

Wesleyan Theological Journal

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Wesleyan Theological Society

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

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EDITOR'S NOTES

The most basic of theological issues are reconsidered in this issue. For instance, John Wright points the way to a reading of Scripture outside the confines of the disciplinary structures of the "modernist" academy. Chad Short extends the critique of modernism by demonstrating the meaningfulness of Wesleyan theology for the postmodern quest for meaning and identity. Kenneth Oakes reconsiders "classical" Christian theism, especially by reviewing the thought of Thomas Aquinas and Clark Pinnock's critique of aspects of this thought. Dean Blevins laments the diminished notion of the church as primarily a voluntary organization and urges a fresh definition of church and person. Also working against corrosive postmodern trends, Philip Meadows insists that Christian discipleship is not personal and private. Eric Severson substantiates this by locating Christian theology in the community event of the eucharist.

The work of leading holiness personalities are explored again, including Howard Snyder on B. T. Roberts, Timothy Wood on Orange Scott, and James Price on H. Orton Wiley. Scott Lewis, noting the great influence of William Seymour on twentieth-century pentecostalism, asks about the influence on him exerted by the Church of God movement (Anderson). Gregory Clapper seeks to identify the main doctrines in John Wesley's view, how they related to the "practical" concern for spiritual formation, and how they should relate to the teaching and practice of theology among Wesleyans today.

Highlights of the 39th annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society included the awarding of the Society's 2004 Smith/Wynkoop Book Award to Floyd Cunningham for his *Holiness Abroad: Nazarene Missions in Asia* (Scarecrow Press, 2003, see Stanley Ingersol's review) and the honoring of H. Ray Dunning with the Society's Lifetime Achievement Award (see the Tribute by Craig Keen). In the 39:1 issue of the Journal, David Bundy wrote about the influence of early Eastern Christian texts on the Holiness and Pentecostal movements. Now Patricia Ward critiques certain of his theses and Bundy responds to her critique.

The 40th annual meeting of WTS will convene at Seattle Pacific University on March 4-5, 2005. Officers of the Society are listed herein, with email addresses. For further information, consult wesley.nnu.edu/wts

Barry L. Callen, Editor, Anderson, Indiana, October, 2004

**“BLESSING, HONOR, GLORY, AND MIGHT,
FOREVER AND EVER!”
NICEA AND THE CHRISTOLOGY OF
THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

by

John Wright

“Professional biblical scholarship”¹ has marked Johann Philipp Gabler’s inaugural lecture at the University of Altdorf on March 30, 1787 as a significant “moment” in the “emancipation” of the biblical text from the dogmatic concerns of the Church in order to establish a new discipline of “biblical theology.”² Gabler strongly differentiated “biblical” from “dogmatic” theology in a manner not previously seen before in the history of the Christian readings of the Scripture. Gabler wrote:

Biblical theology bears a historical character in that it hangs on what the sacred writers thought about divine things; dogmatic theology, on the other hand, bears a didactic character in

¹This phrase was coined by Stephen Fowl to designate the guild of the modern academy’s readers of the biblical texts. This guild provides an interpretive context that initiates readers into its particular community through applying certain disciplinary constraints upon these readers. See Stephen E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), especially 178-190.

² E.g., W. G. Kümmel devotes the bulk of his chapter on “Biblical Theology” in his account of “The Beginnings of the Major Disciplines of New Testament Research” to Gabler’s address. See Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 98-105.

that it teaches what every theologian through use of his reason philosophizes about divine things in accordance with his understanding, with the circumstances of the time, the age, the place, the school [to which he belongs], and similar matters of this sort. Considered by itself the form always remains the same, since its arguments are historical (although represented this way by one person and that way by another), while the latter, on the other hand, as constant and assiduous observation over so many centuries more than demonstrates, is subjected along with other human disciplines to manifold change.³

Biblical theology gives an enduring, "objective" historical interpretation of the biblical text; dogmatics gives the time conditioned, philosophical articulation of "divine things" to address apologetically the concerns and needs of each age.⁴ Gabler obviously could not foresee how his differentiation would ultimately be institutionalized in the modern academy through such organizations as the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion.⁵

There is also a historical thesis within Gabler's distinction. This thesis has become so embedded in both biblical and theological scholarship that it is nearly axiomatic in both fields. Throughout church history, dogmatic statements are believed to represent the philosophical expression of more basic religious convictions/experiences found within the biblical writings. These biblical writings themselves witness to historical developments in light of increasing accommodation to the Gentile-Hellenistic

³Quoted in Kümmel, *ibid.*, 98-99.

⁴If one doubts the enduring legacy of Gabler, Heikki Räisänen (in *Beyond New Testament Theology: A Story and Programme* [London: SCM, 1990], xviii) recently wrote: "'New Testament theology' may be a legitimate part of self-consciously *ecclesial* theology. By contrast, those of us who work in a broader *academic* context should abandon such an enterprise (and, *a fortiori*, any dreams of a 'biblical theology' which would cover both Testaments). More precisely, 'New Testament theology' ought to be replaced, in this context, with two different projects: first, the 'history of early Christian thought' (or theology, if you like), evolving in the context of early Judaism, second, critical philosophical and/or theological 'reflection on the New Testament,' as well as on its influence on our history and its significance for contemporary life." Quoted in Werner G. Jeanrond, "Criteria for New Biblical Theologies," *Journal of Religion* 76 (1996), 235-236.

⁵For an analysis of the institutionalization of the fragmentation of the theological disciplines as they became established within the structure of the modern university, see Fowl, 15-21.

world as the church moved outwards from its Jewish origins.⁶ Gabler's

distinction both presupposes and argues for a deep disjunction between the witness of the Christian Scripture and the formation and positions of the Trinitarian creeds.

It is not surprising, then, that Fredrick Holmgren, in the recent theological exploration titled *The Old Testament and the Significance of Jesus*, writes:

. . . for New Testament authors, Nicaea and Chalcedon would have been a complete astonishment and possibly a disappointment. Had they been given the opportunity to read the fourth- and fifth-century creeds of Nicaea and Chalcedon, they would have been amazed at how complex and abstract their experiential, descriptive witness had become.⁷

Such a perspective sees Nicaea in its Christological/Trinitarian affirmation as the importation of an alien Greek metaphysics (the philosophical dimension mentioned by Gabler) upon an earlier, more primitive “Jewish” religious experience found within the New Testament.⁸ Holmgren’s perspective would have been utterly foreign to a fourth-century author

⁶As Frank Matera writes, “Until relatively recently, most works of New Testament Christology focused on either (1) the development of Christology in the early Christian community or (2) the christological titles applied to Jesus.” Frank Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1999), 2. For a survey and proposal of a historical developmental/evolutionary approach to “NT Christology” in the past century, especially the significance of Bousset, see Larry W. Hurtado, “Christ-Devotion in the First Two-Centuries,” *Toronto School of Theology* 12 (1996), 17-33.

⁷Fredrick C. Holmgren, *The Old Testament and the Significance of Jesus: Embracing Change—Maintaining Identity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 172.

⁸See, for instance, Raymond Brown: “each ‘moment’ that was used to rephrase Christology moved Christian thought farther and farther from Jewish expectations of the Messiah.” Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 145. Even Richard Bauckham, whose work is fundamental to the argument of this paper, can write regarding the Christology of the Book of Revelation: “he [the author of the Apocalypse] has made a rather sophisticated attempt to use language that includes Jesus in the eternal being of God without stepping outside the Jewish monotheism which for him was axiomatic, not least as part of the prophetic and apocalyptic tradition in which as a prophet he consciously stands. He does not use the abstract conceptuality with which the later Christian theologians, drawing on Greek philosophy, were able to say that the Son of God shares the divine nature of his Father” (*The Theology of the Book of Revelation* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993], 61-62).

such as Athanasius who defended Nicea as articulating fundamental Christian convictions as found in the Scripture.⁹

In contrast to Holmgren, David Yeago argues “that the ancient theologians were right to hold that the Nicene *homoousion* is neither imposed *on the* New Testament texts nor distantly deduced *from* the texts, but rather, describes a pattern present *in* the text, in the texture of scriptural discourse concerning Jesus and the God of Israel.”¹⁰ Yeago goes on to make the additional claim “that the exegesis underlying classical Christian doctrines is in certain crucial respects methodologically superior to the ‘critical’ exegesis which has claimed to invalidate it.”¹¹

This paper will seek to extend the argument of Yeago. It will widen his claim that Nicea represents a judgment found *in* the Scriptures, rather than one imposed on the text or deduced from the text. I will first look at the text of Nicea itself, especially in light of the interpretation given by Athanasius, its most significant defender. Does Nicea represent the importation of fourth-century CE Greek philosophical categories upon the “biblical witness”? How does it relate to fourth-century Neo-Platonic metaphysics, the reigning metaphysical philosophy of the time? What claim does the creed precisely delineate? Secondly, I will examine Nicea’s relationship to the Scripture itself through examining the relationship between God the Father, the Son, and creation in the Book of Revelation. Although originating late in the first century, the Apocalypse arguably represents the New Testament book least influenced by Greek philosophical concepts in its deep indebtedness to Jewish apocalyptic thought.¹²

⁹David Yeago, “The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis,” in Stephen E. Fowl (ed), *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 87.

¹⁰Yeago, 88.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² See, for instance, R. H. Charles’ assessment of the author of the text: “The author of J^{ap} was a Palestinian Jew. He was a great spiritual genius, a man of profound insight and the widest sympathies. His intimate acquaintance with the Hebrew text of the O.T., of which his book contains multitudinous quotations based directly upon it, is best explained by this hypothesis. The fact also, that he thought in Hebrew and translated its idioms literally into Greek, points to Palestine as his original home. Though no doubt he used the Aramaic of his day, in a real sense Hebrew was his mother’s tongue.” R. H. Charles, *A Critical and*

I then will argue that, while the Apocalypse never uses the specific terminology of Nicea, it articulates the identical theological relationship between God the Father and the Son in distinction from creation as articulated at Nicea. The Christology of the Book of Revelation is of one substance with that of Nicea, articulating an underlying theology of God as “other than” creation. Within this duality of God and creation, the Son firmly ends up fully and completely—by nature—on the side of God. The paper thus also supports Yeago’s second claim that the exegesis that underlies classical Christian claims is “in certain crucial respects methodologically superior to the ‘critical’ exegesis which has claimed to invalidate it.” The marginalization of theological reading skills such as those possessed by the Nicene defenders has masked significant dynamics of the biblical text itself.

Creation and God, the Father, God, the Son: The Logic of Nicea

As the theological disciplines have shifted locations to the modern(ist) academy, they have become increasingly fragmented and isolated from each other. It is possible, even likely, for a student to be initiated into the guild of New Testament scholarship without ever examining the pre-modern ecclesial reception of the text as a significant guide to its meaning. Within the guild, primarily shaped by historical-critical scholarship, meaning is found behind a text, in its composition and/or the origins of the traditions that have become embedded within the text. The very idea that a contemporary New Testament scholar might learn something actually about a New Testament text from readers who do not share in such specialist knowledge seems hard to countenance.

Disciplinary fragmentation also leads scholars to become isolated from significant developments in other theological disciplines. The tendency by New Testament scholars to view Nicea as the importation of Hellenistic metaphysics upon a more primal Jewish experience rests upon

Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), xlv. Some commentators early in the century even saw the book as predominantly Jewish and only vaguely Christian. For instance, Rudolf Bultmann in his *Theology of the New Testament* wrote, “The Christianity of Revelation has to be termed a weakly Christianized Judaism. The significance of Christ is practically limited to this: that he gives the passionate eschatological hope a certainty which the Jewish apocalyptists lack.” Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1955), vol. 2, 75.

a much dated and highly selected understanding of Nicea.¹³ Recent scholarship has consistently argued that the key to Nicea is not metaphysical commitments external to the Church, but particular convictions and practices inherent within the tradition itself. Jaroslav Pelikan builds upon the soteriological reading of Nicea provided by Adolf Harnack,¹⁴ rightfully adding the dimension of the church's liturgical practices as central to its promulgation: "By the homoousios, so interpreted and defended, the expositors of Nicene doctrine attempted to safeguard the soteriological and liturgical concerns of the church, for which it was mandatory that Christ be divine."¹⁵

Indeed, as one reads the text of the creed, one is struck by how limited and focused the creed is. As Kelly writes, "The theology of the council, therefore, if this argument is sound, had a more limited objective than is sometimes supposed. If negatively it unequivocally outlawed Arianism, positively it was content to affirm the Son's full divinity and equality with the Father, out of Whose being He was derived and Whose nature He consequently shared."¹⁶ Extensive metaphysical language simply is not present in the creed. The language that could bear great metaphysical freight, *ousia* and *homoousia*, is not employed nor was it interpreted by its defenders in such a fashion.

¹³One might trace this presupposition to the liberal understanding of doctrine put forth by Adolf von Harnack. As Samuel Powell has written, "Harnack asserted that dogmas belonged only to a certain epoch of Christian history, suggesting that their usefulness was transitory. This assertion implies not only his well-known view that 'dogma in its conception and development is a work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel,' but also the charge that Christianity in the period of dogma was modeling itself on the ancient schools of philosophy." Samuel Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2001), 161. Ironically, Harnack argued that soteriological, not philosophical, matters were determinative in the Nicene debate (see footnote 14). New Testament scholars, however, have drawn from Harnack's general view of doctrine rather than his particular interpretation of Nicea in their presuppositions about the nature and development of doctrine.

¹⁴"The theology and Christology of Athanasius are rooted in the thought of Redemption and his views were not influenced by any subordinate considerations." Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma* (New York: Dover Books, 1961), vol. 4, 26.

¹⁵Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, Vol. 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971), 206.

¹⁶J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (rev.ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 236.

This is not to say that the Creed is devoid of any metaphysic—it is not. But its metaphysic is very basic. In a profound way, it runs counter to the predominant currents of the Neo-Platonic milieu of late antiquity. We will look briefly at the creed itself, and then to Athanasius’s defense in *Epistula de decretis Nicaenae synodi* (*De decretis*) to see how his defense of the creed followed the categories the creed itself set forth.

Most obviously, and as universally recognized, Nicea binds the Father and the Son together as God, while distinguishing between them, maintaining a certain logical, though neither chronological nor ontological priority of the Father. The central and oft controversial phrases of the Creed binds “one Lord Jesus Christ” with “the Father Almighty” as God. The Son “begotten from the Father, only begotten, that is, from the *ousia* [substance] of the Father . . . *homoousia* [of one substance] with the Father.”¹⁷ Even more significant, however, the Creed distinguishes between God and creation as two and the only two orders of Being. The body of the Creed identifies the Father as “maker of all things visible and invisible” and the Son as the One “through whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth.” Therefore, as the Son is “begotten not made,” “*homoousia* with the Father,” the Creed carves Reality into two distinct categories: God and creation, with the Father and the Son on one side as God; everything else on the side of creation.¹⁸ Lest this becomes obscured, the anathemas that conclude the Creed emphasize exactly this duality between God and creation and the Son’s identity with God as Other than creation: “as for those who say, ‘There was a then when he did not exist,’ and, ‘Before being born he did not exist,’ and that he came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or *ousia*, or is created, or is subject to alteration or change — these the church catholic anathematizes.”

The metaphysics of Nicea, therefore, is extremely focused, but what it does distinguish is important. The Creed posits a duality between God and creation, with no mediating realms of divine emanations or demigods. The nature of creation is not defined, except as “not God” and, therefore, not eternal. Significantly as well, the “*ousia*” of the Father and

¹⁷All translations of the Nicene Creed are from Pelikan, 201.

¹⁸The status of the Holy Spirit, of course, remains ambiguous in the Nicene Creed; the defense of the Creed, however, quickly incorporated the arguments for the full divinity of the Son to also include the Holy Spirit, resulting in the classical Cappadocian and Augustinian conception(s) of the Trinity.

the Son is never described nor defined, except as God. As Harnack recognized, “ousia” is used merely to describe the numerical unity of the Father and Son together as God. In the last anathema, a Greek metaphysical conception does slip into the Creed—those who say “the Son of God . . . is subject to alteration or change” are anathemized. God is presumed to be simple, and therefore, outside the realm of the flux of the created. The Creed also presumes that God is without beginning or end, outside the time of the created. In both cases, the text clearly functions primarily to distinguish between God and creation so that the Son might be assigned fully in the realm of God. Nicea is focused on one issue: the relationship of Father and the Son as God in distinction from—and relation to—creation. The Creed functions as a “rule” or a “grammar” that was believed to ensure the faithfulness of Christian theological thought to the Scriptures and thereby to sustain the on-going life and practices of the church catholic.

The Nicene Creed, therefore, does not put forth, consciously or unconsciously, “Greek metaphysical categories” as theologically normative for the church. Seen in its historical context, Nicea explicitly rejects both the then current neo-Platonic melding of Plato and Stoicism and the theological Origenistic thought of divine mediations that characterized pre-Nicene Christian theology.¹⁹ Plotinus placed reality in a hierarchical chain of Being from the Unmoved Mover to the vestigial remains of the Logos in the equally eternal world; Origen presented a metaphysical continuum between God and fallen souls chained down by bodies with the Logos a means of movement up and down in this continuum. In both cases, the firm duality of God and creation rejects, or at least severely modifies, this predominant metaphysic, reconfiguring the Plotinic/Origenistic cosmology into categories anchored in the development of the “rule of faith” from the second century. In Nicea, “God” is defined

¹⁹“In the Hellenistic tradition there was a progressive tendency to conceive of a transcendent first principle who was described in increasingly apophatic terms, and to posit a distinct divine principle who acted as a mediator between the mundane and intelligible realms. In this way, divine transcendence and immanence were distinguished and in some way separated. . . . The biblical witness presents a markedly different perspective, in which divine involvement in the world is in no way seen as detracting from divine transcendence, but rather as the very manifestation of the divine greatness and majesty.” Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1998), 3-4; see also, 6-25.

as “Other” than “creation,” with the Son, along with the Father, belonging properly to the realm of “God.”

The debate that followed Nicea understood the Creed in this manner as well. The defense of the Nicene “rule” was not waged by foundational, “universal” philosophical arguments, but by appeal to the Christian Scriptures. The defenders sought to uncover the Scriptural logic of the relationship between the Father and the Son and creation in order to maintain coherent Christian convictions about creation and salvation and uphold practices deeply embedded within the church’s life. The Creed never was interpreted or defended through Greek metaphysical categories, but in terms that attempted to articulate the inner-logic of Christian convictions and practices. Nicean “apologetics,” therefore, were thoroughly ecclesial in focus.²⁰

De Decretis, written around 356 CE, has recently been called “Athanasius’s fullest defense of Nicea.”²¹ By this time Athanasius had honed his interpretation of Nicea and here defends the work of the Council by unfolding the inner theological logic of its wording. The relationship of God and creation and the Son’s relation to both occupy the central place in the treatise. Athanasius frames his theological defense in terms of the logic of the Scriptural language for “son.” “Divine Scripture acquaints us with a double sense of this word” (III.6): Scripture speaks of being a son either by adoption as a reward for moral virtue, or by nature, as a result of being begotten. Yet in regard to the Word, this distinction must be worked out in relationship to creation. If the Word is son “by grace from moral improvement . . . then He would seem to differ us in nothing.” This, however, would violate the precise language of Scripture, for then He would not “be Only-begotten, as having obtained the title of Son as others from His virtue” (III.6). The Word, then, would be part of creation: “If then these by your thoughts, O Arians, about the Son of God, that thus He subsists and came to be, then in your judgment He will differ nothing

²⁰Thus, Athanasius presumed the authority of Scripture in defining ecclesiastic convictions and practices: “If then they [the Arians] deny Scripture, they are at once aliens to their name, and may fitly be called of all men atheists, and Christ’s enemies, for they have brought upon themselves these names” (*De decretis*, IV.15). All quotes from *De decretis* are taken from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 150-172. For the Greek text, see Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, 25, 415-476.

²¹Anatolios, 89.

on the score of nature from others, so long as He too was not, and came to be, and the name was by grace united to Him in His creation for His virtue's sake" (III.9).

Such a position, Athanasius argues, fundamentally distorts the understanding of God's relation to creation, rendering creation impossible. By making the Word a creature who creates by the will of the Father, the position "divide(s) creation," and ultimately separates God from creation. Using a variation of the Zenon paradox, Athanasius argues that holding that the Word is created, even if "from nothing," excludes the whole possibility of creation: "If it was impossible for things originate to bear the hand of God, and you hold the Son to be one of their number, how was He too equal to this formation by God alone? . . . a Mediator being ever in request, never will the creation be constituted, because nothing originate, as you say, can bear the absolute hand of the Unoriginate" (III.8). Creation by the Word, demanded by Scripture, demands that the Word itself not be creation, lest creation be cut off from God.

Scripture, therefore, requires that mediating levels of divinity and creation be denied. Reality is divided into two distinct spheres: God and creation. The doctrine of creation and God's relationship as Creator to it excludes the possibility that the Son be Son by adoption; the Son as the Only-Begotten must share in the very nature of the Father, if for no other reason but to ensure the Word's—and therefore God's—role in creation and God's on-going relationship to creation: "If then son, therefore not creature; if creature, not son; for great is the difference between them, and son and creature cannot be the same, unless His essence be considered to be at once from God, and external to God" (III.14).

Athanasius defends the Creed by drawing a theological rule on the basis of the Scripture and the Rule of Faith: in order to maintain God the Father as Creator through the Son, two distinct realms of reality must exist—God and creation. These are "mutually exclusive categories, between which there is no middle ground"²² The Son, then, as the "Only-Begotten," must stand fully with the Father on the divine side of this divide, lest God be severed from creation, or creation itself be denied. As Anatolias has written,:

Mediation, in the sense of a bridging of the abyss between creation and the Creator, cannot be conceived in terms of a func-

²² Ibid., 101.

tion performed by any created nature, however exalted, but only in reference to the condescension of the divine love. . . . The fact that mediation takes place wholly through divine condescension is a manifestation of the Father's love. . . . The fact that mediation takes place wholly through divine condescension thus means that the Son's mediation toward creatures represents and effects the immediate presence of the Father, through the Son's own substantial identity with the Father. Athanasius is concerned to stress that this conception of the Son's mediatorial activity, as opposed to that of the Arians, entails this immediacy of the Father's presence and activity to creation.²³

Nicea, as interpreted by Athanasius, puts forth the distinction between God and creation as a theological rule, but does so in order to protect God's immediate relationship as Creator to creation through the Son. The fundamental metaphysical statement of the creed lies in the duality between God and creation, into which one may therefore understand that the Son, *qua* Son, fully partakes in the divinity of the Father.

Athanasius, therefore, uses spatial imagery to define the distinction between the Son and creation in relationship to the Father. The Son is "within" or from the Father by nature; creation, however, is "from without" or "exterior to" God: "if you say the Son, you have declared what is from the Father by nature; and if you think of the Word you are thinking again of what is from Him, and what is inseparable; and speaking of Wisdom, again you mean just as much, what is not from without, but from Him and in Him" (IV.17).²⁴ As Anatolios remarks:

. . . for Athanasius, creation's being external to or outside God is an ontological datum that is inseparable from another datum, of equal force, which is that creation subsists "in" God. Consistently, Athanasius wants to maintain simultaneously God is both "outside" and "within" creation: "within all according to his own goodness and power, yet outside all in his proper nature."²⁵

²³ Ibid., 113.

²⁴ "The single most pervasive motif employed by Athanasius is his continual reiteration that the Son in 'proper to' (*idios*) the Father, while all of creation is 'external to' or 'from outside' (*ektos ecsouthen*) the Father." Ibid., 102.

²⁵ Ibid., 104.

The Son belongs “within” the Father by nature; creation belongs exterior to God by nature, but “within” God through creation through the Word. “The crucial distinction is that ‘father’ necessarily connotes an actual relation by which God’s very being is constituted and described, whereas ‘maker’ only necessarily connotes a potency inherent in the agent.”²⁶ Within an ontology divided into the realms of God and creation, the Word stands firmly with the Father in the category of “God.”

The specific language of Nicea, therefore, is not meant to define God metaphysically, but to state a rule about where the Son must belong in relationship to God in order for God to be Creator amidst a system where only God and creation are meaningful categories. This is precisely Athanasius’s interpretation of *ousia* and *homoousia* within the Creed:

For neither are other things as the Son, nor is the Word one among others, for He is Lord and Framer of all; and on this account did the Holy Council declare expressly that He was of the essence of the Father, that we might believe the Word to be other than the nature of things originate, being alone truly from God; and that no subterfuge should be left upon to the irreligious. This then is why the Council wrote “of the essence” (V.19).

Similarly, in order to remove possible ambiguity in the Creed, the Bishops

. . . were again compelled on their part to collect the sense of the Scriptures, and to re-say and re-write what they had said before, more distinctly still, namely, that the Son is “one in essence” with the Father; by way of signifying, that the Son was from the Father, and not merely like, but the same in likeness (V.19).

The words *ousia* and *homoousia* perform a negative function in the Creed, excluding a position that would place the Son on the side of creation, rather than fully with the Father as God. As interpreted by Athanasius, the terms have no positive metaphysical significance in describing God, except to ensure the Oneness of God the Father and God the Son: “when we hear the phrase ‘one in essence,’ let us not fall upon human senses and imagine partitions and divisions of the Godhead, but. . . let us preserve undivided the oneness of nature and identity of light; for this proper to a son as regards a father, and in this is shown that God is truly Father of the Word (V.23).

²⁶Ibid., 119.

Precisely because of the “otherness” of God from creation, Athanasius is wary to use analogies drawn from creation to describe the “essence” of God. Only through Scripture may we carefully use human language in speaking of God: “in saying ‘God’ and naming ‘Father,’ we name nothing as if about Him, but signify his essence itself. To comprehend the essence of God is impossible, yet, if we only understand that God is, and if Scripture indicates Him by means of these titles, we, with the intention of indicating Him and none else, call Him God and Father and Lord” (V.22). *Ousia* and *homoousia*, therefore, appear to summarize the “sense” of Scripture and exclude certain positions rather than foisting a Hellenistic metaphysic upon the Christian doctrine of God. The terms’ presence in the Nicene Creed establish the Creed as a theological rule which establishes a duality between God and creation in order to protect the Christian conviction of God as Creator through the Word, with the Word being fully and completely God, participating in the Father by nature.

Nicea’s language and conceptuality is, therefore, not anchored in Greek metaphysics. The Creed does not provide a “symbol” to express an earlier Christian experience of Jesus as God. Nicea is anchored in the earlier Rule of Faith, confessing God as Father, creator of heavens and earth, as a prerequisite to baptism, a rule of what must be true about the Son in order to maintain the conviction of God the Father as Creator, given the Scripture’s imagery and language of the Word’s participation in this creation. The Creed does not even attempt to translate Christian convictions into a metaphysic more conducive to the intelligentsia of the fourth century CE; the Creed as written and as interpreted puts forth an understanding of reality that must distinguish between two realities, God and creation, with the Word and the Father, clearly and fully on the side of God. The coherence of Christian Scripture, convictions, and practices demanded it. Nicea established a normative theological grammar so that Christian convictions about creation, salvation, worship, and, though not sufficiently developed within the defense of Nicea, Christian ethics, might maintain their inner coherence with each other, given the normative status of Christian Scripture.

Yet it is precisely the “givenness” of Scripture in the Creed that “professional biblical scholars” usually assume has been called into question by the results of historical critical scholarship. With a proper interpretation of Nicea in the background, it is now possible to examine this assumption through looking at the relationship between God the Father

and the Son in a New Testament text anchored deeply within the Jewish apocalyptic framework of earliest Christianity—the Book of Revelation. It is to this task we now turn.

Creation and God the Father, God the Son: The Logic of the Book of Revelation

Historical-critical scholarship into the Christology of the Book of Revelation has largely concentrated on the historical origins of the book's imagery for God the Father and the Son.²⁷ The text uses complex imagery to describe the being and mission of Jesus, drawn from a variety of backgrounds: early Christian traditions, the Old Testament, especially scenes of the heavenly throne room, the ancient Near East, as well as the first century Roman imperial cult. When scholars have paid particular attention to the role of Jesus in the book in relationship to "the One on the Throne," the historical origin of the imagery has tended to control the ascribed significance of Jesus, often with an interpretation that emphasizes the subordination of the Son to the Father.²⁸ As a result, contemporary readings tend to merge uncritically the character "God" solely with the character "the One on the Throne."²⁹

Early Nicene interpretation of the Scripture would have found the contemporary preoccupation with "parallelomania"³⁰ as a means of deter-

²⁷While "Father" and "Son" language does not dominate the imagery of the Apocalypse, the language is present, especially in the letters to the churches that begin the book. For a summary of the background of the imagery that influenced the mid-century interpretation of the Christology of the Apocalypse, see Per Beskow, *Rex Gloriorum: The Kingship of Christ in the Early Church* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962), 13-41; for a recent exemplar, see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995).

²⁸Thus, Stuckenbruck concludes, "while without question the worship of and devotion to Christ in the Apocalypse of John presupposes a number of internal developments within Christian circles, the veneration of angels in Early Judaism may ultimately have provided a significant underlying model behind the author's way of placing this religious outlook alongside the indispensable primacy in devotion to the one unique and transcendent God 'who sits upon the throne'" (Stuckenbruck, 272-273).

²⁹See, for instance, T. Holtz, "Gott in der Apokalypse," in J. Lambrecht (ed), *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament* (BETL 53; Leuven: Leuven University, 1980), 249-265.

³⁰See Samuel Sandmel's famous Society of Biblical Literature presidential address, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1961), 1-13.

mining the being and work of Jesus in the Book of Revelation perplexing, to say the least. Nicene exegesis developed a fine-tuned theological reading of the text that sought the structural relationship between the Father and the Son inherent within Scripture, with particular attention to how these characters must relate to “God” according to the biblical imagery. Whereas contemporary interpretation focuses on extratextual relationships between individual biblical books and relevant background material in order to describe the “biblical theology” of a book, fourth-century exegesis read intratextually throughout the Scripture to construct a coherent reading to shape the life and practice of the church catholic.

Research into the background of the theological and Christological imagery of the Apocalypse has produced interesting and useful readings of the text, especially in the political/ecclesiological commitments that the text seeks to elicit.³¹ Yet a careful intratextual reading of the book brings relationships to light that provide insights into the theology and Christology of the book beyond those offered by “biblical theology.” While the text clearly describes “the One on the Throne” as “God,” a close reading of the text suggests that the character of “God” is more complex than a simple and sole identification with “the One on the Throne.” By focusing on the characters of “God,” the Father (“the One on the Throne”), and the Son (“the Lamb”) in relationship to other figures in the book, it becomes evident that the theological structure of the Book of Revelation corresponds to the theological structure of Nicea. The book firmly distinguishes between God and creation, with the character of the one “God” embracing simultaneously both the Father and the Son.

One need not read long, nor search hard, to discover the distinction between God and Jesus in the Apocalypse, and the subordination of the Son to the Father. Immediately, the book opens with the distinction between “God” and “Jesus Christ,” with Jesus as an emissary of God: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him” (1:1). Here Jesus stands in relationship to God as “his angel” stands to Jesus, and as “his servant John” stands in relationship to the angel (1:2). Jesus stands below “God” and above the angel in a heavenly hierarchy for the success-

³¹See, for instance, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, Co., 1998), 228-247; and Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1996), 169-185.

ful communication of the heavenly revelation into the earthly realm. Jesus stands obediently to do the will of “God” in the earthly realm so that the divine will might be accomplished on earth.³²

This subordinate role distinction remains consistent throughout the book, but becomes explicated in the introductory letters as the imagery of the Father and the Son.³³ Yet even here, the complexity of the claims concerning the relationship between the Father and Son emerge. The letters end with: “To the one who conquers, I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat with my Father on his throne” (Rev. 3:21). The verse is intriguing in its drawing together, yet distinguishing the Father, the Son, and the conquering saint—yet maintaining a distinction between the saint and the Son in a manner not present between the Son and the Father. The Son has a throne distinct from the Father’s, a throne that is shared with the faithful through the gift of the Son. The Son also shares the Father’s throne after conquering. Yet never is the Father’s throne said to be given to the Son as it is to the “one who conquers.” As will be seen below, the only throne in the book that the Son occupies is the same throne sat upon by “the One who sits upon the throne.” The text, therefore, differentiates the Father and the Son from “the one who conquers.” From the heavenly perspective of the economy of salvation, the Son stands subordinate to “God the Father,” mediating humanity to the Father’s throne through his own throne (which is the Father’s). Yet this subordination is of a different kind from the subordination of humanity to the Son—their place on the throne comes as gift, not by right. It is Jesus Christ, “the faithful witness” who made us a kingdom, a priest to God and his Father” (1:6).

³²Such scenes have given rise in recent scholarship to the possibility of early Jewish angelology as the backdrop for the Christology of the Apocalypse, scholarship that points out interesting parallels and distinctions with the Book of Revelation. Without asking the theological question of creation in regards to both the angels and Christology of the book, the tendency is to read the text in light of the sources, rather than examine the relationships within the text itself.

³³Throughout the letter, the same hierarchical relationship between the Father and the Son appears as in the beginning of the book. The letter to the church of Thyatira ends with an assurance from “the conquering one”: “As I received from my Father, also I will give to him the morning star” (2:28). To Sardis, “the one having the seven Spirits of Good and the seven stars” speaks of the Father as “my God” (3:2). The Son stands consistently subordinate to the Father in the redemptive communication of the divine will to humans.

The complexity of the relationship between the Father and the Son continues throughout the book, even when other, non-kinship terms are used to describe this relationship. We read of “our Lord and his Christ” (11:15), “the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ” (12:10), “to God and to the Lamb” (14:4). Yet even in this distinction, a conjoining of the two becomes readily apparent.

The “One who sits on the throne” and the “Lamb” appear together continually throughout the book, whether in relationship to the seal (14:1, cf. below) or the execution of judgment upon the earth (e.g., 6:16). They share titles and role—the Lamb is even “Lord of lords” and “King of Kings” (17:14), and both are conjoined in the eschatological consummation of all things (cf. 11:15; 12:10; 21:22-22:5). Perhaps most interesting is where the conjoining of the two is followed by singular pronouns in reference to them: “The Kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever” (11:15). In 20:6, the saints will be “priests of God and Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years.” Does the singular pronoun include “Christ” or solely “God/Lord”?³⁴ While this data is suggestive, the overall working of the imagery in depicting the relationship between the Father and the Son reveals at a certain level the text binds the “Father” and the “Son” together as One, even while their conjoining does not overcome their distinctiveness.

Perhaps the most significant “unity in distinction” found between the Father and the Son in the Apocalypse appears in the geography of the

³⁴Stuckenbruck, for instance, interprets the singular pronoun as evidence that only “the Lord” is God in Revelation, leaving Christ as a subsidiary angel: “With possibly one exception (6:17), God and the Lamb are at no point in the Apocalypse clearly referred to with a plural pronoun or are they the subject of a plural verb; among the texts just cited, this phenomenon avails in 14:1; 20:6; 21:22; and 22:3. Thus, although the author has Christ worship alongside God, he strove to retain language which maintains a monotheistic framework” (Ibid., 262). Richard Bauckham, on the other hand, writes concerning such cases, “It is not clear whether the singular in these cases refers to God alone or to God and Christ together as a unity. John, who is very sensitive to the theological implications of language and even prepared to defy grammar for the sake of theology (cf. 1:4); he may well intend the latter. But in either case, he is evidently reluctant to speak of God and Christ together as a plurality.... The reason is surely clear: he places Christ on the divine side of the distinction between God and creation, but he wishes to avoid ways of speaking which sound to him polytheistic.” Richard Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 60-61.

throne room and the spatial dynamics of the worship that occurs there (chs. 4-5).³⁵ The distinction between “the One on the Throne” and the “Lamb” remains consistent throughout the book in their role differentiation. The worship of the heavenly court identifies “the One who sits upon the throne” as Creator: “Worthy is the Lord, our God, to receive glory and power and honor, for you created the all, and they exist by your will, and they are created” (4:11). On the other hand, the heavens proclaim the Lamb’s role in redemption: “Worthy is the Lamb to receive the book and to open its seals for you were slaughtered and redeemed for God by your blood from every tribe and language and nation and made them a kingdom and a priesthood for our God and they will reign upon the earth” (5:9). Yet even in opening the seals, the Lamb remains subordinate to the will of “the One on the Throne.” As in Rev. 3:21, the Lamb mediates between the “One on the Throne” and humanity in redemption.

³⁵The discussion of the Christology of the Apocalypse has focused on the significance of Revelation 4-5 and the significance of the Throne since Richard Bauckham’s important study, “The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity,” *NTS* 27 (1980-81), 322-341; significantly, in order to read the Christology of the Apocalypse in light of early Jewish angelology, Stuckenbruck must marginalize the significance of the passage and the Throne from his reading of the book. He writes, “The throne in the Apocalypse plays a central role in the author’s view of the world. It can function as a ‘boundary’ between God and other (allied) beings; in this respect, the language of worship provides the major criterion which determines how the divine throne may be related to the author’s perspective of christological and angelological formations (7:10-17). And yet, for the author the symbol also gives expression to a fluidity between christological, anthropological (3:21; 20:4), and demonic (2:11; 13:2) categories. Thus, though ‘throne’ in the Apocalypse signals a distinction between Christology and angelology, it serves as an inadequate startingpoint for the analysis. Where Christ, in contrast to ‘angels,’ is expressly associated with the enthronement motif (as in 5:6-17; 7:9-17; 22:1,3), the term ‘throne’ is as such not *explicitly* used to reinforce the distinction. Therefore it would seem that the distinguishing function of the throne symbolism within the author’s Christology depends on the question of how the author has related Christology and angelology to begin with” (Stuckenbruck, 43). Stuckenbruck’s objection to reading the Christology of Revelation through Revelation 4-5 misses the fundamental point that while there are other thrones, there is only one “the Throne” in the Apocalypse, and that Revelation 4-5 begins the visionary section of the book, and thus provides a proper starting point for examining its Christology, rather than beginning with a reconstructed, fragmentary “early Jewish angelology.” By starting with angelology, he naturally ends there, even against the main force of the text. Again, the historical background is interesting and often helpful, but cannot provide an “interpretive control” to read against the “plain sense” of the text.

Yet this distinction—and the subordination of the Lamb to the One on the Throne—becomes relativized in the throne room. Here the unity of both “the One on the Throne” and “the Lamb” becomes apparent in their identity as God in distinction from creation. The spatial dynamics of the throne room draws both the One on the Throne and the Lamb together as God.³⁶

The central feature of the heavenly palace in chapters 4-5 is the Throne—a feature that should not be too quickly assimilated to “the One who sits upon the Throne.” The “Throne,” not “the One who sits upon it,” dominates the scene. The narrator, John the elder, unfolds the vision from its spatial center outward, then returns to the center before working out again. At the center, and first mentioned, is the Throne (4:2). From the Throne, the vision pans outward to one sitting upon the Throne, to a description of what this being is “like” as well as a rainbow around the Throne (v. 3). Continuing the move outward, the vision identifies the twenty-four thrones that surround the Throne, and then describes the beings that sit upon them (v. 4). The vision then returns to the center—to the Throne (not the One sitting upon it). Here the narrator describes the light and sounds and thunder that emerge out of the Throne and the seven lamps burning “before the Throne” (v. 5), lamps immediately identified as the seven Spirits of God. Joining the lamps “before the Throne” is the sea. Two distinct spatial regions govern the vision: (1) “upon” the Throne; and (2) “around” and “before” the Throne.

The vision next focuses on the strange “four living ones” who occupy their own place in the geography of the room. These creatures spatially connect the Throne with the thrones: they dwell in the middle of the throne but also, with the rainbow and the twenty-four thrones, surround the Throne (v. 6b). These four living things are clearly distinguished from the One on the Throne. They are “the living ones,” but the One on the Throne is “the one who lives forever and ever” (v. 9). Thus the twenty-four elders fall “before the One on the Throne” and “worship the One who lives forever and ever” (v. 10). For the first time the text focuses not on the Throne, but on the One on the Throne in order to maintain the distinction between the “living beings” and “the One who lives forever

³⁶See Bauckham, *op. cit.*, 58-63. Interestingly, late fourth-century iconographic interpretations of Revelation 4-5 in the West pictured the Lamb as the center of worship, with the “One on the Throne” not pictured.

and ever.” Having emphasized this distinction, the elders cast their crowns “before the Throne.” The spatial focus of the scene returns to the Throne itself, where the vision began.

The geography of the scene maintains a strong distinction between the Throne and those who stand outside its confines. The Throne stands spatially at the center; “the One upon the Throne” sits geographically distinguished from the other beings. When the four living beings geographically blur this distinction with their presence “in the midst of and surrounding the Throne,” the text restores the distinction by focusing on the One on the Throne as eternal and as receiving the adoration of the living beings and the worship of the twenty-four elders. The One on the Throne is “The Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come” (v. 8), who “created everything and by your will they were and they were created” (v. 11). The distinction between the One on the Throne and the other beings in the scene is a distinction between God and creation, a distinction marked by the One’s place upon the Throne and eternity of that One’s life. Two orders of reality exist: Creator and created, a distinction conceptual encoded spatially by being either upon, before, or around the Throne.

After the orderliness of the vision of chapter 4, the beginning of chapter five (vv. 1-5) throws the focus of the scene into disarray. Whereas the Throne anchored the seer’s vision in one location in chapter 4, the vision moves around the whole cosmos and loses its central focus: the text moves visually from the book in the right hand of the One on the Throne (v. 1) to an angel (v. 2), to throughout the heavens and earth (v. 3), to the seer himself (v. 4) and to an elder (v. 5) in rapid succession. The elder re-establishes a central focal point in the scene by directing the seer’s vision to the “Lion of Judah” who the seer sees first as a slaughtered Lamb.

As the Throne dominates the vision of chapter 4, the Lamb anchors the scene in chapter 5. Yet even in chapter 5 the Throne still controls the spatial dynamics of the scene, for in the chapter the Lamb *never appears outside the confines of the Throne*. The vision begins again with the absolute spatial centrality of the Throne in the geography of the heavenly palace. Yet now a Lamb appears there: “And I saw in the middle of the Throne and of the four living beings and in the middle of the elders a Lamb standing as slaughtered” (v. 6). The Lamb standing in the midst of the Throne now provides the absolute center of the scene. Concentric cir-

cles surround the Lamb—the Lamb stands in the midst of the Throne, in the midst of the four living beings, in the midst of the elders. The Lamb never moves from this location throughout chapter 5—there is no necessity of leaving the Throne to take the book from the One on the Throne's right hand, for obvious reasons (v. 6). In v. 11 myriads of angels add another concentric circle around the Throne, joining the living beings and the elders as they sing praises to the Lamb.

The Lamb throughout stands in the midst of the Throne. There is no enthronement, no movement towards or away from this center.³⁷ The Throne still governs the spatial dynamics of the scene, but it is no longer merely the location for the One who sits upon it. Now the slaughtered Lamb who stands in the midst of the Throne appears with the One sitting there. The Lamb stands spatially on the Throne where the One on the Throne sits, geographically distinct from all other beings in the scene. The Throne spatially binds the Lamb and the One on the Throne together as One before all the heavens and earth. As has been noted by recent scholarship, such scenes of worship are extremely significant for the Christological claims of the New Testament.³⁸ The exclamations and movements of worship and devotion chapters 4-5 bind the One on the Throne and the Lamb together as God in contrast to the creation that renders praise to them.

Five scenes of praise structure chapters 4-5, binding them into a whole. The scenes become increasingly comprehensive in the involvement of creation in worship. The first four scenes are structured in a simple ring-structure, leaving the last scene (5:13-14) as the distinctive capstone of all the previous worship. The scenes of worship combine with the spatial dynamics of the vision to distinguish the One on the Throne

³⁷“It should be noted though that there is no change with respect to the Lamb, but to the book.” W. C. van Unnik, “‘Worthy is the Lamb’: The Background of Apoc. 5,” in A. Descamps and A. de Halleux (eds), *Mélanges Bibliques en hommage au R. P. Béda Rigaux* (Gembloux: Éditions J. Ducolot, 1970), 448.

³⁸ See Bauckham, “Worship of Jesus;” R. T. France, “The Worship of Jesus, A Neglected Factor in the Christological Debate?” in H. H. Rowdon (ed), *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie* (Downer Groves, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 17-37; and a series of works by L. W. Hurtado, including, “Christ-Devotion in the First Two Centuries: Reflections and a Proposal,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 12 (1996), 17-33; and *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998).

from the Lamb, yet ultimately hold them together as God in contrast to creation.

The first scene of praise in the heavenly palace occurs in 4:8. The four living beings alone speak, echoing the words of the cherubim in Isaiah 6: “Holy, holy, holy.” The words of the four living beings initiate a second scene of worship (4:10-11). Actions combine with words in the second scene, mutually reinforcing each other. The elders first fall before the “One sitting upon the Throne” and worship “the One living forever and ever.” A third act, casting their crowns “before the Throne” accompanies the proclamation of the worthiness of “the Lord and our God” to receive the crowns of the elders.

The third scene shifts to the Lamb in the middle, yet closely follows the second scene (5:8-10). Rather than merely the elders falling before the Throne, the number of the participants before the Throne increases. The four living beings, never prostrate in chapter 4, fall with the elders before the Lamb (4:8).³⁹ The harps and incense, the prayers of the saints parallel to the crowns offered before the Throne, appear immediately before those prostrate proclaim the worthiness of the Lamb (5:9; cf. 4:11a). Therefore, the third scene, as the second, includes action and words, both mutually interpreting each other.

As the second scene immediately follows the first, the fourth scene (5:11-12) immediately follows the third. As the first included only words of exaltation, so does the fourth. The scenes, therefore, move in a simple ring-structure, from word to action/word to action/word to word. Yet participation in the act of worship grows, as angels appear, joining the elders and the living beings, proclaiming the worthiness of the Lamb to receive “power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing”—a list that includes, and exceeds the “glory and honor and power” given to the One upon the Throne (4:11). Not only does the number involved in the worship of the One on the Throne and the Lamb increase

³⁹David Aune quite correctly notes that “the verb *proskunein*, ‘worship,’ is conspicuous by its absence” in 5:8.” David Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (WBC 52a; Dallas, Texas: Word Books Publishers, 1997), 338. Yet all creation does “worship” before the Lamb with the “One on the Throne” in 5:14. As Bauckham notes, “John does not wish to represent Jesus as an alternative object of worship alongside God, but as one who shares in the glory due to God. He is worthy of divine sonship because his worship can be included in the worship of the one God.” Bauckham, *Theology*, 60.

as the vision progresses from the One on the Throne to the Lamb, the intensity and volume of the praise increases—only the four living beings and the elders speak in chapter 4 (vv. 8 and 10); in 5:12, the angels, living beings, and elders speak together with a loud voice. The vision builds towards a climax at the end of the chapter.

The first four scenes of worship, therefore, exist as a unity with an interlocking literary structure. As the praise moves from the One on the Throne to the Lamb, the scenes gather increased momentum as more and more beings join the exaltation and the exaltation increases in words and volume. Never do those upon/in the midst of the Throne speak—they are solely the recipients of the praise. Their reason for their spatial distinction from those around them, therefore, becomes clear. Their presence upon/in the midst of the Throne marks them as those worthy of worship, in distinction from those around the Throne who give worship to them. The Throne unites the One who sits upon it and the Lamb who stands in its midst together as God in distinction from creation, heavenly and earthly, who exist before and around the Throne. The distinction between God and creation is a distinction between rightfully receiving or giving praise.

The final scene of worship (5:13-14) reinforces this distinction with both the One sitting upon the Throne and the Lamb mutually receiving a unison hymn of praise. Yet again, the number involved increases one last time: now all creation, carefully spelled out to cover all the cosmos, heaven and earth, joins to exalt the One on the Throne and the Lamb together. The seer does not envision this praise—he hears it (v. 13b). The praise applies equally to the One on the Throne and the Lamb, and extends into eternity. The four living beings confirm the praise in which they have partaken, and the scene ends with the elders again falling and worshipping, presumably around the Throne—the Throne where the One sits and the Lamb stands.

The final climatic scene of worship draws the One sitting on the Throne and the Lamb together as recipients of a single act of worship, linking this worship with their eternity, the characteristic of the divine in chapter 4. Even more significantly, the text makes an important distinction in the scene: the distinction between “all creation” which offers praise and “the One on the Throne” and the “Lamb” that receive the praise and worship together (v. 14). With the scene’s center on the Throne, the “One sitting upon the Throne” and the “Lamb standing as slaughtered” share the Throne as One. The spatial dynamics of the scene demarcate firmly

between the divine and creaturely beings. Within this duality, the Lamb completely and solely belonging on the divine realm as much as the “One who sits upon the Throne.” The Lamb does not participate in the worship of the One on the Throne on the side of “all creation.” Rather, the Lamb receives the worship of all creation along with the One on the Throne. The seriousness of this distinction between creation and God for worship in the book cannot be doubted: the seer is twice warned to worship only God, not a creature (19:9 and 22:8-9).⁴⁰ The rules of Jewish monotheism are strictly maintained throughout the book. As there is only one Throne, even if it is inhabited by the Two, there is only one God, even if the one God is known as the “One who sits upon the Throne” and the “Lamb.”⁴¹

From the spatial dynamics of the heavenly palace and activities that take place around and before the Throne in chapters 4-5, one must conclude that the Book of Revelation puts forth a more complex image of God than equating “God” solely with the One who sits on the Throne, and reducing the Lamb to a different realm of being as a special emissary of this God. Whereas the historical origins of the imagery may suggest a subordinate, emissary status of the Lamb, the structural relationship between the One on the Throne and the Lamb, the Father and the Son, in chapters 4 and 5 unite the two together as one God, while distinguishing them within their roles in creation and redemption. The Throne does not merely belong to the One who sits upon the Throne; the same Throne is the Throne of the Lamb as the Lamb never leaves the space of the Throne in chapters 4-5. If “the Throne of God” pertains to the “One who sits upon it,” it must equally pertain to the Lamb who stands in its midst.

The results of our reading of chapters 4-5 come to remarkable fruition when we turn to chapter 7 and the relationship between the Father

⁴⁰“Since the issue of monotheistic worship is so clear in Revelation, it cannot be that the worship of Jesus is represented in Revelation through neglect of this issue. It seems rather that the worship of Jesus must be understood as indicating the inclusion of Jesus in the being of the one God defined by monotheistic worship.” Bauckham, *Theology*, 60. For background material on early prohibitions of the worship of angels, see Stuckenbruck, 75-103.

⁴¹Indeed, if one doubts that the Lamb is included in the heavenly worship, compare the acts of worship given to the parody of the One on the Throne and the Lamb, the Dragon, and the Beast in chapter 13 where the “whole earth” (13:3)—not the heavens—worships the dragon and the beast together (13:4). As throughout the book, the parody mimics and inverts the real thing—true worship is to the One on the Throne and the Lamb.

and the Son and the New Jerusalem in the final vision of the book. Throughout the opening of the seven seals in Revelation 6-7, the seer never leaves the setting of the heavenly palace, but watches the unfolding judgment upon the earth from the heavens. Yet, whereas the language of “the One on the Throne” and the “Lamb” predominates over the language of God in the visionary descriptions and doxological proclamations of chapters 4-5, the language of “God” predominates in chapter 7. As a result, following the scenes of chapters 4-5 and its development later in the book, the language of “God” in chapter 7 embraces both the One on the Throne and the Lamb.

The opening of the sixth seal simultaneously invokes judgment upon the earth and the sealing of the saints in heaven. An angel arises with the “seal of the living God” (7:2) to “seal” the 144,000, an event accomplished in vv. 5-8. This “seal of the living God” protects the elect from the destruction unleashed by the fifth trumpet in 9:4. The “seal” works effectively, for in 14:1 the 144,000 appear with the Lamb when the visionary sees the Lamb upon Mount Zion. Yet here the specific mark of the seal is revealed. Upon the forehead of the 144,000 is engraved “his [the Lamb’s] name and the name of his Father” (v. 1). The “seal of the living God” thus identifies “God” as “the Father” *and* “the Son,” distinguishing between them—they both have their own names—yet joining them together equally as God.⁴² The imagery of the seal consistently portrays the relation between the Father and Son in relationship to “God” in a manner entirely consistent with the spatial dynamics and liturgical scenes of Revelation 4-5.

Chapter 7:9-17 continues this complex imagery for “God” in the book, distinguishing between the character of the One on the Throne and the Lamb, yet uniting them together equally as “God.” The scene shifts back to the heavenly palace. The visionary sees the saints from all nations standing “before the Throne and before the Lamb” (v. 9), a redundancy as the Lamb is still in the midst of the Throne. Again, the spatial dynamics of the scene remain significant. The same geography is at work here as in chapters 4-5. The Throne, now “of God” (v. 15), stands in the middle, with concentric circles of beings still encircling it. As in 5:11, the angels form the exterior circle, with the elders next, and finally the four living beings most immediately around the Throne. Naturally “the One who sits

⁴²It is the parody of the Lamb, the beast, whose name (13:17) constitutes the mark on those subject to divine wrath, usurping the proper place of the “seal of God.”

upon the Throne” occupies this “Throne of God” (v. 15b) yet, as in chapter 5, *the Lamb dwells there as well*. Indeed, the passage emphasizes the Lamb’s presence on the Throne, identifying the Lamb as the one “up in the midst of the Throne” (v. 17). As the seal of God, the “Throne of God” includes the Father and the Son, distinguished but equally God. When the angels, elders and living beings fall before the Throne upon their faces and worship God (v. 11), the one (singular) God they worship is “the One on the Throne and the Lamb.”

The “unity in distinction” appears quite clearly in the hymn of vv. 15-17. The passage begins with a reference to God, singular: those who have come out of the great ordeal gather “before the Throne of God” where they “worship Him day and night in his Temple” (v. 15a). The hymn then introduces different (the same?) character(s) in conjunction with the Throne: the One who sits upon the Throne (vv 15b-16) and “the Lamb who is up in the midst of the Throne” (v. 17a), before returning to a summary of the activities of the sheltering of the One on the Throne and the guidance of the Lamb by reference to “God” who will wipe the tears from their eyes (v. 17b). Another simple ring-structure is formed as the text moves from (a) God to (b) the One on the Throne to (b’) the Lamb to (a) God. “God” becomes the inclusive term, incorporating “the One on the Throne” and the “Lamb” even as “God” remains one.

The complexity of the character “God” becomes extremely important when we examine the statement of the nations in 7:10. The Greek is ambiguous. Standard translations usually presuppose the simple identity between “our God” and “the One who sits upon the Throne.” For instance, the NRSV translates, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” The Lamb is distinguished from the One on the Throne precisely by not sharing in the One on the Throne’s “Godness.” Grammatically, an equally legitimate translation, however, is “Salvation belongs to our God: To the One who sits upon the Throne and to the Lamb!” The latter translation, however, is superior because it corresponds best to the relationships between God “the Father” and God “the Son” seen throughout the book. The character of “God” in Revelation may not be simply and solely identified with “the One who Sits upon the Throne.” “God” also, and equally, includes the Son, while all the time, remaining singularly “God.”

The final scene of eschatological culmination in Revelation 21-22 continues to clarify the identity of the character of God. In Revelation 21,

as the New Jerusalem descends “from God,” a loud, unidentified voice “from the Throne” (21:3) announces the singular God’s healing presence in the New Jerusalem: “Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with humans, and He will dwell with them and they will be his people, and He himself will be with them, their God.” When the seer sees the New Jerusalem, however, he sees no Temple, but God directly present in the city: “For the Lord, God Almighty and the Lamb, is its Temple.” The Lamb dwells as the presence of God in the city.

As symbolic of the presence of God, the Throne, of course, must appear in the New Jerusalem, and indeed, it does. Yet what we first met as “the Throne” (4:2), which was later described as “the Throne of God” (7:15), in the eschatological city receives the designation “the Throne of God and the Lamb” (22:1, 3). As we have argued, however, this is not an enthronement—the Lamb from the beginning has dwelt in the midst of the Throne. It is, however, the explicit unfolding of the nature of the Lamb for all to see, the revelation of Jesus Christ! The Throne has always been the Lamb’s; in the New Jerusalem, however, this identification is open for all to see. The Lamb is fully God along with God, the One on the Throne, one God. The text strains to image this complex binatarian concept of God in 22:3-4: “And the Throne of God and the Lamb is in it [the New Jerusalem]; and his servants will worship Him and they will see his face and his name upon their foreheads.” God is One and is worshipped as One, even, as we have seen, “his name upon their foreheads” is the name of the Father and the Son, or God and the Lamb. Within the theology of the Book of Revelation, as in the Nicene Creed, the Two is One, and the One is Two, One God, Father and Son, each one distinct, each one sharing in the divine Throne, one God.

The concluding vision explicitly unites “the One who sits upon the Throne” and “the Lamb,” both with “the Lord God.” Immediately before the seer begins his visionary account, “the Lord God” speaks for the first time, introducing Godself: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, the One who is, who was and the one who is coming, the Almighty” (1:8). In 21:5-8, the “One who sits upon the Throne,” the One who has previously been identified as the One who was and is and is coming, speaks directly for the first time in the book: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” The words ring out a third time, this time in the final exhortations of the book: “I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (22:13). Who speaks

these words? The reader must wait until v. 16: “I Jesus.” As has been indicated throughout the book, the One on the Throne is God, fully, completely, from beginning to end. Yet the divine nature is not borne in solitude, but fully participated in as well by Jesus, the Lion of Judah who appears as a Lamb slaughtered in the midst of the Throne, who, too, is fully “the Lord, God, the Almighty,” “the Alpha and Omega.”⁴³ The book, however, does not present a bi-theism, but remains firmly amidst the commitments of a Jewish apocalyptic monotheism—only one God is worshiped, the One on the Throne and the Son.⁴⁴

In the Book of Revelation, “God” may not be simply and solely identified with “the One on the Throne.” Yet the Book of Revelation clearly embraces a Jewish monolatric system: “Worship God alone!” the angel tells the seer. Neither does the book present a modalism: the Lamb clearly is not merely a different manifestation of God from the manifestation of the One on the Throne. The Lamb is distinct from and subordinate to the One on the Throne. The distinction between these two is never lost nor blurred. Yet a deeper distinction emerges between these two, on one side, and creation, on the other, a distinction between the one God who is worshiped and creation that offers God/Them worship. It is never even intimated that God, the One sitting upon the Throne and the Lamb, belong to creation—the geography, worship, and interchangeable references between God and these Beings clearly separate the One on the Throne and the Lamb from the four living beings, the elders, the angels, and all creation. Though distinct, the One on the Throne and the Lamb both share a common “nature” as God in distinction from creation.

⁴³Bauckham notes a chiasmic pattern that relates the prologue of the book to its epilogue around these phrases. As he states, “This pattern underlines the identification of Christ with God which the use of the titles themselves express.... It shows that the identification of Christ with God implied by the titles is not the result of an adoptionist Christology, in which the mere man Jesus is exalted at his resurrection to divine status. Important as the resurrection is for Christ’s participation in God’s lordship (cf. 2:28; 3:21), these titles he shares with God indicate that he shared the eternal being of God from before creation.” Bauckham, *Theology*, 58.

⁴⁴If monotheism and bi-theism are the only options, of course Revelation is “monotheistic.” Yet it is precisely the formulation of Trinitarian theology that shows that “monotheism” and “bi-theism” form a false dichotomy in speaking about the Christian God.

Conclusion

This intratextual reading of the Scriptural characterization opens up the relationship between the Father and the Son for analysis in a way that a historical-critical analysis never could. This intratextual analysis, driven by theological questions, mirrors closely early Nicean doctrinal exegesis and arrives at a similar result. Obviously, in the Apocalypse, the Lamb is never called “of one substance” with the One on the Throne. Yet the Nicean confession does not stand outside the Book of Revelation, but speaks from within it. The Creed is neither a “development” from the Apocalypse or an overlay of philosophical conceptuality upon it. Rather, the Creed makes explicit the relationship between the Father and Son in a language different from, but not foreign to the Book of Revelation. In both Revelation and Nicea, “God” embraces equally both the Father and the Son, while simultaneously distinguishing God/Them from the creation. Articulated with different metaphors, Nicea and the Apocalypse nevertheless share the same “metaphysical” categories of a duality of God and creation, with the Father and the Son firmly together on the side of the divine as one God.⁴⁵

Athanasius wrote in *De decretis*, “Wherefore also He [the Son] sits as Word at the Father’s right hand; for where the Father is, there also is His Word; but we, as His works, stand in judgment before Him; and while He is adored, because He is Son of the adorable Father, we adore, confessing Him Lord and God, because we are creatures and other than He” (III.1). If the above reading of the Book of Revelation is persuasive, Athanasius here summarizes not merely Nicea, but the theology/Christology of the Book of Revelation as well. Indeed, in the West where Revelation was accepted as canonical without controversy, fourth-century iconography drew directly upon the Book of Revelation, espe-

⁴⁵In Yeago’s terms, both Nicea and Revelation, even if they do not use the same conceptuality with regards to Jesus, make the identical judgment concerning him. As Yeago writes, “The same judgment can be rendered in a variety of conceptual terms, all of which may be informative about a particular judgment’s force and implications. The possibility of valid alternative verbal/conceptual renderings of the identical judgment accounts for the fact that we ourselves often do not realize the full implications of the judgments we pass: only *some* of their implication are ever unpacked in the particular renderings we have given them.” (Yeago, *ibid.*, 93).

cially chapters 4-5, to articulate in visual form the teachings of Nicea.⁴⁶ The theological “grammar” provided by the Nicene Confession articulates and preserves the “plain sense” of the most fundamental theological convictions of the Book of Revelation.

If so, supporting Yeago’s first claim, we must re-conceive of the relationship between the Christian Scripture and the early ecumenical creeds, at least Nicea. The Apocalypse does not exhaust the whole of Scripture; yet as the final book in the canon, it does represent a vast overview and recapitulation of the biblical narrative.⁴⁷ As no biblical book explicitly articulates intermediary stages between God and creation nor states that the Word is a creature, the theological position of Nicea and the Apocalypse opens up other Trinitarian readings of the Scripture to emerge where they might not normally be seen. For instance, Mark 1:3 quotes Isaiah 40:3, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Who appears as the Lord, the God of Israel, whose way John the Baptist prepares? “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee” (Mark 1:9).

Read with the appropriate questions, the Christian Scripture may be much more open to Nicene readings than has commonly been recognized. Given the importance of the second century Rule of Faith in arriving at the Christian Scripture and its status in establishing the Nicene Creed, one could argue that as Scripture, as a canon, one indeed *must* read the text in this way.⁴⁸ If so, Nicea stands as a fundamental rule, a hermeneutical guide, for the Christian reading of Scripture. To abandon it may be to abandon the concept of Scripture, reducing the Christian Bible to a collection of miscellaneous books from various stages within Israelite, Jewish, and early Christian history and communities.

⁴⁶ See van der Meer, op. cit.

⁴⁷ The Apocalypse is filled with imagery drawn from the Old Testament. See G. K. Beal, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (JSNTSS 166; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999) and Steve Moysie, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (JSNTSS 115; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995).

⁴⁸ See Robert W. Wall, “Reading the Bible from within Our Traditions: The ‘Rule of Faith’ in Theological Hermeneutics,” in J. B. Green and M. Turner (eds.), *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 88-107.

This is exactly what “biblical theology” has done.⁴⁹ In the guise of “objectivity” and “historical neutrality,” biblical theology, or NT Christology in this case, actually undercuts the literature, convictions, and practices that sustain the distinct life of the church as the people of God. It is no accident that “biblical theology” arose within the confines of modernity with its anti-ecclesial political agenda.⁵⁰

Such data as examined above, however, also support Yeago’s second contention: the superiority of the exegesis underlying classical Christian doctrines to “critical” exegesis. The above reading suggests that the disjunction between the Christian Scripture and the Creeds “discovered” by modern(ist) historical scholarship may lie in the questions asked in the discipline of “biblical theology” and “the history of ideas” more than in the texts of the Scripture and the Nicene Creed themselves. Nicea does not represent the hellenistic “philosophizing” of a “primitive” Christian experience. Indeed, its firm duality of God and creation strongly differentiates Nicea from its neo-Platonic context. Rather, in accordance with recent work done by Larry Hurtado, the above data suggest that the Nicene Confession arises out of demands made within early Christianity’s Jewish apocalyptic origin.⁵¹ If so, apocalyptic truly is the mother of Christian theology, even in its Trinitarian form!

Indeed, the above readings suggest that Gabler’s distinction between “biblical” and “dogmatic” theology must be challenged in order to open the Christian Scripture to the full dynamics of the Christian Scriptures. The disciplinary boundaries constructed by the modern academy not only damage the theological discourse of the church, but also close the text off from being heard in its multivalent fullness. Rather than “biblical theology,” theological readings of Scripture, read from within the context of the church, are a legitimate, interesting, and intellectually demanding

⁴⁹“This mode of biblical theology cannot advance theological interpretation of scripture because its aims and purposes differ from those of theological interpretation. For a variety of reasons, including the disciplinary concerns that have shaped so much of modern academic life, biblical theology has worked diligently to exclude the theological convictions it needs to engage in order to advance substantive theological arguments. (Fowl, *Engaging*, 21).

⁵⁰For the relationship between liberal democratic political theory and historical critical biblical scholarship, see Stanley Hauerwas, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

⁵¹See n. 38 above.

enterprise, one that does honor to the text itself. Read from the perspective that the Scripture provides a linguistic, textual resource to guide the faithful articulation of the church's doctrinal convictions and ecclesial practices, the continuity of Nicea and Scripture, the continuity on the basis of which Nicea was accepted as catholic, becomes readily understandable.

Recovering such a discipline of reading will not produce either the disciplines of "biblical" or "dogmatic" theologies. Yet perhaps it could produce contemporary readers of the Scripture outside the confines of the disciplinary structures of the modern(ist) academy, readers like Athanasius, or Aquinas, or Calvin, or Luther, or Wesley, or Barth who, in order to preserve the faith given to the saints, might open up the Scripture anew to form the church in its convictions and practices as a faithful witness to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

TEMPORALITY AS RUPTURE AND REMAINDER: WESLEY, PINNOCK, AND ST. THOMAS¹

by

Kenneth Oakes

“Do I understand metaphysics; if not the depth of the Schoolmen, the subtleties of Scotus or Aquinas, yet the first rudiments, the general principles of that useful science.”²

Accolades for an emphasis on the “practical” and “useful” are often showered upon John Wesley by contemporary theologians, but such accolades are less often given for his metaphysics. In light of current Wesleyan scholarship, that Wesley had even read the Scholastics is a surprise to some.³ But the above quotation implies that Wesley had not only read but was appreciative of his encounter with the Schoolmen.

Wesley and the Scholastics

David Ingersoll Naglee, in a refreshing if somewhat dramatic account of the Scholastic influences on John Wesley, claims that Wesley

¹Many thanks to D. Stephen Long for needed suggestions and advice. Any remaining faults are, of course, the author’s own.

²John Wesley, “Address to the Clergy,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. X (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 493.

³Perhaps this trend is waning, as D. Stephen Long’s remarkable forthcoming work, *Wesley’s Moral Theology* (tentative title, Abingdon Press), attempts to tie Wesley more closely to the Schools and the Cambridge Platonists than previously thought. See esp. chapter 2.

“urged all clergymen to study Aquinas for their betterment.”⁴ Further, Wesley “embraced the Christianizing of Aristotle’s metaphysics by Thomas Aquinas, and it became his chief philosophical tool to aid theology.”⁵ To be sure, we hear elsewhere of Wesley’s disdain for some of the “abstract, idle and vain speculations” of the Schoolmen.⁶ But Naglee’s narration is interesting and provocative since Thomas and “classical theism” are the acme of all that is execrable in theology. Do not Aristotle and Thomas proffer us only a static and immobile deity whose unchangeable cold shoulder unfortunately usurped the dynamic and personal categories of Hebraic thought?

One would indeed be lead to consider Thomas as the high priest of “statism,” at least if one believed most contemporary theology. Such a widespread and unchallenged misconception reveals that we have been misreading Thomas as a Suarezian, as giving priority to essence over existence.⁷ We forget that for Thomas existence, contra Scotus, Suarez, and Kant, actually does add something to essence and is thereby given precedence over essence (or more correctly, God’s essence is God’s existence) in the “description” of God. In this manner, Thomas ensures that theology will be concerned with the infinite life, buzzing activity, and incomprehensible actuality of God. Etienne Gilson’s injunction to “avoid trying to conceive as an essence what an eternal act-of-being must be”⁸ is a helpful reminder of Thomas’ radical priority of existence. This “static” misreading is also evident in the clamor generated when God’s immutability or timelessness is mentioned. That much of the commotion is raised from theologians in the Wesleyan tradition is curious, as Wesley himself

⁴David Ingersoll Naglee, *From Everlasting to Everlasting, John Wesley on Eternity and Time Vol. 1* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 64.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶“On the Gradual Improvement of Natural Philosophy,” *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. XIII, 483.

⁷See the whole of Etienne Gilson’s writings, especially *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949). For a short synopsis of his driving concern, see *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1956), 48-58. Also see David Burrell, C.S.C., “Aquinas and Islamic and Jewish Thinkers” in Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁸Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 102.

held to the (in)famous divine attributes or “perfections” as he called them.⁹

Since Wesley considered study of Thomas edifying, perhaps it is time for an attempted rapprochement between the two. Ironically, the largest obstacles to such a venture are precisely the Wesleyan theologians who repeat the same charges about the Great Doctors that we have heard since Harnack. In this paper, we will first consider some of the common complaints against Thomas’ timelessness, using Clark H. Pinnock as our example, then track Thomas’ grammar of immutability/eternity as it applies to God and to creatures to determine whether the critiques hold, and finally raise some questions for Pinnock.

The Common Complaints

The standard and hackneyed polemic against the God of “classical theism”¹⁰ is peppered with adjectives such as static, distant, immobile, remote, etc. Pinnock summarizes the common and predictable critiques well when stating, “a package of divine attributes has been constructed which leans in the direction of immobility and hyper-transcendence, particularly because of the influence of the Hellenistic category of unchangeableness.”¹¹ The culprit is Greek “statism” which stunts the biblical record of “God’s dynamic interactivity” with the world. This generic theism is the offspring of the Hellenic and Judaic traditions (as if they were monolithic), but at times it seems more equivalent to a stillbirth since it is difficult to “square the dynamic biblical portrait of a God who is involved in the world and affected by it with Greek axioms that are fundamentally static.”¹² Elsewhere Pinnock describes this God as a “a remote Being, a metaphysical iceberg, alienating of human significance.”¹³ And these are

⁹See “The Unity of the Divine Being” (Sermon 114), in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. VII. Wesley viewed eternity as both “boundless duration” and as simultaneous whole. Naglee contends that the former was the more important conception for Wesley. For a different reading, see Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, Abingdon Press, 1994), 50f. and n.28 on 276.

¹⁰For Pinnock, this notion appears to be a hasty and broad amalgamation of the Patristics, the Scholastics, and certain Reformed theologians.

¹¹Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 65.

¹²*Ibid.*, 68.

¹³Clark H. Pinnock, “Evangelical Theologians Facing the Future: An Ancient and Future Paradigm,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33:2 (Fall 1998), 23.

the two controlling and contrasting metaphors of Pinnock's project: the dynamic and the static. These two locutions are employed so frequently and loosely that it is almost as if Pinnock is closing his eyes and exorcising the specter of Thomas through these magic words. But does "statism" adequately describe Thomas' God? And would Pinnock's theological project be jeopardized if this reading were shown to be fallacious?

Pinnock contends that God's timelessness entails that God cannot be involved with or in the temporal process and is perforce aloof. Repeatedly we are instructed as to the incompatibility between the atemporal and the temporal. The unchangeableness of God "forces us to think of God knowing a changing world in an unchanging way, as acting in a temporally changing world in an atemporal way, as experiencing time as simultaneous whole and not successively."¹⁴ God's personal encounters with Creation are not possible if God is outside time, "a timeless God could not genuinely respond, deliberate, or do many of the things the Bible says God does."¹⁵ God's atemporality and immutability, for Pinnock, erect a barrier between God and creatures, "as immutable and timeless, God is not free to act and interact as a person would."¹⁶ The astute reader would have noticed by now the almost interchangeable usage of immutable and atemporal/eternal. This is no oversight since the two have been closely linked in the tradition. Pinnock himself criticizes those theologians who have dismissed immutability but still cling to atemporality, for "immutability and timelessness are tied together."¹⁷

Contra Wesley, Pinnock denies God's immutability and experience of time as a simultaneous-whole. Both of these compose the "pagan inheritance" that much of the tradition unfortunately accepted and should now be dismissed. As an alternative, Pinnock re-presents us with the biblical view that "presents God as temporally everlasting, not timelessly eternal."¹⁸ To be sure, he shies from directly equating the temporality as experienced by the creature and by the Creator. In fact, at times he appears to draw back into a sort of agnosticism concerning time and eternity. After rightly noting the consequences of our temporal reflections on

¹⁴Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 71.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 96.

the Trinity, he states that “whatever God’s eternity is like, it includes the possibility of time and the capacity to relate to us within time.”¹⁹ Much of the “pagan-influenced” tradition could wholly agree with Pinnock when eternity is stated in this manner, for no competition was imagined between the two. He also muses whether we could speak of God’s “relative timelessness,”²⁰ in the eternity “before” creation, but this notion is neither explored nor explained very clearly and in speaking the “before” already presupposes succession.²¹ Despite these intriguing qualifiers, he is quite confident of God’s fundamentally temporal existence: God is “above finite experience and measurement of time but he is not beyond ‘before or after’ or beyond sequence of events.”²²

There are a number of things Pinnock is quite sure can or cannot be the case. Among these are what it is to be temporal (or atemporal/eternal), to be a person, and to act in time. What is questionable is that he can so confidently delimit the boundaries of temporality for both humans and the divine. He would certainly claim that the content of his categories are derived from the biblical text itself, which he notes is not a “collection of timeless propositions.”²³ However, questions are raised when he also notes how well his biblically-derived categories fit with “the modern horizon.”²⁴ This hints at a subtle sort of eisegesis, especially when this concept of freedom is defined as “libertarian.” Such a description sounds suspiciously close to the formal, rights-based freedom constructed/produced by the liberal-modern tradition. One can almost detect the lingering scent of univocal predication in air, of a notion of freedom, casuality, personhood, and temporality subsuming both God and Creation under larger and

¹⁹Ibid., 99.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹On this point, see Thomas Aquinas, SCG II, 19, and Rowan Williams, “On Being a Creature,” in *On Christian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2000), esp. 67-75.

²²Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 96.

²³Clark H. Pinnock, “Evangelical Theologians Facing the Future: An Ancient and Future Paradigm,” 15.

²⁴The notion of what it is to be a person, or to be free, has hardly been constant throughout the Western tradition. For development of notions of self, see authors as diverse as Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, and Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*. For a differing conception of freedom in the Patristics, see D. C. Schindler, “Freedom Beyond Our Choosing: Augustine on the Will and its Objects,” *Communio* 29 (Winter 2002).

more general categories. Such an evangelical version of the *analogia entis* is surprising given Pinnock's Barthianism. Is this dogmatic certainty of what cannot be the case in the temporal/atemporal arena for both God and Creation therefore justified? What would happen if we were less sure of what we humans mean when we say "temporality" and "eternality"? Thomas, with his careful attention and somewhat agnostic approach to language and predication, will be of help here.

Thomas and Simplicity

Simplicity, immutability, impassibility and infinity are typically grouped under the category of divine attributes, but a closer reading prevents such a nomenclature. For in the preface to Q3 in the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas states that "we have no means for considering how God is, but rather how He is not."²⁵ Questions 3-11 then fall under the rubric of "how God is not." These are not, therefore, definitions or predicates of the divine essence but instead they function as grammatical rules for how to *not* speak of God. In this way, Thomas promises not to impressively circumscribe the divine essence but instead "to show what God is not,"²⁶ not to expound a doctrine of God but an "anti-doctrine."²⁷ A better title for these "descriptions" might then be the "non-attributes" of God.

It is this overlooked agnosticism of Thomas that leads David Burrell to deny that Thomas is developing a doctrine of God at all. Instead, Burrell argues that Thomas is hammering out the logic of the claim that God is "the beginning and end of all things," and therefore not a thing amongst other things. Utilizing Wittgenstein's distinction between a "formal feature" and an "ordinary feature," he attempts to demonstrate that the non-attributes springing from Q3-11 are not empirical (ordinary) features but logical/ontological (formal) features. The latter are "not patient of description yet displayed in the form of discourse itself."²⁸ They are not encountered in the world, are not "things" at all, but can only be deduced from the way in which we talk about things. The divine attributes do not therefore describe "empirical" facts about God, but are instead guides for

²⁵ST 3. Preface.

²⁶David Burrell, C.S.C., *Aquinas: God and Action* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1979), 14.

²⁷Robert Barron, *Thomas Aquinas: Spiritual Master* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 77.

²⁸David Burrell, *Aquinas*, 15.

how to (not) speak about God well. This cannot help but change the manner in which we read these questions.

Simplicity denies that any composition is found in God and so the standard creaturely distinctions of essence/existence, matter/form, subject/accident, genus/species and potency/actuality do not apply to the divine. As the formal feature of compositeness is the precondition for describing and identifying an object at all, simpleness severely cripples our ability to speak and know of God. This alerts us that God is utterly unlike objects we encounter in the world. A more contemporary and familiar way of stating this insight would be to say that God is not creation. More controversially, this rubric prevents us from alleging that God can move from potency to actuality. From here it is just a small hop to the non-doctrine of God's immutability.

In the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas defends the immutability of God in only two articles. If he had known the controversy this would eventually spawn, perhaps he would have developed his arguments more fully. In his *responsio* for the first article of Q9, Thomas advances immutability from three points established prior. First, only that which has potentiality may change but this was already denied in God on two different fronts: the qualities of the First Being must possess (Q2. a.3); and God as *Actus Purus* (Q3. a.3). Secondly, in all changes there is both identity and difference. This implies a sort of substratum that contains superficial elements that are variable, but this connotes a type of composition that is denied of God. Thirdly, whatever moves either arrives at a different location or acquires something novel. But as infinite, God cannot "extend" God's self anywhere else and as perfect (i.e., not lacking any of the perfections of being), God always already "possesses" everything worth having. God is therefore wholly immutable while all creatures, because they are in potency to their end, experience privation according to place, and only are because of God's generous donation of being. They are only derivatively immutable.²⁹

A glance at the Augustine reference in the first article of Q9 of the *Summa* tells us what does not fall under the category of immutability. Thomas reminds us that Augustine makes reference to God moving God's self, even though Augustine alleges that this takes place "neither by time, nor by place." Even "the acts of understanding, and willing, and loving,

²⁹ST. 9.2.

are called movements”³⁰ in the divine life. Thomas admits no qualms with stating that God moves God’s self, and explains that “God understands and loves Himself, in that respect they said that God moves Himself.”³¹ Thomas continues on to qualify this usage of “movement.” It is “not, however, as movement and change belong to a thing existing in potentiality, as we now speak of change and movement.”³² An analogous usage of “movement” is entirely acceptable and indeed necessary when referring to the divine life. What Thomas is denying are forms of activity that are “associated with striving and achieving.”³³ God’s activity is declared to be utterly different from those of creatures, in that it has nothing to struggle against or contend with, but it is simply is what God is.³⁴ This qualifier intimates that using the locution “immutability” requires some skill in its application and may have nothing to do with “statism.”

The corresponding “religious” analogue to God’s immutability is “eternity.” Thomas’ definition of eternity is inherited from Boethius as spoken by Lady Philosophy: “Eternity is the simultaneous-whole and perfect possession of interminable life.” The two crucial qualities here are “simultaneous” and “interminable.” In Aristotle’s *Physics*, we are told that time is “the number of movement according to before and after.”³⁵ Thomas points out that before/after do not apply to eternity, which is simultaneous-whole. There is therefore no succession in eternity, and no beginning or end either. Our suspicions concerning the use of time as a metric for the eternal are confirmed when Aristotle tells us that “those things are said to be measured by time which have a beginning and an end in time.”³⁶ But as there is no beginning or end in time for eternity, time is thereby declared a radically inadequate meter-stick for the eternal.

In the following article in the *Summa*, Thomas then queries whether God is eternal. The answer is in the affirmative, of course, but for reasons unsettling to many contemporary theologians: “as God is supremely

³⁰ST 9.1 reply to obj. 1.

³¹ST 9.1. reply to obj 1.

³²ST 9.1. reply to obj. 1.

³³David Burrell, *Aquinas*, 37,

³⁴Excluded from this are logical impossibilities, for those are considered to be nothing at all.

³⁵ Aristotle, *Physics* IV, 11 (220a 25).

³⁶ Aristotle, *Physics* IV, 13 (221b 28).

immutability, it belongs to God to be eternal.”³⁷ God as absolutely immutable is outside all dualities of before/after and beginning/end. Following the grammar of simplicity, Thomas immediately denies that this is a predicate or attribute for “as He is His own essence, so He is His own eternity.”³⁸ He furthers this logic in responding to an objection that “eternity is a kind of measure” and therefore a circumscribing of that which cannot be circumscribed. Once again the divine simplicity is implemented when Thomas states, “eternity is nothing but God Himself.” This means that “God is not called eternal, as if He were in any way measured.”³⁹ God is not measured, either by time or by eternity. God’s simplicity therefore frustrates all of our attempts to “get a handle” on God.

We can witness Thomas’ possible retort to Pinnock when the former responds to an allegation that God is not eternal because “words denoting past, present and future time are applied to God in Scripture.”⁴⁰ Thomas’ reply was, God’s “eternity includes all times,”⁴¹ effectively mystifies our notion of what it even means to be temporal. Ironically, ineffable and incomprehensible eternality is the larger category that explains and upholds the temporal and therefore cannot be measured by it or by anything. To state or argue for a dynamic versus static eternity only signifies confusion, as these terms do not properly (*proprie*) describe eternity. Of course, we have used the temporal to aid us in understanding the eternal, but exactly when this knowledge is used appropriately in the contemplation of the divine is deemed problematic and uncertain. We finally see the ladder for what it is, a rickety and shaky collection of planks. Thomas doesn’t object, then, to the use of temporal tenses to describe God, just as long as we know what we are not saying, for it is “not as if He Himself were altered through present, past and future.”⁴² And it is this knowing what we are not saying when we do speak of God (or even of temporality/eternality) that is the goal of this exercise.⁴³

³⁷ST 10.2

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹ST 10.2.3.

⁴⁰ST 10.2.obj 4.

⁴¹ST 10.2.4.

⁴² ST 10.2. reply obj. 4

⁴³ Thomas’ distinction between the *modus significandi* and the *res significata* provides him ample room for such a move.

Eternity, Æviternity and God's Creatures

The radical difference between temporal creation and the immutable/eternal divine is not an impenetrable wall, as a cursory glance at the place of angels and æviternity in Thomas will demonstrate. When explaining the difference between æviternity and time, the eternal is the “standard” of measurement. Thomas explains that receding from the permanence of being is simultaneously the receding from eternity.⁴⁴ The term “receding” (*recedit*) should alert us as to that which once again founds temporalities and non-temporalities. Oddly enough, this *recedit* can occur in degrees. Some things sufficiently lose eternity so that their being is subject to changes such as motion and corruption and are therefore measured by time. This would be the case for inferior beings such as plants and marshmallows. The being of the heavenly bodies recedes less and consequently their being neither consists in change nor is subject to change, but they do alter place and velocity. This is also the case with the angels, who may change affections or location. The latter two examples of being are measured by æviternity, which is a “mean between eternity and time.”

Thomas goes on to opine that the spiritual creatures share in eternity as regards their vision of glory, share in æviternity as regards their being, and share in time as regards their affections and understanding. The fact that these creatures span three realms or planes of “time” should cause us to be wary of antagonistically opposing eternity to time. In understanding, the angels know diverse species in time, or discursively, but as to elements of the divine vision, these are seen simultaneously as a seeing of/into God.⁴⁵ Likewise, in those who see the essence the God, these are seen simultaneously and not successively, for it is a participation in the divine intellect which sees all things in its own essence in one act.⁴⁶ The beatific vision is barred from humans in this life, for we only know according to our nature, which is a being corporeal. We may only know things that have a form in matter or that can be known through such a form. This is no reason to despair, for being given glorified eyes in a resurrected body will permit a vision of the essence of God.⁴⁷ This vision

⁴⁴ST 10.5.

⁴⁵ST 10.5.

⁴⁶ST 12.10. Also see *Summa Contra Gentiles* III/1, 60-61.

⁴⁷ST 12.3.2.

will be a participation in the eternal rapture and ecstasy of the love between the persons of the Trinity. In this way, our being will also be to span the differing planes of “times” as the other creatures do, even become immutable. Eternity/immutability is not something that the divine jealously hoards for itself. Instead, God desires many to share in the eternal vision of endless beauty and love. This gaze is eternal, for once viewed the captivation of its goodness is so great that the will can do nothing but say yes and receive it open-handed over and over again.⁴⁸

Possible Problems for Pinnock

Thomas would have been baffled at the following attack of Pinnock: “God is to be thought of as movement, not simple, immutable substance. He is internally and externally dynamic and relational.”⁴⁹ As we have seen, Thomas would heartily agree that God is capable of “movement.” But it is precisely the divine simplicity that permits him to identify the divine Persons and the relations, “a divine person signifies a relation as subsisting.”⁵⁰ Relation cannot be an accident in the divine, as it is in humans, because the accident/substance distinction does not apply to that which lacks all composition. God can be internally relational, and is internal relation, because God is simple and “dynamic.” This is an absolute transgression of Aristotle’s categories, for Thomas is saying that the substance, the *suppositum*, is its relation. This is why Thomas must maintain that God does not have a real relation to creatures, for this would make the world the fourth Person in the now divine quaternary.⁵¹ Thomas contends that God is dynamic and relational to creatures, but only in an analogous sense. Pinnock also seems intent on using “dynamic” and “relational” as univocal categories, to which Thomas would fiercely object.⁵² Contemporary theologians have been quite prone to just state this lack of real relation between God and world without any explication and leave the reader to conclude that Thomas (and Anselm) prayed to an unhearing and unconcerned monster. For Thomas, God is relation, the *hypostases* are the relations, and I am unsure of anything more “dynamic.”

⁴⁸SCG III/1, 62.

⁴⁹Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 84.

⁵⁰ST 29.4.

⁵¹See ST 28.1 reply to obj 3.

⁵²“Univocal predication is impossible between God and creatures.” ST 13.5.

Pinnock intimates the difficulties his temporal certainty holds for the Trinity, “though the passage of time in the divine life must be different from what we know, there were always the inner dynamics of the everlasting Trinity.”⁵³ This offers a glimmer of hope that he may be able to avoid his claim that God experiences “before and after.” But he immediately closes his escape when in the next sentence he opines, “God is above time in the sense that he is above our finite experience and measurement but not beyond sequence itself.”⁵⁴ However much he blurs the sequential distinction between God and creation, it still implies that “there was time when the Son was not,” when there was a solitary Father without the Son or the Spirit. For Thomas, however, the relations of the divine Persons are their actions. The Father is the One who continually begets the Son and who with the Son processes the Holy Spirit, the procession of Love. The Father *is* as the Father *is related* (is the relation) with these two other Persons. It is therefore essential that we understand that no temporal succession is implied in the terms “begetting” or “processing.” His agnosticism regarding temporality/eternity allows him to deny temporal succession in the begetting and processing of the Persons and to therefore not make the Son an exalted creature.

The temporal sequence in God causes Pinnock to distinguish between God’s essence (which changes not) and existence (which changes).⁵⁵ Such a move always risks the imagining of a *Deus absconditus*, and the supposing of a fourth divine Person. Applying the real distinction to God may paradoxically lessen the “dynamics” of the Open God, as relegating certain qualities solely to the divine essence entails that God’s “whatness” is no longer informed or determined by God’s activity. Aspects of the divine are removed from the sphere of existence, which for Thomas is the sphere of activity and doing. Thomas’ assertion that God’s essence is God’s existence is to precisely deny the priority of substance over life and activity. Pinnock’s distinction allows attributes of God to not be determined by life and activity and allows for his dreaded category of substance to enter the divine. But, even adopting this opposing of “substance” and “activity” by Pinnock and others, it is highly problematic and

⁵³Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 99.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 85-88.

charges both Aristotle and Thomas with a bifurcation simply not present in either thinker.⁵⁶

The following statement of Pinnock would be made appropriate if one replaced “Hellenistic” with “Jewish”: “In Hellenistic thinking God is essentially what the world is not.”⁵⁷ This is apart of his critique that Thomas (and Anselm) move from the Greek notions of perfection to their descriptions of what God must then be. And in doing so, Thomas is charged with deriving his God “from reason not revelation.”⁵⁸ Such a statement ignores the fact that Thomas knows that God is not creation only from God’s status as Creator and from the incarnation (for the Word becoming flesh implies that the Word is not something inherent in flesh). All of this would have been unintelligible to either Aristotle or Plato, for “the people collectively known as ‘Greek’ in this context did not, of course, have any notion of creation”⁵⁹ and neither could the eternal Logos ever become incarnated. Hebert McCabe argues that the revelation that God is not a god, is not a component of the *cosmos*, is a distinctively Jewish idea, not Greek, not pagan. He adds further, “the God of Augustine and Aquinas in the west is precisely the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who is not a god, not a powerful inhabitant of the universe, but the creator.”⁶⁰ Simply because Augustine or Thomas utilized pagan conceptual tools does not mean that they left such tools untouched. Instead, philosophy was to be subordinated and

⁵⁶On this consistent confusion and egregious charge, see Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 48-50.

⁵⁷Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 72.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 70. This opposing of reason to revelation would have confused Thomas. For when reason is operating correctly it is a participating in the divine mind, which could also be named “revelation.” “The very light of natural reason is a participation of the divine light” (*ST* Q12.11.reply obj 3). The separation of the two is more a result of developments in the late medieval and early modern periods. Faith and revelation result from a more intense uniting to the divine intellect, which is always a gracious gift. And there are many realities that are above reason but never contrary to truly operating reason. Verbs such as “assisting,” “infusing” or “strengthening” are typically used by Thomas to describe grace perfecting the operation of human reason.

⁵⁹Herbert McCabe, *God Matters* (Springfield: Templegate Publishers, 19XX), 41.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 42.

commandeered for expressing this distinctively Jewish notion of God as Creator and Christian mystery of the incarnation. In contrast, the God of Open Theism sounds suspiciously similar to one of the gods, especially when Pinnock muses about God being embodied.⁶¹ This extremely unThomistic last step is only consistent with the constant applying of creaturely notions of agency and temporality to the divine.

Pinnock's concern for ecumenical affairs is to be applauded and only stands to gain if the polemic against "classical theism" were dropped. The scope of the "big tent" could then be enlarged and a handshake extended to those deeply engaged with and indebted to Scholastic and Patristic sources. This would be no trivial matter, given the increasing current interest in the wisdom of the Christian tradition. It would mean no longer imagining the relation between the temporal and the eternal agonistically. Wesley himself would most likely be appreciative as well, in that he too could fit under the umbrella of the "evangelical big tent."

The Temporal as Rupture and Remainder of the Eternal

Slavoj Žižek returns us to Boethius. In *The Fragile Absolute*, Žižek describes eternity as "not atemporal in the simple sense of persisting *beyond* time; it is rather, the name for the Event or Cut that sustains, opens up, the dimension of the temporality as the series/succession of failed attempts to grasp it."⁶² The temporal is the rupture and remainder of the eternal, the series of continual efforts to grasp the gift/trauma that is its precondition. Boethius explains more fully the origin of the temporal directly following the passage from which Thomas derives his definition of eternity. Lady Philosophy, in the vein of the *Timaeus*,⁶³ instructs the narrator as to the source of the temporal:

⁶¹ Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 33. Thanks to D. Stephen Long for pointing this out to me.

⁶² Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute—or why is the Christian legacy worth fighting for?* (London: Verso, 2000), 95.

⁶³ "Now it was the Living Thing's nature to be eternal, but it isn't possible to bestow eternity fully upon anything that is begotten. And so he began to make a moving image of eternity: at the same time as he brought order to the universe, he would make an eternal image, moving according to number, of eternity remaining in unity. This number, of course, is what we now call 'time,'" Plato, "Timaeus" in *Plato: Complete Works*, John M. Cooper (ed.), (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company 1997), 37D-38A.

This condition of his [God's] unchanging life in the present is imitated [*imitatur*] by the perpetual movement of temporal things. Since that movement is unable to achieve and match that unchanging life, it degenerates [*deficit*] from changelessness into change. From the simplicity of the present it subsides [*decrescit*] into the boundless extent of future and past. Since it cannot at the one moment possess the total fullness of its life, it appears partially to emulate [*æmulari*] what it cannot totally fulfill and express.⁶⁴

The temporal is the rupturing, the *deficiens* of the eternal due to its unfathomable excess of life. Ironically, with such a platonic notion of timeless, unbounded life is more appropriately applied to the Triune God than Plato's own deity. This is because the persons of the Trinity, as pure *ecstases*, are able to wholly donate and entirely receive each other's very own infinite self, being, goodness and beauty. This can occur in a non/moment since God's very essence is this relational joy and giving. Creatures, who are fundamentally relational and not fundamentally relation, cannot enjoy this rapturous economy and so the infinite excess in the eternal generates and wildly spirals into the temporal. God's giving of God's very self to Creation, the ground and goal of temporality, must therefore be drawn out over a series of gifted moments. At graced times, the creatures are caught up into the eternal and participate in the divine life, but only through participation. The temporal as a reflection and imitation of the eternity necessitates the peaceful participation of the former in the latter. Such is the vision that inspires St. Thomas, and perhaps even Wesley as well.

⁶⁴Boethius, *The Consolations of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 111.

“HOLY CHURCH, HOLY PEOPLE”: A WESLEYAN EXPLORATION IN CONGREGATIONAL HOLINESS AND PERSONAL TESTAMENT

by

Dean G. Blevins¹

It appears that the church is undergoing a period of redefinition under the influence of postmodernity. This redefining phase indicates a rapidly diminishing notion of the church as primarily a voluntarist organization of like-minded individuals (a “believers’ church,” if you will) where ecclesiology is more individually determined. For theologians within the Wesleyan tradition the redefinition of the relation of church and person raises fresh questions on the nature of holiness of heart and life.² This new movement actually resonates with my own research on the nature of communal formation for discipleship. However, the shift from “modern” individualism to communal construction raises a new concern for losing all sense of human participation in the midst of ecclesial prac-

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²Rodney Clapp, “Tacit Holiness, the Importance of Bodies & Habits in Doing Church,” in *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth*, eds. Samuel M. Powell and Michael E. Lodahl (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 62-78; Stanley Hauerwas, “The Sanctified Body: Why Perfection does not require a Self,” in *Embodied Holiness*, 19-37, also published in *Sanctify them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified* (Great Britain: T & T Clark, 1998, republished Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 77-92.

tice. How will Wesleyans avoid the pitfall of reducing human responsiveness to a transaction between church and individual, where people are merely recipients of ecclesial dispensation? What role will the “members” of the Body of Christ play in the organic description/construction of the church?

John Wesley and others within the Wesleyan tradition provide one possible answer rooted in Wesley’s treatment of “the witness” of the saints. Wesley provides a series of accounts of Methodist people who embody holiness as living testaments to the church. In addition, the very nature of their hagiography critically cautions the church in its own practice of self-deception. This present essay first details the rise of ecclesial holiness and its limits. The study also explores three sources’ (including Wesley’s) contributions to the unlikely category of Methodist “sainthood.” The concept of sainthood initiates a critical and constructive theological treatment of hagiography, including a brand of Methodist hagiography and its relationship to the congregation at large. The study concludes with a few reflections on the implications of the role of “saints” as personal testaments to ecclesial holiness.

End of the Modern and the Emergence of Ecclesial Holiness

The modern paradigm of church as an abstract institution or corporation of “seekers” and “the saved” seems to be giving way to more organic and theologically centered definitions of the community of disciples. In the earlier modern paradigm the church seemed more an incubation chamber where individuals were transformed through an effort of will, a divinely enabled will perhaps, but an individualistic effort nevertheless. The church, if only tolerated, was a “mixed bag” of blessings and curses. Congregational life, particularly worship, served as an arena where religious “actors” fulfilled their personal drama in a private transaction between God and self, often in almost exclusive anonymity (“I see that hand”).

Fresh investigations, however, seek to define how the theological reality of the church not only shapes the nature of holiness but also how the faith community engenders holiness with persons.³ Such a move is to

³Craig Keen, “The Human Person as Intercessory Prayer,” in *Embodied Holiness*, 47; Alar Laats, *Doctrines of the Trinity in Eastern and Western Theologies: A Study with Special Reference to K. Barth and V. Lossky* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), 115-19; Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, N.Y.: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 111-123. Characterizing the

be expected in light of an equally diminishing view of the “Cartesian” self. No longer insular “selves,” our lives find definition in a tapestry of social relations and as such, we are vitally connected to those communes that often determine us much more than we determine ourselves.⁴ Current work on the “liturgical” construction of the self is but one example among many seeking to define holiness in broader ecclesial categories.⁵ The church, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, becomes the “clue” to holiness rather than a congregational second thought in the otherwise personal pursuit of full salvation.

Now it appears that a new question arises, one that does not ask whether we can justify the existence of the church in the midst of personal religious experience, but a question of whether we will tolerate the existence of personal religious experience in light of social construction. If our “modern” forefathers and mothers risked turning holiness into a private “transaction” between person and God, our “postmodern” sensibilities risk a similar danger of corporate transactions, where our performative abilities are adjudicated by “the church” to see if they distinguish and determine the quality of holiness.⁶ As Eastern Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky writes:

individual is always problematic since Enlightenment assumptions feature laden terms like “individual” and “personal” with modern meaning. The Orthodox notion of *hypostases* might be a better nomenclature (this term will be addressed later in the paper). However, the term remains awkward for most Wesleyans and would warrant an additional section early in this paper for greater clarity and definition. Instead, for the sake of this paper, the term “personal” (which is consistent with Lossky) is used, primarily to represent a postmodern understanding of an “embodied” set of social relations that constitute the “self” before God.

⁴Craig Keen, 45-50; Calvin O Schrag, *The Self after Postmodernity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), 1-9.

⁵Dean G. Blevins, “We are the Church: The Liturgical Construction of the Self,” *Doxology: A Journal of Worship*, 18 (2001); Dean G. Blevins, “A Wesleyan View of the Liturgical Construction of the Self,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 38, no 1 (Spring 2003).

⁶Eberhard Jüngel, *Theological Essays II*, tr. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast and J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 1. Jüngel writes, “The human self is not to be blotted out in one’s attempt to speak responsibly of God: neither by the God who comes to speech in human words, nor by the community of believers which finds one common language. The *communio sanctorum* does not wear a uniform.”

Is there not also a danger of losing personal liberty and of replacing the determinism of the sinful state from which we are saved by some sort of sacramental determinism, in which the organic process of salvation, accomplished in the collective totality of the “Church,” tends to suppress personal encounter with God?⁷

If an individualistically construed notion of perfectionism (which Wesley fought to overcome through accountable discipleship) threatened a previous generation’s ability to be reflexive, then a defacto platonic notion of congregational holiness risks a similar danger in the face of horrendous examples of community deception such as racism, sexism, and child abuse. Scholars need a theological hermeneutic that acknowledges both the strengths and the limits of a congregational holiness when dealing with persons.

Wesley’s Questionable Contribution

Steering some ecclesial course between the extremes of personal and congregational holiness (or at least determining a way of holding them together) appears necessary if one wishes to acknowledge a Wesleyan heritage. For instance, Wesley appears to embody the ecclesial/individual tension in what Albert Outler calls John’s first written treatment of ecclesiology.⁸ In his sermon “Of the Church,” Wesley notes the objective reality of a holy church. He writes:

Does it not clearly appear from this whole account why, in the ancient Creed commonly called the Apostles’, we term the universal or catholic church, “the holy catholic church”? How many wonderful reasons have been found out for giving it this appellation! One learned man informs us, “The church is called holy because Christ the head of it is holy.” Another eminent author affirms, “It is so called because all its ordinances are designed to promote holiness”; and yet another, “Because our Lord intended that all the members of the church should be holy.” Nay, the shortest and the plainest reason that can be given, and the only true one, is: the church is

⁷Lossky, 105.

⁸Albert Outler, “Introduction” to John Wesley’s Sermon 74: “Of the Church,” *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 3:45.

called “holy” because it is holy; because every member thereof is holy, though in different degrees, as he that called them is holy.⁹

Wesley unfortunately appears to take back with one hand what he has offered with the first by emphasizing that this ecclesial holiness must take “personal” expression before one may even be considered a part of the church. He continues:

How clear is this! If the church, as to the very essence of it, is a body of believers, no man that is not a Christian believer can be a member of it. If this whole body be animated by one spirit, and endued with one faith and one hope of their calling, then he who has not that spirit, and faith, and hope is no member of this body.¹⁰

Wesley continues at the end of the sermon to exhort the church to express holiness in a way that seems also to imply a curious blend of corporate and personal expression. Indeed, Wesley’s phrase “the church is called ‘holy’ because it is holy; because every member thereof is holy” leaves some ambiguity as to the “source” and the “expression” of holiness. Is the church holy *so* every member is holy or is every member holy *so* the church is holy? In his introduction to the sermon Albert Outler tends toward the second interpretation of the church as “the company of all true believers, ‘holy’ because its members are themselves holy.”¹¹

Wesley, for all of his ambiguity, still affirms both the role of the congregation and its members in holiness, revealing a pressing need to avoid the modern individual/institutional apposition. However, something must be said about the “members” of that holy church and their sometimes seemingly extraordinary example of holiness in personal lives. In our

⁹John Wesley, “Of the Church,” *The Works of John Wesley*, 3:55-56.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 56.

¹¹Outler, 46. Outler’s full assessment reads, “The essence of the church, for Wesley, need not be sought in its visible institutions, not even some invisible *numerus electorum*. The church as Body of Christ is the company of all true believers, ‘holy’ because its members are themselves holy (§28). This is, therefore, an unstable blend of Anglican and Anabaptist ecclesiologies; it is also one of Wesley’s more daring syntheses. Its outworkings in the subsequent histories of Methodist and Anglican ecclesiology have yet to be probed as deeply as they deserve, which is also to say that its ecumenical significance has yet to be fully appreciated.”

postmodern turn (or some would say return) to ecclesial holiness, how will the church embrace extraordinary personal lives while acknowledging a community's corporate as well as personal frailties? Could the two be interrelated?

“Saintly” Writing in a Wesleyan Mode

Even with the Methodist founder's ambiguity (or perhaps better, tension) over the relationship of church and members, Wesley may still offer important clues to negotiate this conundrum. Departing from Wesley's sermon, one might trace out a different argument through his journals, a fitting selection in light the completion of their Bicentennial edition.¹² In the journals one finds that Wesley communicates an implicit ecclesiology, understood as the community of the “saints,” through his stories (or testimonies) of people who are transformed as a part of the Methodist revival. This approach seems indicative of at least two other sources connected to Wesley, William Cave's volumes on *Primitive Christianity* and Leslie Church's volumes on the lives of the Methodist people.¹³ Cave's work provides some insight into Wesley's use of biographical accounts. Leslie Church's writings seem to follow and in many ways emulates Wesley's method of “hagiography.”¹⁴ Together these writings raise the question of the role of the “saints,” both within Methodism and in a larger ecclesial framework.

Wesley's Journals. As Richard P. Heitzenrater notes, Wesley's use of a published journal places him within a small number of autobiographers, and obviously one of the primary reasons for publication was to

¹²Wesley, John, *The Works of John Wesley, Journals and Diaries*, eds. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988-2003), vols. 18-24.

¹³William Cave, “Preface to the Reader,” in *Primitive Christianity*, 4th ed. (J.H. for R. Chiswel, 1682) selected from Donald Wing, *A Short-title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries, 1641-1700* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945; microfilm Ann Arbor, MI: Xerox University Microfilms reel 652; Leslie F. Church, *The Early Methodist People* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948); *More About the Early Methodist People* (London: The Epworth Press, 1949).

¹⁴These two authors are not exclusive sources but indicative resources for the argument.

defend himself and his efforts in the Methodist movement.¹⁵ In addition, the journal includes a number of other elements from reports on geography and culture during Wesley's travel, letters of correspondence, weather, public events, entertainment and even general education. As Heitzenrater notes, "the longer Wesley's Journal continued, the more like a newspaper it became."¹⁶ The journal, however, also contained Wesley's reports of persons who experienced transformation at a number of levels, including John's own testimony of conversion.¹⁷

The use of personal accounts seemed to change over the life of Wesley's journal. At times, particularly early in Wesley's ministry, these experiential accounts could be quite phenomenal, marked by extraordinary experiences that often appeared almost paranormal.¹⁸ Wesley obviously was suspicious of many of these events (as in the case of the French prophets and other participants in the Evangelical revival).¹⁹ But not all experiences were dismissed and publishing such events, particularly those that served as experiential confirmation of Wesley's preaching, risked the critique of "enthusiasm."²⁰

¹⁵Richard P. Heitzenrater, "The Nature of Wesley's Journal," in the Introduction to *Journals and Diaries* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 18: 37-39.

¹⁶*Ibid.* 40.

¹⁷*Ibid.* 41. Though Wesley's report is somewhat truncated according to Moravian confessional accounts

¹⁸Wesley, *Journal and Diaries*, vol. 18. Examples of exceptional expressions of conviction occurred in several accounts in the early years of the revival, such as January 1, 1739 (29), June 15, 1739 (70), July 30, 1739 (82) & Sept. 3, 1743 (336). The accounts on a couple of extraordinary occasions appeared more like instances of demon possession, such as Oct. 12, 1739 (104) and a protracted account from Oct. 23-28, 1739 in Kingswood (109-12).

¹⁹Wesley, *Journal and Diaries*, vol. 18: 32-33, 72-76; 23:389. Several demonstrations appeared as encouraged through encounters with the French Prophets, such as January 28, 1739 (32-33) & June 22-30 1739 (72-76). Even later (April 2, 1786) Wesley would continue to be suspicious, comparing Derbyshire "enthusiasm" with that modeled after the French Prophets (389 and n.)

²⁰George Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, vol. 2 (London: J. and P. Napton, 1754); Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 275-78. A stinging satire of Methodism in general and Wesley in particular, at one point in the text Wesley is caricatured as an exorcist (58-59).

In later journals Wesley includes more detailed accounts of deep transformation, including children,²¹ as well as those “venerable” saints that modeled exemplary holy living.²² Wesley continued publishing third-party letters detailing conversions and accounts of holy Christian living involving different people in the revival. The letters include known class members but also at times contain reports of anonymous people.²³ He included his own first-person encounters, either as interactions with living Methodist or sometimes in the form of short eulogies derived from John’s officiating the funeral.²⁴

Some accounts, by Wesley’s own standard, were quite extraordinary; as in Grace Paddy’s autobiographical account.²⁵ Wesley concludes, “Such an instance I never knew before, such an instance I never read: a person convinced of sin, converted to God, and renewed in love within twelve hours! Yet it is by no means incredible, seeing one day is with God a thousand years.”²⁶ Wesley’s appreciation of long-term friendships, and the quiet witness of many Methodists, reveals itself in his account of Alice Daniel (whom John knew at least twenty-three years during the revival). Wesley writes:

Her sons are all gone from her, and she has but one daughter left, who is always ill. Her husband is dead. And she can no longer read her Bible, for she is stone-blind. Yet she murmurs

²¹Wesley, Jan. 20, 1777; May 18, 1785, *Journals and Diaries*, 23:41, 358. Examples of child spirituality included third party accounts of a five-year old deathbed witness (41) and a first person encounter with a child who walked two miles to see Wesley (358). See also, John W. Prince, *Wesley on Religious Education* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1926), 97-102.

²²Wesley, July 14, 1744; May 7, 1785, *Journal and Diaries*, 20:35, 23:355-56. Wesley’s treatment of Mr. Vincent Perronet from his initial meeting (“I hope to have cause of blessing God for ever for the acquaintance begun this day”), to Perronet’s death (at age 92), is a classic example of his appreciation of the venerable saints of Methodism. Wesley remarks on his own life (at age 82), “O that I may follow him in holiness! And that I my last end may be like his!” (356).

²³Wesley, October 16, 1746, May 30- June 13, 1756 *Journal and Diaries*, 20: 145-46; 21: 56-60. In both cases there is a series of letters.

²⁴Wesley, Sept. 12, 1765, Oct. 31, 1766, Nov. 8 & 15, 1767, *Journal and Diaries*, 22:20, 65-6, 109. See also, Wesley, Nov. 26, Dec. 6 & 20, 1778, *Journal and Diaries*, 23: 113-15. The accounts are examples of a number of such entries.

²⁵Wesley, Sept. 8, 1765, *Journal and Diaries*, 22: 19-20. Wesley apparently reported this account both prior to and following her death, see notes.

²⁶*Ibid*, 22: 20.

at noting, but cheerfully waits till her appointed time shall come. How many of these jewels may lie hid up and down? Forgotten of men but precious in the sight of God.²⁷

Wesley's observation of faithfulness in the midst of obscurity reveals a key theme in many of his reports. Even Wesley's first person accounts could be anonymous.²⁸ Overall, there are a number of personal accounts of seemingly obscure Methodist people alongside Wesley's notes and eulogies of leading pastors like John Fletcher.²⁹

One is left to puzzle the place of a number of testimonies and experiential narratives. It is a fair assessment that Wesley included many of these accounts to bolster his method and message.³⁰ Beyond Wesley's personal defense, there seems to be more at work in Wesley's noting of exemplary Methodist lives than either personal/political gain or nascent attempts at amateur social psychology. Wesley seemed to be compiling a testimonial record of the early "saints" of Methodism, though sometimes odd or obscure examples of saints.³¹ These early lives, as testaments

²⁷Wesley, Sept. 9, 1766, *Journal and Diaries*, 22: 60.

²⁸Wesley, June 6, 1778, Sept. 13, 1784, *Journal and Diaries*, 23:91, 331. The June 6 entry recounts the conversion of two anonymous sisters. The Sept. 13 account provides an ongoing testimony of the faithfulness of an anonymous visitor. Wesley writes, "I visited one that was confined to her bed and in much pain, yet unspeakably happy, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, an in everything giving thanks; yea and testifying that she had enjoyed the same happiness without any intermission for two and twenty years" (331). See also Aug. 23, 1767, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (1872, reprinted Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 4:389.

²⁹Wesley, Nov. 6, 1785, *Journal and Diaries*, 23:380; Wesley, *Sermon* 114, 3:610-29. Though memorialized for all time in a sermon, Wesley's journal comments "for that great and good man" John Fletcher are remarkably brief at the time of his death. Remarkably, Wesley includes another eulogy for Judith Perry in the journal entry (same sentence): "a lovely young woman, snatched away at eighteen. But she was ripe for the Bridegroom and went to meet him in the full triumph of faith." (380)

³⁰Wesley, June 21, 1767, *Journal and Diaries*, 22: 86-88. Ellen Stayners's account seems more an endorsement of Methodism, and perhaps the ministry of Preacher John Pawson, than a standard conversion account. See notes as well.

³¹Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 240, n.76. Heitzenrater notes, "Wesley not only read many such biographies but included spiritual biographies in his fifty-volume *Christian Library* (1749-55) and, later in the century, incorporated many autobiographies as a regular feature in his *Arminian Magazine* (1778—), many being the lives of his preachers written by themselves."

within Methodism, mirrored as much a New Testament witness to Jesus Christ as they were an apologetic for Wesley's efforts.³² As such, they were reminiscent of earlier writings on Christian witness.

Cave's Primitive Witness. Wesley's employ of ordinary yet transformed lives was not an original idea. His approach follows a pattern of at least one writer that predated and influenced him, church historian William Cave.³³ Wesley's vision of the Primitive Church and his sacramental sensibilities were influenced by Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, a text which included the "lives and manners" of the early church as well as liturgies, festivals and sacramental practices as their "ancient rites."³⁴ Wesley abridged the document and included it in the *Christian Library*.³⁵

Cave's text, organized around his understanding of Pauline views of "piety towards God, sobriety towards ourselves, righteousness towards others," includes as well a vindication for persecuted Christians and a number of chapters on the liturgical world of primitive Christianity.³⁶ The

³²Allison Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 229-230.

³³"Introduction" to William Cave's *The Lives, Acts, and Martydoms of the Apostles of our Savior*, vol. 1 (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1857), xxx-xxxii. Cave was educated at Cambridge and served as Chaplain in Ordinary to Charles the Second (following the interregnum but close to 1670 when Charles was beginning to open Catholic conversations again). He died in 1713 after an extended period as vicar of Isleworth. His primary love was scholarship, particularly church history, and his most recognized writings other than those already named included his *Historia Literaria* or *Literary History of the Ecclesiastical Writers* and *Tables of the Ecclesiastical Writers*.

³⁴Cave, *Primitive Christianity*, "a 4;" Geoffrey Wainwright, "Introduction" to *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* by John Wesley and Charles Wesley (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1745; Facsimile Reprint Madison, N.J.: The Charles Wesley Society, 1995), v. Note, the pagination of Cave's text is suspect or absent at times. Additional information will be provided where needed.

³⁵Wesley, Oct. 6, 1750, *Journals and Diaries*, 20:363 and n. It should be noted that Wesley did not think highly of all of Cave's effort. Wesley writes, "a book wrote with as much learning and as little judgment as any I remember to have read in my whole life, serving the ancient Christians just as Xenophon did Socrates, relating every weak thing they ever said or did." Remarkably, Wesley's critique of Cave, the weaknesses of the ancient Christians, may just betray some of Wesley's own later accounts.

³⁶Cave, "Preface," *Primitive Christianity*, unpaginated but third page from the end of the preface.

liturgical descriptions apparently influenced Wesley's later approach to the sacraments along with his Anglican upbringing.³⁷

For all of its liturgical merit, Cave also focused on an equally large issue of portraying the lives of early Christians as a "witness" of the primitive church. Cave disdained the use of one traditional source, the *Lives of the Saints*, but did include a number of testimonies of early Christians, including those listed by "professed Adversaries of the Christian Faith."³⁸ Cave writes, "I resolved to stand in the ways and see, and enquire for the good old way, the Paths wherein the Ancient Christians walk'd."³⁹ In parts two and three of his text, Cave uses a series of categories to depict this early Christian life as "witness:"

Part II: The Religion of the Primitive Christians, as to those Virtues that respect themselves

- Of their Humility
- Of the Heavenly-mindedness and Contempt of the World
- Of their Sobriety in respect to Garb and Apparel
- Of their great Temperance and Abstinence
- Of their Singular Countenance and Chastity
- Of their Readiness and Constancy in Professing their Religion
- Of their Patience and exemplary carriage under Sufferings

Part III: Of their Religion as respecting other men

- Of their Justice and Honesty
- Of their admirable Love and Charity
- Of their Unity and Peaceableness
- Of their Obedience and Subjection to Civil Government
- Of their Penance, and the Discipline of the Ancient Church⁴⁰

In doing so, Cave completes his three-fold method, "following S. Paul's distribution of Religion, into piety towards God, sobriety towards our selves and righteousness toward others."⁴¹

³⁷Dean Blevins, "Practicing the New Creation: John Wesley's Eschatological Community formed by the Means of Grace," *Asbury Theological Journal*, forthcoming; Wainwright, v.

³⁸Cave, Preface, *Primitive Christianity*, "a" or third full page and following page.

³⁹Cave, Preface, *Primitive Christianity*, 2nd full page.

⁴⁰Cave, Table of Contents, *Primitive Christianity*.

⁴¹Cave, Preface, *Primitive Christianity*, 3rd page from the end.

Beyond the overall structure of the text, there are interesting accounts of primitive Christian witness. Cave's descriptions range from Christian bishops to cooks when discussing humility.⁴² He includes eulogies as well; second-hand accounts of exceptional persons reported in the early ecclesiastical writings, like Melania, who in a time of great trial at the death of husband and sons said, "Lord I shall serve thee more nimbly and readily, by being eased of the weight thou hast taken from me."⁴³ Primarily Cave cites Christian leaders when dealing with exemplary behavior, such as Origen, Cyprian, and Athanasius in their apologies or Deacon Laurentis and Bishop Sixtus at their martyrdom.⁴⁴ In total it is clear that Cave not only intends to communicate the practices of primitive Christianity (liturgy and festivals) but to also depict the general lives of the early Christians as witness. It is equally clear that such a depiction, while ignoring the standard resource of the *Lives of the Saints*, inevitably draws upon the day-to-day lives of these self-same "saints" as illustrations or "testaments" to this larger emphasis on witness.

Remarkably, Wesley's abridgement retains much of Cave's original intent.⁴⁵ Wesley's appreciation of Cave's observations of rite and ritual are retained in his *Christian Library*,⁴⁶ as are Cave's interest in and presentation of early Christian lives.⁴⁷ Wesley not only retains Cave's original outline, but he also preserves many of Cave's biographical illustrations, including many of those mentioned above.⁴⁸ In actuality, Wesley's extract makes the exemplary lives of the early Christians even more apparent than Cave, reducing the verbiage but accentuating the illustrations. Such evidence helps to establish a link between Cave's influence not only on

⁴²Cave, *Primitive Christianity* 2:11-14.

⁴³Cave, *Primitive Christianity* 2: 35.

⁴⁴Cave, *Primitive Christianity* 2: 177, 183.

⁴⁵John Wesley, "Primitive Christianity: Or the Religion of the Ancients, Extracted from Dr. Cave," in ed. John Wesley, *Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts From and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which have been Published in the English Tongue* (London: J. Kershaw, 1825), 19: 1-121.

⁴⁶Wesley, *Primitive Christianity* extract," 21-61.

⁴⁷Wesley, "Primitive Christianity Extract," 62-114.

⁴⁸Wesley, "Primitive Christianity extract," 63-88. All of Cave's earlier illustrations are included: 63-64 (Bishop Nanzianus and the cook); 69 (Melania), 86-88 (Laurentis and Sixtus on 88).

Wesley's liturgical sensibilities but also in his desire to continue the lives of the saints by example.⁴⁹ This example seems to continue in the history of Methodism itself.

Leslie Church and the Lives of the Methodists. Unlike William Cave, Wesley scholars may be more acquainted with Leslie Church's writings of the early Methodist people that were originally given as a series of lectures.⁵⁰ A member of the Royal Historical Society, historian Henry Rack notes that Church's volumes are "affectionate" and too little known as a valuable resource in early Methodism.⁵¹ However, unlike earlier written accounts, Church's text does not focus on more notable or "eminent" Methodist ministers.⁵² Church explains his motivation in the preface to his first text. He writes that in ecclesiastical, as in secular history, men and women in the pew and street are often forgotten or remembered only as groups.⁵³ Church continues:

⁴⁹Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory*, 240, n.75. As mentioned earlier (note 30), Cave provides a "clue" to Wesley's use of all illustrative biography/autobiography. Heitzenrater notes, "William Cave, in the preface to his *Apostolici*, claims that the lives of these saints 'acquaint us with the most remarkable occurrences of the Divine Providence, and present us with the most apt and proper rules and instances that may form us to a life of true philosophy and virtue; history (says Thucydides) being nothing else but "philosophy drawn from examples."' Vol. 1(1677), "To the Reader."

⁵⁰Church, *The Early Methodist People and More About the Early Methodist People*; s.v. "Church, Dr. Leslie Frederic" in *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, ed. John A. Vickers (London: Epworth Press, 2000), 66. The book was originally his Fernley-Hartley Lecture and is considered a pioneering study of the Methodist laity (66).

⁵¹Rack, 420.

⁵²P. Douglass Gore, *The Lives of Eminent Methodist Ministers: Biographical Sketches, Incidents Anecdotes, Records of Travel, Reflections, etc. etc.* (Augsun: Derby and Miller, 1853); Thomas Jackson, ed. *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, vol. 1 (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1871); Joseph B. Wakeley, *The Heroes of Methodism: Containing Sketches of Eminent Methodist Ministers and Characteristic Anecdotes of the Personal History* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1855). The tenor of these treatments is fairly obvious in the subtitles of Gore and Wakeley since these books deal not only with famous preachers of Wesley's day but also with other esteemed preachers of a later generation. Even Thomas Jackson is susceptible to a bit of promotional writing as he writes, "The biographies of many of these excellent men are once more submitted to the consideration of Methodists generally, and especially to those who have succeeded them in ministry ("Introduction," xxiii).

⁵³Church, *The Early Methodist People*, vii.

This book is part of an attempt to rediscover the first Methodist people, and to see them, not only in groups or as followers of John Wesley, but as individuals with definite personalities and lives of their own. . . . It looks at these ordinary men and women who, in the first flush of a new experience, were compelled to worship in farm-kitchens and tumble-down sheds.⁵⁴

Church's two texts make good on his project. Interspersed with more general descriptions of Methodist living, Church includes a number of intimate accounts of particular Methodist men and women. Drawing from personal journals and biographical statements, Church includes conversion narratives, including short declarations by the likes of George Osborn of Rochester as well as longer accounts such as the account by Hester Ann Roe.⁵⁵ Some representatives are more familiar. Mary Bosanquet, John Fletcher's wife, renounces worldly diversions for the sake of the Christian life.⁵⁶ Other accounts describe much more obscure persons like Frances Mortimer, who Dr. Church raises to an exceptional height by writing, "If Francis of Assisi had peeped over her shoulder as she wrote, he would have understood her tears, and gloried in the light which mastered them."⁵⁷

Methodist historians might wonder what is going on in Leslie Church's writings. Has this historian taken leave of his historical detachment, or might something more be occurring? Perhaps Dr. Church is merely replicating a tradition that both Wesley and Cave follow. In the midst of a number of other agendas, all three authors reveal a particular tendency to record and communicate a peculiar form of hagiography or "saint making" through faithful but obscure lives. As much as they are trying to lift up faithful and sometimes exceptional lives, Wesley, Cave, and Church are continuing a tradition of recording the lives of saints.

"Double-coded" Haigiography and the Ecclesial Life

The role of saints has often been given special status in the church. Dr. William Abraham notes that they are often included as part of the canonical tradition of the church, alongside other sources including

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Church, *The Early Methodist People*, 97-99.

⁵⁶Ibid., 208.

⁵⁷Ibid., 200.

liturgy, sacrament, doctrine and ecclesial polity.⁵⁸ Saints are testaments to the ongoing attempt to imitate Christ (*Imitatio Christi*).⁵⁹ In our telling and retelling the lives of the saints we are participating in the ongoing “anamnesis” of the church. At times this means re-living the practices of the saints, but this is not always advisable, as changing contexts indicate.⁶⁰ Saints, however, are not just moral exemplars to be emulated. The church may also participate in their lives via the hearing and retelling of their stories, through the *poesis* (creative working or formation) of the Holy Spirit.⁶¹ To acknowledge and contemplate the lives of saints (as much as emulating their behavior) is to participate in their imitation as well. The process follows the churches treatment of scripture, as Graham Ward notes:

Meditation, the dissemination of messages, the narration of stories, the communication in one context being transposed and reported in another—these constitute the poetics of the New Testament itself, the lettered Word of God which supplements the incarnate Word of God.⁶²

This process of anamnesis or “participation” provides the church with a means of engaging saintly lives not only to imitate Christ but also to participate in God’s ongoing, eschatological, fulfillment through the Holy Spirit.

What is remarkable is that these saintly lives also “trouble” the Church through an already troubling genre that does communicate Chris-

⁵⁸William J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology: From the Fathers to Feminism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 38, 40.

⁵⁹Margaret Miles, “An Image of the Image: Imitation of Christ,” in *Practicing Christianity: Critical Perspectives for an Embodied Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 21-42.

⁶⁰Margaret Miles, “An Image of the Image: Imitation of Christ,” in *Practicing Christianity: Critical Perspectives for an Embodied Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 41-42.

⁶¹Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 48-50; Henry W. Spaulding II, “Milbank’s Trinitarian Ontology and a Re-narration of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 36 no. 1 (Spring, 2001), 134-159.

⁶²Graham Ward, “The Displaced Body of Jesus Christ,” in *Radical Orthodoxy*, eds. John Milbank, Catherine Picstock and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999), 175.

tian character, but also reveals the church's temptation toward self-deception. For instance, modern historians, contrasting this saintly material with modern biography, have long suspected this literary process to be "a whitewash job," overlooking key facts while lifting up moral idiom and bizarre behavior.⁶³ As such, there is already a healthy "modern" suspicion that such saintly lives reveal a proclivity by the church toward a "gloss" of reality, perhaps to either preserve the life of the saint or the purpose of the church. Modern analysis, however, might tend to allow such suspicions to dismiss saintly accounts altogether, which would be a serious mistake.

Edith Wyschogrod notes that hagiography should actually be "double-coded," so that any current investigation of saints might first challenge modern assumptions (so saints may not be dismissed), yet "trouble" any romantic retrieval of sainthood by submitting this process to postmodern investigation.⁶⁴ Saints themselves, while taken seriously, often subvert their saintliness, or at least notions of saintliness in relation to the church. Wyschogrod notes that saintly lives embody four characteristics that make them appealing to postmodern tastes: narrativity, corporeality, textuality, and historicity.⁶⁵ Summarizing these four characteristics Wyschogrod notes that saints often trouble theological discourse, subverting "customary" knowledge of the church's often abstract depiction of Christian life through their exceptional lives, subverting what it means to be a "saint."

As an odd but singular presence, a saint may fall outside "normative" views of holiness. If so, theologians may be lead to recognize that the church may not yet have fully defined holiness, so ecclesiology must remain open to what may come. Such a view mitigates any claim that the church fully understands its own adjectival claim to holiness. This may be a good caution, for the church might also be hesitant to claim as well that it knows exactly how it can "dispense" holiness to members of the body. Practices then become acts of faithful participation, not merely a transaction where leaders of the church vouchsafe the holiness members receive,

⁶³Mary-Ann Stouck, "Introduction" in *Medieval Saints: A Reader*, Mary-Ann Stouck ed. (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1999), xvi-xviii.

⁶⁴Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), xxiii-xxiv (in the Introduction).

⁶⁵Wyschogrod, 5.

say through the Lord's Supper (something Wesley resisted in all his treatments of the means of grace).⁶⁶

If a particular "saint" has such power, Wesley's accountings of Methodists' lives as transformed but also quite ordinary and humble might also trouble any ecclesial discourse that presents a triumphal vision of the church in the here and now. Wesley, Cave, and Leslie Church's inclusion of "day-to-day" saints opens a different view of ecclesiology that leads the congregation to deeper understanding of its eschatological journey via the Holy Spirit. Wesley's broad range of "witnesses" reminds congregational leaders of the potential of God's gracious Spirit in a number of situations, sometimes as an almost anonymous "gift." In their most extraordinary moments these testaments to faith appear to be outside the "control" of the church and its liturgical expression. Even in more predictable times the "ordinariness" of these saints reminds the church of an ecclesiology anchored in humility (Cave's first category). Without such humble expressions, ecclesial holiness always risks becoming a triumphal object of possession, a "commodity" owned by the church (rather than a gift to the church), exchanged through sign and symbol.

The critical presence of saints reminds the church that there may be something "more," something eschatological to the notion of holiness; that the promise is yet to be fully realized by the church, either in the ecclesial life as a whole or through specific practices. If the church is to be holy, it must not only have a "vision" of holiness transmitted through word and sacrament; the church also needs particular expressions, saints, to provide material reference and also eschatological promise.⁶⁷ Beyond this critical "promise," the church may also discover theological insight on how contemporary "saints," even in their most ordinary expressions, also function in the here and now to creatively model holiness.

⁶⁶John Wesley, Sermon 16: "The Means of Grace," *Sermons*, 1:356. Wesley writes, "Settle this in your heart, that the *opus operatum*, the mere work done, profiteth nothing; that there is no *power* to save but in the Spirit of God, no *merit* but in the blood of Christ; that consequently even what God ordains conveys no grace to the soul if you trust not in him alone."

⁶⁷Graham Ward, *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1996), 1-42. It should be noted that this form of deconstructive analysis acknowledges some of the assumptions of Derrida but does not capitulate to Derrida's full project. Derrida's method, elaborated through Wyschogrod, is helpful in fostering a critical discernment of the role of saints in the church. Particularly it helps to "caution" our own second-order theological constructions of the nature of ecclesiology.

Embodied Church, Embodied Holiness

Eastern Orthodox theology provides another way to understand how personal “saintliness” influences the church “body” in the here and now through a revised definition of anthropology. Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky states that persons, while related to one another, are also authentically unique . . . just as the three “persons” or hypostases of the Trinity are related yet unique. The uniqueness is not one of differentiation, each person sharing a common “essence” that is manifested in differing personalities. Instead, what makes each person unique is the capacity to also “embody” all relationships. Lossky writes that the person

is not only a part of the whole, but potentially includes the whole, having in himself (or herself) the whole of the earthly cosmos, of which he (or she) is the hypostasis. Thus, each person is an absolutely original and unique aspect of the nature common to all. . . . Although linked with individual parts of the common nature in created actuality, they potentially contain in themselves, each in his (or her) fashion, the whole of nature.⁶⁸

Lossky continues by saying that the church is “more united than a collective totality” as a “body,” yet the church is also where persons realize themselves in true diversity.⁶⁹

Following Lossky, it might be said that saints, in their uniqueness, “embody” the potentiality of all holiness.⁷⁰ Saints, through the renewal of the *imago Dei* (via the power of the Holy Spirit), embody a new sense of “person,” participating in the very essence of the Trinity.⁷¹ This does not mean that they are separate from the church, the body of Christ, but that all the potential for holiness that God calls the church to embrace might be modeled in the life of one saint through the power of the Holy Spirit. As such, saints are truly “testaments” to holy living, not only for the sake of pagan rulers (as in Cave’s recounting) or for the sake of Methodist tradition (as in Leslie Church’s recounting), but also for the sake of the immediate Christian church (as it appears was Wesley’s intent).

⁶⁸Lossky, 107.

⁶⁹Lossky, 107-08.

⁷⁰Laats, 117.

⁷¹Laats, 118.

If this trinitarian depiction of anthropology is accurate, the traditional call to the church to imitate the saints as they imitate Christ (*Imitatio Christi*) takes on new pneumatological meaning. The “body” of the congregation, in its pursuit of holy living, may be called to look to its most humble and obscure “members” as an “embodied” triune source of holiness. It is crucial to note that this personal holiness is always in communion, yet the “saint” might embody all ecclesial relationships so that holiness, by the power of the Holy Spirit, might be given back to the community.⁷² The relatedness of each member to the body becomes just as crucial for the congregation as for each person. If persons might actually embody holiness for the sake of the church, the view of a hierarchical dispensing of grace (through doctrine or practice) becomes problematic. For the preacher and the officiate of communion, it might come as a shock that relatedness has a two-way flow via the activity of the Holy Spirit: not only from the body to members (in the liturgical construction of the self) but from members to the “body” in the liturgical “witness” of faithful participation.

For All the Saints

Wesley and the Methodist movement provide a helpful corrective to a potential misunderstanding emerging from a newly found love of ecclesial holiness. This correction helps contemporary scholars move from a romance with the church to a more precise understanding of ecclesiology in relation to personal experience and the “messiness” of congregational life. These insights not only encourage Christian practice, they also provide a hermeneutic to guide the practice of the church. Wesley and others passed along a pervading notion that the church needs particular “saints” to witness to the community of faith the character of holiness, revealing both the strengths of holy living and limits of congregational proclivities. In this sense, personal religious experience is vital, even in its most

⁷²John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 125. Developing Lossky’s scheme, Zizioulas notes, “Lossky would develop the view that both Christology and Pneumatology are necessary components of ecclesiology, and would see in the sacramental structure of the Church the ‘objective’ Christological aspect which has to be constantly accompanied by the ‘personal’ or ‘subjective’ aspect. The latter is related to the freedom and integrity of each person, his inner ‘spiritual life,’ deification etc.”

hagiographic form, to remind the church of its own hagiography and to caution toward both a sacrificial humility as well as a missional identity.⁷³

One of Wesley's favorite feast days was All Saints day. In 1756 John remarks, "Was a triumphant day of joy, as All Saints' Day generally is. How superstitious are they who scruple giving God solemn thanks for the lives and deaths of his saints!"⁷⁴ Perhaps John appreciated this festival because it indeed revealed the church triumphant.⁷⁵ But the imagery evoked by "All Saints," like Wesley's definition of the church, functions as a double entendre. Such a procession reminds all ecclesial minded scholars that each unsung saint provides a personal "testament" to the body, one whose holiness cannot be fully defined through the church's "dispensing" grace. Such humble saints trouble any self-assured notion of holiness on the part of the church, but they may also embody the very promise of a congregational holiness, a promise evoked by the Holy Spirit and in which the whole body, working together, participates.⁷⁶

⁷³Keen, 51-61. Craig Keen's "kenotic" view of self in both God and human is one example.

⁷⁴Wesley, *Journal and Diaries*, 21: 81.

⁷⁵Robert Nelson, *A Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England: with Collects and Prayers for each Solemnity*, 23rd ed. (London: J. Buckland and Company, 1773), 366.

⁷⁶Concluding comment: Recognizing that even academic writing is a "communal" effort, I want to acknowledge the patient counsel of two good friends, Professor Rick Quinn and Dr. Henry W. Spaulding II. Both gentlemen were invaluable companions in the creation of this writing. While any inaccuracies or inconsistencies in the writing are solely the responsibility of the author, any insight from the text is due in part to the help of these two extraordinary "saints."

METHODIST SOCIETY AS THE NEW CREATION

by

Philip R. Meadows

The biblical language of “new creation” gives rise to a variety of interpretive themes: the *personal reality* of being a “new creature” in Christ, i.e. the transformation of individual lives, typically identified with new birth; the *social reality* of new creation “in Christ,” i.e., the Christian community as a new way of life set apart from the unbelieving world; and the *eschatological reality* of “creation made new,” i.e., the new community as a foretaste of, and a witness to, the final consummation of all things in Christ. Any adequately biblical theology of discipleship will embrace each of these as inseparably related and mutually conditioning themes.

Under the individualistic conditions of modernity, however, understanding the new creation as a radically social and eschatological reality becomes eclipsed by the construal of Christian discipleship as a foundationally personal and even private matter. Although the Christian community may be assigned critical importance, it is often interpreted as being *derived from* the voluntary association of its members or as the collective *expression of* private faith commitments. Rarely is discipleship thought to be actually constituted by participation in the life of the Christian community itself, as though what it means to be a new creature could be rendered intelligible apart from (or prior to) the social and eschatological reality of the new creation to which it belongs.

When read through the biblical lens of new creation, we find an ambiguous relationship between Wesley’s theology of real Christianity

and the significance of early Methodist society. On the one hand, it would appear that he affords us ample opportunity to indulge our modern individualism. He explicitly makes the concept of new creation coterminous with new birth, understood as a renewal of the divine image through the transformation of one's inner spiritual life. In addition, he consistently interiorizes the nature of "true religion," and emphasizes the inward witness to this change of heart as a private spiritual experience. On the other hand, the force of this incipient individualism is checked by Wesley's own descriptions of, and reflections upon, the corporate life of "the People called Methodists." So, he also insists on Christian conferencing as an ordinary means of grace (placed alongside the eucharist); mutual submission to the intimacy and accountability of small group fellowship; the converting and sanctifying power of such disciplined discipleship; and the necessarily social nature of real Christianity.

What is more, it has become commonplace to note the "conjunctive" nature of Wesley's categories as an antidote to over-individualistic readings of his theology. So, it can be observed that he combines both individual *and* social; inward *and* outward; private *and* public; holiness of heart *and* life. Yet Wesley typically explains the logic of these conjunctions to mean that the outward, public, and social aspects of Christian life (including the nature of the church) are founded upon the inward, private, and personal. Despite such correctives, therefore, it is not difficult to see how this pattern of conjunction can easily become captured by the narratives of modern inwardness, which invariably commence with accounts of the individual human subject. Further, experience often suggests that Wesley's synthesis has offered little resistance to the liberal interpretation of Christian community as a support mechanism for empowering individuals in the pursuit of their own private spiritual journeys.

In this essay, I will explore the conditions under which Wesley develops the distinction between inward and outward religion—and the need to keep them inseparably conjoined—as a way of resisting the dangers of both formalism and voluntarism. I will argue, however, that this pattern of conjunction tends to be inherently ambiguous and finally incapable of supporting a theology of Christian fellowship robust enough to resist the persistently individualizing forces of modern and postmodern culture. Moreover, it may have been that the weaknesses inherent in this scheme actually contributed to the eventual demise of the very disciplined discipleship that Wesley sought to uphold.

It is not that Wesley's vision for the Christian life lacks balance or that he fails to address each of its personal, social, and eschatological dimensions on different occasions; nor, indeed, does Wesley fail to see these things as being inseparably related. Rather, my claim is that his basic arguments from interiority are inherently problematic and that these problems can be brought to light by examining his use of the biblical language of new creation. In conclusion, I will suggest that discipleship should not be founded on the rather individualistic principles of either inward or outward religion, but in the social reality of new creation, which is the Christian community. I will suggest that Wesley himself actually offers us some hints about how such a theology might take shape.

Turning the New Creation Outside-In

It is well known that shortly after his Aldersgate experience, John Wesley struggled with what it meant to experience new birth yet fall short of the love, joy, and peace "that excludes the possibility either of fear or doubt." In his journal entry for 6th October, 1738, he engages in a detailed process of theological reflection and self-examination based on 2 Corinthians 5:17: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (KJV).¹ Wesley interprets this to mean that those who are made new possess new *judgments* concerning self, new *designs* and *desires*, rooted in the life of God and the recovery of his image, and new *conversation* and *actions* springing from or leading to love of God and neighbor. In all of these, Wesley judges himself to be a new creature "by the grace of God in Christ," but *with the exception of his desires* (i.e., "passions and inclinations"). This exception is critically important because it amounts to a serious doubt concerning his whole standing as a new creature in Christ.

The reason for this is that "judgment," "designs," "conversation," and "actions" are matters belonging merely to the *outward form* and not the *inward power* of religion. In other words, there are ways of thinking and living as a Christian which are possible apart from the "settled, lasting joy" and "full assurance of faith" associated with the evangelical experience of new birth. Such outward things are true marks of the new creature, therefore, only insofar as they derive from godly desires, rightly

¹Journal, 6th October 1738, in: Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958-1959), vol.9, 161. Hereafter abbreviated as WJW.

ordered by inward spiritual power. This pietistic pattern of conjunction is characteristic of the way Wesley presents holiness of life (an outward reality) as a necessary but insufficient indicator of new creation, or holiness of heart (an inward reality).

In this same text, it is particularly significant that Wesley's understanding of the *General Rules*—which come to signify the nature and design of Methodist society as a whole—is definitionally excluded from the theme of new creation: "His judgment concerning holiness is new. He no longer judges it to be an outward thing: To consist either in *doing no harm, in doing good, or in using the ordinances of God*. He sees it is the life of God in the soul; the image of God fresh stamped on the heart; an entire renewal of the mind in every temper and thought, after the likeness of Him that created it." The holiness of new creation is a foundationally inward reality that may be *expressed*, or even *nurtured*, through participation in the discipline of Christian community, but not actually *constituted* by it. Wesley's apparent ambivalence toward "outward religion," however, must be understood in the context of his apologetic maneuvers against the dangers of religious formalism.

1.1 The Problem of Deistic Exteriority. In the 1750s, deist theologian John Taylor published *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination*, in which he rejected as unscriptural the Augustinian tradition of original sin. Wesley's response was to publish a long treatise rebutting Taylor's work, entitled *The Doctrine of Original Sin: According to Scripture, Reason and Experience*. He was concerned to defend the idea of original sin because it is only when we proceed from the *inborn corruption of human nature* that we can understand the necessity for an evangelical experience of new birth. The logic of deism, on the other hand, proceeds from the conviction that human beings have an *inborn capacity for godly virtue* through the exercise of natural reason, conscience, common sense, etc. It is quite instructive, therefore, to briefly examine the way these two narratives compete for a right interpretation of new creation in scripture.

Wesley's critique hinged on Taylor's interpretation of the new creation as an outward "profession" or pattern of moral teaching.² Consider

²What follows is a discussion based on Wesley's own interpretation of Taylor's work, and not an examination of the original text, which would lie outside the scope of our present concerns. What matters is the pattern of thought that Wesley identifies in Taylor's work, and the reasons why he rejects it.

the text of Ephesians 2:14-15, that Jesus Christ “is our peace, he who hath made both one . . . that he might form the two into one new man in himself, so making peace” (KJV). For Taylor, the “new man”³ and the “new birth” come to signify Christianity as a “way of life” historically accomplished in the social order of Christendom. In other words, the “new man” signified the “Christian dispensation”: a new historical epoch marked by the introduction of a new profession of faith into the world. This may be contrasted with the “old man,” or a vicious way of life found in the pre-Christian or “heathen dispensation.” Just as human beings contracted the disease of the “old man” through the imitation of heathenish custom, the new birth meant becoming a “new man” through the self-appropriation of Christian moral teaching. Christian conversion and renewal, therefore, is viewed as a matter of resocialization, of “putting off the old man” (i.e., the ways of a heathen) and “putting on the new man” (i.e., a Christian way of life). Thus, for Taylor, it was the moral responsibility of nominal Christians, born in a “Christian society,” dutifully to embody their *de facto* profession, using the capacities of their own God-given nature. Wesley reports Taylor as claiming that “all holiness must be the effect of a man’s own choice and endeavour, and that, by a right use of his natural powers, every man may and must attain a habit of holiness.” It was the business of the church, therefore, to be the agent of Christian resocialization in a heathenish world.

For Wesley, this account simply repeated the hollow nominalism of a formal religion that remained extrinsic to the heart and soul of real Christianity. First, he notes that the “*one* new man” in Ephesians 2:15 “does not mean one outward profession, but the one church of living believers in Christ,” a single “mystical body” which transcends and includes the ethnic differences of Gentiles and Jews.⁴ On this occasion, Wesley faithfully interprets the Pauline theme of the “one new man” as “one new humanity” made present in the church. It is unfortunate, however, that Wesley’s biblical scholarship at this point does little to restrain his otherwise thoroughgoing interiorization of the “new creation” language. So, he turns to the theme of “new man” found in Ephesians 4 and

³Otherwise translated “new creature” or “new self”; Ephesians 4:22-24; and Colossians 3:8-15.

⁴John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1976), Ephesians 2:15. Hereafter abbreviated as NTN.

Colossians 3 as an exegetical key, and interprets these texts as unambiguously signifying the inward “work of God in every individual believer.” Although Wesley does in passing subject this to the logic of conjunction—the “new man” denotes “a principle of internal *and* external holiness”—it is neither typical nor well explained.

Insofar as Wesley definitively rejects Taylor’s view that the language of new creation signifies a way of life, however, he clearly takes the interpretation from inwardness to be normative for real Christianity and even for his understanding of the church. Christian conversion is not about resocialization but inner transformation. Consistent with his defense of original sin, the old man does not refer to a “heathenish life,” but to the inward corruption that ensnares us in such ungodly ways: “an inbred hereditary distemper, coeval with our nature.” Putting on the new man, therefore, “does not mean an outward profession, but a real, inward change; a renewal of the soul” synonymous with new birth and sanctification.⁵ The church’s primary task, therefore, is to promote this inward transformation one individual at a time.

For all its merit, Wesley’s critique of deism puts us on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, it would appear that speaking about the new creation as “a way of life” is freighted with the dangers of nominalism and deistic formalism. On the other hand, it would appear that these dangers can only be resisted by interiorizing the new creation and compromising the profound ecclesial significance of texts like Ephesians 2:15 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. This dilemma, however, arises from an individualism common to both these narratives: the *deistic appropriation* of moral values assumed to be embedded in the social order of Christendom; and the *pietistic interiorization* of moral virtues as the prior condition for any Christian way of life. Either way, Christian existence is located somewhere between the inwardness of a changed heart and the outwardness of a Christianized nation. Wesley himself speaks of the *General Rules* as simply the “religion of the world,” or the outward form of godliness which a Christendom society affirms, but which cannot be truly accomplished apart from the inward power of godliness that evangelical conversion supplies.

⁵John Wesley, *Doctrine of Original Sin, Part V*: “To put off ‘the old man’ (the same as to ‘crucify the flesh’) is, to subdue and mortify our corrupt nature; to ‘put on the new man’ is, to stir up and cultivate that gracious principle, that new nature . . . ‘created after God,’ or ‘in his image.’” (WJW, 9:400)

1.2 The Problem with Pietistic Interiority. There is, however, a third alternative to the dilemma of deistic exteriority and pietistic interiority; and this possibility requires a better understanding of the way scripture speaks about new creation as a social reality embodied in the life of the church itself. The blindspot which dogs Wesley's vision of the new creation, and is found wherever the "Christendom" vision of church and society persists, is a failure to see the Christian community itself as a social reality in which the virtues of new creation are to be found, and in such a way that sets it apart from an unbelieving world. For Wesley, the Christian's life in the church and in the world get lumped together under the single category of "outward religion." Yet, it is the need to distinguish between these relations if we are to understand how the social reality of new creation is manifest in the church.

In his book *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, Richard Hays argues for "new creation" as one of the major "focal images" through which we can attain a coherent vision of New Testament teaching on the Christian life. It is worth quoting him at length:

The image of "new creation" belongs to the thought-world of Jewish apocalypticism. . . . Paul's use of the phrase "new creation" echoes Isaiah's prophesy of hope [Isaiah 65:17-19]. . . . When we hear 2 Corinthians 5 in the context of Isaiah's fervent prophetic hope for the renewal of the world, we understand that Paul is proclaiming that the church has already entered the sphere of the eschatological age. The apocalyptic scope of 2 Corinthians 5 was obscured by older translations that rendered the crucial phrase in verse 17 as "*he is a new creation*" (RSV) or—worse yet—"*he is a new creature*" (KJV). Such translations seriously distort Paul's meaning by making it appear that he is describing only the personal transformation of the individual through conversion experience.... [A] very literal translation might treat the words "new creation" as an exclamatory interjection: "If anyone is in Christ—new creation!" Paul is not merely talking about an individual's subjective experience of renewal through conversion; rather, for Paul, *ktisis* ("creation") refers to the whole created order (cf. Rom 8:18-25). He is proclaiming the apocalyptic message that through the cross God has nullified the *kosmos* of sin and death and brought a new *kosmos* into being.⁶

⁶Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (HarperCollins, 1996), 20.

Hays goes on to explain that “the new creation is not just a future hope, as in most forms of Jewish apocalyptic thought; rather, the redemptive power of God has already broken into the present time, and the form of this world is already passing away. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the church is an eschatological sign, a foretaste and assurance of God’s promised redemption.”⁷ It is according to this reading of the church as new creation, therefore, that we are to understand the meaning of a “new world” (i.e., a new *kosmos*); that is, a new social reality that embodies God’s victory over sin and death through the cross of Christ. So, Hays describes the church as “a sneak preview of God’s ultimate redemption of the world”⁸; it is, we might say, the “now” of creation made new in the midst of a “not yet” redeemed world.

It is not difficult to see how Wesley’s understanding of the new creation can be subjected to Hays’ critique, and how far it falls short of the social and eschatological meanings of new creation in scripture. Even when he does replace the old language of the KJV (“*he is a new creature*”) with a translation more faithful to the original Greek (“*there is a new creation*”), Wesley’s exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:17 continues to repeat the same interpretive flaw. Observe the anthropocentric turn in his *New Testament Notes* on this text: “Only a power that makes a world can make a Christian. . . . He has new life, new senses, new faculties, new affections, new appetites, new ideas and conceptions. His whole tenor of action and conversation is new and he lives, *as it were*, in a new world. God, men, the whole creation, heaven, earth, and all therein, *appear* in a new light, and *stand related to him* in a new manner, since he was created anew in Christ Jesus.”⁹

There is a clear connection in Wesley’s mind between new creation as a divine act of world-making (or re-making) and what it means to be made a Christian. The “new world” which Wesley describes here, however, is not the Christian community as proleptic present of an eschatological future for the entire creation, but is a change of heart and life founded on the experience of each new creature. This pattern is further highlighted in his sermon *On Sin in Believers* (1763), in which Wesley takes the text of 2 Corinthians 5:17 and internalizes the eschatological

⁷Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 21.

⁸Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 24.

⁹NTN, 2 Corinthians 5:17. Emphasis is mine.

dialectic of “now and not-yet” as the personal struggle between “nature and grace, the flesh and the Spirit,” rather than the unfinished redemption of creation as a whole.¹⁰ Again, it is telling that Wesley also takes 2 Corinthians 5:17 as the text for his sermon on *The New Creation* (1785), which actually is about the eschatological renewal of the world, but in which the scriptural language of “new creation” is conspicuously absent!¹¹

If Hays is right, many of the texts that Wesley uses in support of his argument for interiority are either misunderstood or interpreted in such a way as to eclipse their social significance for the Christian community.¹² The new creation is not a new *epistemological reality* rooted in a *transformed subjectivity*, as Wesley would have it, but a new *eschatological reality* visibly embodied by a *transformed community*. Despite this, there are a few weak (or underdeveloped) themes in Wesley’s work that can help us restate his commitments more fully in the context of Christian community.

2. Turning the New Creation Inside-Out

Although Wesley resists *deistic exteriority* by interiorizing the new creation, he is also aware of the nominalizing dangers of this inward turn

¹⁰Frank Baker, ed., *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), vol. 2, Sermon 13, *On Sin in Believers*, IV.3. Hereafter abbreviated as BCE. Wesley says that the hearts of those that are born again are “truly, yet not *entirely*, renewed”; they are “saved from sin; yet not *entirely*: It *remains*, though it does not *reign*.”

¹¹ Wesley turns to the themes of the “new heaven” and the “new earth” found in the book of Revelation.

¹² So, for example, in his argument against deistic exteriority, Wesley interprets the text of Romans 12:1-2 (“present your bodies a living sacrifice. . . be ye transformed by the renewal of your mind,” KJV) in support of his argument for new creation as the transformation of inward corruption, and not the reformation of a way of life. He takes “the mind” to mean the whole of one’s inward life (thoughts and tempers), albeit conjoined to the outward life of “the body.” Hays claims, however, that Paul’s use of the expression “mind” implies the corporate obedience of God’s people, as we see in other texts such as Philippians 2:2: “be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” So, “The church is a countercultural community of discipleship, and this community is the primary addressee of God’s imperative. The biblical story focuses on God’s design for forming a covenant *people*. The primary sphere of moral concern is not the character of the individual but the corporate obedience of the church. . . . The community, in its corporate life, is called to embody an alternative order that stands as a sign of God’s redemptive purposes in the world . . . the concrete social manifestation of the people of God” (*Moral Vision*, 196).

as well. This can be seen in the way he appropriates the mystics' interpretation of true religion as the life of God in the soul, while adamantly rejecting the kind of *mystical interiority* that reduces Christian life to a "solitary religion." He accomplishes this by asserting the essentially social nature of real Christianity: "Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness."¹³ It is significant that this concern first appears in his preface to the earliest edition of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), clearly emphasizing the importance of Christian community in discipleship.¹⁴ Later, in his commentary *Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse IV* (1748), Wesley reasserts Christianity to be "essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it." He presses the point further by interpreting social religion to mean not only that true religion "cannot subsist so well, but that it *cannot subsist at all*, without society,—without living and conversing with other men."¹⁵

Wesley's fierce resistance of formal religion, however, can cause him to interiorize the idea of true religion so thoroughly that it appears to exclude the necessity of all social relations. A good example can be found in the sermon *The Way to the Kingdom* (1746) which highlights his consistent identification of true religion with the kingdom of God as a foundationally inward reality: "True religion does not consist . . . in any outward thing whatever; in anything exterior to the heart. . . . Not in any *outward thing*, such as *forms*, or *ceremonies*, even of the most excellent kind. Supposing these to be ever so decent and significant, ever so *expressive of inward things* . . . true religion does not principally consist therein; nay, strictly speaking, not at all. . . . These are good in their place; just in

¹³John Wesley, Preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), WJW, 14:321, para.5.

¹⁴John Wesley, Preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), WJW, 14:320f, paras. 3 & 6: "He [Christ] commands us to build up one another" for "it is only when we are knit together that we 'have nourishment from Him, and increase with the increase of God'." He makes a cumulative case from the scriptural descriptions of Christian fellowship: "Ye are taught of God, 'not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is;'" but to instruct, admonish, exhort, reprove, comfort, confirm, and every way "build up one another." "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," that teacheth you to renounce any other or higher perfection. . . ."

¹⁵BCE, 1, Sermon 24, *Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse IV*, I.1. Emphasis is mine.

fact subservient to true religion. . . . Let no man dream that they have any intrinsic worth; *or that religion cannot subsist without them.* . . .”¹⁶

In short, he claims *against the mystics* that true religion cannot subsist at all without our social relations; yet, *against the deists*, he claims that the essence of a truly religious life can indeed subsist without such outward things. The result brings us not merely theological ambiguity, but to the very edge of flat contradiction!

We can, of course, interpret this ambiguity as a revivalistic concern to assert the possibility of individual hearts being *instantaneously transformed* by the immediacy of divine grace, coupled with the need to have such people *subsequently joined* together in supportive community for working out their salvation. Indeed, the theological priority that Wesley gives to justification over sanctification tends to make us think of justification (qua momentary event in the life of an individual) as temporally prior to sanctification (qua process requiring the assistance of others). It is not the instantaneity of new birth or the immediacy of divine grace that is really at stake in my argument, however, but the role of Christian community in the Spirit’s work of salvation as a whole.

It is worth remembering that the evangelistic proclamation of the gospel was aimed at spiritual “awakening” and incorporation into Methodist society; where the experience of justifying grace (new birth and the forgiveness of sins) might take up to two years of immersion in the practices of disciplined Christian fellowship. These were, however, practices that also sustained the experience of sanctifying grace (holy living and Christian perfection) among those who had already experienced such evangelical conversion. In other words, participation in Methodist society was a means of both justifying and sanctifying grace.

This suggests that the inseparability of these two “grand branches” of salvation comes from each being founded in the practices of disciplined discipleship, and not in some order of spiritual experience. Hence, we might even say that belonging to the social reality of Methodist society (as the new creation) theologically preceded the personal reality of new birth (or becoming a new creature); and it was only in the discovery that spiritual life is *bound to* Christian community that we one could be

¹⁶BCE, 1, Sermon 7, *The Way to the Kingdom*, I.3-4. Latter emphasis is mine.

freed from the various temptations of both formalism and voluntarism in the pursuit of holiness.

2.1 Social Holiness. For Wesley, mystical interiority is not only objectionable because it misses the many-sided importance of obedience to God's commandments, but because of the fundamentally mistaken assumption that Christian virtue can be a self-possessed reality. So, he begins the discussion on social holiness by rejecting the voluntarism which requires a suspension of social relations and outward activities in order "to work all virtues in the will."¹⁷

As a conclusion to his commentary on the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12), Wesley claims that "the religion described by our Lord in the foregoing words *cannot subsist without society*, without our living and conversing with other men, is manifest from hence, that several of the most essential branches thereof can have no place if we have no intercourse with the world."¹⁸ The virtues of meekness (which implies patience, gentleness, longsuffering, or the rule of "doing no harm" to others) and peace-making (which implies the rule of "doing all good" for others) make no sense when construed individualistically.

Yet, we are not surprised to discover that Wesley interprets Jesus' commentary on the Mosaic law (Matthew 5:20ff.) as a sign that the inward reality of Christian virtue, located in the immediacy of our relationship with God, takes theological priority over outward actions. Although this immediate experience has a certain life of its own, however, it necessarily entails an obedience manifest in the context of our social relations: "It is most true that the root of religion lies in the heart, in the inmost soul; that this is the union of the soul with God, the life of God in the soul of man. But if this root be really in the heart, it cannot but put forth branches. And these are the several instances of outward obedience which partake of the same nature with the root; and, consequently, are *not only marks or signs, but substantial parts of religion*."¹⁹ Wesley's point is that the social reality of Christian virtue is not merely derivative,

¹⁷BCE, 1, Sermon 24, *Sermon on the Mount, IV*, para. 3.

¹⁸BCE, 1, Sermon 24, *Sermon on the Mount, IV*, I.2. Emphasis is mine.

¹⁹BCE, 1, Sermon 24, *Sermon on the Mount, IV*, III.1. Emphasis is mine.

or an optional counsel of perfection, but that real Christianity is inseparably co-constituted by both kinds of relation, with God and neighbor.²⁰

There are a number of important conclusions to be drawn from Wesley's account of social holiness. First, the virtuous character of Christian living is rooted in the life-giving immediacy of our personal relationship with God. Second, Christian virtues are inherently social: they can only subsist in relation to those among whom God has called us to live. Third, the virtue of our life before God is both stunted and perishes by neglecting the social relations that it necessarily entails.

We may take this logic one step further than Wesley while remaining consistent with his own commitments. Insofar as the new birth is understood to imply a renewal of affections synonymous with Christian virtue, then being a new creature cannot be a merely inward reality, but must always be constituted socially. We might paraphrase Wesley's claim, therefore, by saying that the new birth "cannot possibly subsist without society, without living and conversing with other men."²¹ Understood this way, the reality of social holiness is that *we cannot be holy on our own*; we cannot be new creatures in Christ apart from the social relations that actually constitute the virtues of new birth.

The question is not *whether* Christian virtues are social, however, but *where* those Christian virtues are cultivated. We discover that Wesley does not clearly connect these commitments to the life of Methodist society itself but our individual relations with "the world." In other words, he does not explain how both the discipline of Christian fellowship and the labor of Christian witness in the world are inescapably and constitutively necessary to our new life in Christ and the practice of holy living.

2.2 Friendship with the World. It is important for us to remember that the biblical context in which Wesley locates the idea of social holiness is that of Matthew 5:13-16, where Jesus uses the metaphors of salt

²⁰So, for instance, the singular virtue of meekness implies both *meekness before God*, as the inward disposition of resignation to the divine will, which "may subsist. . .in total solitude," and *meekness before others*, as the outward practice of long suffering, which "cannot possibly have a being...without intercourse with other men." Although Wesley wants to affirm the occasional practice of solitude before God as having inestimable benefit for Christians ordinarily living amidst the distractions of the world, the mystic's attempt to turn meekness (for example) into "a solitary virtue is to destroy it from the face of the earth."

²¹ See note 18.

and light to describe the nature of Christian witness in the world. For Wesley, therefore, social holiness is virtually synonymous with witness and evangelism.²² The veracity of any truly virtuous relation with another, which has its root in a heart transformed by God, lies in the light and flavor of the gospel that is shed through it.

Under the conditions of modernity, however, the call to witness and evangelism is made problematic because it scandalizes the canons of inwardness. The doctrine of social holiness declares that Christian faith is constitutively incapable of being confined to the realm of private opinion or interior experience. The reality of Christian virtue is not only social, but inescapably visible: "So impossible it is, to keep our religion from being seen; so vain is the thought of hiding the light, unless by putting it out! Sure it is, that a secret, unobserved religion, cannot be the religion of Jesus Christ. Whatever religion can be concealed is not Christianity."²³

From this perspective, Wesley's doctrine of social holiness cannot be fully understood apart from his radical (and much neglected) cautions against friendship with the world,²⁴ in which he identifies two snares to real Christianity resulting from the temptation to privatize true religion.

²²BCE, 1, Sermon 24, *Sermon on the Mount, IV*, I.6: "[The Lord] is so far from directing us to break off all commerce with the world that without it, according to his account of Christianity, we cannot be Christians at all. It would be easy to show that some intercourse even with ungodly and unholy men is absolutely needful, in order to the full exertion of every temper which he has described as the way to the kingdom.... Yea, it is necessary to the very being of several of them, of that meekness, for example, which, instead of demanding "an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth," doth "not resist evil," but causes us rather, when smitten "on the right cheek, to turn the other also;"—of that mercifulness, whereby we "love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us;"... Now all these, it is clear, could have no more being, were we to have no commerce with any but real Christians."

²³BCE, 1, Sermon 24, *Sermon on the Mount, IV*, II.4.

²⁴See BCE 3, Sermon 80, *On Friendship with the World* (1786), which takes James 4:4 as the text: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of this world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore desireth to be a friend of the world is an enemy of God" (see KJV). And BCE 3, Sermon 81, *In What Sense We Are to Leave the World* (1784), which takes 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 as the text, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you; And I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (see KJV).

First, there is the inward urge to retreat from the world (qua the mystics), which gives rise to various forms of spiritual solitariness and voluntarism. Second, the outward urge to friendship with the world (qua the deists), which gives rise to various forms of spiritual dissipation and formalism.²⁵ The truth is, real Christianity and worldliness represent two different ways of life; with different principles, means and ends; and with ultimate commitments that are finally incompatible. So, Wesley makes it plain that we cannot inhabit both worlds simultaneously, or occupy some neutral space between them. We walk in the way of one or the other, and the way between them requires nothing less than a conversion.

At first glance, Wesley's apparently hostile attitude to "the world" may seem incompatible with his doctrine of social holiness, which makes our relations with unbelievers actually constitutive of real Christianity. His point, however, is that we do not "leave the world" by turning in upon ourselves, or hiding out in public, but by visibly embodying the gospel through the holiness of heart and life it calls forth. The social virtue of our relations with the world, then, is properly defined in terms of "witness" rather than "friendship."

The logic of Wesley's thought is that we cannot escape being in relationship with others, and that those relationships inevitably give shape and substance to the whole course of our lives. The question is, what will the nature of those relationships be and how will we seek to cultivate them? For Wesley, the true nature of friendship implies an uncommon level of intimacy in which we are made particularly vulnerable to the influence of others. Friends seek to win our affections, to have us participate in the story of their lives, and even make us in their own image. So, we might have expected Wesley to affirm that true friendship is as risky as it is necessary for the formation of Christian character. In other words, friendship with unbelievers is apt to make us worldly; while Christian friendship helps to making us like Christ. He does not do this. The social relationships that this witness entails do not signify the bonds of Christian fellowship as such, but the influence that can be spread from heart, to life, to world, one individual at a time.

²⁵BCE, 3, Sermon 81, *In What Sense we are to Leave the World*, para. 8: "They [believers and unbelievers] are subjects not only of two separate, but two opposing kingdoms. They act upon quite different principles: they aim at quite different ends. It will necessarily follow that frequently, if not always, they will walk in different paths."

In these sermons, Wesley's primary concern is to counsel the "People called Methodists" on the dangers of spiritual dissipation which come from flirting with worldliness. If friends are those who strive together toward a common goal, then we might claim that true friendship was to be reserved for those within the Methodist society and, more particularly, to be found in the intimacy and accountability of disciplined small group fellowship. On this view, the priority and necessity of Christian friendship declares our new life in Christ to be constitutively social once again, and that this *social* identity is first formed within the Methodist *society* itself.

2.3 The General Rules. If there is one thing that gave shape to the corporate life of Methodist society, it was the *General Rules*.²⁶ With some minor variations, this scheme of accountability shaped the fellowship and discipleship of the whole Methodist movement. Wesley described the kind of community formed by the *General Rules* as "a company of men having the form of godliness 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..." and nurture a desire "to flee from the wrath to come."²⁷

Wesley thinks of such discipline as one of the "spiritual helps" that God has given to the Christian community. In this regard, "the Methodists are a highly favoured people." But we have also seen that Wesley typically and refers to the *General Rules* as merely the outward "form of godliness." Apart from the inward "power of godliness," such discipline is merely a "dead form," a "poor, shallow, formal thing."²⁸ Having form without power is merely formalism; but seeking power without form is merely voluntarism. In contrast to both, Wesley conceived of early Methodism as a renewal of both the form and the power of true religion.

²⁶John Wesley, *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies*, WJW, 8:269f. The *General Rules* are summarized by the three-fold axiom of (1) "doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind"; (2) "doing good, by being, in every kind, merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible, to all men" (works of mercy); (3) "attending upon all the ordinances of God" (works of piety).

²⁷John Wesley, *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies*, WJW, 8:269, para. 2.

²⁸BCE 1, Sermon 22, *Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse II*, II.4.

Although the power of godliness sought through the *General Rules* is clearly that associated with the personal reality of new birth, it is possible to extend Wesley's prefatory comments into a fuller theological description of the Christian community it shaped. First, there is the *personal reality* of becoming a new creature in Christ. The purpose of disciplined Christian fellowship was to experience "the power of godliness," a freedom from the tyranny of sin in heart and life which Wesley identifies as a mark of new birth. Second, there is the *social reality* of participation in the Christian community, without which this new life could not subsist. The power of godliness is pursued through the cultivation of Christian friendship among those "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 own salvation." Third, there is the *eschatological reality* of a people seeking "to flee from the wrath to come"; a people called to holy living, evidenced in their life together as a radical witness in a world of unbelief. We might read the *General Rules*, therefore, as a script for the visible practices of disciplined discipleship meant to shape a Christian community in which new creatures could be both born and raised, and without which that new life would quickly perish.

Wesley liked to point out that this kind of Christian fellowship was capable of being something other than a mere "rope of sand," or the kind of nominalism he found in the church at large.²⁹ A "rope of sand" clearly denotes a simulation of Christian community: an atomistic assembly of people having the appearance of genuine fellowship and friendship but lacking the discipline of true connexion with God and each other. Again, we might extend this analogy to suggest that Christian community is not produced by a lot of self-possessed individuals *formally* subscribing to a common order of discipline, or by *voluntarily* gathering in the same place at the same time to further their own private spiritual journeys. Rather, it is only to be found among those bound together with real "Christian connexion," in which there is "watching over each other's souls" and a "bearing of one another's burdens."

So, we might restate the purpose of the *General Rules* as shaping a community of intimacy and accountability whose life together cuts across

²⁹See Wesley, *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* (1748), I.11, WJW, 8:251. See also John Wesley, *The Late Work of God in North America*, WJW, 7:412; *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part III*, WJW, 8:225.

the individualistic distinctions of inward and outward, public and private. On the one hand, it was a way of life in which the formation of Christian character could be understood in terms of virtues that are constitutively relational. On the other hand, it was a way of life in which the ministry of reconciliation entailed a watching over one another in love, and formed a people capable of bearing witness to the gospel of forgiveness and grace through the virtues of their life together.

3. Discipleship and the New Creation

The biblical language of “new creation” has guided my analysis of some strengths and weaknesses in Wesley’s theology of fellowship and discipleship. Wesley’s pastoral-theological concern for the Christian life was to avoid the nominalizing forces of both deistic formalism (into mere exteriority and the naturalization of divine grace) and mystical voluntarism (into mere interiority and the privatization of discipleship). He seeks to resolve this apparent conflict through a pattern of conjunction, based upon the foundational pietistic distinction between inward and outward religion. Accordingly, inward experience (the immediacy of grace, personal faith, and inner witness) becomes the foundation upon which outward religion (use of the law, means of grace, and social holiness) derives its true meaning. This logic is also applied to the nature and significance of Christian community, as derived from, yet supportive of, the inward transformation of individual disciples and their witness in the world.

Yet, it is not difficult to see how this appeal to Christian interiority is all too easily captivated by the strategies of modern individualism: first, by *sundering* inward from outward, and individual from social; second, by *opposing* them in contrastive terms; then, third, by *assimilating* the meaning of outward to inward and social to individual, thus completing the turn to self. Under these conditions, discipleship gets privatized through a process of radically interiorizing the spiritual encounter with God and the church gets privatized by radically voluntarizing the nature of Christian community. So, we get caught repeating old *inward turns* through modern forms of mystical solitariness, like pursuing one’s own private and inward spiritual journey and following old *outward urges* through modern forms of deistic formalism, like conflating Christian discipleship with secular citizenship.

One instance of this is the way that works of piety (mistakenly reduced to an inward reality) and works of mercy (mistakenly reduced to

an outward reality) commonly get sundered and opposed some assimilating piety to mercy for the sake of social action (qua much modern liberalism), and others assimilating mercy to piety for the sake of saving souls (qua much modern evangelicalism).

At his best, however, Wesley offers us some theological resources for how we might escape the weaknesses in this conjunctive way of thinking. We have seen that his doctrines of social holiness, friendship, and disciplined discipleship can encourage us to rethink the inward-outward distinction in terms of constitutive relations rather than conjunctive categories. The logic of this, however, means that the concept of new creation must be reconceived as both a personal and social reality, such that the personal reality of being a new creature in Christ remains inconceivable apart from the Christian community as the social reality of new creation itself. Thinking this way also makes it possible to recover the biblical picture of Christian life together as a radical, eschatological witness in the world.

3.1 Toward a Biblical Theology of Discipleship. A biblical theology of discipleship capable of resisting the narratives of modern individualism can no longer commence with accounts of inward religion. On the one hand, we have seen that Wesley's thinking drinks deeply from the well of pietism, in which the language of new creation gets interiorized as the experience of individual regeneration and sanctification. This does provide him with a theological language adequate to the evangelical experience of new birth, and makes possible his challenge to the nominalizing pressures of deistic formalism. On the other hand, we have also seen that Wesley considers this new creation to be inseparably, if ambiguously, related to the kind of intimate and disciplined Christian fellowship so characteristic of the early Methodist movement. His insistence on the necessity of such practices for the cultivation and sustenance of real Christianity is brought forth most clearly in his defense against the nominalizing pressures of mystical voluntarism.

Despite the biblical warrant, however, it is telling that Wesley does not apply his common conjunctive synthesis of the inward-outward distinction to the theological language of new creation itself. I suggest that this actually unmasks a more general failure in such thinking for understanding the Christian life, and is reflected in Wesley's own persistent failure to posit the theologically constitutive significance of "outward"

things like disciplined Christian fellowship for his evangelical emphasis on heart religion.

Listening too closely to Wesley at this point impales us on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, if we emphasize the nature of true religion as a social reality, we may resist the pressures of voluntarism, but only by inviting the danger of an empty formalism. On the other hand, if the only way we can counter these temptations is to interiorize true religion, then we become susceptible to the temptations of modern individualism and privatized spirituality.

As we have seen, however, there is a genuinely third alternative to the dilemma posed by the options of pietistic interiority and deistic exteriority, which involves retrieving the biblical significance of new creation as a description of the Christian community. Yet, in doing so, we must go further than Wesley and entertain the unthought possibility that participation in Methodist society itself was a constitutive condition for the conversion of both heart *and* life associated with the experience of evangelical Christianity.

3.2 Toward a Postmodern Theology of Discipleship. A postmodern theology of discipleship must be founded in the practices of disciplined Christian fellowship. Setting forth the social reality of new creation does not lead to the conclusion that Wesley was mistaken in emphasizing the importance of our personal relationship with God; nor does it diminish the experience of becoming a new creature in Christ. It is misleading, however, to make such inward experience the foundational moment in a theology of discipleship. Doing so has consistently obscured the vital importance of other doctrines, like that of social holiness.

We must think of the Christian life as something more than the conjunctive resolution of contrasting commitments within the heart and life of each individual. As an alternative, let us imagine that our discipleship is not founded on each person's immediate encounter with God, but in the social reality of a community that is gathered, indwelled, and led by the Spirit. We each participate in the life of God as we participate in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ, such that our personal experience of God is constituted by indwelling the corporate experience of the Spirit's presence in the church. Understood this way, the primary meaning of discipleship is not founded in either the *inward struggles* or the *outward practices* of individual Christians, but in the *common life* of the Christian

community itself. What it means to be a disciple is unintelligible apart from the corporate practices of discipleship which embody our life together.

We would be misguided in another way, of course, if such an emphasis on the Christian community caused us to miss the equally constitutive significance of a life transforming personal relationship with God. The meaning of disciplined Christian fellowship is also unintelligible apart from the Christian character that is formed within and among all its members. The question that follows from these considerations is, What sort of community can act as a foundation for real Christian discipleship? Or, to put it another way, What kind of fellowship is capable of nurturing the mutual participation of Christian lives necessary to find the real presence, and life transforming power of God in their midst? Or again, how does the power of religion become a principle of our life together in the church, and not just our individual lives in the world?

The wisdom we receive from Wesley lies in remembering the virtue of intimate and accountable small group fellowship, as witnessed in the classes and bands of the early Methodist movement. The vital importance of such disciplined Christian fellowship for the life of discipleship is signaled by the fact that Wesley made participation in a class meeting the basic unit of society membership. Methodist society, therefore, was not a community *with* small groups, but a community *of* small groups, shaped and directed by accountability to the *General Rules*. These practices were not optional extras for the People called Methodists, but an occasion in which the fullness of new creation was called forth and experienced. Methodist discipleship, then, was virtually synonymous with participation in this form of disciplined Christian fellowship.

Furthermore, the requirement of class and band tickets for entry into society meetings (such as the love feast) underscores the idea that the life of Methodist society as a whole was founded in this small group practice. In other words, this kind of disciplined discipleship was a condition for the possibility of encountering the life transforming presence and power of God, both in one's personal experience and even in the great congregation itself.

I suggest that the genuine reciprocity of mutual submission to the discipline and experience of such intimate and accountable small group fellowship provided the early Methodists with a practical corrective to Wesley's rather myopic vision of the new creation as a foundationally

personal matter. I also suggest that the theme of new creation as a social reality may encourage us to retrieve this practice as a means for overcoming the kind of inwardness and privatism characteristic of modern individualism, which may well have contributed to its demise.

3.3. Toward an Evangelical Theology of Discipleship. An evangelical theology of discipleship requires the Christian community to fulfill its calling as a radical witness in the world. Wesley's teaching about social holiness makes it plain that Methodist discipleship finds its *raison d'être* as a witness to the lordship of Jesus Christ over all creation. His teaching on "friendship" also makes it plain that this is an eschatological witness unintelligible apart from our relationships with the world as a place of unbelief. It is unfortunate, however, that he still reduces the meaning of this witness to each individual's life in the world; thus repeating the basic interiority of new creation, and sidestepping the social and eschatological witness of the Christian community itself.

It is possible, however, to re-read Wesley's doctrines of social holiness and "friendship" with the world, together with the *General Rules*, according to the full range of meaning in the biblical language of new creation. First, the call to new birth implies a radically new relationship with God, in Christ, by the Spirit, whose life-transforming presence and power indwells and possesses the human heart. This establishes a conversion from worldliness to holiness; from spiritual dissipation to singular devotion; from self-possession to self-denial; and from death to new life in Christ. Second, the reality of new birth is inseparable from participation in Methodist society, as a radically new community of believers, gathered and directed by the Spirit. This community is set apart from the world by the peculiar practices of discipleship which constitute its new life together, under the common discipline of Jesus Christ. Third, membership of this new community is inseparable from life in the world, as it embodies a radically new witness to the gospel, summoned and preceded by the Spirit. So, we might claim that this missionary movement of persons in community is constituted by its visible distinction from the world as a sign, foretaste and herald of the new creation.

I have suggested that the best way to understand the inseparability of these multiple commitments is in terms of intimate and accountable small group fellowship. If contemporary Methodism is to re-embody the "mystery of godliness" (i.e., the Spirit's work of renewing the creation) as a

movement-turned-church, then it must be constituted by communities whose citizenship entails a disciplined resistance to a worldliness that would privatize its faith. This means discerning that our mission is to expose the “mystery of iniquity” in the world (i.e., sin’s work to undermine the new creation) by making the mystery of godliness visible in the form of our life together.³⁰

Revitalization of church life will not come from the inward turn of spiritual narcissism, nor an outward urge to Christianize the nation, but from the genuinely third alternative of *radical Christian community*. We must recover the apostolic vision of a church that can only be *for* the world by being *other* than the world and whose very *raison d’être* lies in the relationship of loving resistance and faithful witness that such a difference entails.

The force of my arguments drive us to the conclusion that this possibility requires a vision of Methodist society as the new creation, or creation made new, in which new creatures are both born and raised. Such a vision is inconceivable and unintelligible apart from the practices of witness, evangelism, and disciplined discipleship that invite people to become citizens of these new societies, who will pledge allegiance to nothing but the present and future lordship of Jesus Christ over all creation. This was, and is, the promise of Methodism.

³⁰See BCE, 2 Sermon 61, *The Mystery of Iniquity*.

WESLEY’S “MAIN DOCTRINES” AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND TEACHING IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION¹

by

Gregory S. Clapper

This is a theological and hermeneutical investigation in three parts, namely: (1) What did John Wesley hold to be the essential aspects of Christianity?; In view of this, (2) What makes his theological vision especially “practical?”; and, given the answer to these questions, (3) How should theology and spiritual formation be taught in the Wesleyan tradition today? Specifically, I will answer the question, Should United Methodists relate to the “official doctrine” of our day any differently than Wesley related to “official doctrine” in his day?

What Was Essential to Christianity for John Wesley?

I contend that what was essential to Christianity according to John Wesley was a life marked by the religious affections. This life was made possible by, among other things, both an indispensable kernel of Christian doctrine, and, equally important, a particular *mode* of describing and expressing this doctrine. When trying to understand or embody Wesley’s vision, the medium and the message must be integrated or Wesley’s paradigm is violated.

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John Wesley summarized his essential doctrines in slightly different ways at different times in his career, but there was enough consistency in these various summaries to detect a clear pattern. Three leading interpreters of Wesley's theology, Richard P. Heitzenrater,² Albert C. Outler,³ and Thomas A. Langford⁴ have each taken Wesley's statement of his "main doctrines" in *Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained* as a representative summary. In that piece, Wesley names the three essential doctrines that describe the doctrinal kernel of Christianity.

Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three—that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third, religion itself.⁵

There are several remarkable things about this statement, and I have commented on this doctrinal summary extensively in my book *As If the Heart Mattered: A Wesleyan Spirituality*,⁶ which makes the case for taking a specifically *theological*, rather than a purely psychological grounding for spirituality. The part of this passage that I want to focus on here, however, is Wesley's descriptions of "repentance," "faith," and "holiness" as "*doctrines*." To say that these three terms are, in and of themselves, "doctrines" is, I think, more than a kind of lazy shorthand on the part of Wesley. This "doctrinal" summary speaks directly to what Wesley held to be most crucial in the whole Christian enterprise—namely, lived Christianity, describable in terms of the affections or tempers of the heart.

For Wesley, experiences such as repentance, faith, and holiness are more than and distinguishable from *feelings*.⁷ Repentance, faith, and holiness are embodiments of the Christian gospel experienced by Christian believers. Without these experiences, one might *know* all sorts of things

²See his *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 156, 204, 214-215, 242, where he discusses the different summaries.

³See his collected works, *The Albert Outler Library* (Anderson, IN: Bristol, 1995), vol. 1, 258ff; vol. 2, 240ff; vol. 3, 422-447.

⁴Thomas Langford, *Methodist Theology* (London: Epworth Press, 1998), 7.

⁵*Works of John Wesley*, volume 9, 227.

⁶Gregory Clapper (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1997).

⁷See my *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1989), 60-64, 118-120, and 162-164.

about Christianity, and yet not *be* a real, fully mature Christian. However, though they are more than passing sensations, these conceptions, as Wesley understood them, clearly represent a different way of viewing “doctrines” than is more usual in the wider tradition.

Ted Campbell makes an interesting distinction between two different lists of essential doctrines in Wesley’s thought. One list of doctrines contains those that Campbell sees as essential “*Christian*” doctrines that all Christians believed; the second list is distinctive to the evangelical movement—those that were “*distinctively Methodist*.” It is the three doctrines listed above—repentance, faith, and holiness—that make up the list of these distinctive doctrines. Campbell makes the interesting historical note that these three can be seen in the very structure of a variety of Methodist hymnals going back to the time of John and Charles.⁸

What Campbell does not note, however, is that these three doctrines are key not only, or even primarily, because they are “distinctively Methodist” (the point that Lawrence Meredith makes with regard to these doctrines⁹), but because they are *most important for the foundational formation of disciples*. Because they are formative of the heart is most likely the reason they *became* distinctively Methodist. It is not their capacity to serve as denominational markers—their “distinctiveness”—that makes them important. Rather, it is their formative capacity. They are the most important—or essential—“doctrines” because they shape the heart—they plug into (and/or create) the emotional capacities that Wesley saw as indispensable for being a Christian.

Typically, when the tradition speaks of these experiences with regard to “doctrine,” we find discussions about “the doctrine of sin” or “the doctrine of justification by grace through faith” or “the doctrine of sanctification,” and occasionally Wesley himself would use this kind of language.¹⁰ These latter, traditional formulations of “doctrine” have one thing in common, though—they are abstract, secondary reflections on the primary

⁸Campbell’s papers delivered at the Manchester Wesley Tercentenary Conference, 18 June, 2003, and at “The Legacy of John Wesley for the Twenty-First Century” conference held at Asbury Theological Seminary, 1-3 October, 2003.

⁹Lawrence Meredith, “Essential Doctrine in the Theology of John Wesley, With Special Attention to the Methodist Standards of Doctrine,” Harvard University Th.D. Thesis, 1962.

¹⁰An example is when he referred to “original sin” instead of repentance in one of his summaries of the grand doctrines of the Methodists. See note 1 above.

lived realities that Wesley referred to by repentance, faith, and holiness. A life marked by these doctrine-shaped experiences will be a life marked by the religious affections—the signs of the renewed heart in the believer.

“Renewal of the Heart” as Wesley’s Orienting Concern

I think that the “renewal of the heart” is the best way to understand what was most essential to Wesley’s vision of Christianity. To put this in Randy Maddox’s terminology of an “orienting concern,” the orienting concern of Wesley’s theology is best conceived of as the renewal of the human heart.

In his justly praised and highly useful study of Wesley’s theology, Randy Maddox terms Wesley’s “orienting concern” as “responsible grace.”¹¹ With reference to Gerhard Sauter’s use of an “orienting concept,”¹² Maddox sees an orienting concern as what gives consistency to, and provides guidance for, the various particular theological activities that a thinker undertakes. He sees an orienting concern to be “an abiding interest which influences the selection, interpretation, relative emphasis, and interweaving of theological affirmations and practices.”¹³ Given this understanding, I suggest that a helpful way of seeing Wesley’s orienting concern is as the renewal of the human heart.

I assert this not to deny that “responsible grace” can be a helpful heuristic device for understanding many of Wesley’s theological concerns, especially his theological anthropology and the issue of God’s providence. I do not see my proposal as *denying* Randy’s proposal, but as offering an alternative that can live in harmony with his. Maddox himself allows that a thinker might have more than one orienting concern.¹⁴ I offer this alternative for several reasons.

First, the term “responsible grace” seems to domesticate and tame God’s most lavish and extravagant gift to humanity. God’s grace, seen especially in the forgiveness of sinners, is, from a human standpoint, the most irresponsible and incomprehensibly loving act that has ever occurred—something that no responsible *person* would ever do—and that

¹¹Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 17ff.

¹²See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 258, n16.

¹³*Ibid*, 18.

¹⁴*Ibid*, 18.

is why this grace is supposed to engender comprehensive and life-changing gratitude, humility, and love in the recipient. To speak of Wesley's orienting concern as "responsible grace" seems to park Wesley—and God—in an ever-so-polite middle class drawing room instead of probing the hearts of tear-stained miners at a Newcastle coal pit.

Secondly, in Maddox's understanding, an orienting concern is typically "implicit,"¹⁵ and this stipulation serves Maddox well since, as he notes, Wesley himself never explicitly used the phrase "responsible grace."¹⁶ Maddox sees an "orienting concern" as "meta-conceptual" and not just one concept or metaphor among others. However, I do think there are real advantages to seeing Wesley's orienting concern as expressed in a conceptuality that Wesley actually used and spoke about.

I agree with Maddox's assessment that Wesley is concerned to "preserve the vital tension between two truths that he viewed as co-definitive of Christianity: without God's grace, we cannot be saved; while without our (grace-empowered, but uncoerced) participation, God's grace will not save."¹⁷ However, when Wesley actually addressed such issues, he typically used the language of the heart. Moving away from this first-order language of love fear, hope, and joy to a conceptuality as abstract as "responsible grace" tends to distort both the substance and the style of Wesley's theology.

People might express a variety of concerns about taking the "renewal of the heart" as Wesley's orienting concern. They might point out that Wesley:

- talked about heart *and* life;
- talked about *social* holiness;
- emphasized the life of the church, especially its sacraments;
- emphasized the life of the mind and education.

However, understanding what he meant by "heart religion" and the "affections" would alleviate all of these concerns. Given the limited scope of this paper, I refer the reader to my *John Wesley on Religious Affections* for evidence in Wesley's own discussions of heart religion that speaks directly to these concerns. His vision of what it meant to have a renewed

¹⁵N. 19, 258. See also Maddox's "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," *Theological Studies*, 51, 1990, 671.

¹⁶*Ibid*, n.21, 259.

¹⁷*Ibid*, 19.

human heart was nuanced and balanced so that it could serve as an “orienting concern” for his whole theology just as adequately, if not more so, than “responsible grace.”

Consider some of the evidence for construing the “orienting concern” of John Wesley’s theology as the renewal of the human heart. In his Sermon on “Original Sin” Wesley says, “Ye know that the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God.”¹⁸ Albert Outler comments on this passage that this renewal is the “axial theme of Wesley’s soteriology,”¹⁹ and almost every thinker who has studied Wesley agrees that soteriology is at the heart of his theology.

Indeed, from the very “Preface” to his *Sermons*, we see Wesley’s emphasis on the life of the heart. In the Preface, Wesley says that in compiling these sermons it was his desire

First, to guard those who are just setting their faces toward heaven . . . from formality, from mere outside religion, which has almost driven heart-religion out of the world; and secondly, to warn those who know the religion of the heart, the faith which worketh by love, lest at any time they make void the law through faith, and so fall back into the snare of the devil.²⁰

At the conclusion of his thirteen part series of sermons on the Sermon on the Mount, Wesley summarizes the whole series by saying, “In a word, let thy religion be a religion of the heart.”²¹

Perhaps most tellingly, in his “Plain Account of Genuine Christianity” (which started out as a letter to Conyers Middleton), Wesley begins his account not by asking the person-independent question of “What is Christianity?” but instead by asking the very person-dependent—and affection-dependent—question: “*Who is a Christian?*” His answer tells us that a Christian is marked by *humility*, that the “ruling temper of his heart” is absolute submission to God and the tenderest *gratitude*, that the Christian is above all marked by *love*, which is productive of *all right affections*, and he has no *fear of dispraise*, for since God *loves him*, human dispraise is not to be feared.²²

¹⁸ *Works*, Vol. 2, 185.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 185n.

²⁰ *Works*, Vol. 1, Preface, 106.

²¹ Sermon 33, *Works*, Volume 1, 698.

²² “A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity,” in Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 183ff.

He begins, then by talking about what the personal enfleshment of Christianity looks like, and he expresses this in terms of the affections or tempers of the heart. Only *after* this is done does he turn to discussing what Christianity itself is. But even at that point, it is crucial to note the very *person- and affection-dependent* way in which he describes "Christianity." He asks, "What is real, genuine Christianity—whether we speak of it as a principle in the soul or as a scheme or system of doctrine?" Seemingly reinforcing his opening reflections on the "true Christian," Wesley here says that Christianity is capable of being seen as a "principle in the soul." But what about Christianity as a "scheme or system of doctrine?" Well, this scheme's primary accomplishment is to "describe the character above recited"—that is, theology's first job is to describe what Christianity looks like when it is enfleshed by describing the affections it engenders.

What comes next for theology? It should "promise this character shall be mine (provided I will not rest till I attain)" and then it should tell us "how I may attain it." He concludes this passage by saying:

May every real Christian say, "I now am assured that these things are so; I experienced them in my own breast. What Christianity (considered as a doctrine) promised, is accomplished in my soul." And Christianity, considered as an inward principle, is the completion of all those promises. It is holiness and happiness, the image of God impressed on a created spirit, a fountain of peace and love springing up into everlasting life.²³

Wesley then begins section III of this piece by saying, "And this I conceive to be the strongest evidence of the truth of Christianity. I do not undervalue traditional evidence. . . . And yet I cannot set it on a level with this."²⁴

This last statement may sound dangerously close to making irrelevant the historical bases of our faith, giving the appearance, for instance, that the arguments between the "Jesus seminar" and people like N.T. Wright and Luke Timothy Johnson are irrelevant. These historical arguments are not irrelevant for Christianity today, and Wesley would not have seen them as irrelevant in his time, as witnessed by his many arguments with the deists of his day. But Wesley's statement that this "inward

²³*Ibid.*, 191.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 191.

principle” is the “strongest evidence of the truth of Christianity” helps us understand just how central his view of the renewed human heart is to the center of his theology.

To consider just a few other pieces of evidence from his work that show this *person-dependent* description of Christianity that is put in terms of the affections of the heart:

- He saw “faith”—understood as both the summary of the cognitive content of the creeds and scripture and as an experience of trust—as only the handmaid to love.²⁵ The faith on which Luther laid virtually his whole emphasis, in other words, is merely the door into the larger house of love and all of the “fruit of the Spirit” that lie within it for Wesley.
- He described “the walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called” in terms of the attitudes of the heart such as lowliness, humility, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another in love, living in peace.²⁶
- Wesley speculated that God made faith to be the necessary means to receiving justification by faith because having to step out in faith and not having absolute certainty is an action that works against pride.²⁷ He sees God’s concern for human formation, in short, to be reflected even in the means that God has selected for establishing the God-human relationship.

I could multiply the references to Wesley’s vision of Christianity as being about the renewal of the human heart, but instead, let us assume that this point is made and move on.²⁸

What Makes Wesley’s Theological Vision “Practical?”

In Randy Maddox’s *Responsible Grace*, he states that Wesley’s theology is a *practical* theology because it was about “nurturing and shaping the worldview that frames the temperament and practice of believer’s lives in the world.”²⁹ I agree with this way of putting it. In his article

²⁵Sermon 36, “The Law Established by Faith, Discourse II,” *Works*, Volume 2, 38.

²⁶Sermon 74, “Of the Church,” *Works*, Volume 3, 53.

²⁷Sermon 5, “Justification by Faith,” *Works*, Volume 1, 197-198.

²⁸For further references, see my *John Wesley on Religious Affections* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1989).

²⁹Pages 16-17.

"John Wesley—Practical Theologian?" In the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*³⁰ and in his article "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline" in *Theological Studies*,³¹ Maddox delineates the interesting history of theology from its church-and-monastery-based beginnings to its eventual capture by the academic model of the universities and the resulting transformations for understanding "practical" theology.

In all of this, Maddox makes the case that Wesley was a practical theologian in that he thought theology *per se* should be practical, and that the appellation "practical theology" should not be reserved only for certain areas of applied or "pastoral" theology. On this point, Maddox's view of Wesley's theology is very similar to how Ellen Charry has portrayed theology in her book *By The Renewing of Our Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*.³² This can be contrasted with understandings of practical theology that are typically encountered today, such as in Emory University's new doctoral programs in "practical theology" which in fact might better be called *pastoral* theology since their focus is on pastoral functions such as preaching, pastoral care, worship, religious education, ministry, administration and evangelism.³³

Maddox goes on to say that a truly practical theology in this tradition should be marked by five characteristics. Practical theology should be: transformative; holistic; recognize the primacy of practice; be contextual; and be occasional.³⁴ In my view, the "transformative" and "holistic" dimensions of this paradigm are particularly applicable to Wesley's theology that he expresses in the idiom of heart language, especially Maddox's "holistic" point. In elaborating on what he means by holistic, Maddox makes explicit use of the "three ortho" pattern that Ted Runyon and I have used in different ways: seeing Christianity as being described not only in terms of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, but also in terms of *orthokardia* (my term) or *orthopathy* (Runyon's term).³⁵

³⁰Volume 23, numbers 1 and 2, Spring-Fall 1988, 122-147.

³¹"The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," *Theological Studies*, 51, 1990, 650-72.

³²New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

³³See Emory's website: <http://www.emory.edu/GDR/lillyinitiative.htm>

³⁴"John Wesley—Practical Theologian?" 134-135.

³⁵I used this threefold pattern in my dissertation and first book, and Ted Runyon, who served on my dissertation committee, used this pattern in several places. See especially his *The New Creation* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1998).

However, in considering Maddox's five-fold pattern for practical theology, we must be especially cautious when interpreting his criterion of the "primacy of practice." Given contemporary discussion of practice that could lead to distortions of Wesley's vision, we might better leave that out. Specifically, we cannot interpret Wesley as meaning that having a practical theology should put a primary emphasis on "practices."

Excursus on Holiness and Practices.³⁶ The word "practice" has been increasingly current in the vocabulary in theologians in the last few years. Most recently, see *Practicing Theology: Beliefs, and Practices in Christian Life*.³⁷ Much of this comes out of an appreciation for the work of George Lindbeck in his *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*.³⁸ In this book, Lindbeck offers the now-famous analysis that "religion" has typically been understood in one of three ways: either as doctrine, or as a kind of experience, or as a cultural-linguistic set of practices—a way of life.

The first understanding can be seen in "confessional" churches where a creed or confession is seen as defining who they are. The second is exemplified in the theology of Schleiermacher who said that the essence of Christianity is the "feeling of absolute dependence," as well as in the thought of those who hold that the different religions are merely different "expressions" of one common and universally available experience. Related to, and informing, Lindbeck's third option are the works of such diverse people as Weber, Wittgenstein and Geertz³⁹ (though one could also easily draw parallels between the cultural-linguistic model and Kierkegaard's emphasis on Christianity as a lived reality, and not merely a speculative scheme⁴⁰). All of these people associated with this third option assert, in one way or another, that the crucial part of Christian faith is what is lived out in real life, and that any instance of Christian faith

³⁶Part of what follows in this section has been adapted from my essay "Shaping Heart Religion through Preaching and Pastoral Care" in the volume edited by Richard Steele, *"Heart Religion" in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 209-224.

³⁷Edited by Volf and Bass (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). See especially the essays by Volf, Jones, Pauw, Dykstra, and Bass.

³⁸George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

³⁹Lindbeck, 20.

⁴⁰See his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, among other works.

must somehow be determinative of observable behavior, in concrete communities, which are focused around particular practices.⁴¹

John Wesley would certainly feel comfortable with some of this language of "practices." Wesley, sometimes portrayed as primarily an evangelist, was in fact a genius for organizing real, lived communities, and always wanted to make sure that enduring life changes were occurring in the people who had responded to his preaching. He was not interested in merely providing a spiritual thrill or an ephemeral passion. In this basic sense, Wesley clearly was about promoting a practical faith.⁴² He wanted people to "practice their faith".

There have been some recent discussions of practices, however, which seem to come close to embodying a misunderstanding of the Christian faith which is as old as the faith itself, and one that was a particularly important misunderstanding during Wesley's time. That is, seeing Christianity as primarily something that one *does*, and ignoring the subjective experience of *being* a Christian.

In the 1998 meeting of the National Academy of Religion, Dr. Owen Thomas presented a paper to the Christian Spirituality group entitled "Interiority and Christian Spirituality."⁴³ In this paper he claims that the long Christian tradition of emphasizing the "interior" life is mistaken and that we should move to an emphasis "on the outer as primary and a major source of the inner." He invokes both Lindbeck and Wittgenstein in support of this claim.

In a similar vein, in an article in *The Christian Century*, Robert Wuthnow spoke of a practice-oriented spirituality, and contrasted this with a "seeker-oriented" spirituality of "indwelling."⁴⁴ Wuthnow applauded the former and denigrated the latter, making it seem as if any model for spirituality other than the life defined by practices would lead to emotional self-delusion and obsession with our own immediate needs.

⁴¹See Dorothy C. Bass's recent book, *Practicing Our Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997) for a collection of essays on this theme.

⁴²See my "Orthokardia: The Practical Theology of John Wesley's Heart Religion," in *Quarterly Review*, 10.1:49-66; and Randy Maddox's "John Wesley—Practical Theologian?" in *The Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 23:122-147.

⁴³Later published as "Interiority and Christian Spirituality," *The Journal of Religion*, 80:1 January 2000, 41-60.

⁴⁴Robert Wuthnow, "Spiritual Practice," *The Christian Century*, September 23-30, 1998: 854-855.

I think Wesleyans will lose sight of a crucial part of the truth of our tradition, however, if, in the midst all of this present emphasis on the practice of the faith, we forget an important admonition from John Wesley. In a letter to “John Smith” in 1745, Wesley warned his reader that

I would rather say faith is “productive of all Christian *holiness*,” than “of all Christian *practice*”; because men are so exceeding apt to rest in “practice,” so called, I mean in *outside religion*; whereas *true religion* is eminently seated in the heart, renewed in the image of him that created us [emphasis his].⁴⁵

Looking seriously at the New Testament with all of its references to the heart, to love, to joy, to peace, etc., one cannot help but think that a “heart religion” is the minimum requirement for taking the Bible seriously. But taking heart religion as our paradigm means that we have an ongoing, twofold task of clarification. On one front, the battle will always be over understanding the nature of these religious “affections” or “tempers” (to use Wesley’s terminology) so that they are not just seen as episodic, intense feelings, but as dispositions for all of life, master passions which shape all behavior whether they are consciously felt or not.

While guarding against this over-emphasis on the inner, felt experience, though, those who promote heart religion must also be wary on another front as well, that which Wesley warns us about in his quote. Emphasizing “practice” in an exclusive and single-minded way can lead to a deadening moralism that will ignore the heart’s yearning for holiness. No matter how compelling and complete the practice appears to be, if it is not done with the goal of either growing or expressing our gratitude for salvation, it has not achieved its purpose. As Wesley said in his sermon “The Way to the Kingdom”:

Yea, two persons may do the same outward work—suppose, feeding the hungry, or clothing the naked—and in the meantime one of these may be truly religious and the other have no religion at all; for the one may act from the love of God, and the other from the love of praise. So manifest is it that although true religion naturally leads to every good word and work, yet the real nature thereof lies deeper still, even in the “hidden man of the heart.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley: Letters*, volume 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 179, letter of 12/30/1745.

⁴⁶*Works*, volume 1 (Sermon # 7, 220).

Of some help in seeing the potentially crucial difference between an orientation of “practices” and an orientation of “heart holiness” is the distinction that the philosopher Robert C. Roberts makes between virtues related to the will and motivational virtues. In his essay titled “Will Power and the Virtues,”⁴⁷ Roberts says the motivational (or “substantive”) virtues have to do with what we desire. Examples would be compassion or friendship. The will-power-related virtues, on the other hand, are primarily “corrective” in that they are needed mainly when we experience conflicting desires. Examples would be courage or self-control.

Those who exemplify perfectly the motivational virtues in the Christian context would be those who fundamentally desire the love of God and neighbor. Such exemplars Roberts (and the church) call “saints.” Those who have conflicting desires—who are not marked by the “purity of heart” of the saints—will need such corrective virtues as courage and self-control, and those who prevail in such inner struggles Roberts labels “heroes” rather than “saints.” Overcoming the character flaws which lead to conflicting desires is the classic plot of tragedy, and the protagonists of such stories, are often referred to as “heroes.”

Roberts, and Wesleyan theologians, would all assert that both kinds of virtue are required in the Christian life since even those most “pure in heart” are still in need of the will power virtues in this world of temptation. We need to be part saint and part hero, to use Roberts’s language. This brings us back to the problem with a single-minded emphasis on “practices” as the defining feature of the Christian life.

Over-emphasizing practices can lead to an over-emphasis on the will-power virtues to the exclusion of those of the heart. This can lead to what has often happened in those traditions that emphasize holiness—a deadening moralism where Christianity is entirely defined by what observable practices one does or does not engage in. Instead of allowing this to happen, we need to see the Christian life not simply as a collection of proper deeds to do, but also as entailing a distinctive manner of doing them. This means that being a Christian is not just a question of knowing what to do and then doing it, but it is also a question of *how* these deeds are done. “The Lord loves a cheerful giver” means that the Lord disapproves not only of those who don’t give enough, but also of those who

⁴⁷In *Vice and Virtue in Everyday Life*, Sommers, ed. (Ft. Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 266-288.

don't give cheerfully, no matter how much they throw in the plate. The gratitude of a cheerful giver comes from a heart touched by grace, from a life of holiness.

Surely we can say that a person who fails to perform certain obligatory Christian deeds is deficient of faith. But we also need to say that faith is more than the performance of such deeds. It also involves a certain *kind* of performance, a certain "spirit" in the way one performs them. Put differently, the key to authentic faith seems to lie not just in the verbs, but in the adverbs; not just in the nouns, but in the adjectives.⁴⁸ This can be hard to capture in "practice" language that can invite an objectifying, de-personalizing view of the faith.

These remarks can be seen, of course, as nothing more than a kind of gloss on Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 13:3—"If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing" (NIV). And it was Jesus himself who said in the Sermon of the Mount that we must not hate, let alone murder, must not even lust, let alone commit adultery (Matthew 5:21-29).

So, while it is possible to get lost in an interior labyrinth and lose contact with the God of the real, external world, by focusing solely on our inner experience, it is also possible to be so defined by one's outward and observable life that one neglects the interior life, the life of the heart. When that is the case, we risk becoming, as Wesley once put it, like "'whited sepulchres,' fair without and foul within."⁴⁹

If we can avoid being cowed away from using the biblical heart language by this current intellectual trend of speaking primarily about "practices," and so avoid the dangers of emphasizing exclusively the visible side of the Christian life, then we can use Wesley's theology in truly "practical" ways.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Thanks to Rick Steele for this particular way of phrasing things.

⁴⁹Wesley's comment on Luke 11:44 in his *Notes Upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1976), 247.

⁵⁰A balanced emphasis on practices, which sees them—and the narratives which hold them in place—as working toward their proper end of holiness, the truly religious affections of the heart—can be found in *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth*, ed. by Hauerwas, Murphy, and Nation (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994). See especially Richard B. Steele's article on "Narrative Theology and the Religious Affections," 163-179.

Bracketing out, then, this idea concerning the "primacy of practice," I think that of the remaining four criteria for practical theology as Maddox describes them, it is clear that most important for describing the truly practical nature of Wesley's theology are the "transformative" and "holistic" elements. The "contextual" and "occasional" elements in Maddox's model aptly describe Wesley's mode of doing theology—he did react to the events as they occurred—sometimes in letters, treatises or abridgements—rather than writing one comprehensive, systematic tome covering all doctrines within one cover. But when describing his theology as "per se practical," what I see as truly essential is the *transformative* and *holistic* use of the affections of the heart as the necessarily constitutive elements of the Christian life.

As John R. Tyson states in his article "Essential Doctrines and Real Religion: Theological Method in Wesley's Sermons on Several Occasions,"

For Wesley, theological "essentials" were those producing "real religion." The truthfulness of a doctrine inhered not only in its veracity, but also its vitality. . . . What seems most "essential" about Wesley's doctrines was his willingness to affirm classical Christian teaching in solid connection with the larger context of Christian living. He had a pervasive sense of the inner symmetry of Christian theology. His appreciation for the "analogy of faith" felt the wholeness within Christian teaching and sought to apply it in order to produce whole Christian lives.⁵¹

Wesley's Practical Theology in the Language of the Heart and Contemporary Understanding of "Affections" and "Emotions"

Wesleyans ought not abandon this orienting concern of the renewal of the heart, then, because it would be untrue to Wesley's theological vision. But this orienting concern should also be preserved and taken as our heuristic entry into Wesley's thought because, at this very point in our intellectual history, Western philosophy and theology are starting to understand—or, in some instances, to *recover*—a vivid sense of what a complex and powerful reality "an affection" truly is. See the works of contemporary historical, philosophical and theological theorists such as

⁵¹ *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Volume 23, nos. 1 and 2, 175.

Thomas Dixon,⁵² Robert C. Roberts,⁵³ and Martha Nussbaum,⁵⁴ as well as the works of Richard Steele,⁵⁵ Brooks Holifield,⁵⁶ and Albrecht Diehle⁵⁷ on the nature of voluntarism.

These contemporary views of what it means to have an “affection” or “temper” or “emotion”⁵⁸ can help us see that Wesley’s conception of the affections was *not* some kind of universal phenomenon as Schleiermacher or some in the history of religions tradition might see them.⁵⁹ Wesley saw them as Nussbaum, Roberts, and others see them, kinds of cognitive judgments or construals. That is why it made sense for Wesley to say that, if one did not have the religious affections, one was not a mature Christian—if you don’t love God and your neighbor, you have not really understood what it means to have your sins forgiven or to be graced with freedom—in short, you have not fully understood the Christian gospel.

Webster’s Ninth Collegiate Dictionary lists one meaning of “practical” as meaning “actively engaged in some course of action or occupation,” and when Maddox emphasizes the contextual and occasional nature of Wesley’s theologizing, this definition would fit. However, Webster’s also says that practical can mean “capable of being put to use or account: useful.” This, I think, is the primary reason why Wesley’s theology is practical—it is directly useful in the process of formation in large part

⁵²*From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵³*Emotion: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵⁴*Upheavals of Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵⁵“Gracious Affections” and “True Virtue” According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1994).

⁵⁶*The History of Pastoral Care in America* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1983).

⁵⁷Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of the Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

⁵⁸I am aware that Randy Maddox, in *Responsible Grace*, 69ff, and Kenneth Collins in his article in *Methodist History*, “John Wesley’s Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers and Affections” (36:3, April 1998) have tried to make clear distinctions between affections and tempers. I think that in the final analysis Wesley himself did not strictly observe such a distinction, but the confines of this paper do not invite the lengthy study this would necessitate. I do hope to provide such a study in the future.

⁵⁹E.g., the works of R.C. Zaehner, Rudolf Otto, and Eliade.

because his theology is *expressed* in the *language* of formation—the language of the heart. This language, contemporary thinkers are helping us see, has an integrity of its own.

The problem with several contemporary works on doctrine in the Wesleyan tradition is that these heart-related features that make his theology practical are seemingly filtered out. This has important implications for how theology and spiritual formation are taught, so I will now turn to those concerns.

Teaching Theology and Spiritual Formation in the Wesleyan Tradition

The tendency to overlook the important affectional key of Wesley's theology is even true in a subtle way in Maddox's *Responsible Grace*. While this text does demonstrate a fair amount of attention to the substance of the issue of the heart and its affections, its structure shows it not to be a practical theology in the way I am describing that field. This book's structure follows the classic approach of university-based Summas: considerations of epistemology and revelation first, then doctrine of God, Christ, Holy Spirit, the Means of Grace, and Eschatology. This is a marvelous study and helpful in many ways, and I pay it the highest compliment a professor can pay by using it in my courses. However, I do not see that text as itself an example of the kind of theology that Wesley exemplified. I suspect that Maddox would agree with this assessment, as his stated goal was to write a comprehensive assessment of Wesley's theology, not write a Wesleyan practical theology for today.⁶⁰

Similarly, Scott Jones' recent text *United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center*⁶¹ downplays Wesley's emphasis on the renewal of the heart in his summary of what he takes this church's doctrinal core to be all about. While he takes great pains to separate his work from a work on Wesley's theology, he does point out that there is a great deal of overlap between these two concerns, and it is this area of overlap that I am addressing. Jones consciously limits himself to the authoritative doctrinal standards of the United Methodist Church, which include Wesley's 53 Sermons and his *Notes* on the New Testament (though, interestingly, Jones takes as his opening quote the statement about Christianity as a principle of the soul, quoted above, which, since it is found in a letter to

⁶⁰See Maddox's own discussion of his stated task in his Introduction, especially 24-25.

⁶¹Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.

Conyers Middleton and “A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity,” lies outside of the official boundaries he chose to work within).

Jones says that United Methodist doctrine teaches “the religion of the heart,” and it sounds as if we are off to a promising start. However, in chapter two, in talking about how United Methodist doctrine is practical, he gives three characteristics of this practical nature. First, he says that the origin and the goal of Christian doctrine is in the practice of the Christian faith, which sounds very much like Maddox’s emphasis on the “primacy of practice.” Jones also says that doctrine is practical because it can be transformative, again similar to Maddox. However, while Jones’ third point sounds like one of Maddox’s points—practical theology should be holistic—Jones’s understanding is crucially different from Maddox’s.

On this point, Jones says that doctrine is practical because its goal is holistic, understood as both orthodoxy and orthopraxis (75-76) with no mention of the third *ortho*—be it my term of *orthokardia* or Runyon’s term of *orthopathy*. While he closes this passage with a reference to the “religion of the heart,” it is clear that for Jones this means simply holding together belief and right conduct. Similarly, he closes the entire book with “Part III” which he labels “The Goal of Doctrine,” but the only chapter in this Part III is titled “Preaching and Maintaining United Methodist Doctrine,” and in that, he only spends a very short passage asserting that the goal of doctrine is in fact holiness and the religion of the heart, with the rest of the chapter about maintaining and preaching United Methodist doctrine.

The index to this book contains no entries for “heart,” “affection,” “temper,” nor, most curiously, for “holiness,” and in fact the only reference to affections and tempers (198) was a seeming dismissal of Wesley’s psychology when Jones notes that “Wesley’s understanding of human psychology was that outward behaviors are the result of inward tempers,” followed by a quote to that effect by Maddox. Given Wesley’s emphasis on holiness itself as the heart of renewed affections, I think this is a very lamentable lacuna in Jones’ work. This vision of United Methodist doctrine, supposedly consistent with Wesley’s *Notes* on the New Testament and the first 53 of Wesley’s standard Sermons, in fact is at best a misleading construal of what Wesley saw as crucial in Christianity, and could lead people quite away from what Wesley saw as the religion of the heart.

Another book that gives short shrift to matters of the heart is *Living Grace: An Outline of United Methodist Theology* by Klaiber and Mar-

quardt.⁶² Their book is a kind of contemporary *Summa* for the United Methodist Church. I think this work has many virtues, but providing a practical theology in Wesley's terms is not among them.

Practical Theology and "Official" Theology

If the "renewal of the heart" is the orienting concern of Wesley's theology, legitimate questions arise about the role of the larger sweep of Christian doctrine in teaching Wesleyan practical theology. One way of putting this would be to ask: "In teaching and engendering the faith, should good Wesleyans relate to the 'official' doctrine of our day any differently than Wesley related to the 'official' doctrine of his day?" My answer to this question is "no."

Let me stipulate what I mean by "official doctrine." In Wesley's time, this would refer to things like the *Homilies*, the "Articles of Religion" and the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England. For the contemporary United Methodist Church, I mean by official doctrine what is specified in the *Book of Discipline*, e.g., the *Standard Sermons* of Wesley, his *NT Notes*, and Wesley's abridged "Articles of Religion." In that context, I think we should not relate to the official doctrine of our day any differently than the way that Wesley did in his day.

In the Wesleyan tradition it is undeniably important to have a coherent doctrinal framework *in the background* of the Christian life, which can be referred to as a kind of grammar of the Christian life.⁶³ But just as we do not typically learn a language—especially our first language—by studying its grammar first, so Christianity should not be initially taught primarily on a doctrinal basis—and here I am not talking only about catechism for young teenagers, but even, and *especially*, theology for seminarians, especially given their increasing need for adult remedial catechesis.⁶⁴ Basic Christian formation and theological education should, on

⁶²Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

⁶³On seeing theology as grammar, see not only Paul Holmer's work, which makes use of a remark by Wittgenstein *The Grammar of Faith* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1978), but also Wesley's Preface to his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (reprinted London: Epworth Press, 1976) where he speaks about divinity as the grammar of the Holy Ghost (9-10).

⁶⁴See the reference to this need by Greg Jones in his essay "Beliefs, Desires, Practices and the Ends of Theological Education," in *Practicing Theology*, ed. by Volf and Bass (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 185-205, esp. 186ff.

Wesley's understanding, be concerned with shaping that metaphorical center of the human called the "heart." This is not, in the first instance, done through the abstractly intellectual paradigm that much higher education—including much theological education—values so highly, but instead through a pedagogy of concrete delight, love and imitation.

This is not necessarily accomplished, as some seminaries seem to think, simply by adding a required course or two in spiritual formation, or putting everyone into a covenant discipleship group. To be true to Wesley's vision of Christianity, perhaps we should invite people—in *our theology courses*—to reflect not, in the first place about epistemology, the Trinity, or even the saving work of the cross of Christ, but on a series of questions—questions about their own lives. These questions might include:

Who or what do you now love?
What is it that you now take joy in?
What is it that brings you peace?
Are you happy now?
Why or why not?
What makes you afraid?
What makes you angry?

When we have their answers to these questions, we will then be able to tell our students how the Gospel proposes its own, distinctive answers to these questions when outlining the contours of the Christian life. Then we can start helping our students make the transition to that vision of a renewed heart.

Theologians should be about describing what, for the Christian, the ultimate objects of our love and joy should be and why, what we should fear, and why, etc. But in order to do this, our "coherent doctrinal framework" that lies in the background of these questions must itself be couched and expressed in the language of the heart. Asking "heart" questions can make clear what the shape or grammar of their hearts now looks like; it can also open up the possibility of adopting an alternative grammar—the grammar of a heart shaped by the Gospel as conveyed in the basic doctrines of the faith. This alternative grammar is one that they can then hold onto, and live into, as a model for imitation.

When we begin our theological ventures with consideration of doctrines like the Trinity or the nature of the salvation brought by the cross,

we invite a different mindset and approach—what people in higher education (often condescendingly and self-servingly) like to call a “critical thinking” perspective. Here, doubt is privileged and faith and trust are seen with great suspicion. Once this method begins, it sometimes never ends, with an ever-deepening gyre of confusions about proper epistemic warrants and foundations, meaning and reference, truth and validity.

On this point, Ellen Charry’s analogy between theology and medicine is very apt. Charry says that the kind of knowledge that John Locke’s epistemic pronouncements would allow, the standard that has so hamstrung theology in the last two hundred years—a knowledge separated from trust—was never the kind of knowledge that most of the Christian theologians of the tradition were looking for anyway. Accordingly, theology’s failure to meet this standard should not be too bothersome to Christians, for while theology cannot meet this standard, neither can, as Charry points out, medicine, and yet we use medicine all of the time. This comparison to medicine can make clear just how theology per se (and not just some sub-field of it) can be “practical.” On this model we should relate to official theology in the same way that Wesley did: as necessary to make clear—and help develop—the Christian way of life.

Dr. Susan Felch, a professor of English at Calvin College, has said that in her field of interpreting literature, the practitioners often align “complexity” with “perplexity” and assume that both necessarily entail critical distance, disbelief, and doubt. Whereas, Felch asserts, the complex narratives of Genesis 1 and 2 offer another model, where complexity is instead rooted in immanence, trust, and hope. Critical imitation that leads to discovery is what she wants to invoke as a literature teacher, and I think that is what we should be about as people who teach Christian theology.⁶⁵

What would this mean in specific terms? Perhaps it would mean following Wesley’s biographical emphasis in his *Arminian Magazine* and devoting significant parts of our theology classes to helping our students see the grammar of the renewed hearts in some of the saints who have gone before us—seeing how their loves and fears, hopes and angers were re-arranged and re-ordered by the Gospel, and how these affections were lived-out in real life.

⁶⁵From her unpublished paper “You Cannot Teach a Child Disbelief” delivered at Pepperdine University’s conference on Christian vocation, October 2002.

This is one of the absolutely essential features of Wesley's thought—Christian truth had to be expressed in livable and imitable ways. This is why William Abraham has missed the genius of Wesley's theological vision when he denigrates Wesley's "heart" and "affection" language. This attitude is reflected in Abraham's *The Logic of Evangelism* where he says that the emphasis of Wesley (and Jonathan Edwards) on religious affections and the "response of the individual" has been the "undoing of modern evangelism."⁶⁶ In his more recent *Canon and Criterion in Recent Theology* Abraham complains that, while Wesley was "resolutely committed to the doctrine of the Trinity, it has been displaced by his doctrine of the Christian life in the analogy of faith."⁶⁷

Wesley offers *not* a foundationalism of the Christian life, as Abraham seems to imply, because the affections cannot be generated or sustained outside of our relationship to the Triune God made known to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we take the life of the heart seriously we can see how the Gospel-shaped heart is not self-sufficient or complete in itself, but only exists as it stands rightly-related to the one true God. Abraham has failed to see that by putting Christianity in terms of the life of the heart, Wesley has made a very accessible, and (crucially important) *imitable* depiction of what it means to be a Christian.

This act of imitation does not entail a turn of one's eyes to *one's own* experience, or even necessarily the *experience of another*. The kind of imitation I am talking about involves turning one's eyes to see *the reality that is forming* the experience of the one we are imitating. At the beginning of the process we might catch a vision of a holy life being lived out by an exemplar—either a contemporary person or a historical figure described in the literature of the tradition. We find it immensely attractive, and so we pay close attention to this life. But in the end, the process of formation comes about not by becoming fixated on looking *at* the exemplar, but by looking *with* the exemplar.

Another way of teaching Wesley's views on the essential doctrines might be to begin by studying some of the classic liturgies of the tradition and ask what kind of life they are trying to form. One could then work backwards from their vision of the Christian life to the doctrinal truths

⁶⁶Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 58-59.

⁶⁷New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 216, n.1.

that are expressed in these liturgies. One of the implications of this Wesleyan vision of what is essential to Christianity is that Christianity is first and last a form of life, not merely a form of thought, and Don Saliers' work on worship and theology is very suggestive for the role of liturgy in primary theological orientation. Worship not only reflects a form of life; worship itself can be seen as a form of life.⁶⁸

This means that both teaching Christian doctrine and leading people in a program of spiritual formation entail attempting what Kierkegaard called an "existence communication." Instead of seeing theology and spiritual formation as related to each other as dialectic is related to rhetoric in the medieval trivium—where dialectic establishes the "truth" and rhetoric merely is about communicating the truth convincingly—we need to re-envision both disciplines, especially in the Wesleyan tradition, as ultimately inseparable and symbiotically related.⁶⁹

Wesley said in his "Earnest Appeal" that what he wanted to do is make people "virtuous and happy, easy in themselves and useful to others,"⁷⁰ and if our theological reflections begin with that vision then perhaps the guild of theologians will get fewer complaints that what we put out "won't preach"—a criticism to be taken seriously in the Wesleyan tra-

⁶⁸Saliers *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Divine Glory* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

⁶⁹To see the irony of disconnecting theology from life, see Soren Kierkegaard's *Journal* on "The Professor"—"Let us take mathematics. It is very possible that a celebrated mathematician, e.g., might become a martyr to his science—hence there is nothing to hinder me from becoming a professor of the subject he lectured upon, for here the essential thing is a doctrine, science, and the personal life of the teacher is accidental. But ethico-religiously, and Christianly in particular, there is no doctrine that can be regarded as essential while the personal life of the teacher is accidental: here the essential thing is imitation. What nonsense then that one, instead of following Christ and the Apostles, and suffering what they suffered—that one instead should become a professor. Of what?—Why, that Christ was crucified and the Apostles scourged. Nothing was lacking but that on Golgotha there had been a professor present who promptly installed himself as professor. . . of theology? It is true, we know, that at that time theology had not yet emerged, so at that time it would have been clear that, if he would become professor of anything, it must have been of the fact that Christ was crucified—to become professor of. . . that somebody else was put to death." From Walter Lowrie's biography *Kierkegaard* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1970, 507).

⁷⁰*Works*, Volume 11, "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," 51.

dition. The life of love and joy and peace in Christ is what we have to offer to the world. Wesleyans have the conviction that this is inherently attractive. The Christian should approach our under-catechized members—and non-Christians as well—with the awareness that we are the salt of the earth, and if we cannot season their lives, then we have nothing to offer.⁷¹ This is not a foundationalism of the lived life—the foundation of this life is the Trinity as worshipped in hymn, word and Eucharist.

Henry Knight III characterizes Stanley Grenz as saying that “evangelicalism is best understood in terms of spirituality and only secondarily as a set of doctrinal distinctives.”⁷² Especially if “evangelicals” see themselves as in the tradition of Wesley, this is a positive reflection of their fidelity to this tradition, and not a seeming mistake of weak-mindedness of this school of thought. They know what the “doctrinal distinctives” are for, and they put them where they belong—enfleshed in the lived Christian life.

Conclusion

There are three reasons, then, why Wesleyans should not translate or filter out Wesley’s language of life experience—the language of the heart and its affections—when we describe what is essential to Christianity:

1. Doing so would evacuate Wesley’s theology of not only its particular style, but also much of its essential content;
2. Contemporary thinkers are finally coming to terms with the importance and complex realities of “affections” or “tempers” truly; and
3. This heart language actually is the reason why Wesley’s theology is a truly practical theology. Speaking of doctrines in terms of life experiences is necessary if our practical theological task is to be the same as Wesley’s—that is, to describe the Christian character, promise it can be ours, and describe how to attain it.

⁷¹S. T. Kimbrough once remarked that this was the evangelistic approach of the Christian minority in Nepal.

⁷²This is found in his “True Affections: Biblical Narrative and Evangelical Spirituality,” in *The Nature of Confession*, ed. by Phillips and Okholm (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996, 193). Knight is referring to Grenz’s book *Re-visioning Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993, 58).

Madame Bovary in Flaubert's famous novel of that name made a wreck of her life because she "tried to imagine just what was meant, in life, by the words 'bliss,' 'passion,' 'rapture'—words that had seemed so beautiful to her in books."⁷³ I think that many people today—Christians and otherwise—are making a wreck of their lives in the fashion of Madame Bovary—relying on the images of bliss and passion that our often-toxic culture floats out into the world. Wesley's vision of Christianity—and his theology in the key of the affections—offers a vision where such questions are not seen as irrelevant or subordinated to some sort of secondary "application" field of pastoral theology, but are the initial and primary questions addressed. These questions are taken with the utmost seriousness, and the Scriptures, as interpreted by reason and tradition, are enlisted to help shape and create such experiences—experiences that don't lead to a ruined life à la Bovary, but, to use Wesley's famous couplet, to all "happiness and holiness."⁷⁴

⁷³Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert quoted in *Invitation to the Classics*, ed. by Cowan and Guinness (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 252.

⁷⁴Lest the reader become concerned about this approach losing sight of larger theological issues of truth and reference, I would make clear that seeing doctrine as primarily serving the purpose of bringing about the renewal of the heart is a universal truth claim that does not give up any claims to the realism and reference of our doctrines. Cf. Charry, *By the Renewal of Your Mind*, n. 4 on 30-31 where she sees no contradiction between holding both a realistic referential view of doctrine and also emphasizing doctrine's instrumental dimension. Our claims for *justifying* this truth claim can come only in a very particular cultural-linguistic context, but then, as William Placher has pointed out, claims about truth and claims about justification can be distinguished. See Knight quoting Placher in "True Affections: Biblical Narrative and Evangelical Spirituality," in *The Nature of Confession*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 126.

B. T. ROBERTS' EARLY CRITIQUE OF METHODISM¹

by

Howard A. Snyder

Anyone who has studied the so-called “Nazarite Controversy” in the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1850s and the subsequent birth of the Free Methodist Church knows that a trigger event was Benjamin Titus Roberts’ two-part article titled “New School Methodism.” Virtually unknown, however, are several important earlier articles in which the young B. T. Roberts (1823-1893) critically analyzed the state of Methodism, especially in his own western New York.

This essay focuses on these earlier key articles that Roberts published between the time he began pastoral ministry in 1848 and his publication of “New School Methodism” in 1857. Their significance lies in the theological and sociological points they make about increasingly bourgeois Methodism in western New York in the 1850s. The articles show how widespread—and controversial—the practice of pew rental was as a means of financing urban new church construction. The fact that this practice sounds strange to us now underscores the cultural differences between the 1850s and our time. Even so, at points Roberts’ writing sounds surprisingly contemporary.

¹This essay is based on the author’s forthcoming comprehensive biography of B. T. Roberts, provisionally titled *Populist Saints: B. T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists*.

Roberts as Writer

Roberts was a lifelong writer. His essays from his student days at Wesleyan University (1845-1848) show that already he had a considerable gift for writing clearly, concisely, and pungently. Though some of his college essays were rather mannered as Roberts sought to find his own voice, yet when he felt passionately about something his writing became more simple, direct, and forceful. As his ministry developed, Roberts, like John Wesley, consciously sought to write simply and without jargon or clichés, and generally was successful in this.

Several of Roberts' Wesleyan University papers give hints of things to come. In the winter of 1846-1847 Roberts penned "A Ramble on the Housatonic." At the time he was teaching public school at Oxford, Connecticut, during vacation periods to help support himself. The essay narrates his walk along the nearby Housatonic River, already an important source of power in New England's emerging textile industry.²

Roberts describes the scenic landscape along the river. Seeing a woolen factory, he clambers down and wanders through it. He is impressed with the speed of the water-powered looms that have now replaced handlooms. A sign of progress, he thinks; Roberts always admired industry and deplored indigence. But as he continues exploring the mill, Roberts finds "a little girl, of about 10 or 12" tending two or three carding machines. He is struck by her "beautiful eyes, and the most intelligent expressive countenance" he had ever seen in a child. "She was pale from her long & unwholesome confinement." Stopping to talk, Roberts' sense of injustice is aroused when the girl tells him "with a voice of great sweetness" that she has been working constantly in the factory for two years, and that her father is the mill owner.

"This is much against our factories," Roberts writes. "Children are put into them at an age when they ought to be at school." Roberts was encountering child labor for the first time. He doesn't elaborate, but the essay already shows Roberts' sensitivity to issues of justice, fair treatment, and exploitation that runs like a thread through his life from his early abolitionism to his advocacy of the Farmers' Alliance in the 1870s.

²B. T. Roberts, "A Ramble to the Housatonic" (B. T. Roberts Family Papers, Microfilm Reel 10); see also Clarence Howard Zahniser, *Earnest Christian: Life and Works of Benjamin Titus Roberts* (Circleville, OH: Advocate Publishing House, 1957), 22-23. The essay is undated, but this outing likely was made while Roberts was teaching in Oxford in the winter of 1846-1847.

Roberts' Earliest Published Writing

Graduating from Wesleyan University in 1848, Roberts immediately became an appointed preacher in the Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in western New York state. In 1849 he married Ellen Lois Stowe, niece of M.E. publishing agent George Lane, in New York City. For four years Roberts served rural circuits at Caryville, Pike, and Rushford before being appointed to the historic Niagara Street Church in Buffalo in 1852.

Busy with his pastoral duties, Roberts generally followed John Wesley's advice to spend his mornings in study. He read widely, and his readings prompted him to begin writing for publication. Early in his ministry he began sending off articles to the Methodist press. References to writing appear occasionally in Roberts' diaries. He mentions writing on January 15, 1852, during his year at Rushford. Then twenty-eight, Roberts was beginning his long writing career. Though it is not always clear just what projects he was working on—whether he was writing articles or sermons or simply attending to his correspondence—we know from his diaries that about this time he began writing for publication.

Roberts began sending articles to the *Northern Christian Advocate* (often called simply the *Northern Advocate*), a weekly newspaper published in Auburn, New York. He noted in his diary on February 23, 1852: "Sent an article to the N.A. against Theological Schools, in reply to Prof. Vail."³ Sponsored jointly by the Genesee and East Genesee conferences, the *Northern Christian Advocate* was the voice of Methodism in upstate New York and the natural place for Roberts to send his earliest pieces. Edited by William Hosmer (1810-1889), the *Northern Christian Advocate* was at this time a strong voice for both revivalism and abolitionism. Hosmer was about to publish his attack on the notorious fugitive slave law, *The Higher Law in Its Relation to Civil Government; with Particular Reference to Slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law*.⁴ Roberts would be associated with Hosmer in writing and publishing over several years.

³Diary of B. T. Roberts, Feb. 23, 1852 (hereafter cited as BTRD).

⁴Auburn, NY: Derby & Miller, 1852. Hosmer authored several books, including *The Young Lady's Book; or Principles of Female Education* (1851) and *The Young Man's Book* (1852). In 1853 he published *Slavery and the Church* (Auburn, NY: William J. Moses) in which he argued, among other things, that "The exclusion of slavery [and slave-holding from the church] is essential to the evangelization of the world." Because of its significance for civil rights, Negro Universities Press (New York) republished Hosmer's *The Higher Law* in 1969 (204 pp.).

One of Roberts' earliest published writings was a report on the Portville camp meeting, south of Rushford near the Pennsylvania border, which he attended in July, 1852. The crowds grew to some 4,000 over the weekend of the camp; Roberts felt the camp meeting was "the most powerful meeting [he] ever attended."⁵ He immediately sent an account to the *Northern Christian Advocate*, signing it "Titus" (his middle name and his father's first name).

Roberts' report was published in the July 28, 1852, issue of the *Northern Christian Advocate*. He wrote, "The meeting commenced in the spirit, progressed in power, and closed in triumph." During the camp "the woods almost constantly reverberated with the cries of the saints, the groans of the penitent and the shouts of the redeemed." People were slain in the Spirit; "Strong men were shorn of their strength, and left as powerless as if they lay in the arms of death." Roberts then turned his report into an editorial, arguing that camp meetings were needed to cure Methodism's "prevailing tendency to formality." When many churches "say in effect to the rich 'sit thou here in this good pew for thou art able to pay for it' and to the poor 'here take this bench, or go get a seat in the gallery,' we are in danger of forgetting that in the presence of God, worldly distinctions are lost. But at the camp-meeting, the rich and poor meet together and feel as they cannot in many of our sanctuaries that 'the Lord is Maker of us all.'" Roberts concluded his report, "Long live camp-meetings!"⁶

Roberts' way with words was by now being recognized at the conference level. His diary shows that at times he played a major role in writing committee reports on various topics. At the 1852 session of the Genesee Conference he was elected to the Slavery Committee; he remarked in a letter to his wife Ellen that he was "very busy" writing its report, to be presented on the conference floor.⁷ The report, given on the last day of

⁵BTRD, July 14, 1852.

⁶"Titus" [B. T. Roberts], "Portville Camp Meeting," *Northern Christian Advocate* 12:30 (July 28, 1852), 1. See Zahniser, 49-50; Zahniser incorrectly gives the date of publication as July 20, 1852.

⁷B. T. Roberts to Ellen Roberts, Sept. 10, 1852. Quoted in Zahniser, 51.

conference, strongly denounced the Fugitive Slave Act, and was ordered to be published.⁸

In his biography of B. T. Roberts, C. H. Zahniser sets Roberts' early writings in the context of his year at Rushford:

It was in Rushford that his devotion appears to have been enhanced; the church there had progressed under his labors so that a recognition of his ability was given in his promotion [sic] to Buffalo; there his revival work became more marked; his rising criticism of formalism and his antipathy to the pew system were becoming evident; and also his power of literary endeavor was evidenced by his writings in the *Northern Christian Advocate*.⁹

Roberts' early articles were partly a reflection on his own pastoral experience and partly his response to developments he saw and read about in Methodism more broadly (and in the emerging larger American culture). Roberts had had a good year at Rushford; the congregation of about 220 was substantially revived, mainly through a stirring revival in January. He noted in his diary at the end of the conference year in September, "Our finances are in a good state. . . . All seem very anxious to build a new house [of worship]. This has been a prosperous year for this charge."¹⁰ About 40 new members were added, but since he had to remove the names of so many inactive members, he actually reported a statistical loss.

Roberts felt that while some of his members at Rushford were paying the cost of discipleship and living out biblical Christianity, others were settling into a compromised culture Christianity that was a betrayal of original Methodism with its discipline and plainness. The fact that one of his members, Sister Hathaway, had "put on her jewelry again" was one sign of the drift.¹¹

⁸Manuscript Minutes of the Genesee Conference, 1852, 114. The report was later published in the *Northern Christian Advocate* 12:39 (Sept. 29, 1852). The last item read: "Resolved 7. That we view the Fugitive Slave Law with painful solicitude, deep mortification and unutterable detestation as an enactment, too vile for any nation, Christian or Pagan, civilized or savage and that we cannot in any case assist in remanding a fellow-being to Slavery. [Signed:] J. H. Wallace, P. Woodworth, A. Steel, B. T. Roberts, G. Benedict."

⁹Zahniser, 52.

¹⁰BTRD, Sept. 4, 1852.

¹¹BTRD, Feb. 24, 1853.

At the 1852 annual conference in September, Roberts was appointed to the historic Niagara Street M.E. Church in Buffalo. He would serve one stormy year, his commitment to primitive Methodism clashing with the urbane, “fashionable” Methodism that was emerging in Buffalo, the busy terminus of the Erie Canal and gateway to the Great Lakes.

1853 *Northern Christian Advocate* Articles

In Buffalo, Roberts tried his usual strategy for renewing the church—holding a protracted series of revival meetings. He enlisted the services of the controversial “lay” evangelist John Wesley Redfield, who assisted Roberts in special meetings in January, 1853. Though the revival produced some fruit (including a spiritual breakthrough for Ellen Roberts), it provoked opposition from some influential members. The ensuing controversy led to Roberts being moved from Niagara Street to Brockport, New York, at the other (eastern) end of the conference, in the fall of 1853.¹²

Roberts reflected on his frustrating attempt at revival in Buffalo, and more broadly on his now four years as a Methodist preacher, in an important series of three articles written in February and March, 1853. Here Roberts assessed the health of Methodism as he perceived it.

Thursday, February 10—a cold, blustery day in Buffalo—Benjamin began his first article for the *Northern Christian Advocate*. It concerned “the State of the Church,” he noted in his diary.¹³ He quickly finished the 700-word article and sent it off to Hosmer at the *Northern Christian Advocate*. Soon he was at work on the second, which he finished and mailed on February 26.¹⁴ He completed his third article, about twice as long as the first, a month later. These analytical pieces, the first of this type Roberts had attempted, were published in the *Northern Christian Advocate* on February 16, March 9, and April 6, 1853.¹⁵ Zahniser notes

¹²There is not space here to narrate the rather complex story of the stymied January 1853 revival at Niagara Street, but it is covered fully in my biography of B. T. and Ellen Roberts.

¹³BTRD, Feb. 10, 1853.

¹⁴BTRD, Feb. 26, 1853.

¹⁵George Peck in *Early Methodism* notes, “An old rule of the Discipline prohibited a traveling preacher from publishing anything without first obtaining the leave of his conference,” and the Genesee Conference accordingly set up a committee in 1810 to deal with this matter (George Peck, *Early Methodism Within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828* [New York, NY: Carlton & Porter, 1860], 496). This rule had fallen by the wayside well before Roberts’ time, however, and it doesn’t appear Roberts sought anyone’s consent before publishing his pieces.

that these hard-hitting articles “were the first publications which brought the young pastor into conflict with his ministerial brethren.”¹⁶ The titles of Roberts’ articles indicate the scope of his concern:

“Genesee Conference—Its Prosperity, Its Decline”
 “Genesee Conference—Causes of Its Decline”
 “Causes of Religious Declension”

In the first article, Roberts began diplomatically by noting the prosperity of western New York and of Methodism in the region. The people generally, “moral, intelligent, and energetic,” are “rapidly increasing in wealth,” he noted. “Splendid mansions, elegantly furnished, rear their proud fronts, where but a few years ago stood the humble log house of the hardy pioneer. . . . The unmistakable evidences of an astonishing prosperity are everywhere apparent.” The area boasts “fertile meadows and well cultivated plains,” now traversed by railroads.¹⁷ This was an accurate picture of Buffalo and the surrounding area in the 1850s.

The Methodist Church also was prospering materially, Roberts observed. The Genesee Conference led the denomination in per-capita missions giving. “Our Church edifices are numerous, commodious, and some of them elegant.” Many of the churches have fine, well-appointed parsonages

But Roberts argued that this material prosperity masked serious spiritual decline. Conference statistics as reported in the published *Minutes* gave a disturbing picture. Population in the region had increased by twenty-five percent, or some 67,000, in the past decade, Roberts calculated. If Methodism had grown proportionately, the conference now would have over 15,000 members. But the actual total membership in 1852 was 11,312—about a thousand less than in 1842!¹⁸ “To have simply maintained our ground, we ought to have increased with the increase of the population,” he argued. And “to have only maintained our ground would have been failing of our duty.” He then elaborated, making his key point:

¹⁶Zahniser, 58. Zahniser refers however only to the first two of these three articles.

¹⁷B. T. Roberts, “Genesee Conference — Its Prosperity, Its Decline,” *Northern Christian Advocate* 13:7 (Feb. 16, 1853), 2.

¹⁸Roberts worked out some of these calculations in the “General Memoranda” section of his 1853 diary (p. 216).

The spirit of Christianity in general, and of Methodism in particular, is aggressive. Every disciple of Christ is bound to “gather with Him.” And who, if he had “*that mind which was in Christ*,” could not by the blessing of God, in the course of a year, bring at least one soul to the Savior? If every Christian *could* do this he is under *obligation* to do it. Hence the Church instead of diminishing in number should have “added to it daily of such as shall be saved.”

This great declension in numbers is *prima facie* evidence that our spiritual condition is not very good. We are a Conference low in spirituality. There is great want of the power and even of the form of godliness. In many and perhaps most of our charges, probably not one half of our members are enjoying justifying grace, according to the scriptural and the Methodist standard.¹⁹

Here was a serious charge—that probably less than half the Methodists in the conference were really Christians, according to Methodist standards. Roberts concluded his article in the tones of a biblical prophet, not nuanced to advance his ministerial career:

The Discipline is a dead letter. The Bible, where it forbids fashionable vices, and enjoins duties irksome to the carnal heart, is virtually repealed. The conscience is seared. Many living in open violation of God’s commands, profess to feel no condemnation. A tide of worldliness threatening to sweep away the boundaries between the Church and the world is setting in.

“There must be causes for the existence of this state of things,” Roberts wrote; he would address these in his next article.

The week after Roberts’ first article appeared in the *Northern Christian Advocate*, editor John Robie warned in his independent paper, the *Buffalo Christian Advocate*, “There is a spirit of religious fanaticism prevailing in some portions of Western New York, which, unless curbed, will work ruin in many churches. There will be more maniacs in the future than there have been!”²⁰ The comment may have been sparked partly by

¹⁹B. T. Roberts, “Genesee Conference—Its Prosperity, Its Decline.” Italics in the quoted material are in the original.

²⁰[John E. Robie,] editorial comment, *Buffalo Christian Advocate* 4:8 (Feb. 24, 1853), 2.

Roberts' article, though probably Robie principally had others in mind. But in an article on the same page entitled "A Great Moral Waste," Robie took direct aim at Roberts. He quoted a passage from Roberts' article in which Roberts said the conference was "low in spirituality" and was being engulfed in a "tide of worldliness." Robie commented, "As we are inclined to doubt, to some extent, at least, both the practicability and correctness of the writer's statements, we may be permitted to look at them a little hereafter."²¹ Translation: Roberts is wrong, and I will reply next week! Robie, a Methodist preacher and member of the Genesee Conference, had himself at times been critical of the spirituality of western New York Methodism, but he clearly felt Roberts had gone too far.

Roberts and Robie would have run into each other fairly frequently within the circles of Buffalo Methodism, and it may be that Roberts complained to Robie that the brief extract of his article that Robie printed missed Roberts' main point. In any case, in the following week's issue Robie published a longer extract, giving Roberts' analysis of Methodist statistics in comparison with population growth. Robie prefaced the quotation with this statement, which seems to hint at a complaint from Roberts or perhaps someone else: "We publish cheerfully, the following additional remarks from the communication of Rev. B. T. Roberts, an extract only of which we inserted last week. From the data herein contained, he drew his conclusions, which we considered at the time very objectionable."²²

Perhaps as a counterpoint to Roberts' argument, Robie followed the quoted extract with a brief item entitled "Revivals in this City" in which he commented favorably on "an interesting revival" in two Presbyterian churches and added that "in the Pearl and Swan st. [sic] Methodist churches, the revival influence has been enjoyed for some time past. In each, souls have been converted."²³ A week later he wrote about "Revivals in Western New York," suggesting that in the region "including the City of Buffalo there has never been a time of greater religious inter-

²¹[John E. Robie,] "A Great Moral Waste," *Buffalo Christian Advocate* 4:8 (Feb. 24, 1853), 2. Robie apparently intended the title "A Great Moral Waste" sarcastically.

²²[John E. Robie,] editorial comment, *Buffalo Christian Advocate* 4:9 (Mar. 3, 1853), 2.

²³[John E. Robie,] "Revivals in this City," *Buffalo Christian Advocate* 4:9 (Mar. 3, 1853), 2.

est than the present." Revivals were occurring in all the denominations. "Our columns might be filled with reports full of encouragement to the friends of Zion. . . . We shall greatly mistake if the present season does not witness the ingathering of thousands to the fold of the Church, and if the savor of life does not act more powerfully than ever on the morals and habits of the masses. It is the day of triumph."²⁴

Meanwhile, Roberts' second *Northern Christian Advocate* article appeared on Wednesday, March 9. Here Benjamin has one central thesis: The numerical decline in the Genesee Conference is due above all to "*the want of entire devotion in the ministry.*" Pastors and preachers are primarily responsible to see that Methodism fulfills its mission "to spread Scripture holiness over these lands," he said, so the lack of growth signals a failure in leadership.²⁵

Roberts began this article with a small correction in the statistics he reported earlier. But he restated his main point about Methodist decline in western New York relative to the overall population. Ten years ago, "*one person out of every twenty was a member of our Church, now only one out of every twenty-seven.*" Roberts acknowledged that multiple causes may have contributed to Methodism's failure to keep pace with population growth, but he was convinced that the chief factor was the failure of the ordained leadership.

People still remembered the Millerite excitement of ten years earlier, and that had affected church growth, Roberts suggested. William Miller, an unordained Baptist preacher, had predicted that Jesus Christ would return to earth within the year following March 21, 1843. This created great public excitement. As F. W. Conable noted in his history of the Genesee Conference, with "appeals of warning and alarm being circulated in various printed forms, and sounded in the ears of multitudes by public lectures, with huge, staring pictures of 'the great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads,' and other similar illustrations," it was little wonder that many should "be awakened to some concern for their souls."²⁶ Roberts acknowledged this but dis-

²⁴[John E. Robie,] "Revivals in Western New York," *Buffalo Christian Advocate* 4:10 (Mar. 10, 1853), 2.

²⁵B. T. Roberts, "Genesee Conference—Causes of Its Decline," *Northern Christian Advocate* 13:10 (Mar. 9, 1853), 2 (italics in the original).

²⁶F. W. Conable, *History of the Genesee Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, from its Organization . . . in 1810, to the Year 1872* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1876), 496.

counted it as a factor in the ten-year growth pattern of the conference. He noted, "In 1843 the minds of the people were greatly agitated by predictions of the speedy coming of the end of the world. A general religious interest was awakened. Multitudes were added to the Church. The increase for 1843, in what was then the Genesee Conference, was over six thousand."

Roberts cited Nathan Bangs recent book, *The Present State, Prospects, and Responsibilities of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (1850), to show that the vast majority of those added to the Methodist Church during the Millerite excitement had remained faithful.²⁷ There was no great falling away that could explain the relatively low numbers nine years later. Factors more internal to Methodism must be sought.

In his book Bangs had noted that, although there was some dip in membership after the Millerite excitement, still overall Methodist Episcopal membership in the U.S. grew from 1,068,525 in 1843 to 1,114,509 in 1849 (combining North and South). Methodists had increased from "one member for every sixty of the [U.S.] population" in 1795 to "at least one church-member to every twenty of the population." Bangs thus drew the opposite conclusion from Roberts. Despite "the hue and cry about the want of zeal and skill in the ministry, and the lukewarmness and backsliding of the membership," Methodism continued to grow, Bangs noted. "Instead, therefore, of lamenting over our deficiencies," Methodists should praise God that the church had continued to grow, without "any permanent departure from our ancient landmarks, either in doctrine, discipline, or practical piety."²⁸ But Bangs was speaking of American Methodism generally, while Roberts was describing the Genesee Conference only. Bangs' discussion is a reminder, however, that Roberts' was but one of many voices warning of Methodist declension. "Much has been written, of late, respecting the state and prospects of the Methodist Episcopal Church," Bangs noted, and some had argued that the church had "abused its trust" and was "no longer an agent in the hand of God for effecting good for the human family."²⁹ This, of course, was not Bangs' view.

²⁷See Nathan Bangs, *The Present State, Prospects, and Responsibilities of the Methodist Episcopal Church. With an Appendix of Ecclesiastical Statistics* (New York, NY: Lane & Scott, 1850).

²⁸Bangs, *The Present State*, 19-21.

²⁹Bangs, *The Present State*, 15.

Roberts argued that Methodist preachers were in fact failing in their trust. Methodist ministers are to preach and profess holiness. "Yet how few of us ever profess to have attained to this perfection of love. . . . Thus because we have not trod the way ourselves, we have not been able to lead the Church up the hills of difficulty to the fair plane of holiness." Using a military metaphor, Roberts argued that rather than the church effectively attacking "the world with our spiritual weapons," instead "the world has been the assailant." The result was a devastating tide of worldliness invading Methodism:

Splendid houses, elegant furniture, parties of pleasure, ornaments of gold, and costly apparel have been offered her sons and daughters, if they would cease to be "*a peculiar people, zealous of good works*," and the offer has been, in too many instances, accepted. And no wonder. Accredited ambassadors of Him who enjoined self-denial upon all his followers, have assured them, that they need not give up any of the elegancies of life, to aid in carrying on the mighty work of the redemption of the world, for the promoting of which, He who *was rich became so poor, that he had not where to lay his head*.

Methodist ministers "have allowed the Church to rest in winter quarters," Roberts charged, rather than taking up "the stern duties of a soldier of Christ." He concluded:

We have been raising monuments to the victories of our fathers, when we ought to have been achieving still greater conquests. We have, ourselves yielded to too great an extent, to the spirit of the world. Some of us have labored these years past, with greater success, in saving property, than in saving souls. For these things we are responsible. With a deeper spirituality, our example would have been better, our words would have been accompanied with greater power, and God would have worked mightily by us.³⁰

Roberts promised in a final article to discuss the "other causes" that had "contributed to this leading one" in bringing about Methodist decline.

In his references to accommodations to worldly fashions, Roberts perhaps had recent happenings in mind. The Niagara Street Church had

³⁰Roberts, "Genesee Conference—Causes of Its Decline." See the discussion in Zahniser, 58-61.

hosted a major denominational event, the celebration of the Methodist Missionary Society Anniversary, several weeks earlier, at the end of January. Coincidentally this missionary conference came right in the middle of the revival with Redfield. The primary focus of the Missionary Society initially had been missionary extension within the United States, but by 1853 the society had initiated work in Liberia, South America, Europe, and China, and the work of missions was being broadly promoted in the denomination. A main promotional tactic was to hold “Missionary Anniversary” rallies in various places. A number of denominational leaders came to Niagara Street for this event, including missionary secretary John Price Durbin, Bishop Edmund Janes, and Abel Stevens, now serving as Corresponding Secretary of the recently organized Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Niagara Street sanctuary was packed for the anniversary rally on Monday night, January 24. Bishop Janes, John Durbin, and Abel Stevens all spoke during the long service. Robie reported, “The church was crowded to its utmost capacity. A most happy state of feeling animated the large audience from the beginning. It was evident that the missionary fire was already in a blaze on the altars of devoted and philanthropic hearts.”³¹

John Wesley Redfield was present for the missionary rally and gave a less glowing report. He felt some of the speakers, including Bishop Janes, used the occasion to criticize the kind of Methodism he and Roberts were promoting. Redfield later wrote that Abel Stevens “made his hits by giving the straight way his special note of rebuke and declared to them that Christianity is not inconsistent with the luxuries or the Elegancies of life. [Meanwhile] old ministers sat nearby and seemed to enjoy the fun of hearing old Methodism put under foot.”³²

Stevens’ comments (as reported by Redfield) hint at a key issue. Redfield and Roberts strongly opposed the growing fashionableness and fashion consciousness of urban Methodists, which they saw as inconsistent with biblical holiness and a defection from genuine Methodism.

³¹[John E. Robie,] “Missionary Anniversary,” *Buffalo Christian Advocate* 4:4 (Jan. 27, 1853), 2. Robie gave a full account of this service and the related events.

³²Manuscript autobiography of John Wesley Redfield (1863), 315 (spelling corrected). The 425-page manuscript is housed at the Marston Memorial Historical Center, Indianapolis, IN.

Prominent and well-connected Methodists in Buffalo were eager to shed the plainness and boisterousness of traditional Methodism.³³ But for Roberts, this was a clear sign of dangerous compromise and spiritual decline.

Considering the timing of Roberts' articles, it is reasonable to assume that he was thinking of Abel Stevens and other Methodist leaders who spoke at Niagara Street during the Missionary Anniversary when he criticized the failure of Methodist preachers to uphold traditional Methodism doctrines and values. The most striking thing about Roberts' second article, however, is the reference to Jesus Christ as the one who was rich but became so poor that he had nowhere to lay his head—combining references to Luke 8:58 (or Matthew 8:20) and 2 Corinthians 8:9, one of Roberts' favorite texts. Roberts appeals not primarily to the doctrine of holiness but to the example of Christ. Genuine holiness is measured by the life and ministry of Jesus, and especially his identifying with the poor. This is a key theological point which will recur in Roberts' writing for years to come.

Roberts' third article, published on April 6, was much longer. Here Roberts proposed several causes of Methodist decline. He noted in his diary that this was "an article against pewed Churches," and that was in fact its main theme.³⁴ The 1500-word article appeared on page one of the *Northern Christian Advocate* under the title, "Causes of Religious Declension." Roberts argued that a main reason for Methodist decline was "*the prevailing custom of selling or renting the seats in our houses of worship.*" He continued:

Pewed churches are all the fashion. There are but few free Methodist churches in any of the villages, and none in the cities of Western New York. The consequence is, multitudes do not attend our ministry who otherwise would. The people are virtually shut out of our churches.³⁵

³³James Alan Revell, "The Nazirites [sic; i.e., Nazarites]: Burned-Over District Methodism and the Buffalo Middle Class," Ph.D. Diss., University of New York at Buffalo, 1993. See especially chapter 6, "Buffalo and the New Methodists: 'Taking Down the Barriers.'"

³⁴BTRD, Mar. 25, 1853.

³⁵B. T. Roberts, "Causes of Religious Declension," *Northern Christian Advocate* 13:14 (Apr. 6, 1853), 1 (emphasis in the original in this and subsequent quotations).

This is perhaps the first time Roberts used the phrase “free Methodist” church or churches in his published writing. Here it means, of course, church buildings whose seating is open to all without distinction, with no pews being reserved for those who had “bought” pews—that is, who paid an annual pew rental fee.³⁶

Roberts denounced the whole now-fashionable pew rental system. He argued that while some people “are too poor to buy a seat,” others stay away because “their American pride” does not permit them to “intrude upon privileges” purchased by others for cash. “Not owning a seat, they seldom visit the church. And when they do, they are not at home. They feel like intruders. They are liable to be turned out of the pew. Therefore they stay at home, or saunter about on the Sabbath. They do not hear our preaching, and are not saved by it.” Roberts, in other words, was concerned about reaching the unreached; Methodist leaders who promoted pew rentals to finance the church seemed concerned mostly about those already in the church.

In his first article Roberts had charged that in many Methodist churches less than half the members were really Christians. This problem is compounded by renting the pews, he wrote. “Unawakened pew-owners . . . are rarely converted.” He argued that renting and selling pews was really self-defeating. Methodists buy seats for their families, only to discover with time that “their children, who are to inherit” them, either become “indifferent to religion” or go to churches of other denominations that have grander buildings or better music. Pew rental plays into competition on worldly grounds—and here Methodists are simply bound to lose. With a bit of sarcasm but some sociological realism, Roberts wrote:

We cannot yet, in outside splendor and tinsel gewgaws, vie with older Churches. Our edifices are not as magnificent. The “performances” of our pulpit and orchestra do not exhibit as much artistical skill. But by aping them, we base our claims to

³⁶In contrast, when Roberts later established the first “Free Methodist Church” in the city of St. Louis, MO, “free” meant freedom for slaves and from slaveholding. “The First Free Methodist Church ever organized was in St. Louis, a slave-holding city, and at a time when slave-holders were freely admitted to the churches generally. Yet [the Free Methodists] made non-slaveholding a test of membership, prohibiting, as they have ever done, ‘the buying, selling, or holding a human being as a slave.’” *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Free Methodist Church* (Rochester, NY: Published by the General Conference, 1870), v-vi.

a hearing upon the same ground. The entertainment we offer is the same in kind, but poorer in quality.

The result, Roberts argued, is that “we neither keep our children nor save the people.” This is totally the wrong approach. A true church is built on fundamentally spiritual dynamics, not on fine buildings and professional music. “If the power of the Lord was manifest among us, . . . [then] old and young, rich and poor, would flock to our churches, not to admire the architecture and listen to the fine performances, *but to save their souls.*”

Roberts argued that pew rental also subtly undermined the church's zeal for winning people for Christ. Members become more concerned with gaining the well-to-do than with winning the masses. “They do not feel like laboring for the conversion of the poor, for these cannot be received into our Churches as brethren entitled to equal privileges with all.” Thus “there is not *always* joy in the Church on earth over *every* sinner that repenteth, but over the rich sinner coming into the Church there is great rejoicing.” The sad truth, Roberts argued, is this: “Rich men have become necessary to us.”

Roberts buttressed these arguments with the Scriptural indictment of showing partiality to the rich, quoting from the Letter of James. When “we bind ourselves by our hand and seal, to him who is able and willing to pay the most, to give him, his heirs and assigns forever, the undisputed and exclusive possession of the best seat in the house,” we violate God's Word. Roberts again appealed to the example of Jesus Christ. Jesus drove the “buyers and sellers” of sacrificial animals out of the temple. He asked: “*What would he have done if he had found them there selling by auction to the highest bidder parts of the temple itself?*”

Roberts linked pew rental to a growing tendency to value financial considerations over spiritual ones. If the pew system functions properly, the financial security of the church is secured. Then “we shall not need much religion to have, financially, a very pleasant and prosperous state of things. Instead of protracted meetings, we may then have social parties.” He added, in a dig at theological seminaries: “When this system shall be perfected, we shall only need a good establishment for the manufacturing to order, of genteel and graceful preachers, and the Church can then get along. . . without the agency or interposition of God.”

In this system, naturally the most prominent and valued preachers will be those who are expert financial managers. So Roberts argued:

. . . a Church sets the highest estimate on what she honors most. In our Conference, the reputation of possessing great financial ability is the highest to which a minister can attain. Piety, devotion to the work, and learning, are ranked below this.—The financier wields a controlling influence in all our councils. Whoever fails in this department, brings upon himself speedy and certain disgrace. We may preach from year to year without revivals. The Church may decline in spirituality under our labors. The discipline may not be enforced. *These failures will be passed by unnoticed. But let us fail in the collections, and we are compelled to answer for the default at the bar of Conference.* . . . The discipline does not make it our duty to obtain from the people any definite sum for any object. God does not promise us access to their purses. But the discipline does say that our one work is to save souls. And the word of the Lord says, “That he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” I would suggest, then, whether it would not be more appropriate to require every preacher who fails in being instrumental in the conversion of at least fifty souls, to answer for it at the bar of Conference.³⁷

Readers in the Genesee Conference could hardly read the above comment about financial experts “[wielding] a controlling influence in all our councils” without thinking particularly of Thomas Carlton (1808-1874), and perhaps of entrepreneur John Robie. Carlton, who had just recently replaced Ellen Roberts’ uncle George Lane as Methodist publishing agent in elections at the 1852 M.E. General Conference in Boston, was well known for his financial acumen. He would soon become a key figure behind the movement to oust Roberts from the church.³⁸

³⁷Roberts, “Causes of Religious Declension” (emphasis in the original). The printed text has “deportment” rather than “department” in the above quote, but this appears to be a typo—though “deportment” is possible.

³⁸Thomas Carlton, who moved from Buffalo to the New York City area upon his election as book agent, became more and more of a businessman. Toward the end of his life he served on the board of directors of the Shoe and Leather Bank (whose president was Methodist businessman and philanthropist Andrew Stout) and at the time of his death was treasurer of Elizabeth, New Jersey (across from Manhattan) where Carlton lived and near where he is buried. “Death of Rev. Dr. Carlton,” *Elizabeth Daily Journal* (Apr. 16, 1874).

Roberts concluded his article with this: "I do not write in a captious spirit. I love Methodism for what it has done, and what it is capable of doing. I do not think her mission is accomplished. She has not finished her work. But she is neglecting it. I would, if possible, aid in recalling her to the stern toils of the harvest field."

Reaction to Roberts' Articles

Roberts' rather inflammatory charges did not go unanswered. In his diary Roberts noted John Robie's comments in the February 24 *Buffalo Christian Advocate* (cited above); his first article "called forth some sneering remarks in the Buffalo Advocate," he wrote.³⁹ But that was only the beginning. On April 13 Richard Waite (1810-1897), an older preacher who had just been sent to pastor at Lima because of the death of the preacher there, published a response in the *Northern Christian Advocate*. Waite warned that Roberts' charges would injure both himself and the church, creating prejudice against the would-be prophet. With heavy sarcasm he added, "It is, however, a matter of gratitude that amid the general defection, there is one true man remaining, 'one true amid many false' who, 'having no fear but the fear of God' before his eyes, dares to reprove the general apathy, and like Luther and Wesley, strives to awaken the slumbering church."⁴⁰

Waite put a different spin on Methodist statistics. External factors explained the numerical decline in the Genesee Conference: the Millerite excitement; the California gold rush; and migration of many Catholics to the Genesee area due to the railroad boom. Such factors could mean that in a particular area, population "might outrun the church for a time." But this was no cause for alarm. In fact, within Methodism the Genesee Conference was the "Banner Conference in several respects" (which Roberts did not deny).⁴¹

Waite also attacked Roberts' credibility. How could Roberts, a "junior preacher" with only four years of experience, know enough of what was going on to make such sweeping generalizations? "What have been his opportunities for forming an intelligent opinion concerning the

³⁹BTRD, Feb. 26, 1853 (not Feb. 20, as in Zahniser, 58).

⁴⁰R. L. Waite, comment in the *Northern Christian Advocate* 13:15 (Apr. 13, 1853), 1. Quoted in Zahniser, 59. Zahniser has April 16, but that is incorrect since the *Northern Christian Advocate* was published on Wednesdays.

⁴¹Waite in the *Northern Christian Advocate*, as quoted in Zahniser, 60.

spiritual condition of the ninety circuits and stations within our bounds?" It was "preposterous . . . to indulge in these wholesale denunciations of the Church, concerning whose condition he knows so little." Roberts, of course, could form a fairly accurate picture from the tone of conference gatherings and his frequent conversations with other Methodist pastors, and he had long made a point of observing conditions in the conference and the denomination. Still, it is no doubt true, as Zahniser comments, that "Roberts' judgments were somewhat weighted with his Buffalo revival disappointment."⁴² Waite concluded: "The truth is, Bro. Hosmer, this hue and cry about declension and apostasy is all moonshine. The Genesee Conference is sound to the core."

Thus the issues were engaged. Clearly "a war was on in the Methodist press"⁴³—and had been, in fact, well before Roberts' articles. But Roberts did stir things up, especially in western New York. A February 21 letter from his parents in Gowanda, New York, may refer to reactions to his first article. The letter caused him "great uneasiness," Roberts wrote. "In trying to do good I have exposed myself to trouble."⁴⁴ Some of Roberts' articles were reprinted in the *Western Christian Advocate*, the Methodist paper published in Cincinnati. Methodist preacher John H. Wallace, who initially had helped out in the Redfield revival at Niagara Street, came to Roberts' defense in the May 11 issue of the *Northern Christian Advocate*.⁴⁵

In Mt. Holly, New Jersey, George Lane's wife Lydia saw the flurry of articles and was alarmed. She wrote to Ellen Roberts in June: "I see that Mr. Roberts is assailed on the right, and left, for his plain truth. I think it is wise in him to be silent." Yet (as she said in a later letter), based on her visits to Buffalo, she had to agree with Roberts' critique.⁴⁶

The Case for "Free Churches"

The debates continued over the next several years. In 1856, during the first of his two years as appointed preacher at Albion, Roberts pub-

⁴²Zahniser, 60.

⁴³Zahniser, 60. Zahniser interprets Roberts' second article as a response to Waite, but in fact the second article appeared before Waite's comments were published.

⁴⁴BTRD, Feb. 21, 1853.

⁴⁵Zahniser, 61-62.

⁴⁶Lydia B. Lane to Ellen Roberts, June 2 and July 19, 1853. Cited in Zahniser, 61-62.

lished another series of three articles in the *Northern Christian Advocate*. As pastor at Albion Roberts' platform was a fairly prominent one; the Albion M.E. Church was the fifth largest in total membership in the conference and third largest in full members (230 full members at the end of the 1856-1857 conference year).⁴⁷

This 1856 series of articles, all bearing the title "Free Churches," was written a little more than a year before Roberts penned "New School Methodism." The articles are significant both because they further document the developments leading to Roberts' ecclesiastical trials in 1857 and 1858 and because here Roberts provides a more comprehensive argument in favor of "free churches" than he does in "New School Methodism."

The articles appeared in the April 23, April 30, and May 14, 1856, issues of the *Northern Christian Advocate*.⁴⁸ These were some of the last issues of the *Northern Christian Advocate* that Hosmer edited before he was replaced as editor because of his outspoken abolitionism. In these "Free Churches" articles Roberts argued on biblical, theological, and practical grounds against renting and selling pews. Partly the issue was simply good stewardship—and thus of discipleship and spirituality. "Let every one give as in apostolic days, according to his circumstances, and the Church can be far more easily sustained than under the pew system," he argued. "An average of 10 cts. per member, per week, would amount in a Church numbering 200, to over \$1000 per annum."⁴⁹

The three articles are particularly good examples of Roberts' style and his reasoning. Roberts unconsciously employs all the elements of the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. The first article appeals especially to tradition, reason, and experience, while the second and third are based primarily on Scripture. Roberts says, for example, in the first article, "But we are not left to mere reasoning. However conclusive that might be, actual experience is far more reliable."

These articles apparently were prompted in part by an article entitled "Free Churches" that Roberts had found in the October 1855 issue of *The*

⁴⁷*Minutes*, Genesee Conference, 1856, 1857. In 1857 the largest church in the Genesee Conference in total membership was the prosperous Grace Church, Buffalo, with 351 members. Albion had a total membership of 257.

⁴⁸Roberts' handwritten manuscripts of these articles are found in the B. T. Roberts Family Papers (Microfilm Reel 11, Frames 2-21).

⁴⁹B. T. Roberts, "Free Churches," *Northern Christian Advocate* 16:17 (April 23, 1856), 4.

Church Review. This article, which discussed the practice of pew rental in the Episcopal Church, provided much of the ammunition for Roberts' own pieces.⁵⁰ Based on *The Church Review* article, Roberts noted that many Episcopal "houses of worship have been made free, in accordance with resolutions passed by their Conventions," and with good results. He cited several examples from the article and noted: "These facts show conclusively, that even in the Episcopal Church, the expenses of public worship can be better met under the free than under the pew system. How much more among us, with our liberal Evangelism and doctrine of Entire Consecration!"⁵¹

But Roberts argued more fundamentally that the selling or renting of pews had "always been contrary to the economy of our Church." Over time "the spirit of the world has encroached upon us" so that now "in all this region, I do not know of a single free church in any of the cities or larger villages." Roberts, however, was "thoroughly convinced that this system is wrong in principle, and bad in tendency. It is a gross corruption of Christianity." He felt this very deeply:

I beg the indulgence of expressing myself strongly. I cannot adopt the cautious language of doubt, for I have no misgivings. I do not believe merely, that there should be free churches; but that all churches should be free. Not merely that some unmarketable seats should not be rented or sold, but that no seat in the house of God should be rented or sold.

Roberts advanced several arguments: Voluntary offerings were actually more effective in meeting expenses than was the pew system; pew rental or sale introduced "a certain degree of social distinction" in the church; "Voluntary contributions for the support of the ordinances of religion" is the biblical and traditional way—all points made also in the *Church Review* article. Roberts cited Lutheran church historian Johann Mosheim on the way the early Christians combined praying with giving, so that both the church's ministers were sustained and the poor were fed. "We have gained little and lost much by the unnatural divorce of praying

⁵⁰See "Free Churches," *The Church Review* 8:3 (Oct. 1855), 352-366. Unsigned, the article was probably written by the editor, Nathaniel Smith Richardson. It is a review article of several books or pamphlets and published sermons which opposed or discussed pew rental in the Episcopal Church.

⁵¹B. T. Roberts, "Free Churches," *Northern Christian Advocate* 16:17 (Apr. 23, 1856), 4.

and giving," Roberts contended. Now people give very disproportionately, and for the wrong reasons. "The distribution of the burden is very unequal. Let every one give as in apostolic days, according to his circumstances, and the Church can be far more easily sustained than under the pew system." Here Roberts cited data from the Episcopal Church study.

Roberts concluded, "Thus is the plea of the necessity for pewed churches completely overthrown," even though the system is often urged with great "pertinacity." "From what we sometimes hear, it would seem as if some supposed that the great object of building a church is that it may be like a theatre, a paying concern."

In his second article Roberts' argument is essentially a biblical one. "Several precepts of the Bible plainly require that the house of the Lord should be free for all who may wish to assemble there for purposes of worship," he began. The pew system can't be supported without "great violence . . . to the Scriptures." Arguments for the pew system, as for polygamy or slavery, amount to "perversions of the Divine record."⁵²

Roberts emphasized his thesis statement: "*The Pew system is condemned in all those passages that forbid the paying of respect to persons.*"⁵³ Though several such passages "readily recur to the mind," he cited specifically only James 2:1-10, which he quoted in full. With its prohibition of showing partiality to the rich, this had become the key text for opponents of renting and selling pews.⁵⁴

The remainder of Roberts' article drew out the implications of this passage. To provide better seating for those "whose appearance indicates wealth and pride" than for the poor clearly is sin. "Sin does not cease to be sin because it is reduced to a system and committed unblushingly," Roberts asserted. Whenever "pews are rented or sold, 'the brethren' virtually say, whoever is able and willing to pay the most, shall have the best seat permanently, for the exclusive use of himself and his family." Even if he is morally corrupt—"an atheist or an infidel, a gambler or a libertine"—it makes no difference. "He has the money, the one thing needful to secure peculiar privileges in a pewed house of worship."

⁵²The reference to polygamy here may have been prompted by the rise of and controversy over Mormonism.

⁵³B. T. Roberts, "Free Churches," *Northern Christian Advocate* 16:18 (Apr. 30, 1856), 4 (italics in the original).

⁵⁴The *Church Review* article quotes James 2:1-6, 8-9 (p. 355).

Thus the whole pew-rental system clearly violates Scripture. It necessarily requires “respect of persons.” Ushers seating the congregation know that “it will not do to put plainly dressed persons into the pews of those aspiring to ‘social position.’ Though the Church be not more than half filled, more or less difficulty is always experienced in seating the congregation, so as not to offend the owners of pews.” The teaching in James 2 clearly proscribed the renting of pews, Roberts concluded. “Explain away the force of this portion of Revealed truth, and you may with the same facility make any other portion of the word of God ‘of none effect through your traditions.’”⁵⁵

Roberts’ third “Free Churches” article was brief but in some ways the most telling. Significantly, he based it directly on the example and teaching of Jesus. “*We are forbidden to make the house of God a house of merchandise*,” he began.⁵⁶ He based his argument on Jesus’ cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem—one of the few incidents in Jesus’ life found in all four Gospels, he noted. He quoted John 2:13-16, which concludes, “Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise.” This argument was perhaps suggested to Roberts by the *Church Review* article which similarly made the connection between Jesus’ cleansing of the temple and pew renting and quoted John 2:16.

“To the worst of sinners, the Savior was usually mild and forbearing,” Roberts noted. “Of all the sins that [Jesus] witnessed, one sin only aroused his holy indignation to acts of violence”—buying and selling in the temple. Roberts gives a brief exegesis of this incident, noting that the animals bought and sold were all “lawful articles of traffic” and “indispensable to the Temple service.” He explained:

All this trade was intended to facilitate religious worship. It was carried on with decency and propriety. But the Savior would not tolerate it, however good the intention. He made a scourge of small cords, and by force drove out these buyers and sellers. What would he have done if he had found them selling off parts of the temple itself, by auction, to the highest bidder?—Would the traffic in pews, in the house of his Father, have excited his indignation less than did the traffic in sacrifices? . . . Pews are

⁵⁵B. T. Roberts, “Free Churches,” *Northern Christian Advocate* 16:18 (Apr. 30, 1856), 4.

⁵⁶B. T. Roberts, “Free Churches,” *Northern Christian Advocate* 16:20 (May 14, 1856), 4 (italics in the original).

offered for sale in the market, and advertised in the newspapers, the same as dry goods and groceries. Church stock rises in value as religion becomes fashionable, and the minister of the Gospel, popular among the proud and aspiring.

This example of Christ could not have been recorded by the four Evangelists to prevent the repetition of the particular offence that he thus strongly condemned, for He knew that the temple would soon be destroyed, and its typical ceremonials be abolished forever. Had his prophetic eye looked down through the vista of succeeding centuries, and rested upon the pew system, the latest corruption of the religion He established, He could hardly have condemned it more strongly than by the words and the accompanying action, "*Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.*"

Thus Roberts concluded his three-part attack on the pew-rental system and the merchandising of the gospel. Though he would return to the "free church" issue a year or so later in "New School Methodism," these three pieces present his most cogent and detailed attack on the renting and selling of pews.

Conclusion

Three concluding observations may help put Roberts' early articles in broader perspective. First, these articles show that Roberts' two-part "New School Methodism" essay, which led to his trials and expulsion from the Methodist Episcopal Church, was the culmination of a sustained critique that Roberts had been making over a period of years. From the perspective of influential Genesee Conference preachers such as Carlton and Waite, "New School Methodism" was simply the last straw.

Second, the theological basis for Roberts' opposition to the pew-rental system is significant. Although he raises several issues—stewardship, fidelity to Scripture, and church-growth strategy (what today might be called seeker sensitivity)—his principal argument is Christological: The example and teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels. He sounds much like an early Anabaptist with this strong "following of Jesus Christ" motif. Though Roberts was an advocate of Wesleyan theology and specifically of the doctrine of entire sanctification, the heart of his theology was not so much Christian perfection as it was the following of Jesus—the source of Christian perfection. Roberts believed (as his later writings also show) that authentic holiness is found in the faithful following of Jesus

Christ, made possible in believers' lives through the sanctifying energy of the Holy Spirit. Key to such holiness was ministry to and among the poor, because this is what Jesus did and taught us to do. This is genuine holiness.

Finally, it is important to note the cultural and sociological meaning of Roberts' early critique of Methodism. However one evaluates Roberts' arguments (and his language), he was largely correct in his analysis of the shifts occurring within American Methodism. Gilbert Haven, editor of *Zion's Herald* and an older classmate of Roberts at Wesleyan University, acknowledged as much in 1871 (the year before he was elected Methodist bishop). Comparing the Methodism of around 1830 with the situation several decades later, Haven wrote, "The Methodists were not then, as now, rich and influential."⁵⁷

A century later, in 1992, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark analyzed this shift sociologically in their book, *The Churching of America 1776-1990*. Finke and Stark underscore the significance of Roberts' critique. B. T. Roberts was "entirely correct that the Methodists in 1850 were no longer the church of the Wesleys or of Bishop Asbury." It was true that "the glory of the Methodist 'miracle' was not based on appealing to the 'proud and fashionable,'" just as Roberts argued. Though Finke and Stark believe Roberts "was wrong to suppose that he could generate a return to higher tension Methodism," yet his protest was on target, and the formation of the Free Methodist Church in 1860 was "a valid portent of troubles to come."⁵⁸ Roberts had put his finger on a major shift within Methodism, these sociologists argue. The controversy Roberts provoked in western New York was evidence and symptom of broader changes within the denomination.

The underlying issue in Roberts' critique of Methodism was the question: What does fidelity to the gospel of Jesus Christ mean for the church during times of growing denominational success and social acceptance, and of rapid social and cultural change? This is essentially the issue Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon addressed in their 1989 book, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*.⁵⁹ It is a perennial issue, still with us in 2004.

⁵⁷Gilbert Haven and Thomas Russell, *Father Taylor, The Sailor Preacher* (1871), 107. Republished with additional material as *Life of Father Taylor, The Sailor Preacher* (Boston, MA: Boston Port and Seamen's Aid Society, 1904).

⁵⁸Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 152-153.

⁵⁹Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989).

PARTING WAYS: THE SEPARATIST IMPULSE IN THE THEOLOGY OF ORANGE SCOTT

by

Timothy L. Wood

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

2 Corinthians 6:17

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment.

1 Corinthians 1:10

Few events in the history of American Christianity have challenged the witness of the church like the existence of slavery. As the debate over slavery in the United States intensified in the decades before the Civil War, the Methodist Episcopal Church found itself increasingly divided on the issue. In many respects, Methodists in the early nineteenth century were hostages to their own success. Despite John Wesley's well-known opposition to human bondage, Methodism spread quickly across the American South, becoming ever more tolerant of slavery as it grew. As the Methodist Episcopal Church struggled to remain a viable institution in both the North and the South, church leaders sought theological compromise to defuse mounting sectional tensions. On the highly volatile question of slavery, many church leaders believed that future Methodist unity depended on their success in silencing abolitionist elements within the

church and cultivating a theology that stopped well short of condemning southern racial assumptions, labor practices, and economic institutions.

The accommodation of official Methodist doctrine to the institution of chattel slavery in the South presented an urgent challenge to Methodist abolitionists. For Orange Scott, a Methodist Episcopal minister who left that denomination in order to found the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in 1842, the solution to that moral dilemma lay in complete separation from the mother church. In tracing the roots of Scott's separatist theology, four factors emerge which reveal much about the tensions that abounded within Methodism in the first decades of the nineteenth century. In many ways, Scott stood as a legitimate theological heir of John Wesley. First and foremost, Scott followed Wesley's example in developing a biblically based system of social ethics that challenged Methodism's acceptance of American slavery. Secondly, like the Methodist founder, Scott believed in a direct link between personal holiness and social responsibility, arguing that people could not expect to experience the power and grace of God in their lives while turning a blind eye to the sufferings of other human beings.

On the other hand, Scott embraced a deeply Americanized view of the nature of the church and its authority. The founder of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection envisioned a church that conformed to both the pattern of primitive Christianity and the principles of American democracy. By combining those four ideas into a call for separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church, Scott demonstrated that, even seventy years after Methodism was first planted in America, no "Wesleyan consensus" existed regarding the most pressing moral question of that generation. Instead, the reality of slavery forced Scott and his colleagues to strike a new balance between the interests of Christian unity and the believer's call to bear witness against evil.

Life and Times

Orange Scott was born in Brookfield, Vermont, on February 13, 1800. Like many Yankee farmers before them, the Scotts struggled to eke out a living in the rocky soil of upper New England. Certainly, it was no secret to most New Englanders that agricultural conditions in the region were less than optimal. Long, cold winters guaranteed a short growing season, and a rugged, mountainous terrain made good farmland scarce. However, the early nineteenth century ushered in a time of profound demographic transformation in rural New England, fueled by new options for

those willing to look elsewhere for greater prosperity. For those with the resources to uproot themselves and start over by purchasing land in the Midwest, the fertile farmlands of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois beckoned. Many others abandoned agriculture altogether and sought to make a new life in the textile mills that sprang up in New England's growing cities.

Nevertheless, such opportunities proved to be either undesirable or unobtainable for many of New England's poorest families. Although they lacked the financial wherewithal to purchase their own land (either in Vermont or on the frontier), Orange Scott's family continued to shun industry in favor of agriculture. As the oldest of eight children, Orange's family expected him to shoulder a great deal of responsibility for the well-being of his younger siblings. Consequently, both Orange and his father supported the family by hiring themselves out as farm hands. However, the busy work schedule left little time for school. In fact, by 1820 Scott had received only a mere thirteen months of formal education.

By his own later admission, Scott's upbringing was also largely irreligious. Often embarrassed by his inability to afford nice clothes, Scott generally avoided church as a young man. However, as he grew into adulthood, Scott's mind increasingly turned to spiritual matters. As he later recalled:

I was alone, at work in the field, when the whole subject of religion presented itself to my mind. I reflected upon the object of my existence; upon God; upon eternity; upon my numerous sins; upon the uncertainty of life; and upon the awful consequences of being found unprepared when God should call me away.

Even at that early stage in Scott's spiritual journey, he already displayed an acute appreciation for humanity's capacity for sin. He continued:

I had never had the slightest temptation to be a Universalist. I always believed that the evil doer would be rewarded according to his evil deeds. I do not recollect having at any time, a disposition to excuse or palliate my crimes. I knew that I justly deserved to be damned if I died in my sins.¹

Spurred on by that realization, Scott undertook an intensive regimen of daily prayer and Bible study. Soon after, he began to attend church regularly, where he sought earnestly the salvation of his soul. In September,

¹Orange Scott, *The Life of Rev. Orange Scott.*, ed. Lucius C. Matlack (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 7.

1820, Scott attended a series of revival meetings in Barre, Vermont. After listening to many sermons and engaging in much fervent prayer, he later recalled, “it was on this consecrated spot, and on this holy occasion, that I was enabled to surrender all to God, take Christ without reserve, trust him with all my ransomed powers, and find peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost!”²

After his conversion, Scott realized that his life was about to take off in a dramatically new direction. As he later remarked, “it was but a few weeks after my conversion before I felt it would be my duty to call sinners to repentance.”³ By the end of 1821 the Methodist Episcopal Church had granted Scott his license to preach, and he began his ministerial career as an itinerant preacher covering a circuit of about two hundred miles. In 1824 the church ordained Scott as a deacon, and in 1830 he was promoted to presiding elder. Throughout that same period, Scott worked and studied strenuously in an effort to supplement his meager education, improve his preaching, and become fluent in the theological and political issues of his day.

As Scott pursued his studies, he became increasingly interested in the question of slavery in antebellum America. Indeed, Scott’s conversion to abolitionism marked a second major turning point in his life. As a young pastor in New England during the 1830s, Scott witnessed firsthand much of the heated debate over slavery and the place of African-Americans within U.S. society. During that period, Scott was exposed to two major arguments concerning slavery. The first argument centered on the issue of colonization. Advocates of this position sought gradual emancipation of the slaves, at which point the newly freed individuals would be encouraged to leave the United States and settle in Africa.

Abolitionist thought represented the second position. Abolitionists argued for the immediate release of the slaves without compensation to their owners or imposing requirements that freedmen leave the country. Scott spent much of the year 1833 exploring both sides of the issue, but found himself increasingly drawn to the writings of abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison. In comparison, colonization schemes seemed to be a thinly veiled attempt “to get rid of free people of color.”⁴ By the following year Scott planted himself firmly within the abolitionist camp.

²Ibid., 9.

³Ibid., 10.

⁴Orange Scott, *An Appeal to the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1938), 108.

The campaign against slavery played a central role in Scott's ministry for the remainder of his life. Throughout the mid-1830s he spoke out forcefully against slavery, often drawing the personal scorn of those whom he opposed. In 1836 Scott's bishop informed him that, unless he kept silent on the issue of slavery, he could not be reappointed as a presiding elder. In response, "I told him plainly that I could not pledge where conscience was concerned. Of course, I was rejected."⁵ That same year Scott's opponents within the church charged him with telling "palpable falsehoods" in an anti-slavery speech before the Methodist General Conference. After his home conference investigated the matter, they pronounced Scott's "character for truth and veracity" to be "fair and unimpeached." In 1838 the church hierarchy accused him of using "coarse and disrespectful language" when referring to his pro-slavery opponents within the church—especially his superiors. He was acquitted of those charges as well.⁶

Nevertheless, by the 1840s such recriminations had pushed relations between Scott and the Methodist hierarchy to the breaking point. In 1842 Scott, along with his ministerial colleagues Jotham Horton, Luther Lee, and Laroy Sunderland, publicly withdrew from the Methodist Episcopal Church and founded a new organization known as the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. First and foremost, this new denomination committed itself wholly and without reservation to abolitionism and other social reform movements. The Wesleyans also developed their own distinctive church polity by eliminating the position of bishop, increasing the voice of the laity in church affairs, and giving each conference the right to elect its own president.⁷ In 1843 Scott became editor of a weekly newspaper known as *The True Wesleyan*, where he kept readers updated on the

⁵Scott, *Life*, 37.

⁶Ibid., 40-41; Scott, *Appeal*, 50-51.

⁷James E. Kirby, *The Episcopacy in American Methodism* (Nashville, Tennessee: Kingwood Press, 2000); Lucius C. Matlack, *The History of American Slavery and Methodism from 1780 to 1849; and History of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America* (New York, 1849), 336-337; Douglas M. Strong, "Partners in Political Abolitionism: The Liberty Party and the Wesleyan Methodist Connection," *Methodist History* 23 (January 1985): 99-115; Herman E. Thomas, "Abolition and the Wesleyan Methodist Connection in America," *The A.M.E. Zion Quarterly Review* 111 (January 1999): 18-29. For an analysis of the motives of Scott's colleague Luther Lee, see William C. Kostlevy, "Luther Lee and Methodist Abolitionism," *Methodist History* 20 (January 1982): 90-103.

growth of the new church and continued his crusade against slavery, and not infrequently, alcohol.

However, just as Scott reached the apex of his career as a minister and social reformer, his health began to wane. The founder of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection had battled physical illness throughout much of his adult life. While on a preaching tour of Massachusetts during the early 1830s he had suffered from a “numb palsy” (probably a mild stroke) whose symptoms included partial paralysis, numbness across half his body, impaired vision, difficulty in speaking and thinking clearly, and severe headaches.⁸ Shortly after his withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church, his health once again began to fail. In 1844 Scott was elected president of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, but declined the honor due to illness. During the last years of Scott’s life, he struggled to remain active in the church even while most of his strength was sapped by his battle against “pulmonary consumption.” Ultimately, Orange Scott died of tuberculosis on July 31, 1847.

Separatism: A Theoretical Vindication

Separatism plays a central role in understanding the career of Orange Scott. Since its inception in the eighteenth century, Methodism had contained a latent separatism. John Wesley’s Methodist movement had always remained officially within the confines of the Church of England, while at the same time departing farther and farther from Anglican doctrine and discipline, especially when it came to liturgical irregularities, the use of lay preachers, and Wesley’s practice of ordaining his own ministers. Historian Frank Baker has emphasized Wesley’s separatist tendencies:

Most impartial observers would agree that long before 1784 John Wesley had effectively separated from the Church of England by founding a closely-knit “connexion” of preachers and societies administering vast properties subject to no Anglican oversight except that of one priest with no official cure of souls and sitting very loose to episcopal authority. In 1784 he had legally incorporated this connexion to ensure its continuance under similar non-parochial, non-diocesan control. . . . All these things—and more—witnessed to a rift between Wesley and the Established Church.⁹

⁸Scott, *Life*, 26-27.

⁹Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1970), 283.

However, Wesley always denied charges of separatism, and professed the deepest loyalty to the Anglican church—at least as he defined it. To defend his position, Wesley referred critics back to the Thirty-nine Articles, which defined the visible church of Christ as simply “a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered.”¹⁰ As historian Henry D. Rack commented:

This conveniently ignored the whole question of establishment, canon law, and so on. They were then free to assert that membership and zeal for the church was a matter of upholding Christian truth and life; they were to obey the bishops only in “things indifferent” and they did not separate so long as they preached the church’s doctrines and attended its worship. . . . So far as [the Church of England’s] defective spiritual courts and worship and the like are concerned, one need only “leave the evil and keep the good.”¹¹

Despite the considerable organizational independence that the Methodists displayed in their relations with the Anglican church, Wesley continued to be a strong advocate of Christian unity. In his sermon “On Schism,” Wesley reminded his listeners that:

To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love. It is the nature of love to unite us together; and the greater the love, the stricter the union. . . . It is only when our love grows cold, that we can think of separating from our brethren. The pretences for separation may be innumerable, but want of love is always the real cause.¹²

As for his own Methodists, Wesley proclaimed that “they are not a sect or party; they do not separate from the religious community to which they at first belonged; they are still members of the church; — such they desire to live and die.”¹³ In Wesley’s worldview, separation stood as a desperate last resort in resolving conflict between Christians, and he urged his fol-

¹⁰John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1991), 6:396.

¹¹Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 293, 297.

¹²Wesley, 6:406.

¹³*Ibid.*, 7:278.

lowers not to forget their scriptural duty to maintain the bonds of fellowship.

Wesley's stance on schism presented a steep obstacle to Orange Scott and his embryonic Wesleyan movement. There can be no doubt that Scott was an ardent admirer of Wesley. In fact, Scott once described Wesley as "one of the most perfect examples of Christian sacrifice and liberality" who "soared like the noble eagle, far above all worldly considerations."¹⁴ Thus, Scott understood that in order to remain true to Wesley's theological legacy, he must articulate reasons for his separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church that fit within Wesley's system of divinity. To that end, Scott devised a triple defense for the necessity of separation, arguing that Christians could be forced out of a church by its blatant sinfulness, that sectarianism had often proved healthy for Christianity in the long run, and that a mandate for ridding the church of sin was implied in Biblical passages relating to excommunication.

First of all, the founder of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection sought to demonstrate that sometimes separatism was the lesser of two evils. Fortunately for Scott, even Wesley had recognized that sometimes separation might be unavoidable—to deny that fact would amount to a repudiation of the entire Protestant tradition. Instead, as Wesley remarked in his sermon "On Schism":

If I could not continue united to any . . . society, Church, or body of Christians without committing sin. . . , I should be under an absolute necessity of separating from that society. And in all these cases of separation, with all the evils consequent upon it, would not lie upon me, but upon those who constrained me to make that separation, by requiring of me such terms of communion as I could not in conscience comply with.¹⁵

In Scott's eyes, such a moment had arrived within the Methodist Episcopal Church. In announcing his departure from the church, Scott remarked:

When a church requires its members to do something forbidden by the word of God, or places them in circumstances in which they cannot do what God's word enjoins, or must do what his word forbids them, then . . . they are not only free to

¹⁴Scott, *Life*, 251.

¹⁵Wesley, 6:409.

withdraw from that church, but are bound by the law of the Most High to do it. . . ; and the ruinous effects of separation . . . lie all at the door of the church. We cannot stay in a pro-slavery church without doing what God's word forbids, and leaving undone what it enjoins; hence . . . we are bound to leave such churches.¹⁶

Secondly, Scott pointed out that denominationalism had been instrumental in reawakening believers to neglected aspects of Christian truth. In fact, by the early 1800s the sectarian impulse had strengthened rather than weakened America's religious life. Scott contended that "there is nothing in the idea of a sect either unreasonable or unscriptural." Despite the unorthodox opinions espoused by some denominations, Scott ultimately welcomed an atmosphere where churches competed freely against one another in the marketplace of ideas. He argued that "though the present is an age of speculations and ultraisms—yet it is an age of independent investigation; and the grand tendency of the whole is favorable to the dissemination of free and liberal principles." When evaluating the pros and cons of separation, Scott offered the following advice:

I would guard you . . . against two errors. . . . One is an idolatrous worship of sect, and the other is that opposite to, and fear of sect, which results in the uprooting of all church organizations. The medium is the true scriptural ground. The doctrine of "the church!" "the church! "the holy mother!" is scarcely less dangerous than those leveling principles which would sweep all ecclesiastical organizations from the land.¹⁷

And again:

The distribution of the Christian world into sects has achieved incalculably more good than it has inflicted injury; —that the rudest conflicts of a militant theology are preferable to the hollow peace of a universal thralldom. . . . Discussion multiplies the chances of truth, diffuses the thirst of knowledge, leads forth reason from the mist, converts prejudice into conviction, and gives to dead faith a moral and operative power.¹⁸

¹⁶Orange Scott, *The Grounds of Secession from the M.E. Church* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 90.

¹⁷Scott, *Life*, 255-256.

¹⁸*The True Wesleyan*, April 4, 1843.

Finally, Scott suggested that biblical passages urging excommunication of immoral members from the church could also be construed in ways that might vindicate separatism. Citing such New Testament passages as 1 Corinthians 5 and Matthew 18:15-17, Scott stated:

If it be wrong to remain in church relation with a corrupt individual, which must be true if the church is bound to expel corrupt individuals, it cannot be right to remain in church relation with a greater number of individuals that are equally corrupt. The duty of expulsion rests upon the obligation to separate ourselves from sinners, and as this obligation cannot be lessened by increasing the number of the corrupt to a majority, it follows . . . that when a majority of any religious community become guilty of what ought to exclude an individual, the minority are under the obligation to secede.¹⁹

Simply lacking the numerical power to remove evil from the confines of the church did not give genuine Christians the freedom to assimilate themselves into an organization that had laid aside its Christian witness. As Scott pointed out, “when the church spreads her fold so wide as to enclose sinners, she loses her identity, and her distinctive character is merged with the common character of the world.”²⁰ When faced with a decision between leaving a church that had abdicated its divine mission or keeping silent in the face of sin, Scott argued that the true servant of God must always choose the former.

Justification of the 1842 Schism

Having put forth his case for the appropriateness of separatism in the abstract, Scott still faced the daunting task of demonstrating that his withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1842 was justified. In order to achieve that goal, Scott understood that he must first defy centuries of theological opinion to the contrary and convincingly demonstrate that slavery was a moral evil. In attacking slavery as a sin, Scott demonstrated how in-step he remained with Wesley’s code of social ethics. Decades earlier, Wesley himself had asked:

. . . has any man living a right to use another as a slave? It cannot be, even setting Revelation aside. . . . Liberty is the right

¹⁹Scott, *Grounds*, 67.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 66.

of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; and no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature.²¹

Indeed, Scott enthusiastically echoed Wesley in his insistence that slavery was fundamentally wrong. Scott contended:

The principle of slavery. . . is morally wrong, —or, in other words, that it is a sin. The principle. . . aside from all circumstances, is evil, only evil, and that CONTINUALLY! I said, no hand could sanctify it—no circumstances could change it from bad to good. It was a reprobate—too bad to be converted—not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, could be. . . . If any circumstances could justify the right of property in human beings—then we had only to change some of the circumstances with which slavery is connected, and it becomes universally right—so in that case, the sin would be in the circumstances.²²

To that end, Scott readily undertook the task of reminding the Methodist Episcopal Church of the biblical case against slavery. In examining the Old Testament, Scott recognized a number of precepts that, if obeyed, would seem to close the door on slavery. To Scott, slavery contained elements of theft (Exodus 20:15, Ezekiel 18:4), covetousness (Exodus 20:17, Isaiah 57:17), oppression (Proverbs 14:31, Jeremiah 7:6-7), and man-stealing (Exodus 21:16, Deuteronomy 24:7).

Turning next to the New Testament, Scott cited several instances where the practice of slavery seemed to be in direct contradiction to the spirit of the gospel. He argued that slavery was completely incompatible with Christian kindness (Matthew 25:35-46, Hebrews 13:3). He further recognized that if the New Testament's advice to masters and slaves was explicitly followed, it would create such an awareness of the slave's rights and human dignity that it would become virtually impossible to claim property in another human being (1 Corinthians 7:21, Colossians 4:1). Scott recognized the many instances in the Bible in which slavery is implicitly condemned by using it as a metaphor to describe sin (Galatians 4:3, John 8:32). Scott clearly believed that slavery was diametrically opposed to the idea of Christian love and the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12,

²¹Wesley, 11:79.

²²Scott, *Appeal*, 52.

John 12:12). Moreover, he viewed slavery as contrary to the overarching themes found in the gospel, such as the sanctity of human life and deliverance from the bondage of sin (Luke 4:18, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Finally, Scott reminded his readers that one cannot expect forgiveness from God while deliberately mistreating other human beings (Matthew 5:23-24).²³

Of course, Scott's interpretation of the Bible's message regarding slavery met heated opposition. Since Scripture never explicitly prohibited slavery (and in many cases attempted to regulate the institution), many pro-slavery theologians argued that the Bible must be read as tacitly approving of human bondage. Consequently, Scott knew that he must offer an alternative interpretation to those passages that seemed to condone slavery. The Wesleyan founder first turned his attention to slavery in the Old Testament. If, as Scott contended, slavery were evil in all circumstances, why were the Israelites allowed to enslave some of the Canaanites whom they encountered in the Holy Land? In formulating his answer, Scott made a careful distinction between God's sovereign power over humanity and the power of one individual over another. As he remarked:

. . . God may punish any of the children of sin as he sees fit; He has a right to do so, and He alone has a right. He may commission either the winds, or the waves, or the pestilence, or their fellow-man, to work his purpose of vengeance upon any people. But man has no right to arrogate the prerogative of the Almighty—he has no right, uncommissioned by his Maker, either to enslave or destroy his fellow. . . . How, then, can any man assert that, because God determined to punish the Canaanites and used the Israelites as the executors of his decree, we are at liberty to obey the dictates of our own avarice, and hold our fellowmen in bondage?²⁴

Scott also understood that parts of the New Testament had been used to justify slavery—especially 1 Timothy 6:1-2. Could the masters discussed in that passage really be considered “faithful and beloved” Christians? To solve that problem, Scott undertook a careful exegesis of the Greek word for slave, *doulos*. Upon closer examination, Scott concluded

²³Ibid., 42-43. These reasons were originally compiled by the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky.

²⁴Ibid., 69. Interestingly enough, Scott extended that analogy to condemn those who used the precedent of Old Testament holy wars to justify violence against Native Americans.

that the meaning of the word was not as clear cut as advocates of slavery pretended. Instead, “the term *doulos* covers all kinds of servitude,” not just slavery. Scott argued that when “the term *doulos* is used in the Scriptures to mean a slave exclusively, it is . . . generally qualified by some such term as ‘under the yoke.’” Thus, many passages in the New Testament that seemed to approve of slavery might—under Scott’s definition—now be read as referring only to masters and servants.²⁵

Thus, Scott had accomplished his first goal, to offer a clear demonstration of the moral evils of slavery. But Scott understood that this alone would not justify his split with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Many within the church would claim that, even if slavery was wrong, it was beyond their power to fix it. Such deeply entrenched social ills lay beyond the responsibility of the individual. Thus, Scott’s next step was to demonstrate that social justice issues like abolitionism were intimately connected to the vision of Christian holiness put forth by Wesley.

There can be no doubt that Wesley saw social action as an integral part of one’s personal piety. The Methodist founder once defined Christian perfection as “loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions are governed by pure love.”²⁶ Of course, by defining Christian perfection in terms of love, Wesley developed a doctrine of sanctification that demanded action. If the apathy and self-interest that occupied the human heart were replaced with perfect love for other men and women, one could scarcely remain unconcerned about the sufferings of other people. Thus, Wesley could address those involved in the slave trade in the following way:

Is there a God? You know there is. Is he a just God? Then there must be a state of retribution; a state wherein the just God will reward every man according to his works. Then what reward will he render to you? . . . Think now, “He shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy. . . .” But if your heart does relent, though in a small degree, know it is a call from the God of love. . . . Whatever you lose, lose not your soul: Nothing can countervail that loss. Immediately quit the horrid trade.²⁷

²⁵Ibid., 46.

²⁶Wesley, 11:394.

²⁷Ibid., 11:76-77.

However, as Methodism took root in America after the Revolutionary War, opposition to slavery had slowly become divorced from the notion of personal holiness. For American Methodism, the price of doing business in the South was to accept slavery as an institution outside the purview of religion. By the end of his career, even such a prominent Methodist leader as Francis Asbury had put aside his overt opposition to slavery in order to concentrate solely on meeting the spiritual needs of the enslaved peoples of the South.²⁸

Thus, one of Scott's highest priorities was to reintroduce a sense of social responsibility into the Christian vision of holiness. It is important to emphasize that Scott did not advocate social reform as a substitute for personal piety. Again and again in the pages of *The True Wesleyan*, Scott featured articles that stressed the centrality of a personal relationship with Christ. However, he could not view that relationship as genuine, or accept the work of sanctification as complete, while people turned a blind eye to the sufferings of their brothers and sisters. Scott contended: "The real moral reforms of the age, though in a sense subordinate to vital godliness, are nevertheless so closely allied to it that the advancement of the latter is essential to the progress of the former. They are but the application of Christian truth to existing evils."²⁹ And as Scott's colleague Jotham Horton wrote in *The True Wesleyan*:

Holiness is an entire surrender, and full consecration of all to Christ. Grace reigns, peace dwells, and love triumphs in the soul. . . . It is most manifest, that in this state the mind must possess a clear perception of moral distinctions. The wrongs of earth, and the woes consequent upon those wrongs, make an affecting appeal to the heart. . . . The moral susceptibilities of the soul are keenly alive to whatever concerns the honor of God, the authority of his law, the welfare of universal man. In the eyes of holiness, the distinctions among men which pride and avarice have created, are seen in their true colors. They are judged in light of God's law and the decisions of a judgment day. . . . Holiness is not an abstraction. It is not confined

²⁸For more on the divergent views of Wesley and Asbury on slavery, see Timothy L. Wood, "'That They May Be Free Indeed': Liberty in the Early Methodist Thought of John Wesley and Francis Asbury," *Methodist History* 38 (July 2000): 231-241.

²⁹ *The True Wesleyan*, January 7, 1843.

within the limits of church homilies, doctrinal or even biblical phrases. It is a living, loving, active principle. It is eminently practical.³⁰

Not only did Scott wish to highlight the concern for social justice that must accompany the Christian experience, but he also sought to squelch any potentially antinomian conclusions that might be drawn from the gospel message. Free grace must not become a loophole through which Christians evaded Christ's command to love one another. Believers must understand that "the doctrines of justice are as much a part of the gospel as those of grace." In fact, Scott went so far as to declare:

The gospel is a perfect law. It is indeed perfect, because it is a complete law, to which nothing need be added; it is a complete law, from which nothing must be taken, and it is a perpetual law, which will endure forever and not be abolished by any superior dispensation of grace. . . . It may be called perfect because of its superiority to the law of Moses, which made no man perfect, either in respect to justification or sanctification, whereas the gospel is calculated to make men perfect in both respects.³¹

Justification does not create individuals who were above ethical considerations; instead, the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit after conversion enables Christians to pursue good in a way that transcends humanity's fundamentally sinful nature. The new covenant does not differ from the old in that it contains no moral precepts, but instead offers the means to be reconciled to a perfectly just and righteous God through the sacrifice of Christ. As Scott pointed out: "We can no more live on good news and glad tidings than we can on precepts and penalties. Christ must be received, and the atonement applied, or a thousand gospels could not save us."³²

Consequently, if social responsibility were inseparably linked to personal holiness, and justification could not serve as an excuse for ignoring

³⁰*The True Wesleyan*, January 28, 1843.

³¹Orange Scott, *The Gospel a Law: A Discourse on the Perfect Law of Liberty* (1829), 3, 12-13. Although this tract is generally considered to be Scott's work, it is simply signed "by a Methodist minister, member of the New-England conference."

³²*Ibid.*, 20.

the moral law, then Scott had found yet another reason to separate from the Methodist Episcopal Church. By ignoring the plight of slaves in America, the Methodist leadership had turned their back on the message of holiness. Since slavery contained an element of so many different sins,

If it can be admitted into the church . . . there is no crime this side of Pandemonium itself, which can be excluded from the Church of Christ, by the laws which he has enacted for the government of the same. If this sin, when tolerated in the church, does not make secession a duty, no other sin, nor all other sins combined, can make secession a duty.³³

If the full Christian message really included the possibility of a state of perfect love, then Methodism had betrayed that message by manipulating its theology to accommodate slavery. In such cases, separatism was preferable to remaining in a church that had truncated the gospel of Christ.

Orange Scott was profoundly influenced by the life and thought of John Wesley. However, Scott also lived his life in a far different time and place than the founder of Methodism. So it should not come as a surprise that many of the trends that defined American religion in the early 1800s found their way into Scott's theology, and subsequently provided more reasons for Scott's departure from the Methodists. Thus, the third rationale Scott offered for secession from the mother church was his desire to return to a more primitive (and therefore a presumably more authentic) form of Christianity.

In the aftermath of the 1801 Cane Ridge revival, Americans searching for spiritual authenticity dreamed of a return to primitive Christianity. To that end, Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone repudiated traditional Christian creeds and confessions and sought to reconstitute the church as they believed it existed during the first century. By 1830, Scott's fellow Vermonter (and almost exact contemporary) Joseph Smith had unveiled the Book of Mormon, the first of three new books of divine revelation that he claimed restored the true essence of apostolic Christianity.

Orange Scott was not immune to that impulse. In fact, when examining the polity of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he found many tendencies that he believed ran counter to the ecclesiastical example set by the New Testament. Two of Scott's biggest objections regarded the extensive,

³³Scott, *Grounds*, 66.

unchecked power given to bishops in the Methodist church, and the exclusion of the laity from church conferences. Instead, Scott believed that church government should be a cooperative venture between the clergy and the laity—a precedent he believed originated in the New Testament.

To make his point, Scott turned to the controversy over Judaic ritual in Acts 15. In that passage, Scott repeatedly emphasized the role that the laity had in resolving that dispute (indicated in this chapter by references to the “whole church” and by the term “brethren”). In verse 4, Paul and Barnabas were received by the entire Jerusalem church, not just its leadership. In verse 22, the entire church appointed Silas and Judas Barsabas as delegates to the Gentiles. Finally, in verse 23, Scott pointed out that the letter sent from Jerusalem to the Gentiles was addressed as being from “the apostles and elders and brethren” to “the brethren which are of the Gentiles.” To Scott, it was clear that the laity had played a central role in the government of the apostolic church. As he commented:

This fact, that the apostles who were divinely inspired to settle the principles of church government submitted the question to the consideration of the brethren, is conclusive evidence that this was the plan upon which the church was organized, and upon which it should be governed. . . . What right can the ministry have to take away from the laity what was so clearly granted to them by inspired men, whose actions are admitted to have been authoritative?³⁴

The Methodist episcopacy had usurped powers that properly belonged to the laity, and in doing so had deviated from the example set by the apostles themselves.

Finally, a concern over how the Methodist church fit into the political culture of the early United States also drove Orange Scott down the road to separatism. The Wesleyan founder once quipped that broaching the topic of reform with the Methodist hierarchy was like “asking the despot to yield his sceptre in favor of his vassals.”³⁵ Certainly, for many Methodists in the 1830s the concentration of ecclesiastical power into the hands of a small number of high church officials seemed incompatible

³⁴Ibid., 132-135.

³⁵Ibid., 150.

with the emphasis on the political empowerment of the “common man” so prevalent in Jacksonian America.³⁶

In Scott’s eyes, Methodism’s aristocratic and authoritarian nature seemed at loggerheads with the republicanism so cherished by Americans. Could Americans who willingly submitted to the arbitrary rule of bishops on Sunday be trusted to vigilantly guard their civil liberty and defend democracy the other six days of the week? Scott feared that the two were ultimately incompatible. The laity had rights within the church that were analogous to the rights of a citizen within the United States; the surrender of the former must surely foreshadow the loss of the latter. Scott remarked that “by tracing the lines of civil and ecclesiastical history up to antiquity, it will be found that, in proportion as religious freedom has obtained, in the same proportion has civil government been administered according to free principles.” Scott continued:

Is not the church to be the standard of justice and right? But are not the recognition of justice and right the essentials of civil as well as religious freedom? If, then, the church exerts her appropriate power on the community in which she exists, and does not at the same time sustain the principles of freedom by securing liberty of conscience to her own members, can we expect that civil freedom will long continue? It is manifest that if the church exerts the power it is in its province to exert, it will give character to a nation: in which case, if a despotism exists in the former, it will sooner or later sway its iron sceptre over the latter.

By silencing abolitionists and denying the laity their right to participate in the government of the church, the Methodist church advocated principles “at deadly war with inalienable rights.”³⁷

In order to drive his point home, Scott appealed to the anti-Catholicism that was so rampant in America in the early nineteenth century. Because of their spiritual allegiance to the pope, Roman Catholics were viewed as a potential fifth column in most Protestant nations, including the United States. But Scott believed that Methodism was

³⁶For more on the 1830s as an “age of the common man,” see Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1945); John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

³⁷Scott, *Grounds*, 161-162.

. . . far more dangerous than Catholicism itself; for the corrupt and liberty-crushing character of that organization has long since been exposed, so that the ever-watchful eye of liberty is always open to its dark plottings and jesuitical designs. But Episcopal Methodism is a Protestant system, sprung up almost imperceptibly in our midst, under circumstances and auspices which have, till lately, shielded it from public reprobation, and . . . even from general suspicion.³⁸

As long as Christians refused to challenge the bloated power of the Methodist hierarchy, they risked that some day “a worldly and ambitious priesthood, joined with some intriguing and liberty-hating political party, may upturn the foundations of our government, demolish the temple of freedom, and establish an absolute despotism over the land.”³⁹

Summation

Reflecting back on his ministry in December, 1845, an ailing Orange Scott issued the following words of advice to his followers:

Let us never seem to act upon the principle that there are not good Christians, and many of them, in other churches—and even in those whose general economy we feel bound to oppose. . . . Let no walls of prejudice ever exist between us and other Christian denominations. Let sectarian exclusiveness never attach to a Wesleyan pulpit or a Wesleyan church. But standing on the broad platform of our common Christianity, let us extend to the ambassadors and followers of Christ, the courtesies which naturally emanate from a religion which makes all one in Christ Jesus. Let us. . . take no course which has a tendency to create or continue a bitterness of feeling between us and other Christian sects.

As Scott confronted the evils of slavery in America, he faced the difficult decision of remaining in fellowship with a church that condoned the institution of human bondage or parting ways with his former colleagues in an effort to maintain the integrity of his Christian witness. In establishing the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, Scott vindicated separatism on the theoretical level in three different ways. Scott argued that Christians could be forced out of a church by its unabashed sinfulness, that sectarianism had

³⁸Ibid., 159.

³⁹Ibid., 161.

often proved beneficial to Christianity in the long run, and that biblical passages relating to excommunication implied a duty to rid the church of sin. However, Scott also had to justify his conclusion that separatism was an appropriate response to the conditions existing within Methodism in 1842. That he accomplished by presenting a biblical case for the evil of slavery, by reminding Methodists of the intimate connection between personal holiness and social reform, and by contending that Methodist church polity conformed neither to the example of the primitive church nor to the ideals of American republicanism.

Although Scott remained confident that his departure from his home church in 1842 was morally correct, the decision to separate had not come easily, and toward the end of his life a certain sadness is apparent in his writings when he contemplated the broken ties of fellowship. For instance, as he neared the end of the letter quoted above, Scott paused for a moment of personal reflection.

Some of the articles which have appeared in *The [True] Wesleyan* have been perhaps unnecessarily severe. It may have been thus with some of our sermons. True, I am not the man to cast the first stone, as I am not without fault. But let us . . . hereafter speak and write freely, but kindly—imitating not the example of others, but the example of the Lamb of God. Let us love as he loved, and walk as he walked.⁴⁰

Perhaps Scott recognized the paradox that lay at the heart of his legacy: in order to achieve the very Wesleyan goal of reuniting a deep, Spirit-filled personal piety with a sense of social responsibility, he felt compelled to resort to the rather un-Wesleyan tactic of separation. In the end, Scott believed that only through an act of schism could he fully demonstrate his solidarity with those human beings who suffered under the oppression of slavery.

⁴⁰Scott, *Life*, 257-258.

WILLIAM J. SEYMOUR: FOLLOWER OF THE “EVENING LIGHT” (ZECH. 14:7)

by

B. Scott Lewis

The catalyst of the 1906 Azusa Street Revival, William J. Seymour, is well known within Pentecostal and Charismatic circles. Knowledge about Seymour's life prior to the Azusa Revival, however, is sketchy, except for Seymour's contact with Charles Parham in Houston in 1905 where he learned of Parham's doctrine of speaking in tongues as the evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. These events are well documented and much historical evidence is available. Prior to these events, however, Seymour's contact with the Holiness movement is much less developed as a source of influence for his thought and practice.¹ Therefore, in the following essay, I explore Seymour's association with the "Evening Light Saints," now known as the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana). The key question addressed is: What influence did the "Saints" have on William Seymour's life and theology?²

¹One secondary source that deals with the "holiness" influences on William Seymour and the Azusa Street Mission in any detail is Charles Edwin Jones, "The 'Color Line' Washed Away in the Blood? In the Holiness Church, at Azusa Street, and Afterward," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34 (Fall, 1999). Jones's article highlights the influence of the Holiness Church of California on the Azusa Street Revival, particularly regarding racial reconciliation; however, Jones does not examine Seymour's holiness background with the "Evening Light Saints" which, in my opinion, potentially formed his holiness convictions about race, unity, and holiness.

²The phrase "Evening Light Saints" has its roots in Daniel Warner's understanding of Zech 14:7. The "Evening Light," says Warner, "points to the holiness of the church in the 'time of the end.'" See D. S. Warner, *The Evening Light* (Grand Junction, Mich.: Gospel Trumpet Publishing Co., 1895), 1.

William J. Seymour: Seeker of the Light

On May 2, 1870, William Joseph Seymour was born to former slaves, Simon Seymour and Phyllis Salabarr Seymour, in Centerville, Louisiana.³ William Seymour's family during the late nineteenth century probably experienced some of Louisiana's severest treatment of slaves. For instance, it was typical for Louisiana slaves to work very long hours in extremely humid weather.⁴ In the years following 1865 after the 13th Amendment was ratified, southern slaves enjoyed emancipation; however, the years 1865 through 1867 witnessed some of the worst violence experienced in the South, with a total of 243 Blacks murdered and over 300 assaults.⁵ Seymour's life met the cruel realities of racism in the South and probably he experienced the toils of living and working on a plantation to keep the family's needs met. Seymour's ecclesiastical commitment during his youth in the South, according to Vinson Synan, was Baptist.⁶ However, Seymour's "African religious heritage" would have influenced his Christianity. This was a heritage in which "spiritual practices were communally oriented; worship focused on rhythm, spontaneity, and evocative preaching; the indwelling of the Spirit was experienced through a Christ-centered conversion; and symbolic imagery, derived from the Bible, became the foundation of their spirituality."⁷

Seymour moved north to Indianapolis at age twenty-five and at a time when 90% of Blacks lived in the southern states.⁸ While in Indianapolis he waited on tables in a hotel restaurant and lived at two down-

³Douglas J. Nelson, *For Such a Time as This: The Story of William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival* (Unpublished Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1981), 151. See also, Rufus Gene William Sanders, *The Life of William Joseph Seymour: Black Father of the Twentieth Century Pentecostal Movement* (Unpublished Dissertation, Bowling Green University, 2000), 30. The Sanders dissertation presents much background and genealogical information about William Seymour's family as well as slave plantation ownership.

⁴Nelson, 152.

⁵*Ibid.*, 154.

⁶Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 93.

⁷Douglas M. Strom, *They Walked in the Spirit: Personal Faith and Social Action in America* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Knox Press, 1997), 36.

⁸Nelson, 159.

town addresses during his stay (127 1/2 Indiana Avenue and 309 Bird Street).⁹ While living in Indianapolis, Seymour became a member of the Simpson Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church. This church was racially inclusive and active in outreach to Blacks, even letting them attain leadership positions.¹⁰ Interestingly, an African Methodist Episcopal Church was also in downtown Indianapolis, but Seymour chose to attend the interracial church for the reason that Nelson notes: "[It] was the first clear indication he gave of seeking interracial reconciliation."¹¹ While in Indianapolis, as Rufus Sanders has shown, oral tradition tells of Seymour attending the Simpson Chapel when he first became associated with the "Evening Light Saints."¹² Only after the M. E. Church became racially divided, according to Nelson and Sanders, did Seymour then become dissatisfied with the Methodist Church.¹³ In 1900 "racial attitudes in Indiana were beginning to harden" and many churches began to racially divide along color lines.¹⁴ Moreover, the *Indianapolis News and World* paper tells how "in recent years there has been a growing hostility toward the black man. He has continually had fewer friends and more enemies."¹⁵

Most scholars suggest that William Seymour left Indianapolis to escape the racial prejudice and went to Cincinnati in hopes of finding his "promise land."¹⁶ His move to Cincinnati is not well documented. Douglas Nelson relies heavily on oral tradition for Seymour's stay in Cincin-

⁹Ibid. According to Nelson, the Indianapolis City Directories of 1896-1899 list Seymour living in Indianapolis. After 1899 his name does not appear and Nelson assumes that he moved to Cincinnati in 1900.

¹⁰Nelson, 160; Sanders, 62.

¹¹Nelson, 160; see also, Sanders, 63.

¹²Sanders, 63. Nelson never mentions that Seymour had contact with the "Saints" in Indianapolis. In fact, if it were not for Emma L. Cotton, no record would exist for Seymour's association with the Saints. Thanks to Cecil M. Robeck who brought this to my attention in an email exchange. Also, see Cecil M. Robeck, "Seymour, William Joseph," *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 1054.

¹³Nelson, 162; Sanders, 64.

¹⁴Sanders, 64.

¹⁵ *Indianapolis News and World*, Sept. 1, 1990, 390.

¹⁶Sanders, 64. Martin suggests that Seymour left Indianapolis for Chicago due to racial prejudice.

nati.¹⁷ In fact, according to Rufus Sanders, Seymour “never mentioned Cincinnati in any known conversations, but neither does he talk about Indianapolis.”¹⁸ The exact year he moved to Cincinnati is not clear.¹⁹ His name appears in the Cincinnati City Directories in 1901, 1902, and possibly in 1904.²⁰ Perhaps Seymour’s racial experience in Indianapolis probably was less than desirable and he went to Cincinnati in search of increased racial inclusiveness. Whatever our speculation about the reasons why Seymour moved to Cincinnati, the circumstance needs to be reconstructed in light of his association with the “Evening Light Saints.”

William Seymour: Follower of the Light

The first contact with the “Evening Light Saints” was in Indianapolis while Seymour was attending an M. E. Church. His association with the Saints led him to experience conversion. The “Evening light Saints,” who latter became designated as the Church of God movement (Anderson, Indiana), emphasized experiential conversions and the holiness doctrine of entire sanctification. Moreover, the Saints were very tolerant of blacks, and advocated interracial worship. In fact, James S. Tinney notes, “when Seymour heard the testimonies of these Saints, he could not resist. He went to the altar and ‘prayed through’ to salvation. Then he went back a second time and prayed until he testified to being wholly sanctified, as he tells us.”²¹ Perhaps his conversion with the Saints was the result of

¹⁷Nelson never gives any sources or evidence of Seymour’s stay in Cincinnati.

¹⁸Sanders, 64. Despite Sanders statement that Seymour never mentioned Cincinnati, C. W. Shumway says that Seymour contracted smallpox during his stay in Cincinnati. See C. W. Shumway, *A Study of “The Gift of Tongues”* (A.B. thesis, University of Southern California, 1914).

¹⁹The last time William Seymour’s name appears in the Indianapolis City Directory is 1899. This is the year that is referred to by Nelson as the year he left Indianapolis. Larry Martin, *The Life and Ministry of William J. Seymour* (Joplin, MS: Christian Life Books, 1999), speaks of Seymour moving to Chicago in 1900; however, evidence for this move is nonexistent. We do not know where Seymour was in 1900.

²⁰*Cincinnati City Directories* (Cincinnati, Ohio), 1901, 1902, 1904. In 1901 Seymour is listed as a waiter living in the rooms at 23 Longworth. In 1902 Seymour is listed as a waiter living in the rooms at 437 Carlisle Ave. and in 1904 he may have been listed as a laborer living in the rooms at 337 W. Front.

²¹James S. Tinney, “William J. Seymour: Father of Modern Day Pentecostalism” in *Black Apostles: Afro-American Clergy Confront the Twentieth Century*, eds. Randall K. Burkett and Richard Newman (Boston, Mass.; G. K. Hall & Co., 1978), 216.

interracial inclusiveness that attracted the young Seymour. If Seymour left the M.E. Church in Indianapolis for the reason of its increasingly "color line" split, as Nelson and Sanders seem to assume, it is reasonable to suggest that the "Saints" had a radical influence in his decision. Furthermore, because the Saints advocated a strict "come-outism," Seymour would have left his "sect" immediately. Therefore, it is unlikely, as Nelson and Sanders suggest, that Seymour attended the M. E. Church and "Evening Light" services simultaneously. The holiness-and-unity message of the Saints would have influenced the young Seymour to rethink his ecclesiastical commitment to the M. E. Church.

The Light of Racial Unity

James Earl Massey observes that Blacks were typically dissatisfied "over the sectarianism in which they as members of various religious bodies were involved . . . and were quick to see and claim the spiritual and social implications inherent in the Movement's central message of Christian fellowship."²² In fact, Blacks "embraced the Movement's essential theological forms, sentiments, opinions, faith, and practices."²³ While vast amounts of racial prejudice abounded during the late nineteenth-century, the "Saints" abhorred such notions and upheld interracial worship as an indicator of the true church functioning in holiness and unity. During the early years of the "Saint's" movement, Merle D. Strege says:

It was not uncommon for members of both ethnic groups to attend the same tent meetings and revivals, on occasion drawing the ire of local residents for transgressing such racial taboos as mixed seating. In some instances Whites served as ministers to biracial gatherings; in other cases Black ministers took the lead. The pattern of racial unity in the movement's early decades was driven by a literal reading of Galatians 3:28 as the normative status of the true New Testament church: "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."²⁴

²²James Earl Massey, *An Introduction to the Negro Churches in the Church of God Reformation Movement* (New York: Shining Light Press, 1957), 17.

²³ Ibid., 18.

²⁴ Merle D. Strege, *I Saw the Church: The Life of the Church of God Told Theologically* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 2002), 145-147.

Notably, Daniel S. Warner and his early followers, according to historian Charles E. Brown, “were more rigid and stern in their stand . . . for justice to the Negro” than most holiness churches.²⁵ In an article written in the *Gospel Trumpet* on December 20, 1906, W. J. Henry writes:

There is no room for prejudice of any kind in the hearts of sanctified people. If you, as a white man find any of this in your heart toward the black man as an individual or toward his people, you need to go to the Lord for cleansing; to the black brother, I will say the same. All prejudice of every kind is outside the church of God.²⁶

There is no question that Blacks were attracted to the early Saints movement; they had found their “light” in the darkness of racial prejudice.

Perhaps Seymour’s conversion experience was the result of the racial inclusion witnessed within the Saint’s meetings. Tinney suggests that, upon hearing the “testimonies of these Saints,” Seymour experienced entire sanctification.²⁷ His experience was common in the early meetings of the Saints. In fact, some of these meetings were commonly reported in the *Gospel Trumpet* by stating that souls were saved, sanctified, and prejudice removed. Interestingly, in Illinois and especially Indiana, several such reports were recorded. One field report in the *Gospel Trumpet* (August 25, 1898) records that “Prejudice was removed, a few souls saved, and friends won to the truth. . . . Our labors will be for a time in Indiana near Indianapolis, thence to the northern part of the state.”²⁸ Another report in Bryant, Indiana, says: “A few souls were saved, a few believers sanctified, and many were convinced of the truth. . . . Much prejudice was removed from the hearts of the people at that place.”²⁹

Many of the traveling ministers among the Saints frequented Indianapolis and area towns. Such was the case with J. N. Howard, A. J. Kilpatrick, E. Bragg, Bro. and Sis. Craft, and Bro. and Sis. Cheatham between the years 1898 and 1900. A. J. Kilpatrick was one white evangelist who spent six weeks in Augusta, Georgia, with Jane William’s congre-

²⁵Charles E. Brown, *When the Trumpet Sounded* (Anderson, IN: Warner Press, 1951), 156.

²⁶W. J. Henry, “The Color Line” in *Gospel Trumpet* (December 20, 1906), 3.

²⁷Tinney, 216.

²⁸*Gospel Trumpet* (August 25, 1898), 5.

²⁹*Gospel Trumpet* (April 26, 1900), 5.

gation, converting large numbers of Blacks.³⁰ Conceivably, Seymour could have had contact with one or more of these individuals, including Kilpatrick, while living in Indianapolis. If Seymour was searching for racial unity, a "promise land" as Nelson and Sanders suggest, then the quest for racial inclusion would have been found with the "Evening Light Saints."

The Light of Holiness

Perhaps Seymour embraced the "holiness" and "unity" quest of the Saints and heeded the call to "come out" from the M. E. Church in Indianapolis. The early Saints preached a radical holiness message, inherited from Daniel S. Warner who advocated "coming out" of "whatever human structures and traditions impeded the free flow of God's Spirit."³¹ Warner's message suggested that people leave their holiness traditions and join the true church, whose organizer and true unifier was the Holy Spirit.³² The Saints identified themselves as living in the "evening time" or the "last days" when God would cleanse and unify his church prior to Christ's soon return.³³ Thus, the call was "to all the truly redeemed to abandon the sinful sects and to come out of spiritual darkness into the light."³⁴ Evidently, Seymour followed the "light," abandoned his former ties with his holiness sect, the M. E. Church, and became an "Evening Light Saint."

³⁰John W. V. Smith, *The Quest for Holiness and Unity: A Centennial History of the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)* (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1980), 164. Jane Williams was a black woman who wrote several times to the *Gospel Trumpet* in hope of Warner or others holding meetings in Augusta, Georgia, to establish a congregation of the Church of God movement in that city. She had "dreams" for the Church of God to flourish in Augusta; however, racial prejudice inhibited her from such accomplishments. But, in due time many leaders such as A. J. Kilpatrick and W. Thomas Carter held meetings in Augusta. Her Church was the first property owned by Blacks in the Church of God movement.

³¹Barry L. Callen, *It's God's Church: The Life and Legacy of Daniel Sidney Warner* (Anderson, Ind.: Warner Press, 1995), 76.

³²Much emphasis was put on 2 Corinthians 6:17 which says, "Come out. . .and be ye separate."

³³See D. S. Warner, *Evening Light*, 1.

³⁴John W. V. Smith, 97. Smith says, "In calling the faithful out of the bondage of sectarianism, they strongly insisted they were not asking the redeemed to join another sect but rather were inviting them to participate in the free fellowship of the Spirit."

Warner and others in the early Saint's movement thought "sin" was the cause of denominations or sects, "and the only cure for this plague was a through-going experience of sanctification that would melt believers into a spiritual and physical union."³⁵ The very foundation of the Saint's vision for unity, therefore, was holiness. The Saints believed that the experience of sanctification, subsequent to justification, empowered believers to live a holy life, renewed the image and likeness of God, perfected love, and baptized them with the Holy Spirit.³⁶ Historian John W. V. Smith notes:

With Sanctification came "heart purity," "fullness of God," "fullness of joy," "assurance of faith," "full assurance of hope," "perfect love," "the more abundant life," and the "baptism of the Holy Ghost." . . . The importance of this experiential understanding of salvation in the minds of the pioneer leaders of the Church of God can hardly be overemphasized. It was related to all other aspects of their faith and practice, and especially to their view of relationships to each other, to the world, and to other Christians.³⁷

The experience of sanctification was central to the message and vision of unity, for it was the cleansing of God's sanctuary that unified the Church, which set the stage for Christ's soon return. This motivated the early Saints toward "a God-ordained mission in the 'last days,' an urgency generating a self-conscious 'movement' now being driven by a prophetically fired biblical vision."³⁸ William Seymour, as an "Evening Light Saint," would conceivably be motivated by the same vision of holiness and unity: a cleansing of the church prior to Christ's soon return. Perhaps Seymour went to Cincinnati in an urgent drive to preach "full salvation" to those in that city before Christ's return.³⁹

Following the Light in Cincinnati

William Seymour's move to Cincinnati in 1900 or 1901 is contemporaneous with the Saint's vigorous evangelistic activity in that city. Dur-

³⁵Strege, 21.

³⁶Strege, 16; See also, John W. V. Smith, 88.

³⁷Smith, 88.

³⁸Barry L. Callen, *Contours of a Cause: The Theological Vision of the Church of God Movement* (Anderson, IN: Anderson University School of Theology, 1995), 191.

³⁹"Full Salvation" was a phrase to indicate the Holiness Movement's message of "sanctification." Yet, in the case of the Saints, this would include the "unity" concept which was predicated on the experience of sanctification.

ing this time a new church was planted in downtown Cincinnati, offering its inhabitants a "guiding light" in the "evening" of the last days. Most scholars place Seymour in Cincinnati with the Saints, but no direct evidence of this is available.⁴⁰ Nelson and Sanders suggest that Seymour was a "Saint" because he attended Martin Wells Knapp's Bible school.⁴¹ They assume that Knapp was an "Evening Light Saint," which is incorrect.

Martin Wells Knapp was a "come-outer" from the Methodist church, but it is unlikely that he was associated with the early Saint's movement.⁴² In fact, an article published in the *Gospel Trumpet* in 1901 accuses Knapp's school and his "Apostolic Holiness Union" of teaching false doctrine.⁴³ Moreover, in the same article, G. Tufts, Jr., who once associated with the Saints, was disfellowshipped for "joining" Knapp's holiness union.⁴⁴ In light of the *Gospel Trumpet* article, it is inconceivable

⁴⁰Neither Douglas Nelson nor Rufus Sanders includes any source material for their assumption that Seymour was associated with the Saints in Cincinnati. However, we do know that Seymour stayed in Cincinnati during the years 1901, 1902, and possibly in 1904.

⁴¹Again, Nelson, Sanders, and Larry Martin offer no evidence or sources to suggest that Seymour went to God's Bible School.

⁴²Perhaps Nelson categorically assumes that Knapp was a "Saint" because he was a "come-outer" and advocated similar doctrines such as racial inclusion, unity, and sanctification. However, in Knapp's publication, *Revivalist*, there are several articles from the *Gospel Trumpet* during the late 1890s. Some of these articles were written by G. Tufts, Jr., who belonged to the Saint's movement, but later was disfellowshipped because of associating with Knapp.

⁴³"Deceptions and Counterfeits," *Gospel Trumpet* (August 22, 1901). Some of the "false doctrines" that Knapp's school was accused of were the following: denying the necessity of water baptism, teaching people "to stay in sectism among unbelievers," and ridiculing the idea of footwashing.

⁴⁴I do not believe Tufts went to the School, but he did join the union and this, in fact, upset the Saints. Apparently, Tufts was writing articles for the *Revivalist* and sent these articles to various Saints in the region. In the articles Tufts said he was still a Saint and believed everything they endorsed ("full salvation" and "unity"), but apparently he "felt led" to "cooperate" with Knapp's people. The Saints were subtly warning Tufts about his ministry practices prior to these happenings (e.g., consistently preaching on the text about "owe no man anything" for which he had several outstanding debts; giving himself to a "streak of fanaticism prayer" [Tufts was locking himself in his room for days praying, for which the Saints said "God wants men of prayer, but he wants men of action—men who will believe what they pray and then put their belief into practice"]); however, Tufts was sympathetic with the Saints' discipline but did not show evidence of repentance. Despite Tufts' mistakes, his move to "associate" with Knapp's holiness union and Bible school obviously was the last draw for the Saints.

to think that any Saint would attend the Bible school, much less William Seymour, unless he had split off from the movement.⁴⁵ In other words, if Seymour had associated with Knapp's holiness school, he would have "violated" the Saint's "come-out" doctrine and risked being dis-fellowshipped from the movement. If Seymour was still associated with the Saints, as many suggest, then most likely he did not attend Knapp's school. Moreover, Seymour's name does not appear in any of the attendance records at the Bible School nor does any "Saint" appear listed in the records.⁴⁶ Seymour's move to Cincinnati, then, if still associated with the Saints, as scholars suggest, would not be a move to associate with Martin Wells Knapp and his school, but possibly a move to help the new "Evening Light" ministry in Cincinnati.

During the year 1900 much "evening light" activity was present in Cincinnati where Seymour had moved. Montford L. Neal suggests that the earliest Church of God congregations in Cincinnati started in 1904 and 1907.⁴⁷ However, evidence from the *Gospel Trumpet* suggests otherwise. In fact, the earliest Saint's congregation was established prior to the time of Seymour's stay. For instance, in the year 1900 Robert Campbell writes from Cincinnati to the *Trumpet* stating:

It has been some time since I have written to the *Trumpet*. I am praising God for salvation full and free, and for his power

⁴⁵In addition, during the year 1901 several articles were written in the *Revivalist* condemning the Saint's "anarchistical come-outism." Knapp's followers opposed the Saints by humorously poking fun at their "sect-cleansing," saying they were "sect-fighting sectarian[s]." See the following issues of the *Revivalist* (February 21, 1901; April 4, 1901; and September 12, 1901). In light of these articles alone, it would be inconceivable to think that any Saint would attend God's Bible School.

⁴⁶Thanks to Paul Alexander, librarian for R. G. Flexon Library at God's Bible College, who assisted me in the archives at the Library. Of course, the various names of the Saint's I had living in Cincinnati around the years 1900–1904 were limited.

⁴⁷Montford L. Neal, *History of Southwest Ohio Churches of God (Anderson, Indiana, affiliation)*, compiled for the Church of God Centennial, 1980, 6–8. In 1904 Neal identifies a family by the name of Green who had connections with the early movement, but apparently they did not start a church. In 1907, however, Neal places a church led by a Mrs. Allender on "Sixth Street in the West End, and this became the first public services of the Church of God in Cincinnati." There appears to be evidence of the Saints' movement existing prior to this date in 1900, possibly meeting at this same Sixth Street location.

to heal the body as well as the soul. We have a few precious souls here who are out for God and the truth. We have opened a little mission at 4482 Sixth Street. Any of the saints passing this way will find a welcome. If the Lord so leads, we would be glad to have them stop with us.⁴⁸

In June of 1900 John A. Vance, a traveling evangelist, writes from Cincinnati to the *Trumpet* stating:

I arrived here yesterday from Louisville, on my way to Moundsville camp meeting. I found a few saints here who are holding up the truth to all the light they have. They have never been in any meetings held by the saints or heard the evening light preached; but received the light through a brother passing through some time ago, and the reading of the *Gospel Trumpet* literature. I intend to hold a few meetings here and, the Lord willing, go on to Moundsville in time for camp meeting. I desire your intercessory prayers that God may have his way in all things, and use me to his glory, and cause the few here to be established in the present truth, and his cause built up in this place. Remember this request, making mention in your prayers. I remain your brother in the Lord, fully redeemed by two definite cleansings.⁴⁹

At one point between June and September 25, 1900, M. N. Roark accompanied John Vance in holding meetings at Cincinnati. Roark, in a short notice in the *Trumpet*, mentions how in Cincinnati they "visited other holiness missions and distributed many *Gospel Trumpets* in that city." He adds, "Bro. Vance is talking of opening up a mission in Cincinnati. . . . Any one desiring to correspond with him can address him at 106 East Court St., Cincinnati, Ohio."⁵⁰ Interestingly, the address that Roark gives for brother Vance is the home address of Rev. Robert Campbell, who had already opened a mission on Sixth Street.⁵¹ Also, in the follow-

⁴⁸"Testimonies," *Gospel Trumpet* (April 12, 1900), 6. Prior to this date, however, on November 16, 1899, Louisa C. Adams writes to the *Gospel Trumpet* about how inspiring the *Trumpet* has been to her and contends, "I am here alone," suggesting she is the only Saint in Cincinnati.

⁴⁹"News from the Field," *Gospel Trumpet* (June 7, 1900), 5.

⁵⁰"News from the Field," *Gospel Trumpet* (October 4, 1900), 5.

⁵¹Perhaps both Vance and Campbell were collaborating together in establishing this mission.

ing issue of the *Trumpet*, John Vance mentions that prior to coming to Cincinnati many people's "prejudice was swept away and I think a better opening for the truth is in the future" for these towns.⁵² Whether or not Seymour had contact with these people is not known, but this is probably the only "evening light" church in Cincinnati at this time. It is conceivable to think that Seymour went to the church on Sixth Street, visited Rev. Robert Campbell, or corresponded with John Vance at the 106 East Court Street address.

Seymour's Ordination in the Light?

Most scholars suggest that the Saints ordained Seymour while he was in Cincinnati.⁵³ Unfortunately, the primary sources for this are absent; this may be an "oral tradition" without direct documentation. Douglas Nelson places Seymour's "ordination" to ministry only after contracting smallpox while he was in Cincinnati.⁵⁴ Apparently, Seymour attributed meaning to his sickness, connecting it to God's judgment for his "disobedience to the divine call."⁵⁵ Nelson says that Seymour "accepted ordination with the Saints, who may have nursed him back to health."⁵⁶ Unfortunately, no record exists of Seymour's ordination. Ordination lists do exist, although such lists are not all-inclusive of those ordained during that period.⁵⁷ In fact, many traveling evangelists were not formally ordained; they simply felt the "divine calling" and started traveling and preaching.⁵⁸

During the early Saints movement, "missionary homes" played an important role in developing ministerial candidates. In fact, according to Merle Strege, after 1892 the Saints planted approximately fifty homes in

⁵²"News from the Field," *Gospel Trumpet* (October 11, 1900), 5.

⁵³Martin, 80; Nelson, 165; Sanders, 69.

⁵⁴Nelson, 165.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Thanks to Douglas Welch, archivist at the Anderson University Library, for bringing this to my attention. In fact, early ordination lists do exist, but they are usually associated with those ministers who attended camp meetings. In James Massey's book, *An Introduction to the Negro Churches in the Church of God Reformation Movement*, he lists several African American ministers with the Church of God during this early period; however, Seymour does not appear on the list.

⁵⁸Strege, 82-83.

cities across the nation. These homes were "missions" which "undertook evangelistic work in the neighborhood and surrounding region."⁵⁹ The *Gospel Trumpet* staff was an example of such a "missionary home" where "members lived in a genuinely communal arrangement."⁶⁰ The staff lived together in a residence and received no salaries, but worked to provide for the needs of each other. Oftentimes these homes "served as hotels for traveling revivalists and missionaries."⁶¹ But most importantly, these homes "provided opportunities for inexperienced volunteers to validate and then develop their ministerial calling. The homes were magnets that drew young people, many of whom had 'seen the church' as it was described in the 'News From the Field' section of the *Gospel Trumpet*."⁶²

Whether or not Seymour was ordained as an "Evening Light" minister we may never know; however, Seymour may have spent time in a "missionary home" as a volunteer developing his ministerial calling. Perhaps Seymour saw the "News From the Field" sections of the *Gospel Trumpet* in 1900 and sought refuge in the "missionary home" of Rev. Robert Campbell in Cincinnati. If so, Seymour's later Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles would emulate the typical "missionary home" of the Saints where several individuals lived communally.⁶³

"The Cleansing of the Sanctuary"

William Seymour's theology, as represented in the *Apostolic Faith* and in his book *The Doctrines and Disciplines of the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission of Los Angeles, California*, reveals some important parallels to the "Evening Light" movement.⁶⁴ Significantly, Seymour uti-

⁵⁹Ibid., 80-81. Some of these missions had specialized ministries to women and African Americans.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., 81.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Along with William and Jennie Seymour, James Ross and Richard Asbery lived at 312 Azusa Street. See William J. Seymour, *The Doctrines and Disciplines of the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission of Los Angeles, California*, ed., Larry Martin (Joplin, MS: Christian Life Books, 2000), 35.

⁶⁴For instance, the three ordinances of the church parallel the "Evening Light" movement: water baptism, foot washing, and Lord's Supper; see Seymour's *Doctrines and Disciplines*, 44-45. Another parallel with the Saint's theology was Seymour's insistence of Spirit Baptism with the evidence of love (42-43, 54), unity (41, 43), and holiness (25, 42, 64).

lizes a central metaphor of the Saint's theology to propagate not only his doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but his whole theological system. In fact, he utilizes the notions of the "the cleansing of the Sanctuary" metaphors used by Warner and Riggle in their book *The Cleansing of the Sanctuary* (1903) to provide a biblical vision of the true church.⁶⁵

The diagram of "The Tabernacle" which Seymour provides in his book *The Doctrines and Disciplines of the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission* (63) is the same diagram used in Warner and Riggle's book *The Cleansing of the Sanctuary* (99).⁶⁶ This diagram of the tabernacle foreshadows what Seymour calls "Full Salvation." The tabernacle typifies the progression of "full salvation" from (1) justification represented by the "Brazen Altar," (2) sanctification signified by the "Golden Altar," and (3) Baptism of the Holy Spirit signified by the "Holy of Holies." Warner and Riggle's diagram, from which Seymour seemingly copied, obviously advocates a "holiness" model of salvation, represented by two works of grace: justification typified by the "Golden Altar" and sanctification typified by the "Holy of Holies." For Warner and Riggle, the diagram represented Daniel 8:14, which says, "And he said unto me, unto 2,300 days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." The cleansing of the sanctuary was for Warner and Riggle to be fulfilled in their day. This verse, along with Zech. 14:7, acted as a prophetic self-understanding for the early Saint's movement which believed they were living in the last of the 2,300 days mentioned in Daniel. In fact, the "light" that shines in this "Evening Time" was thought to be the "cleansing" of the church, which God was doing through the Saints. For instance, Warner and Riggle affirm the following:

The Work of cleansing the literal sanctuary, which Antiochus had defiled, which was accomplished by Judas Maccabeus at the completion of the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14, was a perfect figure of the great work of cleansing the spiritual sanctuary, or church, which is now going on. Judas Maccabeus burned the heathen altars, set up the altars of the Lord, and reinstated the true worship of Jehovah according to the ancient custom. See 1 Macc. 4:36-55. So today, with the fire of holiness and truth, we

⁶⁵Daniel S. Warner and H. M. Riggle, *The Cleansing of the Sanctuary* (Faith Publishing House, 1903, 1967).

⁶⁶Seymour, 63; Warner and Riggle, 99.

burn the false religions of the earth, and restore the true worship of God as in days of old—as it existed in apostolic times.⁶⁷

The Lord was thought to be using the Saints to cleanse the church of "sectism" and restore "true worship" as in apostolic times. For the Saints, restoring "full salvation" included justification and the subsequent work of sanctification. As mentioned above, "sin," according to the Saints, was the root problem of "denominations" and "sects"; "the only cure for this plague was a through-going experience of sanctification that would melt believers into a spiritual and physical union."⁶⁸ The very foundation of the Saint's vision for unity, therefore, was sanctification by Spirit baptism. The experience of sanctification was central to the message and vision of unity, for this experience was the perceived cleansing that God was doing to unify his church. The Saints envisioned a church free of race, gender, age, and sect discrimination, with all members unified in the Spirit.

William Seymour's theology emulates this same pattern, as typified in his diagram of the tabernacle.⁶⁹ His view of the progression of salvation is similar except for the added third-work of grace, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Of course, Charles Parham's influence seems to be best illustrated here; however, Seymour wants to signify "Full Salvation" after the

⁶⁷Warner and Riggle, 435.

⁶⁸Strege, 21.

⁶⁹Throughout *The Apostolic Faith* periodicals, this notion of tabernacle typology dominates Seymour's ideas of justification, sanctification, and Spirit baptism. For examples, see A. F., "The Way Into the Holiest" (October 2, 1906), 4; A. F., "Baptism with the Holy Ghost Foreshadowed" (Dec. 1906), 2; A. F., "Salvation According to the True Tabernacle" (Edition 10, 1907), 2. Also, see William J. Seymour, *Azusa Street Sermons*, ed. Larry Martin (Joplin, MS: Christian Life Books, 1999), where he advocates a "cleansing" motif in the last days within the church. Seymour states: "Those that will be permitted to enter in are those who are justified, sanctified and baptized with the Holy Ghost—sealed unto the day of redemption. . . . The Holy Ghost is sifting out a people that are getting on the robes of righteousness and the seal in their foreheads" (44-45). Also, his sermon "Rebecca: Type of the Bride of Christ" shows a similar motif: "So God the Father has sent the Holy Spirit from the glory land down into this world and He, the Spirit of Truth, is convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, and is selecting out of the body of Christ His bride. He is seeking among his kindred, the sanctified, and Jesus is baptizing them with the Holy Ghost and fire, preparing them for the great marriage supper of the Lamb" (57-58).

manner of his Saint's heritage.⁷⁰ Instead of the Saint's emphasis on sanctification," for William Seymour the terminology of the baptism of the Holy Spirit sets the foundation for Christian unity.⁷¹

Conclusion

William Seymour's association with the "Evening Light Saints" during his stay in Indianapolis and Cincinnati helped formed the theological-

⁷⁰Seymour's "later years (1915-1922)," during which he wrote his book, *Doctrines and Disciplines*, show strong evidence of Seymour reverting to his holiness heritage. Instead of advocating a Holy Spirit Baptism with the evidence of tongues, he suggests that "love" was the evidence of such baptism. This change of thought, however, was probably due to the dissatisfaction of his former teacher, Charles Parham, who was racially biased and questioned Seymour's credibility as a leader. Parham's consistent ridicule of Seymour during and after the years of the Azusa Revival led Seymour to respond with his book in 1915, *Doctrines and Disciplines*, thus denying Parham's "Annihilation Theory" and "evidential theory" of Spirit Baptism. See Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "William J. Seymour and 'the Bible Evidence' in *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism*, ed. Gary B. McGee (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 82-84. Robeck suggests that Seymour's "definition of what constitutes a Pentecostal would surely be a broader one than would be Parham's. . . . It would remain more faithful to the Wesleyan-holiness tradition out of which the Pentecostal movement emerged, including a more profound commitment to the ethical dimension of the Christian faith" (89).

⁷¹ See *The Apostolic Faith* (Jan. 1907), 1. For instance, "The Azusa Mission stands for the unity of God's people everywhere. God is uniting His people, baptizing them by one Spirit into one body." See also *The Apostolic Faith* (Sept. 1906), 1: "The Pentecostal movement is too large to be confined in any denomination or sect. It works outside, drawing all together in one bond of love, one church, one body of Christ." Also, see his emphasis of unity based upon the experience of the Spirit: "This meeting has been a melting time. The people are melted together . . . made one lump, one bread, all one body in Christ Jesus. There is no Jew or Gentile, bond or free, in the Azusa Street Mission. . . . He is no respecter of persons or places" (in *Apostolic Faith*, Dec. 1906, 1). For further evidence of the Saint's theology of unity in Seymour's writings, see Seymour, *Azusa Street Sermons*, 108. There he illustrates Christian unity in the following way: "Apostolic faith doctrine means one accord, one soul, one heart. May God help every child of His to live in Jesus' prayer. . . . O how my heart cries out to God these days that he would make every child of His see the necessity of living in the 7th chapter of John, that we may be one in the body of Christ, as Jesus has prayed." He continues by saying, "When we are sanctified through the truth, then we are one in Christ, and we can get into one accord for the gift or power of the Holy Ghost, and God will come in like a rushing mighty wind. . . . O how I praise Him for this wonderful salvation that is spreading over this great earth. The baptism of the Holy Ghost brings the glory of God to our hearts."

ecclesial convictions that remained a part of Seymour life and ministry. Perhaps Seymour developed his ministerial skills and learned of the Saint’s teachings while visiting the “missionary home” of Rev. Robert Campbell in Cincinnati. In so doing, Seymour would have understood that the true church was “unified” by the Spirit of God, whose cleansing power was ridding the church of “denominations” and “sects” of every kind before Christ’s soon return. Seymour’s heritage of following the “evening light” produced a self-conscious identity that was rooted in temple imagery and biblical prophecy for the advocacy of Christian holiness and unity.

H. ORTON WILEY—DOMINANT IMAGES FROM THE LIFE OF A HOLINESS EDUCATOR

by

James Matthew Price

According to James McClendon, the study of biographies becomes a search for “dominant or controlling images which may be found in the lives of which they speak.”¹ For instance, notes McClendon, Martin Luther King, Jr., was guided by the biblical image of the Hebrew exodus from Egyptian slavery. McClendon further explains that dominant images are important because the “convergence of such images in a particular person helps to form his [or her] characteristic vision or outlook.” But in an insightful critique, Michael Goldberg suggests that “there is rarely only one static ‘dominant image’ in a person’s life; earlier images are often absorbed, modified, or abandoned in light of later ones.”² The meaning of a dominant image, therefore, needs the context of an entire lifetime to understand its impact upon a person’s “story of development of self over time.”³ The life and work of H. Orton Wiley (1877-1961), Nazarene educator and theologian, offer several compelling images of higher education in the Wesleyan holiness tradition during the last century.

Ronald Kirkemo suggests that there were three “Wiley’s” over the course of his professional life.⁴ The “Younger Wiley” led the way intel-

¹James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today’s Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 69.

²Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 92-93.

³Goldberg, 1991, 93.

⁴Ronald Kirkemo, personal conversation with the author, February 2000.

lectually and professionally in developing Nazarene colleges beyond ideological Bible schools into diversified liberal arts colleges. He was the “first intellectual in the Church of the Nazarene.” The “Middle Wiley” emphasized interaction with students and was more flexible in his approach to campus life than the conservative church culture generally, allowing, for instance, co-ed excursions to the sunny beaches of southern California. The “Older Wiley” was “wise” but had become “narrow in his ways.” He wrote and preached eloquently, but his views had solidified, particularly on president-faculty relations.

McClendon argues that “to know [a person’s biographical] images is . . . to know a life.”⁵ What, then, are the dominant images that emerge through a biographical study of Wiley’s life and educational career? I suggest that Wiley’s life was characterized by a series of dominant images or themes: *moving around* (a penchant for moving physically and geographically), *being a moderating influence* (a tendency to find the middle ground on most theological and administrative issues), *making education possible* (an ability to raise funds for higher education and the mutual influence of his administrative work on his theological work and vice versa), and *mentoring others* (Wiley’s educative influence upon others and his predecessors’ influence upon him).

Moving Around

Historians of American education often neglect the western expanse and western coast of the United States.⁶ Yet, Wiley’s life was characterized by westward movement. Born on the Nebraska prairies, he had lived in five cities and three states by age sixteen. His trajectory into higher education can be tracked by his movement through these movements and “decisive moments” in his life.⁷

After graduating from high school in Oregon, Wiley attended a state normal school, two universities (one public, one private) and a theological seminary by age thirty-two. All were in northern California where Wiley ministered as a pastor on two circuits in the United Brethren church. Soon after his introduction to Phineas F. Bresee, Wiley was asked to serve

⁵McClendon, 1990, 162.

⁶Sol Cohen, “New Perspectives in the History of American Education 1860-1970,” *History of Education* (1973), 87.

⁷Goldberg, 1991, 100. Michael Goldberg characterized the “decisive moments” in a person’s life as those that signify the purpose of that life.

Nazarene University in Pasadena, California, as the Dean and Registrar. Over the next fifty years, Wiley was president of two colleges, his denomination's education executive, editor of his denomination's weekly paper, and book author. Although Wiley spent thirty-three years at Pasadena College, he did so in three separate terms, the longest of which was sixteen years. He held fast to the charge given him by the dying Bresee, one of his mentors and the school's first president, to "stand by the college."⁸

During these years, Wiley traveled America extensively, preaching and teaching. Ross Price tabulated Wiley's "major preaching assignments" from 1921-1961 and found that Wiley spoke mainly at church-related camp meetings, preacher's retreats, and college chapel services. He traveled to twenty-seven states and three Canadian provinces. In one year alone, Wiley spoke at half of these locations. In his busiest year, 1930, he spoke at the following events:

1930—Convention at Regina, Saskatchewan, Jan. 26 to Feb. 2.

Convention at Morse, Saskatchewan, Feb. 3 to 6.

Weekend at Winnipeg, Manitoba, Feb. 7 to 9.

Kansas District Convention, Sylvania, Kansas, Feb. 25 to March 2.

North Dakota Convention, Jamestown, North Dakota, March 19 to 22.

Kentucky District Convention, Mt. Sterling, March 25 to 30.

Indiana Convention, Seymour, April 2 to 5.

Olivet College, April 10 to 13.

Mt. Vernon Convention, April 15 to 18.

Grand Rapids Convention, April 22 to 27.

Cleveland District Assembly, Special Speaker, May 2 and 3; tour of the district May 4 to 8.

Halltown Camp Meeting, Missouri, July 6 to 15.

Lestio Camp Meeting, Northern Maryland, August 1 to 10.

Des Moines Convention, August 15 to 21.

Plattsburg, New York Convention, September 7 to 10.

Special Meetings, New Haven, Connecticut, September 14-28.

New England Convention, October 27 to 31.

⁸H. Orton Wiley. Letter to Hardy C. Powers, General Superintendent, April 26, 1957. Correspondence files, Wiley Collection, PLNU Archives.

Preached all over Kansas City during November and December in various churches.⁹

Wiley traveled most often while he was editor of *Herald of Holiness* between 1928 and 1933. When he returned to Pasadena College in 1933, he traveled almost exclusively in states west of the Rockies.

From 1939 to 1960, Wiley spoke at the Beulah Park camp meeting each summer in Santa Cruz, California. During these twenty-two years, he preached many sermons, but one sermon in particular has lingered in memory longest. "We All Do Fade as a Leaf" was first published in 1963. The sermon evokes the natural imagery of tree leaves to communicate human life as fleeting and transient (Isaiah 64:6). The outdoor amphitheater created an idyllic setting for this message about the development of a bud into an autumn leaf, and of human life in the twilight years. The metaphor and imagery of Wiley's speaking ability is captured in this brief passage from the sermon text:

A few [leaves] survive their generation, and rustle mournfully in the topmost boughs, and only the violence of the storm or the sprouting of the buds in spring can dislodge them from their places. So also some, exceeding their threescore years and ten, still linger with a generation not theirs. They are more related to the dead than to the living. The grave to them is no longer the residence of strangers, but of kindred and friends gone on before. But we must not mistake, as youth are so apt to do. The world recedes, no doubt, but the sunrise of a glorious morning also begins to dawn. Eternity is no longer a cold, bleak, outlying region of shadows, beyond their sympathy and regard, but a portion of the loved scenery of home. Into it has gone much of what formed a very part of their being, dearer than life itself.¹⁰

It might be ironic that Wiley's life, being noted for its constant movement, has as a lasting image of his life and influence the idea of a stationary

⁹Ross E. Price, "H. Orton Wiley: The Man and His Ministry." The Wiley Lectures, January 31-February 3, 1984. Point Loma Nazarene College: II, 2. Unpublished manuscript. Price had possession of loose-leaf notebook diaries that Wiley used to compile a record of every sermon he preached, including the date preached, expenses, and general subject or text.

¹⁰H. Orton Wiley, *The Pentecostal Promise and "We All Do Fade as a Leaf"* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1963), 15.

tree, though his life might be more identified by the ever-changing hues and progress of its leaves.

A Moderating Influence

Kirkemo mentioned one dominant image for describing Wiley: the preacher, theologian, and college president was above all a “moderating” influence.¹¹ Indeed, Wiley’s role as moderator can be seen at several points in his life. He mediated conflicts and discrepancies in his professional experience and theological thought among differing parties. Examples include the Seth Rees affair in 1915 and “Black Friday” in 1957.

The Seth Rees incident was one of the greatest challenges that Wiley faced in his early career.¹² In this situation, Wiley moderated differing viewpoints of how local churches should be governed by the general church. Accountability to denominational control, for Wiley, did not mean local congregations could not protest general church decisions. Elements from the episcopal system were balanced by those from a local, congregational structure. This understanding was important for Nazarene colleges as well. They were accountable to the general church in terms of finance and standardization, but the general church could not create policy that encumbered the governance and administration of a regional institution or its constituency.

Wiley also was a moderating influence in theology. His personalism was influenced by German idealism, notably Hegel. Hegel’s developmentalism proposed that a thesis had an antithesis that could be resolved in a synthesis. In Wiley’s concept of God, the thesis of the philosophical Absolute had an antithesis in the reality of the religious experience(s) of the person with the Ultimate Person. The Absolute and the Experiential were resolved in the synthesis of the historical Christ. Wiley states the idea this way: “The Christian conception of God is a conviction that the

¹¹Ronald Kirkemo, personal conversation with the author, February 2000.

¹²The Northwest Nazarene University Archives has a box labeled “Seth Rees.” This box contains professional and personal correspondence relating to the Rees controversy. Although Timothy Smith (1962) and Ronald Kirkemo (1992) have documented accounts of events surrounding Wiley and the Rees dissension, this material asks for more in depth study and could coalesce into a case study of the strengths and weaknesses of church-related colleges. More on this subject can be found in J. Matthew Price, “An Educational Biography of H. Orton Wiley,” Ph. D. diss., University of Kansas, 2001.

ultimate Personality of religion and the Absolute of philosophy find their highest expression in Jesus Christ.”¹³

A counter example can be offered at this point so that the search for dominate biographical images does not devolve into hagiography. Wiley’s role as moderator was tainted in his involvement in connection with Pasadena College’s “Black Friday” incident. Wiley did not play a principal role, but chose to stand on one side of a public and divisive campus-wide conflict. The event centered upon the unwillingness of a professor to recant a public statement that expressed his hesitation concerning the validity of the virgin birth of Jesus. The controversy sparked a conflict between Ross Price and Wiley against four popular professors, one of whom had made the statement about the virgin birth. The situation came to a head on Friday, March 15, 1957, when the four teachers were told that their contracts would not be renewed at the end of the school year.¹⁴ The ramifications were so serious that the college’s president, W.T. Purkiser, also resigned. Purkiser was a Wiley protégé who had followed him in this leadership role.

During his presidential tenures at Pasadena College and Northwest Nazarene College, Wiley generally gave and received support from both the faculty who were more conservative and those who were more liberal, but he usually did not move too far from the middle on theological issues. But in this Black Friday incident, Wiley found himself between two protégés, Price and Purkiser, who were on differing sides of a tense situation. Price wanted the offending professor fired, while Purkiser hoped to settle the situation more diplomatically and discreetly. One reason may have been that Pasadena College had just been accredited. Nonetheless, the college’s accreditation was cut from five years to three. Wiley, however, would not adjust his theological position to accommodate other ideals.

Kirkemo’s interpretation of Wiley’s behavior is that Wiley responded as a theologian who had become “an old man and narrow in his ways.”¹⁵ Another view is that Wiley was influenced by his close relationship with Ross Price. It could be said Wiley naturally sided with Price, a former student and protégé, or maybe Wiley’s friendship and counsel were given the unfair weight of unflagging allegiance to Price rather than Purkiser. The

¹³Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 1:221.

¹⁴Ronald Kirkemo, *For Zion’s Sake: A History of Pasadena/Point Loma College* (San Diego: Point Loma Press, 1992), 218-227.

¹⁵Ronald Kirkemo, personal conversation with the author, February 2000.

data are unclear, but it seems highly unlikely that Wiley would have wanted the fallout from the Black Friday affair to have included the resignation of Purkiser, also a former student and protégé.

The Seth Rees affair and the Black Friday incident show Wiley's willingness to enter serious academic or political debate and to take unpopular perspectives. He generally sought the best *possible* resolution considering the circumstances. In the end, he was in the middle, and most of the time, moderating the relationships of faculty with constituents, the academy with the church, new developments in psychology with historical theology, and theological debate with practical experience.¹⁶

Making Education Possible

Wiley worked hard to help make solvent the educational institutions he served. From the Victory Campaigns at Northwest Nazarene College to the Troubadours traveling student group of Pasadena College, Wiley gathered people and ideas to pull these colleges out of indebtedness and made higher education possible in times of financial uncertainty. When the financial situation looked bad, Wiley relied on his spiritual faith. For Wiley, faith was experienced as more than a theological doctrine; faithfulness was a reality of life.

McClendon notes that some "biographical subjects have contributed to the theology of the community of sharers of their faith especially by showing how certain great archetypal images of that faith do apply to their own lives and circumstance, and by extension to our own."¹⁷ Faith in the midst of financial doubt became a dominant image throughout Wiley's career. He spent most of his career asking for people to give money to a project or plan for education in which some donors would never see the results or reap the benefits of their gifts. Faith, trust, and giving were intertwined in Wiley's theological teaching. An example of this practical and theological congruence can be found in his description of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Wiley wrote, "The Pentecostal gift was the gift of a Person."¹⁸ The personality of the Holy Spirit is identified as the "Gift and the Giver."¹⁹

¹⁶Further examples of these moderating influences can be found in Price, 2001.

¹⁷McClendon, 1991, 75.

¹⁸Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 2:312.

¹⁹Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 2:315.

The Holy Spirit, according to Wiley, is “the Gift of the glorified Christ to the Church, and abides within it as a creating and energizing Presence.”²⁰ The creative and energizing responsibility of the Holy Spirit is depicted as an “administrator of redemption.”²¹ The image of “Giver” is prominent throughout Wiley’s career as God continually sustained his attempts to teach, write, and provide leadership in difficult times.

For Wiley, the human response of trust, faith, and giving occurs not just individually, but within a community. According to Wiley,

God did not create men as a string of isolated souls, but as an interrelated race of mutually dependent individuals; so also the purpose of Christ is not alone the salvation of the individual, but the building up of a spiritual organism of interrelated and redeemed persons.²²

The “spiritual organization of interrelated and redeemed persons” also included the Christian college. Wiley believed that during a student’s time spent in college, a sense of vocation developed. What kind of vocation? “The Holy Spirit, as the Agent of Christ, makes known His divine purpose for the salvation of the world through a Proclamation . . . known as the Vocation or Call”²³ that is available to all persons. This gift of divine vocation is free and available to all persons regardless of social standing, gender, or external circumstances. The task of a liberal education can give meaning and structure to one’s vocation.

Giving to others, then, was one of the dominant images of Wiley’s life. The divine image of sacrificial giving was extended to the Christian community that supported Christian higher education. According to McClendon, the “Christian faith comprises images applied to life [which is] why the understanding of that faith must involve the examination of

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*, 2:316.

²²*Ibid.*, 2:239.

²³Wiley, *Christian Theology*, 2:334. James Fowler suggests finding one’s vocation is the primary goal of adulthood. Vocation, according to Fowler, is defined as “the response a person makes with his or her total self to the address of God and to the calling of partnership.” James W. Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Harper Row Publishers, 1984), 95. Thomas O. Buford contends that vocation is the goal of Christian higher education (*In Search of a Calling: The College’s Role in Shaping Identity* [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press,] 1995).

the role of images in actual lives, the role of images in the experience of life.”²⁴ For Wiley, the practical action of giving to Christian institutions has a theological basis in the doctrine of the third Person of the Trinity.

Mentoring Others

N. Ray Hiner has suggested that education be defined as “the entire process by which humans develop their sense of self, formulate their identities, learn the ways of their society so they can function within it, and define and transmit their culture from generation to generation.”²⁵ Wiley’s development as an educator is a study of his self-identity. The Church of the Nazarene and the small college campuses where Wiley served influenced who he was and what he accomplished during his career. The last aspect of Hiner’s definition suggests that a historian should become what has been called an “historical anthropologist,” or one who identifies “how society transmits culture to succeeding generations.”²⁶ Helen Horowitz has incorporated this perspective in interpreting how the values of student types are passed from one generation to the next in the history of American higher education.²⁷ The study of H. Orton Wiley’s life is an example of how the culture of the Church of the Nazarene, small liberal arts campuses, holiness theology, and life in the western United States have been transmitted through the career of a single person filling the roles of student, professor, theologian, and college president.

Wiley defined education as the formation of a person. Education, as Wiley defined it, was “the results of training or teaching, usually the purposeful efforts of one person to impart information, to shape and interpret the environment, and to exercise helpful influence over another.”²⁸ The “helpful influence over another” is really the shaping of one’s own life

²⁴McClendon, 1991, 77.

²⁵N. R. Hiner, “History of Education for the 1990’s and Beyond: The Case for Academic Imperialism,” *History of Education Quarterly* 30 (Summer 1990), 158.

²⁶“History of Education as Field of Study,” *Encyclopedia of Education*. Volume 4. (New York: Crowell Collier Educational Corporation, 1971), 418.

²⁷Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

²⁸H. Orton Wiley and E. P. Ellyson, *A Study of the Pupil* (Kansas City: Department of Church Schools, Church of the Nazarene, 1930), 13.

and another's life through educational interaction. McClendon noted that lives have creative possibilities that emphasize the "influence that life may have on others' lives." Being an influence upon another person can be described simply as being a mentor.²⁹ For Wiley, the idea of education was caught up completely in the idea of mentoring—being helpfully influenced as a student by a teacher.

Wiley was mentored throughout his life. His mother was a teacher. His grandfather Ward was a preacher. Wiley became both of these. Phineas Bresee gave him an opportunity to enter higher education, and Wiley remained committed to Nazarene higher education for the rest of his life. J. W. Buckham of the University of California, Berkeley, challenged him to think critically and grow intellectually, so Wiley taught others in the same way. All these individuals influenced Wiley's choice of vocation. His life trajectory can be viewed as a result of their influence.

Though this may be difficult to measure, the possibility of seeing a mentor's influence becomes clearer as one looks at the dominant images of Wiley's life. However, Wiley could find no mentor to help him learn how to preside over a small liberal arts college. He had examples for teaching, preaching, and delivering the Christian message, but no clear direction on how to do what he spent the majority of his career doing—leading a college. His closest mentor in this case was Bresee, who had experience as a college trustee and Bible college president, but not the experience of leading a liberal arts college. Another possible mentor in college leadership was E. F. Walker, President at Olivet College and General Superintendent, a man with whom Wiley corresponded during the time prior to his resignation from Nazarene University in late 1915 through early 1916.

Wiley mentored many students into notable professions. Esther Carson Winans, a student from Nazarene University, became a missionary in

²⁹Matt Price, "Undergraduate Student Perceptions of Faculty as Mentors in a Small Liberal Arts College." Unpublished manuscript, University of Kansas, 11 May 1999. Literature about mentoring in higher education includes: Maryann Jacobi, "Mentoring and Undergraduate Academic Success: A Literature Review," *Review of Educational Research* (1991), 61:505-532; Thomas O. Buford, *In Search of a Calling: The College's Role in Shaping Identity* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995); Marcia B. Magolda Baxter, "The Affective Dimension of Learning: faculty-student relationships that enhance intellectual development," *College Student Journal* (1987), 21:46-58.

Peru and a translator. Fred J. Shields, a graduate from Nazarene University, became a professor at Northwest Nazarene College during Wiley's tenure there, and later became president at Eastern Nazarene College. W. T. Purkiser, a student at Pasadena College, became a seminary professor, college president, and theologian. Louise Robinson Chapman, Prescott Beals, and Fairy Chism were all graduates of Northwest Nazarene College who became missionaries to Africa and India. Ross Price, a student at Northwest Nazarene College, became a lifelong student of Wiley's and followed him as dean of the graduate school of religion at Pasadena College. Price was with Wiley at his death in 1961 and has collected and maintained much of Wiley's personal files, books, and papers, now stored in university archives in Nampa, Idaho and Point Loma, California.

Wiley's constant travel and heavy responsibilities kept him very busy, but he did not ignore his family. He was preceded in death by his wife, Alice, in 1957 after 55 years of marriage. Pearl, his oldest daughter, edited Sunday School curriculum for Nazarene Publishing House before going to Japan as an independent missionary. She ministered at a large church and led a seminary for ministerial students until her death in the 1975. Lester, his oldest son, entered the priesthood of the Episcopal Church, ministered in a parish in Kansas, and served as a chaplain at Kansas State University. Ward, the third child, also became an Episcopal priest and served as a hospital chaplain in San Jose, California. Ruth, the youngest daughter, served as a librarian at Pasadena College before marrying a Nazarene minister. All of them are now deceased. Clearly, Wiley's children carried the faith of their father, though in slightly different forms, into the next generation.³⁰

“We All Do Fade as a Leaf”

Wiley was influenced profoundly by those who went before him, and he mentored those who came after him. In a noteworthy sermon, Wiley noted that each leaf on a tree has at its base “a tiny bud, which later will usurp its place.” At the same time, “the leaf nourishes the bud with

³⁰“Our 50th Wedding Anniversary Record.” Recorded audiotape. Northwest Nazarene University Archives, Nampa, Idaho; “Reminisces about Nampa, Early NNC, and Wiley.” Ruth Wiley and Prescott Beals, interview by Dr. Culver and Dr. Ford, Homecoming 1974. Box 87E. Northwest Nazarene University Archives.

its expiring life.”³¹ Wiley was an excellent example of a person who received and reciprocated guidance, counsel, and education. He was a true mentor.

In the sermon “We All Do Fade as a Leaf,” preached the year after he retired as a college president, Wiley asked, “What causes the brilliant hues of the autumn leaves?”³² In this imagery of the fading leaf, he echoes the words of one of his own mentors, Professor John Wright Buckham.³³ Wiley also spent his life as a mentor in the making, only to give way to the next generation. He formed the minds and guided the lives of those who followed him as educators and leaders in the Church of the Nazarene. Wiley described this parable of the fading leaf, itself a dominant image of his experience as an educator, in this way:

Those who in youth take up into their lives the beautiful things of the Spirit will find these things bursting forth in splendor at autumn time; while those who fail here must end their lives in the unsightliness of decay. A person must die as [he or she] lives.

As Wiley’s life came to a close, perhaps, the lives of his students and colleagues continued to exhibit the “beautiful things of the Spirit.” Mentors like Wiley, hopefully, will connect previous generations to the next.

³¹ H. Orton Wiley, *Pentecostal Promise and “We All Do Fade as a Leaf”: Anniversary Messages Given on Outstanding Occasions* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1963), 18.

³² Wiley first preached this sermon in Santa Cruz, California, in an open-air auditorium on August 7, 1949. It was published posthumously in *Pentecostal Promise and “We All Do Fade as a Leaf”: Anniversary Messages Given on Outstanding Occasions* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1963): 21.

³³ John Wright Buckham, Wiley’s advisor at the Pacific Theological Seminary, described himself as a “leaf on the tree of knowledge” in his first book depicting his view of “personalism” in (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1909), v.

ABSENCE TRANSFORMED: THE EUCCHARISTIC SITE OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

by

Eric R. Severson

Perhaps it was the dusty road, or the two-hour walk, or maybe the setting Easter Day sun. Perhaps it was the profound exegetical and theological conversation between the two friends and a faceless stranger, or maybe it was their downcast faces, full of confusion and disappointment at the events that occurred in Jerusalem that weekend. For whatever reason, the two disciples who walked the road between Jerusalem and Emmaus, discussing the events of the first Easter, failed to realize that they strolled alongside the Risen Christ. The hidden Savior asked about the events of the weekend, and with downcast faces they told the story of the crucifixion and the troubling reports of an empty tomb. As the shadows grew long, the trio arrived at Emmaus, and the stranger appeared to be headed further down the road. Cleopas and his friend encouraged the stranger to stay. As he blessed and broke bread with them, their eyes were opened, and for a fleeting instant they gazed at the Risen Christ. As quickly as their eyes fixed on the one they now knew to be Jesus, he was gone, evasively out of sight once again.

The centerpiece of this invaluable narrative is the breaking of the bread. On both sides of this instant of recognition and presence, there is absence and distance, although one absence is quite different than the other. The moment when bread was blessed and broken remains laden with transformative and theological meaning. They recognized in that

fleeting but priceless instant that they sat dining face to face with Jesus himself.

Marginalized By Modernity

That Eucharistic and sacramental theology has experienced marginalization throughout modernity should come as no surprise. The modern mind, trained to be reductionistic, is offended by the suggestion that anything profound might occur through the banal acts of breaking open a loaf of bread. In this sense, Eucharistic theology has shared marginalization with other aspects of Christian theology, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, which fit poorly into the philosophical and metaphysical trends of modernity. The physical practice of Eucharist has also experienced marginalization in some Protestant denominations. Throughout the modern era some have practiced the sacrament with declining regularity. There are surely a wide variety of factors that have contributed to this loss of the Eucharistic site of Christian theology and liturgy. The following will not attempt to definitively name the causes of this decline¹ or argue for a particular form (or regularity) of Eucharistic celebration, but will address the considerable cost of marginalizing this centerpiece of Christian liturgy.

Particularly surprising in this development is the ambiguous way in which denominations which trace lineage to John Wesley have appropriated the sacramental in theology and practice. The revival headed by John and Charles Wesley in eighteenth-century England was deeply Eucharistic in nature, to the degree that William Crocket asserts: "It is not commonly known today either by Anglicans or by Methodists that the Wesleyan revival was as much a Eucharistic revival as an evangelical revival."² Wesley advocated weekly, or even daily, celebration of the Eucharist, and gladly defended the centrality of the practice to Christian worship and theology in his 1733 sermon, "The Duty of Constant Communion." In this sermon Wesley defends regular celebration of the

¹One can hardly hope to improve on those who have thoroughly described this decline, including William Placher who has done so at length in *Domestication of Transcendence* (Louisville: Westminster, 1996). Placher carefully outlines the theological and liturgical damage wrought by modernity.

²William R. Crocket, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1989), 199. This passage is quoted in Laurence Hull Stookey, *Eucharist: Christ's Feast with the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

Eucharist against a host of arguments, and reissues the same sermon 55 years later. The 1745 collection of 166 Eucharistic hymns published by the brothers Wesley testify to the centrality of the Eucharist in their liturgy and theology.

Still, sacramental theology has often been marginalized both by theologians within the Wesleyan heritage and without. Many churches within the Wesleyan heritage practice the Eucharist with an infrequency that might alarm the Wesleys. But what is of interest here is not specifically Eucharistic *practice*, but the critical theological foundation that is lost when Christian theology loses sight of the paradoxical tension of presence and absence upheld by sacraments. Some nineteenth-century Methodists found Wesley's adherence to the sacraments an embarrassment, preferring a piety that allows the Eucharist to play only a small role.³ Though many who follow Wesley have continued to practice the Lord's Supper regularly, the rich theological significance of sacramental *theology* is too often overlooked.

It will be suggested here that the sacramental, understood as the liturgy of the ultimate divine extension in Christ's death, is the nexus of Christian theology, the site through which all theology must pass to confirm that it is authentically Christian. The brief exegetical focus here will be on the Emmaus narrative. We suggest that Luke's account establishes Eucharist as the cornerstone for interpretation of the events of cross and resurrection. Special attention will be given to the spatial significance of appearance and withdrawal. The implications of this thesis include cautions against the danger of idolatry in non-sacramental theology and strong statements about what is at stake theologically around the table. Ultimately it will be argued that Christian theology's responsibility is to be thoroughly sacramental. The focus here will be specifically on how the Eucharist provides a hermeneutic for non-idolatrous theology.

Luke and Eucharist

The liturgical and theological centrality of the Eucharist can be argued throughout the Luke-Acts material. Many of the issues that will be highlighted here within the Emmaus Road narrative appear consistently throughout the Lukan material and seem to culminate in the resurrection appearances. Themes such as appearance and withdrawal, seeing and

³ Stookey, *Eucharist*, 160.

blindness, and the significance of the “gaze” can be observed throughout the Lukan version of Jesus’ life and ministry. The spatial movements of Jesus alone represent profound cause for reflection: Jesus withdrawing to pray in the wilderness (5:26), withdrawing from messianic identification (5:14), withdrawing for a nap in the boat during the storm (8:22-25), and the obvious spatial issues surrounding Jerusalem and the temple. For the sake of brevity, we will focus on the Lord’s Supper (22:7-38) and the Emmaus narrative (23:13-34), but it is important to recognize that these issues are far from unique to this passage.

The reasons for finding particular significance in the Emmaus Road narrative are numerous. This is an Easter Day narrative and seems to be Luke’s unique contribution to our understanding of Easter Sunday. According to Luke, the two journeying from Jerusalem to Emmaus were privileged to be among the first to see and speak with the Resurrected Savior. The narrative includes significant interpretive movements on behalf of the author, who seeks to place the events of Easter weekend within the context of the Torah, messianic hope, and prophetic scripture. When the pair turned around and hurried back to Jerusalem, their reports of seeing Jesus were met by the news that Jesus had also appeared to Peter, but Luke excludes the story of Jesus’ appearance to Peter. Structurally, this narrative provides a lengthy and explanatory transition between the understanding of the pre- and post-resurrection Jesus.

It would be no overstatement to suggest that the Christian gospel hinges on the events occurring between the breaking of two loaves of bread, between the loaf broken with the disciples at the Last Supper and the loaf broken at the café in Emmaus.⁴ But the reactions to these two events of bread-breaking are more notable in their contrast than in their symmetry. Around the table in Luke’s version of the Lord’s Supper there is a nearly immediate reaction of animosity and self-assertion on behalf of the disciples. It is as they shared the cup together, brooding over the words of Jesus about a “new covenant,”⁵ that Jesus pointed out that a betrayer

⁴Jesus states at the first Lord’s Supper that he “will not eat or drink again” until the fulfillment of God’s Kingdom. The moment when Jesus again dines with the two Emmaus followers appears to represent the fulfillment of his promise to not eat and drink again until the Kingdom is “fulfilled.” The meals provide Eucharistic bookends on the most significant events in history (Luke 22:16).

⁵Luke 22:20. The New Living Translation will be used for all quotations in this paper.

shared this meal of thanksgiving. Their conversation digressed quickly to accusations and then turned to a verbal contest concerning which disciple would be the greatest in the Kingdom to come. Even before the aftertaste of the first Eucharist faded, they turned their attention away from the Broken One and onto themselves. The first meal was unsuccessful in dislodging the self-idolatry that dominated the thinking of the disciples. The first Eucharist was, therefore, decidedly non-Eucharistic in the sense that the focus of the meal and conversation—the theme of the “liturgy” in those moments—was self-centered and not Christ-centered.

When Jesus next gave thanks and broke bread, he gazed into the eyes of two followers who recognized him in that moment, and in their recognition were spellbound. The moment they “recognized” the Savior, the lessons from the road all fell into place.⁶ The significance of that broken bread and the broken body were not lost on these second Eucharistic participants. The Emmaus pair worshipped truly. Their worship allowed them to catch only a glimpse of Jesus himself. As soon as they recognized him he was gone. Notably, in this context the language of recognition repels the notion of possession. They did not grasp the Savior who dined with them. They did not drag him back to Jerusalem to show the eleven. They were graciously allowed to gaze for a fleeting, flashing moment at the Savior, and then the vision was gone. Withdrawal, absence, and distance once again prevailed. But, unlike the first Meal, this bread-breaking fulfilled the purpose of the fledgling sacrament. In bread and wine the Resurrected One made appearance and left his indelible presence. The ecclesial, theological, and Trinitarian implications of this *recognition* and subsequent *withdrawal* are profound and require significant attention.

Eucharist, Idolatry and Trinity

It is both sad and ironic that at the very institution of the Lord’s Supper divisiveness and self-idolatry occurred. But perhaps it is not coincidental that the hostile struggle over “who would be the greatest”⁷ occurred as Jesus served his disciples a meal. The “foot washing” narrative is unique to John’s gospel, but Luke does explicitly emphasize that Jesus was the servant at this meal. Jesus interrupted their quarrelling to say, “normally the master sits at the table and is served by his servants.

⁶In reflection, the pair discussed the experience of feeling their hearts “strangely warmed” as Jesus discussed Scripture (Luke 24:32).

⁷Luke 22:24.

But not here! For I am your servant.”⁸ Things are apparently supposed to be different around this particular table, eating this particular meal. Yet it seems to be the meal itself that leads them into their quarrel. Perhaps they *face* one another in this act of true *communion*, and become unbearably aware of one another and their place in the community—naked and ashamed.⁹ Jesus fades from the narrative momentarily, and the disciples quarrel among themselves. Later we will turn our attention toward the ecclesial application of this first Communion and why this passage issues a powerful warning against idolatry in non-Eucharistic Christianity. First, it is important to explicate a crucial relationship between Eucharist and idolatry.

Idolatry raises a concept or physical object to the level of godhood. Around the table the disciples were offered the *gift* of the very body of God’s Son, and replaced that opportunity for doxology with self-idolatry. To better understand how idolatry relates to Eucharist we will appeal, though not uncritically, to Jean-Luc Marion’s understanding of idolatry. Marion is leery of the same modern influences that have pushed Eucharist and Trinity to the margins of Christian theology, and wishes to confront the theo-*logical* dependence of modernity and even post-modernity on metaphysics and philosophy. He believes that the metaphysical tradition has reduced the notion of God to a conceptual idol.¹⁰ Marion’s God (written as Gød to indicate that God is known in God’s disappearance in the death and resurrection)¹¹ is absolutely free of the confines of metaphysics and utterly unknowable apart from revelation. The Christian God is to be understood in terms of gracious, loving *Gift*.

For Marion, God is not obligated to “be” and cannot be constrained by the shackles of metaphysics and philosophy.¹² The God of the metaphysician is ultimately an idol determined by human reason, and the highest of metaphysical aspirations still remain confined within the language of being. Metaphysics attempts to link the “Being” of God to the “being”

⁸Luke 22:27.

⁹It would be helpful and constructive, but not realistic in this context, to enter into a discussion of Adam and Eve’s shame in Genesis 3 in relationship to *facing* at the Eucharistic table with the “new Adam.”

¹⁰Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 29.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 105.

¹²*Ibid.*

of creation, and in this attempt never raises its gaze to God but remains fixated on itself.¹³ As Wholly Other, the Christian God is “beyond being,” beyond metaphysics and beyond philosophy. Marion’s theology (Marion is ambivalent about whether his work can even be considered *theology*) is respectful of divine absence and the inability of philosophy to overcome the divine withdrawal. Apart from revelation, Marion’s God is utterly unknowable. While we will later offer some reservations about Marion’s powerful thesis, his view is deeply useful as a partner in critique of idolatrous approaches to theology and liturgy. It is important to note how Marion’s use of Eucharist in establishing an understanding of God as Gift resonates with Luke’s central event of bread-breaking at Emmaus.

Marion’s purpose in proposing the “Eucharistic site of theology”¹⁴ is precisely the protection against the sort of idolatrous theologies produced when Christianity turns to metaphysics to inform its language about God. The Eucharist, as we receive it in Scripture, is a mysterious interplay between the gift of Christ’s presence and the clear absence of Christ in the physical accidents of bread and wine. One cannot (though some have tried) define in metaphysical terms how Christ is truly present in the elements of Eucharist.¹⁵ The only manner in which Eucharistic presence can be understood is as free *gift*. This presence cannot be verified scientifically because it is shrouded in absence, mystery and distance; the giver “lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach.”¹⁶ The presence of Christ in the Eucharist occurs within the context of withdrawal—never canceling the notion of his ascension, but affirming presence nonetheless.¹⁷

Marion’s thesis and dismissal of metaphysics is as controversial as it is challenging. Essentially, he dismisses the supposition that “correlational language”¹⁸ can speak about the Christian God without committing

¹³Ibid., 9. Here Marion discusses the notion of the idol as “First Visible” and object of fixation.

¹⁴Ibid., 139ff.

¹⁵It should be noted that not all metaphysicians expect the Eucharist to be metaphysically definable.

¹⁶First Timothy 6:16.

¹⁷It would be helpful but impractical to enter into a more thorough discussion of the meaningful spatial issues at work in the concept of ascension, which powerfully reinforce the Emmaus withdrawal.

¹⁸David Tracy discusses the issue of “correlation” in the introduction (p. ix-xv) to Marion’s *God Without Being*.

idolatry. Correlational language supposes that it is possible to create correlations, however humble, between human observations (science, metaphysics, etc.) and God. Marion will not allow a correlation between logic and God, because such a God is forced into “Being” at the command of human cognition. But Marion never deals adequately with the implications of the Christ-event on our understanding of creation and God’s activity elsewhere in Scripture or in creation. If we grant Marion’s corrective assertion that natural theology cannot make any assertions about God, are we not still left to wonder if there are any natural implications of God’s self-giving on the cross of Christ?¹⁹ While we will side here with Marion against metaphysical restraints on God, it is worthwhile to note that Marion’s project leaves a number of important questions unanswered. His sweeping statements appear to overlook a variety of potentially non-idolatrous approaches to theology.

Marion himself finds that “Trinitarian play” pronounces in advance the desolation of metaphysics.²⁰ He suggests that the *distance* apparent in the Father’s desertion of Christ on Good Friday irrevocably confounds metaphysics. The first metaphysically irreconcilable distance occurs in the extension of the logician’s One God into Christianity’s Triune God, replete with *distancing* in the economy of God’s self-giving as Father, Son and Spirit. This movement is severely downplayed by metaphysical theologians interested in reconciling the logic of God’s ultimate unity with the Trinitarian implications of Christian Scripture. In this struggle the Trinity is invariably marginalized so that the logical unity of God is not ultimately offended by implications of “distance” within God. That the doctrine of the Trinity was rarely utilized during modernity’s prime (17th-19th centuries) should come as no surprise.

¹⁹The God given on the cross must also be the God who creates *ex nihilo*, author of all things. Marion’s near silence on the Old Testament is obviously a result of his emphasis on the revelatory significance of the Christ-event. But, as we have noted from the Emmaus narrative, Jesus himself makes a point to blend and connect the cross and resurrection with the Torah and the prophets. Revelation and creation are intertwined in a much more intricate fashion than Marion will acknowledge. Such a God is virtually silent in the important realms of nature, creation ethics, and any divine role in an ongoing creative process.

²⁰Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), xxv.

Although Jürgen Moltmann may have overstated himself in reaction to this marginalization, his claim that Christianity is not “monotheistic”²¹ is understandable in light of the fact that modernity had all but succeeded in silencing the offensive irony of Trinitarian confession. Postmodern thinkers, by definition, agree on very few things, but among them is the suspicion that we will not soon uncover the metaphysical system that defines all of God’s interaction with the world. Marion pushes this suspicion to its furthest limits by denying that metaphysics have a foothold whatsoever in Christian theology. Whether Marion’s rather sweeping assertions bear out is less important here than the tools he provides for understanding how the Eucharist and Trinity challenge philosophical idolatry.²²

William Placher is similarly concerned with the tendency of modernity to “domesticate” Christian concepts that are at odds with philosophy and metaphysics. Of particular concern to Placher are the concepts of transcendence and Trinity, domesticated by modernity to fit into the philosophical systems of humanity. He writes, “we cannot simply fit God in as one component of our intellectual system, or think of a God who fits our categories and purposes.”²³ Such theology, claims Placher, does not evade idolatry. In *Domestication of Transcendence* he tells the story of the demise of modernity, describing the reasons why “modern thinking about God went wrong.” Marion and Placher are joined by a host of powerful thinkers in the Radical Orthodoxy movement in scathing critique of the idolatry in “modern” theology. But there remains no clear, common recommendation concerning what should be done with the mess that modernity has made of Christian theology and liturgy.

It is suggested here that the doctrine of the Trinity, properly understood, confounds modernity’s idolatry and calls Christian theology and liturgy to careful reconsideration of divine mystery and transcendence. But establishing which notion of Trinity is “properly understood” is a difficult project indeed. While recent decades have seen a marked resurgence in discussion of God as Trinity, this revival has not been accompanied by any consensus on how the doctrine of the Trinity should be

²¹Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981), 191.

²²Hence we will not address whether all metaphysical language commits idolatry, a fine question that Marion and his opponents deal with extensively.

²³Placher, 17.

discussed or appropriated. In fact, there have been many versions of Trinitarian theology presented that are thoroughly modern in nature.²⁴ Trinitarian thinkers have often drifted far away from the foundations of pre-Trinitarian Scriptural texts in an attempt to establish a doctrine that is metaphysically tenable.

Here we will side with Catherine Mowry LaCugna in her insistence that Scripture and divine economy provide an abundance of material for a robust doctrine of the Trinity. Such a doctrine must be based on the outward movement of God toward creation, received as *gift* in the Eucharistic divine movement. Whereas the Trinity frequently has been perceived as a static unity from which God then chooses to initiate contact with the world, many have suggested recently that a more biblical approach to Trinity focuses on God's revealed approach to the created "other."²⁵ Therefore, God's movement toward creation as Trinity is not a secondary property to a static Triune existence, but the very essence of what we mean by Trinity. What we discover in the economy of God reveals God truly. Therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity is not first about God's static, stationary "Being," but instead about the Father's active, self-extending missions of Spirit and Son.²⁶ The doctrine of the Trinity speaks primarily of the ecstatic movement of God for the sake of the world. The Father sends Son and Spirit for the purposes of reconciliation, relationship, communion and love.²⁷ Such an approach to Trinitarian theology in no way

²⁴Most moderns who have attempted to do systematic Christian theology have included a doctrine of the Trinity of some sort. Such doctrines often follow either Schleiermacher in relegating Trinity to a theological addendum or follow Process theology in drastically altering the doctrine to fit a metaphysical system.

²⁵Catherine Mowry LaCugna has contributed powerfully to this project in *God For Us: The Trinity in Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

²⁶Hendrikus Berkof says it concisely: "Spirit-Son-Father. These three names in their togetherness point to a movement of the one God, not a static community of three persons," *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964).

²⁷These categories, reconciliation, communion, *koinonia*, etc., are often established as primary through various philosophical or religious standpoints. What is important here is that the Trinity is our essential confession of the New Testament faith, not a doctrine produced to support democracy, liberation theology, process metaphysics, narrative theology, or any other particular theological or political perspective.

negates the immanent Trinity nor does it contradict creedal affirmations of God's transcendence at Trinity. But since the nature of "God internal" is beyond the scope of revelation, we must swiftly reach respectful aporia²⁸ when it comes to speculation about the internal relationships of Father, Son and Spirit.

This approach places the doctrine of the Trinity in the center of any truly Christian theology and it imbeds our understanding of God's nature as Trinity in the particulars of the pre-Trinitarian building blocks of Scripture. It takes little account of the modern desire to integrate Trinitarian confession with metaphysics, but focuses intently on the rhythm of divine movement within Scripture—a rhythm that is decidedly economic in orientation. The uncomfortable particularities of Trinitarian theology often have been domesticated to become more compatible with contemporary philosophy, but this approach to Trinity relishes such incompatibility as demonstrative of the fact that Triune God is a stranger to human metaphysical and philosophical constructions. The Trinity is God in *giving* and as *gift*. This emphasis on economy and donation finds profound resonance in the pre-Trinitarian language of Scripture. Spirit and Son are gifts of a generous Father, who chooses to self-extend to the world out of agape. The activities of Father, Son, and Spirit in Scripture are creation-aimed movements of generous self-giving. It is this unprecedented, free movement creation-ward that is "recognized" and celebrated in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist performs its most crucial function in celebrating the *distance* from which the Father gives the filial gift of *presence*. In discussing Holy Saturday, Graham Ward speaks of the "Trinity at its most extended; the moment when the Father is most separated from the Son and the distance between them embraces the lowest regions of hell."²⁹ In the brokenness of the cross and the depth of the grave the Trinity is *stretched* the furthest, and the irony of Trinitarian confession becomes most unavoidable. The Eucharist as instituted by Jesus is a recognition of the depth of the self-giving of the Triune God for the sake of extending the "Trinitarian play" to all creation. The condescension does not stop in the irony of incarnation, but extends to humanity's impoverished, the poor and the outcast. At the first Eucharist, the extension of Triune self-

²⁸From the Greek *aporos*, which connotes perplexity, impassibility and skepticism.

²⁹John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 170.

giving is illustrated in the form of a serving Savior who waits on his disciples in illustration of true agape, true relationality. But the first Eucharist is not only about servanthood and self-abnegation; it is about an even further depth to which the Triune God extends—the cross and the grave. The broken bread is physical, tangible, taste-able reminder of the profound extent of Triune exteriority. God as Trinity does more than come; the Triune God comes to redeem the very depths of existence.

It is for this reason that the Eucharist is essential to Trinitarian (and hence Christian) theology. The Eucharist is the liturgical expression and re-enactment of the extent of Trinitarian agape and exteriority. Eucharist uniquely illustrates the full extension of the Triune God as incarnate, fleshed reality. In the Eucharistic moment our liturgy must reflect the depth of God's Triune condescension. As our look at the Emmaus narrative will confirm, Eucharist represents human "recognition" of this divine movement, which is cause for doxology and thanksgiving. It provides the framework by which the Triune God can be celebrated and emulated without being possessed or confined. The Eucharist is by definition *thanksgiving* and is therefore a grateful reaction to the economy of divine self-giving. It cherishes the glimpse of *presence* found at the table, and celebrates also the *absence* that forever reminds the celebrating community that God is beyond our grasp, unpossessable.³⁰ Without a thoroughly Eucharistic hermeneutic, our liturgy and theology fail miserably to be focused on the Triune God, never rising above idolatry to authentically Christian worship.³¹

Presence at Emmaus

The spatial and temporal issues arising from the Emmaus resurrection appearance are several, but it would be incorrect to assume that all of these implications were intended by the Lukan author. Still, the delicate

³⁰This is a conclusion about the negative value of "absence," which is the protection of transcendence. We suggest that "absence" and "withdrawal" have positive benefit in the opening of the Triune life.

³¹It is important to note that while the Eucharist performs a powerful and persuasive function in protecting Christian theology from idolatry, we are referring here to a hermeneutic rather than a doctrine. There is no 'doctrine of the Eucharist' to rival the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity. Rather, we must approach all Christian doctrines in a Eucharistic fashion, with a Eucharistic hermeneutic.

balance of presence and absence throughout the Luke-Acts material is unmistakable. While the author may not have intended the inferences mined here, the narratives undoubtedly open up profound insights into the manner of God's self-disclosure in Jesus.

Most striking as the story begins is the fact that Jesus is hidden from the pair on the road by divine design: "God kept them from recognizing him."³² Their downcast demeanor and identity as peripheral disciples make this cloaking of Jesus more reasonable to imagine, but Luke makes it clear that God prevented recognition as they walked along the road talking together. Jesus asked them to fill him in on the events of the weekend. The Emmaus pair told the story well, of the dashing of their hopes at the hands of the priests and religious leaders. They told the story with downcast faces, disappointment woven into the fabric of their conversation. When the stranger responded to their story, he began to unravel their illusions about the nature of the Messiah. Jesus contradicted the supposition that the Messiah's *presence* in Israel would be unrestricted. Their messianic hopes were, according to Jesus, disconnected from the words of the prophets who anticipated suffering and struggle in the coming Messiah. Had they heeded their prophets, the disciples would have realized that God's presence in the Messiah remained beyond possession. The Messiah would be *gift*, given even to the extent of suffering and death, but still not a gift to be grasped and possessed by Israel.

In those hours of strolling along the road to Emmaus, the Father's gift of the Son was suspended just beyond the noses of those two disciples. They were absorbed in their disappointment and confusion, unable to see far enough to discover the answers just inches away. The Triune condescension was hanging suspended in those moments as Jesus graciously prepared the two for an unprecedented recognition. Distance, absence, and withdrawal clouded the vision of the disciples, even as Jesus began to peel the layers off their messianic misconceptions. And then the conversation began to wind down—they had reached the village of Emmaus. Despite the fact that the sun was low in the sky, the stranger indicated that he would continue in his journey away from Jerusalem.

The doctrine of the Trinity (at least economically understood) lies just beneath the surface of this interaction. It is the Father who gave this gift of the Son, both the embodied Jesus who walked the road beside

³²Luke 24:16.

them and the gift of recognition at the bread-breaking. This messiah is only received in this context of Triune generosity. It is the Father who maintains the balance between presence and absence, delivering both as gracious gift. The pressing need for the Son to move onward from Jerusalem and Emmaus makes sense in light of the strong emphasis on the gift of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. The condescension of the Triune God, though utterly complete on Easter Sunday, is still at work in the project of incorporating humanity, the Church. The Lukan Jesus must move on, must withdraw to create “distance” in which the Holy Spirit can be fully realized.

But the stranger hesitated at the crossroad between Emmaus and parts unknown. He hesitated because he was beseeched by the traveling pair to join them for supper. Notably, the Emmaus disciples invited a *stranger* to dine with them. Obviously they would have invited Jesus to dine with them, but their invitation was issued to a man whose name and identity were unknown to them. Appreciative of his company, intrigued by his understanding of the mysteries that boggle their minds, they invited him to stay. The stranger accepted the invitation and sat down to dine with the couple. Oddly, the narrative implies that Jesus only dined with them because of their hospitable request. These disciples were extending Eucharistic hospitality to a stranger on the road. Those who eat and drink at the table of Jesus in the Kingdom of God were to be the sort of women and men who serve the stranger, the outcast.³³ One can almost imagine Jesus pausing at the crossroads, recognizing the brand of Eucharistic hospitality that had been so absent in the upper room just three days earlier. So it should not be overlooked that the brilliant flash of recognition just moments away occurred within the context of hospitality. The disciples invited Jesus to their table as a stranger, and the magnificent moment that would follow is *covenantal* in their unknowing participation in the hospitable atmosphere of this second Eucharist. Without knowing it, they entertained the Son of God.³⁴

Luke tells us that Jesus pronounced blessing on a small loaf of bread, broke the bread and handed it to his fellow travelers. Their eyes were suddenly opened and recognition occurred. This recognition itself comes in the form of a gift. They have been “kept” from seeing Jesus by

³³Luke 22:27.

³⁴Matthew 25:35-36, Hebrews 13:2.

God throughout the journey, and now as the bread is broken the veil is lifted and they recognize Jesus truly. Yet as quickly as they saw Jesus for who he really was, he was gone, again absent from them. That Jesus was moving on down the road until he was begged to stay is an often overlooked detail in this narrative. Where was he headed? Whatever Luke's intentions were in including this small detail, the language of withdrawal is obvious. The resurrected Messiah is withdrawing from Jerusalem, as he makes explicit at the ascension. But he withdraws from a human community forever transformed by the flash—the brief encounter with the Trinity “at its most extended.” This encounter lives on despite his absence, and is in fact funded by his withdrawal. He withdraws from the Emmaus pair, and later from the disciples in Jerusalem, having finally accomplished the preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit, having opened up the Triune life to sin-torn humanity. As Jesus makes explicit in Luke-Acts (and even more clearly in John's gospel), his withdrawal is good and necessary for the incredible benefits of the Spirit.

But the most significant aspect of this story occurs in the *presence* of Jesus at the table in Emmaus, where Luke's gospel hinges theologically. It is here that, as the bread is broken, for the first time in Luke's gospel Jesus is seen in the full light of his messianic mission. On the other side of the grave, in light of the lengthy conversation en route to Emmaus, and with the blessing of bread, Jesus is truly recognized. The blind eyes of the pair on the road incorporate a gospel full of blind eyes and misled messianic expectations, highlighted by the disastrous feud at the first Eucharist. And the recognition at that table is the first full recognition of Jesus. This moment of recognition was as fleeting as it was profound. Almost as soon as he was recognized, he disappeared from their grasp, apparently slipping off down the road of *withdrawal*. But behind, left sitting on the table, was a remarkable loaf of bread. And along with the bread there is indelible trace, memory, lingering touch, *real presence* that have transformed the very meaning of absence and withdrawal.

Absence Transformed

The sort of absence experienced by those disciples in the moments after the disappearance of Jesus bears little resemblance to the blind absence of the road. They now sit transfixed by the flash of recognition. Absence has been transformed, no longer veiling the face of Christ but now hollowing out room for God's church to receive the Spirit by which

it may respond to the Triune self-gift. The resurrected Christ withdraws, but leaves behind his *presence*; the bread, the memory, the words, and most importantly the Spirit. But the withdrawal illustrates the ongoing inability of the disciples and the church to contain or possess the Messiah. The Messiah instead moves beyond, down the road, lovingly beckoning the church toward deeper reception and embodiment of Triune self-giving. This self-giving is intimately tied to the seemingly routine act of eating and drinking.

This new and strange form of absence is laden with lingering, active, Christic and pneumatic presence. How strange that this should be represented by the commonplace elements of food and drink! And yet, the banality of the Eucharist underscores its irony and theological centrality. It makes no *logical* sense that the flash of divine revelation should occur in such a hackneyed moment; the sense it makes is entirely *theological*. Modern worshippers and theologians are perhaps offended and put-off by this illogical movement. It is so much more *logical* if some metaphysical principle governs revelation and divine presence. But if revelation is Eucharistic, it can only be received as *gift*, unpredictable and unwarranted. So this Eucharistic site of theology, bound awkwardly in the garb of the particularities of a story, bread, flesh and blood, is the supreme site of theology. Here the wonder of *presence* and the mystery of *absence* are recognized and celebrated. It is here that we recognize the paradox of divine presence in creation.

The new form of absence, immediately available as Jesus disappeared from the Emmaus table (and particularly as Jesus disappears in the ascension), can no longer be understood as “absence” in the same sense. Though the departure of Jesus still represents withdrawal, this new departure of Jesus actually funds the ongoing presence of the Risen Christ in the church. The “absence” apparent in the story-telling by the disciples on Emmaus Road is marked by its misinformation and blindness to the *presence* of Jesus. The “absence” that follows the Eucharist is laden by *presence*, filled with wonder and thanksgiving. They lingered only a few moments in wonder around the table and then sprinted back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples about their encounter, where the Resurrected Jesus was again tangibly present at the very proclamation of their story. The withdrawal of Jesus has been transformed by the *gift* of Eucharist, and the sacrifice of brokenness, cross and death represented in the sacrament.

Eucharist positions liturgy and theology between reverent doxology and humble aporia. The disappearance and withdrawal of Christ opens up the “Trinitarian play” to the world, inviting the Eucharistic community into the space of the Trinity.³⁵ Withdrawal allows the disciples to embody the role of Christ, to face one another in a Christic fashion. Whereas absence prior to the gift of recognition was empty, the absence found after Christ withdraws is actually the blossoming presence of Christ in the world. The disciples, partakers of the Eucharistic body of Christ, have now “recognized” the gift of *presence*. They have celebrated the gift, and in Christ’s *absence* they participate in his *presence* by being broken with Christ for one another and the world.

The Eucharistic Community

George Lindbeck notes that “the Eucharist tastes bitter in a divided church.”³⁶ If Lindbeck is correct, the original Lord’s Supper must have been distasteful even to the first celebrant. Perhaps it is even true that the Eucharist goes *untasted* in a divided church, for the Emmaus Eucharist of Luke was only made possibly by the hospitable community of disciples who begged the Stranger to dine with them. The true realization of the presence of Christ occurred in the context of hospitality, when the bread was broken in a community of agape, and when Jesus was finally recognized and blessed accurately.

Every trip to the table should mimic and mirror the manner in which the Triune God unfolds creation-ward. If the Eucharist represents the cross and grave, and therefore the furthest extension of Triune exteriority, then this sacrament is the liturgical celebration of Triune relationality.³⁷ Furthermore, our methods and manners of relatedness should be patterned after no less than the relationality of the Triune God. What we find at the table is not a complicated maze of inter-divine relationships. The Trinity of the Eucharist is economically expressed in radical self-extension.

By the generosity of the Father and the ubiquity of the Spirit is the Son *given* and *recognized* at the table. But as Jesus makes clear around

³⁵Jean-Luc Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002). This language is used by Marion on pages 142-143.

³⁶Lindbeck makes this statement on the Yale University website, among other places: <http://www.yale.edu/divinity/spec/spectS99/spect299.htm#NEWS>.

³⁷In this sense the Eucharist is like baptism, passing us with Christ through his death and into the Resurrection.

the first Lord's Supper, the reception of the bread and wine does not self-glorify. Eating and drinking the meal of this "coming kingdom" changes the way relationships occur within the human community. The master becomes servant, illustrated in the relational priority of the "other" in the Son's service at the table. This sacrament beckons the worshipping community to enter the Triune venture into the painful depths of agape-facing. The cross and the grave, remembered, celebrated, and re-lived in the Eucharist, represent the place where God's self-giving intersects with the very basest of human conditions. As Trinity, God "faces" the world truly, the Son descending to the grave for the sake of the "other."

In the act of table service a good servant is intensely attentive to the "face" of the master. The glass is refilled before it is half-empty, the plate is arranged pleasingly, the master's needs are anticipated, perhaps by the very expression on her face. The Eucharistic service takes such notice of the "other." And the deepest irony offered by Christianity is that the Triune God chooses to face creation in this fashion. Father, Son, and Spirit in Scripture *face* creation for the sake of redemption, reconciliation, and communion.

When the first Christian communities gathered for Eucharist, there were some significant failures to embody Trinitarian "facing." The Lord's Supper controversies in Corinth make it clear that the table was already a site for marginalization of the poor, discrimination and self-gratification. In this sense, the Eucharist became de-facing liturgy, and thereby a markedly un-Eucharistic event.³⁸ Though these communities met and broke bread together, *Eucharistic facing* was absent from their defacing liturgical patterns.³⁹ In its most practical application, this thesis calls Christian communities not to simply *practice* Eucharist, but to *face* eucharistically. The goal of Christian liturgy is Eucharistic facing, modeled and *storied* by the other-centered exteriority of the Trinity. The un-Eucharistic practices of the church become opportunities for a miraculous refunctioning. Just as the "great un-Eucharist" of the crucifixion is transformed into the blessed Eucharist of the Emmaus table, the defacing rampant in Christian communities, biblical and contemporary, can be re-narrated to provide opportunities for reconciliation and Eucharistic facing.

³⁸James Buckley and David Yeago, eds., *Knowing the Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). In Eugene Rogers' chapter he calls the crucifixion the "great un-Eucharist" (276).

³⁹It would be interesting but impractical at this point to expand on the defacing nature of Corinthian worship.

The church need not look far for the “other” that has been wounded by non-Eucharistic liturgical and theological practices. The lack of “facing” in the Christian community has provided tacit support for the totalizing marginalization of women, minorities, children, the disabled, the elderly and many others. Eucharistic facing occurs painfully and constructively around the table, deconstructing the totalizations of sinful (non-Eucharistic) relationships. At *this* table, echoing the words of Jesus in Luke 22:27, the “other” reigns, the self (master) chooses service. In the Eucharistic community, “facing” means searching the face of the other and being made captive by the gaze of the other. The other-centering movement is inspired and funded by the Triune gaze, which remarkably condescends to Holy Saturday as gift and service to the very “other” that God created. When Jesus said “this do in remembrance of me,” he meant far more than eating and drinking. This command is an invitation to participate in the Triune venture of facing, reconciliation, and communion, in remembrance of the ultimate, divine facing of the Christ-event.

When worship and theology are not Eucharistic, they gravitate toward over-estimation of our ability to appropriate divine presence. Though the Emmaus disciples were “kept from seeing” Jesus, their own misconceptions about the Messiah participated in their blindness. Only when the bread broke did their eyes open. Only when *gift* overcame the infinite distance between Triune God and human community was the Son made known fully to them. The bread-breaking is not peripheral to this revelation; the Eucharist is the liturgical context for the real *presence* of the incarnate Son. This context is instituted but not realized around the table in the upper room, and the disciples dine with the pre-crucified and pre-resurrected Jesus. The significance of bread-breaking is solidified in the Emmaus resurrection narrative and echoed in the meal-of-realization shared by all the disciples later in Luke 24.⁴⁰

Toward a Eucharistic Hermeneutic

We have here stated that the Eucharist is the site of Christian theology, the gateway through which all authentically Christian theology must pass. Still, obvious priority has been given to the doctrine of the Trinity in these pages. Clearly, we are wise to embrace the Trinity as the central

⁴⁰Oddly, in that narrative the disciples only truly believe that Jesus is embodied (not an illusion or ghost) when they watch him eat.

doctrine of Christian theology, but it is both dangerous and unwise to assume that we safeguard Christian theology from idolatry by confessing to worship the God who is Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity can be (and has been according to Jürgen Moltmann)⁴¹ used to support systems of domination and violence. Though the New Testament can (and must) be read as implicitly Trinitarian, there is no biblical “doctrine of the Trinity” through which the rest of Christian theology can be strained.

The vast spectrum of Trinitarian thinking occurring today testifies to the insufficiency of calling for a “Trinitarian center” to Christian theology. Itself a highly interpretative doctrine, the notion of Trinity must itself be subject to the narratives of divine self-giving in Scripture. It is by the Eucharist that God “opens up the triune life to all flesh.”⁴² We should not understand the Eucharist through the lens of the doctrine of the Trinity, *for it is in the very breaking of the bread that the Triune reality is made known to us*. Such an approach to theology prioritizes the *gift* and the recognition that comes from partaking in God’s Triune givenness. The Eucharist returns the church and its theologians to the giving of God, humbling human aspirations to possess or even fully articulate the nature of the giver or even the gift.

Only by a thoroughly sacramental hermeneutic, which is implicitly doxological and liturgical, can Christian theology avoid idolatry. The Eucharist respects the *absence* and *distance* established and maintained by God in the manner in which the Trinity is revealed in salvation history. We cannot deny the possibility that non-Eucharistic theology, philosophy, or metaphysics might speak truthfully and perhaps even come to similar conclusions about other-centeredness and agape. But what makes theology particularly Christian is not a metaphysical or *theo-logical* framework, not even a discussion of the power of love or the wonder of grace. Theology is marked as particularly Christian because of its centeredness in the story of cross, grave and resurrection—the story recognized and relived around the Eucharistic table.

⁴¹Jürgen Moltmann claims that unitarian models for God validate dominion and domination, whereas Trinitarian theology emphasizes community and communion (*The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* [London: SCM Press], 1981).

⁴² This theme echoes language frequently used by Marion, but is a quote from Eugene Rogers’ chapter in *Knowing the Triune God*, 282.

WESLEYAN THEOLOGY AND THE POSTMODERN QUEST FOR MEANING AND IDENTITY

by

Chad Short

To juxtapose John Wesley with the term “postmodern” is, at first glance, an unlikely pairing, especially if one associates “postmodern” with multiple body piercings and tattoos. It is difficult to imagine Wesley relating to such a crowd. The pairing seems unlikely on another level: Wesley’s context was the Enlightenment period and Postmodernity, as a reaction against Modernity, is the death knell of Enlightenment thought. Yet, upon further consideration, as one moves beyond the surface, the Wesley/Postmodern pairing makes more sense. The central concern of this paper is to explore ways in which Wesleyan theology might speak to Postmoderns and enable the church to minister effectively in the post-modern milieu. A secondary consideration is the exploration of ways in which Wesleyan theology does not connect well with the postmodern mind.

When traveling in unfamiliar territory, it is always a good idea to make sure you know how to read the map. Similarly, when venturing into intellectual territory where different individuals understand the same terms differently, it is a good idea to clarify the terminology being used. For the purpose of clarity, therefore, this paper begins with a section clarifying the terms that will be used throughout the paper. After this brief delineation of terms, the main body of the paper explores the interaction between postmodern themes and Wesley’s theology. For the sake of clar-

ity and comparison, Modernity's treatment of these themes is also presented.

The two epochs must be understood in relation to one another, for Postmodernity is the outworking of the themes of Modernity. A study of the themes of Postmodernity reveals that much of postmodern thought is more compatible with, and even more favorable toward, Christian thought than that of Modernity. This does not mean that Christians should uncritically accept Postmodern thought. As Stanley Hauerwas puts it, "being an enemy of my enemy does not and should not necessarily make me a friend of postmodernism" (2000:41). With that qualification in mind, there are still aspects of postmodern culture that may be friendly toward Christian faith. This section examines two themes as understood in Modernity, Postmodernity, and Wesleyan thought. The point of comparing the two epochs with Wesley is to determine how Wesleyan theology may or may not speak effectively to Postmoderns.

Clarification of Terms

In order to understand Postmodernism, one must first make a general distinction between Postmodernism and Postmodernity—between the *ism* and the *ity*. Attempting to draw such a distinction may sound like splitting hairs, but there *is* an important distinction between the two. It is similar to the distinction between science and scientism. Science is a field of academic pursuit; it is a way of looking at the world, a way of searching for truth, trying to understand the world. Scientism, Walter Truett Anderson says, is "the naïve acceptance of science as the source of absolute truth" (1995:179). So, science is a way of pursuing knowledge and scientism, the *ism* associated with science, is a philosophical commitment toward science.

In a similar manner, Postmodernity describes an era in history; specifically it is an era of great cultural change, what Anderson has called "a great, confusing, stressful and enormously promising historical transition" (1995:2). Citing Oxford historian David Harvey, Anderson defines Postmodernity as "the situation in which the world finds itself after the breakdown of the 'Enlightenment Project,' which lasted from the latter part of the eighteenth century until well into the twentieth" (1995:3). Postmodernism refers to a philosophical response, or more accurately, a variety of philosophical responses to the cultural shifts known collectively as Postmodernity. I have attempted to remain consistent throughout

this paper in my use of Postmodernity, as a condition or state and Postmodernism as a reaction to that condition. The reader should take care to observe the use of the two similar-looking words.

Some of the authors consulted for this paper see postmodern thought as being part of a larger issue. Kevin Graham Ford, for example, in his book *Jesus for a New Generation* (1995), treats postmodern thought as a quality of Generation X (cf. Hahn and Verhaagen 1998). These authors do not speak primarily of postmodern thought; their focus is a generation influenced by postmodern thought and other cultural forces. When I use terms referring to Generation X (Xers, Thirteeners, etc.), it is usually, though not always, in a quote from one of these authors. While “postmodern” and “Generation X” are not precisely synonymous, they are related closely enough to warrant citing Generation X thought and behavior as examples of postmodern thought and behavior.

The prefix “post” in Postmodernity/Postmodernism suggests that these two terms stand in contrast or comparison to something else. That something else is Modernity/Modernism. These refer to contrasting eras of history or prevailing conditions in which we find ourselves. They are more about mind-set and philosophical commitment than a given cultural situation. It is a comparative analysis of Modernity, Postmodernity, and Wesleyan thought to which the attention of this paper now turns.

Comparing Two Eras

Since Postmodernity stands in comparison and contrast to Modernity, it will be helpful to outline some of the characteristics that define the latter. I offer first a broad view of Modernity followed by a more detailed discussion of two key themes. Brian McLaren (2001:16-18) identifies ten dominant themes of Modernity:

Modernity was an age of *conquest and control*.

Modernity was an age of the *machine*.

Modernity was an age of *analysis*.

Modernity was an age of *secular science*.

Modernity was an age of aspiring to absolute *objectivity*.

Modernity was a *critical* age.

Modernity was the age of the *modern nation-state and organization*.

Modernity was an age of *individualism*.

Modernity was the age of *Protestantism and institutional religion*.

Modernity was an age of *consumerism*.

These ten themes that McLaren outlines are strands of the “metanarrative” of the Modern age. Anderson explains, “A metanarrative is a *story* of mythic proportions, a story big enough and meaningful enough to pull together philosophy and research and politics and art, relate them to one another, and—above all—give them a unifying sense of direction” (Anderson, 1995:4, italics in the original). Modernism (note, this is the *ism* not the *ity*) is a philosophical commitment to the validity and even the absoluteness of these themes. Postmodernity is the condition created by the outworking of the themes of Modernity. McLaren explains the significance of the prefix “post” in Postmodernism:

Think of post- as applied to the word pubescent. . . . Puberty is a period of life children experience, and after it, they are never children again (at least, not biologically). To be postpubescent means to have passed through puberty, to have been changed by it, and by virtue of having experienced it, to be now different, to be postpubescent: no longer a child; now an adolescent.

Similarly, to be postmodern doesn’t imply being anti-modern or non-modern, and it is certainly different from being pre-modern (though it is similar in some ways). To be postmodern means to have experienced the modern world and to have been changed by the experience—changed to such a degree that one is no longer modern. I guess if you think of hormones as what change a child into a teenager, you could think of modernity bathing us in its hormones too (2001:15-16).

As Modernity played itself out, people began to realize that the promises of Modernity were not coming true. The colonial system, for example, purportedly was an expression of the “white man’s burden” to take modernization and civilization and even Christianity to the “benighted heathen” in undeveloped lands. Any good intentions associated with colonialism were tainted by incredible abuses. Neither did science, technology, and industry live up to their promises. The whole notion of absolute objectivity was called into question as people began to realize that every person’s viewpoint is influenced by culture and experience. The individualism of the Modern period left people unconnected and longing for meaningful relationships and community. Consumerism also rings hollow as the Modern era’s acquisition of material goods fails to bring meaning and satisfaction.

Postmodernity is the era of change and transition currently underway, primarily in Western cultures. In Two-Thirds world settings, it would be more appropriate to speak of the Post-colonial era since colonialism was the dominant expression of Modernity in those contexts. Postmodernity is a period in which there is a growing realization that the promises of the Modern era have been less than stunningly fulfilled. Postmodernism is a reaction (or range of reactions) toward the way Western culture has been shaped by Modernism's uncritical acceptance and advancement of the themes of Modernity.

The character of the reactions to Modernity are illustrated in the popular postmodern movie *The Matrix* (1999). In the early part of the movie the main character, Neo (Keanu Reeves), is seeking answers for nagging questions in the back of his mind. Neo is led to a meeting with Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne), the leader of an underground resistance movement. What is being resisted? The answer comes out in the conversation between Morpheus and Neo.

Morpheus: "I imagine that right now you're feeling a bit like Alice. Tumbling down the rabbit hole? Hmm?"

Neo: "You could say that."

Morpheus: "I can see it in your eyes. You have the look of a man who accepts what he sees because he is expecting to wake up. Ironically, this is not far from the truth. Do you believe in fate, Neo?"

Neo: "No."

Morpheus: "Why not?"

Neo: "Because I don't like the idea that I'm not in control of my life."

Morpheus: "I know exactly what you mean." (dramatic pause)
"Let me tell you why you're here. You're here because you know something. What you know you can't explain. You've felt it your entire life—that there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is, but it's there, like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad. It is this feeling that has brought you to me. Do you know what I'm talking about?"

Neo: "The Matrix?"

Morpheus: (nodding) “The Matrix is everywhere. . . . It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.”

Neo: “What truth?”

Morpheus: “That you are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else, you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch—a prison for your mind.”

The character and influence of Modernism, like the Matrix, is everywhere. Modernism is like a splinter in the minds of Postmoderns, driving them mad. There is a feeling of unsettledness in Postmoderns, a feeling of uneasiness about the themes of Modernity, about what Modernity has wrought in Western culture. Postmodern thought may be an attempt to pull off the blinders that Modernity has put on. Postmodernism is a reaction against the effects of Modernity on Western culture.

If the Postmodern era stands in contrast to the Modern, then as McLaren puts it: “In the postmodern world, we become postconquest, postmechanistic, postanalytical, postsecular, postobjective, postcritical, postorganizational, postindividualistic, post-Protestant, and postconsumerist” (2001:19. Some readers might prefer hyphenated renderings.).

To give detailed consideration to all ten themes of modernity identified is beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, I will deal only with two of the themes of Modernity that are particularly related to Christian ministry and mission. They are epistemology and the view of the self (interrelating individualism and consumerism). I will discuss how these themes were manifested in the Modern era, the response to them in the Postmodern era, and how Wesleyan theology either may affirm the Postmodern response or offer an alternative response.

Epistemology: How Do We Know What We Know?

The Renaissance was characterized by a rediscovery of Greek philosophy, a renewed interest in literature and the arts, and the rise of science. New methods in science focused on empiricism, observation, and systematization. These developments posed a challenge to the Roman Catholic Church, which through the Middle Ages had been understood as the source of truth. The demands of the church for unquestioning obedience set up an inevitable conflict between the church and science, and even *within* the church itself as reformers such as Martin Luther ques-

tioned the authority of the church. A series of influences in the period of the Renaissance/Reformation eroded the authority of the church. This was the beginning of the ending of the Pre-modern period.

Epistemology in Modernity. The Enlightenment period elevated reason and scientific inquiry as supreme authorities in determining truth, over against the Pre-modern period where the church was the unquestioned authority. Francis Bacon insisted on experimentation and scientific method, believing that science would give people control over the environment. In the Pre-modern era, the church and faith had shaped the basic approach of scientific inquiry; science was concerned with understanding God's design and purpose in creation. Modern science focused on observation and quantification. Rationality and science, it was believed, would inevitably lead to progress and even perfection.

A central feature of the Enlightenment was a belief in the certainty and objectivity of knowledge. Certainty and objectivity presumably would lead to mastery of the universe. In the Modern period, Enlightenment rationalism was applied to economics, resulting in industrial capitalism. There was no concern for spirituality or community. Rationalism was applied to politics and social structure. Rationalism and pluralism were applied to education. Most importantly for the purpose of exploring the question at hand, religious systems and authorities were rejected in favor of reason. Empirical science became the objective and reliable source for truth. Paul Hiebert notes the effects of this in relation to religions:

The extreme form of this empiricism, sometimes referred to as scientism, led to a denial of metaphysics and of knowledge that does not ultimately rest on a form of empirical sense perceptions that can be repeated and verified independently. The result was a separation of science from its theological and philosophical rivals and a growing agnosticism that denied transempirical realities (1999:5-6).

Epistemology in Postmodernity. The hard-line empiricism of Modernity eventually proved untenable. Hiebert notes the irony of the situation as attacks against science came from within science itself. "As scientists began to use scientific methods to study science and the scientific process, they began to question its fundamental assumptions. The first major assumption to be questioned was that of unbiased objectivism"

(1999:29-30). The idea that there was only one correct understanding of reality was called into question. In addition, the social sciences, applied to scientists and the scientific method, showed that “scientists are deeply influenced by their historical and cultural contexts” (1999:30). Thomas Kuhn, for example, demonstrated “how truths are socially constructed within scientific communities” (Anderson, 1995:187).

Science was attacked in other ways. One severe critique addresses “the impact of modernity on humankind. It has failed to produce the utopia it promised and has failed to offer real succor in human crises” (Hiebert, 1999:34). In these and other ways, the claims of science to offer an unbiased, totally objective picture of reality were undermined. Thus, epistemology steps into the realm of Postmodernity.

Ford, citing Stanley Grenz from a 1994 symposium on Generation X in Charlotte, North Carolina, explains the nature of postmodern epistemology:

Feelings and relationships supersede logic and reason. The postmodern mind rejects the philosophical assumptions of the Enlightenment and modernism. The transrational, the paradoxical and the supernatural are not unquestioned by Xers; they are automatically assumed to be real. To Xers it is feelings and relationships that matter, not dispassionate knowledge and logical arguments (1995:115).

The postmodern mindset represents an abandonment of the rationalist belief system. The postmodern framework allows for the existence of realities that science cannot measure—the supernatural, the transrational, the spiritual, the eternal, the ineffable, the numinous” (1995:123).

Ford observes that in postmodern thought reasoning is “nonlinear.” Well-reasoned arguments will not win over the postmodern mind. “You can’t convince us, persuade us or convert us with logical arguments and linear reasoning” (1995:129). Postmodern thinking is more intuitive, more open to the mysterious and the mystical. The lack of emphasis on a coherent belief system means that Postmoderns are often more eclectic in their beliefs.

Hahn and Verhaagen note the implications of this for mission and ministry: “If the church is to be successful in reaching GenX, we must be prepared to spiritually mentor and disciple these individuals, anticipating their tendency to overemphasize the mystical or cut and paste their

beliefs” (1998:17). Part of effective mission to postmoderns, then, is moving beyond strictly cognitive, information-based approaches to discipleship. This does not mean that we jettison content. Rather, it implies that we must adjust our approach to presenting content.

Epistemology in Wesleyan Theology. Wesleyan scholars have long recognized that Wesley’s epistemology employed scripture, reason, tradition and experience (the Wesleyan Quadrilateral) “with scripture as the ‘norming norm’ to be placed above all other authority” (Snyder 1980:71). More recent scholarship (De Souza 2001) sees a fifth component—creation—in Wesley’s epistemology, thus making the case for a Wesleyan “Pentalateral.”

Wesley’s multifaceted epistemology has potential for connection with the postmodern ethos. His acceptance of experience as an epistemological category is particularly suited to the postmodern context. Gary Burge, professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, explains the hunger for meaningful experience in his college students:

Say “liturgy” and my evangelical college students have a reflex akin to an invitation to take a quiz. Say “mysticism” and they are drawn, fascinated, eager to see what I mean. They want spontaneity yet drift toward the Episcopal church. They carry NIV study Bibles but are intrigued by experiments in prayer, Christian meditation, spiritual disciplines honed in the medieval world, and candlelit sanctuaries” (Burge 1997:21).

Burge cites one student’s aversion to a church that practiced a purely cognitive form of Christianity: “There was no imagination, no mystery, no beauty. It was all preaching and books and application.” Of the Episcopal church, by contrast, the same student says, “I truly worship there. It’s the wonder, the beauty I love. It feels closer to God” (1997:22).

Authors Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, in their *The Experience Economy* propose that, just as the service economy is replacing the industrial economy, the “experience economy” is replacing or at least supplementing the service economy. In increasing numbers, people are seeking meaningful experiences, and experiences are being commodified and marketed to an ever more eager public. In an interview with *Leadership Journal*, Gilmore explains the ramifications of this shift for Christian mission. Gilmore, a committed believer, sounds a caution regarding the idea of marketing experiences. Creating and marketing experiences to an expe-

rience-craving culture is not the same as evangelism. "When the church gets into the business of staging experiences," he says, "that quickly becomes idolatry" (2001:31). To put it another way, the church must not make experience the "norming norm" over Scripture.

For John Wesley, experience had its place, but experience never took precedence over Scripture. Nonetheless, the postmodern desire for meaningful experiences *does* have implications for the church. Gilmore explains what he believes these implications will be.

I believe that one result of the emerging Experience Economy will be a longing for authenticity. To the extent that the church stages worldly experiences, it will lose its effectiveness. . . . After a while, thoughtful people begin to ask, "What effect are all these experiences having on me? What am I becoming?" That's why we think the Experience Economy will eventually give way to the Transformation Economy (31-32).

Evidence that people are hungry for transformation is not difficult to find. Several years ago, physical fitness expert Bill Phillips, in an effort to motivate people toward greater levels of fitness, issued a challenge. He proposed a nationwide fitness contest, the grand prize of which would be his personal blood-red Lamborghini Diablo. To Phillips' surprise and delight, over 54,000 people of all ages and lifestyles signed up for the challenge. Phillips comments on the response:

Many of the men and women who accepted my challenge reported that this Program [Phillips' exercise and nutrition program] literally saved their lives. Their risk of heart disease (the number-one killer in America today) was drastically lowered, as well as the risk of being afflicted with other illnesses, such as diabetes, cancer and osteoporosis.

Beyond even that, the psychological and emotional changes reported by these men and women were (and are) stunning. They described off-the-chart leaps in self-confidence, self-respect, and empowerment. They discovered that taking control of their bodies broke down barriers all around them. People were more attracted to them. They got better jobs. They made greater amounts of money. Their relationship with colleagues, family and friends improved. Their marriages got better. Their sex lives became more satisfying. Old habits that seemed impossible to break suddenly became easy to drop (Phillips and D'Orso, 1999:3-4).

The inside-back flap of Phillips' book *Body For Life* promises:

When you begin to apply the information in this book, you will be *proving* to yourself that astounding changes are within your grasp too. And, you will discover Body-for-Life is much more than a book about physical fitness—it's a gateway to a new and better life—a life of rewarding and fulfilling moments, perhaps more spectacular than you've ever dared to dream before (1999).

It is little wonder that as of April 2002, Phillips' book had spent 118 weeks on the New York Times Best Seller List. While Phillips' understanding of transformation is vastly different from that of Wesley, it does underscore the fact that people are hungry for real, meaningful change. Wesley's vision had God at its center. His goal was that of "forming a genuine people of God within the institutional church. He concentrated not on the efforts *leading up to* decision but on the time *after* decision . . ." (Snyder 1980:2). He formed "little bands of God-seekers who joined together in an earnest quest to be Jesus' disciples. He 'organized to beat the devil'—not to make converts but *to turn converts into saints*" (Snyder 1980:2, emphasis added). Caution and discernment must be exercised when it comes to the cultural discussion about transformation. It has become a trendy topic and those who seek to guide people into greater levels of Christ-likeness must be clear about the goals and process of transformation from a Christian perspective in general, and a Wesleyan perspective in particular.

For Wesley, experience was a valid part of apprehending truth, but he would never stand for making an idol of experience. As Snyder puts it, for Wesley, "An inner experience of God in the soul which does not result in one's 'doing all the good you can' is inherently suspect" (1980:147). So, a Wesleyan theology for Postmoderns both affirms and critiques the postmodern quest for experience. Wesleyan thought can affirm what Hahn and Verhaagen say about the postmodern religious experience: "Many Xers want to experience God directly, free of doctrine and psychology. While it is impossible to separate our knowledge of God or self from our experience of God, it is important that we honor the longing of many in our generation to enter deeply into relationship with God" (1998:101).

Wesleyan theology can affirm the validity of personal experience, but never makes experience an end in itself. Experience, in Wesleyan thought, must always lead to real life change, to transformation. And

again, the transformation Wesley had in mind was of a particular sort. It was more than the transformation of the physique or even of the intellect. Wesley's view of transformation was that of restoration to the image of God. He wanted to see people changed from sinners into people who loved God with the totality of their being and their neighbor as themselves. The ultimate purpose of transformation was viewed as a growing knowledge and experience of God. Wesley's commitment to convert sinners and make converts into saints led directly to the development of the Methodist structure of classes, bands, and societies. That leads to the next theme to be considered.

View of the Self

Early on in John Wesley's ministry, nearly a decade before his Aldersgate experience, he sought out a certain "serious man" who advised him: "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion" (Dimond 1926:209). Wesley took this advice to heart, preaching against individualistic religion and avoiding it himself. In his fourth discourse on the Sermon on the Mount, he "endeavour[s] to show that Christianity is essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary religion, is indeed to destroy it" (Burwash 1988:241). He argues that the virtues Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, such as meekness, peace-making, and mercy, can only have their being *in relation to others*. Thus, Christianity cannot be solitary, but rather *must be practiced* in relation to others.

The individualism that Wesley so vigorously opposed is a driving force of Modern thought. A related feature of Modernity is consumerism. These two themes of Modernity are treated together here because they are related; they both have to do with the view of the self.

Individualism in Modernity. Regarding individualism, something so critical in determining one's view of self, McLaren observes,:

As mechanistic organizations pursued conquest and control, communities were disintegrated, leaving their smallest constituent parts—individuals—disconnected and hanging in midair. The modern era moved inexorably from a focus on "we" to a focus on "me." Never have individuals been so "free" of all social constraint and connection as they are in late

modernity. Not surprisingly, never have they felt so alienated and isolated (2001:18).

The radical individualism of the West, and ironically the particular American variety, is hazardous to the health of the individual. Robert Bellah and his colleagues in their classic study of American individualism, *Habits of the Heart*, contend that in the process of individuation and separation “we have jettisoned too much, forgotten a history that we cannot abandon” (1996:83). Meaning, they contend, is found, not in radical individualism, but in relation to other people and institutions (1996:84).

Individualism in Postmodernity. While Modernity affirmed and celebrated the value of individualism, in Postmodernity this value has been called into question. The cry of the Postmodern generation against the excesses of Modernity’s individualism is heard in the following select lyrics of the band, Soul Asylum (1992):

I want to live with you in the fifth dimension, In a dream I never had, 'Cause I just can't live like this in a world like this; I just wanna kiss it goodbye.

But we are not of this world, And there's a place for us, Stuck inside this fleeting moment, Tucked away where no one owns it, Wrapped up in a haste and by mistake got thrown away. And oh, I am so homesick, but it ain't that bad, 'Cause I'm homesick for the home I've never had.

And though I sometimes get annoyed, I know just where I'm at. This is my song of joy. Now I know there are no secret tricks, No correct politics, Just liars and lunatics.

Though I would not take it personally, It's just the child in me, Who never really knew how much I had. Woe is me, I am so homesick, But it ain't that bad 'Cause I'm homesick for the home I've never had.

Modernity’s promise, expressed in individualism, has proven to be an empty promise, yet the postmodern generation is ambivalent about individualism. Postmodern thought has its reservations about radical individualism, but it has not completely jettisoned the idea. Modernity’s advancement of radical individualism has left a generation with a sense of longing for something they have never had, a sense of homesickness for the home they have never had. Instead of bringing liberation, Modernity has brought

bondage of another kind. Without the constraints of caring community, people fall into bondage to their own desires. Bellah and his research team perceived a general awareness among the people they interviewed that individualism needs to be balanced by a commitment to the common good. Yet the question remains: how do we achieve that balance?

Bellah and his colleagues suggest that cultural transformation would require personal transformation of thinking and action among large numbers of people. While American individualism limits the way people think, Bellah and his team see what appears to be signs of desire for change. They found that “few have found a life devoted to ‘personal ambition and consumerism’ satisfactory, and most are seeking in one way or another to transcend the limitations of a self-centered life” (290). As Modernity gives way to Postmodernity, there is a growing awareness that radical individualism needs tempering. Ajith Fernando comments: “We are seeing that post-modernism is placing a new emphasis on the need for community life, which was undervalued in the strongly individualistic modern era” (2000:255).

One expression of the search for community is described by Patricia Hersch in her study on American adolescence. She writes:

In the vacuum where traditional behavioral expectations for young people used to exist, in the silence of empty homes and neighborhoods, young people have built their own community. The adolescent community is a creation by default, an amorphous grouping of young people that constitutes the world in which adolescents spend their time. Their dependence on each other fulfills the universal human longing for community, and inadvertently cements the notion of a tribe apart. More than a group of peers, it becomes in isolation a society with its own values, ethics, rules, worldview, rites of passage, worries, joys, and momentum. It becomes teacher, adviser, entertainer, challenger, nurturer, inspirer, and sometimes destroyer (1998:21).

The growing postmodern uneasiness with Modernity’s conception of the self has powerful implications for Christianity and the practice of mission. At times the church has bought into Modernity’s affirmation of individualism, resulting in an overly privatized version of the faith. However, when the church operates as God intended, real community takes place. Biblical community is sharing life together; it is engaging in the “one-another” ministry of mutual support, edification, love and service. Bellah

and colleagues affirm the power of religion when it functions properly. They believe “the United States is a nation of joiners” (167). Implicit in the American tendency to get involved is the idea that there is a relationship between self and society. They found that religion is one of the most important ways Americans get involved in the pursuit of the public good. They recall that Alexis de Tocqueville affirmed the indispensable role of religion in counterbalancing radical individualism. The function of religion in nurturing concern for society is as follows: “Through reminding the people of their relationship to God, it establishes patterns of character and virtue that should operate in economic and political life as well as in the context of worship” (Bellah, *et. al.*, 1996:227). The churches that make the greatest impact on societal well being will be those that relate biblical faith and practice to all of life: cultural, social, political, ecological and economic, not just to personal and family morality. In other words, the churches that will be the most effective in the emerging post-modern context will be churches that counter the Modernist tendency toward radical individualism.

Ford says that there is a strong desire for community among Gen Xers, a desire that churches must meet if they want to be effective in reaching this generation:

Many of my generation—particularly those who come from dysfunctional backgrounds—have a special hunger for family. They look for a sense of community wherever they can find it. They have a longing for belonging. They may not know what a “healthy” relationship is like, but they deeply want to experience it. (1995:79)

Individualism in Wesleyan Thought. John Wesley’s position on individualism is noted above. He both modeled and taught the social nature of the Christian faith. From his days as a student at Oxford, he sought out other committed believers as companions in the practice of Christianity. His convictions regarding the social nature of the faith are most clearly seen in the structure of Methodism: the classes, bands, and the society. The system is Wesley’s theology in practice. The class meeting, Snyder observes, “was the cornerstone of the whole edifice.” More house churches than “classes” in the contemporary sense, these groups met together for reporting on spiritual progress, for mutual edification, and for discipline as needed (1980:54-55). Methodist bands, normally

smaller than class meetings, met for confession of sin, for prayer, and for the mutual examination of one another's spiritual state (Snyder, 1980:59-60).

Structures that resemble the Wesleyan class/band structure have emerged only relatively recently in the North American church. In that sense, small group ministry could be considered a "postmodern" development. Several key questions come to mind when comparing the Wesleyan function of the small group with the emerging small group emphasis in North America. How does the Wesleyan understanding of the small group function in North America? What is the function of the small group structure as it is emerging on the American scene—nurture, accountability, community?

One of the pioneers of the small group movement in North America is Dale Galloway. The model he pioneered at New Hope Community Church in Portland, Oregon, shows that American individualism can be overcome, that people can effectively be brought into community, into a communal pursuit of God. Leading trend watchers in the American church see a cultural desire for the kind of care and community that can happen in a small group. Carl George observes that even large airline companies, handling thousands of reservations on a daily basis, still need "a telephone-reservation system that affords the personal touch of speaking with a human being about a specific flight and a particular seat. The implication for churches? I believe," says George, "that opportunities for interpersonal exchange, such as small caring groups, are needed more than ever" (1991:15). Fernando sees this desire for community as a significant opportunity for the church: "I am convinced that when the world recognises the awful loneliness and unfulfillment of the independent and private lifestyles that are rampant today, Christian community could be one of the most powerful forces for people coming to Christ" (2000:255). Those who minister in the Wesleyan tradition have particularly strong historical precedent for meeting the growing cultural hunger for community.

As in the Wesleyan structure, in the modern cell church, "lay" people do the pastoral care. George explains that "Nurture-focused cell groups become edification centers. The Holy Spirit's gifts are operative as merciful people empathize, teachers instruct, serving people assist, prophets exhort and upbuild, and so forth" (1991:99). The challenge in cell ministry is to balance nurture and community with discipleship and accountability. Healthy small groups need both. Pastor Andrew McQuitty

of Irving Bible Church explains how small groups can promote both: “We heavily emphasize the lifestyle, behavioral, and relational aspects of discipleship. That paradigm involves being part of a community, usually through a small group” (George and Bird 1994:123). Hal Seed, founding pastor of New Song Community Church in Oceanside, California, explains his motivation for small group structure: “I was on staff in a traditional church where decisions-by-committee and disciple-making-through-Sunday-school were the norm. The problem was, church members weren’t experiencing life change as described in the New Testament, and unchurched people weren’t being attracted” (George and Bird 1994:171).

In addition to small/cell groups, another structural element is on the rise. These smaller groups, called by various names, are the primary locus for confession and accountability. Neil Cole explains: “The first discipline necessary for a disciple to grow into usefulness is the confession of sin. Unless we are cleansed from sin we will not be useful or honoring to the Lord. Christians are people of confession” (Cole 1999:45). The emphasis on confession of sin within the bands was a key component of the Methodist structure. A. Skevington Wood observes, “This mutual confession to one another, based on the scriptural injunction of James 5:16, was the Methodist equivalent of auricular confession to a priest, and was designed to bring the same sense of relief and catharsis” (Wood 1978:191-192). “Life Transformation Groups,” as Cole names them, are comprised of two to three people meeting together.¹ This size group, Cole believes, is important because, “It is difficult to be held accountable to a multitude of people who do not know you well. A group of two or three has a greater degree of strength in accountability. One can find support with a group of two or three who know and understand his or her life” (1999:50). Cole is executive director for Church Multiplication Associates, a church planting ministry associated with the Grace Brethren Churches. The Life Transformation Group model he promotes is more than just theoretical. It works. It is part of an effective strategy for reaching the unchurched and planting new churches.

While the Wesleyan vision of discipleship and accountability in small groups is viable for reaching Postmoderns, a few notes of caution

¹See Cole, *Cultivating a Life for God*, Appendix 2, p. 132, for a listing of churches using this structure and the various names given to these groups.

must be sounded. First, there is another vision of Postmodern community present within American culture, one that is being promoted by what Ravi Zacharias calls “second level” philosophers (1994:12), the celebrities of the popular arts. This level of philosophizing “through the arts, has shaped the national mind-set in everything from determining war strategy to electing presidents, to finding one’s identity in cars and deodorants” (1994:12). Zacharias notes the irony of this situation: “Western man has long prided himself as being the offspring of the Enlightenment, nurtured at the feet of sophisticated thinkers. Yet he has, in turn, brought about the humiliation of reason by the instruments that were born from the strength of the mind” (1994:12). Through the invasive and pervasive influence of the popular arts, “Truth has been relegated to subjectivity; beauty has been subjugated to the beholder; and as millions are idiotized night after night, a global commune has been constructed with the arts enjoying a totalitarian rule” (1994:12).

The alternative, competing vision of community presented by the popular arts can be seen in top-rated television shows such as *Friends* and *Seinfeld*. In both these shows, there is community of sorts. It is, however, a pallid, shallow sort of community. No one ever calls another person’s behavior into question. Anything goes in this alternative vision of community. It is a pseudo-community without accountability or direction. Postmodern people may be feeling the sting of Modernity’s overemphasis on individualism and may be hungry for meaningful relationships and community, but the church must be careful to offer genuine community that offers real life change, avoiding the superficial community modeled in popular culture.

One of the stereotypical, yet not altogether invalid, qualities of the postmodern generation is a “been-there-done-that” attitude. Speaking of GenXers and Millennials both, veteran youth worker Gary Zustiak writes, “They are jaded... nothing shocks them. This is part of the reason for the rise of extreme sports. In everything they do they like to push the edge. What’s thrilling today becomes blasé tomorrow” (1996:226). Such is the anomie of a generation that has enjoyed the benefits of technology and the privileges that come with their parents’ affluence, but find little meaning in it all. Substitute a list of extreme sports for the common forms of entertainment in Wesley’s day and his comments on “Amusements” sounds oddly contemporary:

You eat, and drink, and sleep, and dress, and dance, and sit down to play. You are carried abroad. You are at the masquerade, the theater, the opera-house, the park, the levee, the drawing-room. What do you do there? Why, sometimes you talk; sometimes you look at one another. And what are you to do tomorrow, the next day, the next week, the next year? You are to eat, and drink, and sleep, and dance, and dress, and play again. And you are to be carried abroad again, that you may again look at one another! And is this all? (*WJW* v. 8:16-17)

Wesley goes on for several paragraphs, reasoning that satisfaction is not to be found in work, the accumulation of wealth, the pursuit of pleasure and ease, or the benefits of Europe's high culture. Wesley then suggests a remedy for the lack of direction and meaning he sees in his generation:

What then can you do? How can you employ the time that lies so heavy upon your hands? This very thing which you seek declare we unto you. The thing you want is the religion we preach. That alone leaves no time upon our hands. It fills up all the blank spaces of life. It exactly takes up all the time we have to spare, be it more or less; so that "he that hath much hath nothing over; and he that has little has no lack." Once more: Can you, or any man of reason, think you was made for the life you now lead? You cannot possibly think so; at least, not till you tread the Bible under foot. The oracles of God bear thee witness in every page, (and thine own heart agreeth thereto,) that thou wast made in the image of God, an incorruptible picture of the God of glory. And what art thou, even in thy present state? An everlasting spirit, going to God. For what end then did he create thee, but to dwell with him, above this perishable world, to know him, to love him, to do his will, to enjoy him for ever and ever? O look more deeply into thyself! and into that Scripture, which thou professest to receive as the word of God, as "right concerning all things." There thou wilt find a nobler, happier state described, than it ever yet entered into thy heart to conceive (*WJW* v. 8:17-18).

As timely as Wesley's thoughts here are for the postmodern era, it must be noted that attempting to apply a Wesleyan structure of classes and bands *directly* in a different cultural context will likely be ineffective. Snyder concurs that contemporary structures need not be patterned

directly on the class / band structure. Rather, he affirms, the necessary element is a structure that allows “for something more than merely fellowship, study, or prayer groups. The Methodist system,” Snyder notes, “shows the need for covenant, discipline and accountability within the group, and accountability of the group to the larger church body” (1980:162). What is needed is a synthesis between the Wesleyan model of community, which focuses on discipline, and the popular culture model of community. The postmodern mindset needs “hang out time,” time where there is no structure, no agenda. Wesley might view such unstructured time as frivolous pursuit of amusement, but the lifestyle of the young postmodern includes participation in such “amusements.”

The Wesleyan understanding of Christianity as a social religion is essential for churches that want to reach postmoderns. For a generation that has been neglected and wounded, discipline must take place within the context of relationships. Hahn and Verhaagen explain:

Hard words can build us up or tear us down. The key is whether those words come from a loyal friend who has the motive to build us up. Someone we believe to be committed to us can speak tough words that help us grow and mature. They provide us with much needed feedback about our behavior, our words, and our motives. . . . A person earns the right to say hard things by being a loyal friend (1998:154).

Earning the right to speak into a person’s life takes time, perhaps even years according to Hahn and Verhaagen. They caution, “Many of us have met other Christians who believe that they are somehow entitled to say harsh things to others, even without a firm base of relationship or understanding with the other person” (1998:154). This suggests that while postmoderns might reject the sometimes-confrontational style of preaching practiced by Wesley, the Wesleyan structure provides a place where loving correction and discipline can take place.

This type of discipline does not come easily to postmoderns, neither on the giving end, nor on the receiving end. Hahn and Verhaagen explain the reluctance to correct a friend: “It is easier to let the friend make her blunders while hiding behind the oft quoted, ‘I can’t make her decisions for her.’” However, they insist, “A loyal friend not only earns the right to say a tough thing, but often has the responsibility to say it. Our responsibility is to speak truth when it can help our friends mature or steer clear of sin. As friends, we speak truth even when it is tough to do” (1998:155).

Wesley's theology always called people away from isolated individualism and into community. His theology also went a step further. Community was not an end in itself. Community was related to mission. Wesley always strove to raise people's vision to the pressing needs in society. Hahn and Verhaagen assert that this is an important point for discipling Generation X. The church needs to help them "see that they are now part of a wider community. The kingdom of God is much bigger than the church, the new community, but this community is the most important product of the kingdom" (1998:38). Hahn and Verhaagen note a desire in this younger generation to be a part of something that makes a difference.

We are not interested in knowledge for the sake of knowledge. We disdain the therapeutic culture that demands that preaching meet each individual's emotional needs. We see a world that needs fixing and lives that are torn and we want a faith that matters, that addresses in plain language our struggles, heartaches, and dreams (1998:87-88).

Ford observes a similar desire. He asked Bill Strauss [author of *13th Gen*], "Suppose you are a Thirteener with a direct line to God. If you could ask God to do anything for you, what would it be?" Strauss replied, "I would ask for him to give me some way to feel I'm a part of human progress and part of the improvement of man. I would want him to show me I'm not a backstep" (1995:148). The church has often failed to address the legitimate desires of a questioning generation. Ford says:

My generation wants to know that God will bring about reconciliation, that he will heal our hurts and that he will accept us unconditionally. Unfortunately, most of us Thirteeners have not found this in church. We come into church with our self-esteem already bruised. Then we find that church makes us feel even more guilty and unworthy. The preaching is judgmental and irrelevant to our lives. The music is lame. The liturgy is boring and meaningless. Everyone dresses in a Sunday-best evangelical "uniform," making us feel shabby, inferior and out of place. We see the church taking hard-nosed doctrinal stands that divide people and put certain groups down. We see hypocrisy. We agree with Gandhi, who said, "I like your Christ. But I don't like your Christians—they are so unlike your Christ" (1995:140).

The postmodern generation, Hahn and Verhaagen argue, "wants and needs a gospel that addresses the human condition with both truth and

hope and that allows room for the mystery of suffering.” They are strongly hopeful that Generation X has the potential, “Perhaps more than previous generations . . . to reflect Christ’s compassion for those who suffer, the kind of compassion that comes only from a life acquainted personally with sorrow and grief” (1998:41).

The kind of missional community envisioned by Wesley captures the attention of Gen Xers. Take the problem of homelessness, for instance. This, says Ford, “is an issue where Christians are widely seen to lack credibility.” The attitude which many Gen Xers see as prevalent in the church seems to lack compassion. But, Ford says, “when Christians join together to do something tangible about homelessness—turning church classroom space into midweek homeless shelters or serving meals to homeless people at the downtown park—my generation takes notice” (1995:181).

Wesley himself had a strong concern for the social problems of his day and he strove to instill in his followers an active concern that engaged these problems. Christine Pohl writes:

For Wesley complicated misery had a very personal face. He was haunted by it—by the young girl whose clothing was too thin for winter weather, by the old woman who begged for food but found no relief from pious Christians who blamed her poverty on idleness, by the black slaves who had been robbed of their liberty and identity. Much of his writing involved trying to help other people see—helping them to see that poor people and those forced into slavery were made in God’s image, bought with Christ’s blood, valued and precious to God (Pohl 1993:5).

The response of Wesley and his followers to the social problems of his day would resonate with the postmodern ethos. “Wesley responded with a holiness that engaged the world. . . . It was practical; in a wretched situation, holiness and love had to have spiritual [sic], as well as social and physical expression” (Pohl 1993:7). Pohl notes that Wesley’s involvement with the poor included, but was not limited to, personal interaction. “In addition to personal relations with the poor, and a profound welcome of the poor into Methodism, Wesley and the early Methodists created institutions and structures to help transform and then sustain transformation in spiritual, social, and physical areas of life” (1993:12). Postmoderns feel they have inherited a messed up world from their parents’ generation.

Wesley's approach of attacking social problems at both the personal and structural levels could give Postmoderns a sense of empowerment, a sense of hope that things can change.

Consumerism in Modernity. Consumerism is related to radical individualism because, at its core, it is a way of viewing oneself. McLaren captures the essence of consumerism. In Modernity "people often quoted the maxim, 'Money can't buy happiness' but seldom acted as if they believed it. The market economy led to freedom from the feudal system, but it has become a powerful lord in its own right" (2001:18). Hauerwas, quoting Boyle (1998:153-154), explains the view of the self that consumerism entails: "the fiction by which the global market commends itself to us and encourages our participation in it is that the human self is purely a consumer.... The self is little more than a formality, the name we give to the principle that consumes options..." (2001:47).

Consumerism in Postmodernity. In Postmodernity rampant consumerism is no longer tenable. Voices on the Postmodern cultural landscape are calling attention to ecological issues like the wanton exploitation of the environment, pollution, etc., and socio-economic issues like the inequities between "developed" and "developing" nations. In a move that seems a contradiction in terms, a group of *anarchists* took place in an *organized* demonstration decrying globalization at the meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999.

On a more personal level, postmodern voices are expressing renewed interest in spirituality—not necessarily Christianity, but spirituality of some sort. Thus, religion becomes the new arena for consumerism. Anderson calls attention to the phenomenon known as "cafeteria Catholics":

A cafeteria Catholic is someone who behaves within the faith as one might behave in one of those restaurants where the customer takes a tray, goes down along a counter, and selects the dishes that appeal to him or her at the moment—chooses what to eat and what not to eat (1995:180).

He notes the less than enthusiastic response of the church leadership: "The conservative elders of the Church say this is no way to deal with the faith. The teachings are all of a piece and must be accepted as such—accepted and believed." In spite of this admonition from the top, "most

contemporary Catholics—clergy as well as parishioners—feel free to pick and choose” (1995:180). The phenomenon Anderson calls attention to is not limited to the Roman Catholic Church. Denominational loyalty is at an all-time low and loyalty to the local congregation is dependent on the degree to which a church meets the needs, expectations, and preferences of those seeking spiritual experiences.

The church has at times come close (perhaps too close) to embracing the spirit of consumerism. In the mid 1990s an edition of *Christianity Today* featuring Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church on the front cover wondered whether the seeker movement was “Selling Out the House of God” (1994). Critics of the seeker movement, Marva Dawn for example, have warned against the church becoming a dispenser of religious goods and services (Dawn 1999:90 ff.).

What the church can offer, and needs to offer, is a view of the self that runs counter to the view of the self that was prevalent in Modernity. What Wesley offered, and what the church today must offer, is a picture of the self in relation to the Creator and other believers. This view defines self not as an autonomous individual or a consumer driven by unrelenting appetites, but as one who finds meaning and connection in relationships and service. Erwin McManus, pastor of Mosaic, arguably the flagship of postmodern churches, observes a connection between service and faithfulness in church:

A person who attends but does not begin to serve will drop out within a year. . . . If a person is simply *being* served, it is highly unlikely that person will make it in the long-term. For some reason, our stickability is related to our servanthood, and it is through serving others *with* others that we genuinely begin to make the connection (2001:174).

The picture of the self the church offers does not eliminate the individual. Rather, the radical individualism of Modernity is tempered with balancing emphases on relationships and service. J. Lawrence Burkholder, in the *Anabaptists* volume, paints a picture of a balanced individualism. He has in mind

. . . a young, Mennonite, Ph.D., female scientist working for the United States government in the field of health. She is a biostatistician. Several years ago she met a Catholic who worked in the same field at the same location. They were married and were blessed with a son.

Their work had international implications insofar as they were engaged in the collection and correlation of medical information beyond national boundaries. As if by accident, they heard about a group of hospitals in south India where significant research was being carried out but where no systematic efforts were being made to conserve and correlate the results.

Such information was enough to move this young couple to request a leave of absence from their highly remunerative positions to go uninvited to India at their own expense and without pay. This they did even in the absence of church support and the concurrence of such legitimating agencies as mission boards and the Mennonite Central Committee. They simply represented themselves as they made their unannounced appearance in south India. They went to India as Christians, their faith being communicated primarily through the quality of their work rather than through verbal witness. They worked hard for more than a year before returning to their posts in Washington. They made a significant contribution to the medical services and scientific research in south India (2000:411).

Burkholder notes with approval the convergence of two influences in this story. One influence is “postmodern, nonconformist self-determination.” The other is the “traditional faith, ideological thought, authoritative structures and stable family life as representative of modern Mennonite and Catholic communities” (2000:412). The implication of Burkholder’s story and analysis is that Postmodernity and Christianity—whether Catholic, Mennonite or Wesleyan—can be combined in such a way that an authentic and faithful expression of faith develops, a faith that is truly Christian and appropriately Postmodern. This is a challenge and opportunity for the church. Can we become Christians who are appropriately postmodern and biblically faithful? Can we avoid the mistake that was made in the Modern era, whereby the church embraced the ethos of Modernity and subverted its effectiveness in mission?

Wesleyan Theology and Consumerism. “Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give away all you can.” Wesley’s advice on money has sometimes been used in a Western consumer culture to justify accumulation of wealth. Wesley’s true intention in giving that advice was not to promote accumulation of wealth, but to encourage industry and frugality so that one might have something to give to the poor. In *A Further Appeal*, Wes-

ley said, "If I leave behind me ten pounds (above my debts, and my books, or what may happen to be due on account of them,) you and all mankind bear witness against me, that I lived and died a thief and a robber" (*WJW* v. 8:40). Wesley's life was clearly oriented toward giving and serving, not toward consumption and accumulation. His example set a standard for earlier Methodism, but he feared that as the movement progressed, Methodists would grow lax in their obligation toward the poor and become consumers, accumulating wealth for themselves.

From the earliest days of Methodism, Wesley and his companions understood the importance of service. The Oxford group made a habit of visiting and caring for widows, orphans, prisoners, etc. The idea of service itself is not inconsistent with Postmodern thought. The motivation for service, as Wesley understood it, however, may not work in a Postmodern context. Wesley saw a vital connection between service to "the least of these" and final perseverance. Answering the objection that feeding and clothing the poor is of no value "if they are just dropping into everlasting fire," Wesley says: "Whether they will finally be lost or saved, you are expressly commanded to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. If you can, and do not, whatever becomes of them, you shall go away into everlasting fire" (Burwash 1988:249). This type of "negative" motivation, although biblically based, will likely not work among Postmoderns. It may be viewed as hegemonic and domineering. Positive motivation is a better approach in a postmodern context. Christian leaders in postmodern contexts will need to motivate people to service by "selling" them on the benefits.

It is no small thing to feel that you are needed. And your sense of ownership increases when you see your fingerprint on the work that has been done. To make a contribution is to give of yourself. When you give of yourself, you've become part of something bigger than simply you (McManus 2001:174).

Steven Covey observes a desire in Western culture to "leave a legacy." He identifies this as a "*spiritual* need to have a sense of meaning, purpose, personal congruence, and contribution" (1994:45). Similarly, Bob Buford in *Half Time* shares his personal story of how he was led from the pursuit of success to the pursuit of significance, and he challenges others to assess the impact they are making (1994:77 ff.). These are cultural forces that can help Christian leaders draw Postmoderns away

from an overly individualistic and consumeristic view of self and into a balanced biblical view.

John Piper offers a more theological approach to this same issue. He contends that Christians tend to draw too much of a distinction between duty to God and delight in God. Our duty to God, he argues, is to delight in God. Piper uses an illustration from Edward John Carnell (1967):

Suppose a husband asks his wife if he must kiss her good night. Her answer is, “You must, but not that kind of a must.” What she means is this: “Unless a spontaneous affection for my person motivates you, your overtures are stripped of all moral value.” (Piper 1996:83)

The “must” is driven by the husband’s delight in his wife, not a cold, detached sense of duty. Piper uses this illustration to make a point about *worship*, but the same line of reasoning can be used in talking about our motivation for service to others. Drawing a distinction between duty and delight can make service to others in the name of God a cold, unfeeling, detached, mechanical performance. Christian leaders working with Post-moderns want to instill in them the sense that they must serve others, *but not that kind of must*. Service *for others* in a Postmodern context should be understood as bound up with delight in God and *in others*.

This is not un-Wesleyan at heart. In addition to the motivation of final perseverance and avoidance of hell, Wesley drew on love for God and love for others as motivation to service. Wesley saw whole-hearted love of God and love for one’s neighbor as being the defining essence of holiness. He also saw a connection between holiness and happiness, often pairing the two in sermons. Holiness, expressed as love for God and humankind, was the source of true happiness for Wesley.

In summary, Wesley’s theology challenges narcissistic views of the self. Wesleyan thought allows no room for the modernist understanding of the self either as an autonomous individual or as merely a consumer, but always seeks to move individuals into community and into service. Wesleyan thought also speaks to the cry of the Postmodern generation for true, meaningful community and the desire to make one’s life count for something bigger than oneself.

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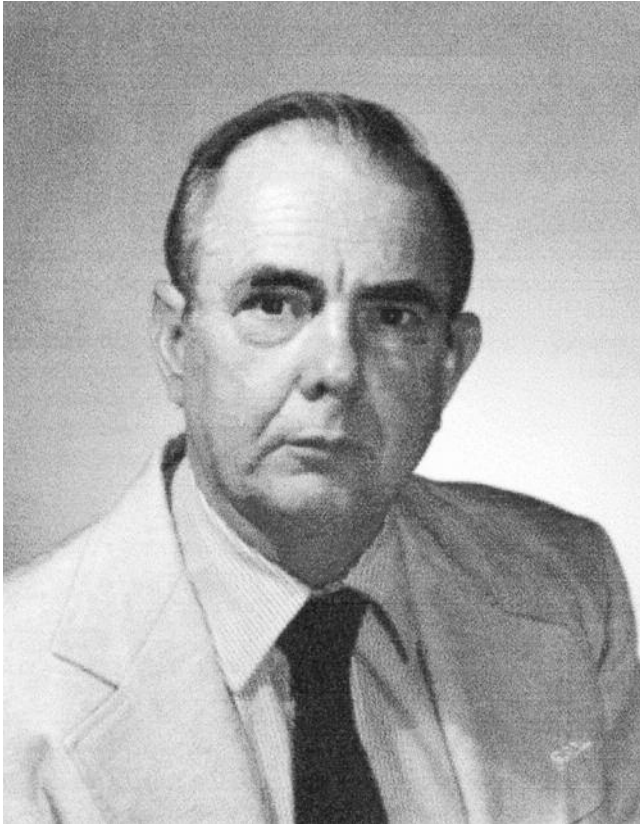
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**Dr. H. Ray Dunning, Recipient of the 2004
WTS Lifetime Achievement Award**

A TRIBUTE TO H. RAY DUNNING

Delivered in March, 2004, on the occasion
of the Wesleyan Theological Society granting to
Dr. Dunning its Lifetime Achievement Award

by

Craig Keen

I first met Ray Dunning in the winter of 1975. I was a 25-year-old seminary student in Kansas City. Ray had come to town on Nazarene business. He had made contact with a couple of my friends who had been his students at Trevecca Nazarene College. Ray had made a deep impression on them. They were both quite drawn to Ray's broad theological vision. They had learned from him what was largely absent from some other religion departments of the colleges of the Church of the Nazarene, namely, an appreciation for 20th-century theology. In those days it was in the theology of Paul Tillich that Ray lived and moved and had his being. His students, in fact, had the name "Tillich" so often on their lips that other students at Nazarene Theological Seminary, who had not had the privilege of being introduced to the broad currents of recent theological discourse, were confused. Those of us who came up in that world will not be surprised to learn that, on a day when still another Trevecca alum was speaking passionately out of what he had gained as an undergraduate, someone asked: "Who is this Tillich? Does he teach at Trevecca?"

We three NTS amigos—Ray's students, Paul Belcher, Bill Breeden, and I—were to meet with Carl Bangs for another weekly informal excursion into the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Paul and Bill invited Ray to join us. What I remember of Ray that night is what I have found

him consistently to be these last 29 years. He walked through the door, shook Carl's hand, said something mildly humorous, smiled meekly, joined us as we talked about the "philosophy of organism," and kept quietly to himself. Yet there was nothing about him that suggested that he was disengaged, a mere spectator. It is just that it was impossible to tell what he was thinking or feeling. Had he been obliged to speak, we would no doubt have been met with something formidable—and a couple of us might not have liked it.

The next time I met Ray was five years later. I was flown into Nashville to interview for a job teaching philosophy at Trevecca Nazarene College. It seemed odd to me that they would be considering a Barthian theologian for such a post, especially since I knew that "Tillich taught there," but I had learned as a seminary student to respect what went on at that school. When I was offered the job, I gladly said "yes" and *thought* . . . "thank you." I moved to Nashville in the late summer of 1981.

Trevecca was very different from what I was used to. Its President thought it a good use of the few minutes we had together during my interviews to tell me that he didn't want members of the faculty attending movies; the bookstore manager told me, just as my first term was beginning, that a textbook I'd chosen for one of my courses was inappropriate because of its *cover*—which displayed a 16th-century woodcut of Adam and Eve less than fully clothed; almost nobody on the faculty seemed to like popular music; and I was teaching a "normal load" of twelve courses a year. But I grew to love the place—in large part because of the atmosphere created by Ray Dunning. Ray let me do anything I wanted. And it took grace for him to do so. I was 31 when I joined the department Ray chaired, a "young gun" looking to out-draw the seasoned gunfighter who was the sheriff of this town. Ray had every right to run me out of Dodge. But he didn't. He let me teach my courses, take occasional pot-shots at him—and he would just smile, say something mildly humorous, and quietly go about his work.

Do not get the impression, however, that Ray was a pushover. He was not easily dissuaded from the theology he had worked so hard to construct. And he could be quite intimidating. Not a few of his students felt the sting of his sarcastic rejoinders to questions and comments that struck him as dissociated from the serious work of the course. His students were not the only ones. I recall a certain professor of theology at a rather provincial university who had critiqued Ray's work for making use of certain modern theologians. Ray's response was direct, decisive, and devastating.

By the time I came on board, Ray was finding it more and more difficult to relate to traditional 18 to 22-year-old undergraduate students. And those students were finding it more and more difficult to relate to him. There had been a cultural sea-change and the kind of give-and-take that he had been able to call his students into only a few years earlier was now hard to come by. Ray's time was poured increasingly into writing projects—particularly the composition of *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*—and into graduate seminars that were populated by older students. These enterprises gave him great energy. He would grouse about his undergraduate classes, but become visibly excited as he dreamed and planned and worked at building Trevecca's M.A. program in religion.

His focus was absolutely on the local church. He saw his books, articles, and graduate courses in particular to be ways by which he might serve struggling pastors. I remember how close he became to a big middle-aged country businessperson named Doug Skinner, who had left a successful career, hauled his family off to the big city, and enrolled in our pastoral ministry program. Doug was not especially bright, but he knew why he was in school, and he studied with all his might. This was the kind of student Ray was there to teach. Watching the way Doug was drawn to Ray and the way Ray took Doug in helped me understand how my seminary friends had come to hold him in such affection. I saw the sadness that washed over Ray when word came that Doug had been killed in a tragic accident, a sadness that Ray had trouble shaking off.

Ray's devotion to the local church is all over him. Were one to take the church out of Ray, nothing would be left. His whole life has been written in the script of the church. He was the part-time pastor of two churches while he was still in high school! He was ordained an Elder in the Church of the Nazarene when he was 20 years old! He pastored full-time for 14 years in churches in Lebanon, Maryville, and McEwen, Tennessee, and in Jacksonville, Arkansas. His 1969 reflections about his work during those years are entirely consistent with Ray's character:

The years of pastoral work were [first] years of maturing for me, and [second] exposure to problems which I had never faced before. I needed the former to enable me to think creatively for myself and the latter to broaden my perspectives. All of this I see to be fundamentally a preparation for the work I am now doing—helping prepare young people for work in the church. I see no change from this vocation in the future

since I definitely feel it is God's call. . . . [Our time] in a word . . . is a time of "crisis," a day when the church must honestly face itself, the world in which it lives, come out of its shell, become vulnerable to change, or else become content with stagnation and eventual extinction as an organization.

Once I said rather thoughtlessly in Ray's presence, "You can't do theology to fight fires in local churches!" He responded with a vigorous "Why not?!" In all of his work, Ray sets out from the beginning to construct a theology that is grounded in the real life of real people in real churches. There is a profoundly pragmatic and existential dimension to all that he has done: life is to take place in the *living* God and that life is to be a *virtuous* life, a life that is centered in the God in whom all well-being has its roots, in the God whom we approach through the Christ who is always to be our norm, in the God who comes alive in us through the work of God's own Spirit. Long before he learned of "the courage to be" from Langdon Gilkey, he learned that "holiness is wholeness" from Bill Greathouse, the teacher and friend Ray most admires. Any approach to Scripture that settles for the abstraction of propositions, any approach to history that settles for the abstraction of dispensations, any approach to holiness that settles for the abstraction of the eradication of sin is in Ray's mind utterly opposed to life in the God glorified in unveiled human faces. Ray's account of what might be called "virtue holiness" is an account of the lines of relation that make us what we are and what we are to be: mirrors of God's glory. Ray's theology is done at the place where "spirituality" engages flesh and blood. When Ray writes, he thinks of people—and when he thinks of people, he thinks of the God those people need.

It is this in Ray that made the project that culminated in *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* (1988) so gratifying, but also so frustrating for him. When you get to know Nazarenes, you find that they are really nice people . . . by and large. However, at least on an organizational level, they are a nervous people. Nazarenes aren't quite sure what to do with theology or with theologians, but they do believe that they have to be kept on a short leash, perhaps muzzled—and, if necessary, shot! Ray would not be muzzled, he slipped out of any collar anybody tried to put on him, and he dodged the bullets that were fired at him (at least well enough to keep from being hit in any major organ). I watched it all. He'd get another letter from the committee to which he was to answer and he'd grind his teeth and fume and dig in his heels—and then he would cool off enough to respond irenically,

clarifying or providing new arguments in favor of what he had written, or suggesting new ways of phrasing what he had said. Generally, the trouble he got into with this committee or with various defenders of some idiosyncratically defined “orthodoxy” had to do with his humane regard for the things of God.

Ray, like many other Tennesseans, is stubborn. An “only child,” he knows how to be alone. He could not have survived and certainly could not have thrived in his world otherwise. But he is also open to change, perhaps not as open as some of us would like—and it is still unclear to me why Ray has never been able to make extended use of any of the great variety of liberation theologies—but he listens and he changes. A close reading of *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* bears this out. His former students have sometimes been confused by the difference between what he says here and what they learned in the systematic theology courses they had from him at Trevecca in the 1970s. The book itself shifts subtly from its beginning to its end. It might not be unfair to suggest that that shift is from a more Tillichian reading to a more Barthian reading of Wesley. In the early 1980’s Ray took Barth simply to be dead. Of course, Barth was dead and had been dead since 1968! But Tillich was dead, too—and had been dead for three years longer than Barth! Over the course of a decade or more, Barth came alive to Ray and he found himself reading long sections of the *Dogmatics* as he composed *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*. And it shows. There is a significant shift, it seems to me, from a theology of correlation early on to a kind of thinking *von Gott aus*, thinking “outward from God,” in later sections of that work. Its logic is less and less linear. Its concerns are more and more with other-regarding love.

Of course, it may simply be that a theology so deeply immersed in Wesley will shift as it moves from more abstract to more concrete doctrinal matters, from the doctrine of God to the doctrines of holiness and the church. However, I suspect that, were Ray to wipe the slate clean and begin his book again at the beginning, his treatment, say, of theological method or the doctrine of the Trinity, would be a different treatment, one more alive with the spirit of the last chapters of the book.

Ray has two hobbies: fishing and building. Ray would from time to time offer a P.E. course in angling at Trevecca. He didn’t announce it. It wasn’t in the schedule. But if a few serious outdoors types were ready to throw themselves into a challenging course and got word to Ray, he might take them on. Ray also builds houses. Last I heard he had built three of

them, one for each of two of his kids and one for Bettye and himself. If we can think of Ray hammering nails into 2 x 4's on some days and angling on others, we might understand a great deal of what he is as a theologian. His is constructive theology. He secures a solid, stable foundation and builds on it. The weight of what is hammered together above, from roof and rafters to base boards and flooring, is supported by what is poured to form the base. This is Ray as "systematic theologian" in the modern sense of the term.

But Ray's is also a theology with a less definite center. He casts his attention out to where he hopes there is something to be thought, out where thoughts seems to gather, where the water is stirring, careful not to get snagged on submerged by debris or overhanging branches. He lures those thoughts to his hook, but they have already lured him, he is hooked—and when they bite and tug on his line, they pull against him just as he pulls against them. This is Ray as "systematic theologian" in something other than the modern sense of the term. His theological center is finally on the outside, where something elusive swims, which is not there to be caught, cleaned and eaten, but to be honored, to be wrestled with, as one might wrestle with an angel. If Ray reels a fish in early some Saturday morning, he'll let it go. Ray doesn't eat fish. He just likes the way they fight.

Ray is a graduate of Trevecca Nazarene College (B.A. degree, 1948), Nazarene Theological Seminary (B.D. degree, 1951), and Vanderbilt University (M.A. degree, 1952; Ph.D. degree, 1969). He was president of the Wesleyan Theological Society, 1985-1986. He has authored or co-authored over a dozen books and many more scholarly and popular articles—ranging in subject matter from theological ethics to historical, doctrinal, biblical, and philosophical theology to biblical commentary, to hermeneutics, to preaching, to biography. He began teaching at Trevecca Nazarene College in 1964 and retired from Trevecca Nazarene University in 1995, starting as Professor of Philosophy and Bible, finishing as Professor of Theology and Philosophy. He is the only child of Scott and Gussie Dunning, born in the same year as was Jürgen Moltmann, 1926. In 1952 he married his high school sweetheart, Bettye Warren (one of the most delightful persons I've ever met). Together they've had three children: Carey, Dennis, and Joy—and, with the help of their children, three grandchildren.

Ray is not a perfect human being . . . not in every sense of the word—but he's a better one than I am. I am deeply grateful that our paths crossed. Ray, I am so honored to have been chosen to say "thank you" to you for all that you have done and all that you are doing and all that you will do in the body of Christ, among us Wesleyans. We are forever in your debt.

**FLOYD CUNNINGHAM:
THE 2004 WINNER OF THE
SMITH-WYNKOOP BOOK AWARD**

by

Stanley Ingersol

The Smith-Wynkoop Book Award is given annually by the Wesleyan Theological Society to the author of a book that represents best the fundamental traits that characterized the scholarly work of those for whom it is named. Neither Timothy Smith, a historian, nor Mildred Wynkoop, a systematic theologian, was content simply to think “inside the boxes” each had inherited. They were known for gutsy reinterpretations and provocative theses that often received initial disagreement from some within their respective quarters of the theological community. Each demonstrated independent judgment and a willingness to look at old problems in new ways.

Wynkoop was willing to reconsider John Wesley’s theology in a new light, first for the Asian students she taught in Taiwan and Japan in the 1960s, and later for her American students who were shaped by the social currents of the 1960s and early 1970s, rejecting the fundamentalist tendencies of their past and seeking a Wesleyan vision that reconnected them to society. Smith’s canvass was in some sense larger. His scholarship sparked lively debate throughout the American Society of Church History over a variety of issues, including the reassessment of the holiness movement in the larger history of American Christianity and the roles that race and ethnicity played in shaping America’s religious mosaic.

This award is named for imaginative thinkers. It is designed to recognize each year a work of original research and literature that deals with

concerns central to the purposes of the Wesleyan Theological Society. It has been given once to a work of systematic theology, twice to works in historical theology, and for 2004 the Smith-Wynkoop Award went to Floyd Cunningham for the book *Holiness Abroad: Nazarene Missions in Asia* (Scarecrow Press, 2003). For over two decades, Cunningham has been Professor of Church History at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, located in metro-Manila, The Philippines. For much of that time he has also been academic dean. It is worth noting that Cunningham may well be the only recipient in the history of the prize who was a classroom student of both Wynkoop and Smith.

The Editorial Committee has communicated to Floyd that he should take special pride in this award. Nearly a dozen books were nominated this year. Over half were serious contenders. The number and quality of submissions is striking evidence of the intellectual vitality and seriousness of this Society. The rationale for giving this year's award for the book *Holiness Abroad* includes the following four main reasons.

First, main issues related to the history of the American holiness movement have become all too familiar territory. Cunningham leaves that familiar territory behind to examine the impact of projecting Wesleyan-Holiness preaching and theology into Asian and Pacific cultures. As Steve O'Malley notes, Cunningham deals with the "international and intercultural dissemination of the Wesleyan tradition." O'Malley notes further: "This work will prove useful to readers beyond the denomination under consideration. It should contribute to a greater understanding of the interaction of theological and cultural themes that accompanied the development of the Christian world movement in the twentieth century."

Second, Cunningham left behind the ruling paradigm in mission history, which typically describes what missionaries have done and how fields have developed. Though retaining a narrative approach, his study is an honest assessment of the complex dynamics in cross-cultural missions. Cunningham examines the interactions between missionaries, national pastors, and workers, and the interactions of national pastors and workers with one another. Put simply, *Holiness Abroad* is not a Mom-and-Pop missions history. Cultural dynamics and conflict, along with human personality, are dominant factors in cross-cultural missions, and they are the stuff of this book. The author's fundamental conviction is that anything less than a frank understanding of cross-cultural dynamics would be dishonest to his own students, who come from a variety of Asian and Pacific nations, and to other students of missions.

Third, as our comments already suggest, *Holiness Abroad* breaks new ground by bringing the role of national pastors and leaders more fully into the story than any previous accounts possibly could. This was possible largely because of the book's fourth virtue.

Fourth, this book is based on thorough research conducted over many years in archives in the United States and abroad. A primary reason that Cunningham can include national leadership in the story is that he established an archive at Asia-Pacific NTS nearly twenty years ago and assiduously added sources to it over the years. He has done this through a growing network of former students. He has lived or traveled in the nations about which he writes, including mainline China, conducting interviews with national leaders and pastors and finding new sources. This book could not have been written, at least in its present form, until recently.

Throughout this book, Cunningham has exercised judicious judgment toward his sources and adopted an engaging style of writing. For this and the other above reasons, the 2004 Smith-Wynkoop Award was given to Floyd Cunningham for his *Holiness Abroad*.

MAPPING THE TRADITIONS OF METHODISM AND THE HOLINESS AND PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENTS: A REPLY TO DAVID BUNDY

by

Patricia A. Ward

In his essay, “Visions of Sanctification: Themes of Orthodoxy in the Methodist, Holiness, and Pentecostal Traditions” published in the Spring 2004 issue of this journal, David Bundy wishes to set out “a map of the influence of certain early Eastern Christian texts” on Methodism and on the Holiness, and Pentecostal movements.¹ He carefully sets forth the difficulties in tracing influence, noting that “to say that a writer is influenced by a text does not assume any need for that individual to understand it as it would have been understood, for example, in a fourth-century context. All appropriation of ideas is conditioned at least as much by the recipient’s reading of a text in his/her context as by the original context of the text, if that can be known” (Bundy 106). The difficulties of establishing a theological and historical lineage for the movements in question are such that it is necessary, as far as possible, to establish the meaning and historical context of original texts, specific intermediaries (for example, transmitters, interpreters, translators, and abridgers), as well as the cultural context of the receptors or readers of the transmitted texts or themes. Because of these complex issues, I wish to comment on parts of David Bundy’s essay.

¹*Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 39:1 (Spring 2004): 105. The entire essay includes pp. 104 to 136 and will be referred to subsequently in the body of this article as “Bundy.”

Orthodox Texts Within the Traditions of “Mystical Theology” or “Theology of the Heart”

Bundy correctly indicates that there is an intertwining of English and continental theological and spiritual traditions in the thinking of John Wesley. He wishes to explore further the recent emphasis on Wesley’s awareness of early Christian thought. Various phrases are employed to describe this tradition, represented by figures such as Clement of Alexandria and Pseudo-Macarius. The phrases include: “early Eastern texts”; “the primitive church”; “eastern Orthodox spirituality”; “Eastern Christian themes”; “multiple-state spirituality seen in the Alexandrian Christian tradition of Origen”; and “Orthodox themes.”

As Bundy’s essay evolves, a certain amount of “slippage” ensues so that precedence is given to Orthodox authors, particularly to Clement of Alexandria and Pseudo-Macarius, as the source of the identifying characteristic of or the influence on a complex set of interconnected spiritual writers. For example, after noting briefly Wesley’s wide interests, Bundy concludes: “It is uncertain when Wesley read Pseudo-Macarius for the first time, but it is certain that the Pietist writers, Pseudo-Macarius, the French and Spanish Mystics, and Thomas à Kempis all reinforced within Wesley and his heirs a predisposition toward a tradition of Eastern Orthodox spirituality” (Bundy, 116). Although Orthodox spirituality may take precedence chronologically if one wishes to establish an ideal theological meta-narrative for Methodism and the American Holiness and Pentecostal movements, as Bundy apparently wishes to do, the complexities of transmission and of self-conscious awareness of tradition are such that one cannot speak with certainty of “a predisposition toward” a tradition of Eastern Orthodox spirituality either in Wesley or his heirs.

Rather, Orthodox themes figured in a larger, fuller tradition of inner spirituality often called “mystical theology” or “theology of the heart,” of which Wesley was aware, as were American adherents to Holiness and Pentecostal tenets, although to a less precise degree. A continuity of thought and practice can be traced around the issues of contemplative (non-discursive) prayer, disinterested or pure love, abnegation of the will, union with God, and the practice of the presence of God. The roots lie with figures such as Clement of Alexandria, but travel through apophatic mysticism, Rhinish mysticism, the *via negativa* of people like John of the Cross, to seventeenth-century “Quietism,” to popular Protestant move-

ments of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Quietist affair surrounding Molinos, Jeanne Guyon, and Fénelon occurred at the end of the great age of mysticism and involved differing views of mysticism. Seventeenth-century texts emphasize the inner way (versus an external, speculative way) of knowing God. It is important to note that Protestant piety, with a few exceptions, consistently de-emphasized the mystical components of the Catholic tradition, often blending Reformed and Pietist thought.

The complexities of this situation at the end of the seventeenth century are illustrated by the example of Pierre Poiret, mentioned in passing by Bundy (120, note 52), who was a key intermediary in transmitting this ongoing tradition to Protestants.² Poiret was a Huguenot pastor who became a follower of Antoinette Bourignon and then of Jeanne Guyon. His contacts with German Pietism were first via Spener, and his influence was as a writer in his own right and then as an editor and anthologist. Wesley knew Poiret's *L'Economie divine* (7 vols., 1687) and his *Vrais Principes de l'éducation chrétienne des enfants* (1690), the latter excerpted in Wesley's *The Christian Library*. The young Wesley also was much impressed by Saint-Jure's *Vie de M. de Renty* which, although it

²Under the influence of the scholarship of Jean Orcibal, French scholars have long described this continuous tradition of spirituality going back to the early church and extending to Thomas Upham. For a concise summary, see Jean-Robert Armogathe, *Le Quétisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973), especially 9-20 and 103-108. Bundy cites one of Orcibal's essays, "Les spirituels français et espagnols chez John Wesley et ses contemporains," in note 33, p. 115. One should note as well a companion piece to the latter essay, "L'Originalité théologique de John Wesley et les spiritualités du continent, *Revue historique*, 222 (1959): 51-80, as well as "L'Influence spirituelle de Fénelon dans les pays anglo-saxons au XVIIIe siècle," *XVIIe siècle*, 12-14 (1951), 276-277. These three essays are reprinted in *Etudes d'histoire et de littérature religieuses XVIe-XVIIIe siècles*, ed. Jacques LeBrun and Jean Lesaulnier (Paris: Klincksieck, 1997).

I go into detail concerning the issues of the transmission of the spirituality of submission, pure love, the inner way, etc., in my book manuscript, *Quietists Abroad: Madame Guyon, Fénelon, and Their American Readers*, forthcoming.

On Pierre Poiret, see Marjolaine Chevallier, *Pierre Poiret (1646-1719). Du protestantisme à la mystique* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1994) and her entry, "Poiret," in the *Dictionnaire de spirituality* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985):12, 1831-1836. Details on Poiret in this essay are based on this latter article by Chevallier.

existed in English, was re-edited by Poiret as *Le Chrétien réel* (1701). Renty was an example of someone who lived in the presence of God.³

Poiret also transmitted works of Catholic “mystical theology” by cataloguing, anthologizing, and editing them: *La Théologie du coeur* (1697, including mystical treatises by Surin, Bérulle, Saint-Samson and others), *Préface sur la Théologie Mystique* (1700), *Bibliotheca Mystico-rum* (1708), *La Théologie de la présence de Dieu* (Laurent de la Résurrection) (1710), as well as editions of Thomas à Kempis and the spiritual works of Fénelon (1718). He edited the works of Antoinette Bourignon in nineteen volumes (1678-1684) and those of Madame Guyon (forty volumes, from 1704 to 1720). The latter, although listed as published in Cologne by J. de la Pierre, were really produced in Amsterdam by Henri Wettstein. The number of the foregoing authors used by Wesley in *The Christian Library* demonstrate the dynamism of this tradition of spirituality, mediated in part through English translations.

Now, the role of “Orthodox” authors in this tradition becomes apparent if we look at Madame Guyon’s 3-volume text, *Les Justifications*, probably written with the help of friends for her defense at the colloquy of Issy when she was being examined for her orthodoxy (compare Bundy’s discussion, 119-120.) Her text is organized by headings. Under the heading “mystical theology” we find the following categories: pure love, prayer, abnegation, states of the mystical life, and operations of God in the interior life. There are also discussions of 47 key terms. Thomas Upham gives an idea of Guyon’s sources when he discusses *Les Justifications*: “She sustains herself, in particular, by references to the writings of St. Dionysius, Cassian, St. Bernard, John Clemacus, Catherine of Genoa, John of the Cross, St. Theresa, Henry Suso, Thomas à Kempis, Gerson, Ruysbroke, Thauler, John de S. Samson, Harphius, Blossius, Ruis de Montoya, and oth-

³Orcibal suggests that Wesley became aware of Poiret’s *Economie divine* in 1730 (“L’originalité théologique,” 79). Martin Schmidt discusses the importance of the biographies of Gregory Lopez and of Gaston Jean-Baptiste de Renty, indicating that Wesley began reading Renty in 1736. On Renty, see *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, tr. Norman P. Goldhawk, vol. 1 (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 213-217. Although Schmidt’s discussion is partially superseded by later scholarship, it remains useful.

ers.”⁴ One of the things that so angered Bossuet about Madame Guyon’s *Justifications* was that, even though she mounted a defense of Quietist spirituality by citing a continuous tradition of precedents, she also maintained in her preface that intellectual judgments were not appropriate for “writings that proceed from the heart,” thus putting in question the entire framework for adjudicating the orthodoxy of her beliefs and writings.

Fénelon himself wrote an essay on Clement of Alexandria for the colloquy of Issy, precisely to point out the roots in the orthodox writings of the Church of what Bossuet would later call the “new mysticism.” More important still, his *Maxims of the Saints* was argued in such a way that Fénelon related all true spirituality, going back to the early church, to writings on pure love, of which the most important recent example was François de Sales. In his preface, Fénelon states that “all interior ways lead toward pure or disinterested love. This pure love is the highest degree of Christian perfection. It is the end of all the ways known by the saints.”⁵

⁴Thomas C. Upham, *Life and Religious Opinions and Experience of Madame de la Mothe Guyon . . .* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1847), II, 175. The work was published in two volumes, originally in 1846. Subsequent references will be to Upham.

The most reliable, complete translation in English of the autobiography of Madame Guyon is *Autobiography of Madame Guyon*, tr. Thomas Taylor Allen (London; St. Louis: B. Herder, 1897). This translation was reprinted, with an introduction by Ruth Bell Graham as a Shepherd Illustrated Classic edition (New Canaan, Conn: Keats Publishing, 1980).

⁵*Explication des Maximes des saints*, in *Oeuvres*, vol. 1, ed. Jacques LeBrun (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 1005. This edition supersedes previous editions of Fénelon’s spiritual works; LeBrun is the editor of the ongoing edition of the correspondence (see Bundy, 117, note 39). Both Madame Guyon’s *Justifications* and Fénelon’s *Maxims* were known very early in English translation, but other works by them were much more influential.

For an idea of the scope of American knowledge of Madame Guyon in particular, see my article, “Madame Guyon in America: An Annotated Bibliography,” *Bulletin of Bibliography*, 52 (June 1995), 107-111. Page 107 should be corrected to read: “Although John Wesley’s early interest in Madame Guyon was tempered in his later years, he included an extract by her in his *Christian Library*. The reprinting of this in America. . .”). This essay gives a detailed listing of translations, editions, and abridgements.

I give some attention to the influence of Fénelon in America, including Harriet Beecher Stowe’s interest in him and her relationship to holiness revivalism in “Fénelon Among the New England Abolitionists,” *Christianity and Literature*, 50 (Autumn 2000), 79-93. The history of Fénelon’s influence and reception in America is complicated and is treated in part by Orcibal and also by Austin Warren, “Fénelon Among the Anglo-Saxons,” *New England Saints* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956), 58-73.

Thomas Upham himself was aware of this long tradition of spirituality. For example, in his version of the life of St. Catherine of Genoa, he used Poirer's earlier interpretive biography and edition, *Théologie de l'amour*, as a model. Upham situated Catherine in a long tradition of "experimental" writers of "inward experience." These included John of the Cross, Suso, Canfield, Ruysbroke, Thauler, Kempis, Harphius, and the writer of the *Theologia Germanica*.⁶ Once Upham's version of Madam Guyon's spirituality had become widely distributed, a distinct, self-conscious awareness of an ongoing tradition emerged that acknowledged its Catholic roots, but did not identify orthodox writers (see Bundy, 127.) For example, a 1903 article, "Points in Holiness Theology," identifies the distinctive characteristics of this tradition. The main tenets are certainty about experience and historical continuity (holiness theology "reaches across the centuries"); its roots have been in the lives of "the holiest men and women this world has ever seen;" its basis is in the Bible as "understood by plain people who are filled and guided by the Holy Spirit," and it has been non-sectarian.

Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas à Kempis, Madam Guyon, Fenelon, etc., are not to be ostracized from Wesley, Fletcher, Watson, and Asbury, because they are governed by the times in which they lived and the churches to which they belonged in many of their views and utterances.⁷

Is Upham a Reliable Source and How Did He Interpret the Thought and Experience of Madame Guyon?

David Bundy indicates that, in the *Life and Religious Opinions and Experience of Madame de la Mothe Guyon*, Upham uses a "careful historical technique" and Madame Guyon's spirituality is "accurately represented, if one allows for a certain amount of de-Catholicizing of her story" (Bundy, 123). Indeed, Upham was a careful scholar and the basic facts concerning Jeanne Guyon and the Quietist controversy are correct in his book. However, Upham wrote an interpretive biography and commen-

⁶*Life of Madame Catherine Adorna*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1858), 138, 140. I cite this example and the following example from *Living Water* in my essay, "Madame Guyon and Experiential Theology in America," *Church History*, 67:3 (September 1998), 493, 498.

⁷Amicus, "Points in Holiness Theology," *Living Water* (May 12, 1903), 3.

tary, as he had for Madame Adorna in which he used Poirer as a model.⁸ Upham makes his principles very clear. He has used on occasion an existing translation by Thomas Diby Brooke; he has substituted the first-person in translating *The Torrents* so that Madame Guyon speaks in her own voice instead of referring to “the soul” in the third person; and he has completely reordered and revised the *Short and Easy Method of Prayer*. More important is the fact that Upham is engaged in an act of compensation and of interpretation. After commenting on the deficiencies of Jeanne Guyon’s education, he says: “In translating her statements, therefore, it is oftentimes necessary to analyze her thoughts and to re-arrange them in their logical order, in order to present them to the mind of the reader in the same position, and with the same import they possessed in her own mind.” Further, Madame Guyon uses “theological and experimental terms” with specific meanings known to “the mystic writers.” Thus, a “translation of words” is insufficient. Further:

It is necessary . . . to ascertain what she meant, and then to embody her ideas . . . in such a mode of expression—whether it corresponds verbally and literally to the original form of expression or not—as will convey to the English reader just that meaning which she herself would have conveyed, if she had used the English language as an instrument, and had communicated with the Anglo-Saxon mind.

Madame Guyon’s style is often repetitious and fragmentary, so Upham endeavored “to combine them [passages] together, and to give them in the simplest form, without repetitions.” His is “an *interpreted* translation, a translation of the spirit rather than of the letter. . . . A *true* translation of what she *was* and of what she *meant* can be made in no other way.”⁹

The consequence of Upham’s approach to the Guyon text is that he is selective in his citations and adds an interpretive theological frame that casts her experience into the experiential frame of the nineteenth-century holiness movement. The terms “justification,” “sanctification,” “entire consecration,” for example, are not to be found in Madame Guyon’s *Vie*.

One example can suffice. Bundy cites “her document of total surren-

⁸See my “Madame Guyon and Experiential Theology in America,” 493-494.

⁹See Upham, I, 60-61 for citations; on his method in presenting *The Torrents* and *The Method of Prayer* (Upham’s title), see I, 193, 398.

der to God, her ‘act of consecration’ to God” as presented by Upham (Bundy, 118).¹⁰ The document in question was a marriage contract to Jesus, prepared at the suggestion of Jeanne Guyon’s advisor, Geneviève Granger, a Benedictine. Upham prefaces the citation of this document with a commentary that Madame Guyon had earlier “placed herself on the altar of sacrifice” and had been engaged in a “process of inner crucifixion,” experiences that Mother Granger well understood. Subsequent to citing the “transaction,” Upham concludes that Madame Guyon “had an inward and deeper sense of consecration, both of body and spirit, such as she had not experienced at any time before.”¹¹ This language is almost completely absent from the original.

In the autobiography itself, before citing the marriage contract, Madame Guyon describes how, after a number of trials and of losses, including the death of her first daughter, she followed the Benedictine’s advice to make exceptional alms and to fast and then to take communion on the feast day of Mary Magdalene. Madame Guyon then entered a room where there was an image of Mary with the Infant Jesus in her arms. Jeanne signed the marriage contract, placed it at the feet of the infant Jesus, and put on a ring, signifying that she was the spouse of “Our Infant Lord and Saviour.” As a dowry of this “spiritual marriage,” she asked only for “crosses, scorn, confusion, opprobrium, and ignominy.” “O, how that day has since been a day of grace and of crosses! These words were first placed in my mind that he would be *a husband of blood* [Exodus 4:25]. Since then, he has taken me so strongly for his own that he has perfectly consecrated my body and my mind by the cross.” The specific phraseology is from the tradition of mystical marriage, and the act of consecration is completed by the divine Infant who, as husband, imposes crosses of suffering on the beloved.¹²

One can conclude that Upham’s interpretation of Madame Guyon places her within the context of the nineteenth-century Holiness Move-

¹⁰Bundy does not cite the two-volume standard American edition of Upham, but an edited English version of Upham (see 118, note 41 and 122, note 58.). The citation from this later edition varies slightly from the original edition on I, 140.

¹¹Upham, I, 138, 140.

¹²My translation. This is the 1720 text of Madame Guyon, with modernized punctuation and spelling, reprinted as *La Vie de Madame Guyon écrite par elle-même*, ed. Benjamin Sahler (Paris: Dervy-Livres, 1983), 151, hereafter cited as *Vie*.

ment, transforming her. One cannot rely on Upham for an understanding of her specific spiritual or theological context. Further, Upham's interpretation, while appreciative, is an act of intellectual reordering in which he assumes a regulative role in understanding Jeanne Guyon's intent and in overcoming her deficiencies of self-expression.

Upham and the Transmission of Madame Guyon's Thought

David Bundy asserts that Phoebe Palmer's "altar theology" came to her "from Pseudo-Macarius via Madame Guyon, Fénelon, and essentially Thomas Upham" (Bundy, 125). Given the fact that Upham consistently inserted the theology and terminology of the American holiness movement into his interpretation of Madame Guyon, a case can be made, rather, that Phoebe Palmer's interpretation of the experience of sanctification indeed colors the *Life and Religious Experience and Opinions of Madame de la Mothe Guyon*. In fact, the chronology of the contacts between Upham and Palmer implies this. Under Phoebe Palmer's tutelage, Upham came into the experience of sanctification during 1839-1840.¹³ Phoebe Palmer's *The Way of Holiness* (1843) appeared before Upham's two-volume work on Madame Guyon was published in 1846. Palmer's book had appeared in the form of articles in 1841-1842. The altar theology and its terminology of "laying all upon the altar" are very explicit in *The Way of Holiness* (63 f.). The context is quite different from the Guyon marriage to the Infant Jesus and the consummation of the marriage as a consecration by means of the cross imposed by this husband. Further, Palmer became increasingly concerned about the influence of continental mysticism on Thomas Upham and the tendency of his later works to suggest that justification and sanctification are followed by a third experience of divine union, entailing the annihilation of the will.¹⁴

Further, evidence does not support a link between the social activism of American holiness revivalism and the spiritual texts of Madame Guyon and Fénelon (Bundy, 120-121, 126). They both were viewed as political martyrs in the early eighteenth century. Fénelon gained enormous prestige because of his pedagogical success in training Louis XIV's grandson (who unfortunately died before ascending the throne). Fénelon's prose

¹³See Richard Wheatley, *The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer* (New York: W.C. Palmer Jr., 1875), 238-242, hereafter cited as Wheatley.

¹⁴Wheatley, 518-523. See Bundy, 124 (and note 62).

epic, *Telemachus*, published in 1699 was written to demonstrate the qualities of an ideal ruler and was widely interpreted as an indirect condemnation of the absolutism of Louis XIV. *Telemachus* was the most reprinted work of French prose fiction in the eighteenth century, and French editions even appeared in America because the work continued to be used for pedagogical purposes. There is no evidence that *Telemachus* influenced the heirs of Phoebe Palmer.

Madame Guyon became a victim of court intrigue because of the influence of her writings on the Saint Cyr school for girls, founded by Madame de Maintenon, the wife of Louis XIV, but her writings are not overtly political. Her treatise on prayer can be seen as a social statement in that she claims that the way of interior, mystical, contemplative prayer is open to all, particularly the unlettered, and that external, intellectual approaches to spiritual practice are deficient. This set her in opposition to the rising spirit of Cartesianism and the forms of Ignatian and Jesuit spiritual practice increasingly dominant in France. The mere fact that Madame Guyon was a lay woman, not a religious, espousing a form of interior prayer available for all placed her in a precarious position before ecclesiastical and political authorities.¹⁵ Certainly, Madame Guyon's imprisonment and Fénelon's exile from the court to his bishopric in Cambrai lingered on in the popular mythology that surrounded the two of them so that they always were viewed as victims of absolutist repression.

The Transmission of the Spirituality of Guyon and Upham (Bundy, 127 f.)

There is a long tradition in America of reprints, translations, and abridgements of the texts of Madame Guyon. Although some nineteenth-century publications are reliable, many books (whether supposed translations or biographies) are abridgements based on abridgements, and modernization and adaptation have occurred. *The Mystical Sense of the Sacred Scriptures* is but one example (see Bundy, 118-119 and note 41.) The original Guyon spiritual commentary on the Bible was published by Poiret in twenty volumes between 1713 and 1715. The volume published

¹⁵See my "Madame Guyon and the Democratization of Spirituality," *Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature* 23, no. 45 (1996): 501-508.

by Words of Faith in 1886, cited by Bundy, is in turn based on a translation and abridgement published in Glasgow in 1872.¹⁶

A study of the record of reprints and re-editions and of references within periodicals shows that the heritage of Upham's works, whether concerning Madame Guyon or divine guidance or union with God, continued well into the twentieth century. The process of diffusion and citation is so complex that it is difficult to equate this tradition with an unconscious use of Orthodox terminology or themes. However, Madame Guyon continues to figure in the literature of spirituality in America, although she has been transformed into a quite different spiritual mother from the one known by Protestants who formed part of her circle after her release from the Bastille in the early eighteenth century.

Recent Scholarship and the Difficulties of Understanding Madame Guyon

A number of recent editions and studies have appeared in French and in English, of which American scholars may not be aware. The difficulties of synthesizing Madame Guyon's thought are illustrated by an example recalling the beginning of her true spiritual journey. She had been admonished to look within. When she did look within herself, she discovered contemplative prayer as a form of mystical experience that absorbed her individual will into the divine will.

My prayer was, from then on, empty of all forms, types, and images; none of my prayer took place in my head; but it was a prayer of delight and possession in the will . . . a deep contemplation (*recueillement*) without act or discourse. . . . It was a prayer of faith which excluded all distinctions, for I had no sight of Jesus Christ nor of divine attributes: everything was absorbed into a delicious faith, where all distinctions were lost in order to give way to the love of loving with more amplitude, without motives or reasons to love. This sovereign power, the will, swallowed up the two other [faculties of the

¹⁶Jacques LeBrun discusses the hermeneutical principles of Madame Guyon in "Présupposés théoriques de la lecture mystique de la Bible. L'exemple de la Sainte Bible de Mme Guyon," *Revue de théologie et de philosophie*, 133 (2001): 287-302; the theme of the return to origins is discussed on 293 f. Guyon's commentary is imbued with preceding Catholic interpretation, particularly that surrounding the Song of Songs.

memory and understanding], depriving them of every distinct object in order to better unite them in her. . . . It is not that they remain passive and unknown in their operations, but it is that the light of faith, like light in general, similar to the Sun, absorbs all distinct lights and puts them in obscurity from our perspective, because the excess of its lights surpasses them all.¹⁷

¹⁷My translation, *Vie*, 75. For a summary in English of Madame Guyon's life and thought see my "Madame Guyon's Theology of Interiority" in *The Pietist Theologians*, ed. Carter Lindberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). Useful editions of Madame Guyon include: *La Passion de croire*, ed. Marie-Louise Gondal (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1990), a thematic anthology that includes extracts of difficult to find texts; *Le Moyen court et autres écrits spirituels*, ed. Marie-Louise Gondal (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1995); and *Les Torrents et Commentaire au Cantique des cantiques de Salomon. 1683-1684*, ed. Claude Morali (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1992). *Madame Guyon. Rencontres autour de la vie et l'oeuvre* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1997) is an anthology of useful essays by Joseph Beaudé and others.

VISIONS OF HISTORIOGRAPHY: MAPPING THE TRADITIONS OF THE METHODIST, HOLINESS, AND PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENTS: IN RESPONSE TO PATRICIA A. WARD

by

David Bundy

Patricia Ward's responses to my essay, "Visions of Sanctification" are based on a fundamental misreading of the text. She insists that I am arguing for an "ideal theological meta-narrative for Methodism and the American Holiness and Pentecostal traditions." This could not be further from the truth, as I carefully discussed in the essay. The historiographies that use cultural mapping as a tool do not construct meta-narratives, but seek to place items on a "map" or grid and see what relationships evolve. It does not presume proximity on the grid is automatically indicative of meaning. When I described the method as "mapping" I meant exactly what I said. I was quite explicit in distancing myself from the history-of-ideas approach on which Ward's critique is based. My historiography is influenced by the traditions of French historical scholarship and my involvement in the Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative that is working with those ideas to map human culture on a global scale.

Secondly, I am accused of "a certain amount of 'slippage'" (an interesting scholarly phrase) when I focus on Clement of Alexandria and then Pseudo-Macarius after observing that Wesley was influenced by a large number of early Christian and later writers. As I indicated in the text, with footnotes, Pseudo-Macarius was chosen as a focus for the essay because that writer has been the focus of discussion among Wesleyan scholars

wanting to claim a direct link between Wesley and “Orthodoxy.” In ecumenical circles, this claim has caused considerable confusion because the Orthodox theologians look at the three traditions and do not see the link. This encounter alone would be an interesting issue for an essay or book. However, I was arguing that, while these persons may be placed on a grid, and while use of texts can be documented, the forms of transmission and the uses to which these items were put are quite complex and that NO claims of meta-narrative should be made easily.

Certainly, the analysis could be made for many other writers mentioned by Wesley. Wesley, being quite an erudite fellow, had read extensively and commended and/or mentioned numerous authors to his readers, as had his father before him. The texts of Wesley (see Outler’s footnotes to the *Sermons*) are replete with references to earlier writers. These were used at various times by authors in the Methodist, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions to promote spirituality, as resources for their thinking and for ecumenical and other purposes. I have no illusion, nor did I make claims, that looking at small portion of the Pseudo-Macarius thread of the vast network that transmitted Greek Christian themes to the West resolved the larger issues. To say that there is continuity of themes or elements of themes in and across cultures is not to argue for a meta-theory, although such might be developed on the basis of a more complex mapping.

In addition to the above, there are a number of Ward’s points that must be addressed. I will address them briefly.

1. Guyon in Her Context. I agree with Ward that Guyon is a very complex person and a writer whose texts are not always easy to understand. In addition, I argue that scholars have rarely examined Guyon in a dispassionate manner, ever since her writings first attracted the negative attention of Louis XIV who, in the words of Van Kley “unleashed Bishop Bossuet on both of them [Guyon and Fénelon].”¹ It is naïve to assert that Bishop Bossuet was offended primarily by the theological method of *Les Justifications*. His analysis is more complex and must be understood in the context of the struggle to assert and maintain the absolute monarchy against the corrosive influences of the Christian agrarians. Guyon’s apologetic in *Les Justifications* made it impossible for Bossuet to maintain one

¹Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 56.

of his primary arguments—that she was under the direct influence of foreign and/or condemned spiritual authors. By taking those texts out from under the judgment of the scholars of the day, Guyon hoped to have them evaluated on their spiritual usefulness rather than on the basis of either political intrigue or the kept scholars of church and regime. Bossuet’s anger suggests that the move was effective in many circles.

Ward’s comment “written, probably with the help of her friends” is an allusion to the scholarly tradition (ever since Bossuet) that Guyon could not have compiled the volumes and mounted the arguments. When I examined the manuscript of the work in the Bibliothèque Nationale, it is clearly by the hand of a non-professional scribe. It is not by the hand of Guyon (as other documents demonstrate), but, according to the curator of manuscripts, was probably written by a household servant or a woman religious. Guyon’s works are often disparaged by moderns as uninteresting and poorly written. Guyon herself does not claim more! However, the leap made that they are therefore ignorant is unjustified. Throughout her works there are echoes of the complex popular religious traditions of her century and others. This is a matter that would be worthy of serious research.

2. Upham as a Scholar and Transmitter of Guyon. As Ward and I both indicate, Upham was aware of the complex popular religious traditions including Guyon and her circle. He was also aware of the earlier translations of parts of Guyon’s works, including the ones cited in my essay. Ward criticizes my description of Upham as a scholar “using careful historical technique” because he was not a literal translator of the words of Guyon. She has a different definition of “scholar” than I do. I understand a scholar to be one who clearly states the methodology of the project and consistently applies that methodology. Upham clearly stated that his translation was what is now called a “dynamic equivalency” translation. In this he was following the lead of other early translators of Guyon and other texts. Does that mean that he distorted the text of Guyon? Not necessarily, but it is a question worth pursuing. Would a word-for-word translation (which cannot possibly happen between two languages!) have been more true to Guyon? Not necessarily. Does dependence on a text that is not the original text mean that there is no influence from the text that is congruent with what readers of an original version might experience? Not necessarily.

For other examples of this problem, think of the “Phillips translation” or the “Good News Bibles” or the simplified children’s Bibles. Do they

pervert one's understanding of Christianity? Not necessarily. Does the final translation put Guyon into a form that is congruent with the century in which he published it? Certainly. Does that mean that the voice of Guyon has been subverted? Not necessarily. Are the modern anthologies (they are not really "editions" as that term is generally understood) recommended by Ward more true to Guyon? Probably. But these sources present another series of intellectual issues. As French scholars since the beginning of the twentieth century have argued, discussions of the "intent" and influence of texts requires great caution. The original version is not the text that must always be examined to indicate influence. One must examine what is read by the translator and the reader of the translation, and those processes are extremely complex.

3. Upham and Palmer. Ward then argues that Upham and Guyon could not have influenced Palmer since her book *The Way of Holiness* was published in 1843 and the two-volume translation of Guyon was published in 1846. There is considerable evidence that Guyon was influencing Palmer, and Merritt before her, at an earlier stage. Certainly, Upham, since 1839-1840, was in continuous discussion with Palmer and working on the translation before either book was published. The fact is undisputable that the concept of absolute surrender (loss) of the self to God (in mystical union) while in prayer was a part of the spiritual tradition of Guyon as well as of a host of persons who were, through quite complex patterns of transmission, introduced to this construct present in Eastern Christian understandings of Jesus and Paul as early as the second century. Is it certain that this tradition came to Palmer through reading/hearing Guyon or by learning of Guyon through Upham? Little if anything in history or life is new or absolute. There are certainly alternatives, but Ward has suggested none.

4. The "Unconscious Use of Terminology and Themes." More centrally, in our earlier correspondence and in an aside, Ward indicates a concern for what she describes as an "unconscious use of terminology and themes." I am surprised that this is a matter of concern. Much of modern thought, including Christian theology, depends on distinctions made by Plato. Few bother to footnote these on a regular basis, although scholars of culture frequently acknowledge this relationship. Is the average person reciting a Christian creed on Sunday morning aware that the themes of the creed and the following sermon rely to a certain extent on Plato and other early, non-Christian Greek philosophers? Most will not have heard of the

philosophers. Most will never have read a text by Plato or one of the philosophers. Does this mean there is no continuity of themes? Of course not. Must a Holiness or Pentecostal evangelist be required to have read Wesley or Guyon to use insights or theological distinctions promulgated by them? Certainly not. Does this mean that they were not influenced by the earlier authors? Equally not!

5. Social Criticism by People Espousing Intense Spirituality. The fallacies of Ward's reading of my text as an effort to construct a positivist meta-narrative are no more clear than in her criticism of my observation that the spiritualities of Guyon, Wesley, and Palmer all entail elements of social criticism. She assumes I mean that one caused the other. That is a fundamental misreading of the text. That these writers were social critics is only slowly becoming accepted in scholarly circles. It is still a frequently heard, albeit it unwarranted, criticism of the Holiness and Pentecostal traditions that they are not socially conscious. Therefore, I feel it is important to point out that many persons making arguments for intense spirituality have also often been active social critics and activists. However, to say that Guyon and Upham and Palmer and Wesley all engage in social criticism is not to simply say (and I most emphatically did not say) that one influenced the other to be thus involved. I would not even be willing to argue that Wesley was a direct influence on the North American anti-slavery movements. Were some of the theological constructs and ideas promoted by Wesley influential in those movements? Definitely. The question of the interaction of ideas and social constructions is more complex.

6. Editions Used to Study the Transmission of Ideas. When one studies the transmission of ideas, it is important to use the text that is actually read and cited. The appropriate text for citation will depend on the question being posed. This relates to the above discussion of scholarship. Ward is accurate in observing that I did not cite the original text of Upham's translation of Guyon. Instead, I cite the revised abridgement of Upham's text published in 1866, a text based on an earlier revision and condensation published in 1872. The 1886 text has been published in numerous versions and languages, of which several are still in print. It was the later version and its derivatives that sold well around the world and that normally is cited in Holiness periodicals and exclusively in the Pentecostal periodicals. Ward could have made the same criticism about every author mentioned. For example, I did not discuss the disparities between the

English translations of Pseudo-Macarius and the published Greek texts. Nor did I discuss the difference between Thomas à Kempis and the early Dutch and Latin texts. I did mention the disparity of Wesley's text of Pseudo-Macarius and that of the translation he used. That was because Wesley's work is cited in the literature (as documented in my essay) as evidence of his influence by Pseudo-Macarius and I wanted to point out that it was not that simple.

7. Recent Scholarship. As Ward notes, there has been a blossoming of scholarship on Guyon, Fénelon, and their century. There are two issues. First, it is assumed that, if one does not cite all secondary literature, one must be unaware of it. For a professional bibliographer that may be true. However, the historian cannot possibly cite all material on most any subject. One can only cite what is actually useful and important to the argument being made. Most libraries (and/or electronic databases) can help readers find the rest of the bibliography. Secondly, Ward suggests that it is problematic to understand Guyon and that that is a problem. If clarity of expression, good grammar, and ease of understanding were essential for a text to be important and influential, Christianity would never have existed. Writers of the New Testament were accused of the grammatical infelicities similar to those of Guyon. We are still struggling to understand Paul, much less Thomas Aquinas, Wesley, Palmer, Barth, Rahner, Lonergan, and Foucault. In fact, the complexities of the texts may be what give them their enduring attractiveness as people tend to find them useful conversation partners precisely because they are mysterious, sometimes self-contradictory, and open to diverse understandings.

Finally, I wish to thank Patricia Ward for the opportunity her response has afforded me. It has allowed me to restate the thesis, method, goals, and conclusions of my essay "Visions of Sanctification: Orthodox Themes in the Methodist, Holiness and Pentecostal Movements." I hope that a forum can be found for a more fulsome exploration of the continuities and discontinuities between these spiritual descendents of the Wesleyan revivals and the various traditions of Christianity, including those early Eastern Christian authors so prized by Wesley.

BOOK REVIEWS

John K. Lander, *Itinerant Temples: Tent Methodism, 1814-1832* (Foreword by T. S. A. Macquiban) (Studies in Evangelical History and Thought; Cumbria: Paternoster, 2003). ISBN: 1-84227-151-2.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

Tent Methodism is a generally ignored chapter in the history of British Methodism. Unlike most of the splits within that body following the death of John Wesley (1791), Tent Methodism had to do with two themes: the acceptability of ministry outside of the chapel venues; and ministry to the poor. It quite starkly demonstrates the evolution of Wesleyan Methodism away from the Wesleyan preaching-in-the-fields tradition and away from Wesley's concern for the poor. It provides a vivid case study of the institutionalization and gentrification of a revivalist religious tradition.

Of course, there were personality issues that were determinative for the outcomes of the struggles for the identity of Wesleyan Methodism, but the loci and subjects of ministry were primary. The author of this carefully documented tome is the son of a Congregational and United Reformed minister who, after a banking and business career, undertook a research degree at the Open University, the revised thesis of which resulted in this book. The volume explores the early decades of Wesleyan Methodism and has implications that transcend chronological, denominational, and national boundaries.

Lander begins his analysis with an investigation of the social and religious context of the conflicts within Methodism from 1791-1820. He gives particular attention to the lack of a designated successor to Wesley

as well as the quest for social respectability, partly to avoid persecution by the Anglican/state authorities and partly to avoid identification with the masses devastated by the economic disorientation of the nation. Methodists by 1807 had distanced themselves from the poor. That year the Conference Minutes recorded a decision to distance themselves from open-air meetings in the tradition of Wesley and Whitefield. The Tent Methodists were, at the beginning, a few businessmen who were also local preachers. They felt a need to serve the poor and to take their evangelistic efforts out of the increasingly quite antiseptic chapel culture. They set up their tents in the areas in and near Bristol where the poor of the city would be free to congregate and where efforts could be made to meet their most basic needs for transformation, education, and self-respect.

The two early leaders of the Tent Methodists were George Pocock and John Pyer. Pocock was a successful businessperson and educator who developed his wealth through a system of private schools. Pocock purchased a tent (1814) that provided shelter for five hundred persons and began to hold services in the fields. Pyer was converted to Methodism in his twenties, hoped to be a foreign missionary, became a local preacher and fell under Pocock's influence. Pyer had difficulties with parents of school children and with the Wesleyan superintendents. He accepted (1819) the invitation to become a full-time tent minister. Both of these men were roundly criticized by the Wesleyan Methodists and would probably have been excommunicated but for the fact of Pocock's wealth and generosity in paying for the building of Methodist Chapels and providing assistance to debt-laden circuits. Wesleyan Methodist clergy were afraid of being embarrassed by the loud and unsubtle evangelism, leery of competition for converts, funds, and terrified of not being in direct control of all Wesleyan Methodist evangelistic activities, which they were determined to focus on their newly developed series of debt-laden chapels.

Even Pocock's largesse and the converts sent to Methodist Chapels could not keep the new evangelistic movement in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Certainly there were other issues, but the cultural and ecclesiastical control issues appear to have been paramount in the exclusion and withdrawal of the Tent Preachers. The Tent Methodists were formally established in 1820 and maintained an energetic ministry in various regions of England (see Appendix E). The missionaries received unexpected support from Baptists and other Nonconformists. When the tent ministry became too demanding, several of the leaders joined the Baptists

and Congregationalists. Women ministers were never accepted among the Tent Methodists. Eventually Pocock lost interest as he grew older and was unable to entice educated clergy to his cause.

Lander tells this story with fully documented details on the basis of sources never before used, thus providing the grist for a fresh probing of the heart of Methodist identity during the first decades of the nineteenth century. The extensive bibliography, index and appendixes provide access to the volume and its sources. The volume describes Wesleyan Methodism at odds with its own origins. It is an important contribution to the history of the Methodist churches and a study with import for understanding the evolution of all revivalist and restorationist movements.

T. McCracken and Robert B. Blodgett, *Holy Rollers: Murder and Madness in Oregon's Love Cult* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Press, 2002). ISBN: 0-87004-424-9. \$16.95.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

This book is the most recent and complete telling of a story that has influenced the development of the Holiness and Pentecostal churches in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States for nearly a century. It is not a scholarly book, although it is based on careful research in newspapers as well as in other public and court records. It lacks the scholarly perspective that is generally expected of a book that is reviewed in a scholarly context. Questions of historical methodology and the nature of the sources used are never addressed. The documentation is less than clear and it is not always evident when sources are quoted and when the dialogue is invented to heighten the author's interpretation of events. That being said, it is an important book for what it unwittingly reveals about social responses to what is considered deviant religion, and the impact of those responses on the groups considered deviant. It is also a case study on the U.S. legal system and the inability of the courts to separate public hysteria orchestrated by the news media and the facts of given cases related to religion. The volume also helps one understand the historic culture of the Holiness and Pentecostal churches in the Pacific Northwest as they sought to escape the opprobrium of public disapproval.

Central to the story is Edmund Creffield, a German immigrant and convert within the context of the Salvation Army. He was assigned to the fledgling Portland, Oregon, Salvation Army center in 1899. He had difficulties in the Salvation Army and was not gifted at raising the funds needed to sustain the Army. He withdrew from the Salvation Army in 1901 and went to Salem, Oregon, where he studied at the Pentecostal Mission and Training School founded by M. L. Ryan and apparently modeled after God's Bible School in Cincinnati.

Creffield left Ryan's institute to open a ministry in Corvallis, Oregon, apparently in late 1902. The *Corvallis Gazette* described the liturgies of the radical holiness tradition as "a burlesque on religion" and opined that "true religion of a respectable character . . . commands . . . a better class of people" (p. 12). It was of small comfort to the classicist press when persons from more prosperous families became numbered among

the converts. When land-owning men and women (primarily women) were attracted to the new tradition, the leaders were accused of holding the women captive through orgies and preying on the “weaker” female minds.

Accusations from Corvallis were echoed in the regional presses of Portland and Seattle. Unlike the treatment of the Pentecostals in Los Angeles and Indianapolis by the press, where reporters were assigned to cover the worship, the Oregon and Washington presses relied on gossip and hearsay and repeated it as truth. The persecution led to an intensification of the differentiation of the group from society. Creffield, following the example of people like J. A. Dowie, adopted a biblical name: Joshua. Seeking to escape persecution, the congregation moved to another town, Waldport, Oregon, its members having scandalized Corvallis by destroying all of their encumbering worldly goods in a quest for a simple lifestyle. The indignant relatives and their accusations followed.

The press transposed the self-explanations of the group’s behavior and liturgy into the most sensational narratives possible. Creffield’s wife was forced by relatives to divorce him, but they remarried in Seattle. A brother of another convert killed Creffield in sight of many witnesses, and was painted as a hero in the press for accomplishing the murder of a hated citizen. The newspapers and wealthy citizens raised vast funds for the killer’s defense and he was acquitted, only to be fatally shot by his sister in the Seattle train station. Both the sister and Creffield’s wife were then declared insane. Both ended up committing suicide.

It was a long-running series of events that provided grist for the muckraking press. The public and press agreed that the problem was “bad religion,” and even the authors of this book do not understand the complexities of the situation in which press and public hysteria may have been as much or more to blame for the untoward events as was the religious group itself. Sex sells; hysterical sex sells even better. The authors succumb to this selling effort by describing the group in the title as “Oregon’s Love Cult.”

It is to be hoped that this period in Northwest religious history will eventually be the subject of a careful scholarly analysis. In the meantime, this volume, without index but with a useful bibliography, will be the best access available to the events of 1900-1906 and their far-reaching consequences.

David McKenna, *A Future with a History: The Wesleyan Witness of the Free Methodist Church, 1960 to 1995*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Light and Life Communications, 1997. 395 pp. Hardback. ISBN 0-89367-220-3

Reviewed by Howard A. Snyder

This is the fifth Free Methodist denominational history to appear, although the first since Bishop L. R. Marston's landmark centennial volume, *From Age to Age a Living Witness*, in 1960. Earlier histories were done by John S. M'Geary (1908), Wilson T. Hogue (2 vols., 1915), and Carl L. Howland (1951). These were preceded by Elias Bowen's *History of the Origin of the Free Methodist Church* (1871) and B. T. Roberts' *Why Another Sect* (1879). Thus, McKenna's book brings up to date (that is, until 1997) what is a well-documented denominational tradition.

This is an official history in that it was commissioned by the denomination, overseen by a steering committee chaired by Bishop Gerald Bates, and published by Light and Life Communications. It was largely funded by the White Foundation (with help from others); the book begins with a tribute to Hugh and Edna White. A shorter preliminary edition of the book (172 pp.) was published in 1995 in order to be available for the Free Methodist General Conference that year. Though that book was designated "Volume I," it was essentially a preliminary interpretive essay consisting of two sections, "Benchmarks of a Century, 1860-1960," and "Previewing Our Era, 1960-1995." This material has been reworked in the larger edition, with some deletions and additions. Thus, the 1997 book is not "Volume II" but is really the completed work incorporating and expanding most of what was in the 1995 edition. In the 1997 volume the words "and Forward" were added to the subtitle. Later historians will no doubt divert themselves tracing the various differences between the two volumes.

Given the extensive earlier published sources, McKenna elected to focus primarily on the period since 1960. Parts I and II (four chapters; 54 pages), however, summarize the earlier history; and, in fact, chapters three and four are really an essay on Free Methodist identity from the perspective of 1995. The bulk of the book (15 chapters; 260 pages) narrates the most recent three and a half decades. *A Future with a History* is thus not a full-scale denominational history, but rather functions as a supplement to Hogue's and Marston's major works. This new volume is perhaps best seen as an interpretive essay on Free Methodist history and identity and a useful documenting of developments and of leadership since 1960.

An epilogue, "Servant Leaders of Our Generation," lists bishops, Board of Administration members, denominational officials, and key personnel in higher education and missions, 1960-1995.

The historical summary in the first part of the book, while useful, is marred by several errors which should be corrected in a subsequent edition and with an errata sheet in the meantime. Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT, where B. T. Roberts studied, is misidentified as "Wesleyan College." It never was a college; it was founded as a university. We are told that the 1858 first Laymen's Convention was held in Albany, New York; actually it was Albion, New York. The book says Roberts began publishing *The Earnest Christian* prior to 1860; in fact, the first issue was January, 1860. The period of Free Methodist history from 1931 to 1959 is described as "early childhood" (p. 39); actually it should be "early adulthood," as properly labeled in the 1995 preliminary edition of the book.

Also, we read that "in 1883 Roberts represented the Free Methodist Church as a charter member of the newly formed World Methodist Council. Joining even with those who expelled him from the Methodist Episcopal Church, Roberts had the confidence of his convictions that permitted him to participate in the larger Methodist ecumenical community." It is hard to know what this is intended to refer to, and no source is given. In any case, there was no World Methodist Council meeting in 1883. The First Methodist Ecumenical Conference was held in London in 1881 and met every ten years thereafter; it did not become the World Methodist Council until 1951. Roberts did not attend the 1881 meeting in London, although he did participate in the interdenominational Centenary Conference on the Protestant Missions of the World in London in 1888. In a November, 1881, article in *The Earnest Christian*, Roberts gave several reasons for *not* participating in the Methodist Ecumenical Conference, the main ones being that the conference would be dominated by Methodist Episcopal Church delegates and that the MEC delegation did not include "prominent representatives of the holiness wing of that church." Roberts said that, though he had "sympathy and fellowship" with many in the ME Church, particularly those who professed holiness, "yet we do not see how we can consistently fraternize with it as an ecclesiastical organization." In the twentieth century, however, the Free Methodist Church was for a time a member of the World Methodist Council, as Marston notes in *From Age to Age A Living Witness* (p. 563).

The strength of McKenna's book is its analysis, from various perspectives, of Free Methodism as a denomination, especially since 1960.

Here McKenna brings his considerable sociological, psychological, and analytical gifts to bear.

A useful feature of the preliminary (1995) edition, which is missing from the expanded edition, is a list of “turning points” and “pivotal decisions” that shaped Free Methodist history during the period from 1960 to 1995. These were gleaned from a survey of fifty-seven past and present Free Methodist leaders. Identified turning points (in perceived order of importance) were: (1) relocation of “World Headquarters” to Indianapolis in 1989; (2) creation of the FM World Fellowship in 1962; (3) adoption of church growth (1974) and church planting (1985) ideas; (4) the “New Day” initiative announced in 1986; (5) growth of “overseas” Free Methodism, surpassing North American membership in 1974 and more than tripling it by 1995; (6) formation of the Canadian FM General Conference in 1990; (7) growing recognition of social, urban, and ethnic ministries; (8) development of the unified World Mission for Christ budget in 1964 and then the division between home and world missions in 1985; (9) non-merger with the Wesleyan Church in 1974 after ten years of negotiation; and (10) establishment of the Free Methodist Foundation in 1988.

Of the ten pivotal decisions identified, the top six were: (1) new membership covenant, 1974 and 1995; (2) revision of the article of religion on original sin, 1974; (3) revision of the statement on Scripture, 1989; (4) approval of the ordination of women in 1979; (5) shift from a bishop to a “lay” member as chair of the Board of Administration in 1985; and (6) shift in the role of bishops to less administrative and more pastoral functions.

These survey results, McKenna says in the 1995 edition, “helped focus the research” for his project. Thus they are not included in the expanded edition, although the issues identified are of course treated. The lists as presented in the 1995 edition (plus a list of “major cultural trends” that influenced Free Methodism during this period) are still useful, however, as an overview and as a teaching device. The various issues identified are not unambiguous; in the expanded book McKenna analyzes the key issues and points out some of the ambiguities.

In interpreting Free Methodist history, McKenna emphasizes the both/and or complementary nature of Wesleyan theology. Thus, the historic “biblical convictions” of Free Methodism, according to McKenna, are these: Faith is both doctrine and experience; worship is both freedom and order; holiness is both personal and social; and growth is both educa-

tional and evangelistic. McKenna identifies FM “denominational distinctives” as follows: Governance is both episcopal and congregational; stewardship is both unified and diverse; mission is both local and global; and direction is both connectional and ecumenical. McKenna then applies what might be called the test of complementarity—how have these biblical convictions and denominational distinctives been “balanced and integrated over time”? What actions and events “have tipped the balance toward one complementary principle or another”? While this construct is a bit artificial and begs a number of historical and theological questions, it does provide a useful framework for analysis.

McKenna presents the body of his historical overview of the 1960–1995 period in twelve chapters with such titles as “Defining Our Faith,” “Structuring Our Fellowship,” “Educating Our Leaders,” and “Multiplying Our Witness.” The treatment here is topical rather than chronological. He gives considerable attention to organizational and strategy issues and less to theology and historical continuity. In typical McKenna-esque fashion, he consistently sets denominational developments in the context of social and cultural currents.

Few will doubt that the redefinition of Free Methodist membership at the 1995 General Conference (culminating a process that actually began in the aborted attempt to merge with the Wesleyan Church twenty years earlier, McKenna notes) represented a turning point in Free Methodist history. Much of the disaffection of many older Free Methodists with the direction of the denomination today centers in that redefinition of membership (and therefore identity).

McKenna does a good job of tracing the issues and debates regarding membership, noting the key role played by the select Study Commission on Doctrine (SCOD) created by the denominational Board of Administration in 1972. The crucial shift from membership *rules* to membership *goals* regarding Christian behavior was the result of a nearly twenty-year study process. McKenna notes that “the SCOD report for the 1995 General Conference recommended major modifications in the Membership Covenant to emphasize entry principles backed by separate sections on maturity goals.” The proposal marked a “shift from codified rules to covenant principles as the basis for entry into membership” and did away with the category of “preparatory membership” as being unsound theologically. This proposal, with some modifications, was adopted.

McKenna puts a generally positive construction on these developments, although he also notes some of the dissenting voices and argu-

ments. Time will tell whether this historic shift in Free Methodist identity was wise or not. To some, it appears that the Free Methodist Church adopted a “principles” and moral development model of membership just at the time in its history when it was losing the social solidarity and cohesion necessary to make such an approach effective. This kind of shift is, of course, widely documented in the history of religious movements. Denominations become embarrassed at being “sects,” drop their “peculiar” characteristics, and move in the direction of “principles.” Though appropriate theological rationale may be given, sociologically speaking, this process is totally predictable. What would have been unusual and truly prophetic would have been if the Free Methodist Church had moved in the opposite direction, reaffirming a life of specific covenant commitments (much like an order in the church) and recommitting to “preach the gospel to the poor.” But this is not what denominations do as they move well into their second century. It is not yet clear, therefore, that the 1995 membership revision was for Free Methodism “one of its finest moments,” as McKenna calls it. In fact, McKenna adds a caveat by raising the question: “Will the distinctive Wesleyan faith position [actually] become the conscious identity” of Free Methodist members?

A significant (though brief) chapter in *Future with a History* is entitled “Profiling Our People.” Here McKenna reports the results of a survey of “more than 750 clergy and lay [sic] denominational leaders as well as local pastors and members of local congregations” (to which, apparently, there were 261 responses). The point of the survey was to measure perceptions among different Free Methodist constituencies as to FM identity in 1960 and in 1995. McKenna notes that, according to the survey, “With each new generation, less importance was being attached to the 1960 benchmarks of biblical convictions and denominational distinctives.” A “major imbalance,” according to McKenna, is the growing “importance of the local church at the expense of the global mission.” McKenna concludes that the 1995 profile revealed (among other characteristics) “a strong church in its faith, a weakened church in its denominational connections, a searching church in its identity, a shifting church in its patterns of governance, a changed church in its methods of evangelism, [and] a wealthy church in its human and institutional resources.”

A Future with a History is more of a documented interpretive essay than a denominational history. It will prove useful now for instruction, and in the future will serve as a benchmark of Free Methodist identity and perceptions 135 years into the denomination’s history.

John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. 232 pages. ISBN 0-415-30525-X

Reviewed by Henry W. Spaulding II, Professor of Theology and Philosophy, Trevecca Nazarene University.

The vitality of “radical orthodoxy” is clearly evident in *Being Reconciled*. Milbank begins by promising that this is the first of a projected series on “gift.” The reader will not be disappointed either in the depth of the articles or in the breadth of issues dealt with in this book. The book begins with Milbank’s usual, lucid “Preface” in which he outlines the major arguments contained therein. This makes the book more readable for those who do not usually walk through the “thick” forests associated with Milbank and radical orthodoxy. This volume is a collection of several things the author has done before, yet it reads like a sustained argument.

Milbank sets forth the general theme of gift at the very start of the book, “Why ‘gift’ exactly? The primary reason is that gift is a kind of transcendental category in relation to all the topoi of theology, in similar fashion to ‘word.’ Creation and grace are gifts; Incarnation is the supreme gift; the Fall, evil, and violence are the refusal of gift; atonement is the renewed and hyperbolic gift that is forgiveness; the supreme name of the Holy Spirit is *donum* (according to Augustine); the church is the community that is given to humanity and is constituted through the harmonious blending of diverse gifts (according to the apostle Paul)” (ix). This suggests the importance of this book for systematic theology in general and Wesleyan-Holiness theology in particular.

Every chapter marks a contribution to theological understanding, but several chapters are of particular importance. One of these chapters concerns forgiveness. Milbank observes: “Forgiveness, therefore—the forgiveness that we in the West have been given to remember—is poised vertiginously between obliteration and a recollection that amounts to restoration” (44). He walks carefully in this chapter between these two poles (memory and forgetfulness) in order to place forgiveness within a theology of gift. He indicates later in the chapter that forgiveness is really about charity. His analysis completely obliterates any notion that forgiveness is an activity that the human will can accomplish alone. Rather any adequate understanding of forgiveness will require reference to the divine as is evident in incarnation and atonement. This chapter clearly illustrates the fruitfulness of Milbank’s theology of gift.

Milbank address Incarnation through his theology of gift in this book. He explains, “The sovereign victim is also able to forgive, unlike other human beings, at the very original instance of hurt, without a single jolt of rancour, since in the divinely enhypostasized human nature, suffering is paradoxically undergone in a wholly accepting active receptive fashion, in such a way that this undergoing is itself offered as gift” (61). If we are to think of incarnation, it must be as gift, even to the Cross. Such an understanding takes the tragedy of the event and re-narrates it through a theology of gift. Milbank adds to this, “it remains our task to forgive and to go on receiving the forgiveness of other human beings, since what God offers us is not his negative forgiveness, but the positive possibility of intrahuman reconciliation” (62). This only becomes possible with a theology of gift. Milbank makes a sophisticated argument in this chapter that is well worth the time to understand.

The material on atonement provides a good deal to think about. Some within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition have begun to re-think the relationship between “satisfaction theories” of atonement and holiness theology. This chapter will provide a nuanced argument toward that end. According to the Milbank, “Christ’s abandonment offers no compensation to God, but when we most abandon the divine donation it surpasses itself, and appears more than ever, raising us up into the eternal gift-exchange of the Trinity” (100). A holy God is capable of being a loving and gift-giving God. Such is the message of holiness. This offers a new way to think about *Christus Victor* motifs in holiness theology.

Perhaps, the best chapter in the entire book is entitled “Grace: The Midwinter Sacrifice”. Milbank begins with the following observation, “Since I reject all Protestant accounts of grace as mere imputation (although there are many Protestant accounts of grace not of this kind), an account of the arrival of grace must for me also mean an account of sanctification and of ethics” (138). The reflections in this chapter complete the argument he has already made in his *The Word Made Strange* volume when he concludes that Christians cannot be moral. Here he makes it clear that the reason for this is that grace out-narrates reason as a basis for holiness. That is, confidence not conscience is the goal of the Christian life. Milbank takes on Kant in this essay as he did in the former, but he clearly offers an alternative to Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida as well. He says, “Against this view, which now enjoys a wide consensus, I shall argue that a self-sacrificial view of morality is first, immoral, second

impossible, and third, a deformation, not a fulfillment. . . of the Christian gospel” (139). The reflections in this chapter will require close reading, but they will also provide clear insight. Milbank links moral luck with grace in such a way as to define a better way of thinking about morality. He also shows in this chapter that morality properly understood requires a *polis*, which is the church. He shows how too much of what Christians have taken to be Christian ethics is really “a transcription of secular modernity, which reads time not as a gift-of-self in the hope of an eternal return, but rather as a giving-up-of-self in time for a future absolutized space which will never truly be set in place” (159). After reading this chapter one, will be in a position to better comprehend holiness lifestyle as a gift in time.

Clearly, *Being Reconciled* is hard to read, but worth the effort. There is much here to think about and consciously incorporate into Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Having said this, the last chapter of the book is something of a disappointment. Here Milbank observes, “In the face of the fusing of nature and culture therefore, the Church should proclaim the ‘gospel of affinity’. It is the Church of all the marriages and quasi-marriages (including homosexual union), the Church of all natural and spiritual offspring” (209). He links affinity with reconciliation and embodiment as appropriate to the City of God. Milbank argues here that affinity will obliterate the boundary between culture and nature as Christian has already obliterated other such boundaries throughout its history. This chapter will excite and anger those who read it. While its conclusions are difficult to accept, they illustrate a constant threat theologians face. This threat is to never allow logic to overcome the plain sense of the Scripture and tradition. Homosexuality is not an easy issue, but it will never be solved by concluding, “There need be no problem whatsoever with the idea that homosexual practice is part of the richness of God’s Creation. . .” (207). This chapter will raise questions and force those who reject it to think again about how to do theology in the face of cultural challenges.

Those within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition should read this book because it is vigorous theology. We should read it because much of what he says will enrich our theological paradigms. We should read it because it now appears that radical orthodoxy and John Milbank will be an enduring theological movement. We should read it because affinity, reconciliation, and embodiment, as they are placed within a theology of gift can offer insight to those want to see a renewed theology of holiness emerge.

James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 182 pages. ISBN 0-415-27696-9

Reviewed by Henry W. Spaulding II, Professor of Theology and Philosophy, Trevecca Nazarene University

Those who read this little book will need to bring energy and focus to the exercise. It is a tightly argued book by Calvin College professor of philosophy James K. A. Smith. His argument is set forth in three parts: horizons, retrieval, and trajectories. These three parts present a sustained argument that includes intersections with theology, phenomenology, and language. Toward this end, Smith skillfully engages the work of Augustine, Derrida, Husserl, early Heidegger, Marion, Kierkegaard, and Levinas as he unpacks his own argument. If for no other reason, it is worth reading this book in order to read a clear analysis of these major theological and philosophical figures. Yet, the most important thing about the book rests with the persuasiveness of Smith's conclusion regarding the possibility of an incarnational logic, that is, one that is capable of expression in the context of transcendence and appearance.

The first section of the book is entitled "Horizons." Here Smith attempts to answer a difficult question: "How should one speak of that which is incommensurate with language" (1)? Theological and phenomenological resources are employed in order to deal with this question. Smith understands the problem of theological speech, but he also understands that silence is not always required. Clearly, this is a phenomenological problem, one that concerns Derrida and others. In fact, how can we think of a phenomenology of the invisible? Yet, this is precisely the challenge of religious language, if not theology and philosophy in general. Smith wants to argue for a new phenomenology in the face of these problems: "I will suggest that I am at the same time offering a new phenomenology—understanding phenomenological appearance as a matter of 'incarnation' and phenomenological method as a structure of *respect* or *praise*" (10). He will find that Augustine is the person who both sees the problem and points toward a way to go on.

Smith tackles the problem of phenomenology and transcendence in chapter two of the book. This is a magnificent chapter that ably ranges from Husserl, Marion, Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida. One is left with the impression that in Smith we have a young and articulate commentator

on the state of phenomenology. The detail of this chapter exceeds the space for this review, but if one wants to read a tight analysis of these important thinkers, this chapter will prove to be a rich resource. After a careful and useful analysis of phenomenology, Smith sets forth a question that moves his argument to the second part of the book: “If the other person can show up in phenomenology, why can’t God” (56)? This is the question many have asked and that Smith engages in the remaining pages of the book.

Part two of the book moves from history to constructive proposal. Here Smith draws upon the early Heidegger and Augustine. The basic issue for Smith is that Husserl quickly moves away from the particular (phenomenon) to the general, which tends to betray the phenomenological project. He thinks that the early Heidegger largely avoids this tendency and therefore can be a resource for a new phenomenology. This effectively displaces the phenomenological gaze from theoretical consciousness toward *Leben* (76). Therefore, Smith comments, “one of the tasks of Heidegger’s new phenomenology will be a *Destruktion* which (as much as is possible) takes us back to a non-theoretized experience—back, that is, to ‘the things themselves’” (77). This forces phenomenology toward phenomena and away from a preoccupation with theory, which in turn calls for a radically different conceptuality. Such an approach can address “a double bind, between kataphatic objectification and apophatic silence” (90). Here Smith poetically states the problem with older phenomenological theories, “All that phenomenology can do is *locate* its possibility, prepare the way for its advent, crying in the wilderness in order to clear the space for its appearance, going before to prepare an avenue for its Triumphant Entry” (97). Finally, it is essential that as these issues are addressed that Kant not be allowed to enter into the backdoor through a reappearance of the theoretical and a disappearance of the particular.

This leads Smith to Augustine who curiously seems to have understood the basic issues from the start. In other words, Augustine sees the enormity of what theology seeks to name, but does not finally allow silence to rule. What Augustine offers is praise “which grapples with the methodological questions of how (not) to speak of that which exceeds conceptualization and expression” (115). Smith understands that, in order for this to be fully useful, praise will need to be linked to confession. He effectively mines the resources of Augustine for a basis upon which the unspeakable can be spoken as praise and confession. Smith calls this the

logic of the Incarnation. Here “language functions like the Incarnation of the God-man: when the ‘Word became flesh’ (John 1:14), the transcendent God descended into the realm of immanence (finitude), but without thereby denying or giving up his transcendence” (125). This is a very profitable way to understand the very problem Smith is addressing in the book. He adds his own analysis: “The Incarnation signals a connection with transcendence which does not violate or reduce such transcendence, but neither does it leave it in a realm of utter alterity without appearance” (126).

The final chapter of the book is the third part of the book entitled “Trajectories.” Smith begins by mirroring the classical statement of the “Problem of Evil”: “If (1) God is Infinite, and (2) language—particularly conceptual language—is finite, then how will it be possible to *speak* of God, since (3) speaking requires the employment of language, and theology requires the employment of concepts” (153)? This is an important chapter because it sets out clearly how the logic of the Incarnation points to a way to avoid not speaking. It is the incarnation that illustrates how the transcendent can appear. According to Smith, “An incarnational concept, while ‘embodying’ transcendence, denies any claim to domesticating or rigidly determining such transcendence. Rather, it opens itself to the Other” (169). He goes on to assert that incarnation out-narrates the radical orthodox proposal regarding participation because it is more fundamentally rooted in embodiment. It is in the incarnation that we “avoid not speaking” (176).

This book is part of the theological movement known as radical orthodoxy. He draws upon the theology of John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, especially toward the end of the book. Yet, Smith is careful to show that participation, which is central to radical orthodoxy, is not fully adequate. He goes on to assert that the Incarnation provides a clear logic for facing incommensurability and transcendence in a way that provides a way between objectification and silence. This book is a must read for those who teach systematic theology and philosophy of religion. It presents a solid review of the major voices in the twentieth-century. It includes a constructive proposal by James K. A. Smith that is worth serious consideration. The book also contributes to a general widening of radical orthodoxy that will no doubt make it an even more attractive option for many.

David Willis. *Notes on the Holiness of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002. 187 pages. ISBN: 0-8028-4987-3.

Reviewed by W. Brian Shelton, Toccoa Falls College, Toccoa Falls, Georgia.

Constructions about the holiness of God in contemporary scholarship have moved David Willis to write about the nature and application of God's holiness. In traditional studies of God's incommunicable and communicable attributes, it seems that transcendence and immanence have been wrongly treated as opposites, that they have been misappropriated as spatial categories, and that holiness has been abandoned almost exclusively to God's incommunicable transcendence. This book is an inquiry—a series of reflections and miscellaneous notes with a built-in corrective—investigating the divine attribute or perfection of holiness (83). David Willis, Charles Hodge Professor Emeritus of Princeton Seminary, draws from biblical imagery and theology, historical theology, and classical aesthetic thought to establish a case for an imminent, transforming, and personal holiness for the people of God.

The starting point for exploring God's holiness in six chapters is the cross because “the Subject who is actually obedient there is the enfleshed Word of God” who suffered in and fully displayed divine holiness for his people (55). By grounding his study in the pinnacle of revelation of God's character, Willis avoids much speculative theology. Next, he explores the *communio sanctorum*, “community of saints,” as it reflects the corporate aspect of holiness at two levels: through the Incarnation, where gaining the hypostatic union results in a “property sharing” with humanity, and through the Holy Spirit, who unites all believers spiritually (41-42). These dimensions of *communio* become essential for understanding how God transfers his holiness to us.

In two ensuing chapters, Willis makes notes on the foundation that enables this communion of holy people—the eternal love and the purifying love of the one who is Holy Other. In two of his finer chapters, he defines the eternal love of God in terms of *perichoresis*—God being one while being eternally related within the Trinity—as a basis for his movement toward “creaturely holiness” with a purifying love. God's love towards others yields collective acts of the triune God in creation, redemption, and sanctification. Next, Willis considers two benefits of God's purifying love that redeemed creatures can enjoy. They are beauty

and hope. Beauty is an aspect of holiness that can serve as a good angle for viewing God's sacred quality of character; hope is a promise of an imputed holiness that our Maker shares with redeemed creatures in an eternal, very real, satisfying way.

The first notable feature of this work is Willis' high level of writing. There is a lifetime of erudition at work here, and the reader may discover intellectual humility anew. Terms including apophatic, theopoiesis, and perichoresis are fundamental to advancing his thesis, and he even warns that his work may require a "somewhat new vocabulary" combined with a "more seasoned, aged-in-oak parlance" (6). However, his impressive knowledge base produces fascinating insight into unique realms otherwise overlooked, such as communication of the divine holiness understood by Arius versus Athanasius (95-99). Likewise, he imagines how beauty, delight, aesthetics, art, awe, and creation itself echo the holiness of God, using excellent imagery (111-134).

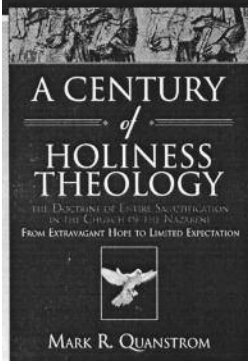
Willis works from a Reformed perspective and regularly alludes to Barth, Calvin, and historical inclinations within the Reformed context alone. For example, he speaks of revelation as an I-Thou encounter (55) and describes God as the "Holy Other" whom we encounter in purifying love (60). Although a valid approach, this perspective alone is limiting on matters of holiness. He ignores the Wesleyan contribution to holiness. His extensive bibliography lacks traditional Wesleyan systematic works, and his prejudice is obvious but correctable: "The Reformed tradition gives greater attention to the implications of the Trinity in matters such as . . . a this-worldly exercise of Christian piety" (4). He entertains no notion of perfection through imputed holiness in this life and pulls from Wesley's writings only once. This inclination can be a helpful reminder to works-oriented Wesleyans, however, remembering that God is the source and initiator of our sanctification, despite the synergistic aspects of the process.

At times, Willis's "Notes" seem tangential to the defining of God's holiness. For example, the question of whether the crucified and resurrected Christ is the same person (15-24) needs no explanation for Christians and indirectly informs about God's holiness; instead he could more deliberately wed the impact of holiness and imminence in Christ's earthly glorified state upon the Christian life. However, "Notes" is an appropriate title for the work because these are loosely connected reflections about God's defining quality and its application to believers. There is a mood of

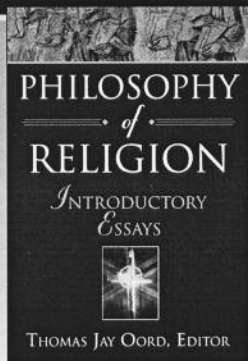
synthesis at work in this book as Willis ties together the actuality of God's holiness on diversified fronts such as beauty, Old Testament law, Trinity, creeds, language, creation, and location.

Catching sight of God's holiness, depicted in so many spheres of Christian thought, is Willis' greatest contribution to systematic theology. This furthers the prominence that this divine attribute deserves. Willis helps to correct the anemic doctrine of divine imminent holiness among Christians. After all, the ineffable holiness of God leads some to live as if "unknowableness" were a divine attribute rather than God's potentially fuller, present reality.

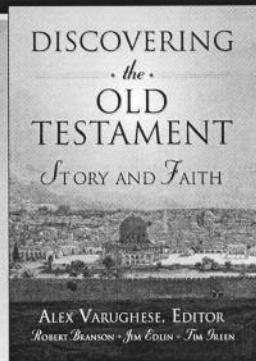
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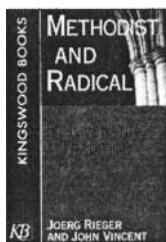
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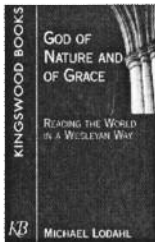
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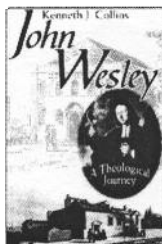


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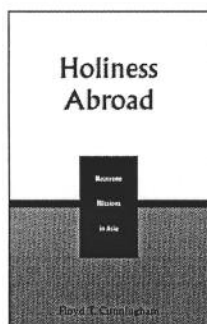


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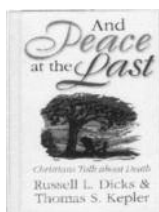
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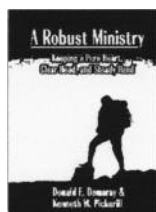


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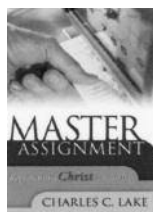


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