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Presidential Address:

**BELIEVING IN THE (CONTEMPORARY) WESLEYAN MODE:
The Faith of Our Children**

by
Wayne McCown

I was troubled by what they were saying. It had been a good week. God's Spirit had been present, graciously working. Many young people had responded. Now, on the final night of the camp, as we gathered around the fire, they shared their testimonies. One by one, they came forward. Some had made a new decision, to follow Christ. The majority, however, testified to a renewal in their Christian faith.

Soon, a common theme began to emerge, to my dismay. Again and again, one after another, they described their experience in the following manner: This is now the third (or fourth, or fifth) camp I have attended. Each time I have been saved. But then I have backslidden. Now I have come back to Christ, and I hope I can really follow Him all the way this year. Please pray for me.

That night I was awakened to the problematic aspects of believing in the (contemporary) Wesleyan mode. We find it much easier, of course, to see and critique the logical and practical consequences of Calvinism or Pentecostalism (or some caricature of them). But we also need to reckon with the formative influence of Wesleyanism (or its practical outworkings) in the lives of our children.

Contemporary Wesleyan youth reflect the influence of our thinking, preaching, and acting. And they struggle with some of the problems they have inherited from us. On their behalf, I wish to present and discuss a couple of major ones, for your careful and prayerful consideration.

But first, I should identify my sources of information. Some are bibliographical, and it is a privilege to direct your attention to some good materials. More important in this instance, however, are two sources of personal first-hand information: (1) The written spiritual autobiographies of nearly 200 students who have taken my course on Christian Holiness in the past three years; (2) A recent survey of the faculty, staff, and students of Western Evangelical Seminary: they were asked to describe the aspects of their Christian religious experience which have proved beneficial and those problematic in their personal development.²

First, the good news. Without exception, our young people express appreciation for the role accorded the Bible in the Wesleyan movement. They applaud Bible preaching, teaching, and study; some wish they had received more. They also respond positively to the emphasis on personal religious experience and practical Christian holiness.

Frequently, they express their appreciation for the fellowship of the church, the warmth and love shown them. Their experiences in worship are more varied: some evaluate the past as good; others wish it were better. All express an interest in improving the quality of worship in our churches. They also want our churches to be evangelical, many seeing a need for improvement in the area of outreach. Some hope to see, too, a more profound social consciousness and concern.

But, these are not major problem areas.

Revivalism and Guilt

Guilt is. The spiritual autobiographies of our young people reveal the fact that guilt is a major problem, especially during the teen years. Almost all, it appears, wrestle with it; some are overwhelmed by it. It is a restraint; it is a motivator. It preserves many from gross sin; it drives some to considerations of suicide.

While guilt may be the common fate of teenagers today, certain Wesleyan emphases seem to exacerbate the problem. "Perfectionism" (as they call it) posits standards too high for them to attain and/or to maintain. Their consequent failure is not alleviated, but rather complicated by their developing awareness of adult "hypocrisy" (as they term it).

Many go through repeated cycles (often bearing their self-disappointment stoically, silently, tragically). From the mountain peak of high idealism and self-sacrifice, they descend by way of a failure here and another there, to the valley of guilt and the slough of despond. Religious and self-doubt, then, must be conquered once again — a tremendous feat, which requires the muster of great courage and resolve. Usually that occurs in the context of a revival atmosphere (such as the camp meeting), and is accompanied by powerful emotional feelings.

This process produces some hardy believers, but also some battle-scarred. And, most tragically, on each dip of this roller-coaster ride, some fall off. They are lost to Christ and the church, many never to be heard from again — although I have talked with some who were salvaged later, by God's grace.

"A warning is perhaps in order here," says V. Bailey Gillespie, in his excellent study on *Religious Conversion and Personal Identity*.

The leaders of the church and church schools should be careful not to supply an environment too conducive to change based on the obvious observable phenomena such as crying, stress, emotionalism, manipulation, etc. Change within this context is coercive and denies freedom and individuality which real conversion and identity experiences demand. The goal is to see changed lives because of an encounter with the God who is holy — motivated by God and not by man.³

Later, Gillespie adds, ". . . since personal identity is found within value-

laden experiences and choices, it is important that the materials used in this kind of format as well generate those supreme values and beckon man to become religious rather than to force him into a mold which he will later wish to demolish." 4

Peter L. Berger is reported to have declared: "To have a conversion experience is nothing much. The real thing is to be able to keep on taking it seriously; to retain a sense of its plausibility..." 5

William James in his famous work on *The Varieties of Religious Experience* wrote: ". . . to say that a man is 'converted' means . . . that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual center of his energy."6 The goal is not Christian conformity, but a God-centered life.

Horace Bushnell, in his classic volume on *Christian Nurture*, delivered a strident critique which we have dismissed too easily as theologically biased. The fact of the matter is we have failed our children at this point. Bushnell contends with those of our ilk:

Again there is another and different way in which parents meaning to be Christian, fall into the ostrich nurture without being aware of it. They believe in what are called revivals of religion, and have a great opinion of them as being, in a very special sense, the converting times of the gospel. They bring up their children, therefore, not for conversion exactly, but, what is less dogmatic and formal, for the converting times.7

Bushnell opines, "To bring up a family for revivals of religion requires alas! about the smallest amount of consistency and Christian assiduity."8

In my judgment (and my students agree) it is not a question of Christian nurture vs. spiritual revival. What is needed is not one rather than the other, but both. There is need of both a genuine experience of personal conversion (not trumped up), and a discipling relationship with a mature adult believer (see further below). We cannot simply presume that because a child has responded to an altar invitation and given testimony to a change of heart, that he/she is therefore "saved" (even though that may be the terminology used). That demarcates only a new beginning.

As I have reported, many of our young people, after a presumed conversion experience, face a long struggle. There are typically many threads in the tapestry of that struggle: the expectations of Wesleyan perfectionism; the developing sense of self responsibility and identity; peer pressure; physical hormonal changes which introduce powerful sexual feelings, moral and cognitive development; etc. Especially difficult to handle during these years — youth is idealistic — are personal shortcomings and failures. They can prove devastating, viewed up close.

Customarily, they also produce feelings of personal guilt — sometimes real, frequently false.

According to Lowell Noble, Professor of Social Science at Spring Arbor College, Western psychology and Western theology generally have over-emphasized guilt. More particularly, this might be said of Wesleyanism, insofar as guilt is used to manipulate people.

"Not all cultures are as guilt oriented as our own," says Noble. "In fact, Western culture seems to be an exception to the rule."9 It is his thesis, that

since we are so inclined to guilt rather than shame, "the guilt concept has been extended to cover part of what the Bible and other cultures label shame."¹⁰

"Guilt, whether real or false, is a central concern of the overly individualistic approach to man." Guilt is essentially a legal term. Thus, the emphasis on guilt as a motivator, "can easily degenerate into an impersonal legalism concerned more with the act rather than with the person."¹²

Shame, on the other hand, handles the social dimension better and is more concerned with "failure to be what one should be." Gerhart Piers, in his study on *Shame and Guilt* declares: "Whereas guilt is generated whenever a boundary (set by Super-Ego) is touched or transgressed, shame occurs when a goal (presented by the Ego-Ideal) is not being reached."¹⁴ It thus describes not sin but shortcoming. The ultimate function of shame is "to reveal what is wrong and to prod a person to do what is honorable."¹⁵

I think it would be helpful to our young people and healthy for Wesleyan theology to develop a better definition of guilt, distinguishing it from what may more properly be diagnosed and handled as shame. Two additional reasons may be adduced: (1) The Scriptures use the term "guilt" primarily in an objective sense, to describe a state of culpability before God rather than adolescent "feelings" of guilt;¹⁶ (2) As Helen Lynd notes in her study *On- Shame and the Search for Identity*: when personal failure is internalized as guilt, it frequently involves "a sort of haggling anxiety, a weighing of pros and cons over a period of time."⁷ It is this prolonged and anxious haggling with feelings of guilt (more properly shame) that constitutes such a problem for our young people: I'm OK; no, I'm not. I have fallen short of expectations. I have disappointed both myself and others. Therefore, I am a sinner, and need to be saved. Next time I will try to do better. Or should I just give up, and forget religion altogether?

Drop-out and Discipleship

Drop-out is a major problem during the teen years. Professor Donald Joy of Asbury Theological Seminary published in 1972 a significant research report titled "Children, Salvation, and Drop Out." The study was based on a random probe involving a sample of almost 6,000 persons in five conferences of the Free Methodist Church. The resultant data and profile ought to disturb us.

Joy comments on the picture which emerged: "We can only conclude from this a pattern of success with children of grades one through three and from the population peak which begins to flatten in grades four through six, that the churches must be missing their way in attracting, holding, and meeting the needs of the emerging adolescent and young adult."¹⁸ Joy admits there may be multiple causes for these substantial losses, some beyond our control. "Nevertheless," he asserts, "we are obligated to ask whether our handling of childhood and adolescent needs in the church may be producing excessive losses for irrelevant reasons."¹⁹

Helen Hirsch, Professor of Christian Education at Houghton College, states as a respondent: "I immediately identified with the article, because the things it deals with have been perplexing me for some time, both in classroom situations and in things I have faced personally in working with CYC groups, in VBS, and in the regular church C.E. programs. I observe,

too, that the church generally does not seem to do much about it."²⁰ "In addition," says Joy, "local churches evidently rarely, if ever, inquire how well they are managing their most important resource — a phenomenon as incredible as learning that the local bank directors have not been studying what is happening to money."²⁰

Don't we care? Why are we so lackadaisical about such an important matter? Don't we have some responsibility for the spiritual welfare of our own young people?

I have a specific suggestion to offer, which represents a corrective, an antidote, a remedy to the malaise which affects us. It is not really my own idea. It is, rather, another observable thread in the spiritual autobiographies of our young people. Let me paraphrase their common plea for you: If only someone had helped me. I was obviously struggling, but no one in the church seemed to care. All I needed was someone to listen, to answer my questions, to help me understand some things. A little personal encouragement from some adult would have gone a long ways. I could have been spared a lot of stumbling, pain and heartache. It would not have taken much effort or time. All I needed was someone to pray with me, and keep me on track.

Many of our young people complain (sometimes bitterly): *No one ever followed through.* While they received special attention and counsel in their altar experiences, in between times they were on their own. They lacked an ongoing relationship which could sustain them. A problem had to assume critical proportions before it could be addressed.

"I would like to see," one of our young people wrote me, "more adult-youth discipling type relationships for stability and growth in youth"—"and adults," he added parenthetically.²²

That is a missing ingredient in our ministry to youth — and adults, we may add parenthetically. Allan Coppedge has an excellent essay on "Holiness and Discipleship" in the *Asbury Seminarian*, Fall 1980. It is the first published article of its kind on this subject, to my knowledge. Tucked away in the footnotes are several telling concessions.

On the subject of discipleship in the Gospels, Coppedge cites several significant works. But, there is only one written by a Wesleyan: Robert Coleman's *Master Plan of Evangelism*, published in 1963.²³

A number of more recent books, as you know, deal with the process of discipling in a contemporary setting. Coppedge describes nine which are especially helpful "Unfortunately," he hastens to add, "none of these authors write from a Wesleyan perspective, and therefore, the dynamic impact the Wesleyan-Arminian theological position ought to have upon the strategy for making disciples does not receive the attention it deserves."²⁴ He does note, however, that the Free Methodists have developed a manual for use by- local churches, titled *Decision to Discipleship*. 2S

Coppedge laments, in regard to his subject, "Far too little attention has been given on the inter-relationship of sanctification and discipleship."²⁶ For an introduction, he recommends a chapter in Richard Taylor's *Disciplined Life*.²⁷ A more recent work titled *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges of the Navigators he commends as useful.²⁸ But, typically, he must add: "Since Bridges does not write from the Wesleyan tradition, he

misses the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit as well as the interaction between entire sanctification and discipleship."²⁹

That's our dilemma. And, of course, there are consequences which ensue. "It may well be," asserts Coppedge, "that failure to give proper attention to making disciples as a complement to preaching sanctification is the reason that so many do not retain their experience of sanctifying grace, while others do not seem to be able to make real spiritual progress after consecrating their lives to God's sanctifying Spirit."³⁰

Morton Kelsey, in a superb address on "Leading Others on the Spiritual Path," describes four essential elements of mature Christianity "First of all," he says, "if we are going to lead anyone into a vital Christianity, we must know the Christian tradition."³¹ "The second thing we must have is a critical intelligence." "There is a third element essential to a mature Christianity — one which is often neglected . . . --namely, the development of one's own religious experience."³³ "If we are going to lead another person in the spiritual life," Kelsey later adds, "we must pay attention to our own spiritual life. The blind cannot lead the blind."³⁴ And, "there is a fourth element, again only recently appreciated in the Church. If we are going to communicate the Christian gospel, we must know something about how human beings function."³⁵

Some may believe that the spiritual problems of our youth would be solved, if only they could experience the reality of entire sanctification. I do not think so. They struggle with that, too. Don Joy has concluded it is developmentally unlikely to occur before age 23.³⁶ Maybe; I am not sure on that point.³⁷ But I do know it takes more than an altar experience, a crisis or two, to make a saint out of a teenager.³⁸

NOTES

- 1 The present essay represents the presidential address as delivered on November 5, 1981 at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky The topic was selected in coordination with the theme of the 1981 Annual Meeting. The other papers presented (and published here) address other facets of the theme.
- 2 The author's wife, Darlene McCown, Ph.D. in Child Development, has served as a consultant in the preparation of this paper.
- 3 V. Bailey Gillespie, *Religious Conversion and Personal Identity* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1979), p. 220 (italics added for emphasis).
- 4 Ibid. (italics added for emphasis).
- 5 This quotation constitutes the frontispiece to Chapter 1 of Gillespie's study.
- 6 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Mentor Books, 1958), p. 162.
- 7 Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1888), p. 62.
- 8 Ibid.

- 9 Lowell Noble, "Shame Versus Guilt: A New Framework for Evangelism and Fellowship in Wesleyanism," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 6 (Spring, 1971), p. 55
- 10 Ibid, p. 56.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid., p. 57
- 13 Ibid., (italics original).
- 14 Gerhart Piers and Milton B. Singer, *Shame and Guilt: A Psychoanalytic and Cultural Study* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1953), p. 11.
- 15 Noble, *op. cit.*, 57.
- 16 See *ibid*, pp.55-56,59-60; cf. Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), II,
- 17 Helen Lynd, *On Shame and The Search for Identity* (New York Science Editions, 1958), p. 49.
- 18 Donald M. Joy, "Children, Salvation, and Drop Out," *Asbury Seminarian* 27 (October, 1972), p. 20.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid. "Responses," p. 33.
- 21 Ibid, p. 20.
- 22 Chris Holmes, "My Christian Experience: A Critique," An unpublished survey response (Portland, Oregon: Dean's Office, Western Evangelical Seminary, 1981).
- 23 Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1963).
- 24 Allan Coppedge, "Holiness and Discipleship," *Asbury Seminarian* 35 (Fall 1980), p.97.
- 25 *Decision to Discipleship* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Light and Life Men International, 1977).
- 26 Ibid, p. 96.
- 27 Richard Taylor, *The Disciplined Life* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill, 1962), pp. 48-62.
- 28 Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1978).
- 29 Coppedge, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
- 30 Ibid, p. 92 (italics added for emphasis).
- 31 Morton T. Kelsey, "Leading Others on the Spiritual Path," *Asbury Seminarian* 34 (October, 1979), p. 33.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid., p. 34.
- 34 Ibid., p. 35

35 Ibid., p. 34.

36 Donald M. Joy, "Human Development and Christian Holiness," *Asbury Seminarian* 31 (April, 1976), p. 23.

37 Cf. James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 209: "Much of the health that comes from such experiences derives from this unique transcendent relationship to the ordinary course of human development." (The author, who holds a Ph.D. from Harvard, has done post-doctoral studies at Piaget's Institute in Geneva.) See also Cathy Stonehouse, "Human Development and Sanctification," an unpublished paper presented to the Study Commission on Doctrine (Winona Lake, Indiana: Board of Bishops, Free Methodist Church, 1981), p. 16: "A person may commit himself totally to the control of the Holy Spirit at the various levels of moral development."

38 After presentation of this paper at the 1981 Annual Meeting, Dr. Herbert Livingston of Asbury Theological Seminary informed me of a D.Min. thesis recently approved by the faculty. On November 6, 1981, by special privilege of the library staff, I was able to review Charles C. Lake's study, *The Biblical Basis for Discipleship in the Local Church*. Early in the treatment Lake laments, "A survey of contemporary discipleship literature will reveal *a serious lack of biblical basis*" (p. 4). Unfortunately (and surprisingly), in seeking to exposit an "adequate" model, Lake fails to consider — in any way whatsoever—the relation of discipleship to sanctification, holy living, and/or Wesleyan theology generally. Near the end of his study, however, he does state: "Emphasis on discipleship should be given at least equal, if not greater importance than the current emphasis on evangelism" (p. 99).

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY IN A WESLEYAN MODE

by
H. Ray Dunning

In analyzing our topic, it becomes apparent that there are two issues which need to be addressed at the outset. There is first of all the matter of doing systematic theology. We do not need to give an extensive elaboration here but it is of the utmost importance that we understand what it is we are about. I am interpreting the phrase to refer to an activity which should be distinguished from both Biblical theology and historical theology, and-perhaps depending on definitions-dogmatics as well. I personally would subscribe to the view of Biblical theology which defines it as "an inductive descriptive discipline, synthetic in approach, which on the basis of a grammatico-historical study of the Biblical text seeks to set forth in its own terms and in its full structural unity the theology expressed in the Bible."¹ This is to distinguish the discipline from a theology which is Biblical. In that sense, all theology ought to be Biblical theology, but that is where the rub comes.

I am also distinguishing systematic theology from historical theology in the sense that, in our context, it is something different from scrutinizing the documents with an intellectual microscope to determine what Mr. Wesley himself taught on various and sundry topics. That is not to say that this is either unimportant or irrelevant to our task. In fact, I would suggest that it is indispensable. The work of the historian provides a substantial backdrop for the theologian, especially when his work is wholistically integrated and interpreted. It is important for the Wesleyan theologian what Wesley said in detail, but not ultimately important.

If we define dogmatics as the study of creeds or denominational articles of faith-and I grant this is probably not your definition-then "systematic theology" is different from this discipline as well. Such an enterprise is certainly worthy as is all study of tradition as a resource for "theologizing" but finally tradition must be brought under the judgment of theological adequacy and the Biblical Word. We must avoid falling into the trap so delightfully described by Helmut Thielicke as guarding the ashes rather than tending the flame.²

Let me suggest a tentative definition of systematic theology as "the attempt to interpret the faith in a wholistic way in continuous dialog with

the authoritative sources of wisdom on the one hand and with the contemporary situation on the other, seeking constantly to be true and faithful to the 'faith once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3) while addressing man and his need in an idiom which communicates." This is methodologically different from the understanding expressed in some quarters that systematic theology is a logical task of organizing propositions divinely revealed in a disorganized form.

In connection with attempting to define the discipline of doing theology it seems pertinent to me to note here that in a Wesleyan setting this is not a task for a "lone ranger." Given the Wesleyan understanding of the communal nature of the Christian faith, I am committed to the conviction that "doing theology" is a dialogic enterprise carried on within the community of faith including both scholars and laymen. It is, in other words, not an autonomous discipline where the theologian does his work in independence of the checks and balances which the community provides. On the other hand, neither is it heteronomous in the sense that certain "authoritative" theologians or ecclesiastics impose their ideas upon that community. Within this limiting context the scholar must be free to pursue his explorations without fear of reprisal so long as he is properly committed to the sources of theological authority. I should perhaps qualify this by saying that I respect implicitly the authority of the scholar vis-a-vis technical questions.

Further exegesis of the topic reveals the second issue: that of a Wesleyan mode or perspective. This idea raises a couple of questions: (1) the matter of perspectival theology and (2) the question of the substance of a Wesleyan mode of thinking. Why not approach the Biblical data objectively? Is it not the case that one should cast aside his presuppositions and approach the Biblical text in an objective manner? Even to raise these questions reminds one of the ghost of Leopold von Ranke whose 19th century school of historiography chased the will-of-the-wisp of writing history "as it really is."

Apropos to this point is the incisive analysis of Robert K. Johnson in his hard-hitting book, *Evangelicals at an Impasse*. He here calls attention to the fact that "Evangelicals, all claiming a common Biblical norm, are reaching contradictory theological formulations on many of the major issues they address..."³ This highlights the significant truth that the crisis of evangelicalism is the task of transplanting Biblical authority into practice in one's constructive theology. The chief issue is hermeneutics rather than some particular theory of Biblical authority. This is the point Donald Bloesch is hammering home when he reiterates that Jehovah's Witnesses, the Christadelphians, the Mormons and the Unitarian Pentecostals all contend for Biblical inerrancy.'

The ideal of a study of scripture without the coloring of a pre-understanding is challenging and should be constantly pursued. However, we must recognize it as-an "impossible possibility" and strive to avoid allowing our pre-understanding to pervert the meaning of the text in the task of exegesis. We should determinedly seek to bring the light of scripture to bear upon those presuppositions with which we read the scripture in a relation of reciprocity between premise and data. The most crucial danger is from the possibility of our not being aware that we have presuppositions.

As I often tell my students, the truly educated person is not one without presuppositions, but one who knows what his presuppositions are. We are conditioned by our own perspectives but not imprisoned by them.

John Jefferson Davis, in a perceptive essay on "contextualization and the nature of theology" has pointed out that "the very variety of theological systems within the evangelical tradition alone, all claiming an equally high regard for the authority of scripture, is in itself an indication that there are factors beyond the text itself which shape the gestalt of the system."⁵ He concludes that there is an inescapable element of personal judgment which shapes the theologian's vision, as it does the artist's or scientist's.

The bottom line of all this is to suggest that it is legitimate to posit a particular point of view and recognize that there is and for us perhaps ought to be a Wesleyan way of reading Scripture and that it should be a self-conscious undertaking. The "Catholic" side of Wesley would support this positive evaluation of the role of tradition in the theological task.

The question to which we must now address ourselves is the substance of such a perspective. I am suggesting that we are here concerned with something more comprehensive than a Wesleyan teaching on this or that particular doctrinal item, but more profoundly, a distinctive point of view which will serve as a norm for the entire spectrum covered by systematic theology. The assumption here is that systematic theology is only possible when it is developed in the light of a controlling "norm" (Tillich).

The central focus of Wesley's own teaching was soteriology, all his work was laid in tribute to this one end. That might lead one to think that the Wesleyan doctrine of salvation was his distinctive teaching and this is not altogether wide of the mark as we will soon see. Wesley's conservative successors have commonly given their attention to this aspect of his thought thus leaving the impression of a fairly general consensus about the centrality of this complex of doctrines.

However, the disturbing thing to me is that the Wesleyan soteriology (with different nuances of development perhaps) has been grafted onto significantly non-Wesleyan theological trees. Timothy Smith, in *Called Unto Holiness* has pointed out the wedding of Wesleyan perfectionism with a Disciples' ecclesiology in one group that eventually became a part of the Church of the Nazarene (p. 154). Donald Dayton, if I properly interpret some of his work is at least suggesting that the combining of Wesleyan holiness with the Oberlin theology is a somewhat mismatched union. Clearly that was Paul Bassett's point in a paper on the development of Holiness Theology in the 19th century published in the *Methodist History, A.M.E.-Zion Review* some years ago. I, myself, pointed out in a paper to this society the incongruity of the widely prevalent joining of Wesleyan theology with Dispensationalism. An interesting case in point where this "coincidence of opposites" operates in reverse has recently come to my attention. Daniel Fuller, in his book *Gospel and Law* has worked his way, via painstaking exegesis of relevant passages, out of both Dispensationalism and Covenant theology to a thoroughly Wesleyan position on the relation of gospel and law. But in the latter part of the work, he still clings to Reformed presuppositions, apparently unaware that they are logically

incompatible with the first part and theologically cancel out his exegetical findings there. It occurred to me that while the careful exegetical work could be received gratefully by the Wesleyan as supporting his point of view, nonetheless if the Biblical text had been read originally from the Wesleyan perspective, any adequate English translation would have appeared naturally and easily to teach the understanding to which Dr. Fuller had apparently struggled manfully from another perspective.

The list of mixed marriages could doubtless be multiplied many times over. This phenomenon highlights the need for identifying a distinctively Wesleyan norm which will provide the perspective from which we can develop a full-orbed, consistently integrated, coherently developed, systematically adequate Wesleyan theology.

My proposal for such a norm would look something like this: At the center would stand, as previously suggested, the doctrine of salvation conceptualized as justification by grace through faith and sanctification by grace through faith related as "two foci of an ellipse." I think this imagery most adequately captures the relationship between the two basic themes of Wesley's teaching.

In an address presented to the Drew Conference celebrating the commencement of the publication of the Oxford Edition of the Works of John Wesley, Professor Albert C. Outler argued much the same point. His thesis was that Wesley's place in the Christian tradition was vouchsafed by his "distinctive undertaking to integrate 'faith alone' with 'holy living' in an authentic dialectic."⁶

If justification is interpreted as the center of a circle, the practical consequence tends to be antinomianism as Wesley perceived to be the case with Luther; if sanctification is seen as the center of a circle, the result tends to be moralism or legalism as Wesley felt was the case with William Law.⁷

Wesley, himself, it seems to me, consistently maintained a balanced relation between the two, a balance epigrammatically embodied in his favorite scriptural formula of "faith working by love" with which he opposed the Thomistic-Catholic formula of "faith formed by love" and balanced the Lutheran formula of "faith formed by Christ." This seems to be the upshot, on the positive side, of Cell's famous analysis that Wesley's position was a unique synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace and the Catholic ethic of holiness.

This balancing of justification and sanctification also provides a clue to something I have felt for some time but have not felt competent to assert, something which Professor Outler in his paper insisted on also, namely that Wesley stands in a *via media* relation to Eastern and Western Christian thought. Outler's words are worth quoting in part: "Over the course of Christian thought about the mystery of salvation . . . one may see two great contrasting perspectives. They have always been in unstable tension and when either has succeeded in obscuring the other, the results have been debilitating. One has been more largely associated with what we have come to call Latin Christianity; the other is more characteristically Eastern and Greek. The code words, in Latin Christianity, have been 'pardon,' 'acquittal,' 'remission,' 'final glory,' etc.; in Greek Christianity: 'forgiveness,' 'reconciliation,' 'participation,' 'perfection.' Latin Christianity has been

dominated by forensic images, metaphors from the law courts: Greek Christianity has been fascinated by visions of ontological 'participation in God:'...' His observation on this fact was that "any Protestant theologian who, by intention and partial achievement has grasped the vital unity of both Pardon and Participation motifs is at least as relevant for our times as most other spokesmen for more disjunctive systems." "Wesley, in my judgment," he averred, "grasped this vital unity firmly."⁸

It is my suspicion that perhaps due to the dominance of the Reformed tradition among conservative theologians in our culture, we have latched on to the Latin side of Wesley's thought and attempted to develop our theology within this perspective which makes it oftentimes more Calvinist than Wesleyan, especially in our Atonement theories. Leo Cox is surely correct when he says that Wesley's "ideas on sin, grace, justification and sanctification lead one to believe that a Wesleyan conception of the Atonement must differ somewhat from a traditional view."⁹ It would suggest to me that a Wesleyan view of the Atonement would combine a balanced relation between the incarnation and the crucifixion, involving both in an organic interrelationship rather than stressing exclusively the crucifixion as Latin Christianity has tended to do.

When you combine this possibility with the fact that many Wesleyans have also been exclusively preoccupied with sanctification which in Wesley would be most at home in his Eastern side, you may have a clue to certain ambiguities which have developed. This is only a programmatic statement and I would propose it as a heuristic comment hoping to recruit some help in exploring this frontier (at least to me it is a frontier).

The putting of justification/sanctification at the heart of the Wesleyan perspective reflects Wesley's own soteriological concerns and makes them the heart of theology into which all tributaries flow. Colin Williams and others rightly call attention to the point that Wesley was only peripherally concerned with speculative theology. The "fact" of the Divine-Human Christ, the "fact" of the Trinity, etc., were all secure but the particular "explanation" of the fact was a matter not to be preoccupied with-except, as Williams says, "where the true living knowledge of Christ (was) actually at stake."¹⁰ This would not, it seems to me, require the Wesleyan theologian to be a "folk" theologian but it would provide him with a benchmark by which to evaluate the doctrinal formulations with which he concerns himself.¹¹

Now we must enhance our proposed norm by adding an encompassing concept to provide the setting within which the dialect of justification/sanctification is developed. This would clearly be *prevenient grace*. To say that this is an important distinctive in a Wesleyan perspective would be an immense understatement. The whole work of salvation is carried on within the context of *prevenient grace* and even as thus limited, it provides the "hair" which divides Wesley from Calvinism. This aspect of his thought has been developed ad infinitum and needs no further elaboration on my part in its soteriological dimensions. However, what I would like to propose is that *prevenient grace* be extrapolated into an epistemological and an ontological principle. Wesley himself gave a few clues in this direction as Charles Rogers has pointed out in his Ph.D. dissertation on "The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John Wesley" (Duke, 1967).

While I cannot give a fully developed treatment of all the ramifications of this proposal in this paper since that would be to present a systematic theology, let me suggest a few pointers. If Prevenient Grace is seen as such a principle, it would lead to the position that God is not only first in the *ordo essendi* of doctrines as traditionally accepted, but also first in the *ordo cognoscendi*. This would imply that knowledge of God is immediate rather than inferential and place Wesleyan theology in the philosophical tradition of Plato rather than Aristotle and in the theological tradition flowing from it which would include Augustine, Bonaventure, John Baillie, Paul Tillich and so on. Thus a Wesleyan theology would have no time for so-called "proofs" for the existence of God, since proof reasons from what is known or certain, to which is not known or uncertain. But in the Wesleyan perspective God is the Ultimate Reality which impinges upon our consciousness as the primary datum. In the words of Colin Williams, "God makes himself known directly; first in a preliminary way (through conscience) by prevenient grace, and then in a direct way (through the gospel) by convincing grace. " 12

If this conclusion is valid, it would have ramifications for the concept of reason" with which Wesley was much concerned. The primary mode of reason" operative in such a gestalt would be akin to the concept of reason designated by Professor Tillich as Ontological in contrast to what he calls technical reason. This would emphasize the Platonic epistemological principle of "participation." In his "Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," Wesley gives implicit approval to such a concept as is seen in these words: "One question still remains to be asked: 'What do you mean by reason?' I suppose you mean the eternal reason, or the nature of things; the nature of God and the nature of man, with the relations necessarily subsisting between them. Why, this is the very religion we preach: a religion evidently founded on, and every way agreeable to, eternal reason, to the essential nature of things."13 "Reason," of course, is not to be conceived in this mode humanistically, i.e., as a natural function of man in his fallen state, but as a gift of prevenient grace.14

Such a structure would stand, logically, as a corollary to a properly developed understanding of the *imago dei* in which one aspect of this doctrine would affirm that the *image* is a relationship within which man stands perpetually. Within this context of grace the Wesleyan would affirm with the classical Christian tradition that man is essentially good, though existentially estranged since the essence of man is seen to be "man-in-relation- to-God." I think we would probably have to jettison the time-honored term, natural image since from a logically consistent analysis based on this proposed norm, the *imago dei* would be a gift of grace in all its aspects and therefore not "natural." My opinion is that Wesley was using this term as a traditional one and would heartily concur with this suggested alteration in terminology. After all, his concept of the "natural man" being a logical abstraction and no man being devoid of prevenient grace would entail such a reconstruction.

Furthermore prevenient grace would provide a clue to a distinctive doctrine of Revelation. While, true to Wesley, it would deny any possibility of a natural knowledge of God and thus a natural revelation (which is actually a contradiction in terms) it would be able to develop a view of General

Revelation which would provide both a "point of contact" for the Gospel (contra the early Barth) and a ground of rapprochement with the non-Christian religions which would emphasize continuity rather than discontinuity.

John Allen Knight, in his Ph.D. dissertation on John Fletcher says that Fletcher was the first systematic theologian of the Wesleyan movement (p. 189, n.3). According to Dr. Knight's analysis the unifying motif of Fletcher's thought was his doctrine of dispensations which refers to various stages or facets of man's knowledge of God. This doctrine is actually a spelling out of the implications-which Wesley himself never developed-of the doctrine of prevenient grace. This suggests significant support for giving this motif a dominant and widely pervasive place in a distinctly Wesleyan theology.

But we must now go one step further in rounding out our norm. Wesley both explicitly and implicitly grounded prevenient grace in Christology which would appear to give the whole of his theology a Christological focus. Or, in other words, the all encompassing determinant which embraces all the rest is Christology.

In his paper presented in 1972 to the WTS on Wesley's Old Testament Notes, Dr. William Arnett demonstrated how this resource is developed with a Christological emphasis. Jesus Christ is the "new hermeneutic" in the light of which the Old Testament is interpreted. In Dr. Arnett's words, "Wesley's vision was filled with Jesus Christ, the eternal, incarnate, crucified, and risen Saviour. He sees his form and hears his voice from beginning to end in the Old Testament.... For Wesley, Jesus Christ is the very center of God's revelation and man's salvation."¹⁵ Although, from our perspective, Wesley may have read some of the Old Testament witness to Christ in a non-historical and thus less than satisfactory way, the instinct is sound and illuminates our suggestion that Christology be the unifying element for a theological norm.

If this is a true perspective, it follows that every doctrinal development is to be ultimately interpreted Christologically, Justification and sanctification and Revelation and the Doctrine of God and the work of the Holy Spirit all. Without a doubt this would also serve a controlling function in the Wesleyan theologian's use of his sources but I will need to leave that for another time.

NOTES

1 John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), pp. 114-115.

2 *The Evangelical Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub., 1974), I, 54.

3 Robert K. Johnson, *Evangelicals at an Impasse* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p. 71.

4 *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1978), I, 4, 20. 83.

- 5 *The Necessity of Systematic Theology*, J. J. Davis, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 177.
- 6 In *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition*, ed. by Kenneth Rowe (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1976).
- 7 See Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (NY: Abingdon press, 1960), p. 78f and Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (London: The Epworth Press, n.d.), pp. 57-58.
- 8 Outler, *The Place of Wesley*, pp. 29-30.
- 9 *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1964), p. 34.
- 10 *John Wesley's Theology*, p. 92.
- 11 I am not using the term "folk theologian" in a pejorative sense but with the same connotation as Albert Outler in describing Wesley in this way.
- 12 *John Wesley's Theology*, p. 42.
- 13 *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, ed. by Gerald R. Cragg (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 55.
- 14 Cf. Works, V, 211, "Compend of Natural Philosophy," and John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960), p. 92.
- 15 William M. Arnett: "A Study in John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament* " *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 8, 1973, p. 21.

RESPONSE: THE PERILS OF A WESLEYAN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGIAN

by
William J. Abraham

The modern, Wesleyan, systematic theologian faces a cluster of three interrelated dilemmas which even an Irishman would not wish upon his enemies.

(1) On the one side, our theology must be genuinely modern for it must seek to draw on the best sources of research and information available to us, entering into "continuous dialogue with the authoritative sources of wisdom on the one hand and with the contemporary situation on the other." On the other side, our theology must be genuinely Wesleyan, drawing inspiration from the work of that fastidious, dictatorial, workaholic, Oxford don whose evangelism, churchmanship and theology revolutionized the Church of the eighteenth century and indirectly shook the social order in its foundations. The pre-critical outlook of the eighteenth century Wesley cannot be transplanted into the post-critical twentieth century without its undergoing considerable strain and hence considerable mutation.

(2) On the one hand, our task is to be a systematic theologian, "attempting to interpret the faith in a wholistic way,"² thus seeking to spell out comprehensively and in some detail the panoramic ingredients of the Christian faith. On the other hand, our mentor was not a systematic theologian in this sense at all but scattered his theology here and there in sermons, notes on the New Testament, short theological treatises, tracts for the times, polemical essays, letters and, of course, in hymns. Thus we are faced with the problem that in changing the task from that of the folk theologian to that of the systematic theologian we may be radically reshaping the whole tenor and perhaps even content of Wesleyan theology. In other words, the change of medium may have a profound effect on the message.

(3) On the one side, the Wesleyan theologian must acknowledge the indispensability and authority of the canon of scripture for faith and practice, thus seeking to articulate the faith once for all delivered to the saints. On the other side, the Wesleyan theologian qua Wesleyan theologian must acknowledge some sort of special significance to the thought of Wesley, thus seeking to preserve some degree of continuity with Wesley, for without this there will be nothing to distinguish us from, say, a Barthian or

Calvinist theologian. Hence there is considerable tension between our commitment to the Bible, the Word of God, our canon, and our commitment to Wesley, a very human word, our mentor and inspiration.

Prof. Dunning is well aware of these dilemmas. Thus he is careful to distinguish systematic theology from historical theology and from dogmatics (understood as a study of the creeds). Quite rightly he does not want to guard the ashes but tend the fire. Moreover, he is intent not to short-circuit the complexity of the theologian's work, say, by opting to turn it into the deductive task of "organizing propositions divinely revealed in a disorganized form,"³ or by patching elements of Wesley's thinking into the loin-cloth of some alien theological system, such as fundamentalism or dispensationalism. What is especially intriguing, however, is Dunning's own positive proposal to resolve dilemmas two and three. In what follows I want to outline and evaluate this proposal.

Insofar as I understand Dunning's proposal it incorporates three distinct theses. First, the systematic theologian must begin and build on Biblical theology understood as "an inductive, descriptive discipline, synthetic in approach, which on the basis of a grammatico-historical study of the Biblical text seeks to set forth in its own terms and in its full structural unity the theology expressed in the Bible."⁴ This work however, cannot be done in a vacuum; it is done from within a set of presuppositions or from a particular perspective, a fact which is substantiated for Dunning by the historians to arrive at agreed conclusions. Although one can and should aim at an objective reading of the text there is an "inescapable element of personal judgment which shapes the theologian's vision" and which should be self-consciously fostered rather than ignored.

This provides the background for his second thesis, namely, that the Wesleyan theologian approaches the scriptures from Wesleyan presuppositions. Knowing that exegesis cannot be without a perspective or without presuppositions the Wesleyan self-consciously approaches the text from a distinctively Wesleyan point of view which serves as a norm for the entire spectrum of issues covered by systematic theology. The substance of that perspective is manifold. It incorporates a central focus on soteriology and salvation: "At the center would stand the doctrine of salvation conceptualized as justification by grace through faith and sanctification by grace through faith related as 'two foci of an ellipse.'"⁵ Around this center stand at least two other themes or doctrines: prevenient grace and Christology. Taken together these presumably constitute the "distinctively Wesleyan norm which will provide the perspective from which we can develop a full orb, consistently integrated, coherently developed, systematically adequate Wesleyan theology."⁶

With this norm, the Wesleyan systematic theologian then proceeds to develop the details of his doctrinal system, using it as a source of inferential reasoning and as yardstick of Wesleyan identity. This constitutes the third of Prof. Dunning's thesis: Wesleyan systematic theology is theology grounded on and developed out of the foundational Wesleyan perspective which one self-consciously brings to the reading of scripture. Prof. Dunning gives several examples at this point which flesh out what he means. Thus he argues that a modern Wesleyan will develop a distinctive view of the atonement, will have no time for so-called "proofs" of the existence of God,

will operate with a mode of reason which is 'ontological' rather than technical, will develop a doctrine of the 'essential' goodness of man, will jettison the doctrine of the natural image of God in man and will develop a doctrine of general revelation, while rejecting a doctrine of natural revelation.

What are we to make of this fascinating proposal? I find myself in sympathy with the whole tone and spirit of the paper. I especially appreciate the emphasis on doing theology within the community of faith yet doing it with a measure of independence. I also like very much the recognition of the need for collaborative work with those scholars who must pursue detailed technical questions to the limits of their capacity. The questions which I want to raise, therefore, should be construed as much as a product of the turmoil of my own mind as they are a critique of Prof. Dunning's proposal.

My misgivings cut right across the three major points which I see Prof. Dunning as making. Perhaps I might begin with the last and work back-wards. Concerning the actual content of Prof. Dunning's proposed systematic theology I find myself disturbed by the extent to which Wesley himself is ignored when it comes to the working out of the system. To take the most glaring example, Wesley's position on natural theology seems to me to be completely overturned. To put it mildly, Wesley, good Lockean that he was, showed considerable interest in the classical proofs for the existence of God. To take another example, he has a quite definite doctrine of the atonement which is much more specific than anything Prof. Dunning either suggests or implies.⁷

What I feel is happening here is that we are not only straying from the actual corpus of Wesley's writings and thus missing the benefits of potential Wesleyan insight but we are smuggling in highly contested if not dubious philosophical and theological proposals which should be explicitly and carefully grounded in appropriate data and warrants. The great danger, at this point, is that we work with a kind of pseudo-history, as happens when we place Wesley in an amorphous tradition stretching from Plato to Tillich. That done, we expose ourselves to further danger when we almost unconsciously use this pseudo-history as a warrant for pivotal epistemological and theological doctrines. I can think of no more unsatisfactory way of resolving long-standing philosophical problems in theology. For me philosophical issues call for philosophical solutions and if Wesley is to help us, we will only gain that help if we attend to Wesley's philosophical commitments, modest as these may be. The game can be said, albeit with qualification, for any particular theological proposal we may care to develop.

What I am suggesting here pertains quite generally to the hermeneutics of Wesley and our use of his ideas as a source of theological reflection. For any particular issue I propose that we must do justice to what Wesley actually wrote on that issue. Thus if we are addresses the issue of natural theology, we begin not with what he says about prevenient grace and our analysis of what this supposedly implies but simply what Wesley says on that issue. Prof. Dunning wants to work with much broader strokes and thus very readily draws on the work of historians like Outler to develop a 'Wesleyan perspective.' It is this that then serves as the touchstone for a modern Wesleyan theology.

This perspective has its own problems. (a) It lacks internal coherence,

being sewn together rather artificially and oscillating between soteriology and Christology as its central focus. (b) It draws on one particular reading of Wesley and does not sufficiently acknowledge the highly contested nature of claims about Wesley's theology.⁸ (c) It too readily assumes that Wesley's theology can be flattened into a perspective for use today. Over against this, I would argue that much as we should attend to the structure and focus of Wesley's theology, we can never ignore the specific proposals he furnishes on any particular issue. To repeat my point, Wesley, too, readily gets cast aside as Prof. Dunning begins to develop his systematic theology.

I think it is no accident that this happens for *how* we use Wesley in our theology depends in part on *why* we use him in the first place. This takes us to Dunning's second major thesis, namely, that we use Wesley's theology because we must have A perspective in our study of scripture. My misgivings at this point are much more substantial. To begin, I find the references to perspective and presuppositions much too broad and general to be illuminating. We can agree that we all bring presuppositions to the text of scripture, but this does not in itself show that we should come loaded with the very specific theological framework suggested by Dunning. On the contrary, the very proposals Dunning says we should self-consciously bring to the text, namely salvation and sanctification by grace through faith, prevenient grace and Christology, should arise out of our study of the text. Otherwise we are wide open to the charge of cooking the hermeneutical books in advance. Surely these matters are the kind of central theological issues which must be pursued at length by the systematic theologian in the course of his work. They cannot be conveniently packed in a suitcase called perspective and brought along on the journey, to be used as a kind of map to keep us going in the right direction. Rather they constitute the very issues which have to be explored and decided in the journey itself.

For this reason, they should not, as Dunning explicitly suggests, function as a norm for the rest of our systematic theology.⁹ If they do, we simply beg the question against the opponents of Wesleyan theology. To be sure, insofar as they are true, we should articulate and defend and work out consistently the implications of these classical elements in Wesley's theology but that is the task before us; that is not something from which we begin. Moreover, if these function as a norm, where does scripture then stand? Verbally no doubt we will say that it is still our canon, but this must be taken with caution for how can scripture function as canon when we make a virtue and indeed a necessity of reading it loaded with such a precise and comprehensive theological perspective? I have genuine fears at this point that our hermeneutics may corrupt our hearing the profound riches of Scripture or theology.

This takes us right, back to the first thesis of Prof. Dunning, namely, that the systematic theologian builds on biblical theology, understood as, "an inductive, descriptive discipline, synthetic in approach, which on the basis of a grammatico-historical study of the Biblical text seeks to set forth in its own terms and in its full structural unity the theology expressed in the Bible." It might be hoped that by now I would have found something with which to wholeheartedly agree. Alas, I must disappoint you. Such a theology in my view does not exist. It is an invention of modern scholars

which was originally intended to replace the babble of voices sounding forth from the systematic theologians but which has failed to materialize; even the very best which has been produced covers only one part of the canon. It has had at least two great weaknesses: (a) it has ignored the richness and genius of the canonical process by seeking to flatten out the message of the Bible into a grand 'Biblical theology' which overlooks the complicated development of theology within Israel as enshrined in the canon itself; (b) it has so ranged itself against systematic theology that despite its good intentions to the contrary, it has turned the interpretation of Scripture into either a boring, historical exercise devoid of the theological insight so desperately needed to fathom the riches of the Bible or a cloak for our personal theological prejudices.

Unfortunately modern Wesleyan theology has gone the way of all flesh in its deference to 'Biblical theology.' Due to our hurried, secretive shot-gun wedding with theology in the twenties and thereafter, we became impregnated with ideas which spurred us on to look on 'Biblical theology' as our theological saviour. It is small wonder that our theological womb has become totally barren. For forty years now we have not given birth to a single substantial monograph on a central doctrine of the faith, not to speak of trying to replace the work of the mediocre Wiley and the more competent Gamertsfelder. Moreover, the very same wedding ostracized or stifled the crucial critical work in Biblical studies and philosophical theology without which early systematic theology will become antiquated, boring, bourgeois, and ultimately self-destructive. Just at the time when Biblical research has come to question the whole quest for a Biblical theology we still cling to it for theological salvation.

We should note that Wesley knew nothing of this modern imperialist discipline which has kept us in bondage for a generation or more. At this point his pre-critical setting was a god-send. It allowed him to work much more directly with the text. Much as he mulled over the full range of the canon and compared Scripture with Scripture, he did not sense the need to run his exegesis through the mill of 'Biblical theology' before putting it to use in preaching and instruction. Rather drawing imaginatively from Scripture, he creatively integrated what he found there with what he knew to be true from reason, experience and tradition, all the time speaking to issues which cut into the life of the people of God in his day. It was this that he then proclaimed and lived and sang to such telling effect throughout England and Ireland. I find it remarkable that he never became a systematic theologian in the classical sense of that term- rather, he wrote short theological treatises where he could touch the relevant bases without losing his reader and where he could do justice to the relevant data within and without Scripture without sacrificing intellectual integrity. When he wanted a rounded system of theology for his people, what did he do? He took the thirty-nine articles, shortened them to twenty-five and sent them to America with a prayer-book. Systematic theology had its place but only as a kind of catechism or handbook of theology which would give an over- view of the total terrain. After that people would have to read sermons and sing hymns en route to further reflection on the riches of the canon. Even then there was no substitute for hammering out the details for themselves: after all, Methodists were to be people who think and let think.

It is at this methodological level that Wesley is our greatest asset and

mentor. His judicious use of Scripture, reason, experience and tradition, while by no means original, is God's greatest gift to the contemporary theological scene. As we follow in his footsteps, we will no doubt find that we share his theological perspective and doctrines but we also find that Wesley is at times as human, as fallible, as wrong as other great doctors of the Church. In the process, however, we will be nurtured, chastened and purified. We will be dubious of grand schemes no matter how brilliantly conceived; we will seek to ground our theological proposals in the relevant data and warrants both within and without Scripture; we will keep our ears and hearts open to the needs of the people of God where we live and work; above all we will seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to help us proclaim and live out what we come to believe.

It might seem that I am here hacking away at the very foundation of systematic theology itself. This is not so. What I am urging is that we grasp how fascinating the task before us really is and that we thus come to terms with the first dilemma I set forth at the start of this paper. Think of it this way. Wesley, genius that he was, sought to serve people and train preachers, just as we do. Due to his pre-critical setting he had two advantages over those who live in the post-critical setting. First, he could serve his purposes in ministry without doing systematic theology in the classical sense. He could write occasional pieces without drawing them into a coherent whole. Secondly, when he did his theology well with all the relevant data and information. After all, given his reading schedule and discipline he could become something of a Renaissance man, mastering the best science, history, linguistic study, philosophy, etc., available in his day. Why, he could even try his hand at medicine!

For us the situation is reversed. We cannot minister adequately without doing systematic theology. We need it in order to satisfy the craving for a comprehensive, coherent vision of the Christian faith and we need it simply because we are scholars working in modern universities and seminaries where it is an integral and vital part of a sound curriculum. We therefore have to cover a range of issues much wider than Wesley addressed. At the same time we simply cannot master the relevant data and information from Scripture, reason, experience and tradition to the extent possible for Wesley. In other words, the ideal of the Renaissance man has totally collapsed and we cannot hope to master all the relevant disciplines and information demanded by the very nature of theology itself and bequeathed to us by our heritage.

In such circumstances it is easy to panic. Cool-headed Wesleyans, however, will preserve the basic methodology of Wesley's theology, will continue to mull over his writings for insight and assistance, will ransack the voluminous but sadly neglected output of classical Wesleyan theologians of the last century, and in the light of these creatively develop the structure and details of a modern Wesleyan theology. Such work can only be done in fear and trembling. Whatever we produce, we do well to ponder the advice of Pascal: "Do small things as if they were great, because of the majesty of Christ, who does them in us and lives our life, and great things as if they were small and easy, because of his almighty power."¹⁰

NOTES

1 H. Ray Dunning, "Systematic Theology in a Wesleyan Mode," 1.

2 Ibid, 2.

3 Idem.

4 Ibid., 1. Dunning here follows John Bright's definition.

5 Ibid, 6-7.

6 Ibid., 6.

7 For comments and exposition see A. Skevington Wood *John Wesley: The Burning Heart* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 236-238.

8 For a healthy reminder of the variety of interpretations of Wesley see Kenneth E. Rowe, "The Search for Perspective," in *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition*, ed. by Kenneth E. Rowe (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1976), 1-10.

9 Op. cit., 6.

10 Quoted in Alban Kraitsheimer, *Pascal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 72.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE WESLEYAN MODE

by
Wesley Tracy

The flower bouncing in the breeze atop the stem of the "I Gotta Be Me" plant which has flourished like Jack's beanstalk for the last decade or two is the idea that to be free I must choose my own self-description. Group identity must be transcended, and family history must be shut out of the mind. No matter how strong the temptation to savor the flavor of a sense of history or to hum the song of a "heritage" it must be resisted in favor of intoxication with the perfume of the "I Gotta Be Me" plant.

Of course some, for better or worse, are not affected by that plant. For example, when a citizen of the Lone Star state tells you he is from Texas he is not telling you his address or simply where he comes from. He is telling you something of his heritage, his world view, a life style that has had a great influence on who he is as a person. Being a Texan presents many problems, "but at least the Texan does not have the illusion he is a person without a history." The Texan's personal story, his heritage, not only organizes his life in certain ways; it supplies for him a way to form the future. It pushes him toward making his actions consistent with his identity.

I sometimes wish Wesleyans were more like Texans. I wish our heritage were more clearly understood, and more eagerly owned. I wish it were set free to help form our identity, to take us by the hand and lead us down the path of self-discovery and to whisper to us in still moments who we are. I wish it could push us towards consistency of action and identity and toward future-forming.

When some people mention their Wesleyan-heritage church they are merely telling you what church building they go to on Christmas, Easter, and Rally Day. Some Wesleyan educational workers do not even know that when they identify themselves as "Wesleyan" they should be saying some- thing definite about the philosophy, learning theory, curriculum materials, theology and methodology employed under their supervision. To other "Wesleyan" means loyalty oaths regarding "holiness shibboleths."

But being a Wesleyan is understanding, liking, appreciating, and being who we are. I guess I am saying that my purpose in this paper is to urge Wesleyans to be more like Texans. At least it is to explore our heritage in

educational matters and make hints as to how this should illumine our educational philosophy, theology of Christian education, learning theory and our basis for authority in faith and practice.

I. A Glance at our Wesleyan Heritage of Christian Education

Many moderns are too soon outraged by John Wesley's educational eccentricities. Today's permissive educators dealing primarily in "warm fuzzies" and "sloppy agape" turn tears and run at the first mention of Wesley's infamous "will-breaking" passage. Or escaping that they might bump into a procession of young children from a Methodist school on a field trip to see a dead body and hear an "exhortation on how death, sin, and hell all go together. Sooner or later they are almost sure to run into Charles Wesley's insipid hymn for children called "On Hell" which describes with sensuous vividness, the fate of impenitent children in the land of the damned.

"There their tortured bodies lie,
Scorch'd by the consuming fire;
There their souls in torment cry,
Rack'd with pride and fierce desire:
Fear and grief their spirits tear
Rage and envy and despair."²

Again, a devout young Wesleyan majoring in developmental psychology may be hopelessly bent out of shape browsing through the Journals and reading Wesley's accounts of the piety of children under three years of age. Let a Wesleyan whose children are attending a Montessori school read that at Kingswood school no time, ever, was to be spent in play and we have yet another casualty. The jolt of these aforementioned eccentricities is something like what a 10-year-old Texas lad experiences when he reads the rest of the history book and discovers that the South after all did lose the Civil War.

But if we can negotiate these "sandbars" and "rocks" we can bring our ship of education safely into harbor and discover a rich Wesleyan heritage. It is futile to pretend the sandbars and rocks aren't there, or to try to explain them away. An interesting exercise is to note the contortions of twentieth century biographers trying to explain the ways of Wesley to Wesleyans. We learn, for example, that what Wesley really meant in proscribing play at Kingswood was that there would be no bear-baiting, cock-fighting, or crap shooting on campus. Let us plainly admit that Wesley's eccentricities were sometimes laughable. Perhaps then we can come to an appreciation of the man, who did more for education than any other person in the eighteenth century, John Wesley.

Without trying to explain it away it is still helpful to have some notion of the character of the times if we are to understand Wesley's education system. England was in the greedy grip of a whirlwind now called the Industrial Revolution. That whirlwind blew humanity into the cities like maple leaves before a November wind. And it left them, like leaves, piled in random heaps. Housing conditions were outrageous. Ten persons per unfurnished room was common. Horse manure polluted the unpaved streets. It was sometimes piled 14 feet high on both sides of the street in London.

Diseases like typhoid, smallpox, dysentery, and cholera ravaged almost unchecked. One fourth of the babies born died the first week of their lives. The whirlwind of industrialization blew in more people each day: disease, crime and malnutrition removed more and more each day. In many cities the graveyard operators maintained "poor holes"-large common graves left open until the daily flow of the corpses of nameless nobodies finally filled them up.

Crimes of the most violent sort were so common they were commonly ignored. Gambling and gin drinking became the national pastimes. For the children there were the streets or the sweat shops. Schools? Only one child in every 25 attended any school of any kind. Into this revolution-ripe setting John Wesley came stressing as antidotes for the diseases of the times-discipline, education, evangelism, religion, and love. Through these the Methodists helped these sorrowful victims of squalor see their essential dignity before God. Hear Adam Clarke preach in City Road Chapel "Show me . . . the vilest wretch in . . . London, and I say, that he has the same claim upon God's mercy as the apostles had, and may have as much mercy as they had . . . to qualify them for the kingdom of heaven."³

To reach the goals of saving this society required a thorough, multi- faceted scheme of Christian Education. Education was in no way secondary to evangelism for Wesley & Co. Education and evangelism were bound together with education frequently coming first, chronologically, in the lives of many. Wesley once said that he had spent more time on a single educational project (Kingswood) than on any other project in his life. We shall survey some of his educational projects giving special attention to the education of the young.

A. The Preachers Were Teachers

Education was a preacher's priority. The preacher himself was to teach the children and adults in the homes of his people. A preacher seeking admittance to the Conference was confronted with: "Will you diligently and earnestly instruct the children and visit from house to house?"⁴

Wesley counseled his preachers, "Let every Preacher, having a catalogue of those in each society go to each house. Deal gently with them.... Give the children the 'Instructions for Children' and encourage them to get them by heart.... Take each person singly into another room, where you may deal closely with him, about his sin, and misery, and duty."⁵

Wesley goes on and step by step tells the preachers how to conduct such a religious education session.

In 1766 he outlined the preacher's responsibility for the religious education of children.

1. Where there are ten children in a society, meet them at least an hour every week.
2. Talk with them every time you see any at home.
3. Pray in earnest for them.
4. Diligently instruct and vehemently exhort all parents at their houses.
5. Preach expressly on education.⁶

One preacher objected, "But I have no gift for this." Wesley replied,

"Gift or no gift, you are to do it; else you are not called to be a Methodist Preacher. "

Again the Conference of 1768, legislating programs for religious education in the larger parishes, instructed the preachers to meet with the children an hour a week "whether you like or not."6 "For what avail preaching alone, though we could preach like angels?" Wesley asks. "We must, yea every travelling Preacher must, instruct them from house to house. "7

B. Parents Were Teachers

Of course, the preachers could not alone do the task of educating the young. Parents were strongly urged to carry on family education Repeatedly Wesley said to his people that the Methodist revival would dissipate in one generation without a vigorous program of Christian Education in the home. To neglect this was to prove Luther right, Wesley said, is his (Luther's) assertion that revivals of religion lasted only 30 years Wesley indeed evaded that pitfall-and largely because of his almost fanatic belief in education.

Wesley told the Methodists that their children were "immortal spirit whom God hath, for a time, entrusted to your care." And this He has don "that you may train them up in all holiness."10 Preaching from the text "a for me and my house we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15) Wesley told parents they must restrain their yet-unconverted children through advice persuasion, and correction. Correction included corporal punishment an Wesley reminded them that this should be done only after all else fails- "and even then you should take the utmost care to avoid the very appearance of passion. Whatever is done should be done with mildness; nay indeed with kindness too." He declared that those who tried to thrash the children in to heaven and out of hell should not think it strange "if religion stunk in the nostrils of those that were so educated. They will naturally look upon it as an austere, melancholy thing."12

To advice, persuasion and correction the Christian parent was to ad instruction. This instruction was to be done early, plainly, frequently, an patiently P3 Since "the corruption of nature is earlier than our instruction can be we should take all pains to counteract this corruption as early s possible."14 This project should start as soon as the child can begin to speak and understand, "because the bias of nature is set the wrong way; education is designed to set it right."15 Education aided "by the grace of God is turn the bias from self-will, pride, anger, revenge and love of the world Wesley goes on to say, "to resignation, lowliness, meekness, and the love of God."16

The parents were to see that each child took time "every day for reading, meditation, and prayer."17 Further family worship was to be "serious: and solemnly performed." Family worship was recommended for morning and evening and should include prayer, Bible reading and singing of Psalms. Lest some parents not know how to go about this and thus neglect it Wesley prepared an order of service. A short prayer was used to begin the proceedings Then the Bible was read and explained by a parent. Next children were then to explain in their own words what the scripture meant. A longer prayer followed. Then came a doxology or benediction after which

each child was to ask for a blessing from the parents. Parents were never, under any circumstances, to deny this blessing.¹⁸

Besides this, Thursday evening was to be set aside for catechising the children. Saturday night was a special review time when each child recited what he had learned during the week.¹⁹

Besides these somewhat formal times of instruction the parents were to use whatever opportunities came from the routine of life. For example, an April morning bathed in sunshine and punctuated with rosebuds was not to be wasted on mere aesthetics. Wesley advised the hearers of his sermon "On Family Religion" to ask the little child to look around and then ask "What do you see there? The sun . . . feel how warm it is upon your hand! Look, how it makes the flowers to grow, and the trees and everything look green.... It is God who made the sun, and you, and me, and everything.... Think what he can do! He can do whatever he pleases.... He loves you; he loves to do you good. He loves to make you happy."²⁰

Wesley made available to parents and preachers resources for the nurture of children. He published "Prayers for Families" and "Prayers for Children." Each of these contained morning and evening prayers for each day of the week. In addition "A Collection of Forms of Prayer" gave morning and evening prayers for private devotion and added questions for self-examination as well. Other materials included the Life of Philip Henry the father of Matthew Henry. The section on family worship in the Henry home was to be given special attention. In the early years Wesley recommended James Janeway's Tokens for Children. It was the collected testimonies of 13 dying children. Judiciously, Wesley never seems to mention it again after 1744.

Wesley himself prepared an important document for the education and spiritual nurture of children in the parish and in the home: Lessons for Children. It is a series of 200 Bible studies for children-all based on the Old Testament. In addition he edited a French document and called it "Instructions for Children."²¹ Its fifty-eight lessons are gathered under six sections and include these subjects.

- I. God, Creation, Man, Sin, Redemption, Heaven, and Hell
- II. God and the Soul of Man
- III. How to Regulate our Desires
- IV. How to Regulate our Understanding
- V. How to Regulate our Joy
- VI. How to Regulate our Practice

C. The Societies, Classes and Bands Were to Teach

Beyond the preceding exhortations and ample materials for the religious education and nurture of Methodists the organization of the Connexion held within it the seeds of its own perpetuation through the societies, classes, and bands. The society was "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love that they may help each other to work out their salvation."²² These societies were subdivided into classes of about 12 persons each. Each class had a Leader whose duties included seeing "each person in his class once a week at least, in order to inquire how their soul⁹ prosper; to advise, reprove,

comfort, or exhort as occasion may require; and to receive what they were willing to give toward the relief of the poor."21

The bands were small groups whose sharing, intimacy and achievement rivals the best of the small group explosion of the 60's and 70's. Their theme was "Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another that ye may be healed." A part of every meeting was the sharing of one's answer to these questions:

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?24

D. Special Schools Were Established

The bands, classes, and societies deserve (and have indeed received in many places) additional attention but since the present exploration focuses primarily on education of the young we shall move on to the schools John Wesley established and operated.

The Foundry was the first school which Mr. Wesley started on his own. He and the Methodists bought an old foundry for 115 pounds and spent five times that much rebuilding it as a school and society meeting- house. It was located in a poor part of London where Wesley noted that the teeming offspring of the poor were given no schooling at all and so grew up "like the wild ass's colt."

One end of the Foundry had a long room some 20 feet wide and 80 feet long. One end was a bookstore or literature dispensary filled with Methodist literature. In 1740 the other end became a school for 60 ragamuffins from the London streets.

One of the early headmasters was Silas Todd who so cared for the down and out that he had served for 30 years as the unpaid chaplain to the condemned prisoners of Newgate. This man, hired for 26 pounds per year, was ideally suited to control Wesley's school for the poorest children in London. In addition to the teachers two Stewards were appointed. They were to see that the rules were observed, raise money for the schools and control expenditures. But they were also expected to talk with the teachers every Tuesday and to meet with the students twice each week about spiritual matters. Of particular importance were the Wednesday morning meetings in which the Stewards and teachers met with the parents of the scholars "and gave them advice as to how they might plan their home-life so that its influence on their children might assist the work of the school."25

The Foundry operated on six rules:

1. Minimum age for admission was six years.
2. Chapel attendance was mandatory-it was called "the morning sermon."
3. The school day was to be from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. with an hour for lunch.
4. There were to be no "play" times.

5. No talking to classmates. No child was to speak in school except to the master.
6. Two unexcused absences in one week meant automatic expulsion,²⁶

We know little about the success of the school, but A. H. Body assumes that since references to it in Wesley's Journal and Letters are few that the school pursued a course of reasonable success else Mr. Wesley would have bewailed its failures in the aforementioned documents.²⁷ Some may argue that Wesley's Kingswood rule of not letting boarding students go home for even one day until they had finished the course of study came from sad experience of the Foundery scholars' day school education being ruined by ungodly homes at night. This is not likely; rather the rule of "no home visits" for boarding students come from John Milton's *Tracate on Education* which John Wesley read and liked.

The Kingswood School building was begun the same year that the Foundery became a school, 1740. George Whitefield had been "shamed" into preaching to the primitive and brutal inhabitants of the Kings Wood. They were coal miners, rough, sinful, ignorant. Whitefield preached and got many converted. They wanted a school for their children. Whitefield raised 60 pounds, held a "stone-laying" ceremony, knelt and prayed "that the gates of hell might not prevail against our design,"²⁸ and then announced that he only had time to "set it on foot," but he told them that he hoped that his "honoured friend" John Wesley would take it from there and bring the school to good effect.²⁹

The school was located three miles from Bristol in a sort of national forest. It was an ideal site (except for the lack of a natural water supply) for Wesley's experiment. It would at least take the scholars away from the evil influence of the city streets.

The first building was completed in 1740. It consisted of a large central room with four smaller rooms on each end. The central part of the building still stands and is called Wesley's Chapel. For several years the coal miners and their children were taught to read and write and pray there. Then on April 7, 1746 the foundation stone for a building large enough to house boarders was laid. At that ceremony John Wesley preached from Isaiah 60:22 "A little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation." The three-story building was completed in 1748 and on Friday June 24 the opening ceremonies for the New House were held. Kingswood the boarding school was on its way. Charles Wesley wrote a special hymn for the affair which poetically expressed the educational ideals of the Wesleys:

Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To whom we for our children cry,
The good desired and wanted most
Out of thy richest grace supply
The sacred discipline be given
To train and bring them up for heaven.

Answer on them that end of all
Our cares and Pains. and studies here.

On them, recovered from their fall,
 Stamp'd with the heavenly character,
Raised by the nurture of the Lord,
To all their paradise restored.

Error and ignorance remove,
 Their blindness both of heart and mind,
Give them the wisdom from above,
 Spotless, and peaceable, and kind.
In knowledge pure their mind renew
And store with thoughts divinely true.

Learning's redundant part and vain
 Be here cut off and cast aside:
But let them, Lord, the substance gain,
 In every solid truth abide,
Swiftly acquire, and ne'er forego
The knowledge fit for man to know.

Unite the pair so long disjointed
 Knowledge and vital piety,
Learning and holiness combined,
 And truth and love let all men see.
In these whom up to thee we give,
Thine, wholly thine to die and live.

Father, accept them in thy Son,
 And ever by the Spirit guide,
Thy wisdom in their lives be shewn,
 Thy name confessed and glorified,
Thy power and love diffused abroad
'Till all our earth is filled with God."³⁰

Besides Charles' hymn John delivered one of his most important sermons on education. Wesley's text was Proverbs 22:6. In the introduction he told the gathered teachers, scholars, parents, and guests that "education . . . is to be considered as reason borrowed at second-hand, which is as far as it can, to supply the loss of original [rational] perfection."³¹ The aim for Kingswood then is to teach children "how to think, and judge, and act according to the strictest rules of Christianity."³² Thus such virtues as abstinence, humility, sobriety, and devotion shall be "a hundred times more regarded than any or all things else."³³

Just as "physic" is to restore physical health, Wesley told them, a Kingswood education was to restore spiritual health. The need was desperate because every one born of woman is infected by seven spiritual diseases. Now we are ready for the seven main points of the sermon.

I. The Disease of Atheism is first treated. Natural theology is not nearly enough. Children learn theism as parents and teachers model it by deed and word.

II. The Disease of Self-will is the second demon Kingswood will seek to exorcise. All men worship themselves, make their own wills their god and king. Parents and teachers who give in to children, give them what they cry

for, are making the disease well nigh incurable for they are strengthening the will that resists God. Wise parents and teachers are to conquer this will as soon as it appears, for "in the whole art of Christian education there is nothing more important than this." 34

III. The Disease of Pride is the next obvious malady for which a cure must be sought. Pride has turned angels to devils. Almost all parents fan this flame, Wesley says, by praising their children to their face. "See that you sacredly abstain from it,"³⁵ he declares, "and, adds a warning that others may praise them if you don't watch carefully. This is a "grievous incentive to pride, even if they are praised for what is truly praiseworthy."³⁶

Then follows one of the most frightening passages in Wesley:

If, . . . you desire without loss of time to strike at the root of their pride, teach your children, as soon as possibly you can, that they are fallen spirits; that they are fallen short of that glorious image of God wherein they were first created; that they are not now, as they once were, incorruptible pictures of . . . God . . . bearing the express likeness of the wise, good, the holy Father of spirits: but more ignorant, more foolish, and more wicked, than they can possibly conceive. Show them that in pride, passion, and revenge, they are now like the devil; and that in foolish desires and groveling appetites, they are like the beasts.³⁷

Then perhaps becoming uneasy at his own overkill he adds "I do not say 'You are never to commend them' [although] many writers assert this, and writers of eminent piety."³⁸ But Wesley notes that Jesus "frequently commended" His disciples and Paul commends the people of Corinth and Philippi. "We may not, therefore condemn this altogether. But I say use it exceedingly sparingly . . . with the utmost caution."³⁹

IV. The Disease of the Love of the World is next addressed. This disease may be fatal if "glittering toys, shining buckles or buttons, fine clothes, red shoes, laced hats, needless ornaments, ribands, necklaces and ruffles"⁴⁰ are draped upon the child. Further fancy foods are to be avoided and they are not to be given wine or strong drink "before nature requires it." Simplicity is to be prized, riches, pomp, and all finery are to be despised.

V. The Disease of Anger must also be cured. Anger in the form of revenge is the primary problem, and teaching children the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount the primary cure.

VI. The Disease of Falsehood, that is, lying, is universal. Education and grace must deal with it. Parents and teachers must not applaud "ingenious lies and cunning tricks"; rather they should teach children "a love of truth-of veracity, sincerity, and simplicity, and of openness both of spirit and behaviour."⁴¹

VII. The Disease of Injustice must also be cured. Children will "connive at wronging each other," but they must be taught the concepts of justice and mercy. No degree of unmercifulness is to be indulged whether it involves other children, birds, animals or even snakes.

It is the "part of all those to whom God has entrusted the education of children, to take all possible care . . . not to feed, any of these diseases; . . . and next, to use every possible means of healing them."⁴² He reminds the

listening teachers and parents that in the end it is God, not man who is the physician of souls, that no man can "bring a clean thing out of an unclean." Only God can do that, "but it is generally his pleasure to work by his creatures: to help man by man."⁴³ These tempering words were to stand the Kingswood people in good stead in the years to come.

Thus to the unbearable plight of children in 18th century England was brought to bear an experiment with discipline, education, religion, and love being the active agents in the test tubes.

The rules for the experiment to help stamp out the seven deadly sins were in harmony with the strictness of Wesley's opening sermon. The children were to come to Kingswood and not see their parents at home again until they finished the course of study. They were to rise at 4:00 a.m. for an hour of private devotions before an hour of public worship which gave way at 6:00 a.m. to an hour of work on the grounds at various chores until the 7:00 a.m. breakfast hour at which time they were served milk porridge or water gruel. Classes were then held until 11:00 o'clock. An hour of work or walking preceded the noon "dinner." Classes resumed at 1 p.m. and continued until five o'clock. At five another period of private prayer was observed followed by a "walking or working" session and supper of bread and cheese, or butter, and milk. At 7 p.m. there was public worship and at 8 p.m. the children went to bed "the youngest going first." Sunday was a day of rest for the children were allowed to sleep until six and then get up and go directly to breakfast. There were, however, even on Sunday several hours of class work and, of course, two public services.

No play was planned and none was to be allowed. Supervision by the school staff was to be constant — 24 hours per day.

During the school's history many kinds of education have been carried on. Within the first decade Wesley had several schools operating at Kingswood. There were the schools for boarding students, one for boys and one for girls. There was a day school for the coal miners' children. Further there was a school for adults which operated early in the morning and at night. A little later Kingswood admitted tuition free the children of the preachers, and adults who were called to the ministry, but had no learning.

Through the years of Wesley's life Kingswood was primarily a boarding school. When it was discovered that Kingswood boys were not being admitted to Oxford (because of their Methodist label) Wesley strengthened the curriculum and guaranteed that any graduate of Kingswood would be "a better scholar than nine in ten of the graduates at Oxford or Cambridge."⁴⁴ To reach this degree of education the student entered Kingswood between the ages of six and twelve and pursued an eight-year course of study which began with the three "R's" and "Instructions for Children" and ended with advanced Greek and Hebrew. In between were language study (modern and ancient), philosophy, Biblical Studies, rhetoric, music, art, logic, the ancient classics, and the writings of some contemporary churchmen.

Wesley screened and edited all the textbooks. There are 1,729 printed pages in the texts Wesley himself prepared for use in the ordinary school course. In addition we must add the 50 volumes of the Christian Library most of which Wesley wrote at Kingswood between 1749 and 1755, as well as the Compendium of Logic, five grammar books (no one taught English in

those days) and his four-volume *The Concise History of England*. Only then can we get a glimpse of the amount of John Wesley's life and energy that went into this one educational project. He once said that no other project had taken as much of his life as Kingswood.

Kingswood had a checkered career. Difficulties of all sorts came. Anyone with less vision and determination than Wesley would have given up. Even he had times when he said he would "kill or cure," "mend or end" it.

Of course Wesley and Co. had other educational projects. Time and space restrict treatment here of the orphanage in New Castle or the Lying-in Hospital in London. The latter was a place of refuge for destitute expectant mothers. During their stay the young women were not only cared for physically, they were given religious instruction and vocational training. One year, for example, no fewer than 300 such women entered this institution. There is no time to show that there were Methodist Sunday schools at least a decade before Raikes' schools; or to show that Raikes produced his Sunday school only after Sophia Bradburn, a Methodist preacher's wife, suggested it to him.

The limitations of this project also prevent a tracing of the Methodist mania for education in the post-Wesley years. Methodists established elementary schools left and right. Hundreds of such schools were started in England, Ireland, and America. The Conference of 1840 for example records the twenty year plan to establish 700 new Methodist elementary schools in Britain. Historically the Wesleyans have been the most vigorous foe of sin, ignorance, and poverty which they have meant to overcome by Christian education, discipline and the Gospel of grace.

II. How should our Wesleyan Heritage Inform our Practice of Christian Education?

It remains now, after this ever so scanty survey of our Wesleyan heritage to ask ourselves, "What are we to do about all this?" Or, "How should our Wesleyan heritage inform our current practice of Christian education?" I propose to make four rather brief "starter statements" in pursuit of the implications of our rich Wesleyan heritage. They are, in outline:

1. Our Heritage Informs us as to the Primacy of Christian Education.
2. Our Heritage Informs our Philosophy of Education.
3. Our Heritage Informs our Theology of Education, particularly at the point of Learning Theory.
4. Our Heritage Informs us as to the Primacy of Biblical Authority in Comparison to the Subordinate Authority of the Behavioral Sciences.

A. Our Heritage and the Primacy of Christian Education

If it is not already obvious that the early Wesleyans were ready to do whatever it took to provide Christian education, then nothing I could add would make it clearer. The question must be: was their enthusiasm misguided? Or was it, due to certain circumstances, more important then than now? My response is "no" to both questions. Some of their methods

may be put to question but not their motives. Further I see nothing in our day that negates the need for thorough Christian education. The details of the situation change. The glut of notions and -isms in today's idea market provokes the same need for thorough Christian education that the vacuum of ideas and opportunities provoked on behalf of the poor of 18th century England. The call to literacy education may not be so great, in America at least, but this is replaced with a similar and equally urgent need for cross- cultured education. We are told that by the end of this decade 85% of the population of the Los Angeles basin will be made up of various minority groups-most will be Spanish speaking. Within 18 years Chicago will be a Spanish-speaking city as well. At this moment 43% of our total population is non-white. I think the educational and evangelistic challenge implicit in these facts would challenge the likes of John Wesley, Adam Clarke and Francis Asbury. Other such analogies could be drawn. But suffice it to say we have not outgrown our need to keep Christian education in the "primary" category for Wesleyans. Something seems strangely out of joint when one hears the anti-intellectual bellowings of certain theological descendants of those early Wesleyans. When American Methodist Bishop George F. Pierce, for example, opposed theological training as a threat to Methodism declaring "Had I a million, I would not give a dime for such an object"⁴⁶ one wonders what has happened.

B. Our Wesleyan Heritage Informs our Philosophy of Education

If you were an enemy of Mr. Wesley, you would think it fair to say that his philosophy of education was hodge-podge. If you were his friend, you might call it a lofty eclecticism. If you were just plain honest, you might call it something in between. His metaphysics and axiology were idealistic, his methodology behavioristic, his epistemology existentialist and essentialist. It appears that John Wesley, when trapped by the vision of educating his world parish, reviewed his theology and the Scriptures. Then, with these as back-drop, he went about to search out the best educational theories available. He consulted his mother-teacher of ten. He visited Jena and Herrnhut, the Moravian schools born of the insights of Comenius. He studied schools in Georgia and taught with Delamotte there. He read and liked Milton's writings on education, he read and disliked Locke's writings on education-but then copied some of them. In Plato's *Republic* he found advice on education. He studied the Port Royal schools and adopted some of their materials almost unchanged. He read Rousseau on education and dismissed him as useless. But the important point is that he critically studied the best writings and institutions available and selected what he thought to be the best suited to Wesleyan doctrine, and the mission of the church. Whether he made the best selections or not is somewhat beside the point-the point being that we are not disloyal to our heritage when after focusing on our theology and the Scriptures we critically select from the best theories and practices that which in our times is best suited to our "world parish" mission.

But can we not locate Wesley in the spectrum of educational philosophy, at least in terms of central tendency? I think that we can. Let us use for convenience Wayne Rood's philosophical categories. He oversimplifies and drags some theorists kicking and screaming into some categories which

are a bit strange to them, but his system is quite manageable.⁴⁷ Rood reduces the various educational doctrines to three: Personalism, Essentialism, Experimentalism. It would be worthwhile to review the metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, and ethics of each of the philosophies from which these doctrines spring, but foregoing this a simple description-sketch of each shall be given.

1. Idealism is the philosophy behind personalism.

The aim of personalism is to make whole persons. Its curriculum is person-centered

Its symbol is the conference or small group. Its methodology is sharing, discussing.

The teacher skill required is group dynamics.

Its principal weaknesses include: a tendency to lose the vertical dimension, to humanize God and deify man, to be heavily subjective.

Its strengths include: the affirmation that reality is personal; the building of self-esteem and social skills: the accenting of individual worth and loving relationships.

Exponents include: George Albert Coe, Lewis Sherrill, Her- man Horne, Johann Pestalozzi, John Amos Comenius, Plato, Hegel, Kant, Descartes, E. S. Brightman.

2. Thomism, Neo-Thomism, Traditionalism, Realism and Neo- Scholasticism is the philosophical cluster Rood weds as the support group for the educational doctrine called essentialism.

The aim of essentialism is to transmit knowledge, to master the facts.

Its curriculum is content-centered.

Its symbol is the lecture room and the library.

Its methodology is lecture and research

The teacher skill required is lecturing.

Principal weaknesses include: tendency to be dull: knowledge about replaces knowledge of, can become authoritarian indoctrination.

Strengths include: perpetuation of the good traditions of civilization, the wisdom of the ages, and provision of the student with an encounter with greatness.

Exponents: Aristotle, Aquinas, John Locke, Maria Montessori, John Milton, Bertrand Russell.

3. Pragmatism is the philosophy behind experimentalism.

The aim of experimentalism is to solve problems.

Its curriculum is activity-centered.

Its symbol is the laboratory.

Its methodology is experimentation.

The teacher skill required is project leading

Principal weaknesses include: opposition to all fixed value systems, over-emphasis on experience.

Strengths include: promotion of critical inquiry; practical character; attention to social problems.

Exponents: John Dewey, Charles S. Pierce, William James, Ernest Chave, Ernest Ligon, Jean Piaget, August Comte, Francis Bacon, Protagoras. Heraclitus.

Most of the educators who influenced Wesley are found in the Essentialism camp. This is to be expected. Most educators before Wesley were. Further the moment you announce that you are a Christian and that Christianity has something distinctive to say about man's meaning, existence and destiny which must be handed down to the next generation you have declared yourself, to a certain degree, to be an essentialist.

Milton whose educational ideas Wesley openly admired was strictly an essentialist. Instead of writing acres of deadly prose about education Milton could have simply said: give your children a classical education at a boarding school and make everything (even war games) like the schools of Greece and Rome. Many of the classics Milton recommended were included in the Kingswood curriculum. From Milton Wesley got the notion that the best schools were boarding schools into which the child disappeared never emerging until graduation. The purpose or aim of education Wesley adapts from Milton who wrote: "the end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright." "Education," says Wesley, "is to be considered as reason borrowed at second hand, which is as far as it can, to supply the 1099 of original perfection."4# Of course two other instructors of Wesley made similar statements, William Law and Comenius.

Wesley was powerfully influenced by the essentialistic ideas of John Locke. Like Locke, Wesley opposed the notion of innate ideas probably because of its relation to the Socratic-Platonic idea of the pre-existence of the soul. The "blank sheet of paper" suited Locke's and Wesley's notion of the child better. Their methodology would betray such a presupposition even if it were not stated. Locke's "Essay on Human Understanding" was required reading at Kingswood. Wesley copied Locke's menu for his Kings- wood school. Further he paraphrased Locke's writing (giving no credit at all to his source) time and again. Note these examples:

" 'Few of Adam's children are so happy as not to be born with some Byass in their natural Temper, which it is the business of Education to take off, or counterbalance.' (LOCKE.)

'The bias of nature is set the wrong way: Education is designed to set it right.' (WESLEY.)

'This ought to be observed as an inviolable Maxim, that what- ever is deny'd them (i.e. children), they are certainly not to obtain by Crying or Importunity, unless one has a mind to teach them to be impatient and troublesome by rewarding them for it when they are so.' (LOCKE).

'Let him have nothing he cries for; absolutely nothing, great or small; else you undo your own work.' (WESLEY.)

'Most Children's Constitutions are either spoil'd or at least harm'd by Cockering and Tenderness.... Let his bed be hard, and rather Quilts than Feathers. Hard lodging strengthens

the Parts: whereas being bury'd every night in Feathers melts and dissolves the Body.' (LOCKE.)

'All their beds have mattresses upon them, not featherbeds, both because they are most healthy, and because we would keep them at the utmost distance from softness and effeminacy.' (WESLEY.)

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But when you have cited Wesley's roots in rigid essentialism you have not said everything about Wesley's educational plan. There were other teachers of Wesley who accented a more personalistic dimension. Susanna Wesley strongly influenced John. She was a skilled educator. Her servants did the housework while she taught the ten children on a regular school day schedule. She wrote and edited her own textbooks. She ran a strict school, largely by essentialistic principles, but her education was laced with parental love, saturated with tears and prayers for salvation, and highlighted by individualized instruction. She devoted Thursday evenings to John. The boy was so impressed with these one-to-one teaching sessions that many years later when the "care of all the churches" weighed heavily upon him he pleaded with his mother to spend part of each Thursday evening praying for him. Such an upbringing helped humanize Wesley's educational work.

The "Little Schools" of Port Royal made their mark on Wesley as well. He translated his "Instructions for Children" from their works. The humanizing element appears when it is recognized that the personalistic love for the pupil was the bed-rock of the Port Royal discipline and teaching.⁵¹ This did not mean they were permissive-far from it. From them it may be that Wesley borrowed his view of 24-hour supervision. But in the Port Royal educators severity and love were admirably combined. In Wesley at his best we find the same thing.

The writings and schools of John Amos Comenius also humanized Wesleyan education. The Moravians brought Comenius to Wesley's attention. Wesley travelled to Germany and observed two Comenius-patterned schools in operation. The daily schedules for Jena and Herrnhut were copied almost verbatim by Wesley for the Kingswood schedule. There were two differences: Wesley's children had to rise an hour earlier for an extra period of private prayer, and when the Moravians had their two daily sessions of walking in the woods to "learn from nature" Wesley decided that his students could use that time to get acquainted with nature even better through work-so pulling weeds, cutting fire wood, and hoeing in the garden were prescribed. Other points at which Wesley seems to have been coached by Comenius, particularly The Great Didactic include:

1. Developmental concerns. Wesley scorched the English schools for ignoring any need for progression in difficulty of works assigned. We hear Wesley say "Carefully observe the few ideas which they have already, and endeavor to graft what you say upon them."⁵¹ Here and at other points Wesley is echoing the fifth, sixth, and seventh principles of Comenius. These principles teach orderly progression from the known to the unknown. Comenius taught that the teacher must grasp "the right occasion" to make learning effective. Here is the "teachable moment."

Wesley was insistent that the content be adapted to the child's level of thinking. Modeling his own advice he promised a group of clergymen whom

he was correcting that he would preach to the children on a certain date and never use a word—even from Scripture—that had more than two syllables. He preached to 550 children and kept his word, and taught a lesson to his preachers.

2. Understanding versus memorizing. Comenius, who called the recitation-plagued schools of Europe the "slaughter house of the mind," insisted on understanding rather than memorization. Wesley did the same counseling parents and teachers to again and again stop and let the child explain meanings in his own words.

3. Knowledge, virtue, piety—these came in this order — and without knowledge neither virtue nor piety could happen. Wesley believed this.

4. Education must begin in pre-school years. Both Comenius and Wesley are urgent about teaching children at the very first sign of understanding.

5. "Amending" the will was Comenius' term—Wesley carried this quite a bit farther with his "will-breaking" doctrine.

6. Love in education. Comenius had been thrashed through school, so he established a school based on love. Wesley believed in love too, but held to severity much more than Comenius. Still, Wesley's love of children is well documented. He speaks of it often in word and deed. For example, when he had to order a carriage for a journey he frequently ordered it to arrive earlier than his appointed departure so he could give children a ride before having to leave.

7. Education of the poor was a keynote of both Comenius and Wesley. In fact the humanitarian tone of the Methodist revival gave somewhat of a humane tone to Methodist education.

8. The best education is pleasurable. Here Wesley seems to have rejected the then revolutionary idea of Comenius that the most effective learning occurs in an atmosphere of pleasant emotion. Wesley knew that education must be painful to be profitable. Wesley should have listened more closely to Comenius' first "promise" in chapter 12 of *The Great Didactic*: "The whole earth is being educated."

Wesley the synthesist, Wesley the eclectic, studied the schools and educational literature available to him and critically selected what he considered to be the strengths of each. He devised a program that was primarily essentialistic, but was, at its best, tempered with personalistic concern. This is not a useless formula for today's religious educator.

C. Wesleyan Theology Informs our Learning Theory

I believe that our theology should critique every aspect of Christian education. But I shall limit my comments here to a few remarks about Wesleyan theology and learning theory.

Learning theories are commonly collected under three headings:

1. Personologism declares the human personality to be generative and active. It acts upon environment shaping it and follows its own ends in spite of environment.

2. Situationism declares the personality or intellect to be a passive lump upon which environment works with a free hand shaping and forming the person in its (environment's) own image.

3. Interactionism says that the person is indeed generative and active, but not impervious to environment.

A Wesleyan, being true to his theological heritage would at once disavow unwavering allegiance to Situationism for this denies the Wesleyan theological view of man (to say nothing of the Scriptural view of man) as free (by prevenient grace) and responsible. B. F. Skinner is probably the most popular situationist today. His brand of behaviorism declares "it is the environment which acts upon the perceiving person, not the perceiving person who acts upon the environment."⁵² Therefore, if we can control the environment we can shape and precisely predict behavior. Because human freedom is a mere myth anyway and always has been we can neither be blamed or credited for our behavior. Heroes and criminals are just alike-like all of us they were simply created by their environment. Before Skinner's technology of behavior human freedom falls. As Skinner writes:

What is being abolished is autonomous man-the inner man, the homunculus, the possessing demon, the man defended by the literatures of freedom and dignity.... Autonomous man is a device used to explain what we cannot explain in any other way. He has been constructed by our ignorance, and as our understanding increases, the very stuff of which he is composed vanishes.... His abolition has been long overdue.⁵³

It seems obvious that Skinnerianism in any of its derivatives bears careful scrutiny by Wesleyans who subscribe to what Susanna Wesley taught John at her knee, "The freedom of the will is necessary if there is to be moral responsibility."⁵⁴

You would be correct of course to object that Wesley himself used behavioristic methodology. At Kingswood he acted in a manner almost as environment-conscious as Skinner. He planted the school in the woods, far from the corrupting influences of the wicked cities he arranged a constant religious atmosphere, he provided 24-hour supervision, censored textbooks, children could not go home for weekends or holidays lest wicked playmates or neglectful parents stain their souls. Any student who was deemed a bad influence on classmates was expelled immediately. In fact, I think a reasonable final examination subject would be "Discuss Kingswood School as Skinner box."

Nevertheless, in spite of his faith in the influence of environment, Wesley knew in the end human freedom enabled by grace would make the final choice. He warned in his introduction to the Lessons for Children to "Beware of that common, but accursed, way of making children parrots, instead of Christians."⁵⁵ In his sermon "On Family Religion" after instructing parents to thoroughly teach and model Christianity he says, "Your son may nevertheless serve the devil if he will; but it is probable he will not."⁵⁶ Wesleyans like Wesley's term "probable" much more than the behaviorists' "predictable" when it comes to individual response to education. In the sermon he used to open Kingswood school he said Proverbs 22:6 was a "general, though not universal promise" for some had been trained in the way they should go and "in the strength of their years, they did depart from it."⁵⁷ He adds "some of the best parents have the worst children" in

spite of education's lofty aim of drumming the "seven diseases" out of the child. So we see that when adopting behavioristic, even pragmatic, methodology Wesley is careful to maintain his belief in free moral agency. Wesley's descendants would do well to be careful at this point for some of our materials are generously sprinkled with activities which betray stimulus- response presuppositions.

But there is another force in learning theory today which is at once in conflict with Wesleyan thought. Humanistic education is a "growth industry" in today's pedagogical market. Today's humanistic educator is primarily a personologist. I believe that Locke Bowman was right when he said that the threshold question for Christian educators in the 80's is to decide their response to this two-question true-false test:

1. Human beings are functioning organisms, subject to forces from the outside that cause them to behave the way they do.
2. Human beings are uniquely persons with inner potential, each one with a dynamic self-concept that results in individual patterns of growth.⁵⁸

The personologists have made a great impact on Christian education, much of it for the good, some of it otherwise. Such things as values clarification, moral development, sensitivity training, open-ended methods, and faith development all fall within this general stream of influence. At once the Wesleyans have grounds for dialog with these. For example, they don't have to fight for human freedom: the humanists make an issue of such. But right away we are in another jam-the structural developmentalists, the values clarification brokers, and the optimistic humanist practitioners have nothing whatever to say about sin-original or duplicated. And in dealing with human nature, its perfectibility, and its potential the Wesleyan starts with sin as a first consideration-to the humanists the doctrine of sin is a not-quite-funny non-sequitur.

Wesleyans can still dialog with these sunny folk better than Calvinists or Lutherans. Carl Rogers, a prominent humanist was raised a Calvinist, but on the basis of his counseling said the Calvinists were wrong in their insistence that man was totally depraved. He said that at the bottom of man's heart he found something positive that could be counted on to work toward healing. A point of dialog may be seen in Wesley's belief that there are some remains of the image of God in the worst of men. Again, James Fowler says that his system of faith development has no inevitable conflict with Christian theology unless you have a radical Calvinist or Lutheran doctrine of predestination or the Fall. He sees his system quite in harmony with the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification.

I believe that Wesleyans should note the behaviorist-humanist extremes and search for a mediating view which not only retains a tolerable view of human freedom, environmental influence, the distorting reality of sin, but which also provides for prevenient saving, and sanctifying grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. In other words our stance should not be that of hovering outside the university lab to see what new infant theories the behaviorists or the humanist may send toddling forth for us to "scoop" and integrate into our curriculum before the Baptists or Episcopalians can. Rather, we should search for the identifying badges of theories thrust

before us, understand their origins and assumptions, critically evaluate how, if at all, they can contribute to the mission of Wesleyan Christian education.

D. The Wesleyan Accent of Biblical Authority Informs Us as to the Subordinate Nature of the Authority of the Behavioral Sciences

I cite this from among other alternatives because I think it is a threshold issue for today. We have seen the behavioral sciences, particularly sociology and psychology, push theology off the throne and even make Biblical authority a mere footstool. This of course makes man the measure of things.

It is not merely the secularists who have championed this cause; religionists as well have turned to the behavioral sciences as the final authority for "faith and practice." Many examples might be cited, but let me here give just one-the 322-page study by the Catholic Theological Society of America called *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*.

A committee appointed by CTSA brought the fruit of several years of study to the 1977 meeting. The report was a plea for a new contextualism in Catholic sexual ethics. En route to establishing a more liberal view of homosexuality, premarital sex, extra-marital sex, and birth control they vigorously toppled three authorities. The theologians of the Roman church were disarmed because, after all, their task, as everyone knows, has been to concoct systems to accommodate the mandates made by theologically unsophisticated managers, kings, and popes. So why listen to their coaching on sexual ethics? Church tradition polluted by Greek philosophy and natural law ethics must also be discounted-the Church made early mistakes here and has rigidly repeated them. The third authority, and the one which concerns us here is the Bible. In fact, this is the first one to be rooted out by the probings of the CTSA report. The Old Testament teachings about homosexuality, adultery, incest, etc. are so culture-clad that they can give no firm guidance for today's Christian. Moreover, they declare "the motivation behind Old Testament legislation had nothing to do with sexuality itself. It stemmed rather from social and economic considerations."⁵⁹ Further "the sayings of Jesus and the writings of the New Testament Church on sexuality are all occasional, conditioned by particular questions arising from particular circumstances."⁶⁰ In addition the church's post-Easter impositions on the texts of the Gospels make it impossible to know what Jesus really said or believed about sex. Paul, intoxicated with Stoicism, wrote even more muddled instructions and what he did say clearly has been muddled and misunderstood.

With theology, tradition, and finally the Bible disposed of, the report hoists on its shoulders the new king and true authority-behavioral science. The bottom line, the final authority, is sociological and psychological studies and opinion polls. In a settling-the-issue section Kosnik and company declare:

"the behavioral sciences have not identified any sexual expression that can be empirically demonstrated to be, of itself . . . detrimental to full human existence.... The theorist who

wishes to hold the view that acts of masturbation, pre- and extra-marital sex and homosexuality are absolutely inconsistent with healthy personality development or successful marriage relationships cannot presently look to empirical data."⁶¹

They add that in light of this recent discovery that "enlightened and well integrated individuals might well free themselves of conflict by simply reflecting on the relativity of their society's sexual ethic and proceed discreetly with their own sexual project."⁶²

Pastors are then told that in their counseling and spiritual care they would do well to remember that pre-marital sex can be beautiful, that various kinds of extra-marital sex may represent "a truly Christian response to the problems and needs of particular groups."⁶³ Further, in dealing with homosexuals rather than being a guilt doer they should "recommend close stable friendships between homosexuals not simply as a lesser or two evils but as positive good."⁶⁴

I hope that the lurid content of this example does not detract from the point I am trying to make here. That point is the fact that the tone of the times is to measure man by man, to hail the behavioral sciences as Messiah. And this makes current experience the final judge and in the final analysis makes what is into what ought to be: "isness" becomes oughtness.

I raise the subject in this address on religious education because this fox is already in the Christian education's chicken coop. To treat the latest enthusiasm of religious education-stage theories of cognitive, moral, and faith development-uncritically is to take the muzzle off the fox.

I celebrate the insights that Piaget, Kohlberg, and Fowler have helped us to gain about structural developmentalism. We must study them, profit from their work all the while knowing that they are describing what is, not what ought to be.

We have been well warned by scholars like Donald Joy who has reminded us that "Kohlberg, with Piaget, easily identifies himself as a naturalist and a humanist."⁶⁵ Joy sharply critiques the naturalistic errors in Kohlberg-his naturalistic fallacy, "one-handed empiricism" which ignores noumenal concern, and, the point which concerns us here, the is- equals-ought error.

It is not just eager and simple lay educators in the local church schools who make the leap from isness to oughtness-witness Lawrence Kohlberg's own arrogant article "From Is to Ought: How to Commit the Naturalistic Fallacy and Get Away With It."⁶⁶ This is merely another example of how behavioral science researchers think that isness equals or at least prescribes oughtness. But we must remember that when the behavioral science workers studying global sexual preferences, or human ways of making meaning, have filed their most detailed empirical charts summarizing the isness of the issue they have yet to utter one syllable about oughtness.

It is at this point that our Wesleyan doctrine of Biblical authority stands us in good stead. Wesleyans have honored experience; so do the behavioral science high priests of today. The authority of Scripture for Wesleyans is an "experienced authority."⁶⁷ Thus fully appreciating the importance of experience a Wesleyan will know of the greater authority of the Word.

Many quotations could here be marshalled to represent the Wesleyan heritage of a Biblical faith. But permit me to let Adam Clarke counsel us here. Clarke declared that the Bible should form the creed. Too many creed builders create their creeds according to their own biases, and then hunt up passages in the Bible "dismembered from their fellows"⁶ to give a Biblical ring to their homemade creed. For Clarke all the winds of doctrine which howled through the winter of England's soul-deism, latitudinarianism, dead orthodoxy-were to be examined in light of the Bible in which Clarke said we "find the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."⁶⁹ This was not a doctrine of verbal dictation for Clarke said that his doctrine was "not of such an inspiration as implies that even the words were dictated or their phrases suggested to them by the Holy Ghost.... They were hagiographers who were supposed to be left to their own words."⁷⁰ For Clarke private experience could not outweigh the Bible. In his sermon "Apostolic Preaching" he declared "Suppose not one person could be found in all the churches of Christ whose heart was purified . . . who loved God and man with all his regenerated powers, yet the doctrine of Christian perfection would still be true."⁷¹ because it is in God's Word.

When his years were in the "yellow leaf" as Byron says, Clarke wrote to his friend James Everett and said:

I have lived more than three score years and ten; I have traveled a good deal, . . . I have conversed with and seen many people, in and from many different countries; I have studied all the principal religious systems in the world; I have read much, thought much, and reasoned much; and the result is, I am persuaded of the simple unadulterated truth of no book but the Bible.⁷²

I have not covered every argument here. I neither tried to nor do I care to. I cite the representative quotations from Clarke simply to remind us of what we already know. That being that a Biblical faith is not merely the sauce which seasons Wesleyanism; it is the meat, the main course, the substance of Wesleyanism itself. This is an important fact to remember in these days of dictatorship by social sciences. You see, if we yield our Wesleyan awareness of Biblical authority to the prophets of "isness is oughtness " we will then join the ranks of those who preserve Christianity in the world by baptizing as Christian whatever they find thriving in the world, whether it be sexual revolution, empiricism, civil rights or even atheism itself. In this "post-Christian" era this temptation will appear like a subtle siren-song come to life. It will not come boldly forward in a recognize-at-one-glance uniform. Rather it will seep into our people's lives through the media and the market place. Then into religious journals and Christian curricula. It may look as gentle as a Star of Bethlehem flower, as healing as Gilead salve, as scientific as an equation, as reasonable as the Novum Organum and may even wear a gold cross around its neck by the time it gets to you, for whatever is popular in the world will soon dress up and come to church. But to yield our doctrine of Biblical authority in favor of isness equals oughtness is to baptize as Christian the fads of the moment.

Conclusion

These beginning guidelines for making Wesleyans more like Texans are really aimed at raising our consciousness of the value importance of Christian Education to Wesleyans and to some strategic ways in which this heritage informs our philosophy, learning theory, and concepts of authority. We need more holiness people who understand and treasure their Wesleyan heritage. May that heritage challenge us, inspire us, humble us. May we own it, incorporate it into our collective life and allow it to guide, and help shape our identity.

NOTES

- 1 Stanley Hauerwas, "A Tale of Two Stories: On Being a Christian and a Texan," *The Perkins Journal*, Leroy T. Howe (ed.) Summer, 1981, p. 4. I am indebted to Mr. Hauerwas not only for this quote but for the metaphor suggested in his title which I have adapted to being a Texan and a Wesleyan.
- 2 Paul Sangster, *Pity My Simplicity* (London: Epworth Press, 1963), p. 45.
- 3 Adam Clarke, "The Necessity of Christ's Atonement," Sermons 4:159, cited by Wesley Tracy, *When Adam Clarke Preached-People Listened* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1981), p. 184.
- 4 Minutes I, 52, 68 cited by John W. Prince, *Wesley on Religious Education* (New York: The Methodist Concern, 1926), p. 134.
- 5 *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., 14 vols. (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978, vol. VIII), p. 305.
- 6 Ibid, p. 316.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Minutes I, 81, cited by Prince, *Wesley on Christian Education*, p. 135.
- 9 Works, VIII, p. 302.
- 10 John Wesley, "On Family Religion," Works, Vol. VIII, p. 79.
- 11 Ibid., p. 80.
- 12 John Wesley, "A Thought on the Manner of Educating Children," Works, XIII, p. 476.
- 13 "On Family Religion," Works, VII, p. 81.
- 14 "A Thought on the Manner of Educating Children." Works, XIII, p. 476.
- 15 Ibid
- 16 Ibid
- 17 Ibid
- 18 Minutes I, 4~Works, V, 194, cited by Prince, p. 133.
- 19 Ibid, p. 134.
- 20 Works, VII, p. 82.

- 21 The Instructions for Children i9 translated from *Les Principes solides de la religion et de la uie Chretienne appliques a l'educateur des enfants* by Abbe Fleury and M. Pierre Poirot. See Richard Green *The Words of John and Charles Wesley* (London, 1896), Nos. 62, 117, 118, 174.
- 22 Works, VIII, p. 269.
- 23 Ibid, p. 270.
- 24 Ibid, p. 273.
- 25 A. H. Body, *John Wesley and Education* (London: Epworth, 1936) p. 83.
- 26 Ibid, p. 80.
- 27 Ibid, p. 82.
- 28 Ibid, p. 73.
- 29 Ibid, p. 75.
- 30 Charles Wesley, *Hymns for Children and Others of Riper Years*, 35-36 cited by Prince, pp. 91-92.
- 31 "On the Education of Children," Works, Vol. VII, p. 87.
- 32 Ibid, p. 88.
- 33 Ibid
- 34 Ibid, p. 92.
- 35 Ibid, p. 93
- 36 Ibid, p. 94.
- 37 Ibid
- 38 Ibid
- 39 Ibid
- 40 Ibid, p. 95.
- 41 Ibid, p. 97.
- 42 Ibid, p. 90.
- 43 Ibid
- 44 "A Short Account of the School in Kingswood near Bristol," Works XIII, p. 289.
- 45 A. H. Body, *John Wesley and Education* (London: Epworth Press 1936), p. 100.
- 46 John O. Gross, *John Wesley: Christian Educator* (Nashville: The Board of Education, The Methodist Church, 1954), p. 28.
- 47 See Wayne Rood, *Understanding Christian Education* (New York: Abingdon, 1970).
- 48 Cited by Body, p. 34-
- 49 Ibid, pp. 56-57.
- 50 Works, VI, p. 593, cited by Prince.
- 51 Prince, p. 121.

- 52 B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Bantam/ Vintage Books, 1971), p. 179.
- 53 *Ibid*, p. 191.
- 54 From Mrs. Wesley's writings quoted by Adam Clarke in *Susanna Wesley*, p. 241.
- 55 Wesley, *Lessons for Children*, pp. 3-4, cited by Prince, p. 125.
- 56 *Works*, VII, p. 85.
- 57 "On the Education of Children," *Works*, VII, p. 87.
- 58 Locke E. Bowman, *Teaching Today* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980), p. 22.
- 59 Anthony Kosnik, et al., *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), p. 14.
- 60 *Ibid*, p. 17.
- 61 *Ibid*, p. 59.
- 62 *Ibid*, p. 56.
- 63 *Ibid*, p. 147.
- 64 *Ibid*, p. 219.
- 65 Donald M. Joy, "Kohlberg Revisited: An Evangelical Speaks His Mind," *The Asbury Seminarian*, Winter 1980, p. 8.
- 66 See *Cognitive Development and Epistemology*, T. Michael (ed.) (New York: Academic Press, 1971), pp. 151-284, cited by D. Joy.
- 67 See "John Wesley's Approach to Scripture in Historical Perspective," by R. Larry Shelton, *WTJ*, 14:1 (Spring 1981) and "Conservative Wesleyan Theology and the Challenge of Secular Humanism" by, Paul M. Bassett, *WTJ*, Spring 1973, pp. 74-75.
- 68 Wesley Tracy, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- 69 *Ibid*, p. 166.
- 70 *Ibid*, p. 56.
- 71 *Ibid*, p. 119
- 72 *Ibid*, p. 55.

DOING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN A WESLEYAN MODE: A RESPONSE TO WESLEY TRACY

by
J. Duane Beals

The main title implies two things: first, that there is a form of education that is distinctly Christian, and second, that there is a form of Christian Education that is distinctly Wesleyan.

Christian Education has as a philosophical base the world view of Biblical Theism. Biblical Theism is chosen and preferred over any other religious or naturalistic world view.

Wesleyan Christian Education I will define as a Biblical Theism which is informed by Wesleyan-Arminian presuppositions which provide a foundation for structuring and communicating a view of God, man, and the universe.

It almost goes without saying (I say "almost" because I am going to say it) that the watershed of Wesleyan theology is prevenient grace. The Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace places man, even natural man (unregenerate man), as a recipient of God's grace. To be human is to be graced. Prevenient grace enables the unregenerate to recognize his need of salvation when he hears the gospel and *move toward God* in repentance and faith that God might justify, regenerate, adopt, and begin sanctification in him with the gift of saving grace. It is the Wesleyan understanding of prevenient grace; added to the concept that fallen man still has somewhat of the image of God (in other words, total depravity is not absolutely total); to which is added, thirdly, the Wesleyan tenet that all men, fallen or redeemed, have free will; which interact to provide the bases for a Christian Education which is distinctly Wesleyan. A Wesleyan Christian Education will be built upon this three-fold understanding of man: 1) humanity is graced (prevenient grace), 2) natural man can hear and understand the gospel, and 3) man is free to receive or reject (all or part) of what he learns. We then add a Wesleyan epistemology-the four-fold test of truth-Scripture, reason, experience, and tradition. This three-fold understanding of man coupled with a Wesleyan epistemology provides a minimal formula for developing an approach to Christian Education that is distinctly Wesleyan. This minimal statement not only has implications for Christian Education,

but implications for evangelism as well. Indeed, Wesleyans have been reticent to draw a line between Christian Education and Evangelism.

This theoretical foundation has had a practical working out (though largely unconscious of its theoretical base) in the historical usage of the Sunday School as an evangelistic arm of the church. Non-believers have been taught as though they could understand the truth of the gospel as well as believers, and they have responded to that teaching in significantly large numbers over the years. At this point we might raise the question of the relationship of evangelism to Christian education, which is usually phrased: "Is evangelism Christian Education?" A line is usually drawn, sides are taken, and the battle waged. I tell my students that I do not care how they relate the two, but I do require them to give reasons for standing on their chosen side of the line. In historic American Wesleyanism there has been no problem with the relationship of evangelism and Christian Education. We do not need a Gallup Poll to inform us. "Hip-pocket data" shows that we have evangelized and educated at the same time and gotten results. I bring up the relationship of Evangelism and Christian Education because it is part of any Introduction to Christian Education course, and because we have a tendency to equate if not exhaust Christian Education with the Sunday School – a tendency not unique to Wesleyans, but almost universal to Wesleyans. And, we have used the Sunday School as an evangelistic arm of the church. Almost certainly, Wesley the evangelist would approve.

I summarize my opening statement by saying that Christian Education in a Wesleyan mode must be cognizant of a distinct theology with primary emphasis upon prevenient grace. Now for a brief response to the paper. The historical summary is excellent. I liked it so well that I read it to my students yesterday morning.

The author, Wesley Tracy, makes passing reference to prevenient grace in his discussion of learning theory, and gives more consideration to free will especially in his critique of B. F. Skinner's behaviorism. I would prefer that Mr. Tracy had given more space to prevenient grace as an "enabler" to recognize the truth. This would be more in keeping with historical Wesleyan awareness of the educational element in evangelism.

The author makes us aware of Wesley's study of the many and varied writings on education which were extant in his time, and presents Wesley as a synthesizer. After Wesley's critical study of educational theories, he picked and chose what he liked or what fitted the situation. I believe this to be a correct analysis of the development of Wesley's educational thought and also to be historically Wesleyan. Wesleyans have always grazed in everyone's pastures, but tried to give their own milk. It is especially evident at the annual meeting of this society. We also try to give "whole" milk for salvation of the "whole" man from "all" sin.

Mr. Tracy points out Wesley's emphasis upon knowledge as antecedent to virtue and piety. This suggests a strong educational element in the process dimensions of sanctification. We grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. I earlier commented about Wesley Tracy's response to B. F. Skinner and other brands of behaviorism. After reading his comments I was left with the uneasy feeling that he comes dangerously close to overreacting against social science methodology and throwing out the good with the bad. Tracy does recognize that Wesley used the environment as a

teaching tool, and that other behavioristic ideas can be read back into Wesley's approach to education. However, in Tracy's critique of the confusion of isness and oughtness by behaviorists, a valid critique' I hasten to add, he seems to leave room for the sole conclusion that isness must necessarily lead to oughtness. As a result of today's conversation with him, I now know that he does not maintain this, but I was left in doubt after reading his paper. I want to warn against throwing out social science methodology just because there are some, perhaps even many, "bad" social scientists.

Perhaps an analogy will help. The scientist may look at the universe and say, "This is what I see." Then he might also add the statement, "What I see is all that exists." He may have adopted an empirical epistemology which leads him to that conclusion. When he is observing, he is a scientist; but when he is pontificating, he becomes a philosopher. He is, in effect, a good scientist, but a bad philosopher. The same is true in the social sciences. A social scientist may say, "Men learn by conditioning." Then he may add, "That is the only way in which men learn." When he makes that second statement, he becomes a philosopher – a very bad philosopher. But his bad philosophy does not invalidate the truthfulness of his first statement. Men do learn some things by conditioning. Perhaps not solely by conditioning, but it is an important element in some learning.

The social science method of observation, classification, and prediction of probability is a valid tool and can be used by those who hold distinctly Wesleyan presuppositions.

Let me illustrate with an example which precedes even modern social science methodology. In the 1820's, a young preacher by the name of Charles Grandison Finney began evangelistic tours in which he developed methods for effective evangelism. Williston Walker, commenting on Finney's methods, said, "It was the shaping of them into a system designed to produce results that was the novel feature."² Perhaps a few excerpts from Finney's own writing will serve to illustrate. Regarding the comparison of a revival with a miracle, Finney states:

A miracle has been generally defined to be Divine interference, setting aside, or suspending, the laws of nature. A revival is not a miracle in this sense. All the laws of matter and mind remain in force. There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature. It consists entirely in the right exercise of the powers of nature.³

To illustrate the right exercise of the powers of nature, Finney refers to the breaking up of the fallow ground, which he calls the preparation of one's mind to bring forth fruit to God. He makes reference to directing one's feelings toward God.⁴ He prescribed some very behavioral processes which could aid or impede revival. Coming late to prayer meeting was frowned upon, as was reading long portions of Scripture.⁵ Environment was a topic for Finney's comments. The building was to be clean and warm, and the chairs comfortable.⁶ There is no record of any formal social science research on Finney's part, but he gathered enough "hip-pocket" data to structure and realize successful revival meetings. Finney analyzed and categorized his experience and applied the results to his practice.

Experience has always been an essential part of Wesleyan thought. The four-fold test for truth: Scripture, reason, history, and experience, used by John Wesley and his followers gave more room to experience than any other preceding reformation theology, but always weighed experience against the other three giving pre-eminence to Scripture thus avoiding excesses which appear in some neo-Pentecostal emphases upon experience.

I suggest that experience, both our own experience of learning, and our observation of how others learn, has valid roots in both the theology and history of the Wesleyan movement, and should therefore, have a rightful place in any Wesleyan Mode of Christian Education. If modern social science methodology allows us to be more accurate in our observations and gives a higher degree of probability of desired learning outcomes, so much the better. We have one more pasture in which to graze. But, and here we return to Tracy's critique, let us not graze in that pasture only. Let us wander with wonder across hill and vale grazing where every green blade grows, digesting our nibblings in the axioms of our learning theory, giving the "sincere milk of the Word" to those entrusted to our care that they might grow in the "grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." That is Christian Education in the Wesleyan Mode.

NOTES

- 1 He might have gone further in his critique. For instance, if there is no such thing as freedom, how does Skinner assume that he is free to structure an environment which will condition others?
- 2 Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church, Revised Edition*, New York, Charles Scribner's Son, 1959, p. 118.
- 3 Charles G. Finney, *Revival Lectures*, Westwood, New Jersey, Fleming H. Revell, n.d., p. 4. (First published as *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* in 1834 and 1835.)
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 36.
- 5 *Ibid*, p. 145.
- 6 *Ibid*, p. 207.

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES IN THE WESLEYAN MODE

By
John E. Hartley

The topic at hand is to consider what is the nature of Old Testament Studies in a Wesleyan mode. From a strictly scientific perspective the interpreter's theological outlook should make little difference in his analysis of the Biblical text. Nevertheless, most scholars concede that no interpreter approaches the text with a blank mind. Since each one brings to the text his preconceptions and his frame of reference, those who adhere to the Wesleyan tradition will reflect their biases by being more sensitive to certain themes and issues present in the Bible than a person from a different tradition. If this is true, I would think that some nuances and inclinations of perspective would be detectable in the OT work of Wesleyan scholars. Affirmatively stated Wesleyan Biblical scholarship may articulate some important insights contained in the Biblical message that have been bypassed or underrated by some scholars.

The question then is a hermeneutical question. Therefore, I shall begin by considering the nature of hermeneutics in a Wesleyan context. Afterwards I wish to look at two selected themes prominent in the OT as illustrative of how the results from Biblical research may enrich Wesleyan theology.

The dominant hermeneutical method in the conservative wing of the Wesleyan movement is the inductive method.¹ This method may be contrasted on the one hand to a traditional approach that seeks to indoctrinate through the exposition of the Scriptures and on the other to a historical-critical approach that analyzes the text by precise scientific methods. Both of these approaches are more directional than the inductive method which encourages the student to read the text first hand for what it says. Though the inductive method arose in another setting, it has found widespread adoption in the colleges and seminaries in the Wesleyan tradition, for it is compatible with the Wesleyan doctrines regarding the Scripture, the Holy Spirit and the believer's responsibility.² This fact is a fine illustration of how a tradition sets the climate for the flourishing of certain approaches. A great advantage of the inductive method for Wesley studies is that it allows room for the work of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation process, a

major interest in Wesleyan theology. At the door of this strength a potential danger lies. If the Spirit's role in the interpretation process has not been adequately defined, the outworking of this emphasis may lead to a very subjective interpretation and also encourage treating the text quite superficially. Instead of spending long, laborious hours in exegetical study, the student may rely on his emotions to give him the sense of the passage. This fault is too prevalent among Wesleyans. In their desire to win conversions and affect social change they tend to read the text in support of their particular bias. Consequently the best Biblical work has been done outside of our circles. This state does not always have to exist. With the rise of a host of Wesleyan scholars trained in Biblical studies my hope is that we as a whole may make some significant contributions to Biblical scholarship, but more importantly, that we shall have a powerful impact on the Wesleyan movement itself, to buttress a serious weakness in its present manifestation.

I. THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

To address the question of what OT studies in a Wesleyan mode consists, I shall begin with the inductive method and its potential as a broad hermeneutical umbrella that may cover multiple critical approaches to the Biblical text. A distinct advantage of the inductive method is that it begins the interpretation process in a manner that anyone can use. Also it provides a framework that may lead to the most comprehensive interpretation of the text. The steps in the inductive method from the simple to the complex, are usually three: survey, concentration and comprehension.

A. Survey

In the first step labeled survey the student only needs a Bible, a pencil and some paper. The emphasis lies on personal observation. Unencumbered by past interpretation the student studies a portion (usually a book or a major segment of a larger book) of Scripture to discover all that he can about that portion. While simple in nature, this step is most demanding. A problem is that before realizing its fullest results the student usually languishes and seeks relief from commentaries or other secondary sources. Nevertheless, he who perseveres benefits greatly, for he begins to control a large portion of a book, before he analyzes specific passages in conjunction with other interpretations of those passages. Another problem is that teachers too often prevent the student from realizing the fruits of this method. This may happen in one of two ways. The teacher lets the students share their observations, usually only preliminary ones, without demanding more detailed observation as illustrated in the story about "The Student, the Fish and Agassiz"³ or he presents a host of information as though he too received it from observation without showing the student all of the methods he employed to wrestle such insight from the text. Thus he leaves the faulty impression that they came primarily from his own observations. Be that as it may, observation is a crucial initial step in interpretation.

B. Concentration

The second step in the inductive method may be labeled concentration or analysis. Traditionally in conservative Wesleyan circles this step has

consisted mostly of linguistic exegesis. Linguistic analysis is certainly vital, but it is only one important step in the long process of interpretation. After careful grammatical exegesis, the various critical methods must be applied to the text.

Of course, some among us may reject categorically the different critical methodologies such as literary criticism as antagonistic to a high view of inspiration. While readily admitting that not all assured results presented in any critical method may be trusted-for they are only assured if one accepts all the presuppositions of that method-we need to remember that an earnest interpreter must be willing to employ any method that will nudge truth from the text. Conversely no critical method may be engaged categorically, for each critical procedure is founded on a naturalistic epistemology that denies the divine transcendence witnessed to in the Biblical text.⁴

At this point a digression may be helpful. I believe it is essential that a hermeneutic be developed that takes into account both the divine initiative and the responding creative human talent that produced the written text. Such a hermeneutic will establish principles for understanding both dimensions in the Biblical text. The results won by the application of this hermeneutic will present information for the scholarly discussion in OT studies and at the same time formulate ideas that will nourish the church. Of course, the construction of such a hermeneutic is viewed as untendable to those residing at the extreme poles; on the right those who hold to literalistic approach and on the left those who pursue higher critical methods. The literalists believe that any critical methodology robs the Scripture of its spiritual value, and scientific scholars assume that the acceptance of a transcendental force robs scholarship of its greatest asset, objectivity. Consequently, anyone who works in the middle ground between these extremes will be anathematized from both sides as being either unspiritual or unscholarly. Those on the right will claim that the scholar is tampering with God's word, while those on the left will say that the critical methodologies are not used properly or in a thorough manner. But a balanced methodology is necessary to avoid the fallacies inherent in both extremes, namely religious bigotry on the right and secularized faith on the left.

By contrast I believe that Wesleyan theology, of all systems, permits, yea, encourages the formulation of a balanced hermeneutic.⁵ In Wesleyan theology God and man are accorded great worth. Theological truth is constructed from the dynamic interchange between the Word of God and Christian experience. Both reason and faith contribute to spiritual understanding.⁶ This approach is clearly visible in a Wesleyan teaching on the dynamics of faith. Faith is synergistic: man working out his own salvation with God's assistance. A believer grows in grace by striving to incarnate the Scriptures in his personal existence, trusting in God's guidance. This view means that one must conduct his daily life by drawing heavily on his own inner resources. Planning is an essential, responsible act of obedience to God. As the believer lives each day he has faith that God is blessing and directing his responsible efforts. Then on special occasions his Christian walk is punctuated by God's presence, imparting his life dynamically. That kind of encounter, however, is the exception, rather than the

rule. The Christian life thus consists of a dialogue between the believer and God who is present in the believer's life through the Holy Spirit.

This synergistic understanding of Christian experience may be carried over, I think, to the area of hermeneutics, for the study of Scripture is a central construct of divine-human communication. It means that in a synergistic hermeneutic the interpreter must apply all of his rational faculties in studying the text and at the same time he must be jealous for the inner illumination of the Holy Spirit.⁷ Through this kind of an approach the interpreter will discern in a given passage both the natural and the transcendental forces that have led to its composition. Especially in historical passages he will perceive God's use of natural forces to accomplish His purpose. Then in his exposition the interpreter will expound on both the natural and the supernatural and will consider how these elements have interfaced to accomplish God's purpose. The results of his study will enable the Scriptures to instruct, reprove, correct and train the faithful in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16), addressing both their relationship to God and their cultural setting. The resulting interpretation will build faith, not decimate it; and the resulting faith will be an informed, thoughtful conviction, not a blind naivete.

1. Critical Tools

If a synergistic approach is possible, a believer may use every critical method to study the Scripture and expect significant results. Since the Bible is God's Word written in the words of men in history, critical methodologies are not inherently destructive of faith.⁸ However, analyzing the text completely by a single critical method will lead to negative results from the standpoint of faith. Not only does every method have its limitations by definition, but critical methods usually assume a naturalistic viewpoint. The conflict arises between certain categorical presuppositions of a critical method and faith, but not necessarily between faith and the way a critical methodology addresses a specific phenomenon inherent to Scripture as a literary and historical work. But if the presuppositions of the methodology may be altered to allow for dynamic transcendence, the believing scholar may apply each methodology to the aspects of the text addressed by that methodology and gain insight from his study. To put it another way, in order to function primarily within the context of the church all critical methodologies need to be made compatible with the implications of the church's conviction that the personal has interacted with mankind in word and in event to achieve salvation for all men. It should also be noted that a modern historical approach in itself has proven inadequate for interpreting fully the Bible, for the results from such study stand in conflict with the testimony of Scripture itself, namely God himself has acted uniquely in history to establish his kingdom. To put it another way, in order to unlock the spiritual truths contained in the Word a valid hermeneutic must also have a theological orientation. Fortunately, we stand at a point in the history of modern Biblical interpretation when the locking grip of historical criticism is being broken. We are fortunate for this turn of affairs, since the preoccupation with historical criticism has created an impasse for constructing a Biblical theology and hence for being true to the Scripture's own intent. Nevertheless, since we are rational creatures, we must continue

to use various critical methods adapted to the hermeneutic called for above in order to acquire historical and cultural perspective reading of the text.

In summary no other position save that taken in the middle ground is adequate for serious Biblical research. Unless the text is thoroughly analyzed its message remains hidden, and unless the study leads to an awareness of the divine message, the results won will not offer a word from God valid for the contemporary age. I am convinced that a group of Wesleyan scholars from the disciplines of Biblical studies, theology and philosophy could work out such a synergetic hermeneutic and that they would win recognition, though of course, not adherence from both extremes. With the current, widespread interest in the questions of interpretation and methodologies the present climate in Biblical studies will encourage such an effort on our part.

The benefits from working a synergistic hermeneutic to the Wesleyan tradition would be immense. Such a hermeneutic will pave the way for a more thorough investigation of Scripture within our tradition. The results from this study could anchor the tradition more firmly to the Scriptures and discourage the spawning of vastly divergent movement from its midst that range all the way from dogmatic fundamentalism to social humanism. Neither of these spinoffs remain within the perimeter of Wesleyan theology. Positively the dialogue between the results of sound Biblical interpretation and the theological heritage of the Wesleyan tradition would help keep our tradition vital in an era of rapid change.

2. Form criticism

After the above digression that argues for a synergistic hermeneutic, I wish to demonstrate that form criticism is an apropos tool for use by Wesleyan scholars in the analytic stage of the inductive method. In Biblical studies, form criticism has proven to be a most valuable interpretative tool. Form criticism is able to penetrate into the text's meaning, for it works with the way the mind, both of the individual and of the community, sets up categories to evaluate, synthesize and record information as well as compose and express ideas. The analysis of the structure of a genre results in clearer definition of its words and phrases, which have numerous possible meanings. That is, the classification of a genre greatly narrows the semantic field of its words. For example, the word "run" has scores of meanings; but its meaning is often clarified by the form in which it appears: a baseball score sheet, an article in a sports magazine about track and field events or a political essay. Form analysis then assists greatly in determining the precise meaning of key words in a pericope. Another asset of form criticism is its awareness of the close relationship that exists between language and society. In this it treats the role that "a word" has in giving structure to community functions. The form critic thus studies ancient literature to reconstruct the different genres contained in that literary piece, and then he describes the social setting that gave rise to each genre.

For example, form critical work on the Psalms has been most fruitful. The Psalms have been classified into many genres and their place in Israel's national life has been described. The results of this study offer a clearer perspective of the faith and practice of an ancient Israelite. As a result of

this research, I may still read the Psalms in all of their poetic beauty, but with the added dimension that now as I recite them I have a sense of their importance in Ancient Israel. By discovering a Psalm's original function, a modern person has a richer appreciation of its intended meaning. It is instructive to note that even the ancient community felt the need for both a historical perspective and a generic classification of the Psalms, for at a very early date titles were appended to many Psalms. The elements contained in the titles vary, including musical direction, classification of the Psalm, the cultic context and the historical setting for the Psalm. Is it too bold to say that the purpose of form criticism, i.e., to learn the origin of a Psalm and its use in the community, moves in the same tradition that led to the titling of the Psalms?

From the outset form critics centered on reconstructing the oral form of the epic narratives and poetic passages found in Scripture. It was assumed that much Biblical literature had a long oral stage before it was written down and that numerous genres functioned as vehicles for this oral tradition. As a corrective to the over emphasis on the oral stage of other literature form critics now acknowledge that written communication may be classified into generic types as much as oral literature. As a result more attention is given to the structure and content of a passage in seeking to classify its genre.⁹ Since the creative ability of the literary artist is taken into account, mixed genres are accorded equal weight with pure types and a socio-historical context is sought for these blends. R. Knierim, a leader in form criticism, calls for flexibility in defining the form critical task so that both the typical patterns and the peculiar parts of a pericope may be treated.¹⁰ Now it is recognized that a genre may function differently in a context removed from its original setting. Particularly significant in interpreting the Bible is the final literary context of each genre. These advances in the form critical methodology enable the method to yield a more holistic understanding of each pericope. And as a hermeneutical tool it now fits more appropriately in the framework of the inductive method.

After the original setting has been ascertained the tradition history of a passage may be investigated. The critic attempts to describe the growth and development of a tradition that resulted in the final written form of the pericope. From this aspect of the study much insight into community patterns that existed in various eras in Ancient Israel is attained. The picture of the social setting ascertained reveals the dynamic interplay between "the word" and the community. The effect "the word" had in shaping the community's customs and destiny becomes visible. This point is a most beneficial result of form critical study. In discovering the effect a word has on the community the interpreter places himself in a better position to translate that ancient message to a contemporary setting. Such interpretation focuses on God's word as addressed to the people of God functioning as a community, rather than as a special word addressed primarily to individuals singled out from the congregation. A product of this method then is understanding the Biblical words as addressed to a community of believers. In this we are reminded of a central tenet of Wesleyan theology, that believers must fellowship together around the Word of God in order to strive for entire sanctification. I wish to suggest that awareness of the form critical approach to Scripture will give us insight into ways the Word of

God should function in that community fellowship. From the other side, I would think that the community orientation and the concern for social redemption espoused by the Wesleyan tradition would sensitize its Biblical scholars to have a special interest in and inclination for applying the form critical method to the Biblical text. With this twofold conviction I believe that properly teaching our students in this method will raise their sights to the scriptural concern for ministering to society as a whole. I also think this method will highlight the principle that the fullest potential for spiritual growth exists in the context of a small group fellowship. An obvious tie can be made between such a group and the old class meeting.

Further, I am convinced that a proper application of form criticism in a synergistic hermeneutic will make the student be more alert to his own social setting. This sensitivity will encourage him to go beyond historical exegesis to translate the ancient word to his social context. Since the Wesleyan movement has a strong concern for the redemption of society, especially to bring healing to social ills that multiply suffering for the masses, the results of seeing the social implication of the Biblical text will encourage this concern and suggest judicious ways to effect social healing. This direction will also serve as a corrective to the over-emphasis on individualism and conversionism in contemporary evangelical Christianity.

Of course, every critical methodology has its limitations and the singular application of any method is fraught with problems.¹¹ In regard to form criticism we need to consider some of the problems that attend its use. Not every passage in the Bible is cast into a generic form and too often form critics try to force texts into an artificial category. One example is the analysis of the book of Job. Though Westermann argues that the book is a lament¹² and Richter a lawsuit,¹³ the book defies strict form analysis. While these two genres are dominant in the book of Job, the poet draws on a wide variety of genres to address the issue of suffering from many perspectives. Thus it is impossible to show that one genre is so primary that it is determinative for understanding the whole work. There is no question that the book of Job in world literature is *sui generis*.

By looking at a given pericope as a generic type the form critic may miss the unique literary style and artistic construction of that unit.¹⁴ Often using a specific genre, an ancient writer created an image in the audience's mind, and then in order to highlight the idea he wished to communicate he altered the structure of that genre in places and/or he placed it in a literary setting that was different from its original setting in life.

Employed in this way a genre no longer has its original significance; now its literary context more prominently colors its meaning. Therefore, the full nuance of a pericope is discovered by investigating the text's structure and the author's literary use of that structure. Today form critics recognize the need for literary analysis and assign more importance to individual texts.¹⁵

When form critics are preoccupied with small units and literary fragments in Scripture, they tend to miss the central theological issue that the passage addresses. Thus a pericope must not only be interpreted in light of its life setting, but also in its contextual setting. In some passages these two settings are at play with each other. The final author or editor employs the various genres at his disposal and gives them a final shape by

the context in which he places them. Form critics are now treating literary forms and are interested in larger units and entire books.¹⁶ By placing form criticism in the framework of the inductive method the broadest application of this method will emerge.

A more serious critique of form criticism must consider the implication of the assumption that the community created the text rather than that God communicated His word to the community. While the community did have a powerful role in the selection and preservation of the Biblical material, its formative role was perhaps secondary, after God had spoken. In other words, the community played a significant role in the formation and the preservation of these words, but it may have been preserving what it heard and saw rather than creating a word for some special need or occasion as often assumed by form critics. Part of the problem is that form critics usually assume a closed universe. But I think it is possible to employ this methodology free from that assumption. Nevertheless, what the consequences of an openness to the belief in a dynamic transcendence will be for form critical methodology will require careful investigation within the program for a synergistic hermeneutic called for above.

3. Beyond Form Criticism

Form criticism is but one hermeneutical tool. Other methods need also to be employed in order to unlock the fullest meaning of the text. Particularly important for a synergistic hermeneutic will be any method that looks at the Scriptures as a whole, for it is the entire canon that is the Church's authoritative word. That is, in order to rightly divide the Word of God each passage must be set within the context of the whole, the canon.¹⁷ This view assumes that each pericope must be judged in the light of the whole in order to learn what its authoritative word is for the contemporary church.¹⁸ Scholars trained in the form critical method have developed other methods to deal with whole of Scripture in its final form, e.g., redaction criticism,¹⁹ tradition criticism²⁰ and canonical criticism.²¹ Through use of these tools they seek to discover how pericopes and themes fit within the canonical context.

The tradition critic studies the origin and historical development of a theme. Insights about the growth of a tradition provide a better perspective from which to interpret the passage in its final form. One method that treats the development of Biblical themes is called inner-Biblical interpretation.²² This method investigates how an authoritative word is understood in a new cultural-historical context that demands some alteration of the original word to be relevant in the new setting. A great result from this study will be the discovery of hermeneutical principles employed by the Biblical writers themselves. Another approach called redaction criticism devotes itself to the final form of the text. This method seeks to uncover the various stages of editing, compiling and arranging of passages that have led to its canonical form. By employing these critical methods the interpreter will find what the ancient word meant in its original setting and will ascertain its meaning in its canonical setting. The rich perspective gained from these methods will greatly enhance our understanding of the role of the Word in the formation of Israel, the people of God.

As argued, critical methodologies may be conducted in the framework

of the inductive method, but this possibility has not been adequately pursued, in my opinion, by conservative Wesleyan scholars. In too many circles these critical methods have been unduly shunned or even anathematized. When we overcome our resistance to critical methodologies and use them correctly in the challenging task of interpreting the Scriptures, we will have gathered the material necessary for the third step in the inductive method, a statement of the theology taught in the unit under study.²³

C. Comprehension: A Biblical Theology

This statement leads us to the third step of the inductive method, namely to state the aim or intent of the passage exegeted. While the synthetic nature of the third step has long been recognized by exponents of the inductive method, I have seldom seen evidence of its adequate application. In my studies I was encouraged to write a paragraph about the meaning of the text. This assignment moves the student in the right direction, but it does not go far enough. In my presentation of the inductive method in my classes I assign an essay that is to present the Biblical theology of the passage. This theological essay is to consist of three inter-related parts: the passage's theological intent, the value orientation (or ethos) inferred from that theology and some suggested ways for integrating the theology and the ethos of that passage with contemporary culture.²⁴

A descriptive statement of theology inherent in a passage is the most basic synthesis, for it joins together the results of philological exegesis, historical-critical investigation and a theological understanding of the spiritual intent of the themes or concepts in the text. Made within the framework of a synergistic hermeneutic the description will recognize both the historical dimension of the text and its theological witness. By working with the tensions of these two forces the full dimension of God's communication with man will be displayed. By avoiding the tendency to either historicize the Biblical text or spiritualize the resulting theological statement will be authentic, dynamic and relevant. This step may be taken for each pericope studied, as illustrated by the format of the *Biblischer Kommentar* series.²⁵ More demanding and more profitable is the presentation of the theology of an entire book. An interesting example is the third volume of H. J. Kraus's commentary on the Psalms in the above mentioned series entitled *Theologie der Psalmen*.²⁶

Once Biblical theology is recognized as the goal of Biblical studies, we may produce from our own circles a Biblical theology covering the entire OT or more ambitiously the entire Bible as an intermediate step, a series of monographs treating specific theological motifs found in the OT needs to be written. Although there is available excellent insight into the OT idea of the "holy" in George Turner's *A Vision that Transforms*²⁸ and various articles on the topic as David Thompson's "Old Testament Basis of the Wesleyan Message"²⁹ a thorough study of this concept by a Wesleyan scholar would strengthen our emphasis on holiness and also correct some inaccuracies in the way we develop this dogma. Another one could investigate the concept of the Holy Spirit in the OT.³⁰ With all the tantalizing ideas about apocalypse floating about, a description of the impact of Biblical eschatology and its teaching within the context of Biblical thought would be most beneficial. Such treatises will expound

specific OT themes by tracing their origin, development and alteration through the various ages covered in the OT.

After the exegetical and thematic work has been accomplished, a volume on OT theology could be worked out. In that work the various theme, inherent in the OT tradition would be integrated around the theological center of the OT, even if that center has many facets. The work will need to recognize the rich diversity of theological thinking within the OT tradition Also there must be a dialogue carried on between the divergent views and the unifying factors that tie the OT tradition together-if nothing else the unifying factor may be the continuous confession through Israel's history that Yahweh is God, His name is one and His people are one. By working with the tension between the diverging theologies in the OT and the unifying principles, the Biblical scholar will produce a holistic work that addresses the multiple aspects of diverse human existence before God. Further, the Biblical theologian needs to articulate the values inherent in the OT message and to translate them for the people of God functioning as community in a modern cultural setting. A Biblical theology done in the Wesleyan mode cannot omit this crucial aspect of a theological expression for the working out of faith in daily life has always been a primary interest of those in the Wesleyan tradition. When that tradition has been on course it has sought to affect society as a whole. With this interest in the social dimensions of the Scriptures, Wesleyan scholars will discern principle from the interaction between God and His people recorded in the OT.

In summary, the goal of Biblical studies within a Christian confession is a Biblical theology, namely a descriptive statement of the teaching of the passage under consideration. A right understanding of the inductive method leads in this direction. This procedure is congruent with the Wesleyan tradition for Wesley himself was interested in the study of theological themes in his own Bible study, as he writes,

In order to know the will of God, there should be a constant eye to the analogy of faith: the connection and harmony there is between those grand, fundamental doctrines-Original Sin, Justification by Faith, the New Birth, Inward and Outward Holiness.³¹

There are limitations, of course, to any work on Biblical theology. Since it is expressed in twentieth century language conditioned by contemporary cultural interest and a specific philosophical outlook, it will become archaic with time, just as Wellhausen's works function now more as documents in the history of OT interpretation than as sources for understanding the OT. So many of his ideas have been changed, altered or negated by continue research. In addition, further research into the historical background of the Biblical text, clearer understanding of Biblical language, more comprehensive knowledge about the growth of the Biblical tradition will prove a better perspective from which to view the Biblical text and alter former insights. The point is that modern interest and world views have a profound effect on the insight of the Biblical theologian and will color his theological work. The wide variance among the OT theologies produced in the last quarter of this century continues to bear witness to fact that an interpreter's outlook is conditioned by his setting, his traditions, his training and his hermeneutic.

While the works of Eichrodt and von Rad have long been paramount among OT theologies, Terrien's recent work *The Elusive Presence* in which he emphasizes the multiple experiences of the divine presence witnessed to in the OT reveals how refreshing and enlightening a different perspective can be.³² Surely a Wesleyan scholar using the resources of his own setting, tradition and training could produce a Biblical theology that would be refreshing and spiritually invigorating. Let us at least get into the contemporary discussion, which as attested at the last SBL meeting is in creative ferment.

When the Biblical scholar has done his work well, the results of his study will reach the general church through the labor of the theologian and the preacher. The theologian will integrate the results of Biblical theology into a Wesleyan theology. The preacher will be the spokesman that proclaims a Biblical message to the congregation. To facilitate this diffusion the Biblical scholar must present his findings in a lucid, exciting style in order to inspire the preacher's thinking. When the preacher becomes thoroughly familiar with the themes and ideas contained in Scripture, he will have found a rich source material from which he may draw an abundance of food for his congregation. In so doing he will feed the people of God the meat of the word and afford the opportunity for significant spiritual growth, a desperate need in the Wesleyan movement. Too often adults in congregations of the Wesleyan tradition become dry from lack of Biblical teaching. A turning to the Scriptures will inspire new life into dormant congregations and will improve significantly the health of living bodies of believers.

To illustrate the advantage for Wesleyan theology that may accrue from scholarly work let us consider the themes of covenant and sin.

II. THE TWO EXAMPLES

A. Covenant

A major theological theme that is central to the OT, but that receives little or no emphasis in the Wesleyan tradition, is covenant.³¹ From the initiation of redemptive history with Abraham to its fulfillment in Christ covenant plays a central role. God first entered into a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15). God fulfilled the promises of that covenant by forming Abraham's descendants into a nation through the events of the Exodus and by entering into a covenant with the entire nation at Mt. Sinai. Later God established a royal line to rule Israel and backed His purpose by making an eternal covenant with the house of David (II Sam. 12; Ps. 89; 132). But dismayed by Israel's disobedience under the covenant encouraged by the weak and sometimes corruptive leadership of David's descendants on the throne, the prophets looked for a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). Jesus initiated that new covenant with His atoning death (Heb. 8). The covenant concept is so fundamental to the divine plan of redemption that our Bible is divided into the Old and New Covenants or Testaments. Why then is there so little emphasis on this truth in Wesleyan circles? No doubt it is a reflection of our biases. We sense that too much emphasis on covenant will support the doctrines of predestination, election and eternal security and downplay our emphasis on experience, free will and the possibility of falling from grace.

A study of the covenant theme however, reveals the manner in which God prefers to work with man and makes clear the relationship between law and promise. Also man's responsibilities in relationship to his privileges in grace and the assurance that God is with him in his daily life are described in the Bible in covenantal language. Therefore, the knowledge about the theology of covenant will strengthen a believer's understanding of the way God relates to man.

Let us look at the problem of the relation between covenant and the cherished Wesleyan dogma of "backsliding." If God enters into a covenant with man, can man by his own deeds annul that covenant? This is a difficult question. In order to gain some perspective on this question let us consider the multiple metaphors found in both Testaments that represent the dynamic relationship between God and man:

father—son

husband—wife

shepherd—sheep

king—servant

master—slave

Some of these metaphors certainly suggest that the relationship between covenant partners is not subject to change and thus would, on the surface, exclude the possibility of a believer backsliding, e.g. shepherd-sheep and father-son. The latter has become a central metaphor in Arminian-Calvinistic debates. Perhaps, though, another metaphor is more germane for the question at hand, particularly if its use coincides with the issue being investigated. A study of the OT reveals that the metaphor of "husband — wife" is a dominant in passages concerned with Israel's unfaithful ways (e.g., Jer. 2-3; Ezek. 18; 23). The ancient marriage relationship was solemnized by a covenant, but it was a relationship that could be broken. There were recognized grounds for granting a divorce, i.e., the breaking of the covenant relationship. In reference to Israel's unfaithfulness to her covenant with Yahweh, the prophets drew heavily on language associated with husband-wife to warn Israel about her sinful ways. Reproachfully they called Israel an adulteress. This name means that she has spurned love and must bear her shame. But is Israel's covenant actually annulled? That is a moot point. Again a consideration of the covenantal structure is helpful. Whoever enters into a covenant comes under the blessings and the curses enumerated therein (cf. Lev 26; Deut. 28). Those who are faithful are blessed and those who violate the statutes are cursed. In Israel's case being a nation, the ultimate curse was captivity. Eventually God had to activate that final curse and send Israel into Babylonian captivity for her rebellious ways. While in captivity Israel was still under the covenant but under its curses. So in one sense the covenant was broken, but in another sense it was still alive, but as an instrument of punishment.

These principles may be transferred to the new covenant in Christ. It, too, has blessings and curses as seen in the beatitudes and woe sayings of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount recorded in Luke 6:20-26. Whoever becomes a member of this covenant through faith in Jesus Christ places himself under its blessings and curses. Should a covenant member violate the standards of the covenant, he will experience the woes and continued denial of his

Lord will lead him to eternal separation from God. That is, God may judiciously sentence a violator of the covenant to eternal punishment. So even if one wishes to argue that the covenant is not broken, the covenant relationship clearly does not guarantee a believer "eternal security." To put it another way, by becoming a member of the Christian community blessings in heaven are not promised unconditionally, instead they are made possible.

Thus the Wesleyan emphasis on free will, responsible holy living and the possibility of "falling from grace" are not negated by the Biblical teaching on covenant, but they are tempered. For example, in popular Wesleyan thought, the attributing to man so much autonomy needs to be corrected. The emphasizing of man's freedom made without proper correctives has parishioners in Wesleyan circles too introspective and too neurotic about their position in grace. Never sure where they stand before God, they feel too insecure. A proper exposition of covenant, I believe, will bring healing to such afflicted souls by providing a strong sense of assurance in Christ and by offering a sound cure for improper guilt feelings.

B. Sin

A second Biblical theme I wish to consider is sin. The doctrine of sin is a central construct of Wesleyan Theology as the following statement by Richard S. Taylor illustrates:

The doctrines relating to sin form the center around which we build our entire theological system.... If our conception of sin is faulty, our whole superstructure will be one error built on another, each one more absurd than the last, yet each one necessary if it is to fit in consistently with the whole erroneous scheme. If we are to end right, we must begin right, and to begin right we must grapple with the question of sin in its doctrinal significance until we have grasped the scriptural facts relating to sin in all of its phases....

Many, perhaps most, of the errors which have protruded themselves into Christian theology can be finally traced to a faulty conception of sin. 34

Surely the OT with its cultic interest in atonement and the extended accounting of Israel's waywardness can shed much light on the manifold nature of sin. Yet a thorough study of the concept of sin in the OT by a Wesleyan scholar to my knowledge is lacking. So I wish to share some impressions on the OT concept of sin from my studies. I see that in the OT sin is viewed as being multifaceted. There exist, of course, the two aspects of sin mentioned above, willful acts of sin and a sinful bearing in man. However, sin is more complex than that. There are at least two other categories of sin: inadvertent errors and social sins.

"Inadvertent errors" is a translation of the Hebrew word *segaga*, which comes from the root *saga* meaning "to err, go astray."³⁵ This word is found clustered in Lev. 4-5 and Num. 15. Lev. 4:27-28 provides a sense for this word:

If any one of the common people sins unwittingly in doing any one of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and is guilty, when the sin which he has committed is made

known to him he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed.

According to this passage the erring party is guilty, for he must make a offering and his error is called "a sin" (*hatta't*). This passage cautions that a person's errors cannot be easily dismissed as mere mistakes. They are sins even though committed inadvertently or out of ignorance. By contra intentional sins are described in bolder terms in the OT and there punishment is final as a verse in Numbers illustrates:

But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles Yahweh, and that person shall be cut off from among his people (15:30).

The difference between these two types of sin is clear. While a flagrant sin causes a member to be removed from the covenant community, such is not the case with a person who commits a *segaga* sin. He remains a member the community of believers, completely answerable, though for his err, When he becomes aware of his error, he must make atonement for it lest raises it to a willful sin by being unrepentant. After the erring party offers the right sacrifice, he is forgiven, continuing in fellowship with God as a member of the covenant community.

Consequently from an OT perspective mistakes are serious and must owned up to, for they endanger a man's relationship with God and strain his relationship with his neighbors.³⁶ Surely in a theological system that emphasizes love, any slighting of love must be considered a breach of perfect love and therefore sin, not merely excused because of human frailty. By failing to call acts of injury done in ignorance sin, we weaken the message of the gospel and stifle spiritual growth. A stronger teaching on the nature of inadvertent sins would lead the believer to be more sensitive to the responsibility borne from his mistakes though not to make him paranoid of error and insecure, but rather to prompt him to relate to others in a quiet, gentle, humble manner that is genuine. So when he becomes aware of any offence, he will confess it to God and seek to restore harmony with his fellow man. In so doing he effects reconciliation and models his Lord's redemptive work. Out of such humility grows genuine love and spiritual power. In the interim between an inadvertent sin and its confession the erring person is not removed from grace nor has he backslidden. He is covered each moment by Christ's atoning blood.

Another kind of sin in the OT is social sin. Since everybody participates in the actions and attitudes of his community, he also participates in the corporate guilt resulting from his group's sinful behavior. Thus when my congregation practices racial prejudice, I, too am guilty. When my labor union supports acts of violence, I am a participant. When my nation exploits a people for their oil or when it creates poverty in far corners of the world to gorge its lust for delicacies, I, too, am guilty. The OT teaches this the punishment for social sins takes place in this life, in plague, famine, war, and climactically in the Day of Yahweh. An understanding of social sin and the believer's participation in it as a member of a community and a nation throws some light on the question of why believers must suffer loss from earthquakes, fires and violence. They are not exempt by reason of their

faith. Instead God offers grace to endure. Also the concept of social sin provides a rationale why the church must go through the tribulation in the last days, at least for a time.

A proper understanding of social sins may lead to affirmative results. As believers we will be interested in the course of events in the world. We will have an interest in community government as well as national concerns. As we become alert to the suffering of the masses, we will look for ways to extend relief to the hungry, the unemployed, the sick, the lonely, the aging, at home and abroad. We will be concerned about racial prejudice and energy conservation- especially when we perceive how our thirst for oil has unsettled other societies and heaped reproach on the gospel-and foreign policy in general. Hopefully then an emphasis on the OT teaching about social sins will motivate us to effect reconciliation and healing in our communities and our world. This awakened interest will support the social emphasis in Wesleyan theology, one of its great hallmarks.

Therefore, a fuller understanding of the OT teaching on sin will help clarify the Wesleyan position on personal Christian experience. It will distinguish between willful sins and inadvertent errors without dismissing the latter as mistakes. Confession and seeking forgiveness inside the covenant community will become a more integral part of our worship and our personal devotion. We will gain a better perspective on what constitutes backsliding and a more positive teaching on Christian assurance. It will also provide information for the manner in which the church is to minister to contemporary social ills.

III. CONCLUSION

By way of summary I have attempted to look at the way OT study may be done in a Wesleyan context. I believe the movement needs to encourage more serious Biblical study and then integrate the results into its theology and practice. The place to begin is to work out a viable hermeneutic that will allow for the use of the critical methodologies and at the same time define more precisely the role that the Holy Spirit must play in the interpretation task. It is my conviction that Biblical scholars in the Wesleyan tradition working with this resulting hermeneutic will present to the Wesleyan congregations a host of works that interpret the Biblical text, study theological themes and possibly a Biblical theology. The results of these efforts will provide an abundance of material for our theologians to incorporate into a Wesleyan theology. But more importantly it is my conviction that this new impetus would raise the place that the Bible receives in the Wesleyan tradition. A greater emphasis on the Bible will leaven the tradition in a most wholesome way. If these opinions are accurate, it would be a worthy project for the WTS to define areas of need and to sponsor projects to address them. At these annual meetings there could be working seminars on various topics and the results of such dialogue published. With the complex social problems facing the world today, the Wesleyan tradition has a vital word for this confused age and this age offers us a great opportunity to let us do the hard work of providing a solid Biblical foundation for our tradition to serve "this present age, our calling to fulfill."

NOTES

- 1 An excellent presentation of this method is found in Robert A. Traina's *Methodical Bible Study* (Wilmore, Ky.: Asbury Theological Seminary, 1966).
- 2 Cf. R. Larry Shelton, "John Wesley's Approach to Scripture in Historical Perspective," *WTJ*, 16 (1981~), pp. 23-50.
- 3 Irving L. Jensen, *Independent Bible Study* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), pp. 173-178.
- 4 In *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation*, Roy A. Harrisville, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) Peter Stuhlmacher finds the historical critical method too limited to deal adequately with the Biblical text. Therefore, he calls for fashioning a hermeneutics of *Consent* that will have an "openness to transcendence," be "methodologically veritable" and have an "effective-historical consciousness," p. 65. Of special note are a couple of his comments on the historical critical method: "historical criticism is the agent of a repeated and growing rupture of vital contact between Biblical tradition and our own time. We have seen that this problem is inherent in the structure of historical criticism. As a result, a correction in respect of method is called for here." "For them Biblical criticism has produced a vacuum which causes them to despair of the possibilities of a useful, historical-critical interpretation of scripture, and in part to seize at hair-raising theological substitutes," p. 65. To this may be added David C. Steinmetz's conclusion in "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," *Theology Today*, 33 (1976):27-28 "medieval theory of levels of meaning in Biblical text, with all its undoubted defects, flourished because it is true, while the modern theory of a single meaning, with all its demonstrable virtues, is false. Until the historical-critical method becomes critical of its own theoretical foundations and develops a hermeneutical theory adequate to the nature of the text which it is interpreting, it will remain restricted-as it deserves to be-to the guild and the academy, where the question of truth can endlessly be deferred," p. 38.
- 5 Paul S. Minear, "Ecumenical Theology-Profession or Vocation?" *Theology Today*, 33 (1976):66-73. He shows that the setting in which Scripture is studied has a powerful influence on the results of that study. Of special concern is the modification of Biblical studies done within the context of the American University. If this force becomes dominant, he believes it will have a negative impact on doing quality Biblical theology by American scholars.
- 6 Cf. Laurence W. Wood, "Wesley's Epistemology," *WTJ*, 10 (1975):48-59.
- 7 Luther saw the need for the Holy Spirit to enlighten the heart of the interpreter so that he might discern the spiritual dimensions of the Word. Prenter describes Luther's perspective in these words: "If God does not speak into the heart while the ear listens to the outward Word, the outward Word remains the word of man and law. When we hear the Word of Scripture, we are compelled to wait on the Spirit of God. It is God who has the

Scripture in His hand. If God does not infuse his Spirit the hearer of the Word is not different from the deaf man. No one rightly understands the Word of God unless he receives it directly from the Holy Spirit." Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, J. M. Jensen, trans. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953), p. 102 quoted in R. L. Shelton, op. cit., p. 22.

- 8 George E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 19-53.
- 9 Cf. R. Knierim's most significant article "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered," *Interp.* 27 (1973):459.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 435-468.
- 11 Cf. S. H. Travis, "Form Criticism," *New Testament Interpretation*, I. H. Marshall, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 157-160.
- 12 Claus Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job*, C. A. Muenchow, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).
- 13 Heinz Richter, *Studien zu Hiob* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959).
- 14 Under the name rhetoric criticism, James Muilenburg in "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL*, 88 (1969): 1-18 argues the need to investigate the rich literary structure of each passage. He views this step to be in addition to the form critical analysis of the passage. Its design is to discern "the actuality of the particular text . . . for it is this concreteness which marks the material with which we are dealing," p. 18.
- 15 R. Knierim, *op. cit.*
- 16 *Ibid*
- 17 Cf. Brevard Childs, *op. cit.* pp. 97-122 and his book *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).
- 18 Cf. John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), pp. 161-212.
- 19 Cf. the stimulating study of Robert Polzin on the various redaction of the books of Deuteronomy-Judges. He studies the speeches in these books in particular as a clue to the various levels of redaction. *Moses and the Deuteronomist* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980).
- 20 Cf. Walter E. Rast, *Tradition History and the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972) and Douglas A. Knight, *Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel* (SBL Dissertation Series 9, 1975).
- 22 Especially helpful in this regard is the work of James A. Sanders of Claremont School of Theology and Michael Fishbane of Brandeis University. James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972) and "Text and Canon: Concepts and Methods," *JBL*, 98 (1979):5-29. Michael Fishbane, "Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis," *JBL*, 99 (1980):321-341.
- 23 Cf. Traina, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-227.

- 24 For a discussion of what constitutes a Biblical theology a very helpful work is Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975 rev. ed.) especially pp. 35-55, 129-143. A very important article on Biblical theology is Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary" in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), I:418-432.
- 25 The format of the *Biblischer Kommentar* differs markedly from two sets designed by Americans. The *Interpreter's Bible* makes a wide distinction between exegesis and theology or material for preaching and The *Anchor Bible* abandoned any holistic statement of the text and offers only a philological and historical notes on selected verses.
- 26 Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theologie der Psalmen Bk 15/3* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979).
- 27 Brevard Childs in *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970) forecasted the demise of Biblical theology and suggested a program for a new Biblical theology. A severe criticism of Child's work is offered by James D. Smart in *The Past, Present and Future of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1979). J. Smart shows that interest in Biblical theology, though fluctuating at times, has continued strong. His view is supported by the number of recent efforts at composing a truly Biblical theology: W. Zimmertli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline*, D. E. Green, trans. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978); S. Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978); C. Westermann, *Theologie des Alten Testaments in Grundzugen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978); R. E. Clements, *Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1978); W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 1978); E. A. Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981).
- 28 George A. Turner, *The Vision that Transforms* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1964).
- 29 David L. Thompson, "Old Testament Basis of the Wesleyan Message," *WTJ*, 10 (1975):38-47. The title of this article is over-ambitious. One will find a solid study of the Old Testament concept "holy," but little is done to tie the results into Wesleyan theological expression.
- 30 See such a study by Meredith G. Kline entitled *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980).
- 31 "Wesley himself had a great interest in covenant, no doubt reflecting his Puritan heritage, as is reflected in his covenant service. For a discussion cf. R. C. Monk, *John Wesley His Puritan Heritage* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 96-106.
- 32 Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., A. Baker, trans. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961); Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., D. M. G. Stalker, trans. (New York: Harper and Row Publisher, 1962); S. Terrien, *op. cit.*

- 33 Cf. Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenantary Formula*, David E. Green, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).
- 34 Richard S. Taylor, *A Right Conception of Sin* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1945), pp. 9-10. For further treatment of the doctrine of sin from a Wesleyan perspective see the articles on sin in *The Word and the Doctrine*, Kenneth E. Geiger, ed. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1965); Henry A. Grinder, "The Origin of Sin: Individually," pp. 73-87; Merne A. Harris and Richard S. Taylor, "The Dual Nature of Sin," pp. 89-117; Dennis F. Kinlaw, "Sin in Believers: The Biblical Evidence," pp. 119-125; Delbert R. Rose, "Sin in Believers: As a Principle," pp. 127-136.
- 35 R. Knierim, "sgg," *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, E. Jenni and C. Westermann, eds. (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1976), II:869-871.
- 36 In the light of these observations I would think that the following statement made by R. Taylor, op. cit. would need to be tempered: "True, such things as misinterpretation of God's will and mistakes of ignorance need to be guarded against and need the atoning blood of Christ, but only because they are results of the fall and not because they are in themselves acts of sin" (p. 63).

**OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES IN A WESLEYAN MODE:
A RESPONSE TO THE PAPER PRESENTED
BY DR. JOHN HARTLEY**

by
Sherrill F. Munn

Part I: Setting the Perspective

Dr. Hartley's paper is an apologetic for a Biblical theology based upon a solid foundation of a broad matrix of critical methodologies. Such acceptance of the critical historical and literary methods is most welcome. Unfortunately, modern critical methodologies have tended to be condemned or looked upon with suspicion within Wesleyan circles. However, it has been my experience that most of the criticism comes from those on the outside looking in and not from the Biblical scholars themselves who work with these methodologies daily and who know their value for understanding the Biblical text and the community which produced it. The following statement from a recent publication by a Wesleyan theologian is typical:

Generally, the Historical-Critical approach has been negative and destructive, because it has operated on two presuppositions: (1) That Scripture and the Word of God are not to be equated; rather there is a "canon within the canon" which the astute student is to find, while the rest he may reject as totally human and full of error.... (2) An even more devastating presumption is the a priori denial of miraculous.... In contrast, the *Historico-Grammatical* method of interpretation may and should be practiced by conservative students. This begins with the assumption of inspiration and infallibility, but seeks to understand the Bible by bringing to bear on its pages every possible ray of light from historical backgrounds and setting, cognate languages, philology, and the science of textual criticism. 1

Such a statement is incorrect, prejudicial, and attempts to limit severely the scope of Biblical studies. It is incorrect because the *Historical-Critical* method is not endowed with the presuppositions which he claims.

Any student of the secondary literature in Biblical studies knows that presuppositions regarding Canon and miracle vary from scholar to scholar and these certainly are not inherent in the method. His statement is prejudicial because it tends to prevent any real dialog with scholars who work with historical-critical methodologies. It sets a communication barrier between the theologian and the Biblical scholar because it condemns a priori his mode of operation. Moreover his description of the so-called *Historic-Grammatical* method clearly excludes most literary methods of study such as source, form, redaction, audience, tradition, and structural criticism. Such an approach is woefully inadequate to a full treatment of the text with all the rich possibilities that such methods offer.

One might also point out that the description of *the Historico-Grammatical* method which includes the study of historical backgrounds, setting, cognate languages, philology, and textual criticism does not necessitate the assumptions of inspiration and infallibility. As a matter of fact, if a scholar was so inclined, he could incorporate those assumptions claimed for the *Historical-Critical* method into the *Historico-Grammatical* method.

The most serious problem raised by such an attitude toward modern Biblical studies is the one already mentioned, i.e. the communication gap between theologians and Biblical scholars. It is counter-productive when theologians wish to dictate the parameters of Biblical studies to Biblical scholars. And, too often, if a dispute follows, resolution comes about through ecclesiastical politics rather than scholarly debate which would allow a progressive dialectic to exist within the Wesleyan community of scholars. Frequently, I fear, the Wesleyan theologian has adopted a traditional-proof-texting method of approach to scripture. He has sought, in this way, Biblical confirmation of an already firmly fixed tradition. Instead of relying for authority on his doctrine of Scripture,² he has permitted tradition to carry the weight of authority to the detriment of Scripture. It would be preferable if the tradition were continually brought into creative dialog with the Biblical scholars.

Since the Reformation the Holy Scripture has been understood among most Protestant traditions to be the only and final source of revelation for Christians and thus the final authority in all matters of doctrine and practice. In the words of Martin Luther,

As a matter of fact, a judgment must be pronounced by making the Scripture the judge, something that is impossible if we do not accord primacy to Scripture in all questions that are referred to the church fathers. This means that Scripture itself is the most unequivocal, the most accessible, the most comprehensible authority, itself its own interpreter, attesting, judging, and illuminating all things....³

The Wesleyan understanding of Biblical authority certainly stands in the mainstream of the reformers. Precisely, this emphasis upon the primacy of scripture necessitates the search for its own message. The reformers' understanding of Biblical authority in large part gave rise to critical Biblical studies in all its manifold richness. The historical and literary methods of Biblical study have been developed through centuries of study

of the Bible for its own illumination. Methodologies, such as source, form, redaction, tradition criticism, developed from close observation of the text itself. They are methods which the Biblical text suggested by its very nature.

Dr. Hartley's paper recognizes both the necessity and the rich possibilities of critical Biblical scholarship. It is my hope that his paper will move us in the direction of broader acceptance of these methods and the dialog between theologian and Biblical scholar which is needed in the Wesleyan community.

Part 2: Response to Dr. Hartley's Paper

Preliminary Comments:

Dr. Hartley's call to scientific analysis of the text, and his understanding that the theological presuppositions of the Wesleyan scholar will lead him to emphasize certain nuances and slants of interest is welcomed. There is, however, a caution which must be heeded. While one neither can nor should disown his presuppositions, he can, nevertheless, consciously control their influence upon his interpretation of the text. What must be avoided is allowing theological presuppositions to dictate conclusions and to circumvent objectivity in the analytical process of Biblical studies. It would certainly be an error to fail to keep those themes and concerns which are close to a Wesleyan heart from being fully integrated into the context of the whole of Old Testament thought. Such a rush to Wesleyan emphasis would result in a misunderstanding of the significance of these concerns in Biblical thought, and the conclusions would not be convincing to the scholarly world. Dr. Hartley is, of course, sensitive to these problems, but I believe they need to be expressed more directly.

The call to Biblical theology as the final goal of Biblical studies, I believe to be admirable. The synthetic process should indeed be the result of the analytic process. This, of course, does not imply that all Biblical scholars have the gifts or inclination for Biblical theology. Some are excellent exegetes in the narrower sense of the term. Consequently the synthetic process should be a community work building upon one another's strengths and insight. A nexus of scholarly dialog is essential to the process of doing Biblical theology.

An essential part of Dr. Hartley's paper is his plea for an expanded use of what he calls the inductive method of hermeneutics. I have a question as to the difference that exists between the "inductive method" and the "historical-critical" method from which he distinguishes it.⁴ The basic difference seems to be the initial close reading of the text to understand what one can before the secondary literature is used. This is good practice in any method and particularly the historical-critical method.

Despite the question of the distinction between the methodologies, I am in sympathy with his treatment of hermeneutics. I am particularly intrigued with his suggestions regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation, the necessity of the analytical process which "may cover multiple critical approaches to the Biblical texts"⁵, and the call for Biblical theology as the goal of Biblical studies.

1. The Holy Spirit in Interpretation

With respect to the first issue, the place of the Holy Spirit in interpretation, I would agree that the Spirit's involvement has not been adequately defined. As to the statement that the inductive method is compatible with the prominent place given to the Spirit's role in Wesleyan theology, it would seem that such a statement depends upon an adequate definition of what that role is.

The tendency for the Spirit to be a shortcut to interpretation has led too often to a shallow treatment of the text. One is compelled to ask, "How does one keep Biblical study from falling into a subjectivism with such emphasis upon the Spirit as interpreter? For, is one as valid as what it says to another even if they disagree?" Dr. Hartley has given a provocative suggestion for understanding the Spirit in the interpretive process by indicating that the process is synergistic.⁶ It is the interpreter's responsibility to apply the multiple critical approaches to the Biblical text which will bring insight and understanding. On the other side, it is the Holy Spirit who bears witness to the truth of the theology of the text. Or to restate: understanding of the meaning of the text is primarily the work of critical scholarship, but confirming the truth of the theology reflected to argue that the Holy Spirit also helps him in applying critical methods to understand the text. However, in the course of debate over the meaning of text it seems to me to be exceedingly unfair to claim that the Holy Spirit helped me and not you.

Another emphasis, regarding the Holy Spirit's role in interpretation, is the presence and operation of the Spirit within the community. Too often concepts of inspiration or enablement are individualistic. Dr. Hartley correctly recognizes that form criticism opens up vistas for understanding the Biblical community as a people of God rather than persons of God. To continue this line of thought one may add that the methodologies of source, form, redaction, and tradition criticism illustrate that it is the community which preserved, modified, created, and edited the traditions which are presented in their final form in scripture. The process is a community process and the locus of inspiration is the community. By analogy, could we not suggest that the H it operates in and through the dialog and dialectic of the scholarly community? No one individual has claim to inspiration or enablement. Rather, inspiration is inherent to the flux and flow of the scholarly community at work as a whole.

2. Critical Methods

Dr. Hartley's emphasis upon the necessity of critical methodology beyond linguistic exegesis well taken.⁸ To concentrate upon linguistics and ignore literary methods is a truncated approach which will bring insufficient results for Biblical theology. Furthermore, his caution with regard to these methodologies needs to be voiced. However, *caution must not lead to fear*, and such loaded contrasts as naturalistic epistemology vs. divine transcendence and literalistic vs. higher critical methodologies may engender fear of some humanistic demon lying concealed in these methodologies ready to devour the one who trespasses upon his domain. It is rather

simply a matter of learning the limitations of any given method. One must not reject sound logical foundations in what is called the naturalistic epistemology, but recognize that conclusions of a transcendental nature cannot be drawn. On the other hand one must be very careful how he uses the notion of transcendence to confirm what he wants to be true in the text. It is easy to slip into eisegesis.

Another such contrast found is spiritual vs. scientific.⁹ Dr. Hartley is attempting to draw a much needed synthesis between the spiritual and scientific dimensions of Biblical theology. A significant problem for the Christian Biblical scholar exists here. Often, that which is theologically the most important is scientifically the least demonstrable. Yet, this need not produce a conflict between scientific study of the text and the community from which it springs and the essential theological concerns. One's choice is not either spiritual or scientific but both/and. At the same time, one must recognize the limitations of each element in the hermeneutical process. The scientific approach may describe the meaning of the text in phenomenological terminology pertaining to what the community of Israel believed about itself at any given point in its history. But this should augment our understanding of the theological affirmation which the believer wishes to confess.

What has been said about the synthesis between the spiritual and scientific should also be applied to faith and secularity.¹⁰ Here also, Dr. Hartley seems to be calling for a synthesis between the methods of the secular and believing scholar. Here again he must be applauded. There does not appear to be any necessary conflict between the critical method of the university and the theological concern of the seminary. One must understand that the secular scholar is not concerned with faith affirmations apart from describing them as a phenomenon of the Biblical community. Secular scholarship neither confirms nor denies the truth of theological statements. If a particular scholar does, he himself is leaving the scientific study of the text and crossing the boundary into theological affirmation.

Referring again to Dr. Hartley's discussion of form criticism, I cannot agree more with the strengths which he attributes to the form critical method. Nevertheless, his critique of the naturalistic base of form criticism,¹¹ I find to be questionable. Again, I fail to see the necessary conflict between the community creating the text and God communicating His word to the community. Creating, preserving, altering, using, editing traditions are community exercises and in these activities of the community God's word finds its incarnation. Moreover, that a certain pericope may have been inspired to explain a phenomenon which the people encountered is, in fact, a type of historical setting within the life of the community and should not be ruled out as a possible genesis of some traditions as Hartley implies. It is still God's word, canonical, received by the church as authoritative regardless of its origin.

3. The Call for Biblical Theology-Comprehension Stage of Hermeneutics

Within the call to produce Biblical theology, Hartley correctly perceives the diversity within Biblical thought and the community which produced it.¹² Biblical theology often seems to be the search for the center or in many cases a stating of what is to be the center and attempting to

arrange Biblical thought around the center. Hartley recognizes both the difficulty of locating that center and the reality that that center, no matter how broadly conceived, will be many-faceted. In developing Biblical theology one must understand the complicated process of the growth of Biblical religion and canonization. I have no essential quarrel with Dr. Hartley's suggestion that the first step toward Biblical theology be monographs on specific themes-and certainly his examples of covenant and sin are well chosen-yet I fear that our tendency to go looking for what is distinctly Wesleyan may override our need to understand all the Scripture for itself. Certainly, we will turn to particular key themes. However, such themes must be treated carefully in full light of their place in the traditions and processes of the Biblical community and the canon. Any Biblical theologian, Wesleyan or otherwise, must be comprehensive in scope. I am worried that a Wesleyan Biblical theology which begins with motifs particularly important to Wesleyans may also end there, without being placed within the total context of Biblical thought.

The question of finding the center of Biblical thought suggests a related problem which Dr. Hartley has alluded to but not developed, that is, the problem of the unity of Scripture. I am concerned that too often a presupposition in our search for the unifying core of Biblical thought is a simplistic notion of the unity of Scripture which in reality does not exist. Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament emerged from a single unchanging, culturally pure community. Consequently, even those themes which endure through the Old Testament or both testaments are not given uniform treatment by all Biblical writers.

Frequently, a simplistic overview of Biblical unity has caused significant misunderstanding. A very basic insight is that the existence of a New Testament implies some discontinuity with the Old. Indeed, New Testament writers specifically state many discontinuities. Moreover, such discontinuities are as theologically significant as the unity of scripture. To illustrate: there are certain popular fundamentalist movements, the most noted headed by Jerry Falwell, which maintain that the United States must support the modern state of Israel and that this is a divinely ordained moral position. Falwell cites Old Testament passages of the election of the nation of Israel as proof that modern Israel is the apple of God's eye and that all nations will be blessed which bless her. Falwell does not cite the Epistle to the Hebrews or the Acts of the Apostles or any other New Testament work, and for good reason. In the New Testament the people of God is not the nation of Israel. – However, the naive belief that all the Bible is the Word of God allows Falwell to pick a few isolated verses from the Old Testament and cite them as having Biblical authority. Unfortunately, this simplistic perspective and use of scripture is widely accepted among both pastors and laity of our movement. We have been remiss in the Biblical and theological education in our churches and apparently our colleges and seminaries also. Consequently such Biblical and theological illiteracy allows these potentially dangerous inaccuracies to abound.

One other caution regarding the necessity of Biblical theology needs to be mentioned. The call for Biblical theology to extend to application to the contemporary setting may impinge upon the theologian's domain and tend to dominate and impede the process of systematic theology which

synthesizes the descriptive work of the Biblical scholar with tradition, experience, contemporary philosophy and culture. The work of the Biblical scholar is primarily descriptive. The synthetic work is primarily within the purview of the systematic theologian. Of course, both disciplines should proceed within a framework of mutual dialog.

I have no specific critique of the examples of Biblical themes which Hartley indicates may be of particular importance for Wesleyan theology.¹³ I have already voiced the more general concerns. I am particularly pleased with his treatment of social sin and responsibility which the Old Testament clearly addresses. However, I want to move on to a few concluding statements.

Conclusion

Several times in the course of this conference, reference has been made to prevenient grace as a hallmark or perhaps the hallmark of the Wesleyan-Armenian tradition. If this is the case, it is interesting to me that the exponents of such a tradition have tended in recent years to close themselves off from critical methodologies because they are humanistic and naturalistic. Moreover, there seems to exist a tendency to espouse so much of fundamentalism with its exceedingly narrow frame of reference. This seems to me to be a great incongruity which ought not to exist. The Wesleyan Biblical scholar should experience and know the prevenient grace of God by opening his mind to the whole panorama of Biblical scholarship, critically examining all which is offered there. No area of learning should be ruled out a priori and pejoratively called higher criticism or naturalistic or humanistic criticism. While Dr. Hartley does not specifically mention the doctrine of prevenient grace in his defense of critical methodologies, he certainly has captured its spirit.

Finally, the question which is at the heart of the conference: "What is the Wesleyan Mode for Biblical studies?" is particularly problematic, in part, because study of the history of Biblical exegesis and hermeneutics in the Wesleyan tradition exists to my knowledge. It seems to me that such a study is crucial for an adequate answer to the question of the conference. I believe that we have raised some issues which are central to the Wesleyan Biblical scholar's work, e.g. the authority of Scripture, the Holy Spirit in interpretation, prevenient grace and openness to critical methodologies. However, these are but a few issues presented in a very preliminary way. I am not suggesting a search for a Wesleyan hermeneutic, which will lock us into a traditional prison-house. In fact, such a study may require self-criticism, for, I suspect that we would discover two hundred years of eisegesis. I wonder if we are mature or secure enough to look at ourselves in a critical manner. A study of our exegetical heritage would perhaps help to give us insight into our relationship to the wider world of Biblical studies and help to establish our self-identity within that wider context.

NOTES

1 Richard S. Taylor, *Biblical Authority and Christian Faith* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1980) pp. 70-71.

- 2 "That both Old and New Testaments constitute the divinely inspired Word of God . . . and the final authority of life and truth. " Cited from the statement of belief of the Wesleyan Theological Society.
- 3 *Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per Bullam Leonis X novissimans damnatorum* (Declaration of all the articles of Martin Luther condemned through the papal bull of Leo X), WA, VII, p. 97. Cited from Werner George Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 22.
- 4 Hartley, p. 2.
- 5 Hartley, p. 3.
- 6 Hartley, p. 6.
- 7 Hartley, p. 11.
- 8 Hartley, p. 4.
- 9 Hartley, p. 5.
- 10 Hartley, p. 7 ff.
- 11 Hartley, p. 15.
- 12 Hartley, pp. 17-22.
- 13 Hartley, pp. 22-29.

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY IN THE WESLEYAN MODE

by
Carl Bangs

As a good Methodist I shall adopt the method of that proto-Methodist, *Petrus Ramus*, and divide my topic into two parts: historical theology and the Wesleyan mode. Then I shall divide historical theology into two parts, its nature and its functions, and the Wesleyan mode into two parts, its meaning and its possibilities. Each of the four sub-parts will then be sub-divided into enough parts to exhaust either the subject or the reader, whichever comes first.

The Nature of Historical Theology

I refer the term "historical theology" not so much to a branch of theology as to the fact that all theology, be it Biblical, systematic, or practical, is historical, that is, that all theology participates in "the interrelated web of spatio-temporal events." Nothing is exempt from being caught up in the relativities of history. Even when theology speaks of a God who is beyond history, it speaks from within history. In this sense all theology is a theology "from below," that is, a "historical theology."

Historical theology is at the same time "contemporary theology." All that the historian has to deal with is the present. There is no way to go back to the past. What we call "the past" is all caught up in the present. Present experience bears within it the realities of its inherited past. It is a present experience to encounter archaeological remains, ancient or not-so-ancient tests, language (that vast repository of history), or the less tangible cultural realities of rituals, aversions, adversions, appreciations, evaluations, sentiments, emotions that color every moment of existence.

Historical study is a one-sided way of examining the present, of dealing with current theological issues, attending to those elements of the rolled-up inheritance that illuminate how the present came to be what it is. A Wesleyan historical theology uncovers the immanent past with a concentration on the Wesleys, their followers, and the movements stemming from them.

Jaroslav Pelikan has called historical theology "ecumenicity in time," as against ecumenicity in space. It is the inclusion of the past into our Christian community, the inclusion, indeed, of the dead, "admitting the

Fathers as brothers." In this larger, trans-temporal dialogue historical theology takes account of change and looks for continuity.² Since the Enlightenment and the rise of historical thinking, it is impossible to ignore change. The Vincentian canon that "one must take the greatest possible care to believe what has been believed everywhere, ever, by everyone" has fallen on hard times. Wishing will not make it otherwise.

Pelikan has said that although historical theology does not belong to the *esse* of theology, it does belong to the *bene esse*. ' The situation is more urgent than that. Historical theology is an unavoidable aspect of every act of interpretation and hence belongs to the *esse* of theology.

Historical Theology: Its Functions

One way to identify the functions of historical theology is to say that it stands in some gaps, provides some linkages. Pelikan has pointed out one of these gaps. Most theologians, he says, have wanted to be known as interpreters of the Bible, and yet there is now often a hiatus between Biblical theology and systematic theology. "Historical theology must build bridges to Biblical theology by studying the history of the theological interpretation of Scripture."⁴ One task of a Wesleyan historical theology will be to place the exegesis done by the Wesleys and the Wesleyans in the broader context of the history of Biblical interpretation, from ancient to modern, identifying the internal changes undergone in Wesleyanism and assessing Wesleyan exegesis in the arena of change and continuity in Biblical interpretation.

There are other gaps to be bridged. One is between church history and systematic theology. Early Christian theology often assumed that antiquity itself conferred authority-"the older the better." Under this rubric, perhaps updated to locate "the old-time religion" as late as the eighteenth or even the nineteenth centuries, the past becomes in the present the proverbial "dead hand." Historical theology, by showing that the past was marked by as much ambiguity and relativity as we encounter in the present, has the task of liberating systematic theology from undue bondage to "the Fathers" whom we admit as "brothers" in theological dialogue.

Pelikan points out that historical theology has the correlative function of liberating systematic theology from the control of the present, from what Lord Acton called "the tyranny of environment and the pressure of the air we breath."⁵ The tentativeness we learn from the past can and must be carried over into the present to foster what Pelikan calls "a healthy detachment from the transiency of dogmatic fashion."⁶

Another gap to be bridged is that between the life of the church viewed from within and the larger context in which the church and its theology always exist. Historical theology has not always accepted responsibility for standing in this gap, but it will be increasingly difficult for historical theology to ignore the non-ecclesiastical factors that are designated as intellectual, philosophical, literary, scientific, social, political, and economic. Historical theology must take account of the personal histories of the theologians-that Luther was the son of a miner, that Calvin was trained in law, that Arminius moved in the circles of the Dutch humanists, that John Wesley was an Oxford-trained Tory, or that Asbury was a lay bishop. It must provide bridges from dogmatics to Enlightenment, from

evangelical faith to Darwin, Marx, and Freud, or from western European American orthodoxies to contemporary experiences of oppression.

Historical theology, in sum, is a servant discipline, as all theology should be. Other theological disciplines-Biblical, systematic, and practical-need, however, the service of this one. Historical theology's service, moreover, must be to the whole church, and its validity turns on its ability to illuminate the faith and theology of not merely one tradition but of the wider Christian community. "Historical theology in the Wesleyan Mode," as my assigned topic puts it, has the task of illuminating not only the Wesleyan tradition but the traditions and present tasks of all Christians. That brings us to the second part of the topic, "the Wesleyan mode."

The Wesleyan Mode: Its Meaning

Here the topic gives the most difficulty. There can be no agreement on what constitutes "the Wesleyan mode." As to scope, it can mean John Wesley, John and Charles Wesley, the Wesleys and those "in connection" with them, the Wesleys and one or more of the Methodist churches that sprang from their work, or all of the above plus the "movements" stemming from them, such as social reform movements, educational enterprises, the holiness movement, and current movements for social justice.

Even within those options, there will be a problem over precise agreement about what "the mode" is. Here I shall not attempt a normative definition but only a description of some central features of the Wesleys and their connection, the Methodist or Methodistic churches, and the movements of faith that move in and around these foci.

The Wesleyan Mode: Its Possibilities

The possibilities that historical theology can uncover are, first, a more clear understanding of the Wesleyan tradition itself, and, second, some contribution to the understanding of the thought and life of the church at large, both past and present. The second goal is the broader justification of the first goal-both more important and more difficult. It would be much simpler for the historical theologian to settle for being an antiquarian or an apologist for a particular tradition.

To get at some clarifications of Wesleyan thought in particular and Christian thought in general, one may direct historical labor at points of tension in the Wesleyan tradition. I shall point to four.

A. Two sources of the Wesleys' evangelical theology.

It is well known that the Wesleys were Anglicans in the train of the high churchmanship of the Caroline Divines. Their basic loyalty to the Church of England, often sorely tested, is a clue to their distinctiveness and serves to mark them off from other leaders of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism. George Whitefield, for example, another Anglican, could organize his converts in Newburyport, Massachusetts, into a Presbyterian church. The Wesleys adhered to high liturgical and sacramental theories and practices, and they adhered to episcopacy. Even when John Wesley broke with the strict juridical order of English episcopacy, he acknowledged that in the strange providence of God he was himself playing the part of a bishop. He could define Methodism itself as good old Church of England religion.

There can be no question of the central, formative importance of Anglicanism's episcopacy, liturgy, and sacramentalism for the early Wesleyan connection. This influence extends itself into all or most Methodist and Wesleyan denominations to the present.

When the Wesleys became leaders of the Evangelical Revival, they retained both the structure and the theology of Caroline Anglicanism. Two revealing examples: early in the days of the Methodist societies John Wesley excluded from the meetings any Presbyterians who would not kneel for prayer, and, theologically, he resisted Calvinist doctrines that ran counter to Anglican Arminianism. It is just at these points, however, that one-sided understandings of the Wesleys have arisen.

The Wesleys' adherence to the liturgical tradition, often forgotten in the nineteenth century, was picked up in the recent past under the influence of the romantic Anglo-Catholic movement, giving rise to a Methodist high church movement which exhibits, in my judgment, what A. N. Whitehead called "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness." Eighteenth-century Anglicanism was full of high churchmen. The high-churchmanship of the Wesleys, while essential to their theology, does not in itself account for their greatness.

In tension with their high church orientation was their deep indebtedness to English Puritanism. The Wesleys' criticisms of certain Calvinist doctrines has obscured this. Their use of Puritan writers has been recounted. It is important to see also their indebtedness to Puritan piety and structure. Some points can be mentioned in illustration.

1. Seriousness, a persistent theme in Puritanism marked the piety and preaching of the Wesleys as they countered the frivolity and foolishness of eighteenth-century Britain.

2. The warmed heart, in terms of which John Wesley expressed his awakening at Aldersgate, was a theme from the Puritan Richard Sibbes.⁷

3. Fasting, while a historical Catholic and Anglican practice, had fallen into disuse but had been revived by the Puritans and was followed by the Wesleys.⁸

4. The covenant was a central theme in Puritanism, and the Wesleys' service of the renewal of the covenant, borrowed immediately from Joseph Alleine, picked up a central theme of the Puritanism of the time of Queen Elizabeth.⁹

A whole cluster of Puritan distinctives centered in their "exercises of prophesying," when groups of clergy of Puritan sympathy gathered in conference to engage in Bible study, preaching, and mutual discipline of life and doctrine. So much in demand was Puritan preaching that Puritan clergy, mutually strengthened in conference, itinerated outside their parish bounds to meet the need, and even lay people, some of whom learned their theology in the conferences, were pressed into the service of preaching. In this Puritanism of the Elizabethan era are to be found the precedents of some of the most central features of Methodism. Thus the list continues-

5. Conference was what actually occurred when the clergy met for mutual strength. They conferred. Notable among these continuing conferences was that at Dedham, near Colchester, beginning in 1582. It consisted of as many as twenty clergy. They attended to matters of doctrine, internal discipline, public morality, and even the placing of ministers (although they

were ostensibly under the Anglican episcopacy). They kept minutes in question-and-answer form. When John Wesley summoned his preachers in conference in 1744, there was ample precedent at Dedham and in the other Puritan conferences."

6. Discipline was another Puritan concern, activity, and institution. Even the term Book of Discipline comes from Elizabethan times."

7. Lay preaching arose as more and more parishes and people attended to preaching. The Puritan clergy were generally the best educated of the English clergy, many of them from Cambridge University. They had a preponderance of the licenses to preach, which meant the passing of an examination beyond the abilities of many parish clergy, who for their silence in the pulpit were called "dumb dogs." Puritan lay people, to meet the need in parishes with silent pulpits, undertook the task themselves, although their addresses for legal reasons had to be called "lectures." The Puritan lectureships provide a precedent for another central feature of Methodism.

8. Itineracy, although not pioneered by the Puritans, was characteristic of their ministry. The orders of friars provide an earlier precedent, but the Puritans furthered the practice in Protestant England, with both clergy and the lay lecturers traveling outside parish bounds to preach in and out of churches. The itinerant preachers were sometimes supported by freewill offerings, another innovation, or by public or private endowments (the origin of the endowed "lectureship").

9. The world parish concept of Methodism builds on this innovative crossing of parish boundaries. When John Wesley was attacked by James Hervey in 1739 for taking liberties with the legal parish bounds, Wesley pointed out that since he was an ordained minister charged to preach the gospel, and since he was not assigned to any parish when virtually every square mile of Europe was theoretically in some parish, he had no option but to say, "I look upon all the world as my parish."¹² It had been a radical concept and practice for the Elizabethan Puritans, and it continued to be so for the Wesleys.

10. Singing, at least of Psalms, was one of the distinctive features that Puritanism brought back from Geneva, and it was to become central to the Wesleyan Revival.

11. *Ex tempore* prayer, which many today take for granted, was in sixteenth-century England a Puritan innovation. It was to become important to the Methodist societies, and John Wesley felt free to break out in *ex tempore* additions even to the Communion service of the Book of Common Prayer.

What I propose is that the Wesleyan theology and practice were an intermingling of two powerful precedents, Caroline Anglicanism and Elizabethan Puritanism. Present-day Wesleyanism in all of its denominational manifestations needs to come to terms with both. By so doing, it may be able to exhibit a full-orbed evangelicalism in our time.

B. Wesleyanism's tri-partite ecclesiology.

Another point of creative tension in Wesleyanism is the unresolved question as to what kind of church emerges from the Wesleyan Revival. I find in the Wesleys' own time three different concepts of Methodism, and I find them still unresolved in most Methodist churches.

First were the societies. They were the gatherings of awakened persons,

most of them already baptized Anglicans, into para-ecclesiastical companies for mutual edification, discipline, and service. They were adjunctive to the church. They did not meet at the time of the parish church services. They were not in themselves churches: at most they were *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. The word "society" for a local Methodist congregation has persisted down to the recent past. It probably can be found in deeds to currently-held property. It suggests something intimate, informal, personally awakened and committed, a company of the converted within or alongside a more inclusive "Church."

Then came the annual conferences. Beginning in 1744, and every year since, Methodism's travelling preachers have gathered to confer. In John Wesley's time it was the only comprehensive meeting of Methodism, and lay people were seldom present. In American Methodism there was resistance to the very presence of a lay person in an Annual Conference session, and only after many decades were lay people admitted as voting members. Their role in the United Methodist Church is still restricted.

The societies and the conferences of preachers (themselves, by the way, mostly unordained) continued throughout most of Wesley's life as parastructures alongside the established church. Neither societies nor conferences, for example, provided sacraments.

In America, Methodism found itself without an English Episcopal Church as the ecclesiastical, sacramental matrix for its existence. In 1784, the year after the Treaty of Paris broke all legal ties to Britain, American Methodists organized the third distinctive form of Methodism, the Methodist Episcopal Church. This Church was constituted by what were still called "societies" and was served and led by what continued to be a conference of lay preachers, although from 1784 onward some of the lay preachers were ordained through the offices of the new episcopal structure.

The anomalies and tensions are still unresolved. We baptize the infants and develop a comprehensive, "national" church (the United Methodist Church, it is reported, being the only Protestant denomination with at least one church in every county of the 48 states). At the same time that we extol the size and security of a comprehensive church, we complain that not all its members are awakened and living by a common discipline. In other words, the Wesleyan denominations find themselves serving the ecclesiastical, sacramental functions of their parent Anglicanism and wanting at the same time to be the spiritually awakened "societies" that are somewhat aloof from the perfunctory everydayness of an ecclesiastical establishment.

I see this not so much as a disaster as an opportunity to face honestly our desire for two or three concepts of Christian community all at once. It may well be a unique vantage point for developing a creative new ecclesiology.

C. Holy love as the integrative aim of Christian faith and doctrine.

John Wesley rediscovered the doctrine and experience of justification by faith on the way to his goal of perfection in holy Christian love. Historical theology in a Wesleyan mode will continue to try to understand what Christian holiness is, but it has the further opportunity of trying to understand what happens to all Christian doctrine when the centering aim is shifted from justification to sanctification. The precedent is in Wesley. It calls for a broader, not a narrower, application of Wesley's doctrine of love.

Dr. Mildred Wynkoop's *A Theology of Love* takes us in this direction. Other steps may entail a careful look at the interpersonal meaning of love as the locus of what has been conceived traditionally as the arena of human love for God. The late Daniel Day Williams, raised a Methodist, has led US on this path in *The Spirit and the Forms of Love*.¹⁴ Equally important is the relation of love and justice, and apart from dealing with this problem Wesleyan theology can make little contribution to liberation theologies arising out of the experience of oppression.

Finally, I propose that Wesleyan historical theology can serve to broaden the base of historical theology itself. Traditionally, historical theology has concerned itself with the interpretation of the Bible, the two ecumenical dogmas of Trinity and Christology, the creeds of the universal church or segments thereof, something broadly termed "tradition," and more recently the work of influential theologians. Pelikan has proposed that this base be broadened to include liturgy and mysticism. I agree. I believe, however, that Wesleyan life and thought opens the door to a still broader base for historical theology and for theology in general.

This broader base will include the Christian experience and testimony of individual believers, recorded in the journals, for instance, of John and Charles Wesley and of Francis Asbury, and in the many published testimonies of Methodists. There can be included also the intense interactions of the Methodist societies as they engaged in mutual discipline and edification. The outreach of Methodism in taking responsibility for society at large is also appropriate grist for the mill of historical theology. And not least is the distinctive role of hymnody in shaping Christian life and thought.

Such a broadened base for historical theology will enrich not only the understanding of Wesleyanism but of the universal church.

Thus ends my dialectical treatment of the topic. I hope that Petrus Ramus is not too exhausted by his method.

NOTES

1 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine* (New York: Corpus; Philadelphia: Westminster; London: Hutchinson: 1971), pp. 160-161.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

5 Quoted *ibid.*, p. 150.

6 *Ibid.*

7 On Richard Sibbes (d. 1635), see, *inter alia*, Norman Pettit, *The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 66-74 *et passim*.

- 8 On the Puritan revival of fasting, see Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), pp. 214-217 *et passim*.
- 9 *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock (London: Epworth Press, 1916, 1938), VIII, 8n.
- 10 Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, pp. 222-239.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 291-302.
- 12 John Wesley, Letter to the Rev. James Hervey, in *The Journal*, II, 218.
- 13 Mildred Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972).
- 14 Daniel Day Williams, *The Spirit and the Forms of Love* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY IN THE WESLEYAN MODE: A RESPONSE

**by
Leon O. Hynson**

It has been suggested that the critic lives in the objective case, in the subjunctive mood, and in the past tense. In the contemporary existential climate, the study of historical theology may appear to some to be an immersion in the past. In my assigned role as respondent to Carl Bangs' paper, I assume more the task of complementing his analysis than critiquing it.

Historical theology is theology carried on by persons in historical time and place, informed by particular assumptions and shaped by particular norms. Dr. Bangs has described theology as "human response to a divine initiative."

If theology issues from faith, theology will participate in the humanness of the response. For that reason it will always be historical, that is something that participates in a specific historical situation and community that has emerged through a particular history and which bears the mark of that history. Theology is always historical, never purely biblical nor purely systematic. The theology that the Wesleys developed as the concomitant of the movement of evangelical faith was no exception."¹

"Historical theology" is a concept which is more than the sum of its parts. It is history and, it is theology, but it is more. When the Christian scholar reviews the theological past s/he may strive for objectivity through - descriptive methodology, or develop an apologetics using normative criteria. When historical theology is in a constructive stage at the hand of the historical theologian, when, as Bromiley puts it, the "observer ceases to be mere observer and becomes participant," when he is "a Christian doing theology in its historical dimension,"² then objectivity will be subordinated to a theology structured for the church, possessing a normative and evaluative character. The historical theologian may treat theology in a largely phenomenological manner, describing its structures and variations

throughout history. But, when the historical theologian is participant, creating theological models and offerings for Church, society, family, or even for himself, or, when faith is seeking understanding, the normative dimension surely enters. Considerations of worth, of significance, of integrity, or truth, will be weighed by the scholar's own heritage, philosophical stance, mind-set, etc., etc.

This is illustrated by the work of Albert Schweitzer who sought early in this century to correct earlier "life of Jesus" interpretations in his *Quest for the Historical Jesus*. B. H. Streeter critiqued Schweitzer's own modernity, charging him with presenting a "boldly-outlined portrait of Jesus, which is a little like the Superman of Nietzsche in Galilean robes."³

In the interests of objective scholarship some will want to employ the phenomenological approach of Mircea Eliade, or C. J. Bleeker, studying historical theologies as the parasitologist analyzes the anopheles mosquito or trichinosis (no puns, inferences, or comparisons intended). It is difficult to see that this can be carried off if the historical theologian is a theologian of and for the Church. If the scholar tries to assume a strict neutrality, at some point his neutrality will break down as he encounters ideas contrary to his own heritage; ideas evoking emotional response, or theological conflict. No one comes to historical theology with an empty head (certain contrary appearances notwithstanding).

When we study theology "in the Wesleyan mode" (for purposes of this paper, "Wesleyan" will mean an understanding and use of Wesley's approach to historical theology), both descriptive and normative styles will be used. Wesley's mode is typically normative and presuppositional.

Norms, Presuppositions and/or Interpretive Assumptions in Historical Theology

1. Primitive Christianity is more highly esteemed than contemporary Christianity as a measure of authentic Christianity.

It is now better understood that Wesley interpreted Christianity by the norms of the Church of the New Testament and the pre-Constantine fellowship. Influenced by the renaissance of interest in the Primitive Church at Oxford University, Wesley read the records of the early Fathers (through the Apostolic Canons of William Beveridge, written 1672), validated his extraordinary actions in ordaining ministers for America (by reading Lord Peter King's Account of the Primitive Church), and shaped his societies (through Moravian midwifery of course) by the New Testament concept of *koinonia*. His reading of the Biblical record effected a critical assessment and rejection of the Church's acquiescence in wealth and power in the Constantinian subversion of the Church. Wesley found in early Christendom a model for accenting the spiritual energy of Christ's church in a society (the Constantinian) attuned to compromise. The familiar pattern of martyrdom and rigorous discipleship was so suddenly succeeded by an atmosphere of permission. Soon the church is not simply licit but regnant. It was a case of the "bland leading the bland."

The model of the primitive church decisively shaped Wesley's ecclesiology. In his mature years he called the Established Church a "mere political institution." The New Testament conception of the church as a "fellowship" so dominated his vision that he could never come to terms

again with the Church of Elizabeth. This quest for repeating the patterns of the primitive church is called restorationism in the Christian (Disciples) Church. Wesley lacked confidence in the actual re-creation of the early Church. He portrayed the primitive church as the model for Christian renewal.

2. Scripture, which is illumined and interpreted by the aid of reason, experience, and tradition, stands above and judges all three.

Scripture thus interpreted determines the value and use of various theologies of history. This is most evident in Wesley's appeal to the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone over prevailing contemporary interpretations in the Church of England which were Pelagian and latitudinarian. When Wesley was charged with rejection of the doctrines of the Church, he responded that he held to the essential doctrines of the Church taught in the Reformation Church of England. Wesley described the difference between 16th and 18th Century theology by contrasting the views of his opponents with his own:

First. They [the clergy with whom he differs] speak of justification, either as the same thing with sanctification, or as something consequent upon it. I believe justification to be wholly distinct from sanctification, and necessarily antecedent to it.

Secondly. They speak of our own holiness, or good works, as the cause of our justification.... I believe neither our own holiness nor good works are any part of the cause of our justification....

Thirdly. They speak of good works as a condition of justification, necessarily previous to it. I believe no good work can be previous to justification . . . but that we are justified . . . by faith alone, faith without works, faith (though producing all, yet) including no good work."⁵

Wesley's appeal to the Reformation represents a decided preference for the anthropology of the Reformation over that of the Enlightenment.

3. Historical theology in the Wesleyan mode focuses as sharply on orthopraxy as on orthodoxy.

Influenced by the Pietist concentration on the primacy of Christian experience, Wesley argues that correct doctrine is a slender reed if it lacks the corollary of experience. Experience is not to be divorced from credal expression, but in its authentic Christian form (fleshed out in life and practice), it is a stage beyond the formal fiduciary framework. Wesley's formulation of the great issues of the faith is careful and sophisticated, but he leans hard toward the experience of Christian reality; reality interpreted in formal structures, creeds, and articles.

Wesley's reading of Christian history demonstrates his concerns. In 1771, he read Maclaine's translation of Lorenz von Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History. (Mosheim's history has been described as objective history⁶ but his designation of Montanus as "insane" suggests that he lacks von Ranke's objectivity.) Wesley wrote: "I dare not affirm that either one or the other (Mosheim or Maclaine) was acquainted with inward religion."⁷

4. Wesleyan theology will be processive and teleological, both in its order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) and in its eschatology.⁸ It will be trinitarian with emphasis on Christology.

5. Divine sovereignty, and human responsibility interpreted by the doctrine of prevenient grace, are given balanced emphasis. This leads Wesleyan theology to a critical assessment of Reformed theologies, to a rejection of determinism, and a magnifying of divine pre-determination which is God's pledge that all who believe will be saved (Ephesians 1:4ff).

6. Historical Theology in the Wesleyan mode will be:

a. Constructive and Eclectic--meaning that it will build its own structure from many theological materials (hopefully "gold, silver, and precious stones."⁸ Albert Outler calls this approach "plundering the Egyptians."⁹

b. Ethical -- it will be concerned with Christian lifestyle, with "faith active in love," with holiness both personal and social.

c. Sometimes, but not primarily, Apologetic--engaging in discussion with humanistic approaches (such as Joseph Priestley or David Hartley) or with theologies which conflict with the wholism and balance of Scripture.

Conclusion

To reiterate, the "Wesleyan mode" which is analyzed here has centered primarily upon the formation of Wesleyan theology through an evaluative interaction with historical theologies. Wesley does not propose an academic treatment of historical theology but appeals repeatedly to a broad range of theological perspectives for pastoral guidance, for evangelism, and for reform. Theology for the sake of theology, as gnosis for the elite, a scholastic enterprise for the titillation of theologians is entirely outside the purview of the Wesleyan style. Theology divorced from history is "like making love out of a book of etiquette."¹⁰

In sum, Wesleyan theology aspires to "express the faith of the fathers in the language of the children," to the end that the children may be God's children.

NOTES

1 Carl Bangs, *Our Roots of Belief: A Biblical and Faithful Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1981), p. 53.

2 Geoffrey Bromiley, *Historical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. xxv-xxvi.

3 Cited in Alec Vidler, *The Church in An Age of Revolution* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 197.

4 The principle of the development of doctrine is not disavowed. If the scholar employs the Wesleyan theological corpus to gain intellectual and practical guidance for issues Wesley never confronted, he is surely carrying

on "Wesleyan" theology. The term loses its meaning if it becomes a comprehensive umbrella used to describe everything a Wesleyan scholar may do.

5 Journal. II, p. 275 (September 13, 1739).

6 See Roland Bainton, *Christendom II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 118.

7 Journal V (August 12, 1771), pp. 425-426.

8 See Clarence Bence, *The Teleological Theology of John Wesley* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1981).

9 *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Tidings, 1975), pp. 1-22.

10 Bangs, p. 64.