	7 Sept. 1950, p.3.	The President is pessimistic of further organic union within this generation. Cooperation and inter-communion are possible, although the RCC's decision concerning the Assumption will be a barrier to many, as were the decisions of 1870 and 1854.
'Accept No Substitutes'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	10 Sept. 1950, p.4.	On the demands of the Christian Faith; the whole life of the individual.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Loving Methodism'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	14 Sept. 1950, p.3.	Stresses the importance of loving the local church and the distinctive attributes of Methodism. The Methodist Church must bring these to the debates concerning reunion.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Loving Methodism Overmuch'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	21 Sept. 1950, p.3.	Seeks to delineate the essentials of Methodist Church identity as opposed to the aspects that people hold onto, perhaps to keep control of their local church or for sentimental reasons.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'A Vision For Methodism'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	28 Sept. 1950, p.3.	Sangster lays out his vision for Methodism, seeing it as a swift-moving fighting force for God in the great battle for righteousness; sharp in evangelical attack; cooperating with other churches; recruiting by personal evangelism; & world engaged.

The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Vision For The Local Church'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	5 Oct. 1950, p.3.	Every local church should devise a plan for growth that includes as essentials a stress on evangelism, holiness, worship, prayer and missions abroad.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'A Vision For The Ordinary Methodist'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	12 Oct. 1950, p.3.	A spiritual check-up for Methodists. Asks the reader to look through John Wesley's definition of a Methodist.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'As Others See Us'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	19 Oct. 1950, p.3.	Reprints parts of a letter from an overseas visitor that illustrate some practices that need addressing within the local church: cleaning, choir attire, people sitting at the back of an otherwise empty church.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Our Neglect of Prayer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	26 Oct. 1950, p.3.	Stresses the vital role of prayer in family-life, the individual soul and the life of the Church.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Sincerity Is Not Enough'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	2 Nov. 1950, p.3.	Sincerity, especially in prayer, is not enough; petition often being the focus. Time with God is important; leads to a compassion and concern for others that needs to be worked out in practice – ideas to draw back lapsed Methodists.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Feeling and Prayer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	9 Nov. 1950, p.3.	Sangster gives suggestions how to overcome a major hindrance to prayer; not feeling like it.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Wandering Thoughts'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	16 Nov. 1950, p.3.	Suggestions on how to defeat the second major hindrance to prayer; wandering thoughts.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'A Rule of Prayer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	23 Nov. 1950, p.3.	Presents a scheme for the improvement of personal prayer.
'Hope'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	26 Nov. 1950, p.6.	On the meaning of life and the programme of Christianity which answers it.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Getting Guidance'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	30 Nov. 1950, p.3.	Stresses the possibility of personal guidance from God in important life decisions. Gives suggested ways.
The President's Quarter Hour: 'On Intercession'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	7 Dec. 1950, p.3.	The importance of intercession is stressed. Practices to aid effective prayer for others are offered.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Meditation'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	14 Dec. 1950, p.3.	Stresses the role of meditation in building a healthy sub-conscious.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'His Family and Ours'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	21 Dec. 1950, p.3.	On the family trees of Jesus, according to Matthew & Luke. Stresses that Jesus also came from 'soiled stock'. This gives hope to all who come from difficult backgrounds.

'The Battle for the Soul of Britain in 1951'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	28 Dec. 1950, p.3.	Reviews his visits to the Methodist Districts during his Presidency and sets out his plans for the remainder of his term. Suggests each local church make New Year resolutions- suggests some himself.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Britain and The Wider World'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	4 Jan. 1951, p.3.	Looking at the moral decline of the Country and suggests that a stress on holiness and evangelism is needed.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'The Way of Holiness'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	11 Jan. 1951, p.3.	Stresses the centrality of holy living to the Early Methodists and the importance that it is rediscovered in modern Methodism.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Are There Two Ways To Holiness?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	18 Jan. 1951, p.3.	Defends the Methodist view of holiness as a gift while paying respect to the RCC's viewpoint.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Discipline in Holiness'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	25 Jan. 1951, p.3.	Seeks to relate the Methodist view of holiness as a gift of faith, with the life of discipline.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Holy-In Part'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	1 Feb. 1951, p.3.	On holiness: Addresses the Methodist doctrine of holiness but stresses the crucial significance of the social application.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Personal Evangelism'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	8 Feb. 1951, p.3.	Highlights the need for every Christian to participate in personal evangelism.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Making Contact'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	15 Feb. 1951, p.3.	Suggests ways of breaking the ice when seeking to engage in personal evangelism.
The President's Quarter: 'Having All It Takes'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	22 Feb. 1951, p.3.	Every Christian has what is needed to be a witness for Christ.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Unburdening The Heart'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	1 March 1951, p.3.	Addresses the importance of the role of the confessor in spiritual development and the qualifications needed.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Following Through'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	8 March 1951, p.3.	Speaks of the method of dealing with a penitent.
'The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Securing Continuance'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	15 March 1951, p.3.	Addresses the importance of 'follow-up' after conversion.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Jesus Has Abolished Death'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	22 March 1951, p.3.	Concerning Christ's power over death, devitalising it by: His teaching; His death; His resurrection.

The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Some Aversions'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	29 March 1951, p.3.	Sangster lists some common irritations when attending meetings.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Being Certain of God'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	5 April 1951, p.3.	Highlights the need for Methodism to recover its certainty of faith: the doctrine of assurance.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'On Certainty By Authority'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	12 April 1951, p.3.	Sangster briefly analyses the way the Christian Church has sought certainty by the appeal to authority. Methodism appeals to the authority of the Bible and to the Church, neither of which carries a fundamentalist emphasis.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Certainty by Intuition'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	19 April 1951, p.3.	Concerning the Witness of the Spirit and addresses the inward knowledge of God.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Certainty By Thinking'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	26 April 1951, p.3.	Addresses the role of reason in seeking spiritual certainty.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Pentecost'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	3 May 1951, p.3.	The presence of the Holy Spirit is the message of Pentecost, leading to joy, power and guidance.
'Message to the Methodists of the World'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	3 May 1951, p.4.	An appeal as President for prayer and thought for the upcoming Methodist Ecumenical Conference at Oxford.
Letter: The President's Commendation	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	3 May 1951, p.12	Sangster's letter of support for the London scheme to build a garden memorial to Charles Wesley.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Why Don't People Go To Church?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	17 May 1951, p.3.	The reasons why people don't attend Church are suggested: boring services; lack of difference between those in the Church and those outside; inadequate training.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Pastoral Visitation'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	24 May 1951, p.3.	During many visits around the Country, Sangster has been made aware of a general lack of adequate pastoral visitation. He stresses the need for proper pastoral visits, including the use of scripture and prayer.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'Where is the Work Hardest?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	31 May 1951, p.3.	Reflecting on his visits as President and his own experience as a minister, Sangster gives reasons why ministry in the major built-up areas of the large cities is the most difficult. Some of his proposed solutions anticipate the church-growth principles of the 1980s and 1990s.

The President's Quarter Hour: 'The Way Ahead (i)'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	7 June 1951, p.3.	Suggests that long-term planning is essential for British Methodism, but this must be made to compliment the one year Presidency system.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'The Way Ahead (ii)'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	14 June 1951, p.3.	Clarifies his position from the previous article, stressing the importance and freedom of local church initiatives.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'The Way Ahead (iii)'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	21 June 1951, p.3.	Re-emphasises the central themes of his Presidency: evangelism & holiness. Suggests Cliff College as a centre for the promotion of these throughout British Methodism.
The President's Quarter Hour: 'The Way Ahead (iv)'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	28 June 1951, p.3.	Underlines the need for greater cooperation with other churches; Methodism having a tendency to being parochial.
The President's Quarter-Hour: 'In Conclusion'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	5 July 1951, p.3.	A presidential 'stock taking' for the year; reporting on his major commitments and highlights.
'No Wonder'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	15 July 1951, p.6.	On a sense of wonder. Many so called great 'wonders of the world' disappoint. The greatest wonders are near at hand: that God is and that He cares.
Retiring President's Address	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	19 July 1951, p.1.	Addressed to the new President: Dr. Watkin Jones.
'Beating the Bowling'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	5 Aug. 1951, p.6.	On resisting temptation.
'The Church's Primary Task'	<i>Evangelical Christendom</i>	Sept. 1951, p.74.	A summary of one of Sangster's sermons at the Festival of Britain, United Exhibition and Evangelistic Campaign at Westminster Central Hall, September 1951. The sermon relates the Church's four most important tasks.
'The Need For Revival'	<i>Evangelical Christendom</i>	Sept. 1951, p.107.	As above. Also produced on LP. Stresses the need for revival and mentions the increasing crime rate as a symptom of a spiritually sick country.
'As Old As That'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	23 Sept. 1951, p.6.	Addresses the modern tendency to excuse sin. The Country must recover a sense of right and wrong.
'See Life'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	4 Nov. 1951, p.6.	Young people were being advised to 'see life'. Sangster offers a Christian interpretation of the advice.
'Can I Know God?'	Personal manuscript (A. Cheatle) & Tape Recording.	Sept. or Dec. 1951.	Spoken at the 'For Such A Time As This' campaign. The subject concerns how a person can know God. On the validity of religious experience. A summary is printed under the same title in <i>Westminster Sermons</i> , I, pp.114-123

'Forget It! – And How'	<i>Readers Digest</i>	Jan, 1952, pp.48-50.	Forgetting the hurts people receive from others is not natural; the way is to remember to forget.
'A Life In A Day'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	6 Jan. 1952, p.6.	On how to understand the passage of time and how to make more time.
'How it Began'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	10 Jan. 1952, p.4.	Presents the genesis of the idea for the World Methodist Mission for the year 1953.
'Evangelism – And Leaders' Meetings'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	7 Feb. 1952, p.7.	Advocates that every Leaders' Meeting begin to pray, study the Bible and train in evangelism for one hour each week; to take the lead in preparation for the World Methodist Mission of 1953.
'Set Apart By God'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	14 Feb. 1952, p.3.	Tribute to King George VI who died 6 Feb. 1952.
'Sermons Classified According to Psychological Method'	<i>Pastoral Psychology</i> , 3:52.	March 1952, pp.35-41.	Authoritative, Persuasive and Cooperative methods are the principle psychological types of sermon used by the preacher. Edited version of material from <i>The Craft of Sermon Construction</i> , 1951.
'A Sense of Guilt'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	2 March 1952, p.5.	On the human conscience and a sense of guilt.
'A Question God Can't Answer'	<i>Christian Advocate</i>	6 March 1952, pp.7, 26-27, 31.	An examination of human freedom and the sovereignty of God.
'Anticipating May the 24 th '	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	6 March 1952.	Suggests pilgrimages to the 'shrines' of Methodism, open-air meetings, prayer meetings, covenant services, Wesley Day services and public meetings as ways of celebrating 24 May, all in anticipation of the year of World Methodist Mission.
'Motives in Evangelism'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	3 April 1952.	'Love for others' must be the primary motive for evangelism, not filling empty pews.
'Afterglow of Easter'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	20 April 1952, p.6.	On the continuing benefits of Christ's resurrection.
'My Ministry: Fragments of Autobiography'	<i>British Weekly</i>	CXXXII 24 April, 1952, pp.6-7	Brief descriptions of his daily life as a minister.
'Send Us a Post-Card'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	1 May 1952, p.4.	Asks for every Methodist church or circuit to send post-cards announcing the method of evangelism and the type of training and preparation required for 1953 – the year of Methodist Mission.
'No Peace'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	25 May 1952, p.5.	Peace can be found in Jesus Christ but this has an 'already and not yet' relationship to peace in the world.

'So Far, So Good'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	5 June 1952, p.4.	Reports of the progress being made for 1953. Much is happening, although preparations for the World Methodist Mission seem to be more advance abroad.
'A Word to Critics'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	3 July 1952, p.3.	Addresses the detractors from the plans of 1953. Argues against indifference and excuses. The task of evangelism is essential and a Christian requirement and preparation is now absolutely necessary.
'The Blessing of Conference'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	7 Aug. 1952, p.4.	Reports on the important blessing of the British Methodist Conference on the plans for a year of evangelism.
'He Restoreth My Soul'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	17 Aug. 1952, p.8.	On using holidays to shut out distractions and take time alone with God.
'Do We Believe Our Gospel?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	4 Sept. 1952, p.7.	Discusses some of the difficulties in talking about God in the modern era. This should not excuse the Church from the task of evangelism.
'Man Needs God'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	21 Sept. 1952, p.8.	Sangster contends that humanity needs God to bring sense to existence.
'Three Things'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	2 Oct. 1952, p.7.	Final reminder and encouragement to those churches that have not yet planned for the 1953 year of evangelism.
'What They Are Doing'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	6 Nov. 1952, p.4.	Reports from around the Country concerning the preparation for the year of evangelism.
'He Is Coming'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	30 Nov. 1952, p.6.	An advent message proclaiming the coming of Christ and the Second Advent.
'What A Religious Revival Might Do For Britain'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	8 Jan. 1953, p.3.	A full reproduction of the 'sermon that hit the press', preached at the Sunday Evening service at Westminster Central Hall (4 Jan 1953).
'Humbug Apart - What Do You Believe?'	<i>Daily Express</i>	20 Jan. 1953, p.4.	A message to those who believe in God but don't practice religion. Encourages people to dedicate themselves to God, as will the Queen on Coronation Day.
'When sin is blatant- where shall we seek for a cure?'	<i>Daily Express</i>	27 Jan. 1953, p.4.	A report from Sangster's visit to Manchester for the 'Find-Your-Faith' Crusade.
'I Would Like To Believe...'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	1 Feb. 1953, p.8.	Addresses the difficulties some people have in believing in God due to the contradictory messages of the natural world.
'An Act of God?'	<i>Daily Express</i>	3 Feb. 1953, p.4.	Addresses the issue of disasters and the love of God. Follows the Great Flood of 1953 on the East Coast.

'Let's Be Clear About What We're Doing When We Pay To See A Smutty Show'	<i>Daily Express</i>	5 Feb. 1953, p.4.	For decency in the entertainment industry; support the wholesome and protest against the immoral.
'When Youth Loses Faith Who Are the Guilty?'	<i>Daily Express</i>	13 Feb. 1953, p.4.	The importance of bringing the Church to young people.
'Women and Children only...'	<i>Daily Express</i>	20 Feb. 1953, p.4.	Seeks to ascertain the reason for the lack of men within the Church.
'Found Guilty'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	29 March 1953, p.8.	On the Cross of Christ and its significance.
'The More Excellent Way'	<i>Religion In Life</i>	Spring 1953, Vol.22.2, pp.310-311.	A book review of George Allen Turner, <i>The More Excellent Way</i> (Winona Lake: Life & Life Press, 1952).
'For Forty Days'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	3 May 1953, p.8.	On the Resurrection and importance of the forty days between Easter and the Ascension.
'What Critics Think: The Church From Outside'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	4 June 1953, p.3.	Lists a number of criticisms about the Church from Sangster's <i>Daily Express</i> post-bag.
'Are Our Critics Right?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	11 June 1953, p.3.	A continuation of the above article.
'John Wesley'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	28 June 1953, p.8.	On the significance of John Wesley's life, commemorating two hundred and fifty years since his birth.
'No Wonder'	<i>The Saturday Review of Literature</i>	XXXVI 19 Sept. 1953, pp.24-25.	Unable to procure a copy. Ref. from Dorr, p.215.
'In Everything Give Thanks'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	27 Sept. 1953, p.8.	With Harvest being celebrated across the Country, Sangster encourages thankfulness in all of life.
'What Use Are Saints?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	1 Nov. 1953, p.8.	On the occasion of All Saints' Day Sangster compares three Communist heroes to the Saints, seeing even more goodness in the Saints – especially love.
'What Do You Expect Where Religion Is Spurned?'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	19 Nov. 1953, p.3.	Asserts that declining moral standards are a result of people moving away from religious faith.
'Are We Free?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	6 Dec. 1953, p.8.	Against some modern theories of psychology, philosophy and sociology, Sangster stresses the importance of individual responsibility to the concept of justice and the Law and the running of society.
'A Call to Bigger Thinking and a Bolder Strategy'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	24 Dec. 1953, p.3.	Reflects on the results of the year of evangelism. Emphasises the need for a longer term strategy for the Country.

'In the Villages of India'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	4 March 1954, p.5	Report from his world tour.
'Gospel Transforms South India Village'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	15 April 1954, p.7.	Report from his world tour.
'Evangelism Through Education In Modern Ceylon'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	17 June 1954, p.1.	Report from his world tour.
'Australia's Vital Mission to the Nation Goes On'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	17 June 1954, p.8.	Report from his world tour.
'Warm-Hearted Church of New Zealand'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	2 Sept. 1954, p.5.	Report from his world tour.
'Sunday – and Church'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	5 Sept. 1954, p.8.	On the individual and corporate benefits of church attendance.
'Agnostics Anonymous'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	17 Oct. 1954, p.8.	Sangster airs the idea of applying the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous to Agnostics, believing that time and candid discussion with believers would help them find faith.
'Eleven O'Clock'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	7 Nov. 1954, p.8.	Using Remembrance Day as an introduction, Sangster applies the principle of 'the eleventh hour' to human conscience, encouraging the reader to face God now, before it is too late.
'Century of Transformation in Fiji Islands'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	11 Nov. 1954, p.1.	Report from his world tour.
'How Different Are We?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	20 March 1955, p.8.	Asks the question of those professing Christian faith whether their lives exemplify it properly. Christians should be the salt of the Earth.
'Bible Basis of All We Believe'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	28 April 1955, p.3.	An appeal for agreement on some fundamentals of evangelical faith.
'Ascended!'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	15 May 1955, p.14.	On the meaning of the Ascension, including the real presence of humanity in heaven.
Letter: 'More Views on the Bible Basis of Belief'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	12 May 1955, p.7.	Reply to the letters of Mr.Gill and Dr.Letch from <i>Methodist Recorder</i> , 5 May, p.7.
'The Spirit and the Bride'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	12 May 1955, p.13.	Book review of E.J. Rattenbury, <i>The Spirit and the Bride</i> (London: Epworth, 1955).
'The Meaning of Whitsun'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	29 May 1955, p.8.	The significance of Pentecost to the Christian Faith and the life of the believer.
'Sin's Incinerator'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	3 July 1955, p.10.	On a sense of sin and guilt and its remedy.

'The Rev.Dr.Leslie D.Weatherhead: An Appreciation'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	7 July 1955, p.11.	A personal appreciation of his friend: Leslie Weatherhead.
'Church=Museum'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	4 Sept. 1955, p.8.	Addresses the purpose of the Church; shows the meaning of life and creates goodness.
'Publicity and the Church: A Discussion'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	29 Sept. 1955, p.9.	A discussion between Sangster and Lord Mackintosh about the use of publicity within the Church.
'Revival In Our Time'	<i>Joyful News</i>	29 Sept. 1955, p.1.	States that his goal for his new position as Secretary of Home Mission Department is 'Revival in Our Time'.
'Mission Opportunities in the Welfare State'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	27 Oct. 1955, p.9.	Discusses with Lord Ammon whether the Welfare State has affected mission work.
'The Secret of Salvation'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	30 Oct. 1955, p.10.	Defines salvation as the shifting of self from the centre of personal being.
'The Church and New Television Community'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	24 Nov. 1955, p.1.	Discusses the place and impact of television upon the Church.
'He Came Himself'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	4 Dec. 1955, p.10.	An apologetic for the reality of the Incarnation.
'Let this be True – and Nothing Matters'	<i>Joyful News</i>	8 Dec. 1955, p.4.	Concerning the uniqueness, the eternity and the adequacy of the Christmas story.
'How Can We Get Men Back Into the Church'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	20 Dec. 1955, p.7.	Discusses with Lord Lawson of Beamish the loss of men to the Church and ways of getting them back.
'Redeem the Time'	<i>Joyful News</i>	5 Jan. 1956, p.1.	Addresses the often heard problem that people don't have enough time. Suggests that Christians prune the day of useless, wasteful & unproductive pursuits.
'The Cinema in the Service of Evangelism'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	26 Jan. 1956, p.1.	Interview with J. Arthur Rank about evangelism and the use of film.
'The Meaning of It'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	5 Feb. 1956, p.8.	On the meaning life.
'World Peace: How Individuals Can Help'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	1 March 1956, p.1.	Interview with Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, concerning the role & importance of peace-loving people in the establishment of World peace.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	8 March 1956, p.1.	Discussion of the most effective methods of evangelism, concluding that all are related and necessary.
'A Matter of Time'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	18 March 1956, p.12.	On the fear of death.

'Miners' President On Christian View of Work'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	5 April 1956, p.1.	An interview and discussion with W.E. Jones, President of the National Union of Mineworkers concerning a Christian understanding of work.
'What Have I Done...?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	6 May 1956, p.10.	Addressed to those who find faith difficult because of loss. The cure for the torment and bitterness is Christ.
'The Missing Window in Medak Cathedral'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	31 May 1956, p.1.	Report on the work of Methodism in South India. Frank Salisbury's offer to complete the windows and to give £1000 to the unfinished Medak Cathedral is followed by an appeal for extra funding from readers.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	31 May 1956, p.7.	Evangelism the key theme; discussing prison ministry, young peoples' work and using the unconverted to carry out practical jobs within the church.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	14 June 1956, p.2.	A report on an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and numerous conversions within the Hunstanton and Docking Circuit in North Norfolk. Sangster traces its roots to fervent prayer and visitation.
'Going to Church'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	17 June 1956, p.10.	The neglect of church attendance carries long term consequences for society, including higher divorce rates, juvenile delinquency and stealing.
Letter: 'The Church and the Modernist'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	1 July 1956, p.2.	Reply to Mr. Cound, who criticised Sangster views from the previous article.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	12 July 1956, p.5.	On the revival of Mow Cop in 1807. Suggested that a special 150 year anniversary should be linked with Wesley Day in May 1957 to celebrate.
'Jesus – Mad or God'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	15 July 1956, p.8.	The claims Jesus made about himself mean that he was either mad or God.
Letter: 'Mad or God'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	29 July 1956, p.2.	Reply to Dr. E.E. Chip (22 July 1956, p.2), who sees the example of Buddha as proving Sangster wrong. Sangster asserts in response that, although Buddha was a highly important figure, Jesus is the 'light of the world' and truly God.
'Youth and Maturity in the Church's Service'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	2 August 1956, p.1.	About Bert Bissell's class for young men in Dudley, that has contributed ten Methodist ministers and twenty local preachers within one generation.
'Stymied Souls'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	19 Aug. 1956, p.8.	Counsel for those who find belief difficult. In the case of two equal alternative choices, Sangster suggests taking the 'higher' choice and time will prove the case.

'The Night Draws In'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	16 Sept. 1956, p.12.	On the problems of facing the ageing process and mortality.
'Dr. Sangster and His Hopes For Revival Now'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	20 Sept. 1956, p.1.	An extensive interview with Sangster on Methodism's purpose.
'Treasurers of Meditation'	<i>Reader's Digest</i>	LXIX Sept. 1956, pp.109-110	The importance and benefit of setting aside quality time to meditate on God and positive thoughts.
'We Are Doing Battle for the Soul of Britain'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	27 Sept. 1956, supplement, p.i.	Addresses the important work of the Home Missions Department, commenting especially on the vast challenges due to changes in society, particularly large shifts in population.
'A Rule For Prayer'	<i>Joyful News</i>	4 Oct. 1956, p.3.	A practical guide to prayer.
'The Light of Reason'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	7 Oct. 1956, p.10.	On the human condition; sin and its consequences.
'Publicity and the Perfect Product'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	23 Oct. 1956, p.3.	A report on Sangster's speech to the Advertising Christian Group at Orange Street on 22 Oct.1956. Contains most of his speech.
'Can We Get "Peace of Mind"?'	<i>Christianity Today</i>	Vol. 1, 29 Oct. 1956, pp.5-17.	A response to the many books on peace of mind. Sangster asserts that people need to know where to look and to look for the right things.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	1 Nov. 1956, p.2.	Addresses some barriers to church growth, answering in particular the plight of some ministers who find themselves using most of their time and energy looking after buildings and church gardens without help.
'Spectacles in Childhood'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	4 Nov. 1956, p.12.	Asserts that everyone sees life through spectacles. The Christian sees life through the eyes of Christ.
Letter: Concerning the British involvement in the Suez Crisis.	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	15 Nov. 1956, p.3.	Sangster vehemently attacks government policy, saying among other things, 'We have soiled our good name, strained the Commonwealth to breaking point – invited the public rebuke of the world and dealt a blow to the United Nations which could prove fatal'.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	15 Nov. 1956, p.2.	Reports on the start of the Schools For Evangelism programme and encourages attendance.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	29 Nov. 1956, p.2.	On behalf of the Home Mission Committee, Sangster calls Methodism to cooperate in the Prayer Life Movement. Also, contains a report from the North London Crusade at Edmonton Central Hall.

'A Minimum for God'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	2 Dec. 1956, p.10.	Sangster suggests a prayer a day and a weekly attendance at a Church service as a minimum commitment for the Christian.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	13 Dec. 1956, p.2.	On the benefits of the house church or home cell for the growth of the Church.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	27 Dec. 1956, p.5.	Emphasis on prayer.
'What Is Time'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	6 Jan.1957, p.10.	Enquires about the purpose of time; the earth is a vale of soul-making, with faith, hope and love abiding.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	10 Jan. 1957, p.3.	Report on the progress of his call to prayer, including reports of a local revival in Sherburn Methodist Church, Durham.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	24 Jan. 1957, p.2.	Encouragement to increase the amount of prayer.
'In A Train'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	3 Feb. 1957, p.12.	A moral lesson concerning a man who ruins his life by committing adultery.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	7 Feb. 1957, p.5.	Concerning the equipment needed for the average Christian to become an effective witness.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	21 Feb. 1957, p.2.	Second part of previous article.
'Through the Barrier'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	28 Feb. 1957, p.9.	Concerning ways of breaking the barrier between the Church and the world.
'Values Are Real'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	3 March 1957, p.12.	Concerning human conscience.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	7 March 1957, p.2.	Third part of the series dealing with equipment needed to be an effective witness.
'Democratic Humanism'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	31 March 1957, p.14.	Explores the validity of democratic humanism as an alternative to the Christian Faith.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	31 March 1957, p.2.	Part four of his series on the equipment needed for effective Christian witness.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	4 April 1957, p.2.	Fifth part of the series on effective witness.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	18 April 1957, p.2.	Part six of effective evangelism.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	2 May 1957, p.2.	Reports of Methodist evangelical student campaigns during Easter.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	16 May 1957, p.2.	Addresses what he sees as hindrances to revival.
'No Hoax'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	19 May 1957, p.16.	Takes issue with those who claim Christ never existed.
'The Christian Use of Leisure'	<i>Christianity Today</i>	Vol.1, 10 June 1957, pp.11-13.	On various ways of using free time with suggestions for more Christian uses of time.

'How the Apostles Came to Pentecost'	<i>Joyful News</i>	13 June 1957, p.1.	A new Pentecost is needed to bring about a Revival of Religion, says Sangster, before laying out a number of preconditions that the disciples fulfilled before their experience of the Holy Spirit.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	13 June 1957, p.2.	More thought on hindrances to revival.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	27 June 1957, p.2.	Third part on the hindrances to spiritual revival.
'Going to Church'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	7 July 1957, p.14.	On the excuses people use for not attending church.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	11 July 1957, p.2.	More on hindrances to revival.
' "Moral Tone –Up of Nation" First Consequence of Return to God'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	18 July 1957, p.5.	Sangster's report to Conference as President of Home Missions.
'Blue –Domers'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	4 Aug. 1957, p.13.	On the excuses used for not attending church, especially by 'blue-domers', a term used by parsons for those who feel worship under 'the blue-dome of heaven' is enough.
'The Jungle is Neutral'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	1 Sept. 1957, p.13.	Addresses the subject of natural theology.
'The New Joyful News'	<i>Joyful News</i>	5 Sept. 1957, p.3.	On the purpose of the publication: Evangelism, Scriptural Holiness, Social Righteousness and Spiritual Revival.
'Is Unbelief Sin?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	15 Sept. 1957, p.16.	Addresses the issue of unbelief and its relationship to sin.
'The Minister As Pastor'	<i>British Weekly</i>	CXL 19 Sept. 1957, p.5.	The crucial role of shepherding within the work of the minister.
Letter: 'Is Unbelief Sin?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	29 Sept. 1957, p.4.	Reply to Lord Amwell's letter (<i>Sunday Times</i> , 22 Sept. 1957, p.4.) that took issue with Sangster's article on unbelief.
'What Kind of Agnostic?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	6 Oct. 1957, p.26.	Argues the case for Christian faith against two forms of agnosticism.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	24 Oct. 1957, p.6.	A report on the second series of Schools of Evangelism.
'The Sorrows of Sceptics'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	3 Nov. 1957, p.16.	A lesson from the life of Edward Clodd the celebrated agnostic who found his agnostic friends turning to belief later in life.
'Using Tragedy'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	1 Dec. 1957, p.18.	A Christian response to tragedy.

'Doubling Membership in Ten Years'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	5 Dec. 1957, p.1.	On the Schools of Evangelism programme and Sangster's contention that keeping the youth of Methodism would double Methodist membership within ten years.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	12 Dec. 1957, p.6.	On the crucial importance of love to the success of the evangelistic drive and to the life of the Church.
'Into the Unknown'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	5 Jan. 1958, p.14.	A New Year's message drawing encouragement from Abraham's step of faith to follow God, 'not knowing where he went'.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	9 Jan. 1958, p.3.	Reports from various evangelistic drives, illustrating widespread indifference.
'Religion and Peace'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	2 Feb. 1958, p.16.	With the growing threat and fear of nuclear annihilation, Sangster states that religious people believe that God can show a way forward.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	13 March 1958, p.2.	More reports from evangelistic campaigns.
'Send or Take?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	16 March 1958, p.18.	On the importance of taking children to church rather than sending them.
Letter: To Alex Deasley		11 April 1958.	Sangster answers a question concerning the relationship of Taylor's understanding of knowledge from his <i>Gifford Lectures</i> and John Wesley's view of assurance and the inner witness.
'Hating God'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	20 April 1958, p.18.	A reply to those who claim to hate God.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	24 April 1958, p.2.	During the run up to Pentecost, Sangster encourages the reader to seek a fuller experience of the Holy Spirit and to evidence greater love towards other denominations.
'Proved by the Fruit'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	18 May 1958, p.20.	On the meaning of Pentecost and the presence of the Holy Spirit.
'God Enjoys Forgiving'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	15 June 1958, p.18.	On God's forgiveness and the seriousness of sin.
'Fun in the Lord's Name at Filey'	<i>The Methodist Recorder</i>	26 June 1958, p.18.	A positive advertisement for the Christian holiday camps at Filey.
'Fresh from the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	3 July 1958, p.2.	Addresses the issue of co-operation in evangelism and its importance for revival. Stresses again the vital role of prayer.
'The Way to Know'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	6 July 1958, p.16.	Although the existence or non existence of God cannot be proved, commitment and faith lie at the heart of knowing God

Report of the General Secretary of the Home Mission Department	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	17 July 1958, pp.1 & 3.	Sangster's report to the Methodist Conference of 1958. A new apologetics, pre-evangelism and more prayer are needed to bring revival.
'The Evil of Religion'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	3 Aug.1958, p.12.	Attempts to bring perspective to some of the evils caused by religion.
'Does Religion Matter?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	31 Aug. 1958, p.16.	A defence of the relevance of religious belief.
'The Search for Truth, and God's Answer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	11 Sept. 1958, p.1.	The need for the Church to face reality rather than ignore the true state of apathy and resistance within the Country.
'Questions Methodists Must Answer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	18 Sept. 1958, p.9.	Addresses the question of the use and separateness of Methodism.
'Decent-But Not Religious'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	21 Sept. 1958, p.18.	Sangster asserts that, although it is possible to be decent without religion, morals based on such a position are rarely robust.
'Let's Face These Pressing Needs'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	25 Sept. 1958, p.11.	On the importance of prayer especially corporate prayer.
'The Witness Within'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	19 Oct. 1958, p.32.	Addresses the question of difficulties to faith and the 'pull of the Great Reality'.
'The Voice Within'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	16 Nov. 1958, p.32.	Concerning human conscience.
'Standing in the Need of Prayer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	27 Nov. 1958, p.11.	The need for more prayer and an introduction to the Westminster Pamphlet <i>How To Form A Prayer Cell</i> .
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	27 Nov. 1958, p.7.	On increasing the prayer power of the Church.
'Standing In the Need of Prayer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	4 Dec. 1958, p.13.	The continuing need for more prayer, including and tips for forming a prayer cell.
'Interested In Religion'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	7 Dec. 1958, p.32.	Interest in religion is not enough, commitment is needed.
'3 Prepare to Meet Thy God'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	11 Dec. 1958, p.13.	How to prepare and run a prayer meeting.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	11 Dec. 1958, p.8.	On prayer and the establishment of more prayer cells. Relates his experience of being in hospital.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	25 Dec. 1958, p.3.	Expresses his great hope for 1959: the establishment of more prayer cells.
'Beset Behind & Before'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	4 Jan. 1959, p.24.	On God's help when feeling beset by problems. A meditation on Ps.139.5.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	15 Jan.1959, p.2.	On the problems faced by the Methodist Central Halls due to declining numbers.
'The Urgent Need For Recovery of Prayer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	29 Jan. 1959, p.1.	On the importance of prayer to all the efforts of Methodism.

'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	29 Jan. 1959, p.2.	On ways of serving God despite hindrances.
'Does God Demand Worship?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	1 Feb. 1959, p.26.	Addresses misunderstandings about worship.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	12 Feb. 1959, p.2.	On the importance of preaching.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	26 Feb. 1959, p.2.	Reports of Christian work in Russia and the value of home Class meetings.
'What Critics Say To Evangelicals'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	5 March 1959, p.1.	Assesses the criticisms aimed at evangelicals that they place too much stress on the Cross and conversion.
Letter: 'A Letter to You'	<i>Prayer-Cell Messenger</i>	March 1959, p.1.	Introductory letter about this new publication with its purpose to encourage and increase prayer.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	9 April 1959, p.2.	Discusses the divisions within Christianity but sees the Church's strength in the deep piety, love and sacrifice of its people.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	23 April 1959, p.2.	On religious broadcasting and tolerance.
'Aid For Reverent Agnostics'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	30 April 1959, p.1.	On how to speak to Christian agnostics who accept a general Christian ethic but cannot accept its beliefs.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	7 May 1959, p.2.	On the work of a minister and the use of time.
'Unhappy Divisions'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	17 May 1959, p.28.	An article on the season of Pentecost and divisions within the Church.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	21 May 1959, p.2.	Ideas for the celebration of Wesley Day in the coming Sunday Worship services.
Letter: 'A Letter to You'	<i>Prayer-Cell Messenger</i>	June 1959, p.1.	On the centrality of prayer.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	4 June 1959, p.2.	On the importance of religious films and the work of Cliff College.
'The Real Summit'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	7 June 1959, p.33.	Against the background of the Summit Conference at Geneva, Sangster encourages people of all faiths to pray for peace.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	18 June 1959, p.1.	On prayer, the situation of Cyprus that Sangster sees as an answer to prayer and a brief report on tithing.
'Truth and Love'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	5 July 1959, p.10.	Concerning division within the Church and love as being the vital key to the exploration of truth.
'The Ministry of Converts'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	2 Aug. 1959, p.20.	Sangster contends that those who move between denominations should speak highly of their previous church rather than trash it.
'Prayer and Politics'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	23 Aug. 1959, p.22.	On praying for the political situation and world affairs.

Letter: 'A Letter to You'	<i>Prayer-Cell Messenger</i>	Sept. 1959, p.1.	On the increasing number of prayer cells.
'The Homesick Soul'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	20 Sept. 1959, p.34.	On human conscience; a homing instinct for God.
'Defending Methodism'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	1 Oct. 1959, p.9.	The best way of defending Methodism is to live the life of a Methodist to the full.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	1 Oct. 1959, p.6.	On evangelicalism and social righteousness.
'On Visiting Shrines'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	15 Oct. 1959, p.11.	Sangster relates his life-long passion to visit the places connected to the Saints.
'Who Is "Top"?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	18 Oct. 1959, p.32.	On the quest for ultimate authority.
'On Family Prayers'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	29 Oct. 1959, p.9.	An article that promotes family prayer and insists on its benefits.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	5 Nov. 1959, p.2.	A discussion concerning what should happen to harvest gifts, his preference being to give them to the poor.
'On Ways of Worship'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	12 Nov. 1959, p.9.	With reunion being discussed among the people, Sangster addresses various forms of worship, mentioning that he preferred a freer form; liberty is the key.
'God's World or Devil's?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	15 Nov. 1959, p.31.	A philosophical apology for the existence of a beneficent Creator.
'On Not Letting the Lord Down'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	26 Nov. 1959, p.9.	Tells the story of a lady who was afraid of becoming a Methodist member because of her temper; afraid of letting the Lord down.
Letter: 'A Letter For You'	<i>Prayer-Cell Messenger</i>	Dec. 1959, p.1.	Mentioning the rapid growth of the Prayer-Cells, Sangster asserts that prayer must lead to fruitfulness. An appeal is also put out for emergency visitors.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	3 Dec. 1959, p.2.	On the problems facing youth work.
'God Born?'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	6 Dec. 1959, p.31.	A philosophical apology for the incarnation: To be truly known God has to be known through personality.
'On 2,000 Prayer-Cells'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	10 Dec. 1959, p.13.	Concerning the formation of the two-thousandth prayer-cell within one calendar year.
'Our Greatest Day'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	20 Dec. 1959, p.22.	A Christmas message on Christ's birth in a stable.
'On His First Army Christmas'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	24 Dec. 1959, p.7.	Sangster relates the story of his first Christmas in the Army and the help he received through a church.
'How Preaching Comes Alive'	<i>The Preacher's Handbook</i>	1959, VI, pp.4-12	On making preaching interesting and vital.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	7 Jan. 1960, p.5.	On witnessing to agnostics.

Letter: 'A Message from Dr. Sangster—'	<i>British Weekly</i>	14 Jan. 1960, p.7.	In response to <i>The British Weekly</i> campaign about the future of children, Sangster agrees that world peace and child poverty are priorities. Christian homes are, however, indispensable to the development of childhood character.
'Now Is The Time'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	17 Jan. 1960, p.32.	In spiritual development 'now' is always the time.
'On Cultivating Taste'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	21 Jan. 1960, p.8.	Sangster gives counsel to those working among youth. An attitude of acceptance is a prerequisite, as is a genuine attempt to understand and appreciate their tastes. Introducing other similar but maybe more healthy choices should only happen gradually.
'On A Singular Answer to Prayer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	4 Feb. 1960, p.10.	Relates the story of how God answered prayer in Sept. 1951 when the Festival of Britain Campaign needed an overflow to Westminster Central Hall.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	4 Feb. 1960, p.5.	On racism and positive reports from hostels and Methodist Homes about their treatment of foreigners.
'Christians and Humanists'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	7 Feb. 1960, p.32.	Assesses the claims of humanists but wishes them to look beyond ethics to origins, life after death and other Christian beliefs.
'On Happiness'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	18 Feb. 1960, p.10	Sangster asserts that Christians know a joy that other people do not know, a joy that survives through misfortune and ill-health.
Letter: 'A Letter to You'	<i>Prayer-Cell Messenger</i>	March 1960, p.1.	A message of love to the reader.
'On Gazing at the Cross'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	3 March 1960, p.10	On the benefits of meditating on the Cross.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	3 March 1960, p.5.	On the longing for revival and thoughts of the recently deceased missionary statesman Dr Cochrane on revival.
'How To Use Lent'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	6 March 1960, p.32.	On ways of using the season of Lent. People who reject the Christian Faith are encouraged to use Lent to study it in order to see if they are actually rejecting their own idea of the Faith.
'Those Teenage Agnostics'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	17 March 1960, p.8.	Starting with the problem of churched teenagers becoming agnostics, Sangster requests that youth leaders learn basic apologetics, especially the various ways of knowing.

'On A World At Prayer'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	31 March 1960, p.8.	With the Peace Summit Conferences due in May, Sangster suggests that all who believe in God's existence (Christian, Jew, Buddhist, Hindu, Moslem etc) should go to prayer on some pre-arranged day to pray for World Peace.
'On To The Cross'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	3 April 1960, p.32.	On the meaning of the Atonement.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	7 April 1960, p.2.	An article expressing concern over the continued decline of the Christian Church in Britain. Sangster feels that the Church must battle for the minds of the people. Christian apologetic are an important priority.
'On Our Definition of Sin'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	14 April 1960, p.10.	A discussion on the various ways of understanding sin and a Methodist view.
Letter: To Rev. Maynard James		27 April 1960.	A letter of thanks to one of the leaders of the Holiness Movement in Great Britain.
'Spiritualism: On wishing it were so'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	28 April 1960, p.10.	A discussion of spiritualism and whether proof of life after death is an advantage.
'May Day'	<i>Sunday Times</i>	1 May 1960, p.32.	On the magic of May Day. Sangster relates a brief history of 1 May, then gives it a Christian interpretation; it is special because it lives in the afterglow of Easter.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	5 May 1960, p.2.	On the changing balance of giving between Anglicans and Methodists. Sangster believes tithing is an important principle.
'Those Back-Street Missions'	<i>Methodist Recorder</i>	12 May 1960, p.11.	On the value of the Methodist Missions. Sangster reflects on his own indebtedness.
Letter: 'A Letter for You'	<i>Prayer-Cell Messenger</i>	June 1960	Published after his death, Sangster praises the racial and social diversity achieved through the Prayer-Cell Movement.
'Fresh From the Home Front'	<i>Joyful News</i>	2 June 1960, p.2.	On Sunday observance and the trend towards the dropping of Sunday evening worship.