

卫理宗精神：感恩的心

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引言：感恩的祝福

有一天，我收到一个电话，一位主内姐妹说要带她的丈夫来办公室找我。她说，其丈夫已经陷入忧郁的状况一段时间，她很担心。

过了不久，她就和丈夫一起来到我的办公室。我看到她先生愁眉不展，垂头丧气。谈了近况，进一步瞭解他的处境以后，我便按圣经的话和原则与他交流四件事：

- 一，请问你现在能尝试说一下，一两件你还能感恩的事吗？（帖前 5:16-18）
- 二，请问你最喜欢的经文，或上帝的应许，是那一节？（诗 1:1-2；19:7-8）
- 三，请问你能够想一个，你眼前最想作到的事或目标吗？（腓 3:13-14）
- 四，请问你是否有某一件事很内疚的事，或令你很痛苦的罪一直控告你？你是否劳苦担重担呢？（罗 8:33；约一 1:9；太 11:28）

最后，我告诉他回家作四件事：

- 一，不住地凡事谢恩，因这会使你的身心灵在基督里温暖起来，重新得力；
- 二，早晚默想经文和上帝的应许，因上帝的话会医治和安慰你的心，你将被圣灵充满；
- 三，告诉自己要向着标竿直跑，眼前的我还有活下去的目的和意义；
- 四，给自己的心灵“存款”，透过看网络上福音电视台所播放的美好见证，让那些如同云彩的见证人围绕你，鼓励和建立你（腓 4:8；来 12:1）。

一开始，我邀请他每天都来见我一次，谈一谈进展并一起祷告。接下来，一个星期来一次作跟进。当然，他也看医生。不久以后，他便痊愈，重返职场，重回教会！我还记得，跟进的时候，他曾对我说：“牧师，按你所说的，我一直都作感恩祷告，不断为大小事跟上帝说谢谢……我开始相信，上帝容许这痛苦的经历临到我，有一个奇妙的目的！”

卫理宗的感恩精神

的确，从上述个案里，我再一次见证上帝是耶和拉法（医治的主），祂的话真能苏醒和快活人的心，而且，感恩实在是一个祝福满满的属灵和道德操练。难怪卫斯理约翰在其文章《循道会信徒的品格》（*The Character of a Methodist*, 1742）里指出，循道徒（Methodist）的特质之一就是凡事谢恩。他说：

他高兴地接受所有的事，说‘上帝的旨意是好的’；不管主是赏赐或收取，他都同样赞美主的名。因他已经学到无论在什么景况都可以知足，他知道怎样处卑贱，也知道怎样处丰富；或饱足，或饥饿；或有余，或缺乏，随事随在，他都得了秘诀。不管安逸或痛苦，有病或健康，生或死，他都打从心里向那位使万事互相效力的上帝感恩。他知道各样美善的恩赐都是从上帝来的，各样全备的赏赐也是从众光之父那里降下来的。他把自己的身体和灵魂都完全交在上帝手里，也就是那位信实的创造主手中。所以他一无挂虑，因他将忧虑都交给顾念他的主，而且在一切事上都依靠祂，藉着感恩将心里所要的都告诉上帝（para. 7）。

感恩是喜乐和祷告的果子

卫斯理约翰认为，感恩（thanksgiving）是常常喜乐和不住祷告的结果。他在《新约圣经注解》（*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 1755）里解释帖撒罗尼迦前书五章 16-18 节时指出这一点。他甚至说，喜乐不断、祈祷不辍、事事谢恩，这三者加起来就是“基督徒的完全”（Christian perfection），一个十足爱神爱人的生命流露！

为什么常常喜乐和不住祷告会产生凡事谢恩的果子呢？对韦斯利来说，这是因为喜乐的缘由是上帝伟大的救恩，而祷告乃是蒙恩的工具。

卫斯理在《循道会信徒的品格》里说，一个循道徒常常喜乐是因为他经历救恩之乐，也就是在上帝的爱里没有惧怕；爱既完全，就把惧怕除去（约一 4:17）！这种喜乐包含三个面向：

- 一，回首往日信耶稣的时候，上帝如何涂抹了我们的过犯，像厚云消散，涂抹了我们的罪恶，如薄云灭没。
- 二，看现在自己站在恩典中，白白称义，藉着耶稣基督与上帝和好，又有圣灵与自己的心同证，我们是上帝的儿女。
- 三，展望未来的活泼盼望，可以得着不能朽坏、不能玷污、不能衰残、为我们存留在天上的基业！（para. 6）

上述的丰盛救恩岂不使我们常常喜乐，又感恩吗？卫斯理约翰的弟弟，查尔士所写的圣诗《你当欢欣歌》（Rejoice, the Lord is King, 1746），就具体描述了信徒认识救主为王、神国永不衰败、耶稣必定再来时，感恩的心油然而生：

“欢欣救主为君！你当叩拜至尊！高声**感谢主恩**，凯歌永远欢欣；提高你声！振发你心……！”（参《普天颂赞》第68首）

卫斯理约翰深信，不住祷告也是产生凡事谢恩的因素，因为祷告是信徒的属灵呼吸，使信徒持续经历上帝大能的同在和各样恩惠。例如，卫斯理带动早期循道徒固定操练禁食祷告，这促使许多循道徒成功对付自己的罪，靠主破除罪的捆绑和纠缠，如酗酒问题，获得自由，脱胎换骨！这岂不令人感恩和赞美主吗？

结论：

两百多年前，卫理宗始于一场发生在英格兰、苏格兰、威尔斯和爱尔兰的属灵大复兴运动。这运动的主要精神是追求圣爱的心灵和生活，以恢复上帝造人的荣美形象，具有健康的理智和心思、神圣的情感与意志，以及合神心意的生活管理和美德。感恩的心，是卫斯理约翰最看重的其中一个圣洁指标，因它显示一个人是否真已经历救恩之乐，以及是否有属灵操练的纪律。他深信，事事谢恩，能使信徒满有基督长成的身量。

The Spirit of Methodism: A Thankful Heart

Rev. Thomas Lau Sie Ngiu

Introduction: Methodist versus real Christian?

In December last year, I was invited by pastor Alan Lau to speak to the newly elected youth leaders of CMCA in Melbourne. That night, in the fellowship room of Camberwell Methodist Church, I told the energetic leaders that the Methodist Holiness Revival Movement in the 18th century was started by none other than a group of young people like them! It took place in the University of Oxford in England in 1729. Under the leadership of John and Charles Wesley as well as George Whitefield, this group of “Oxford Methodists” seriously devoted themselves to works of piety and mercy, such as prayer, reading the Scriptures, receiving the Lord’s Supper, keeping the fasts, visiting prisons and working among the poor. At that time, they were also referred to as “The Holy Club,” “Godly Club,” “Bible Moths,” and “Supererogation Men.”

During the Question and Answer time, one of the youth leaders asked why had CMCA emphasized so much on “being Methodist” in recent years? “Why don’t we just say that we must be real Christian?” I was so happy to hear this concern and pointed out to him that two hundred years ago, to be a “Methodist” in a society with low spiritual ebb was exactly about being a “*real* Christian” whose inward as well as outward lives were both transformed by the holy love and grace of God, and hence rose to renew the church and impact the nation! As John Wesley remarks, in his article “Advice to the people called Methodists” (1745):

By Methodist I mean, a people who profess to pursue (in whatsoever measure they have attained) holiness of heart and life, inward and outward conformity in all things to the revealed will of God; who place religion in an uniform resemblance of the great object of it; in a steady imitation of Him they worship, in all his imitable perfections; more particularly, in justice, mercy, and truth, or universal love filling the heart, and governing the life.

Even in 1784, the elderly Wesley still wrote something in his sermon “In What Sense We Are to Leave the World” that reflected his deep concern for real Christianity:

When it pleased God to give me a settled resolution to be not a nominal but a *real* Christian (being then about two and twenty years of age) my acquaintance were as ignorant of God as myself. But there was this difference: I knew my ignorance; they did not know theirs [emphasis mine].

The major concern of the Methodist movement is, therefore, none other but holiness, that is, “*real change*” in Christ and restoration of the image of God in human whose life purpose should be “Christian Perfection” or Christlikeness (Matt. 22:37-40; Phil. 2:5).

Real Christianity---Christian Perfection---Thanksgiving

In light of Scripture, John Wesley painstakingly expounded “Christian perfection” many times throughout his lifetime. One of the definitions could be found in his explanatory notes on the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians:

5:16: *Rejoice evermore* - In uninterrupted happiness in God. *Pray without ceasing* - Which is the fruit of always rejoicing in the Lord. *In everything give thanks* - Which is the fruit of both the former. **This is Christian perfection.** Farther than this we cannot go; and we need not stop short of it. Our Lord has purchased joy, as well as righteousness, for us. It is the very design of the gospel that, being saved from guilt, we should be happy in the love of Christ. Prayer may be said to be the breath of our spiritual life. He that lives cannot possibly cease breathing. So much as we really enjoy of the presence of God, so much prayer and praise do we offer up without ceasing; else our rejoicing is but delusion. Thanksgiving is inseparable from true prayer: it is almost essentially connected with it. He that always prays is ever giving praise, whether in ease or pain, both for prosperity and for the greatest adversity. He blesses God for all things, looks on them as coming from him, and receives them only for his sake; not choosing nor refusing, liking nor disliking, anything, but only as it is agreeable or disagreeable to his perfect will. [*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, 1755*]

Apparently, for Wesley, thanksgiving, with constant rejoicing and praying, are important and practical demonstrations of “Christian perfection.” He accentuated, in his article “The Character of a Methodist” (1742), that one of the marks of being a Methodist is that he or she “in everything giveth thanks”:

[H]e cheerfully receives all, saying, “Good is the will of the Lord;” and whether the Lord giveth or taketh away, equally “blessing the name of the Lord.” For he hath “learned, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content.” He knoweth “both how to be abased and how to abound. Everywhere and in all things he is instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need.” Whether in ease or pain, whether in sickness or health, whether in life or death, he giveth thanks from the ground of his heart to Him who orders it for good; knowing that as “every good gift cometh from above,” so none but good can come from the Father of Lights, into whose hand he has wholly committed his body and soul, as into the hands of a faithful Creator. He is therefore “careful” (anxiously or uneasily) “for nothing;” as having “cast all his care on Him that

careth for him,” and “in all things” resting on him, after “making his request known to him with thanksgiving.”

Charles Wesley, in his hymn “Rejoice, the Lord is King” (1746, *The United Methodist Hymnal* #715), also describes vividly how our knowledge and conviction of Christ as triumphant King, redeeming Savior, sovereign Ruler, and righteous Judge, would spur us to rejoice, give thanks, and sing!

In short, John and Charles Wesley regard thanksgiving as significant spiritual and moral exercise of a *real* Christian who pursues Christlikeness. It is the “fruit” of rejoicing in God’s goodness, consistent communion with the Trinity in prayer, and strong faith in the Lord Jesus as victorious King and Coming Judge. May the Methodists nowadays continue to live out Spirit-filled life of “thanks” and “giving” through which we spread Scriptural Holiness over the land and transform the broken world.

Further readings:

John Wesley, “The Character of a Methodist,” available from: <http://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/The-Wesleys-and-Their-Times/The-Character-of-a-Methodist>

John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, available from: <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesleys-notes-on-the-bible/>

Collins, Kenneth J. *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999. Note especially pages 24, 28, 37, 41.