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Wesleyan Theological Journal

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Editor and Chair of the Editorial Committee:
Barry L. Callen, 1993 to present

All communications concerning editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor, Barry L. Callen, c/o Anderson University, 1100 East 5th Street, Anderson, Indiana 46012. Communication about book reviews is to be directed to the Book Review Editor, David Bundy, c/o Fuller Theological Seminary. Membership dues and other financial matters should be addressed to the Secretary-Treasurer, William Kostlevy, c/o Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky 40390. Rate and application form are found at the end of this issue. E-mail addresses for all officers of the Society are also found on the inside of the back cover.

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The Society's mission is to encourage the exchange of ideas among Wesleyan-Holiness theologians; to develop a source of papers for CHP (Christian Holiness Partnership) seminars; to stimulate scholarship among younger theologians and pastors; and to publish a scholarly journal.

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

ARTICLE WRITERS:

Dean G. Blevins	Trevecca Nazarene University
Monica A. Coleman	Doctoral Candidate, Claremont
Kenneth J. Collins	Asbury Theological Seminary
Melvin Dieter	Retired, Lyndhurst, Virginia
Stanley J. Grenz	Truett Theological Seminary
J. Prescott Johnson	Retired, Monmouth, Illinois
Randy L. Maddox	Seattle Pacific University
Stephen Charles Mott	Pastor, West Bridgewater, Mass.
Thomas J. Oord	Northwest Nazarene University
A. Wingrove Taylor	Retired, Indianapolis, Indiana
John W. Wright and	
J. Douglas Harrison	Point Loma Nazarene University
Amos Yong	Bethel College (MN)

BOOK REVIEWERS:

**Charles W. Christian, Henry H. Knight III,
Thomas E. Phillips, W. Brian Shelton,
Henry W. Spaulding II.**

EDITOR'S NOTES

The Wesleyan Theological Society is pleased to announce that, under its auspices and sponsored by the Bahamas Wesleyan Fellowship, there will be convened on January 9-10, 2003, in Nassau, Bahamas, a special conference with the theme "Faith Working Through Love: Wesleyan Traditions Today." Program detail and registration information has been mailed to WTS members. Then the 38th Annual Meeting of the WTS will convene on March 20-22, 2003, in Lexington, Kentucky, hosted by Asbury Theological Seminary and meeting jointly with the Society for Pentecostal Studies. The theme is "Wesleyan and Pentecostal Movements for a New Century: Crucial Choices, Essential Contributions." WTS members will receive full registration information in the mail, or the reader may consult the following web address that features this and much more Society information: www.wesleyantheologicalsociety.org

In this present issue of the Journal, Stephen Mott examines the seminary in terms of United Methodist ecclesiology, Kenneth Collins seeks fuller clarity on the "new creation" theme in the theology of John Wesley, and Randy Maddox provides a detailed look at the most recent decade of dissertations in Wesley Studies. Issues of analytic psychology and ecclesial practice are pursued, with John Wright and Douglas Harrison asking whether the "Wesleyan" is an appropriate theological option in contemporary Christianity. Dean Blevins explores the question, How does the Wesleyan tradition inform leadership in the shifting sands of postmodernity?

Amos Young revisits the "Baptist vision" of the late James McClen- don, Jr., in conversation with recent Wesleyan and Pentecostal theologies. Also explored here is the relation of Boston Personalism to Wesleyan theology and process philosophy (Thomas Oord), a biblical study of sanctification and the Greek tenses (J. Prescott Johnson), and a possible reconstruction of the Wesleyan understanding of sanctification in terms of process philosophy (Monica Coleman). Stanley Grenz ponders helpfully the appropriate relationship between the scholastic and experiential dimensions of today's evangelical Christianity.

The reader also will find in these pages a sermon by A. Wingrove Taylor who received the 2002 "Lifetime Achievement Award" of the WTS, Melvin Dieter's tribute to Brother Taylor, and Henry H. Knight's special review of Diane Leclerc's book *Singleness of Heart* that won the 2002 Smith/Wynkoop Book Award of the WTS. Eight other book reviews and several publisher advertisements are also included. All of this is sent forth for the good of the churches and their many ministries today.

Barry L. Callen, Editor
Anderson University
November, 2002

THE SEMINARY AS A SOCIETY OF THE CHURCH: SEMINARIES AND THE CHURCH IN UNITED METHODIST ECCLESIOLOGY

by

Stephen Charles Mott

The nature of the seminary is usually discussed with some reference to the church, to ministry, to ordination. It is surprising how infrequently the seminary is examined in terms of ecclesiology. What is a seminary in terms of one's understanding of the church? Is a seminary an aspect of the church itself, a somewhat separate arm of the church, or an independent organization working in cooperation with the church? In the latter case one would need to identify theologically the nature of this independent body with respect to the church and the world. This examination would also include the interrelationship of the mission of the seminary and of the church. Because of the significant variations in ecclesiology and polity within Christian orthodoxy, one would expect that there would be several different approaches to the relationship of the seminary to the church.

Here we will examine the seminary in terms of United Methodist ecclesiology.¹ We will reflect on United Methodist ecclesiology and also identify the ecclesiological assumptions revealed in the historical development of United Methodist institutions with the task of preparing ministerial leadership. We will argue that the seminary has an organic relationship to the church in United Methodist ecclesiology and note the factors that have provided a significant diminishing of that relationship.

¹I use the term *United Methodist* to indicate the various traditions within the Wesleyan movement that united in 1968.

The Seminary as a Society of the Church

Society as a Mission of the Church. United Methodist ecclesiology is strongly influenced by the origins of the Wesleyan movement as a society within the Church of England. The Methodist societies were part of the church and served the church, but were not the church itself. The mission, and the societies that it formed, did not have all the tasks and responsibilities of the church. The administration of sacraments was not its task, for example.² The society was an evangelical force serving the church almost against its will.³ Because of its special task for the national church, Wesley's mission could ignore the opposition of local churches and invade the parishes of other priests if that was necessary for carrying out its task for the church. It was in this sense that Wesley stated, "I look upon *all the world* as my parish. . . . I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation."⁴ Wesley was convinced that his Oxford ordination had given him an extraparochial licence for a specific task of preaching and teaching.⁵ He portrayed himself and his helpers as "extraordinary⁶ messengers (that is, out of the ordinary way)" designed to supply the lack of service of the regular ministers "toward those perishing for want of knowledge."⁷

The society is a mission of the church, and thus part of the church. In contrast to the separate existence of a sect, Charles Wesley wrote, "We

²C. Outler, "Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?" in *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. D. Kirkpatrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), 19-21.

³*Ibid.*, 15.

⁴John Wesley, "Letter to John Clayton [?], March 28, 1739 [?]," in *The Works of John Wesley* (Bicentennial Ed.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984-), 25:616.

⁵Oxford itself, reflecting its mendicant origins, had specific tasks for the whole church.

⁶Wesley later emphasized that this extraordinary task was not for the ordinary functions of the priestly office; thus his preacher-evangelists were not by this ministry authorized to exercise the privileges of the ordinary office, such as administering the sacraments (Wesley, Sermon 121, "Prophets and Priests" [1789] 11-12, in *Works*, Bicentennial Ed., 4:78-79). They were "raised up by more immediate divine inspiration somewhat outside institutional channels" (Howard A. Snyder, "Wesley's Concept of the Church," *Asbury Seminarian* 33, 1 [January, 1978], 50).

⁷John Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others" Q. 24, in *Works*, ed. T. Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1872), 8:309.

are only a sound part of the national church.”⁸ In terms of the traditional *notae ecclesiae* shared with the Church of England—word, order, and sacrament—the society is not a church. Wesley, however, had another way of defining the church which was more missional. Here the emphasis lies more on action and less on being and experience. A society, organized for a particular task, is closer to this understanding of the church. According to an historical statement of the Book of Discipline, “the infallible proof of the true church of Christ is its ability to seek and save the lost, to disseminate the Pentecostal spirit and life, to spread scriptural holiness, and to transform all peoples and nations through the gospel of Christ.”⁹ Correspondingly, the purpose of gathering into local churches is not only the hearing of the Word, receiving the Sacraments, and worshipping God, which relate to the historical *notae ecclesiae*. The purpose also is “to carry forward the work which Christ has committed to his Church.”¹⁰

A missional society of the church exists to contribute to the church in mission even if, lacking the three *notae ecclesiae*, it is not itself a church. In this sense the justification for being a society, even a society for the training of ministerial leaders, is the same as for being a church.¹¹ In light of this activity-oriented understanding of the church and the place of societies in it, it is not surprising that in both the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Association, the concept of theological training in a missionary institute prepared the way for the acceptance of theological institutions for preachers.¹²

Drawn from the foundations of United Methodist ecclesiology, *society* provides an effective model for understanding the seminary. The seminary is an educational society within the church. It is an organization of the church designed to carry out a task of the church. It is not to be

⁸Charles Wesley, *Journal of Charles Wesley* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1849), 106; cf. Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1970), 106.

⁹United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 1988* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1988), 10.

¹⁰United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2000* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2000), ¶203.

¹¹Albert Outler, “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?”, 25.

¹²Edward D. Jervy, “La Roy Sunderland and Methodist Theological Education,” *Christian Advocate* 11,15 (August 10, 1967), 11f.; William Henry Naumann, “Theology and German-American Evangelicalism: The Role of Theology in The Church of the United Brethren in Christ and The Evangelical Association” (Yale Univ. Ph.D. dissertation, 1966), 88f.

viewed bureaucratically as a subsidiary of the church, but connectionally as a manifestation of the church, an instrument of the church in mission.¹³ Theological education emerges from the connection, which provides for the church national mission and mutual support.¹⁴ The seminary relates to the Methodist church as Wesley's societies did to the Church of England, although the particular mission involved differs. As a comparison, the camp meeting had commonality of mission with the church. Paul Bassett has argued that the camp meeting was aimed to be an *ecclessiolae in ecclesia* as Wesley's movement was to the Church of England.¹⁵

David Kelsey's discussion of the Methodist type of relating the seminary to the church has remarkable insight. "The school is constituted . . . by the fact that it consists of a cadre of persons called by the larger church to a mission in the world." Kelsey describes it as "a service agency to a denomination."¹⁶ While his emphasis is on service to the denomination, the term *agency* links the seminary too closely to the denomination, particularly in terms of how United Methodist theological schools have actually developed in America. *Agency* indicates a more integrated pattern of accountability and connection.¹⁷

Kelsey's distinction of seminary from church in terms of what unifies each has validity. For a seminary, the unity is in understanding God truly, while for the church it is public worship of God in Jesus' name.¹⁸ Yet the distinction does not necessarily go beyond that of part and whole since understanding God truly is also a function of the church (Kelsey also affirms this intersection¹⁹). The seminary serves the church in developing this understanding and guiding developing leaders into it.

¹³Cf. Kenneth L. Carder, "A UMC Prognosis: Naming the Diseases and the Cures," *Circuit Rider* 17,7 (1993), 7-9.

¹⁴Brian E. Beck, "Some Reflections on Connexionalism," *Epworth Review* 18,2 (May, 1991), 50.

¹⁵Paul M. Bassett, "The Tension Between Believer's Church and Established Church: Ecclesiology in the Holiness Movement." Paper presented to Methodism and Ministry: Historical Explorations Consultation, Drew University, April 4, 1983.

¹⁶David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly. What's Theological About a Theological School* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1992), 55f. Kelsey is one of the few to describe the seminary as a community in relationship to the church (cf. especially, 50-59).

¹⁷Cf. United Methodist Church, *Book of Discipline, 2000*, ¶701-703.

¹⁸Kelsey, 180.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 198.

H. Richard Niebuhr spoke of theological schools “which serve *in* the Church and serve the Church.” The intellectual life is part of the being of the church. A seminary is an “intellectual center of the church’s life.”²⁰ It seems that for Niebuhr the seminary is like a concretion of that intellectual life. Whenever there is intense intellectual activity in the church, seminaries have risen.²¹ Alkiviadis Calivas puts it in another way. Theology is a gift of the Spirit to the church, which is “the pillar and bulwark of truth” (1 Tim. 3.15), so that doing theology is a vocation of the church. The Holy Spirit accordingly supplies to the church gifts, reflected in 1 Corinthians 12.4-11, of delving into the mysteries of faith, interpreting the Word of God, and teaching it to others. Theologians with these gifts of the church are found both in the local church and in the theological academy of the church.²² The early Methodist argument for theological schools, however, ignored theological reflection as a component and need of the church. Kelsey is again perceptive in linking the Methodist model to preparing leaders for the mission of the church. As we will see, the ecclesiological argument supporting the seminary was often utilitarian and pragmatic in terms of the needs of the church to grow and to be an effective force in the community and in the world.

The analogy of an order is helpful for understanding what is asserted in describing the seminary as a society. Outler describes early Methodism as “an evangelistic ‘order’ within the Church of England . . . determined to carry forward her true mission to the people.”²³ An order has closer accountability to the church than a para-church organization; yet it is not an agency of the church. A para-church organization often has accountability to nobody except its own trustees. The organic connection of the order to the church is seen in that in an order the sacraments, especially the Lord’s Supper, may be celebrated, while this is not the case for a para-church organization. A society is considered to be part of the church, yet it is not equivalent to the church. Its mission is closely related to the

²⁰H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry. Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education* (New York: Harper, 1956), 23.

²¹*Ibid.*, 107f.

²²Alkiviadis C. Calivas, “Orthodox Theology and Theologians: Reflections on the Nature, Task and Mission of the Theological Enterprise,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 37 (1992), 275, 293-94.

²³Albert C. Outler, “Introduction,” in Outler (ed.), *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford U., 1964), 19; cf. 21, n.72.

church as an essential function of the church. A society is subject to a degree of control by the church, at least at a higher level. At the same time it has a degree of independence functionally required by its task. There must be a tension in the matter of control. If the tension is released in the direction of independence, the organization becomes para-church and its ecclesiological nature becomes ambiguous.

Class Meetings in the First Seminary. The society aspect of the first Methodist theological institute, Wesleyan Methodist Theological Institution (London, 1835), is seen in the fact that, in addition to the president, there was a house governor who functioned as class leader for the students. He met with them in a class meeting every week, inquiring specifically about their spiritual state and progress. He was a spiritual father and role model in addition to his other responsibilities.²⁴ That the focus of this leader was on leading a class rather than leading worship is striking. The seminary was closer to that of a society than a worshipping community, a different model of the relationship of seminary to church.²⁵ The seminary was not, however, a duplication of the Wesleyan society. It was not first of all the nurturing society. The nurturing aspect was subordinated to the institute's central focus of educating leaders for the church. In the Pietist tradition, however, the educational mission included the nurturing task since the theological schools were seedbeds of the church with the responsibility of formation of students in godliness.

The relationship of class and class leader here also was not an extension of the earlier informal form of ministerial training in the Methodist societies. The supervising minister and local pastors did not relate in the manner of a class meeting. The institute's class relationship drew more deeply from the life of the congregation.

Education of Ministerial Leaders as a Task of the Church

A Task Required of the Church. Theological education for the clergy developed within the church. The training of leadership began

²⁴Stephen M. Vail, *Ministerial Education in the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Boston: Magee, 1853), 103; Dale A. Johnson, "The Methodist Quest for an Educated Ministry," *Church History* 51 (1982), 310. The presence of bands among the children at the Kingswood school (Wesley, *Journal*, for September 5, 1773, in *Works*, Bicentennial Ed., 22:388) would indicate, however, that this society function of personal renewal was part of Methodist educational philosophy in general, not merely of theological education.

²⁵Contrast Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly*, 51f.

when a convert joined a society and began to seek a holy life.²⁶ Wesley himself from time to time led those who became his preachers in study, lectures, and the disciplines of devotional life,²⁷ and this was a significant aspect of his annual conferences with his preachers.²⁸ Early in Methodism (before the decline of the circuit²⁹) the theological training of preachers was person to person. Older preachers, usually presiding elders, took the younger preachers “under their wing and showed them how.”³⁰ Wesley assumed that the Church England already provided for theological education with numerous schools and two universities.³¹ In the Conferences of 1744 and 1745, however, he expressed hope for a school for preachers (who were not ordained), but it was not developed because of the lack of interest by the people and the difficulty of preachers leaving their tasks.³²

In America the preachers were instructed to read five hours a day.³³ A more developed form of guidance was the course of study of recommended books.³⁴ These began in 1816, but were sporadic in the early years and varied from one annual conference to another in the seriousness with which they were taken. The long period of time in which the course of study had a weighty role in Methodist ministerial education reflects the church’s ownership of the task of educating its clergy. From 1816 to well into the twentieth century most Methodist pastors were educated in the course of study, not in theological schools. Until 1900 for the Methodist

²⁶Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect. The Aims and Purposes of Ante-Bellum Theological Education* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1990), 403.

²⁷E.g., Wesley, *Journal* for December 23, 1771, December 19, 1774, and January 13, 1777, in *Works*, Bicentennial Ed., 22:303, 440; 23.40.

²⁸Gerald O. McCulloh, *Ministerial Education in the American Methodist Movement. An Informed Ministry*, 1 (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Board of Higher Education, Division of Ordained Ministry, 1980); Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, 407.

²⁹L. Dale Patterson, “Improvement in the Methodist Ministerial Education at the End of the Nineteenth Century,” *Methodist History* 23 (1985), 74.

³⁰Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism. A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1974), 220.

³¹Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, 405.

³²Vail, *Ministerial Education*, 103; Johnson, “The Methodist Quest,” 305.

³³Nathan Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Mason, 1839), 1:195f.; McCulloh, *Ministerial Education*, 10f.

³⁴Kenneth E. Rowe, “New Light on Early Methodist Theological Education,” *Methodist History* 10 (1971), 59f.; McCulloh, *Ministerial Education*, 11f.

Episcopal Church and 1914 for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, even seminary graduates had to complete it before they could be ordained.³⁵

La Roy Sunderland, the Methodist abolitionist who later was one of the founders of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, addressed this the lack formalized ministerial education in America. He argued in the 1830s that the lack of provision for educating ministerial leaders made the Methodist church a notable exception to the practice of the church. Nearly every Christian church had had theological education as an indispensable prerequisite for persons entering the duties of Christian ministry. They had some standard for what constitutes a Christian education and made some provision for preparing people for the work of the Gospel ministry. It was a biblical tradition reflected in the Old Testament by the schools of the prophets and in Judaism by the synagogues. Christ trained the first preachers and they in turn gave precepts for their successors.³⁶ Stephen Vail, a later apologist for theological education, drew on these materials and added the Levites as a whole tribe set aside for a task that included theological teaching.³⁷ Education of ministerial leaders was an essential function of the church. Seminaries would be instruments of the church for this aspect of its mission.

Early objections to Methodist theological schools assumed that theological education was the task of the church. According to one criticism, seminaries would take the “theological training of ministers out of the hands of the church.”³⁸ Sunderland’s response was that all the operations of the seminaries were to be in the hands of the church. Another complaint was that “the connectional principle” would be violated if a particular conference (New England) took such an initiative in so important a matter as the system of theological education.³⁹ Similarly, a contemporary Methodist theologian argues that ministries that express the historic and catholic continuity of the church, in contrast to those which are created

³⁵Patterson, “Improvement in the Methodist Ministerial Education,” 78.

³⁶La Roy Sunderland, “Essay on Theological Education,” *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* 16 (1834), 424-26.

³⁷Vail, *Ministerial Education*, 13-15 (1853).

³⁸La Roy Sunderland, “Theological Seminary,” *Zion’s Watchman* 4,21 (May 25, 1839), 82.

³⁹Sunderland, “‘Connectional Principle’,” *Zion’s Watchman* 4,48 (November 30, 1839), 190.

for particular situations, should not be altered without the consent of the whole *koinonia* for whose universal service they were instituted.⁴⁰

Essential for an Effective Church. The early apologists for institutions for training the ministerial leaders presented a case which was strongly utilitarian. A justification for theological education was the impact that it would have on the growth and mission of the church.⁴¹ This training was necessary for the church to be effective in drawing people to itself, equipping them for growth and service, and impacting the community. The United Methodist approach was squarely in the tradition of defining theological education as educating church leaders. Kelsey rejects this approach as leading to the replacement of critical thinking with training in what is demonstrably effective and successful in practice. It distorts theology by defining theology not in terms of its ultimate subject, God, but in terms of socially defined roles in the church.⁴² This tendency to downplay serious theological academic study was limited, however, by the deep intellectual example of Wesley and other early leaders. As we will see, the theological institutes also early set an academic pattern by quickly buying into the prevailing classical mode of education of the time. For example, the first curriculum at Westminster Theological Seminary in Maryland was in “the old classicist tradition” in which the president and most of the faculty had been trained with the addition of the Wesleyan Methodist inheritance.⁴³

The early design for United Methodist seminaries also went beyond the knowledge and skills needed for particular roles within the church. The seminary continued the church’s responsibility for the formation of mature believers. Learning was integrated with the dimension of spiritual formation. We have seen the presence of the class meeting structure in the first theological institution. Nathan Bangs argued that a seminary could be as zealous as the pulpit, yet more systematic and efficient in urging its pupils to “Scriptural doctrine, the necessity of heart-felt religion, of

⁴⁰David Carter, “A Methodist Contribution to Ecclesiology,” *One in Christ* 30 (1994), 166.

⁴¹John R. Durbin, “An Educated Ministry Among Us,” *Christian Advocate and Journal* 411 (1834), 186.

⁴²Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly*, 55, 162.

⁴³Douglas R. Chandler, *Pilgrimage of Faith. A Centennial History of Wesley Theological Seminary, 1882-1992* (Cabin John, MD: Seven Locks, 1984), 25.

experimental and practical piety.”⁴⁴ Kelsey artificially separates the purpose of the seminary from the need that the church has for an institution of theological training that goes beyond the practices of theological education proper to the church itself. He is correct that theology must be guided ultimately by a commitment to know God truly. In a seminary, theology of this nature should be present because it is the component most necessary for any Christian’s preparation for ministry; thus it is to be provided at an advanced level for the offices of the church which require advanced preparation.

Stephen Vail argues that one denomination cannot depend upon another one to provide this training. The task belongs to the whole church, and the whole church should look after it. The Methodists like other churches needed to prepare their own people in their own doctrines so that each denomination could correct one another’s errors.⁴⁵ One of the early arguments for higher education in the United Brethren Church was, in the face of doctrinal battles in the church, the need for a common theological education for all of its own young ministers.⁴⁶ The seminary thus would contribute to a national understanding of the church.⁴⁷ For Vail, theological education was an obligation committed to the charge of the church by heaven. The church must see that through the establishment of facilities for theological instruction the pastoral office “should be made efficient, in the highest degree, for the great purpose of its existence.” Since the ministerial leader will not be able to accumulate money to pay for this needed instruction, the church must provide the instruction.⁴⁸ Much later, William R. Cannon, a bishop and Wesleyan theologian, stated this in supporting the establishment of two new seminaries in 1956: “The achievement and maintenance of a strong and sufficient ministry is the responsibility, not of a board or agency or a school, but of the whole church.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴Nathan Bangs, *The Present State, Prospects, and Responsibilities of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Lane, 1850), 304.

⁴⁵Vail, *Ministerial Education*, 149.

⁴⁶Quentin Charles Lansman, *Higher Education in the Evangelical United Brethren Church: 1800-1954* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Board of Higher Education, 1972), 12f. Lansman cites articles by J. B. Ressler and Jacob Ritter in *The Religious Telescope* in 1844-45.

⁴⁷Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, 187.

⁴⁸Vail, *Ministerial Education*, 152f., 185.

⁴⁹McCulloh, *Ministerial Education*, 211.

Preparation for Orders Required for Seminary Admission. The organic connection of the seminaries to the rest of the church was seen in the requirement that the seminary students, in the words of the editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal* in 1834, were to be only those who “are called of God to this work, and approved by the proper authorities,” i.e., “by the Church.”⁵⁰ The basic assumption of Stephen Vail’s apology for theological education for ministerial leaders in 1853 is that a person with a call to preach needs preparation for this work.⁵¹ Seminaries are institutions for those whom the church has affirmed as being called by God for ministerial leadership.

The first institute for the education of Methodist preachers was established by the British conference the same year as the *Christian Advocate* article. Applicants had to be preachers “on trial” who passed an additional examination on their qualification for ministry by a committee of preachers serving in London, which was the location of the institute.⁵² Similarly, every applicant for admission to the Vanderbilt theological school in 1871 needed a recommendation from a quarterly or annual conference and should have attained the standard of education needed for admission on trial into an annual conference.⁵³ At Drew Theological Seminary in 1867 those to be admitted could instead have a local preacher’s license.⁵⁴

Such a role of the seminary as an integral part of the church’s ordination process was still being affirmed in the middle of the twentieth century. In 1952 when the Methodist church increased its financial support of the seminaries by creating an agency to relate specifically to them, it stated firmly the responsibility of the seminaries. They not only were to acquaint the students with the programs and organization of the church (1952 *Discipline*, ¶ 347); they also were to share in the screening and guidance of candidates for the ministry. They were to require for admission the license to preach and a recommendation from the annual conference. Seminaries also were requested to share information about the candidate’s preparedness with the conference boards of ordained ministry.⁵⁵

⁵⁰Durbin, “An Educated Ministry Among Us,” 186; cf. McCulloh, 20.

⁵¹Vail, *Ministerial Education*, cf. xiii-xxxv.

⁵²Johnson, “The Methodist Quest,” 308.

⁵³McCulloh, *Ministerial Education*, 163.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 113.

The Seminary and the Various Manifestations of the Church

The Role of the Different Types of Conferences. The United Methodist church in its connectional ecclesiology views the different geographical dimensions of the church organization, whether local, regional, or national, as equally the church. Definitions of the Church as a whole and the local church are very similar (see the Confession of Faith 5⁵⁶ and ¶201 of the Discipline). The one true church manifests itself in its catholic fullness at each level of association.⁵⁷ As Wesley put it, “In every particular Christian congregation” we have “a little emblem” of the church universal, dispersed all over the earth.⁵⁸ Each of the differing sized units is a manifestation of what belongs to the whole people of God. Each part has all the essence of the whole, not just an aspect of it. This wholeness does not characterize a society or consequently a seminary; it is not itself a church. Yet as a society that carries out the mission of the church, a seminary may be authorized and controlled by the church at varying levels of geographic association. Seminaries accordingly were founded, funded, or controlled by one or more annual conferences, by jurisdictional (i.e., regional) conferences, or by the General Conference. Wesley’s society had a church-wide authorization parallel to the reaches of the Church of England. The first theological institute, Wesley Theological Institute in London, was founded by the Conference (the nation-wide body). The special examination for its applicants was paid by a connectional fund. Such a fund later provided buildings for the institute.⁵⁹

The bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church warned in 1856 that the growing interest in ministerial education should not allow the movement to develop without the General Conference.⁶⁰ Vail argued that because of the importance of the theological schools, the General Conference should have supervisory care for them; but since it had so many

⁵⁶United Methodist Church, *Book of Discipline*, 2000, 67f. The only difference is the phrase “one, holy, apostolic and catholic” to describe the church as a whole.

⁵⁷Cf. Ion Bria, “Unity and Mission from the Perspective of the Local Church: An Orthodox View,” *Ecumenical Review* 39 (1987), 265-70.

⁵⁸Wesley, Sermon 92, “On Zeal” (1781) 2.5, in *Works*, Bicentennial Ed., 3:313f.

⁵⁹Vail, *Ministerial Education*, 98, 100.

⁶⁰John O. Gross, “Theological Education in the Methodist Churches,” in *The History of American Methodism*, ed. E. Bucke (1964), 3: 264.

other tasks, the specific oversight should be by the annual conferences.⁶¹ The charter for the seminary which became Drew stated that its education would be “under the direction and supervision of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. . . , and in consonance with the doctrines and discipline of the said Church.” The General Conference elected Drew’s trustees.⁶² The United Brethren, the Evangelical Association, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, started their first seminaries through their General Conferences.⁶³ The courses of study were controlled by annual conferences, and in the mid-nineteenth century they were standardized by the General Conferences. It was the New England Annual Conference that, under Sunderland’s urging, established “the Missionary Education Society”⁶⁴ and later the New England Wesleyan Educational Society, the institution which became Boston University School of Theology.⁶⁵ Duke and Claremont were tied to annual conferences. Candler and Perkins, on the other hand, were controlled by jurisdictional conferences.

Church Control. The control of the various conferences over the schools could be significant. The first theological institution in the Evangelical Association (Union Bible Institute, later Evangelical Theological Seminary, and finally Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary) was mandated by the General Conference in 1871 that all its trustees, administration, and faculty were to be members of the Association. Faculty (annually) and trustees were to profess their loyalty to the doctrines and discipline of the Association. Textbooks were to be in accord with the church’s

⁶¹Vail, *Ministerial Education*, 189.

⁶²Henry Butz, “Drew Theological Seminary,” in *The Early Schools of Methodism*, ed. A. W. Cummings (New York: Phillips, 1886), 390, 395.

⁶³Norwood, *Story of American Methodism*, 221; Chandler, *Pilgrimage of Faith*, 7f.

⁶⁴*Society* as used here is not the pietist form of renewal in early Methodism but the widespread usage in the time for common efforts for a host of different purposes. Many Baptist schools had been founded by educational societies (Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, 309). Baker notes that the Wesleyan movement as a society was distinct in its dominant notes of evangelism and pastoral care. In contrast, societies like the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge were almost solely administrative “committees of church leaders sponsoring worthy causes outside themselves” (Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 117).

⁶⁵Sunderland, “Essay on Theological Education,” 429; Jervey, “La Roy Sunderland,” 11f.

doctrine.⁶⁶ Garrett Biblical Institute also required the faculty to sign a declaration of approval of the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁶⁷ By the 1908 General Conference, a written pledge of loyalty to Methodist doctrine and polity was a requirement for the appointment of every seminary professor.⁶⁸

The 1964 bylaws of Emory University stated that the school “belongs to the Methodist church” and it is to be administered “for the benefit of said church and under the direction of the Southern Jurisdictional Conference . . .”; it was to report to each subsequent quadrennial session of that conference.⁶⁹ Similar language was used in the establishment of Southern Methodist University. As Gerald McCulloh notes, the strong language of control expressed an intention to avoid the situation that led to the loss to the church of Vanderbilt University in 1914. In reporting this secure control of the church, a commission in 1916 described the two institutions as each equally “the child of the church.”⁷⁰ Vail had argued that the churches should fund the seminaries. The schools would be “in the fullest sense dependent on the churches,” which would give the churches control. The schools “should be under the most rigid surveillance of the church” because of their crucial influence on the “rising ministry.”⁷¹

Factors Within the Ecclesiology Contributing to the Separation of the Seminary

The Functional Independence of the Society. The Wesleyan society was appropriately organized for its task; its organization correspondingly was distinct from the ordinary structure of the church. The society

⁶⁶Lansman, *Higher Education in the Evangelical United Brethren Church*, 54. Such controls were placed by the General Conference upon the theology departments of its colleges by the United Evangelical Church in 1902. Each theological school was to be amenable to the conferences under whose control it stood and was to report to each conference session as the conference might require.

⁶⁷Grant Goodrich, “Garrett Biblical Institute,” in *Early Schools of Methodism*, ed. Cummings, 383.

⁶⁸Gary Scott Smith, “Two Sides of the Evangelical Tradition: Presbyterian and Methodist Theological Education, 1890-1920,” 45, n. 158. Paper presented at the Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition Conference, Wheaton College, IL, December 3, 1993.

⁶⁹McCulloh, *Ministerial Education*, 47, 181.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 78, 171.

⁷¹Vail, *Ministerial Education*, 186, 188.

was given suitable independence while remaining under the authority of the church. Wesley argued that the “irregularities” of which the Methodists were charged were necessary functions of their mission and not symptoms of dissent.⁷² He even argued that his movement was a “private society” not directly subject to church law. Church authorities did not have to be consulted on the society’s rules of membership.⁷³ His authority within them did not rest in his priesthood but as one whom the societies themselves had voluntarily chosen. Even down into the twentieth century the distinction of membership in the society and in the church was maintained in British Methodism.⁷⁴

The Independent Academic Function. As a society characterized by this task-guided independence, the seminary was free to organize as the task of education required. This meant adopting the organization and methods of the academy as they were suited for its purposes.

Two distinct spheres in Western institutional life, then, came into play with the formation of seminaries: church and education. They reflect two different types of relationships of the believer. One reflects the relationship of the believer to God through Jesus Christ and to the community of faith. This relationship to God is one of absolute significance. Believers stake their entire being on it, and learn, witness, and act with each other and in the world in light of it. The other relationship is that of a learner. One is a finite person with reason, emotions, and experience that are seeking to understand a world the underlying significance of which is presented not only in special revelation but in a creation accessible through reason. The learner is dependent on the observations of others, whose

⁷²Outler, “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?”, 18; cf. Wesley, letter to Samuel Walker 4, September 24, 1755 (*John Wesley*, ed. Outler, 76) (“nor have we taken one step farther than we were convinced was our bounden duty”). Examples of practices done out of “absolute necessity” that varied from the rule of the church were field preaching, extemporaneous prayer, organization into classes and societies, annual conferences of the preachers, and their appointments (Wesley, Sermon 121, “Prophets and Priests,” 81; cf. Howard A. Snyder, “John Wesley and the Radical Protestant Tradition,” *Asbury Seminary* 33,3 [July, 1978], 25).

⁷³Wesley, “The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained” (1746) 3.6, in *Works*, Bicentennial Ed., 9:193f.; cf. Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 103.

⁷⁴John C. Bowmer, *Pastor and People. A Study of Church and Ministry in Wesleyan Methodism from the death of John Wesley (1791) to the death of Jabez Bunting (1858)* (London: Epworth, 1975), 175.

number is vast globally and historically. This relationship requires objectivity in respecting the contributions of others who do not share in the first relationship, or at least not in the same way. It requires a learning stance of some critical distance from one's own commitments, understanding, experience, and emotions. It requires the accumulated wisdom of educational methodology that reflects many of these aspects of the learner.⁷⁵ Timothy Dwight in 1808 included among the standards of good education a professional and specialized faculty, a substantial library, and a structure of legal accountability in the form of trustees, to which could be added a defined relationship to education as a whole.⁷⁶

This idea of combining spheres may not be compatible with some uses of the Reformed conception of sphere sovereignty. An attitude of either one sphere or another may resist the idea of more than one basic aspect of culture being carried out in one institution. Herman Dooyeweerd, however, substituted "mode" for Abraham Kuyper's "sphere." Patterns may be developed, and even combined, in a variety of different institutional configurations.⁷⁷ Conceiving education or government as creational modes of life rather than orders provides for their integrity as well as the complexity of their institutional appearances.

From the beginning of Methodist theological education, the educational sphere presented claims that its own institutional forms be recognized. These forms manifested themselves without ecclesiological intention. This is clear in the control by a board of trustees. The control of Cokesbury College, the earliest American school, quickly passed from the Methodist Conference to a board of trustees. Despite its independence, ecclesiological interests continued on the board of trustees through various forms of representation, which guaranteed, among other rights, participation in the election of the president and faculty.⁷⁸ The association formed in 1837 by the New England Annual Conference to assist young men to be educated for the gospel ministry recognized the ecclesiological nature of the proposed Newbury Biblical Institute (later Boston University

⁷⁵Cf. Niebuhr, *Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*, 4f., 47.

⁷⁶In his address at the opening of Andover Seminary, "The Evangelical Scribe" (cf. Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, 49, 68-69).

⁷⁷Richard J. Mouw, "On Creation's 'Several Parts': Modal Diversity in Dooyeweerd's Social Thought," in *Christian Philosophy at the Close of the Twentieth Century*, ed. S. Griffioen and B. Balk (Kampen: Kok, 1995), 180.

⁷⁸Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, 140.

School of Theology) by having the trustees elected by three New England Conferences.⁷⁹ At times a bishop has been the president of the board of trustees. At Cokesbury, Bishop Francis Asbury was the ex officio president of the trustees.⁸⁰ This was also the case when Evangelical Theological Seminary was founded in 1873.⁸¹ At Vanderbilt the bishops of the church formed a board of supervision working jointly with the trustees.⁸²

Not only election by the church, but even the requirement that trustees be United Methodist has in recent decades largely been superseded.⁸³ For Drew, for example, this occurred in a charter amendment in 1969. United Methodist representation does continue to be important, nevertheless. All of the seminaries have United Methodist representation on their boards. Drew itself continues to have bishops on its board. Some of the seminaries require a certain number of United Methodists on the board.⁸⁴ The trustees of St. Paul School of Theology include three bishops named by the South Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops and a representative from the six closest annual conferences. The majority of the forty-one-member board are to be members of the United Methodist Church.⁸⁵

The pull from the sphere of education against ecclesiology has been particularly strong in the United Methodist Church. Claude Welch described a tendency for Protestant seminaries to be founded some distance away from the ethos of the colleges and the education that they offered.⁸⁶ McCulloh suggests, however, that “a somewhat unique characteristic of Methodist schools of theology” has been “their affinity for universities and other higher education institutions.” The first three theological schools (Boston University, Garrett, Drew) were quickly set in a university context.⁸⁷ American Methodism is unique in having formed by

⁷⁹McCulloh, *Ministerial Education*, 23.

⁸⁰John O. Gross, *Methodist Beginnings in Higher Education* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Church, Board of Education, Division of Educational Institutions, 1959), 21f.

⁸¹McCulloh, *Ministerial Education*, 134.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 164.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 95.

⁸⁴Personal letter from John E. Harnish, then Associate General Secretary, Board of Higher Education, the United Methodist Church, June 21, 1994.

⁸⁵St. Paul School of Theology Bylaws, 1993, Art. II.

⁸⁶Claude Welch, *Graduate Education in Religion. A Critical Approach* (Missoula, MT: U. of Montana, 1971), 116; cf. McCulloh, 83.

⁸⁷McCulloh, *Ministerial Education*, 83.

1922 seven divinity schools organically connected to universities.⁸⁸ It also is alone in continuing to have seminaries in the university under ecclesiological control. The motivation was not ecclesiological, but practical concerns for educational, religious, and cultural resources to relate the church and its leadership to its society. McCulloh suggests that these concerns also drew United Methodist theological education into urban centers.⁸⁹ Glenn Miller observes that the university context also was fitting for the lack of sharp distinction of laity and clergy in Methodism.⁹⁰

The frequent beginnings of theological education in departments in Christian colleges accentuated the distance from the church. Colleges had a distinct role in the development of theological education in United Methodism. The Christmas Conference, which organized the American Methodist church in 1784, in authorizing the establishment of the ill-fated Cokesbury College, included among the latter's purposes preparation for public service for the "young men who are called to preach."⁹¹ The primary purpose, however, was for children of preachers and orphans. It was an English free school that never achieved college status (although Thomas Coke in contrast to Francis Asbury had that desire).⁹² Asbury later sought a boarding academy for every conference and led the organization of five or six of them.⁹³

In America the prevailing opinion in this period was that preparing an educated ministry could best be done through the general colleges supported by the church. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers led to an emphasis on all young Christians having the opportunity for Bible study and related disciplines. An 1840 Episcopal address stated that "as a

⁸⁸Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion. Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana U., 1995), 19, 23. Miller, however, proposes that Methodists thus became the leader of university-related divinity schools by default because the early theological schools were not well supported by the church and so needed the university framework (*Piety and Intellect*, 460).

⁸⁹McCulloh, 83 and chap. 7.

⁹⁰Miller, 426f.

⁹¹Bangs, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1:230; cf. McCulloh, 10.

⁹²Douglas R. Chandler, "A New Church in a New Nation, 1784-1800," in *Those Incredible Methodists. A History of the Baltimore Conference of the United Methodist Church*, ed. G. P. Baker (Baltimore: Baltimore Conference, Commission on Archives and History, 1972), 66, 70.

⁹³Gross, *Methodist Beginnings in Higher Education*, 31.

Christian community, all our institutions of learning should be sanctuaries of theological science.⁹⁴ The General Conference of 1820 gave the bishops the right to appoint traveling preachers as officers and teachers in colleges.⁹⁵ Ecclesiological concern, however, created a resistance to dominance by the more secular academic institution. The charter of Boston University required a faculty separate from the biblical or religion departments of the university in order to preserve the distinctive task of a seminary.⁹⁶ A determination to move into a deeper relationship with the church⁹⁷ led the “School of Religion,” established at Duke in 1926, to become a divinity school in 1940.⁹⁸

Up to 1912 the bishops had to approve all faculty appointments to the seminaries.⁹⁹ The removal of this requirement reflected a different ecclesiological understanding of the seminary. It was removed largely in reaction to the Council of Bishops’ refusal in 1905 to confirm the election to the faculty of Boston University of Hinckley Mitchell, an Old Testament scholar accused of incompatible views on biblical scholarship and other doctrinal matters.¹⁰⁰ An understanding has been that actions of the General Conference, bishops, or church agencies are not to dictate the seminary curriculum. When the 1956 Discipline required studies in Methodist history, doctrine, and polity for full clergy conference membership and when the Methodist seminaries were required in 1960 to include these studies in their course offerings, some feared that the General Conference was beginning to determine seminary curriculum.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴To the 1840 General Conference, quoted in Norwood, 306. Significantly, the colleges were viewed as being part of the “Christian community.”

⁹⁵Gross, 36f.

⁹⁶McCulloh, 84.

⁹⁷The description of the relationship of the church to the educational institution as “patronage” probably fit the college better than the seminary. This term was used, for example, in the charter of Wesleyan University (“the patronizing Conferences”) (Edward Cooke, “The Wesleyan University,” in *Early Schools of Methodism*, ed. Cummings, 172) and in the first annual catalogue of Baldwin University (A. Schuyler, “The Schools in Berea, Ohio,” in *Early Schools of Methodism*, 316).

⁹⁸McCulloh, 88.

⁹⁹Thomas Trotter, “Forward,” in McCulloh, *Ministerial Education in the American Methodist Movement*, xii.

¹⁰⁰McCulloh, 246.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 300.

Gerald McCulloh concludes his *Ministerial Education in the American Methodist Movement* by affirming the independence of the educational sphere. The schools must be free so as to avoid “preoccupation with techniques of congregational manipulation or institutional gadgetry” that would distort the schools’ educational integrity and impoverish the church’s own life and mission. The churches and the schools must be free “to say yes or no to each other.”¹⁰² Kelsey grounds academic freedom in the priority of faithfulness to God over our theological traditions. In addition, the nature of true learning requires more than simple transfer from teacher to student of a single line of thought, although the church’s theological tradition appropriately provides the starting point of critical reflective study.¹⁰³

The danger in thus embracing the institutional sphere of education is that its focus and horizons can dominate the concerns of the sphere of the church to which the society belongs rather than developing a unique Christian philosophy of educational practice.¹⁰⁴ The solution is not to deny the special character and needs of education, but to ensure that the educational society remains a living part of the church that it serves. As H. Richard Niebuhr urged,¹⁰⁵ the other components of the church are necessary for the enterprise of theological learning. The necessary abstraction of concrete reality must be carried out in the context of worship of God, hearing God’s Word, and direct service to one’s neighbor. Theology must not be severed from the total life of which it is the intellectual part.

Experience in the life of the church as it encounters God is a crucial form of religious knowledge. The theological task should deal with the questions that arise out of the essential practices of the church,¹⁰⁶ including the church’s responsibility for training its ministerial leadership. At the same time, the theological enterprise must respond to Scripture, reason, tradition, and other sources of Christian experience more broadly than the church’s current experience so as to have the capacity to have a critical stance regarding the practice and thought of the church.

¹⁰²Ibid., 309f.

¹⁰³Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly*, 184-86.

¹⁰⁴Lansman, *Higher Education in the Evangelical United Brethren Church*, 138.

¹⁰⁵Niebuhr, *Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*, 129-33; cf. Calivas, “Orthodox Theology and Theologians,” 281, 305.

¹⁰⁶Kelsey, chaps. 7-8.

Financial Independence. Financial considerations have provided another factor tending to remove the seminaries from their organic unity with the rest of the church. The United Methodist Church pays only 20 percent of the operating costs of its thirteen seminaries¹⁰⁷ (although that still provides considerable leverage). Most of the seminaries were established through very large gifts from wealthy laypersons. This pragmatic factor, not ecclesiological considerations, has prodded independence. The extreme case was when the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, lost control of Vanderbilt University. The courts ruled in 1914 that the founder was not the church, but Cornelius Vanderbilt because of his \$1,000,000 gift.¹⁰⁸

Ecumenical Service. A further factor lessening the relationship of United Methodist seminaries to the rest of the denomination has been ecumenical commitment. The ecumenical leadership of United Methodism was prepared by historic Wesleyan ecclesiology. For Wesley the church is the people of God in a particular area as they associate and manifest the true characteristics of the church. In his sermon "Of the Church," Wesley states that "a particular church may . . . consist of any number of members, whether two or three, or two or three million." The universal church is all the persons in the universe whom God has called out of the world. A national church, like the Church of England, is the part of that great body which lives in any particular nation. Christians who live in one town or even who gather in a particular house are smaller parts of the universal church.¹⁰⁹ Different denominations are the same church just occupying different ground. Wesley wrote to the Methodists in America in 1784 that they were to invade no one's territory. Methodists could cope with different rites and non-essential differences in doctrine as long as they could carry out their mission.¹¹⁰

As Wesley recognized larger geographical units also to be truly the church, so too was the church universal. The strong ecclesiological connectionalism of Methodism means that there is no autonomy to surrender. Acknowledgment of a higher identity lies in the idea of the church so that

¹⁰⁷Harnish, June 21, 1994 letter.

¹⁰⁸McCulloh, *Ministerial Education*, 167.

¹⁰⁹Wesley, "Of the Church" (1785) 1.14-15, in *Works*, Bicentennial Ed., 3:50f.

¹¹⁰Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 135.

acceptance of mutual responsibility and submission to mutual jurisdiction is natural.¹¹¹ Further, visibility as a congregation and in sacrament and preaching characterizes the nature of the church. “The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered . . .” (Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church XIII [taken over from the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England]). Since visibility characterizes the church, unity with other believers must be more than a “spiritual” matter.¹¹²

The Methodist understanding of the church includes a tension between a loose inclusivism and a rigid exclusivism.¹¹³ The Wesleyan society in eighteenth-century England was not to form itself as a separate sect because that would interfere with their mission “to spread life among all denominations.”¹¹⁴ Non-Anglican Dissenters were allowed into the Methodist societies.¹¹⁵ Likewise, the seminary carries its educational task to the other denominations as well. A comparable institution might be Trinity Evangelical Divinity School that similarly has a two-fold principle. It is sponsored by and serves the Evangelical Free Church, but also is consciously open to and reflective of the Evangelical movement generally. More broadly, Neo-Evangelicals, by not forming one distinct denomination, could serve all denominations, including the provision of Evangelical seminaries.

Methodist ecclesiology gives support for the presence of the broad Christian tradition in its institutions for educating ministerial leaders.

¹¹¹Beck, “Some Reflections on Connexionalism,” 46.

¹¹²John Deschner, “Methodism’s Thirteenth Article,” *Perkins School of Theology Journal* 13,2 (1960), 9f.

¹¹³Durward Hofler, “The Methodist Doctrine of the Church,” *Methodist History* 6,1 (October, 1967), 34.

¹¹⁴Wesley, Letter to Thomas Taylor, April 4, 1790, in Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. J. Telford (London: Epworth, 1931), 8:211; cf. Wesley, *A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion* (Bristol: Farley, 1758), 241. Similarly, following Wesley’s death, the London Trustees contended that the Methodists were intended to be “evangelists to all denominations,” not just another denomination. They were to be a middle link uniting all religious parties “in the interests of experimental religion and scriptural holiness” (Address of the London Trustees, July 17, 1793, in Bowmer, *Pastor and People*, 23). A para-church organization can also be understood to be a servant of the church and not of a particular denomination: C. Howard Hopkins described the YMCA in its early years as “not a denomination, but the servant of the churches for a specialized ministry to young men” (*John R. Mott* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], 235).

¹¹⁵Snyder, “John Wesley and the Radical Protestant Tradition,” 129.

Niebuhr argued for the educational importance of this perspective. A commitment to the church as a whole, greater than the more proximate denominational part, allows for a critical theological attitude in which there can be a confrontation with the theological object.¹¹⁶ Wesley, however, also regarded the Methodist distinctives as important for the movement's work. He would be zealous that they were imparted in training. The broad ethos of the age-old church had distinct content for Wesley. For him, "one Spirit, one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God and Father of all" each represents significant further content for Christian life and faith.¹¹⁷

The discussion that led to the establishment of the institute that became the first theological school in America in 1840 (eventually Boston University School of Theology) proposed that it be for "candidates with suitable qualifications from any Christian church."¹¹⁸ The university design opened this wider door at Duke. An objective of its founders was establishing "a university school of ministerial education." The focus was to be on the distinctive tasks of Christian theology, which were separate from the secular study of religion as a phenomenon of human culture. Within this Christian focus, the school had dual principles. On one hand, it had a legal relationship with the North Carolina conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church. One of its principles was to embrace the received religious tradition of its founders. The other principle, however, was a conscious reflection on its university format—the freedom to accent what was essential for advancing theological understanding in a university context. "University" was understood to demand ecumenicity. The 1926-27 Duke catalog stated that members of all other Christian denominational groups were to be made welcome in a school of religion. The basis of the work was broadly catholic and not narrowly denominational. According to Robert Cushman, in this second principle, the living church, which forms the indispensable reference in theological education, now was the church universal, as the particular Methodist church was the living church for the first principle. Cushman sees this to be in accord with Wesley's sermon "The Catholic Spirit" and his "Letter to a Roman Catholic."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶Niebuhr, *Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*, 9-41, see particularly 10, 40.

¹¹⁷Wesley, Sermon 74, "Of the Church," 1-19, in *Works*, Bicentennial Ed., 3:46-52.

¹¹⁸"The Convention at Boston," *Zion's Watchman* 4,18 (May 4, 1839), 70.

¹¹⁹Robert E. Cushman, "Fifty Years of Theology and Theological Education at Duke; Retrospect and Prospect," *Duke Divinity School Review* 42 (1977), 8-11.

The attempt to do theological reflection with reference to two levels of the church, the denomination and the church universal, appears to have become the mode of contemporary United Methodist seminaries. Boston University School of Theology was allowed by the university charter to insist on adherence to Methodist principles. The School of Theology in 1871 chose, however, to subscribe to a rule which previously had applied only to the rest of the university: No instructor should be required "to profess any particular religious opinions as a test of office."¹²⁰ The School of Theology at Claremont when newly incorporated in 1956 stated its intention "to prepare ministers and other professional leaders for the churches of the Christian faith . . . irrespective of denominational connection or religious profession."¹²¹ Claremont's campus provides a base for a theological cluster that also includes seminaries of the Episcopal, Lutheran, and Presbyterian denominations. Claremont provides the degree and one year of the Master of Divinity degree for the Episcopal seminary, while the Disciples have a House of Studies for their students at Claremont.¹²² At the same time it should be noted that the bishop of the California area is the chair of the board of trustees, eighty percent of whom are United Methodist. Forty-eight percent of the students are United Methodist.¹²³ Gammon Theological Seminary is a special case as it, in service primarily of African-American ordained ministry, shares with six other denominations in a unified faculty, curriculum, library, and facilities in the Interdenominational Theological Center.

In 1980 McCulloh noted that among the seminaries, from fifteen to about fifty percent of the student bodies came from other churches. Reciprocally, in some years the number of United Methodists graduating from non-United Methodist seminaries exceeded those graduating from United Methodist seminaries.¹²⁴ This service of other churches, however, has been accompanied by a diminishing of the organic relationship of some Methodist seminaries to their own church. Drew and Duke have officially identified themselves as interdenominational and ecumenical.¹²⁵

¹²⁰Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion*, 61.

¹²¹School of Theology at Claremont, Faculty Handbook (1994), 1.1.

¹²²Personal letter from Marjorie Suchocki, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean, School of Theology at Claremont, September 28, 1994.

¹²³Personal letter from John E. Harnish, June 28, 1994.

¹²⁴McCulloh, *Ministerial Education*, 95.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 307.

Conclusion

The United Methodist seminary is a missional society serving the church by carrying out its charge for educating its ministerial leaders. As a society, it is part of the church, yet it has an independence necessary to carry out its educational task. The involvement in academic institutional life creates a tension in the organic unity with the institutional life of the church. This separation is expanded by the intentional ecumenical breadth of the educational society's services. As a result, the United Methodist seminaries experience the danger of moving from the missional society model to that of an independent institution that has only a working agreement with the church. The relationship then is not that of a part to the whole but of one institution to another, although accompanied by a commitment to the tradition and style of theology of the church. To that degree the seminaries have moved out of the original United Methodist ecclesiological foundation.

**THE “BAPTIST VISION” OF
JAMES WM. McCLENDON, JR.:
A WESLEYAN-PENTECOSTAL RESPONSE**

by

Amos Yong

On 30 October 2000, shortly after completing the final pages of his *Systematic Theology*, James William McClendon, Jr., Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Fuller Theological Seminary, returned home to be with the Lord.¹ The following review, reflection, and response to McClendon’s “baptist vision” is written in recognition of its importance for contemporary Christian theology. At the same time, insofar as it seeks to participate in, complement, and extend the theological conversation to which McClendon had devoted his life’s work, it should also be considered as a tribute to his legacy. Part one of this essay will summarize some of the primary themes, motifs, and arguments of the *Systematic Theology*, thereby setting the stage for the dialogue to follow in part two. There, I will look in some detail at McClendon’s “baptist vision,” his biographical/theological method, and his theology of religions, and do so in conversation with recent Wesleyan and Pentecostal theology since these are con-

¹James Wm. McClendon, Jr., 6 March 1924–30 October 2000. McClendon’s magnum opus is his *Ethics: Systematic Theology*, Vol. I; *Doctrine: Systematic Theology*, Vol. II; and *Witness: Systematic Theology*, Vol. III (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986, 1994, and 2000 respectively). All references to these volumes will be cited parenthetically in the text simply by volume, colon, and page number; italics and emphases within quotations are McClendon’s unless otherwise noted.

sidered by McClendon as members within the family tree of the Radical Reformation.²

Part I: McClendon’s Systematic Theology—An Overview

Theology had been previously defined by McClendon as “a science of convictions.”³ But what are convictions? They are “our persuasions, the beliefs we embody with some reason, guiding all our thought, shaping our lives” (1:23). Theology is, therefore, the “discovery, understanding, and transformation of the convictions of a convictional community, including the discovery and critical revision of their relation to one another *and to whatever else there is*” (1:23). Putting it this way, the progression of McClendon’s *Systematic Theology* from *Ethics* through *Doctrine*, and concluding in *Witness* makes eminent sense. Theology flows out of and shapes convictional practices. What Christians believe (*Doctrine*) cannot be abstracted from what they do (*Ethics* and *Witness*).

1. Ethics. McClendon begins his *Ethics* with the question of what an authentic baptist theology should be like. He lays out the hypothesis, designed to be tested throughout the *Systematic Theology*, that the marks of a distinctively baptist theology include the following features:

1. Biblicism, understood in the sense of Scripture being authoritative for faith and practice;
2. Evangelism, oriented toward mission with the understanding that genuine witness may entail suffering;
3. Liberationism, with emphasis on the individual’s voluntary response to God, and on the Christian community and its separation from the state;
4. Discipleship, defined as life-long service in acknowledgment of the lordship of Christ and signified by believer’s baptism;

²Because I did not know James McClendon in person, I can only honor his life’s work by engaging seriously with his ideas. At the end of the Preface to volume 2, McClendon writes, “I point out that I have written slowly, that there is much on each page, and that slow reading is in this case the best reading. In particular, I point this out to reviewers, who are at their lovely best when they take time to read what is actually written.” I hope that I have heeded the author’s request, and that such would be evident in what follows to those who knew him best.

³From James Wm. McClendon, Jr., and James M. Smith, *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), esp. chap. 7; orig. published as *Understanding Religious Relativism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974).

5. Community, understood as sharing life together in the service of and with Christ, signified by the Lord's supper.

Drawing from Peter's connecting the pentecostal experience with the prophecy of Joel—"this is that" (Acts 2:16), this experience on the day of Pentecost being a fulfillment of that prophecy—the baptist vision also makes a similar claim. Expressed as a hermeneutical motto, this claim is a "shared awareness of *the present Christian community as the primitive community and the eschatological community*. In other words, the church now is the primitive church and the church on the day of judgment is the church now; the obedience and liberty of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth is *our* liberty, *our* obedience" (1:31). These two motifs—"this is that" and "then is now"—are at the heart of McClendon's baptist vision: "The church now *is* the primitive church; *we* are Jesus' followers; the commands are addressed directly to *us*. . . . The baptist 'is' in 'this is that' is therefore neither developmental nor successionist, but mystical and immediate; it might be better understood by the artist and poet than by the metaphysician and dogmatist" (1:33).

But why begin with ethics? While McClendon acknowledges the interconnectedness between ethics and doctrine and their presupposing each other, he argues for the chronological priority of ethics over doctrine (1:42). Are not spiritual and moral instruction the center of Christian life from which emerges Christian teaching? Yet McClendon is not interested in ethics understood simply as moral decision-making. Rather, building on the work of others like Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder, the decisions of the moral life flow out of shared convictions about the way things ought to be, and such convictions derive, finally, from the shared story that Christians participate in. Our Christian lives are or should be no more and no less than the re-enactment of convictions found in the biblical story: "this is that."

It is also important to note that, for McClendon, convictions are what make persons and communities what they are. To relinquish a conviction is not simply to shed an incidental belief but to undergo a transformation of self or community into something other than what it was before. But what then about the convictions undergirding Christian morality? What, in other words, is the content of Christian convictions about the spiritual and moral life? McClendon suggests a three-stranded framework for understanding biblical morality: the sphere of the organic (the

body, the material, the natural and environmental realms), the sphere of the communal (the social, the interpersonal, the ecclesial realms), and the sphere of the anastatic (the resurrection, pentecostal, and eschatological realms) (1:66-67). His argument is that God is to be found in each sphere of human life, even while none of the spheres is disconnected from the others, and each includes the other two (cf. 1:186). The three-part structure of *Ethics* unfolds according to this three-fold framework.

Each of the three parts, in turn, follows a similar structure. The sphere of the organic begins with the contours of an ethics and morality of the body and moves toward an ethic of sexual love. The sphere of the communal outlines a social ethics and moves toward an ethic and politic of forgiveness. The sphere of the anastatic begins with a sketch of resurrection ethics and moves toward an ethic of peace. The movement in each case, from the general toward specificity, is mediated in the middle chapters of each part by biographical narratives which depict the baptist vision of "this is that." These biographies are by no means accidental to the *Systematic Theology*. Rather, they follow from McClendon's conviction that narratives are at the heart of identity, and that part of the theological task involves exploring how the Christian narrative and personal narratives that are far removed in space and time are interrelated.⁴

More concretely, for example, part one begins with the narrative of the black experience of religion and morality as embodied. The next chapter on the lives of Sarah and Jonathan Edwards tests the ethical theory as it relates to the erotic and yet common life of Christians. The last chapter in this part discusses sexual love within the larger moral framework of multiple narrative identities. Whether it be the Augustinian understanding of concupiscence connected with the fall, the romantic myth of the twelfth-century Tristan poem, the Freudian myth of eroticism, or Robert Louis Stevenson's love story, *Catriona* (1893)—the last presented in order to illuminate the biblical story of divine agapeic love—moral character, identity and norms are shown to be derivative from various kinds of narratives.

Part two on social ethics continues this narrative approach. Bonhoeffer's life illustrates how Christian convictions are lived out amidst diffi-

⁴This theological programme was charted long before the *Systematic Theology* began; cf. James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1975). Alongside the three biographical chapters, other section-long or paragraph-long narratives are interspersed throughout *Ethics*.

cult social and political circumstances. Without a communal environment to cultivate, reinforce, and act upon the shared Christian story, not only was Bonhoeffer's martyrdom inevitable, but the Confessing Church's resistance to the Nazi regime was bound to fail (cf. 1:207, 210). This is because it is only in communities that practices are established, performed, and maintained. Practices which go wrong or counter the redemptive model of Jesus' life become fallen principalities and powers that stand in need of correction (1:173-77, *passim*).

Finally, in the discussion of resurrection ethics, Dorothy Day's quest for social utopia exemplifies the socio-ethical implications of a millennial vision wedded to pacifist convictions. Yet visions and convictions are rooted in practices and narratives that persist through trying times. Day's period of engaging the world from the Great Depression, through the second World War, and to the later Civil Rights movement, is a testimony to the continuities amidst the disjunctions of a set of meaningful and lived convictions. Building on Day's biography, McClendon argues in the final chapter of this part that peacemaking is the set of practices that brings together all three spheres of the ethical life: the organic, the social, and the eschatological. These practices are rooted, finally, in the life and message of Jesus. As McClendon notes, it is by stories that "our lives are shaped; their narrative logic controls our use of rationality; they are the stuff of our convictions. If, then, we find our own convictions in discord, the indication is that we have not gotten our own stories straight" (1:313). Thus it is that this three-sphered ethics is a narrative ethics because "its task is the discovery, understanding, and creative transformation of a shared and lived story, one whose focus is Jesus of Nazareth and the kingdom he proclaims—a story that on its moral side requires such discovery, such understanding, such transformation to be true to itself" (1:332).

2. Doctrine. *Doctrine* continues the development McClendon's baptist vision: "this is that; then is now." The driving motif in this volume is doctrine as practice: What does the church need to teach in order to be the church? McClendon's argument is that (at least in America), theology from Edwards to Martin Luther King, Jr., has been "a practice about practices, a secondary practice that sought to discover, to interpret, and (provisionally) to revise the primary practices of the Christian communities it served" (2:56).

To further explore this thesis, McClendon suggests that traditional soteriological doctrines and categories be reinterpreted as practices at var-

ious stages of the Christian spiritual journey which are directed toward the eschatological reign of God (Part One). What is known as “catechesis”—which in the early church both preceded and followed after baptism—concerns the practices of instruction. “Conversion” governs the practice of baptism. “Koinonia” shapes the practices of eucharistic life following the way of Jesus. “Sanctification” influences the practices of discernment. McClendon discusses these successively under the categories “preparing,” “conversion,” “following,” and “soaring” (2:137-44). Yet each of these are dimensions of the one “salvation” that Christians experience (2:121). This salvation is the means through which believers experience the presence of Christ (the organic); through which they come into right relations with Christ and each other (the communal); and through which enter into a new way of life (the anastatic).

Yet while practices do fund doctrines, it can also be said that doctrines also illuminate practices. McClendon’s discussion of christology (Part Two) specifically focuses on the various ways in which christological doctrines illuminate Christian practices. The doctrine of the resurrection serves to structure the practice of Christian worship; that of ascension enables vision of the risen Christ [it encourages the practices of waiting and tarrying] and reception of the Spirit of Christ [it legitimates the experience of Spirit-baptism]; that of the Pentecostal presence of the risen Christ governs the kingdom work and disciple witness of the community of Christ’s followers (2:240).⁵ But, at the same time (and perhaps, more importantly), resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost are not only about us and our practices, but also about God and his actions. They narrate the activities of God’s own story (cf. 2:248) such that they are truthful representations of God’s character and life. In this way, McClendon attempts to account for Christian theology, doctrine, and practice. But to do so, he has to resort, finally, to a “two-narrative” christology (2:274-78) that is reminiscent of the “two-nature” christology of Chalcedon.

⁵For an extensively developed narrative christology of praxis that complements McClendon’s efforts, see Donald L. Gelpi, S.J., *The Firstborn of Many: A Christology for Converting Christians*, 3 vols., Marquette Studies in Theology 20-22 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), esp. vol. 2: *Synoptic Narrative Christology*. Gelpi’s christology, however, should be read against his larger project of a systematic foundational theology of Christian conversion: how should Christian beliefs shape Christian life? For an overview of Gelpi’s system, see Amos Yong, “In Search of Foundations: The *Oeuvre* of Donald L. Gelpi, S.J., and Its Significance for Pentecostal Theology, Philosophy & Spirituality,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, forthcoming.

This said, McClendon insists that doctrines are never only items of belief, but also structures of practices. Thus, christology serves as an invitation to us to participate in the life of Jesus and that of his disciples. Further, the doctrine of the atonement is about the work of God through Jesus Christ; but it is also about how Jesus' sacrificial life illuminates the Christian practice of carrying the cross. Thus, the gospel stories are about Jesus' life and his relationship to his disciples; but they also "invite contemporary readers to identify themselves with the wayward but transformed disciples of the story. The Gospels rhetorically invite readers to *become* participating disciples [by providing] the essential elements—character, plot, setting—of authentic narrative" (2:228).

Part Three on "The Fellowship of the Spirit" continues to probe the question of what kind of Christian community is appropriate to the Christian story. As expected, McClendon argues for a "free church" ecclesiology rooted in the baptist vision. Such an ecclesiology is "local, Spirit-filled, mission-oriented, its discipleship always shaped by a practice of discernment" (2:243). This hearkens to the marks of the baptist vision as detailed in *Ethics*. It assumes regular Bible reading along with communal interpretation. It is therefore pneumatic over and against Protestant or Catholic ecclesiologies which are characterized as more localized/individualized or corporate/catholic (2:341-44; I will return to this point later). Yet this is far from a sectarian (in the pejorative sense) ecclesiology. Rather, while each ecclesial voice and vision should be heard by the others, all are "provisional, awaiting future, even eschatological, completion" (2:337). In fact, McClendon's ecumenical vision insists that each voice continues to engage other voices, including those of the Jews who are not only at the roots of Christian community, but who also share central biblical narratives with those in the Christian way (2:345-60).

When applied to Christian worship, the baptist hermeneutical principle of "this is that, then is now" is what enables the church at worship to know itself as the church (2:385). Thus, paedobaptism is unacceptable since only adults can affirm the "yes" or insist on saying "no" to Jesus (2:394-95), and the former is absolutely necessary for true discipleship. With regard to the eucharist,

to say that [Jesus] is present *in a way that matters* . . . is to say that the one of whom this story tells is present in such a way that *the story continues*, present in a way that makes no sense

save for the story to this point, a way that shapes the story still to follow. Hence there can be no better “honoring,” no better “worshipping” of the one who meets us in Christian liturgy than recalling that story, any of its parts and especially its high moments (2:378).

It also is important to emphasize that the entirety of the liturgy (and not only the formal sacraments)—including its times, structures, and spaces—not only coheres with what the church teaches, but is the means of living out and transmitting (handing on) Christian convictions.

Readers will notice, however, that McClendon appears to have deviated from his biographical theology. Where are the historical and contemporary narratives which hold together the practices and undergird the convictions of Christian doctrine? McClendon explains in the Preface that due to constraints of space (as it is, *Doctrine* is already the longest of the three volumes, reaching to 536 pages), only a short section here or a paragraph there provide biographical glimpses into the life and faith of Christians. In this volume, therefore, the dominant narrative is that of Jesus Christ’s. Secondly, the narrative of the church functions to illuminate the soteriological structure of Christian faith and experience. Yet this secondary narrative remains highly abstract. Put another way, it is descriptive of every Christian in a general sense (and thus functions normatively), but is of no one in particular (as readers of *Ethics* will clearly miss).

Yet it is also true to say that the combination of these two narratives—of the gospel narrative and that of the Christian way—leads McClendon to completely restructure the traditional framework of systematic theology. Arguably, his is the most ambitious project in systematic theology to date which proceeds from the narrativist framework. As such, *Doctrine* provides new categories and new theological loci by which to grasp the important truths, beliefs and experiences of Christians in a postmodern world.⁶ This is a movement away from classical theism,

⁶For all of their emphasis on the testimony, Pentecostals have yet to produce a systematic theology in narrative form. One such Wesleyan account is available: Michael Lodahl’s *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1994). It is a single-volume work which focuses exclusively on the biblical narrative, thereby following its basic contours. The arrangement of the theological loci reflects this biblical shape: creation, sin, covenant, christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. What, if anything, do these examples—Lodahl’s and McClendon’s—tell us about the implications of narrative methodologies for the traditional theological loci?

if by that one means building the Augustinian-Thomistic synthesis on indubitable foundations (i.e., the doctrine of revelation), proceeding through trinitarian theology (i.e., the doctrine of God), and culminating with eschatology (i.e., the doctrine of last things).⁷ Of course, these elements are all present in *Doctrine*, but transfigured structurally, relationally, and, arguably, in terms of content, by the narrative method employed. Thus, for example, McClendon begins with eschatology and concludes with the doctrine of revelation understood in terms of the category “authority.” The discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity is found in chapter seven, but is there set squarely within the gospel narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. On the one hand, then, those who are looking for a traditionally structured systematic theology might come away from a superficial reading of *Doctrine* feeling like they’ve missed out on their meal altogether. On the other hand, those who are looking to see how one baptist vision informs and shapes the enterprise of systematic theology may feel treated to a royal feast.

3. Witness. The last volume of *Systematic Theology* reintroduces the biographical method prevalent in *Ethics* but largely missing in *Doctrine*. The driving question of *Witness* is “where and how the church must stand to be the witnessing church; that is, what must be the relation between the culture that is the church (and the larger Christian and biblical metaculture the church represents) and those cultures the church indwells, evangelizes, serves?” (3:34). McClendon’s goal in this volume, broadly put, is a theology of culture.

Part One focuses on exploring certain aspects of contemporary culture. In successive chapters, the religious, scientific, and artistic dimensions of human life are probed as “cultural vistas.” McClendon fundamental intuition that Christian convictions require both a yes and a no to culture appears immediately in the discussion of religion which begins with Navajo culture. Navajo convictions and practices are presented across the broad spectrum of the Navajo experience, followed by a brief history of the arrival of Protestant and Catholic missionaries and their

⁷McClendon makes the observation that, generally speaking, the scholastic and rationalistic language of classical theism remains incomprehensible to most Baptist ministers (2:300-01). This in itself marks a paradigm shift in evangelical theology today; see my “Divine Knowledge and Future Contingents: Weighing the Presuppositional Issues in the Contemporary Debate,” *Evangelical Review of Theology*, forthcoming.

interaction with the Navajos. McClendon's assessment of Christian faith vis-à-vis Navajo religiosity is captured in a section which deserves to be quoted at length:

For the gospel of the new that comes in Jesus Christ can only exclaim with an amen to the Navajo sense of the wholeness of life and the beauty it evinces. Would that Europeans and Anglo Americans had perceived such a wholeness sooner and more clearly! Here Navajo 'religion' (or better, their religiousness) has much to teach the Christian missionaries and witnesses who come near it. On the other hand, the gospel must proclaim good tidings. . . , a word of great good cheer to Navajo people who, for whatever reason, are hounded by fear of witches and dread of ghosts. . . . Thus, to repeat, the gospel is not a simple no or yes to Navajo 'religion' but declares a simultaneous yes and no (3:73).

This simultaneous yes and no persists throughout the remainder of McClendon's discussion of American religious culture which includes the American Revolution, the 19th century Evangelical Revivals, and the Social Gospel.

The chapters on science and society (written by Nancey Murphy) and on art in American culture continue to tease out the tensions between the yes and the no on the one hand, and McClendon's baptist vision on the other. Scientific discoveries affirm the intrinsic connection between the material and social strands of human experience (cf. the argument in *Ethics*) even while the theological doctrine of original sin (for example), is seen to have played a role in advances in the biological and sociobiological sciences. Further, the baptist conviction that witness perseveres through suffering provides a window into the question of natural evil. In the discussion of the visual, verbal and musical arts, the tensions between emphasis on the empirical here-and-now world and the transcendental spiritual-sublime world is explored through the lens of the two-narrative christological notion of the hypostatic union (developed in *Doctrine*). Just as the incarnation meant the transmutation of both flesh and spirit into a "distinct biblical whole ('God with us')," so does Christian art mean the transmutation of both empirical and spiritual art into a new whole as well (3:137). This chapter makes for especially interesting reading as McClendon contextualizes aesthetic theory and theology in the narratives of prominent American artists, writers, and musicians.

Part Two of *Witness* is an extensive engagement with the philosophical debate about modernity and postmodernity in contemporary American culture. Structured after the argument in *Ethics*, the three chapters move from a general overview of modern philosophy through to a more specific examination of philosophy of religion in a postmodern world, mediated by an intellectual and religious biography of Wittgenstein. Here, McClendon breaks new ground in bringing to light evidence regarding the important role of Christian conversion and convictions in Wittgenstein's philosophical development. In this regard, Wittgensteinian "fideism" must be understood not as an isolated and parochial "last stand" designed to protect beliefs from outside criticism, but rather as flowing forth from and grounded in the entirety of his quiet and yet sincere Christian life, "one that weighs his [Wittgenstein's] 'wonderful life' and its basic Christian dimension into the task" (3:269). The result for the discipline of philosophy of religion at the turn of the third millennium is that there is no such thing as philosophy of religion apart from the religious convictions which are brought to bear on such philosophizing.

While I will return to the question of McClendon's philosophy of religion later, the third and last part of *Witness* does play out this movement toward a holistic Christian theology of culture and of cultural engagement. McClendon's dialectical treatment of the world's identity and Christian identity—"they measure and define each other" (3:343)—means that Christianity itself is an essentially contested concept.⁸ How then can the followers of Jesus provide a distinctively Christian witness to the world? Certainly not in abstraction from the testimonies of their life narratives, McClendon responds. It is precisely in such living narratives that the rationality of Christian convictions can be seen to be most profound and the Christian witness is felt to be most powerful because it engages rather than withdraws from or rejects the world. Of course, the plurality of cultures, religions, and experiences in the world means that the Christian witness appears as one amidst a number of "clashing stories." This means, of

⁸Here, McClendon builds on the work of Stephen W. Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity: Theologians and the Essence of Christianity from Schleiermacher to Barth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). The latter's proposal, in turn, parallels that of Robert Schreier, who suggests that the process of contesting Christian identity requires a dialectical movement between concepts whereby one humbly submits one's claims to others even while one receives the claims of others in a self-critical fashion; see Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985), 119-21.

course, that adjudicating conflicting narratives is both an ongoing contest of engaging one’s own testimony with that of others and an eschatological anticipation intrinsic to the hope embedded in the Christian story.

In the concluding chapter of this *Systematic Theology*, McClendon applies his theology of culture to the concrete case of the relationship between Christian theology and the university. He argues that every worldview, even that of “secularism,” is theological in some respect because all worldviews make explicit the convictions of one narrative or another. Since this is the case, one cannot and should not bar Christian theology from the university. On the other hand, “Every worldview, every serious examination of human convictions in light of one another *and in light of whatever else there is* (no reductionism is acceptable in this work)—all this has some claim upon the curriculum, the prominence of each claim being proportionate to its perceived value in the larger arts curriculum and in the wider culture” (3:416). Here again, the “yes” and the “no” of McClendon’s baptist vision is made evident.

Part II: Wesleyans and Pentecostals in Dialogue with McClendon

The preceding summary undoubtedly does not do justice to McClendon’s 1386-page multi-volumed work. I surely do not intend to raise every conceivable point of criticism which might be raised, and that for at least two reasons.⁹ In the first place, my concerns about McClendon’s work are few. I found myself more often than not agreeing with him intuitively and theologically.¹⁰ This leads to my second reason for only a cir-

⁹Both sympathetic and critical reviews have been published in response to *Ethics and Doctrine*; see, e.g., Richard J. Mouw, “Ethics and Story: A Review Article,” *The Reformed Journal* 37:8 (1987): 22-27; Stanley Hauerwas, “Reading McClendon Takes Practice: Lessons in the Craft of Theology,” *The Conrad Grebel Review* 15:3 (1997): 235-50; Willie James Jennings, “Recovering the Radical Reformation for Baptist Theology: An Assessment of James Wm. McClendon Jr.’s *Doctrine* (A Review Article),” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 24:2 (1997): 181-93; and Ralph C. Wood, “James Wm. McClendon, Jr.’s *Doctrine*: An Appreciation,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 24:2 (1997): 195-99.

¹⁰My only real question about McClendon’s project concerns the emphasis he places on the priority of narrative. I would agree with such considered chronologically—that all thought is second-ordered activity that proceeds from life experiences—but wonder about whether or not it is a nuanced enough position that takes the dialectic of thought and experience into account epistemically. In other words, to turn the questions around, do moral lives frame decision-making or do the latter constitute moral selfhood? Do narratives structure experiences, or do experiences give birth to narratives? Are the meanings of narratives equivalent to

cumscribed dialogue with McClendon's opus. As a Pentecostal who has received part of his graduate education in a Wesleyan environment (Western Evangelical Seminary in Portland, Oregon), my goal in what follows is to bring McClendon's achievement specifically into dialogue with the Wesleyan and Pentecostal traditions. I believe this to be a worthwhile task not only since McClendon specifically includes both Wesleyans and Pentecostals within his baptist vision at various places throughout the *Systematic Theology*, but also because the ground of convergences between this baptist vision and Wesleyan and Pentecostal trajectories potentially makes for fruitful comparison and self-critical reflection. I will begin by exploring the inclusion of Wesleyans and Pentecostals in the baptist orbit (§1), and move from there to exploring this "family" connection in greater detail by way of looking at the issue of theological method (§2). I conclude by testing the methodological proposals of all three traditions in light of their common task of theologizing Christianly in a religiously plural world (§3).

1. The Baptist Vision and the Baptist Orbit. The first observation I would like to make concerns the relationship of Wesleyan and Pentecostal Christianity to McClendon's baptist vision. Certainly McClendon recognizes that these are three distinct trajectories of Christianity which have emerged since the Protestant Reformation. Accordingly, he at times distinguishes churches with their origins in the Radical Reformation from churches in the Holiness and Pentecostal streams (1:19). Yet at other times, he does not, as when he sets off the baptist type of ecclesial existence over and against the Catholic and the Protestant (2: chap. 8, esp. 334-35, 341-44 and 364-65; 2:450); as when he includes all "believer's churches" within the "baptist" orbit (1:34-35); as when he speaks of the "strange voices"

an understanding of their truths or are narratives to be held to and assessed by non-narrativist criteria and principles? My own intuition in the matter is much more complex than McClendon's rhetoric, at least, lets on. Yet while I will deal with some of these questions incidentally in what follows, space constraints and the purpose of this review essay as a tribute to McClendon's life work prevent me from taking up these issues at any length. For discussions of some of these questions by advocates of narrative theology, see Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982); Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, eds., *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989); and Hans W. Frei, *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, eds. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

from the for-the-most-part silent baptist tradition (3:339-40); as when he reflects on being oriented eschatologically to the coming Kingdom of God (3:342); as when he discusses what has traditionally been called "sanctification" and includes under his category "soaring" the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification and the Pentecostal experience of Spirit baptism (2:142-44); as when he draws a parallel between baptist discipleship and Wesleyan perfect love (2:278); and as when he agrees with Lesslie Newbigin's classification of 16th century Anabaptists together with 20th century Pentecostals as the "third force" in Christendom (2:335 and 434).¹¹ In each of these cases, baptist includes Wesleyans at one moment, Pentecostals at another, both together at a third, and so forth. In fact, things become significantly muddled when baptist also includes, at other moments, evangelical and fundamentalist bodies (1:19), Methodism (2:365), and other denominations in the free church tradition which are

amorphous, and in its wholeness little known. Its communal structure, like its doctrine and morals, is known only by bits and pieces, and not as the character of one ecclesial type. Some know what it means for Pentecostals to speak in tongues; others see the point of the immersion of new members; others make sense of the practice of the Rule of Christ (Matt. 18:15-18); yet others appreciate the paradoxical claim that "this [present gathering] is a New Testament church" (2:362; brackets orig.).

Leaving aside the question of what it is that defines either Wesleyanism or Pentecostalism, perhaps one way to approach the relationship between these two traditions and McClendon's baptist vision is to inquire into what exactly "baptist" means. The key clearly lies in his understanding of "baptist" as referring to any and all who are heirs of the Radical Reformation (1:19-20, 2-35; 2:45), and central to the definition of the latter is the primitivistic hermeneutic of "this is that" and "then is now." In this case, of course, Wesley's biblicism and Pentecostalism's primitivism appear to qualify both within the baptist orbit. But so would, it seems, the Lutheran *sola scriptura*. Other considerations therefore impinge on the definition of baptist, including those features which mark out and clearly distinguish an authentic baptist theological vision.

¹¹McClendon here follows Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (New York: Friendship, 1954).

Clearly, however, McClendon is not undertaking either a Wesleyan or Pentecostal theology, but a baptist theology. Yet his is not a parochial baptist theology, but an ecumenical one. It is motivated by the biblical narrative of what the church should be (2:371). Thus, the issue, as noted above in the discussion of ecclesiology in *Doctrine*, appears to revolve around how one understands the church. This *Systematic Theology* represents a uniquely baptist effort to bring those voices and traditions which have been on the periphery of the discussion back to the center. Here, McClendon rides the tension between particularity and universality. On the one hand, the baptist vision emerges from a historically locatable trajectory which bridges the world of the Bible and the world of the Radical Reformation; on the other hand, this vision is also ecumenical and eschatological, as evidenced not only by the various personal and communal narratives it brings together, but also by the emphasis on the anastatic (in *Ethics*), the theological priority of the Kingdom of God (beginning *Doctrine*), and the ecclesial practices which anticipate participation in that Kingdom (concluding *Witness*, as “Story’s End”; 3:371-83, esp. 379-80). Thus McClendon suggests that the various Christian identities “are justified only if they serve as provisional means toward that one great peoplehood that embraces all, the Israel of God” (3:374; cf. 2:365).

Granting this notion of eschatological provisionality and the ecumenical orientation of this baptist theology that proceeds not from a view from nowhere but from the specificity of practices within the free church tradition, the place of Wesleyans and Pentecostals within McClendon’s baptist orbit seems legitimate. McClendon’s project is sure to connect with the sympathies of ecumenically minded and yet convinced Wesleyans and Pentecostals. Further, insofar as Wesley and early Pentecostals emphasized practical Christianity over abstract doctrinal and theological speculation, the ethical priority and emphasis of this baptist vision is sure to be theologically attractive. At the same time, even conservatives within both traditions will be drawn to various aspects of this *Systematic Theology*, including its biblical commitments, its narrative structure, its evangelical and missionary thrust, and its pneumatic ecclesiology. Having said all of this, however, it is also important not to ignore the fact that baptists are not Wesleyans nor Pentecostals and vice-versa. In order to explore more explicitly some of the differences, I want to probe in greater detail the driving force behind this reshaping of systematic theology as traditionally conceived, McClendon’s biographical or narrative methodology, and how that compares and contrasts with Wesleyan and Pentecostal approaches.

2. Biographical Theology and Theological Method. The method behind the *Systematic Theology* derives from two fundamental tenets laid out at the beginning of *Ethics*: that theology is the science of convictions, and that convictions are inevitably narrative based. Building from these, McClendon insists that theology is pluralistic since it emerges from the various narratives which are brought to the theological task (1:36-37). Pluralism reigns even among baptist theologies because the two common features include the emphasis on the Bible, on the one hand, and the emphasis on experience—defined as “what we have lived through and lived out in company with one another, the experience that constitutes our share in the Christ story” (1:38-39). Yet this experiential approach does not open the door to relativism since theological activity is disciplined by its quest for truth (1:39-41). This leads McClendon to argue, following the patristic fathers and the Radical Reformers, for the chronological (not logical) priority of ethics over doctrine, even if both are ultimately concerned with understanding the fundamental convictions of any community (1:42-44).

These preliminary thoughts are then put to work throughout *Ethics*. In the final chapter of this first volume McClendon returns to the question of method and summarizes his case—made throughout the book—that the ethics of propositional principles, decisionism, or values all “presuppose and require some narrative, and that their Christian use presupposes and requires the Christian narrative” (1:328-29). More important, the three-stranded ethics is itself “none other than the critical analysis of the moral life of those who share in a certain ongoing real story [that of Jesus’ and of the kingdom of God]—a story whose link with its primitive past is established by *anamnesis* or memory, and whose link with its final end is fixed by the anticipation or hope of the sharers of the Way” (1:332). Ethics is, after all, more about the building of character and the exemplification of virtues than it is about the making of choices. The truths of character building and virtuosity are of necessity story-shaped.

The same strategy of exemplifying the method and commenting on it finally only in the last chapter of the book is pursued in *Doctrine*. What is the theological authority behind the claims made about what the church needs to believe in order to be the church? For McClendon, “authority” is “first of all a name for the Godhead of God.” The question then is how one locates “the subsidiary authorities by which God’s authority takes hold” (2:456). Scripture is itself one of these proximate authorities (2:463), even if supremely normative (the traditions of the church being understood as

“hermeneutical aids”; 2:471). In what might be understood as a Barthian move, Scripture’s witness is understood as pointing to Christ. McClendon thus discusses the question of authority by appealing to the story of God exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ. We find that this is not just a story “out there,” but a story in and through which we live, a story which lays a claim on us in one sense, but is an open invitation to us in another. More important, our living out the story validates its truth since it enables us to affirm “this is that” and “then is now”: “Here is a mystical vision, mysterious exactly because it does not deny the facts of history but acknowledges them. Our study of the original setting [e.g., the quests for the historical Jesus] does not cancel the vision but enhances its claim upon us” (2:466).¹²

To see his narrative hermeneutic at work in what is usually considered in traditional systematic theology under the label of prolegomena, observe how McClendon deals with the question of canonicity. His starting and ending points are the same: that *practice* secures biblical authority (2:473) and not vice versa since it is our living the story that “displays an authority that is none other than the bi-directional love of God: ‘this is how we know that we dwell in him and he dwells in us’ (1 John 4:13)” (2:462). McClendon applies this narrative perspective to the question of the biblical canon, a move which allows the blending of two stories—God’s and humanity’s—into one. Just as the two-narrative christology developed earlier teaches the interconnectedness of the human story and the divine, so also does a narrative perspective on the Bible enable us to see that the Scriptures are not only about God’s story, but also about our own, the two stories becoming “one indivisible Book” (2:476) through the one work of the Spirit of God in the unveiling the divine-human encounter. McClendon thus sidesteps the traditional questions regarding the priority of church and tradition over Scripture or vice versa. Rather, it is precisely because the various books

already possessed scriptural attributes—such attributes as being at once God’s own story and a truly human story, as

¹²Here, McClendon has the recent developments in biblical scholarship firmly on his side. Even in the debate between emphasizing the Bible as history (James Barr) over against the canonical shape of Scripture (Brevard Childs), both sides recognize the import of the centrality of narrative. In the former case, narrative is a genre that structures the biblical events, while in the latter, narrative provides the framework for understanding canonical processes. For a discussion of the tensions involved in this particular debate, see Frank Kermode, “The Argument about Canons,” in Frank McConnell, ed., *The Bible and the Narrative Tradition* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 78-96.

centering upon Jesus Christ, as evoking in their readers the prophetic or baptist vision—so that churches, by their recognition of these attributes, thereby revealed themselves as real churches. In this sense, their act of recognizing Scripture authenticated the church as church even while it acknowledged Scripture as Scripture. Canonicity . . . foreshadows an act that must be repeated whenever a church, Spirit-guided, uses any part of the Scriptures as Scripture. In this sense, the canon is not merely “open in principle,” as many have said, but open in fact (2:476-77).

How does McClendon’s narrative method compare and contrast with Wesleyan and Pentecostal approaches to theology? While it would certainly be wide of the mark to assume that the latter two movements employ only a single hermeneutical or methodological approach, for the sake of discussion, I want to focus on the Wesleyan quadrilateral and the Pentecostal pneumatic hermeneutic. Briefly, the quadrilateral emphasizes the priority of Scripture, albeit not to the neglect of tradition, reason and experience as sources of theology.¹³ The Pentecostal pneumatic hermeneutic, on the other hand, insists on the centrality of the Spirit’s illumination of the Scriptures as read and experienced within the community of faith; in this sense, biblical exegesis is also always exegesis of experience or its lack thereof.¹⁴

¹³While not explicitly identified as such by Wesley himself, the quadrilateral was exemplified in Wesley’s own theological method. On the quadrilateral, see, e.g., Lodahl, *The Story of God*, Part I; Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990); John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 155-76; W. Stephen Gunter, et al., *Wesley and the Quadrilateral: Renewing the Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997).

¹⁴Here, I draw from the work of William Menzies, “Synoptic Theology: An Essay on Pentecostal Hermeneutics,” *Paraclete* 13:1 (1979): 14-21, and Roger Stronstad, *Spirit, Scripture, and Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 1995). D. Lyle Dabney, “Otherwise Engaged in the Spirit: A First Theology for the Twenty-first Century”, *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann*, eds., Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg and Thomas Kucharz (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 154-63, argues that such a pneumatocentric hermeneutic is most appropriate for the accounting of Christian convictions in a postmodern world. My own constructive proposal includes this pentecostal element, although I call it a “trialectical hermeneutic and method” instead; see my *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*, New Critical Thinking in Theology and Biblical Studies Series (Brookfield, VT, and Aldershot, Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2002).

McClendon's only mention of the quadrilateral is in connection with his discussion of theological authority. He agrees that Scripture, evangelical experience and salvific community (and its practices, it should be added, all of which combine as "tradition") are appropriately understood as authorities for the theological task. What about reason, as advocates of the Wesleyan quadrilateral might add? McClendon's response is that it is a category mistake to identify reason, more properly understood as the processes of thought, as a site of authority (2:458-59).¹⁵ And, given his conviction about Scripture as the highest Christian authority, both experience and tradition are normatively subordinated to it. The "God of the philosophers," for example, derived from and can only be equated with the "God of tradition" (2:316). And, the resolution to the question then of "Which tradition among many?" is to be found not in a meta-tradition derived from some non-existent Archimedean standpoint but from the practices of discipleship shaped by the biblical narratives (2:317). Accordingly, McClendon insists, "The baptist vision is more often caught from the Scriptures than taught by a tradition" (1:198).

But what about experience, evangelical and otherwise? Does not McClendon's biographical theological method act (consciously or not) as a material norm for his scriptural exegesis? How can he avoid doing so when the beginning, middle, and conclusion of his reflections build on individual and communal narratives (such as appeal to black religious experience, Jonathan and Sarah Edwards, and Stevenson's *Catriona* in the organic sphere of ethics)? One's response may take either of two forms. McClendon's version would probably be the counter question, How can one recognize the truth of the biblical narratives apart from their instantiation either in our own lives or in those of other Christians? This would parallel the response given by Pentecostal pneumatic hermeneutics that all exegesis proceeds not in a vacuum but from one's personal and communal experiences of God through the Spirit. This leads to the Pentecostal emphasis on testimony—"Look what the Lord has done!" A similarly

¹⁵More explicitly: "reason or rationality is not understood as an authority or the authority; it is neither an authority in or on religion, nor a criterial authority for students of religion; rather it is a name for the thought processes by which we seek to maintain order in any sphere of conversation. To think is to reason, but to list thinking among one's authorities reflects either a category mistake (a misunderstanding of how the term is used) or a covert appeal to authorities one prefers to leave unnamed" (2:459).

structured pneumatic hermeneutic, then, can be seen to animate both McClendon's baptist vision and what I have elsewhere called the Pentecostal "pneumatological imagination," albeit resulting in diverse emphases.¹⁶

If that is the case, however, is not McClendon's baptist hermeneutic ("this is that; then is now") nothing more than primitivist or typological hermeneutic? He himself uses these labels to classify his hermeneutic at various places (e.g., 2:92, 395). If true, such a charge, frequently leveled at Pentecostal hermeneutics, would seem to lead McClendon back to a fundamentalistic biblicism. That this project does not fail on this score should be self-evident, but deserves brief comment along three lines. First, McClendon's emphasis on the eschatological sense of the biblical reality runs counter to a naïve primitivism. In this regard, this baptist theologian finds himself in the company of Pentecostals whose theological imagination is similarly animated by eschatological convictions.¹⁷ Second, McClendon's "this is that" builds on a sophisticated application of speech-act theory.¹⁸ Doing so allows him to alternative emphases between the biblical narrative on the one hand and historical or contemporary narratives on the other, as appropriate to the various junctures of his argument. Thus the tension between the biblical and the ecclesial horizons is preserved.¹⁹ Lastly, McClendon's biographical theology simply attends to a multitude of narratives, including that of the scriptural one. As previously noted, this "baptist vision" is deceiving (albeit not intentionally) in that it casts a wide net, one wide enough to include Wesleyans and Pente-

¹⁶See my *Spirit-Word-Community*, chapter 4.

¹⁷See, e.g., D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement series 10 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

¹⁸See McClendon and Smith, *Convictions*, chapter three.

¹⁹Nancey Murphy addresses this question with regard to the horizons of both the contemporary and ancient biblical audiences. She argues that McClendon's baptist vision—"this is that"—provides the hermeneutical key to understanding how the biblical words were received and practiced communally then and how they continue to be received and practiced communally today, since, according to speech-act theory, "the illocutionary force *then* is to be the illocutionary force *now for us*" ("Textual Relativism, Philosophy of Language, and the Baptist Vision," in Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey Murphy and Mark Nation, eds., *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994], 245-70, quote from 266; italics orig. to Murphy).

costals, among others. McClendon's ecumenical breadth and sensitivity means that he goes about his task of forging such a "baptist theology" in a way that will arouse few objections from those—such as Wesleyans and Pentecostals—not normally considered within the baptist camp. But, on the other side, what about the possibility that McClendon's inclusiveness may alienate others whose convictions are not quite as catholic? Is it the case that a narrative theological method compromises—at least potentially, if not actually—the exclusivity of Christian doctrinal claims to truth on precisely this score?

3. Testing the Methodologies: The World of the Religions. This raises the ecumenical question in all of its breadth and depth. I propose to consider this issue not only in terms of intra-Christian ecumenism, but, more seriously especially for the task of contemporary theology, with regard to interfaith relationships and the interreligious dialogue. This is an area of theological reflection that McClendon himself recognizes has serious implications for Christian doctrine and practice. At the end of *Ethics*, McClendon provides a summary of the two convictions undergirding his argument for a Christian ethics:

[The first is that] my story must be linked with the story of a people. The other is the conviction (call it the doctrine of salvation) that our story is inadequate as well: The story of each and all is itself hungry for a greater story that overcomes our persistent self-deceit, redeems our common life, and provides a way for us to be a people among all earth's peoples without subtracting from the significance of others' peoplehood, their own stories, their lives (1:356).

What exactly does McClendon mean here? Does this "greater story" refer to the gospel story? This might be a plausible reading except for the previous sentence. Should it then be understood as the eschatological version of that story? But how can the eschatological story be "greater" if in fact "this is that"? The most obvious meaning seems to be that McClendon wishes to take with all seriousness the plurality of stories that characterize human life and existence, including those of religious others.

McClendon's own theology of religions builds on three fundamental motifs. First, following his assessment of Christian faith, all religions and religiosities are understood as "powerful *practices* that embody the life-forming convictions of its practitioners" (2:421). This move builds on

post-Wittgensteinian cultural-linguistic theories of religions (like those of Clifford Geertz and George Lindbeck), and theologies of religion which emphasize their diverse practices targeting distinctive aims and teloi (like those of Joseph A. DiNoia and S. Mark Heim) (3:300-01). Second, following from the first, is the conviction that Christians can and should genuinely engage religious others in a transforming and yet critical dialogue. This is because those of other faiths are

strangers dwelling within the land of faith and examining its constitution, just as once there were strangers within the gates of Israel, and these deserve special honor for their distinctive atheist or Buddhist or Muslim or Judaic or other contributions to Christian self-understanding, although this must not be allowed to obscure their lack of the crucial element of trust in Jesus that identifies regular participants (2:33).

This leads, finally, to the soteriological question. Those who have never heard the gospel will be judged according to the light that they have. McClendon states forthrightly that this category of persons cannot be condemned in an apriori sense since "one cannot reject what one has not been offered!" (2:131). The Christian Testament's pronouncements of judgment, condemnation and damnation "have no clear application *outside* the bounds of [the Christian] community" (2:423). In this sense, and returning to the conviction of religion as embodied practices, McClendon's baptist vision strives to preserve the undeniable exclusivity of Christian beliefs. He therefore writes that "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ('outside church, no salvation') is true, not in Cyprian's Catholic-party sense, but in the sense that *the very meaning* of the word 'salvation' (or *salus*) in Christian use turns upon the shared life Christians take up when they come to Christ" (2:423).

But if this is the case, then how does one adjudicate conflicting truth claims across religious lines? If each religion's convictions are embodied in its practices, and if the latter are funded by their own narrative forms and structures, then how can critical and normative engagement occur? That "facts always arrive theory-laden; there are no theory-free facts, no convictionless facts, no facts save those constitutive of one story or another" (3:363) may mean that narratives can only and continuously speak past one another. What's good for me will not be good for you. The specter of relativism raises its ugly head.

Here, it might be useful to compare and contrast the results of McClendon's method with those of Wesleyan and Pentecostal theologies of the religions. On the Wesleyan side, Philip Meadows brings together recent thinking shaped by Wesley's own theology of the unevangelized in a richly suggestive proposal.²⁰ He urges (a) a broad reading of religion which recognizes each as a complex phenomenon that eludes simplistic categorizations as either true or false or as good or evil; (b) a providential understanding of the world such that its various processes, including religious ones, are overseen by rather than outside the hand of God; (c) a gracious conception of being human that underscores the seed of the Word in the heart of every person (cf. Jn. 1:9); (d) a christological notion of salvation which preserves the life and death of Jesus at the center of the divine plan without insisting on epistemic access to these events as the *sine qua non* of being saved; (e) a dialogical approach to mission which includes interpersonal relationships and mutual social projects alongside kerygmatic proclamation; and (f) a pluralistically envisioned eschatology such that "salvation understood as the pursuit of holiness can, in fact, serve as a meta-narrative to inscribe (rather than exclude) other ways of being religious, acceptable to God as means of grace with their own particular goals."²¹

On the Pentecostal side, my own work in theology of religions follows a similar trajectory.²² My concerns, however, are to emphasize insights into the structures of human religiosity from a pneumatological

²⁰Philip R. Meadows, "'Candidates for Heaven': Wesleyan Resources for a Theology of Religions," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35:1 (2000): 41-66. The literature on Wesleyan views of the religions is growing, as exemplified in the studies cited in Meadows' article (esp. note 3). Cf. also Floyd T. Cunningham, "Interreligious Dialogue: A Wesleyan Holiness Perspective," in S. Mark Heim, ed., *Grounds for Understanding: Ecumenical Resources to Religious Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 188-207; and Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*, esp. 145-53.

²¹Meadows, "'Candidates for Heaven'," 123-29; quote from 129. On this last point, Meadows follows the richly suggestive work of DiNoia and S. Mark Heim. Note the latter's recent book, *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends*, *Sacra Doctrina: Christian Theology for a Postmodern Age 2* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), which is not referenced by Meadows.

²²See, e.g., Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions*, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 21* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); and Amos Yong, *The Holy Spirit and the Non-Christian Faiths: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

perspective. Thus I have called attention to the pneumatological imagination as it functions epistemically with regard to human affections and emotions, and human relationships to others and to God. This enables pneumatological categories to emerge which situate the discussion in theology of religions in a different frame of reference than one that is concerned exclusively with soteriological issues. In other words, it demands the shift in attention from the question “what of those who have never heard?” to reflections on the religions in all of their complexity as human aesthetic, ethical and spiritual experiences. The resulting program requires nothing less than extensive dialectical, dialogical, and empirical analyses targeted toward understanding the religions comparatively—i.e., in terms of genuine rather than superficial similarities-in-differences—and therefore theologically.

Taken together, the Wesleyan theology of religions proposed by Meadows and the Pentecostal one proposed by myself complement McClendon’s own vision. Let me highlight a number of points of convergence which enable us to see these visions at work. In the first place, the baptist “this is that” retains a historical focus on how the past implicates and shapes the present, not only descriptively but also normatively. Thus the centrality of Jesus’ life and death, and the testimony of the apostles, prophets and early Christian community to that gospel narrative together function normatively both for Christian beliefs and, more importantly, for Christian practices. This connects with the Wesleyan christological inclusivism which distinguishes between the ontological and epistemic issues: Jesus’ life work and death are the basis of salvation, even if it is left open as to whether or not explicit knowledge and confession of his name is required for salvation. It also connects with the Pentecostal experience of the Spirit as the experience of Jesus since it is both true that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus and that Jesus is the sender of and the baptizer with the Spirit. In short, at various junctures, baptist, Wesleyan and Pentecostal theologies of religions are christocentric even if they may be divided between restrictivism/exclusivism and inclusivism with regard to the question of epistemic access to that gospel.

Second, all three emphasize a robust theology of mission. The baptist vision insists that the practical theory of religions frees us to see that mission is one of the integral practices of the religion we call Christian, that without it Christianity *dis-integrates*, that is, loses its integrity. In short, to be Christian is to be on mission. Hence, the final motivation for

mission need not rest in the unanswerable question of the status before God of those to whom we are sent, but rather on the far more immediate question of our own status as Christ's disciples (2:424). Similar motivations underwrite Wesleyan and Pentecostal missions. The former derives from Wesley's pastoral vision of the wide world as a parish, while the latter flows from the descent of the Spirit's "power from on high." Both revolve as much around the issue of Christian obedience—flowing forth from sanctification on the one hand and from Spirit baptism on the other—as they do around the Great Commission.

This leads, third, to the eschatological dimension of the baptist "this is that" which insists both that *then* ought to be *now* and that *then* also will be *in the future*. McClendon thus rightly calls attention to the fact that, "Special to each master story is the *hope of the future* that it generates" (3:359). This connects well with the sanctifying and perfect love trajectory of Wesleyan spirituality and with the eschatological orientation of Pentecostal praxis. In each case, eschatology is not simply an abstract, speculative scheme, but a means of ordering one's affections, shaping one's character, and structuring the social relations of the community of faith.

But the question that arises here is that which lies at the heart of the contemporary experience of religious pluralism. It concerns the potentially arbitrary privileging of the future. Sure, all religions have eschatologies, but not all eschatologies are alike, nor do all eschatologies play similar structural or functional roles within their respective religious systems. Buddhists and Hindus with their cyclical rather than linear views of time certainly have master narratives which envision the future, but to discuss these futures in conjunction with "hope" is misleading because of the connotations that category has within the Judeo-Christian framework. This is not to say that Buddhists and Hindus have no hope, but that their hopes have distinctively Buddhist and Hindu flavors.

This exemplifies the problematic questions that attend to contemporary Christian theology of religions in general, and to McClendon's culture-relative perspectivism in particular (or "soft perspectivism," as he also calls it; 1:350-51; 3:52-54). A story theology inevitably runs up against other stories, other narratives, other cultures, leading to a contest of stories and a clash of narratives. McClendon resorts to a principled criteriology of love, forgiveness, and peace. He acknowledges that these arise out of the Christian master story and therefore "provide no way for

our story's 'logic' to triumph over all others." Yet, they also "serve as bridges linking the concerns of the world to the concerns of Jesus' people. The Hebraic *shalom* and the Arabic *salaam*, for example, together form "a bridge by which they [Jews and Arabs] can come to respect each other's yearnings and find common way to fulfill them" (3:366). Respect means, in this context, much more than toleration, but appreciation and the willingness to be transformed. In fact, insofar as even one voice is silenced, all parties actually lose. The marginalization of the baptist voice, for example, is ample evidence that not only is that one cause "injured, but *so is every cause*" (3:339).

Here, the subtle point which emerges is that human stories are many, but also in some respects one. This finds agreement with the broad theological anthropology of Wesleyanism and the pneumatological anthropology of Pentecostalism. Witness does indeed arise out of the particularity of experience, but engagement and encounter with the testimonies and stories of others is always possible. Thus, it is true that perspectivism,

like mere relativism, acknowledges the great, contrary variety of human convictional communities, and acknowledges that the truth perceived in one is not easily translated into the truth of another community. Yet it does not theorize that there is no truth that is true. While recognizing that truth may be hard to get at, it is not dismayed. Meanwhile, perspectivism thinks it sees difficult but real ways to bring together discordant elements in the human fabric—a project about which relativism is totally pessimistic, and absolutism blithely optimistic (1:350).

This leads, finally, to that kind of interreligious dialogical encounter which the baptist, Wesleyan, and Pentecostal visions all endorse. Such is missiologically in intent, self-critical and transformative in practice, concerned with the question of truth, and eschatological in orientation. At their best moments, all three eschew rationalistic theologizing that neglects affective praxis and resist abstract schematizing in favor of dynamic modes of reflection; and all three attempt to creatively engage centrist theologies from their marginal positions. If this is what the baptist vision is about, I can, as one pentecostal, cast my lot with the McClendons of this world. And, I believe that I could speak also for many of my Pentecostal and Wesleyan friends and colleagues. May the legacy of James Wm. McClendon, Jr., encourage us in our ongoing work.

CONCERNS OF A PIETIST WITH A PH.D.

by

Stanley J. Grenz

When a Baptist congregation in Vancouver, British Columbia, invited me to fill its pulpit on Pentecost Sunday, I immediately knew that I would preach on renewal. This once vibrant congregation had been wracked by several years of internal squabbling, and as a result had dwindled in both membership and worship attendance. In seeking to minister to the need of the congregation at this point in its history, I delivered a sermon that drew from the experience of the disciples in the upper room in the days prior to the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit recorded in Acts 1. On the basis of this text, I sought to outline what must characterize Christians today if God were to visit us with an awakening.

As I concluded this message, I sensed a compulsion to offer an opportunity for anyone who had been challenged by the Word to respond in a concrete manner. To facilitate this, I invited all who would commit themselves to being catalysts for renewal in the congregation to stand and thereby give public expression to their resolve. I expected that one or perhaps two of those in attendance would heed my call. When the number of people standing swelled to eighteen, I was moved nearly to tears. So overwhelmed was I by this evidence of the Spirit's presence that I could not offer the promised dedicatory prayer, but had to call on the interim pastor to replace me on the platform and pray in my stead.

This incident was a vivid reminder to me of how deeply steeped I am in the warm-hearted, relational, pietistic conception of the Christian faith that I saw as a child in my father's ministry and imbued in the

churches he served. The concern for heartfelt piety does not only tie me to my own immediate genealogical history, however; it also links me to a long trajectory of proponents of “experimental” Christianity that dates at least to the eighteenth-century Great Awakening.

In addition to being committed to the awakening vision of the Christian faith, I am a systematic theologian schooled in the great tradition of scholastic theology with its focus on the intellectual aspect of the Christian faith, including the task of articulating and defending right doctrine. Since my elementary school days, I have been interested in discussing intellectual questions and issues. Beginning in high school, this interest led me to contemplate a career as a scientist, until I experienced a dramatic call to vocational ministry just prior to my junior year in university. As a result I changed my major to philosophy with a view toward theological studies. During seminary and then in graduate school, I gained a deepened appreciation for the importance of critical theological thinking as well as for the task of standing clearly within the context of the doctrinal heritage of the church.

Over two decades as a theological educator, I have steadfastly remained committed to pursuing the “understanding” dimension of the “faith seeking understanding” dictum. Moreover, I seek in all aspects of my work to give evidence of my underlying assumption that Scripture functions as the ultimate touchstone for Christian belief. In short, two strands run through my spiritual psyche: a non-negotiable concern for the work of the Spirit in transforming human hearts and an unabashed commitment to a Bible-focused intellectual rigor. You might say that I am a “Pietist with a Ph.D.”

I do not think I am unique in this respect, however. On the contrary, I am quite sure that many other evangelicals sense this double bloodline running through their spiritual veins. Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to suggest that this doubleness even mirrors American evangelicalism itself, at least as I have come to know it. The goal of the following paragraphs is to engage with the two-sided character of evangelicalism. I begin by sketching the rise of each of the two aspects of the evangelical ethos. I then summarize what I see as the current tension within evangelicalism that the presence of the two concerns occasions. Finally, I turn my attention to a possible way forward for evangelicals who, like I, sense that they are Pietists with Ph.D.s.

Awakening Evangelicalism: The Concern for Convertive Piety¹

Two concerns have determined the ethos of evangelicalism throughout its history. The central concern that has propelled the movement from its inception is evident in the designation “evangelical.” As the word itself suggests, evangelicals are a people committed to the gospel, an etymological connection that the group’s apologists routinely exploit.² Evangelicals are intent on upholding what they see as the one true gospel, a self-understanding that places them in a long stream of reform-minded movements in church history.

For the genesis of their namesake, evangelicals look above all to the Protestant Reformers. The patron saint of evangelicalism, Martin Luther, referred to his coworkers as “those who boldly call themselves Evangelicals”³ because of their attempt to return the church to the biblical gospel that they believed had been lost in the Middle Ages. As the continued use of their chosen name suggests, evangelicals view themselves as the true heirs of the focus on justification by grace through faith alone (*sola fide*). The ongoing self-consciousness of evangelicals as a gospel people is evident in such recent documents as “The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration,” published in the June 14, 1999, issue of *Christianity Today*.

In their commitment to the gospel, evangelicals are not simply Lutherans, however. Rather, their understanding of the gospel of justification by grace through faith has been mediated to them by developments that followed on the heels of the Reformation. Perhaps the most evident

¹For a fuller development of the history sketched in the following section, see Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-theological Era* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 25-52. The author expresses appreciation to Baker Book House for permission to draw from previously published materials.

²See, for example, Morris A. Inch, *The Evangelical Challenge* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 10; Donald G. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 15; Robert E. Webber, *Common Roots* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 25-27; Ronald H. Nash, *Evangelicals in America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 22. This point was also foundational to the section concerning evangelical identity set forth in the document that arose from the 1989 consultation on Evangelical Affirmations cosponsored by the National Association of Evangelicals and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. See *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 37.

³See, for example, Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, et. al. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986), 27:48.

example is the fact that evangelicals have generally diverged from the Lutheran script by following the Reformed tendency to view justification as a completed spiritual transaction that inaugurates the process of sanctification.⁴ The roots of this hallmark of the evangelical understanding of the gospel lie in the Puritan and Pietist movements that are often cited as forming the immediate seedbed for the rise of the evangelical awakening in the eighteenth century.

As the Puritan movement unfolded, many of the more radical among them came to conclude that the goal of the gospel is to gather out of the world "pure" churches, that is, congregations consisting solely of the elect of God. A church that would be truly reformed, these Puritans concluded, must rid itself not only of popish errors but of the unregenerate within it. The quest for a pure church ignited within the Puritans an apprehension regarding the possibility of gaining assurance of elect status. The result was the development of a descriptive psychology of sin and regeneration⁵ that gave rise, in turn, to the practice of reciting personal testimonies of God's work of grace in the heart--which, when coupled with evidence of a subsequent Christian walk, could mediate to concerned believers "full assurance" of salvation and of eternal election.⁶ Like the Puritans, the Pietists were reformers. Their goal was to complete the Lutheran reformation which in their estimation had degenerated to adherence to outward forms rather than fostering inward transformation. According to the Pietists, the true gospel entails the call to personal conversion, i.e., to a transformed heart leading to right living.⁷ In their estimation, the experience of the new birth forms the basis for the sanctification process.

According to church historians such as David Bebbington, evangelicalism was born on English soil in the 1730s.⁸ What triggered its rise was

⁴For a statement of the typical Reformed position, see Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, revised and enlarged edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953), 513-14.

⁵William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, Harper Torchbooks edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 92.

⁶Ted A. Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia: SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 47-48.

⁷Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 116.

⁸David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, Baker Book House edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 1.

the confluence of Puritanism and Pietism in the lives of a theologically diverse group of Christians, the most influential of whom was perhaps John Wesley.⁹ Like the Pietists, Wesley preached a gospel of conversion or regeneration (i.e., the new birth), an event that he believed includes justification.¹⁰ In fact, these two doctrines, justification (the forgiving of our sins through the atoning death of Jesus Christ) and the new birth (the renewing of our fallen nature that occurs at the time of conversion), formed the center of Wesley's theology.¹¹ During the evangelical awakening, the preaching of the new birth sparked a parade of vivid accounts of conversion, all of which followed a typical form.¹² The paradigm of the evangelical conversion narrative found its musical expression in the penultimate stanza of Charles Wesley's hymn "And Can It Be," which also encapsulated the evangelical theological assumption, inherited from Pietism, of the primacy of conversion and regeneration to justification. Hence, only after narrating the conversion experience—"My chains fell off, my heart was free"—do the lyrics announce that the regenerated believer is now "clothed in righteousness divine."¹³

Like his Puritan forebears, John Wesley was also keenly interested in assurance.¹⁴ His recounting of his Aldersgate experience (May 24, 1738)—"an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death"¹⁵—indicates that in his estimation assurance entails a sense both of forgiveness and of deliver-

⁹For a helpful sketch of the background influences on John Wesley, see Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 34-42. For Wesley as the intersection between Puritanism and Pietism, see Scott Kisker, "John Wesley's Puritan and Pietist Heritage Reexamined," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34:2 (Fall 1999), 266-80.

¹⁰For a discussion of Wesley's views on regeneration, see Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 101-130.

¹¹John Wesley, "The New Birth," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler, 26 volumes (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 2:187.

¹²See, for example, Isaac Backus, *Isaac Backus's Life: An Account of the Life of Isaac Backus* (unpublished manuscript), pp. 16-18. See also Isaac Backus, *Isaac Backus, His Writing Containing Some Particular Account of my Conversion* (unpublished manuscript), 5-6.

¹³Charles Wesley, "And Can It Be that I Should Gain."

¹⁴See the appraisal of Collins, *Scripture Way of Salvation*, 131.

¹⁵John Wesley, *Journals and Diaries*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, volumes 18-24 of *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984-), 18: 250.

ance, that is, a confirmation of both justification and the new birth. Moreover, according to Wesley, such assurance comes through the working together of the witness of our spirit and that of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ The former is indirect, arising as an inference from evidences such as the marks of the new birth (e.g., faith, hope and love), obedience to God's commandments and a good conscience, whereas the latter comes directly to the believing heart (and is the cause of the indirect evidences). Wesley's interest in assurance was closely connected with his concern for sanctification. For him, justification (understood as imputed righteousness) is the basis for the believer's acceptance with God. Sanctification (which emerges from regeneration), in turn, is the fruit of such acceptance.¹⁷

The focus on the new birth and the assurance of salvation that launched the evangelical awakening was abetted by an approach to the Christian faith that Bebbington and others claim arose from the influence of the new empiricist, inductive, experiment-focused scientific method that had been mediated to Wesley and others by the Enlightenment thinkers, especially John Locke.¹⁸ Hence, eighteenth-century evangelicals repeatedly referred to their goal as fostering "experimental religion," that is, a faith that had been tried and proved by experience. They believed that genuine religious affiliation is always experienced in life and its truth confirmed through personal experience, i.e., through "experiment."

In short, its roots in Puritanism and Pietism mediated to eighteenth-century evangelicalism a concern for and an emphasis on a conscious experience of the grace of God in personal conversion.¹⁹ Thus, at the heart of the evangelical movement has always been what Donald Dayton calls "convertive piety" or what Roger Olson terms "conversional piety,"²⁰ i.e., the message that "true Christian piety-devotion, discipleship, sanctification-begins with a distinct conversion experience."²¹ Convertive piety,

¹⁶Collins, *Scripture Way of Salvation*, 134.

¹⁷Collins, *Scripture Way of Salvation*, 94.

¹⁸Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 53. See also George M. Marsden, "Evangelicals, History, and Modernity," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George M. Marsden (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 98.

¹⁹William W. Wells, *Welcome to the Family: An Introduction to Evangelical Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 119.

²⁰For this designation, see Donald W. Dayton, "The Limits of Evangelicalism," in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, ed. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 48.

²¹Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 593.

in turn, has given shape to evangelical theology. Issues surrounding the shared conversion experience have provided grist for the evangelical theological mill for two and a half centuries, and it reemerges repeatedly as the fodder for evangelical “consensus” documents, including the 1999 *Christianity Today* statement on the gospel, which declares: “The Gospel assures us that all who have entrusted their lives to Jesus Christ are born-again children of God . . . indwelt, empowered, and assured of their status and hope by the Holy Spirit.”²²

Scholastic Evangelicalism: The Concern for Right Doctrine²³

Since the Great Awakening, evangelicals have proclaimed the gospel of the transformed heart. By the mid-twentieth century, however, descriptions of the movement tended to augment the focus on gospel proclamation with another, decidedly cognitive aspect, the commitment to biblical doctrine. The introduction of this additional dimension suggests that the evangelical ethos consists of a material and a formal principle,²⁴ the gospel of Christ and the authority of the Bible understood as the source of sound beliefs.²⁵ This development indicates the extent to which contemporary evangelicalism is heir not only to the legacy of convertive piety but also to the concern for right doctrine.

As with the commitment to the gospel of justification by faith alone, evangelicals look to Martin Luther for the genesis of their elevation of the Bible to center stage. Evangelicals afford Luther this status because of his unswerving allegiance to the primacy of Scripture against the medieval Roman Catholic position that ascribed authority to Scripture as interpreted by the magisterium, plus tradition. In elevating the Bible to the

²²“Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration,” *Christianity Today* 43:7 (June 14, 1999), 53.

²³For a fuller development of the history sketched in the following section, see Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 53-84.

²⁴See, for example, the statement produced by the 1989 consultation on Evangelical Affirmations co-sponsored by the National Association of Evangelicals and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, as published in *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 37-38.

²⁵See, for example, Kenneth S. Kantzer, “Unity and Diversity in Evangelical Faith,” in *The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They are Changing*, ed. David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge, revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977), 72-73.

center of theology, contemporary evangelical thinkers see themselves as maintaining Luther's principle, *sola scriptura*.

Yet, here too evangelicals are not simply Lutherans. In fact, their understanding of the implications of *sola scriptura* differs substantially from that of Luther himself. Luther elevated the Bible because he saw it as the cradle that holds Christ and as God's chosen instrument for bringing the gospel to sinful humans. Although not directly disagreeing with Luther's stance, contemporary evangelical theologians tend to honor the Bible as the source book for what may be called its "stateable content,"²⁶ that is, the doctrines (and moral precepts) it teaches. This altered understanding of Luther's great principle was mediated to evangelicalism by several post-Reformation developments.

Crucial in the early stages of this process was a movement that many historians call "Protestant scholasticism." As the conflict with the Roman Catholic Church continued into the seventeenth century, both Lutheran and Reformed theologians sought to undergird the commitment to *sola scriptura* by setting forth a clearer understanding of biblical authority. In the process, many Protestant theorists elevated the divine origin of Scripture above its human authorship, and they came to treat Scripture as accurate in every detail and as a storehouse of revealed propositions.²⁷ Theology, in turn, came to be viewed as the attempt to forge a system of right doctrine,²⁸ a goal accomplished through the systematizing of the teachings of Scripture.²⁹

Although contemporary evangelical theologians routinely follow the pattern honed by the scholastics, they do not generally trace their lineage directly to Protestant scholasticism and the seventeenth-century conflict with Rome that spawned its approach to the theological task. Rather, the characteristically evangelical focus on biblical doctrine is more immedi-

²⁶For this designation, see David H. Kelsey, *The Uses of the Bible in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 29.

²⁷See, for example, Johann Andreas Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-Polemica sive Systema Theologicum* 1:79,80, as cited in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Historical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 321.

²⁸Richard A. Muller, "Scholasticism Protestant and Catholic: Francis Turretin on the Object and Principles of Theology," *Church History* 55:2 (June 1986), 205.

²⁹Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., 3 volumes (1679; reprint, Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publ. Co., 1992), 1:5.

ately indebted to the nineteenth-century Princeton theologians who sought to respond to a quite different phenomenon than that of their seventeenth-century forebears. Rather than attempting to establish the Protestant cause over against the claims of the Roman Catholic Church, the Princetonians were exercised by the challenge posed initially by the rising influence of the scientific method, then by German higher criticism, and eventually by theological liberalism.

In response, Charles Hodge and his successors set forth an understanding of theology and a theological method that paralleled in several important ways the empirical scientific method, with its elevation of induction that had arisen in conjunction with the Enlightenment. Hodge suggested that theology and science share a common method of inquiry.³⁰ As a consequence, he patterned his work in uncovering the theological facts found within the Bible after the model of the scientist.³¹ Moreover, Hodge paralleled the natural scientists of his day in his assumption that the theological propositions he drew from the Bible stated universal facts. On this basis, he viewed biblical truth as consisting above all (albeit not exclusively) in the doctrines that are supposedly revealed in Scripture.³²

Many evangelical theologians in the second half of the twentieth century pursued the pathway charted by the Princeton theologians.³³ Yet, the line connecting them to their nineteenth-century forebears is indirect, running through the fundamentalist movement.³⁴ In their fight against theological liberalism, a conflict that united a diverse group of co-belligerents into a loose coalition of conservative voices, the fundamentalists ele-

³⁰For this judgment, see John W. Stewart, "Mediating the Center: Charles Hodge on American Science, Language, Literature, and Politics," *Studies in Reformed Theology and History* 3:1 (Winter 1995), 26.

³¹Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, three volumes (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1872), 1:18.

³²See, for example, Charles Hodge, "The Theology of the Intellect and That of Feelings, Article II," *Essays and Reviews* (New York: Robert Carter & Bros., 1857), 609-610. See also, Richard J. Mouw, "The Bible in Twentieth-Century Protestantism: A Preliminary Taxonomy," in *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford, 1982), 143.

³³For an example, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 21.

³⁴For a contemporary fundamentalist telling of the history of the movement to the 1980s, see David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism since 1850* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986).

vated adherence to correct doctrine as *a* mark—if not *the* mark—of authentic Christianity. Moreover, to counter what they perceived as the liberal attack on the Bible, they called for an uncompromising loyalty to Scripture arising out of a high view of biblical authority that, they contended, was guaranteed by divine inspiration. The fundamentalists looked to the Princeton theologians for the intellectual framework for their own elevation of the Bible and their commitment to its complete trustworthiness.³⁵ In keeping with the high regard in which the fundamentalists held the Princetonians, the movement eventually adapted for its own use the five-point declaration of “essential” doctrines that B. B. Warfield had influenced and that was adopted by the Presbyterian General Council in 1910.³⁶ Insofar as the first of the five assertions in the Presbyterian document was an affirmation of biblical inerrancy, this doctrine naturally came to stand at the head of the list of the “five fundamentals,” which then listed four Christological doctrines.

The legacy of fundamentalism introduced into the heart of the evangelical ethos a concern for right doctrine, understood as adherence to a set of basic dogmas that are viewed as encapsulating the essence of the faith. Moreover, the dogmas that the movement bequeathed to evangelicalism as comprising essential Christianity did not focus so much on the nature of salvation itself, which topic had stood at the theological center of the Reformers’ controversy with Rome. Rather, the five fundamentals were more closely related to the supernatural character of the faith, which the fundamentalists saw as under attack by the naturalism of modernism in its various forms. Finally, the legacy of the fundamentalist struggle against liberalism, waged on the terms set out by the Princeton theology, oriented evangelical theology toward the quest for propositional truth, in contrast to the interest in the person’s relationship to God that had shaped and propelled the theological pursuits of the earlier awakening evangelicalism.

In short, the trajectory through fundamentalism, with its appropriation of one aspect of the theological agenda of the nineteenth-century Princetonians, altered the ethos of American evangelicalism. It

³⁵For a helpful summary of the connections between the Princeton theologians and the Fundamentalists, see Mark Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement: Growth, Impact, Controversy, Dialog* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 77-80.

³⁶George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 117.

bequeathed to the movement the task of maintaining biblical orthodoxy in a context understood as an ever-present battle against heterodoxy. Adding this grave burden to the older commitment to the advancement of the gospel of transformation netted an augmented self-understanding. To be an evangelical came to mean being concerned both for warm-hearted piety and for right-headed orthodoxy. The result has been the interplay of the cognitive-doctrinal and the practical-experiential so evident today within the evangelical movement as a whole and within evangelical theology in particular. In a sense, evangelicalism has taken on the face of a “Pietist with a Ph.D.”

Contemporary Evangelicalism: Caught in the Middle

The historical journey of American evangelicalism from its beginnings in the eighteenth century awakenings to its reorientation in the wake of early twentieth-century fundamentalism has pressed into the psyche of the movement two concerns—the pietistic and the scholastic, the warm-hearted and the right-headed, the convertive and the doctrinaire. This double-sided ethos is embodied in the psyche of many of evangelicalism’s children, including the author of this essay. As is often the case with dualities, however, the presence of these two aspects raises the possibility of internal conflict. Indeed, many evangelicals today may—like I—sense that they are caught in the middle, that they are being pulled in two directions simultaneously.

In a sense, this conflict is of relatively recent origin; in any case, it was less evident at the inception of the movement. Not surprisingly given evangelicalism’s roots in the confluence of Puritanism and Pietism, the warm-hearted, “experimental” dimension initially determined the ethos of the movement and predominated throughout much of its history. Already in the sixteenth century, the Puritans criticized the English church for having become a mixed company that included persons, and even clergy, who showed no evidence of true devotion to Christ. In a somewhat similar manner, the continental Pietists bemoaned the state of the Lutheran church, which in their estimation had grown content with mere outward forms and adherence to creeds. The eighteenth-century evangelicals, in turn, extended this critique to the church of their day. They decried a nominal Christianity in which, to cite George Whitefield’s words, “many are baptized with water which were never, effectually at least, baptized

with the Holy Ghost.”³⁷ Viewed from this perspective, evangelicalism began as a revival of warm-heartedness within a church whose focus on right-headedness had left its adherents spiritually cold and unconverted.

From the eighteenth century to the present, the pietistic orientation of the movement has led many evangelicals to take an uncompromising stance against the presence of what they have feared is a life-sapping creedalism in the church. Pietistic evangelicals have been zealous in warning of the dangers they find inherent in a confessionism in which the focus on orthodox doctrine is purchased at the cost of warm-hearted piety, fervor, and devotion to Christ. The “experimental” approach is not without its own dangers, of course. As the history of American Christianity amply illustrates, when allowed to become the sole defining characteristic of the Christian faith, warm-heartedness can lead to wrong-headedness, that is, to doctrinal slippage or to a virulent anti-intellectualism. Nevertheless, the commitment to the gospel of heartfelt transformation and the accompanying suspicion of any reduction of saving faith to simple *assensus* has been the lifeblood of evangelicalism throughout its history. It may well remain the movement’s central contribution to the renewal of the church of Jesus Christ.

Despite the central role that the commitment to experimental faith has had in defining the evangelical ethos throughout much of its history, in recent years the pietist dimension has increasingly found itself overshadowed—at least in some circles—by the other side of the contemporary evangelical psyche, the concern for maintaining orthodox doctrine. A growing number of evangelical theologians have set themselves to the task of shoring up doctrinal standards for the movement. “Confessing evangelicals” claim that the essence of the movement consists in adherence to right doctrine.³⁸ Some within their ranks go so far as to elevate the doctrinal heritage of a particular ecclesial tradition, or a particular theological interpretation of the nature of salvation, as the norm for all who would claim the designation “evangelical.” As a result of this trend, some commentators have expressed fear that a battle for the “soul” of evangeli-

³⁷George Whitefield, “The Nature and Necessity of Our Regeneration or New Birth in Christ Jesus,” in Timothy L. Smith, *Whitefield and Wesley on the New Birth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 67.

³⁸To cite one example, the framers of the Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, dated April 20, 1996, declare in the document’s prologue, “Historic evangelicalism was confessional.”

calism is brewing.³⁹ Any such conflict might end up pitting the champions of doctrinal fidelity against the defenders of warm-hearted piety.

Like many others, I find myself caught in the middle of this theological tug-of-war. Because I share both of the concerns that have come to form the evangelical psyche, I not only affirm the perspective that each side is seeking to uphold, I also rue the debilitating problem that each is wanting to rectify.

My commitment to warm-heartedness is evident in my repeated declarations that the *sine qua non* of evangelicalism is not primarily doctrinal uniformity, but a vibrant spirituality.⁴⁰ In making this point, I have positioned myself squarely within the legacy of the warm-hearted, experimentally-oriented awakening evangelicalism of eighteenth-century figures such as John Wesley.⁴¹ At the same time, I bristle when some pietistic evangelicals use the call to warm-heartedness as a pretense for an anti-intellectual, anti-theological bias that glorifies “simple believing” and vilifies any attempt to grapple with the intellectual dimension of the faith. In such a climate, I too become a “confessing evangelical,” for I am deeply concerned that the Christian church maintain its doctrinal integrity in the face of heterodoxy.

Like other confessing evangelicals, I am aware that a theologically naive “experientialism” can produce a theologically-vacuous “spirituality,” and so I share their fervor in combatting this debilitating tendency. Moreover, I agree with confessing evangelicals that theological conviction is a crucial well-spring of Christian living. Consequently, I too am convinced of the importance of sound theology for the on-going health and vitality of the church, and I seek to model in my own life and foster in the lives of others a theologically-tuned and theologically in-tune discipleship. For this reason, therefore, I resonate with those who lament the decreasing interest in theology so often evident in the church and the paltry place given to solid theological engagement not only on the shelves of Christian bookstores but more importantly in the day-to-day living of vast numbers

³⁹For an example, see Roger E. Olson, “The Future of Evangelical Theology,” *Christianity Today* 42:2 (February 9, 1998), 40-42.

⁴⁰For an early statement of this position, see Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisoning Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 30-35.

⁴¹For a recent statement regarding the character of Christian spirituality by a contemporary Wesleyan, see Barry L. Callen, *Authentic Spirituality: Moving Beyond Mere Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

of persons who claim to be evangelicals. Hence, when David Wells reports that an “anti-theological mood . . . now grips the evangelical world,”⁴² I respond immediately and passionately, eager to join forces with colleagues in the task of promoting sound theology.

Yet when I set myself to enter the battle, I discover that I am at odds with the direction that some of the evangelical generals would take this “good fight of the faith.” My hesitancy is generally not motivated by irreconcilable differences over fine points of doctrine, for in most of the more volatile debates that divide evangelical theologians today, I usually am in basic agreement with those who are defending what have become the traditional positions. Rather than differences over the doctrines themselves, what triggers my consternation is a gnawing fear that the tendency of some theologians to elevate adherence to a particular set of doctrinal formulations as a necessary condition for claiming the designation “evangelical” too easily overshadows the focus on heartfelt Christian faith so crucial to true evangelical piety. Whenever the discussion moves in this direction and the battlecry becomes simply and solely that of “saving” a supposedly now decadent and floundering evangelicalism by means of shoring up its doctrinal boundaries, my pietist heart grieves and my soul worries that the would-be saviors of evangelicalism may in fact be the unwitting agents of its actual demise. In such moments, I discover again the degree to which awakening evangelicalism has been ingrained in my soul. I may sport a doctor of theology degree, but in the end I remain a pietist—albeit a “Pietist with a Ph.D.”

The Evangelical Ideal: The Integrating Middle

So what, then, is the way forward? Can evangelicals retain allegiance to both heartfelt piety and biblical doctrine without succumbing to the debilitating situation of being caught between competing concerns? Or stating the question in personal terms, how can I cope with being a Pietist with a Ph.D.? Perhaps the obvious answer to the dilemma is “integration.” The evangelical ideal would be to integrate warm-heartedness and right-headedness. The pietist with a Ph.D. would be the one who not only remains committed to both the gospel of transformation and the advancement of biblical doctrine, but brings the two concerns into creative engagement.

⁴²David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 96.

Calling for integration is neither a new nor a unique idea, of course. Nearly all contemporary evangelicals would likely claim that the integration of head and heart (as well as “hand”) is exactly what they are seeking. Moreover, almost all evangelical theologians might characterize their program as that of bringing together doctrine and piety, orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Even theologians whose sympathies appear at first glance to lie with the first member of each of these dyads routinely suggest that they are about the business of integration. My theological teacher at Denver Seminary, Gordon Lewis, to cite one illuminating example, recently remarked to me that the goal of his theology is to relate revealed theological truths to one another, not as an end in itself, but for the sake of living by them. This purpose is evident in his co-authored magisterial work, *Integrative Theology*,⁴³ for Lewis concludes each chapter with a section entitled “Relevance for Life and Ministry” Similarly, although Wayne Grudem states quite categorically that “systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic,” he later adds, “application to life is a necessary part of the proper pursuit of systematic theology.”⁴⁴

The importance of personal piety was likewise acknowledged by the nineteenth and early twentieth-century luminaries who mediated the attention to right doctrine in its now familiar form to contemporary evangelicalism. Despite his modeling of theology after the pattern of empirical science, Charles Hodge displayed a strong pietistic side.⁴⁵ He supposedly warned his students to “beware of a strong head and a cold heart.”⁴⁶ Moreover, Hodge evidenced a deep appreciation for the tradition of devotional literature. In the opening section of his *Systematic Theology*, he declared, “It would be safe for a man to resolve to admit into his theology nothing which is not sustained by the devotional writings of true Chris-

⁴³Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987-1994).

⁴⁴Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 21,23.

⁴⁵For a recent treatment of the piety of the Princeton theologians, see Andrew Hofferker, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians: Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981).

⁴⁶“Charles Hodge,” in *Princeton Sermons* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1958), xvi. For this and other similar anecdotes, see Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity*, 136-137.

tians of every denomination.”⁴⁷ In keeping with his sense of the importance of the devotional life, Hodge even tried his hand at this literary genre, composing a book entitled *The Way of Life* (1842).⁴⁸

A similar appraisal ought to be voiced regarding the early fundamentalists. Their goal was never that of elevating doctrine at the expense of piety. Indeed, their firmly held desire was to retain the legacy of awakening evangelicalism. Rather, the fundamentalists’ turn to doctrine occurred because they perceived that orthodoxy, and not piety, was the dimension of the faith that was being put at risk by the rise of liberalism. Roger Olson explains: “Early fundamentalists did not deny that personal experience of repentance and conversion is important. But because of the threat they saw in liberal theology, they tended to emphasize assent to unrevisable doctrinal propositions as the essential and timeless core of Christianity. . . . They distrusted religious experience and affections because liberals could claim to have them.”⁴⁹ The issue, therefore, is not whether or not commitment to, and integration of, the two central evangelical concerns is a worthy goal. Rather, the question that may well divide evangelicals today is: Which concern ought to be given preeminence in the process of determining the character of evangelicalism? Here, I would advise that we move cautiously.

Several considerations lead me to suspect that elevating the concern for biblical doctrine as the determinative or integrating characteristic of evangelicalism may well undermine the movement itself. First, a doctrine-centered approach all-too-readily loses the distinctive character of evangelicalism as a renewal movement within the church. It can too easily transform what was meant to be a transconfessional coalition into a particular confessional tradition and thereby make the parachurch into the church. Second, viewing right-headedness as evangelicalism’s integrating concern risks the demise of the generous spirit that has characterized evangelicals from the beginning, but which is all-too-often the first casualty in the battle for doctrinal uniformity. Above all, however, giving central place to the doctrinal concern can blunt the central insight evangelicalism offers to the church, namely that genuine Christian faith dare never

⁴⁷Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:16-17.

⁴⁸Reprinted in *Charles Hodge: The Way of Life*, ed Mark A. Noll (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 45-233.

⁴⁹Olson, *Story of Christian Theology*, 567.

be equated with externalism in any form, including the externalism entailed in mere adherence to orthodox doctrine.

The early evangelicals knew from their own experience that fidelity to doctrinal standards cannot guarantee the presence of true Christianity, which they rightly understood as personal trust in Christ and hence a heart converted to God and to others. As J. I. Packer has noted, “What brings salvation, after all, is not any theory about faith in Christ, justification, and the church, but faith itself in Christ himself.”⁵⁰ Looking to the concern for doctrine as the integrative principle, therefore, risks replacing the focus on warm-heartedness that constitutes the central ethos and unique contribution of the evangelical community with the very attitude—the creeping creedalism—that evangelicalism rose up to protest.

Rather than the quest for right doctrine, therefore, the commitment to convertive piety—which comprises the great contribution and lasting legacy of the eighteenth-century awakening—must remain the integrative principle of the evangelical ethos. Whatever value evangelicals may (rightly) place on doctrinal orthodoxy, historically they have always been adamant that doctrine is never an end in itself, but is important insofar as it serves and nurtures the transformation of the heart and true Christian piety. Consequently, concern for biblical doctrine must always remain the handmaiden to commitment to the gospel of heartfelt piety.

Having said this, I must quickly add that piety dare never ignore doctrine. Orthodoxy is crucial to orthopraxy, right-headedness is important to warm-heartedness, and doctrinal rigor plays a crucial role in the truly transformed life. This conclusion emerges directly out of the nature of the convertive piety that marks the essence of evangelicalism. As I have declared repeatedly,⁵¹ the encounter with God that evangelicals proclaim does not occur in a theological vacuum. Every experience is necessarily tied to an understanding of reality, an interpretive framework that both facilitates it and emerges from it. So also, the saving encounter with God in Christ through the Spirit, both at conversion as the beginning of the faith journey as well as in the on-going life of faithful discipleship, must

⁵⁰J. I. Packer, “Why I Signed It,” *Christianity Today* 38:14 (December 12, 1994), 37.

⁵¹See, for example, Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 33-35; Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 202-3. See also, Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 48-54.

be cradled by the constellation of beliefs, arising from the Bible, that comprise the Christian interpretive framework.

My commitment to convertive piety, therefore, leads inevitably to a concern for orthodox doctrine. Or stating the point in the opposite way, my strong regard for doctrine arises as a crucial and necessary by-product of my being an evangelical committed to the gospel of heartfelt transformation. But notice the order: I am deeply concerned for right-headedness because I am an evangelical. Furthermore, my adherence to orthodox doctrine does not in and of itself constitute me as an evangelical. Indeed, not everyone who is doctrinally orthodox can claim (or would desire to claim) the descriptor “evangelical.”

A personal illustration might make the point clearer. In March, 1995, I served as one of the plenary speakers at the Midwest region of the Evangelical Theological Society. During the conversation, one member of the panel asked me if I could name one doctrine that I thought a person must affirm to be rightly labeled an “evangelical.” At first glance the question seemed quite straightforward. I could easily have tried to placate my interlocutor by listing the theological commitments that I hold dear and that I view as belonging to the theological heritage of the faith—the doctrine of the Trinity, the created goodness but fallenness of humankind, the deity and humanity of Jesus, Christ’s substitutionary atonement for human sin, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, the church as the body of Christ, and the Lord’s return in glory and judgment. But I did not cite any of these. My reticence was not due to any hesitation on my part to affirm these doctrines; nor was it the product of any doubts I had as to their importance to the evangelical community, or to Christian orthodoxy for that matter. Rather, I avoided compiling a list of doctrines because I wanted to preserve the priority of the new birth and reiterate that doctrine is the servant—a crucial servant to be sure, but a servant nonetheless—of the transforming work of the Spirit.

So where does this leave me? I view myself above all as one whom God has encountered in Christ, whose heart the Holy Spirit has regenerated, and therefore whose highest desire is to be a faithful disciple of Christ within the community of Christ’s disciples and the world. This makes me a pietist. At the same time, I readily acknowledge that doctrine—in fact, the entire enterprise of faith seeking understanding—both facilitates and arises out of this encounter, and it serves the life of discipleship. My vocational concern for this enterprise led me to seek a doc-

torate in theology. I am a Ph.D. Putting the two together means that I am imbued with a commitment both to warm-heartedness and right-headedness. I am, in short, a “Pietist with a Ph.D.”

Viewing myself in this manner, as being loyal to a two-fold commitment, means that I see myself as an evangelical. I stand in a long trajectory of people from the Pietists and the Puritans, from John Wesley and Isaac Backus, to the folks who came forward at the worship service on Pentecost Sunday, all of whom have a burning desire to serve the cause of the gospel in the church and the world by calling for an awakening to heartfelt piety. With these heroes of the faith, I share the concern to foster the kind of warm-hearted fervency that is able to replace dead creedalism with a generous orthodoxy that can facilitate us in the task of being faithful disciples of Christ by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God. Following the lead of the great evangelical heroes, I am also concerned for right-headedness, knowing that intellectual rigor in the exploration and articulation of biblical doctrine is crucial to the life of true piety and to the advancement of the gospel of genuine transformation.

For insight as to how to integrate these two dimensions—how to bring together heart and head, piety and orthodoxy—I turn to a long line of faithful servants of God. This legacy includes my own teachers and the nineteenth-century exemplars whom they imitated, to be sure. But I look as well to the notables of the seventeenth century, like Spener and Francke, and to their eighteenth-century followers, such as Wesley. In their own ways and in a manner appropriate to their day, these luminaries were concerned for an awakening of true piety and sought to bring their intellectual resources into the service of this glorious cause. In short, the heroes of the evangelical tradition were also Pietists with Ph.D.s. And they were such long before I was.

THE NEW CREATION AS A MULTIVALENT THEME IN JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY¹

by

Kenneth J. Collins

At the beginning of the twenty-first century it is eminently fitting that participants at the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies are exploring the theme of the new creation as articulated by John Wesley. Mindful of our different social location and of the challenges that historiography pose for us, we should profit from a fresh consideration of Wesley's thought and praxis. He was a magnanimous leader who, along with George Whitefield and Charles Wesley, was at the helm of a burgeoning and pulsating revival. Indeed, not only did eighteenth-century Methodism flourish under Wesley's able and careful leadership, and not only did this Anglican cleric minister to a full array of needs among his people, but, perhaps most important of all, the poor were invited to participate in nothing less than the life of God, the glad tidings of salvation.

Wesley's Understanding of the New Creation

Serious students of Wesley, who have taken the trouble to read most of his works, will be rewarded for such labor in discerning, among other things, the carefully articulated, well nuanced, multivalent conception of the new creation that repeatedly surfaces. Such a conception will no doubt be in sharp contrast to some of the more prominent contemporary accounts that are, despite their current popularity, markedly monological

¹This paper was presented at the Eleventh Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies held at Christ Church, Oxford, England, in August, 2002.

in their assessments, and are often driven merely by materialistic or political considerations.² Wesley's eighteenth-century thought, on the other hand, is far more sophisticated and is, therefore, best explored in terms of a number of frameworks which, together, underscore the richness of the grace of God as it is manifested in the deepest recesses of the soul, in society, as well as in the larger created order.

A. The New Creation as an Inward Work. Several well developed themes in Wesley's writings during the 1740s demonstrate that his concern, even preoccupation, was not principally outward conformity or practice, no matter how noble or sincere, but what he termed "inward religion." In 1745, for instance, he wrote to a clerical friend as follows: "About seven years since, we began preaching inward, present salvation as attainable by faith alone. For preaching this doctrine we were forbidden to preach in the churches."³ That same year Wesley penned a letter to "John Smith" and underscored once more the value of inward religion, the religion of the heart:

But I would rather say, Faith is "productive of all Christian holiness than of all Christian practice": because men are so exceeding apt to rest in practice, so called—I mean, in outside religion; whereas *true* religion is eminently seated in the heart, renewed in the image of Him that created us.⁴

Wesley's favorite text for communicating the immense value of heart religion, both as the source, the motivating factor for external religion, and as its ultimate goal was none other than Romans 14:14: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (KJV). The significance of purity of intention, as well as the extent of the moral law as it relates to godly motivations, truths communicated to Wesley much earlier by the triumvirate of Taylor, à Kempis, and Law, were now being expressed in a public, written, and didactic manner by means of key sermons. In his "Way to the Kingdom,"

²Cf., Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990).

³Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vols. 25, 26. *The Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 26:125.

⁴*Ibid.*, 26:179. Emphasis is mine. There are over one hundred references to "true religion" in Wesley's writings which range from 1730s to the 1790s, and this indicates that this theme, like the motif of "real Christianity," is marked not by its discontinuity or extinction but by its continuity and significance.

for example, produced in 1746, Wesley denies that the nature of religion consists in “forms of worship, or rites and ceremonies,”⁵ or in any outward action whatsoever. He explains:

Yet may a man both abstain from outward evil, and do good, and still have no religion. Yea, two persons may do the same outward work—suppose feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked—and in the meantime one of these may be truly religious and the other have no religion at all; for the one may act from the love of God, and the other from the love of praise. So manifest it is that although true religion naturally leads to every good word and work, yet the real nature thereof lies deeper still, even in the hidden man of the heart.⁶

But neither does the nature of religion consist in “orthodoxy or right opinions,”⁷ Wesley cautions. A believer may assent to “all the three creeds—that called the Apostles’, the Nicene, and the Athanasian—and yet ‘tis possible he may have no religion at all, no more than a Jew, Turk, or pagan.”⁸ That is, intellectual assent can never be the very essence of saving faith, but only its external form. True religion, on the other hand, is ever summed up in three particulars: “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,”⁹ the very *presence* of God in the human heart. Again, true religion consists not so much in orthopraxis or even orthodoxy, though both are clearly important, but in what has been termed “orthokardia,”¹⁰ that is, in a heart right toward God and neighbor that implies nothing less than happiness as well as holiness.

Ever careful to communicate important soteriological truths in an *ad populum* fashion, Wesley offered perhaps the best explication of this theme of inward, true religion in his numerous discourses (thirteen in all) on the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount which were crafted in 1748 and fol-

⁵Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vols. 1-4. *The Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:219.

⁶*Ibid.*, 1:220.

⁷*Ibid.* See also Wesley’s letter to Vincent Perronet in 1748 in which he relates that orthodoxy or right opinions is “at best a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all.” Cf. Telford, *Letters*, 2:293.

⁸*Ibid.*, 1:220. Outler maintains that in this sermon Wesley denies that religion consists in either correct praxis or doctrine. Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 1:217.

⁹*Ibid.*, 1:221.

¹⁰Cf. Gregory S. Clapper, “Orthokardia: The Practical Theology of John Wesley’s Heart Religion,” *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring 1990), 49-66.

lowing. Influenced by the earlier treatments of Bishop Blackall, John Norris, Henry Hammond and others,¹¹ Wesley explored the substance of Matthew 5-7 along three main lines: "(1) 'the sum of true religion'; (2) 'rules touching that right intention which we are to preserve in all our outward actions'; and (3) 'the main hindrances of this religion.'" ¹²

Interestingly enough, Wesley points out in this same series of sermons that it was often the rich or those who considered themselves to be of the better sort who were the most presumptuous in this area and who, therefore, considered inward religion to be nothing less than "madness."¹³ In fact, late in his career even Joseph Humphreys, who was one of Wesley's early lay preachers, succumbed to various pretensions and now scoffed at inward religion: "That was one of the foolish things which I wrote in the time of my madness."¹⁴ And in 1749, while Wesley was preaching in Ireland in the face of much opposition from local leaders, he offered the following defense or apologetic for inward religion in his *A Short Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland*:

Religion does not consist in negatives only . . . but is a *real, positive* thing; that it does not consist in *externals* only, in attending the church and sacrament (although all these things they approve and recommend), in using all the means of grace, or in works of charity (commonly so called) superadded to works of piety; but that it is properly and strictly a principle within, seated in the inmost soul, and thence manifesting itself by these outward fruits on all suitable occasions.¹⁵

¹¹Ibid., 1:466-67.

¹²Ibid., 1:467. It was, of course, Thomas à Kempis who had first revealed to Wesley the significance of inward religion, the religion of the heart, as noted in Wesley's later comments in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Indeed, the substance of Wesley's appropriation was largely western and later came to include Jeremy Taylor, Caroline divine, and William Law, the famous Non-Juror. Cf. Jackson, *Works*, 11:366.

¹³Ibid., 1:673. See also Wesley's comments on inward religion in *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* in Gerald R. Cragg, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 11. *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 11: 275.

¹⁴Cf. Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 4:493.

¹⁵Rupert E. Davies, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol 9, *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 9:283. Bracketed material is mine.

Again, in this same treatise Wesley maintains that "religion does not consist . . . either in negatives or externals, in barely doing no harm, or even doing good, but in the tempers of the heart; in right dispositions of mind towards God and man, producing all right words and actions."¹⁶

Moreover, a few years later, in 1756, Wesley replied to those in his own age who had sought to advocate morality and social justice by the mistaken practice of deprecating piety and religious affections, the very substance of inward religion. He cautioned these errant believers with stinging effect in his treatise on *The Doctrine of Original Sin*:

How capable are you of recommending, not barely morality (the duty of man to man), but piety, the duty of man to God, even the "worshipping him in spirit and in truth!" How well qualified are you to explain, enforce, defend, even "the deep things of God," the nature of the kingdom of God "within us;" yea, the *interiora regni Dei*! Are you disserving the cause of inward religion, labouring to destroy the inward kingdom of God, sapping the foundations of all true, spiritual worship, advancing morality on the ruins of piety? Are you among those who are overthrowing the very foundations of primitive, scriptural Christianity? which certainly can have no ground to stand upon, if the scheme lately advanced be true.¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid., 9:284. Wesley was not surprised that many Irish remained in the Roman Catholic faith since "Protestants can find no better ways to convert them than penal laws and Acts of Parliament." Cf. Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journals and Diaries*, 20:189.

¹⁷Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 9:432. For a popular, although mistaken caricature of Pietists see Theodore Runyon's work, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*, where he writes: "One of the persistent tendencies emerging from pietism and its understanding of Christianity has been *individualism*. The essential core of Christian faith is reduced to what takes place within the individual and his or her personally experienced awareness of God." However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to make the case that Spener, Franke, and Tersteegen were individualists. In fact, these *Pietists* repeatedly emphasized the corporate, communal dimension of the church in their support of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. Therefore, it is simply unnecessary, and indeed counterproductive, as Wesley himself knew all too well, to deprecate piety, the interior life of the soul, in order to advance external religion and social action. Indeed, the one work of grace should readily flow into the other. Cf., Theodore H. Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 102, and Theodore H. Runyon, *Sanctification and Liberation: Liberation Theologies in the Light of the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 47.

In fact, much later, in 1783, Wesley continued these well worked themes and stated quite clearly, as Jesus had done centuries earlier, that the kingdom of God is, in a real sense, not an outward kingdom but an inward, invisible one. In his sermon “The General Spread of the Gospel,” for example, Wesley explains: “But in general, it seems, the kingdom of God will not “come with observation;” but will silently increase, wherever it is set up, and spread from heart to heart, from house to house, from town to town, from one kingdom to another.”¹⁸

A year before his death, in his sermon “On the Wedding Garment, Wesley was so concerned that the Methodists would soon simply be marked by the form of religion without its power that he cautioned his people to remember not only that the new creation was preeminently a work of God, but also that “neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but a new creation,” the renewal of the soul “in the image of God wherein it was created.”¹⁹ The Methodist way, then, from its very beginning to the last days of its cherished leader, ever highlighted “a principle within” as the source and goal of all outward fruit and action. Consequently, the alteration of the tempers of the inmost soul was not considered a “pious indulgence” or “enthusiasm” as the spiritually dull of Wesley’s own age would have it, but as nothing less than a prerequisite for godly and effective ministry.

B. The New Creation as a Regenerating Work. Another framework that Wesley employed to elucidate the richness of the new creation was the new birth, that glorious work of the Holy Spirit that brings a soul to a new and godly life. Along these lines, Wesley saw fit to publish the sermon of his brother, Charles, entitled “Awake, Thou That Sleepest,” a work that underscored the relation between the new creation and regeneration in considerable detail. To illustrate, in this piece the younger brother exclaims: “Knowest thou, that, in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision

¹⁸Outler, *Sermons*, 2:493. See also the reply to the Rev. Mr. Church in which Wesley accuses the gentleman of rejecting “the whole *inward kingdom* of God; that is, in effect, the whole gospel of Jesus Christ.” Cf. Jackson, *Wesley’s Works*, 8:408.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 4:147. Wesley had specifically defined the inward kingdom in terms of the *presence* of the Holy Spirit much earlier in his following observation: “The inward kingdom of heaven, which is set up in the hearts of all that repent and believe the gospel, is no other than ‘righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’ Every babe in Christ knows we are made partakers of these, the very hour that we believe in Jesus.” Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:139.

availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith that worketh by love; but a new creation? Seest thou the necessity of that inward change, that spiritual birth, that life from the dead, that holiness?"²⁰

Naturally, the theme of the new creation as the renewal of the soul in the image of God, as a genuine spiritual birth, was also developed in Wesley's own writings where he maintains that this soteriological event is not a natural change, one which could be brought about merely by human will or design, but a *supernatural* change. Thus, in his *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, drafted in 1743, Wesley reasons:

If you ask, "Why then have not all men this faith? all, at least, who conceive it to be so happy a thing? Why do they not believe immediately?" We answer (on the Scripture hypothesis), "It is the gift of God." No man is able to work it in himself. It is a work of omnipotence. It requires no less power thus to quicken a dead soul, than to raise a body that lies in the grave. It is a *new creation*; and none can create a soul anew, but He who at first created the heavens and the earth.²¹

Much later, in 1762, Wesley affirms in a letter to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester that it is the office not of humanity but "of the Holy Ghost to sanctify."²² Elsewhere in his writings, he likewise takes great care to distinguish all human effort and virtue from the vast change which takes place in regeneration through the power of the Holy Spirit. In his sermon "On a Single-Eye," for example, he declares:

Let them be ever so learned, ever so well versed in every branch of polite literature; yea, ever so courteous, so humane; yet if their eye is not singly fixed on God, they can know nothing of scriptural religion. They do not even know what Christian holiness means: what is the entrance of it, *the new birth*, with all the circumstances attending it.²³

And in a note Wesley adds: "They know no more of this [change] than do the beasts of the field."²⁴

²⁰Ibid., 1:151.

²¹Cragg, *The Appeals*, 11: 47-48. Emphasis is mine.

²²Telford, *Letters*, 4:380.

²³Outler, *Sermons*, 4:124. Compare this sermon also with "The New Birth," a piece in which Wesley once again makes a distinction between conventional morality and the new birth. Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:194-95.

²⁴Ibid.

Viewed in another sense, the connection between the doctrines of original sin and the new birth postulated by Wesley, where one work is the foundation for the other, not only points to the absolute necessity of regeneration for salvation, but also keeps this crucial doctrine from being misunderstood in a moralistic way, as if an increase in education, virtue, practice, or even the employment of the means of grace were all that is entailed in this glorious work of God. Wesley elaborates:

Go to church twice a day, go to the Lord's table every week, say ever so many prayers in private; hear ever so many sermons, good sermons, excellent sermons, the best that ever were preached; read ever so many good books—still you must be born again. None of these things will stand in the place of the new birth; no, nor any thing under heaven. Let this therefore, if you have not already experienced this inward work of God, be your continual prayer: "Lord, add this to all thy blessings,—let me be born again!"²⁵

Even more emphatically, Wesley distinguished the new birth, that supernatural work of the Most High, from all commonplace although misguided notions of this grace. In his piece "The New Birth," for example, he reasons:

Thousands do really believe, that they have found a broad way which leadeth not to destruction. "What danger," say they, "can a woman be in that is so *harmless* and so *virtuous*? What fear is there that so *honest* a man, one of so strict *morality*, should miss of heaven; especially if, over and above all this, they constantly attend on church and sacrament?" One of these will ask with all assurance, "What! shall not I do as well as my neighbours?" Yes, as well as our unholy neighbours; as well as your neighbours that die in their sins! For you will all drop into the pit together, into the nethermost hell! You will all lie together in the lake of fire; "the lake of fire burning with brimstone." Then, at length, you will see (but God grant you may see it before!) the necessity of holiness in order to glory; and, consequently, of the new birth, since none can be holy, except he be born again.²⁶

²⁵Ibid., 2:200-201. For other examples of "inward religion" in Wesley's theological tracts and essays, Cf. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:19, 120, 197, 204; 9:36, 122; 9:432; 10:403; and 11:366.

²⁶Ibid., 2:195.

The new birth, then, as evidence of the new creation, marks the beginning not simply of an incremental change, not merely one of degree, but of a *qualitative* change which issues in a distinct kind of life, a life that men and women cannot bring about by themselves. In fact, Wesley so emphasizes this supernatural change that he maintains repeatedly throughout his writings that spiritual life itself, what his brother Charles had called "spiritual birth," commences when we are born again.²⁷ In the Conference Minutes of 1745, for example, Wesley and his preachers responded to the question, "When does inward sanctification begin?" by pointing out: "In the moment we are justified. The seed of every virtue is then sown in the soul. From that time the believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace."²⁸ Again, "Justification of *life*, as being connected with the new birth," Wesley observes, "[is] the beginning of spiritual life, which leads us, through the life of holiness, to life eternal, to glory."²⁹ Beyond this, Wesley develops this same theme in his sermon "On God's Vineyard," produced in 1787, in which he argues that "The new birth is the first point of sanctification, which may increase more and more unto the perfect day."³⁰ In light of this evidence, it is clear that holiness, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the human heart, begins not at the reception of prevenient or convincing grace, but only at regeneration and justification. Prior to initially sanctifying grace, then, that grace which makes one holy, believers may be many things (recipients of prevenient grace, convinced of sin, moral and virtuous), but they are not yet holy.

²⁷Telford, *Letters*, 4:332. Compare this letter to Wesley's sermon, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," where he notes that "salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) "preventing grace." This, however, does not contradict his earlier statements so long as it is realized that in the former Wesley is referring to salvation, properly speaking, which always includes holiness; but in the latter, he is simply highlighting a "degree" of salvation in that the sinner is at least on the way to holiness. In short, in no sense was Wesley arguing in his sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" that those who merely have prevenient grace are in fact holy and are therefore redeemed, properly speaking. Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 3:203.

²⁸Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 8:285.

²⁹Outler, *Sermons*, 2:411. Bracketed material is mine. Interestingly enough, in his sermon, "On Living Without God," Wesley indicates that at regeneration the spiritual senses of the believer come alive to discern the love of God. In this context, he employs such sensory language as "tasting," "feeling," etc., to make his point. Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 4:173.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 3:507.

Beyond this, the elderly Wesley highlighted the soteriological importance of the new birth, its cruciality, by contending that “no good work, properly so called, can go before justification,” and therefore before regeneration as well.³¹ This issue of good works, then, like Wesley’s views on regeneration, once again indicates the subtlety of his position. On the one hand, in light of his doctrine of prevenient grace, Wesley refused to refer to these works prior to justification and regeneration as “splendid sins” as the Calvinists were inclined to do; but on the other hand, since these works were not informed by sanctifying, regenerating grace, they were not deemed good, strictly speaking. The genius and balance of Wesley’s theology, then, is that it held both of these ideas together and without contradiction. Accordingly, what should be behind good works, properly speaking, as the church ministers to the poor, is a “principle within,” a principle that not only is the motivating factor, the imperative for such labor, but also, in a real sense, the goal or telos of all.

C. The New Creation as a Social Work. In his “Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount: Discourse the Fourth,” which takes Matthew 5:13-16 as its text, Wesley advocates that “Christianity is essentially a social religion, and that to turn it into a solitary religion is indeed to destroy it.”³² This passage, interestingly enough, has often been cited by contemporary scholars to show that Wesley was principally, if not exclusively, concerned with public religion and the social order. However, this appears to be an anachronistic reading (confusing the twenty-first century with the eighteenth) and is *not* the meaning suggested in this sermon. For one thing, Wesley relates that Christianity is a social religion in the sense that it cannot subsist without society, without living and conversing with other people. Beyond this, he observes that a social dimension is necessary for inward religion itself, for the inculcation of such holy tempers as meekness, gentleness, and longsuffering. “But this is apparently set aside,”

³¹Cragg, *The Appeals*, 11:449.

³²Outler, *Sermons*, 1:533. For more on the salient issue of social holiness, Cf., Hugo Assmann, “Is ‘Social Holiness’ Enough? A Catholic Reading,” in *Faith Born in the Struggle for Life*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1988), 26-37; Robert Edwin Black, “The Social Dimensions of John Wesley’s Ministry as Related to His Personal Piety” (Dissertation, Union Seminary of Virginia, 1984); and R. George Eli, *Social Holiness: John Wesley’s Thinking on Christian Community and Its Relationship to the Social Order* (New York: P. Lang Pubs., 1993).

Wesley warns, “by all who call us to the wilderness, who recommend entire solitude either to the babes, or the young men, or the fathers in Christ.”³³ Thus, the chief object of Wesley’s censure in this sermon is *not* inward religion, the religion of the heart, but solitary religion in the form of anchoretic monasticism, the kind of religion that leaves one *alone*. Put another way, such an isolated approach does not provide the appropriate social context for the instantiation of inward religion, for the inculcation of a diversity of virtues in the human heart. So then, to those contemporary interpreters who continue to deprecate or diminish heart religion, viewing it perhaps as an extravagance and who therefore consider social or political action to be the *chief* end of the Christian faith, Wesley offered this word of caution: “That ‘the regulation of social life is the one end of religion’ is a strange position indeed. I never imagined any but a Deist would affirm this.”³⁴

Given that such inaccurate statements as the claim “Methodism began as a movement *of* the poor, *for* the poor, *by* the poor, and *with* the poor,”³⁵ are often made in contemporary Methodism, it is best to consider the historical question more carefully. That is, in what way did the Methodists actually bring the glad tidings of salvation to the downtrodden of broader British society? As will be apparent shortly, it is not so much that the Methodists were among the poor in a direct way, simply sharing of their own largess, but that the poor were among the Methodists in an accountable and responsible way, participating in the full life of Methodism with its rich and diverse ministries—ministries that had consequence for both body *and* soul. Indeed, Wesley rarely sought to ameliorate the plight of the poor by simply giving them money. Instead, he almost always augmented such material assistance by offering the poor nothing less than the care and fellowship of the Methodists as an instance of the body of Christ and as a savor of the invigorating graces of the new creation.

One way of understanding the relation between holiness of heart and life and the works of mercy that flow from it, especially as such works relate to ministry to the poor, is found in the work of Theodore Jennings.

³³Ibid., 1:535.

³⁴Telford, *Letters*, 6:205.

³⁵Oxford Methodists were in many respects quite privileged and hardly constituted England’s poor. Cf. Kenneth L. Carder, “What Difference Does Knowing Wesley Make?,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 28.

Thus, for example, this contemporary scholar sets up a means/end relationship and maintains that the love of God reigning in the heart is a suitable means to works of charity and to the-yet-higher end of reform of the political order. "Wesley emphasizes inward transformation," Jennings maintains, "because he is so earnestly interested in outward behavior."³⁶ Elsewhere in his writings, Jennings specifically links holiness to political goals, that is, to the elimination of private property and to the establishment of communism. "Wesley supposes that the Methodist movement will produce not only a spread of the gospel throughout the earth," he writes, "but also, and therefore, bring in the communist society."³⁷ And though these political goals themselves are questionable, especially in light of recent events in eastern Europe, the valuational structure into which they are placed is even more dubious. Is the satisfaction of the temporal needs of the poor, though important, the very highest goal, the telos, at which Wesley aimed? Was political transformation really the end, the major purpose of the eighteenth-century revival? Or is this modern reading of Wesley, in its attempt to be relevant, actually reductionistic in that it entails the substitution of the penultimate for what is truly ultimate? Not surprisingly, Richard Heitzenrater, ever careful in his scholarship, has criticized Jennings' "political reading" of Wesley in the following fashion:

What is not evident in Jennings' claim of Wesley's "preferential option of the poor" is the fact that the poor of which Wesley spoke were not "them" but "us." The poor of the Society, to use Wesley's common phrase, were not outsiders who were the occasional object of his external social outreach—they

³⁶Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 144.

³⁷Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., "Wesley's Preferential Option for the Poor," *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 9, No.3 (Fall, 1989), 22. Ignoring the political and social context of eighteenth-century England, Jennings contends that Wesley repudiated the right of private property. However, there is sufficient evidence in Wesley's own writings to demonstrate that he upheld both religious and civil liberty. More to the point, in his "Thoughts upon Liberty" Wesley observes that civil liberty entails "a liberty to enjoy our lives and fortunes in our own way; to use our property, whatever is legally our own, according to our own choice." And in his "Observations on Liberty" he adds: "Civil liberty is a liberty to dispose of our lives, persons, and fortunes, according to our own choice, and the laws of our country." Cf. Jackson, *Works*, 11:41, 11:92. See also, Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 37-38.

were, by and large, the people who made up a relatively large proportion of his societies and for whom he and the Methodists had special pastoral responsibility. The point is a major one that Jennings by and large misses—the issue has not so much to do with the nature of the church's mission to the larger society; rather, the issue has to do with the nature of the church itself.³⁸

Yet another way of reading Wesley, of construing the relationship between the inward kingdom, the love of God reigning in the heart and all manner of good works (individual, political, social) is to contend that the one endlessly leads to the other in a cyclical fashion. In other words, in this interpretation, the love of God and neighbor issues in works of mercy which in turn enhance the love of God and neighbor.³⁹ Here each element is a means to the other and the question of valuation, of an ultimate telos, is avoided. Indeed, when the historian focuses on particular kinds of evidence, Wesley can in fact be read in this way. Accordingly, if inward transformation does not lead to good works, Wesley cautioned, one's faith and love cannot remain. Commenting on James 1:27, he writes: "The only true *religion* in the sight of God is this, to visit—With counsel, comfort, and relief, *the fatherless and widows*—Those who need it most, *in their affliction*—In their most helpless and hopeless state. . . ."⁴⁰ Moreover, Wesley likewise affirmed that good works are often a means of grace to spiritual growth and maturity. Thus, he points out in his sermon "The

³⁸Richard P. Heitzenrater, "The *Imitatio Christi* and the Great Commandment: Virtue and Obligation in Wesley's Ministry with the Poor," in *The Portion of the Poor: Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 52.

³⁹Wesley maintained that works of piety as well as works of mercy are in some sense necessary to sanctification. In other words, if there be time and opportunity, these works are the normal means to an improvement of the rich grace of God. Wesley, however, did not contend that doing good works necessarily results in an increase in holiness. The emphasis here, as elsewhere, is on the grace of God and works of mercy as a means of that grace. Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:164 ("The Scripture Way of Salvation").

⁴⁰John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmull Publishers), 599. A contemporary Methodist scholar who holds this view of a balance between inward, personal transformation and social activity is Howard Snyder. Indeed, his chart on the various models of the kingdom of God places the individual (personal) and the social in symmetrical relationship. Cf. Howard A. Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 17.

Scripture Way of Salvation,” that all good works, works of piety as well as works of mercy, are “in some sense necessary to sanctification,” that is, if there is time and opportunity for them.⁴¹

Though this second reading of Wesley is much more plausible than the first, it too must be judged as inadequate simply because it cannot incorporate the kinds of value judgments which Wesley did, after all, make in this area. For example, in his sermon “On Visiting the Sick,” produced in 1786, Wesley advises his visitors in the following fashion:

But it may not be amiss usually to begin with inquiring into their outward condition. You may ask whether they have the necessaries of life. Whether they have sufficient food and raiment. If the weather be cold, whether they have fuel.⁴²

But after this, Wesley asserts, the visitor is to proceed to things of *greater* value. “These little labours of love,” he writes, “will pave your way to things of greater importance. Having shown that you have a regard for their bodies, you may proceed to inquire concerning their souls.”⁴³ Furthermore, Wesley repeats this judgment, no doubt for emphasis, but this time he clearly displays what is the *telos* of all ministry:

While you are eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, a husband to the widow and a father to the fatherless, see that you still keep a *higher end in view*, even the saving of souls from death, and that you labour to make all you say and do subservient to that *great end*.⁴⁴

Though these value judgments have seldom surfaced in the secondary literature, they are by no means idiosyncratic but represent Wesley’s own thinking throughout his career. For example, much earlier, in 1748,

⁴¹Outler, *Sermons*, 2:164. Note that Wesley is in no way suggesting salvation by works, but he is affirming that good works, informed by the grace of God and by proper motivation, are a real means of grace to the believer.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 3:390.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 391. These hortatory comments found in the sermons reveal that in his ministry to the poor Wesley was never simply preoccupied with their temporal needs, important though they were, but he also was ever concerned with the transcendent, with the issues of God and eternity, a trait which gave his economic ethic, at least at times, a decidedly “otherworldly” emphasis. “Every pound you put into the earthly bank is sunk,” Wesley writes in his “The More Excellent Way,” “it brings no interest above. But every pound you give to the poor is put into the bank of heaven.” Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 3:276.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 3:393. Emphasis is mine.

Wesley had written concerning those engaged in ministry: "He doth good, to the uttermost of his power, even to the bodies of men. . . . How much more does he rejoice if he can do any good to the soul of any man!"⁴⁵ And two years later Wesley continued this theme in his sermon "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Thirteenth":

Over and above all this, are you zealous of good works? Do you, as you have time, do good to all men? Do you feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction? Do you visit those that are sick? Relieve them that are in prison? Is any a stranger and you take him in? Friend, *come up higher*. . . . Does he enable you to bring sinners from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God?⁴⁶

Two points are noteworthy in light of the preceding evidence. First, for Wesley at least, a part of what it means to love your neighbor as yourself always involves the exercise of both material gifts and spiritual talents; it entails the employment of all those gifts and graces which will enhance the physical well being of the poor *and* their spiritual character. Second, and perhaps more importantly, although the material needs of the

⁴⁵Ibid., 1:519. With respect to the roles of ministry, the task of visiting the sick and the poor demonstrates not separation as in some praxis models, not ministry which occurs in one direction only, from the poor to those who minister to them, but it reveals a mutuality of need and love in an ever larger circle of ministry. Moreover, this mutuality of need and love is amply displayed in Wesley's sermon "On Visiting the Sick," in which he counsels his readers to visit the afflicted in person for two principal reasons. First, unlike a physician, the visitor can do great good to the souls of men and women. Second, sending relief by another does not improve one's own graces; there is no advance, in other words, in the love of God and neighbor. "You could not gain that increase in lowliness, in patience, in tenderness of spirit, in sympathy with the afflicted," Wesley notes, "which you might have gained if you had assisted them in person." Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 3:389, 393.

⁴⁶Ibid., 1:695. Emphasis is mine. Runyon maintains that Wesley gave priority to works of mercy, which is true, but since this contemporary scholar fails to distinguish the difference between *chronological* and *valuational* priority, he actually leaves the wrong impression in terms of Wesley's own ongoing judgments. Cf. Theodore H. Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 106; and Kenneth J. Collins, "The Soteriological Orientation of John Wesley's Ministry to the Poor," *The Asbury Theological Journal*, 50, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 75-92.

neighbor have *chronological* priority, they clearly do not have *valuational* priority in Wesley's thought,⁴⁷ for their fulfillment prepares the way, to use Wesley's own terminology, for things of *greater importance*. Once again in his sermon "On Visiting the Sick" the Methodist leader instructs his visitors:

And if your delicacy will not permit you to imitate those truly honourable ladies, by abasing yourselves in the manner which they do, by performing the lowest offices for the sick, you may, however, without humbling yourselves so far, supply them with whatever they want. And you may administer *help of a more excellent kind*, by supplying their spiritual wants; instructing them (if they need such instruction) in the first principles of religion; endeavouring to show them the dangerous state they are in, under the wrath and curse of God through sin, and point them to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.⁴⁸

But perhaps the most lucid expression of the value and necessity of personal, inward transformation for social reform is found in the following selection from the sermon *On Zeal*, a sermon which epitomizes Wesley's thought in this area and provides insight into his ethical motivation and concern. Notice, for instance, what is at the heart of this ethic and the consequences which flow from it. Wesley declares:

In a Christian believer *love* sits upon the throne, which is erected in the inmost soul; namely, love of God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival. In a circle near the throne are all *holy tempers*: long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, fidelity, temperance—and if any

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., 3:389. Emphasis is mine. Although the ministry of visiting the sick was one open to the poor, women, the young, as well as the old, Wesley contended that "the rich" have a special calling to this labor. He reasons: "You have likewise a peculiar advantage over many, by your station in life. Being superior in rank to them, you have the more influence on that very account. Your inferiors of course look up to you with a kind of reverence. And the condescension which you show in visiting them gives them a prejudice in your favour which inclines them to hear you with attention, and willingly receive what you say. Improve this prejudice to the uttermost for the benefit of their souls, as well as their bodies." Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 3:393 ("On Visiting the Sick").

other is comprised in “the mind which was in Christ Jesus.” In an exterior circle are all the *works of mercy*, whether to the souls or bodies of men. By these we exercise all holy tempers; by these we continually improve them, so that all these are real *means of grace*, although this is not commonly adverted to. Next to these are those that are usually termed *works of piety*: reading and hearing the Word, public, family, private prayer, receiving the Lord’s Supper, fasting or abstinence. Lastly, that his followers may the more effectually provoke one another to love, holy tempers, and good works, our blessed Lord has united them together in one—the *church*, dispersed all over the earth; a little emblem of which, of the church universal, we have in every particular Christian congregation.⁴⁹

In this sermon, then, it is as if Wesley has allowed us to peek into the throne room of his entire theological and moral enterprise.⁵⁰ And on the throne sits not any political ideology or works of mercy, however noble or valuable they may be. No, love itself sits on the throne, and next to it are all those holy tempers (holiness) described earlier. And it is precisely only when these elements are in place, as motivating factors, at the very heart of things, that Wesley is then willing to consider works of mercy, piety and the like. As noted earlier, he cautions: “No outward works are acceptable to him [God] unless they spring from *holy tempers*.”⁵¹ And again, “That all those who are zealous of good works would put them in their proper place! Would not imagine they can supply the want of holy tempers, but take care that they may spring from them!”⁵² Therefore all those “dispositions of mind” like meekness, gentleness and long-suffering etc., are not beside the point, a pious extravagance or indulgence, but are “absolutely necessary . . . for the enjoyment of present or future

⁴⁹Ibid., 3:313-14.

⁵⁰Though there is no evidence that Wesley ever read St. Teresa of Avila’s *Interior Castle*, the central images which both spiritual leaders use to describe the Christian life are remarkably similar. Both, for instance, employ paradigmatic metaphors which not only contain implicit value judgments, but also highlight the crucial nature of love. For example, Teresa’s seventh mansion and its “geographical” location in the center of the castle is analogous to Wesley’s placing of love on the throne from which all else in the Christian life flows. Compare Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 206ff, with Outler, *Sermons*, 3:313-14 (“On Zeal”).

⁵¹Ibid., 3:320.

⁵²Ibid., 3:305.

holiness.”⁵³ Indeed, they are nothing less than the lodestars of the moral life, the key to Wesley’s ethic.

Moreover, without holy love as its impetus, without a concern for “souls” as its highest ministry, the church runs the risk of self-righteousness, a partisan spirit, an incipient materialism, and much worse: of fostering perhaps all those unholy tempers which Wesley so often warned against.⁵⁴ Again, in his homily *On Zeal*, the Methodist itinerant cautions:

And, first, if zeal, true Christian zeal, be nothing but the flame of love, then *hatred*, in every kind and degree, then every sort of *bitterness* toward them that oppose us, is so far from deserving the name of zeal that it is directly opposite to it. . . . Secondly, if lowliness be a property of zeal, then pride is inconsistent with it. . . . Thirdly, if meekness be an inseparable property of zeal, what shall we say of those who call their anger by that name? Why, that they mistake the truth totally. . . . Fourthly, if patience, contentedness, and resignation, are the properties of zeal, then murmuring, fretfulness, discontent, impatience, are wholly inconsistent with it. . . . Fifthly, if the object of zeal be “that which is good,” then fervour for any *evil thing* is not Christian zeal.⁵⁵

Therefore, a bitter zeal simply for social justice, which views matters of the soul and of human affection as of little consequence, is no substitute for the justice which grows out of a holy, loving, Christlike concern. Some scholars may have begun on the political level; clearly Wesley did not.⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid., 4:223. The danger of beginning not with love and holy tempers but with political and economic concerns is that “justice” so conceived will most likely be unreformed, marked by anger, class animosity, and perhaps even outright hatred of the middle-class or the rich. In other words, its concern for the poor will be expressed in all those unholy tempers against which Wesley inveighed. Once again, love and holiness are the proper starting point. Only then will the poor be properly ministered to and receive the justice they deserve.

⁵⁴Ibid., 3:304.

⁵⁵Ibid., 3:315-17. For more on Wesley’s own politics, Cf., Frederick Dreyer, “Edmund Burke and John Wesley: The Legacy of Locke,” in *Religion, Secularization and Political Thought*, ed. James E. Crimmins (London: Routledge, 1989), 111-129, and Leon O. Hynson, “John Wesley and Political Reality,” *Methodist History* 12 (October 1973), 37-42.

⁵⁶As Marquardt points out, “Wesley regarded the order established in England since 1689 as essentially excellent. Therefore, like all moderate Tories, he worked to support preservation of the status quo.” Cf. Marquardt, *Social Ethics*, 124.

D. The New Creation as a Global Work. Beyond these aforementioned frameworks, there are a number of ways of understanding how the kingdom of God, as an expression of the new creation, can be manifested in common life and, in its furthest reaches, on a global scale. One approach contends that the reign of God appears as the church looks beyond itself to transform the public order through political action and social legislation. Although this work is eminently vital, especially in maintaining basic human rights as an expression of natural law,⁵⁷ such labor nevertheless falls far below the graces and liberties of the gospel. Indeed, asserting rights, passing laws, and creating more just structures in society, though necessary, may yet leave the hearts, minds, and attitudes of sinners hardly moved at all. Put another way, the grace of God manifested in Jesus Christ goes far beyond calculating justice, adjudicating rights, and balancing powers and interests, to nothing less than self-surrender and humble, sacrificial love. Such abandonment, such a generous and uncalculating display of love, a real sense of the “newness” of creation—and not politics as usual—is only really a possibility for those regenerated believers who live in God through faith and in their neighbors through love and who, as a consequence, have been dispositionally transformed.

Moreover, in the area of politics itself Wesley was remarkably conservative. As a Tory who “feared God and honored the King,” he maintained that all political speech against the King should be strictly avoided in the pulpit: “There is a plain command in the Bible, ‘Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of the people.’”⁵⁸ Indeed, since it is the main duty of gospel preachers to “preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified,”⁵⁹ the only kind of political preaching that Wesley tolerated in a Methodist pulpit was

⁵⁷Wesley strongly criticized American slavery, which denied slaves their basic human rights, and he denounced this practice late in his career in a letter to Wilberforce in the following fashion: “Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.” Drawing from some of the insights expressed in his earlier sermon “The Original, Nature, Properties and Use of the Law,” Wesley reasons that a human or positive law cannot overturn natural law; it cannot, as he puts it, “change the nature of things.” Cf. Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 13:153 and 11:70. See also Frank Baker, “The Origins, Character, and Influence of John Wesley's Thoughts Upon Slavery,” *Methodist History*, 22, no. 2 (January 1984), 75-86.

⁵⁸Jackson, *Works*, 11:155.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

the refutation of the evil speaking and the vile aspersions cast against the King. And the Methodist leader substantiated this counsel in the following way: "It is always difficult and frequently impossible for private men to judge of the measures taken by men in public offices. . . . Generally, therefore, it behooves us to be silent, as we may suppose they know their own business best."⁶⁰ Again, Wesley insists, "it [is] our main business to preach repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."⁶¹ It is the proclamation of the gospel, the glad tidings of salvation, not divisive ideology that must ever resound in the church.

Accordingly, a second approach views the new creation as occurring in germ, that is, as growing slowly and with some retrograde movements along the way, not so much in the external, politicized order but *within* the church which is nothing less than the body of Christ. Here the kingdom is entered into freely, not by coercion, law or mandate, and all of this arises in the context of the richest fellowship and love. In this view, the new creation is manifested in the world to the extent that the church, the emblem of divine sanctifying grace and freedom, is in the world through love, although it is apart from the world in some sense through holiness. To be sure, in Wesley's estimation the church is that new community, that new creation, invigorated by grace and purified by love, in which the lordship of Christ is manifested and where His majestic reign has *already* begun. The church, then, is the locus of God's redemptive activity in a preeminent way and not the pagan, secular political orders that remain in rebellion and self-will and consequently refuse to surrender in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. This difference, then, this preference for the church, for all those who are holy, is evident in the distinction that Wesley made even in terms of distributing excess resources among the needy. In his sermon "On the Use of Money," for example, he writes:

First, provide things needful for yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on, whatever nature moderately requires for preserving the body in health and strength. Secondly, provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household. If, when this is done, there be an over-

⁶⁰Ibid. Hynson maintains that Wesley did indeed prefer a limited monarchy to other forms of government. Cf., Leon O. Hynson, *The Wesleyan Revival: John Wesley's Ethics for Church and State* (Salem, Ohio: Schmull Publishing Co., 1999), 155-190.

⁶¹Ibid.

plus left, then “do good to them that are of the *household of faith*.”⁶²

Moreover, there is considerable evidence in Wesley's own writings to demonstrate he actually believed that the great eighteenth-century Evangelical revival, as a vibrant witness of the church, was itself an increasing manifestation of the coming kingdom, the glorious reign of God over the earth. In his sermon “The General Spread of the Gospel,” for instance, Wesley eagerly anticipates all that is yet to come: “But I cannot induce myself to think that God has wrought so glorious a work to let it sink and die away in a few years. No; I trust this is only the beginning of a far greater work—the dawn of ‘the latter day glory.’”⁶³ What, then, was the grand stumbling block that prevented the fullness of this salvific reign of grace throughout the earth? It was none other, Wesley observes, than the lives of nominal, hypocritical Christians.⁶⁴ But if such wayward believers freely repented, if they forsook their evil ways, then the way would be open for an even greater work of God as the grace and witness of the *church*, empowered by the Holy Spirit, would soon spread throughout the earth. Wesley marks this transition in the following words:

The Mahometans will look upon them with other eyes, and begin to give attention to their words. . . . The poor American savage will no more ask, “What, are the Christians better than us?” . . . The Malabarian heathen will have no more room to say: “Christian man take my wife; Christian man much drunk.” . . . The holy lives of the Christians will be an argument they will not know how to resist.⁶⁵

And as if to demonstrate that his own thought on these matters was not captive to mundane, politicized valuations, those that reveled in the tribalism of an “us versus them mentality,” a carnal approach speckled, at times, with class animosity, and that, therefore, ever excluded a portion of humanity from God's love and embrace, Wesley notes in this same ser-

⁶²Outler, *Sermons*, 2:134. Emphasis is mine.

⁶³Ibid., 2:493. In this same sermon Wesley also points out that “at that time will be accomplished all those glorious promises made to the Christian church, which will not be confined to this or that nation, but will include all the inhabitants of the earth.” Cf. Ibid., 2:498.

⁶⁴Wesley writes “The grand stumbling-block being thus happily removed out of the way, namely, the lives of the Christians.” Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:499.

⁶⁵Ibid., 2:495-496.

mon: "Before the end even the rich shall enter into the kingdom of God. Together with them will enter in the great, the noble, the honourable; yea, the rulers, the princes, the kings of the earth."⁶⁶

A significant portion of Wesley's writing on the new creation, however, concerns not so much this present dispensation, and the church militant, but the era that will emerge shortly after God's sovereign judgment of the earth, the period of the church triumphant. Indeed, the judgment of the Most High will *disrupt* the created order, destroying the continuity from one age to the next. That is, after the judgment, the heavens will pass away and the earth and all its sinful works will be burnt up to prepare for the new creation as promised in the Book of Revelation. However, even in Wesley's time there were many scoffers who doubted such a judgment and how the entire earth could be consumed in such a fashion. By way of response, Wesley speculated that perhaps a comet, or "the lightnings which give 'shine to the world,'"⁶⁷ or even lava from Aetna, Hecla, or Vesuvius would bring about this momentous flaming end.⁶⁸ At any rate, though Wesley was not certain of the specific manner of this occurrence, he was of its eventual realization.

Judging from the amount of material on these topics, it appears, however, that Wesley was much more interested in the creation of the new than in the destruction of the old. In his sermon "The New Creation," for example, he reveals, first of all, how both the starry and the lower heavens will be created anew such that there will no longer be any blazing stars or comets in the former, nor hurricanes or terrifying meteors in the latter.⁶⁹ Moreover, the elements which make up the natural world will all be transformed with benign results. Fire, for instance, will lose its capacity to

⁶⁶Ibid., 2:494. For a discussion of Wesley's political and economic judgments, though somewhat colored by a post 1960s American social location, Cf. Donald W. Dayton, "The Wesleyan Option for the Poor," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 26, no. 1 (1991), 7-22. See also Clarence Robert Haywood, "Was John Wesley a Political Economist?," *Church History*, 33 (September 1964): 314-321.

⁶⁷Outler, *Sermons*, 1:369.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., 2:503. For studies that raise the question of whether Wesley was a post or premillennialist in his eschatology, Cf. Kenneth D. Brown, "John Wesley: Post or Premillennialist?," *Methodist History*, 28, no. 1 (October 1989), 33-41, and J. Steven O'Malley, "Pietist Influences in the Eschatological Thought of John Wesley and Jurgen Moltmann," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 29, no. 1 (Spring-Fall 1994), 127-139.

destroy, though not its "vivifying power."⁷⁰ The air, in turn, will be unable to support storms and tempests, and the water of the earth, the one-time instrument of God's wrath, will keep its bounds and will no longer issue in floods. In fact, the earth itself will be renewed so that there will be neither earthquakes nor burning mountains which destroy, nor thorns, nor briars, nor thistles which frustrate the fruit of the land, nor will any creature "hurt or give pain to any other."⁷¹ But the most glorious of all changes relates not to the elements nor to any inanimate thing, but to the living sons and daughters of God. Wesley writes:

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are done away. As there will be no more death, and no more pain or sickness preparatory thereto; as there will be no more grieving for or parting with friends; so there will be no more sorrow or crying. Nay, but there will be a greater deliverance than all this; for there will be no more sin.⁷²

In a real sense, then, Wesley's doctrine of the new creation, as just described, spills into the question of theodicy. In other words, the whole problem of natural evil in the form of floods, earthquakes, etc., receives a definite answer only in the coming new creation. Here natural evil will finally be a thing of the past, as will sorrow, pain, and death. Thus, grace will triumph where sin once ruled; life will be victorious where death once held sway. The redeemed "shall hear a great voice out of heaven," Wesley writes, "saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them. . . ."⁷³ And he adds, underscoring his point:

⁷⁰Ibid., 2:504.

⁷¹Ibid., 2:509. See also Theodore H. Runyon, "The New Creation: The Wesleyan Distinctive," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 31, no. 2 (Fall 1996), 5-19.

⁷²Ibid., 2:510. Though Wesley as an Arminian affirms that men and women can fall from grace in freely and stubbornly committing sin, after death their condition is apparently immutable such that they will not (and cannot) sin. Cf., Barry Edward Bryant, "John Wesley's Doctrine of Sin" (Dissertation, King's College, University of London, 1992).

⁷³Ibid.

“Hence will arise an unmixed state of holiness and happiness far superior to that which Adam enjoyed in paradise.”⁷⁴

But there are good and rewarding things in store not only for humanity, but for the animal kingdom as well as the new creation holds consequences for the entire created order. Admittedly, what Wesley argues here is somewhat speculative, but it nevertheless deserves consideration since it gives the reader many significant clues concerning the basic contours of his theological posture. For example, at one point Wesley asks: “But will *the creature*, will even the brute creation, always remain in this deplorable condition?” To which he emphatically replies: “God forbid that we should affirm this!”⁷⁵ On the contrary, the animals as well will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, from irregular appetites and passions, into glorious liberty, “even a measure, according as they are capable, of ‘the liberty of the children of God.’”⁷⁶ And though in his sermon “The General Deliverance” Wesley denies that God has equal regard for beasts as He does for humanity, he nevertheless conjectures along the following lines:

What if it should please him, when he makes us “equal to angels,” to make them what we are now? Creatures capable of God? Capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying the Author of their being?⁷⁷

Viewed from another perspective, the implications of this last teaching are of great import. Since the knowledge and love of God are both the privilege and distinguishing characteristic of humanity for Wesley, what then of those who neglect this glorious favor? Some theologies may suggest that those who choose to live in this fashion will eventually descend to the level of beasts; however, Wesley suggests something even more frightful—that wicked men and women, those who stubbornly refuse to

⁷⁴Ibid. For additional references to the close association between happiness and holiness in Wesley’s sermons, Cf. 2:600 (“The Case of Reason Impartially Considered”); 3:37 (“Of Hell”); 3:100 (“Spiritual Worship”); 3:194,197 (“The Important Question”); 4:67 (“The Unity of the Divine Being”); and 4:121 (“On a Single Eye”).

⁷⁵Ibid., 2:445.

⁷⁶Ibid., 2:445. The love and providential care of the Creator for all animals is evident in Wesley’s observation, expressed in his sermon “On Divine Providence,” that “He knows all the animals of the lower world, whether beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, or insects: He knows all the qualities and powers he hath given them, from the highest to the lowest.” Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:539.

⁷⁷Ibid., 2:448.

love and serve God, will sink even below the level of animals, since the animal kingdom itself will no longer be at so low a rank, but will be invited to enjoy what sinful humanity has willfully rejected: that is, to know, love, and enjoy God forever.⁷⁸ How poignant, then, how troubling will the loss of the wicked be! How horrible the realization that all of creation has passed them by to serve a rich and loving God. "Let all who are of a more generous spirit know and maintain their rank in the scale of beings," Wesley admonishes, "Rest not till you enjoy the privilege of humanity—the knowledge and love of God."⁷⁹

Conclusion

It should be evident by now that the theme of the new creation in the writings of John Wesley evidences a multivalence and a richness not often found in contemporary treatments. Indeed, as employed by this eighteenth-century evangelical, this theme embraces no less than four key relations: the self's relation to itself (inward work), to God (regenerating work), to society (social work), and finally to the cosmic order (global work). Although the first three relations clearly receive the lion's share of attention in Wesley's writings, it is the fourth one that predominates in such pieces as "The New Creation," where divine, not human agency is underscored, even celebrated.

Given such thematic richness, it is imperative that those who continue to look to John Wesley as a theological mentor and guide avoid all narrow, provincial and reductionist readings in this area. Accordingly, the "new creation," conceived simply as the regeneration of the soul that spawns an ongoing individualism, cannot bear any of the corporate, communal, and social meanings so often employed by Wesley. Likewise, materialistic readings of the new creation (whether from the theological right or left) must be put aside as incapable of displaying the full range of

⁷⁸Ibid., 2:449. Wesley's respect for and kindness towards animals is revealed in his sermon *On the Education of Children* where he states: "They [the parents] will not allow them [their children] to hurt or give pain to anything that has life. They will not permit them to rob birds' nests, much less to kill anything without necessity; not even snakes, which are as innocent as worms, or toads, which, notwithstanding their ugliness, and the ill name they lie under, have been proved over and over to be as harmless as flies. Let them extend in its measure the rule of doing as they would be done by to every animal whatsoever." Cf. Outler, *Sermons*, 3:360. Bracketed material is mine.

⁷⁹Ibid., 2:450.

Wesley's theological interests. Indeed, the new creation should be linked neither with the mundane material success of Christians, as if the two ever went hand in hand, nor should it utterly devolve upon the maintenance needs of the poor to the neglect of other, more important, considerations.

And finally, the theme of the new creation should not be subsumed under a particular politics, again whether from the right or left, for the power that the Methodists had come to know, under the careful pastoral leadership of John Wesley and through the *presence* of the Holy Spirit, was of a much different kind than that regnant in the machinations, interests, and agendas of self-interested and conflicting political groups. Indeed, it was in the context of the Methodist societies, in particular the class meetings and bands, that the poor, the neglected, and the despised came to learn of a different power: not the power of self-assertion and pride, not the power of force and coercion, nor even the power of self-will, but of the remarkable and sustaining power of the humble love of God manifested in Jesus Christ and received through the Holy Spirit. Again, in the Methodist society, the poor, so often neglected in eighteenth-century England, learned of their high dignity and calling as men and women created in the image and likeness of God, a God of satisfying and abiding love. They understood, perhaps for the first time, that their identity was rooted not utterly in themselves, nor in the groups to which they belonged, nor even in the circumstances of their lives, but in the holy God who had called them forth to participate in nothing less than the divine life. And this transvaluation, this new creation, so readily perceived by the poor, is no doubt one of the chief reasons why the common people often heard John Wesley gladly.

A DECADE OF DISSERTATIONS IN WESLEY STUDIES: 1991–2001

by

Randy L. Maddox

Over the second half of the twentieth century scholarly consideration of John and Charles Wesley underwent a dramatic transformation. Coming into this period as a side avocation of a few scholars, it ended the century as an area of academic focus in its own right—with dedicated academic chairs, degree programs, and publishing imprints. As one might expect, this growth is reflected in the number of doctoral dissertations devoted, in whole or in part, to the Wesleys. In the decade 1951–60 there were about 15 dissertations with this focus. The number grew to about 25 in the 1960s and held steady at this level through the 1970s. In the period of 1981–90 there was a noticeable increase to nearly 40 works, and below I list 45 dissertations that I have been able to locate that were produced between 1991–2000 (I would appreciate hearing of any I have missed).

There are several characteristics of this list of dissertations from the past decade that are worthy of attention. Consider first their years of publication. There is a fairly stable regularity, with at least one dissertation appearing every year, and around four in most years. The most striking year is 1999, when thirteen dissertations were approved. This appears to be an anomaly, rather than indicative of the level to expect in the future. The list shows only one dissertation for 2000, and I am aware of only one approved in the year 2001.

A second significant characteristic of the list is the number of institutions at which these dissertations were pursued. There are 33 different

schools, most of which produced only one dissertation on the Wesleys in the decade. Four institutions [Bristol, Claremont, Edinburgh, and Marquette] produced two studies, while one [Trinity] produced three. The most prolific was Drew University, which fostered and approved seven dissertations on the Wesleys in this decade. This range of institutions suggests that serious academic study of the Wesleys is gaining broad recognition. However, it also means that many of these works are pursued at schools where there is no faculty mentor with expertise in Wesley Studies, which helps explain why some studies do not engage the most significant existing secondary works (or the most up-to-date critical texts) relevant to their topic.

While the number of institutions sponsoring dissertations on the Wesleys has grown significantly over the last few decades, their geographical clustering has remained fairly stable. Most continue to be done in the United States or the United Kingdom (Scotland, England, and Wales). The exceptions in the past decade are from the closely related settings of Australia, Canada, Ireland, and South Africa.

On the other hand, there is a notable increase of Asian and African scholars in this batch of dissertations. Most of these scholars chose to focus their creative suggestions more on the implications of John Wesley's theology/practice for their socio-cultural setting than on the challenges their setting might raise for Wesleyan theology and practice, or for reigning interpretations of this theology and practice. But such implications can be gleaned from their work, and will surely be a growing part of the contribution of such new voices in the field of Wesley Studies.

The specific topics chosen for these dissertations also reflects some transition. While several still focus on questions of the *sources* of the theological emphases of John and Charles (with particular attention paid to early "Eastern" Christian and contemporary Anglican sources), there is a shift in overall balance from previous decades with more dissertations focusing on the *implications* of Wesleyan theological convictions for present issues and contexts. In other words, we are seeing emerge more of what Albert Outler called "Phase III" in Wesley Studies.

One of the biggest disappointments in terms of topics addressed is that only one dissertation in this decade focused on Charles Wesley. This is down from three dissertations in each of the two preceding decades. Charles deserves more attention than he has been receiving. Fortunately, the recent creation of the Charles Wesley Society and the establishment of

a Charles Wesley Research Centre at Liverpool Hope University are helping rectify this imbalance. One of the fruits of this new interest will be a dissertation on Charles by Gareth Lloyd in 2002.

My intention in the list that follows is not to give a detailed critique of each dissertation, but to provide as much information as necessary beyond what the title conveys so that scholars can determine which works would be most relevant to their own interests. I do try to indicate which dissertations advance specific discussions in the field of Wesley Studies itself. Fortunately, two of the dissertations that are most deserving of wide reading in the field have just been released in published versions (Leclerc and McGonigle), making them more accessible.

The Dissertations, 1991-2001

1. Anderson, Neil Douglas. "The Influence of Clement of Alexandria upon the Thought of John Wesley." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

While acknowledging the importance of indirect influence, Anderson seeks to demonstrate some more direct influence of Clement of Alexandria upon Wesley, particularly as this was mediated by one of Wesley's mentors, John Potter.

2. Baik, Chul. "Christian Religious Education for the Formation of Full Humanity: A Comparative Cross-Cultural Study of Yi T'oegye and John Wesley." School of Theology at Claremont Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Baik stresses similarities in the way that Wesley and the neo-Confucian Yi T'oegye viewed education as a means of restoring the fullness of human nature.

3. Basappa, Joseph. "Towards a Theology of Universality: John Wesley's Theological Response to Class Distinctions and its Relevance to Caste Distinctions." University of Manchester (Nazarene Theological College) Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

The strength of Basappa's study is its application to the issue of caste distinctions.

4. Blevins, Dean Gray. "John Wesley and the Means of Grace: An Approach to Christian Religious Education." School of Theology at Claremont Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Blevins probes the ways in which the means of grace functioned as educational “ways of knowing” for Wesley, and how this precedent can provide a theological and pedagogical framework for Christian religious education today.

5. Boafo, Paul Kwabena. “An Examination of the Theology of John Wesley with Particular Reference to his Social-Political Teaching and its Relevance to the Ghanaian Situation.” Queens University Belfast Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

The strength of Boafo’s study is its application to specifics of the Ghanaian situation.

6. Bosch, L.C. “The Ethical Implications of the Concept of Faith as Freedom From Society in the Theology of John Wesley.” University of South Africa Ph.D. thesis, 1995.

Bosch tends to read Wesley through the lens of Jacques Ellul, hence considering “society” more as the threat of imposed conformity than as a support for Christian life.

7. Bryant, Barry Edward. “John Wesley’s Doctrine of Sin.” King’s College, University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

Bryant provides a helpful and reliable analysis of Wesley’s doctrine of sin.

8. Clarke, Charles David. “A Still More Excellent Way: An Historical, Theological, and Biblical Evaluation of John Wesley’s Doctrine of Christian Perfection.” Potchefstroom (South Africa) University for Christian Higher Education Ph.D. thesis, 1998.

Clarke’s main claim is that Wesley makes love key to his doctrine of Christian Perfection. He engages few recent studies or their insights/questions about this doctrine.

9. Creasman, Ronald R. “Heaven Connected to Earth: Toward a Balance of Personal and Social Eschatology in Wesleyan Theology.” Marquette University Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Creasman contends that recent studies of Wesley’s eschatology have tended to focus on its social dimension and miss the important role of personal eschatology, which Wesley understood to play a key motivational role in evangelism and social action. He provides a good survey of the elements of eschatology in Wesley’s writings.

10. Doo, Jin Kim. "Holiness in Calvin and Wesley." University of Bristol Ph.D. thesis, 1995.
This comparative study focuses more on description than interpretive analysis.
11. Eckley, Richard Kevin. "Pneumatology in the Wesleyan Tradition and Yves Congar: A Comparative and Ecumenical Study." Duquesne University Ph.D. thesis, 1998.
The strength of Eckley's study is its comparative exchange, which leads him to suggest that Wesleyans need to appropriate from Congar a deeper appreciation for the ecclesiological dimension of pneumatology.
12. Fletcher, W. Brian. "Christian Perfection in Wesley and Fletcher with Implications for Today." University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1997.
Fletcher aims to show that there was less difference between Wesley and Fletcher than is sometimes claimed. Specifically, he stresses how both place any emphasis on specific experiences in the context of ongoing growth toward Christian maturity. His study is addressed to the European Methodist context and its general devaluation of any claim for attaining Christian Perfection.
13. Fourqurean, David N. "The Politics of Christian Perfection as Peace: Karl Barth and John Wesley in Dialogue." Duke University Ph.D. thesis, 1997.
Fourqurean's primary interest is to criticize Wesley for not adopting pacifism, which he assumes is the only reasonable application of Wesley's theology of pure love.
14. Giffin, John. "The Structure of Authority in the Thought of John Wesley." Fuller Theological Seminary Ph.D. thesis, 1999.
Giffin's stated goal is to show that faithfulness to Wesley would require The United Methodist Church to affirm the principle of *sola scriptura*. He provides little interaction with other recent studies of Wesley's understanding and use of scripture.
15. Griswold, John Eliot. "Mystics and the Authority of Experience in John Wesley's Theology." Boston University School of Theology Th.D. thesis, 1999.

In striking contrast with Giffin, Griswold tries to demonstrate in Wesley an openness to mysticism as a theological source, and argues that contemporary Methodists need to recover this openness.

16. Haartman, Keith. "Watching and Praying: A Psychoanalytic View of Personality Change in Eighteenth Century British Methodism." University of Toronto Ph.D. thesis, 2000.

While others have given psychoanalytic interpretations of Wesley's own conversion, Haartman applies this grid to Wesley's model for the spiritual development of his people.

17. Hall, Elaine Friedrich. "Pedagogical and Andragogical Principles of John Wesley's Anthology." University of North Texas Ph.D. thesis, 1998.

Hall's main argument is that Wesley's catechetical materials and structures reflect an awareness of the different needs for addressing children (pedagogy) and addressing adults (andragogy). This challenges somewhat the assumption that Wesley operated with a model of children as essentially "little adults" (cf. Willhauck).

18. Im, Seung-An. "John Wesley's Theological Anthropology: A Dialectic Tension Between the Latin Western Patristic Tradition (Augustine) and the Greek Eastern Patristic Tradition (Gregory of Nyssa)." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1994.

Im contends that the relationship of Latin and Greek influences in Wesley's thought should be seen more as a both/and relationship, rather than in the either/or terms that he believes characterizes earlier studies.

19. Kim, Hong Ki. "The Theology of Social Sanctification Examined in the Thought of John Wesley and in Minjung Theology: A Comparative Study." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1991.

Kim understands "social sanctification" to mean social-political transformation, and this is the focus of his comparison with Korean Minjung theologies.

20. Kim, Kwang Yul. "A Tension Between the Desire to Follow the Example of Jesus' Life and the Desire to Trust in His Redemptive Work: The Theology of John Wesley Reflected in his *Christian Library*." Westminster Theological Seminary Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

Kim contends that the selection of materials in the *Christian Library* shows that Wesley's Arminian (or really, in Kim's view, Pelagian) commitments override the classic Protestant commitment to the adequacy of Christ's redemptive work.

21. Kwon, Tae Hyoung. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Prevenient Grace: Its Import for Contemporary Missiological Dialogue." Temple University Ph.D. thesis, 1996.

Kwon argues that Wesley's doctrine of Prevenient Grace allowed him (and us) to accept that there is some truth in other religions, and to develop context sensitive ministries.

22. Leclerc, Diane Cunningham. "Original Sin and Sexual Difference: A Feminist Historical Theology of a Patristic, Wesleyan, and Holiness Doctrine." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1998; published as *Singleness of Heart: Gender, Sin, and Holiness in Historical Perspective*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001.

Of focal interest for Wesley scholars in Leclerc's study is her innovative argument that we find a gender-sensitive understanding of the basic nature of sin in Wesley's mature work. She traces how this understanding is carried over in Holiness writers like Phoebe Palmer. The book *Singleness of Heart* was granted the 2002 Smith/Wynkoop Book Award by the Wesleyan Theological Society.

23. Lee, Hoo-Jung. "The Doctrine of New Creation in the Theology of John Wesley." Emory University Ph.D. thesis, 1991.

Lee advances two main claims: that Wesley's theology is better read in terms of the organizing scheme of re-creation than that of the *ordo salutis*; and that Macarius and the Syriac tradition were more influential on Wesley than was Gregory of Nyssa.

24. McGonigle, Herbert. "John Wesley—Evangelical Arminian." Keele University Ph.D. thesis, 1994; published as *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism*. Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 2001.

McGonigle's basic goal is to show that Wesley's understanding of the supernatural gift of grace to all persons enabled him to maintain a near-Augustinian doctrine of original sin, yet reject both Pelagian innate ability and Calvinistic unconditional election. He includes the best evidence to date of Wesley reading actual extracts of Arminius.

25. Marino, Bruce. "Through a Glass Darkly: The Eschatological Vision of John Wesley." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1994.

Marino provides a basic overview of Wesley's stance on traditional topics in eschatology.

26. Meadows, Philip R. "S•dhana and Salvation: Soteriology in R•m•nuja and John Wesley." Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis, 1996.

This is a comparative study in the best sense. Meadows draws upon insights in each camp to suggest new perspectives on long-standing issues in the other. For example, he urges that R•m•nuja's notion of non-duality would be a helpful way to capture the relationship Wesley seeks to defend between Divine initiative and human response in salvation.

27. Miller, Kenneth H. "Ecclesiology, Sin, and Restoration: Toward a Wesleyan Concept of the Church and the Keys." Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Ph.D. thesis, 1998.

Miller argues that Wesley provides a model of the role of the church as a key means in our release from sin that is preferable to the more institutional emphasis of the standard Roman Catholic understanding.

28. Miller, Richard A. "Scriptural Authority and Christian Perfection: John Wesley and the Anglican Tradition." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1991.

Miller claims that it was the influence of rationalism that led Wesley's contemporaries to discount Christian Perfection, while Wesley's commitment to literal exegesis—when this did not clash with context—undergirds his commitment to this doctrine.

29. Moyer, Bruce Eugene. "The Doctrine of Christian Perfection: A Comparative Study of John Wesley and the Modern American Holiness Movement." Marquette University Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

While Moyer claims to compare Wesley's understanding of Christian Perfection to that found in the American Holiness Movement in recent decades, he bases his summary of Wesley largely on secondary studies by holiness scholars. The resulting similarities should come as little surprise.

30. Parr, Jr., Walter Lamoyne. “John Wesley’s *Thoughts upon Necessity* in His Search for the Middle Verity.” University of Aberdeen Ph.D. thesis, 1994.
- Parr focuses on Wesley’s attempt to articulate a defense of human accountability in the midst of the debates over the role of reason, the sentiments, and determinism in the moral theology of his day. He criticizes Wesley for failing to appreciate that Jonathan Edwards’ model of voluntarism was compatible with affirming Christian freedom!
31. Rose, Bruce Edward. “The Influence of Genre in John Wesley’s Journal.” University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Ph.D. thesis, 1999.
- Rose argues that Wesley’s journal should not be read solely as a personal autobiography since it weaves in as well such genres as travel narrative, pilgrimage, and the like.
32. Schwenk, James L. “The Wesleyan/Whitefieldian Paradigm: The Quest for Evangelical Ecumenicity in Eighteenth-Century British Methodism.” Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1999.
- Schwenk’s concern is to stress the areas of similarity and shared mission between Wesley and Whitefield, as a counterbalance to whatever theological differences they had. He offers them as an example of the type of ecumenicity we should seek today.
33. Shepherd, Neville. “Charles Wesley and the Doctrine of Atonement.” University of Bristol Ph.D. thesis, 1999.
- Shepherd surveys various models of the atonement, showing Wesley’s resonance with each. In an appendix he discusses possible dependence of both John and Charles on Richard Hooker.
34. Smith, Mark Anthony. “John Wesley: A Pattern of Monastic Reform.” University of Kentucky Ph.D. thesis, 1992.
- Smith argues that Wesley’s rules and structure for early Methodism carry strong resemblance to the Medieval Franciscan order of Friars.
35. Studebaker, Richard F. “The Concept of Mind in the Sermons of John Wesley.” Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Ph.D. thesis, 1998.
- Studebaker’s study demonstrates once again that Wesley’s understanding of mind was not purely intellectualist, but integrates the more holistic dimensions of piety.

36. Suh, Peter Kikon. "Two Soteriologies: Wonhyo and John Wesley." Northwestern University Ph.D. thesis, 1999.
A comparison of Wesley with a representative of Pure Land Buddhism. Suh suggests that the dialogue shows a need in Wesley's theology for more sense of the *now* of salvation.
37. Thelander, Brook A. "On the Healing of the Soul: Therapeutic Paradigms for Salvation in John Wesley and Select Homiletics." Knox College, Toronto School of Theology Th.D. thesis, 1995.
Thelander summarizes recent studies emphasizing Wesley's emphasis on the therapeutic dimension of salvation. His contribution lies in analysis of subsequent homiletics.
38. Ting, Gah-Hing. "John Wesley and the Psalms: An Examination of the Influence of the Psalms on Wesley's Religious Language." University of Queensland (Australia) Ph.D. thesis, 1996.
Ting surveys language and imagery in Wesley's writings that appear to have their source in the Psalms. He suggests, with little development, that the central role of psalmody in Anglican worship may account for this presence.
39. Tucker, Karen Beth Westerfield. "'Till Death Us Do Part': The Rites of Marriage and Burial Prepared by John Wesley and Their Development in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1784-1939." University of Notre Dame Ph.D. thesis, 1992.
The portion of Tucker's study that deals with Wesley is an exemplary study of the sources and editorial changes in these specific liturgical resources.
40. Tyson, John Horton. "The Interdependence of Law and Grace in John Wesley's Teaching and Preaching." University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1991.
Tyson provides a reliable discussion of how integrally Wesley relates law and grace in his mature theological works.
41. Walker, G. Clinton. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Justification in Relation to Two Classical Anglican Theologians: Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes." Baylor University Ph.D. thesis, 1993.

Walker argues that therapeutic concerns are found not only in Wesley's emphasis on sanctification but also in his understanding of justification. He sees Wesley much closer to the theological convictions of Andrewes than of Hooker in this regard.

42. Weeter, Mark L. "John Wesley's View of Scripture." University of Wales (Lampeter) Ph.D. thesis, 1997.

Weeter tries to demonstrate that Wesley held the position defended as "inerrancy" in current debates, but dialogues with none of the more recent studies of Wesley on scripture that would challenge his claim.

43. Wickersham, Ruth C. "The Rhetoric of John Wesley's Sermons: The Logic of the Heart." Northern Illinois University Ph.D. thesis, 1995.

Wickersham argues that the style of Wesley's sermons falls in between Joseph Butler (with his scientific logical tone) and George Whitefield. She assigns Wesley to what has been called the "Christian Grand Style."

44. Willhauck, Susan Etheridge. "John Wesley's View of Children: Foundations for Contemporary Christian Education." Catholic University of America Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

Willhauck provides the best study to date of Wesley's basic assumptions about children and how these assumptions help shape his approach to Christian education.

45. Woodring, Andrew N. "An Investigation of the Possibility of Caricature: Developing A More Objective Model for Determining Misrepresentation in Theological Debate." Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Woodring does a comparative study of Wesley's quotes and summaries of James Hervey with Hervey's original texts during their debate over predestination. He demonstrates that Wesley caricatures Hervey, but does not consider whether Hervey did the same. Nor does he compare this case with the rhetoric common in theological disputation at that time.

BOSTON PERSONALISM'S AFFINITIES AND DISPARITIES WITH WESLEYAN THEOLOGY AND PROCESS PHILOSOPHY¹

by

Thomas Jay Oord

A collection of essays pertaining to the relationship between Wesleyan theology and process thought has been recently published under the title *Thy Name and Thy Nature is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue*.² As co-editor (with Bryan Stone) of this book, I was encouraged by the publisher's general editorial committee to engage in historical research pertaining to previous interactions between Wesleyan and process thinkers. Given the present interest concerning the ideological correlation of these two theological traditions, I was surprised at how little had been written about the affinities these trajectories share.³ After all, when one considers the general affinities Wesleyan theologies have with various philosophical traditions and ideas, and when one examines the philosophical underpinnings of process theologies, remarkable overlaps and common tendencies become evident. These two traditions often end up on the same side of debates about principal philosophical issues.

¹This essay is dedicated to the memory of the many scholars within the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition who were strongly influenced by Boston Personalism. In many ways, I consider myself an heir to their legacy.

²Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord, eds., *Thy Name and Thy Nature Is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue* (Nashville: Kingswood, 2001). Special thanks is due to Bryan Stone, who read and made various valuable suggestions regarding this essay.

³See the introduction of *Thy Name and Thy Nature is Love* for an account of Bryan Stone's research on this matter.

When considering these overlaps and common tendencies, a particularly important philosophical tradition to address is personalism. In particular, Boston Personalism has influenced and been influenced by both Wesleyanism and process thought. Given the basic affinities between Wesleyanism and Boston Personalism, on the one hand, and between Boston Personalism and process thought, on the other, it may be that the present correlation of Wesleyan theology with process thought is a natural development. In this essay, I will explore this possibility by (1) identifying key ideas and figures in Boston Personalism and noting the general influence this philosophical tradition has had upon American Wesleyan theology and (2) discussing the points of contact between Boston Personalism and process thought. Although there are many Wesleyan theologies and process theologies, I will attempt to address main strands in these complex and diverse theological trajectories.

Boston Personalism and Wesleyan Theology

Personalism is defined by John H. Lavelly as “a philosophical perspective or system for which *person* is the ontological ultimate and for which *personality* is thus the fundamental explanatory principle.”⁴ As Edgar S. Brightman explains, “any theory that makes personality the supreme philosophical principle (that is, supreme in the sense that the ultimate causes and reasons of all reality are found in some process of personal experience) is given the name *personalism*.”⁵ While, in a broad sense, many philosophers and schools of philosophy could be called personalist, the school of thought at Boston University known as “Boston Personalism” is the most representative of the more narrowly designated personalist tradition and the most closely associated with the Wesleyan tradition.

Given personalism’s emphasis on the person as ultimate explanatory principle, philosophers in this tradition have understandably concentrated on explicating just what personhood entails. Brightman, for example, defines person as “a complex unity of consciousness, which identifies itself with its past in memory, determines itself by its freedom, is purposive and value-seeking, private yet communicating, and potentially

⁴John H. Lavelly, “Personalism,” in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1967, 1972), 5:107. Emphasis added.

⁵Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, 3rd ed., rev. Robert N. Beck (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963), 330.

rational.”⁶ Personalism, at least in its Boston form, is also identified with the philosophical tradition of theistic idealism. As Brightman explains, “idealistic personalism, or personal idealism, makes the . . . assertion that persons and selves are the only reality, that is, that the whole universe is a system or society of interacting selves and persons—one infinite person who is the creator, and many dependent created persons.”⁷ At its core, this project of theistic idealism is a metaphysical enterprise by which one seeks to develop the most coherent and plausible theory possible to account for what is given in conscious experience.⁸

The initiator of Boston Personalism was Borden Parker Bowne (1847-1910). During the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, Bowne’s personalist influence on American Christianity was immense. In 1936, Henry Nelson Wieman and Bernard Eugene Meland claimed, “[Bowne’s] thinking has probably reached the minds of more professing Christian people than any other philosophy of religion in the United States.”⁹ This far-reaching influence is demonstrated by Bowne’s influence on scholars like Brightman, John H. Lavelly, Peter A. Bertocci, L. Harold DeWolf, Ralph T. Flewelling, Georgia Harkness, Albert C. Knudson, and Walter Muelder.¹⁰ His influence even extends to well-known religious leaders such as Harry Emerson Fosdick and Martin Luther King, Jr.

That personalism should have such a broad impact suggests that many religious leaders found its worldview intellectually and religiously satisfying. Indeed, Boston Personalists attempted quite consciously to provide what they considered to be the most adequate philosophical structure for Christian theology.¹¹ Many theologians considered this effort suc-

⁶Edgar Sheffield Brightman, “Personalism,” in *A History of Philosophical Systems*, ed. Vergilius Ferm (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1950), 341.

⁷Brightman, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, 330.

⁸*Ibid.*, 331.

⁹Henry Nelson Wieman and Bernard Eugene Meland, *American Philosophies of Religion* (Chicago: Willett, Clark, and Company, 1936), 134.

¹⁰Others strongly influenced either directly or indirectly by Bowne’s brand of personalism include John W. E. Bowen, Olin A. Curtis, Paul Deats, Jr., Nels F. S. Ferre, Carroll D. Hildebrand, Francis J. McConnell, Richard M. Millard, Wilbur Mullen, Harris F. Rall, Edward T. Ramsdell, Carol Sue Robb, J. Deotis Roberts, S. Paul Schilling, William H. Werkmeister, H. Orton Wiley, and J. Philip Wogaman.

¹¹In the words of Albert C. Knudson, Boston Personalism “seeks to provide religion with a philosophical underpinning, to give it a cosmic framework in which it will fit, to create for it an intellectual atmosphere in which it will thrive” (*The Philosophy of Personalism: A Study in the Metaphysics of Religion* [New York: Abingdon, 1927], 328).

cessful. Wieman and Meland state flatly, “a survey of prevalent philosophies yields the conviction that, of them all, the philosophy of personalism is most true to the Christian tradition.”¹²

Of those influenced by Boston Personalism, clearly Wesleyans were in the majority. Bowne’s thought was more important for the work of Wesleyan-oriented scholars in America than any other philosopher’s in the early decades of the twentieth century. He provided Wesleyans, says Thomas A. Langford, with “a generative philosophical foundation for theological construction.”¹³ This made Bowne “the seminal source of the most generally influential school of theology produced by American Methodism.”¹⁴ Bowne and those in Boston’s personalist tradition guarded “the intellectual life of religion,” says F. Thomas Trotter, “[and] clung to the Wesleyan insistence on the practice of vital piety.”¹⁵ This insistence on vital piety in the Wesleyan spirit coincided with the Boston Personalists’ private theological inclinations; all were Methodist.¹⁶

One reason that Bowne-inspired personalism was so influential in America comes down to sheer numbers. Ministerial students from Wesleyan traditions flocked to Boston University and later left the school to serve as college presidents, professors, and church leaders. Partly because of these many graduates, personalism was the dominant philosophical position in scores of colleges and churches across the land.¹⁷

For what reasons did personalism come to hold such an attraction for Wesleyans? In the first place, one of Boston Personalism’s core conceptions was congruent with a basic Wesleyan tenet: God is personal, interactive, and relational.¹⁸ “What we especially have in mind, when from the

¹² Wieman and Meland, *American Philosophies of Religion*, 133.

¹³ Thomas A. Langford, *Wesleyan Theology: A Sourcebook* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1984), 149.

¹⁴ Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 175.

¹⁵ F. Thomas Trotter, “Boston Personalism’s Contributions to Faith and Learning,” in *The Boston Personalist Tradition in Philosophy, Social Ethics, and Theology*, eds. Paul Deats and Carol Robb (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 21.

¹⁶ Paul Deats, “Introduction to Boston Personalism,” in *The Boston Personalist Tradition in Philosophy, Social Ethics, and Theology*, 13.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ This was presented in a more coherent way by Brightman and his students. Bowne argued for a personal, interactive, and/or relational God, but rejected divine mutability and temporality. For a discussion of the problems Bowne faced because of this rejection, see Jose Franquiz Ventura, *Borden Parker Bowne’s Treatment of the Problem of Change and Identity* (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico: University of Puerto Rico, 1942).

religious view we speak of the personality of God, is the thought of fellowship with him,” says Knudson. “He is a Being who knows us and loves us and whom we can trust.”¹⁹ “On every count,” argues Brightman, “the metaphysics of personality interprets [deity] more adequately than does any competing view.” To illustrate, he notes that

. . . prayer, contemplation, mystical communion, ethical loyalty, are all personal attitudes and experiences, which acquire their highest worth when directed toward a personal object. Any impersonal view of God is either vague or unsuited to serve as the object of prayer and worship. . . . Such experiences as redemption and salvation have to be interpreted most awkwardly and unnaturally on the basis of an impersonal view of God. The eternal ideals of goodness and beauty, truth and holiness, by which we seek to measure our human vales, are given a clear and rational metaphysical status when thought of as the conscious goals of God’s purpose.²⁰

It comes as little surprise that Wesleyans would be attracted to such a conception of deity. John Wesley understood God as a relational deity who intimately interacts with the created order.²¹ Certainly, the God who is personal in this way is amply attested to throughout the biblical witness. Still, this conception of God was not well represented by other metaphysical schemes that have dominated the theologies of Western Christianity. Personalism’s alternative metaphysics came as a breath of fresh air to Wesleyans who sought a philosophical basis for their central convictions about relations with a personal God.

A second reason why Wesleyans found Boston Personalism attractive was that it emphasized the freedom of persons,²² opposing mechanistic, behavioristic, or theistic theories that denied persons a measure of self-determination. The personalist claim that God created persons with

¹⁹Albert C. Knudson, *The Doctrine of God* (New York: Abingdon, 1930), 298.

²⁰Edgar S. Brightman, “Personality,” in *Personalism in Theology: A Symposium in Honor of Albert Cornelius Knudson*, ed. Edgar S. Brightman (Boston: Boston University Press, 1943), 62-63.

²¹See Randy L. Maddox’s discussion of Wesley’s relational, interactive God in *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994), ch. 2.

²²Knudson reports that “personalism. . . holds to the libertarian as against the deterministic view of [humans]” (*The Philosophy of Personalism*, 74).

the capacity to act freely corresponds well with the central Wesleyan doctrine that prevenient grace enables humans to act in free response to God. Once again, it can be said that this notion of human freedom dominates the biblical witness. Wesleyans judge that the philosophies at the heart of theologies espoused by Augustine and Aquinas, and those at the heart of the Reformed theologies of Luther and Calvin, were not conducive to an emphasis on genuine personal freedom. Boston Personalism offered a philosophical alternative to these traditions, one that was more consistent with the spirit of Wesleyan thought.

Thirdly, Boston Personalism offered Wesleyans a structure to support the Christian demand for personal morality and social responsibility. "Personality implies freedom and moral responsibility," argued Knudson.²³ Personalists claim that the world is social; it is a world of mutually dependent and interacting moral beings. "In such a world," says Knudson, "love is necessarily the basic moral law."²⁴ For Ralph Flewelling, this implies that society "should be so organized as to present every person the best possible opportunity for self-development, physically, mentally, and spiritually."²⁵ Given statements such as these, those who agreed both with Wesley's rejection of antinomianism and with his conviction that there is no holiness but social holiness, were likely to find personalism inviting. The fact that Georgia Harkness, the first female theologian at an American seminary, and Martin Luther King, Jr., the most well-known American civil rights leader, were personalists suggests that personalism played a vital role in how some American Christians were responding to matters of gender and race.

A final reason Wesleyans were attracted to Boston Personalism was its emphasis on love. The primacy of love in Wesleyan theology is illustrated by Wesley's own words: "Love is the end of all the commandments of God. Love is the end, the sole end, of every dispensation of God, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things."²⁶ Wesley also reminds us, "It is not written, 'God is justice,' or 'God is truth'

²³Ibid., 83.

²⁴ Albert C. Knudson, *Principles of Christian Ethics* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1943), 118.

²⁵Ralph T. Flewelling, "Personalism," in *Twentieth Century Philosophy: Living Schools of Thought*, ed. Dagobert D. Runes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), 325.

²⁶Sermon 36, "The Law Established through Faith, II," *Works*, 2:39.

(although he is just and true in all his ways). But it is written, ‘God is love’.²⁷ Boston Personalists likewise argued that God’s primary volition is love.²⁸ Furthermore, the nature of love requires interpersonal relationships, both for deity and creatures. Brightman contended that “if God is love, his love needs free companions who return his love.”²⁹ God seeks to increase love in others: “the personal God is one who works—whether with us or in spite of us—to attain the highest values and the most perfect love.”³⁰ What made personalism so attractive to those who placed love at the center of their theological constructions, then, was its personal and interpersonal categories, which lent themselves to lucid analysis of divine and creaturely love relations.

The fact that many Wesleyans were drawn to Boston Personalism in the twentieth century does not mean, however, that it was accepted by everyone as the most adequate philosophy for the Christian faith. Some Wesleyans were suspicious of the idealism at the root of personalism; they preferred, instead, the realism of a commonsense philosopher such as Thomas Reid.³¹ Others opposed various novel theological formulations proposed by specific Boston Personalists. For example, many considered Brightman’s notion of a finite God, for whom evil is something of a “given” within the divine self, religiously inadequate. So too, some recognized that traditional Christian doctrines were not easily couched in the theistic idealism of personalism. Even Knudson admits that “the traditional doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement do not easily fit into the framework of our current personal idealism.” He maintains, however, that “this may point to the need of the reformulation of these doctrines rather than to any want of harmony between personalistic philosophy and the essentials of the Christian faith.”³² Wesleyans varied among themselves regarding the extent to which they thought such doctrines needed reformulation.

²⁷*Predestination Calmly Considered*, §43, *John Wesley*, 445.

²⁸Borden Parker Bowne, *Studies in Christianity* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), 94.

²⁹Edgar S. Brightman, *Is God Personal?* (New York: Association Press, 1932), 64.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 46-47.

³¹James E. Hamilton makes this claim in “Epistemology and Theology in American Methodism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 10 (1975).

³²Knudson, *The Philosophy of Personalism*, 80.

II. Boston Personalism and Process Thought

With even this introductory sketch, we can perhaps recognize some significant commonalities between Boston Personalism and Whiteheadian-Hartshornian process thought. It is understandable, then, that personalist and process philosophers have been generally appreciative of each other's views since the early decades of the twentieth century. In fact, Brightman called both Whitehead and Hartshorne "personalists," and he praised Whitehead, saying that "the greatest Anglo-American philosopher of recent times, A. N. Whitehead, came from a realistic tradition, but his doctrines . . . all point to panpsychistic personalism."³³ Brightman's published work and personal correspondence reveal that, through his reading of Whitehead and his exchanges with Hartshorne, he slowly drifted away from hard-core personal idealism toward doctrines more characteristic of process thought. However, although Hartshorne considered Brightman to be a process theist and was influenced somewhat by Brightman, Whitehead did not appear to be significantly influenced by Bowne, Brightman, or others in the Boston Personalist tradition.³⁴

A number of similarities—both thematic and methodological—between process and personalist philosophies have proved to be of great interest to Wesleyans. Both philosophies are adventures in speculative metaphysics; both are grounded in an analysis of experience, which leads to the testing and construction of metaphysical suppositions in the light of that experience. The resulting philosophy is hypothetical; it is always subject to reassessment and revision.³⁵ Lavelly suggests that "the affinities between and the common motifs of personalism and panpsychism are such that both positions have more at stake in reinforcing each other than in repudiating each other. . . . Jointly panpsychism and personalism may be the . . . best hope of metaphysics."³⁶

The epistemological point of departure for both Whiteheadian process thought and Boston Personalism is self-experience. Bowne contends that self-conscious and active intelligence is the presupposition for

³³Brightman, "Personalism," 344.

³⁴The key word in this sentence is "significantly." On this and related subjects, see Randall E. Auxier, "God, Process, and Persons: Charles Hartshorne and Personalism," *Process Studies* 27/3-4 (Fall-Winter 1998): 175-199.

³⁵Brightman, "Personalism," 345-47.

³⁶John Lavelly, "Personalism Supports the Dignity of Nature," *The Personalist Forum* 2:1 (Spring 1986), 37.

knowledge of ourselves, others, the world, and God.³⁷ “What we immediately experience is the starting-point of all our thought and action,” says Brightman, “and the present fact at all times is our own self.”³⁸ Personalists claim that what we find in our personal relationships provides the basis to construe everything in terms of personality. Here, however, process thought differs from personalism as to the types of self-experience that inform epistemology. Boston Personalists limit their notion of self-experience to experience that is conscious, sensory, and value-based. Process philosophers, in the tradition of Whitehead and Hartshorne, also acknowledge the epistemological validity of unconscious and nonsensory experience. This broader approach to experience is seemingly more suitable to Wesleyan concerns about how God relates to creation and, specifically, how God guides and assures us through what Wesley calls the “spiritual senses.”

Especially appealing to Wesleyans is another current running through both personalist and process philosophies, namely, the relational metaphysics of each. For process thought, all actual existence involves, in Whitehead’s words, “an essential interconnectedness of things.”³⁹ Bowne, sounding like a relational metaphysician, also argues that “the notion of interaction implies that a thing is [influenced] by others, and hence that it cannot be all that it is apart from all others. . . . Its existence is involved in its relations.”⁴⁰ At least later in his life, Brightman spoke of interconnectedness when claiming that personalism posits “an interacting and intercommunicating universe,” which means that the basis for this philosophy “is essentially interpersonal, and therefore social.”⁴¹ However, as contemporary personalist Rufus Burrow, Jr., admits, “it must be conceded that neither Bowne nor Brightman worked out the fuller implications of a relational metaphysics.”⁴² An illustration of this failure to work out a rela-

³⁷Borden Parker Bowne, *Personalism* (Norwood, MA: Plimpton, 1908, 1936), 217.

³⁸Edgar S. Brightman, quoted by Wieman and Meland in *American Philosophies of Religion*, 140.

³⁹Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1968; New York: Macmillan, 1933), 227.

⁴⁰Borden Parker Bowne, *Theism* (New York: American Book Co., 1902), 57.

⁴¹Brightman, “Personalism,” 347, 350.

⁴²Rufus Burrow, Jr., *Personalism: A Critical Introduction* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice, 1999), 232.

tional metaphysics is Brightman's denial of literal participation of selves in one another; he concludes that "monads have no windows through which existences or concrete realities may interact. Only purposes may interact."⁴³ Whitehead and process metaphysicians contend that monads do have "windows," whereby each actuality is internally related to others who have preceded them.⁴⁴ The uniquely process way of conceiving real internal relations shares strong affinities with the Wesleyan emphasis on the prevenience of grace and the transforming presence of God within all creation.

Continuing in the philosophical tradition of Gottfried Leibniz, personalism affirms what Brightman calls "quantitative pluralism" and "qualitative monism." Quantitative pluralism refers to the claim that human persons are to be distinguished from each other and from the divine person. Qualitative monism refers to the claim that only persons are truly real, with God and conscious non-divine individuals sharing the common characteristic "personhood."⁴⁵ Process thought also affirms the essence of Brightman's understanding of pluralism and monism, although its qualitative monism extends to all actual existents. Process philosophy's quantitative pluralism is more thoroughgoing, because each actuality essentially enjoys a moment in its becoming that is *causa sui*. Or, as Whitehead puts it, "every actual entity . . . is something individual for its own sake; and thereby transcends the rest of actuality."⁴⁶ Furthermore, Hartshorne's qualitative monism is more thoroughgoing than Boston Personalism's, because, for Hartshorne, even God embodies the metaphysical characteristics conditioning all persons. Brightman's God remains an exception to these metaphysical principles.

⁴³Brightman, Letter of May 13, 1939. Quoted in Auxier, "God, Process, and Persons," 181.

⁴⁴Later in his life, and subsequent to reflection on the thought of Hartshorne and Whitehead, Brightman attempted to correct his deficient hypothesis regarding internal relations. See Auxier's article regarding Hartshorne's influence on Brightman pertaining to this matter ("God, Process, and Persons," 175-199).

⁴⁵Edgar S. Brightman, "Personalistic Metaphysics of the Self: Its Distinctive Features," in *Studies in Personalism: Selected Writings of Edgar Sheffield Brightman*, ed. Warren E. Steinkraus and Robert N. Beck (Utica, N.Y.: Meridian, 1984), 18.

⁴⁶Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected edition, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978; orig. ed., 1929), 88.

I have already noted that the emphasis on God as personal, which resides at the core of Boston Personalism, is attractive to Wesleyans. Although the similarities between Whitehead and Hartshorne are so great that both are generally regarded as the primary inspirations for process theology, Hartshorne's thought is decidedly more congruent with Boston Personalism at this point. His doctrine of God more easily generates a conception of God as personal. In the section of *The Divine Relativity* that Hartshorne entitles "Divine Personality," he argues that God should be conceived "as a supreme person."⁴⁷ As person, God enjoys successive "states" of existence analogous with the states of existence enjoyed by other personally ordered societies of occasions of experience.⁴⁸ Whitehead's God, however, does not lend itself to personalist categories, because deity subsists in a single, ever-becoming state.⁴⁹

Process theism also shares important similarities with personalism in regard to theodicy. A glimpse at how prominent scholars in these traditions address the problem of evil reveals that, in general, both personalism and process thought seek to reconceptualize divine power to account for divine love. Sounding like Whitehead, although writing nearly twenty years earlier, Bowne rejects classical theology's construal of divine power: "A great deal of our theology was written when men believed in the divine right and irresponsibility of kings, and this conception also crept into and corrupted theological thinking, so that God was conceived less as a truly moral being than as a magnified and irresponsible des-

⁴⁷Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1948), 142. See also Hartshorne, "God, As Personal" in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Virgilius Ferm (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945), 302-303.

⁴⁸Charles Hartshorne, "Whitehead's Idea of God," in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (New York: Tudor, 1951), 530.

⁴⁹Whitehead's doctrine of God does not easily lend itself to speaking of God as personal, because he conceived God to be a single, ever-concreasing, actual entity. Although interaction with others is part of what it means to be personal, it is difficult to imagine how a single actual entity, which everlastingly becomes, can affect other actualities. That is, if interaction requires an individual to oscillate between being and becoming, or object and subject, as Whitehead contends, it is unclear how God could interact personally. For a critique of Whitehead on this point, and for an alternative doctrine of God similar to Hartshorne's, see the classic work on the subject by John B. Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965).

pot.”⁵⁰ Wesley reconceived divine power similarly, although his construal was hammered out in the context of broader soteriological concerns, especially related to the question of predestination.

Chief among notable answers to the problem of evil given by Boston Personalists is the relatively controversial one offered by Brightman. The fact of evil, he claims, “indicates that the Supreme Self is achieving value in the temporal order under difficulties.”⁵¹ The impetus of these difficulties is found in the improper use of human freedom and in God’s own self-imposed conditions of reason and goodness. But these impetuses do not account entirely for the presence of evil. A crucial aspect of what Brightman considers an adequate theodicy developed through his reflection on the divine nature. He speculates that, residing within Godself is a measure of recalcitrance and perversity he calls “the given.” This resistant and retarding factor “constitutes a real problem to divine power and explains the ‘evil’ features of the natural world.”⁵² Although neither created nor condoned by God, this nonrational given inevitably conditions the divine experience internally making it impossible for God to overcome all evil.

In contrast to Brightman’s controversial solution, Boston Personalists have generally simply affirmed divine self-limitation as a way to preserve perfect divine love in the face of genuine evil. In providing power for freedom to creatures, they say, God became self-limited. Although many process theists also reject the language of divine finitude, they do not embrace the personalist notion of divine self-limitation. Process theology’s criticism of a self-limited God is that this deity, who incessantly enjoys the capacity to become un-self-limited, ought to overcome self-imposed limitations periodically in the name of love.⁵³ Process theologian David Ray Griffin, for example, rejects Brightman’s notion of a God internally burdened with a nonrational given, and calls this deity an imperfect Being unworthy of worship.⁵⁴ Unlike Brightman’s God, whose

⁵⁰Borden Parker Bowne, *Studies in Christianity*, 151.

⁵¹Brightman, quoted by Wieman and Meland in *American Philosophies of Religion*, 142.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Among pertinent material criticizing divine self-limitation from a process theological perspective, see Tyron L. Inbody, *The Transforming God: An Interpretation of Suffering and Evil* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 148-50.

⁵⁴David Ray Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 246.

internal conflict prevents unqualified expressions of love, the process deity Griffin proposes expresses perfect love everlastingly, albeit through the metaphysical conditions that God and all other actualities embody.

Personalism and process thought both emphasize the immanence of God. Speaking like a naturalistic theist in the process tradition, Bowne begins his book *The Immanence of God* with these words: “The undivineness of the natural and the unnaturalness of the divine is the great heresy of popular thought.”⁵⁵ However, Boston Personalists speculate that God’s immanent relation with the world, in contrast to the immanent relations of process God, is volitional rather than necessary. Personalism “insists on God’s free relation to the world,” says Knudson.⁵⁶ Or, as Bowne says more subtly, God “is the most deeply obligated being in the universe. And, having started a race under human conditions, he is bound to treat it in accordance with those conditions. God is bound to be the great Burden-bearer of our world because of his relations to men.”⁵⁷ Process thought, in contrast, denies that God voluntarily relates with nondivine creatures, or, as Whitehead says, “the relationships of God to the World should lie beyond the accidents of will.” Instead, these relationships should be founded “upon the necessities of the nature of God and the nature of the World.”⁵⁸ This implies that some realm of finite actualities or another has always existed;⁵⁹ God does not omnipotently dispose “a wholly derivative world” *ex nihilo*.⁶⁰

Ultimately, the greatest differences between process and personalist thought can be traced to the philosophical traditions upon which they draw; process thought draws heavily from realist traditions and Boston Personalism draws heavily from idealist traditions. These different start-

⁵⁵Bowne, *The Immanence of God* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1905), preface.

⁵⁶Knudson, *The Philosophy of Personalism*, 329.

⁵⁷Bowne, *Studies in Christianity*, 144.

⁵⁸Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 215.

⁵⁹This does not deny, in principle, the theory that our particular universe may have begun with a Big Bang, only that such an event, if it occurred, was not the beginning of finite existence.

⁶⁰Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 166. For an examination of the relevance of God’s voluntary or necessary relations with the world, see Thomas Jay Oord, *Matching Theology and Piety: An Evangelical Process Theology of Love* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Claremont Graduate University), chs. 6-7; and Mark Lloyd Taylor, *God is Love: A Study in the Theology of Karl Rahner* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), ch. 11.

ing points lead each to regard the non-personal entities of nature quite differently. For Bowne and other theistic idealists of the Boston Personalist tradition, unconscious entities, e.g., rocks, plants, and cells, have no degree of independent reality. One reason that non-personal entities possess no independence whatsoever is that, for these personalists, individual “experience” is synonymous with “consciousness.” Personalists account for the presence of the non-personal world by claiming that it depends entirely upon, and acts as an element of, the divine mind.⁶¹ Brightman states this idealist position succinctly:

Personalism may be taken to be that philosophical system which holds that the universe is a society of selves, unified by the will and immanent causality of a Supreme Self, and which, therefore, defines matter and the whole system of physical nature in terms of the active, conscious will of that Supreme Self, while it regards human selves (and whatever other selves there may be) as enjoying an existence of their own, dependent, it is true, upon the will of the Supreme Self, yet no part of it.⁶²

Process theism, arising out of realist philosophies, postulates that the unconscious actualities of the natural world *do* have a degree of independence, and even autonomy, *vis-à-vis* God. Without this postulation, say process philosophers, persons have no good reason to claim that unconscious entities even exist, let alone possess intrinsic value. The postulation that non-personal and unconscious actualities have a measure of independent reality does not lead process thought to espouse mindless materialism, however. Instead, process thought puts mind in matter; experience occurs at all levels of existence. This avowal of panpsychism or, more happily, panexperientialism⁶³ offers a way to affirm the reality of mentality generating purpose, freedom, and value; it also offers a way to affirm the commonsense notion that a real world of unconscious natural actuali-

⁶¹Borden Parker Bowne, *Kant and Spencer* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat, 1967), 133ff.

⁶²Brightman, quoted by Wieman and Meland in *American Philosophies of Religion*, 139.

⁶³David Ray Griffin suggests that “panexperientialism” better depicts what is entailed in process philosophy’s version of panpsychism (“Some Whiteheadian Comments,” in *Mind in Nature: Essays on the Interface of Science and Philosophy*, eds. John B. Cobb, Jr., and David Ray Griffin (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1977).

ties exists with a measure of autonomy. One way to characterize process panexperientialism, then, would be to claim this doctrine considers “personhood” to extend from the most complex to the least complex of all entities in the world. In this postulation, personhood need entail neither consciousness nor the degree of complexity required to sustain enduring individuals. At the risk of oversimplification, one might say that if, as Boston Personalists contend, idealism is the antithesis of materialism, panexperientialism is the synthesis.

The implications of panexperientialism for process thought are significant, and the extent to which these implications result in significant differences between process theology and the idealism of Boston Personalism is far-reaching. I mention three briefly. First, although Boston Personalists sometimes argued for a responsible environmental ethic, their idealist presuppositions made it difficult to formulate ethical schemes that regard non-human individuals and the elemental actualities of nature as intrinsically valuable.⁶⁴ Only persons are really real, which implies that only persons can be intrinsically valuable. Second, Boston Personalism, because of its adherence to idealist premises, struggles to provide a satisfying solution to the mind-body problem; it provides no adequate theory for how a person (human self or mind) could interact naturally with a person’s bodily members (matter).

Third, because of its idealism, Boston Personalism aligned itself with a position in the science and religion dialogue that many today find unsatisfactory.⁶⁵ Knudson expresses this position when he argues that, “If both scientists and theologians had understood that science is by its very nature confined to the phenomenal realm and that religion by its nature is concerned simply with the ultimate power and purpose that lie back of the phenomena, most of the conflicts between them in the past would have been avoided.”⁶⁶ “It is [best],” he concludes, “to adopt Bowne’s distinction between phenomenal and ontological reality, and then to say that science is concerned with the former and religion with the latter.”⁶⁷ Process

⁶⁴Rufus Burrow, Jr., wrestles with this criticism in *Personalism*, 235-240.

⁶⁵For a brief explanation and criticism of the kind of position Boston Personalists take regarding the relationship between religion and science, see Ian Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 10-17.

⁶⁶Knudson, *Philosophy of Personalism*, 253.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 330.

thought rejects the distinction between phenomenal and ontological reality—and, therefore, also rejects a hard and fast distinction between science and religion—partly because of its doctrine of panexperientialism.

Although Wesleyans still shape and are shaped by personalism, and personalism is by no means a dead philosophical school,⁶⁸ the last half of the twentieth century witnessed a stronger Wesleyan attraction to process thought. Reasons for this attraction have been addressed in this essay; a fuller exposure of such reasons is found in the essays of *Thy Name and Thy Nature is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue*. My present task here has involved proposing a rationale for why Boston Personalism has been attractive to Wesleyans and for why this attraction naturally carries over to contemporary process thought.

⁶⁸Contemporary personalists include Douglas R. Anderson, Randall E. Auxier, Thomas Buford, Rufus Burrow, Jr., Charles Conti, Mark Y. A. Davies, Frederick Ferre, Erazim Kohak, James McLachlan, and Josef Seifert.

**THE WORLD AT ITS BEST: A PROCESS
CONSTRUCTION OF A WESLEYAN
UNDERSTANDING OF
ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION**

by

Monica A. Coleman

“If sanctification has its roots in the doctrine of creation, it has its destiny in a doctrine of eschatology, or creation’s final end. For the love that is manifest in the sanctified life is no penultimate reality but the present participation in that which is eternal.” — Marjorie Suchocki¹

In Wesleyan theology, sanctification is usually defined by John Wesley’s thoughts on the topic. Yet John and his brother Charles disagreed on several points of the doctrine of entire sanctification. John conceived of a qualified perfection that was attainable in this life. Charles expressed an unqualified perfection achieved only at death. Holding their different perspectives in tension (along with their agreement that sanctification is a process) gives a fuller and contrasting view of entire sanctification, a “Wesleyan” understanding of entire sanctification.

A process construction of entire sanctification highlights the ways in which the Wesleyan understanding is eschatological. Entire sanctification is already here, but not yet. It is realized only after death, and yet it is

¹Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, “Coming Home: Wesley, Whitehead, and Women,” in *Thy Nature and Thy Name Is Love: Process and Wesleyan Theologies in Dialogue*, eds. Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord (Nashville: Kingswood Books, Abingdon Press, 2001), 58.

continually given to us as an attainable ideal in this life. A Wesleyan understanding of entire sanctification redefines eschatology so that eschatology is no longer about the *last* things, but it is *every* thing—the interaction between God and the world. It is not the end. It is how we act and how we strive to be. It is conformity to the vision of God. It is perfection in love. It is the world at its best.

Although John Wesley was not a “process” theologian in the contemporary sense, there has long been an affinity between process theologians and Wesleyan theologians. For instance, in their anthology *Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love: Process and Wesleyan Theologies in Dialogue*, editors Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord note a similarity between a Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification and the process emphasis on becoming. Both Wesleyan and process theologies “understand the perfecting of God’s creation, in general, and human growth in grace, in particular, primarily in relational and processive terms.”² These editors state that the goal of their volume is to ask “whether the resources of process thought assist Wesleyans in this task [of reformulating our theology and re-thinking our basic ideas and assumptions] and, at the same time, whether the Wesleyan tradition offers insights from which process thinkers can benefit.”³ This paper has the same goal.

In the Stone/Oord volume, there are two articles offering a process understanding of sanctification. One article focuses on the dual nature of justification and sanctification and concludes that a process sanctification will be a restoration of the divine image through reorientation. The other article focuses on the gradual nature of sanctification and constructs a process sanctification where God’s image is revealed in the world throughout all time. Neither essay explicitly investigates the concept of entire sanctification, nor does either consider the differences between John and Charles Wesley on the doctrine of sanctification. A process construction of entire sanctification should hold the views of John and Charles in tension. It should express an eschatology that affirms the already-not-yet quality of traditional eschatology and agrees with the Wesleyan affirmation that most of the Christian life is lived in pursuit of this goal.

²Bryan P. Stone, and Thomas Jay Oord, eds. “Introduction,” *Thy Nature and Thy Name Is Love: Process and Wesleyan Theologies in Dialogue*, 9.

³*Ibid.*, 13.

Salvation

One of Methodism's unique contributions to Christian theology is the understanding of salvation as something that is passive and active, gradual and instantaneous. For John Wesley, salvation is the unfolding of the Christian life. John carefully notes that salvation is not "the going to heaven, eternal happiness. It is not the soul's going to paradise . . . it is not a blessing which lies on the other side of death, or in the other world. It is not something at a distance."⁴ Rather, salvation "is present . . . the entire work of God."⁵

In his 1785 sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," John Wesley describes the stages of salvation. Salvation begins with God's prevenient grace extended towards the world. Humans recognize this as the "first wish to please God . . . the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against [God]." The second stage is "convincing grace" or "repentance" where the individual recognizes the corruption of his or her fallen nature. The individual is convicted of the sin. At this point, "proper Christian salvation" begins. Herein we find justification, the new birth, sanctification, and entire sanctification.⁶ Justification is pardon. It is forgiveness for sins and an acceptance of God's favor.⁷ In the moment justification occurs, the new birth or "regeneration" takes place. The new birth is the "change whereby the earthly sensual, devilish mind is turned into the mind which was in Christ."⁸ The new birth is the gateway of sanctification. As natural birth is to human growth, so the new birth is to sanctification. Sanctification is the regeneration "as a progressive work carried on in the soul by slow degrees from the time of our first turn to God."⁹ As John often put it, justification is what God does *for* us and sanctification is what God does *in* us.

It is important to understand the experiential concurrence of justification, the new birth, and the beginning of sanctification. In his 1765 ser-

⁴John Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 372.

⁵Ibid.

⁶John Wesley, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, Albert C. Outler, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 488.

⁷Op. cit., 373.

⁸John Wesley, "The New Birth," *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, Albert C. Outler, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 340.

⁹Ibid.

mon “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” John does not even mention the new birth: “At the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins.”¹⁰ In “The New Birth” (1760), John admits that justification and the new birth are only differentiated in abstraction: “In order of time neither of these is before the other. In the moment we are justified by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Jesus we are also born of the Spirit, but in order of thinking, as it is termed, justification precedes the new birth.”¹¹ New birth *is* the beginning of sanctification.

Sanctification

Sanctification, also called “holiness” or “Christian perfection,” is a perfection of love. John Wesley identifies the commandment to love God with all one’s heart, soul, and mind as the highest commandment. It is to this commandment that we are all to strive. When we have attained it, we are entirely sanctified. To be entirely sanctified is to have a heart full of love or a purity of intention towards God and the world. John often describes sanctification as having a “heart full of love” or “the mind that was in Christ Jesus.” Entire sanctification is the deliverance from all sin: “The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words and action are governed by pure love.”¹²

By “cleansed from all sin,” John does not mean that people are free of limitations. Those who are sanctified are “not free from infirmities, such as weakness or slowness of understanding, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination.”¹³ We will always make mistakes, become ill, etc., as long as we live. This is part of mortality. With sanctification, John is referring to the intention, the love that guides action.

In a doctrinal sense, sanctification is the renewal of the image of God that was corrupted in the Fall. “Gospel holiness is no less than the image of God stamped upon the heart.”¹⁴ Sanctification is rooted in John’s doctrine of creation. According to John, humanity was made in the

¹⁰Wesley, “The Scripture Way,” 373.

¹¹Wesley, “The New Birth,” 336.

¹²John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 42.

¹³Wesley, *Plain Account*, 16.

¹⁴Wesley, “The New Birth,” 340.

trifold image of God—the natural (immortality), political (power of governance), and moral (righteousness and holiness) images.¹⁵ This was the Adamic law of God—that humanity would act in righteousness and holiness. With the Fall, humanity lost the image of God. God has given other laws to humanity to live by. The Mosaic law encouraged humanity to the political, moral, and ceremonial laws of God. But the law of faith, instituted by Jesus Christ, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies every believer.¹⁶ “Love is the fulfilling of this law.”¹⁷

Sanctification involves the doing of works, but it is attained by faith. Works are only “conditionally necessary.” Works of piety (prayer, sacraments, searching the Scriptures, fasting, etc.) and works of mercy (feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting the imprisoned, etc.) are both the overflow of sanctification and the necessary things that are done while the process of sanctification is occurring. But it is faith that accomplishes sanctification: “For these fruits are only necessary conditionally, if there be time and opportunity for them. Otherwise a [hu]man may be sanctified without them. But [the person] cannot be sanctified without faith.”¹⁸

For John Wesley, sanctification is not an ideal set far away at or near death. Complete perfection in love, or entire sanctification, is possible in this life. It is, in fact, to be expected at every moment of the Christian life. Although many people do not experience it until the threshold of death, there is no reason, John asserts, to believe that this is the only way the entire sanctification occurs. He writes: “But does God work in this great work in the soul gradually or instantaneously? Perhaps it may be gradually wrought in some. I mean in this sense—they do not advert to the particular moment wherein sin ceases to be. But it is infinitely desirable, were it the will of God, that it should be done instantaneously; that the Lord should destroy sin by the breath of [God’s] mouth in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”¹⁹ John always affirmed that sanctification is a gradual process: “[F]rom that time [justification] a believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace.”²⁰ But there is no timeline on sanctification. Entire sanctification can occur years after justification, or just months.

¹⁵Ibid 337-338.

¹⁶Wesley, *Plain Account*, 67-70.

¹⁷Ibid., 71.

¹⁸Wesley, “The Scripture Way,” 378.

¹⁹Ibid., 379-380.

²⁰Wesley, *Plain Account*, 33.

Entire sanctification can occur at a point in time, but it must be maintained by faith and works because the stages of salvation are not static. One may “backslide” and advance from one stage to another. “They who are sanctified yet may fall and perish.”²¹ Indeed, the processive nature of sanctification never ends. The gradual process of experiencing higher and higher heights of love still exists after entire sanctification: “So the change wrought when the soul dies to sin is of a different kind [than justification], and infinitely greater than any before, and than any can conceive until [they] experience it. Yet [one] still grows in grace, in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God; and will do so, not only till death, but to all eternity.”²² Thus a wholly sanctified person cannot afford to become lazy and stagnant after the confirmation of a heart purified in love. The process of growing in grace and love continues.

John Wesley summarizes: “That Christian perfection is that love of God and our neighbour which implies deliverance from *all sin*; that this is received merely *by faith*; that it is given *instantaneously* in one moment; that we are to expect it, not at death, but *every moment*; that *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of this salvation.”²³ Entire sanctification is perfect love. It does not make a person infallible, but rather is an indication of a purity of intention. It can be lost and it is preceded and followed by a gradual work—the process of sanctification. Entire sanctification should be preached and encouraged. It is to be expected in every moment. “Expect it in faith, expect it as you are, expect it now!”²⁴

Charles Wesley and Sanctification

John Wesley was not the only Wesley with a doctrine of sanctification. In fact, John and his brother Charles differed significantly in their understandings of entire sanctification. As noted before, John never understands sanctification to mean “perfection” in the sense of being free from all flaws and mistakes. Sanctification is the purity of heart such that an individual does not *willfully* sin. With this understanding, sanctification is possible and, he believes, promised by Scripture, attainable in this life, and not simply at death.

²¹Ibid., 79.

²²Ibid., 53.

²³Ibid., 41.

²⁴Wesley, “The Scripture Way,” 380.

Clearly there was contention among the Methodists on this point.²⁵ When asked at the 1747 conference about the differences of opinion that existed among Methodists about entire sanctification, John acknowledged that there are some who believed that “everyone must be entirely sanctified in the article of death . . . and a believer daily grows in grace, comes nearer and nearer to perfection.”²⁶ John, however, states that Scripture does promise salvation from all sin before death. Charles was clearly one of those who believed the former way. Although John concludes that all agreed about the doctrine of sanctification (“Nor do I remember one dissenting voice; but whatever doubts any one had when we met, they were all removed before we parted.”²⁷), several of Charles’ hymns reveal that he believed that entire sanctification not only entailed perfection and freedom from all sin in intent *and* action, but that it did not occur until death or the very threshold of death.

Charles held an unqualified ideal of sinlessness in sanctification. That is, John’s belief that sin is volitional was never satisfactory for Charles. For Charles, sinlessness means the absence of sin in both intent and practice. There are no allowances for mistakes in Charles’ view. John felt that Charles set perfection too high. In 1762, Charles published *Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture*. John did not have a chance to edit this volume and hence warned against Charles’ depiction of sanctification found in the volume. In a 1762 letter to a believer, Mrs. Dorothy Furly, John writes: “Indeed my judgment is . . . that to set perfection too high (so high as no man that we ever heard or read of attained) is the most effectual (because unsuspected) way of driving it out of the world. Take care you are not hurt by anything in the *Short Hymns* contrary to the doctrines you have long received.”²⁸

Because Charles’ view of sinlessness and sanctification was so high, he did not believe that sanctification was completed until death. In one of the *Short Hymns*, Charles writes:

²⁵The Maxfield-Bell controversy created a schism within Methodism when Methodist preachers Thomas Maxfield and George Bell preached an attained unqualified sanctification—“the perfection of angels.” This caused a rift and break within Methodism during 1758-1763. See Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 334-342.

²⁶Wesley, *Plain Account*, 34.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 39.

²⁸John R. Tyson, *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 379.

Advancement in thy Kingdom here/ Who'er impatiently
 desire, They know not, Lord, the pangs severe,/ The trials
 which they first require/ They all must first Thy sufferings
 share,/ Ambitious of their calling's prize./ And every day Thy
 burdens bear,/ And thus to late perfection rise. Nature would
 fain evade, or flee/ That sad necessity of pain;/ But who refuse
 to die with thee,/ With Thee shall never, never reign;/ The sor-
 row doth the joy ensure,/ The crown for conquerors prepared;/
 And all who to the end endure,/ Shall grasp through death the
 full reward.²⁹

Sanctification should be a process and it will entail suffering and pain. Entire sanctification is the full reward that is not grasped until we have died. Charles held this view throughout his life. In his 1772 collection of hymns, *Preparation for Death*, Charles writes: "Hear in me thy Spirit's groan/ For purity divine; Languishing for my remove,/ I wait thine image to retrieve;/ Fill me, Jesus, with Thy love,/ And to thyself receive."³⁰ Charles does not expect sanctification to occur until death, or at least on the threshold of death.

Charles greatly emphasized the gradual nature of sanctification. One short hymn ends with the words: "But by Thy will at last we stand,/ In gradual holiness complete."³¹ Another hymn reads: "Glad to receive the gradual light/ More of His grace and more to know,/ In faith and in experience grow,/ Till all the life of Christ we prove,/ And lose ourselves in perfect love!"³² Here Charles' biographer notes that John edited this hymn by adding the words "and the sudden" directly after "the gradual light." Whereas John strove to couple the gradual process with a sense of the instantaneous, Charles never wavered from believing that sanctification was only a gradual process. In fact, Charles wrote explicitly against those who preach instantaneous entire sanctification:

While warm with undiscerning zeal;/ We urge the novices on
 too fast,/ To scale at once the holiest hill,/ As his first labour
 were his last;/ He swells as so holy sanctified;/ As perfect in a
 moment's space,/ He bursts with self importional pride/ And
 loses all his real grace.

²⁹Ibid., 371.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., 380.

³²Ibid.

Longer than all should forward press,/ Should see the
summit with his eyes,/ Impatient for his own success/ BE
PERFECT NOW, the preacher cries!/ He ruins by his head-
long haste,/ The wheat is choak'd with tare oer'run,/ And
Satan lays the lunacy and the waste.

Our only wisdom is to trace/ The faith whereby the Spirit
leads,/ The usual course of saving grace/ Which step by step
by grace proceeds,/ Instructs them more and more to grow,/ A
people for their Father born;/ Till all his mind at last they
know,/ And ripe for God, to God return.³³

These stanzas from this hymn indicate Charles' outright rejection of John and any others who preach that entire sanctification is available now. Rather, entire sanctification occurs "step by step" and it is not complete until one is near death: "ripe for God, to God return."

John and Charles were aware of their doctrinal differences and neither one of them desired to heighten the schism within Methodism. In June of 1766, John wrote to Charles, pleading with Charles to meet him halfway on their doctrinal differences: "O insist everywhere on full redemption, receivable now by faith alone. . . . Press the instantaneous blessing; then I shall have more time for my peculiar calling, enforcing the gradual work."³⁴ Charles' letter of reply has not been recovered, but his biographer concludes that Charles must not have been persuaded and hence John writes to Charles again in January 1767. In this letter, John challenges Charles and lays out his own position once again. An excerpt will demonstrate: "As to the time [of sanctification], I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty or forty years before death. So we agree or differ here? I believe it is usually many years after justification, but that it may be within five years or five months after it."³⁵

Ultimately, John and Charles will never reach agreement on the timing of entire sanctification. John believes he must have living witnesses of entire sanctification in order to preach it. Clearly, this could not be the case with Charles' understanding. In February of 1767, John writes to Charles with frustration: "The whole comes to one point: Is there, or is there not, any instantaneous sanctification between justification and

³³Ibid., 386-387.

³⁴Ibid., 388.

³⁵Ibid., 391.

death? I say, Yes. You (often seem to) say No. What arguments brought you to think so?"³⁶ Charles' understanding of sanctification did not carry the nuances of the later John (as seen in *Plain Account*). Charles was clear that being cleansed from sin meant being free from sin in will and in effect. This unqualified understanding of sanctification led him to conclude that it was not attainable until death.

We see that John and Charles do compromise—at least publicly. Charles allows John to edit his published sermons. In John's sermons written before 1767, there is little mention that sanctification is a stage that can be lost. Nor is there a sharp distinction between sanctification and "entire sanctification" or "complete perfection in love." These distinctions are made in "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" (1785) and in *Plain Account* (1767), both written after John's letter to Charles. John's sermons that discuss sanctification (many of them written before 1767) usually balance this discussion with the doctrine of justification. It is *Plain Account*, with its explicit focus on sanctification, that subordinates justification to sanctification.

Put together, John and Charles weave a picture of entire sanctification that is within the grasp of a living Christian, and yet outside of the reach of any living person. It is a purity of intention and it is a complete freedom from mistake or injury. It is something that we can anticipate and work toward in this life, and yet it is something that we can press towards, but never achieve until we have died. It is temporal and yet it is eternal. Although John and Charles appear to contradict each other, they are expressing the already-not-yet dialectic that is commonly associated with eschatology. A process eschatology has the ability to make sense of the tension between John and Charles. A process eschatology can hold their positions together in a coherent manner and redefine our understanding of salvation.

This paper will weave John and Charles' understandings of entire sanctification together into what I call a "Wesleyan understanding of sanctification." Holding the two perspectives in tension, a process understanding of entire sanctification reveals eschatological leanings, as eschatology is understood in process thought. I agree with Marjorie Suchocki when she writes, "If sanctification has its roots in the doctrine of creation, it has its destiny in a doctrine of eschatology, or creation's final end."³⁷

³⁶Ibid., 392.

³⁷Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, "Coming Home: Wesley, Whitehead, and Women," 58.

Suchocki comes to this conclusion using a part of sanctification on which John and Charles agree. Her argument is as follows. Entire sanctification is a heart full of love. The goal of sanctification is to restore the image of God. To restore the image of God is to be what God is, to be a part of that which God is. It is to participate in God, God's being (or in process terms, "God's becoming"). Suchocki says the same thing with process terminology: "the love that is manifest in the sanctified life is the present participation in that which is eternal."³⁸

Process Constructions of Sanctification

The Wesleyan description of sanctification appeals to process theologians who readily stress the gradual work of sanctification because of its strong affinities with the process understanding that life is constantly becoming. Bryan Stone and Marjorie Suchocki have constructed explicitly process understandings of John Wesley's doctrine of sanctification. Stone's understanding couples well the tensions of justification and sanctification found more clearly in John Wesley's sermon than in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Suchocki's construction, on the other hand, emphasizes the gradual work of Christian sanctification, as does Wesley's explication in *A Plain Account*.

Bryan Stone. In "Process and Sanctification" Bryan Stone constructs a process theology of sanctification. He outlines Wesley's understanding of sanctification as one that is grounded in his doctrine of creation and theological anthropology. It is, he concludes, Wesley's understanding of the relationship between grace and freedom that completes his soteriology. He notes the aforementioned similarities between process and John Wesley, while also noting stark differences. Process thought has been informed by important intellectual developments since the time of Wesley—evolutionary and ecological perspectives, depth perspectives in psychology, sociology, wave-particle theory, relativity and quantum theories, to name a few. Process thought also refutes binary dualisms and substantialist language (such as "state," "essence," and "human nature") that Wesley assumes.

Stone understands sanctification primarily as a restoration of the image of God. This focus leads him to a process construction of sanctification that is centered around reorientation: "If we can speak of sanctifi-

³⁸Ibid., 59.

cation as a restoration of the image of God, we do not mean the recovery of a past state of perfection. We mean rather a *reorientation* of our lives toward God and others in openness and inclusion, a reorientation of our lives toward the future in hope, and a reconstitution of our lives in freedom” (emphasis mine).³⁹ Drawing from Charles Hartshorne’s description of creative synthesis—composed of the three essential aspects of community, creativity, and freedom—Stone arrives at what he calls a “process triad” for reconstructing sanctification.

Stone describes God’s image as social, creative, and free. Therefore, with sanctification, we reorient our lives toward God and others in love. We reorient ourselves toward the future with hope. Lastly, we reorient and reconstitute our lives with faith in and for liberation. Salvation is something that God does for us and in us. There are passive moments where God acts, and there are active moments where humanity acts. Here Stone is holding in tension the two well-known aspects of Wesleyan salvation: justification and sanctification. He writes, “This means that not only does sanctification include both a passive moment and an active moment, it is also both a gradual (though not “automatic”) process and, at the same time, is inaugurated and advanced in decisive moments of surrender, engagement, and commitment.”⁴⁰

Stone can therefore construct sanctification in process terms as a relationship between God and the world: “Sanctification is not a test to be passed, a state to be entered, or an achievement to be gauged. It is a creative project of love in which, as co-creators with God, we are led increasingly to reflect the image of God discovered in Christ and offered to us by the power of the Holy Spirit as gift, as demand, as lure.”⁴¹ Sanctification is a project or, to use the familiar process term, a dance with God where the image of God is offered to us and we reflect that image outward.

Marjorie Suchocki. In her 1987 essay “Coming Home: Wesley, Whitehead, and Women,” Marjorie Suchocki highlights the priority that both Alfred North Whitehead and John Wesley give to the full range of human experience. Suchocki also discusses the openness of the Wesleyan

³⁹Bryan P. Stone, “Process and Sanctification,” *Thy Nature and Thy Name Is Love: Process and Wesleyan Theologies in Dialogue*, Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord, eds. (Nashville: Kingswood Books, Abingdon Press, 2001), 93.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 94.

vision of sanctifying and perfecting love with a process-relational interpretation. She concludes that a process interpretation of Christian perfection clarifies the unitive love for God and world at the heart of Wesley's soteriology, which is likewise the ground of liberating social action. She also understands Wesley's soteriology as being grounded in his doctrine of creation. Human reason and affections are distorted through failure to adhere to God's creative plan (Adamic and Mosaic law). Christ is the end of the law, or rather the law of faith takes over, and faith in Christ incorporates us into restored creation. God's destiny, Suchocki writes, "is nothing other than that the creation shall be the living love of God, spread out in time and space, informing time and space, infusing time and space with the divine image."⁴² While she notes that the image of God is an important part of the Wesleyan understanding of sanctification, Suchocki places more emphasis on the gradual work of sanctification.

Justification is a prelude to sanctification and then Wesley's theology is described in process terms: "Justification is for the sake of sanctification, clearing away the hindrances, in order that God's creative destiny for the world shall at last have full sway. Thus Christian perfection is at the very core of Christian theology and Christian experience; it is the fruit that proves the vitality of the tree. Not justification, but sanctification is the focal point of creation. Justification is the means to this great end."⁴³ Sanctification implies (1) service to the world as service to God and (2) an incarnational theology in which God is present to us through the neighbor. The conclusion reached is: "The love of Christian perfection can be seen as a unitive force binding all creation together in interdependence, thus leading to the temporal completion of God's creative destiny in the world."⁴⁴

Suchocki's constructive doctrine of sanctification focuses on a continuation toward perfection since the realization of perfecting love is a relative and not an absolute state. One could call it a processive condition, adapted to the situation of the believer, and always luring the believer on toward yet fuller realization of love." Suchocki adapts sanctification beyond the experience of the individual believer or the human church. She posits a kind of cosmic sanctification:

⁴²Suchocki, "Coming Home: Wesley, Whitehead, and Women," 58.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 58.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 59.

Therefore, the Christian perfection that is the destiny of the world is not one that is static once-for-allness to be achieved by the Church, but is in fact to be historically appropriated, so that all time becomes the moving image of God's eternal/everlasting love. Christian perfection is a fullness that is called to a self-surpassing fullness yet again, and in this process the divine destiny is achieved. It depends upon God's grace, and human openness to God's gracious action within the heart.⁴⁵

Sanctification depends upon the movement of God and it never ends. It is the image of God throughout all time.

Both Stone and Suchocki come to constructive understandings of sanctification that rely on a process construal of what they call "fundamental insights" from John Wesley's doctrine of sanctification. They both agree that John Wesley's sanctification teaching is not solely individualistic (as has been accused) but social. They both conclude that John Wesley's emphasis on liberation action or works concretizes some of the insights of process metaphysics. Stone seems to hold the tensions of justification and sanctification, passivity and activity, decision and gradual process, more clearly than Suchocki who readily focuses on the gradual nature of sanctification.

Stone and Suchocki agree that sanctification is grounded in Wesley's doctrine of creation. Their primary focus is on the way in which sanctification works for those who are living the Christian life. While not exploring this fully, Suchocki suggests that entire sanctification contains a doctrine of eschatology. Charles Wesley's doctrine of sanctification highlights this point. Inasmuch as entire sanctification is not achieved until death or the "return to God," sanctification necessarily implies the "last things" or eschatology.

Eschatology in Process Thought

Eschatology is the theological term given to the consideration of "the last things" or "the end times." In Christian theology, eschatology is often coined in variations of the biblical term *basileia*, the reign of God, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, the city of God, etc. In classical theism, the kingdom of heaven is the realm wherein evil is eradicated, God's will prevails, and the righteous dwell. The kingdom of

⁴⁵Ibid.

heaven is the believer's telos and current ideal. It is the place where we want to be sent when "the last things" come about, and it is also the standard by which we are to work to eradicate evil on earth.⁴⁶

From the metaphysics of Whitehead's philosophy of organism (commonly known as process thought), eschatology looks significantly different. The philosophy of organism is best summarized in his phrase, "The many become one, and are increased by one."⁴⁷ That is, every unit of reality, from the quark to a human being, is in the process of becoming. These units of reality, "actual entities," are constantly in the process of synthesizing the disjunction of a diverse past into the unity it will become. As soon as the unity is achieved, the new entity contributes to the world and is now, quite literally, one of the many that will be synthesized into a unity in the next moment of experience. This process continues on and on.

Despite the ongoingness of becoming, the actual entity is not destined to repeat its past over and over again. In the process of becoming there is both a sifting of the influences from the past and a source of novelty. As the actual entity feels the influence of the past world, it allows some aspects of the vast past to influence its current becoming, while it negates others. This process of becoming is also influenced by the future possibilities that are available to the actual entity. These possibilities are presented to the actual entities in the form of the initial aim from God. In the initial aim, God orders the possibilities to the specific circumstances of each actual entity while luring the actual entity towards the possibility(ies) that maximize harmony and intensity. The actual entity has the freedom to become its own thing as it is constituted by the past, the initial aim, and its own self-determination. This actual entity then contributes, in its subjective aim, what it has become to the manyness of the world.

In Whitehead's model, God is an actual entity that is the chief exemplification of the metaphysical principles of the working of the world. The process God is dipolar, with a primordial nature and a consequent nature.

⁴⁶For a concise explanation of eschatology in classical theism, see David Basinger, "Eschatology: Will Good Ultimately Triumph in the Process System?" in *Divine Power in Process Theism: A Philosophical Critique* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 69-84. For a more thorough explanation, see Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *End of Evil: Process Eschatology in Historical Context* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

⁴⁷Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, eds. (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 21.

The primordial nature of God contains all the infinite possibilities that will be directed towards the actual entities of the world. The consequent nature of God receives the actual entities of the world, feeling them as the world has experienced them. Whereas the two natures of God can be separated in abstraction, they form a unity that receives, evaluates and lures the world to a vision of the common good.

The Consequent Nature of God. Inasmuch as eschatology locates a realm wherein evil is eradicated, process eschatology relies on an understanding of the consequent nature of God. For Whitehead, the ultimate evil is the perpetual perishing of the temporal world. That is, as each actual entity becomes something new, it is no longer what it once was. So as each actual entity is constantly in the process of becoming, it is also perpetually perishing. It remains only as it has influenced other actual entities. In this sense, it is immortal because its influence is felt beyond its own perishing. But it is only objectively immortal since it no longer exists for itself. It exists only as it has been felt by other actual entities. Objective immortality does not provide the everlastingness that the world craves, the everlastingness that generally frames our ideas of “heaven.” For Whitehead, the perishing is evil: “The ultimate evil . . . lies in the fact that the past fades, that time is a perpetual perishing.”⁴⁸ David Griffin and John Cobb identify this perpetual perishing as the loss of meaningfulness.⁴⁹

As the completed actual entity increases the manyness of the world by one, it is also felt by God—received into the consequent nature. In this sense, every actual entity is a part of God and thus lives on everlastingly in God. That is, God is constantly receiving from the world, but retaining in God’s own everlasting present all that is past in the temporal world. Thus, one can say that no matter how much our actions and decisions may fade in the course of time, they matter in the divine life.⁵⁰ The consequent nature of God receives every aspect of the world and highlights the best of it. The consequent nature of God receives the multiplicity of the world and holds it in a unity: “It is just as much one immediate fact as it is an unresting advance beyond itself. [Like all other actual entities,] the actuality of God must also be understood as a multiplicity of actual components

⁴⁸Ibid., 40.

⁴⁹John B. Cobb, Jr., and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 121.

⁵⁰Ibid., 122.

in process of creation. This is God in [God's] function as the kingdom of heaven."⁵¹ Simply put, in the consequent nature of God, the loss of perpetual perishing does not occur. Heaven is this place where evil is eradicated. To use Whitehead's language: "The problems of the fluency of God and of the everlastingness of passing experience are solved by the same factor in the universe. This factor [the kingdom of heaven] is the temporal world perfected by its reception and its reformation, as a fulfillment of the primordial appetite which is the basis of all order."⁵²

We see that the kingdom of heaven has two aspects: it is received and reformed. God receives the world in the consequent nature, but also evaluates the world according to intensity and harmony. God orders the experiences of the world and forms a vision that will be used to form the initial aim that will be given to the actual entity: "The consequent nature of God is [God's] judgment on the world. [God] saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of [God's] own life. It is the judgment of a tenderness which loses nothing that can be saved. . . . [God] does not create the world, [God] saves it or, more accurately, [God] is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by [God's] vision of truth, beauty and goodness."⁵³

This vision, the primordial vision, is not a universal one for all actual entities. Rather, it is tailor-made for the concrete circumstances of each actual entity in its context. The vision continues to promote harmony and intensity, but we do not know exactly what it will look like. The future of the world is dependent upon how the world responds to the initial aim and how it forms itself. In this sense, there is no guarantee that the end will be a triumph of evil over good. Process eschatology insists that "the future is open and that what will happen depends upon what human beings will do."⁵⁴ The vision is not static, but dynamic and changing in its particularities as the world (and God) advances. Process eschatology depends on both God and the world to co-create together.

A process eschatology is found in the interaction between the world and God. Whitehead describes the interaction between God and the world as occurring in four stages. The first phase is found in the primordial

⁵¹Whitehead *Process and Reality*, 350.

⁵²Ibid., 347.

⁵³Ibid., 346.

⁵⁴Cobb and Griffin, 118.

nature where the possibilities exist as concepts that have to be applied to the concrete situation of each actual entity. The second phase is where the actual entity derives its determinate conditions from the possibilities presented in the initial aim of God (as well as from its own past). In the third phase of “perfect actuality” the many actual entities are becoming one in God (the consequent nature) without any loss of individual identity or unity. In the last phase, this perfected actuality returns to the world as an initial aim and can again qualify the world because the actual entities will include it as a factor in their experiences of becoming.⁵⁵ This “perfected actuality” is heaven.

From the consequent nature, where all actual entities live on and participate in God eternally, to the ordering of what has been received (God’s concreting), to the primordial nature where the vision is returned to the world, heaven is both something that is apart from the world—in God—and yet in the world. Whitehead concludes: “The kingdom of heaven is with us today. . . . What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world.”⁵⁶ In process thought, heaven is a reciprocal relationship of love.

The Primordial Vision of God. There is a second Whiteheadian concept that will inform a process eschatology. The primordial vision includes a portrait of love that can also be interpreted as “heaven.” The consequent nature of God evaluates the received experience of the temporal world and returns that valuation to the world. It returns to the world through the initial aim that orders the infinite possibilities (finite in the concrete situation of the actual entity) according to the primordial vision. In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead refers to the primordial vision as a “vision of truth, beauty and goodness.” In *Adventures of Ideas*, the temporal world (therein called “civilization”) is ordered by God’s vision of truth, beauty, adventure, art and peace. Griffin and Cobb identify this concept of Peace as the kingdom of heaven. Let us pause to look at Whitehead’s understanding of Peace.

For Whitehead, Peace is the inexplicable harmony that the human soul feels: “I choose that term ‘Peace’ for that Harmony of Harmonies

⁵⁵Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 351.

which calms destructive turbulence and completes civilization.”⁵⁷ Peace is the goal and telos for the human soul: “It is a positive feeling which crowns the ‘life and motion’ on the soul. . . . It is not a help for the future, nor is it an interest in present details. It is a broadening of feeling due to the emergence of some deep metaphysical insight, un verbalized and yet momentous in its coordination of value.”⁵⁸ Peace is felt deep within the soul, and it is selfless: “Its first effect is the removal of the stress of acquisitive feeling arising from the soul’s preoccupation with itself.”⁵⁹ Peace is not something that people can achieve through their own efforts: “The experience of Peace is largely beyond the control of purpose. It comes as a gift.”⁶⁰ Peace is concerned with the interest of the greater good. But Peace is greater than moral codes; Peace is about motive. Peace promotes morality, but is not limited to it.⁶¹ For this reason, Peace is essential to the world. It keeps the soul from viewing the world as narrowly as it otherwise might. Ultimately, Peace is manifest as love: “One of its fruits is that passion . . . the love of [hu]mankind as such.”⁶²

Peace is tied up in the interaction between God and the world that was previously described. Whitehead writes: “It [the Supreme Adventure] is the immanence of the Great Fact including the initial Eros and this final Beauty which constitutes the zest of self-forgetful transcendence belonging to Civilization at its height.”⁶³ To translate: Heaven is the immanence of God which includes the initial aim of love that comes from God’s primordial nature and the reception of the world in God’s consequent nature that constitutes the Peace the belongs to the world when it is as its best.

Thus, Griffin and Cobb rightly identify Peace as an integral part of a process Christian eschatology: “In the body of Christ, where the words of Jesus are rightly heard, there is Peace. Peace is a gift of Christ and a fruit of the Spirit. Hence Peace is a mark of the church as the extension of the incarnation and the eschatological community.”⁶⁴ Peace is penultimate. It

⁵⁷Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 285.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 286.

⁶³Ibid., 295-296.

⁶⁴Cobb and Griffin, 127.

is the “harmony of harmonies,” the “best of the best.” It is a realm where there is no triviality or discord (evil). But Peace is not properly a place. Peace is a feeling; it is a gift from God that is concerned with the intent of the soul and manifests itself in morality and ethics—generally thought of as love.

Peace is God’s eschatological vision given to humanity in the lure of God. And yet we are not all received and reformed in the love of God until after we have perished and have become a part of God’s nature. Since we are constantly perishing and returning to God, a process eschatology is the entire work of God, and yet it is also an ideal given in the primordial vision, offered to us, but only guaranteed to occur in God.

A Process Interpretation of Entire Sanctification

A Wesleyan understanding of entire sanctification states that entire sanctification is the heart full of love, a heart full of the essence of God. Wesleyan entire sanctification is both attainable in this life and yet outside the reach of our temporal beings. It is the purity of our intent in our interactions with the world, and yet it is also actions devoid of sin, evil, triviality, and discord. Entire sanctification is like the kingdom of God. It is something that we experience here, and yet it is something that will not be fully realized until our temporal lives have ended. It is the entire work of God, the way in which we live. It is the continual process of the Christian life. And yet it is an ideal that is only fully realized in God.

A combination of the understandings of John and Charles Wesley concerning entire sanctification holds opposites in tension. The process model has always dealt well with holding opposites in tension. This produces the contrasts that enrich life by providing both an accurate description of the model and the intensity that is valued by God. Whitehead writes:

The final summary can only be expressed in terms of a group of antitheses, whose apparent self-contradiction depend on neglect of the diverse categories of existence. In each antithesis there is a shift of meaning which converts the opposition into a contrast. It is as true to say that God is permanent and the World fluent, as that the World is permanent, and God is fluent. It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God many. It is as true to say that, in comparison with the World, God is actual eminently, as

that, in comparison with God, the World is actual eminently. It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World. It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God. It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God. God and the world are the contrasted opposites in which Creativity achieves its supreme task of transforming disjoined multiplicity with its diversities in opposition, into concrescent unity, with its diversities in contrast.⁶⁵

A Wesleyan understanding of entire sanctification is a contrasted opposite that becomes a unity when understood in light of process eschatology.

John Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification corresponds to the aspect of process eschatology where Peace is given to the world as part of the primordial vision in the initial aim. When the initial aim becomes the subjective aim of the actual entity, we are entirely sanctified. Charles' entire sanctification corresponds to the aspect of process eschatology where the multiplicity of the world becomes received and reformed in the consequent nature of God. Only after an actual entity has perished to the temporal world and been received in God, is sinlessness and love highlighted.

Entire sanctification is loving God and creation with all of our hearts, souls and minds. Entire sanctification is the world at its best—as the restored image of God, in perfection of love, in the harmony of harmonies. We see glimpses of it in the world. Indeed, it is attainable and instantaneous. It is available to us now. But entire sanctification is only fully achieved after death when we return to God.

John's entire sanctification affirms our experience that sometimes we get it right. We heed the lure of God and become and act according to perfect love. God's ideal of love comes into our hearts and our souls and refracts itself onto the world. In love for God, we embody the love of God and God's desire for us to love each other. The initial aim of God becomes our subjective aim and, completed in love, we love those around us. God's primordial vision for the world is actualized in our concrete circumstances and we feel it as a gift. This vision is manifest as love for the world.

But entire sanctification is not permanent. It can be gained and lost—just as we may conform to the initial aim in one moment and depart

⁶⁵Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 348.

from it in another. This is why works are important for achieving entire sanctification. John's works of piety help us to better tune into the initial aim of God. The works of mercy helps us to better feel the needs of those around us and, thus, to better contribute lovingly towards the world. Works of piety and mercy help us to become more conscious of God's love in ourselves and the world. They bring us closer to entire sanctification—to being completely loving in our relationships. John reminds us of the process assertion that the form of eschatology ultimately depends on what the world does in response to the primordial vision of God.

Charles Wesley's entire sanctification doctrine affirms the reality that we often fall short. The journey to entire sanctification is a sloppy dance between the world and God. It is a slow, painful, gradual lesson where triviality and discord are known to cause pain and suffering. We do not love each other and our world as we ought. We do not operate towards one another in love. We strive to be more than what we have been. We strive to be better than what we have been. We strive to be more loving than what we have previously been. But so often we are not. Our actions adversely affect those around us, and we are adversely affected by what the world contributes to us. Charles' unqualified entire sanctification reminds us of our interdependence—that the best of our intentions still produce suffering and pain and evil for others. Until we have overcome that dimension of sin, we are not entirely sanctified. That unity is only found after we have left this temporal world. That unity is only found in God.

Charles reminds us that love does not occur in its fullness in this temporal world. He affirms the process admission that there is no guarantee that good will triumph in this world. Only in God, in our perishing to this world and returning to God, are we entirely sanctified. There, God envelops us into the divine nature. In God, we have literally been restored to the image of God. Entire sanctification is not experienced until we are dead and received into God.

A process construction of entire sanctification is eschatological. Like traditional understandings of the kingdom of God, entire sanctification breaks into history while guiding us towards a fuller vision of its realization found after life has ended. In process terms, the primordial vision of Peace comes to the temporal world in the initial aim of God. But there is no guarantee that the temporal world will come into alignment with that vision. The ideals of Peace and love are only achieved in God's becoming

when God values the reception of the world in the consequent nature. Both John and Charles Wesley emphasize that sanctification is a gradual process. This is the goal of the Christian life—to be entirely sanctified. The interaction between God and the world is all about entire sanctification. The interaction between God and the world is about eschatology. It is about helping the world to be the best that it can be. In a process eschatology, God accepts all that we do and continually persuades us to be more than what we are. God persuades us to be those creatures operating in love toward and with each other. Herein is eschatology redefined. There is no end. The end is not the end because God is luring us, over and over again, to perfect love.

HEALING GRACE AND LEADERSHIP: ANALYTIC PSYCHOLOGY AND COMMUNITY¹

by

Dean G. Blevins

What is a leader to do? In the shifting sands of postmodernity, leadership is an all too perilous venture. While a plethora of leadership texts expound the purpose of leadership (often in business-like fashion) there is little complementary material that defines the role of leadership in more organic, interrelated terms in regard to the local community. In short, the current image of leadership draws from commodity-driven business paradigms rather than from interdependent, relational language that marks much of postmodernity's understanding of person-in-community. Church leaders also tend to rely heavily on business models and approaches that do not reflect the nuances of postmodern sensibilities.² While such leadership models are not inherently evil, there is a tendency to endorse norms

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²Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol and Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1999); Luther Tweeten and Carl Zulaf, "The Challenge of Postmodernism to Applied Economics," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 81, no. 5 (1999), 1166-72; Lovett H. Weems, *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture and Integrity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993). Weems is a good representative of a text on leadership that utilizes a host of business sources. *Ascent of a Leader* is an interesting attempt to infuse Christian principles as a corrective to business oriented leadership. Tweeten and Zulaf, however, argue that applied economic theorists, the source of many business principles, "find themselves philosophically more distant from many of their colleagues in other social sciences and humanities" (1170-71).

based on commodity exchange, marketing, and performance—hardly values consistent with grace, witness, and service.

Merely affirming Christian values may be insufficient without some sense of the relationship between community and persons. If the self is socially constructed, what role would leaders play beyond subtle endorsements of predetermined community norms? Such a question becomes increasingly important when theorists realize that not all communities or their leaders are equally valid in the postmodern world. Many communities reflect an ethos of violence or consumerism. Seduction and control, through oppression or consumer passivity, threaten communities that do not possess clear leadership. Surprisingly, some scholars hold that even John Wesley, the venerable icon of Methodist tradition, is suspect in such circumstances. Leaders in the postmodern era are challenged to discern authentic approaches to leadership that model a healing presence in the midst of tendencies toward seduction and control. With the fluid nature of communities and leadership, this form of discernment is tenuous at best, but nonetheless necessary.

What does it mean for leaders in the Wesleyan tradition to be a healing presence? Such presence includes therapeutic moments of care and counsel for persons and communities in pain. Is there, however, a broader “healing” leadership role for ministers that has been lost either in violence or consumerism? Does Wesley himself offer clues even in the face of harsh criticisms? There are unlikely clues from the “fathers” of psychodynamic theory (and “grandfathers” of postmodern thought), Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. These contributors to postmodern leadership appear at first like many of their business counterparts, lost in modern presuppositions with definite antagonisms toward traditional Christianity. Their analytical exploration of leaders and community, however, provides interesting insights into authentic forms of leadership.

My central conviction is that we have more to learn from these theorists about a postmodern understanding of leadership-in-community. Freud’s psychodynamic psychology exposes a key weakness that can surface in leadership and works against any healing influence. Analytic psychology, particularly expressed through Jung, also offers a form of reflective, “individuated” leadership that can actually provide a healing presence for the sake of the community. Recognizing the tension that exists in their modern/postmodern inclinations, Freud and Jung gesture toward a different understanding of persons-in-community, where leaders

may be deeply related to community yet also resist corporate pathology. Psychodynamic theory reveals dangerous tendencies to combine seduction and control, but also encourages the presence of leaders who possess “character” as a healing presence within community.

Learning how such theory informs Christian leadership begins with a deeper understanding of the perilous state of leadership in our postmodern setting. A second move establishes Freud and Jung’s place in the modern/postmodern world and then proceeds to analyze their contribution to leadership and community. I then turn to John Wesley’s life as a case study, demonstrating how current use of psychodynamic theory (in postmodern form) is actually limited since it ignores one-half of the early equations between Freud and Jung. I conclude with qualifications and suggestions for contemporary leadership in our postmodern world.

Postmodern Problems: Community and Psychology

One of the great contributions of postmodern theorists has been the deconstruction of the modern individual as an isolated “self.” New models of self-hood admit the deep relationship if not outright “creation” of the self in community. Theorists working with this new conceptuality argue for a notion of “person-in-community,” a concept that often helps ministers articulating the need for community to shape Christian character.³

All communities are not equally valid, as persons have discovered in places like Bosnia, Rwanda, and the Middle East. The same concerns apply to “communities” shaped in consumer culture, arranging life around iconographic ideologies like MTV, McDonalds, and WalMart. Benjamin Barber notes a postmodern propensity for vicious tribalism and commodity-shaped living, for Jihad and McWorld.⁴ Barber argues that these communities also reveal postmodernity. Barber writes:

[Persons know] that our world and our lives are caught between what William Butler Yeats called the two eternities of race and soul: that of race reflecting a tribal past, that of soul anticipating the cosmopolitan future. Our secular eternities are corrupted, however, reduced to an insignia of resentment, and soul sized down to fit the demanding body by which it now measures its needs. . . . Caught between Babel and Disney-

³Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

⁴Benjamin, Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalization and Tribalism are Reshaping the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996).

land, the planet is falling precipitously apart and coming reluctantly together at the very same time.⁵

Barber believes that Jihad results from fractious local sources that seek to resist the colonizing power of commercial forces located in transnational corporations. Ultimately both aberrations have a debilitating effect on local people. Barber writes, “the consequences of the dialectical interaction between them (Jihad and McWorld) suggest new and startling forms of inadvertent tyranny that range from an invisibly constraining consumerism to an all too palpable barbarism.”⁶ Barber reveals at least two great seductions for local communities, to tyrannize in the name of survival or to seductively co-opt, control, and “consume” in the name of good marketing. In light of these powerful forces, how can leaders, particularly “socially constructed” leaders, provide direction and guidance beyond their social location? How do leaders cultivate a sense of character that “transcends” their social location for the good of community?

Psychology, as a tradition, has long been interested in the relationship between leader and community. In recent years ministers have become increasingly aware of the negative psychological potential of dysfunctional groups within faith communities. A body of literature continues to grow as researchers seek to identify damaging relationships between the religious group and the individual (described either as smaller groups within the parish or as the congregation as a whole). Often this literature is cast in a psychological model drawn primarily from system’s theories based on families struggling with problems associated with addictive or abusive behavior.⁷

⁵Barber, 3-4.

⁶Barber, 220.

⁷Steven Arterburn and Jack Felton, *Toxic Faith: Understanding and Overcoming Religious Addiction* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991); Murray Bowen, *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978); Michael H. Crosby, *The Dysfunctional Church* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1991); Ronald M. Enroth, *Churches that Abuse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Virginia Curran Hoffman, *The Codependent Church* (New York, Crossroad Publishing, 1991); Stephen Muse (ed.), “When Religion Becomes an Addiction,” *The Pastoral Forum*, 11:2 (Winter, 1993); Anne Wilson Schaeff and Diane Fassel, *The Addictive Organization* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). Bowen’s work is foundational to most family system’s theory writing, while much of the material combining family systems and addiction has been popularized in the work of Anne Wilson Schaeff and others. Robert Enroth does identify other forms of religious abusive behavior. *The Pastoral Forum* dedicated an entire edition to this work, including articles which both identified the problems surrounding addiction in the church and other articles designed to help people recover from religious addiction.

Interventions presented as resources for ministry are often based on aspects of the family systems/addiction model.⁸ While addictive disorder theory has provided the major impetus for most of the current ministerial resources, psychodynamic models also shed insight into group behavior and group leadership for Christian ministers in a postmodern world.

Psychodynamic Theory and Postmodernity

Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung serve as major contributors to the field of psychology. A large portion of their acclaim is derived from their contributions toward an analytic understanding of the individual conscious and unconscious psyche. Both psychologists also offer insights into the relationship between the individual and the community as well as that of the larger society. These insights offer points of consideration for faith communities.⁹

Freud and Jung are admittedly odd sources to some in postmodern circles. Freud's influence is clearer, particularly through such postmodern thinkers as Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault.¹⁰ Freud's association with the "beginnings" of postmodernism (particularly deconstructive elements) provides little solace, however, since many theorists struggle with the psychologist's distinctly modern inclinations. Barnaby Barratt writes, "In many ways it is obvious that 'psychoanalysis' and Freud himself are entrenched in the dominant paradigms and worldviews of the modern

⁸Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985); Anne Wilson Schaeff, "Is the Church an Addictive Organization?" *The Christian Century* (Jan 3, 1990) 18-20.

⁹Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, James Strachey, trans. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1959), 5.

¹⁰Lawrence Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 153-55; David Piper, "Through the 'I' of the Teacher: Towards a Postmodern Conception of the Self," *McGill Journal of Education*, 32, no. 1 (Winter 1997), 51-67; Paul Rabinow, "Introduction," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, Pantheon Books, 1984), 25-26; Tweeten and Zulaf, 1166-68. Tweeten and Zulaf include Freud as one of the three "grandfathers" (Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche) of continental "fathers" (Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida) of postmodern thought (1166-68). See also the Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis Homepage (available on-line 3/11/2001 www.slip.net/~kacab/) with the Lacan quote: "It is up to you to be Lacanians. As far as I am concerned, I am a Freudian."

era.”¹¹ Other contemporary theorists support Freud’s contributions to postmodern thinking. Sophie Freud acknowledges the limits of her grandfather’s theories, but also recasts them in more current contextual theories of neuroscience and cognitive theory. She stresses that, while some of the Freud’s theories may be discarded, the psychoanalytic tradition contributed to the postmodern notions of the multiplicity of the human mind and the importance of narrative (the “talking cure”) for reconstructing life experience.¹²

Jung has a long history of dialogue with Christian thought.¹³ Most scholars until recently viewed Jung as representative or even the epitome of modernist thinking.¹⁴ Jung rarely appears on the postmodern horizon, although he also has much to contribute to a postmodern perspective.¹⁵ Even more than Freud, he opposed the over-rational world of the enlightenment by skirting a purely scientific perspective.¹⁶ Following Sophie Freud’s analysis of her grandfather, it would be fair to say that Jung used language of his day that could be re-cast in postmodern settings. Jung, like Freud, did include the multiplicity of the self in even more complex layers of conscious/unconscious depth. Jung’s “transpersonal” or “collective” unconscious need not be seen as a “universal” abstracted stratum of humanity (indeed Jung resisted neat categories) and might actually better

¹¹Barnaby B. Barratt, *Psychoanalysis and the Postmodern Impulse: Knowing and Being since Freud’s Psychology* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 6.

¹²Sophie Freud, “The Baby and the Bathwater: Some thoughts on Freud as a Postmodernist,” *Families in Society* 79:5 (Sept/Oct. 1998), 455-64.

¹³Wallace B. Clift, *Jung and Christianity: The Challenge of Reconciliation* (New York: Crossroad, 1983); Morton T. Kelsey, *Christo-Psychology* (New York: Crossroad, 1982); Robert L. Moore, ed., *Carl Jung and Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988); Robert L. Moore and Daniel J. Meckel, eds., *Jung and Christianity in Dialogue: Faith, Feminism and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990); John A. Sanford, *The Kingdom Within: The Inner Meanings of Jesus’ Sayings*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

¹⁴Peter Homas, *Jung in Context: Modernity and the Making of a Psychology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹⁵Christopher Hauke, *Jung and the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 2000); Homas, 201-09. Homas provides the perfect example of Jung’s paradoxical place in modernity while hinting toward a new, postmodern perspective that exhibits examples of “counter-modernization” (204). Hauk explores a number of significant intersections between Jung and postmodern thought.

¹⁶Michael Palmer, *Freud and Jung on Religion* (London: Routledge, 1997), 3-5, 168-69.

represent an inter-subjectivity of community that was both “particular” but related with other collective subjectivities across history and culture. In this framework archetypes would demonstrate different forms of “family-resemblance” across communities. Jung’s notion of individuation, often misunderstood as a form of radical individualism, might actually be better understood as a form of self-knowledge and “at-homeness” with one’s personhood in the midst of community.¹⁷ While Freud’s contribution to the deconstructive traditions in postmodernism is more clear, Jung may have more to offer in the nature of constructive relationships between persons and community as well as the power to intuit the nature of these relationships through imagination and other tacit forms of “knowing.”¹⁸ Neatly fitting either analyst into postmodern categories is not fully necessary. Postmodern theorists are not obliged to jettison all of modernity as enlightenment colleagues did of the pre-modern period. In a postmodern world, “strands” of postmodernity, modernity, and premodern narratives carry validity.¹⁹ A conversation between Freud’s psychoanalytic psychology, tribalization and commodity-shaped communities provide an intriguing means of “breaking open” the received business-like view of leadership and exposing limitations of leadership (and perhaps endorse some of Abelow’s decisions). Carl Jung, however, cannot be discounted in this postmodern conversation since this early “corrective” to Freud’s determinism might provide both a better model of the leader in contemporary settings and later provide a reasonable response to speculative accusations against Wesley.

While both psychologists take a largely negative view of the community’s influence on the individual, they do offer constructive points for the formation of faith communities with particular attention toward the need for

¹⁷E. A. Bennet, *What Jung Really Said* (New York: Schocken Books, 171-74.1966, reprint 1983).

¹⁸Dean Blevins, “The Means of Grace and Ways of Knowing,” *Christian Education Journal* 4NS, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 7-40.

¹⁹Richard Kearney *The Wake of Imagination: Toward a Postmodern Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 2-20. Kearney notes “that one of the main traits of postmodernism is a suspicion of historical chronology,” resulting in a preference for diverse styles rather than progressive movements so that “history as continuity becomes history as collage” (p.20). The result is that a modernist categorization (“post” modern “following” the modern movement) may be problematic in attempting to locate whether any theological or philosophical movement is “pre” versus “post” modern.

healthy leadership in postmodern settings. To understand the possibilities, we will first explore their analyses of community (and to a limited degree institutional religion) to discern the extent of their critique of groups, avoiding a larger study of society in general where possible. We will then explore their constructive recommendations in understanding group formation and particularly religious faith formation. The paper will move to a case study of how historian Henry Abelove applied psychodynamic thought to Wesley's leadership and offer an analytic corrective based on Carl Jung.

Sigmund Freud

Freud's understanding of groups or the group mind was based primarily on the studies of LeBon in *Psychologie des foules*²⁰ and McDougall in *The Group Mind*.²¹ LeBon and McDougall's texts have been characterized as part of a social psychological movement that tended to be negative to group processes.²² Freud himself acknowledges this negativity, particularly in unorganized groups.²³ He was reviewing LeBon's and McDougall's analysis of crowds or mobs (not ongoing communities), particularly LeBon's description which includes (1) the tendencies of reduced inhibition through a feeling of strength,²⁴ (2) group impulsiveness and susceptibility, (3) a corporate lack of critical thinking or adherence to the truth, and (4) the group's tendency to destructiveness towards others.²⁵ Freud summarizes these tendencies into the two major group influences of the inhibition of intellect and the heightening of effect.

²⁰G. Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, (Paris: 1895); trans. *The Crowd: A study of the popular mind*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1920.

²¹McDougall, W., *The Group Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920).

²²Donald M. Taylor and Fathali M. Moghaddam, in *Theories of Intergroup Relations: Social Psychological Perspectives* (New York: Praeger, 1987). The authors state: "Freud tended to venerate the individual and to be suspicious of the group. In this respect, he can be seen as part of a tradition, particularly strong in the later part of the 19th and early 20th centuries, that views the collective in a negative light...Le Bon (1897) and McDougall (1920), both of who are quoted extensively by Freud throughout his writing on group processes, were also very much part of this 'anti-collective' tradition. McDougall argued that in the group context, the minds of lower intelligence bring those of higher intelligence down to their level. He assumed that the group leads to a lower sense of responsibility for each individual member." (17)

²³Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 23.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 9.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 13-17.

Freud, however, refuses to be content with only a negative picture of all groups. While maintaining that only the individual in solitude is capable of great decisions or discoveries, Freud asserts that groups may be creative. He writes:

But even the group mind is capable of creative genius in the field of intelligence, as is shown above all by language itself, as well as by folk-song, folklore, and the like. It remains an open question, moreover, how much the individual thinker or writer owes to the stimulation of the group in which he lives, and whether he does more than perfect a mental work in which the others have had a simultaneous share.²⁶

Freud's appreciation for more stable groups, the institutions of society, lies in his belief that more complex organizations take on features more characteristic of the individual. He still maintains that the group does influence the individual, increasing the potential of affect (through the lowering of inhibitions), reducing intellectual capabilities, and resigning individual characteristics in favor of group characteristics.²⁷

What binds the individual to the group for Freud includes a mixture of external constraints of artificial control combined with love or libidinal ties between the individual and the leader of the group and between the individual and other followers in the group. "Artificial" groups rely more on external constraints and pseudo affection while even authentic groups use some constraint via the libidinal ties. The result is a restricted freedom for the individual.²⁸ What constrains the person is the love of and identification with the leader, who is an extension of the first leader/father of the primal horde.²⁹

It is of note that Freud uses the church as a model of an artificial group (one held together by external constraints). This view is somewhat consistent with his overall wariness of religion, particularly the hierarchical, authoritarian expressions of religion in his day. Freud saw all religion as primarily individualistic wishful thinking.³⁰ He believed that people

²⁶Ibid., 20.

²⁷Ibid., 24-26.

²⁸Ibid., 35.

²⁹Ibid., 76.

³⁰Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961), 15-33, cf 30. See also Reubin Fine, *The Development of Freud's Thought* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1987), 197.

thought this way for protection against the onslaught of nature that civilization could not defend against.³¹ Theorists refute Freud's general theory of religion from a number of perspectives.³² The question remains, however, if Freud's more specific critique of the church of his day is accurate, demonstrating a predilection for employing varying degrees of libidinal affection and hierarchical control negatively as a way to control groups. Apparently this particular use of affection and control has influenced other schools of thought, as we shall see in the case study of John Wesley.

Carl Jung

Carl Jung, unlike Freud, is seen as a friend of religion, although a dubious one in many circles.³³ Jung was like Freud in his highly critical stance toward group thought, particularly when manipulated by larger corporate structures within society.³⁴ He seems to have been reacting not

³¹Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: 1961), 23-52. In a key quote Freud reveals his mixed appreciation of religion when discussing the plight of a person unable to fulfill their pursuit of happiness. He says: "Religion restricts this play of choice and adaptation, since it imposes equally on everyone its own path to acquisition of happiness and protection from suffering. Its technique consists in depressing the value of life and distorting the picture of the real world in a delusional manner—which presupposes an intimidation of the intelligence. At this price, by forcibly fixing them in a state of psychical infantilism and by drawing them into a mass-delusion, religion succeeds in sparing many people individual neurosis. But hardly anything more. There are, as we have said, many paths which *may* lead to such happiness as is attainable by men, but there is none which does so for certain." (36)

³²Palmer, 60-81. Palmer notes that Freud's depiction of the origins of religion (totemic sacrifice oriented in an oedipal desire to destroy father images) has been challenged by biologists, archeologists, anthropologists and even later psychoanalysts. Freud's critique of contemporary expressions of the Church are not addressed in this historical critique.

³³Palmer, 168. Palmer notes that Jung's influence is more hospitable to religion but also more dangerous than Freud since it tends to turn religion into a *psychologism*, a reduction to subjective phenomenon.

³⁴C. G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Collected Works: Vol. 10, New York: Mentor Books, 1957), 40-41. Jung states: "As can easily be seen, 'community' is an indispensable aid in the organization of masses and is therefore a two-edged weapon. Just as the addition of however many zeros will never make a unit, so the value of a community depends on the spiritual and moral stature of the individuals composing it. For this reason one cannot expect from the community any effect that would outweigh the suggestive influence of the environment—that is, a real and fundamental change in individuals, whether for good or for bad" (40-41). Jung repeats the critique of "collective" thought later in the same text: "A million zeros joined together do not, unfortunately, add up to one" (67).

to particular communities of faith, but to larger institutional forms of community, “both the dictator State and denominational religion.”³⁵ Jung sees the formulations of religious creeds as ultimately abstracting authentic religious experience when co-opted by “denominationalism.”³⁶ He is not opposed to all group existence, acknowledging that humanity as social beings needs some tie to community. However, he is particularly critical when individual experience is validated only so far as it matches institutional dogma.³⁷ In this sense Jung viewed dogma as a rigid set of pre-conceived abstractions (propositions) that served primarily to promote a dry, detached form of institutionalism by controlling individual experience. Clearly Jung’s view is not of a community that fosters or engenders experience, but actually controls experience through abstract rules stated in creedal (not necessarily religious) form. Jung’s antagonism toward these “collectivities”³⁸ that suppress individual human experience always led him to be cautious about affirming the worth of community. Jung writes:

A similar misunderstanding appears in your view that I am not doing justice to the *ideal* of community. Whenever possible I avoid *ideals* and much prefer *realities*. I have never found a community which would allow “full expression to the individual within it.” Suppose the individual is going to speak truth regardless of the feeling of everybody else: he would not only be the most abominable enfant terrible but might equally well cause a major catastrophe. . . . No community can escape the laws of mass psychology. I am critical of the community in the same way as I suspect the individual who builds his castles in Spain while anxiously avoiding the expression of his own convictions. I am shy of ideals which one preaches and never lives up to, simply because one cannot. I want to know rather what we can live. I want to build up a possible human life which

³⁵Jung, 40.

³⁶Jung, 31-32.

³⁷Jung, 49.

³⁸Clift, 117. Clift states, “The basis for Jung’s antagonism to collectivities lay in his confidence that they always resulted in a *lowering of consciousness*. Since he considered the highest goal for mankind to be the development of consciousness—and indeed understood it to be a ‘divine’ purpose in the sense that it seemed to be a ‘given’ in the evolutionary story of mankind—he very naturally opposed any hindrance to that development.”

carries through God's experiment and does not invent an ideal scheme knowing it will never be fulfilled.³⁹

To overcome his reluctance to endorse communities, Jung would often appeal to the capacity of the individual, particularly the gifted individual, to counterbalance the leveling impact of the community. For example,

(F)or a differentiated personality or one capable of differentiation is of the utmost value to the community. The leveling down of the masses through suppression of the aristocratic or hierarchical structure natural to a community is bound, sooner or later, to lead to disaster. For, when everything outstanding is leveled down, the signposts are lost, and the longing to be led becomes an urgent necessity.⁴⁰

The capacity of certain individuals to interact and impact the community qualitatively was important for the sake of the community since Jung did not believe that communities increased qualitatively as they increased in size.⁴¹

Participating in quality leadership was also necessary for the sake of individuals within the community.⁴² For Jung, the individual was important for the community both at a conscious and unconscious level.

The processes of the collective unconscious are concerned not only with the more or less personal relations of an individual

³⁹Carl Jung, *Symbolic Life*, in *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, vol. 18 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 739-40.

⁴⁰C. G. Jung, *The Development of Personality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 143.

⁴¹C. G. Jung, in *The Symbolic Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950) elaborates this position in direct relation to his other concerns about community. Jung writes, "Faced with the question of *what* a man does, one should never forget *who* is doing it. If a community consists of nothing but trash, then it amounts to nothing, for a hundred imbeciles still do not add up to anything sensible.... If I belong to an organization with 100,000 members it does not prove in the least that I am any good, let alone if there are millions of them.... Instead of talking so much about the team-spirit it would be more to the point to appeal to the spiritual maturity and responsibility of the individual. If a man is capable of leading a responsible life himself, then he is also conscious of his duties to the community" (pp., 585-86).

⁴²C. G. Jung, in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (New York: Random House/Pantheon Books, 1966), states: "It is essential, in differentiating the ego from the non-ego, that a man should be firmly rooted in his ego-function; that is, he must fulfill his duty to life, so as to be in every respect a viable member of the community" (p. 73).

to his family or to a wider social group, but with his relations to society and to the human community in general. The more general and impersonal the condition that releases the unconscious reaction, the more significant, bizarre, and overwhelming will be the compensatory manifestation. It impels not just private communication, but drives people to revelations and confessions, and even to a dramatic representation of their fantasies.⁴³

All communities could have value to Jung, but only as they were directed by individuals who themselves were strongly individuated personalities.

Jung's view of religion, particularly dogma, is also rather complex. At one level Jung consistently viewed religion positively unless it was being used to propagate the "State" or denominational religion.⁴⁴ Jung, however, was more concerned that the individual have a connection with God than with a religious institution.⁴⁵ The complexity of Jung's thought on the appropriateness of religion, particularly in community, is particularly evidenced by his use of the term "dogma." At one point he might see dogma, such as the dogma of the Trinity, as symbolic representations pointing to archetypes of a similar nature.⁴⁶ The dogmatic expressions, the "result and fruit of many minds and many centuries," were important "experiences" (even though immediate experience took precedent⁴⁷), particularly in a rationalistic world.

Dogma is like a dream, reflecting the spontaneous and autonomous activity of the objective psyche, the unconscious. Such an expression of the unconscious is a much more efficient means of defense against further immediate experiences than any scientific theory. The theory has to disregard the emotional values of the experience. The dogma, on the other hand, is extremely eloquent in just this respect.⁴⁸

⁴³C. G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytic Psychology*, 179.

⁴⁴Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, 39-41. Jung writes: "The individual who is not anchored in God can offer no resistance on his own resources to the physical and moral blandishments of the world. For this he needs the evidence of inner, transcendent experience which alone can protect him from the otherwise inevitable submersion in the mass" (34).

⁴⁵Jung, 34.

⁴⁶C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 110-111, 199.

⁴⁷Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, 50.

⁴⁸Jung, *Psychology and Religion: East and West*, 46.

At other times Jung viewed dogma as an oppressive religious tool used by the church to devalue individual expression.⁴⁹ This rather surprising shift in meaning (and language, with Jung employing the term “creeds” in a pejorative sense) seems to be more indicative of Jung’s changing context than to religious expression.⁵⁰ Clearly, in *The Undiscovered Self*, Jung views the state (particularly Marxism) and the church suspiciously as examples of unreflected thought.⁵¹ Religion for Jung is of vital importance, but is also susceptible to manipulation by communities if it remains unreflective, abstracted thought.

Freud and Jung had their reservations about communal experiences, particularly those located at the polar extremes of authority. At one end of the spectrum, Freud seemed more concerned about groups that came closer to resembling mobs than communities.⁵² Jung echoed this concern in his rather blunt assessment of the collective “mind” of unreflective individuals. At the other end, Freud also deconstructed organized communities that were hierarchically controlled through external influence or were held together through seductive libidinal desire. Jung shared the same distrust of “The State” or denominations as hierarchically dominating institutions. These concerns are noteworthy in that these extreme forms of community tend to repress individual expression and development both within and outside the group. It is doubly troubling when religion becomes the vehicle of seduction and repression. Freud and Jung offer us due caution in asking how faith communities might actually devalue individuals through unreflective emotion or indoctrination.

Case Study: John Wesley, A Questioned Leader

The cautions of Freud and Jung have taken shape in other settings, surprisingly in a critique of John Wesley and the early Methodist tradition. This critique is anchored in a particular interpretation by historian Henry Abelow. Wesley is both cannonized and demonized as a leader. Some theorists identify Wesley’s communities as centers of liberative practice for

⁴⁹Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, 59.

⁵⁰Ibid., 31-32.

⁵¹Ibid., 34-53.

⁵²Erik Erikson, in *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: International Universities Press, 1959), notes: “As Freud recognized, Le Bon’s ‘masses’ were society on the rebound, shiftless mobs enjoying the anarchy between two stages of society and, at their best, leader-led mobs” (19).

laity, particularly women. At the same time, scholar Henry Abelove accuses Wesley of a form of hierarchical leadership that operated out of a sense of deference by lay ministers, indicative of the stratified social class of eighteenth-century England.⁵³ Abelove's formula for Wesley includes an inadvertent mixture of deference and love, a formula that denigrated his followers to exacted control blended with seduction and sexuality; a blend that resulted in some Methodist leaders, like James Wheatley and Westley Hall, exhibiting sexual misconduct.⁵⁴ Abelove writes, "Prevented from winning love as Wesley won it, the helpers sometimes tried a simpler means. They fondled the flock or kissed them or even, on occasion, took them to bed."⁵⁵ Such comments have drawn a strong but mixed reaction from Methodist historians who differ in their assessment of Abelove's research. Undoubtedly Abelove is drawing from an interpretive framework consistent with Freud and his postmodern followers.⁵⁶

Other theorists, however, note that Wesley's strong leadership was established within often unstable associations of ministers and "helpers."⁵⁷ Even Abelove concedes that Wesley's exacting of deference probably protected Methodist lay ministers from suspicion by local

⁵³Henry Abelove, *The Evangelist of Desire: John Wesley and the Methodists* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 3-23.

⁵⁴Abelove, 23-73.

⁵⁵Abelove, 35.

⁵⁶John P. Briggs, review of *The Evangelist of Desire: John Wesley and the Methodists* in *Journal of Religion* 72 (July 1992), 440-441; E. Dale Dunlap review of *The Evangelist of Desire: John Wesley and the Methodists* in *Church History* 62 (June 1992), 276-77; Richard P. Heitzenrater review of *The Evangelist of Desire: John Wesley and the Methodists* in *Methodist History* 30 (Jan. 1992), 118-20; Arthur J. Moore, "Great Revivalists" review of *The Evangelist of Desire* by Henry Abelove / "The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the rise of Modern Evangelism" by Harry S. Stout/*John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* edited by Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Commonweal* 119, no. 5 (Mar 13 1992) available online, ProQuest Direct (March 12, 2001); and Henry Rack review of *The Evangelist of Desire: John Wesley and the Methodists* in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43 (Jan. 1992), 156-57. Abelove's views are deemed controversial by many reviewers (Dunlap, Heitzenrater and Rack) though some reviewers do not dismiss Abelove's efforts completely. It is certain that the work evidences a strong psychosexual undercurrent. Moore writes that Abelove "has approached the subject equipped with a Freudian theory about group psychology embellished with insights from Lacan and glosses on sexuality from Foucault" (para. 2, lines 3-5)

⁵⁷Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 199-292.

authorities. Wesley's strong leadership is evident in the Conference Minutes where questions and answers are often posed and answered by the patriarch of the movement. Many scholars note that Methodism was unable to sustain itself as Wesley's vision following his death, a problem that may be linked to the inability to locate a successor that could continue Wesley's own strong form of leadership, even if the class meetings were places of empowerment.⁵⁸ Even the class meeting system waned after Wesley's day, although its demise is associated with other reasons.⁵⁹

The paradoxes that surround Wesley's hierarchical leadership, the unstable collection of colliers, charismatics, and plebians that made up Methodism, and the empowering life of class meetings invite an investigation into the nature of leadership. Was Wesley's "dominating" leadership style, by intention or circumstance, necessary for the creation of this new community? Is Abelow correct to use Freudian analysis to suggest that Wesley combined love and control, *even if* this was a socially acceptable form of leadership in Wesley's day? Was Wesley culpable as Abelow speculates?

Other historians have done battle with Abelow's command of the research but few have really challenged his implicit use of psychoanalytic method (wrapped in later postmodern representations). It may well be that methodologically Abelow has only "half" the picture. While his evidence for seduction and control lie primarily with lay assistants, Abelow "assumes" that they are directly tied to the affection people had for Wesley and his employ of deference (a historical reality in the various social classes of eighteenth-century England). If this is the necessary outcome of Wesley's practice, it is odd that not all lay assistants did not exhibit the same behavior, if not worse. Jung may expose why Abelow's speculation of Wesley's demeanor is so false, while later generations of Methodist leaders came much closer to this assessment. Wesley was a man of intense personal devotion, from Scripture to Eucharist to prayer. We might concede, for the sake of a counter speculation, that these practices were actu-

⁵⁸Rupert Davies, *Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1963); Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles*, trans. John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 49-66. Marquardt is favorable to small groups but Davies notes that the groups, and Methodism in general, degenerated into a legalistic community by the next generation.

⁵⁹William Walter Dean, *Disciplined Fellowship: The Rise and Decline of Cell Groups in British Methodism*, Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1985 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 1986).

ally “archetypes” (not in the traditional sense but in the postmodern sense of family resemblance) of an alternative community. If so, Wesley was being “formed” as a person in an alternative “transpersonal unconsciousness” (inter-subjective communal worldview) that enabled Wesley to resist denigrating leadership into seduction and control. This alternative “postmodern” trajectory would provide a constructive complement to Abelow’s deconstructive, Freudian interpretation.

Admittedly there are a number of other challenges to Abelow’s method. This interpretation, however, demonstrates how Abelow might be right in suggesting that later Methodist leadership exhibited instances of dangerous seduction and control (versus authentic forms of love and respect) but not Wesley. Indeed there could be a real tendency to denigrate leadership unless those leaders were engaged in Christian “practices” that suggested another way of living and “being” that was much more authentic to Christian community. Abelow, like other postmodern theorists, may have only an incomplete picture. The incompleteness, in part, may rest in the fact that Jung’s correction and contribution has not been fully explored by postmodern theorists to date. Abelow may not be totally discounted, but there is work left to be done to check the authenticity of his final interpretations.

Final Considerations

In reviewing the early critiques of the fathers of psychodynamic theory, there are certain clarifications based on their own life settings. A challenge could be raised that neither psychologist pays particular attention to religious communal expressions that could serve to be empowering rather than dominating. For instance, increased affect might not automatically result in the lowering of rational thought or action. A positive expression of the emotions could result in the increased self-esteem of the individual. Support or advocacy groups within a faith context might actually provide an emotional base that allows a marginalized person the opportunity to overcome traditionally debilitating circumstances. In this situation the very release of inhibitions might allow the person to act as an autonomous (though not necessarily individualistic) agent for the first time. Freud might conceivably acknowledge this positive expression of the emotions, but would probably insist that the group possess a fair degree of complexity and organization to help channel this expression without dominating it. Religion, particularly ritual, might serve to ensure that appropriate conditions prevail.

Similarly, Jung's positive understanding of dogma might present an opportunity of connection with previous expressions of empowerment, particularly at an unconscious level. These forms of affective expression might then prove to be deeply reflective and empowering for the individual without Freud's insistence of a strong identification with the leader. Libidinal ties would exist, but they could be mutual in nature and find expression not only in symbol but in the very empowerment of the individual and the group (coming much closer to the positive expressions of community that Freud acknowledged).

Ministers should note both the potentially harmful aspects of communities of faith and the need for responsible authority. Wesleyans could critically reflect upon the nature of their particular faith communities, looking for an appropriate balance of affect and reasoned thinking. Ministers might ask critical questions of themselves and other leaders as to the appropriate degree of influence they exert through libidinal over-identification or external authority. Questions about creedal formulations should be raised, particularly in regard to reflective thought. Are the creeds serving as invitations to experience and reflection or serving as gatekeepers against other authentic expressions of faith? In challenge to Jung, ministers might note that beliefs or dogma occasionally need to serve as a dialogical point of reference (a sounding board) in regard to new religious experience. Jung's own appreciation of certain dogma or creedal formulation (the Trinity, for instance) would invite such dialogue between previous archtypal experiences and new experiential claims. This creedal reference, however, must also be open to scrutiny so that the very experience the dogma affirms is not lost in abstraction.

Leadership is a concern for ministers. Reflective, "individuated" leadership becomes essential for the faith community, both consciously and unconsciously. As individuals are educated to become more reflective about themselves as well as others, they exert a tremendous influence that may well be therapeutic through their presence. They contribute to the complexity of the group and can help others within the group to find appropriate expression for their libidinal ties, particularly in faith. From Jung's perspective, leaders can also exert tremendous influence upon the collective psyche of the faith community, becoming a healing agent by their very presence. Ministers must invest themselves to develop multiple leaders for the faith community, leadership grounded in the reflective knowledge of self and community, to extend this same healing presence rather than seduction and control.

Leaders seeking to be a healing presence need to be diligent in cultivating practices that encourage Christian character and a connection with a way of community more consistent with holiness. The danger of abusing honest affection and responsible oversight remains in a world of aggression, control, and seduction. Wesleyan/Holiness ministers would do well to remember the potential dangers of the early Methodist movement. There will always be the seductions of Jihad and McWorld. Normally, only a life shaped in the means of grace and Christian practices, leading toward a community of holiness, will possess the reserves necessary to resist these seductions.

Freud and Jung offer harsh, though often accurate, assessments of community. These assessments must always be balanced by other communal views that are more reflective and empowering. The psychoanalytic view, however, does offer an ability to discern the negative possibilities in leadership and also call for reflective correctives to existing communities of faith. Ministers who take seriously this assertion will seek to cultivate their own personal lives and create opportunities for leaders to discern what influences exist in their own lives and also through their roles within the church. These opportunities for discernment will be seen as vital not only for leaders but also for the churches they serve.

CRISIS AND CON-SEQUENCE: SANCTIFICATION AND THE GREEK TENSE

by

J. Prescott Johnson

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved,
let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and
spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (1 Cor. 7:1)¹

The Apostle Paul enjoins upon the Corinthians a cleansing from all defilement and a perfecting of holiness. He makes it clear that the cleansing is a crisis event in the lives of believers, while the perfecting of holiness is a continuing process that is founded upon that crisis. The English term *cleanse* is, in the Greek, the hortatory aorist subjunctive, *kthariomen*: “*let us cleanse.*” It is in aorist tense and as such denotes a crisis event. The English term *perfecting* is in the original text the present tense participle *epitelountes*. Since the tense is the present, the perfecting denotes an ongoing process. And the strict sequence of the tenses, first the aorist and secondly the present, unmistakably defines the order: first the crisis experience of sanctification and then the continuing life-experience of progress in Christian grace.

Now, while in the sequel some further attention will be given to the subject of consequence as a factor in the experience of Christian perfection, the primary concern of this article is that of the crisis character of sanctification. The genius of the Wesleyan understanding of the doctrine of entire sanctification is its clear and unmistakable insistence that the experience is a crisis experience that is available to the children of God in

¹All scriptural references are from the Authorized Version.

this life. Herein lies the marked contrast with the view of the Protestant Reformers, who taught that sanctification is but a developmental, never completed, process. Referring to hymns published in 1749, Wesley writes:

I have been the more large in these extracts, because, hence, it appears, beyond all possibility of exception, that to this day, both my brother and I maintained, (1.) That Christian perfection is that love of God and our neighbor, which implies deliverance from all sin. (2.) That this is received merely by faith. (3.) That it is given instantaneously, in one moment. (4) That we are to expect it, not at death, but every moment; that now is the accepted time, now is the day of this salvation.²

There is a further significant aspect of Wesley's teaching on Christian perfection. It is his consistent and repeated reference to scriptural texts that address the subject of holiness. While he often refers to the experience of Christians, he finally and decisively supports his view by appeal to the biblical text. He therefore insists that the doctrine of entire sanctification is a biblical doctrine.

The question has been raised by some as to whether or not Wesley himself experienced "the Great Salvation" that he taught and to which he admonished others to testify. Is there any evidence in his writings that he obtained Christian perfection? Olin Curtis believes that he has found the passage in the *Journal* where Wesley records his own obtainment of Christian perfection. In the *Journal* entry of December 23-25, 1744, Wesley writes:

Sun. 23.—I was unusually lifeless and heavy, till the love feast in the evening. . . .

Yet the next day [December 24] I was again as a dead man; but in the evening, while I was reading Prayers at Snowsfield, I found such light and strength as I never remember to have had before. I saw every thought, as well as action or word, just as it was rising in my heart; and whether it was right before God, or tainted with pride and selfishness. I never knew before (I mean not as at this time) what it was "to be still before God."

Tues. 25.—I waked, by the grace of God, in the same spirit; and about eight, being with two or three that believed in

²John Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Co.), 40.

Jesus, I felt such an awe and tender sense of the presence of God as greatly confirmed me therein: So that God was before me all the day long. I sought and found him in every place; and could truly say, when I lay down at night, "Now I have lived a day."³

Curtis sums up the subject:

To anyone familiar with John Wesley's careful, realistic manner of speech, it is evident that we have here the same sort of testimony to the experience of holiness that we have in his Journal, May 24, 1738, to the experience of conversion. If the one is not quite so near a full definition as the other, it surely is just as expressive of the fact. I find it almost impossible to read Wesley's words in the light of all his later utterance about the doctrine of Christian perfection, and not consider this date, December 24, 1744, as the probable time when he began to love God supremely.⁴

The early Wesleyan theologians concur with Wesley that sanctification is an instantaneous work of grace. Richard Watson, the first of the Wesleyan theologians, writes:

The general promise that we shall receive "all things whatsoever we ask in prayer, believing," comprehends, of course, "all things" suited to our case which God has engaged to bestow; and if the entire renewal of our nature be included in the number, without any limitation of time, except that in which we ask it in faith, then to this faith shall the promises of entire sanctification be given; which, in the nature of the case, supposes an instantaneous work immediately following upon our entire and wavering faith.⁵

William Burton Pope, the eminent Methodist theologian, writes in the same vein. While he gives a place to progressive sanctification, as a process of the believer's yielding to the will of God, the finally decisive sanctification is entire sanctification. In this regard he says:

³John Wesley, *The Journal*, in *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House), I, 478-79.

⁴Olin Alfred Curtis, *The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Kegel Publications, 1956), 376.

⁵Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1850), II, 455.

In his administration of sanctifying grace the Holy Spirit proceeds by degrees. Terms of progress are applied to each department of that work in the saint; or, in other words, the goal of entire sanctification is represented as the end of a process in which the Spirit requires the cooperation of the believer. This cooperation, however, is only the condition on which is suspended what is the work of Divine grace alone.⁶

Pope discusses the subject of entire sanctification under three rubrics: Purification from Sin, Perfect Love, and Evangelical Perfection. They are not, he writes, “distinct branches of Christian privilege. Each implies the other; and neither can be treated without involving the rest.”⁷ In the section where he treats of Perfect Love, he characterizes it as “the crisis of perfection,” thereby indicating his belief that entire sanctification is a crisis experience. The passage is:

Its perfection is simply its soleness and supremacy. It is not in the measure of its intensity, which never ceases to increase throughout eternity until it reaches the maximum, if such there be, of creaturely strength; but, in the quality of its unique and sovereign ascendancy, it has the crisis of perfection set before it as attainable.⁸

It does not appear that Wesley, Watson, or Pope appeal to the Greek tense in support of their position regarding sanctification. But later holiness writers have done so. In particular, they have called special attention to the import of the aorist tense. Contrary to some current thinking concerning the relevance of grammar and metaphor to the doctrine of sanctification, the attention given to the Greek tense by these writers is of paramount significance in articulating the biblical import of the doctrine.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, following the American Civil War, Methodist scholars sought to recapture the perfectionist persuasion that had from the beginning defined Methodism. Not all of them dealt with the Greek tense, although many did so. Some attention may with profit be given to certain of those who labored for the cause of the doctrine of holiness.

⁶William Burton Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1881), III, 36.

⁷*Ibid.*, 45.

⁸*Ibid.*

In 1851 and later in 1871, Bishop Randolph Foster published his *Christian Purity*. He argued that, while there is a progressive, preparatory phase of sanctification, it is brought to instantaneous completion as *entire* sanctification:

And though there is progress toward it, yet . . . its attainment *is not a mere ripeness ensuing by gradual growth*, but is by the direct agency of the Holy Ghost, and *instantaneously wrought*, however long the soul may have been progressing toward it.⁹

Minor Raymond develops the same line of thought:

In this view, it is obvious that the work of complete sanctification is both progressive and instantaneous; progressive as to the acquisition of knowledge and ability to know, and instantaneous as to the appropriation of the blessing comprehended. . . . The Spirit may take time in preparing the holy temple for a habitation of God, but he enters and takes full possession, fills the temple with his presence in a single instant of time; the work may be long in doing, but there is an instant when it is done, completed, finished.¹⁰

Neither man refers to the Greek tense. But soon the reference was being made as a means of emphasizing and clarifying the doctrine of entire sanctification. Daniel Steele of Boston University devoted a chapter in his *Milestone Papers* to the tense readings of the Greek New Testament. For example:

I Thess. V. 23: And the very God of peace, once for all, sanctify (aor.) you wholly, and your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved (initial aorist, to mark the beginning in the heart of the power that keeps the believer). The nicety of Paul's grammatical knowledge is seen in verse 25: Brethren, pray (pres.) for us. Greet (aor.) all the brethren with a holy kiss. The praying was to be continuous, the kissing momentary.¹¹

Beverly Carradine, commenting on Eph. 5:26, writes:

⁹Randolph S. Foster, *Christian Purity*, 46. In J. A. Wood, *Perfect Love* (Chicago: Christian Witness Co., 1880), 89.

¹⁰Minor Raymond, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1887), II, 393.

¹¹Daniel Steele, *Milestone Papers* (Kaifeng, Honan, China: Kaifeng Bible School), 39, in the Digital Edition, Duane V. Maxey, Holiness Data Ministry.

Here is sanctification promised to those cleansed by regeneration. And that it is a momentary act is seen from the aorist tense in which the verb appears.¹²

H. Orton Wiley frequently makes use of the aorist in his work, *Christian Theology*.¹³ Olive M. Winchester's book, *Crisis Experiences in the Greek New Testament*, is a careful and scholarly treatise of the bearing of the Greek tense system on the doctrine of entire sanctification.¹⁴

In the opening pages of chapter 8 of his *Milestone Papers*, Steele states the purpose of the chapter:

. . . we have applied the same instrument to the New Testament, in the aid of exegesis. . . . The chief peculiarity lies in the aorist. We have in the English no tense like it. Except in the indicative, it is timeless, and in all the moods indicates what Krueger styles "singleness of act." This idea our translators could not express without a circumlocution in words having no representatives in the Greek.¹⁵

The basic consideration relative to the Greek verb is that, originally, there were no tenses. The function of the verb consisted in its fundamental root-idea. The tenses were devised as a way of making the root-idea explicit. Originally, there were only two verb-types to indicate the verb-action: the linear (durative) and the momentary (punctiliar). The idea of perfected action is a later development.¹⁶ Some verbs have two roots: one for linear action and one for punctiliar action. For other verbs, the root may be used in either way. In this latter case, it is difficult to determine

¹²Beverly Carradine, *Sanctification* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Co., 1909), 131.

¹³H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1940), II, 440-517.)

¹⁴Olive M. Winchester, *Crisis Experiences in the Greek New Testament* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1953).

¹⁵Steele, *op. cit.*, 26-27.

¹⁶See A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 823. Note: Randy Maddox's use of the passage he quotes from Robertson is in error: Robertson is not discussing tense, but the "'Aktionsart' [kind of action] of the Verb-Stem." Immediately following the passage quoted, Robertson says: "The distinction between punctiliar and perfected action is not clearly drawn in the verb-root itself. That is a later refinement of tense." See Randy Maddox, "The Use of the Aorist Tense in Holiness Exegesis," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Digital ed., 16:2 (Fall, 1981), 2.

the respect in which the root is used. For this reason, the tense system was devised.

The early proponents of the doctrine of holiness, realizing that there is this ambiguity in the verbs to which they called attention, thus resorted to the tense system to support the punctiliar, momentary, character of entire sanctification.

The chief function of the Greek tense is to denote, not the time of the action, but the *kind* of action that the verb represents. There are three possibilities: the action may be *continuous*, or *completed*, or *indefinite*. These three possibilities give the *present* tense, the *perfect* tense, and the *aorist* tense. Yet there is a more basic fact with respect to the action of the verb. It is that the present and aorist are the basic tenses in Greek. Thus Dana and Mantey observe:

There are really two fundamental ways of viewing action. It may be contemplated in a single perspective, as a point, which we may call *punctiliar action* . . . ; or it may be regarded as in progress, as a line, and this we may call *linear* action. . . . The perfect tense is a combination of these two ideas: it looks in perspective at the action, and regards the results of the action as continuing to exist; that is, in progress at a given point. Hence the perfect has both elements, linear and punctiliar. The aorist may be represented by a dot (•), the present by a line (—), and the perfect by a combination of the two (•—).¹⁷

The term *aorist* is from the Greek word *aoristos*, which means *unlimited*. The term is a compound of the privitive particle *a*, *not*, and the verb *horizo*, *to divide* or *separate* one part *from* another. The term is thus a negation of any such division or separation of elements. The Attic writers indicate that the term signifies holistic, indivisible verb action. The New Testament writers of the Koiné Greek understood the significance of the term as designating verb tense and used it with remarkable understanding. Thus, for reason of its etymology, the term denotes action as *a single whole*. Since the connotation is that there is in this verb action no dividing of part by part, which is a matter of process, the tense thus signifies action as simply occurring, without reference to its progress. For this

¹⁷Dana, H. E. and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 179.

reason, it registers *instantaneous* action, rather than action as a temporal process. It is sometimes called the “lightning speed” tense.¹⁸ The tense may be regarded from three different perspectives: To quote Dana and Mantey:

While the aorist views an action as a single whole, it may contemplate it from different angles. It may regard the action in its entirety, which we call the *constative* aorist; e.g., [ezesen], *he lived*. We might represent the constative aorist in a graph thus: <•>. The action may be regarded from the viewpoint of its initiation, which we call the *ingressive* aorist; e.g., [apethnen], *he died*. The ingressive aorist might be graphically represented thus: •>—. When the aorist is viewed in its results, we call it the *cumulative* aorist; e.g., [apekteinen], *he killed*. It may be indicated in the graph: —<•.¹⁹

The essential significance of the aorist is best seen in its contrast with the present tense. “The play is entirely upon whether the action is punctiliar—viewed as a single whole—or whether it is the opposite, continued or repeated.”²⁰ A forceful example of this play and interplay between the two tenses is found in John 10:38. Jesus says: “. . . that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.” The verb *know* is used in two places (in the Greek *believe* is *know*). The first use of the verb is the aorist, while the second use is the present tense. Thus the reading is: *that you may come to know and continue knowing that the Father is in me and I in the Father*.²¹ In this text the force of the aorist is that our knowledge of God is *obtained* as a single and “timeless” event. It is not, as it would be if the tense were the present, something that is originally brought about through a developing and continuous process.

¹⁸“There were originally two verb-types, the one denoting durative or linear action, the other momentary or punctiliar action. . . . The aorist stem presents action in its simplest form ([*a-oristos*], ‘undefined’). This action is simply presented as a point by this tense. This action is timeless.” Robertson, *op cit.*, 823-24.

¹⁹Dana and Mantey, *op. cit.*, 195.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Both the aorist and the present tenses are here “ingressive.” This form of the tenses alludes to the action of the verbs in their beginning, that is, it denotes the entrance into the condition indicated by the verbs.

There are many passages in the New Testament that employ the aorist tense of the verb *sanctify*. They all teach that the act producing holiness in the believer is simple and instantaneous, not a drawn-out process. Several passages will here be noted.²²

²²Randy Maddox has asserted, "The assumption that the writers of the New Testament used a grammatical device like the aorist tense in such a specialized sense. . . is absurd" (*op. cit.*, 116). He points out, and correctly so, that the assessment of the significance of the aorist requires more than reference to the verb itself. This is not a new discovery. A. T. Robertson, for example, said the same thing: "Various modifications arise, due to the verb itself, the context, the imagination of the user of the tense" (*op. cit.*, 830). In an immediately preceding passage, Robertson remarks: "In general one may say that in normal Greek when a certain tense occurs, that tense was used rather than some other because it best expressed the idea of the speaker or writer" (*ibid.*). Perhaps the New Testament writers did understand just why they used the aorist in reference to sanctification.

The aorist does indeed have modifications, which, incidentally, is something that both Daniel Steele, notwithstanding the unfair and unjustified charge of simplicity brought against him for his use of Goodwin's *Grammar*, and Olive M. Winchester, following Steele, well-understood: the constative, ingressive, and culminative aorist. But these do not in any sense contravene or seriously modify the root meaning of the tense, which is punctiliar, or momentary, action. With respect to the interpretation of the context as a factor in understanding the particular import of the tense, the matter is quite complex and by no means one of unequivocal determination. Among Greek scholars, there are differences, for example, as to which tense variant the context justifies or requires.

Maddox admits that there are places in the New Testament where the reference to the baptism with the Holy Spirit is crisis action. But he maintains that the reference to crisis action is not uniform. Just what such a difference in the character of divine action means as regards the element of consistency, he does not tell us. A careful reading of Steele and Winchester discloses the fact that, contrary to what Maddox asserts or infers, they do not rely abstractly on the verb alone, but take into account the context in which the verb is used in their interpretation of its significance.

Finally, Maddox argues that the misuse of the aorist, as supporting the crisis nature of entire sanctification, results from equating the manner of speaking of an aorist with the manner of reality. In particular, he contends that Winchester mishandles a point made by Robertson. The passage in question is one where Robertson discusses the effective (his name for the culminative) aorist. It reads: "So then in the case of each aorist the point to note is whether it is merely punctiliar (constative) or whether the verb-idea has deflected it to one side or the other (ingressive or effective). It needs to be repeated that there is at bottom only one kind of aorist (punctiliar in fact or statement). The tense of itself always means point-action. The tense, like the mode, has nothing to do with the *fact* of the action, but only with the way it is stated. Sometimes it will not be clear from the context what the *Aktionsart* is.

Maddox appears to take the expression "nothing to do with the *fact* of the action, but only with the way it is stated" to mean that the tense bears no reference to the reality, the fact of sanctification as denoted by the verb tense. But that

Jesus prays in John 17:17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Here the word *sanctify* (*hagiason*) is the first aorist imperative of the verb *hagiazō*. The wording clearly shows that the sanctification for which Jesus prayed for His followers is to be wrought instantaneously. Daniel Steele, in discussing this verse, quotes Winer:

In the New Testament the obvious distinction between the imperative—as sanctify, above—and the imperative present is uniformly maintained. The imperative aorist denotes an action that is either rapidly completed and transient, or viewed as occurring but once. The imperative present denotes an action already commenced and to be continued, or an action going on, or to be frequently repeated.²³

Peter states in Acts 15:9 that God “. . . put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” The term *purifying* is, in the original, *katharisas*. It is masculine nominative aorist participle of the verb *katharizō*, *purify*. Here, again, purifying or cleansing, is regarded as instantaneous.

In Romans 8:2 Paul writes, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” “Hath made me

is not what Robertson means. He means that the *fact* of the action is the function of the *verb-idea*, while the function of the tense is to state the precise significance of the verb-idea. Thus, in stating or governing the precise significance of the verb-idea as it bears upon fact, the tense, here the aorist, is so associated with the verb-idea as to bear upon the fact of the action. Finally, the tense cannot be relegated to some sphere of subjectivity, i.e., “manner of speaking;” while the verb-idea is given some kind of objective ontic status, i.e., “manner of reality.” Indeed, the very distinction is itself suspect if it asserts or implies a radical separation between language and reality. But that is another issue. What must be insisted on here is that both the verb-idea and the tense have the same status as to their “reality.” They are both ideal, normative objectivities and enjoy a common *situs*. One cannot legitimately be given an “objective” status and the other a merely “subjective” status.

That this is the proper interpretation may be seen by Robertson’s reference to Moulton: “But Moulton [Prol., 116] also makes a distinction between ‘constative’ and ‘punctiliar,’ using punctiliar for real point-action and constative for what is merely treated as point-action. That is a true distinction for the verb-root, but the growing number of constative aorists was in harmony with the simple idea of the tense” (832). What decisively supports Robertson’s conclusion is the fact that Moulton, discussing the aorist as point action and the constative as action in perspective, does not (109 of his work) make that distinction. See John Moulton, *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1908, I, 108-118). See Maddox, *op. cit.*, 2-3, 6, 9.

²³Steele, *op. cit.*, 32.

free” is *eleutherosen se*.²⁴ The verb is the first aorist indicative of the old verb *eleutheroo*, to set at liberty, to make free. Here, again, is the aorist and the view that spiritual liberty is simply and instantaneously granted. In Hebrews 13:12 the writer says: “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.” The original text reads: *hina hagiase, in order that he might sanctify. Hina* requires that the verb be in the subjunctive mood. Hence the verb, *sanctify*, is in the subjunctive. Further, it is in the first active aorist, which denotes instantaneous action. Sanctification is effected instantaneously, as a second work of grace.

There is one passage in Hebrews that merits some detailed attention. The passage is Hebrews 12:10: “For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” This passage has been interpreted by some people to mean that chastening itself is productive of holiness in the believer. The verb *chastened* is in the past tense. The past tense is in reality a sort of auxiliary to the present tense. It functions to refer the continuous action of the present to the past. A rather lengthy quotation from Dana and Mantey is helpful here:

The imperfect may be regarded as a sort of auxiliary to the present tense, functioning for it in the indicative to refer its significance of continuous action to past time. This fact is exhibited even in the form of the imperfect, for it is built on the present stem. The imperfect is “a sort of moving panorama, a ‘moving picture show.’ . . .” The aorist tells the simple story. The imperfect draws the picture. It helps you to see the course of the act. It passes before the eye the flowing stream of history” (R, 883). That is, “it dwells on the course of an event instead of merely stating its occurrence” (Goodwin: *Greek Moods and Tenses*, 12). The time element is more prominent in the imperfect than in the present, owing to the fact that it is exclusively in the indicative tense. Since its essential force is identical with that of the present, it follows that its uses should be practically parallel.

Webster quotes from Donaldson the following definition of the imperfect: “The imperfect denotes an incomplete action,

²⁴*Se* is *you*. Tischendorf accepts this reading; others, as in the King James Version, read *me*.

one that is in its course, and is not yet brought to its intended accomplishment. It implies that a certain thing was going on at a specified time, but excludes the assertion that the end of the action was attained." (*Syntax and Synon. of the Gr. Test.*, 87).²⁵

Now, if the incomplete process of chastening is itself productive of holiness, that process of production must itself reflect the character of the chastening, i.e., be temporally prolonged and temporally incomplete and unfinished. On this interpretation, holiness is finally realized only at the time of death or in some condition after death. However, in what follows the reference to chastening there is a twofold, radical break. It is a break or a disruption that prohibits the conclusion that holiness is but a temporal, incomplete process.

First, there is the appearance of the aorist. Against the continuousness of the imperfect, the aorist brings in a totally new dimension, the dimension of *crisis, singleness and completion*. The English term *partakers* is, in the Greek, the articular second aorist active infinitive of the verb *to partake of*. The aorist disrupts the continuousness of the imperfect tense. The partaking is not something prolonged and incomplete; rather, it is something attained *singly, wholly, and instantaneously*. Salvation is now *full salvation*.

Second, the writer of the Epistle employs a distinctive, and not usual, method of expressing purpose. Purpose is expressed by a purpose clause. The clause expresses the aim of the action denoted by the main verb of the sentence. In the Greek the purpose clause can be constructed in several ways. The usual method employs the conjunction, *hina, in order that*, with the verb of the purpose clause in the subjunctive mood. An instance of the use of this method is found in John 1:7: *elthen . . . hina martures eperi tou photos, he came . . . that he might bear witness concerning the light*. The aim of the main verb, *came*, is that of bearing witness. Bearing witness is the direct result of the action of the main verb, *came*.

A purpose clause formed in this manner signifies that the aim of the action of the main verb is directly achieved by that action. If this method were employed in the verse under consideration, we might well conclude that the action of the verb *chastise* produces as its result the believer's partaking of holiness. This would mean that believers become partakers of

²⁵Dana and Mantey, *op. cit.*, 186-87.

holiness *in and by means of* chastisement. A purpose clause may also be formed by the accusative of the articular infinitive with the preposition *eis, into*. The Greek infinitive is a verbal noun, and like any other noun, may have the article. It is regarded as a neuter noun and so has the neuter article. The proper translation of an infinitive without the article merely prefixes the verbal with the preposition, *to*. Thus, for example, the aorist active infinitive *lusai* means *to loose*. But when the neuter article is prefixed to the infinitive *to lusai* now means *the act of loosing*. Further, when the articular infinitive is used after the preposition *eis, into*, the expression *eis to lusai* becomes a purpose clause and means, literally, *into the act of loosing*.

This is the form of the purpose clause in Hebrews 12:10: *eis to metabein tes hagiotos autou*. The literal translation is: *into the act of partaking of his holiness*. It is difficult, if not impossible, to give an adequate idiomatic translation of this particular purpose clause. But what the writer of the verse wishes to express is that the aim of God's chastening is that of providing the circumstance that facilitates the act of our partaking God's holiness. There is a certain discontinuity between the chastisement and the state of our partaking of God's holiness. Intervening between the two states is an "act," in which the partaking is effected. It is this act that brings sanctity of character, and not the chastisement itself. And the act is designated, we have seen, as an act in the aorist tense, an act that occurs in the timeless and holistic sense. The text does not give any further analysis or description of the act in which God's holiness is shared with the believer. Perhaps it may be viewed, without violence to the tenor of scripture, from our side and God's side. From our side, it is entire consecration; from God's, it is entire sanctification—the ultimate bestowal of saving grace.

The New Testament also employs tenses that register consequence with respect to sanctification. In the first place, there are two places, but only two places, where the verb *hagiazō* occurs in the present tense. The first is Hebrews 2:11: "for both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. . . ." The other place is Hebrews 10:14: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The expression in Hebrews 2:11, *them that are sanctified*, is a present passive articular participle, i.e., a present participle with the definite article *hoi hagiōzomenoi*. Hebrews 10:14 likewise uses a present passive participle with the definite article, albeit here in the accusative case: *tous hagiōzomenous—them that are sanctified*.

Does this usage of the present tense indicate that sanctification is a process and not a “timeless,” instantaneous event? It has been argued, notably by Canon Westcott, that these texts show that sanctification is “the continuous process by which the divine gift is slowly realized from stage to stage in the individual life.”²⁶ If we look carefully at these two texts, we see that the sanctified ones are referred to in terms of their innumerable numbers. Those who become sanctified constitute a great host. In and for that great host the experience of sanctification is repeated over and over again. In this respect, but only in this respect, sanctification is a continuing process. Through the ongoing ages the divine gift is repeatedly conferred upon the believers. Two considerations serve to support this interpretation:

(1) The other uses in the New Testament of the verb sanctify are either in the aorist or perfect tenses. Normally, the aorist is employed. It is therefore clear that the New Testament writers, who were sensitive to the power of the Greek language, held to the view that sanctification is not achieved as a process, but rather is obtained as a single and unitary act.

(2) The present can be used to describe that which occurs as successive intervals or in successive periods. This is the “iterative present.” “It is sometimes called,” Dana and Mantey write, “the present of repeated action.”²⁷ This is the import of the present tense in the two scriptures from Hebrews. In commenting on Hebrews 10:14, A. T. Robertson, who certainly is not writing to support explicitly the doctrine of entire sanctification, suggests that the present tense is used “because of the repetition of so many persons as in 2:11.”²⁸

There are in the New Testament two verbs related to the verb *sanctify*. They are *katharizo* and *hagnizo*, meaning *to purify*. They are almost always used in either the aorist or the perfect. They signify that “entire sanctification, however long the preparation, is put forth at a stroke by a momentary act.”²⁹ There is, however, the use of the verb *katharizo* in the present tense. It is found in 1 John 1:7: “But if we walk in the light, as he

²⁶This quote is taken from Steele, *op. cit.*, 47.

²⁷Dana and Mantey, *op. cit.*, 184.

²⁸Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, c1930), V, 409.

²⁹Steele, *op. cit.*, 46.

is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” It is a mistake, however, to argue that this particular use of the verb teaches that sanctification is a process and not a momentary act.

The first clause in the verse, “But if we walk in the light,” is a conditional one, with the present active subjunctive. It means, literally, “But if we *keep on walking* [the force of the present tense] in the light.” Now, the remaining verbs in the verse are “colored” by the force of the conditional that introduces them. They are therefore in the present tense. Thus, “If we keep on walking in the light . . . the blood . . . keeps on cleansing us from all sin.” That is precisely what the Apostle is telling us; he is not thereby telling us that our cleansing is *initially* but a continuing process and not a definite momentary act. In short, we have no argument from this verse for the view that sanctification is but progressive. Adam Clarke, without question, supports this interpretation:

Verse 7. [*But if we walk in the light*] If, having received the principle of holiness from him, we live a holy and righteous life, deriving continual light, power, and life from him, then we *have fellowship one with another* . . .

[*The blood of Jesus Christ*] The meritorious efficacy of his passion and death has purged our consciences from dead works, and *cleanses us* [*katharizei hemas*], *continues to cleanse us*, i.e., *to keep clean* what it has made clean, (for it requires the same merit and energy to preserve holiness in the soul of man, as to produce it,) or, as several MSS. and some versions read, *kathoiei* and *katharisei*, *will cleanse*, speaking of those who are already justified, and are expecting *full redemption* in his blood.³⁰

It may also be that the verb *cleanse* is an instance of the iterative present. This is Daniel Steele’s view:

The present tense “cleanseth” here denotes continuousness, not on one individual, but on the human family, one after another being wholly purified, as in Rom. iii. 24, one after

³⁰Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, 6 vols. (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1857), VI, 904. The reading that speaks of “those who are justified, and are expecting *full redemption* in his blood” again calls to mind the use of the present to denote repetition in those who will be sanctified. It is this type of continuation, and not the merely developmental nature of sanctification in the believer’s experience, that is indicated.

another is instantaneously justified. When one leper is cleansed as in Matt. viii. 3, the aorist tense is used, but when many in succession are to be cleansed as in Matt. x. 8, the present tense is used.³¹

In the second place, the New Testament sometimes employs the verb *sanctify* in the perfect tense. It registers the fact that sanctification as crisis experience is, in consequence of the crisis element, also a continuing experience in the believer. Hebrews 10:10 is a case in point: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The Greek reads: *hegiasmenoi esmen, we have been sanctified*. The verb is the periphrastic (i.e., used with a form of the verb *to be*) perfect passive indicative of *hagiazō, sanctify*. In keeping with the basic import of the perfect tense, it is here employed to denote a completed state, i.e., that our sanctification is completed. This is another method, along with the aorist tense, of denoting that sanctification is not obtained as merely and only an ongoing, never-finished process.

Acts 26:18 also uses the perfect tense. In his defence before Agrippa, Paul recounts his Damascus meeting with Jesus, who tells him: "that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified. . . ." The phrase, *among them which are sanctified*, is in the Greek text *en tois hegiasmenois*. It is the perfect passive articular participle of *hagiazō, sanctify*. With the article, the participle becomes, in effect, a substantive: *the having been [as completed] sanctified ones*." The language points up the completed fact and reality of sanctification. Thus, again, it is not and cannot be but a developing, essentially incomplete, process. Rather, it is full and complete salvation.

It has been pointed out in the foregoing that Pope approaches the subject of entire sanctification from three perspectives: purification from sin, perfect love, and evangelical perfection. They are inter-related aspects of a whole: "each implies the other." He gives, however, a certain priority to the first aspect. It becomes, as it were, the determining energy infusing the other phases of the complex:

The virtue of the atonement, administered by the Holy Spirit, is set forth in Scripture as effecting the entire destruction of sin. This is everywhere declared to be the design of redemp-

³¹Daniel Steele, *Half-Hours with John's Epistles* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Co., c1901), 12.

tion: and it is promised to the believer as his necessary preparation for the future life. The entire removal of sin from the nature is nowhere connected with any other means than the word of God received in faith and proved in experience.³²

Of perfect love, or entire consecration, he writes:

The Spirit is imparted in His fullness for the entire consecration of the soul to the Triune God: the love of God, having its perfect work in us, is the instrument of our deliverance from indwelling sin; and the return of our love made perfect also is the strength of our obedience unto entire holiness.³³

Near the close of his life, John Wesley gave a last testimony concerning his view of Christian perfection. It is the "Plain Account of Christian Perfection as believed and taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, from the year 1725 to the year 1777." In this account, he ascribes the priority to purification from sin. Perfect love obtains as dependent upon purification. Thus Pope's analysis is in complete harmony with the view of Wesley. Wesley writes:

Pure love reigning alone in the heart and life,—this is the whole of Scriptural perfection. . . . *When may a person judge himself to have attained this?* When, after having been convinced of inbred sin, by a far deeper and clearer conviction than he experienced before justification, and after having experienced a gradual mortification of it, he experiences a total death to sin, and an entire renewal in the love and image of God, so as to rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. Not that "to feel all love and no sin" is a sufficient proof. Several have experienced this for a time before their souls were fully renewed. None, therefore, ought to believe that the work is done, till there is added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification, as clearly as justification.³⁴

The central idea of Wesleyanism is not the conscious intentionality of love, but the cleansing from the sin that pervades the spirit beyond the level of intentionality.

³²Pope, *op. cit.*, III, 45.

³³*Ibid.*, 50.

³⁴Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, pp. 50-51.

Some concern has recently been expressed as to the legitimacy of the resort to the syntax of Greek grammar in connection with the articulation of the doctrine of Christian perfection. This concern is expressed in terms of two considerations. The first is that the exegesis of the doctrine of entire sanctification by those who accept the doctrine is inimical to objective (so-called) textual exposition.³⁵ The manner in which the question is put is really quite patently irrelevant. It makes no difference whether or not one's concern with the syntactical intricacies of the language is motivated by the impulses of one's belief and attitude. The language, with its norms and demands, stands, as it were, on its own feet. In particular, the aorist tense has an independent, linguistic objectivity regardless of anybody's condition of subjectivity. If one does or does not believe in the doctrine of sanctification, the tense makes certain irrefutable claims. And it is not only legitimate, it is necessary, to recognize and respect those claims. This the writers of the New Testament did, and this the early modern proponents of the doctrine emulated.³⁶

³⁵Thus H. Ray Dunning writes: "Biblical texts were often treated out of context and what biblical exegesis that was employed depended largely on 'types' and allegory, along with an ill-advised appeal to the aorist tense of the Greek. The latter has been authoritatively [?] called into question by contemporary holiness scholars of the original language. Stephen Lennox, in his doctrinal dissertation on the exegesis of the early holiness movement, pointed out that the defence for such a use of scripture was a so-called 'spiritual hermeneutic.' The point was that, if one were 'filled with the Spirit,' one could see entire sanctification in these passages, whereas the unsanctified were blind to the biblical truth ("Christian Perfection: Toward a New Paradigm" in *Heart of the Heritage*, eds. Barry L. Callen & William C. Kostlevy (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing Co., 2001), 153.

³⁶The objection that the doctrine of Christian perfection is compromised by the concern, motivated by belief in the doctrine, to support the doctrine by appeal to the Greek tense system implicates a very serious philosophical question. That question is the relation between understanding, or knowledge, and valuation. It is often supposed, for example, that physical science is a pure knowledge that obtains independently of valuational preference. Responsible scientists and philosophers realize that such is not the case. Underlying the activity of scientific pursuit are preferential assumptions and value judgments upon which that pursuit rests. There is the assumption of a reality existing independently of the scientific construct. There are no scientific, cognitive grounds on which the assumption can be supported or proved. There is the valuational, non-cognitive, decision to adopt as the criterion of meaning the deliverances of the senses, to delimit and restrict meaning to sense meaning. There is no cognitive support for this decision. See the remarkable work by the American conceptual pragmatist, C. I. Lewis: *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*. Nobody in his right mind impugns physical science for this reason. Why, therefore, should one impugn the concern with the Greek tense system on the grounds that the concern is underpinned by valuational attitude?

A second concern has also been recently expressed. It may be, or it may not be, directly related to the dissatisfaction with the use of the aorist tense. The concern is that emphasis on cleansing and purification as definitive of Christian holiness entails the element of magic and cult.³⁷ Now, the concern that religion, in particular the Wesleyan view of spirituality, should not be reduced to magic and the cultic practices of magic is a legitimate concern. No reasonable objection can be offered at this point. But a legitimate objection can and must be raised as to whether the defining emphasis on sanctification is tantamount to magic and cult. Wesley uses profusely the language of cleansing and purification. There is nothing in that language that smacks of magic and cult. Nor is there anything in the language of the holiness theologians that connotes magic and its cultic practices. The fact that the ancient Hebrews viewed and practiced cleansing in a ritualistic and cultic manner does not signify that the New Testament idealizing and spiritualizing of the idiom of purification and cleansing carries magical and cultic connotations. In no sense can the sanctifying energy of the Holy Spirit be considered magical or cultic. The energizing agency of divine intervention in the human spirit is not, even tacitly, a form of magic. Supernaturalism is not the same thing as magic. Even to suggest a parallel is to misread the nature of magic and cult and the grounds that differentiate magic and cult from religion.

The essential ingredient in magic is that the mythic construct or formation that is regarded as endowed with energy is *bound to the image-world of the sensuous present*. It is restricted to *the existent*. The essential factor differentiating religion from myth and its plethora of cult and ritual is that the formations drawn from the image-world of the sensuous present are cut loose from their binding to the existent and are taken as having *meaning* or *signification*. It is thus that the material drawn from the image-world is idealized and spiritualized. The difference between *existence* and *signification* is the difference between myth and religion!

³⁷To refer again to Dunning: "Language that speaks of 'cleansing' and 'purity,' while biblical in origin, is also cultic in origin and became the dominant idiom among American holiness theologians. This can be seen clearly by reading H. Orton Wiley's section on 'entire sanctification' where the near exclusive use of 'cleansing' language appears. The problem here is that the use of this language does not necessarily retain the empirically ethical element. . . ." Again: "The emphasis on 'choice' resists the reduction of the moral to the magical and addresses the concern in an insightful quote from Mildred Wynkoop: '. . . if salvation is 'applied' to man by a supernatural alteration . . . then . . . 'personal relationship' is a fiction, biblical salvation is 'a myth,'" *op. cit.*, 155-56; 158.

We read in Hebrews 9:22 that “without shedding of blood is no remission.” And we read in 1 John 1:7 that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.” Here we have language whose denotation may be referred back to ancient ritual and cult. The ancient Hebrews slew the sacred animal, sprinkled its blood upon the people and ate of the roasted flesh. Before them, the ancient Semites slew the animal, drank of the blood, even stood in the pit while the blood of the animal placed above them flowed over them. Here, in both cases, the cultic practice is wedded to the existent object. For the Semites, it is *in and through* the very blood itself that sharing in the life of the divinity is achieved.

As we follow the New Testament narrative of the man, Jesus, that depicts his final earthly days, death, and resurrection-appearances, we find a remarkable lessening of bondage to the givenness of the content of the sensible world. In this lessening, new vistas of signification, of meaning and import, are opened. From within the shadow of his cross, Jesus spoke to his little band of followers: “It is expedient . . . that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”³⁸ His visible presence in his several resurrection-appearances is always tenuous and fleeting. It was to Mary that he spoke: “Touch me not: for I am not ascended to my Father. . . .” Those whom he met on the Emmaus Road and with whom he tarried suddenly “knew him: and he vanished out of their sight.”³⁹ When on the evening of that Sunday he appeared to his disciples, locked within the safety of shut doors, “he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”⁴⁰ Then came his last earthly appearance: “And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”⁴¹

Then came Pentecost: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. . . .”⁴² The earlier promise of the Master had been fulfilled: albeit now absent from earthly view, he is yet present in the gift of the Spirit, the Comforter. In a way that escapes the conceptions of logical system, this sharing in the life of the Supreme Spirit in sanctification is brought through the agency of Jesus’ death, through the shedding of blood on Cal-

³⁸John 16:7.

³⁹Luke 24:31.

⁴⁰John 20:22.

⁴¹Luke 24:51.

⁴²Acts 2:4.

vary's Cross. He kept himself true to the will of the Father, kept himself true to his commission to bring God into the affairs of world and time, even to the extreme point of his own death. Thus the writer of Hebrews can leave aside all positive reference to the ancient practices of cult and ritual and affirm that "by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."⁴³

Having served its occasioning function, the strict bondage to the ancient ritualist and ceremonial cleansing has been broken and has yielded to the new: an inward spiritual cleansing of the waters at the fountain head. Here, and here alone, lies the power of a transformed life evinced in outward holiness. We have reached the mystery of redemption. Yet, as we in faith trench upon the borders of that mystery, there is afforded us a new vision. It is a vision that is now free from the materially perceptive content of earth. It is a vision that achieves a transcendent level of signification no longer bound to the ancient cultic rites. Here, in the fullest sense, signification has replaced existence. We now have "the evidence of things not seen."⁴⁴ Caught up in the vision of the Sacred, we may now sing, without any implication of sense and materiality, that marvelous hymn of redemption:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

If we are to excise the language of purification and cleansing, as regards sanctification, on the ground that it connotes the mythos of magic, ritual, and cult, ought we not, in the interest of consistency, excise the language of purification and cleansing through the blood of Christ as likewise illicit in that it is fraught with that very same mythos?⁴⁵ The irony is that the dissatisfaction with the language of cleansing and purification appears to be made from within the context of the very condition from

⁴³Heb. 9:12.

⁴⁴Heb. 11:1.

⁴⁵It should be observed here that, if the language of purification and cleansing as regards Christian experience should be excised, then in all consistency the language referring to, and even the practice of observing the sacraments should be excised and renounced. For both the language of sacramental observance and of Christian experience carry a sensuous and ritualist basis on which spiritual and metaphorical significance rest.

which the escape is sought: that is, the binding to the image-world of the sensuously given—the very world to which objection is allegedly made.

If one is freed from the binding to the image-world and regards the images drawn from the existent in their transformed signification as metaphors of the spiritual, there should be no allusion to the mythic formations of magic and cult. One then can rejoice with the Apostle Paul:

Knowing this, that our old
man is crucified with him, that
the body of sin might be destroyed,
that henceforth we should not serve sin.⁴⁶

I am crucified with Christ:
nevertheless I live; yet not I
but Christ liveth in me: and the
life which I now live in the
flesh I live by the faith of the
Son of God, who loved me, and
gave himself for me.⁴⁷

There is indeed death to sin, and aliveness to God through Jesus Christ. This, then, may be said of the sanctified:

He walks in glorious liberty,
To sin entirely dead:
The Truth, the Son, hath made him free,
And he is free indeed.

Throughout his soul thy glories shine,
His soul is all renewed,
And deck'd in righteousness divine,
And clothed and filled with God.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Rom. 6:6

⁴⁷Gal. 2:20.

⁴⁸Quoted from Daniel Steele, *Love Enthroned*, rev. ed. (N.Y: Eaton & Mains, 1908), 369.

THE ECCLESIAL PRACTICE OF RECONCILIATION AND THE END OF THE “WESLEYAN”

by

John W. Wright and J. Douglas Harrison

The past fifty years have seen a proliferation of the adjective “Wesleyan” to describe a distinct theological option within contemporary Christianity. The adjective differentiates the conceptual system of those Christian believers who have voluntarily submitted themselves to groups that trace their discipline back to eighteenth-century Methodist societies. As “Wesleyans,” these groups may then understand themselves as distinguished from other believers, both contemporary and historical, by these conceptual differences. From the perspective of the “Wesleyan,” John Wesley appears as a “theological mentor” who conceptually reconfigured the Christian tradition in a unique way.¹ Wesley’s ideological difference legitimates the on-going independent existence of institutions, ecclesial and academic, by maintaining their distinctiveness from other Christian institutions and believers. The term encourages members, especially ecclesiastic leaders and academics, lay and clergy, to maintain and develop their “distinctive identity,” thus providing another “dish” amidst

¹See, for instance, the tenth anniversary WTS presidential address by Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, “John Wesley: Mentor or Guru?” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 10 (1975), 5-14. Wynkoop works out her thought in “What Is Wesleyanism?” in *Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), 53-75.

the “smorgasbord” of market options in contemporary Christianity for those who might develop a “Wesleyan appetite.”²

Pluralism of the Religious Marketplace

The fact that this recent development does not puzzle believers, especially those heirs of the early Methodist societies, indicates how uncritically and deeply the church has assumed the normative status of “pluralism” for the contemporary theological task. As Albert Outler recognized, such a conception, and the fragmented church it presupposes, represents a capitulation to the social space afforded the church by the modern liberal-state. The modern liberal-state itself represents a political organization that originated in the inability of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European Christians to engage in the ecclesial practice of reconciliation.³ Outler argued that, having lost their unity, Christians accepted the conviction that religious toleration and pluralism were the only viable alternatives to religious strife:

Out of this came, naturally enough, the basic concept of “denominationalism,” namely, that any group is entitled to a legal existence by whatever title it denominates itself, and is free to teach and practice its tenets unless they are plainly disruptive of public order. Thus, the whole complex pattern of religious toleration, of the separation of church and state, and

²While “the Wesleyan” does not describe a specific denomination, it does provide a theological rationale for a set of specific denominations to pursue their own institutional self-interests as part of a general “religious marketplace.” Albert Outler keenly picked up the relationship between denominationalism and the consumerist setting of contemporary Christianity: “Denominationalism puts rival churches on their mettle to compete for God and glory and to provide their clienteles with what they want and are willing to pay for. It encourages like-minded folk to gravitate together; it reinforces the pleasures of coziness; and it provides outlets for both group leadership and group service. Moreover, it makes for a modicum of toleration of other expressions of religious faith and practice” (*That the World May Believe: A Study of Christian Unity* [New York: Joint Commission on Education and Cultivation, Board of Missions of the Methodist Church, 1966], 4).

³The tragic fragmenting of the church in the Reformation gave pretense to the early proponents of the modern liberal nation-state to create an ideology to legitimate their usurpation of power in early modern Europe. See William Cavanaugh, “The City: Beyond Secular Parodies,” in *Radical Orthodoxy* (ed. by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward; London: Routledge, 1994, 182-200). See also his “A Fire Strong Enough to Consume His House,” *Modern Theology* 11 (1995), 397-420.

the rampant confidence of the modern secular state in its omniscience, all stem from the scandal of Christians in disunity.

Forced to “tolerate” one another before the law, divided Christians accommodated themselves to a sort of ecclesiastical armistice. They could despise and denounce one another, but they had to keep the peace. Ink could be spilled recklessly, but not blood. Eventually, as the nineteenth century progressed, these conflicts began to lose their force and interest; estranged Christians began to develop a sort of etiquette and protocol for their conduct toward each other. It is this tradition of polite, even amicable, estrangement that most of us inherited and which we have adapted to the circumstances of our neighborhood and business life. Christians who cannot meet at the Table of the Lord may get along famously in the office, or in a bridge club, or on the golf course—by “keeping religion out of it.”⁴

“The Wesleyan” represents the triumph of the “polite, even amicable, estrangement” of believers who have lost the ecclesial practice of reconciliation.

Nevertheless, “the Wesleyan” now continues to grow as a socially legitimated category, even recently being used to describe a distinct type of philosophy.⁵ Having lost the communal practices that previously defined us, we twenty-first century heirs of the Methodist societies have redefined ourselves through a distinct theoretical conceptuality, and entitled it “Wesleyan.” This has allowed us to accommodate our ecclesial existence within the categories of the liberal nation-state, and compete for adherents in the open market with other “denominational” groups. As “Wesleyans” we can differentiate ourselves from fundamentalists, Reformed evangelicals, Roman Catholics, charismatics, and mainline Christians and any number of other menu items that the fragmented church provides.⁶ “The Wesleyan” has become its own unique brand name.

⁴Outler, *That the World May Believe*, 20-21.

⁵The Wesleyan Philosophical Society conducted its first conference on “The Quest for Truth: Issues in Epistemology” at Hobe Sound, Florida, in February 2002.

⁶See, for instance, Wesley Tracy and Stan Ingersol, *Here We Stand: Where Nazarenes Fit in Today’s Religious Market* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998).

Within contemporary North American society, such a “brand name” Christianity is not without significance. Rational choice theorist Laurence R. Iannaccone has suggested that “brand name” specialization is, in part, an ideological act of self-preservation for particular movements within a “religious market”:

The combined actions of religious consumers and religious producers form a *religious market* which, like other markets, tends toward a steady state equilibrium. As in other markets, the consumers’ freedom to choose constrains the producers of a religion. A “seller” (whether of automobiles or absolution) cannot long survive without the steady support of “buyers.” . . . Consumer preferences thus shape the content of religious commodities and the structure of the institutions that provide them.⁷

Without being able to assert some kind of distinctiveness, “Wesleyans” would be unable to claim a particular “niche” in the competitive marketplace.

Yet “the Wesleyan” replaces the distinctiveness of an earlier embodied Methodist witness. The turn to the theoretical “Wesleyan” attempts to maintain a unique market niche that had previously been held by distinctively “Methodist” *practices* and *moral character*. Roger Finke’s “Consequences of Religious Competition” correlates the decline in Methodist numerical membership growth with the gradual loss of distinctiveness in Methodist practice. The loss of specialization translates into loss of “buyers” and the eventual loss of sustainability as a movement.⁸ In a society that privatizes religious belief, theoretical distinctiveness does not bear sufficient social weight to form a distinctive community. All it does is foster competitiveness between its own adherents and other Christian believers, a competitiveness that is antithetical to the ecclesial practice of reconciliation.

Severe theological problems, therefore, arise when the “Wesleyan” is a point of ecclesial specialization. Seen through the lens of reconciliation as a central practice of the church, any theology that provides warrants for the on-going fragmentation of the church, and competition between movements within the church, verges on being sinful. While it is certainly legiti-

⁷Laurence Iannaccone, “Rational Choice,” in Lawrence A. Young, ed., *Rational Choice Theory and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 27.

⁸Roger Finke, “Consequences of Religious Competition,” in Young, ed., 53.

mate and even helpful for theology to reflect upon the Wesley texts and those who have followed him in order to practice Christian theology, the adjective “Wesleyan” is misplaced when appended to a theology that purports to be Christian. For a theology to be “Wesleyan” misses the point, for it begs the question about whether “the Wesleyan” is Christian. Moreover, such a title misconstrues the tradition of ecclesial renewal found in the people called Methodists and their heirs. Central to the practices of these people has been the ecclesial practice of reconciliation, a practice necessary to lend credence to their pursuit of Christian perfection. Wesley texts and early Methodist practice reveal that reconciliation is more basic to “Wesleyans” than a unique ideological system. Therefore, we argue that the appropriate end of the “Wesleyan” is precisely its own end.

From Ecumenicity to Reconciled/Reconciling Catholicity

One could trace the current interest in the distinctively “Wesleyan” to Albert Outler’s re-discovery of Wesley as a theologian. Simultaneously, however, Outler also possessed a profound theological commitment to the unity and catholicity of the church. Outler’s commitment to Wesley and his theological engagement with the unity of the church catholic mutually supported and enriched each other. Outler himself once described Wesley as “rather like the superior-general of an evangelical order within a regional division of the Church catholic.”⁹ His historical-theological work with Wesley and twentieth-century Methodism, therefore, led Outler to think constructively about the nature of Christian catholicity amidst its current fragmentation.

In *That The World May Believe: A Study of Christian Unity and What it Means for Methodists*, Outler engaged the issue of Wesley, Methodism, and catholicity for a Methodist reader. As a good Methodist (and a good Christian), Outler rightly saw that Christian unity was not an end in itself, but rather “unity . . . is both a directive and a function of the mission itself—that the world may believe’.”¹⁰ Yet unity itself results from other Christian practices. Though he never fully develops his insight, Outler implied that ecumenicity is a function of Christian reconciliation, an ecclesial practice that the church has to give the world as a gift, a sign of what is possible for all humanity. He wrote:

⁹Albert Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University, 1964), 306.

¹⁰Outler, *That the World May Believe*, 10.

The mainstream of ecumenical concern in our time is the lively hope . . . that the unity of Christians will enhance the effectiveness of our proclamation of the gospel, that unity may be had without the loss of creative diversity, that we can move beyond our tragic history of internecine strife within the Christian family to a genuine reconciliation which would itself be a reconciling influence in the world.¹¹

In this light, amidst of the burgeoning optimism of the 1960s, Outler saw the ecumenical possibilities in the theological self-understanding of the early Methodists as expressed in their relationship to the Church of England. His euphoria fresh from observing Vatican II, Outler possessed a

. . . dawning realization that we may be nearing the point where we can think, vaguely to be sure, of a united Christian community really united in *communicatio in sacris* (in membership, ministry, and sacraments) in which the distinctive witness of diverse denominations, functioning as “orders,” “societies,” or “movements” under their own self-appointed heads, will be conserved within a wider catholic perimeter, organized constitutionally on some collegial and conciliar pattern.¹²

Outler found in the life and texts of John Wesley and the practices of early Methodism a model for the institutional ecumenicity in which he himself was so deeply immersed.

Given the “reshaping of American Christianity” into “liberal” and “conservative” wings¹³ and contemporary United Methodism’s struggle to avoid schism over social issues, there is something deeply ironic about Outler’s ecumenical optimism. Already a historical and social gulf stands between Outler and his readers. Outler’s reading of Wesley within the church catholic, however, has not gone completely to the wayside. Geoffrey Wainwright soon took Outler’s torch as a leading voice for understanding Methodism as deeply committed to catholicity. Like Outler, Wainwright has based his understanding on the Methodist model of an evangelical order within the church catholic.¹⁴ Yet those theologians and

¹¹Ibid., 15.

¹²Ibid., 54

¹³See Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1988). See also John Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

¹⁴See, for instance, Geoffrey Wainwright, “Methodism’s Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation,” *One in Christ* 19 (1983), 104-134.

institutions most concerned to be “Wesleyan,” especially those “Methodists” who stand outside the discipline of the United Methodist Church, have disassociated Outler’s concern for the theological integrity of Wesley’s thought from his concern to place Wesley and the Methodists as an “order” within the church catholic. Instead, “Wesleyan” has become a term to describe a Protestant group that presumably is a *via media* between fundamentalism and liberalism, an evangelical belief system outside the heritage of the Reformed Protestant orthodoxy that characterizes much of American evangelicalism.¹⁵

Perhaps, however, the bifurcation of Wesley the theologian from Wesley the “superior-general of an order within the Church catholic” lies not merely in those who have developed—and thereby abandoned—Outler’s agenda, but in the nature of the ecumenism of the 1960s itself. While it was commonly stated that genuine ecumenism is local, and thus concrete and embodied, the fact is that such discussions were largely conceptual, abstract, and thus disembodied.¹⁶ The ecumenism of the 1960s could take place without forgiveness and reconciliation, ecclesial practices necessary for the concrete, embodied unity of the church. Doctrinal agreement without confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation remains without moral credibility. It lacks much of a lasting witness in the world.

It is thus interesting to note the relative lack of the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation as specifically ecclesial practices in Outler’s *That the World May Know*. Unity was ultimately to arise out of forgetfulness, not forgiveness; agreement out of compromise, not reconciliation. But within the Scriptures, unity, and thus catholicity, begins with God’s forgiveness of believers through the faithfulness of Jesus, a forgiveness that empowers the believer to forgive others.¹⁷ The forgiveness of the sister and brother, binding and loosing, is ultimately itself a practice for a

¹⁵For a “mapping” of “the Wesleyan” within American Evangelicalism, see Gary Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/JohnKnox Press, 1998), 159-169.

¹⁶While a “conceptuality” or theoretical position grounds the emerging distinctiveness of “the Wesleyan,” it is the disembodied nature of the “conceptuality” of the ecumenical movement of the 1960s that seems to have prevented the practice of genuine Christian reconciliation.

¹⁷See 2 Corinthians 5:16-20.

greater end—to open space for reconciliation.¹⁸ Reconciliation, however, exists for ecclesial unity, and, as Outler recognized, ecclesial unity is for the sake of witness—the ecclesial and moral basis for evangelism.

Here is a different perspective on Christian unity and catholicity. The unity of the church must ultimately be found in the church itself—in the embodied life of believers within the body of Christ, a body gathered by the Spirit through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, maintained through the ecclesial practices of forgiveness and reconciliation. It is precisely this type of catholicity that is held as essential by the late James McClendon in his recent *Systematic Theology*. McClendon wrote:

Our capacity to be reconciled one to another as the people of God may be the best foretaste we can offer a divided and struggling world of the overcoming of its own deadly divisions. For those who believe that world empire and imperial church structure are now alike inadequate to the reconciling of these respective differences, there is hope in the less rigid, more pluriform, and yet not impotent unities that Christian fellowship via correspondence, visits, and conferences across party lines may offer in our day. The real ecumenism takes place, finally, at the grass roots of neighbor congregations, not in world-class councils.¹⁹

Here catholicity is more local than institutional, embodied more than conceptual. It therefore takes place between the bodies of Christian believers as a consequence of their being the visible body of Christ in the world. McClendon's description responds to the real ecclesial realities of the early twenty-first century. It also mirrors the catholicity found in early Christianity, a catholicity sought by Paul in the Corinthian church and practiced by Ignatius through the sharing of Eucharistic elements with other local churches. In both cases, reconciliation provided the required ecclesial practice for the maintenance and restoration of the physical unity, the catholicity, of the Body of Christ in the world.

¹⁸See John Howard Yoder, "Binding and Loosing," in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (ed. Michael G. Cartwright; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 323-358; see also L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995).

¹⁹James W. McClendon, *Systematic Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984-1996), 1: 235.

Outler would not disagree with McClendon. Indeed, their visions are complementary, if not practically required if both are to be sustained over time. From the perspective of the heirs of the early Methodists, it is interesting to observe that both of the visions were sustained in early Methodism. Not only did the early Methodists conceive themselves as an order within the Church catholic; they also were an embodied witness of ecclesial unity through the reconciliation of believers across strained, even estranged ecclesial lines. While Outler celebrated the organizational and theological catholicity of early Methodists, he did not adequately see in Wesley and his early Methodist societies the precedence of an embodied witness of reconciliation that gives unity its moral witness. The Methodist societies were, above all, a disciplined group of those “fearing the wrath that is to come” in pursuit of Christian perfection. It was thereby necessary that Methodism understand itself as an order within the church catholic, an understanding sustained by the practice of reconciliation within concrete relationships in its local gatherings. We cannot adequately understand the early Methodists unless we take into account this dual catholicity.²⁰

It is our contention that the history of the early Methodists displays a concern for catholicity as both an order within the church catholic and as concrete local bodies who practiced reconciliation across estranged ecclesial lines, both in pursuit of Christian perfection. It is precisely these dynamics that are undercut by the rise of “the ‘Wesleyan.’” “The Wesleyan” not only distorts the Methodist tradition and history, but endangers the “Christian” nature of this people by removing them from the communion with and thus accountability to the church catholic. Wesley’s historical location outside the “natural” market environment of contemporary Christianity makes his witness a particularly fruitful place for theological retrieval today.

Wesley and the Early Methodist Societies as Reconciling Communities

It was argued elsewhere that abstracting Wesley’s thought from early Methodist institutions and practices seriously misconstrues the Wesley text; indeed, an examination of the Wesley text shows that Wesley’s

²⁰The “dual catholicity” of the early Methodists refers to (1) Outler’s notion of Wesleyans as an order or society within the church catholic and (2) McClendon’s notion of catholicity as a local, reconciled, “pluriform” community.

thought was a Methodist practice.²¹ In a similar fashion, one must understand Wesley's concern for catholicity as arising from his pastoral care of the concrete realities of the Methodist societies, classes, and bands. To become a member of a Methodist society was not to join a "church"—one need not have been baptized or even have justifying faith, let alone assent to any creedal position to become a Methodist. In his essay "The Character of a Methodist," Wesley sought to "give in the clearest account I can . . . [of how] the principles and practice whereby those who are called Methodists are distinguished from other men."²² He begins the essay by firmly denying that Methodists possess a unique belief system:

The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinions of any sort. His assenting to this or that scheme of religion, his embracing any particular set of notions, his espousing the judgment of one man or of another, are all quite wide of the point. Whosoever, therefore, imagines that a Methodist is a man of such or such an opinion, is grossly ignorant of the whole affair; he mistakes the truth totally. We believe, indeed, that "all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God;" and herein we are distinguished from Jews, Turks, and Infidels. We believe the written word of God to be the only and sufficient rule both of Christian faith and practice; and herein we are fundamentally distinguished from those of the Romish Church. We believe Christ is to be the eternal, supreme God; and herein we are distinguished from the Socinians and Arians. But as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think. So that whatsoever they are, whether right or wrong, they are not distinguishing marks of a Methodist.²³

For Wesley, it was the very catholicity of beliefs and practices that distinguish the Methodists: "I would to God both thou and all men knew, that I, and all who follow my judgment, do vehemently refuse to be distinguished from other men, by any but the common principles of Christianity—the plain, old Christianity that I teach, renouncing and detesting all

²¹See John W. Wright, "Wesley's Theology as Methodist Practice: Postmodern Retrieval of the Wesleyan Tradition," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35:2 (2000), 7-31.

²²John Wesley, "The Character of a Methodist," *Works*, Jackson edition, vol. 8, 339.

²³*Ibid.*, 340.

other marks of distinction.”²⁴ The only requirement to become a Methodist was the desire “to flee the wrath that is to come” and exhibit this through accepting the discipline of the Methodist society through accountability to its rule within weekly class meetings. Wesley, therefore, recruited members for his Methodist societies not merely from the Church of England, but from all people of whatever background. His concern was not to distinguish Christians from each other, but rather to provide a context in which Christians might actually be visibly distinguished from the “unbelieving world”:

. . . by these fruits of a living faith, do we labour to distinguish ourselves from the unbelieving world, from all those whose minds or lives are not according to the Gospel of Christ. But from real Christians, of whatsoever denomination they be, we earnestly desire not to be distinguished at all, not from any who sincerely follow after what they know they have not yet attained. No: “Whosoever doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” And I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that we be in no wise divided among ourselves. Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thine? I ask no farther question. If it be, give me thy hand. For opinions, or terms, let us not destroy the work of God. Dost thou love and serve God? It is enough. I give thee the right hand of fellowship.²⁵

Thus, in his sermon “Of the Church” Wesley described the “catholic or universal Church” as “all the persons in the universe whom God hath so called out of the world as to entitle them to . . . be ‘one body,’ united by ‘one Spirit;’ having ‘one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in them all.’”²⁶ Even churches that Wesley thought held “unscriptural doctrines” or in which sacraments were not “duly administered,” he chose “not [to] exclude from the Church catholic;” indeed he states that he would even receive Roman Catholic congregations into the national church “as members of the Church of England.”²⁷

²⁴Ibid., 346.

²⁵Ibid., 346-347.

²⁶“Of the Church,” *Works*, Jackson edition, vol. 6, 395-396.

²⁷Ibid., 397.

Recent historical scholarship has shown that Wesley's text here was more than empty rhetoric. Methodist societies were indeed drawn from various ecclesial backgrounds. Thomas Albin examined 555 early British Methodist autobiographies from the *Arminian Magazine* and other sources. Within these accounts, according to Albin:

In 320 of the total 555 cases, one finds a clear indication of the religious tradition of the childhood home. Of these 320, ten (3.1%) were clearly not religious. . . . The established church provided the early environment for the majority (203 or 63.4%) of those who later would become Methodists, while the Quakers (5 or 1.6%), Roman Catholic (9 or 2.8%) and known Non-Conformists (32 or 10.0%) combined to make a total of forty-six or 15.4% of the remainder.²⁸

The data clearly justifies Wesley's depiction of the Methodists as not originating in any specific "opinions" found within the denominational structure of eighteenth-century England.

Yet Albin's data suggests more than this. Nothing in the Wesley text suggests that Wesley would have encouraged these persons to give up their previous congregational affiliations as they joined the Methodists. To the contrary, Wesley continually exhorted his Methodists, those in "connexion" with him and each other, to remain within their local congregations, if any, to which they had previously belonged. In "Thoughts Upon a Late Phenomenon" Wesley wrote about Methodists:

Do not impose, in order to their admission, any opinions whatever. Let them hold particular or general redemption, absolute or conditional decrees; let them be Churchmen or Dissenters, Presbyterians or Independents, it is no obstacle. Let them choose one mode of baptism or another, it is no bar to their admission. The Presbyterian may be a Presbyterian still; the Independent or Anabaptist use his own mode of worship. So may the Quaker: and none will contend with him about it. They think, and let think. One condition, and only one is required—a real desire to save their soul. Where this is, it is enough: They desire no more: They lay stress upon nothing

²⁸Thomas R. Albin, "An Empirical Study of Early Methodist Spirituality," in *Wesleyan Theology Today: A Bicentennial Theological Consultation*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1985), 276.

else: they ask only, "Is thy heart herein as my heart?" If it be, give me thy hand.²⁹

Again, in "The Ministerial Office" Wesley emphasized that the Methodists "advised all that were of it [the Church of England] to continue therein, although they joined a Methodist society; for this did not imply leaving their former congregation, but only leaving their sins." The Presbyterian, Anabaptist, or Quaker might still retain their own opinions and attend their own congregations. Having a real desire to flee from the wrath to come was the only condition required.³⁰ Wesley emphasized congregational continuity for individuals who joined a Methodist society.

Such convictions arose out of Wesley's own studies of the Christian tradition. Kenneth Collins has noted the catholic nature of Wesley's use of the Christian tradition, refuting claims that any particular trajectory gave rise to Wesley's convictions. Wesley appealed, says Collins, specifically to traditions that were either his by sacramental discipline (as in the case of the Anglican church) or were those most postured to give access to "genuine primitive Christianity" (as in the ante-Nicene Eastern Fathers).³¹ Wesley appeals particularly to those "Eastern Fathers" who wrote before the East-West schism, thereby appealing to the ancient catholic church rather than to a Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox tradition. "A balanced view," writes Collins, ". . . sensitive to the many nuances of Wesley's theology, suggests that no one tradition, not even Anglicanism or Eastern Orthodoxy, is able to give a full account of the remarkable and intricate synthesis that Wesley achieved in his practical theology, a theology that may be most suitably described, not as the Eastern Way or Western Way, but as the Scriptural way of salvation."³²

Wesley recognized that the Christian witness of the Methodists depended on its members continuing relationships with their originating local congregations. Wesley saw increased importance in the continued loyalty of the individual Methodist to that local congregation as one became more deeply involved in Methodist piety. At the end of his sermon "On Schism" he wrote, "Do not rashly tear asunder the sacred ties which unite

²⁹"Thoughts upon a Late Phenomena," *Works*, Jackson edition, vol. 13, 266.

³⁰"The Ministerial Office," *Works*, Jackson edition, vol. 7, 276-277.

³¹Kenneth J. Collins, "John Wesley's Critical Appropriation of Tradition in his Practical Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35:2 (2000), 74-75.

³²*Ibid.* 90.

you to any Christian society. This indeed is not of so much consequence to you who are only a nominal Christian. For you are not now vitally united to any of the members of Christ. . . . But if you are a living member, if you live the life that is hid with Christ in God, then take care how you rend the body of Christ by separating from your brethren.”³³ The more one internalized the practices of Methodism and identified with a Methodist society, the more significant the witness of the Methodist became within a local congregation. This stance was not merely to stop criticism that the Methodists were sectarian. Rather, Wesley recognized that an earlier Christian perfectionist movement, monasticism, had “secluded themselves from the rest of the world. But what was the fruit of the separation? The same might easily be foreseen. It increased and confirmed, in an astonishing degree, the total corruption of the Church.”³⁴ Part of the Methodist vocation, therefore, was to remain faithful members of the various ecclesial bodies in which they worshiped, with their distinctive beliefs, polity, and liturgies. Methodists were to leaven the church catholic as part of it. They were not a distinct ideological group, but a voluntary group of believers within the church catholic who had been reconciled to each other in their pursuit of Christian perfection by means of the Methodist discipline.

The Methodists, merely to sustain their common life, had to master skillfully the ecclesial practice of reconciliation. To be a Methodist entailed weekly gatherings in a class or band, and as a society. Love feasts would have brought about occasional and intimate times of sharing. Methodists were obligated to frequent each other’s businesses, and the class leader was required to visit each member of the class weekly, regardless of denominational affiliation. Each had to donate money for the care of the poor, especially poor Methodists. By rendering denominational lines irrelevant within the Methodist discipline, the Methodists very publicly undercut such lines through their practices, challenging Christian differentiation on the basis of “opinions” or worship style. They sought to become a public witness for the reconciliation between sisters and brothers in Christ, enabled by the common pursuit of Christian perfection. The Methodist witness was at stake in the visible unity that their societies, classes, and bands manifested. It was a unity that would have taken constant vigilance—and virtue—in order to be maintained.

³³“On Schism,” *Works*, Jackson edition, vol. 6, 409.

³⁴“On Attending the Church Service,” *Works*, Jackson edition, vol. 7, 182.

The Challenges of Reconciliation

This provides the context for Wesley's "ecumenicity" or better his "catholicity." Wesley's concern with catholicity must be seen in his pastoral care of his Methodists in order to keep them open to the sanctifying grace of God. To keep the societies from fracturing through petty bickering, personality clashes, or past conflicts within various local village and urban environments would have been a challenge remarkable enough; however, the distinct ecclesial backgrounds from which Wesley recruited Methodists would have made things even more demanding. His sermon "The Catholic Spirit" places the focus of the Methodist endeavor on the discipline of bringing about "holy affections" by focusing on Christian love:

I ask not, therefore, of him whom I would unite in love, Are you of my Church? Of my congregation? Do you receive the same form of Church government and allow the same Church officers, with me? Do you join in the same form of prayer wherein I worship God? I inquire not. . . . Let all these things stand by; we will talk of them, if need be, at a more convenient season; my only question at present is this—is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?³⁵

Christian reconciliation comes through the catholicity of the Methodist discipline, a catholicity that allowed freedom in areas that might divide and distract from the pursuit of perfection.

On the other hand, the very practices of the Methodists endangered this vocation of remaining within local congregations. The more an individual's loyalties shifted from local congregations to a Methodist society, the more would have been the tendency to withdraw from the originating congregation and the sacramental life found there. Reconciliation, therefore, had to be practiced not merely in the Methodist societies, but with the members of the various parishes and congregations that each Methodist was obligated to attend. Thus, Wesley in "On Schism" emphasizes that "schism" in Paul does not refer to national bodies (as implied by much of twentieth-century ecumenical discussion), but to "a separation *in* a Church."³⁶ Wesley perceptively notes that 1 Corinthians 12 refers to "an alienation of affection in any of them toward their brethren; a division

³⁵"The Catholic Spirit," *Works*, Jackson edition, vol. 5, 496-497.

³⁶"On Schism," *Ibid.*, 402.

of heart, and parties springing therefore, though they were still outwardly united together; though they still continued members of the same external society.”³⁷ Wesley wasted no words: “To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love. It is the nature of love to unite us together; and the greater the love, the stricter the union.”³⁸

Such an ecclesial practice of reconciliation, however, did not always come without a price in terms of social sanctions from local congregations. The public witness of transgressing the denominational boundaries through reconciliation could provoke sanctions from those concerned to preserve denominational distinctiveness and theological purity. In “Advice to the People called Methodists” Wesley observed, “What makes even your principles more offensive is this uniting of yourselves together. Because this union renders you more conspicuous, placing you more in the eye of men; more suspicious—I mean, liable to be suspected of carrying on some sinister design.”³⁹ Later in the essay, he continued:

This offence will sink the deeper, because you are gathered out of so many other congregations: For the warm men in each will not easily be convinced, that you do not despise either them or their teachers; nay, will probably imagine, that you utterly condemn them, as though they could not be saved. And this occasion of offence is not at the height, because you are just gathered, or gathering rather, so that they know not where it will end; but the fear of losing (so they account it) more of their members, gives an edge to their zeal, and keeps all their anger and resentment in its strength.

Add to this, that you do not leave them quite, you still rank yourselves among their members; which, to those who know not that you do it for conscience’ sake, is also a provoking circumstance.⁴⁰

The concrete catholicity of the Methodists, based on a genuine embodied reconciliation, visibly called into question the ecclesial competition for membership. It visibly questioned whether the fractured nature

³⁷Ibid., 405.

³⁸Ibid., 406.

³⁹“Advice to the People Called Methodists,” *Works*, Jackson edition, vol. 8, 354.

⁴⁰Ibid., 355-356.

of the church was really necessary. Methodist loyalty to specific congregations within specific ecclesial traditions was not a victim of the Methodist discipline, but, as Wesley tried to convince others, its beneficiary. A catholicity within particularity was necessary because reconciliation between believers of various denominations was conducive to the pursuit—and experience—of Christian perfection.

Towards the end of his life, Wesley recognized the remarkable witness of the reconciling catholicity of the Methodists. He called it their “particular glory:”⁴¹

In spite of all manner of temptations, they will not separate from the Church. What many so earnestly covet, they abhor: They will not be a distinct body. Now, what instance of this have we before, either in ancient or modern history; of a body of people, in such circumstances, who will not be a distinct part, but choose to remain in connexion with their own Church, that they may be more effectually the servants of all?⁴²

Yet challenges remained. As Methodists recruited from dissenting congregations outside the catholicity of the Church of England—because of a wider Methodist catholicity, the Methodist commitment to an embodied reconciling catholicity became harder to maintain. Wesley recognized that “As more and more who had been brought up dissenters joined with them, they brought in more and more prejudice against the Church. In process of time, various circumstances concurred to increase and to confirm it. Many had forgotten that we were all at our first setting out determined members of the Established Church. Yea, it was one of our original rules, that every member of our society should attend the church and sacrament, unless he had been bred among Christians of any other denomination.”⁴³ Still, Wesley did not concede the issue. The Methodists were to be a witness of reconciliation in the pursuit of Christian perfection:

Let us not then trouble and embroil ourselves and our neighbors with unprofitable disputations, but all agree to spread, to

⁴¹See, for instance, “The Ministerial Office,” *Ibid.*, 278, and “Thoughts Upon a Late Phenomenon,” *Ibid.*, 266. See also “On Bigotry,” where Wesley speaks of this Methodist practice as an “utterly new thing, unheard of in any other Christian community. . . this is the glory of the Methodists, and of them alone,” *Works*, Jackson edition, vol. 5, 281.

⁴²“Thoughts Upon a Late Phenomenon,” *Ibid.*, 266.

⁴³“On Attending the Church Service,” *Works*, Jackson edition, vol. 7, 175.

the uttermost of our power, the quiet and peaceable gospel of Christ. Let us make the best of whatever ministry the Providence of God has assigned us. . . . Leaving a thousand disputable points to those that have no better business than to toss the ball of controversy to and fro, let us keep close to our point. Let us bear a faithful testimony, in our several stations, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, and with all our might recommend that inward and outward holiness “without which no man shall see the Lord!”⁴⁴

The Methodists were a reconciling ecclesial community, faithful members of local congregations from a variety of Christian theological traditions, bound in a specific discipline in order that together they might flee the wrath that is to come through the experience of the sanctifying grace of God.

Seen in light of the concrete reality of Methodist practice, Wesley had little concern for forming his Methodists as a people with its own theological/conceptual distinctiveness. If anything, he appears in his own readings and writings to sustain an antipathy for a distinction of what he calls “opinion.” The early Methodists, or at least Wesley’s hope for them, were to be a society within the church catholic for the pursuit and experience of Christian perfection, thereby renewing the church from within. The practice of reconciliation between members of local congregations from different denominations sustained Methodist catholicity. Wesley saw Methodist distinctiveness in its ability to remain simultaneously faithful members of local congregations while voluntarily joining with the Methodist societies and classes/bands for the pursuit of Christian perfection. Both feats required the ecclesial practice of reconciliation in concrete, local, embodied ways. This reconciliation made the Methodists visibly present in the society at large. The Methodist practice of reconciliation called forth a visible manifestation of the Body of Christ. The Methodists transcended the social categories provided by “the world,” and thus witnessed to the reality of God’s kingdom that was initiated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and is sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Wesley described above would not have seen himself as the founder of a theological school. This Wesley was the “superior-general” of the Methodists—a people within the church catholic, distinct not in

⁴⁴“On Attending the Church Service,” *Ibid.*, 185.

“opinion,” but in providential disciplines and institutions that brought forth the love of God and neighbor among those in “connexion” with each other. This Wesley was not very “Wesleyan” at all. Rather, this Wesley immersed himself in pre-Constantinian catholicity and drew from the breadth of the Christian tradition in editing his *Christian Library* for the nurture of his Methodist leadership. To view him differently is to re-place him into a conceptual/denominational system that he consciously rejected and, thus, to reject the “peculiar glory” that he thought he saw accomplished in the life of his Methodists.

Conclusion: The End of “the Wesleyan”

If the above argument holds, it is evident that it is time to declare the end of “the Wesleyan” as a term to define a distinct conceptual theological system within a wide range of Christian traditions. Indeed, if “the Wesleyan” has an end, a goal, it is its own end and a new birth within a reconciled, reconciling community of believers. Here, believers from various theological traditions within the church catholic, bound together in a common discipline, might experience the fullness of love of God and neighbor while faithfully remaining members of their own local congregations and witnessing to the reconciling power of the cross of Christ.

Such a possibility has remained among the heirs of Wesley’s Methodists. In 1867 a group of leading clergy within the Methodist Episcopal Church formed the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness.⁴⁵ They offered an open invitation for “a general camp-meeting of the friends of holiness, to be held at Vineland, Cumberland County, New Jersey.” The letter of invitation was to “all, irrespective of denominational ties, interested in the subject of higher Christian life.” The letter concluded with an exhortation: “Come, brothers and sisters of the various denominations, and let us, in this forest-meeting, as in other meetings for the promotion of holiness, furnish an illustration of evangelical union.”⁴⁶ Thus, the holiness camp meeting for the pursuit of holiness, the beginning of the American Holiness Movement, required the ecclesial

⁴⁵For the origins of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness, see Charles Edwin Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion: The Holiness Movement and American Methodism, 1867-1936* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1974) and Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (second ed.; Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1996).

⁴⁶Cited in Delbert Rose, *A Theology of Christian Experience* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1965), 52.

practice of reconciliation as a condition for participation in the practice of the holiness camp meeting.

The vestiges even continue to exist today, often submerged and unnoticed in the “rule” of the heirs of Wesley’s Methodists. For instance, the Preamble to the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* (1997-2001) openly declares one of the two purposes of the Church of the Nazarene as explicitly ecumenical. The Church of the Nazarene is to “cooperate effectually with other branches of the Church of Jesus Christ in advancing God’s kingdom.”⁴⁷ Formally, membership remains tied, not to a creed, but rather to a discipline. The Church of the Nazarene requires “only such avowals of belief as are essential to Christian experience”⁴⁸ and accountability to a discipline that has its origins in the Rules for the early Methodist class meetings. As we read the *Manual*, one does not have to forfeit membership in another theological tradition in order to join the Church of the Nazarene.⁴⁹ Membership—although not ministerial credentials—might simultaneously be kept in the Church of the Nazarene and other “denominations.” From the perspective of the *Manual*, a Roman Catholic or Episcopalian member of the Church of the Nazarene seems entirely legitimate. Such persons—and they do exist—might best exemplify the “Wesleyan” heritage of the Church of the Nazarene as an heir to the eighteenth-century Methodist societies.

The possibility of such movements of local (and trans-local), embodied, reconciled members of the church catholic are not unheard of and may be more powerful in witness than any decrees of the World Council of Churches or National Association of Evangelicals. Such movements have recently emerged. Perhaps Promise Keepers has maintained the highest visibility, but recently the Ekklesia Project has arisen with the same concern for catholicity found in John Wesley and the early Methodists.⁵⁰ If the heirs of Wesley and the Methodists would allow “the

⁴⁷“Preamble, *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene 1997-2001*, 26.

⁴⁸Par. 26, *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁹See Par. 25 (p. 35) and Par. 107 (p. 62). A member may transfer only to another congregation under discipline to the Church of the Nazarene; they may, however, receive a “commendation” to another “evangelical” church, at which time their membership in the Church of the Nazarene ceases (Par. 111-111.1, p. 65). By joining another congregation outside the Church of the Nazarene, the ex-member removes himself or herself from its discipline. For elders, see Par. 109.2 (pp. 63-64).

⁵⁰See www.ekklesiaproject.org and Stanley Hauerwas and Michael L. Budde, *The Ekklesia Project: A School for Subversive Friendship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000).

Wesleyan” to end, a concern for catholicity, not distinctiveness, could arise in its place, sustained by the concrete, embodied ecclesial practice of reconciliation. Such a concern would make these groups—and their theologians and pastors—accountable to the faith given to the saints and cast an entirely different light, one true to their heritage, on their common life together in Christ with all believers.

The concern for Christian perfection might be that which makes believers more truly Christian, rather than that which makes followers of Wesley distinctively “Wesleyan.” Perhaps God could use the concern for Christian perfection to surprise us Wesleyans with the gift of brothers and sisters from Christian communities from whom we have been historically estranged. After all, it was Vatican II, not any general conference or assembly of a “Wesleyan” denomination, that stated, “every Catholic must therefore aim at Christian perfection.”⁵¹

At the very least, the practices of John Wesley and the early Methodists, and the potential of the subsequent end of “the Wesleyan,” remind us that any ecumenicity that is not accompanied by concrete reconciliation within the church, visible to the world, remains, at least to an extent, empty. It does not possess the moral credibility to sustain the Christian witness in the world, especially the ability to sustain the witness that the “perfect love [that] drives out fear” is a present possibility in this life. Insofar as a concern for “the Wesleyan” serves to inhibit this reconciliation, to quote Wesley in “On Schism,” “It is evil in itself.”⁵² If “the Wesleyan,” however, can drive us past a concern for distinctiveness into genuine catholicity, experienced in concrete reconciliation within the Body of Christ, then we pray that such Wesleyans may increase and prosper to the uttermost ends of the earth.

⁵¹Decree on Ecumenism, no. 4. Cited by Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., in *Catholics and Evangelicals: Do They Share a Common Future* (ed. by Thomas Rausch; Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 24.

⁵²“On Schism,” *Ibid.*, 406.

A. WINGROVE TAYLOR: A TRIBUTE

by

Melvin E. Dieter¹

It is my privilege to present the “Lifetime Achievement Award” to one of God’s gifted and good servants. I am sure that I speak not only for the Wesleyan Theological Society, but for the whole Wesleyan/Holiness community and many others in the larger Christian family as well. We are not unmindful of the disclaimers given by a venerable colleague on an earlier such occasion. We recognize that when we glory, as we do, in the excellence and integrity of heart and life with which our recipients have represented our tradition, we above all give glory to God who in His goodness has so generously graced them.

Alaric Wingrove Taylor was born November 14, 1923, in Charlestown on the Caribbean island of Nevis. His parents, Richard Alfred Taylor and Irene Blyden Taylor, met at God’s Bible School in Cincinnati, Ohio, and were commissioned by the Pilgrim Holiness Church to return to Nevis and pioneer and establish mission stations there. Nevis and the neighboring island of Trinidad quickly became strong centers for the Wesleyan/Holiness witness in the Caribbean. Wingrove was named for R. Wingrove Ives, a missionary colleague of his parents. His older brother, Ira, is a Wesleyan pastor in Washington, D.C. Two sisters, Katherine, a retired New York City schoolteacher, and Marie, a New York City registered nurse, make up the rest of the Richard and Irene Taylor family.

¹This tribute was presented to the Wesleyan Theological Society at its annual meeting in March, 2002. This was the occasion at which the Society’s “Lifetime Achievement Award” was presented to Dr. Taylor.

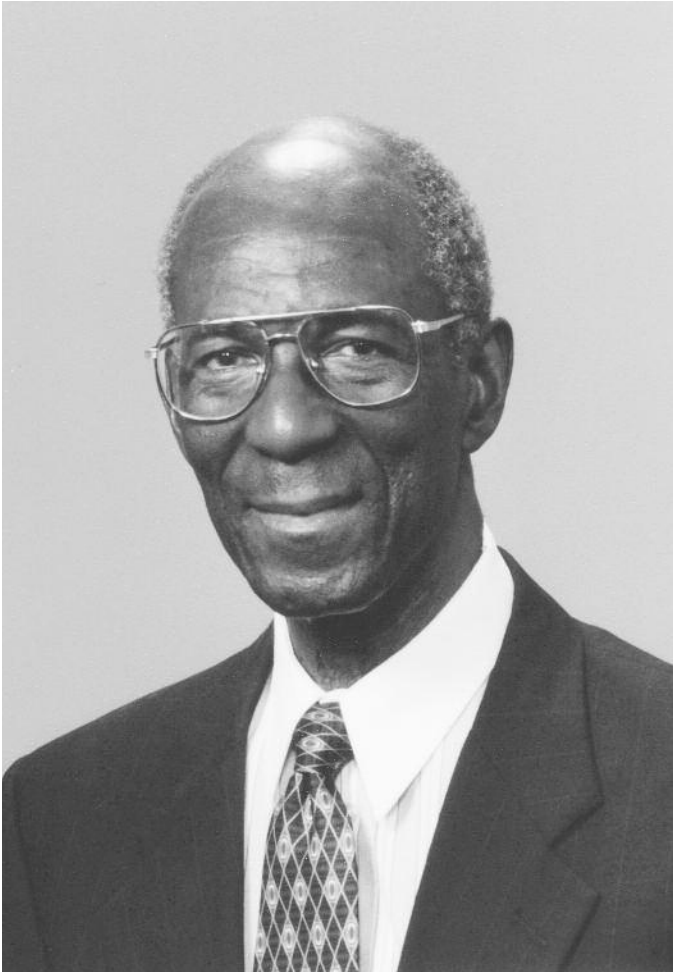
After grade school and some high school in Nevis, our recipient finished high school and completed B.A. and Th.B. degrees at God's Bible School and College. Later, he completed an M.A. in Ministry program at Indiana Wesleyan University. He is the recipient of three honorary doctorates. He and his spouse, Dorine Harper Taylor, have four children. They are: Brainerd, the founding conductor of the National Delt Chorale of Montreal, Canada, a chamber choir dedicated to the creation and performance of Afrocentric music; Paula, librarian, at the Barbados Public Library; Phoebe, emergency room nurse at the St. Francis Hospital in Indianapolis, IN; and Marie Grace, a school teacher also of Indianapolis.

While pastoring at Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, he was a regular delegate to the Caribbean Field Conferences of the Pilgrim Holiness Church. At the time of the Wesleyan Methodist-Pilgrim Holiness merger in 1968 he was giving general leadership to the Caribbean churches as President of the Caribbean Pilgrim College in Barbados. He became a forceful advocate for the indigenous concerns of the overseas churches throughout the merger process, especially in the reorientation of the relationships between the North American Conference and its mission agencies around the world. He was on the founding committee of the new Wesleyan World Fellowship, which provided for other national conferences to take equal status in fellowship with the home conference. He served for twenty years as the first General Superintendent of the first such newly organized conference (The Caribbean General Conference) and for two quadrenia as a representative to the Wesleyan World Fellowship and chair of its executive committee, concluding his services in 1994. Wesley Press published his book, *A Theology of Adornment*, in 1992.

Dr. Taylor's persistent ecumenical vision placed him in the middle of the efforts to rally and unify the diverse evangelical communities and agencies scattered across the Caribbean. From 1973-1989 he served as the founding President of the Caribbean Theological Association. He was equally active in organizing and giving pioneer presidential leadership to the Evangelical Association of Caribbean Churches. He has been a member of the executive committee of the Association from 1977 to the present. He has also been a governor of the Caribbean School of Theology, was co-chair of the Congress on the Evangelization of the Caribbean and chair of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, Caribbean, is a director of Light House Literature, and is a trustee of God's Bible School and College.

All who know Wingrove know that, like the Apostle Paul, by the mercy of God he became a bondservant of Jesus Christ and ministering brother to us all. Dr. Taylor, we honor you for your concerns for an educated and disciplined ministry, for your efforts to bring together the Christian churches of the Caribbean for more effective witness, and for your gift of communication which, combined with rhetorical skills honed to a fine edge by your English Caribbean heritage, have opened up ministry for you in more than forty countries and on six continents. Ever passionate for the Gospel, your uncompromising call to discipleship and to righteousness inspire us to thank God for you

For your lifetime of service to God and the church, we are honored to honor you as the recipient of the Wesleyan Theological Society's 2002 "Lifetime Achievement Award."



A. Wingrove Taylor

HOLINESS VALUES FROM THE HEAVENLY VINE

Sermon by

A. Wingrove Taylor¹

Scripture: John 15:1-8

Text: 15:1-2

The vine is an illustrative plant (Isa. 5:7a). Here, however, “The Vine” is the Incarnate Person. Jesus says, “I am the true vine” (v. 1a). This is the last of Jesus’ seven great I AM statements about Himself. “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35a); “the light of the world” (John 8:12b); “the door” (John 10:9a); “the good shepherd” (John 10:11a); “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25b); “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6b); and, “the true vine” (John 15:1a). Jesus, the Vine, is the incarnate Person because all of these comparative I AM statements find their center in the consummate I AM statement, “I am the Son of God” (cf. John 10:36b). Jesus, the Vine, is the divine, heavenly Person, and the branches are all dependent human persons.

The Heavenly Vine presents holiness as a royal relationship with the Redeemer. Holiness is not first life “for” Christ, “before” Him, or through Him, but “in” Him (v. 2). “In” is predominately the “with” of relationship. This presentation of the living Vine is not a theological treatise, but it powerfully portrays biblical and Wesleyan holiness. The context sets forth positive holiness or relationship principles, but also one negative principle. Our purpose is to look briefly at them.

¹This sermon was delivered at the opening session of the annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society in March, 2002. During that meeting Dr. Taylor was given the WTS “Lifetime Achievement Award.”

We will begin with the bad news, and note, sadly, that negative holiness involves:

I. Expropriated Relationship

The context sets forth this relationship in these woeful words, “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:6).

Because the Vine is not a theological treatise, it strikes me that it is not necessary for this representative “anyone” to be some nominal person in Christ. It strikes me rather that the description first conveys the commonality of holiness. Abiding in the Vine is the standard for all branches, all human beings, not just for some. All must decide the issue of holy Vine-abiding. Holiness is thus not the possession of limited groups. It is universal. It is not merely denominational; it is mightily divine.

The passage also conveys that holiness is a choice and not a compulsion. Inseparable from Adamic history, the “anyone” or any branch that rejects holiness or abiding in the Vine does so (as the verb tense of “abide” suggests) as a deliberate, time-unrelated choice that is actually devilish. The choice is indeed to expropriate or to take to oneself relationship that belongs only to God and in God. This is the old satanic subterfuge (Gen. 3:1-5). Non-abiding is, of course, non-relationship and non-holiness, because it is severing from the Vine, the only Fountainhead of relationship and holiness (John 17:22). Thus follows withering and gathering that ends finally in fuel rather than in fruits. (cf. Eze. 15:1-8). Jacob, his descendants, and all like him are treacherous vines. Jesus is the true Vine.

On the other hand, the positive principles of holiness begin with:

II. Excelling Relationship

Every branch is in the Vine (v. 2a). Each person relates directly not to some denomination—as good as that denomination may be; not to some experience—as godly as that experience may be; not to some accomplishment—as gainful as that accomplishment may be; but to Jesus, the Vine, alone. Holiness is not first a relationship with exquisite sanctification, but with the excelling Sanctifier. In terms of companionship, we cannot converse with an experience, but we can talk with the Person. In terms of constancy, we will find difficulty keeping an experience, but there will be

greater ease and victory when the divine Person keeps us (John 17:11). Holiness will be a lot simpler, saintlier, and surer if we remember that it goes beyond the reception of a crisis experience to a relationship with the crucified, Eternal One.

One of the radical principles of holiness lies in the fact that it is an:

III. Expendable Relationship

Jesus said, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:2).

We need not see the branches in the Vine that do not bear fruit as merely professing, but not genuine Christians. They may be God-grieving Christians under a probationary program of divinely directed correctives that hopefully results not in excision but in expiation (cf. Luke 13:6-9). The point is that the relationship of holiness is a serious one in which God will require the primary expendability of the sub-spiritual that stops fruitage; or even the punitive expendability or severing of the stubborn branch that slights fruitage.

We need not see the purging of the fruit-bearing branches that they may bring forth more fruit as referring only to a cultivating process. The other identical use of purging in the NT is in the context of the cleansing sacrifice of Christ that provides sanctification (Heb. 10:2, 10). The point is that the relationship of holiness is one of absolute set-apartness for which God will require the expendability of the self that subverts fruitage.

Purging may, however, specifically mean cultivating through pruning. The point is that the relationship of holiness is one of superior spiritual sonship; and God will require the expendability of the superfluous that saps fruitage (cf. Heb. 12:8-11).

Expendability is necessary because another radical principle of holiness is:

IV. Exclusive Relationship

Every branch is described as being in Christ, and not in itself, and not in another branch (v. 2a). Each branch has direct relationship only with the Vine.

Biblical blueprints highlight the prime principle of direct relationship. The language of love, one of the major foundations of relationship, infers direct relationship (Mark 12:30). We are to love God with ALL. All

is exclusive. Technically, it means that one has no love remaining with which to love anyone else.

We may also infer from the sweeping sanctification scripture that humans, in the entirety of their beings, are to be set apart or to belong wholly to God alone (1 Thess. 5:23). The truth is that blameless preservation in holiness is inseparable from boundless possession by the Holy One alone. Other passages of scripture carry the similar sense of exclusiveness. “My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation *is* from Him” (Psa. 62:5, NKJV). “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (John 5:44).

One of the greatly needed, practical applications of holiness is that by its very nature, all of the possessors of holiness must have direct relationship with God and God alone.

Because God is the God of relationship, the holiness of direct relationship with Him immediately includes:

V. Extended Relationship

We just considered exclusive relationship. The blessed paradox is that because the triune, One God is the sharing God, exclusive relationship with God includes rather than excludes extended relationship (John 17:21a).

Biblical blueprints highlight this extension of relationship. In the order of Jesus Christ, the first of all the commandments is: “Hear, O Israel; the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:29-30). Immediately, His second follows, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31a).

The point is that the Vine alone is the source of all true and lasting relationship. Only through direct relationship with the Vine, does each branch become indirectly related to all of the other branches. The secret of real and reliable relationship with all, including oneself, is direct relationship with God alone. Further, in holiness, a relationship of love extends even to enemies (Matt. 5:43-44).

In the light of excelling, expendable, exclusive, and extended relationship it should not surprise that another of the principles of holiness is:

VI. Exemplary Relationship

Good trees bring forth only good fruit (Matt. 7:17a). The fruit of branches in the true Vine; therefore, there can never be wild nor poisonous grapes (Isa. 5:4). The fruit can only be wonderful and pure grapes. The fruit of holiness can never be sour grapes (Eze. 18:2). The fruit can only be the sweet grapes of the Spirit's graces of love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience towards others), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). Bearing fruit is not the result of critical, culture-centered conformity. Bearing according to Christ is always a calm and constant consequence of belonging in and to the Vine (John 15:4). In Christian living, nothing aids acceptable behaviour as absolute belonging to Christ the Lord.

Conclusion

There is no option. The lesson of the Vine is that human beings choose either the self-exalting, Expropriated Relationship of satanic, counterfeit holiness, or the Excelling, Expendable, Exclusive, Extended, and Exemplary Relationship of the Saviour's Christlike holiness. Each person should say, "I choose Christ and His holiness."

**THE WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S
TIMOTHY L. SMITH AND MILDRED BANGS
WYNKOOP BOOK AWARD: 2002**

**Diane LeClerc, *Singleness of Heart: Gender, Sin, and Holiness
in Historical Perspective*. The Scarcecrow Press. 2001.**

by

Henry H. Knight III

Some books offer fresh and persuasive interpretations of historical figures. Others make important contributions to theological reflection today. A book that does either of these well deserves our attention and gratitude. Diane Leclerc has written a book that does both.

She addresses an issue that is at the heart of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, the relation of sin and holiness. Theologically, our diagnosis of the problem of sin must correspond to our proposed holiness cure. Western Christianity, following Augustine, has understood the fundamental sin to be *pride*. Leclerc identifies a different tradition that includes Jerome, Chrysostom, John Wesley, and Phoebe Palmer, a tradition that understands the fundamental sin to be *idolatry*. Such idolatry could be self-idolatry, but it could also be relational idolatry in which our relationship to spouses, children, or others takes the place of God. Holiness as *singleness of heart* focuses our devotion on God, and thus projects the remedy for our idolatry.

This is the bare outline of her argument. But to put it this way obscures the complexity and richness of her work. She avoids oversimplification at every turn. It is her recognition of the complexity and even the ambiguity of her theologians and their ideas that gives the book its per-

suasive power. The richness is due in part to her methodology. Here I want to note two aspects of her approach.

The first is her linkage of sound historical research with constructive theological reflection. She seeks to understand theological ideas in their context, but never sees them as simply the result of their context. In this way she offers fresh illumination of past theologies that highlights their contemporary relevance. The second is her distinctive feminist analysis. Leclerc is in the tradition of feminist theologians who consider the depiction of original sin as pride as a view deriving from a male perspective; from the standpoint of women, the original sin is more a failure to take responsibility for one's own life. These are controversial claims, within feminist theology as well as without. Many feminists see patriarchy as the original sin; more recently any gendered understanding of sin is called into question by the postmodern anti-essentialism that sees gender itself as a cultural construction.

Leclerc advocates a "strategic essentialism" that continues to speak of gender distinctions, but does so without assuming a static universality. In her analysis she enlists two contrasting feminist thinkers who provide lenses through which she examines her theologians. Simone de Beauvoir is an early anti-essentialist who urges women to lay claim to their own subjectivity and transcend their situations. Luce Irigaray speaks of woman in essentialist terms, and has a far more complex understanding of how "psychic structures" and the "nature of language itself" keep women in their oppression (p.12). Women can liberate themselves by deliberately assuming the feminine role assigned to them, make it their own, and then subvert it. This is accomplished by taking over the misogynistic rhetoric of their day and using it to make visible their own subjectivity

Part of the complexity of Leclerc's analysis is that she sees both of these forms of feminist experience—the transcendence of circumstances and the subversion of misogynistic rhetoric—at work in church history. This distinctive analysis is one of her most creative contributions, and enables her to offer us a fresh angle of vision. Using this lens, Leclerc shows how, for all their differences, Jerome and Chrysostom represent a tradition that identifies original sin as idolatry. Their rhetoric promoted the renunciation of the feminine roles of wife and mother in order to be fully devoted to God. In this way women ascetics could become "female men of God" (p. 25). Augustine, by comparison, gave great honor to feminine roles, and to women as women, but in the process called women to

remain in relationships that require “passive humility” and submission to a “God-ordained social stratification” (p. 49).

Wesley is placed squarely in the tradition of Jerome and Chrysostom. While most interpreters of Wesley see him as a follower of Augustine, affirming pride as original sin, Leclerc finds in Wesley a clear and consistent emphasis on sin as idolatry, including relational idolatry. Like his patristic predecessors, Wesley urged women not to be trapped in traditional roles such as marriage so that they might be free to fully serve God. Her analysis here is very suggestive and deserves careful consideration by Wesley scholars.

What I found most intriguing was her discussion of Phoebe Palmer. While Palmer has received a lot of bad press for diluting and oversimplifying Wesley’s theology, Leclerc has identified several highly significant contributions by Palmer to Wesleyan/Holiness theology. Among these was her understanding of entire consecration. Palmer envisions a total devotion to God that, instead of requiring women to abandon roles as wife and mother, is able to transform these roles. Leclerc argues that Palmer re-genders “Eastern and Western theories of subjectivity” (p. 127). Instead of becoming symbolic males, they become women set free for singleness of heart within their relationships. Palmer used the language of the nineteenth century “cult of domesticity” to enable women to transcend the limits of traditional relationships and engage in their calling, not as female sons but as “prophesying daughters of God” (p. 128). This fresh rendering of Phoebe Palmer’s theology is for me the most exciting contribution of this book.

What I have presented here is only a partial summary and bare sketch of Leclerc’s rich analysis. But perhaps I have said enough to indicate why Diane Leclerc’s *Singleness of Heart* is a highly worthy recipient of the 2002 Smith-Wynkoop Book Award of the Wesleyan Theological Society. She deserves our thanks for this book and for helping us understand our Wesleyan/Holiness tradition in new and profound ways.

Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology After the End of History: The Refusal of Suffering* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001). 203 pages. ISBN 0-415-24304-1.

Reviewed by Henry W. Spaulding II, Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, Tennessee.

The depth and breadth of Radical Orthodoxy's theological vision continue to grow. Daniel Bell has added to that body of theological literature with his engagement of liberation theology. Anyone who has read John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* is well aware of his critique of liberation theology. He along with others in this emerging school of thought tends to see an ontology of violence in much modern thought. Milbank is suspicious of liberation theology in this regard. Daniel Bell takes up this question in *Liberation Theology After the End of History*. The result of this reflection is a more balanced and thoughtful look at both the possibilities and challenges of liberation theology. This book should be studied and discussed by anyone who is seriously engaged in theological work. First, it provides another look at the emerging school loosely defined as Radical Orthodoxy. Second, it offers an insightful analysis of liberation theology. Third, it provides a thoroughgoing theological construal of capitalism and desire.

The introduction provides context. Bell explains that in 1989 Francis Fukuyama "heralded the arrival of 'the end of history'" (1). This meant that the triumph of capitalism had paved the way "toward a universal homogeneous state characterized by liberal democracy in the political sphere combined with easy access to VCRs and stereos in the economic" (1). The bulk of the book can be explained as a sustained theological rejection of that proposition. The book is composed of four interlocking chapters, each pointing to a theological engagement with this so-called end of history.

The first chapter is entitled "The Infinite Undulations of the Snake" and aptly captures the uneasiness of the author with capitalism. His analysis begins with the philosophical work of Deleuze and Foucault. The particular importance of the work of Deleuze is his conviction that politics precedes being and that "everything is desire, flows of desire" (14). Bell notes that for Deleuze "savage capitalism" goes beyond the economic to the ontological. This observation is central to Bell's theological analysis. This is precisely where he wants to connect desire with capitalism and the particular kind of "savage" domination it presents. Here capitalism is

characterized as a “beacon of prosperity and hope astride the pinnacle of history” (10). This savage capitalism can also be understood as “repressive states, excluded populations, madness, sacrifice, and the absence of alternatives” (12). In other words, it is understood as savage when one considers the cost that must be borne by the marginalized people of the earth. If capitalism is a discipline of desire, then one is left to consider its relationship to the state. This is where Foucault and “governmentality” emerge in the analysis. By combining the insights of these two philosophers, Bell is able to show that capitalism and the state are in a struggle with one another. Because of the basic anarchic nature of desire according to Deleuze, there is a rather basic resistance to the state. This leads to the unappealing alternatives of “the madness of capitalism and schizoid desire” (35). The first chapter ends with the observation that other pathways to the resistance of capitalism need to be explored.

The second chapter attempts to show that, while liberation theology resists savage capitalism, “it is clear that their revolutionary vision remains circumscribed by the very capitalist order they hope to overcome” (42). Bell shows why this is the case and then attempts to chart an alternative vision of Christianity that “builds upon the insights of the liberationists while striving to evade capitalist discipline” (43). The fundamental problem for the liberationists is that they do not understand capitalism and thus they do not see that it goes beyond the economic to the ontological. Much of what this “New Christendom” sought to establish in the face of its oppression and its own constructive attempts is diminished by its own internal crisis. Bell names this crisis clearly as he points to an alternative. According to Bell, “If Christians are to resist capitalism, if Christianity is to heal desire, the modern differentiation of life, with its separation of politics and religion, must be refused” (71). Part of this will be to come to understand the church as an “uncivil society.”

The analysis of the first two chapters set up the constructive movements of the last two chapters. The basic attempt here is “the retrieval of Christianity as an ensemble of technologies of desire” (86). Bell sets forth a bold alternative to liberation theology even as he continues to be impressed with some of its insights. In order to do this he builds upon the theological work of Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas to illustrate the relationship between desire, faith, and life. He effectively shows that the result of seeing Christianity as an ensemble of technologies of desire is a “rich medieval vision of the common good as a shared love embracing material, social, and spiritual goods, to the temporal good of the secular

state” (104). This is an alternative to liberation theology, which is more theologically coherent. Such a vision can more fully address the inevitable conflicts that arise in the pursuit of justice. The understanding of this as linked to atonement as an act of grace provides the beginnings for an adequate theological engagement with the end of history.

The last chapter of the book takes on the question regarding theological adequacy by setting out on a full-blown analysis of forgiveness. Here the words of Bell are particularly powerful: “The atonement is not about meeting the demands of an implacable justice before which even God must bow, but the forgiveness that enables desire to return to its source” (147). It is just this understanding of the atonement and forgiveness that presents the capacity to re-narrate the claims of justice in light of the mercy of God’s grace. According to Bell, it is when “New Christendom” is able to understand itself as the “crucified people” that the hope of stepping outside of the assumptions of savage capitalism begins to emerge. Even more plainly, “The heart of my argument is the claim that forgiveness is the form of Christian resistance to capitalism” (186). He adds to this: “I begin by distinguishing the suffering that is the refusal to cease suffering that is forgiveness, from suffering that is sheer resignation” (190). In other words, the end of history is not to be found in the triumph of capitalism, but in the act of forgiveness on a hill called Calvary. It is in the very practice of the faith (baptism, Eucharist, binding and loosing, penance) that the “logic of debt, equivalence, and retribution [is transformed into] a logic of liturgy” (188). This is the refusal to cease suffering that is enlivened by a gracious hope, a witness of faith that presents the true end of history.

Those who find inspiration and those who have questions regarding liberation theology should read *Liberation Theology After the End of History*. Bell offers a respectful treatment of the themes of liberation theology even as he points to a more theologically adequate evolution of this school of thought. Further, this book is more than a book about liberation theology; it is a book about the way theology ought to engage the world. After reading this book, those within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition might well begin to ask questions about their own engagements with the world. Perhaps the reading of this book may occasion those troubling questions about our own resignation to the very issues we confront. One cannot read this book without coming away with a deeper confidence that the Christian faith is the master discourse by which all of life can be understood. In fact, it is in the very capacity of theology to be embodied that holiness theology finds its finest expression.

Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001. ISBN #0-8010-2290-8. 186pp. + Bibliography.

Reviewed by Charles W. Christian, Pastor, Canby, Oregon.

In 1994, Clark Pinnock, professor of Christian Interpretation at McMaster Divinity School in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, joined four other theologians in a groundbreaking work exploring the doctrine of God titled *The Openness of God* (IVP, 1994). That book sought to expand current Evangelical dialogue regarding the so-called “traditional” (conventional) views of God by redefining ideas such as God’s sovereignty, passibility, and foreknowledge, among other things. The “open” view of God basically states that the God of the Bible is more self-limited in areas like foreknowledge than many traditional (especially American Reformed Evangelical) understandings of God have put forth.

Recent works by Evangelicals (like John Sanders, *The God Who Risks* [IVP, 2000]) have defended these ideas from a biblical perspective. However, critics of the “open view of God” (e.g., R.C. Sproul) have accused Pinnock of abandoning the Christian faith. For this reason, *Most Moved Mover* (an obvious takeoff on Aristotle’s description of God as “unmoved mover”) is a more directly apologetic work defending the view of God’s openness and pointing out biblical, philosophical, and practical weaknesses in some of the long held views of God. This book is the result of Pinnock’s invitation to present the prestigious Didsbury lectures at Manchester, England, in 2000.

In his Preface and Introduction, Pinnock notes that free-will theists (i.e., Arminians and Wesleyans) have shown the least consternation regarding the openness view of God. This is mainly because the open view places emphasis on divine “convincing” love, rather than upon the “coercion” associated with God’s omniscience and power in many traditionally held (or “conventional”) views of divine sovereignty. The future is not yet completely settled, argues Pinnock, so as to make room for “the input of significant creatures” (3). Pinnock’s concern is that in the conventional views of God, which tend to emphasize God’s complete foreknowledge and (in many Reformed models) foreordination of the world, God’s transcendence is emphasized at the risk of his involvement in the world (p. xii). He considers the openness model, with its emphasis upon the “risks” God takes in the world (i.e., the self-limitation of both God’s

foreknowledge and omnipotence), as “a more coherent alternative to Calvinism than Arminians have presented before” (xii). It is noteworthy that Pinnock lists those whose confessions fall outside Wesleyan-Arminian traditions as evidence that the discussion of God’s openness has moved beyond the boundaries of Calvinist-Arminian debates (examples of “openness” Calvinists include Hendrikus Berkhof, Vincent Brummer, Adrio König, and Nicholas Wolterstorff). In four chapters, Pinnock presents Scriptural foundations, critique of the “pagan origins” of the conventional view of God, philosophical defense, and “practical application” (chapter title: “The Existential Fit”) in regard to the openness view.

Pinnock begins both his defense of the openness view and his strong critique of the conventional view (the “unmoved mover” model) in the first paragraph of chapter one when he states: “It may turn out that it is the conventional, not the openness view which has trouble with the Bible” (26). He bases this assertion upon what he sees as the biblical emphasis upon the “personal nature” of God as described in the Bible: God as father, husband, covenant partner, rather than God as “a totally unchanging and all-determining absolute being.” Pinnock draws distinctions between Hellenic preconceptions of God and the Bible’s version of God, noting that, although concepts like the Trinity utilize Hellenic language in early formulations, it affirms a God “who is nearly everything that the Greeks denied” (28). This God, as expressed through Old Testament narratives and in the Incarnation, creates freely, loves freely, and grants creation the choice as to whether it will love Him in return. Citing biblical examples, Pinnock notes references to God thinking in terms of time, unlike the God “above time” portrayed in the conventional views. Pinnock also notes biblical passages difficult to reconcile with the conventional conception of God, passages in which God apparently changes his mind, is disappointed with an outcome, or simply does not get what apparently God wants! These examples suggest, according to Pinnock, that the future may not be fully determined (or known). He emphasizes that the personal and relational nature of God, as displayed in both the Old and New Testaments, implies God’s desire to work with His people, to love them into His will, and even to suffer with them as a loving Father. All these things, argues Pinnock, would be utterly impossible (and would make little sense biblically speaking) if there are not limitations on what God chooses to know about the future. Lest the reader begin to see too much Process thought in Pinnock’s defense of God’s openness, he is

quick to recognize that Scripture does indicate some things that are predetermined by God (see pp. 49-50). However, Pinnock also points out that the best way to see the future in regard to God as partly unsettled and allowing for “creaturely input.”

In chapter two, Pinnock confronts the “pagan influences” he sees dominant in the conventional views of God. Christianity’s long affinity for Hellenic constructs are a clear target for Pinnock’s apologetic: “A package of divine attributes has been constructed which leans in the direction of immobility and hyper-transcendence, particularly because of the influence of the Hellenistic category of unchangeableness” (p. 65). He accuses much of Christianity of allowing accepted ideas about God to dominate its thinking and interpretation of Scripture, rather than seeing what God is biblically disclosing about himself. The main “culprits” in this theological debacle, according to Pinnock, include Philo of Alexandria, Augustine, Aquinas, and many in contemporary Evangelicalism. While noting the positive contributions of many of these listed, Pinnock notes an apparent lack of concern among many conservative Evangelicals in regard to the influence that “pagan” ideas such as immutability have had in their perceptions of God (p. 76). Classical perceptions of God as immutable or unfeeling (“unmoved”) tend to diminish what Pinnock calls the “true beauty” and glory of the God whose sovereignty is exercised not in hoarding power for Himself, but rather in sharing power (p. 93). He sees the God of the Bible not as one who already has the course navigated in advance, but as one who is the skilled captain able to pilot the ship through his wisdom and resourcefulness. This resourcefulness is needed in dealing with a sometimes stubborn creation that chooses to do its own thing from time to time instead of doing what God desires. Instead of relying upon control or coercion, God relies upon love and wisdom to bring about His desires in creation. According to Pinnock, it is this “uncertainty” that causes us to truly trust God without fear and with a faith that is truly “faith.”

In his chapter “The Metaphysics of Love,” Pinnock makes his clearest philosophical defense for the openness view. It is here that he also makes his clearest distinction between process thought and openness theology. He notes that process thinkers have problems with openness theology because openness theology argues that there is an ontological distinction between God and the world (p. 149). Since both process and openness theologies are influenced by the Arminian tradition, there are

common themes: an emphasis on human freedom, an understanding of God in terms of love, and an emphasis on the relatedness of God and creation. However, for Pinnock, just as the conventional view of God is too immobile, the process view too closely links God with creation and ontologically limits God. Pinnock sees God's limitations as self-imposed, relational ones instead. Therefore, for Pinnock, the open view of God "involves a synthesis [between classical and process views of God] that does not burden theology with pagan elements" (p. 150).

Pinnock's most practical chapter, "The Existential Fit," seeks a practical outworking of the theoretical (biblical and philosophical) foundations previously set. He begins the chapter by stating that the conventional model of theism has an "as if not" problem: a conventional theist must live as if this model is not true in order to avoid a motivational problem. If God predetermines all things, then from a practical standpoint we should live (as many do) as if this model is not true. The openness model, which gives room for human freedom, the power of prayer, the persuasive (not coercive) love of God, and does not blame God for the problem of evil, can be more easily lived "as if" it were true. Of particular interest to those in the Wesleyan tradition is Pinnock's defense of the openness view in regard to the doctrine of sanctification: "Holiness cannot be attained without the Spirit but the Spirit cannot sanctify us without cooperation" (p. 167). Pinnock points out that one of Wesley's defenses against determinism is that he felt it would undercut commitment to holiness.

Pinnock has more directly thrown down the gauntlet for Calvinists, Arminians, and Process theologians alike to take a closer look at our ideas regarding God's sovereignty, foreknowledge, and supposed immutability. He is right in his assessment that, although Arminians will be the most comfortable with his defense of openness, even some of us will feel he goes a bit too far in just how limited God is. However, in Pinnock's work lies the foundation for transforming all of theology by giving us the opportunity to move away from Hellenistic preconceptions and more fully embrace the God of the Bible. Jürgen Moltmann recently stated that the doctrine of God is the only real question of theology. For this reason alone, any book written with the thoroughness and passion of *Most Moved Mover* must be examined and taken seriously. Whether its ideas will continue to spread is something that only God knows—or maybe God chooses not to know!

BOOK REVIEWS

Paul J. Achtemeir, Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson. *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). Pp. 624. \$35.00

John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001). Pp. 480. \$29.00

Thomas E. Phillips, Colorado Christian University, Lakewood, CO.

As a professor of New Testament who teaches at least two sections of introduction to the New Testament each semester, I am always on the lookout for a “good” introduction to the NT. At the beginning of the fall semester 2001, I was faced with two new volumes specifically designed for use as textbooks for entry level NT classes. Having used each book as the primary text in an NT class and having read over 100 students evaluations of each book, I thought that I would share my review of the usefulness of each of these books as a primary text in an undergraduate introduction to the NT—the purpose for which each was created.

In the fall semester of 2001, I used John Drane’s new book. The book is attractively laid out with several (black and white) insets of maps and pictures of cultural artifacts from the ancient world. The text is also broken up by several brief excurses upon specific scholarly questions (e.g., “when was Jesus born?” [pp. 47-49] and “the quest for the historical Jesus” [pp. 228-31]). The writing is generally accessible to undergraduates and the chapters are coherently ordered. Drane and Fortress have mastered many of the mechanics of contemporary textbook production.

Either by design or coincidence, the book falls into two nearly equal sections. The first half (236 of 474 pages of text) discusses Jesus and the gospels; the second half discusses the rest of the New Testament. The approach to the study of Jesus and the gospels is predominantly historical. Drane provides a brief introduction to the Greco-Roman world (1-45) and then discusses various aspects of Jesus’ life and teachings (e.g., “Jesus’ birth and early years” (46-62) and “Understanding Jesus’ death” (75-97). Concerns about the genre and “trustworthiness” of the gospels are each addressed in separate chapters where Drane follows a generally conservative but non-fundamentalist approach. He argues that the gospels are ancient biographies and as such are trustworthy characterizations of Jesus. Many critical readers will be disappointed by the fact that Drane devotes less than ten percent of this first half of the book to a discussion of the

uniquenesses of each of the four gospels. His discussion of the “portraits” of Jesus in the four gospels is limited to 21 pages (196-217).

The first half of the book is disappointing in other ways also, betraying its origins in Drane’s popular 1979 volume on Jesus (*Jesus and the Four Gospels*, published by Harper & Row). For example, on the one hand, as an NT scholar, I was disappointed by Drane’s failure to provide any meaningful engagement either with contemporary literary criticism on the gospels or with the important work currently being done on the historical Jesus. On the other hand, many students were disappointed by the poor quality of some of the photos and the lack of detail in many maps—to say nothing of the 1970s era picture of “modern Jews” (36). Many of these problems with datedness are less prominent in second half of the book, but the content of the second half remains less than satisfying. For example, Drane’s discussion of the apostolic council as reported in the widely divergent accounts of Acts 15 and Galatians 2 quickly dismisses the important critical issues associated with these texts by asserting that Paul “was, at heart, a conciliatory and pragmatic sort” who would consent with the decision of the apostles at the council (302-303). Has Drane read Galatians?

At other points, Drane’s discussion is equally unsatisfying. Discussions of the historical circumstances behind the letters are often divorced from the interpretative significance of those historical circumstances. For example, this relative lack of appreciation for the interpretative significance of the historical origins of the various texts is clearly demonstrated by Drane’s disjointed discussion of the Corinthian correspondence. After discussing several competing theories for understanding the complex history behind the Corinthian correspondence, Drane both fails to make a coherent case for any particular theory and also negates the significance of such historical issues by concluding his discussion with these dismissive sentence fragments: “So much for the circumstances in which these letters came to be written. But what was Paul actually saying in them?” (322). Such disjunction between historical analysis and the interpretative activity has the sad effect of teaching students to regard historical-critical questions as largely irrelevant to the interpretation of the text.

Although portions of Drane’s text, particularly the final chapter on “Reading and Understanding the New Testament” (458-474), serve students well, professors and students are much better served by the new work of Achtemeier, Green and Thompson. They write in much the same

format as does Drane, including a generous number of maps, insets, and excurses. However, their illustrations and photos tend to be more detailed and up-to-date than do those of Drane. They also enhance their volume with several insets of texts from the ancient world. Many of these ancient texts are extremely helpful to students (e.g., Plutarch's discussion of biography [65] and Thucydides' comments on the role of speeches in history [263]).

A, G & T invest a much smaller percentage of their volume to "Jesus" and are thus able to offer more extensive discussions of each gospel (89-206). Although their discussions are generally reflective of contemporary scholarship on the various books, their summaries of the content of the gospels (and, indeed, of all the NT books) could have been shortened to make for a shorter volume. Such extensive summaries of the various books (e.g., pp. 96-115 for Matthew) are probably not needed for students who are also reading the NT itself during the semester. A, G & T would do well to include more analysis and less summary of content.

Although the format adopted by A, G & T has required them to devote less space to their discussion of the historical Jesus than does Drane, their discussion tends to reflect current scholarly concerns more fully and accurately than does Drane. This sensitive reflection of the concerns of contemporary scholarship is likewise found in their discussion of Acts, where they, unlike Drane, avoid the anachronistic and misleading expression "missionary journeys" in their discussion of the Paul of Acts. The discussion of the historical concerns associated with the Pauline letters in A, G & T is, in an ironic twist, both more historically nuanced and less distracting. For example, they clearly explain the theories regarding the complex history of the Corinthian correspondence and then proceed to interpret the books on the basis on their conclusion that Paul originally wrote the two letters in much the form that we have them today and that the letters were written in the order in which they appear our canon (327-354).

Although I have some reservations about A, G & T's volume (e.g., it is much too long), this volume is much preferred over Drane's comparable volume both for clarity of presentation and quality of content. A, G & T are to be commended for a significant accomplishment. While Drane's book will undoubtedly enjoy wide readership, A, G & T have produced the book that will establish the standard for non-fundamentalist evangelicals for years to come.

Jon Tal Murphree. *Divine Paradoxes: A Finite View of an Infinite God: A Response to Process and Openness Theologies*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1998. 142 pp. ISBN: 0-87509-771-5.

Reviewed by W. Brian Shelton, Toccoa Falls College, Toccoa Falls, Georgia.

Jon Tal Murphree considers the fundamental theological question, What is God like? Openness and Process theologies have recently contested traditional doctrines of God by saying that God, like man, lacks exhaustive knowledge of the future and is incapable of adding to his experiences. Perhaps offering the earliest Arminian response to these theologies, Jon Tal Murphree reminds us that because God is beyond comprehension, our method of study must sometimes allow for a subject that is at times incomprehensible.

Divine Paradoxes is first of all an analysis of God through an examination of the divine attributes. Each chapter explores the paradoxical nature of a given attribute of God by considering how the Bible speaks of his limitlessness—as if it were something comprehensible. This is not “paradoxical” in the sense of “mysterious” or “unexplainable” (necessarily), but refers to a “set of concepts that initially seem to be contradictory but upon closer scrutiny will be understood to be complementary” (13). Murphree structures chapters to highlight the two sides of these paradoxes, asking how each describes the divine ontology. How can God be eternal yet act temporally? Transcendent yet omnipresent? Constant yet appearing to change? Impassible yet affectable? Knowing yet conditional?

One asset of this book is that Murphree puts his M.Div. in league with his M.A. in philosophy to offer a unique undertaking, a dual approach to the two-sided nature of many of God’s attributes. As readers, Murphree invites us to put some of our long-held but incorrect beliefs about God freshly before the record of Scripture. For example, we often think that the biblical understandings of God’s power and ability are the same, so that we are troubled by the apparent “limitations” of the Christian God. But Scripture does not require that God be understood as being capable of performing logical fallacies involving square circles; it is unyielding in declaring God omnipotent and all authoritative—functions of divine power rather than of divine ability.

Divine Paradoxes is also a response to Process and Openness theologies. Says the author: “It is not primarily a polemic against [them].

Rather, it is a positive study of the controversial areas about God that these theologies have raised. And it contains a built-in corrective to what I consider to be extremes in both . . ." (3-4). The author pauses often in his theological analyses to explain or challenge these two contemporary theologies on scriptural, philosophical, or systematic grounds. Chapters 4 and 5 are of particular interest to contemporary open-theism debates. They are entitled "Foreknowledge and Contingency" and "Omniscience and Non-consciousness." Murphree is a classical Arminian who sees God granting libertarian freedom without compromising his sovereignty and omniscience. The author bases God's knowledge of future contingents on the temporal circumstances themselves: "*Determined by* temporal choices rather than *determining* those choices" (48). However, he does not require that God be so much like us that he must be able to add to his experience, or not be aware of a situation in order to act fairly within it. Although all Christians have more in common with these contemporary trends than we might admit, he asserts that their claims have gone too far and thus have reduced inappropriately the concept of God.

Jon Tal Murphree's best chapter is "Sovereignty and Freedom" in which he argues against the stance of open theism (where divine foreknowledge is limited significantly) without adopting the Calvinist position. He suggests that both Calvinist sovereignty and a position of compatibilism use "freedom" imperfectly, so that both lead to determinism. He contributes to our understanding of God when he differentiates between knowledge and consciousness: "[They] are categorically distinct, and the second does not follow the first" (50). Although Murphree affirms divine omniscience with contingency, he suggests that it operates as "non-conscious awareness" in which God blocks off knowledge in order to operate objectively, rather than mysteriously keeping both operable. Whereas Openness denies God's foreknowledge of certain future things, this author believes that God is "selectively aware of known future events" (56). In this regard, Murphree does not exhibit a classical Arminian position in which God knows the future perfectly without limiting it and without ignoring it. All can appreciate the author's effort to reduce the conflict between God's foreknowledge and human free moral decisions while remaining faithful to scripture's portrait of an all-knowing God.

This book fails to offer clear definitions of Openness and Process theologies and does not adequately distinguish between them. Any biblically trained person might long for some exegesis to accompany the bibli-

cal analysis of the divine. These omissions, however, do not detract from the strengths of this work. The author is succinct and precise so that the book is surprisingly easy to read. Murphree is nowhere condescending but humble in his assertions and polite to those he is critiquing, thus remaining faithful to his opening pledge: “Areas of disagreement will be stated in the spirit of Christian fraternity, academic debate and prudent caution” (3). I found the explanation of the philosophical aspects of systematic theology very friendly, additionally so because of the plain language and occasional anecdotes that illustrate the information. With its primary emphasis on understanding God, it is a book suitable for college or seminary students, dedicated laypersons, and pastors who either are undertaking to know the logical side of God or receiving questions about the contemporary theological trend.

The author refreshingly remains faithful to the scriptural portrait of an amazing God. The reverent spirit with which he writes is seen in his conclusion that “one overarching adjective” must be applied to God: “unfathomably mysterious” (131). This book is a tribute to biblical fidelity, rational consistency, and Arminian theology, inviting any interested person to keep the paradoxical sides of God in tension without having to move fully into the Openness or Process theological camps.

Philip Clayton, *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000. 508 pages. ISBN 0-8028-3885-5.

Reviewed by Henry W. Spaulding II, Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN.

Philip Clayton, a professor of philosophy at California State University (Sonoma), has written a massive survey of the philosophical problem of God in modern thought. He could have justifiably entitled the book “The Problem and Possibilities of Metaphysics in Modern Thought” since at every turn he reflects on the conditions of metaphysical reflection in modern philosophy. The book presents the major arguments of the best-known modern philosophers (Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Spinoza, and Fichte) along with lesser-known philosophical voices (Jacobi, Bayle, Horchius, Lami, and Mendelssohn). These along with many other voices compose the fabric of this well written and comprehensive volume. Clayton provides in five hundred plus pages a convincing argument regarding both the possibilities of God-talk in the modern/postmodern era and the usefulness of metaphysics. Perhaps, the greatest importance of the book lies in its recognition that metaphysics is not dead. And if metaphysics is not dead, then it might just be possible for philosophers to talk about God again.

Clayton sets forth his fundamental argument in the preface, namely “that language about God represents a problem with a history that can be reconstructed and evaluated; and that careful analysis, combined with thorough historical scholarship, can provide reasons for preferring some metaphysical and theological views over others” (xi). With this he embarks on an impressive analysis of “Perfect Being Theology” and a “Theology of the Infinite.” He also makes it clear from the beginning that he does not intend to make a sustained argument for one view over another, but rather has interest in “the standards for an adequate treatment of ‘the problem of God’” (xiii). He does this in the conscious awareness that much philosophical reflection in the last century has either dismissed all God-talk or has driven God-talk to the regions of pietistic subjectivity. This book points to the possibility of avoiding both of these fruitless paths.

After surveying the context for modern thought about God, Clayton turns his attention to a sustained and nuanced discussion regarding the

fate of Perfect-Being theology. He looks at the three theistic proofs found in Descartes, “two separate versions of a causal argument. . .and an ontological argument . . .” (92). Clayton observes that all three of these arguments are based upon the idea of a perfect being. This is the central thread of much God-talk in Descartes and others, according to Clayton. He spells out the consequences of this ontology of perfection, noting that such discussion necessitates degrees of reality, monism, and identity in difference (165-169). Each of these raises significant problems for God-talk. According to Clayton, the result of all of this is the standard metaphysical claim in much modern philosophy that God is either provable or God is but a projection. He claims that this is a false dilemma. Part of the way out for Clayton is to begin to see the interconnections between “Perfect Being theology” and discussions of the Infinite.

The discussion continues through Leibniz and then to Kant. Clayton reflects the generally understood philosophical conclusion that everything is transformed after Kant. In other words, does Kant deal a deathblow to metaphysics? The way one answers this question is tied up with what one brings to the discussion. It seems clear that Kant does end the metaphysics of substance, but it is at least possible that Kant reconstructs a metaphysics of regulative ideas. Clayton observes that Kant’s critical philosophy names what may be an unbridgeable division between what we know and what is. He goes on to say, “This fact alone requires a reorientation in the manner in which any theory of God might be interpreted” (275). Clayton contends that Kant struggles with the consequences of a “Perfect Being theology” and contrasts this with his own notion of infinity. This leads to a continuing problem for Kant and those who follow. The fundamental question might be posed as follows: If metaphysics does not reveal genuine knowledge, does that require that metaphysics concerns only fictions? It is in light of this concern that Clayton makes an important statement. Metaphysicians “must as a result become students of religious and scientific theories as well as of the history of metaphysics, dirtying their hands with vocabularies that originally grew out of religious and empirical concerns, [which] may actually enrich the discipline more than it harms it” (380). Clayton names the long shadow of Kant along with his continuing importance for God-talk.

Part III of the book concerns a theology of the infinite. He begins this analysis with Spinoza by observing that “Spinoza’s approach to the God-question is designed to avoid the reliance on theories of perfection

(both medieval and Cartesian) that we have found to be conceptually inadequate” (387). From this it seems clear that, while Clayton is primarily concerned in this book with the standards for God-talk, he sees more possibilities with the infinite than with perfection. This becomes clearer in the latter part of the book. Spinoza is particularly important because he seems to be looking for a way to talk about God being more than the world (infinite) while understanding the need for a relationship to exist between God and the world. This goes back to a comment Clayton makes earlier, “It is now widely accepted that a strict view of divine simplicity must be rejected, since it rules out even contingent relatedness of God to the world” (133). If the perfection of God is the driving force toward the unrelatedness of God, then a theology of the infinite might provide a more fruitful language for God-talk. Clayton points out that it is just this concern that informs much of the work of Lessing (417). It is not that Clayton thinks that Spinoza with his pantheism provides a definitive language for talking about God, but he does see that Spinoza is struggling with the right issue.

Clayton considers the entire problem of modern atheism in this section. This is a very interesting chapter, although the limits of this review preclude a full treatment of it. Clayton makes an interesting comment regarding the issue. He says, “The Spinoza Dispute and the Atheism Dispute, combined with Kant’s attack on metaphysics and the worry that theological language is a human project, spelled the end of the early modern theory of God as an infinitely perfect being” (473). Here Clayton has summarized the problem of modern atheism, that is, the kind of atheism that is born out of the particular arguments and critiques of modern philosophy. This is the challenge of God-talk that needs once again to take a position of importance for philosophers and theologians. The only adequate pathway here is to take up the metaphysical task again. Clayton points to some ways that might provide a way out of the metaphysical “black-out” in the last one hundred years or so. The metaphysics that has been going on in philosophy has not captured the major themes of Western philosophy recently.

Those who read this book will find it to be a worthwhile challenge. For those who want to talk about God using the tools of philosophy (and in particular metaphysics) will find this book a rich resource. Clayton seems to have placed his finger on the nature of the real issue regarding God-talk. The issue concerns how the tools of reason can name the triune

God. A point that receives inadequate attention is the theological construal of the secular which lies at the heart of the problem of God in modern thought. He does make an interesting comment regarding this when he talks about the starting point for modern theistic metaphysics which “points unmistakably to a particular ontological position: the world cannot be fully separate or different from God” (477). Is pantheism or some reconstructed concept of it the only plausible way to talk about God in modern thought? If this is the case, and one could argue that this is where Clayton is leaning, then it might just be that another trajectory for God-talk needs to be envisioned. After reading this important book one is left to consider the importance of seeing the triune life of God as an ontology capable of envisioning a God who is both holy and related to the world. If such can be envisioned, then reason could be understood as a dimension of God’s triune logic along with its language of doxology. Finally, with a Trinitarian ontology one might have the most adequate language for talking about God in our postmodern world. It is holiness theology. If Clayton’s book encourages those within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition to take up the question of God armed with the tools of a Trinitarian ontology, then he will have indeed done a great service for our tradition.

Michael Prior, ed., *They Came and They Saw: Western Christian Experiences of the Holy Land*. London: Melisende, 2000. ISBN 1901764400

Reviewed by Thomas E. Phillips, Colorado Christian University.

This book is both provocative and useful, but it is not what one would normally expect. The title and subtitle will lead many to expect a series of sentimental reflections on experiences like “walking where Jesus walked.” This book, however, is dedicated to understanding the contemporary context in the Holy Land and the nature of Western tourism in that area. Wesleyan/Holiness leaders and groups have been visiting the Holy Land for nearly two centuries and publishing their accounts in a variety of publications. This volume could enhance and provide contexts for the experiences of the next generation of pilgrims.

The common, although unstated, theme which unites the collection is that *seeing* (thus the title, *They Came and They Saw*) the Holy Land is more difficult than is typically assumed. In order to facilitate a closer look at the Holy Land, Prior has assembled a diverse group of eighteen Western Christians who have spent extended periods of time in the Holy Land (primarily Israel and occupied Palestine). Some of the writers (e.g., Rosemary Radford Ruether, Kenneth Cragg, David Burrell, and Donald Wagner) are well-known in their respective fields, while others are relatively obscure figures. The writing is crisp and well-edited throughout and the mixture of voices makes the case more clear. The case is simple and compelling: there is a profound injustice being perpetrated in Palestine by the Israelis, and most Western pilgrimages to Israel and Palestine unwittingly support this injustice.

This injustice is said to be the political, economic, military, and cultural oppression of the Arabs (both Christian and Muslim) who live under the constant tyranny of Israeli military occupation. Several of the essays relay moving first-hand accounts of Western Christians who visited the occupied territories for “academic” investigation and reflection, only to become personally enmeshed in the Arab quest for justice. The autobiographical elements of the book take on a familiar form. A Western Christian goes to the Holy Land with little pre-existing interest in the Arab cause and some vague sense of the story of Israel’s struggles both to create a modern democratic nation from the dusty arid land of Palestine and to overcome the ongoing violence of those who oppose the Jewish state. But when faced with the reality of Israeli corporate punishment, house demolitions, arrest

without trial, physical abuse of political detainees, and economic strangulation in the occupied territories, the writer is forced to reexamine naively held beliefs about the Arabs and about the modern state of Israel.

A closer examination of the situation around them has forced the writers to acknowledge (often reluctantly at first) that Israeli policies toward the Arab populations in Palestine are unjust—and these grave injustices have failed to arouse the conscience of Western Christians. This book is an intentional attempt to raise such consciousness. The authors repeatedly challenge well-established myths like (1) the image of the Jews who died at Masada as valiant defenders of Israel's freedom (an image which contradicts the portrayal of our only written record in Josephus), (2) the idea that the Middle East has always been characterized by religious violence (a characterization which contradicts the archeological record), (3) the fiction that Arabs routinely commit terrorists acts against Israelis and Western tourists (a fiction designed both to hide the fact that the Israelis commit far more *state-sponsored* violence against the Arabs than the Arabs commit against the Israelis and to scare tourists away from contact with Arabs), (4) the image of all Arabs as Muslims (a demonstratively false image which often results in Arabs being viewed in a less sympathetic light), and (5) the dangerous illusion that Christian tourism in the Holy Land can be non-political (an illusion which ignores the fact that the Israeli "authorities" through whom Christian tourists must organize their activities maintain their political, economic and military control over many holy sites in violation of international law).

Throughout the book, the writing is empowered by the pathos of deeply held convictions about the injustice being perpetuated against the Arabs by Zionist policies within Israel. Because these convictions are so pronounced throughout the book, many of the contributors have wrestled deeply with the problem of how one can be anti-Zionist (that is, opposed to the expansion of a Jewish state by military, economic, and political oppression of non-Jews) without becoming anti-Jewish. With appropriate nuance and sensitivity, the authors draw upon the work of Jewish authors like Marc Ellis who argue that modern Zionism is an interpretive construct foreign to classical Judaism and adopted from Christian dispensationalists. Ironically, these roots of Zionism within dispensationalism are emphatically anti-Jewish because dispensational Zionism seeks the establishment and expansion of a Jewish state so that Judaism can be completely abolished in an apocalyptic event.

Travel in Israel and Palestine is not apolitical and to refuse to become involved in local issues is to firmly align oneself with the Israelis and Zionism against the Arabs. To side with oppressed Arabs rather the oppressive Israelis is to adopt a stance in keeping with the spirit of the ancient Israelite prophets who dared dream of peace. Although this book should be read by every person who plans to travel to Israel or Palestine and should be placed in every quality theological library, it is especially appropriate for Wesleyans who have long ago rejected dispensationalism as an inadequate theological model. This book calls for those who have rejected dispensationalism to reject the Zionism derived from it and to begin seeking a just peace within the lands of the Bible. Let me close with one brief, but poignant, example of the prose within this book:

While the presence of tens of thousands of Western Christian tourists and pilgrims in the Holy Land at any one time has great potential for good, ironically, for the most part, it does great harm. That is because most Christians visiting the Holy Land follow an itinerary purposely designed or encouraged by the Israeli government Ministry of Tourism to bring them into contact only with the Jewish Israel, perpetuating the myth of the Zionist dream being fulfilled. . . . [T]ypically itineraries include visiting the Knesset, Yad Vashem, Masada, the Dead Sea, a kibbutz, and an Israeli cultural evening, all under the watchful influence of a Jewish guide. Contact with Palestinians and visits within the Occupied Territories are avoided as much as possible. Even the tourist maps, available free from the government agency, no longer show the international borders of the West Bank, or Syrian Golan Heights. . . . Most tour groups are oblivious of the fact that they will be passing into illegally held “Occupied Territories” on the West Bank, in order to visit places such as the Old City of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho (Stephen R. Sizer, 152).

Clayton Crockett, *A Theology of the Sublime* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001). 141 pages. ISBN 0-415-24094-8.

Reviewed by Henry W. Spaulding II, Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN.

A Theology of the Sublime is about a theological reading of Immanuel Kant. The extent to which the argument is convincing depends upon how much a person wants to believe that Kant continues to be essential for theological work. The book is framed by its first and last sentences. The author begins the book with the following comment, "Because we think, human beings raise theological questions, which is not to say that we necessarily possess answers to these questions" (1). Thus from the very start the author attempts to develop an anthropologically framed theology mixed with "romantic" indeterminacy. His analysis of Kant and the support he brings to this discussion is shaped by his seeming fascination with this dance with darkness. This is made clear by the way Crockett ends the book: "This theology of the sublime, however, situates itself in the interstice between a dissolution of all established orders of thinking and any new, reconstructive thinking, whether understood as an absolute *novum* or a return to a pure past" (112). Between these two comments Crockett presents an impressive analysis of Kant and his interpreters with the goal of proposing the adequacy of a theology of the sublime.

There is much to be said about this small but dense book, but this review can only look at two issues: the critique of Radical Orthodoxy and the proposal of sublimity for understanding Kant. The first is a critical move and the later is constructive, but they are essential to one another if the argument of the book is to be understood. Crockett begins his task by asking about the possibilities for theological reflection in the shadow of postmodernity. He says, "This book, however, attempts to value theological disorientation by taking seriously the Kantian sublime" (17). Therefore, the problem that concerns Crockett is how one can do theology as transcendental and critical. All of this is framed by the unrepresentable. He finds this tension at the heart of Kant and he concludes that it is constitutive of an appropriate theological method.

Given Crockett's appreciation of Kant, it is no surprise that he finds little lasting value in Radical Orthodoxy. He asks, "Why is Kant the fundamental enemy of Radical Orthodoxy" (27)? He answers his own ques-

tion, “Milbank rejects the formlessness which characterizes the sublime in order to return to a pure form of Thomistic or Platonic knowing which manifests the transcendent without any disorientation or negativity” (28). Kant, according to Crockett, requires the sublime and Milbank finds this need to be a telling sign of the nihilism at the heart of secular reason. Crockett observes that on historical grounds the point Milbank wants to make is problematic. He points to a philosophical mistake on the part of Milbank and company because they “fail to grasp the radicality of Kant’s juxtaposition” (30). He further concludes that the theological grounds for the Radical Orthodoxy case are suspect as well, i.e., the Trinity. Crockett’s basic concern is that Radical Orthodoxy is essentially a *Church Dogmatics*. Later in the book he makes the following observation: “representatives of Radical Orthodoxy deplore the subjective turn of modernity and desire that postmodernity represent an abolishing of the subject in order to clear a space for the divine to appear on its own accord. I am suggesting, however, that it is neither credible nor possible to undo such a development and that the only resources honest theologians can petition are ones forged in and through modernity” (108-109). From this his critique of Radical Orthodoxy is clear, but the reader is left to ask if it is either fair or correct. If it is either, then one is left with one of the true inheritances of modernity, the sublime. Can the sublime possibly be enough? It appears that Crockett’s rejection of Radical Orthodoxy is premature and based on a philosophical conviction that is generally less convincing than the object of his critique.

After dismissing Radical Orthodoxy Crockett sets his sights on a more constructive approach with his proposal for a theology of the sublime. He offers a basic analysis of Heidegger’s and Lyotard’s interpretation of Kant, acknowledging that these thinkers have been deeply influenced by Kant and have appropriated him for their own purposes. This leads Crockett back to Kant’s *Critiques* in order to illuminate temporality, subjectivity, and imagination. These three ideas interconnect with one another to provide the motivation for the sublime. It is this sublime that continually resists formalization. According to Crockett, “The sublime is that which, although it is not quite nothing, and can almost be thought, cannot quite be thought, and is represented ‘in me’ despite my inability to bring it to representation” (83). He adds, “The sublime represents terrifying excess, loss of control, and in-breaking of imagination beyond the ability of reason and understanding to bring it to order, which is related to Augustine’s classical

conception of the will” (100). It is this somewhat romantic formed formlessness and disorienting orientation that the reader might find more than a little troubling. This is summed up by Crockett: “Therefore, to the extent that one can locate the sublime, it takes a position anterior to the subject, that is, just before or beyond it” (111). All of this leads Crockett to the conclusion that a theology of the sublime via Kant, Tillich, and even Freud is the most adequate for theological thinking.

After reading the book one will be aware that it represents an enormously interesting attempt to rehabilitate Kant for the postmodern situation. It might read as a sustained philosophical justification for secular reason, thus liberal theology. Most of all, one is left to ask whether this theology can provide a faithful witness to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is a stretch of major proportions to believe that the sublime can provide sufficient ground for an adequate theology. One wonders on another plane if this theology, like that of Mark C. Taylor and Thomas J. J. Altizer, illustrates the end of the road for all theologies definitively shaped by modernity.

A Theology of the Sublime is a serious book that deserves the attention of those within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. It gives the reader an opportunity to engage the monumental philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Beyond this, it is worth reading because it provides a rare look at a way of doing theology far from the normal paths of holiness theology. We are left to realize that it is not so much the sublime as the holy which drives the holiness tradition. Therefore, it not the formless form, but the one who says, “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out” (Isa 6: 7) that provides the vision for theology.

Marianne Palmer Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000. Pp. 230. \$18.00. Paperback.

Reviewed by Thomas E. Phillips, Colorado Christian University, Lakewood, CO.

In recent years New Testament scholarship has given particular attention to the genre of Acts. Debate has focused on the three categories of history, novel, and biography. Although the consensus of scholarship has classified Acts as history, this classification is generally acknowledged to be a loose fit. Now with this book, Bonz has made a powerful case for consideration of a fourth option: ancient epic.

Bonz argues that the reason that Acts fits so loosely into the genre of ancient historiography is because it is not historiography. Rather than being history comparable to that composed by classical writers like Thucydides, Tacitus, and Herodian, for Bonz, Acts is a foundational epic of early Christianity comparable to Virgil's *Aeneid*. Bonz is aware of the significant differences between Virgil's Latin poetry and Luke's Greek prose and she seeks to overcome these differences of form by arguing that Luke probably knew Virgil's work in translation as Greek prose.

Although many readers will remain unconvinced by Bonz's attempts to explain away the significant formal differences between *Aeneid* and Acts, her analysis of the similarities in content and purpose will prove convincing to many. She argues that the content of epics, unlike that of historiography, was intentionally idealized and their purpose, unlike that of historiography, was inherently religious. Bonz's point is particularly well made in her discussion of the irony in Gregory Sterling's recent defense of Acts as historiography. Sterling argues that Acts is historiography, but that its history is essentially false because Luke's theological interests prompted him to present the church in historically inaccurate and overly idealized terms (pp. 184-86). Bonz argues that such idealization and lack of concern for historical accuracy are characteristics of epic, not historiography. For Bonz, epic, not history, was essentially driven by religious purposes and characteristically contained fictionalized and idealized portrayals of heroic persons from the past in order to fulfill those religious purposes. This argument will be persuasive to many who are already inclined to doubt the historical accuracy of Acts.

Bonz further draws the connection between *Aeneid* and Acts by explaining that "the author known to us as 'Luke' was one of those

authors upon whom Virgil's epic of Roman origins and divinely guided destiny had a profound influence" (p. 39). Whereas ancient histories eschewed any emphasis on divine interventions, miracles, and individual heroes, Luke followed the epics by including such content. And in his purpose, Luke likewise paralleled the epics. For just as Virgil created an epic to establish the divinely ordained origins of Rome's emerging greatness, Luke also created an epic to establish the divinely ordained origins of the church's emerging greatness. Luke's adoption of the epic genre explains why Acts presents "an idealized and, from the perspective of extant historical evidence, largely mythologized version of the origins and early development of the church" (p. 188). Bonz's clear rejection of Acts as historical in any literal sense leads her to seek the truth of Acts at other levels. She explains that "Luke sought to convey what he perceived to be the underlying truth of Christian origins: its divinely mandated mission, earthly trials, and divinely ordained destiny of continued growth within the largely pagan empire of Rome" (p. 188). Few will doubt the accuracy of this characterization of Luke's purpose, but many will doubt that Luke could only fulfill this purpose by employing the genre of epic. Some will argue that Luke could have accomplished this purpose within the genre of history.

This book is as significant as it is well written. If its conclusions become widely accepted among New Testament scholars, it will have profound implications for anyone wishing to use the traditions in Acts as the bases for historical reconstructions of early Christianity. Even if its conclusions are not widely accepted, this volume will prove rewarding reading for those interested in the theological purposes behind Acts. Much of what Bonz argues as the purpose of Acts could be equally true even if her designation of genre ultimately proves unconvincing, as I suspect it will.

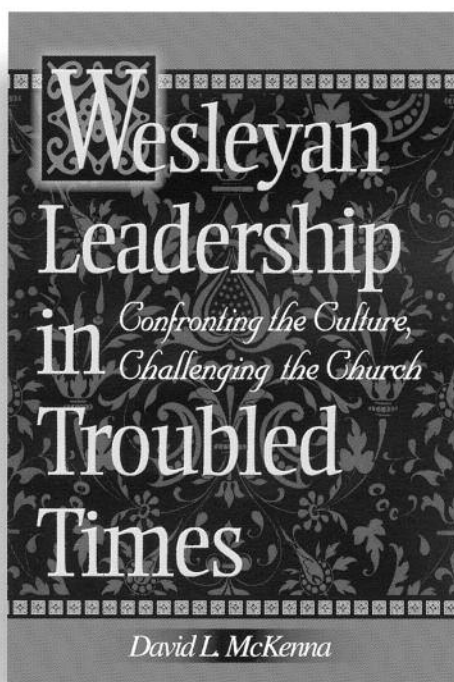
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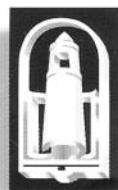
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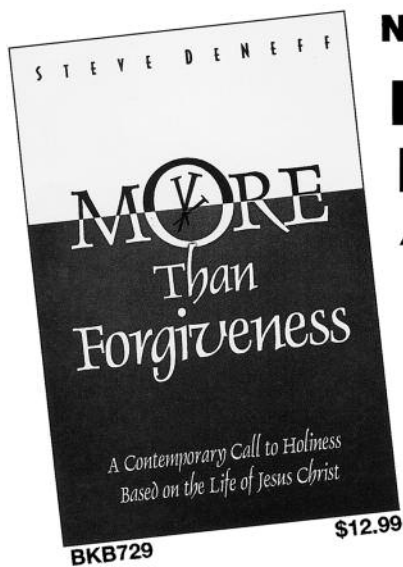
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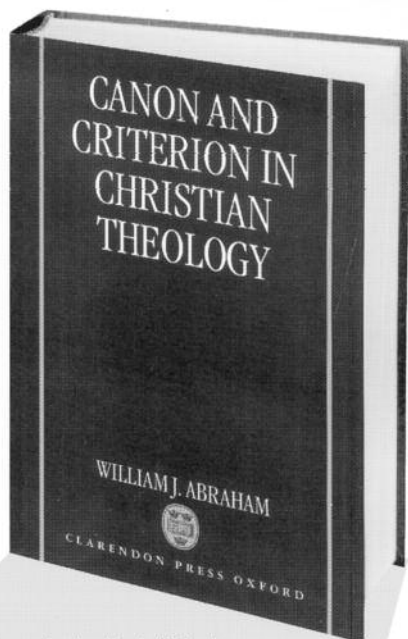
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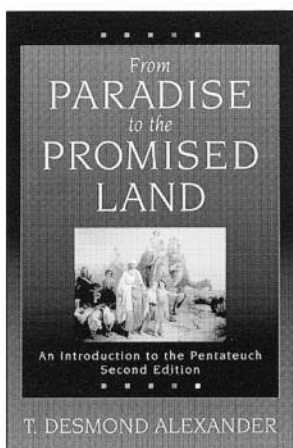


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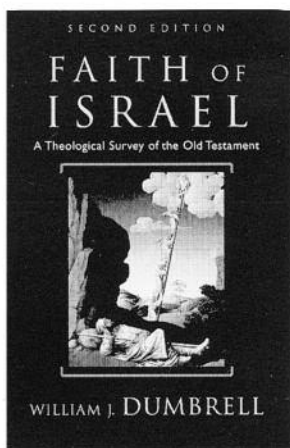
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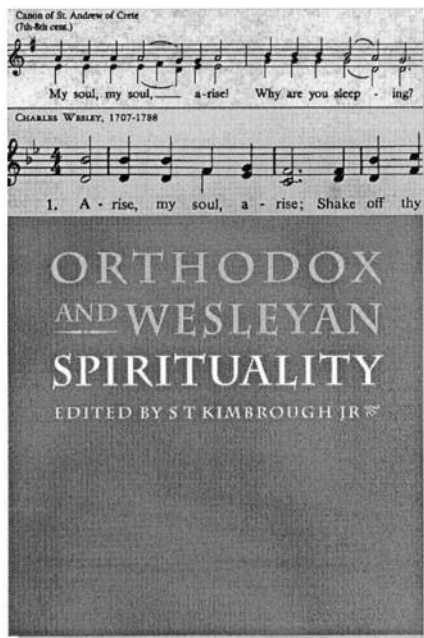
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