

Wesleyan Theological Journal

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

ARTICLE WRITERS:

Barry L. Callen	Anderson University, Indiana
Gregory S. Clapper	University of Indianapolis, Indiana
Kenneth J. Collins	Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky
Bradford McCall	Ph.D. student, Regent University, Virginia
Mark A. Maddix	Northwest Nazarene University, Idaho
Christopher P. Momany	Adrian College, Michigan
Liam Iwig-O'Byrne	Pastor, Free Methodist Church, Texas
Mark K. Olson	Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, California
Victor P. Reasoner	Southern Methodist College, South Carolina
John R. Tyson	Houghton College, New York
Michael Zbaraschuk	Pacific Lutheran University, Washington

BOOK REVIEWERS:

J. David Belcher, Richard Heyduck, Kenneth M. Loyer, Matthew P. O'Reilly, Aaron Perry, Nell Becker Sweeden, and Amos Yong

TRIBUTE WRITERS:

Stanley Ingersol on Randall J. Stephens (Smith/Wynkoop Book Award)
Richard Thompson on Barry L. Callen (Lifetime Achievement Award)

EDITORIAL NOTES

A wide range of important materials will be found in this issue, led by Kenneth J. Collins offering an assessment of Wesley Studies in North America today.

Among the special recognitions given by the Wesleyan Theological Society at its annual meeting, convened at Anderson University, Anderson, Indiana, in March, 2009, were its Lifetime Achievement Award to Barry L. Callen and its Smith/Wynkoop Book Award to Randall J. Stephens for his book *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South*. Both of the related tributes are included here, one by Richard Thompson and the other by Stanley Ingersol.

Note the current availability of all issues of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 1966-2009, now on a searchable CD (see the Wesley Center, Northwest Nazarene University, at <http://wesley.nnu.edu>).

Whatever information is needed about the Wesleyan Theological Society is readily available herein, including all officers of the Society and their email addresses. The WTS web site is Wesley.nnu.edu/wts. Also found here is an application for membership in the Society.

The WTS officers to contact for particular needs you may have are:

1. If you wish to apply for society membership—Dr. Sam Powell
2. If you wish to write a book review—Dr. Richard Thompson
3. If you wish to place an ad—Dr. Barry Callen
4. If you wish to submit material for publication—Dr. Barry Callen

Barry L. Callen
Anderson, Indiana
March, 2009

THE STATE OF WESLEY STUDIES IN NORTH AMERICA: A THEOLOGICAL JOURNEY

by

Kenneth J. Collins

Recently a couple of scholars made the attempt to assess developments pertaining to Wesley scholarship in general and Wesleyan theology in particular, but each foray proved to be inadequate, although for quite different reasons. To illustrate, Henry Rack's turgid bibliographical essay quickly gets lost in the details of largely British developments and therefore misses key *theological* trends that are currently playing out in Wesley studies in North America.¹ William J. Abraham's essay, for its part, is actually an exercise in despair as it proclaims (champions?) the death of Wesleyan theology in order to make room for canonical theism, a project far more to his liking.²

Despite these accounts, a significant theological story remains to be told, specifically in terms of the North American context. This present essay will be quite focused in order to address North American developments, not detailed, analytical, and historical concerns, but the grand the-

¹Cf. Henry D. Rack, "Some Recent Trends in Wesley Scholarship," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 41, no. 2 (2006): 182-199. Because this essay does not clearly discern North American theological trends, it is an unreliable guide to the state of Wesley studies today. Indeed, it is about a full decade behind the *theological* developments.

²William J. Abraham, "The End of Wesleyan Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40 (Spring 2005): 7-25.

ological themes that are currently being developed among theologians. Indeed, most of the scholars to be considered here are giving every indication that Wesleyan theology is not only alive and well, but actually thriving.

At the outset it should be noted that our methodological approach will be informed in some sense by the careful historical work of Hans Küng and David Tracy.³ That is, each of the salient contributions of the Wesleyan theologians below, as a window on North American theological developments, will be expressed in terms of a major paradigm in Wesley studies, a paradigm that constitutes in many respects a clue to the distinct voice and contribution of each theologian. To be sure, the theology of John Wesley is so rich, and so carefully nuanced, that a number of well-constructed paradigms may be necessary to deliver the full deposit of its genius.

Paradigm 1—William J. Abraham: Canonical Theism

Among many other things, the task of theology entails grappling with the essential truths of a given theological tradition (whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim) from a particular social location. That is, the substance of the Christian faith, for example, will be reflected through the cultural forms of its current interpreters, whether they are from the fourth century, the twelfth, or the twenty-first. Theological reflection, then, represents an engagement with the deposit of faith (informed by any number of resources) from a distinct vantage point. So understood, a social location or historical vantage point represents the presuppositions and assumptions that are inevitably involved in all serious theological reflection. Competent theologians, then as now, attempt to become increasingly aware of these as they engage in theology. Put another way, all theological reflection, whether undertaken by Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century or by Augustine in the fifth, is colored, at least to some extent, by the very cultural context in which it lived. Part of the task of a competent theologian, then, is to become increasingly cognizant of what is being brought to the interpretive task itself.

Given this understanding of theological endeavor, when William J. Abraham turns his attention to Wesley studies in North America he actu-

³Hans Küng and David Tracy, eds., *Paradigm Change in Theology* (New York: Crossroad Books, 1991).

ally sees little more than social location and presuppositions. Thus, “[Albert] Outler’s Wesley was an invented Wesley,”⁴ he insists, “a Wesley carefully constructed to fill a network of needs.”⁵ Moreover, Abraham’s assessment of the careful historical labors of a number of Wesley scholars is simply to conclude in a dismissive way that John Wesley turns out to be “very much like the mirror images of the historians under review.”⁶ Reaching back to the putative source, Abraham actually lays the blame for the plethora of interpretations of Wesley to the father of Methodism himself who, so it is claimed, “let loose a tradition that from the beginning was unstable . . . that fostered a latitudinarianism that he, himself, vehemently rejected.”⁷

From the observation that diverse interpretations of Wesley’s life and thought are possible (and how could it be otherwise, given the richness and nuances entailed), Abraham jumps to the conclusion that Wesleyan theology is dead as well. “Half a century of splendid historical investigation,” he exclaims, “has unwittingly become a worthy obituary notice for the death of the Wesleyan theological tradition.”⁸ And with the death of Wesleyan theology comes the demise of Methodism as well. One can almost hear the dominos falling. “John Wesley was a brilliant leader and an able thinker,” Abraham admits, “yet the movement he reluctantly founded in the eighteenth century failed as a church to sustain its best insights and practices beyond a century and a half or so in North America.”⁹ Indeed,

⁴Abraham, “The End of Wesleyan Theology,” 9. Bracketed material is mine.

⁵Ibid. The diverse and complex nature of Outler’s understanding of Wesley’s life and thought is best understood, not in terms of his attempt to meet “a network of needs” as Abraham would have it, but as representative of the variegated theological elements (from a number of different theological traditions) that streamed into Wesley’s artful theology. Cf. Albert C. Outler, “The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition,” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1991), 75-96.

⁶Ibid., 14. In this vein, Abraham refers to the work of Randy Maddox, Kenneth Collins, Donald Dayton, Lawrence Wood, Joerg Rieger, Scott Jones, Gregory Clapper—and even himself!

⁷Ibid., 15.

⁸Ibid., 25. For a contrary and more accurate assessment of the future of Wesleyan theology (though not without its problems), cf. Randy L. Maddox, *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology for Contemporary Methodism* (Nashville, Tennessee: Kingswood Books, 1998).

⁹William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Renewal* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 2.

according to this Wesley scholar situated in the Outler chair of Wesley studies at Perkins, "Methodism as a determinate experiment . . . is over and gone."¹⁰ The irony of this last statement is simply too broad and poignant to be missed.

But Abraham does not stop here. Having supposedly described the death of Wesley studies, Wesleyan theology and even Methodism as viable options, he then contends that the unraveling of our own tradition "is simply a microcosm of the death of Protestantism itself."¹¹ In this particular reading of church history, Protestantism has allegedly lost its way "because it had made pivotal mistakes in its theory of knowledge."¹² However, this last claim must immediately be called into question because Protestantism is and remains far more diverse than this stereotypical analysis can allow. Though many fundamentalists may have made some of the epistemological moves of which they are accused, especially in terms of their focus on propositional revelation and biblical inerrancy, so many Protestant evangelicals today are not (and never were) epistemologically oriented, as Abraham would have it, but are actually soteriologically directed. To be sure, the salient question for John Wesley, the evangelical Protestant, was not "how can I know, but how can I love?"

Moreover, the burgeoning success of Evangelicals and Pentecostals in Latin and South America, of which Jenkins and others have written,¹³ is a tribute to their unswerving soteriological orientation with its focus on the instantiation of the Holy Spirit in the warp and woof of life. And

¹⁰Abraham, "The End of Wesleyan Theology," 17. It is an error to think that Methodism as a theological tradition rises or falls in the wake of a broad and inclusive discussion of the contributions of its founder. That is, Methodism, historically understood, is not fully encompassed in a particular theology, but also represents a number of practices, disciplines, liturgical suggestions, and a way of living that cannot be neatly reduced to specific theological formulations.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 21.

¹²William J. Abraham, *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 380.

¹³Cf. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Jenkins points out that the Roman Catholic tradition has not been pleased about the success of Protestant evangelicalism in Latin and South America. He observes: "In 1992, Pope John Paul II warned the Latin American bishops' conference about these 'ravenous wolves.' He has also said that evangelicals are spreading 'like an oil stain' in the region, where they 'threaten to pull down the structures of faith in numerous countries'" (156).

beyond the Wesleyan community itself Abraham's flat-footed analysis is no more accurate in terms of the life and thought of Martin Luther and the subsequent Lutheran tradition than it is of John Wesley and Methodism. That is, to understand the Lutheran postulation of *sola scriptura* simply as a window on the epistemology of this Protestant tradition is not only to engage in reductionism, but to confuse the issue of authority (which every church tradition must address) with that of epistemology.

To be sure, what Luther meant by the Word of God in its threefold sense as (1) Christ, (2) Scripture, and (3) Proclamation was multivalent, sophisticated, and far more soteriologically rich than Abraham's reading can ever allow.¹⁴ Referring to a church as a *Mundhaus*, where the principal organ of worship is the ear, Luther ever understood the Word of God in terms of the animating Spirit. In fact, so considerable was Luther's understanding of Scripture that when the neo-orthodox theologians of the early twentieth century, such as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, wanted to articulate the richness of the Word of God afresh, they turned to an extensive study of the sixteenth-century Reformer's writings. And more recently, N. T. Wright has aptly pointed out that the authority of Scripture for the Protestant community has always been a shorthand for the phrase "God's authority expressed *through* Scripture,"¹⁵ whereby the living Spirit of Jesus Christ is and remains the very fount of authority for Protestants. All of this, however, has been lost in Abraham's despairing interpretation.

Having cleared the decks, so to speak, of the Reformation and the Protestant traditions, Abraham then feels warranted to introduce his theological agenda of canonical theism as a solution to contemporary theological ills. Simply put, canonical theism entails rejecting a view of Scripture as the *norma normans* and embraces a host of canons, that is, "a complex and subtle configuration of Scripture, liturgy, sacraments, iconography, Fathers, the Creed, the Chalcedonian Definition, Church councils, bishops, sundry regulations on the internal ordering of the life of the church, and the like."¹⁶ In other words, canonical theism focuses preeminently on

¹⁴Cf. Martin Luther, "A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels," and "Prefaces to the New Testament" in *Luther's Works: Word and Sacrament I*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, C. Oswald Hilton, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 113-124 and 355-412, for a good window of how Luther understood the Bible.

¹⁵N. T. Wright, *The Last Word: Scripture and the Authority of God: Getting Beyond the Bible Wars* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 23.

¹⁶Abraham, *Canon and Criterion*, p. 116.

the early traditions of the church, on the public, canonical decisions of the community of faith during its first thousand years. However, with this broad and over-determined conception of the canon in place, a judgment which like both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy views church tradition itself as revelatory, the clear and distinct voice of the Old and New Testaments as they communicate the *kerygma* may at times be distorted, and in the worst instances outright muted (especially in terms of the second commandment).

Some of the more significant difficulties that the paradigm of canonical theism faces are the following:¹⁷

- The hope and promise of systematic theology has been subsumed under the task of historical theology. The role of theologians is, by and large, limited to bringing forward the theological products of others and to the task of catechesis.
- Whatever has been elevated to the status of a canon (the writings of the church fathers and icons, for example) is uncritically accepted because canonical theists are simply bedazzled by their own appeal to the Holy Spirit, an appeal that supposedly legitimizes the entirety of the canons.
- The role of women is unclear in this project. Even today, neither Roman Catholicism nor Eastern Orthodoxy permit women to serve the church as either bishops or priests, largely on the basis of an appeal to this same canonical tradition.
- Canonical theists express enthusiasm for how images and icons can carry their own “charge.” More importantly, if this “charge” is “of sufficient power” it can be expected to change the viewer.¹⁸ This is a deeply troubled claim, as Wesley himself recognized in a similar fashion in his own day.
- Well ensconced in a “catholic paradigm,” canonical theists view the first thousand years, not in a descriptive way (taking into

¹⁷Ibid. For an extensive critique of the canonical theism project, cf. my review of *Canonical Theism: A Proposal for Theology and the Church* by William J. Abraham, Jason Vickers, and Natalie B. Van Kirk, eds. *Asbury Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Fall 2008), 105-112.

¹⁸William J. Abraham, Jason E. Vickers, and Natalie B. Van Kirk, eds., *Canonical Theism: A Proposal for Theology and the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 127.

account the diverse Western and Eastern traditions that are clearly distinguished at least by the fifth century), but in a normative way (focusing on the alleged canons) that only sees unity, even if such unity is not clearly present (the addition of the *filioque* clause in 589 at the Third Council of Toledo, for example).

- Canonical theism never once acknowledges the all-too-human nature of its canons whether it is the writings of church fathers, informed by sinful, diminished views of women (Jerome, for example), or ecumenical church councils, some of which (the Seventh, for instance) were informed by the ugliest of politics.
- The claim that canonical theism is a new version of Evangelicalism is historiographically muddled since this paradigm undercuts the very Reformation basis upon which Evangelicalism rests.¹⁹

As significant as these objections are, canonical theism as a project of reform yet faces a far more serious dilemma, one which in our judgment is a non-starter. To appreciate the force of this predicament, a distinction must be made between a *programmatic* use of the canonical tradition as lived throughout the centuries in Eastern Orthodoxy and an *instrumental* use as embraced, for instance, by contemporary Protestant traditions for the sake of reform. Indeed, as many observers have already noted, little difference exists between canonical theism as described by Abraham and the ongoing tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy. Perhaps, then, Abraham is calling Wesleyans to leave their communions of faith in order to embrace this broader “catholic” tradition. Such an appeal, however, would be most unsatisfactory.

But, perhaps, Abraham is not calling Wesleyans to forsake their church tradition at all, but simply to take on canonical theism as a means of grace (*instrumental* use) within that same Protestant tradition. But such an *instrumental* use of the canonical tradition does not seem to be a viable possibility for Protestants, at least in one sense, since it would entail significant theological inconsistency. Such a difficulty, as well as a lack of theological integration, become readily apparent as the canon of the episcopacy is considered. To illustrate, episcopacy as a canon is understood by the Eastern Orthodox in a *programmatic* sense, not in an *instrumental* one. In other words, this church office, putatively guaranteed by the Holy Spirit, must not be conceived apart from the *apostolic succession* which

¹⁹Ibid., 270.

gives it both expression and legitimacy. And since the bishops of whatever Wesleyan denomination are not and have never been a part of the apostolic succession in the eyes of Eastern Orthodoxy (or those of Rome), not only are their *orders* invalid but also their *sacrament* of the Lord's Supper. The "Protestant" canons themselves are starting to topple.

Accordingly, when Abraham insists that "canonical theism emerges as an option within Protestantism and is proposed as a healing theological option within Protestantism,"²⁰ he is apparently offering an *instrumental* use of the canons that has been specifically rejected by the Eastern Orthodox. In other words, from the Orthodox perspective, Jesus Christ established a *sacred community* in history and the canons cannot be understood apart from that same community whose very integrity is guaranteed by *apostolic succession*. Consequently, the *instrumental* use of the canons by Protestants, as suggested by Abraham, can only be deemed as invalid by the Orthodox, precisely because it is in some sense a-historical. It removes the canons from their proper context, from the sacred community (Eastern Orthodoxy) to which they belong. Thus, the late Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, representing the Orthodox view, has argued that the Protestant confessions (often referred to as "sects") have "'broken in one form or another, directly and indirectly, with the Orthodox Church...they have departed from her."²¹ These religious organizations, then, are societies "'adjoining the Church," he adds, "but they are 'outside' the one Church of Christ,"²² regardless of what canons they hold. In the end, then, canonical theism is just one more version (as judged by Orthodoxy) of pick-and-choose Protestantism.²³

Paradigm 2—Randy Maddox: Responsible Grace

The work of Randy Maddox has been significantly informed by the Eastern Orthodox tradition, but in a way far different from William Abra-

²⁰Ibid., 4. Thesis XX.

²¹Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Platina, California: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2005), 249.

²²Ibid., 250.

²³Such a judgment does not deny that the canons can be embraced *as a means of grace* within Protestantism with some profit, but only underscores that some of these same canons will be viewed as problematic, given their irregular ecclesiastical context, by the Orthodox tradition Abraham so favors. Furthermore, to what authority can Abraham appeal in the embrace of the entirety of the canonical traditions since they will be operative outside the "catholic" church, outside Orthodoxy?

ham. Unlike many of the judgments entailed in canonical theism, Maddox's reading of Wesley does not call for a rejection of key insights culled from the Reformation but incorporates them into an Eastern therapeutic vision which, in his assessment, is far more basic to Wesley's overall theological concerns. That is, Maddox is fully aware of the juridical emphases of Western Christianity surrounding the issues of justification and guilt, especially since the time of the Reformers, but he sees such concerns for Wesley as having been integrated into a foundational therapeutic emphasis characteristic of Eastern Christianity.²⁴

One difference between the Protestant traditions such as Moravianism, German Pietism and Puritanism and the larger Western Christianity of which they are a part is that each of these traditions placed a premium on the participatory renewal entailed in the new birth or initial sanctification. In other words, Maddox's Western juridical and Eastern therapeutic schema quickly breaks down when the actual spiritual formation of Wesley himself (and what Western sources fed into it) is considered. In fact, a strong case can be made that Wesley more clearly understood the processive, participatory nature of sanctification, that is, of becoming increasingly holy, after exploring the works of Gerhard Tersteegen.²⁵ This Reformed Pietist had described the Christian life as entailing a "steady daily growth in the praxis of saving grace,"²⁶ whereby "righteousness was progressively imparted through the indwelling Spirit of God."²⁷

So integral is the Eastern therapeutic approach to Maddox's reading of Wesley's theology that it forms a well-developed paradigm that illuminates the entirety of the Wesleyan *ordo salutis* in the form of *responsible grace*. Trading on a parental model of God as a Physician and Provider, Maddox maintains that Wesley viewed grace as co-operant, even synergistic, although the initiative is always taken by God. In such a view, God

²⁴Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, Tennessee: Kingswood Books, 1994), 142.

²⁵J. Steven O'Malley, "Pietistic Influence on John Wesley: Wesley and Gerhard Tersteegen," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 48-70. See also, Gerhard Tersteegen, *Sermons and Hymns of Tersteegen*, second ed. (Hampton, Tennessee: Harvey Christian Publishers, 1999) and Gerhard Tersteegen, *Life and Letters* (Hampton, Tennessee: Harvey Christian Publishers, 1990).

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 65. See also Gerhard Tersteegen, "Gerhard Tersteegen (Selections)," in *Pietists: Selected Writings*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 241-52.

never acts alone but always in concert and in the context of enabled human response. This synergistic or “catholic” paradigm is remarkably evident in the judgment of Eastern Orthodox theologians who contend that the Fall of Adam and Eve did not deprive humanity of all grace.²⁸ As such, even after the initial descent into sin, humanity was free to co-operate with divine enabling grace. The problem, of course, is that Wesley clearly held a Western Augustinian view of original sin and he even employed such language as “wholly fallen” and “totally corrupted”²⁹ in this setting. However, when Wesley’s Anglican understanding of prevenient grace is factored in, a grace that both restores (at least in some sense) and enables, then the end result of ongoing responsibility for the sinner looks very similar to Eastern emphases. So then, Wesley and the Eastern theologians arrive roughly at the same place, at least on this issue, though they get there from remarkably different starting points.

In filling out the contours of responsible grace, Maddox employs the image of a dance to express salvation’s co-operant nature in which “God always takes the first step but we must participate responsively, lest the dance stumble or end.”³⁰ And though this image seems to cover the entirety of Wesley’s concerns with respect to grace, it actually leaves out about half of his contribution. To be sure, Wesley learned from Luther, Peter Böhler and even John Calvin that grace was not simply synergistic (co-operant), but it was also free, representing a sheer gift. In other words, Wesley held in tension both catholic (co-operating grace) *and* protestant (free grace) elements in his sophisticated understanding of grace. However, after the divine initiative is factored in, responsible or co-operant grace emphasizes human response, human action, enabled, of course, by grace. And while this move is clearly appropriate given the sophisticated nature of Wesley’s understanding of grace, it nevertheless does not capture a leading theme in Wesley’s theology, that is, the activity of God *alone* which is best expressed in the form of free grace.

What are some of the more important characteristics of free grace that are integral to Wesley’s theology? First of all, free grace highlights

²⁸Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Platina, California: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1983), 161. See also, Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 66.

²⁹Albert C. Outler, *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed., vol. 1-4: Sermons (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984-1987), 2:183 (“On Original Sin”).

³⁰Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 151.

the divine role in redemption indicating what *only* God can do, such as forgive sins (justification), make a soul holy (regeneration) or cleanse it thoroughly (entire sanctification). In other words, this understanding of grace, informed by key insights from the Reformation, corresponds to Wesley's use of the *sola* language of "alone" and "only" ("It is the work of God *alone* to justify, to sanctify, and to glorify."³¹) The following chart reveals the balance of both free and co-operant grace:

The Blending of Free and Co-operant (Responsible) Grace in the Wesleyan <i>Ordo Salutis</i>					
Prevenient Grace (as Restored Faculties)	Process	Justification and Regeneration Focus	Process Sanctification	Entire Focus	Process
Free Grace	Co- operant Grace	Free Grace	Co- operant Grace	Free Grace	Co- operant Grace

Second, the fruits of free grace are not given on the basis of prior co-operation (as in some synergistic models) but are given *freely* by a holy, merciful and loving God. Free grace as such excludes all human merit. Accordingly, as Luther had understood so well in his own age, and as Wesley was to learn later at a society meeting at Aldersgate, the sinner does not have to *be* or *do* something first *in order* to be justified and born of God. That is, the forgiveness of sins as well as a renewal of nature are sheer gifts to be *received* by grace through faith. Counseling those on the way to entire sanctification Wesley put it this way: "And by this token may you surely know whether you seek it by faith or by works. If by works, you want something to be done first, before you are sanctified. You think, 'I must first *be* or *do* thus or thus.' Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it by faith, you may expect it as you are: and if as you are, then expect it *now*."³² Beyond this, free grace as

³¹Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 10:230-31.

³²Outler, *Sermons*, 2:169. Emphasis is mine. *The Scripture Way of Salvation*.

employed in Wesley's theology is nevertheless different in some respects from a Calvinist understanding in that such grace is *not* irresistible; God's free gifts can be rejected.³³

From the observation that God's grace is personal and co-operant, Maddox draws the conclusion that salvation is "surely gradual."³⁴ With an eye on the claim of Eastern Orthodoxy that gradualness is essential to the nature of redemption,³⁵ Maddox contends that human salvation for Wesley is likewise "fundamentally *gradual* in process."³⁶ In other words, the healing of a sin-sick soul is a life-long process in which "God does not implant holiness in us instantaneously."³⁷ However, it would be far too facile a reading of Maddox's work to claim that he denied the role of momentary transitions in the Christian life. More accurate interpretations suggest that he relates these transitions to "the gradual growth in response to God's grace,"³⁸ such that "the overall dynamics of salvation [retain] a gradual nature."³⁹ But if justification (or regeneration) devolves upon the process which follows it, then that process and not justification itself has become

³³The specific reference here is to free grace in the sense of justification, regeneration, and entire sanctification, all of which can be rejected. However, if we consider free grace (the work of God alone) in terms of creation itself or with respect to the restored faculties of prevenient grace (such as conscience, a knowledge of the moral law, etc.), these gifts cannot be rejected but are in fact irresistible—at least at their inception. For example, humanity is created regardless of its desire to be brought into being. Indeed, grace as favor is prior to being. The restored faculties of prevenient grace likewise bespeak of the sovereign action of God though they raise slightly different issues. For example, conscience at its inception is present *already* (and in that sense is irresistible) though it may be possible through a stubborn and willful descent into turpitude to extinguish its gracious voice. For more on prevenient grace as a species of free grace, Cf. Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 73-82.

³⁴Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 87.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 152. For more on this theme see: S. T. Kimbrough Jr., ed., *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), and Harold Jonathon Mayo, "John Wesley and the Christian East: On the Subject of Christian Perfection" (thesis, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1980).

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences and Differences," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 45, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 34-35.

³⁸Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 154.

³⁹*Ibid.*

the focus of attention. In other words, Wesley's own claim that justification and entire sanctification are the two foci of the *ordo salutis* has been inverted. That is, the focus is now on the *process* leading up to these soteriological events. Such a view may be characteristic of Eastern Orthodoxy; it is hardly descriptive of the theology of John Wesley. The two *foci* of the Wesleyan *ordo salutis* remain justification and entire sanctification.

The following elements portray the gradual, processive reading of Wesley's theology offered by Maddox, along with a few of the more salient implications⁴⁰:

- Stresses incremental growth and development.
- Soteriological changes are ones that are largely different in *degree* (an increment).
- Emphasizes Christian nurture in a way similar to Horace Bushnell.
- Misprizes the instantaneous theme in Wesley's theology; fails to see it as a focus.
- Justification and regeneration are redefined and incremental-ized (and associated with prevenient grace) in a way which departs from their usage in Wesley's *Notes Upon the New Testament* and in his *Sermons on Several Occasions*.
- The decisiveness, the crucial nature of justification, the new birth, and entire sanctification are all, therefore, muted.
- Maintains that the "faith of a servant" is justifying faith in each and every instance (despite significant evidence to the contrary), with the result that the *qualitative* difference of being a child of God is obscured, even diminished.
- The qualitative difference between prevenient grace and initially sanctifying grace (regenerating grace) is virtually repudiated.
- Identifies entire sanctification with mature *adult* states in an undue stress on a life-long process. The spirituality of children is therefore deprecated.
- Emphasizes an "Eastern Orthodox" reading of Wesley (co-operant grace) without taking significant account of the "Protestant" Wesley (free grace) as well.

⁴⁰Some of this material is drawn from my earlier article. Cf., Kenneth J. Collins, "Recent Trends in Wesley Studies and Wesleyan/Holiness Scholarship," *The Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 67-86.

- Views grace preeminently in a synergistic context as divine initiative and human response rather than seeing this important synergism caught up in a larger conjunction where the sheer gratuity of free grace is factored in.

The chief difficulty of the paradigm of responsible grace, understood in its unwavering emphasis on synergism and process, is that it lowers the standards of redemption (as Wesley had understood them) by focusing on the *possibility* of attainment in a lengthy process rather than on the instantiation, the concrescence, of what graces can now be *actualized*. Two examples will demonstrate this point.

The first concerns the question of Wesley's definition of the faith of a servant and whether it constitutes justification in the *Christian sense*.⁴¹ For one thing, Maddox does not distinguish two separate senses of the faith of a servant and therefore concludes that such a faith is justifying in every instance. However, Wesley specifically identifies the faith of a servant (in our broad sense) with those under the spirit of bondage in a sermon by the same name ("The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption") in 1746.⁴² Moreover, in a sermon produced much later, in 1788, "On the Discoveries of Faith," Wesley observes even more pointedly: "Exhort him to press on by all possible means, till he passes 'from faith to faith'; from the faith of a *servant* to the faith of a *son*; from the *spirit of bondage* unto fear, to the spirit of childlike love."⁴³

⁴¹Wesley defines justification in the Christian sense as that which is associated with regeneration. The one work is what God does "for us"; the other is what God does "in us." So understood, justification and regeneration are conjoined. That is, one cannot be justified without being born of God simply because without the renewal of the new birth in place one would almost immediately be committing the very same sins for which one had just asked forgiveness. And according to Wesley one cannot remain justified in the ongoing practice of sin. Cf., Outler, *Sermons*, 1:187. "Justification by Faith."

⁴²Outler, *Sermons*, 1:250. "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption."

⁴³*Ibid.*, 4:35-36. "On the Discoveries of Faith." Emphasis is mine. Wesley also distinguishes the faith of a servant understood in terms of the spirit of bondage from justifying faith in an important letter to Thomas Davenport, drafted in 1781. He states: "You have now *received the spirit of bondage*. Is it not the forerunner of the spirit of adoption? He is not afar off. Look up! And expect Him to cry in your heart, Abba, Father! He is nigh that justifieth! Cf., John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 5:95.

What then are the traits of the spirit of bondage displayed in the sermon “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption” written in 1746, and which were later identified with the faith of a servant? Those under a spirit of bondage, Wesley argues, feel sorrow and remorse; they fear death, the devil, and humanity; they desire to break free from the chains of sin, but cannot, and their cry of despair is typified by the Pauline expression: “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”⁴⁴ This obviously is not justification in the Christian sense, that is, understood in terms of the conjoined doctrine of the new birth, one of whose marks is to be free from the power and dominion of sin. Therefore, to claim that the faith of a servant associated with the spirit of bondage is justifying faith is to tie justification so understood with the ongoing practice of sin, a clear impossibility in Wesley’s reckoning.

Second, forsaking Wesley’s own hamartiological distinctions, for whatever reason, Maddox substitutes his own novel terminology as is evident in the following observation: “Wesley understood human salvation in its fullest sense to include deliverance (1) immediately from the *penalty* of sin, (2) progressively from the *plague* of sin, and (3) eschatologically from the very *presence* of sin and its effects.”⁴⁵ At first glance it may seem that Maddox’s distinctions of *penalty*, *plague* and *presence* correspond to Wesley’s vocabulary of *guilt*, *power* and *being*, especially when the latter writes: “The *guilt* is one thing, the *power* another, and the *being* yet another. That believers are delivered from the *guilt* and *power* of sin we allow; that they are delivered from the *being* of it we deny.”⁴⁶ This, however, would be a mistaken judgment because a subtle, though no less significant shift has taken place.

Whereas Wesley associated freedom from the *guilt* of sin with justification, from its *power* with regeneration or initial sanctification, and from its *being* with entire sanctification, Maddox disrupts this important linkage in a number of ways. In terms of the new birth in particular, Maddox main-

⁴⁴Ibid., 1:258. “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption.”

⁴⁵Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 143. In this schema Maddox engages in a “soteriological shift” in that he removes the issue of the *presence* of sin from practical consideration and relegates it to a purification process *after* death and to the event of glorification. Wesley, however, maintained that the *being* of sin can be cleansed in this life in entire sanctification. Cf., Outler, *Sermons*, 1:346. “On the Repentance of Believers.”

⁴⁶Outler, *Sermons*, 1:328. “On Sin in Believers.” See also Collins, “Recent Trends,” 67-86, from which some of this material is taken.

tains that believers must struggle under the *plague* of sin for much of their lives. That is, the kind of liberty that Wesley taught, expressive of even a child of God, is, oddly enough, rejected. Accordingly, Maddox links the *plague* of sin, not with freedom from the *power* or *dominion* of sin and with the doctrine of the new birth as Wesley does, but with entire sanctification! Maddox states: “How much deliverance from the *plague* of sin can we hope for in this life? His [Wesley’s] distinctive answer—for which he is most widely known (and often criticized)—was that there is a possibility of *entire* sanctification, or Christian Perfection, in this life.”⁴⁷

Add to this Maddox’s gradualist reading of Wesley’s soteriology, in which entire sanctification is deemed to occur only after a *lengthy process* and is therefore ever relegated to mature *adult* states, and the picture that begins to emerge is one in which the victory motif in Wesley’s soteriology is inadequately displayed, if not outright repudiated.⁴⁸ This has led at least one Wesley scholar to conclude that, in terms of sanctification, Maddox’s soteriology is unduly pessimistic.⁴⁹ To put it succinctly, Wesley contends in his many writings that a child of God does not commit sin. However, Maddox balks precisely at this measure of liberty and accuses Wesley of being, of all things, a Donatist for affirming it.⁵⁰ But can the synergistic, gradual soteriology of responsible grace that makes little room for free grace actually express the kind of decisive, qualitatively distinct changes that are the foci of the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*? Here, Wesley’s soteriology has not simply been explicated; it has also, in some sense, been re-defined.

Paradigm 3—Theodore Runyon: The New Creation

Although Theodore Runyon declares that the theme of his book about John Wesley’s theology is the new creation, he nevertheless reveals that his principal motivation for writing such a work revolves around the question, “What is it . . . that has given rise to the faithful social witness of

⁴⁷Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 180. Bracketed material is mine.

⁴⁸For other references to the “victory motif” in Wesley writings, where it is affirmed that even babes in Christ are free from the power or dominion of sin, cf., Outler, *Sermons*, 1:327; 1:328; 1:332; 2:106 and 2:116-117.

⁴⁹Christopher T. Bounds, “What Is the Range of Current Teaching on Sanctification and What Ought a Wesleyan to Believe on This Doctrine?” *The Asbury Journal* 62, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 38.

⁵⁰Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 164.

Methodism during the past two and a half centuries?"⁵¹ In fact, those readers who are primarily interested in the implications of Wesley's thought for today are quickly directed to turn to chapter six of the book in which the current issues of human rights, poverty, women's rights, the environment, ecumenism, and pluralism are all treated.⁵² Runyon later admits, however, that it actually is impossible to study Wesley's thought on contemporary issues by beginning with the issues themselves. Rather, one must grapple seriously with Wesley's theology first and then make the appropriate connection to the *ordo salutis* with respect to social issues and politics.⁵³

After exploring the topics of creation, Wesley's conception of the image of God in a three-fold way (natural, political and moral images), and the fall of humanity, Runyon moves to a discussion of prevenient grace, the majority of which revolves around a consideration of the restored faculty of conscience. Although a re-inscription of the moral law, at least to some extent, is one of those boons of prevenient grace that is an important window on the created order (the moral law for Wesley is "the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created"), Runyon offers a scant discussion of this topic, little more than goes beyond the observation that "Obedience does not consist in obeying rules."⁵⁴ As a consequence, an important conjunction in Wesley's theology, that of law and grace, is hardly developed in Runyon's paradigm, especially as this conjunction not only illuminates the created order but also offers some clues as to what the new creation will be like.

Failing to distinguish Wesley's use of the phrase "the faith of a servant" in a twofold way, Runyon appears to be unreasonably optimistic in terms of what the prevenient grace of God can do. He observes that Wesley "does not deny that divine saving health is at work in anyone who seeks to serve God and obey his commandments, that is, anyone who has the faith of a servant."⁵⁵ And while it is clear that those who "fear God

⁵¹Theodore H. Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 5.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid. For a well written analysis of politics and how this field can be properly related to the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*, cf., Theodore R. Weber, *Politics and the Order of Salvation: Transforming Wesleyan Political Ethics* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998).

⁵⁴Runyon, *The New Creation*, 18.

⁵⁵Ibid, 69.

and work righteousness” are on the path of salvation, a distinction must be made between such acceptance and justification understood in a *Christian sense*, that is, justification explicated in the context of the new birth, the former a work that God does *for us*, the latter a work that God does *in us*. In other words, justification so conceived is associated with the new birth that issues in freedom from the power and dominion of sin. As noted earlier, one of the more salient marks of the children of God, as Wesley put it, is that they do not commit sin.⁵⁶ Can such a freedom, however, be declared so broadly for those who enjoy the benefits of prevenient grace? A measure of grace and acceptance, even something “akin to justification,”⁵⁷ as Runyon puts it, does indeed express Wesley’s meaning. But this is not to describe salvation, properly speaking, a topic to be considered in greater detail below.

At any rate, Runyon’s sanguine approach with respect to prevenient grace, in particular the “conviction concerning God’s presence in every human life,”⁵⁸ is once again evident as he quotes Thomas Lessmann to the effect that such universal grace “places in a hopeful light even the human being who has turned away from and against God, and who is hardened in his or her sins.”⁵⁹ In light of this pointed observation, Runyon raises the question, “If the Spirit is not intimidated by unbelief, should we be?”⁶⁰ Interestingly enough, he then replies to his own query: “Wesley’s ‘optimism of grace’ is a confidence grounded in the universal activity of God.”⁶¹ And though the salutary possibilities of universal, prevenient grace must not be underestimated, the tempers or dispositions of the heart must be factored in as well. Indeed, it is exceedingly dangerous to be

⁵⁶Outler, *Sermons*, 1:427. “The Marks of the New Birth.” To be born of God for Wesley (intimately associated with justification in a Christian sense) “is so to believe in God through Christ as not to commit sin.” *Ibid.*, 1:427-28.

⁵⁷Runyon, *The New Creation*, 219. Runyon is considering the efficaciousness of prevenient grace in the context of those religions beyond the Christian faith. He refers to those outside the church in some of the major world religions as having something “akin” to justification.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.* For helpful treatments on the topic of prevenient grace, cf., Charles A. Rogers, “The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John Wesley” (dissertation, Duke University, 1967), and Herbert McGonigle, *John Wesley’s Doctrine of Prevenient Grace* (Derby’s, London: Moorley’s Bookshop, 1995).

⁶¹*Ibid.*

hardened in one's sins simply because one may not want to accept what prevenient grace (in the form of conviction) is genuinely offered. So then, it is not a matter of being intimidated by unbelief, as Runyon would have it. Rather, it is a matter of being appropriately concerned about someone whose heart, in terms of its dispositions and tempers, is so steeped in sin.

The theological emphases of John Wesley can be expressed in terms of the triad of orthodoxy (right doctrine), orthopathy (right experience, a term that Runyon apparently coins⁶²), and orthopraxy (right practice). Of the three, Runyon hardly considers the first emphasis, but offers considerable treatments of the remaining two. Indeed, one of the strengths of Runyon's paradigm of the new creation is that it views right experience, broadly understood, as integral to the forms in which the new creation of Jesus Christ is manifested.

Building on some of the epistemological insights of John Locke in terms of an empirical approach to reality, Runyon contends that, just as Wesley believed that knowledge of nature was mediated by the physical senses, so too did he affirm that an awareness of the eternal was communicated by spiritual senses. However, orthopathy in terms of the latter, especially as it relates to the realities of justification and regeneration, does not devolve upon the human heart in terms of pious, individual experiences. Indeed, Runyon is very critical of both Pietism in general and of John Wesley's Aldersgate experience in particular.⁶³ Instead, justification and regeneration as orthopathic experiences are "an open invitation to participate in the divine recreation of the image of God in humanity, namely, that sensitivity which enables us to discern, reflect, and image the divine will and purpose in the world."⁶⁴

⁶²Ibid., 160. Runyon observes: "The criticism of experience serves the purposes of *orthopathy*, to identify and promote the positive role of experience rightly understood."

⁶³It is a stereotype to label Pietism as "individualistic." In fact, most of the German Pietists such as Spener and Francke were communally oriented, focusing on the importance of small groups for the inculcation of real Christianity. For a more balanced treatment of Pietism, cf., Karl A. Olsson, "Influence of Pietism on Social Action," *Moravian Theological School Bulletin* No 1 (1965): 45-56, Kenneth J. Collins, "The Influence of Early German Pietism on John Wesley [Arndt and Francke]," *The Covenant Quarterly* 48 (November 1990): 23-42, and Sung-Duk Lee, *Der Deutsche Pietismus Und John Wesley* (Gießen: Brunnen Verlag, 2003).

⁶⁴Ibid., 80. Runyon contends that nineteenth-century popular Methodism made the mistake of focusing on subjective consciousness (with an emphasis on decision and human feelings) and thereby lost sight of both the *source* and the *aim* of religious experience. Cf., 149.

Since orthopathy orients the church to the renewal of the image of God in humanity as expressed in the will of God for the world, then it is clear why Runyon prefers the more general term “orthopathy” to Gregory Clapper’s “orthokardia.”⁶⁵ Right experience for Runyon, not simply a right heart, must have its source in God, be inevitably transforming, be social not individualistic, as well as be rational, sacramental and teleological.⁶⁶ In other words, orthopathy, rightly understood, does not simply focus on human salvation apart from the rest of creation. Instead, it sees redemption being worked out in the larger created order as well, an emphasis that is without doubt an important window on John Wesley’s theology. But in his struggle to avoid an “individualistic reading” of soteriology (a laudable goal), it appears that Runyon has underestimated the depth of the *personal* which is at the heart of Wesley’s view of redemption. That is, Runyon’s paradigm, so construed, can make little sense of the soteriological valuation evident in Wesley’s “Pietist” sermon “On Zeal” in which it is clear that love itself is on the throne, so to speak, and immediately next to it are all those *personal* holy tempers such as long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, fidelity, temperance, and the like. And in a circle even farther out are works of mercy, works of piety, until finally the church itself is dispersed throughout the world.⁶⁷

Salvation, of course, entails not only the positive work of redeeming humanity and the created order so that it might once again reflect the image of God, but also the negative work as Runyon writes “of overcoming sin and restoring the creation [that] extends to the unconsciousness as well as the conscious, . . . to the social as well as the individual.”⁶⁸ Like many modern theologians, Runyon posits the idea of social sin but does not indicate clear lines of responsibility for such sin. Moreover, when he

⁶⁵Compare Runyon’s term “orthopathy” with “orthokardia” as employed in Gregory S. Clapper, “Orthokardia: The Practical Theology of John Wesley’s Heart Religion,” *Quarterly Review* 10 (Spring 1990): 49-66.

⁶⁶Runyon, *The New Creation*, 161-165.

⁶⁷Outler, *Sermons*, 3:313-14. “On Zeal.” It can be argued that this basic image of a throne room is “Pietistic” in that it places love and its accompanying dispositions of the heart at the very center of things. It is best, though, to understand this image, not in an individualistic way, but in a *personal* way that bespeaks of the depth dimensions of salvation. For more on this topic, cf., Kenneth J. Collins, “John Wesley’s Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers and Affections,” *Methodist History* 36, no. 3 (April 1998): 162-175.

⁶⁸Runyon, *The New Creation*, 87.

considers the atoning work of the mediator, Jesus Christ, he unravels a significant conjunction for Wesley and simply focuses on the human-ward direction of the cross, of overcoming human alienation. In this interpretation, Wesley supposedly “turns the whole drama into an *event of communion* in which humanity is the intended recipient of divine love which in Christ comes to expression.”⁶⁹ Though Wesley clearly underscores the magnificent display of love at Calvary that can overcome human alienation in the form of anger and even hatred towards God, he also stresses the God-ward aspects of the atoning work of the mediator which concern *justice*, even wrath. Such considerations are taken up in what many scholars have called Wesley’s penal substitutionary view,⁷⁰ a view that is hardly acknowledged in Runyon’s analysis. But it is, after all, the work of the mediator, the God/human, facing two directions not one, the human-ward and the God-ward, divine love *and* divine justice.

As Runyon treats some of the issues of today in light of his theme of new creation, he asserts the *priority* of orthopraxy for Wesley. But this is surely a mistake in light of the judgments expressed in the sermon “On Zeal,” cited earlier. For Wesley, holy love, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the human heart in all manner of gracious tempers and dispositions, must take precedence and inform all right action. In other words, both the motivation and the goal of all ministry, for Wesley, begins and ends in the love of God. Even more troubling is Runyon’s description of works of mercy simply in terms of ministering to the bodies of the poor (“feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those that are sick and in prison”⁷¹) while neglecting the care of their souls as well—a task that for Wesley was ever a “higher” form of ministry. Indeed, in his sermon “On Visiting the Sick,” Wesley, in comparing ministering to the bodies and souls of sinners, notes that “souls . . . are of infinitely greater importance.”⁷² Even more pointedly, Wesley exclaims in this same sermon, “These little labours of love will pave your way to things of *greater importance*. Having shown that you have a regard for their bodies you

⁶⁹Ibid., 53.

⁷⁰Cf., John Deschner, *Wesley’s Christology: An Interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), 150-171.

⁷¹Runyon, *The New Creation*, 106.

⁷²Outler, *Sermons*, 3:387. “On Visiting the Sick.” For a consideration of the value judgments that Wesley makes in this area, cf. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 282-283.

may proceed to inquire concerning their souls.”⁷³ All of this is lost in Runyon’s reading, which by and large focuses on the maintenance needs of the disadvantaged.

Beyond this, the subtext of Runyon’s estimation of Wesley’s politics appears to be drawn, not from the eighteenth century, but from the twentieth. Apparently tracking the identity politics of his North American context, Runyon denies the right of private property, although Wesley, of course, was quite familiar with this same right through reading Article XXXVIII of the historic Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.⁷⁴ And although it would be too much to claim that Runyon’s analysis romanticizes the poor, nevertheless, he tends to focus on the changes that occur in those who minister to the downtrodden rather than on the consummate effect of bringing the gospel to those who have been deprived in so many ways. Moreover, though Runyon asserts that humanity, and especially the church, should be “the guarantor of justice and order in the world,” he never develops the various lines of political philosophical reasoning that would indicate just how justice must be understood. At the very least it would have been helpful to unpack the notion of justice in light of the political reasoning of someone like the late John Rawls or Nicholas Wolterstorff by way of comparison.⁷⁵ In the end, because there is simply a vague appeal to human rights and the *imago dei* (and once again without a significant discussion of moral and natural law) in Runyon’s work, many interpreters will, no doubt, be left wondering just what the contours of the new creation will be.

Paradigm 4—Laurence Wood: Fletcher or the Pentecostal

Re-working a much criticized thesis propounded in his earlier work *Pentecostal Grace*,⁷⁶ produced in 1980, Laurence Wood attempts to maintain that both for Wesley and John Fletcher the doctrine of Pentecostal perfection entails the belief that a justified believer may be made pure in

⁷³Ibid., 3:391. Emphasis is mine.

⁷⁴Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983), 513.

⁷⁵Cf., John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁷⁶Laurence W. Wood, *Pentecostal Grace* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980).

heart through the infilling of the Spirit associated with the day of Pentecost.⁷⁷

What is problematic in Wood's approach for many Wesley scholars, and is so evident in his most recent work, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, is his theological method. Claiming that Fletcher was Wesley's "authoritative interpreter,"⁷⁸ to whom he gave his "*imprimatur*,"⁷⁹ Wood essentially displaces the voice of Wesley with that of Fletcher. In fact, Wood not only contends that "Wesley felt as if Fletcher was his *alter ego*,"⁸⁰ but he also argues that Fletcher intended to improve on Wesley's theology by making his way of salvation more consistent.⁸¹ "One can also say," Wood alleges, "that the writings of Fletcher were the thoughts of Wesley in expansive form."⁸²

What is especially troubling in Wood's method is his disjunctive form of argumentation in which broad leaps are made to cover the distance between the thought of Fletcher and Wesley. For example, after citing Wesley's comment to Hester Ann Roe, made in 1776, that "Mr. Fletcher shows . . . that sanctification is plainly set forth in Scripture,"⁸³ Wood concludes: "Here again Wesley places Fletcher as an authority next to his own writings, equating their understanding of Christian perfection."⁸⁴ Even more troubling, Wood repeatedly employs an argument from silence, the weakest form of reasoning, to establish several of his claims. Thus, after he notes that "Wesley said nothing critical about

⁷⁷Laurence W. Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism, Rediscovering John Fletcher as John Wesley's Vindicator and Designated Successor* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2002), xiii.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 75.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, xvi.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 92.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 33. This claim of inconsistency with respect to the Wesleyan *ordo salutis* is belied not only by Wesley's careful and painstaking reflections on salvation throughout the years, but also by the clear, distinct and logical order present in Wesley's key sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," a sermon that evidences parallelism on a number of levels. Cf., Outler, *Sermons*, 2:153-169. "The Scripture Way of Salvation."

⁸²*Ibid.*, 86.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 79. This discussion should also be helped by employing language that will issue in greater clarity. Accordingly, the vocabulary of sanctification should be parsed along three lines: (initial) sanctification, (the process of) sanctification, and (entire) sanctification.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

the many times Fletcher had linked the baptism with the Holy Spirit and holiness,”⁸⁵ Wood declares: “Wesley now agreed with Fletcher on this subject.”⁸⁶

Beyond arguments based on silence, one of Wood’s preferred forms of reasoning is what philosophers call “begging the question.” In other words, Wood assumes precisely what is at stake or what can be called into question. This logical fallacy, this circular form of reasoning, is evident in Wood’s claim that throughout the *Last Check to Antinomianism* “Fletcher laced together passages from Wesley’s sermons with Pentecostal phrases demonstrating that Wesley and he were in theological agreement.”⁸⁷ However, it is more to the point to note that, during the Calvinist controversies of the 1770s, Wesley clearly, and in writing, distinguished his own thought from that of Fletcher. Indeed, in drafting *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s ‘Review of all the Doctrines Taught by Mr. John Wesley,’* Wesley observed: “This may prove that Mr. Wesley contradicts Mr. Fletcher, but it can never prove that he contradicts himself.”⁸⁸

It would have been more helpful in terms of any given claim if Wood had first of all sought to understand Wesley’s teachings in the setting of his own many writings. Instead, Fletcher’s works, oddly enough, become the premier context in which Wesley’s own thought is interpreted. This approach, problematic in so many ways, is rejected by several leading Wesley scholars. Even Fletcher scholars have cast doubt upon both the method and scholarship of Wood. Peter Forsaith, for example, observes: “Larry Wood’s *The Meaning of Pentecost in early Methodism* . . . sails against the wind as it seeks to read Fletcher...against the themes of the Wesleyan holiness movement. Wood’s arguments have been challenged and the work is undermined by poor use of primary sources.”⁸⁹

⁸⁵Ibid., 66. Wood also argues with another appeal to silence: “It is significant that, while Wesley’s critics believed that they had found many self-contradictions in Wesley’s writings, they did not accuse Fletcher and Wesley of disagreeing over the meaning of Christian perfection and the baptism with the Holy Spirit.” Cf., Wood, *Pentecostal Grace*, 77.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid., 69.

⁸⁸Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 10:392.

⁸⁹Peter S. Forsaith, ed., *Unexampled Labours: Letters of the Revd John Fletcher to Leaders in the Evangelical Revival* (Peterborough, England: Epworth Press, 2008), 7.

Wood's methodological problems are compounded as he explores the vocabulary of his Pentecostal thesis. Though both Joseph Benson and John Fletcher employed the phrase "receiving the Holy Spirit" to refer to entire sanctification, a usage that Wood apparently endorses,⁹⁰ Wesley specifically corrected Benson on this matter and cautioned: "If they like to call this, 'receiving the Holy Ghost,' they may: only the phrase in that sense is not scriptural and not quite proper; for they all 'received the Holy Ghost' when they were justified."⁹¹ And in terms of the phrase "baptism with the Holy Spirit," Wood continues in his argument-from-silence ways and observes: "Benson and Fletcher continued to preach on the baptism with the Holy Spirit as the basis for perfection with not a word of censure from Wesley."⁹² However, in his comments on Acts 1:5, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost," Wesley points out, "And so are all true believers to the end of the world."⁹³ In other words, baptism of the Holy Ghost, at least in Wesley's understanding, marks the beginning of the church, not its perfection.

Following once again in the footsteps of Fletcher, Wood argues that the phrase "the Spirit of Adoption" refers not to justification and the new birth but to entire sanctification. He then puts this claim in Wesley's mouth and argues: "Since Wesley lined 'the Spirit of adoption' with the glorious liberty of the children of God in this sermon 'On Faith,' it seems that he intended to link this phrase to Christian perfection."⁹⁴ However, in his sermon "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" Wesley clearly ties the Spirit of Adoption not to entire sanctification but to the new birth and maintains a scriptural idiom throughout, especially when he writes: "They have not received again the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father: The Spirit itself also bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God."⁹⁵ The life prior to the

⁹⁰Wood contends that Fletcher demonstrated that the phrase "to receive the Holy Ghost" was interchangeable with one that ever referred, in Wood's estimation at least, to entire sanctification, namely, "to be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Cf. Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost*, 7.

⁹¹Jackson, *Wesley's Works*, 12:416.

⁹²Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost*, 48.

⁹³John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishers), 275 (Acts 1:5).

⁹⁴Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost*, 183.

⁹⁵Outler, *Sermons*, 1:123. "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption."

reception of the Spirit of Adoption is not in most cases one of justification and regeneration,⁹⁶ as Wood would have it, but one lived under the spirit of bondage and fear, a life, in other words, marked by suffering under the power and dominion of sin. Simply put, the Spirit of adoption, by way of contrast to the spirit of bondage, pertains to a child of God, not a perfected saint.

When Wood (in interpreting Wesley through the eyes of Fletcher) moves the discussion of Christian assurance (the witness of the Spirit) away from justification and over to perfection,⁹⁷ and when he in a similar fashion moves the language of conquering sin (being free from its power and dominion) once again over to entire sanctification,⁹⁸ it is clear that Wood has for the most part emptied out what it means to be justified and born of God, and all for the sake of his pentecostal paradigm. Such a view is not far removed from the language of J. A. Wood of the nineteenth century who, in his zeal for underscoring a second work of grace, diminished the first. In his own day, J. A. Wood wrote of being “merely regenerate.”⁹⁹ The late Robert Lyon noticed this tendency in Laurence Wood’s work as well and concluded: “The work of the Spirit in conversion is then reduced to a minimum and His crucial work kept till later. Such distinctions may preach well, but they are not biblical.”¹⁰⁰ Wesley, in articulating a teaching faithful to the Scriptural witness, taught in so many ways that there is

⁹⁶Wesley affirmed that the witness of the Spirit was the *common*, not rare, privilege of the children of God. Wesley, however, also taught that in some exceptional cases, and therefore rare, some believers may be justified and born of God and yet lack the witness of the Spirit due to ignorance or bodily disorder. I have referred to this in my own work as the “faith of a servant,” in the narrow sense. Cf., Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 131-136.

⁹⁷Wood writes: “. . . assurance related primarily to perfection, and only to justifying faith in a preliminary way.” Cf., Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost*, 122.

⁹⁸Wood writes: “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, then first it was that they who ‘waited for the promise of the Father’ were made more than conquerors over sin [a common phrase for Christian perfection] by the Holy Ghost given unto them. . . .” Wesley, however, understood conquering sin in terms of no longer being under its power or dominion, which is a clear mark of the new birth. Cf., Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost*, 122, and Outler, *Sermons*, 1:419. “The Marks of the New Birth.”

⁹⁹J. A. Wood, *Perfect Love*, 1974 ed. (Noblesville, Indiana: Newby Book Room, 1974), 11.

¹⁰⁰Robert W. Lyon, “Baptism and Spirit-Baptism in the New Testament,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 14-26.

nothing “mere” about regeneration, nothing “mere” about being a child of God. “Even those who are justified, who are born again in the lowest sense,” he cautions, “‘do not continue in sin,’ that they cannot live any longer therein.’”¹⁰¹ All of this, however, has been blurred in Wood’s reading.

Operating out of this diminished view of justification and the new birth, Wood considers both the Apostles prior to the death and resurrection of Christ and Cornelius before Peter visited him as spiritually ready to receive entire sanctification. Thus, in terms of the Apostles, Wood contends that Wesley taught that they were “already justified before Pentecost.”¹⁰² And although Wesley in a dialog with Count Zinzendorf did indeed maintain that “the apostles were justified before Christ’s death,”¹⁰³ Wood does not interpret this statement in the context of Wesley’s other writings in order to understand *in what sense* the Apostles were justified. For example, in his sermon “Salvation by Faith,” produced in June, 1738, Wesley distinguishes saving faith *in the Christian sense* from that of the Apostles: “The faith through which we are saved, in that sense of the word which will hereafter be explained, is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth.”¹⁰⁴ Again, Wesley notes in this same sermon that Jesus had referred to the Apostles as “a faithless generation”¹⁰⁵ prior to his death and resurrection. All of this leads Wesley to the only appropriate theological conclusion that he could draw, namely, that “The Apostles themselves had not the proper Christian faith till *after* the day of Pentecost.”¹⁰⁶ But in Wood’s pentecostal paradigm, he wants to move from justifying faith (not in a Christian sense) to entire sanctification, from the faith of a faithless generation to Christian perfection. This is an impossibility in Wesley’s theology.

In a similar fashion, because Wood discerns the language of his pentecostal paradigm in the account of Cornelius (Acts 10) as the Holy Spirit fell on him and others in the presence of the Apostle Peter, he is in earnest to have Cornelius justified (and presumably born of God as well) in a first

¹⁰¹Outler, *Sermons*, 2:106. “On Christian Perfection.”

¹⁰²Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost*, xiv.

¹⁰³Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley*, The Library of Protestant Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 371.

¹⁰⁴Outler, *Sermons*, 1:120.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Jackson, *Wesley’s Works*, 8:291. Emphasis is mine.

work of grace prior to his baptism with the Holy Spirit. But such a judgment flies in the face of Wesley's own reckoning. Commenting on Acts 10:4, that is, on the spiritual state of Cornelius before Peter arrived, Wesley declares: "And yet it is certain, *in the Christian sense* Cornelius was then an *unbeliever*. He had not then faith in Christ."¹⁰⁷ It is this move from an unbeliever to entire sanctification that is so troubling or, in the case of the Apostles noted earlier, from a faithless generation to Christian perfection. However, one must first of all be justified and born of God (in the Christian sense) before one can receive the perfect love of Jesus Christ. The order is important. The net result of Wood's hermeneutical move is to diminish the first work of grace in his celebration of the second. But if regeneration is not properly understood, neither is entire sanctification.

Wood's work has been criticized by leading scholars in Wesleyan/Methodist studies, namely, by the late Robert Lyon, Donald Dayton, and Randy Maddox. The best approach to present this considerable evidence, then, is to summarize each scholar's contribution in the bulleted lists that follow:

Robert Lyon argued more than twenty-five years ago:

- All members of the body of Christ experience "baptism by the Spirit into the body."¹⁰⁸
- The use of baptism terminology is linked to entrance into the church and is "inclusive of all believers."¹⁰⁹
- "From Pentecost on, not to have the Spirit is not to be a Christian."¹¹⁰
- In Acts the terminology of "baptized in the Spirit," the Spirit is to "come upon" them and "filled with the Holy Spirit" are used interchangeably.¹¹¹
- From Pentecost on, all believers receive the Holy Spirit as promised—in fullness. "No biblical basis exists for a distinction

¹⁰⁷Wesley, *NT Notes*, 302. (Acts 10:4). Emphasis is mine.

¹⁰⁸Lyon, *Baptism and Spirit Baptism*, 16.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 16.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 18.

between receiving the Spirit and being baptized in, or filled with, the Spirit.”¹¹²

- During the ministry of Jesus, the Apostles had the Holy Spirit by “proxy,” that is, “by virtue of the Spirit in Jesus whose ministry is everywhere viewed as a ministry in the Spirit.”¹¹³

Donald Dayton, in exploring the history of Methodism in general and the holiness movement in particular, has pointed out:

- It was Fletcher, not Wesley, who identified the “second blessing” of Methodism with the disciples experience at Pentecost.¹¹⁴
- In Wesley’s doctrine of Christian Perfection there were “few real crossovers to the Pentecostal accounts and vocabulary.”¹¹⁵
- Wood’s reading of texts is “as tendentious and problematic as any I have ever seen.”¹¹⁶
- After the Civil War “the Holiness movement increasingly adopted the Pentecostal formulation of entire sanctification.”¹¹⁷
- The last third of the nineteenth century “marks the rise of the Pentecostal reading of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition that led into Pentecostalism.”¹¹⁸

Randy Maddox cautioned the following:

- “Such a conception [Wood’s Pentecostal paradigm] is full of exegetical and theological difficulties.”¹¹⁹
- In 1772 Wesley edited out of *The Principles of a Methodist* every suggestion that the Methodists teach that “the indwelling of the

¹¹²Ibid., 24.

¹¹³Ibid., 21.

¹¹⁴Donald Dayton, “John Fletcher as John Wesley’s Vindicator and Designated Successor? A Response to Laurence W. Wood,” *Pneuma* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 356.

¹¹⁵Donald Dayton, “The Doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit: It’s Emergence and Significance,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13, no. 1978 (Spring 1978): 120.

¹¹⁶Donald Dayton, “A Final Round with Larry Wood,” *Pneuma* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 265.

¹¹⁷Donald W. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1987), 90.

¹¹⁸Dayton, *John Fletcher as Wesley’s Vindicator*, 357.

¹¹⁹Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 177.

Spirit comes not at justification but at a subsequent event of Christian perfection.”¹²⁰

- From 1745 on Wesley insisted that “*all* Christians have ‘received’ the Holy Spirit or have been ‘baptized with the Spirit.’”¹²¹
- The later Wesley “resisted any equation of the baptism of the Spirit with entrance into Christian perfection.”¹²²
- It is not obvious that Wesley granted Fletcher’s writings “a unique place of privilege in defining the doctrine of Christian perfection.”¹²³
- Wesley would “not grant such *carte blanche* to any human author’s work.”¹²⁴
- The lists of suggested reading in theology that Wesley sent to his preachers and lay members contained “nothing by Fletcher.”¹²⁵

In light of the preceding evidence from Collins, Lyon, Dayton and Maddox it is evident that Wood’s pentecostal paradigm is a failed one. It is unable to walk the gauntlet, so to speak, of the probing and critical questions that must ever be a part of sound scholarship in Wesley studies. In fact, the only reason that the paradigm repeatedly surfaces is because Wood has used this paradigm to criticize the work of leading Wesley scholars throughout the decades, scholars who then respond and thus give continuing life to what they should have laid to rest.

Conclusion: The Future of Wesley Studies in North America

The paradigm of responsible grace articulated by Randy Maddox will no doubt continue to make important contributions to both Wesleyan communities in general and Wesley studies in particular. Recognizing the ongoing importance of Protestantism, while drawing vital insights from the broader catholic tradition, from the eastern fathers in particular, Maddox will continue to demonstrate the ongoing viability of Wesleyan theol-

¹²⁰Randy L. Maddox, “Wesley’s Understanding of Christian Perfection: In What Sense Pentecostal?” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 87.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 83.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 81.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 101.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 101-102.

ogy, as well as the enduring significance of Wesley's voice for future generations. However, because his paradigm argues for the uniformity of grace in Wesley's theology that simply focuses on co-operant (responsible), synergistic grace, it invites a more balanced reading, one that will hold in tension both co-operant and free grace, divine and human acting, as well as the work of God alone. In addition, it is necessary that the paradigm of responsible grace be able to express a robust deliverance from sin, a liberty that can be amply demonstrated in John Wesley's writings. Is a gradual, processive paradigm able to offer hope to people who find themselves trapped in radical evil, the kind that, if deliverance does not come quickly, they will surely perish? In other words, is free grace, the gift of God alone, necessary here as well in order to fill out all the extensive freedoms taught by John Wesley?

Theodore Runyon's paradigm of the New Creation will likely endure to the next generation because it builds upon the Wesleyan tradition and demonstrates its enduring significance not only for eschatology, the new creation in particular, but for ecumenism as well. Recognizing that God raised up Methodism for a distinctive mission to the broader catholic church, Runyon's paradigm invites ongoing conversations across communions for the sake of the reign of God. However, because Runyon is fighting against several "demons," so to speak, in his book *The New Creation*, in particular individualism, Evangelicalism and Pietism, he is unable to connect the rich personal depth of salvation, the vigorous transformation of the tempers of the heart, to the broader social and political orders in a way that bespeaks of Wesley's own more sophisticated vision. And although Runyon writes of the "plenitude of perfection"¹²⁶ that will not only renew the creature but *the world*, he does not take into account the inordinate difficulty entailed, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us so well,¹²⁷ of moving from the personal to the social and on to the political dimension of human existence. As a consequence, an air of naivety surrounds much of Runyon's discussion of sanctification, the world in general, and the political order in particular.

What is needed in light of the weaknesses of these two ongoing paradigms is one that is emblematic of Wesley's own eclectic theological

¹²⁶Runyon, *The New Creation*, 232.

¹²⁷Cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932).

style. To be sure, for Wesley it was most often a matter of “both/and” and not “either/or.” We, therefore, propose a “conjunctive paradigm” that will reflect both holiness and grace, *sola fide* and the process of sanctification, free and co-operant grace, divine/human cooperation and the work of God alone, the favor and power of God, process and instantaneous, a Catholic emphasis and a Protestant one, as well as personal and social action—all in a theology that will witness to the abiding value of Wesley’s theology, especially in the area of soteriology, and to the ongoing theological integrity of the world-wide Wesleyan communions.¹²⁸ And so, to those who have claimed that Methodism is finished and that Wesleyan theology is over, we are reminded of Mark Twain who, in a letter drafted in 1897, wrote in response to the reports of his demise: “the report of my death was an exaggeration.”¹²⁹

¹²⁸To get a sense of what this looks like, cf., Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

¹²⁹<http://www.twainquotes.com/Death.html>

NEVER QUITE GOOD ENOUGH: THE EARLY METHODIST SEARCH FOR CERTAINTY IN *THE ARMINIAN MAGAZINE*

by

Liam Iwig-O'Byrne

When John Wesley first began to publish *The Arminian Magazine* in January, 1778, his main purpose was to promote Arminian theology in response to the ongoing controversy Methodists were having with Calvinists. However, by the end of its first year, the magazine was featuring substantial spiritual autobiographies. These narratives had many common features, generally following a formula matching the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*. With the obvious importance of testimony in early Methodism, these early narratives are particularly instructive.

One might assume that the purpose of publishing these spiritual autobiographies was to provide a pattern for readers to follow, but a careful reading of the earliest testimonies poses an interesting problem. While some of the testimonies follow the pattern prescribed by Wesley in a rather straightforward fashion, others show a struggle to be certain that either the new birth or entire sanctification had truly been accomplished. Sarah Ryan's experience particularly demonstrates this, and her experience will ultimately be the example most thoroughly examined here. The questions I am attempting to address are, why did some Methodists struggle so much with certainty, and what is the significance of these struggles?

Framework of Victor Turner's Ritual Transformation

To understand how problematic ongoing uncertainty was in the Methodist process of salvation, some normative outline of the process

must be understood. A useful frame of reference for Wesley's *ordo salutis* is Victor Turner's theory of ritual transformation. Using Van Gennep's concept of *rite of passage* as a starting point, Turner presented a process usually used in other settings to transform boys into men in the eyes of the community. Generally, the boys ready for the ritual are taken by the men and separated from the rest of the community while they are taught the *sacra*, the body of secret knowledge that one needs to know as a man. Turner called this the pre-liminal phase. The prepared boys are then brought into the presence of the community to go through the actual rite of passage, often in the form of some endurance test that will leave the participants physically and permanently marked. This rite is the actual *limen*, or threshold, of their new status as men. This is the liminal stage, followed by the post-liminal stage in which, after the rite is successfully completed, the initiates now re-enter the community bearing their new status as men. Of particular interest to Turner was the special sense of community experienced by the initiates and their instructors during liminality. Turner called this special sense of community *comunitas*, where the arbitrary (but ultimately necessary, in one form or another) hierarchical social structures are suspended.¹

Turner's model lends itself to examining not just a geographic or political community or culture that has rituals ushering children into adulthood, but to examining voluntary faith communities their rituals for bringing individuals fully into that faith community.² In associating with such a volunteer community by attending its meetings, a person is separating from the broader society. By attending class meetings, visiting with one's class leader or other Methodists, reading Methodist material and hearing

¹See Mathieu Deflem, "Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner's Processual Symbolic Analysis," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30:1 (1991): 11, 19-20; Robert A. Segal, "Victor Turner's Theory of Ritual," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 18:3 (Sept. 1983): 333; Van Gennep's major work was *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), 96-99; and Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1979), 259.

²I am not the first to apply Turner's work to volunteer religious groups. See Bobby C. Alexander, "Correcting Misinterpretations of Turner's Theory: An African-American Pentecostal Illustration," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30:1 (May 1991): 26-44.

Methodist sermons, testimonies, and hymns, the neophyte was receiving the *sacra*, the symbols and content of the secret body of knowledge. This was the message of Methodism, largely what I call the Wesleyan synthesis, which was often communicated through narrative strategies.

Unlike coming-of-age rituals, there was no set time to begin the ritual process for Methodists. They had to “leave the door open,” as it were, so that anyone interested could respond and begin the transformation process. Thus, also unlike coming-of-age rituals, Methodists had to establish liminality not once a year, but perhaps several times a week! Their meetings, even spontaneous ones, involved intentional liminality to facilitate the transformation they desired for everyone. Finally, in the post-liminal phase, the new Methodists would structure their lives around their newly received identity and purpose, living their lives quite differently than before.

Methodist doctrine, practice, and structure were designed to move individuals first from being “careless” (unaware or unconcerned regarding their sinfulness) to being *awakened* or *converted*. This actually was often a radical transformation in itself, but viewed from this framework, it was the beginning of being separated, or the pre-liminal stage. The subject was next to go from a convicted state to becoming converted, the first transformation, bringing the subject fully into the community. A second process began following the first transformation. This second process was designed to move converts to the next normative transformation, from conversion to Christian perfection (entire sanctification). Wesley had even constructed different groups to accommodate different stages in the process, and to encourage adherents to move to the next step. All members, converted or not, were assigned to a weekly class that was designed to move the awakened through the conversion process. All who were converted were to be members of the band, designed to move believers through entire sanctification. Finally, the entirely sanctified attended the select society to encourage maintenance of that state and prepare for the final transformation, when the perfected believer became glorified upon their death.

Framework of Puritan Literature

With Turner’s understanding of ritual transformation, a theoretic framework is provided for the autobiographies in *The Arminian Magazine*. But another important historical framework and precedent

merits examination as well. Early written Methodist testimonies did not simply record the re-enactment of a set of experiential milestones established by Methodist teaching. They also were an outgrowth of an already well-established English literary tradition of written testimonies, the published testimonies of Puritans. Until the rise of Puritanism, written testimonies were not very common. The soteriology and ecclesiology of Puritanism transformed the purpose of the written testimony in the mid-seventeenth century.

Puritan soteriology led believers to carefully search their experience for marks of the new birth. The assurance of their salvation was proportional to the sum total of evidence that they were one of the elect. The experience of deep (and generally, quite lengthy) conviction, coupled with an experience of faith, was an excellent start in accumulating evidence that one was elect. Marks of the new birth had to be evident for a strong hope that conversion had occurred. To see how this was carried out in practice, it is useful to review the testimonies that Vavasor Powell published in 1652 from sixty-one of his parishioners.³ Each testimony provided marks of the new birth which the subject had experienced, often in the form of a numbered list, usually of about six or eight marks.

These testimonies were originally given, as Powell's preface explained, not so much to provide positive examples of spiritual experiences, but in order to properly form a church. Powell described meetings, called "days of humiliation," when potential church members discussed how to properly constitute themselves into a church. The participants needed to be convinced of each other's faith, by determining who had the marks of a believer.

The pilgrimage described in Powell's testimonies, like the narratives in *The Arminian Magazine*, were quite formulaic. The beginning of spiritual transformation in Puritan experiences was quite similar to that of Methodist experiences, awakening and conviction. The emotional and even physical intensity of the conviction of Puritans in the seventeenth century rivaled the conviction of Methodists more than a century later. The next stage for Puritans was central to their religious experience, yet problematic due to their Calvinist and Anglican heritages. Not only were

³*Spirituell Experiences, of Sundry Beleevers, Held Forth By Them at Severall Solemne Meetings, and Conferences to That End, With the Recommendation of the Sound Spiritual, and Savoury Worth of Them, to the Sober and Spirituall Reader* (London: Printed by Robert Ibbitson, 1652).

Puritan seekers unclear as to whether they could receive faith from God, they were often unclear as to whether they had actually received faith. The passive term *receive* faith rather than *exercise* faith is used not only because even the elect cannot have faith until God chooses, but because Anglicanism itself saw faith as a gift from God rather than a choice to be made by a seeker. Clear statements of a moment of believing and the resulting conversion are largely absent from Powell's *Spiritual Experiences*.

In regard to spiritual transformation, the Puritans can be seen as a middle stage from traditional Anglicanism to Methodism. In the seventeenth century, spiritual transformation was problematic for both traditional Anglicans and Puritans because of the issue of assurance. In Anglicanism, one hopefully was raised in the church and spent one's entire life exercising the means of grace until this holiness was achieved, thus providing assurance of genuine salvation. This left little likelihood of dramatic conversions, or at least of sudden conversions. Alternatively, Puritans experienced ordinances before conversion, not so much as means of grace, but as marks of a believer. To the Puritans, any perception that the ordinances were fruitful before conversion would mean that God was not sovereign. Conviction had a very clearly-defined beginning in Puritanism, setting the stage for more sharply-defined stages of transformation than eighteenth-century Anglicanism. Faith often occurred well before one's final illness, due to the high motivation to discover that one truly was elect, and due to the belief that faith was the sole means of salvation. This allowed for a definite stage of assurance which was more sharply distinguished from faith than in traditional Anglicanism.

That Wesley, living in the wake of these traditions, would struggle for years with assurance is no surprise. However, Wesley's resolution of the issue of assurance and other faith development issues provided for even more clearly distinguished stages, as well as another analogous transformation, entire sanctification. Like the Puritans, faith came before a holy life, although the means of grace during repentance were viewed far more positively by the Methodists than by the Puritans. However, for Methodists, holiness merely began with the first transformation of the new birth, while a second transformation provided the kind of holiness that traditional Anglicans saw as necessary for assurance. There was less confusion between faith and assurance in Methodism. Faith was not merely a conscious human choice for Methodists, but more so than it was

for the Puritans or traditional Anglicans. Assurance, on the other hand, was God giving the witness of his Spirit to the person already consciously believing.

The Preliminaries of Awakening and Conviction

The experience of conviction was so important that it took the form of a crisis. As such, it could be actively sought as an experience quite uncomfortable, yet required for the salvation seekers desperately yearned for. John Pawson described his dismay, knowing that he was without God, yet remaining “dull and unaffected.” He continually prayed that God would remove his “heart of stone” and give him a “heart of flesh.” While he lacked this sorrow for sin, he was apparently thoroughly grieved about not having it. “I cried day and night unto him, that he would give me a broken and contrite heart, and it was not long ere he inclined his ear”—an odd description of someone with a “heart of stone!” Accepting the teachings of Methodism meant tremendous pressure to experience the requisite transformations, including the necessary emotional states, such as the sorrow and pain of conviction.⁴

John Pawson received conviction in a service where he felt God’s power coming on him and many others “mightily.”

All of a sudden my heart was like melting wax, my soul was distressed above measure. I cried aloud with an exceeding bitter cry; the trouble and anguish of Spirit that I laboured under far exceeding all description. The arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in my flesh, and the poison of them drank up my spirits; yet in the height of my distress I could bless the Lord, that he had granted me that which I had so long sought for.⁵

Like Pawson, Thomas Olivers would seek to be awakened, and in doing so would first experience what would otherwise appear to be full-fledged conviction. Olivers wrote:

I thought, I live a most wretched life! If I do not repent and forsake my sins, I shall certainly be damned. I wish I could repent and forsake them. If I could but HATE them, as well as I LOVE them, I should THEN be able to lay them aside, but

⁴John Pawson, “A Short Account of John Pawson: In a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley,” *The Arminian Magazine* 2, no. 1 (January 1779): 30-31.

⁵*Ibid.*, 31.

till then I despair of doing it. For I have always gone to church; I have frequently prayed and resolved against my evil practices; and yet I cannot leave them.⁶

Olivers described his distress. “[I] wept bitterly over what I read or heard; for I saw very clearly that if I had died at that time, I should certainly have gone to hell.” Again he resolved to leave off sins, but kept returning to them. Still, in Olivers’ assessment, this was not being awakened!⁷ Olivers then heard Whitefield preach on Zech. 3:2, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?” This would be the experience he described as his awakening.

When the sermon began, I was certainly a dreadful enemy to God, and to all that is good; and one of the most profligate and abandoned young men living; but by the time it was ended, I was become a NEW CREATURE: for in the first place, I was DEEPLY CONVINCED of the great goodness of God towards me all my life; particularly, in that he had given his son to die for me. I had also a far clearer view of all my sins; particularly my base ingratitude towards him.

Following this experience, Olivers wept constantly for days.⁸

Thomas Rankin wrote of the ups and downs of his conviction experience. He resolved to fully dedicate himself to the Lord in receiving communion. Rankin was deeply moved for weeks, focusing on eternity, loving God’s word, prayer, and talking about God’s ways “by night and by day.” This condition lasted several months, while he was “drawn by love, and allured by the goodness of God my savior.” He heard Whitefield preach, and suddenly was left “dark,” his hope, joys gone. Rankin could not see any direct cause for this darkness, which lasted over six months, when the time for receiving communion approached. Weeks before he was “filled with horror.” His temptations grew stronger, and his sins since last partaking made him think he “had trampled upon the blood of the cross and crucified the Son of God afresh, and that now, for me, there remained no more sacrifice for sin. My soul was now all storm and tempest.” While partaking, Rankin felt Satan suggest that “Christ’s blood was

⁶Thomas Olivers, “An Account of the Life of Thomas Olivers,” *The Arminian Magazine* 2, no. 2 (February 1779): 79-80.

⁷Ibid., 80-81.

⁸Ibid., 81-83.

spilt for me in vain." This experience, which made his distress and temptations much heavier, was described by Rankin as his conviction of sin.⁹ So the question remains, what distinguished the distress that certainly would *appear* to be conviction with the distress following this event that actually *was*, in Rankin's own assessment, conviction?

Rankin wrote, "I now fought for salvation from the ground of my heart. . . . I wept and prayed, and searched the word of God, as one digging for hidden treasure." Only unbelief hindered Rankin experiencing peace. "I wrestled with God in prayer night and day. My whole time was spent in seeking. Two days before finally finding his peace, Rankin was greatly troubled by thoughts of God's wrath. He "felt a taste of that misery that the damned in hell feel. . . . All the sins that ever I had committed, appeared as nothing when compared to my grieving the Spirit of God, and quenching that light and those drawings of divine of love." As the crisis built, Rankin was tempted to suicide.

A little later Rankin "seemingly fell into a trance," dreaming that he was dying and that his soul was leaving his body. Rankin dreaded hell, but he was now content to go there if God's glory demanded it. Believing that God's justice did in fact require damnation, he cried, "Thy will be done." Using Rankin's own ambiguous terminology, he "thought" he saw his bed surrounded by "fiends of most horrible aspects, ready to convey my soul to eternal flames. They seemed to look upon me with a hellish triumph, which words cannot describe." Rankin had "such a view" of eternity, the soul's mortality and God's justice and holiness that he "sunk deeper into despair." As it seemed his soul was about to go, he cried out, "O! where is the sinner's friend? Where is the Lord Jesus Christ?" The heavens seemed to open and Jesus appeared. Rankin looked at Jesus for some time, and then noticed the demons were gone. His despair left, and he felt confidence and praised God all day. Yet this was not quite the peace he longed for. While his "load" was gone, Rankin still had no sense of pardon. The load would return two days later, finally precipitating his deliverance.¹⁰

Conviction, then, was not merely distress over sins, at least to some authors. Both Olivers and Rankin experienced their distress in conjunc-

⁹Thomas Rankin, "A Short Account of Thomas Rankin," *The Arminian Magazine* 2, no. 4 (April 1779): 185-186.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 186-189.

tion, ultimately, with contact with Whitefield rather than with Wesley. However, Pawson's conviction was in response to lengthy exposure to Methodist teaching, presumably from a variety of sources. What distinguished preliminary distress (being awakened) from conviction for Pawson seemed to be merely the level of sorrow over sin. He sought for, and received, a state of mind so emotionally intense that his whole life centered on a specific kind of deliverance from that very state. For Olivers, the distinguishing characteristic of the distress he sought was the accompanying ability to leave off his sins.

Rankin's ups and downs reveal a dual concern, to experience an awareness of his sinful and damned state, implied by the vision he experienced, and to have a "load" that would only be lifted upon receiving pardon. Rankin believed his conviction began when his "hopes and joys" vanished upon hearing Whitefield preach. For him, conviction required an awakening that he was truly lost and without hope until he received pardon, and such a realization was accompanied by severe emotional distress. Likely Pawson's point of praying for a "heart of flesh" was that his emotional crisis had to reflect much more than a mere intellectual assent to his sinfulness and damned state apart of the gift of God's forgiveness. Pawson's awakening needed to include an awareness so pervasive that he left off his sins and used the means of grace while he sought his deliverance. Olivers' experience could be interpreted similarly, that real awareness of one's sinful and damned state required abandonment of those sins. All three experiences fit well with Wesley's understanding of repentance as a kind of faith, needing to be accompanied by "works meet for repentance."

Conviction of sin could be painful, but the very intensity of the sorrow generally served the purposes of the transformational process. Indeed, a climax of despair often proved to be the threshold to the transformation of new birth. John Haime found no pleasure in anything, eating, drinking, working or sleeping. Neither he nor those who knew him understood what was the matter with him. He could get no rest day or night. Haime was afraid to go to bed lest the devil should take him during the night. He feared to shut his eyes lest he "should awake in hell," and dreamt of demons in his room ready to take him, or of appearing at the final judgment, or being left with the wicked on earth as it was consumed with fire. Although on the verge of suicide, Haime felt that his anguish, as great as it was, was not as bad as those in hell. Sarah Ryan expressed a

common sentiment for the awakened and despairing sinner. "What horrors, what fears, what dread! I should have been glad to be any thing but a human creature. The Spirit drove me one way, my passions another." Ryan would endure this distress for seven years.¹¹

It is not surprising that some Methodist seekers endured the distress of conviction for months. The length of time in conviction was still less than the years common in Puritan testimonies, particularly in the iconic experience of John Bunyan in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. While Wesley's view of repentance and faith was not as passive as the classic Calvinism of his Puritan predecessors, he did not see either repentance or faith as simple decisions of the will that could be made anytime at the seekers own choosing, as Charles Finney, for example, would later suggest.¹²

The Limen of Justifying Faith

John Wesley taught that, while repentance was a *sina qua non* of salvation, faith was the only *meritorious cause* of salvation. While he had abandoned the Carolinian Divines' teaching that justifying faith came as a possible hope near or upon one's death, Wesley's view of faith was not simply a passive waiting on God for faith. Wesley's synergism, God and believer working together, particularly came into play. Believing would seem to be a human choice, but Wesley also saw belief as an act of God. Wesley believed humanity was actually without any natural capacity to respond to God. The balance to this Western, even Calvinist, view of humanity was the belief in God enabling a response, part of Wesley's understanding of prevenient grace, later termed "gracious ability."¹³ When this would be granted was a bit mysterious, and proved difficult to predict or categorize. This, of course, contributed to the sense of awe in the transformational experience, yet it would also leave the vital moment in the synthesis easily subject to re-interpretations.

¹¹John Haime, "A Short Account of Mr. John Haime," *The Arminian Magazine* 3, no. 5 (May 1780): 209, and Sarah Ryan, "Account of Mrs. Sarah Ryan," *The Arminian Magazine* 2, no. 6 (June 1779): 298.

¹²Charles Grandison Finney, *Lectures on Systematic Theology* (New York: G. H. Doran, 1878), 338-346.

¹³*The History of American Methodism*, ed. Edmond Burke (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), 1: 355.

Commonly, the moment of faith for justification would occur in response to a scripture verse “applied” to the mind of the subject “with power.” Other phenomena commonly ushering in faith included vivid dreams, voices, and “visions” of heaven and/or hell, of the judgment, or of Jesus. When the moment of faith occurred, it often meant a radical reversal of emotions. Jaco reported that on the way to an afternoon service, the verse “Jesus Christ died for the vilest of sinners” was “strongly suggested” to his mind. He concluded that he was that vilest sinner, and “In that moment it seemed to me as though a new Creation had taken place.” All guilt and fear disappeared and his soul was filled with “Light and Love.” Jaco was then as certain of his acceptance as of his own existence. Atlay wrote of spending most of his nights in prayer, finally reporting, “I felt those Words applied to my soul with inexpressible Power, ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed thee.’” Atlay now understood redemption and was finally unable to doubt that he himself was redeemed.¹⁴

Following Rankin’s ups and downs in his search for pardon, he finally had an experience sufficiently definite and intense to bring about the desired change. He cried out, “I have wrestled long, and have prevailed; O! let me now prevail. Lord, let it be now!” With those words, God’s work quite suddenly occurred. “In the twinkling of an eye, the mighty power of God overwhelmed me, and that word came with power, And he blessed him there!” The intensity of this experience superseded his previous abortive attempts to be saved. “I was so overwhelmed with the love of God that I thought I should have died. O! what a change did I feel! My wounded spirit was healed, my darkness turned into day, and my hell into heaven. I was so swallowed up in the love of God all that day, and for many days and nights following, that the desire of food and sleep departed from me.” It would take Rankin two months to physically recover.¹⁵

After seeking fervently for the distress of conviction, then in a moment being entirely transformed, one might assume that, while the new Methodist believers might still have struggles, at least they were not likely to doubt their acceptance by God anytime soon. In fact, quite com-

¹⁴Peter Jaco, “A Short Account of Mr. Jaco: Written by Himself in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Wesley,” 1:11 (Nov. 1778): 543, and John Atlay, “A Short Account of Mr. John Atlay in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley,” *The Arminian Magazine* 1:12 (Dec. 1778): 577.

¹⁵Rankin, 189.

monly the new convert, no matter how dramatic their conversion, would doubt their experience within days or even hours. Even Pawson would experience such a setback. Fortunately, as was often the case, this confusion was quickly resolved. After being entirely happy the first three weeks following new birth, Atlay lost all that he had gained when someone he respected questioned his experience. Falling into despair, he was tempted to take his own life so he would not be a “stumbling block” to others. However, some weeks later, although Atlay could not see anyone there, he distinctly heard a voice say, “Be not faithless, but believing.” The voice then said, “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee.” Atlay promptly knelt in the grass and thanked God. In the nineteen ensuing years, his fear and doubt never returned.¹⁶

Sometimes the loss of one’s experience happened some time later. Jaco was converted at seventeen, but lost his experience two years later, and would not recover his peace for another two years. In one of the most unusual accounts, John Haime, a soldier as well as a Methodist preacher, would lose his experience when, he would later conclude, he had not been sufficiently watchful and prayerful, and gave in to the temptation to purchase books on a Sunday. Haime lost his peace, yet continued in ministry, despite suffering temptations to blaspheme and extreme physical reactions to his continuous distress. Nothing Haime did would restore his peace, yet people continued to be converted in his ministry. Twenty years later, Haime suddenly felt his peace return, but he provided no explanation for this restoration.¹⁷

Sarah Ryan struggled for faith repeatedly, first for the new birth, and then for entire sanctification. Her difficulties with faith went back to her childhood when she had found an old book on faith. She enjoyed reading the book, but felt she still did not understand faith. After being deeply touched by hearing Whitfield preach, and receiving some guidance from a member of Wesley’s society, Ryan would live with a Calvinist family as a domestic servant. She adopted their understanding of faith, and regarded herself as a believer, yet she had “all but the power of faith,” entering a repeating cycle of sinning and repenting, “having great desires to be a Christian, yet no power.” Nine years later, faced with a severe temptation which she successfully rejected and feeling the greatest hatred for every

¹⁶Atlay, 577.

¹⁷Jaco, 543; John Haime (May 1780): 216-217, (June 1780): 256.

sin, Ryan finally began to experience what she described as repentance. Hearing Wesley preach, she wrote, "Something said in my heart, 'This is the truth I shall live and die by.'" When the service began, Ryan saw Jesus with the crown of thorns, and he asked her to feel his nail prints. Ryan's "soul was melted down before him," and she joined the society the next week. Ryan joined a class and was sure that she had faith, and spoke of herself as a believer.¹⁸

After talking at length with someone else, Ryan was urged to pray to know her sins were forgiven, for her current faith was "in vain." This prayer seemed presumptuous to her, but she became doubtful, finally accepting that seekers needed to know that their sins were forgiven. For a time Ryan sought this assurance, but instead she "grew cold and dead as ever." In response to a sermon, Ryan wrote, "as I stood in a careless manner, a thought passed through my mind, 'O that I may have a blessing!' It was immediately answered in me, 'Thou shalt have a blessing.' In the same moment I felt my soul all desire, and it was said to me, Ask, and thou shalt receive: upon which clasping my hands on my breast, I said, 'I will ask, and I shall receive.'" However, it never seemed that easy for Ryan.

But my body was so weak, I could hardly stand, while I was enabled to say, from my inmost soul, "My soul is on thy promise cast; The promise is for me!" And all the way, as I went up with much difficulty to the table, I was still saying, "For me, Lord; for me." When I came up, my strength being quite gone, I threw my body across the rails, and, being overwhelmed with the power of God, was utterly regardless of outward things. Mr. Wesley offered me the bread, but I was not able to take it; so he passed by me, and gave it me when he came back. When he spoke those words, "The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ," they pierced my heart, and filled my soul with love to him. Immediately I said, "This is the Faith by which the martyrs went to the flames." I felt a change through my whole soul, and longed to be alone. As soon as I got home, I fell on my knees, and cried, "Lord, are my sins forgiven?" I was answered, There is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. But this did not satisfy.¹⁹

¹⁸Ryan, 297-300.

¹⁹Ibid., 300-301.

This experience was seen by Ryan as her genuine conversion, yet she would struggle greatly to have a proper witness since it “did not satisfy.” Ryan hoped to receive this witness at communion the next Sunday. For the next three weeks she expected this to happen at “every means of grace.” At class with her sister, who was also “in great distress,” Ryan felt her sister’s burden placed upon her own soul “in an inexpressible manner.” She continued:

While I was exhorting her to believe, the power of God overwhelmed my soul, so that I fell back in my chair, and my eyesight was taken from me; but in the same moment the Lord Jesus appeared to my inward sight, and I cried out three times, “O the beauty of the lovely Jesus. Behold him in his vesture dipt in blood!” A little after, my leader asked me, “Do you now believe?” I faintly answered, “Yes.”²⁰

Yet this was still insufficient! “But I felt something of a doubt still, and wanted a stronger witness. The next morning these words were applied with power, ‘Thy sins are cast as a stone into the deep waters.’ I answered, ‘Now I do believe. Now I know my sins are ‘forgiven me.’” Her joy lasted six weeks, “full of light, happiness, and heaven.” Finally, she was secure in her pardon. Her experience of entire sanctification would be another matter.²¹

A review of Ryan’s experience thus far is illustrative. Ryan had joined the society convinced that she had faith. Being told that her faith was “in vain,” she was instructed to pray to know that her sins were forgiven, which she felt was presumption. Thus, Ryan *believed* she *believed*, but she had to be persuaded that she must *believe* that she was *forgiven*. In the standard terminology of Wesley, the first is justifying faith, the second is the witness to justification.

Next, seemingly on a whim, it occurred to Ryan that she could have the blessing of assurance, and suddenly she felt God telling her that she would receive it. She accepted this promise, and feeling physically weak as she went to receive communion directly from Wesley, Ryan collapsed onto the communion rails. Despite feeling a powerful change, she still felt that it was insufficient. Ryan then received her sister’s “burden,” became temporarily blind, but had an “inward” vision, yet this, too, proved insuf-

²⁰Ibid., 302.

²¹Ibid., 302.

ficient. The next morning a verse was “applied with power,” and she finally accepted this as the assurance she had so earnestly sought for.

Ryan’s struggle was not so much to have the *faith that transforms*, but to then have the *faith that one has been transformed*. A recurring problem for these authors is that, having sought, or even having exercised faith for conviction, conversion or heart purity, they often found it much harder to be persuaded that, having fulfilled the human requirements, God had really done his part. For example, believing Christ died for your sins is one thing; being sure he has already forgiven you and that you are already a new creature is quite another.

The framework of Turner’s ritual transformation allows an interpretation of Ryan’s experience that perhaps makes her appear less neurotic, and helps one see why Wesley included her narrative as one of the first autobiographies he published in his magazine. For the transformational process to work in a voluntary association like Methodism, the supernatural and abstract must be evident in the physical and concrete. Has God empowered a seeker to be truly repentant? Seekers could only be sure if they were powerfully overwhelmed by their sinfulness and were empowered to leave off their sins. Such direct cognitive, emotional, and especially behavioral proof functioned as well for a religious seeker as a physical endurance test that left visible scars on a boy ritually transformed into a man.

Similarly, faith for the new birth was more powerful if it was not seen as mere human choice. This may be a clue as to why later generations of Methodists began to have less dramatic transformations. Early Methodists saw faith as, in part, a gift from God, often received through powerful “application” of a verse of scripture or a hymn, or through a dream, vision or disembodied voice. This mode of transmission provided the additional concreteness or physicality so helpful in making the “rite” of faith truly transformational.

The final problem was the witness to an experience, assurance. If there was any weakness earlier in the transformational process, it would show up here. To some extent, this assurance was the accumulation of the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral evidence accumulated thus far in the process. Even if what had happened to this point had been solid, new problems could arise. The ongoing support of the community was vital, as evidenced in Ryan’s experience.

The Second Limen, Entire Sanctification

Rankin's search for and experience of entire sanctification was more complicated. He became convinced of original sin "and felt the absolute necessity of being renewed in the image of God." The "pressure" from this realization seemed like it would kill him. Hearing Wesley preach on "God laid the ax to the root of the trees," Ryan saw his heart in such negative detail that it "entirely frightened" him. This increased as Wesley read to the congregation of what God was doing for many in London. Rankin's sense of inbred sin was so strong that he was near to giving up his confidence in being pardoned and born again. For months, Rankin felt "polluted and abominable." Rankin was now a preacher for Wesley, and felt that he had to give up preaching, but doing so made his distress worse, so he began preaching again.²²

Rankin talked with some friends about heart purity, and then sang and prayed. "While I was in prayer, and repeating these words, 'Are we not the purchase of thy dear Son's blood! Then, Lord, let us be redeemed from all iniquity!' All at once I was overpowered with the love of God. My mouth was stopped; I could pray no more. O, what a heaven of sweetness did I feel in my soul." Asked whether he thought God had given him the blessing, Rankin replied that he knew that he had never felt so close to God. "I found my heart entirely free, and my spirit was lightened of its load." Several people noticed his changed appearance, and asked what God had "wrought" in his soul. Afraid to say that God had purified his heart; Rankin told them he had "fresh communion" with God, such as he thought impossible in this life. Once again, an author found it harder, at first, to be completely sure that the transformation had actually occurred than to actually experience the transformation. Rankin continued:

I did, with Enoch, walk with God! thy conversation was indeed in heavenly places! My life was hid with Christ in God; and my affections were wholly set on things above. I felt such deep communion with Jesus that I was swallowed up in him. I saw God in all things; I enjoyed God in all things. The flame of divine love ascended every moment, from the altar of my heart, pure as the streams of paradise!²³

²²Rankin, 193-194.

²³Ibid., 194-195.

Two years later Rankin lost the witness to his entire sanctification, although it is unclear whether, in his understanding of events, Rankin actually ceased to be, in fact, entirely sanctified. Rankin's loss occurred when some people opposed the doctrine of Christian holiness and he became resentful, "although I did not lose a sense of the presence of God, yet I lost that constant witness of Christ being all in all to me." Two years later, Rankin's witness of heart purity would return briefly at the Methodist conference in Bristol. A year later, at the conference in Manchester, Rankin became very ill, "violently tempted of the devil," but then recovered his witness permanently.²⁴

It is Ryan's search for entire sanctification, including so many and such dramatic assurances that proved insufficient, that might cause modern readers to think her truly neurotic. Her search for entire sanctification is distinct in a number of ways. Her case reverses what she had experienced in her search for pardon, and what many had experienced in their search for either one. Here Ryan struggles with several ups and downs, several abortive attempts to be actually transformed rather than having more of a struggle to confirm that it had actually occurred. Also, Ryan's experience is notable for the sheer number of abortive attempts. No less than six apparent deliverances from distress were recorded before Ryan finally had the deliverance she sought.

- 1 She began the process with a dream about her inbred sin, but she was also once again doubting whether she had "any faith at all." As this second transformation process began, however, Ryan's struggles over the forgiveness of sin, as far as the written narrative indicates, were over. Her first experience of relief was at the communion rails at Easter, holding God to his promises for six weeks during which she was free of temptation.
2. Ryan's peace was disrupted by her husband's call for her to join him, but when she finally decided her spiritual health demanded that she refuse him and wrote him so, her joy returned.
3. Soon Ryan once again faced many temptations and condemnations. S. C. [a spiritual mentor of Ryan] and God's call to "Go ye unto perfection" encouraged Ryan that she would be delivered, which allowed her only two days of happiness.

²⁴Ibid., 195.

4. As she entered into her fourth round, she now felt "enmity" against S. C., except Ryan felt God tell her that her enmity was actually against him. As Ryan prayed in response, she felt something taken out of her, followed by her prayers naturally turning from request for deliverance to thanks for being delivered. Again her spiritual life was "without hindrance."
5. Ryan is told she should not have been attending the Saturday meetings as she was not spiritually strong enough, and when Ryan returned she was persuaded that she was deceived about having been delivered. However, as Ryan had prayed for, S. C. led out in prayer for her, and Ryan felt greatly comforted.
6. This time Ryan's comfort came with the conviction that she still had inbred sin. She broke out into a cold sweat, trembled, and fell out of her chair, experiencing a vision of Jesus presenting her to God. Finally, Ryan was stabilized in her experience of heart purity.

In her first distress, Ryan was comforted by trusting God's promises, and in her second distress she was relieved when she put her experience with God ahead of her affection for and duty to her husband. In the third round, Ryan found not only temptation, but condemnation, clarifying that the work was not done. Her relief was not, upon a careful reading, actually a deliverance, but merely an encouragement. Her fourth distress was the presence of a specific evil temper, enmity against a fellow believer, or rather, against God. Ryan had feelings indicating actual removal of the problem, but in her fifth distress she is persuaded otherwise. Actually, her fifth distress, and sixth, were not actually distress, but relatively calm resumptions of the search for entire sanctification after a rest. Ryan received what is clearly only an encouragement that her search would be fruitful before her final and sixth effort. By this time she believed God's promises, had been delivered from her affection to her husband and enmity against her friend and against God. She now, without temptations or negative affections/emotions, had her experience finally confirmed by being physically overwhelmed and seeing a "vision" of Jesus presenting her holy to God.

Once again, this process is not as convoluted or neurotic as an initial and superficial reading might indicate. These ups and downs dealt with legitimate problems in the ritual transformation process, and were dealt

with them, apparently, quite effectively. Ryan's lengthy process confirmed her confidence in God to do the work, detected and eliminated the "idolatrous affection" for her husband and her sublimated anger, and placed her thoroughly within the intimate bonds of her Methodist society by forcing her to reject the sufficiency of her private cleansing (without anger!) for a public cleansing among her Methodist peers and mentors. Such a pattern may not fit well with the "short method" of Phoebe Palmer, which Palmer developed in part from the testimony of a contemporary of Ryan's, Hester Anne Rogers, yet it provided a reasonable and effective, if somewhat circuitous, path through Wesley's *ordo salutis*.

John Wesley was a true Enlightenment pastor and evangelist. In attempting to restore "primitive Christianity," Wesley would leave weave his *ordo salutis*, so detailed and well constructed, yet so frequently vague and flexible for a surprisingly wide range of experiences. Spiritual experimentation and pragmatism required this very flexibility on the part of Wesley and the early Methodists. It was a balance between truly transformational religion (internally and externally), and reasonable religion. This required the foundational theory in the form of a detailed soteriology, a practical rubric for actual experience in reference to frames of mind and behaviors of seekers, and finally, a commitment to self-examination, often through the literacy of reading and especially of writing spiritual journals and autobiographies.

If the "three-legged stool" of the Carolinian Divines is Scripture, tradition and reason, then perhaps the above is the early Methodist three-legged stool of transformation. This approach allowed for just as much striving, just as many up and downs in seeking transformation, and then the assurance that transformation has occurred. It also promoted more dramatic transformations and perhaps more certainty in the post-liminal stages . . . eventually.

THE THEOLOGY OF CHARLES WESLEY'S HYMNS

by

John R. Tyson

Charles Wesley is well remembered as a composer of religious verse. He was the “poet laureate” of Methodism, whose hymns gave the movement both a sound track and a public and congregational voice.¹ More than 400 of Charles’ rousing hymns continue to adorn Christian worship today. But there has been some debate about Charles Wesley’s standing as a Methodist theologian. Generally, Charles has been overlooked as a formulator of Methodist theology.

J. Ernest Rattenbury, who gave Charles Wesley’s theology its first sustained, original treatment, admitted that “in the conventional use of the term, he was not a formal theologian. He cannot be classed as of the same caliber as Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Calvin or Schleiermacher.”² Rattenbury rightly argues that to diminish Charles Wesley’s role as a theologian on this basis, however, is to take the term “theologian” too narrowly. Charles was indeed a theologian who created, crafted, and communicated theological doctrine in a more popular medium than formal theologians do. In this regard, Rattenbury considers Charles Wesley to be an “experimental theologian” who wrote theology in the context and medium of

¹See, for example, John R. Tyson, *Assist Me To Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), ch. 16, “Poet Laureate.”

²J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley’s Hymns* (London: Epworth Press, 1941), 85.

Christian experience. Hence, "the experimental theologian is not to be classed with Aquinas, Calvin, or Butler, but on the experimental side, with Paul, Augustine, and Luther. . . ."³

In a more recent article, Thomas Langford concludes that Charles Wesley was a theologian in the general sense: ". . . anyone who thinks, sings, paints, or dances about god is a theologian; namely, every expression about God, every interpretation of Divine presence possesses implicit and inescapable theological beliefs and commitments."⁴ Langford views Charles Wesley as a faithful communicator of Methodist doctrine, but does not see him as a "creative theologian." He wrote: "In this sense Charles Wesley is important not because he added new thoughts or insights to theological discourse, but because he creatively provided for the Methodist revival a theological character suited to its self-understanding. . . .that is, he kept theology immediately and ineluctibly related to the worship and service of God."⁵

Teresa Berger opines the opposite point of view, suggesting that Charles Wesley *was* a creative theologian, and she demonstrates that Charles Wesley's hymns are theological statements in the form of first-order, doxological language. In Berger's view, Charles Wesley's theology and his role as a theologian are best viewed from the standpoint of theology as doxology.⁶ This means, in part, that theological affirmations (made in the form of acts of praise) *to* God are every bit as effective and theologically significant as are those more studied theological statements *about* God. This is a helpful vantage point from which to view Charles Wesley's theological contribution, for it is clear that his hymns both make theological assertions *about God* and make statements *to* God.

That the Wesleys were willing to entrust their theological reformation to such mundane media as sermons (chiefly John's) and hymns (chiefly Charles's), tells us something important about the intention of

³Ibid., 87.

⁴Thomas Langford, "Charles Wesley as Theologian," S. T. Kimbrough, editor, *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian* (Nashville: Abingdon/Kingswood Books, 1991), 98-99.

⁵Ibid., 104.

⁶Teresa Berger, *Theology in Hymns? A Study of the Relationship of Doxology and Theology According to a Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists (1780)* (Nashville: Abingdon/Kingswood Books, 1995), "Definition of the Theme," 15-31.

these men. They were populists. Their target audience was a group of people who would not find themselves reading something like Thomas Aquinas' *Summa*, Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* or Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology*. Indeed, some people in the Wesleys' target audience could not read at all; a goodly percentage of them never darkened the door of a church until they became Methodists. Hence, when John Wesley's famous "Preface" to the standard 1780 Methodist Hymn Book described it "a little body of experimental and practical divinity," John was commenting not only on the order which he had imposed upon the presentation of his brother's hymns, but was also describing the contents of the book itself.⁷

4. Such a hymn-book you have before you. It is not so large as to be either cumbersome or expensive. And it is large enough to contain such a variety of hymns as will not soon be worn threadbare. It is large enough to contain all the important truths of our most holy religion, whether speculative or practical; yea, to illustrate them all, and to prove them both by Scripture and reason. And this is done in regular order. The hymns are not carelessly jumbled together, but [are] carefully arranged under proper heads, according to the experience of real Christians. So that this book is in effect a little body of experimental and practical divinity.

For John Wesley to describe this hymn book as "a little body of experimental and practical divinity" was to recognize the status of hymns as theological expressions. To say that Charles Wesley was interested in "practical and experimental divinity" is to say that he was concerned for Christian theology as it was lived and experienced. Today we would call him a theologian of *praxis*, but these hymns are loaded with theology. They speak very concretely *about God*, even as they speak *to God*; they are without question *theology in hymns*. In this same sense, Ted Campbell described Charles Wesley as a "Theologos" of both historic Christian teachings and the Wesleyan "way of salvation."⁸

⁷Franz Hildebrandt & Oliver Beckerlegge, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, bicentennial edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), Vol. VII, 74-75.

⁸Ted Campbell, "Charles Wesley, *Theologos*," in Kenneth G. C. Newport and Ted A. Campbell, eds., *Charles Wesley Life, Literature, and Legacy* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2007), 264-78.

Charles Wesley's hymns were written as vital expressions of Christian experience. As such, they were able to teach basic Christian theology to uneducated or under-educated people. It is clear from his "Preface" to the 1780 Methodist Hymn Book that John Wesley viewed the hymn books as little handbooks of theology, "of experimental and practical divinity." The word "experimental" focuses our attention on the lived and experiential dimension of hymns as theology. The term "practical" simply serves to intensify the emphasis; it draws our attention to Christian practice as a matrix for doing theology.

A few of Charles' hymnals will pass for formal theology; among these are his two hymnals entitled *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love* (1741, 1742), which defined Wesleyan-Arminian soteriology over-and-against strict Calvinism. His *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (1745) was written in the matrix of the "stillness controversy" which saw Methodists (under the influence of Moravian quietists) begin to doubt the importance of the Lord's Supper and other Anglican "means of grace."⁹ *Hymns on the Trinity* (1768) was composed to combat Deism—which Charles termed "modern Arianism"—and followed the theological format established in a work by Rev. W. Jones and *The Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity Proved by Above a Hundred Short and Clear Arguments Expressed in the Terms of Holy Scripture, Compacted in a Manner Entirely New* (1754); hence, Wesley's *Hymns on the Trinity* was conceived (in part) as an exercise in Christian Apologetics.¹⁰

Charles' small occasional hymn books for the Christian festivals, like *Hymns on Our Lord's Resurrection*, *Hymns for Our Lord's Ascension*, *Hymns on Our Lord's Nativity* (all from 1746), had the effect of explaining and exploring the theological basis of Easter, Ascension Day, and Christmas. In many other instances, we find John Wesley using one of Charles's hymns to illustrate a theological doctrine or to give the issue at hand a further application.¹¹ John Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian*

⁹See John R. Tyson, ed., *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), "The Stillness Controversy," 260-287.

¹⁰See the "Advertisement" in George Osborn, ed., *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, 14 Vol. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office, 1870), VII:203-204.

¹¹See for example, Albert Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley: Sermons*, 3 Vol. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), I:245, I:290, I:312, I:351-52, I:459, I:482, I:498, I:545, I:589-91, II:80, II:122-24, II:255, II:346-47, II:361, II:365, II:369, II:372, II:412, II:430, II:433, II:447, II:469, II:548, II:554, II:599, III:22, III:27, III:94, III:95, III:171, III:190, III:274, III:413, III:559-63.

Perfection is one of the best examples of his sustained use of Charles's hymns as representative theological expressions.¹² I will consider some of the theological constants observable in Charles Wesley's hymns.

Scriptural Foundation

In the broad sense, all of Charles Wesley's hymns communicated basic Christian theology (in its Wesleyan mode). Underneath the fine phrasing of his words, a closer examination can trace Charles' studious regard for the Scripture and for the classical themes of Christian tradition. Few people have been as saturated with the Bible as the Wesleys were; and the Bible's words and phrases flowed from naturally in both sermon and song—as well as in the natural phraseology of their daily speech and private letters. But, as John Rattenbury wryly suggests, “a skillful man, if the Bible were lost, might extract it from Wesley's hymns.”¹³

Charles' hymns are mosaics of Bible words and phrases cemented together by a master craftsman. They also communicate the great writers of Christian history; here we may find a few words borrowed from St. Augustine, and there an echo of Martin Luther. In some instances, close scrutiny can detect Charles working from the text of the Greek New Testament. In other instances, he follows the Prayer Book version of the Scriptures with which he was so familiar from his daily use of the *Book of Common Prayer*.¹⁴

Over 5,000 of Charles' compositions are direct expositions of biblical passages. He called these *Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture* (1762), and that is exactly what they are, short poetical commentaries on selected Bible verses. These compositions reflect Charles' devotional study of the Bible over a fifteen year period of time, and they are no less a Bible commentary and sermon resource than John Wesley's more famous *Notes Upon the Old and New Testaments*. Some of Charles' poetical renditions of the Bible were more accurate than the King James Version of

¹²See Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, A.M., 14 Vol. (London: The Methodist Conference, 1872), XI:566-446.

¹³Rattenbury, *Evangelical Doctrines*, 48.

¹⁴See the classic work by Henry Bett, *The Hymns of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1920), for a thorough treatment of the resources applied in Charles Wesley's hymns. Also, Frank Baker, ed., *Representative Verse of Charles Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), “Introduction,” ix-lxi, and Tyson, *Charles Wesley: Reader*, 29-46.

this day. Looking at the famous “kenosis” passage in Philippians 2:7, Charles Wesley followed the Greek text instead of the translators of the KJV, because they avoided the scandalous phrase “he emptied” and wrote instead: “But he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.” Charles Wesley followed the bold phraseology of the NT Greek:¹⁵

He left His throne above,
 Emptied of all by love:
 Whom the heavens cannot contain,
 God, vouchsafed a worm to appear
 Poor, and vile, and abject here.

But even those Charles Wesley hymns which do not present themselves as explicit expositions of specific Scripture passages evidence Charles’ familiar hermeneutical pattern. Many of Charles’s hymns take their point of departure from a biblical scene or incident. For example, his famous Christmas hymn, “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” has its direct inception in the biblical text of Luke 2:9-14.¹⁶ Following the tradition laid down by the Protestant reformers, “Scripture interprets itself,” Charles Wesley simply used biblical words, phrases, and allusions—drawn from all over the Scriptures—to interpret the passage or theme under consideration. He explained and expounded one Bible passage or theme by weaving a tapestry of biblical words, phrases, and allusions.

To illustrate this approach, observe one verse of another familiar hymn, “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing.” Note the recollection of Acts 2:1, “We do hear them speaking in tongues those wonderful works of God,” which is set in the context of the first Pentecost. Charles Wesley experienced evangelical conversion on Whitsunday (Pentecost), May 21, 1738. That day became a monument to his personal Pentecost when (through conversion) the Holy Spirit visited him powerfully through faith and grace. The original title of this hymn, “On the Anniversary of One’s Conversion,” reminds us that it was written to commemorate the first anniversary of Charles Wesley’s conversion. Likewise, there may be an

¹⁵Osborn, *Poetical Works*, I:148.

¹⁶Osborn, *Poetical Works*, “Hymn for Christmas Day,” I:183. Charles’s original first line was altered to “Hark the herald angels sing” by his friend George Whitefield (1753). Wesley rebuked the alteration because the biblical text depicts the angels announcing the Saviour’s birth—not singing it.

allusion to Phil. 2:11, that “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Certainly one who has received Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit through conversion is one who confesses that “Jesus Christ is Lord.” And this is ample reason to praise God! The number “a thousand” in reference to the tongues of praise is said to have come from Peter Böhler’s suggestion that “for those that love the Lord, not even a thousand tongues would be enough to sing God’s praise.”

The “My” in “*My Great Redeemer’s Praise*” epitomizes Charles’ personalized approach to theology. Among the first words he wrote after his conversion were these:

And can it be, that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour’s blood?
Died He for *me*? —who caused His pain!
For *me*? —who Him to death pursued.
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God shouldst die for *me*?¹⁷

There is a persistent tendency throughout the hymns of Charles to personalize the gospel by using personal pronouns (“my,” “me”). It was likely, as Berger suggests, that the “for me” aspect of salvation was reinforced by Charles Wesley’s reading of Martin Luther’s *Galatians Commentary* in the days immediately preceding his conversion.¹⁸ It is not enough for a person to know that Jesus Christ died for the “sins of the world” (Jn. 3:16). For Charles Wesley, it is also crucial to know that Christ died “for me.” “*Redeemer*” is a common name for God in the Hebrew Testament, being especially prominent in Isaiah and Psalms. It is not used directly of Jesus in the NT, though it is directly implied in many passages, like Lk. 24:21 where it says that Jesus Christ is the one who came to “redeem” the people from their sins. By merging these two Testamental contexts, Charles’s verse identified Jesus Christ as the Messianic Redeemer promised in the Old Testament.

In “*The Glories of My God and King, the Triumphs of His Grace*” the words “*glories*” and “*triumphs*” seem to be an echo of Ex. 15:1-3, where Moses offers a hymn of thanksgiving after the children of Israel had passed over the Red Sea. Brought out of the house of bondage by the mighty hand of God, Moses’ words were: “I will sign unto the Lord, for

¹⁷Tyson, *Charles Wesley Reader*, 103, emphasis added.

¹⁸Berger, *Theology in Hymns?*, 115.

He hath *triumphed gloriously*. . . the Lord is a man of war." Charles Wesley sings, however, not of the triumphs of war, but of the triumphs of God's grace. "*Grace*" connotes God's undeserved favor, God's kindness towards us in Jesus Christ. Through salvation, God's grace sets the prisoner free from bondage to sin. Verse three, Charles' original verse nine, contains a theological pun: "Jesus, the name that charms our fears, / That bids our sorrows cease." "*Charms*" is derived from the Greek word for grace (*charis*) and Charles' pun points out that Jesus Christ "graces our fears away." Hence, in these two lines, Charles Wesley moved us from the old Exodus out of Egyptian bondage towards the new exodus out of sin and fear which Christians enjoy through faith in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, we have seen that a creative approach to Holy Scripture is one of the theological constants of Charles Wesley's hymns. These hymns are power-packed with biblical phrases, themes, and images. Because they so directly teach Bible, these same hymns also teach Christian theology (in the Wesleyan mode). Several other discernable constants emerge to comprise Charles Wesley's poetical hermeneutic.

Basic Bible Words

Charles Wesley's hymns are built around a few basic Bible words that he used to communicate the heart of his theology. Among these are "grace," "praise," "love," and "blood." These little words appear in almost every Charles Wesley hymn, and with good reason—with them Wesley can "tell" (or have us sing) his whole theology of redemption. "Blood" is Wesley's shorthand expression for the saving death of Jesus Christ and its saving significance for us.¹⁹ It is a vivid term which transports the mind's eye to Golgatha, and connects our salvation with the sacrificial connotations of the Cross. "Blood" is the central expression of Charles Wesley's theology of the cross. In Wesley's poetical approach to scripture, the "rock" of Exodus 17:6, became a reminder of Jesus' atoning blood; blood that both reconciles and cleanses;²⁰

¹⁹See John R. Tyson, *Charles Wesley on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), chapter 4, "An Interest in Jesus' Blood," 115-157, for an extensive discussion of the "blood" imagery in Charles Wesley's hymns. The book has been reprinted by Schmull.

²⁰Osborn, *Poetical Works*, XII:89.

The Rock is smote by Moses' rod,
 And pours a consecrated flood;
 I see the fountain open wide,
 I see the inseparable tide,
 Atoning blood and water clean,
 To expiate and wash out my sin.

In his poetical diction, "blood" not only streams from Jesus' pierced hands and side, it fills a font of cleansing to wash away our sins. It also becomes a ransom price that buys our salvation, and, because of its intercessory power, it becomes personified to plead the case of our forgiveness before the throne of the Father.²¹

"Grace" is another basic Bible word the resounds all across Charles Wesley's hymnological corpus. It speaks of God's favor or kindness towards us, as was demonstrated in the Christ-event. It signifies God's Son-sending, gift-giving attitude towards us that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for our sins, and causes us to be reconciled or "join'd to our Saviour."²²

The grace of our Head His members receive,
 The Spirit is shed On all that believe,
 With Jesus the favour Of God we regain,
 And join'd to our Saviour, Eternally reign.

The parable of the Prodigal Son, which is perhaps better described as the parable of the "Waiting Father," supplied some of Wesley's most persistent images of God's grace; we are the sinful rebels returning to the home of our God and Father. Our rejection is rooted in our own sinful choices; "all in me the hindrance lies," Wesley wrote. God's grace is symbolized in Jesus' open-arms of embrace, painfully spread wide on the cross:²³

I believe Thy pardoning grace
 As at the beginning free;
 Open are Thy arms to embrace
 Me, the worst of rebels me;
 All in me the hindrance lies,
 Call'd I still refuse to rise.

²¹Osborn, *Poetical Works*, III:225.

²²Osborn, *Poetical Works*, XI:129.

²³Osborn, *Poetical Works*, IV:416.

Hence, the grace that comes to us through faith in Jesus Christ is a prevenient or “preventing grace” which cuts through our sinful hindrances and assists us in the beginning of the process to “fear God” and “claim” Christ:²⁴

Assisted by preventing grace,
I bow me toward the holy place,
Faintly begin my God to fear,
His weak, external worshipper:
But if my Lord His blood apply,
Entering into the holiest I
Boldly approach my Father's throne,
And claim Him all in Christ my own.

A firm believer in the depth of human sin and lostness, Wesley opined that God's assisting grace is absolutely necessary for a person to come to salvation:²⁵

Unassisted by Thy grace,
We can only evil do;
Wretched is the human race,
Wretched more than words can show,
Till Thy blessing from above,
Tell our hearts that God is love.

But Charles also believed that God's grace could be refused. Like the slothful servant in Matthew 25:26f, the lost have been given the means and the opportunity to respond to God's grace; by grace, our eternal destiny is in our own hands. If we have failed to respond to the offer of grace, the fault is entirely our own:²⁶

The harmless inoffensive man
Is cast before the bar of God,
Cast by his own excuses vain
For not performing what he could;
And burying that preventing grace,
Who justly perish unforgiven,
Shall mix'd with fiends in groans confess
They might have sung with saints in heaven.

²⁴Osborne, *Poetical Works*, IX:274-75.

²⁵Osborn, *Poetical Works*, VI:383.

²⁶Osborn, *Poetical Works*, X:390.

“Love,” God’s *agape* or self-giving love, Charles Wesley viewed as both the motive behind the Christ-event and the renewing power that pours into the Christian’s life through Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit enters to form Jesus Christ within. “Love” occurs more than fifteen-hundred times in Wesley’s published hymns. God’s love was the foundation of the Wesleyan message (both in sermon and song). God’s love was not only an invitation to new relationship; it was viewed by Charles Wesley as a transforming power that poured into the believer’s life. This is powerfully evidenced in his hymn “For Preparation for Death.”²⁷

Love excludes the selfish passion,
Love destroys the carnal mind;
Love be here my full salvation,
Love for Thee and all mankind:
Let Thine own compassion move Thee,
Thy own nature to impart,
Force me now to cry—I love Thee,
Love Thee, Lord, with all my heart.

Reflecting the theological language of 2 Peter 1:4, in which Christians are urged to be “partakers of the Divine nature,” Charles Wesley recognized that the bestowal of God’s love (given in Jesus Christ and made manifest in us by the Holy Spirit) meant that God’s nature was being formed in Christians:²⁸

Truly baptized into the name
Of Jesus I have been,
Who partaker of His nature am
And sav’d indeed from sin;
Thy nature, Lord, thro’ faith I feel
Thy love reveal’d in me;
In me, thy full salvation dwell
To all eternity.

Arguably, Charles Wesley’s most famous use of the theology of God’s love appears in his “Love Divine, all loves excelling.” The hymn evi-

²⁷Osborn, *Poetical Works*, VII:390.

²⁸An unpublished hymn from *Ms. Acts*, a hymn based on Acts 19:5. It was subsequently published in S. T. Kimbrough and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, 3 Vol. (Nashville: Abingdon/Kingswood Books, 1990), II:389-90.

dences several of Wesley's characteristic emphases. In verse one, Jesus is depicted as love personified, and the singer implores Jesus to bring God's love into his/her heart. The historical incarnation of Jesus Christ, as reported in the gospel record, becomes the basis for Jesus entering into the life of the singer as a present experience and reality. This visitation of Jesus Christ is rightly termed "salvation."²⁹

Love divine, all loves excelling,
 Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
 Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
 All thy faithful mercies crown!
 Jesu, thou art all compassion,
 Pure, unbounded love thou art;
 Visit us with thy salvation!
 Enter every trembling heart.

The second verse of Charles Wesley's original composition, which his brother John edited out of what would become the standard, published form of the hymn,³⁰ evidences how this incarnation of "Love Divine" takes place. God's love (nature) will dwell within Christians through the work of the Holy Spirit. Reflecting on passages like John 14:16-18, John 16:7-17, and John 20:22, Charles Wesley wrote:³¹

Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit,
 Into every troubled breast,
 Let us all in Thee inherit,
 Let us find that second rest;
 Take away our *power* of sinning,
 Alpha and Omega be,
 End of faith as its Beginning,
 Set our hearts at liberty.

Hence, God's love leads not only to the believer's acceptance (justification or "salvation"), and transformation (new birth), but also to "that second rest" of sanctification in which the very "power of sinning" is defeated. The third and more familiar verse of this hymn (current verse

²⁹Osborn, *Poetical Works*, IV:219.

³⁰Compare Osborn, *Poetical Works*, IV:219 with Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver Beckerlegge, eds., *The Works of John Wesley: Vol. 7, A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 546.

³¹Osborn, *Poetical Works*, IV, 219.

number two), depicts the singer joining the heavenly hosts who “Pray and praise Thee without ceasing,/ [and] Glory in Thy perfect love.”³² Charles’ fourth and final verse reminds us that salvation for the Wesleys was literally a “new creation”³³ in which the *Imago Dei*, the true created nature of humans (Gen. 1:26) which had been lost in the sinful fall, was “perfectly restored in Thee.” The love-theology leads to entire sanctification, and Charles Wesley’s most characteristic description of it is restoration of the image of God within Christians.³⁴ For Charles complete transformation most naturally occurred as the Christian laid the body down in death, so the “new creation” has heaven as its ultimate destination and context. Thus, the singer of Charles Wesley’s hymn prays:³⁵

Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure, and spotless let us be,
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee:
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

“Praise,” which was so effectively resounded in the line above, is the final little word that epitomizes Charles Wesley’s hymns and their theology. His hymns are written as praises and prayers to God, and hence are set in first-person language. This means that the singer of the hymn joins Wesley in praise and prayer. This dimension of the hymns of Charles Wesley gives his theology the form of doxology; they are not only theological statements *about* God, they are experientially-based affirmations made *to* God. It is this latter aspect that gives his hymns so much transformative potential. The rhyme which Wesley found between “grace” and “praise” made these two words a prominent theological and poetical nexus. Hence, Charles Wesley rightly asked:³⁶

³²Ibid.

³³See Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

³⁴See John R. Tyson, *Charles Wesley on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 47-67. This book has been reprinted by Schmul Publishing Company, Salem, Ohio.

³⁵Osborn, *Poetical Works*, IV, 220.

³⁶Osborn, *Poetical Works*, IV:100.

What recompence, or meet reward
 Shall sinners render to the Lord
 For all His saving grace?
 We only can with thanks receive
 The utmost grace He deigns to give,
 And sing the Giver's praise.

For Wesley, “praise” is the appropriate response of the faithful heart to the offer of God’s grace. It also characterizes the life of those who belong to Christ. Those who praise God become witnesses to God’s transforming power and evangelists of God love:³⁷

3. Honor, and might and thanks and praise
 I render to my pardoning God;
 Extol the riches of Thy grace,
 And spread Thy saving name aboard;
 That only name to sinner given,
 Which lifts poor dying worms to heaven.
4. Jesu, I bless Thy gracious power,
 And all within me shout Thy name;
 Thy name let every soul adore,
 Thy power let every tongue proclaim;
 Thy grace let every sinner know,
 And find with me their heaven below.

A Robust Christology

Each hymn emphasizes a robust Christology. Jesus Christ is the foundation of every Wesleyan hymn. Whether the hymn is about Samson or Jacob wrestling with the angel, Charles Wesley’s rendition of the biblical passage becomes a Christocentric hymn. One of his “Scripture Hymns” even urges the reader to find Jesus in the Scripture mysteries. In this case, the transfiguration narrative became, in Charles Wesley’s hands, a description for how one should read the Bible:³⁸

Who tastes the Truth and Jesus sees
 In all the Scripture—mysteries,
 The Law and the Prophet’s end,
 Delights to meditate and many

³⁷Osborn, *Poetical Works*, V:1-2.

³⁸Osborn, *Poetical Works*, XI:184.

Would gladly on the mountain stay,
And never more descend.

Charles often used typology to find a New Testament reality lurking behind an Old Testament text. For example, Samson with his arms outstretched on the columns of the pagan temple reminded him of “our Samson from the skies.” Isaac, carrying the wood of his own sacrifice reminded him of Jesus Christ.³⁹ And Joshua (whose name, like “Jesus,” means “God saves”) reminded Charles of the true Captain of our salvation who fulfilled the mission begun by Joshua and Moses:⁴⁰

Two shadows of one substance see!
The Lord, who set His people free,
Persists to save the ransom’d race;
Jesus doth all the work alone,
Our Captain and High-priest in one,
In *Joshua* fights, and in *Moses* prays.

These hymns were written in the theological and intellectual context of English Deism.⁴¹ It was an era in which many among the educated elite saw Jesus merely as a great moral teacher. To off-set this emphasis, Charles Wesley’s hymns always speak of Jesus in ways that communicate His deity and equality with God the Father. Yet, Jesus’s humanity is stressed in the repeated use of his human name (“Jesus”). Alongside this, however, Wesley applies many important Christological titles which reflect Jesus’ lordship, messiahship, and full divinity. There are powerful stanzas in “And Can It Be?” Even in hymns which celebrate God becoming a human being through the Incarnation, like “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” the full divinity of Jesus Christ is stressed:⁴²

Christ, highest heaven adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of a virgin’s womb.

³⁹Osborn, *Poetical Works*, IX, 24.

⁴⁰Osborn, *Poetical Works*, hymn based on Exodus 17:10. IX, 50.

⁴¹Roland N. Stomberg, *Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), “Arians and Socinians,” 34-52.

⁴²Osborn, *Poetical Works*, I:183.

Veil'd in flesh the God-head see;
 Hail th' incarnate Deity,
 Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
 Jesus, our *Emmanuel*.

Hymns of Full Salvation

Every Charles Wesley hymn has as a major part of its authorial intention the telling of the whole story of redemption. It really doesn't matter where the hymn begins: "Wrestling Jacob" (Gen. 32), "The Woman of Canaan" (Mt. 15:22f), "The Pool of Bethesda" (Jn. 5:2f), "The Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:30f), "David and Goliath" (1 Sam. 27), "Daniel in the Lion's Den" (Dan. 6), or "The Three Children in the Firey Furnace" (Dan. 3), for Charles Wesley, each of these narrative accounts tells the gospel story as fully and as plainly as the Easter events.⁴³ The central theme of his hermeneutical reconstructions is almost always liberation—freedom *from* sin, both in terms of its guilt and power and freedom for being a new creature by God's grace. Thus, the redemption Charles Wesley sings about and preaches through his hymns is always "Full Salvation"—one of the Wesleys's favorite terms—or "salvation to the uttermost;" it was a salvation from the guilt and power of sin that reached to all dimensions of a person's life and character.

The whole person was to be redeemed, changed, and renewed; every aspect of a person's life must come under the lordship of Jesus Christ and be ruled by Him. Charles saw sanctification or Christian perfection to be a restoration of the image of God within Christians by an invasion of the Holy Spirit and an infusion of God's love:⁴⁴

On Thee we fix our eyes.
 And wait for fresh supplies;
 Justified, we ask for more,
 Give the abiding Spirit, give;
 Lord, Thine Image here restore,
 Fully in Thy members live.

"Full salvation" also demanded "social holiness." In the famous "preface" to their *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), the Wesleys wrote: "The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness, but

⁴³Osborn, *Poetical Works*, II:173, 150, 153, 156, 237, 266, 267.

⁴⁴Osborn, *Poetical Works*, I:337-38.

social holiness.”⁴⁵ Reacting against the seclusion, privitism, and quietism of the mystical tradition, the Wesleys connected their vision of holiness with matters like membership in accountability groups, opposition to slavery, and advocacy for the poor.⁴⁶ Many of these same concerns were registered in Charles Wesley’s hymns. His “A Prayer for Persons Joined in Fellowship” exemplifies his full-orbed emphasis upon “social holiness.”⁴⁷

Help us to help each other, Lord,
Each other’s cross to bear;
Let each his friendly aid afford,
And feel his brother’s care.

Help us to build each other up,
Our little stock improve;
Increase our faith, confirm our hope,
And perfect us in love.

Charles Wesley’s hymn based on Luke 16:9 aptly expresses his concern for the poor:⁴⁸

Help us to make the poor our friends,
By that [mammon] which paves the way to hell,
That when our loving labor ends,
And dying from this earth we fail,
Our friends may greet us in the skies
Born to a life that never dies.

The Gospel “All”

In his journal entry for Sunday, July 17, 1741, Charles Wesley left us a short summation of his estimate of Christianity’s central truths. He reported: “I declared the two great truths of the everlasting gospel, universal redemption and Christian Perfection.”⁴⁹ We have already touched

⁴⁵Osborn, *Poetical Works*, I:xxxii.

⁴⁶See, for example, the Methodist “Large Minutes” (1746), in Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley A.M.*, 14 Vol. (London: The Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1872), VIII:322-24.

⁴⁷Osborn, *Poetical Works*, II:136.

⁴⁸Ms. Luke, 232-33. Cf. S T Kimbrough, ed. *Songs for the Poor* (New York: The United Methodist Church, 1993), 3-4.

⁴⁹Thomas Jackson, ed. *The Journal of Charles Wesley*, 2 Vol. (London: John Mason, 1840), I:286.

upon the latter issue. Now we need to look at the former. We can find it easily enough by looking for the word “all” in Charles Wesley’s hymns. He uses this word to express the unlimited dimensions of God’s grace and love. In 1741 and 1742 the Wesleys were enmeshed in a soul-wrenching dispute over predestination and particular election. In this context, Charles penned two series of hymns entitled *Hymns on God’s Everlasting Love*. They were written specifically to challenge the Calvinistic idea of a limited atonement, and particular election. The little word “all” resounds throughout these hymns, and all across the Wesleyan literary corpus. It is a sledge hammer that Charles used to demolish the notion that some people are excluded from God’s love, and therefore lay beyond the pale of God’s concern and saving grace:⁵⁰

For every man He tasted death:
And hence we in His sight appear,
Not lifting up our eyes beneath,
But publishing His mercy here.

His blood, for all a ransom given,
Has wash’d away the general sin;
He closed His eyes to open heaven,
And all, who will, may enter in.

Summary

Set in a form designed to make them both popular and proclamatory, Charles Wesley’s hymns are Bible studies in verse. They are theological handbooks written in word-pictures. Each hymn offers a robust Christology. With basic Bible words like “blood,” “grace,” “love,” and “praise,” each hymn tells the story of redemption. It tells us that Christ died and urges us to believe that Christ died “for me.” Wesley’s hymns stress “full salvation,” freedom from the guilt and power of sin. They sing of a “social holiness” that is larger than the concerns of Western individualism, and a proclaim gospel that is literally for “all” the world. Charles Wesley’s hymns speak to us across the ages because they speak first-order language in the form of praise and doxology. Hence, they both communicate and induce Christian experience, and in so doing they enhance and encourage our faith.

⁵⁰Osborn, *Poetical Works*, III:93-4

JOHN WESLEY AND A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

by

Mark A. Maddix

John Wesley was a “practical theologian.” His theology was lived out in his ministry. He understood the need to establish educational ministry practices that aided people to grow toward “holiness of heart and life” (Blevins, 99). He was very influential in the development of educational practices that fostered transformation of human persons and society. There now is a renewed interest in excavating John Wesley’s theology and educational ministry perspectives. This article seeks to reveal the interrelationship of Wesley’s theology and his educational ministry perspectives. In particular, it identifies and assesses four primary areas that reveal Wesley’s educational ministry perspectives and the theological influence of his primary “orienting concern” of “holiness of heart and life” (Blevins, 99; Maddix 2001).

Childhood Educational Perspectives

The approach of John Wesley to the religious education of children follows logically from his theology. He believed in the fall of the human race, including its youngest members. According to Wesley, both young and old are lacking in God’s natural and moral image. Sin dislodged the image of God in all humanity and brought alienation from God. Wesley was primarily concerned about the salvation of children. He believed that one of the primary means to this end was through religious education. In his sermon “On the Education of Children,” he states:

Now, if these are the general diseases of human nature, is it not the grand end of education to cure them? And is it not the part of all those to whom God has entrusted the education of children, to take all possible care, first, not to increase, not to feed, any of these diseases (as the generality of parents constantly do)? (Wesley 1975-2003, 3:352).

It was to this end that Wesley spent much of his ministry educating children. He believed that the first step in the redemption of the child was baptism (Wesley 1872/1986, 10:188). The new birth, the beginning of spiritual transformation, was reached by adults through baptism, only on the condition that they repent and believe the gospel; that spiritual life is reached by children through an outward sign of baptism without this condition, for they can neither repent nor believe (Wesley 1872/1986, 5:38). Infants are in a state of original sin, and they cannot be saved ordinarily unless this is washed by baptism. Baptism regenerates, justifies and gives infants the privileges of the Christian religion.

Rob Staples (1991) provides a summary of Wesley's rationale of infant baptism: (1) The benefit of baptism is the washing away of the guilt of original sin; (2) Baptism was proper for children because of the continuity of the covenant of grace God made with Abraham; (3) Small children should be brought to Christ, and admitted into the church, based on Matthew 19:13-14 and Luke 18:15; and (4) Wesley found support in infant baptism in the practice of the church "in all ages and in all places" (Staples 1991, 167-172). Thus, according to Wesley, infant baptism is an important step in the spiritual development of the infant and entrance into the faith community.

Wesley taught that through baptism, "a principle grace is infused" (Wesley 1872/1986, 10:192) and "that infants need to be washed from original sin; therefore they are proper subjects for baptism" (Wesley 1872/1986, 10:193). Thus, if the child lives, he/she never passes again through the door of repentance to faith, unless he/she does actually commit sin. However, it was natural for children to commit sin, for the principle of nature is still working in the child (Towns 1975, 320). The only way to conserve the innocence of children is to guard them completely against contamination during their helpless years and at the same time build character. As a result, they may resist evil by their own strength when they become of age. This task is education (Prince 1926, 95). This, Wesley argued, is the task of education. In fact, "The grand end of education is to cure the diseases of human nature" (Wesley 1872/1986, 2:310).

Wesley's theological view of infant baptism is often misunderstood. Presently, in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, the sacramental practice of infant baptism is typically lacking. Staples states: "In perhaps no other aspect of their sacramental practices have the churches in the Wesleyan/holiness tradition strayed from their classical Wesleyan heritage more conspicuously than in the matter of infant baptism" (1991, 161). One of the primary reasons for the void in practicing infant baptism is the theological misconception of infant baptism as a regenerative sacrament (Blakemore 1996, 179). The question that most people ask is how the transformation Wesley describes can occur in an infant who, so the argument goes, lacks the cognitive abilities necessary for this experience. Wesley's reply is "neither can we comprehend how it is wrought in a person of riper years" (Wesley 1872/1986, v. 6, p. 74).

The next step in Wesley's view of religious education of children is conversion. Wesley believed that anyone who had sinned after baptism had denied that right of baptism and, therefore, must have recourse to a new birth. He judged conversion to be universally necessary for children as well as for adults (Prince 1926, 96). Prince states, "Wesley did not hold that religious education makes conversion unnecessary, but that religious education and conversion supplement each other" (Prince 1926, 96). In his sermon, "On the Education of Children" (Wesley 1975-2003, 3:347-360), Wesley stated that training children in the way they should go means to cure the disease of nature and to train the individual in religion is the same thing. Prince's seminal work on Wesley and childhood education states the purpose of religious education as expressed by Wesley:

The goal of all work with children at home, in the schools, in the Methodist society is to make them pious, to lead to personal religion, and to insure salvation. It is not merely to bring them up so that they do no harm and abstain from outward sin, not to get them accustomed to the use of grace, saying their prayers, reading their books, and the like, nor is it to train them in right opinions. The purpose of religious education is to instill in children true religion, holiness and the love of God and mankind and to train them in the image of God (Prince, 87-88).

For Wesley this took place in the home, in the schools, and in the societies to make children Christians, inwardly and outwardly (Naglee 1987, 228-237).

Educational assessments of Wesley's approach with children vary in degree (Blevins 2005, 2008; Estep 1997, 43-52; Felton, 1997; Heitzenrater 2001; Prince 1926, 103-136; Seaborn 1985, 30-59; Stonehouse 2004). Educators remain indebted to Prince for his contribution to the body of knowledge, for he was the first to explore Wesley's approach to education (Hall 1998, 12). Gross (1954) notes some of Wesley's early experiences may have influenced his curricular design for higher education (13-14). Wesley's theology proves central to his educational perspective and provides a driving force in his educational ministry practices (Stonehouse, 133-148). Wesley provides one summary of his theological foundations of educating children in this following statement,

The bias of nature is the wrong way: education is designed to set it right. This, by the grace of God, is to turn the bias from self will, pride, anger, revenge, and the love of the world, to resignation, lowliness, meekness, and the love of God (Wesley 1872/1986, 13:476).

This process of education begins with the parents and continues in schools by instructors. Wesley's educational practices with children were influenced by his theological convictions. First, a child is a unit of salvation. Wesley's view of children was a product of eighteenth-century England. Elmer Towns (322-324) builds on John Gross who states, "He (Wesley) never considered a child as a child, but rather as a unit for salvation, bred in sin, apt to evil, and altogether as a 'brand to be plucked out of the burning'" (Gross 1954, 9). Second, Wesley firmly believed that a genuine and deeply religious life is possible in childhood (Prince 1926, 82). This belief proves most evident in the childhood conversions at Kingswood school. Reports indicate Children at Kingswood experienced salvation between the ages of six to fourteen years of age. Wesley believed children remain ripe for spiritual change by age ten. Wesley believed, by age ten, he had sinned away the "Washing of the Holy Ghost" which he had received at baptism (Wesley 1872/1986, 2:465). Third, Christian instruction should begin when the child has the ability to reason. Wesley felt that the beginning of conscious religion instruction should coincide with the dawn of reason (Wesley 1872/1986, 13:476).

Fourth, the child must be educated out of the disease of sin. Wesley view of original sin was the foundation stone of his concept of Christian education. Fifth, the will of the child must be broken. Wesley's discipline of children was harsh and severe at times, especially when it came to this

point. This is not to suggest that he advocated a totalitarian or unrestrained form of child discipline (Estep 1997, 49). In *A Thought on the Manner of Educating Children*, Wesley stated:

Even religious masters may not have the spirit of government to which some even good men are stranger. They may habitually lean to this or that extreme, of remissions or of severity. And if they give children too much of their own will, or needlessly and churlishly restrain them; if they either use no punishment at all, or more than is necessary, the leaning either to one extreme or the other may frustrate their endeavors (Wesley 1872/1986, 13:474).

Wesley's view of childhood discipline explains his view of play as being detrimental, both educationally and spiritually. Wesley states in regard to play, "As we have no play on any day; for he that plays as a child will play as a man" (Wesley 1872/1986, 13:285). Wesley's view of play differed from his predecessors (Reed and Prevost 1993, 319). Sixth, Wesley on occasion would speak to his teachers about pedagogical practices and techniques that included such things as how to talk, develop a relationship of love, and educate children through repetition (Towns 1975, 325).

The development of the Kingswood school and Charity School also illustrates Wesley's strong theological conviction about religious education and grew out of his criticism of public education in general. He believed the public schools of his day were "nurseries of all manner of wickedness" (Wesley 1872/1986, 2:301). As Body states, "Public education was a total lack of religion and religious motive, and it is this which gives us at once the clue to his chief educational idea: religion and education go together" (1936, 47).

Jim Estep (1997, 51) provides a list of Wesley's criticisms of public education in England, to which he regarded Kingswood as the solution:

1. Most schools were located in "great towns" wherein children could be distracted from their studies by the activities of the community.
2. Most schools admitted students indiscriminately, with the worst corrupting the better.
3. Defective religious education, and hence the aim of education, in Wesley's opinion, was misguided.
4. Basic study skills, such as reading and writing, were neglected for more formal educational pursuits, such as classical languages.

5. Finally, when classical education is provided, the order of instruction and flow of curriculum is arbitrarily arranged (Wesley 1872/1986, 13:289-301).

Wesley's criticism of public education was coupled with action. He spoke to parents and schoolmasters, supplying them with useful tools as outlined in "Instructions for Children" (Wesley 1872/1986, 14:217-218).

Wesley was deeply committed to providing ecology of education that fostered religious growth and development. The Kingswood school was intended to continue his theological presuppositions regarding the education of children. Wesley did not maintain that all contemporary forms of religious education were beneficial. In fact, he thought that false religions, poor instruction, and undisciplined teachers did "more harm than good." Therefore, he argued that the family and professional instructors must provide sound education that insures them of receiving not just religious education, but a Christian one (Wesley 1872/1986, 14:474-477).

Another important educational development in 1780 was the Sunday school. Even though the chief credit for the development of the Sunday school belongs to Robert Raikes, Methodism's impact cannot be dismissed. The Sunday schools were developed for children of poor families (Marquardt 1992, 54). The Sunday schools were open to all children, unlike the regular day school. The children learned the basics of reading, writing, arithmetic, and the most important portions of the catechism. Also, the primary focus of the Sunday school was the study of the Bible (Marquardt 1992, 54-55). Wesley advanced the establishment of the Sunday schools with a readiness to evangelize the lost. In his understanding and practice Sunday school is more than the impartation of knowledge, but should help children develop into Christians who might lead an inner renewal of the entire nation.

Wesley's educational perspectives of children, as reflected in the precedent literature, vary in degree (Prince 1926, 103-136; Seaborn 1985, 30-59; Estep 1997, 43-52). Educators are indebted to Prince for his contribution to the body of knowledge, for he was the first to explore Wesley's approach to education (Hall 1998, 12). Gross (1954) reviews Wesley's efforts in childhood education, including his influence on Kingswood School and Cokesbury College in America, noting that some of Wesley's early experiences may have influenced his curricular design for higher education (Gross 1954, 13-14). Body's (1936) work may be the

best single work on Wesley's organization of formal childhood education. Body offers a preliminary overview of Wesley's educational sources, but centers primarily upon the development of the boarding school at Kingswood, both as an idealized form of education for Wesley and also as a struggling institution in its actual state. Much of his work centers on the strict daily regimen of Kingswood and the comprehensive academic curriculum, which was written by Wesley or abridged from other sources (84-130).

Body reveals what he believes to be the two major features of Wesley's educational philosophy through the emphasis upon "religious training and perfect control of the children" (94). Body's assessment of Wesley is not always kind. His investigation of the actual history of Kingswood reveals Wesley's struggle with staff and financial concerns of the school at various times. However, in spite of the struggles at Kingswood, Body frames Wesley's work in the humanitarian spirit of the eighteenth century (39-40). He acknowledged that for Wesley, like Whitefield, religion and education must go together: "The purpose of education was that it should be a means to the great end of saving the souls of the children" (74). He also emphasized Wesley's care for the poor:

The foundation of Wesley's educational work, as of his evangelical mission, was primarily humanitarian and his early schools were all established for the poorer class. He observed the poverty and misery of the poor and his heart was stirred to give them a better existence; in needy cases, actually in clothes (Body 1936, 133).

Ultimately, Body understands "that service to humanity was to Wesley only a visible manifestation of his service to God." In Body's assessment, this fueled all of Wesley's educational efforts (134).

In summary, Wesley's emphasis on childhood education is closely linked to his anthropological and theological foundations. His emphasis on infant baptism, conversion of children, and spiritual formation of children all reveal the influence of this theological understanding of humanity.

Adult Educational Perspectives

Wesley's writings and their assessment by scholars indicate that Wesley's adult educational practices were more clearly defined than those for children. Recent studies of Wesley's early personal devotional life, mystical classics as a means of spiritual formation (Harper 1983; Tuttle

1989), and approaches to spiritual direction based upon Wesley's letters to followers (Tracy 1987) give evidence of Wesley's focus on adult formation. Further, scholars have concluded that Wesley's concept and practice of group formation constituted a key feature in his educational ministry practices. Both scholars and practitioners have given specific attention to Wesley's group formation practices and how they might be applied to ministry today. In order to gain an understanding of how Wesley's small groups were developed and practiced, it is important to gain insight in how Wesley developed his philosophy of group formation.

The formation of Wesley's thinking about small groups began in his childhood educational experiences at home. Susanna played a key role in Wesley's development, as did his Oxford experience in relation to the beginning of his disciplined methods (Tyerman 1872, 69-70).

A more significant stage in the development of Wesley's small group practice occurred after his Aldersgate experience. Three weeks after Aldersgate, Wesley set out to visit the Moravian settlements in Saxony. At the first settlement, Marienborn, he met with the Moravian leader, Count Zinzendorf. At the settlement at Herrnhut, Wesley observed the Moravian community with great fascination. Count Zinzendorf had arranged the community into compact cells, or "bands" as he called them, for spiritual oversight and community administration (Henderson 1997, 59). Wesley recorded his observations in his journal:

The people of Herrnhut are divided: (1) Into five male classes, viz.: the little children, the middle children, and big children, the young men, and the married. The females are divided in the same manner. (2) Into eleven classes, according to the houses where they live. And in each class are a Helper, and Overseer, a Monitor, and Almoner, and a Servant. (3) Into about ninety bands, each of which meets twice a week at least, but most of them three times a week, to "confess their faults one to another, and pray for one another, that they may be healed" (Wesley 1872, 2:50).

Wesley was deeply appreciative of the Moravian emphasis on personal character and charitable community involvement. This example became one of the hallmarks of Methodism: the separation of instruction from edification as two distinct functions. The first were instructional sessions called "choirs," which were given entirely to teaching. The second, called "bands," were for personal encouragement. No teaching was allowed dur-

ing these meetings, only intimate sharing, confessions, and personal reporting of spiritual experiences (Henderson 1997, 60-61).

When Wesley returned to England he was eager to experiment with his newfound knowledge. Within three weeks he had organized bands of believers after the Moravian/Herrnhut model. Despite his enthusiasm, he separated himself from the Moravians because of doubts about their doctrine and practices. It was a painful separation, but one that he deemed necessary. Nevertheless, Wesley gained valuable insights that provided the impetus for his group formation (Outler 1964, 353-376).

Wesley shared leadership of the group with Moravian Peter Bolher, and it included forty or fifty men who met for prayer and group encouragement (Simon 1923, 150). It included a list of thirty-three articles, consisting mostly of rules for group admission, function, cohesion, expulsion, and order (Wesley 1872/1986a, 97). The development of this group was a critical shift in Wesley's adult educational practices. The group was not associated with the Church of England. Also, Wesley had been dissatisfied with his participation in the religious Societies because of their lack of opportunity to bare one's soul and to share one's spiritual struggles in a secure and accepting group (Henderson 1997, 65).

The Fetter Lane Society experienced difficulties in 1739. Many of the members were losing interest in the groups. Factions were developing between the Moravians and the Anglicans. As a result of Wesley's dissatisfaction with the group, he held a meeting at the nearby Foundry, which was under construction. Wesley's success resulted in over 300 people attending at the opening of the Foundry, and Wesley decided to break from the Fetter Lane Society to begin a new group called the Foundry Society (Henderson 1997, 76-77).

The Foundry Society was a great success and grew to over 900 members by 1741. The bands were not increasing in number as rapidly as the societies, and Wesley was concerned about the need for better supervision. The result was the development of class meetings. The class meetings filled the critical gap between the society and the bands. It was through the class meetings that Wesley created an environment to accept people from widely different social backgrounds. They met in homes, shops, schoolrooms, attics, and even coal-bins. It included groups called penitent bands, which were designed for rehabilitation. It dealt with people who had severe social and moral problems who required more stringent and forceful treatment (Henderson 1997, 80).

The development of the Societies, Bands, and Class Meetings provided an educational system for Wesley's adult education. Educators and pastors have adapted Wesley's group formation to reflect more current educational practices in congregations today. David Michael Henderson's (1981) develops a taxonomy, which provides an external framework for identifying psychological conditions in Wesleyan groups. Henderson develops his taxonomy of Wesley's groups based upon instructional aims rather than psychological functions (Drakesford 1978, 104). Also, he provides a list of underlying principles on which Wesley's educational philosophy is based (187-188). They include three primary "modes" or "an appropriate method of procedure" that include Societies (cognitive mode), Class Meeting (behavioral mode), and the Bands (affective mode). Henderson's assessment of Wesley's group formation provides a philosophical basis for small groups today. Congregations can use Wesley's groups as a means to evaluate the primary purposes of small groups.

Also, David Lowes Watson provides the most significant contribution to contemporary approaches of Wesley's group formation (1985, 1990, 1991). He develops a framework for discipleship groups in local congregations, particularly United Methodist. His works are helpful in providing practical application of Wesley's group formation. More recently, David Hunsiker (1996) has linked Wesley's group formation to current cell group developments in American Protestantism. He dubs Wesley the father of the modern small group movement (1996, 210).

Wesley's emphasis on adult education is most reflected in his group formation. For Wesley, group formation represented his theological convictions. He believed that spiritual growth and "holiness of heart and life" required discipline, nurture, and accountability. His small groups provide the primary avenue for persons to grow toward "holiness of heart and life." (Henderson 1997).

Social Reform

Wesley's impact on eighteenth-century England cannot be overlooked. The development of schools for children, his evangelistic efforts, and group formation provided an educational system that stemmed from his theological convictions. The context of the early eighteenth century was prosperous for some. Population was growing slowly, while commerce grew rapidly. Those who owned land, or had the skill and the means of production, had opportunity for economic growth. However, during this

time of economic boom, more than half of the workers of England were becoming increasingly poor (Tyson 1997, 176). The economic situation of the lower classes was further exacerbated by legislation that was designed to maintain the income and interests of the upper classes.

The Methodist movement was strongest in the emerging manufacturing and industrial centers. The Wesleys were most effective in those places where the established Church of England was weak and where they were able to consolidate societies that had already been established by others (Armstrong 1973, 68). The genius of the Wesley's and early Methodism, given the social-economic support of the 1740's, lay in the liberating and empowering structures of its societies (Tyson 1997, 179).

Groups were lay-led which fit well with the individualism of the emerging working class. The fact that Methodism stood outside the spheres that undergirded the older, repressive social order, made it an attractive alternative to those interests that did not coincide with those of the clergy or landowners (Tyson 1997, 180-191). Methodism styled itself as a reforming movement in an era that was beginning to agitate for social reform. Therefore, the Methodist societies were the chief vehicle for implementing Wesley's "evangelical economics" (Tyson 1997, 180). Wesley's desire to reach the poor and to resist social evil were cardinal tenets of his Christian education approach (1998, 199). His compassion toward the poor resulted in the development of schools. Not only did he provide the poor with education, but with clothes as well.

Manfred Marquardt provides a strong argument for Wesley's social reform. He develops the relationship between Wesley's educational efforts with a theological ethic focused on transforming social structures (Marquardt 1992, 199-204). The primary focus is the social concern that prompted Wesley's pedagogy and the results of that pedagogy in empowering the poor (1982, 103-122). He concludes:

One of the prominent parts of Wesley's life work, subordinate to evangelism and social service, was his role as founder, promoter, and theoretician for various diverse educational projects, especially to groups: the poor, who were excluded from the existing means of education; and the recently-converted Methodist society members, for whom Wesley felt highly responsible (Marquardt 1982, 49).

Thus, Marquardt believes that Wesley's educational theory was subordinate to evangelism and social reform. Also, he continues, "The primary

reason for the development of schools within his sphere of influence was primarily a religious and humanitarian one" (Marquardt 1982, 52).

Some scholars have argued about the impact of Wesley's social reform on eighteenth-century England. On one side, historians argue that Methodism was primarily concerned about the salvation of the soul, with the emphasis on social reform purely in the stream of the "Protestant ethic" (Madron 1981, 109). Others consider Methodism to have had a positive influential on social reform. They assume that the democratic practices of the society as well as its philanthropy were automatically translated into the larger public sphere. Thus, they credit Wesley and the Methodists for keeping England from experiencing a revolution like the one that occurred in France (Keefer 1990, 11). However, most historians position themselves between these two extremes (Anthony Armstrong, 1973). They recognize the extensive influence that Wesley's spiritual revolution played in English history, which includes the gradual improvement of the country's social condition. Methodism's achievements in philanthropy, the extension of education reform, and the abolition of slavery; all seem to be in line with Wesley's position thrust.

The consensus is that Wesley's social reform was intentional; taking definite structures that involved others in its execution and providing for its continuance. His life was a model for all Methodists. He wanted to model how they might apply themselves to similar projects within their sphere of ministry. His concern for doing well was multiplied many times over in the lives of those influenced by his work (Keefer 1990, 8). Also, Henry Abeloves' (1990) provides a detailed rationale for Wesley's success. One of the primary reasons was that wherever Wesley traveled he provided medical services to people without charge (Abelove 1990, 8). When the poor were sick, they could seldom afford to go to a physician or an apothecary. Instead they would go to the back door of a nearby rectory or great house where they could get broth, wine, common drugs, advice or a favor (Abelove 1990, 9). Wesley deployed genteel and open-handed charity, not only providing coal, bread, and clothes for the needy, especially among his followers, whom he visited house-to-house and oversaw closely, but also creating make-work for the unemployed and, on one occasion, assuming responsibility for an orphaned child (Abelove 1990, 9). Therefore, Wesley's practice of social reform cannot be overlooked as one of his primary educational perspectives.

Evangelism

Wesley's primary theological-educational conviction was "to cure the diseased soul." Prince (1926) offers a view of Wesley as primarily an evangelist whose efforts with adults and children were energized by his focus on their salvation. Most of Prince's work was to resolve Wesley's adult evangelistic efforts with his teaching on the Christian nurture of children (1926, 10). He states that "many evangelists have preached with great power, but only a few of the greatest have combined with it an eagerness to spread education" (1926, 10).

For Prince, Wesley's educational goal includes his theological and pedagogical analyses, which are interconnected or reciprocal. He views Wesley's educational emphasis with children as primarily preparatory for conversion:

He [Wesley] gives the concept of training and education a wider connotation than they actually carry. He uses them to include not only the bringing of children to a knowledge and appreciation of the condition of salvation, but also to their personal appropriation of salvation (Prince 1926, 99-100).

In Wesley's sermon "On Family Religion" (Wesley 1872/1986, 7:76), he speaks about the importance in "training up a child in the way they should go." For him, to train children up in the way they should go means to lead them ultimately into the experience of salvation in much the same way that an adult is led into it. Also, in his tract *A Thought on the Manner of Educating Children* (Wesley 1872/1986, 7:458-459), Wesley identifies conversion with at least a part of the educative process (Prince 1926, 101). He states, "Education is designed to set aright the bias of nature, to cure the disease of self-will, pride, and so on" (Wesley 1872/1986, 7:458-459).

The evangelistic efforts of John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield are impressive. Nearly everywhere that John preached, his hearers were convicted of their sinfulness. He traveled some 25,000 miles and preached some 40,000 sermons (Abelove 1990, 2-3). The primary focus of his preaching, development of schools for children, and his group formation was his passion for souls to be saved. Most scholars identify evangelism as one of his primary educational philosophies (Body 1936; Prince 1926; Abelove 1990).

These educational practices are incomplete in themselves, for they develop an aspect of Wesley's theology and educational perspective, but

are not inclusive of his entire purposes. They often limit additional educational practices that might be needed in contemporary Wesleyan studies. They are not broad enough to satisfy Wesley's understanding of Christianity focused on "holiness of heart and life."

Wesley's Theological Foundation: "Holiness of Heart and Life"

Scholars have developed theological themes trying to unify Wesley's theological approach. For example, Randy Maddox uses "responsible grace" as a hermeneutical perspective to provide a connecting thread of individual doctrinal themes through the transitions from the early and to the late Wesley (1994, 15-19). Also, Knight (1992) and Blevins (1999) use Wesley's "means of grace" as a unifying theme of Wesley's theology and a way to relate to the wide range of educational practices. This approach bridges Wesley's pedagogical practices with his theology.

Blevins asserts that the three educational approaches of formation, discernment, and transformation provide a framework for educational practice (1999, 363) and a unified approach to Wesley's educational perspective. However, the primary theological focus of Wesley's educational perspectives is "holiness of heart and life" (Maddox 1994; Collins 1997; Grider 1994; Dunning 1988). Holiness of heart and life provides a broader description of transformation that encompasses his objectives of evangelism, social reform, and his childhood and adult educational practices. It is a phrase used repeatedly in Wesley's sermons and writings. He speaks about holiness of heart and life in his sermon "The Righteousness of Faith":

One thing more was indispensably required by the righteousness of the law, namely, that this universal obedience, this perfect holiness both of heart and life, should be perfectly uninterrupted also, should continue without any intermission, from the moment wherein God created man, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, until the days of his trial should be ended, and he should be confirmed in life everlasting (Wesley 1872/1986, 5:67).

He also addressed this theme in his sermon on Perfection:

St. Peter expresses it in a still different manner, though to the same effect: "As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15). According to this Apostle, then, perfection is another name for universal

holiness: Inward and outward righteousness: Holiness of life, arising from holiness of heart (Wesley 1872/1986, 6:414).

It is to this end that Wesley's educational practices are focused. His emphasis on childhood and adult education, social reform, and evangelism are derived from this universal theological truth. Again, it proceeds from his anthropology, namely his view on the sinfulness of humanity, and the need for the restoration of the *imago dei* (political and moral image).

Wesley develops this idea in his sermon "The Image of God" (Wesley 1872/1986, 4:293-295). Of these three aspects of the image of God, the natural, political, and moral, Wesley designated the last as the principal image. He writes, "So God created man in his own image . . . but chiefly in his moral image" (Wesley 1872/1986, 4:293-295). Collins states that the reason for this distinction is that the image is conceived as both true righteousness and holiness; it is the context for the very possibility of sin, and it is intimately related to the moral law (1997, 24-25). It is through the empowering grace of God that an individual realizes and experiences the promise of the restoration of the image of God. The restoration of the image of God will not occur without human cooperation with and response to the grace of God.

Lindstrom (1980), Williams (1960), Oulter (1964), and Collins (1997) identify Wesley's *ordo salutis*, or order of salvation, as the core of Wesley's theology. Thus, the transformational and lifelong experience of "holiness of heart and life" best expresses Wesley's soteriological conviction. Holiness of heart and life provides the primary theological framework for Wesley's educational perspective. Each of Wesley's educational theories, childhood education, adult education, evangelistic efforts, and social reform, are derived from this theological core concept.

Summary of Educational Practices

Wesley's educational perspectives, childhood education, adult education (formation), social reform of individual lives, and social structures (social action), and evangelism (personal conversion), provide a holistic approach to Christian education that fosters spiritual growth toward "holiness of heart and life." Wesley's educational perspective focused on the development of the individual learner, both children and adult. His emphasis on providing educational opportunities for oppressed children and his emphasis on class meetings (small groups) for adults were educational

aspects of nurture and development. His development of societies, classes, and bands is unique to Wesley, and is the primary educational approach that actualizes his theological conviction of holiness of heart and life. His soteriological focus was to see human persons transformed by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Wesley's educational perspectives, undergirded by his theological foundations, provide a holistic approach to Christian education that fosters holiness of heart and life.

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JOHN WESLEY'S LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

by

Gregory S. Clapper

For John Wesley, the heart was where true religion took root. The heart is the home of the affections. However, Wesley does not refer to heart-realities exclusively in terms of the “affections.” He also uses language that includes “tempers,” “dispositions,” “feelings,” and (though rarely) even “emotion.”¹ I examine here the recent claims that there are important conceptual and theological issues at stake with Wesley’s use of these various terms.

¹While I will not be focusing on his use of “emotion” in what follows, a few comments about that term might be in order. Wesley uses “emotion” primarily to indicate a general sense of arousal or interest, e.g. *Journal* for Tues. May 6, 1760—“I had much conversation (at Carrickfergus) with Monsieur Cavenac, the French General, not on the circumstances, but the essence, of religion. He seemed to startle at nothing; but said more than once, and with emotion, ‘Why, this is my religion: There is no true religion besides it!’” *Works* 21:259; and, again from his *Journal*, for May 2, 1741—“A few of our brethren and sisters sitting by, then spoke what they experienced. He told them, (with great emotion, his hand trembling much,) . . .” *Works* 19:192. In one instance he puts “emotion” in apposition to affection. In defining zeal he says of the term, “When it is figuratively applied to the mind it means any warm emotion or affection.” Sermon 92, “On Zeal,” *Works*, 3:311. Unless otherwise indicated, all references are to the *Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984-). Any references to sermons will list the sermon number followed by the page given in parentheses after the quote.

Affections, Tempers and Dispositions in John Wesley's Writings

Two recent interpreters of Wesley have asserted that there is an important difference in the way that Wesley uses the terms "affections" and "tempers." Kenneth Collins in his article "John Wesley's Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers and Affections"² says that, while "disposition" and "temper" are used interchangeably by Wesley throughout his writings,³ it is "a mistake to identify tempers and affections."⁴ Collins says that for Wesley the affections are more "ephemeral" than the tempers, the tempers more "foundational."⁵ While Wesley's work nowhere contains such an explicit and self-conscious theoretical distinction between these two terms, Collins appeals to Wesley's comment in his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* on 1 Thessalonians 2:17, where Wesley refers in one section to "transient affections" and in the following sentence to "standing tempers, that fixed posture of his soul."⁶

Similarly, Randy Maddox (whom Collins quotes on this subject) sees the "affections" and the "tempers" as separable,⁷ with reference to this same passage in Wesley's *N. T. Notes* quoted in Collins. I think, however, that it is problematic to lay so much conceptual weight on this one quote, especially since "calm" and "standing" are not fixed characterizations of "temper" in Wesley's work, as "transient" is not a fixed characterization of "affection" in his usage.

The digitized version of the bicentennial edition of Wesley's *Works*⁸ contains all of his sermons, the standard collection of hymns, and Wesley's *Journals* and *Diaries*. Using the search feature of this software, one finds that in these documents Wesley used "affection" or "affections" a total of 297 times, while he used "temper" or "tempers" a total of 401 times. So,

²*Methodist History* 36:3 (April 1998), 162-175. Hereafter, *Topography*.

³*Topography*, 165.

⁴*Topography*, 167.

⁵*Topography*, 171-2.

⁶*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1976) (henceforth, *N. T. Notes*), first published in 1756.

⁷See his *Responsible Grace*, 69-70 and, most recently, his article "Shaping the Virtuous Heart: The Abiding Mission of the Wesleys" in *Circuit Rider*, July/August 2005, Vol. 29, No. 4, 27-28.

⁸Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.

temper(s) is the more common term. However, looking at the times when “affections” and “tempers” are found in the same record shows the lack of a consistent distinction between these terms in Wesley’s usage.

In “Sermon on the Mount, VIII” (#28, 613) we find this passage: “‘If thine eye be thus ‘single,’ thus fixed on God, ‘thy whole body shall be full of light.’ ‘Thy whole body’—all that is guided by the intention, as the body is by the eye. *All thou art, all thou dost: thy desires, tempers, affections; thy thoughts and words and actions*” (emphasis mine). Notice in the italicized passage that Wesley describes all “thou art” by “thy desires, tempers, affections” just as he describes “all thou dost” by “thy thoughts words and actions.” Desires, tempers and affections describe who we are—our heart. It is the reality collectively described by these terms that is who we are—not the tempers that are the “foundational” understanding for the other terms.

In “On Sin in Believers” (#13, 327) Wesley speaks about the growing Christian, saying: “his old desires, designs, affections and tempers and conversation . . . these . . . become new . . . yet, not wholly new. Still he feels, to his sorrow and shame, remains of the old man, too manifest taints of his former tempers and affections.” Here, if “tempers” are always the springs or generators of affections, we should expect to have him speak of remaining tempers tainting current affections, but he does not. The terms are all jumbled together.

In “The New Birth” (#45, 194) we see Wesley’s common equivalence between holiness and the Image of God stamped on the heart. He equates both of these with the “whole mind which was in Jesus Christ all heavenly affections and tempers mingled together in one.” Wesley goes on to make clear that the “one” is love. In “Sermon on the Mount, X” (#30, 651) Wesley describes chapter 5 of the book of Matthew:

In the fifth chapter our great Teacher has fully described inward religion in its various branches. He has there laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity; the tempers contained in that holiness ‘without which no man shall see the Lord’; the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God. (emphasis mine)

Lest someone interpret this to mean that “dispositions,” “tempers” and “affections” might be the “various branches of inward religion,” I want to

make clear that Wesley had previously (in the first of his series of thirteen sermons on the Sermon on the Mount) spoken of Matthew 5 as setting out the “sum of all true religion” that are “laid down in eight particulars” (# 21, 474). These “eight particulars” are, of course, the Beatitudes. That provides the context for understanding the first sentence in the quote above where Wesley refers to Mathew 5 as describing “inward religion in its various branches.” The *Beatitudes* are the various branches of true religion.

In the second sentence of this quote are the three appositional clauses, set apart in series by semicolons, each containing the key words I have italicized. Here we see the *dispositions*, the *tempers*, and the *affections*, all being elucidated by the Beatitudes. In his subsequent exposition of this Scripture chapter, though, there is never a sense that some beatitudes are tempers, some are affections, and some are dispositions. The context seems to make clear that these are parallel terms used to characterize the Beatitudes taken as a whole. They are essentially equivalent phrases, as their being listed in series implies. If Collins is right that “dispositions” and “tempers” name the same reality (see above), it would be hard to deny that these three terms are all used equivalently here.

In “Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith” (# 119, 55), alluding to Colossians 3:2 “set their affections on things above” that he had just quoted, Wesley says, “They regulate all their tempers and passions, all their desires, joys and fears by this standard.” Again, we see no attempt to make a theoretical distinction—tempers and affections are lumped in with desires, joys, and fears.

This Scripture passage from Colossians, where “affections” is itself the biblical term, raises the noteworthy point that the King James Version (which was, of course, the standard text of Wesley’s day) contains at least 7 instances of affection or affections and only one of temper or tempers, and the use of temper has nothing to do with inner dispositions.⁹ The use of temper is in Ezekiel 46:14 and is used in the sense of flour being “tempered” with oil (NRSV uses “moisten”). On the other hand, two of the KJV uses of “affections” are found in key passages of the New Testament where affections are clearly motivating energies, not simply reactive felt responses: Romans 1 “gave them up unto vile affections” [*epithumiais*] and Galatians 5 “crucified the flesh with the affections [*pathamasin*] and lusts [*epithumiais*].”

⁹The digitized version of the King James Version is included in the digital edition of Wesley’s *Works* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005).

Far from seeing tempers as the generators of affections, Wesley often lumps them together and sees both as the product of something else. In “On Pleasing All Men” (#100, 426) he says that we should let truth and love “be the springs of all your affections, passions, tempers; the rule of all your thoughts.” In “Thoughts on Dissipation” we again see “tempers” used not in a sense of generating affections, but as a product themselves:

This disunion from God is the very essence of human dissipation; which is no other than the scattering the thoughts and affections of the creature from the Creator . . . foolish desires and tempers are not so properly dissipation itself, as they are the fruits of it, the natural effects of being unhinged from the creator. . . .¹⁰

It is possible to make a case that there is one other passage (aside from the comment on 1 Thessalonians above) where Wesley seems to make a distinction between these two words. In the Preface to his *N. T. Notes*, he says:

Luther says, “Divinity is nothing but a grammar of the language of the Holy Ghost.” To understand this thoroughly, we should observe the emphasis which lies on every word, the holy affections expressed thereby, and the tempers shown by every writer. But how little are these, the latter especially, regarded! though they are wonderfully diffused through the whole New Testament, and are in truth continued commendation of him who acts, or speaks, or writes.¹¹ [emphasis mine]

The main problem with using this for finding a distinction between affections and tempers, though, is that it is not clear that “the latter” refers to tempers (making the affections the implied “former”). It is indeed more plausible to interpret the “latter” as being *both* affections and tempers, with “the emphasis which lies on every word” being the implied “former.” Given his common use of the terms as equivalents, I think this interpretation makes the most sense here.

Another example of Wesley using these terms as rough equivalents can be seen in his *Journal*. He speaks about how the new birth is not an outward thing: “A change . . . from earthly and sensual to heavenly and

¹⁰*Works*, Jackson ed., Volume XI, 526.

¹¹*N. T. Notes*, 9-10.

holy affections—in a word, a change from the tempers of the spirits of darkness to those of the angels of God [as] they are in heaven.”¹²

Maddox depicts “affection” as a category of “temper” in this way:

Wesley's various discussions of particular tempers appear to distinguish between those that are stable orienting dispositions and those that are responsive motivating affections; included among the former would be humility, meekness, and simplicity; among the latter would be joy, hope, gratitude, fear, holy mourning, and peace.¹³

The problem with this is that humility for Wesley is just as “motivating” as joy or gratitude, and similarly, peace and hope are as “orienting” as meekness. One could say that meekness motivates us to put others before self and peace orients us to the world in a particular irenic way.

Because of the logical structure of emotions shown by such contemporary philosophers of emotion as Martha Nussbaum of the University of Chicago in her *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*¹⁴ and Robert C. Roberts of Baylor University in his book *Emotions: an Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*,¹⁵ I think it is better to see *all* affections/tempers as taking their orientation from targeting certain objects, and hence all are “orienting”—if we have these affections it is because we have been oriented in a certain way. Similarly, the religious affections typically dispose people to behave or act in certain ways; hence they are all “motivating” as well.¹⁶

Relevant Entries in 18th-Century Dictionaries

John Wesley himself published a dictionary, and though it contains entries for neither “affection” nor “temper,” the word “temper” does appear at least four times in the following entries:

Constitution, a form of government, a temper of body, a disposition. *Equanimity*, evenness of temper. *Genius*, a good

¹²*Works*, 19, Journal for September 13, 1739, 97.

¹³Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 132.

¹⁴Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

¹⁵Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

¹⁶For a fuller elaboration of these themes, see 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).

or evil spirit, temper, talents. *Qualify*, to make fit, temper, appease.¹⁷

But, without a contrasting definitional use for “affection”—especially a definition that would define affections as conceptually related to and/or differentiated from, tempers, these passing uses cannot help in coming to clear understandings of Wesley’s usage. The evidence for the distinction that Collins and Maddox want to see is also ambiguous at best in the most influential dictionary of Wesley’s day, Samuel Johnson’s famous *A Dictionary of the English Language*, first published in 1755.¹⁸

Meanings of “affection” at all associated with our interests are found in the first five meanings in this reference book where it is defined variously as: 1. The state of being affected by any cause, or agent; 2. Passion of any kind; 3. Love; kindness; good-will to some person; 4. Good-will to any object; zeal; passionate regard; 5. State of the mind, in general. Compare these to the relevant meanings of “temper:” 1. Due mixture of contrary qualities; 2. Middle course; mean or medium. 3. Constitution of body. 4. Disposition of mind. 5. Constitutional frame of mind.

Here we see that, while “temper” can mean a disposition of mind or a constitutional frame of mind, affection can likewise mean the state of the mind in general. If one were to look up affection and temper in today’s standard English dictionary, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one could see evidence for the distinction between these two terms that Collins and Maddox want to find in Wesley’s writing, but I think this shows that perhaps these two were a bit anachronistic in projecting this distinction back onto Wesley.

¹⁷*The Complete English Dictionary*, published in 1753, the Preface for this appears in *Works*, Jackson ed. Vol. XIV, 23-4. I did not have direct access to this work, but the information I share about it comes from Professor Richard Heitzenrater of Duke University, shared in personal correspondence. He gathered this information from a search of the text on ECCO (Eighteenth Century Collections Online), which he says “might not be absolutely complete but should be taken as representative.”

¹⁸Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language on CD-ROM*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) edited by Anne McDermott. This has both transcriptions of the original text and images of the original pages of the two most influential editions of Johnson’s dictionary, the First (1755) and Fourth (1773). The entries for affection and temper (as a noun) are the same in both editions, with the exception of an additional definition of affection “used by Shakespeare sometimes for affectation” in the fourth edition.

In his often loose terminological usage, I think Wesley is no guiltier of conceptual confusion than most of us are today when we want to refer to what we have experienced, but are wary to use words that might be misunderstood, so we lump many terms together. This can often be heard when people speak loosely about “feelings and emotions,” or when people write about “spiritual and emotional health” or “spiritual/emotional experiences.” I think that, because of the conceptual confusion that has come from the inter-mingling over time of various conceptual and linguistic traditions (the complexity of which is shown by Thomas Dixon in his book *From Passions to Emotions: the Creation of a Secular Psychological Category*¹⁹), we do not have a very good, commonly accepted, and stable vocabulary for these realities. Perhaps with the help of recent philosophers of emotion, such as Nussbaum and Roberts referenced above, it will not always be that way.

Wesley on the Terminology of the Heart

In reading Wesley, then, it is truer to the material to at least assume a rough equivalence of the terms “affections” and “tempers” in Wesley’s usage rather than to see an important distinction between the terms. I admit that it would be a great conceptual help for all in the Wesleyan tradition if the affection/temper distinction was observed by Wesley as some interpreters suggest. He needed such a distinction, and I think that the distinction he was groping for is best made today by the distinction between a “feeling” and an “emotion,” where a feeling is a transitory awareness of the deeper, more stable character-defining “emotion.” However much we might wish for that, though, such a distinction is not reflected in the way Wesley used “temper” and “affection” in his writings.

Henry Knight,²⁰ Richard B. Steele,²¹ and Mark Horst²² all agree with the view of this paper on the essential conceptual equivalence of “tempers”

¹⁹Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Hereafter, *From Passions*.

²⁰See his *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1992). Noted in Collins *Topography*, 170.

²¹See his *Gracious Affection” and “True Virtue” According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1994). Note especially his subject index which includes no entry for temper, 419.

²²See his *Christian Understanding and the Life of Faith in John Wesley’s Thought*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1985. Randy Maddox in his *Responsible Grace* acknowledges Horst’s views as differing from his, 288 n32.

and “affections” in Wesley’s work. It should be noted, though, that there is some reason to see “affection” (contrary to Collins and Maddox) as the *more important* piece of vocabulary when trying to understand Wesley’s “heart religion,” even if Wesley did use it *less frequently* than “temper.”

This can be seen in Thomas Dixon’s historical overview of emotion-related terminology in the last several centuries which completely ignores “temper” as an important term in the discussion of affective reality. Dixon emphasizes that “affection” *does* have an important history in the Western philosophical and theological tradition, based on the cognitively charged Latin understanding of *affectio*, which finds detailed explication in the thought of Augustine and Aquinas.²³

Even more relevant for our purposes is the fact that Jonathan Edwards, perhaps the most respected theologian of the 18th century, used “affections” as the term of choice for these heart experiences, having written a *Treatise on Religious Affections*, which John Wesley abridged, recommended, and published.²⁴ Indeed, the influence of Edwards on Wesley was so strong that Albert C. Outler has said that Edwards was a “major source” of Wesley’s theology, and that Wesley’s encounter with Edwards’s early writings was one of four basic factors that set the frame for Wesley’s thought.²⁵ If “affection” was the more important term in theological history, and it was the preferred choice for one of Wesley’s greatest influences, there is good reason to see Wesley’s heart religion through the historically-hued paradigm that this term offers, even though Wesley used “temper” more often.

²³See *From Passions*, especially chapter two, “Passions and Affections in Augustine and Aquinas,” 26-61.

²⁴This work was first published in Boston in 1746, Wesley’s abridgement first appeared in his collected *Works* (volume 23, 177-279) 1773, reprinted in 1801, and later appeared in the second edition of his *Christian Library* (volume 30, 307-376), 1827. See Frank Baker’s *Union Catalog* entry number 294 for the complete publication history.

²⁵*John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 16. The other three factors, according to Outler, were his Aldersgate conversion, his disenchantment with Moravianism and his vital reappropriation of his Anglican heritage.

ASSURANCE OR PRESUMPTION? EARLY ATTEMPTS TO RECONSTRUCT METHODIST DOCTRINE: 1803-1809

by

Victor P. Reasoner

The views of Joseph Cook and Melville Horne anticipated a later evangelical emphasis in which accepting Christ as Savior was reduced to a deliberate act of the will without the necessity of any feeling. Yet early Methodism preached that true religion was heartfelt. Assurance must be felt to be truly known. Methodism was quick to reject the early attempts by Cook and Horne to reconstruct Methodist doctrine.

Some thirty years later, however, Phoebe Palmer began to advocate a leap of faith, replacing the witness of the Spirit with the witness of the Word. While John Wesley had required evidence, Palmer taught that only “bare faith” was necessary. The conclusion of Timothy Smith is that by 1867 “her views had won out.”¹ According to David Bebbington, “a new era had dawned in holiness teaching.”²

In 1803-1805 Joseph Cook (1775-1811), preaching in Rochdale, England, began to redefine the doctrines of justification and the witness of the Spirit. He emphasized a firm belief in what the Scripture declared,

¹*Revivalism and Social Reform*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1957), 125. In 1894 Daniel Steele acknowledged “the fear of Palmerism” within American Methodism [*Half-Hours with St. Paul and Other Bible Readings* 1894; Rpt. Rochester, PA: Schmul, 1959), 287].

²*The Dominance of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 203.

but at the expense of “experimental religion.” Cook attributed merit to justifying faith and practically denied the witness of the Spirit.³ In 1806 he was expelled from the Methodist Conference.⁴ In 1807 Cook wrote *Methodism Condemned, by Methodist Preachers; or, a Vindication of the Doctrines contained in Two Sermons on Justification by Faith and the Witness of the Spirit, for which the Author was expelled from the Methodist Connection*.⁵

Cook conceded in the first paragraph of the 1807 preface that the Methodist preachers had not condemned their own doctrine. Rather, he was expelled for *not* upholding Methodist doctrine. He denied that John Wesley was an “almost Christian” prior to Aldersgate,⁶ rejecting Wesley’s distinction between a servant and a son.⁷ He rejected Wesley’s interpretation of Romans 8:16 and declared that all who repent are justified. He denied any difference between justifying faith and the witness of the Spirit.⁸ The only witness of the Spirit is what has already been declared in general and not what the Spirit may declare to an individual. Cook wrote,

³W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, George Eayrs, *A New History of Methodism* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1909), 1:415. See also *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, Nolan B. Harmon, ed. (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974), 1:580.

⁴Note that Cook’s name is sometimes spelled “Cooke.” See John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (1867-1887; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 12:99. See “A Review of Methodism Condemned” in the *Methodist Magazine* 30 (Sept. 1807): 399-403; (Oct. 1807): 445-449. It is also significant that Edward Hare published answers to Cook and Horne. Hare wrote *Genuine Methodism acquitted and spurious Methodism condemned, in six letters addressed to J. Cooke, in answer to his vindication of his sermons, ironically entitled Methodism Condemned by Methodist preachers* (Rochdale, England: J. Hartley, 1807). According to the McClintock and Strong *Cyclopedia* article, Coke also answered Joseph Cook. His reply to Horne will be cited later. Hare was Cook’s successor at Rochdale and the pamphlet war between Cook and Hare led to Jabez Bunting’s published sermon “Justification by Faith” in 1812. See also Francis Fletcher Bretherton, *Early Methodism In and Around Chester, 1749-1812* (Chester: Phillipson & Golder, 1903), 184.

⁵Rochdale, England: T. Wood, 1807.

⁶*Methodism Condemned*, 49.

⁷*Methodism Condemned*, 140. Cook also rejected the Methodist interpretation that the Apostles, Cornelius, and Saul were servants, not sons, until they received the Holy Spirit.

⁸*Methodism Condemned*, 52.

“The Bible no where leads men to expect an assurance of their acceptance directly from the Spirit of God.”⁹ He asserted that a knowledge of the Savior’s death and mediation was not essential to justification and that there was no distinction between penitents and believers.¹⁰

Cook also asserted that Wesley had changed his definition of justifying faith from a supernatural conviction to a sure trust and confidence.¹¹ Cook took the position that every penitent is fully justified as a sincere seeker of salvation. Furthermore, he asserted that the witness of the Spirit is the testimony that the Spirit bears to anyone regarding revealed truth.

Perhaps the expulsion of Cook on charges of heresy influenced Horne’s decision to break with Methodism.¹² Melville or Melvill Horne (1762-1841) broke with Methodism in 1809 after he failed in his attempt to reconstruct the Methodist doctrine of faith and assurance. Horne had succeeded John Fletcher as curate of Madeley in 1786 upon the recommendation of John Wesley. In 1792 Horne became a chaplain in Sierra Leone and was a prominent advocate of missions.¹³ In 1799 he became minister of Christ Church, Macclesfield. He later served Anglican parishes in Essex, Cornwall, and Salford.¹⁴ Bernard Semmel compared

⁹*Methodism Condemned*, 266; 273.

¹⁰*Methodism Condemned*, 264-265.

¹¹Cook considered John’s letter to Charles a “direct recantation” [*Methodism Condemned*, 77]. In the July 31, 1747 letter, John declared that there is an explicit assurance of God’s pardon, which is the common privilege of real Christians, and that it is the proper Christian faith, but “I cannot allow that justifying faith is such an assurance, or necessarily connected therewith.” Wesley then explained, “if justifying faith necessarily implies such an explicit sense of pardon, then everyone who has it not, and everyone so long as he has it not, is under the wrath and under the curse of God. But this is a supposition contrary to Scripture as well as to experience.” But according to the summary statement of Nathaniel Burwash (cited below) there is a distinction between justifying faith and a sense of pardon. Wesley denied any contradictions in a letter to Dr. Thomas Rutherford, 28 March, 1768.

¹²Horne seemed to echo several arguments found in Cook’s *Methodism Condemned* as proof that Wesley had changed his doctrine. Among these are John Wesley’s July 31, 1747, letter to Charles, and Fletcher’s *Essay on Truth*.

¹³Suzanne Schwarz, “The Legacy of Melvill Horne,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31 (April 2007): 88-94.

¹⁴See the background information from Albert Outler in *The Works of John Wesley* [Bicentennial Edition] (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 1:154-155; 200; and W. Reginald Ward in *The Works of John Wesley* [BE] (2003), 24:12.

the Anglican message with Methodism by explaining that “the passive Arminianism of the Church of England, though it gave easy access of the Lord to all men, was unable to create a *new man*.”¹⁵

Prior to his break in 1809, Horne had declined to preach in Methodist pulpits for seventeen years, and thus he felt that they considered him to be an enemy. However, Horne asserted that he agreed with the Methodists on every point, including Christian perfection, but not on what constituted saving faith.¹⁶ He said he had grown up hearing the Wesleys preach, but had never accepted their definition of faith. Finally, in 1809 he wrote *An Investigation of the Definition of Justifying Faith, the Damnatory Clause under which it is Enforced, and the Doctrine of a Direct Witness of the Spirit by Dr. Coke, and other Methodist Preachers. In a series of Letters*. Horne renounced Wesley’s view of saving faith, as stated in “The Almost Christian,” that saving faith is a sure trust and confidence in God. He claimed that Wesley had abandoned this position before his death. Horne felt that the Methodist leaders had persuaded John Whitehead to eliminate any evidence of Wesley’s change of mind on this subject in his biography of Wesley published 1793-1796.

This is an unlikely charge because Whitehead, Wesley’s attending physician at the time of his death, had possession of Wesley’s papers and refused to surrender them to Coke and Moore, who had been appointed literary executors of Wesley’s estate. Whitehead did not surrender the papers until *after* he finished his biography of Wesley, and because of this he was expelled from his position within Methodism until 1797. Thus, it is unlikely that the Methodist leaders were able to exert any control over Whitehead during the time he wrote Wesley’s biography because he was already expelled from membership. Furthermore, Thomas Coke was also a part in this dispute with Whitehead. Coke and Moore hastily wrote their own biography of Wesley, which was published in 1792, in an attempt to supplant the Whitehead biography. However, this attempt was ultimately unsuccessful and the second volume of Whitehead’s biography was published in 1796—without any Methodist censorship.

¹⁵*The Methodist Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 101.

¹⁶*An Investigation of the Definition of Justifying Faith, the Damnatory Clause under which it is Enforced, and the Doctrine of a Direct Witness of the Spirit by Dr. Coke, and other Methodist Preachers. In a series of Letters* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; C. Cradock and W. Joy; and J. Wilson, 1809), 2.

Horne denied any direct witness of the Spirit¹⁷ and called the doctrine “unscriptural, unnecessary, and dangerous.”¹⁸ In his inquiry into the nature of faith, Horne asserted that all who repent and believe are forgiven, even if they lack assurance. Faith is scriptural knowledge and unfeigned belief. It is a confession of faith. All that is required is a felt need of Christ and a willingness to receive Christ on his own terms. The moment a sinner flies to Christ he is justified—even if he does not know the moment of his justification.¹⁹ Men may be saved without assurance.²⁰ Horne defined justifying faith as “the receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as made unto us, of the Father, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, in an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart.”²¹ It is “a cordial belief of the *scripture testimony* concerning the Father and the Son.”²² “His faith stands *simply* and *wholly* on the *promises* of God made to him in Christ. His assurance stands on *two* legs: the right on those *faithful* promises, the left on his consciousness that he hath so believed those promises.”²³

Horne admitted that he did not intend there to be any reference to assurance in his definition. Yet, if the penitent receives Christ, he can rationally and Scripturally *infer* his assurance.²⁴ But faith always contains strong assurance. In Acts 17:31 and 2 Timothy 3:14 the Greek word for faith is translated “assurance.” Fletcher observed, “But undoubtedly assurance is inseparably connected with the faith of the Christian dispensation. . . . Nobody therefore can truly believe, according to this dispensation, without being immediately conscious both of the forgiveness of sins, and of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.”²⁵ W. B. Pope declared that, although there is a difference between faith and assurance, the same Spirit who brings faith to life gives the internal assurance that is it fulfilled in

¹⁷*An Investigation*, 113-114.

¹⁸*An Investigation*, 109.

¹⁹*An Investigation*, 25.

²⁰*An Investigation*, 49.

²¹*An Investigation*, 83.

²²*An Investigation*, 98.

²³*An Investigation*, 115-116.

²⁴*An Investigation*, 84.

²⁵*The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher* (1833; rpt. Salem, OH: Schmul, 1974), 1:429.

such swift succession that it is impossible to distinguish between faith and assurance.²⁶

Horne, however, accused the Methodists of insisting on seeing and feeling the Savior, like Thomas, and not merely trusting the Scriptures. For him, assurance is not essential to salvation.²⁷ Horne said that, if he was too lenient, why must the Methodists be too rigid concerning the necessity of assurance. Yet, unlike the modern position among many evangelicals, Horne insisted on the obedience of faith and allowed that the disobedient could fall away. Horne also stated that “God’s matured sons have this witness—this *Spirit in them*, crying Abba, Father! But to make the Spirit of Adoption the *sine qua non* of all true piety, and to preach damnation to all who enjoy it not, is absurd, unscriptural, cruel, and highly presumptuous.”²⁸

Thomas Coke denied that a man may be in the favor of God and not know it. While this does not necessarily lead to damnation clauses, he responded that it brings the mind of man into an insensibility of its condition.²⁹ Coke held that there is not another Spirit distinct from the Spirit of adoption: “Immediately when justification takes place . . . God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into the pardoned heart as the Spirit of adoption; and the evidence which this Spirit brings to ours that we are accepted through the Beloved is the only direct witness which we know, or for which we contend.”³⁰

Did Wesley Change Positions?

Melville Horne cited John Wesley’s letter to Charles in which he declared that there is an explicit assurance of God’s pardon, which is the common privilege of real Christians, and that it is the proper Christian

²⁶*The Prayers of St. Paul*, 2nd ed. (London: Charles H. Kelley, 1896), 214-215.

²⁷*An Investigation*, 33.

²⁸*An Investigation*, ix; 91.

²⁹*A series of Letters addressed to the Methodist Connection, explaining the important doctrines of Justification by Faith, and the direct witness of the Spirit, as taught by the preachers of that body, and vindicating these doctrines from the misrepresentations and erroneous conclusion of the Rev. Melville Horne, minister of Christ Church, Macclesfield, in five letters, written by that gentleman* (London: The author, 1810), 274-295.

³⁰*A series of Letters*, 324.

faith, but “I cannot allow that justifying faith is such an assurance, or necessarily connected therewith.” Wesley then explained, “if justifying faith necessarily implies such an explicit sense of pardon, then everyone who has it not, and everyone so long as he has it not, is under the wrath and under the curse of God. But this is a supposition contrary to Scripture as well as to experience.”³¹ Horne cited this letter as proof that Wesley had changed his position.

But Horne made this argument over sixty years after it was written. In the meantime, Wesley had stated to Horne in 1788 that “we preach assurance as we always did, as a common privilege of real Christians; but we do not enforce it, under pain of damnation, denounced on all who enjoy it not.”³² Thus, John’s letter to Charles recognized the logical distinction between justifying faith and assurance and recognized that there were exceptional cases where assurance did not immediately follow faith.³³

Thomas Coke pointed out that John Wesley had not renounced the doctrines of justifying faith and assurance in that letter. Furthermore, it was unfair for Horne to compare this letter with another partial extraction from Wesley which defined his position.³⁴ Coke wrote that the question was not whether there were degrees of assurance, but whether assurance constitutes any part of faith. Is assurance only an effect which results from faith? “A faith that totally excludes all assurance must be a faith that is destitute of confidence . . . and how any operation of the mind, from

³¹Letter, 31 July, 1747.

³²Robert Southey, *The Life of Wesley; and Rise and Progress of Methodism* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846), 1:258.

³³Kenneth Collins has observed that Wesley referred to the faith of a servant in two ways. In the broad sense, the faith of a servant lacks assurance because of being under the spirit of bondage, under the power and dominion of sin. Thus, the person is not justified nor born of God. Wesley also taught the faith of a servant, in the narrow sense, as descriptive of those who lacked assurance because of ignorance of the gospel promises or some bodily disorder. Although these are justified and born of God, they are “exempt” or exceptional cases [see “Real Christianity as Integrating These in Wesley’s Sorteriology: The Critique of a Modern Myth,” in *The Asbury Theological Journal* 51:2 (1996), 15-45; see also Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 134-136]. One exceptional case was Wesley’s own brief bout with depression, recorded in his journal, January 4, 1739.

³⁴*A series of Letters*, 233.

which confidence is entirely excluded, can be denominated faith, I feel myself at a loss to know.”³⁵ Much later Nathaniel Burwash explained:

One of the most difficult points in the definition of the direct witness is the distinction between the act of faith and the witness. Mr. Wesley held that faith had in itself something of the Divine assurance. All his definitions of faith given in the [first nine sermons] imply this. Yet, he admits in one of his controversial letters³⁶ that “a conviction that we are justified cannot be implied in justifying faith.” Perhaps his clearest statement on this point is to be found in the doctrinal minutes . . . “A sinner is convinced by the Holy Ghost, ‘Christ loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.’ This is that faith by which he is justified or pardoned, the moment he receives it. Immediately, the same Spirit bears witness, ‘Thou art pardoned; thou hast redemption in his blood.’ And this is saving faith whereby the love of God is shed abroad in his heart.” From this and other like passages we may deduce the following summary:

1. Faith has in it divine assurance, and all assurance springs from God-given faith.
2. Justifying faith is a personal divine assurance of the *provision* of salvation in Christ for me.
3. The witness is personal divine assurance of the *possession* of that salvation by me.
4. Abiding saving faith grows out of and includes the witness, as the justifying act of faith preceded it.³⁷

Horne conversed with Wesley about three years before his death, somewhere around 1789, and reported that Wesley had told him, “When fifty years ago, my Brother Charles and I, in the simplicity of our hearts, told the good people of England, that unless they knew their sins forgiven, they were under the wrath and curse of God, I marvel, Melville, they did not *stone* us. They [Methodists], I hope, know better now; we preach assurance as we always did, as a common privilege of the Child of God; but we do not enforce it, under the *pain of damnation*, denounced on all who enjoy it not.”³⁸

³⁵*A series of Letters*, 34.

³⁶Letter to Richard Thompson 5 February, 1756.

³⁷*Wesley's Doctrinal Standards* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1881), 92-93.

³⁸*An Investigation*, 2-3.

According to Kenneth Collins, Wesley maintains that assurance is the *common* privilege of the sons and daughters of God and that “it is rare when assurance, marked by doubt and fear, does not soon follow the new birth.”³⁹ Yet Horne referred to this conversation as proof that Wesley had changed his position, even publishing part of it on the title page. Horne claimed the Methodists still held to Wesley’s previous position and that around 1799 Thomas Coke had preached in Macclesfield on the sealing of the Spirit, insisting on a direct witness and full assurance as immediate and necessary consequences of justifying faith. According to Horne, Coke declared that, without this witness, they were damned.⁴⁰ Coke merely replied:

I am not infallible and it is possible that in earnestly pressing sinners to come to Christ, that I occasionally use expressions which are too strong. This one instance—not from writings—is brought forward from an undetermined period of time. Horne should point to such a statement in my Commentary. Horne makes no allowance for the imperfection of his own memory.⁴¹

However, Coke had preached on the witness of the Spirit at the Methodist General Conference in Baltimore in 1792 and was requested to prepare the sermon for the press which he did the following year.⁴²

In 1810 Thomas Coke also published a series of six letters, running 382 pages, explaining justification by faith and the direct witness of the Spirit, vindicating these doctrines from misrepresentation and the erroneous conclusions of Melville Horne. It was entitled *A series of Letters addressed to the Methodist Connection, explaining the important doctrines of Justification by Faith, and the direct witness of the Spirit, as taught by the preachers of that body, and vindicating these doctrines from the misrepresentations and erroneous conclusion of the Rev. Melville Horne, minister of Christ Church, Macclesfield, in five letters, written by*

³⁹*The Scripture Way of Salvation*, 236; *The Theology of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 136.

⁴⁰*An Investigation*, 4.

⁴¹*A series of Letters*, 128-129. Coke went on to say that it was also possible for Wesley to express himself too strongly [130].

⁴²*A Sermon on the Witness of the Spirit. Preached at Baltimore on Sunday, November 4th 1792. Published at the Request of the Conference* (Philadelphia: Parry Hall, 1793).

that gentleman. Warren Candler wrote that Coke had “corrected erroneous statements and refuted unfounded charges made against the teaching of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher.”⁴³

In his preface, Thomas Coke said he had faced many accusations, but this attack had come under the mask of friendship. Coke then declared Horne’s conception that Wesley had totally relinquished his “erroneous opinions” of his early days “unfounded.”⁴⁴ Coke said that Horne had called into question articles of the Methodist creed. Wesley’s definition of justifying faith, a passage which enforced the necessity of such faith in one of his sermons, and his doctrine on the direct witness of the Spirit were under attack.⁴⁵ Coke then denied Wesley made the connection between the necessity of justification and the direct witness. According to Coke, statements by Wesley had been taken out of context by Horne. Then Coke referred to the attempts to prove Wesley renounced his previous view by referring to the private conversation between Wesley and Horne some three years before Wesley’s death. Coke did not dispute that the conversation occurred, but denied the inference Horne drew from it.⁴⁶ According to Joseph Benson, Coke said, Wesley had not altered his sentiments.⁴⁷

Horne, on the other hand, declared that he was considered an enemy by the Methodists for not holding an absurd definition, an execrable damnatory Clause, and the *ignis fatuus* of the Direct Witness.⁴⁸ By the “absurd definition” Horne referred to Wesley’s statement that justifying faith is “a sure trust and confidence, that a man hath in God, through Christ, that his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.” This is drawn from Wesley’s sermon “The Almost Christian” where he declared, “The right and true Christian faith is a ‘sure trust and confi-

⁴³*Life of Thomas Coke* (Nashville: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1923), 273.

⁴⁴*A series of Letters*, iv.

⁴⁵*A series of Letters*, 1.

⁴⁶*A series of Letters*, 14. The review in the *Methodist Magazine*, however, did raise the question of whether Horne actually wrote down Wesley’s words at the time when he heard them and then reported them accurately twenty years later since his quotation from Wesley’s sermon was very incorrect [“The Truth of God Defended,” *Methodist Magazine* 33:1 (January 1810): 17].

⁴⁷*A series of Letters*, 131.

⁴⁸*An Investigation*, xi.

dence' which a man hath in God 'that by the merits of Christ his sins *are* forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God'—whereof doeth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments."⁴⁹ Horne called this definition "a horrible monster, huge and shapeless, and deprived of sight."⁵⁰

The "damnatory clause" also came from Wesley's sermon "The Almost Christian" where he asserted that "if any man die without this faith, good were it for him, that he had never been born." What Wesley actually said was, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth that if any man die without this faith and this love, good it were for him that he had never been born."⁵¹ While this statement comes five paragraphs after Wesley's "absurd definition," Horne connected the two statements in a way Wesley had not intended. A review in the *Methodist Magazine* asked, "Is it execrable and damnatory to assert that if a man die without faith in Christ, and love to God and man, he had better never have been born?"⁵²

Horne claimed Wesley saw his error on the first two points, and so he was disposed to think he did also on the last point. Horne declared that the Methodist doctrine of the direct witness of the Spirit was *ignis fatuus*. This Latin phrase literally means "foolish fire" and refers to a deceptive hope or delusion. He further denied any distinction between a servant and a son.⁵³ He is clear that what he considers babes in Christ the Methodists regard as penitents until they attain the adoption of sons.⁵⁴ He asserted that Wesley was a child of God before his Aldersgate experience;⁵⁵ that he was justified, yet not assured.⁵⁶ Wesley believed and received Christ, and he was in Christ as were all the Apostles before Pentecost. Every penitent who worships Christ is, in Christ, justified.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the Samaritans in Acts 8 were justified by faith without the adopting Spirit.⁵⁸

⁴⁹"The Almost Christian," Sermon #2, 2.5.

⁵⁰*An Investigation*, 40.

⁵¹"The Almost Christian," Sermon #2, 2.10.

⁵²"The Truth of God Defended," 14.

⁵³*An Investigation*, 32; 79.

⁵⁴*An Investigation*, 40; 97.

⁵⁵*An Investigation*, 34; 39; 71.

⁵⁶*An Investigation*, 39; 46-47.

⁵⁷*An Investigation*, 48.

⁵⁸*An Investigation*, 72; 83.

Horne also pointed to Fletcher's *Essay on Truth* as proof that Wesley had changed his doctrine. In it Fletcher declared that he could not define saving faith as "a sure trust and confident that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me."⁵⁹ Fletcher explained that to use this definition would damn the human race for four thousand years. Fletcher then explains his doctrine of dispensations. Since the Christian kingdom was not fully opened until Pentecost, none could fully enter the kingdom until Pentecost when they received the Spirit of Adoption. Therefore, *Christian* faith is explicitly faith in the merits of Christ's atonement. Fletcher is clear that this Christian kingdom is entered through the birth of the Spirit. Yet his point is that Old Testament saints were not damned. While Fletcher points out that Christ was not the object of faith prior to Pentecost, he is not contradicting Wesley. Wesley's sermon "The Almost Christian" is directed evangelistically toward those who are living *after* Pentecost. Horne does not grasp this distinction and asks, "Did God for four thousand years give the Spirit of Adoption to any man? And yet was he worshipped only by a set of *damned servants*?"⁶⁰ He informed Dr. Coke that Fletcher's *Essay* "cuts up your Definition and Consequence."⁶¹

Coke's fourth letter demonstrates that Wesley and Fletcher were in agreement. Coke observed that Horne had passed over Fletcher's dispensational distinctions in silence.⁶² Thus, Horne missed the point Fletcher was making in actually defending Wesley's views. Joseph Benson, editor of the *Methodist Magazine*, wasted no time in publishing a rebuttal of Horne's book.⁶³ The first article concluded, "Whoever heard any Method-

⁵⁹*Works*, 1:523. Coke pointed out that Fletcher has a footnote confirming Wesley's definition of faith. Thus, Fletcher was not denying or changing Wesley's definition. However, Horne omitted this reference [*A series of Letters*, 103-104].

⁶⁰*An Investigation*, 56.

⁶¹*An Investigation*, 60.

⁶²*A series of Letters*, 194; 199; 213-215.

⁶³"The Truth of God Defended," *Methodist Magazine* 33:1-2 (January 1810): 11-18; (February 1810): 59-68. In a letter Jabez Bunting asked concerning Horne, "Does he understand genuine Methodism? I think he wrote either in a hurry or in a mist" [Thomas Percival Bunting, *Life of Jabez Bunting, D. D.* (London: T. Woolmer, 1887), 329. In the 1859 two-volume edition, this is 1:321]. In a footnote, Bunting's son added that Benson approved of the review, from an anonymous writer, and did not alter one word of it.

Apparently Hare, however, felt that Methodists should write simply. Yet this review is as adequate as Edward Hare, *A Letter to the Rev. Melville Horne*;

ist preacher, or any man in his senses, say that “the God of Love damns sincere penitents?” Mr. Horne knows that the Methodists neither believe nor preach any such doctrine.”⁶⁴

Therefore, it comes as a surprise that Laurence Wood has used Horne to define the doctrine of Wesley and Fletcher. Horne claimed that Wesley had come to assume a distinction between justifying faith and the assurance of faith. The assurance is for mature believers. Pentecost made possible the full assurance of faith to those who previously had been justified by faith.⁶⁵ Yet Wesley was clear that the witness of the Spirit is given to those who are justified *and* those who are sanctified. In *both* cases the assurance may not always be clear at first, neither is it always the same. Sometimes it is stronger and sometimes fainter. But in general the testimony to entire sanctification is both as clear and as steady as the testimony to justification.⁶⁶

While Wood relies on this distinction between justifying faith and the assurance of faith to define Christian perfection,⁶⁷ the issue under discussion is not Christian perfection but the direct witness of the Spirit. In rebutting Horne, Coke’s arguments deal with the doctrine of justification, not perfection. Wood confuses these two subjects, since the witness of the Spirit accompanies the baptism with the Spirit in the new birth and Wood equates both the baptism and witness of the Spirit with Christian perfec-

Occasioned by his Investigation of the Doctrines Imputed by him to Certain Methodist Preachers (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1809). In his 38-page rebuttal, Hare allowed that Wesley abandoned his “obnoxious definition” and that Methodist preachers believe that when the Gospel is preached such “a sure trust and confidence” is the immediate result of saving faith. “None suppose justifying faith is such a sure trust.” Hare further argued that Wesley’s definition of faith, from conference minutes, was “a sinner is convinced by the Holy Ghost that Christ loved me and gave himself for me.” Hare contended that this definition *implies* “a sure trust and confidence.” Hare then attempted to prove from Horne’s own statements that Methodism contends for no more than Horne asserted. Yet Hare told Horne, “Do not imagine that we are to be bullied out of our opinions” [36-37].

⁶⁴“The Truth of God Defended,” (Jan. 1810): 18.

⁶⁵*An Investigation*, 72; 96. This statement is true if Horne meant the previous justification by faith was an obedient faith which kept the Mosaic law.

⁶⁶*The Works of John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson, ed. Third edition, 14 vols (1872; rpt. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 11:420.

⁶⁷*The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism* (Landham, MD: Scarecrow, 2002), 180-186.

tion.⁶⁸ However, if Horne can be trusted to represent Wesley, Horne declared that Wesley “never considered the Christian dispensation as fully opened till the Day of Pentecost, when the Disciples received the Promise of the Father and were baptized with the Holy Ghost and the fire of divine Love. This Baptism brings the fullest assurance of faith. And this is what he means, emphatically, by *saving Christian faith*, not intending to deny faith in Christ, as both saving and Christian.”⁶⁹

Conclusion

The witness of the Spirit is not a specific initial phenomenon as pentecostalism later required. According to Wesley, “The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly ‘witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God’; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.”⁷⁰ Yet Horne attacked the direct witness as “an internal voice, or certain words applied to the mind, and supposed to be spoken directly by the Holy Ghost.”⁷¹ However, he finally concluded that what Wesley meant was nothing more than a text of scripture applied by the Spirit.⁷² Horne believed such texts arose from our own memory and were not a direct testimony of the Spirit.⁷³ Yet, he was redefining Wesley and then attacking the straw man. Wesley was explicit:

Meantime, let it be observed, I do not mean hereby that the Spirit of God testifies this by any outward voice; no, nor

⁶⁸Wood stated, “For Wesley, the phrase ‘baptize with the Spirit’ was a metaphor for water baptism, the phrase ‘receive the Spirit’ meant to receive the witness of the Spirit, and the phrase ‘filled with the Spirit’ meant to be made perfected in love” [“Pentecostal Sanctification in John Wesley and Early Methodism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34:1 (Spring 1999): 40]. Actually, water baptism symbolizes Spirit baptism and the reason they are connected is that they both have to do with initiation into the church. There is no basis for Wood’s definitions of the other two phrases.

⁶⁹*An Investigation*, 23. Wood quoted this as proof that Wesley linked the baptism with the Spirit and Christian perfection. But he omitted the last sentence which clarifies the subject as saving faith, not Christian perfection [*The Meaning of Pentecost*, 180].

⁷⁰“The Witness of the Spirit, I,” Sermon #10, 1.7.

⁷¹*An Investigation*, 114.

⁷²*An Investigation*, 139.

⁷³*An Investigation*, 141.

always by an inward voice, although he may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose that he always applies to the heart (though he often may) one or more texts of Scripture. But he so works upon the soul by his immediate influence, and by a strong though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and the troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm; the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied that God is reconciled, that all his “iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered.”⁷⁴

Wesley did not change his doctrine of Christian assurance at the end of his life as Horne asserted. The *Methodist Magazine* review stated, “We have the effrontery [boldness], however, to believe that Mr. Wesley never changed his opinion of the doctrine of Faith.”⁷⁵ In 1740 Wesley wrote, “I never yet knew one soul thus saved without what you call ‘the faith of assurance’; I mean, a sure confidence that, by the merits of Christ, *he* was reconciled to the favor of God.”⁷⁶

As early as 1745, however, the minutes of Methodist conferences indicated that there might be some exempt cases in which justifying faith may not always be accompanied by the witness of the Spirit.⁷⁷ Wesley elaborated on these exemptions in a letter to Dr. Rutherford as either “disorder of body or ignorance of the gospel promises.”⁷⁸ In 1774 Wesley edited his own *Journal* to say that prior to Aldersgate he had the faith of a servant, but not of a son. However, Wesley consistently maintained that explicit assurance of God’s pardon is the common privilege of real Christians. This is the birthright of all true believers, and Wesley preached, “Let none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness.”⁷⁹

How else could we know that we are accepted by God? Richard Watson explained that pardon is subsequent to both repentance and faith so that neither can provide evidence of pardon. “This being true, the only way we can ever know whether our repentance and faith are accepted is

⁷⁴“The Witness of the Spirit, II,” Sermon #11, 2.4.

⁷⁵“The Truth of God Defended,” (Feb. 1810): 59.

⁷⁶*Journal*, 25 January, 1740. Yet Wesley did distinguish between the faith of assurance and the full assurance of faith.

⁷⁷*Minutes* for 2 August, 1745 [*Works*, Jackson, ed, 8:282] and for 16 June, 1747 [*Works*, Jackson, ed, 8:293].

⁷⁸*Letter*, 28 March, 1768.

⁷⁹“The Witness of the Spirit, II,” Sermon #11, 5.4.

to know the pardon actually following upon them and, since they cannot attest to the pardon themselves, there must be an attestation of a distinct and higher authority, and the only attestation conceivable remaining is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁰

Wesley declared, “This is the privilege of all the children of God, and without this we can never be assured that we are his children.”⁸¹ Adam Clarke taught that those who were adopted could know it by no other means than by the Spirit of God. “Remove this from Christianity, and it is a *dead letter*.”⁸² While dying in 1735, Samuel Wesley admonished his son, “The inward witness, son, the inward witness, that is the proof; the strongest proof of Christianity.”⁸³

More recently, Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that most evangelicals today stop with a logical deduction. Their only assurance is what they deduce from Scripture. “Whosoever believeth on Him is not condemned. So they say, ‘Do you believe in Him?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Well very well, you are not condemned and there is your assurance. Do not worry about your feelings.’” However, Methodism taught the direct witness of the Spirit, that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our own spirit. Lloyd-Jones observed that in 1739 George Whitefield met Howell Harris and the first question Whitefield asked was, “Do you know that your sins are forgiven?” not, “Do you believe your sins can be forgiven?” or “Do you believe that your sins are forgiven?” but “Do you *know* that your sins are forgiven?” Lloyd-Jones said that this emphasis was *the* distinguishing mark of Methodism.⁸⁴

Wesley allowed that it was possible to be justified without the direct witness of the Spirit, but he taught that this direct assurance was the privilege of every believer and that they should not rest until they had received it. “The Spirit of Adoption” should not be equated with entire sanctification. We cannot go on unto perfection until we are clear in our justification. Many professed Christians are not. As the *Methodist Magazine* review stated, “‘The receiving Christ’ is *one* thing, but certainly it is not

⁸⁰*The Works of the Rev. Richard Watson* (London: John Mason, 1834), 11:264.

⁸¹“The Witness of the Spirit, II,” Sermon #11, 5.4.

⁸²*Commentary*, 6:97.

⁸³*Letter to John Smith*, 22 March, 1748, ¶ 6.

⁸⁴“William Williams and Welsh Calvinistic Methodism,” *Puritan Papers*, J. I. Packer, ed. (1969; rpt. Phillipsburg, NJ: Puritan & Reformed, 2005), 5:79-82.

every thing essential to faith.”⁸⁵ Wesley preached that none were to rest without the witness of the Spirit. “This is the privilege of all the children of God and without this we can never be assured that we are his children.”⁸⁶ The full ramifications of this teaching have been misunderstood. The real distinction which should be made is between the direct testimony of the Spirit to acceptance and the full assurance of faith, which is a component of entire sanctification.⁸⁷

There are stages of faith by which we move toward this goal. The full assurance of faith is divine assurance of present salvation which excludes all doubt and fear [Wesley, “On the Discoveries of Faith,” Sermon #110, ¶ 15; *Letter* to Elizabeth Ritchie, 6 October, 1778]. It is associated with the perfect love which casts out all fear (1 John 4:18).

⁸⁵“The Truth of God Defended,” (Feb. 1810): 60.

⁸⁶“The Witness of the Spirit, II,” Sermon #11, 5.4.

⁸⁷“There are *degrees of faith*, and a man may have *some degree* of it before all things in him are become new; before he has the full assurance of faith, the abiding witness of the Spirit, or the clear perception that Christ dwelleth in him” [Wesley, *Journal*, 31 Dec 1739]. Wesley explained that the difference between a clear assurance of justifying faith and full assurance amounts to the difference between the light of the morning and that of the mid-day sun [*Letter* to Thomas Church, 2 February, 1745, 2.8]. He also defended himself against the misunderstanding that he did not distinguish between the common measure of faith and the full assurance of faith. He declared that there may be faith without full assurance [*Letter* to Richard Tompson, 5 February, 1756].

THE ROOTS OF JOHN WESLEY'S SERVANT THEOLOGY¹

by

Mark K. Olson

One of the more contested subjects in recent Wesley studies has been the soteriological standing of the “faith of a servant.” While it appears that Wesley scholars have settled into two basic positions,² another pertinent question concerns the roots of Wesley’s servant theology. Where did this theology come from? How did it arise? What were the factors or circumstances that explain its development? To answer these and similar questions is the task of this paper. But before we seek to answer these questions, we will first clarify when “the servant” became formally a stage in Wesley’s *ordo salutis*.

The first explicit mention of the servant in the Wesley corpus is found in the 1746 Conference Minutes³ and the homily *The Spirit of*

¹This paper is an expansion of an appendix by the same title in my book *John Wesley’s Theology of Christian Perfection: Developments in Doctrine & Theological System* (Fenwick: Truth In Heart, 2007) (Hereafter: *John Wesley’s Theology*). This book is volume two in the *John Wesley Christian Perfection Library*. Volume one is *John Wesley’s “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection”*: *The Annotated Edition*. (Fenwick: Alethea In Heart, 2005) (Hereafter: *Plain Account*).

²One position sees the servant as justified (e.g., Felleman, Laura Bartels, *John Wesley and the “Servant of God,” Wesleyan Theological Journal* 41:2, Fall, 2006; Maddox, Randy, *Responsible Grace*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994, 173). The other argues that in the majority of cases the servant is not justified (e.g., Collins, Kenneth, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007, 134-35).

³May 13, 1746; Outler, Albert ed. *John Wesley*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964, 157 (hereafter: Outler).

*Bondage and of Adoption.*⁴ Yet, the faith of a servant did not become formally a stage in Wesley's *ordo salutis* until the early spring of 1768 when he told Miss Ann Bolton, "He [God] has already given you the faith of a servant. You want only the faith of a child."⁵ How Wesley came to this position is an interesting story. Since I have told this story elsewhere I will cover only the essential details here.⁶

When John Wesley wrote his commentary on the book of Acts he took note of Peter's remark to Cornelius: "In every nation he that feareth him [God], and worketh righteousness, is accepted by him" (Acts 10:35). Wesley concluded from this statement that Cornelius was already in the favor of God, and in "some measure" accepted by God, even though he did not have a proper Christian faith.⁷ This verse became the definitive support for Wesley's position on the faith of a servant:

But what is the faith which is properly saving? Which brings eternal salvation to all those that keep it to the end? It is such a divine conviction of God and of the things of God as even in its *infant state* enables everyone that possesses it to "fear God and work righteousness." And whosoever in every nation believes thus far the Apostle declares is "accepted of him." He actually is at that very moment in a *state* of acceptance. But he is at present only a servant of God, not properly a son.⁸

When Wesley took the time in December, 1767, to revisit his doctrine of justification, fearing God and working righteousness (Acts 10:35) became the bottom-line standard for eternal salvation that he settled upon.⁹ Three months later this same standard was used to define a Christian in the lowest degree.¹⁰ Then, ten days later he wrote to Miss Bolton

⁴P.2 (also written in 1746); *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, Nashville: Abingdon Press 1984—Present, 1:250 (hereafter: *Works*).

⁵April 7, 1768 (Telford, John ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, 8 Volumes, London: Epworth Press, 1931, 5:86 (hereafter: Telford)).

⁶See the chapter "Aldersgate II" in *John Wesley's Theology*.

⁷Acts 10:4, 35 notes, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 2 Volumes, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983 Reprint.

⁸"On Faith (Heb. 11:6)" I.10, *Works* 3:497 (emphasis mine).

⁹Journal 12/1/67, *Works* 22:114.

¹⁰"I believe a consciousness of being in the favour of God . . . is the common privilege of Christians fearing God and working righteousness." Letter to Dr. Rutherford 3/28/68; Telford 5:358. Cf. the letter to Peggy Dale 4/20/67 (Telford 5:45) for another example of Wesley alluding to Acts 10:35 to define a Christian in the lowest degree.

labeling her present spiritual state the “faith of a servant.”¹¹ To confirm that Wesley now held the faith of a servant to be another stage in his *ordo salutis*, two years later he told Miss Bolton, “‘He that feareth God,’ says the Apostle, ‘and worketh righteousness,’ though but in a low degree, is accepted of him . . . I am glad you are still waiting for the kingdom of God: although as yet you are rather in the *state* of a servant than a child”¹²

So by 1770, at the latest, the faith of a servant became another stage in the Wesleyan *ordo salutis*. The soteriological distinction between the faith of a servant and the faith of a child would soon prove personally helpful to John Wesley. By the mid-1770s he used this distinction to demarcate his pre-Aldersgate faith from his post-Aldersgate faith.¹³ In this way Wesley came to understand that his own faith journey included two definitive God-moments: the first in 1725 and the latter in 1738.¹⁴

Yet, understanding when Wesley incorporated the faith of a servant as a stage in his *ordo salutis* sets up our original inquiry. What were *the roots* of this theology? How did it arise? And, why did it arise? Further, what were the factors or extenuating circumstances that contributed to its development? To uncover these roots we need to peruse his early comments on Acts 10:35, and the nexus this biblical passage has with his later servant theology. We further need to look at the correlation that the faith of a servant has with Wesley’s concept of transformed tempers.

We begin by revisiting Wesley’s explicit comments in 1746 regarding the servant to ascertain exactly what Wesley says about the servant’s soteriological standing, and then work backwards to earlier writings that address the same themes and motifs. In this way, we will be able to draw pertinent insights into the evolution of Wesley’s theological development,

¹¹Telford, 5:86.

¹²Letters, 8/12/70, 11/16/70, Telford, 5:197, 207 (emphasis mine).

¹³Works B, 18:215 (notes i, j, k), 235 (note a).

¹⁴In *Plain Account*, 2:1-2 (1765) Wesley utilized the language of conversion to describe his 1725 spiritual awakening. His famous Aldersgate “heart-warming” was also described as a conversion in his Journal (5/24/38). In the mid-1770s Wesley included footnotes in his 1738 journal that identified his pre-Aldersgate faith as that of a servant (Works B, 18:215, footnotes i, k; 18:235, footnote a). This implies that he believed he was justified and accepted by God in 1725, but became born again as a child of God in 1738. See chapter 4 in *John Wesley’s Theology* for a full discussion.

and how his views on the faith of a servant informed his doctrinal development in the 1740s and thereafter.

Early References to the Servant

Albert Outler, in his footnotes on *The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption*, confirms that this homily contains the earliest mention of the servant in Wesley's published sermons.¹⁵ In this sermon Wesley classifies humanity according to three groups—natural, legal, and evangelical—with the servant squarely placed in the middle category. The servant is one who (1) lacks the Spirit of adoption, (2) remains under sin's guilt and power, and (3) falls short of God's kingdom (III.4). The servant serves God out of "slavish fear," not from divine love living in the heart through the new birth. At best, the servant is one who has reached the highest level of the legal state.

Having been awakened to spiritual poverty, the servant fears God and future judgment and sincerely seeks to please the Lord.¹⁶ But this attempt fails because of enslavement to sin. Put in simple terms, Wesley sees the servant as "carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). So Romans seven describes the spiritual condition of the servant. Longing for spiritual freedom and awareness of God's love, the servant remains under sin's reign. Wesley further categorizes the servant (and the entire legal state) under the Jewish dispensation of the Old Testament (III.8). This explains, according to Wesley, why the servant lacks a "proper Christian faith."

We now turn to the Conference Minutes. On May 13, 1746, John and his brother Charles, along with five others, sat down to discuss several questions confronting the societies and revival. Three questions pertain directly to the soteriological standing of the servant:

Q. 9. By what faith were the Apostles clean before Christ died?

A. By such a faith as this; by a Jewish faith: For "the Holy Ghost was not then given."

Q. 10. Of whom then do you understand those words "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?" (Isaiah 50:10).

¹⁵Works, 1:250, footnote 4.

¹⁶We should note the correlation this sermon has with Wesley's comments concerning Cornelius in Acts 10:35. In both writings (separated by ten years) the servant is defined by the reverential fear of God.

A. Of a believer under the Jewish dispensation; one in whose heart God hath not yet shined, to give him the light of the glorious love of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Q. 11. Who is a Jew, inwardly?

A. A servant of God: One who sincerely obeys him out of fear. Whereas a Christian, inwardly, is a child of God: One who sincerely obeys him out of love.¹⁷

It appears clear how Wesley understood the soteriological standing of the servant in these minutes. The servant is not yet born again, and therefore lacks those motives that arise from a revelation of God's gracious love. Instead, reverent fear serves as the source for the servant's faith and attempt to please God. Moreover, the faith of a servant characterizes the disciples' faith during Christ's earthly ministry. Even though they lacked the new birth, Wesley still affirms that the disciples were already "clean" before God. So we see that Wesley was beginning to draw a temporal distinction between being declared "clean" before God and being born again (which he believed happened at Pentecost).

But how did Wesley understand Christ's pronouncement that the disciples were already clean before God? The answer is found six years earlier when he was in the thick of the stillness controversy. The debate became so heated that by late June Wesley felt compelled to "strike at the root" of this "grand delusion."¹⁸ Over a series of several days he took up one point of the controversy after another. His first argument was to show that there are degrees of saving faith.

The quietist sympathizers taught that no one was justified unless faith was free from all doubt and fear. Wesley summarized their position as "*weak faith is no faith*."¹⁹ In response Wesley drew upon several scripture passages in which people who had a weak faith were still acceptable to God. One of these was Simon Peter. Peter had been one of the disciples whom Jesus chastised for having fear and little faith (Matt. 8:26; 14:31). "Nevertheless," Wesley records in his journal, Peter "was 'clean, by the word Christ spoken to him', i.e., *justified*."²⁰ This comment demonstrates that, when Jesus pronounced the disciples were "clean" before God, Wes-

¹⁷Outler, 157.

¹⁸Journal, 6/22/40, Works, 19:153.

¹⁹Works, 19:154 (emphasis his).

²⁰Works, 19:155 (emphasis his).

ley interpreted this to mean they were justified. So we see that as early as 1740 Wesley implicitly began to draw a temporal distinction between justification and the new birth (since Peter and the other disciples were not yet born again). But where did the roots of this distinction come from? From whom did Wesley learn to make this temporal distinction?

Students of Wesley are fully aware of his continuing struggle with doubt following his Aldersgate conversion. From Wesley's journal we know that these struggles persisted for several months.²¹ At times, his doubts were so strong that he felt he was being "sawn asunder" under their weight.²² So he made the momentous decision to visit the Moravian mother church in Germany. While at Herrnhut, Wesley listened several times to Christian David, the carpenter now turned Moravian preacher. In one of those messages Wesley listened to David explain that before Pentecost the disciples had been declared "clean" by Christ, even though they were not "properly converted; and they were not delivered from a spirit of fear; they had not new hearts," since they lacked the gift of the Pentecostal Spirit.²³ David concluded that the disciples' pre-Calvary level of faith characterizes those who are weak in faith, those who are justified and forgiven, but have not received the indwelling Spirit.²⁴

But there is more to consider. In the days following his evangelical conversion Wesley encapsulated his new gospel in the homily *Salvation By Faith*. In this sermon he discusses four kinds of faith—that of a heathen, a devil, the pre-Calvary disciples, and the apostles (following Pentecost). Of these four kinds of faith, Wesley firmly asserts that the first three are salvifically deficient. This, of course, meant that the faith of the disciples during Christ's earthly ministry was salvifically deficient too. His fundamental reason was that the disciples did not yet know Christ as crucified and risen, living and reigning in the heart. At the time, Wesley

²¹The last reference is found on January 4, 1739. Following this date, Wesley's focus shifts to the burgeoning revival and field preaching. In *John Wesley's Theology* (ch. 3) I explain that Wesley included his struggles in his journal to combat stillness within the societies. Wesley demonstrates from his own experience that stillness theology breeds doubt and undermines one's faith and assurance in Christ. Wesley drops the subject in his journal following the January 4 confession because he had made his point. There was no need to continue the exercise.

²² Journal, 6/7/38, Works, 18:254.

²³ Journal, 8/10/38, Works, 18:271.

²⁴ Works, 18:270.

believed that only this latter kind of faith was saving.²⁵ This explains his negative judgment on the faith of the disciples in this sermon.²⁶

When we put the above details together in their chronological order, it appears that Wesley learned from Christian David that the pre-Calvary disciples were justified before they received the gift of the Pentecostal Spirit, thus implying that a temporal distinction can transpire between the reception of justification and the new birth. For in June, 1738, he affirmed the disciples' faith was salvifically deficient, yet two years later—after he sat under David's teaching—he was arguing they were already justified before God.²⁷ Thus, many of the seeds of Wesley's later servant theology are found in the teachings of Christian David.²⁸

Three characteristics marked the disciples' early faith according to David: (1) they were justified and forgiven; (2) their faith was motivated out of reverent fear, not love; and (3) they were not yet born again. By 1746 Wesley used these same three qualifiers to define the servant.²⁹

²⁵“Salvation By Faith” I.5, Works, 1:121; *John Wesley's Theology*, 88-92.

²⁶In “Salvation By Faith” I.3 Wesley affirms that the disciples had enough faith to leave all, follow Christ, and work miracles, yet he asserts that Christ deemed them to be a “faithless generation,” lacking even the faith of a mustard seed. But Wesley does not deal with the question of salvation history in which the disciples bridge the eschatological divide between old and new covenants.

²⁷The above argument is sound, but this author acknowledges concerning the minute details that the process was more complicated, and, in some ways, more convoluted. Wesley's exact summary of David's teaching is that those who are weak in faith are “justified, but have not yet a new, clean heart” (Works, 18:270). This latter phrase was used by Wesley in the early 1740s (when he published journal extract two) as a synonym for Christian perfection. Therefore, it could be argued that Wesley was making a temporal distinction between the first gift of justification and the second gift of full salvation. This argument falters from the fact that Wesley, at the time, maintained that the disciples were born again in a new covenant sense at Pentecost, as did David (Works, 18:271, quoted in a paragraph above, c.f. note 23). Wesley's correlation between justification, new birth, assurance, and Christian perfection was quite muddled and confused during this time period. It took him years to work out a more consistent position regarding these doctrines.

²⁸Wesley also learned from Christian David that perfection is received in a second, post-conversion God-moment (*John Wesley's Theology*, 131-140).

²⁹First, the servant is clean (i.e., justified) before God (May 13, 1746, Conference Minutes Q.9). Second, the servant serves God out of reverential fear (May 13, 1746, Conference Minutes Q.10, 11; “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption” P.2). Third, the servant lacks the new birth (May 13, 1746, Conference Minutes Q. 9, 11; “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption” P.1).

Accordingly, in *The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption* Wesley openly acknowledges that the servant properly belongs to the legal state (P.2), and yet, implicitly, he affirms that the servant overlaps the evangelical state,³⁰ thus straddling the soteriological divide.³¹

When we turn to the 1741 sermon, *The Almost Christian*, other links appear. Wesley describes the almost Christian under the same three categories as described in *Salvation By Faith*: heathen honesty, nominal Christian belief, and devout sincerity.³² While these three qualities comprise the character of the almost Christian, more important for our study is to recognize the presence of an ascending gradation from heathen honesty to devout sincerity in the sermon. Just as the servant serves as the highest level of the legal state in *The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption*,

³⁰Towards the end of the sermon the point is made that the states often are mixed or mingled in individuals: "Perhaps one reason why so many think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, why they do not discern what state they are in, is because these several states (natural, legal, evangelical) of the soul are often mingled together, and in some measure meet in one and the same person. . . . In like manner the evangelical state, or state of love, is frequently mixed with the legal" (IV.2, Works, 1:264-65). As we will learn below, since the servant is the highest level in the legal state ("The Almost Christian" I.9-13), by implication the servant overlaps the legal and evangelical states. Over the next two decades Wesley will work out the implications of this truth to form his mature servant theology.

³¹Just as the continental divide determines which waters flow into the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, so the soteriological divide is that spiritual dividing line which determines who are eternally lost and who are eternally saved. My point is that middle Wesley allows the interpretation that the servant straddles the divide between the legal and evangelical states. The servant is justified before God, implying a footing in the evangelical state, but not yet born again as a child of God, with the other foot in the legal state. This straddling explains the confusion students of Wesley feel when seeking to unravel the soteriological standing of the servant in Wesley's writings.

³²The three sub-groups of the almost Christian match up to the three categories in "Salvation By Faith" (1738): heathen honesty = faith of a heathen; nominal Christian belief = faith of a devil; devout sincerity = faith of pre-Calvary disciples. This confirms that Wesley was referring to the same levels of faith in both sermons. Since both sermons identify the same three levels of faith (prior to a proper Christian one), this further entails that from 1738 to 1741 Wesley envisioned the pre-new birth *ordo salutis* as heathen, nominal Christian (devil), and devout seeker (pre-Calvary disciple). Accordingly, a proper Christian faith belongs to those who are altogether Christians, fully born again and having attained perfection in their love to God and neighbor. For a fuller discussion see chapter 3 in *John Wesley's Theology*.

in the same way devout sincerity defines the highest level in the almost Christian state. Therefore, both the servant and devout sincerity point to the same level of faith in Wesley's *ordo salutis* in the early 1740s. Two important insights follow.

First, although the servant/almost Christian lacks the Spirit of adoption, a "real, inward principle of religion" is at work in this level of faith.³³ Wesley acknowledges that the servant/almost Christian has a "real design to serve God" and a "heartly desire to do his will."³⁴ This means that Wesley already understood the servant's spiritual senses to be *partially alive* to God (more on this point below).³⁵ But since the servant has not yet experienced the Spirit of adoption (new birth), they lack the assurance springing from God's pardoning love. This explains why Wesley understood that the servant cannot reciprocate out of filial love. But does this mean that the servant is totally void of spiritual life? To the contrary! The fact they have a "heartly desire" to please God reveals that "some measure" of spiritual life exists within the servant's heart.

Moreover, following his Aldersgate "heart-warming," Wesley openly identified his pre-Aldersgate faith journey with the almost Christian state.³⁶ Since we have already shown that the almost Christian and the servant represent the same level of faith in Wesley's *ordo salutis* (along with the faith of the pre-Calvary disciples), it became logical for Wesley to identify his pre-Aldersgate faith with the faith of a servant. This conjoining of the almost Christian to the faith of a servant in the early to mid-forties laid the foundation for Wesley to later place footnotes in his 1738 journal which stated that before his Aldersgate conversion he had the "faith of a *servant*, though not the faith of a *son*."³⁷

³³"The Almost Christian" I.9, Works, 1:134.

³⁴"The Almost Christian" I.10, Works, 1:136.

³⁵When we view "Salvation By Faith," "The Almost Christian," and "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" in their chronological order concerning the faith of a servant (though in the first two sermons this level of faith is identified with the pre-Calvary disciples and the highest level in the almost Christian state), we see a definite development of thought. In "Salvation By Faith" Wesley is salvifically negative toward the faith of the disciples. But in the latter two homilies his views are more positive: the almost Christian/servant does have an inward principle of religion at work in the heart, though lacking a proper Christian faith and remaining categorically in the legal state. This reflects early developments in Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace in relation to his *ordo salutis*.

³⁶"The Almost Christian" I.13, Works, 1:136.

³⁷Journal 4/25/38, Works, 18:235 footnote a (emphasis his).

One more point should be made. Since in the spring of 1738 Wesley believed his prior spiritual state to be that of an unbeliever, he also affirmed *implicitly* the servant/almost Christian level of faith fell short of full gospel justification.³⁸ But when John opened his heart to Charles in 1766, he surprisingly defined his present spiritual condition using the same terms as the servant/almost Christian: an “honest heathen, a proselyte of the Temple, one of ‘those who fear God.’”³⁹ Yet, he also confessed to Charles that he did not feel any condemnation for being in this state, thus inferring that he believed himself in the mid-1760s to be justified, though not born again.⁴⁰ This reevaluation further contributed to the faith of a servant becoming a formal stage in his mature *ordo salutis*. As we already noted, in early 1768 Wesley began to qualify the faith of a servant as the bottom-line standard for justification and acceptance before God. In this way he arrived at the position that when “real, inward religion” begins in the heart of the servant, their faith justifies them before God.

Before we draw our conclusions, we first need to survey Wesley's views on Cornelius and Acts 10:35, and the correlation between the faith of a servant and holy tempers.

Cornelius and Acts 10:35

In the Wesley corpus the one scripture text that most defines servant theology is Acts 10:35. This verse is part of a larger story dealing with a Roman centurion named Cornelius. Luke records that the Apostle Peter acknowledged before everyone present that “God is not a respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted by him.”⁴¹ Wesley's comment on this verse is instructive, “Through Christ, though he knows him not. The assertion is express, and

³⁸Wesley considered his prior spiritual state to be that of an unbeliever. See Journal 2/1/38 (Works B, 18:214-216); 4/23-25/38 (Works, 18:234); 5/24/38 (Works, 18:242-250). For a full discussion of the matter, see chapter 2 in *John Wesley's Theology*. Of course, since he deemed his pre-Aldersgate faith to be the faith of a servant/almost Christian, then he logically believed at the time that this faith fell short of gospel justification.

³⁹Letter 6/27/66 (Telford 5:16; the quoted phrase is the editor's translation of Wesley's Greek in the letter).

⁴⁰Cf. *John Wesley's Theology*, 194-198, for a full discussion showing that Wesley believed himself to be in a post-justification state, but in a pre-new birth condition.

⁴¹*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, Acts 10:35.

admits of no exception. He is in the favour of God . . . in some measure, accepted.” Several verses earlier Wesley acknowledged that in a “Christian sense, Cornelius was then an unbeliever” because “he had not then faith in Christ.”⁴² So here we have Cornelius, an unbeliever according to the Christian faith, nevertheless accepted by God because of his sincere reverence (fear) and practice of the means of grace (righteousness).⁴³

But this was not the first time Wesley drew upon the story of Cornelius and Acts 10 to formulate his position. One of the central questions of debate in the 1740 stillness controversy concerned the validity of the means of grace as instruments for conversion. This became the first setting in which Wesley looked to Cornelius and Acts 10 to support his position. He then saw that Cornelius’ prayers and offerings were acceptable to God even though he was an unbeliever in a Christian sense.⁴⁴ This cut through the Moravian argument that stated any use of the means of grace prior to justifying faith was “full of sin.” But this same argument also cut through Wesley’s own position that no good works could be done prior to the new birth, since at the time regeneration was temporally linked to justification in his theology.⁴⁵ As long as Wesley maintained that justification, regeneration, adoption (Spirit’s witness), and saving faith were received in the same moment, then no good work could be done prior to the new birth. But by the mid-1740s his thinking began to change. Wesley started to see with greater clarity that the Spirit’s direct witness does not always coincide with the moment of justification, or even the new birth.⁴⁶ This acknowl-

⁴²Acts 10:4 note.

⁴³The text specifically mentions Cornelius’ prayers and acts of charity (alms). Both serve as means of grace in Wesley’s sacramental theology. Prayer is a work of piety; charity a work of mercy.

⁴⁴Journal 6/25-27/40, Works, 19:158.

⁴⁵Wesley was clear on these two points, “So that he who is thus justified or saved by faith is indeed ‘born again’” (“Salvation By Faith” II.7; Works, 1:124). “I believe no good work can be previous to justification, nor consequently, a condition of it; but that we are justified by faith alone, faith without works, faith including no good work” (Journal 9/13/39, Works, 19:96; cf. “Justification By Faith” III.6, Works, 1:193; Outler, 132 §§ 9-11).

⁴⁶This process was long and arduous. Beginning in the summer of 1738 Wesley learned from the German Moravians that assurance does not always follow immediately one’s justification (Journal 7/12/38, Works, 18:261). But his personal struggles recorded in his journal through the remainder of 1738 and early 1739 show that Wesley was slow at making a proper distinction between the

edgment opened the door for some works to be considered good by God even though the believer lacked the new birth and the Spirit's witness.⁴⁷

Five years later the question of Cornelius' pre-Christian spiritual standing came up once again at the annual conference. Still seeking to find greater consistency in his doctrine of justification, the question was asked if Cornelius was already in God's favor before he believed in Christ. Wesley's response was simply, "It does seem that he was."⁴⁸ When asked if Cornelius' pre-Christian prayers and offerings were at best "splendid sins,"⁴⁹ Wesley again answers with a straightforward "No." He must have been musing over this passage, for he adds that these good deeds of Cornelius, though an unbeliever, were done by the "grace of Christ"! This is a remarkable change from just four years prior when he declared to his university audience that before 1738 he was only an almost Christian/servant—whose faith was merely that of a devil.⁵⁰ The point is that, as Wesley reflected on Cornelius' spiritual state, he came to appreciate more and more that God's grace preveniently enlightens and awakens the human heart to reverence God and to practice righteousness. This meant that saving grace was already at work in the heart to some degree.

Two years later (1747), Acts 10:35 was referenced once more by John in a letter to his brother Charles to support his argument that an explicit sense of pardon is not required for justification before God.⁵¹ In

two. By 1739 he began to delineate between lower and higher degrees of regeneration (new birth), but he still continued to confuse the new birth with perfection (*John Wesley's Theology* 106, 427ff.). Then in "Christian Perfection" II.1-2 Wesley made the breakthrough by utilizing the three levels outlined in 1 John 2:12-14 (children, young men, fathers) to demarcate the faith journey of a proper Christian faith. In this sermon, full assurance is conjoined with the adolescent state, while a simple assurance (often mixed with doubt and fear) is the privilege of a child. Gradually, by 1747 Wesley made a clear distinction between justifying faith and a sense of pardon (Letter 7/31/47, Works, 26:254).

⁴⁷I do not say before justification, because by the mid-1740s Wesley was beginning to allow for a temporal distinction between the reception of justification and the new birth. This means that Wesley could still maintain that no good work could be done prior to justification (this position Wesley did continue to maintain throughout his career).

⁴⁸Outler, 149.

⁴⁹The Moravians had argued that any good work prior to saving faith was only a "splendid sin."

⁵⁰"The Almost Christian" II.4; compare with I.13, Works, 1:136, 138.

⁵¹Letter 7/31/47 (Works, 26:255).

1749, Acts 10:35 began to serve as a kind of shorthand for vital religion. In a letter to the Rev. Vincent Perronet, Wesley shares the story of how the Methodist societies originally started with seekers coming to him for spiritual counsel. Out of this was birthed the United Societies, which had only one requirement for admission: a “desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins.”⁵² Wesley then identifies these seekers with those who “fear God and work righteousness.” A little later in the same letter he proceeds to share how he began to issue tickets to weed out the wayward from his societies. The tickets represented his strong approval that the bearer was a genuine seeker of salvation, a person who “fears God and works righteousness.” To such a believer Wesley gave the right hand of fellowship.⁵³

That same year Wesley reiterated the same point in the sermon *Catholic Spirit*. Fearing God and working righteousness was once again affirmed as the ground for Christian fellowship and unity.⁵⁴ So, by the end of the 1740s, the language of Acts 10:35 was becoming shorthand for vital religion and the benchmark for Christian fellowship. It would take only a small step for Wesley to state in 1755 that Cornelius was already accepted, enjoying the favor of God, even though he was officially an unbeliever according to a proper Christian faith.⁵⁵ The die had now been cast, Wesley’s theology was moving in the direction that would later affirm the faith of a servant as the bottom-line standard for eternal salvation, thus becom-

⁵²“A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists” I.8, Works, 9:257. The reader should note a slight but present parallel between this definition and Acts 10:35. Those who desire to flee God’s wrath also fear him, and those who desire to be saved from their sins also begin to work righteousness.

⁵³“A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists” IV.2, 3, Works, 9:265.

⁵⁴III.5 (Works, 2:94).

⁵⁵*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*. Cf. Outler, 177, for another implied reference to Acts 10:35. In the early 1760s Wesley continued to use Acts 10:35 as a benchmark for vital religion (Journal 7/19/61; 8/19/63). In a letter to the Rev. Mr. Horn, Wesley clarified himself on the spiritual state of the servant. While agreeing with Horn that those who fear God and work righteousness are accepted by God, Wesley disagreed that this implies our works play a role in our justification; for “none can either fear God or work righteousness till he believes, according to the dispensation he is under” (*The Works of John Wesley*, editor Thomas Jackson, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984 reprint, 11:452; hereafter: Works, Jackson). Thus, the servant is accepted by faith, not works; nevertheless, it is a lower faith than that of a child of God. Wesley is well on his way to embracing the servant theology of his later period.

ing another stage in his mature *ordo salutis*. All it would take is some catalyst that would move him to finally articulate his mature views regarding the faith of a servant. This came about in the years 1765-1767 when Wesley experienced a second Aldersgate-like crisis in his life.⁵⁶

The Servant and Holy Tempers

To show the link between the faith of a servant and holy tempers, we first need to survey how Wesley's mature servant theology influenced him toward a greater appreciation of his early period. In several ways Wesley's mature servant theology inspired a return to his earlier roots in the 1730s. At times, in later life, he would reflect on his Oxford era.⁵⁷ He also began to speak more positively of his early mentors, Jeremy Taylor and William Law.⁵⁸ Moreover, Wesley began to incorporate motifs of his Oxford theology in many of his later sermons, like *On Redeeming the Time*, *The Duty of Constant Communion*, *Human Life a Dream*, and *On a Single Eye*. As we saw above, Wesley's mature servant theology proved very helpful for him to make sense of his own faith journey. When he decided to write *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* in the spring of 1765, he came to the conclusion he was first converted to vital religion in 1725, not 1738.⁵⁹ Along with the development of the servant state within his mature *ordo salutis*, this change of perspective as to when he was first converted to vital religion led Wesley to appreciate even more the motifs of his early theology. The single most important motif of his early period was the demand of inward holiness for being fit and ready to enter God's eternal kingdom.⁶⁰

⁵⁶This crisis is dealt with only in a surface manner here. For a full discussion see the chapter "Aldersgate II" in *John Wesley's Theology*.

⁵⁷Letter 12/15/72 (Telford 6:6); cf. "The More Excellent Way" VI.4 (Works, 3:275), "On Family Religion" P.3 (Works, 3:335), "On God's Vineyard" I.1-5 (Works, 3:504-505). Cf. *John Wesley's Theology*, 298-301.

⁵⁸"On a Single Eye" (1789) P.1, Works, 4:120.

⁵⁹The *Plain Account* is Wesley's first published work following his Aldersgate conversion in which he claims to have been converted before 1738. Up to that time he had consistently maintained he was unsaved until May 24, 1738. In the *Plain Account* Wesley uses the language of conversion to describe his 1725 awakening. He does this by appealing to a transformation in his mind, will, and emotions: "Instantly, I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts, and words, and actions" (*Plain Account*, 22).

⁶⁰*John Wesley's Theology*, 21-26. This motif is explicit in Wesley's first written sermon and sets the tone of his early theological system. See Albert Outler's introductory comments concerning early Wesley's preoccupation with the *art of dying* (Works, 4:205). Cf. *John Wesley's Theology*, 75-79.

The heart of Wesley's early quest was to attain holy tempers—inward holiness through the transformation of the dispositional nature for the purpose of being fit and ready to enter God's eternal presence. At the time, what confidence he had concerning the attainment of inward holiness completely evaporated in the face of the storms at sea. He realized he was unwilling to die and to face God.⁶¹ This finally drove Wesley to do radical surgery on his theology in 1738, especially in regard to the basis for acceptance before God. Whereas before he had put his trust in God and in his promises to make him holy, he now placed his faith in Christ alone for acceptance and justification before God.⁶² Yet this also led him to place the divine work of implanting holy tempers in a proper Christian faith (the new birth). But with the birth of the servant state within his mature *ordo salutis* (in 1768), Wesley began to appreciate more and more what prevenient grace could accomplish, even in those who lack a proper Christian faith.

In the later 1760s we begin to see a tendency in Wesley to couple holy tempers with the faith of a servant. The servant, Wesley maintains in the 1770 Conference Minutes, is accepted because he or she "feareth God and worketh righteousness."⁶³ Though Wesley did clarify this to mean that salvation was by faith according to the level of moral and spiritual light (dispensation), this explanation somewhat avoided the implication of his servant theology: people find acceptance before God not only by faith in Christ, but by sincere faith in the one true God, a faith that produces good works.

⁶¹Wesley records in his journal on January 17, 1735, "About eleven I lay down in the great cabin, and in a short time fell asleep, though very uncertain whether I should awake alive, and much ashamed of my unwillingness to die. O how pure in heart must he be who would rejoice to appear before God at a moment's warning!" (Works, 18:141).

⁶²Wesley is very clear on this point when he writes in his Aldersgate memorandum, "But still I fixed not this faith on the right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in and through Christ" (§11, Works, 18:247). Cf. *John Wesley's Theology*, 10-11, 74.

⁶³These minutes enraged the Calvinists because they emphasized the importance of holy tempers as good works in relation to the believer's justification before God. These good works are even available to "those that never heard of Christ." Even though these believers lack a proper Christian faith, they still "feareth God and worketh righteousness" (quoted from *John Wesley Theology*, 208).

Since Wesley's psychology grounded righteousness and good works in holy tempers, the faith of a servant took on a more visible role in his mature *ordo salutis*. As he grew older he became more and more open to the idea that people of other religious faiths could be saved on the ground that they are sincere in their faith in the one true God, and show their sincerity by practicing good works and righteousness.⁶⁴ This meant that God's preventing grace implants holy tempers *prior* to the new birth. As Randy Maddox explains, "Wesley's eventual judgment that God's pardoning grace is effectual in our lives from the most nascent degree of our responsiveness, even the mere inclination to fear God and work righteousness (i.e., the faith of a servant)."⁶⁵

Since Wesley believed in 1741 that the servant (almost Christian) was already awakened to God, by having a "real, inward principle of religion" implanted in the heart,⁶⁶ the logical conclusion was that their spiritual senses must also be awakened. In the sermon *The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God*, Wesley explains the new birth by its counterpart, physical birth. As the newborn baby's lungs take in air for the first time, their eyes, ears and touch come alive to a new environment. In the same way, those born of God are awakened to divine realities. In this soteriology, faith serves as the ground for spiritual life.⁶⁷ Faith sees, tastes, touches, and feels God. Though the servant cannot taste God's pardoning love, since they lack the Spirit of adoption, they still can know and taste God in "some measure." Wesley strongly affirms that the servant believes that God exists and that he rewards those who diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6). Hence, the servant does display a measure of holy tempers by having a faith that seeks to please the heavenly Father.⁶⁸ Simply

⁶⁴1770 Conference Minutes; "On Charity" III.6, 7, 12, 13 (Works, 3:304, 306-07); "On Faith (Heb. 11:6)" I.11, II.3 (Works, 3:497, 500); "On Living Without God" §§14-15 (Works, 4:174).

⁶⁵*Responsible Grace*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994, 173.

⁶⁶"The Almost Christian" I.9, Works, 1:135.

⁶⁷ Wesley's favorite text to make this point was Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (KJV). Wesley called this the "most comprehensive definition of faith that ever was or can be given" since it encompasses all levels or degrees of faith from a materialist to a fully sanctified Christian ("On Faith (Heb. 11:6)" P.1, Works, 3:492).

⁶⁸ Acts 10:4, 35. This is the obvious implication of Cornelius' pre-Christian faith in Wesley's view. Cornelius was already in favor with God, though not born again (in a proper Christian sense). His prayer and alms were not "splendid sins," but were done through the "grace of Christ" (Outler, 150). Hence, holy tempers, as well as spiritual life, were in some measure already at work in Cornelius' life.

put, Wesley no longer believed the new birth to be the foundation for holy tempers or vital religion. Instead, preventing grace provides this foundation.⁶⁹ What the new birth does introduce is greater transformative power through the impartation of divine love within the believing heart.⁷⁰

Consistent with this emphasis was another long-cherished conviction that Wesley held: true religion does not consist of correct opinions, even of a doctrinal nature. In 1742 he published the tract *The Character of a Methodist* in which he acknowledged that, though Methodists differ from Jews, Moslems, Catholics, Socinians, and Arians over many doctrines, “all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think.”⁷¹ Three years later he reiterated that Methodists “profess to pursue holiness of heart and life” with “universal love filling the heart and governing the life.”⁷² Consequently, Wesleyan Methodism did not stress correct opinion or specific modes of worship on non-essential matters. In these matters Wesley was flexible. After all, as his doctrine of involuntary transgression affirmed, even the most perfect err in many things unrelated to salvation.⁷³ This acknowledgment opened the door for the late Wesley to consider that those who err in their understanding of God, like Jews and Moslems, can still find acceptance before him if they fear God and work righteousness (Acts 10:35).⁷⁴ Thus, Wesley’s mature

⁶⁹This is made clear in the landmark sermon “On Working Out Our Own Salvation”: “Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) ‘preventing grace’; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight, transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation is carried on by ‘convincing grace’...” (II.1, Works B, 3:203-04).

⁷⁰“On Faith (Heb. 11:6) I.12, Works, 3:497.

⁷¹§1 (Works, 9:34). This quote does reflect middle Wesley’s Reformation leanings when he was the most stringent in his salvation views. As we have noted in this paper, late Wesley softened quite a bit regarding the possibility of final salvation for people of other faiths.

⁷²“Advice to the People Called Methodists” (Works, 9:123-24). Wesley’s later servant theology even softened this standard by not requiring people of other faiths to necessarily affirm the tenets of Christianity. Cf. chapter 7 in *John Wesley’s Theology*.

⁷³*Plain Account*, 55, 80-81.

⁷⁴The aged John Wesley wrote, “I believe the merciful God regards the lives and tempers of men more than their ideas. I believe he respects the goodness

soteriology came to affirm that the faith of a servant did include the implanting of holy tempers in the heart, in "some measure" before a proper Christian faith is attained.

In the end, Wesley's mature servant theology led him to reaffirm the core message of his early theology: the demand of holy tempers to enter God's eternal kingdom. This, Wesley declared in 1733, is the "distinguishing mark of a true follower of Christ" and of "one who is in a state of acceptance with God."⁷⁵ They seek to have that "habitual disposition of soul which in the Sacred Writings is termed 'holiness'" and look forward to the day when the "great Master" says to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"⁷⁶

Concluding Thoughts

That the servant is accepted by God, because one's faith moves them to fear him and to work righteousness, is the natural evolution of a theology that grounds vital religion in holy tempers. As Wesley came to see the utter bankruptcy of nominal Christianity, he came to realize that such mental assent would never save anyone, no matter what church or creed one affirms. If salvation is to have meaning, its power must begin to transform now, in this present life. Whereas his early theology implicitly affirmed this truth, it was his new gospel at Aldersgate that put this truth on the front burner. Wesley wanted a faith that saved now, in the present. But as he studied the workings of divine grace in the lives of his converts, and in himself, he came to appreciate more and more how the faith journey starts even before one is born again. This led him to a fresh evaluation of his own faith journey in the mid-1760s.⁷⁷ Wesley's struggles in 1766 became the fulcrum for change within his theological system. Existing beliefs and concepts were funneled through the turbulent waters of deep personal questioning and heart-searching struggles to forge a somewhat new theological system; it was a system rooted in the one true God,

of the heart, rather than the clearness of the head; and that if the heart of a man be filled with humble, gentle, patient love of God and man, God will not cast him into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, because his ideas are not clear or because his conceptions are confused" ("On Living Without God" §15, Works, 4:175).

⁷⁵"The Circumcision of the Heart" P.3, Works, 1:402.

⁷⁶"The Circumcision of the Heart" P.3, I.1, Works, 1:402.

⁷⁷Cf. footnotes 39, 40, 57.

his holy nature, and in the cross of his Son, Jesus Christ. These three axioms became the bedrock for his mature theological system that opened the door wider for sincere believers in the one true God to find acceptance before God, believers who evidenced this faith by pursuing righteousness in their lives.

Wesley's servant theology was also a natural outgrowth of the new gospel he learned from Peter Böhler and the English Moravians. Along with several truths, Böhler taught Wesley that (1) salvation begins with justification and (2) there are no degrees to saving faith. After this Wesley consistently maintained that justification as acceptance demarcates the plumb line for eternal salvation.⁷⁸ As his perspective on faith and vital religion matured, Wesley came to realize that the faith of a servant *already* places the servant in a state of salvation since God accepts those who fear him and work righteousness (Acts 10:35).⁷⁹

Wesley's servant theology was also a natural outgrowth of his new gospel in the sense of reaction and correction. Since Böhler preached that salvation comes in an instant, there are no degrees of faith: salvation is received as a complete package. As a consequence, the pietistic leanings of the Moravians led them, and Wesley, to initially understand that when someone embraced Christ by faith alone, witnessed by the Spirit alone, they were instantly ushered into a state of complete victory over all sin and doubt.⁸⁰ Consequently, there could be no remaining doubt or fear if one's faith was genuine. Under this system, Wesley interpreted his pre-Aldersgate faith as void of spiritual life, and he interpreted the scriptures

⁷⁸In the Wesley corpus justification and acceptance are repeatedly linked as synonymous, "Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins, and (which is necessarily implied therein) our acceptance with God" ("The Scripture Way of Salvation" I.3, Works 2:157). The same link was made in "Justification By Faith" (II.5). In 1745 justification, forgiveness, pardon, and acceptance were all conjoined in "A Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion" I.2, which was reaffirmed in a letter to the "Rev. Mr. Horn" in 1762 (Works, Jackson, 11:443).

⁷⁹In 1788 Wesley referred to the faith of a servant as already in an "infant state" in regard to salvation ("On Faith: Heb. 11:6" I.10, Works, 3:497).

⁸⁰This becomes evident from even a cursory reading of Wesley's journal 1738-1740. This perfectionism was due to the strong emotionalism found in the revival. A couple examples should suffice: William Fish's testimony in December, 1738 (Works, 19:23-24); and Mr. Stonehouse's remarks to Wesley in April 1740, that "no one has any degree of faith till he is 'perfect as God is perfect'" (Works, 19:147).

accordingly. Therefore, in *Salvation By Faith* the disciples' pre-Calvary faith was judged to be salvifically deficient.

Then there was the gnawing reality of Wesley's post-Aldersgate doubts. Thanks to these struggles, he found himself sitting at the feet of Christian David in Herrnhuth, Germany. Though their meeting was short, David's shadow looms large over Wesley's theological development in a way few people today appreciate. It was from David's own faith journey that Wesley first learned to distinguish two works of grace (new birth and perfect love); and, significant to our study, it was David who taught Wesley to reinterpret the soteriological status of the disciples pre-Calvary faith. Herein lay the seeds that would later blossom into Wesley's mature servant theology.

Though Wesley was slow at first to realize the implications of this new perspective, over time he did come to appreciate more and more this lower degree of faith as a significant stage in the faith journey process toward full renewal in God's image. At first he would only acknowledge that a degree of "real, inward religion" is active in this level of faith; for he still maintained this faith to be salvifically deficient.⁸¹ But after a few years he rejected any notion that the righteousness produced by the servant's faith was sinful. Instead, Wesley firmly asserted that the "grace of Christ" produced these good works, even though the servant lacks the gift of the Holy Spirit.⁸² Thus, by the mid-1740s Wesley was *implicitly* beginning to affirm the basic truths that would later converge to form the servant state in his mature *ordo salutis*:

- The servant is presently justified before God, but not born again.
- The servant serves God out of reverential fear, not filial love.
- The servant works righteousness from a *measure* of holy tempers living in the heart.
- The servant straddles the soteriological divide.

Besides the influence of Christian David, another significant factor that contributed to the formation of Wesley's servant theology was the stillness controversy. Stillness principles had been the fundamental reason behind Wesley's struggles following his evangelical conversion,⁸³ and

⁸¹"The Almost Christian" (1741) I.9-13.

⁸²1746 Conference Minutes (Outler, 157).

⁸³*John Wesley's Theology*, 120-123.

they continued to impact the Methodist societies for many years.⁸⁴ Central to this controversy was the question of degrees. The Moravians emphatically denied any degrees to saving faith, leading to a strong strain of antinomianism in their theology;⁸⁵ Wesley championed both degrees of faith and the ordinances (means of grace) as conveyors of divine grace. The premise of degrees provided the rationale for Wesley to explore further the various stages of spiritual development and their chief characteristics. Without this fundamental principle, Wesley's servant theology would never have developed as a formal stage in his mature *ordo salutis*.⁸⁶

Finally, a few words should be stated about how Wesley's early views on the faith of a servant intermixed with his developing *ordo salutis*. By early 1739 Wesley was affirming that there are low and high degrees of the new birth, that is, two basic levels or stages of a Christian faith.⁸⁷ But a year later he expanded this to three levels—forgiveness, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and perfect love.⁸⁸ Then a few months later he argued with the Moravians that the Apostle John did affirm three distinct levels of faith, specifically: children, young men, and fathers.⁸⁹ One of the significant steps Wesley took in the homily *Christian Perfection* was to identify the three levels of faith listed in John's first epistle to the three levels identified in his recent preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems*

⁸⁴Many of the Conference Minutes in the years 1744-1747 were in response to Moravian teachings. In 1745 Wesley published two tracts refuting Moravian antinomianism (Works J, 10:259ff.).

⁸⁵Cf. Wesley's conversations with Mr. Molther on April 25, 1740, and with Count Zinzendorf in September, 1741, and the letter he wrote to the Moravians (Works, 19:147, 211-220). Many years later Wesley wrote, "Beware of 'Moravianism'—the most refined antinomianism that ever was under the sun, and such as I think could only have sprung from the abuse of true Christian experience" ("Cautions and Directions Given to the Greatest Professors in The Methodist Societies;" Outler, 302).

⁸⁶This is also true of the other stages of renewal, like the child, young man, father levels of faith (1 Jn. 2:12-14). The stillness controversy forever sealed in Wesley's thinking the utter importance of acknowledging differing levels of renewal in holiness. Only then would believers take serious the biblical exhortations to cultivate inward holiness in their lives.

⁸⁷Journal 1/25/39, Works, 19:32.

⁸⁸"Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems II" (spring, 1740), §9, Works, Jackson 14:326.

⁸⁹1 John 2:12-14, Journal 6/22/40, Works, 19:154.

II.⁹⁰ After this, Wesley's theology featured these three levels as the basic stages of the faith journey from the new birth (lower degree) to full salvation (high degree of new birth).

What we learn from this study is just how much in flux Wesley's theology was in these years. From his own struggle with assurance, and the attacks he faced from the revival's critics, to the continuing conflicts and divisions among the various parties of the revival, Wesley was gradually working through his own theology of Christian discipleship. It was in this environment that the seeds of his later servant theology were planted and took root. Even in these early days of the revival, the needs of the converts compelled Wesley to continually wrestle with the question as to when salvation is initially received. The Calvinists and Moravians ended up with somewhat different answers than did Wesley, a difference which continued to demarcate each group as the revival matured. In this way Wesley forged a theology that was truly his own, with an *ordo salutis* grounded on renewal in God's image, through the transformation of the tempers, but fleshed out with specific stages of faith.⁹¹

Thus, by digging for the roots of Wesley's servant theology we gain important insights into his theological development, which explains why his *ordo salutis* developed in the direction it did. In the end, Wesley strove to develop a theology that continually sought to "present everyone perfect in Christ"⁹²—even those whose faith is less than a proper Christian one.

⁹⁰Children = forgiveness, young men = abiding witness of the Spirit, fathers = Christian perfection ("Christian Perfection" II.1, Works, 2:105). But in 1741 Wesley still confused the new birth with the sanctification process, for only adults were considered "properly Christians" (II.2). It would take until the later 1750s that a formal distinction was made between the new birth and perfection in the sermon "The New Birth" (Works, 2:186).

⁹¹The most comprehensive statement by Wesley of these stages is found in the sermon "On Faith (Heb. 11:6)" I.1-13, Works, 3:493-498.

⁹²Colossians 1:27 (NIV).

WHY REALITY MATTERS: THE METAPHYSICS AND ETHICS OF ASA MAHAN

by

Christopher P. Momany

Scholars of American higher education have institutionalized the assumption that nineteenth-century students completed their studies with a capstone course in moral philosophy. This crowning instruction in ethics would draw together all previous learning and point young leaders toward the obligations and opportunities of citizenship.¹ Such was not the pattern at the college where I teach and serve as chaplain. Adrian College was founded by Wesleyan Methodists in 1859. Abolitionist philosopher Asa Mahan inaugurated Adrian's presidency and was widely known for his advocacy of Christian Perfection.² Mahan had also authored a noted text on moral philosophy in 1848.³ Yet, instead of sending graduates into the world with freshly appropriated moral principles, the early Adrian curriculum ended after a course in the history of philosophy.⁴

¹See, for instance, D. H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience: The Shaping of the American National Ethic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972).

²Asa Mahan, *Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection; With Other Kindred Subjects, Illustrated and Confirmed in a Series of Discourses Designed to Throw Light on the Way of Holiness* (Boston: D.S. King, 1839).

³Asa Mahan, *Science of Moral Philosophy* (Oberlin, Ohio: James M. Fitch, 1848).

⁴*Third Annual Catalogue of Adrian College. Officers and Students for the Academic Year 1861-1862* (Chicago: Church, Goodman & Cushing, Book and Job Printers, 1861), 23.

If this terminal class bore any resemblance to Mahan's later *Critical History of Philosophy*, it charted a typological journey through the discipline. Mahan's two-volume *magnum opus* sorted all philosophical traditions into four basic schools of metaphysics and epistemology: idealism, materialism, scepticism, and realism.⁵ Mahan claimed that idealism reduces realities to subjective operations of mind, and materialism subordinates apprehension to external substance. Scepticism denies knowledge in either subjective or objective form. Only realism offers a perspective that honors both the subject and the object in the relations of understanding.⁶

This passion for metaphysics and epistemology was no retreat from moral issues. Asa Mahan held that getting reality right was absolutely necessary for any proper ethic. In fact, he structured both his teaching and writing as if respect for human rights depended upon some type of realism. We will chart here Mahan's integration of reason and experience and explore similarities and differences between his philosophy and that of Immanuel Kant. Like Kant, Mahan's moral theory was deontological. However, in contrast to Kant, Asa Mahan's realism entailed a deep respect for the intrinsic value of objects. This object-centered ethic called the human subject outside of the self. The subtleties of this moral philosophy found colloquial but profound expression when Mahan spoke, wrote, and acted against slavery.

People were (as Kant had insisted) ends in themselves. Yet slavery was not only wrong because it violated the law of self-legislating subjects. Slavery was wrong because it was the antithesis of the affirmation due to all people. The other is a real object of encounter and stands before us as a sacred subject. Mahan's abolitionist perspective moved beyond the prohibition of oppression and affirmed the value of all people.

Reason and Experience in the Philosophy of Asa Mahan

Asa Mahan was born on November 9, 1799, in Vernon, New York, and thus came of age among a religious populace warmed and worn out by revival fires. His upbringing matched the intensity of New York's "Burned Over District," and he was graduated first from Hamilton Col-

⁵Asa Mahan, *A Critical History of Philosophy*, in two volumes (London: Elliot Stock, 1883).

⁶I have developed this analysis in some detail in Christopher P. Momany, "The Fellowship of the Spirit/Intersubjectivity by Participation," *The Asbury Theological Journal*, 60:2 (Fall 2005), 75-84.

lege and then from Andover Seminary. In 1831 Mahan accepted the pastorate of Cincinnati's Sixth Presbyterian Church and also took on duties as a trustee of Lane Theological Seminary. His staunch support for the student anti-slavery movement at Lane brought him notice and considerable disdain.⁷ Mahan and many of the Lane abolitionists eventually moved to Oberlin, Ohio. Here Mahan served as president of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute from 1835-1850.

During Mahan's presidency, Oberlin was revered and reviled as a colony dedicated to social action, and such a college could not avoid the deeper questions of moral theory. Asa Mahan lived as both activist and advocate for uncompromising principles, and over the years his antebellum familiarity with Kant has drawn attention from intellectual historians and philosophers. Near the middle of the twentieth century, Charles M. Perry wrote: "Asa Mahan . . . at one time president of Oberlin College and later of Adrian, read Kant and his successors with shrewd intelligence, though after all his wanderings in forbidden territory he came safely back to Scottish common sense."⁸ This qualified appreciation for Kant was expressed late in Mahan's life when he criticized the consequentialist ethic of William Paley: "While we differ totally from Kant in the sphere of Philosophy, we are compelled to regard him as a far more correct and safer expounder of moral principles than Paley."⁹ Mahan could not embrace Kant's metaphysical superstructure, but he did like Kant's emphasis on unconditional obligation.

This sympathy with the Kantian ethic is apparent throughout Mahan's writing. The Oberlin president often employed Kant's language to strengthen an argument. This was especially true where the categorical imperative might bolster a moral claim. Mahan's 1848 *Science of Moral Philosophy* featured a lengthy excerpt from *The Metaphysic of Ethics*.¹⁰ The quote was almost certainly borrowed from J. W. Semple's 1836 translation, and Mahan's intimacy with the text demonstrates an early and seri-

⁷Edward H. Madden and James E. Hamilton, *Freedom and Grace: The Life of Asa Mahan* (Metuchen, N.J., & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1982), 26-51.

⁸Charles M. Perry, *Henry Philip Tappan: Philosopher and University President* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1933), 108.

⁹Asa Mahan, *A Critical History of Philosophy* (London: Elliot Stock, 1883), vol. 1, 280.

¹⁰Asa Mahan, *Science of Moral Philosophy*, 268-269.

ous consideration of Kant.¹¹ Even so, such references to moral theory do not tell the whole story.

Asa Mahan's first detailed treatment of Kant came in his 1840 *Abstract of a Course of Lectures on Mental and Moral Philosophy*. Here he categorized the two major schools that divided modern philosophy. Mahan termed the first the Sensual school, represented by the legacy of Locke. The second perspective he termed the Ideal or Transcendental school, represented by the tradition of Kant. Mahan cited Locke's dependence on experience for the derivation of ideas and Kant's conviction that necessary truths are not beholden to experience. The Oberlin president then proceeded to compare the respective positions.¹²

Mahan argued that both schools were, to some degree, right and wrong. He made his assessment clear by appealing to Victor Cousin's method of viewing ideas in either logical or chronological terms. This distinction was popularized through Caleb Sprague Henry's 1834 translation of Cousin's *Elements of Psychology*.¹³ Mahan did not buy everything contained in Cousin's eclecticism, but this particular examination of Locke seems to have had a profound influence on Oberlin epistemology. The Oberlin Collegiate Institute catalogue for 1836 listed Cousin's *Psychology* as required reading during the senior year.¹⁴

Mahan echoed Cousin by arguing that the idea of "body" can only be conceived on the condition of admitting "space." Space is logically antecedent to body. An idea is understood as chronologically antecedent of another when "in the order of actual development in the human mind, the former precedes the latter."¹⁵ According to Mahan, contingent ideas are the chronological antecedents of necessary, universal ideas. In this respect, Locke was correct. However, necessary and universal ideas are

¹¹Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysic of Ethics*, trans. J. W. Semple (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1836), 273-274.

¹²Asa Mahan, *Abstract of a Course of Lectures on Mental and Moral Philosophy* (Oberlin, Ohio: James Steele, 1840), 97-100.

¹³*Ibid.*, 99. Victor Cousin, *Elements of Psychology: Included in a Critical Examination of Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, trans. C. S. Henry (Hartford: Cooke and Company, 1834), 29-51.

¹⁴*Catalogue of the Trustees, Officers & Students of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute, Oberlin, 1836* (Cleveland: F. B. Penniman, Book and Job Printer, 1836), 22.

¹⁵Asa Mahan, *Abstract of a Course of Lectures on Mental and Moral Philosophy*, 99.

the logical antecedents of the contingent. In this respect, Kant was correct. Mahan's resolution may strike contemporary readers as simplistic, but its economy gave him a type of eloquence when considering metaphysical and epistemological questions.

The Oberlin president extended his investigation of these themes in *A System of Intellectual Philosophy*, published during 1845. His discussion of the interaction between *a priori* and empirical cognitions is pivotal. Mahan accepted Kant's basic distinction between reason and experience, but he did not accept that necessary ideas were in every way prior to experience. Under a section titled "Error of Kant," Mahan offered a scathing indictment: "All necessary ideas sustain to the contingent the relation of logical, while the latter sustain to the former the relation of chronological antecedents. It is the height of absurdity to represent the logical antecedent as the condition and ground of the existence of the chronological."¹⁶ Earlier in the *Intellectual Philosophy* Mahan had traced the implications of granting that necessary ideas had no experiential, chronological antecedents:

If these ideas are in the mind as logical antecedents of no empirical intuitions whatever, they are there as splendid conceptions to be sure, but with no claims whatever to objective validity—with no evidence that any corresponding realities exist. Yet as laws of thought, they determine our Understanding-conceptions pertaining to ourselves, the external universe, and the origin of each. Such notions, therefore, as far as they depend upon and receive their character from these ideas, have no claim to objective validity.¹⁷

From Asa Mahan's perspective, Kant's philosophy imploded under a self-defeating subjectivism. This judgment, though perhaps overstated, informed the next forty-five years of his thinking and writing.

By the time the American Civil War ended, Asa Mahan was president of Adrian College in Michigan. There he renewed his criticism of Immanuel Kant and made even more dramatic claims. In sum, Mahan concluded that all forms of idealism undermined social justice:

¹⁶Asa Mahan, *A System of Intellectual Philosophy* (New York: Saxton & Miles, 1845), 221-222.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 203.

If the universe is not a real, but only an ideal existence, the same must be held as true of all the individualities of which that universe is constituted, with all their apprehended relations to us. The family, the community, and the state are nothing in themselves. They are splendid creations of our own minds, and nothing else. The child begets the father, instead of the father the child, and the thing begotten is in reality, excepting as an idea, an absolute nonentity. The individual generates the community, and the subject the state, and the thing generated is a mere ideal unsubstantiality.¹⁸

Mahan's tireless efforts to eradicate slavery, his participation in the Underground Railroad, and his heartbreaking loss of a son in the Civil War moved his argument beyond abstraction. He wrote that a person "must be convicted of holding *realities* in chains, before he [or she] can be bound by the requirement, 'Sunder the bonds of oppression and let the oppressed go free.'"¹⁹ Kant's insight regarding necessary truths was brilliant, but it lacked credibility around the relationship between moral principle and experience. Asa Mahan desired a more integrated philosophy, and this predilection fueled an ethic that emphasized both the knowing subject and the known object of moral action.

The Foundation of Obligation

Kant's moral philosophy has become virtually synonymous with the modern concept of autonomy.²⁰ This autonomy (law of the self) is placed in notorious contrast with heteronomy (other or strange law) throughout the Kantian corpus. Yet the correspondence between autonomy and Kant's subject-centered metaphysic has not always received sufficient scrutiny. The *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* includes a detailed discussion of the contrast between autonomy and heteronomy, and the differentiation is rooted in subject/object relations. Kant wrote:

¹⁸Asa Mahan, *The Science of Natural Theology; or, God the Unconditioned Cause, and God the Infinite and Perfect, As Revealed in Creation* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1867), 301.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 302-303.

²⁰See, for instance, J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

If the will seeks the law that is to determine it *anywhere else* than in the fitness of its maxims for its own making of universal law—if therefore in going beyond itself it seeks this law in the character of any of its objects—the result is always *heteronomy*.²¹

A heteronomy of the will—that is, a will determined by the character of its object—was identified with hypothetical imperatives, while only a proper autonomy could ground the categorical imperative.²² For Kant, an object-centered ethic opened itself to alien, contingent influence and motivation. A subject-centered ethic remained true to itself.

Asa Mahan's conviction around proper motivation of the will departed markedly from the philosophy of Kant. The college president had no qualms about affirming the role of objects in moral action. Among Mahan's personal notebooks, we find the following statement: "All objects known to us esteemed according to their intrinsic worth."²³ The brevity of this comment may mask its import, but Mahan's subsequent notes reveal the implications. Under a discussion of the will's ultimate intention, he wrote: "When the will acts relatively to any object, and the reason for such action is found in the object, and not in anything aside from it, such action is ultimate."²⁴ The value of known objects determined Asa Mahan's moral philosophy.

This object-centered ethic received formal endorsement in Mahan's *Abstract of a Course of Lectures on Mental and Moral Philosophy*:

All the principles and precepts of the moral law are comprehended in these two, namely: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and "thy neighbor as thyself." These two precepts, it will be readily perceived, are based upon one other, upon which every principle of moral rectitude, real or conceivable, does and must depend, namely, this: *That every object known to a moral agent, be esteemed by him [or her] according to its intrinsic worth.*

²¹Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), 108.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Asa Mahan, "Manuscript Writings, Miscellaneous," Archives, Shipman Library, Adrian College.

²⁴ *ibid.*

If the question be asked, Why ought God to be the object of supreme regard?, the answer, and the only answer, is: His intrinsic excellence is greater than any or all other objects. If it be asked: Why ought we to love our neighbor as ourselves?, the only answer that can be given is this: his [or her] interest is of the same intrinsic value as ours. Nothing is to be esteemed by us because it is ours, but on account of its intrinsic worth.²⁵

Mahan's most exhaustive statement relating to the foundation of obligation and the intrinsic value of objects appeared in his *Science of Moral Philosophy*. Curiously, the object-centered emphasis was situated among a meandering indictment of teleological ethics, including the position of Mahan's Oberlin colleague Charles Finney. There were but two options when considering first principles: a subject-centered consequentialism that sought to manipulate outcomes, or an object-centered deontology that yielded to the value of reality beyond the self. Mahan did not examine the way his emphasis on intrinsic worth, while indebted to Kant, arose from contrasting metaphysical convictions.

When considering the reasons for moral obligation, Mahan described the two possibilities in subject/object terms: "The first is the *perceived tendency* of willing to produce the end. The second is the relation of willing to the *intrinsic character* of the end itself, or the object of the intention."²⁶ Mahan's summation leaves no doubt regarding his framing of the issue:

If we are conscious of any thing, we are of this fact, that the great reason in view of which obligation is affirmed is objective and not subjective. In other words, obligation is affirmed in view of the nature and character of the objects presented to the will for its election, and not in view of the tendency of willing itself.²⁷

In short, Asa Mahan endorsed ethical principles remarkably akin to those of Immanuel Kant, but from the mirror opposite of metaphysical positions.

Several questions remain unanswered concerning the way in which Mahan's ethic really deviated from Kant. For instance, Kant's subject-

²⁵Asa Mahan, *Abstract of a Course of Lectures on Mental and Moral Philosophy*, 208.

²⁶Asa Mahan, *Science of Moral Philosophy*, 79.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 81.

centered philosophy can be considered vague with respect to its definition of objects. Were objects realities outside the self that might include persons or merely ends and goals of moral action? Likewise, Mahan critiqued teleological views because they collapse all moral reasoning into the calculation of ends, but the relationship between the intrinsic value of ends as objects and the intrinsic value of persons is not entirely clear. What can be said is this: Kant understood his philosophy in terms of self-legislating subjects, while Mahan grounded his approach in the value of objects. The two poles of concern presented a kind of competing moral gravity dividing the two perspectives.

Asa Mahan's emphasis on the intrinsic value of objects invites particular scrutiny around his axiology of persons. One might argue that Kant's subjective ethic unleashed the anthropocentrism of modernity. Did Mahan's objective ethic disregard persons and perhaps even provide a rationale for the objectification of people? Nothing could be further from the truth. Mahan's passion for objective value found its most eloquent expression in a defense of human dignity. People were understood as beings of inestimable objective worth. This view maintained that others possess a value beyond subjective interests. When pressed to define this value, Mahan was more than willing to celebrate an appropriate subjectivity.

This objectively anchored subjectivity expressed a critical facet of the moral law. Considered subjectively, law was understood as an idea in the intelligence. Considered objectively, law was understood as action in conformity with that idea.²⁸ According to Mahan, the lower orders of creation always act in conformity with laws, but "these laws, however, exist in them only objectively."²⁹ In contrast, law exists both objectively and subjectively among humanity.³⁰ This is a distinction in kind between persons and other orders of creation, not a mere difference of degree.³¹ An objectively grounded subjectivity reveals the Divine image in which humanity was created.³²

The theoretical consideration of subject/object relations shaped Mahan's language around government. A cursory reading of the college

²⁸Asa Mahan, *Abstract of a Course of Lectures on Mental and Moral Philosophy*, 85.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 191.

³⁰*Ibid.* Asa Mahan, *Science of Moral Philosophy*, 26.

³¹Asa Mahan, *A System of Intellectual Philosophy*, 289.

³²*Ibid.*, 290.

president's political views might miss their deeper meaning. Mahan defined government as a lawful institution that existed for the benefit of the governed. Tyranny was conceived as a relationship of power where "subjects cease to be subjects. They become things."³³ The reference to people as subjects is no accident. This is not patronizing terminology but a philosophical designation of respect. Mahan defined slavery as the "perfection of tyranny" because under such oppression subjects become "things."³⁴

The philosophical framing of the slavery issue gave Mahan's social activism a precision lacking in other reformers. Mahan offered the following statement in an 1846 manifesto: "Every individual, for example, wholly misapprehends the anti-slavery movement, one of the great leading movements of the age, who does not contemplate it in the light of the eternal and immutable distinction between a *person* and a *thing*."³⁵ For Asa Mahan, people were objectively known subjects of moral action, and this truth demanded that human dignity determine relationships.

The Case of Contemporary Human Trafficking

Today it is estimated that 27 million people are held in slavery throughout the world.³⁶ This statement may be jarring and unrelated to discourse about metaphysics and epistemology. However, such is not the case.

Documented forms of contemporary slavery vary. Many instances fall within a worldwide system of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Other expressions reveal a proliferation of bonded labor. In areas torn by civil war, children are often forced to serve as soldiers. The United States is not above the problem. Cases of slavery have been exposed in a variety of American enterprises, from the restaurant and service industries to individualized arrangements of domestic help. According to the U. S. government, somewhere between 14,500 and 17,500 people are trafficked

³³Asa Mahan, *Abstract of a Course of Lectures on Mental and Moral Philosophy*, 234.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵Asa Mahan, "Certain Fundamental Principles, Together with their Applications," *Oberlin Quarterly Review*, Article 35 (November 1846): 228.

³⁶David Batstone, *Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade—and How We Can Fight It* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007), 1. This figure may not be precise, given the difficulty of documenting such abuse, but it does reflect serious research that is widely cited among human rights organizations.

each year into the United States. Roughly 80 percent of trafficking victims are female, and 70 percent of female victims are pressed into the commercial sex industry.³⁷

Some will dismiss the description of these relationships as slavery. David Batstone notes: “Many people bristle to hear the word *slave* used to describe the modern practice of exploitation. Deeply engrained in the collective psyche of western culture is the notion that slavery ended in the nineteenth century.”³⁸ Yet, how should we describe conditions where people are abducted or enticed through lies, forced to work without pay, and prevented from ever leaving?

This practice is not new and it thrives in the upheaval of a changing global economy. People are the product. It is hard to imagine a more explicit form of commodification. Twentieth-century forms of collectivism deserved their collapse, but they were supplanted by predatory market practices. Marxist utopianism demonstrated little concern for the value of people, and neither does capitalist excess.

Once individuals grasp the characteristics of human trafficking, the response is almost always revulsion. In fact, public reaction to contemporary slavery might be described as multi-partisan outrage. Those otherwise engaged in conflicting social views find common ground regarding this issue. It is not acceptable to buy, sell, and own people.

One might ask whether our culture’s rationalizing metaphysical and epistemological trends have invited the very abuse we find so shocking. If worth is a matter of personal perception, does it really matter when the other is treated as a thing? Some would argue that subject-centered perspectives excuse self-absorbed behavior. I argue that they certainly fail to provide a sufficient reason for affirming the value of others.

Wesleyans will recall the founder of Methodism’s condemnation of slavery. Mr. Wesley’s multifaceted argument included a strong emphasis on the intrinsic value of people. His 1774 “Thoughts Upon Slavery” closed by naming a shared human nature.³⁹ This perspective was not

³⁷U. S. Government, *Assessment of U. S. Government Activities to Combat Trafficking in Persons* (Washington, D. C.: June 2004), 9-10.

³⁸David Batstone, *Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade—and How We Can Fight It*, 4-5.

³⁹*The Works of John Wesley*, Third Edition, ed., Thomas Jackson, Vol. XI, *Thoughts, Addresses, Prayers, Letters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986), 79.

without its philosophical grounding. Despite Wesley's documented appreciation for John Locke, there are telling reservations among his "Remarks Upon Mr. Locke's 'Essay on Human Understanding.'" Where Locke claimed that the boundaries of the species were created by humanity, Wesley countered: "No; by the almighty Creator."⁴⁰ Identity and value are givens, not constructions. Asa Mahan knew this, too. Today, many human rights workers are calling for a new abolitionist movement. Such a movement will require considered metaphysical and epistemological claims. Perhaps it is time to revisit the philosophy of Asa Mahan.

⁴⁰*The Works of John Wesley*, Third Edition, ed., Thomas Jackson, Vol. XIII, *Letters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986), 461.

PROCESS THEOLOGY RESOURCES FOR AN OPEN AND RELATIONAL CHRISTOLOGY

by

Michael Zbaraschuk

As Wesleyan thinkers continue to refine their approaches to the theological world, both process thought and open theism are making the case to be conceptual theological options. John Cobb and Marjorie Suchocki, as United Methodist ministers and thinkers, have explicitly laid claim to and sought to influence the Wesleyan theological heritage. Clark Pinnock, speaking for open theists everywhere, has famously claimed that “Wesley is our Reformer.”¹ In the author’s opinion, much of what will influence those in the Wesleyan and Holiness traditions will be to the degree that the various approaches will resonate with the Christian commitments of their members. This is especially true when it comes to thinking about the doctrine of Christ and its implications for other parts of Christian faith.

In that vein, this paper seeks to explore some of the affinities and differences between process theology and open and relational theology, with relation to Christology. In examining the topic, I would like to share Tom Oord’s claim that “a glance at the core notions of open theism when compared with the core notions of process theologies suggests that affinities are many and the prospect for mutual transformation promising.”²

¹Clark H. Pinnock, Address to the inaugural section of the Open and Relational Theism Consultation at the AAR, 2003.

²Thomas J. Oord, in *Handbook of Process Theology* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2006), 259. Later in the paper I will examine my own reluctance to whole-heartedly believe this claim.

One of the more interesting prospects for transformation is in the doctrine of Christ—who and what Jesus Christ was and is. It is interesting to note that much of the open and relational theology movement has not dealt with Christology proper. Providence, God’s power, prayer, theological method, science and religion, and even (to a lesser degree) religious pluralism have been reflected upon, but there have been few (if any) specific treatments of the doctrine of Christ. Process theologians, on the contrary, have made Christology a central focus of their work. This paper will first survey the scant work of the open and relation theologians on the doctrine of Christ (and find it wanting), explore the work of various process theologians on the doctrine of Christ, and then pick out the incarnational and relational strands of the process theologians’ work and use them to construct a preliminary open and relational Christology.

Open and Relational Christology: Surprisingly Orthodox

Let us first turn to the open and relational theologians to see if a preliminary doctrine of Christ can be distilled from their works. As mentioned above, there are no specific treatments of Christ from any of the leading open and relational theologians. There are several articles that critique open and relational theology for having an “inadequate” Christology—an “adequate” Christology being defined in terms of creedal orthodoxy. But there are no major articles or books that offer a large-scale treatment of open and relational Christology.

It would not, however, be fair to assume that Christology does not play a role in the thinking and activity of open and relational theologians. On the contrary, Jesus and Christ are central to many of their arguments about other theological topics. As one example, when talking about the Biblical support for open theism, Richard Rice makes his case by appeal to the fact that “Jesus’ life most clearly revealed the nature and character of God” and that “[n]ot only what Jesus taught about God, then, but he way he manifested God in his treatment of people, in particular the underserving and the unwanted, provides powerful indications that God is deeply sensitive and responsive to human experience.”³ Again, he notes that “the center of Christian faith, the life and death of Jesus, thus supports the idea that God is intimately involved in the creaturely world and experiences it in a dynamic way.”⁴ Rice uses these Christological cap-

³Rice in *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 43.

⁴Ibid., 45.

stones as the final touch on his argument that the Bible supports the ideas of open theism.

In the same way, Clark Pinnock uses Christological examples to point to the adequacy of open theism in the area of systematic theology. For example, he points to the fact that God's dynamic interrelatedness with the world was "... present in theology, particularly in dealing with a subject like the incarnation," noting that "the doctrine of the incarnation requires nuanced thinking about God's immutability."⁵ In addressing the power of God in another context, he also points out that God manifests his power paradoxically in the cross of Christ and that the cross reveals that love rather than almighty power is the primary perfection of God. Again, who Jesus Christ is and what he does, the classical formula for Christology, are seen as definitive for discussions of the divine nature and power. Christology is once again seen as the final word on the subject.

One final example from the area of open theism's philosophical reflection will make this point as well. William Hasker, in discussing the inadequacies of the doctrine of God's timelessness, criticizes the view from a variety of considerations of Christian life and spirituality—how can God act or know "as the scriptures say he does? . . . How can respond when his children turn to him in prayer and obedience?" And here Hasker delivers the *coup de grace* "And above all, if God is timeless and incapable of change, how can God be born, grow up, live with and among people, suffer and die, as we believe he did as incarnated in Jesus?"⁶ Once again, Christology is an interpretive key for other matters—philosophical questions of time and change.

In all of these examples as well as many others, there is both substantive and rhetorical (Christ is always the third and final example) weight given to Christology as normative for interpreting other theological topics. Why, then, has there been no extended reflection on the topic itself? This is especially puzzling in light of the fact that creedal Christology is dependent on an understanding of "substance," and given the orientation of open theologians to an ontology of events. Why no sustained open and relational Christology? Why has this topic not been given the same theological overhaul as the doctrine of God, or providence, or science and religion?

⁵Clark H. Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," in *The Openness of God*, 106.

⁶Hasker, in *The Openness of God*, 128.

I think the answer fundamentally lies in the fact that, by and large, open and relational thinkers tend to come from the ranks of evangelical Christianity. As Tyron Inbody points out, evangelical Christians tend to accept (relatively uncritically) as normative the statements of the New Testament about who Jesus was and also tend to accept (again, relatively uncritically) the Christological formulations of Nicea and Chalcedon.⁷ Additionally, given the interest in soteriology to the exclusion of almost all else in thinking about who Jesus is and was, evangelicals often take this doctrine as “settled” rather than look upon it as needing explication or revision. Succinctly, for the evangelicals that make up most of the open and relational theists, the doctrine is closed. I think that much of what draws open theists to their positions on God’s power, or providence, or relation to the world, however, would also benefit a re-examination of Christological assumptions and formulations.

Process Theology: Incarnational, Relational Threads in a “Modern” Tapestry

Process theology, on the other hand, has spent much time and effort on Christology. Indeed, most of the major thinkers of the movement have, because of the twin poles of Christian identity and a philosophical commitment to process thought,⁸ produced works on Christology. From the earlier works of Meland, Wieman, and Pittenger, to the more extended treatments of Cobb, Griffin, and Suchocki, who Jesus Christ was and is and what he did and does has remained an important emphasis in process theology. We will examine each of these thinkers briefly in order to “mine” their thought to see how it fits with an open and relational view, and then see if they can be useful to an open and relational Christology.

It is not too much to note that two of the foundational figures in process thought, Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, were both the sons of Anglican clergyman. Christianity, especially in its Anglican forms, has always had a profound influence on 20th and 21st century process thinking. Indeed, for both Whitehead and Hartshorne, their own

⁷Note Inbody, *The Many Faces of Christology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 69-89; see also Stephen T. Davis, “Jesus Christ: Savior or Guru?” in *Encountering Jesus: a Debate on Christology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 39-59.

⁸For example, one of Norman Pittenger’s many books is called *Process Thought and Christian Faith* (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

work in metaphysics and social thought have “Christological keys,” in that they hold that the Christological doctrines of the church have metaphysical implications that are only seen more fully later, and indeed are the place at which their own metaphysical principles are seen most clearly.⁹ Even with their own basis in explicitly Christian thinking, however, neither Whitehead nor Hartshorne offer enough specific Christological reflection to be appropriated by open and relational theists. It fell to their successors in process theology to do the Christological work that can be of value to open and relational theologians, and thus we will examine those successors more closely to see what they have to offer.

The first generation of process theology was based at the University of Chicago and rooted not only in process thought but also in “modernist” Christianity. As such, it will probably not have much that will be appropriated by an open and relational Christology. Henry Nelson Weiman and Bernard Loomer, while certainly Christian in their thinking and work, are also “modernist” to the core and their work reflects those commitments as well. Weiman’s characterization of Jesus as the catalyst for the “creative event of Christianity” which revealed the “source of human good,” while clearly based in Jesus life, death, and resurrection, will probably not have too much to say to evangelically-oriented thinkers. Most will not want to say that “what rose from the dead was not the man Jesus; it was creative power.”¹⁰

In the same manner, Bernard Meland’s attempt to “express the full Christian evangel within the contemporary idiom [of modernity]”¹¹ is also thoroughly couched in modernist terms. Thus Meland’s point that “The Christ event was a revelatory moment in history, summoning the motives, the intellectual vision, and imagination of men [sic] to a new center of focus”¹² which creates a new form of culture and “new social energy” will probably be seen by open and relational theologians as less than the full expression of Jesus’ person and work. However sensitively observed

⁹See Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, Part V (N.Y.: Free Press, 1979), 520ff, and Charles Hartshorne, *Reality and Social Thought* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1953), especially 24ff and 146ff.

¹⁰Henry Nelson Wieman, *The Source of Human Good*, in *Process Theology*, ed. by Cousins (NY: Newman Press, 1971), 223.

¹¹Bernard Meland, “The New Creation,” in *Process Theology*, ed. by Cousins, 192.

¹²*Ibid.*, 193.

and creatively described, Jesus was for these thinkers a man among men, specially revelatory of God's intention towards all people, and even in some sense bringing God's will about, but not "very God from very God," or "of one substance with the Father."

The work of Norman Pittenger is a curious exception here. For open theists with an incarnational, Anglo-catholic orientation, Pittenger will probably be a revelation. He is somewhat of an "in-between" figure in process thought—not trained at Chicago or Claremont, Anglican rather than Methodist, and primarily oriented to an Anglo-American church audience rather than an American academic one. His grasp of the developments in process-oriented thought in the Church of England, for example, is important.¹³ Additionally, his ease with talking about the person and work Christ in a context in which Christian faith and language are the norm (rather than the exception or something to be explained) could make it easy to share his insights into the person and work of Christ. For those open and relational theists who share those orientations, he will be very useful in talking about an open and relational Christology. In many senses, Pittenger's work is a straightforward incarnational Christology described in relational terms.¹⁴ There is much to recommend it to open and relational theists. Some political considerations (Pittenger supported consecrated unions for gay people in the church as early as the 1970s, for example) may make it difficult for his work to be appreciated and appropriated by those in more conservative evangelical contexts. But the incarnational emphasis as a key to understanding God through Christ will be a thread we will return to as we attempt to construct an open and relational Christology.

While those earlier process theologians worked out their Christological formulations in light of the theological modernism and Church politics that were their context, the later ones thought about Christology in relation to existentialism, liberation movements, feminism, and the philosophy of religion, as well as more sustained reflection on relational philosophy (mostly their own reflection, in the case of Cobb, Griffin, and Suchocki). Schubert Ogden, for example, constructs and maintains an

¹³See Norman Pittenger, *The Word Incarnate* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 172-173; and *Process Thought and Christian Faith* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968), 6-10.

¹⁴Pittenger, *The Word Incarnate*.

almost entirely existentialist Christology, contrasting it with liberation and other Christologies. Open and relational theologians will probably have as much use for Ogden as they have for Rudolf Bultmann.¹⁵

With Cobb, Griffin, and Suchocki, however, we come to the most sustained and explicit Christological reflection in the world of process theology. Cobb's *Christ in a Pluralistic Age*, along with his revisions in *Encountering Jesus: A Debate on Christology*, constitute the definitive statement for many process theologians. In naming Christ as creative transformation or as the Logos, Cobb takes himself one step beyond Wiman's notion of Christ as the creative advance of human society, and affirms Christ as creative transformation as such, in all aspects of reality. Cobb also rethinks the notion of Christ as creative transformation in that Christ is also the suffering one *and* is also Sophia, the wisdom of God. Cobb explicitly interprets these reformulations as making his own Christology more Trinitarian.¹⁶

Another classic process Christological formula is that of David Griffin. *A Process Christology*, based on Griffin's dissertation, is both an historical and a systematic re-grounding of the doctrine of Christ in modern theology and process thought. After discussing Christologies from Schleiermacher through Bultmann to Tillich and H. Richard Niebuhr, Griffin characterizes Jesus as "God's decisive revelation," understood as such because "the vision of reality expressed through his sayings and actions is the supreme expression of God's character, purpose, and mode of agency, and is therefore appropriately apprehended as the decisive revelation of the same."¹⁷ Griffin holds, *contra* the existentialism of Ogden, that Jesus is God's supreme act not only because we recognize him as such, but because he *really is* God's supreme act.¹⁸ Note, however, that Jesus differs from other human beings, with Schleiermacher and other

¹⁵This is not to say that existential analysis is not still *the* point in Christology, only that a Heideggerian or Bultmannian analysis may not "ring true" in many open and relational contexts.

¹⁶See Cobb, "Christ Beyond Creative Transformation," in *Encountering Jesus* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 153.

¹⁷Griffin, *A Process Christology*, 2nd edition (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1973, 1990), 231-2.

¹⁸Here is where Griffin's rationalism leads him to make what seems to me to be unverifiable statements. In an open universe, who can say that God's supreme act has already occurred? Why is it not in the future?

moderns, to such a degree that it amounts to a difference in kind. Indeed, there is a striking continuity between Jesus being the one in which the God-consciousness is supremely felt and the one in which the divine aims are fully realized. In this sense, Griffin's view is as thoroughly modern as those of Meland and Wieman before him.

There is much within David Ray Griffin and John B. Cobb's views that will be hard for open and relational theologians to appropriate. The identification of Christ with "creative transformation," however it is couched in terms of the *Logos* or creative suffering, will probably sound too much like Weiman or Meland to have much resonance with many in the evangelical camp. Griffin's Schleiermacherian solution of making the difference between Jesus and the rest of humanity a difference in degree of the consciousness of God or of the divine aims will also probably also be met with a chilly reception. Most open and relational theologians will want their Christ to more fully participate in the divine life than Griffin's. However, there are several emphases in both Cobb's and Griffin's doctrines of Christ that can be appropriated by open and relational thinkers. First, the general process notion of God is one of realism, and God's activity in Christ is real as well—both in Christian life and in the world more generally. Indeed, Cobb's Logos/Sophia incarnational Christology shares with Pittenger the more classical Christian notion of God's general activity in the world (for Cobb, creative transformation, however couched) as not only revealed by Christ but as effected by Christ as well. Griffin, too, shares this notion of Christ as an ongoing, active presence in the world.¹⁹ This ongoing affirmation of Christ's active presence in the world is one that open and relational theologians will certainly affirm and perhaps develop further.

Another aspect of Cobb's Christology of creative transformation that will be of interest to open and relational theologians is his insistence on taking seriously not only the biblical accounts of Jesus, but also the history of the doctrine of Christ and the associated issues at stake in the discussion, while interpreting them in light of an open view of God and God's activities. For example, his insistence on understanding orthodoxy as right doctrine, rather than "the beliefs that have been most commonly held and insisted upon by the greatest number of respected past thinkers of the church"²⁰ and his strong defense of orthodoxy in this sense can also

¹⁹See *A Process Christology*, 242.

²⁰Cobb, "Beyond Creative Transformation," in *Encountering Jesus*, 174.

be appreciated and appropriated in terms of an open and relational Christology.

We now turn from Cobb and Griffin to the thinker with the most to offer to open and relational thinkers in terms of Christological reflection, Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki. In her *God Christ Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology*, Suchocki takes the essential vision espoused by Griffin and Cobb (there is no substantial difference, except perhaps in clarity, between them) and couches it explicitly in terms of Christian experience, life and doctrine. Speaking of the dependence of Christian theology upon the Bible, she points out that process theologians have often left “this dependence implicit, primarily drawing upon it explicitly when illustrating the unique compatibility between its philosophical vision of God and dynamic, relational biblical vision.”

She then goes on to show her own theology’s explicit dependence on the “biblical notions of Jesus.”²¹ This more Bible-oriented focus of her work, and the way in which the biblical understanding of Jesus permeates her process view of God is one area where open and relational theologians can learn much from this process thinker. Another area where Suchocki’s more Biblically-oriented process thought can share with open and relational theists is in her emphasis on love and justice. These certainly are themes that she shares with Griffin and Cobb, but for Suchocki, again, they are more explicitly related to Jesus. In Suchocki’s formulation, the orientation of the Hebrew Scriptures to justice, and the stories about Jesus oriented to love within that framework of justice, ground her Christology in both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, and will thus resonate more with open and relational theists.

In addition to her emphasis on love and justice as revealed and incarnated in Jesus’ life, she also explicitly talks about Jesus crucified: “we cannot adequately account for the judging and transforming power of the love manifested in Jesus without looking at the cross, too, as a revelation of God.”²² What, then, is revealed by the cross for Suchocki? It is the constancy and the strength of God’s love: “God in love endures the pain of death, and . . . God’s love is unconquered by death.”²³ In addition to

²¹Marjorie Suchocki, *God Christ Church* (NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), 88.

²²*Ibid.*, 103.

²³*Ibid.*, 106.

testifying to the strength of God's love, the cross also reveals the pain of God: "The dreadful truth revealed in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is that the world crucifies God."²⁴ The attention to the reality of tragedy and pain in the world and in God, and the continuing love of God in the midst of that pain is something that can also be effectively mined by open and relational theists.

The final section in Suchocki's *God Christ Church* that will be of interest to open and relational theologians is in her emphasis on the resurrected Christ as deeply important for understanding the person and work. Intriguingly, she notes that the resurrection is less spoken about than its effects,²⁵ especially in the ongoing presence of Christ in the church. She also holds that the scars of Jesus show that pain and death are not totally overcome, but are present in the resurrection. And, additionally, she notes that while the resurrection is hidden, "the results of it are given to the world through the providence of God for the world."²⁶ One final description will show why Suchocki's view will be fruitful for open and relational Christology: "Jesus expresses the nature of God through his life, crucifixion, and resurrection, taking the revelation progressively deeper until finally we are led, not simply to a description of God but to the mystery of God as God. And that mystery is an inexhaustible love, manifested in a power that both confirms and transforms the world."²⁷ An open and relational Christology will do well to take into account such a view that maintains God's universal love, God's ongoing care for the world, and the open future that are the strength of open and relational theism in general.

Suchocki can be thought of as the Pittenger to Cobb and Griffin's Meland and Wieman—speaking the language of Christianity as the norm, rather than something to be explained to the modern or postmodern world. I expect that much of the ability of open and relational theists to appropriate the categories and work of process theologians will depend upon how such work can be characterized—as growing out of the Christian tradition, or out of forms of modern or postmodern thought. I do not know if process thought is irrevocably tarred by the liberal brush for evangelicals. This is why I am less optimistic than Tom Oord about the

²⁴Ibid., 110.

²⁵Ibid., 113.

²⁶Ibid., 115.

²⁷Ibid., 117.

possibilities of mutual transformation, although, as I mentioned, I would *like* to share such a view.²⁸

Woven into an Open and Relational Christology

Pulling out the relational and incarnational strands epitomized by Pittenger and Suchocki, and couching their understandings as fully within the Christian and Wesleyan tradition, can lead us towards a better characterization of the nature, person, and work of Christ in open and relational theology. I will couch my constructive efforts in three emphases that come out of this encounter with process thought: First, a thoroughly incarnational, suffering Christ and divine power; second, the question of eschatology and evil in relation to this same suffering, incarnational Christ; and, third, the question of salvation in this open, relational Christ—both for Christians and for members of other religions.

First, we turn to the question of divine power. The question of divine power has been dealt with exhaustively (and exhaustingly) by open and relational theologians, but mostly from either a philosophical orientation (for example, what is logically possible for God—does God have middle knowledge, etc?) or from a question of interpreting the variety of Biblical discussions of divine activity (most specifically, the various accounts of divine activity in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Christian Greek Scriptures being notoriously short on *unmediated* divine activity). As mentioned above, much of the discourse tends to use Christological examples, but does not (to my reading) take Christ as the clearest revelation of the divine nature and activity. Here is where Pittenger's and Suchocki's examples are of most use for open and relational (and Wesleyan) thinkers. For this very Christian way of thinking, God's primary mode of activity is incarnational, which is necessarily limited, cooperative, partial, dependent, and open to failure and defeat. If the divine word of love becomes flesh, it can be (and has been and is!) crucified and risen, again and again and again. If this is the clearest revelation of divine power, then all notions of God's sovereignty are psychological projections of the totality and immediacy of the experience of salvation, not expressions of the way things are in the world. A powerful personal experience of God's saving

²⁸See, for example, Gary Dorrien's essay where he characterizes process thought as primarily liberal and progressive, and conservative evangelicals as primarily espousing conservative orthodoxy. Dorrien, Gary, "American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, Decline, Renewal, Ambiguity," <http://www.crosscurrents.org/dorrien200506.htm>.

activity does not trump the divine revelation of the crucified God in Christ.

Such an understanding of God's power and activity as incarnational has much to offer to the question of evil, specifically, the question of overcoming evil as part of the work of God in Christ. Again, the question of evil has motivated process and open and relational thinkers alike, but open and relational thinkers have often not taken an incarnational Christological viewpoint to inform their conclusions on the topic.²⁹ From this viewpoint, the question of evil becomes one of a question of engaging in the struggle against it, of cooperating with the divine word of love which is continually trying to be made flesh in all that is, but which is continually being betrayed and crucified (just look around!). The incarnational God, revealed in Christ, has not defeated evil in the past, is not defeating it today, and may not defeat it in the future. To affirm, against the primary Christological understanding, that the word made flesh will never experience crucifixion again, seems unbiblical, unempirical, and illogical. Christ is continuously being born, in the world and in the church (and, as I will argue in the next section, in the other religions as well). Does the flesh cooperate with the word? Even unto death? Even after the resurrection, the cycle begins again. The resurrected Jesus still has scars. Incarnation is, after all, the primary, dominant, governing revelation of God for Christians. Any divine triumphalism (even if supported by a Bible text or any sort of reasoning from one or several of them), is unwarranted in the face of Jesus on the cross.

And, finally, this relational, incarnational understanding of the divine activity in the world will have an effect on an open and relational Christology in the question of salvation—what is salvation for Christians in this sense? And what does salvation mean for the members of other religious traditions? These two questions may be very different existentially, but conceptually they are closely tied together. First, the question of salvation in Christianity—it simply means further and further cooperation with the living word of God, trying to literally become love enfleshed. However one wants to split it into categories of justification and sanctification, grace prevenient or otherwise, it is always an ongoing, emerging, incomplete process, a journey towards and into God. This will have personal, interpersonal, social, ecological, and cosmic aspects (as well as

²⁹Unlike Pittenger or Cobb in this respect.

aspects that are beyond my understanding, surely), all of which are inter-related to one another and are parts of the whole ongoing incarnational activity of God in the world. Salvation is being in tune with this process. It is here that the question of other religious traditions rears its head. Is this process Christological? Are there other processes?³⁰

A seriously incarnational Christology will have the view that the other traditions are also aspects of God's activity in the world, like the processes of nature and the workings of culture in general. As I mentioned above, this Christology will view no real difference in kind between God's activity in Christianity and God's activity in Buddhism or Islam or Judaism. All of them are partial, incomplete, incarnating (and failing to incarnate) the divine purposes for the world. While this process is *understood* Christologically for Christians, it is not *dependent* on Jesus or the Christ-event in any way. Jesus as the Christ is the *revelation* of God, our best understanding of what God is doing all the time anyway.

I would at this point interject that an existential Christian understanding will probably understand other religious traditions as different aspects of the divine love made flesh around us, while at the same time acknowledging that those other traditions will probably reject such a characterization of themselves as an imperialistic misunderstanding. I see no real way around this dilemma, but I do not think that this incarnational view is necessarily the root of a prejudiced and judgmental attitude to the other religions. In fact, viewing those other traditions as aspects of the divine activity means that they need to be treated with the utmost respect, the expression of which will most often be a confession of ignorance and the willingness to learn things that are not within the Christian tradition. If a Christian really believes that Islam or Buddhism is the fruit of the ongoing divine activity in the world, for example, then respect, good will, and an attempt to understand and to learn will be the reaction to it, rather than an attempt to find the parts where it disagrees with whatever version of Christianity that person happens to be a member of at this particular time.³¹ It is, after all, God's activity. The Christian's job is to appreciate, not criticize, those other traditions.

³⁰This is loosely the question of inclusivism vs. pluralism in inter-religious dialogue. I reject exclusivism out of hand—divine incarnate love does not condemn the fruit of its own activity.

³¹I am indebted to Marjorie Suchocki for this insight, as for so many others. See her *Divinity and Diversity* (Abingdon Press, 2005).

Wesleyan Implications and Thoughts for the Future

As mentioned above, process theologians and open and relational theists have been vying for greater spheres of influence in the Wesleyan and Holiness worlds for many years. Those in the Holiness and Wesleyan traditions are serious about their Christianity, willing to defy the magisterial Reformers on the question of the freedom of the will, sanctification, cooperation with divine grace, and other doctrines; and also willing to defy the societal status quo on questions of social justice, lifestyle, and other ethical concerns. Again, one of the author's core convictions is that the amount of influence in the Wesleyan world that these conceptual schemes will have will be directly related to how they are understood as foundationally Christian.

I have argued that the incarnational Christology of the process theologians is truly Christian, and, when understood as the dominant revelation of God, will have implications for understanding the power of God, the question of evil, and the question of salvation, both within and outside of Christianity. I hope that open and relational thinkers will consider these theological reflections as an invitation to revisit their theological reflection, making Christ the center, rather than the periphery, of their ongoing thinking on these and other important theological issues. I also hope that Wesleyan thinkers will continue in their stubbornly independent and Christian path, and will consider these contributions from the process theological camp as what they are: further attempts to understand and live out the revelation of God in Christ in and for and to the world.

HEART OF A RADICAL REFORM: CHRISTOLOGY AND THE CHURCH OF GOD MOVEMENT (ANDERSON)

by

Barry L. Callen

The Church of God movement (Anderson) is both a holiness-rooted and free-church tradition that emerged in the midst of the American Holiness Movement of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The dual sources of this movement's heritage are the Wesleyan and the "Radical" or Believers Church traditions (see Callen, 1999). The primary pioneer, Daniel S. Warner (1842-1895), had been influenced theologically by the earlier reforming work of John Winebrenner (Kern, 1974). Once Warner became separated from the Winebrennerians, mostly because of his embracing and vigorous preaching of Christian holiness, he and others who gravitated to the same theological and ecclesial concerns became "come-outers," even from the formal expressions of the Holiness Movement (Callen, 1995).

The separatist impulse came from a perception of what should be the natural results of the embracing of Christian holiness. Daniel Warner, "after being challenged by his respective church [Winebrennerian] on the issue of holiness evangelism, sought to apply the logic of Christian perfectionism, with all the ultraistic inclinations of the perfectionist mentality, to the church question" (Dieter, 1980, 246). Warner became convinced that both believers and the church itself should be holy—meaning for Warner that it must be purified from sin, that is, released from human control and united with all Christ-believers by the cleansing power of

God's Spirit. The result was Warner and many others separating from all existing church structures in order to stand free in the one and only church of God. The clear intention was whole-church reformation and not the founding another "denomination." The very existence of denominations was judged the sad result of compromising the true life of holiness in God's Spirit. Instead, the movement was toward a recovery of the Pentecostal dynamic of the "apostolic church" (see Brown, 1947).

When considering such a radical reformationist tradition, the status of formalized Christian theology becomes an obvious question area. What happens to theology in the midst of radical reformers who are reacting to the unholy, abusive use of church structures, with their "humanized" creeds and practices? In particular, what about Christology—key to Christian faith, the subject of many "heresies" among earlier church reformers, and thus the stimulation of numerous creedal statements and church divisions? What have the radical reformers of the Church of God movement done theologically in this regard?

In brief, the answer is that these reformers, especially in the movement's earliest generations, determined to be loyal both to the classic Christian tradition of theological teaching (assuming it to be essentially biblical) and to the vision of necessary separation from all the institutionalized disobedience of the church, including mandatory submission to formalized creedal statements that often have functioned as tools of divisive denominationalism. Even so, Christology, as classically defined by the leading church councils, quickly became central to the movement's teaching tradition.

Christology in the Context of Radical Reform

The holiness-oriented reform movement of the late nineteenth century, coming to be known as the Church of God movement (Anderson) in the twentieth century, initially was comprised of numerous ex-Methodists, Winebrennerians, Mennonites, and others. They were sincere Christians reacting to perceived abuses of church life, affirming a fresh vision of God's intention, a holy and undivided church, and separating from all that was seen as less than the divine ideal. There was a strong anti-organizational bias. In fact, this bias against "man-rule" in the church led Daniel Warner to separate even from the Holiness Movement itself—which affirmed or at least tolerated denominationalism. Its focus was more on personal holiness and not also on the corporate holiness of the church evidenced by a challenging of the legitimacy of church structures as such.

In the name of Christian holiness and its divinely-intended implications, the new reform movement challenged all traditional church structures, including formalized creedal statements, viewing them as inappropriate tools of denominational identity and control and causes of ungodly (unholy) division in the body of Christ. The Church of God movement, accordingly, was and still is an unusually “open” fellowship, one with a strong focus on biblical authority, Christian experience, and the present work of the Holy Spirit (without being “pentecostal” in the tongues-speaking sense). The Spirit’s work is relied upon to enable newly-sanctified persons to move in the Spirit’s flow toward a newly-united church with fresh integrity that can spawn authentic and credible mission.

It is assumed in the Church of God movement that an obvious integrity of faith, life change, and the resulting Christ-like, united community of faith will be able to present Jesus Christ more effectively to the world. After all, insist these holiness reformers, the Christian faith is *about Jesus Christ*, and the church is to be in the business of radical change into Christ’s image, being the distinctive Christ community, and being on the mission of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ to all the world. Regardless of its strong resistance to institutionalized creedal systems, then, it is important to note that the reform movement of the Church of God has always been deeply committed to the person, work, community, and mission of Jesus the Christ. All of this is to be biblically defined, life-changing, world-engaging, and Christ-centered.

With a disdain for humanly devised creeds and ecclesiastical organizations, becoming systematically theological, or at least formally honoring the systematic theological work of others, has hardly been a preoccupation of the Church of God movement. Even so, movement leaders have always been very convictional, preaching oriented, and evangelistically persuasive. No one has claimed to be a “prophet” in the sense of bringing from God any dramatic new revelation outside of biblical teaching. There has been nothing “heretical” being announced, not even anything tangential to the historic faith of Christians.

What, then, has there been? This movement has centered on Jesus Christ, believed to be the core of Christian faith. It has championed a new commission understood to be from God, one involving primary focus on (1) “all truth” [not just denominational pieces of truth], (2) a reintroduction of the Spirit-born and Spirit-led “apostolic church,” and (3) unity of the contemporary church, primarily through the proclamation and power

of commonly experienced holiness. Daniel Warner's personal journal for March 7, 1878, reads:

On the 31st of last January the Lord showed me that holiness could never prosper upon sectarian soil encumbered by human creeds and party names, and he gave me a new commission to join holiness and all truth together and build up the apostolic church of the living God. Praise his name! I will obey him.

The heritage of the Church of God movement (Anderson) has been the quest to find the best ways of embracing and implementing such a "radical" holiness vision. As the title of historian John W. V. Smith's book has it, the movement has been "The Quest for Holiness and Unity" (1980, 2009). Both holiness and unity must be Christ oriented and inspired by the Spirit of the Christ.

In the light of this vision, the persistent and potentially "denominationalizing" question keeps emerging. How is the belief life of the church to be governed if the usual tools of theological control (a key aspect of "denominationalism") are disdained as human intrusions on legitimate church life? According to Daniel Warner and other "come-out" reformers, the answer is clear, even if impractical in the eyes of many others. The church is to be the community of God's Spirit, who alone chooses the members, grants the gifts, directs in mission, and instructs in proper belief. The church is the gathering of the saints who are to rejoice in their Spirit-life and find unity with each other because of the sharing of the sanctified life being enabled by God's unmerited graciousness. As believers gather together in the study of the biblical revelation, which centers in Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Christ will instruct, protect, enliven, order, and send.

What, then, is the church to believe, and how can it protect against false belief? The prevailing assumption of the Church of God movement has been that Christian truth consists in going back to "the blessed old Bible" and believing everything that it teaches—and not insisting on anything not clearly taught. Since no Christian ever fully understands biblical truth, the life of the church involves an ongoing searching of the Scriptures together for growing understanding. With no legislated creed to restrict or prematurely abort this process, the Spirit is free to teach all things about and in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, the teaching focus of the Church of God movement has been a conscious return to the "apostolic church" where, it is believed, Jesus Christ reigned in immediacy through

the Spirit—who inspired the composition of the Bible for the understanding of all generations of believers.

The center of Christian faith is viewed as the work of God in Jesus Christ as now mediated by Christ's Spirit. John Winebrenner, Daniel Warner's theological mentor, had included the following in his 1844 list of "avowed principles" about the church: "She believes in one Supreme God, consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that these three are co-equal and co-eternal" (Kern, 48). Charles E. Brown, later theologian and historian of the Church of God movement (Anderson), fully agreed, writing a book that he titled *We Preach Christ*. It is organized around the classic roles of Christ as prophet, priest, and king, with subsections covering the full range of theological subjects. Brown assumed that "there is no clear revelation of God except in Jesus Christ" (1957, 15; see Matt. 11:27). Christology is forever crucial.

This, then, is the vision, the idealism, the perceived commission, and the general Christ-centered theological focus of the Church of God movement (Anderson). There are questions that naturally now arise after 130 years of a reform movement's life. Recognizing the movement's earliest years of protest and attempts at radical reform of church life, and given its anti-organizational and anti-creedal attitudes, we focus here on how Christology has functioned over the decades in this reforming tradition. How analytical, articulate, and "orthodox" has it been? How has it functioned in practical ways to help govern the church's life? Given the experience-oriented nature of the movement in general, how important have been the details of formal Christology, details that most Christians have judged extremely important to avoid heresy?

Two "Reformation Principles"

The Church of God movement has been very cautious about introducing organization in church life, resisting what it has called "man-rule." Even so, a limited amount of organization has evolved over the decades to consolidate, order, and expand the life and witness of the movement. All such organization has been created only as judged essential, with all of it kept from controlling local churches in any way (other than moral persuasion). Cooperative ministries are strictly voluntary. Many that have arisen in North America and involve the movement in general are coordinated by Church of God Ministries, a body responsible to the General Assembly that first was organized in 1917. To avoid being an "ecclesiasti-

cal” body, this Assembly is self-defined as follows (select words italicized for emphasis):

The purpose of this Assembly shall be to function as a *temporary* presbytery in the conduct of (1) the general business of the Church of God in the United States and [in certain regards] Canada and (2) its annual North American Convention. . . . This Assembly shall be regarded as a voluntary association. It shall not exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction or authority over the Church of God in general or over individual congregations in particular. It shall, however, retain the right of a voluntary association to define its own membership and to declare, on occasion, when individual ministers or congregations are not recognized by the Assembly as adhering to the general reformation principles to which the Assembly itself is committed. (Articles II and III of the *Constitution and Bylaws of the General Assembly of the Church of God*).

What are these “general reformation principles” that can regulate Assembly membership? No “creed” exists or likely will be created any time soon. No such principles have been formally stated by the Assembly over the years, but various ones have been regularly assumed in light of the general teaching tradition of the movement. However, arising out of two contentious issues handled by the Assembly in the 1980s, two such principles became more clearly recognized—although still only relating to the membership of the Assembly itself and to the Assembly’s expectation of the governing boards and elected officials charged with oversight of the operational policies of ministry agencies and the credentials of ministers related to the Assembly. These principles essentially repeat what has been celebrated in a movement song for decades, namely, “the Bible is our rule of faith and Christ alone is Lord.” Christology is central, and is to be defined biblically.

The first general reformation principle, then, is *biblical authority*. In June, 1981, the Assembly resisted a move on the part of some ministers who were reflecting the “battle for the Bible” context of the time (spearheaded by Harold Lindsell and other evangelical “fundamentalists”). These ministers had hoped to make “inerrancy” the official Church of God expectation of how the meaning of biblical inspiration should be understood (which, in effect, would be a creedal statement, something traditionally unacceptable in the movement). Historian of the Church of

God, John W. V. Smith, offered this perspective, his way of deflecting the inerrancy push by some. Among thought leaders of the Church of God who wrote during the early twentieth century, when the fundamentalist controversy over biblical inerrancy was splitting churches apart, “there is practically no evidence that any of them, with the possible exception of C. E. Brown, felt that their high view of the Bible needed to be supported by legalist definitions applied to the text such as ‘inerrancy’ and ‘verbal inspiration.’ They simply saw no need to enter into that debate” (1981, 6).

After considerable debate, what the 1981 Assembly finally affirmed, instead of the call for “inerrancy,” was this: “The Bible truly is the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God. The Bible is without error in all that it affirms, in accordance with its own purpose, namely that it is ‘profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work’ (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NAS), and it therefore is fully trustworthy and authoritative as the infallible guide for understanding the Christian faith and living the Christian life.” Here was the principle of appropriate authority in church life, stated in principle more than in creedal or technical terms. Truth is to be biblically defined. The Bible is trustworthy because the Spirit of God superintended its composition and also its current interpretation.

Then in 1985 came the identification of the second reformation principle, one necessarily drawn from the authoritative biblical source. The concern at this time was that some cooperative national ministries of the Church of God had developed limited working relationships with units of the National Council of Churches (U.S.A.)—although the movement itself was not a member of the Council. Recent media news stories had highlighted particular positions and actions of this ecumenical body that offended some ministers, who then called for a full disassociation of the movement from National Council work at any and all levels. Some leaders of the movement strongly disagreed, thinking this an overreaction that would be hurtful to certain Christian relationships and cooperative Christian ministries of the movement.

After some heated discussion on the Assembly floor and then a period of careful study launched by the Assembly, this body, the most representative voice of the Church of God movement, adopted a statement that focused on Christology. Ecumenical ministry partnerships were said to be appropriate in principle, but only if the partner is clearly committed

to the full divinity and lordship of Jesus Christ (meant to exclude some bodies using the name “Christian” but clearly unorthodox in Christology). Said the Assembly: “Any inter-church body involved in a relationship [with national ministry bodies of the Church of God] should be committed publicly to the divinity and lordship of Jesus Christ. He is central to the meaning and the mission of the church!”

Therefore, two reformation principles were identified by the General Assembly during the 1981-1985 period, with their contexts and details reported by Barry L. Callen (2000, 198-204). The Assembly had not set out to establish such principles, even though its own legal documents presumed their existence. It had backed into them in times of crisis. Even so, the two “principles” now existed in a more public way, at least in relation to the Assembly’s own membership. They have always been basic to the teaching tradition of this movement and were justified by the Assembly as not “ecclesiastical” actions, not involving unacceptable creed-making. Nonetheless, they did draw two important theological lines in the sand, essentially restating the movement’s historic approach to Christian theology as summarized by the Anderson University School of Theology faculty in a 1979 booklet titled *We Believe*:

We are privileged to have received the basic *truth of Christ* in the biblical revelation, but we realize that our understanding and application of that truth are always subject to the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit in our midst. . . . It is our conviction that God increasingly is leading all Christians to the challenge of *holiness* and *unity*. We feel ourselves especially called to proclaim these essentials of church life, to pray for them, to work toward them, and, most of all, to model them so that the church which is seen by the world will be an effective representative of Christ.

That is, Jesus Christ is the heart of Christian faith. Belief must focus on him, but with a humility of understanding open to the ongoing teaching ministry of the Spirit of Christ. The church’s mission is to represent Christ in the world. It is in him, and in him alone, that the Spirit of Christ can bring to believers a personal holiness and a corporate togetherness that will allow the unity necessary to represent Christ effectively in this divided world. It all centers in Jesus Christ, yesterday in a cradle and on a cross, and today, through his Spirit, to be in control of all dimensions of church life.

As with the Church of God movement in general, its General Assembly in North America is not in the creed-making business. Its two “reformation principles” are not intended to define a particular “brand” of Christianity, but rather to state what it means to be Christian at all. The Bible is the authoritative guide to the person and story of God in Jesus Christ. That person and story combine to constitute the core of Christian faith. To insist on additional details of belief introduces divisive denominational distinctives; to believe less is to be something other than Christian.

With the Bible accepted as the authoritative base, and with its revelation that Jesus Christ is our divine Lord and Savior, God actually with us for our salvation, what further needs to be said about the many details and theological traditions related directly to Christology? This question is very important, although it has not been handled often and in detail in the teaching life of the Church of God movement.

Singularity in a Pluralistic World

It is hardly surprising that the appearance of systematic theologians has been relatively rare occurrence in the history of the Church of God movement. The first was Frederick G. Smith (*What the Bible Teaches*, 1914), followed by Russell R. Byrum (*Christian Theology*, 1925), and Albert F. Gray (*Christian Theology*, 1944/46). Three substantial books of theology appeared in the 1990s by a new generation of movement theologians. They were Kenneth E. Jones (*Theology of Holiness and Love*, 1995), Barry L. Callen (*God as Loving Grace*, 1996), and Gilbert W. Stafford (*Theology for Disciples*, 1996). Detailed discussions of Christology have been limited and rarely on center stage. When they have occurred, they have tended to appear in the work of these writers and to affirm of the “orthodox” Christological tradition of Western Christianity.

Since the original reforming concerns of the Church of God movement related mostly to the nature of the church and the Christian life, not to the doctrine of God, the movement’s early theologians—Smith, Byrum, and Gray—tended to follow traditional or orthodox Protestant positions on God, Trinity, and Christology. The more recent of the movement’s theologians—Jones, Callen, Stafford—have done the same, exhibiting a tendency to highlight relational motifs that incline toward emphases now common among “open” theologians like Stanley J. Grenz (1993), Henry H. Knight III (1997), Clark H. Pinnock (1990, 1996, 2006)

and Roger E. Olson (2007). In fact, Barry L. Callen is the intellectual biographer of Pinnock (Callen, 2000). At no point, however, does this “open” or more relational (pietistic) tendency depart from the basic soil of traditional Christian theology concerning God as Father, Son, and Spirit.

Callen organizes his 1996 book of theology around the Trinitarian scheme of God the Sovereign (Father), God the Savior (Son), and God the Sustainer (Spirit). Stafford places particular stress on the cruciality of the “orthodox” view of the “Trinitarian God.” He speaks of the “three-personed God” and stands with the Nicene Creed in affirming oneness in plurality and plurality in oneness (176). The Trinity, he insists, is “ontological” and “immanent,” revealing “the eternal lover.” The Trinitarian God is “the ongoing, outgoing God of history . . . the pilgrim God . . . the here, there, and everywhere God . . . the God of the whole Bible—the God of the Old Testament, the God revealed in Jesus Christ, the God poured out at Pentecost” (189).

None of these theological books has been an “official” statement of the movement’s theological stance (nothing is); they, however, have been the expressions of especially respected leaders whose views have been referenced most and considered faithful reflections of biblical teaching. These theologians have stood together on several “orthodox” Christian understandings of the doctrine of God. One such understanding is the doctrine of the Trinity. The prominence of Islam in today’s religious and political arenas forces this forward. Jews, Muslims, and Christians believe in the one sovereign God, but “Trinity” teaching clearly brings separation among the three monotheistic faith traditions. For instance, Adam W. Miller of the Church of God once insisted:

We are confronted today with a revival of that teaching which would remove Christ from his absolute position as sovereign Lord of history and the world’s only hope of redemption. It would make Christ and all he represents but a single contribution in the world’s quest for religious truth. It is an attempt to strip Christ of his claim to be *the* truth. . . . But the Christian church cannot and must not accept such an evaluation or concept of Christ or his gospel. To do so would mean that the church would become merely the dispenser of some important truth and not the witness to nor proclaimer of *the* truth. (1-2)

Stafford tied this insistence on singularity to the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity:

The foundational question is whether we view Christian claims that God is Trinity and that Christ Jesus is the only divine savior as being merely options among many equally (or unequally) acceptable conceptions of God or whether we view them as being ultimately true. The watershed issue that decisively influences one's approach to people of other faiths is whether we are convinced that the Trinitarian God is the only eternal God. (1996, 330)

Callen agreed with Miller and Stafford, but with a little irenic commentary. A witness to Jesus Christ as the full and final truth does not mean that other religious traditions are totally lacking in truth, and therefore are to be denounced. In fact, "Since God is not without a witness among the nations (Acts 14:16-17), one should expect to encounter echoes of God's activity in the maze of the world's religions. . . . [Even so], anything true anywhere is already in Christ, is best understood in light of Christ, and finally will be consummated with Christ" (1996, 159-160).

These representative and influential theologians of the Church of God movement have agreed with another consistent aspect of this movement's teaching tradition. Emphasis should be on the historic coming of God in Jesus and the present meaningfulness of that historic coming because of the present work of Christ's Spirit. Eschatological teachings should not detract from the present lordship of Jesus Christ by relegating hope to some future "millennium" on earth after the return of the Christ. Nor should they depart from the obvious emphasis of Jesus by insisting that a millennium will come that features a political dominance of Christ back on earth, an earthly kingdom like is typical among humans and that Jesus refused to establish, despite pressure from some of his followers. An "amillennial" eschatology is to be affirmed as biblical teaching, in part because it honors the work of Jesus in his first coming and highlights the work of Christ's Spirit in and through the church prior to Christ's return to conclude history and initiate the final judgment. Barry L. Callen's 1997 book *Faithful in the Meantime* is a good example of the amillennial focus. It addresses the subjects of "final things" in the context of the present possibilities for and responsibilities of Christians. The wonderful news is not merely that Jesus is Lord of tomorrow; it is that he also is Lord of today!

Ministerial Education and Credentialing

What does the North American seminary of the Church of God affirm about Christology? What is required of Church of God ministerial

ordination candidates when the movement is “orthodox” by theological tradition, clearly convictional and preaching oriented, but has no uniform creed as a common and mandatory basis of group belief? Answers to these questions can have very practical implications.

The movement leans on the “reformation principles” of its General Assembly (see above) and tends to follow the thinking of its most respected theological writers (see above). The various state assemblies and their credentialing committees set the particulars of their own ordination standards and practices. What prevails is the Bible as the accepted authoritative base, with the ministers in charge of the credentialing process functioning as the Bible’s local interpreters (in light of the general teaching heritage of the Church of God movement as an honored backdrop). This brings general uniformity, along with some inevitable and occasionally awkward difference.

Recent years have seen the development of a national credentials manual intended as a guide to increased uniformity of policy and procedure among the national credentialing units. The manual, of course, is in effect only as given assemblies choose to adopt it as their own (as presented or in some modified form). What does this manual, now relied upon in many places, have to say about the necessary theological commitments of ministerial candidates? The key statement is that credentialing is “for those who possess a well-developed and scripturally valid belief system and whose lives give indication of the assimilation of that belief system” (24). The manual goes on to say that “theology ultimately arises out of one’s own encounter with the loving embrace of God. True theologizing cannot be done by the unspiritual person, since such a person lacks the insight provided by the presence and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.”

Reflecting the pietist and evangelistic heritages of the Church of God movement, it is clear that “spiritual experience” is valued highly. A movement slogan is that “Christian experience makes you a member” of a congregation. Reads the credentials manual: “Theological understanding can never rest on intellectual investigation alone. By its very nature, it must be experiential as well as academic.” The present transforming work of the Holy Spirit is judged crucial. Even so, candidates are asked to prepare a written statement of their beliefs, including direct comment on fourteen subjects listed in the manual. The first three are: “The nature and revealing activity of God; The nature and saving mission of Jesus Christ; and The Holy Spirit’s cleansing and gifting work in the believer’s life.”

Formal educational requirements are not fixed for all ordination candidates—the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be so restricted. Even so, the highest level of ministerial education available to candidates is expected (given their differing abilities, ages when called to ministry, etc.). A seminary education is said to be the ideal, although most candidates have not achieved this educational level in the past. The life of the mind is appreciated generally, but spiritual giftedness and vitality has been even more highly regarded.

A stated assumption in the ministerial manual is that, despite the theological freedom prevailing in this movement, a ministerial candidate's commitments should be "within the bounds of biblically based belief" and should be "in general agreement with the teaching tradition of the Church of God movement" (25). To help identify this particular teaching tradition, listed are fourteen books of theology by respected Church of God authors. They are required or strongly recommended for reading. Once books are consulted and a personal belief statement is written, dialogue occurs between the candidate and credentialing committee. Some subjectivity of committee members is inevitable. This introduces variance among committees regarding the nature and detail of theological expectations and probings that are experienced by ministerial candidates. The variance is usually not dramatic in its dimension, although there are stories of individuals avoiding certain states because of their theological reputations.

At least one element of the occasional variance has been perceived as a problem, particularly by the late movement theologian Gilbert W. Stafford. He expressed deep concern that "it is altogether possible for a [Church of God] congregation to call a minister who, although ordained, does not believe in the faith of the historic Christian church" (2000, 31). For Stafford, Christology was a special concern. He noted one ordination service where the question put to the candidate was, "Do you believe in the one God?" To Stafford, that was not a distinctively Christian question—"Jehovah's Witnesses, Unitarians, Jews, and Muslims all could have said yes to that question" (2000, 31). The more distinctively Christian question would be about the *Trinitarian* God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To be sure, insisted Stafford, "Christians believe in one God, but that is not what sets us apart as Christians. That which sets us apart is that we are convinced the Scriptures teach the *Trinitarian view* of this one God" (2000, 31). The likelihood is that no credentialing unit would dis-

agree with Stafford; the situation is just that some are not as thoughtful and intentional theologically as they might and probably should be, particularly on the central issue of the nature of God in Christ.

A significant and sometimes awkward tension exists in a Christian reform movement that intends to be both thoroughly biblical and staunchly anti-creedal. Leaders of the Church of God movement have resisted any reducing of Christianity to a series of belief statements. The real essence of the faith has been judged to include *experiencing* the truth. Reflecting what Roger E. Olson calls “post-conservative evangelical theology,” a style growing out of the more pietistic side of evangelicalism, the Church of God movement has vigorously affirmed the reality of divine revelation and biblical authority, but has avoided the “inerrancy” approach to biblical inspiration as too rationalistic, considering the purpose of revelation to be more *transformational* than merely *informational* (Olson, 53).

It is important to be clear that the intent of Church of God leaders has *not* been to minimize the importance of the theological content of faith; rather, it has been to highlight the necessity of being involved personally in life-changing obedience to the forgiveness and sanctifying grace of God—who is the source, focus, substance, and end of all true doctrine. Beyond right words lies the divine power to illumine the mind and alter life itself. To “know” God is to be related rightly to God *through Jesus Christ* and to be engaged rightly in God’s present purposes in this world. Faith is always a pilgrimage, a journey guided by the Spirit toward more and more light. Faith’s focus should be less on philosophic and creedal statements about the Christ and more on *the living person of Jesus* who is himself the truth (John 14:6) and who, through the Spirit, now reigns in the church.

There is to be no isolated, merely intellectual, or routinely repeated confessional formulations of doctrine. Christianity, in the usual view of Church of God teachers, already has endured too much use of theological creeds as protectors of historic church institutions and dividers among believers. Early historians of this reform movement tended to read church history as a sad trail of compromises with “the world.” Thus, the goal was to return to the “early morning light” (apostolic church and Bible). It was believed that God intended to have this pure light of Jesus Christ shining again in the “evening time” of the church’s troubled history. Granted, the early creed-making centuries of the church had sought to protect the

church from heresies by careful definitions of the person and work of Jesus. However, it is also true that the immersion of the church into the Greek-Roman-European cultural stream brought an inevitable infusion of humanity into the reasons for, styles of, and uses of the creeds being produced.

The classic Christian creeds are viewed in the Church of God as valuable, of course, but with limitations. They are milestone attempts to define biblical teaching in other than biblical times, languages, and philosophies. Thus, they are instructional, but not themselves biblical. This movement, highlighting Christian “experience” and reacting against organizational paralysis in church life, naturally has de-emphasized any formal status for “systematic” theologies and formalized creedal statements. It has shared to a point the argument of J. Denny Weaver (2000). Especially in our “postmodern” time, credibility for Christians is hardly won merely by making claims to universal philosophic truth. It comes more from demonstrating what differences Christian faith can make in the laboratory of human history. The witness must be to the “way of Jesus,” and it must be made with lives that actually reflect Jesus.

Thus, Barry L. Callen included in his autobiography an original essay that he titled “Please Don’t Call Me ‘Christian’!” He says that “the center of the Christian faith is Jesus Christ, not a full identifying with all of the history, structures, and creeds that have carried the name ‘Christian’” (2008, 398). The preference is being known as a “follower of Jesus.” Callen also wrote a commentary on the biblical book of Colossians (2007), dealing at length and fully agreeing with the great biblical affirmation of the unlimited scope of the supremacy of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:15-23). Earlier, however, he also had written a book on the history, theology, and ethics of the “Believers Church” tradition (important for the Church of God movement), in which he said:

The Christian confession concerning the Christ initially was derived from historical narrative, autobiographical testimony, the story of divine reality as experienced in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Explaining this incarnation reality philosophically and theologically would come later in the process of struggle with competing claims and the challenges involved in engaging in world mission. But first came the foundational witness of the New Testament to the joy of the living reality of Jesus the Christ. The conviction of the

Believers Church tradition is that *all Christological formulation should remain in close touch with the biblical witness to and the living reality of Jesus Christ* (1999, 90).

While never denying the foundational truths about Jesus Christ contained in the classic Christian creeds, the Church of God movement has expressed limited interest in the theological detail of it all. On the one hand, Christology is not to become captive to spiritual experience and thus be whatever an enthusiastic believer says it is; on the other hand, there has been general discomfort with putting a spotlight on complex theological details that traditionally have hardened into divisive creeds and competing denominations. Thinking of the Wesleyan and Pietistic streams that have influenced the Church of God heritage, the movement has reflected John Wesley's characteristic of not being quite a "systematic" theologian—orthodox, clearly, but also deeply pietistic intentionally.

Contemporary Trends: A Generous Orthodoxy

Two contemporary trends are pulling vigorously on pastors of Church of God congregations. One is the growing diversity of church backgrounds from which the people are coming. Congregations hope to be constructively related to their immediate environments, sharing the gospel with whomever is nearby and will hear. Once drawn to the congregation, the pastor is often inclined to avoid being perceived as theologically restrictive or narrowly denominational—which the Church of God has not wished to be anyway. The alternative, now being called "post-conservative evangelical theology" by a few prominent "evangelical" theologians, is well described with the adjectives *critical*, *generous*, *progressive*, and *dispositional* (Olson, 193-208). The freedom, freshness, and yet faithfulness of such theology is seen in books like *The Flame of Love* by Clark H. Pinnock (1996). It is a merging of rationalism and pietism, a version of the "Wesleyan Quadralateral" where the Bible base and interpretative triad of reason, experience, and tradition are surrounded by the work of God's Spirit (Callen, 2007, 351).

Pastoral wisdom and the heritage of the Church of God movement both support a hesitation to be theologically detailed or demanding. The principle of biblical authority is not to be compromised. Even so, the increasingly wide range of biblical understandings in the pews is obvious, and a circumstance that pastors must manage carefully. The challenge is still to go "back to the blessed old Bible" and be wary of arrogance about

absolutizing interpretative traditions (creedalism). As Alister McGrath says, “Evangelicalism is principally about being biblical and not the uncritical repetition of past evangelical beliefs” (32).

The second contemporary trend, related to the first and sounding almost counter to it, sends the contemporary pastor in another direction. It is a move toward being very clear theologically about what is most distinctively Christian. Apart from the things that constitute the many “brands” of Christianity, the question now is: What constitutes Christianity as a distinct faith in a world of competing faith communities? Biblical teaching points to the historic fact and cosmic significance of Jesus the Christ. This central fact is stated clearly by Barry L. Callen in his commentary on Colossians 1:15-18:

The strict monotheism of Jewish tradition is not to be violated: even so, a dramatic new reality has come about, one that soon would have Christian theologians talking seriously about the “Trinity” of God—a *multiplicity* in relation to the *one* God. Speaking adequately about God necessarily involves reference to divine revelation *in the Son* as now illumined for us by the Spirit. . . . Salvation hinges on the Son, both on who He is by nature and by what He has done for us in His earthly life, death, and resurrection (2007, 290-91).

The trend to deal openly and gently with multiple Christian traditions in the same congregation is limited at least by a strong belief in the classic claim that Jesus Christ is the *one* Son of God and the *only* Savior of humankind. Reflective of the two “reformation principles” discussed above, the essential foundation of a distinctive Christian faith is (1) biblical authority, which yields a necessary belief in (2) Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of all.

Both of these two contemporary trends, a flexible pastoral approach to theological diversity and a fixed Christology made necessary because of biblical revelation, are seen in the 2003 theological statement of the North American seminary of the Church of God, Anderson University School of Theology. On the one hand, the seminary did not attempt to set or even claim to represent officially the theological stance of the Church of God movement, as no person or group does or can. It was made clear that this statement represents only this particular faculty and staff, and only at that point in time. On the other hand, the seminary was aware that being Christian means something distinctive in today’s marketplace of

religious claims. The distinction rests on a particular understanding of God as biblically presented, the Triune One revealed in the Son, Jesus Christ. The seminary also wanted to better define itself theologically in the eyes of its constituencies. Its 2003 statement concludes:

In devotion to Christ as the head of the church, we desire to be a biblical people, a people who worship the triune God, a people transformed by the grace of God, a people of the kingdom of God, a people committed to building up the one, universal church of God, and a people who, in God's love, care for the whole world.

This statement of theological identity represents well the general teaching heritage of the Church of God movement. It does not seek to introduce any new teaching outside the received "orthodox" tradition, and certainly it does not seek to establish a particular denominational stance on any doctrine. It seeks only to affirm clearly what is thought to define Christianity as a distinctive faith tradition in a pluralistic world. The focus is on Jesus Christ, who brings God to us and who, through his Spirit, should head the current Body of Christ, the church, wherein people are privileged to worship the Triune God. Instead of abstract explorations of this great mystery of incarnation, the spotlight is on people being transformed by God's amazing grace, celebrating the united body into which the Spirit of Christ ushers them, and joining together in the mission of Christ in today's world.

The fact and significance of the divine Christ, the center of Christian faith, were stated classically by a Quaker philosopher and theologian who was a good friend of the Church of God movement and shared much of its "radical" reforming. Wrote David Elton Trueblood:

A Christian is a person who . . . becomes convinced that the fact of Jesus Christ is the most trustworthy that he knows in his entire universe of discourse. Christ thus becomes both his central postulate and the Archimedean fulcrum which, because it is really firm, enables him to operate with confidence in other areas. . . . To say that Christ is the fulcrum is not merely to say that He was the greatest figure of history or the finest moral teacher. It is, instead, to see Him as the genuine revelation of the mystery of existence, the one clear light among the many shadows. Commitment is thus vastly more than mere admiration. It means passionate involvement in His life, teachings, death, and resurrection (Trueblood, 38-39).

Accordingly, the Church of God movement agrees with the title of a 1957 book authored by Charles E. Brown, one of its loved teachers and theologians. The title is *We Preach Christ!* The movement also echoes the title of a popular booklet by Laura and Oral Withrow written about the movement. That title is *Meet Us at the Cross*. The core attitude of the movement was stated well by another of its deeply loved leaders, R. Eugene Sterner. Often saying, “We do not ask you to come to us. We invite you to meet us at the foot of the cross,” Sterner made clear that this movement has never wanted to start another denomination, but rather has intended “to take a position of openness on the Godward side to all the truth. . . and an openness on the manward side to fellowship with all of God’s people everywhere” (19). To do that as true Christians, Christology must be central both in theological belief and, through the power of Christ’s Spirit, in life and church transformation.

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EMERGENCE THEORY AND THEOLOGY: A WESLEYAN-RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

by

Bradford McCall

Emergence is the view that novel and unpredictable occurrences are naturally produced in nature, and that such novel structures, organs, and organisms are not reducible to their component parts. In brief, emergence claims that it is possible to get “something more from nothing but.”¹ It is the “theory that cosmic evolution repeatedly includes unpredictable, irreducible, and novel appearances.”² As such, emergentists argue that reductionary tendencies within natural science are not tenable. No longer can one seek to explain all things as being thoroughly reducible to their physical entities or microphysical causes (i.e., physicalism). Although substance dualism was probably the dominant metaphysical view in Western history from Aristotle to Kant, it is no longer feasible to adhere to a bipartite construction of physical components and spiritual components. The revolution in metaphysics first wrought by Kant has undercut physicalism and dualism. The earth, in the emergentist view, is an active, empowering environment that brings forth life by various interdependent processes.

¹Ursula Goodenough and Terrence W. Deacon, “From Biology to Consciousness to Morality,” *Zygon* 38, no. 4 (2003): 802. This sentiment is prevalent within the emergence debate.

²Philip Clayton, *Mind & Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004), 39. Morowitz states that evolution is the overall process, but emergence punctuates the steps of the evolutionary epic (Harold J. Morowitz, *The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex* [Oxford: Oxford University, 2002], 191).

Wesleyan theology conceptualizes God's sovereignty and power in a manner that allows for the creativity of that which emerges to be exercised within limits.³ Moreover, Wesleyan theology in general is keen to highlight the relational nature of God's love,⁴ a love that insists on embracing and working with creatures,⁵ versus over and against them, which connotes a process marked by not only time, but also perhaps by diversions (the term "diversions" being preferable to "errors").⁶ Because God *is love*,

³See Wesley's "Thoughts upon God's Sovereignty," in *The Works of John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 10:362–63.

⁴As relational, God is affected by those with whom God relates. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop deserves the credit for highlighting the relational character of Wesley's theology in *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972). Wesleyan-Relational theologians reject the idea that God is a distant monarch uninfluenced by creation. See, e.g. Barry L. Callen, *God as Loving Grace: The Biblically Revealed Nature and Work of God* (Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel, 1996); Clark H. Pinnock, et. al., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994). In their book, *Relational Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2005), Thomas Jay Oord and Michael Lodahl argue that the core distinctive of Wesleyan theology is relational love. The theology that Keller proposes is relational at its core, as its relational God "remains enmeshed in the vulnerabilities and potentialities of an indeterminate creativity" (Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* [Routledge, 2003], 226).

⁵Cf. Michael E. Lodahl, *God of Nature and of Grace: Reading the World in a Wesleyan Way* (Nashville: Kingswood, 2003), 27. As the subtitle of his book indicates, Fretheim argues for a "relational model of creation" one that avoids pitting divine sovereignty against human freedom, or espousing a static view of creation in which everything was created perfectly within the first seven days (Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2005]). Fretheim states that "both God and creatures have an important role in the creative enterprise, and their spheres of activity are interrelated in terms of function and effect" (27). Divine sovereignty under such a model is one that "gives power over to the created for the sake of a relationship of integrity" (272).

⁶See John B. Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 251. Cobb stipulates that the Godhead constantly readjusts his aims in response to the partial successes and partial failures of the past so that some possibility of achievement lies ahead for creatures and created things. Elsewhere, Cobb notes that if the creatures or created things responded fully to God's lure in the past, that entity would be given wider possibilities in the present, but if it has resisted the lure, then less is possible in the present (John B. Cobb, Jr., "Human Responsibility and the Primacy of Grace," in Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord, eds. *The Nature and Thy Name is Love* [Nashville: Kingswood, 2001], 106).

the divine takes risks with creation,⁷ working with it over a long period of time through the processes of evolution, rather than creating by divine fiat.⁸ In fact, the Wesleyan theologian Thomas Jay Oord asserts: “Love requires relations with others. Love cannot be expressed in absolute isolation; love is inherently relational. Loving actions require sympathetic responses to others with whom the lover possesses relations. And love involves the promotion of well-being to those with whom the lover relates.”⁹ He goes on, “Giving gifts to others—including the power for self-determination—is by definition part of what it means to be a loving and relational God. And a gift-giver whose essence is love cannot do other than give gifts of love.”¹⁰ One may assert, then, that the defining theme in relational theology is that God fundamentally exists in relationship, which means that both God and creatures are affected by others in give-and-take relationships, and all that God does is for the purpose of relationship.¹¹

⁷As Wesley notes, “It is not written, ‘God is justice’, or ‘God is truth’ (although he is just and true in all his ways). But it is written, ‘God is love’, love in the abstract, without bounds; and there is no end of his goodness” (John Wesley, “Predestination Calmly Considered,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson, ed., 10:227).

⁸Cf. Lodahl, *God of Nature and of Grace*, 64–67. God accepts these risks, says Murphy and Ellis, “in order to achieve a higher goal: the free and intelligent cooperation of the creature in divine activity” (Nancy Murphy and George F.R. Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 246). The process of evolution, Murphy and Ellis go on to say, reflects God’s “noncoercive, persuasive, painstaking love all the way from the beginning to the end, from the least of God’s creatures to the most splendid” (Ibid.).

⁹Thomas Jay Oord, “Essential Kenosis: An Open and Relational Theory of Divine Power: Between Voluntary Divine Self-Limitation and Divine Limitation by Those External to God,” American Academy of Religion, Open and Relational Theologies unit, San Diego, CA. (November, 2007), 8.

¹⁰Oord, “Essential Kenosis,” 11–12.

¹¹Inbody notes that Wesley’s understanding of God’s power construes it as dynamic, relational, and persuasive (Tyron L. Inbody, “Reconceptions of Divine Power in John Wesley, Panentheism, and Trinitarian Theology,” in Stone and Oord, eds., *The Nature and Thy Name is Love*, 169–192. In the same volume, Lodahl argues that Wesley reconceived God’s power as relational and over-abundant in its self-giving (Michael E. Lodahl, “Creation Out of Nothing? Or Is Next to Nothing Enough?,” in Stone and Oord, eds., *The Nature and Thy Name is Love*), 222. For further reading on Wesleyan-relational theology and how relationality informs Wesley’s theology, see John B. Cobb Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995); John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007); and the excellent work of Barry L. Callen in his systematic theology titled *God As Loving Grace* (Nappanee, IN.: Evangel Publishing House, 1996).

This article reviews select literature regarding emergence theory, in particular its relation to Christian theology, highlighting its basis in panentheism, and noting an implication growing from the literature. It is the resultant possibilities for God. This implication creates space for a Wesleyan-relational perspective on the process of emergence, a perspective that is not only warranted, but also fruitful for further research. While this is not an exhaustive review, the reader nevertheless will have better comprehension of the current state of discussion concerning emergence theory in religion and science, especially regarding its consonance with Wesleyan-relational theology.¹²

Characterizations of Emergence

Philip Clayton is a leading authority in the field of emergence. In the book entitled *Mind & Emergence*, he seeks to offer a third way of understanding the world and human relationships: emergentism. Emergence is presented as a viable option and fruitful paradigm for evolutionary progress, in contrast to the waning explanatory power of its competitors, physicalism and dualism.¹³ Emergentists argue that the reductionary tendencies within the natural sciences are not tenable. In fact, “actualizing the dream of a final reduction ‘downwards,’ it now appears, has proven fundamentally impossible.”¹⁴ Clayton somewhat modifies el-Hani and

¹²The distinctive Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace offers a similar concept of love as entailing divine call and creaturely response. Prevenient grace might very well be best described as the omnipresent, omni-relational God acting in each moment to empower creatures to respond freely and then luring them to choose responses that increase overall complexity. See Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994); and Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*. For a Wesleyan reading of divine omnipresence, see Michael Lodahl, *God of Nature and of Grace*, chapters 4 and 6.

¹³Clayton, *Mind & Emergence*, 3.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 70. Elsewhere, Clayton contends that three general claims undergird emergence theory in the philosophy of science. First, empirical reality divides naturally into multiple levels, which means that over the course of evolutionary history, new emergent levels evolve. Second, emergent “wholes” are more than the sum of their parts, and require new types of explanation adequate to each new level of phenomena. Third, such emergent wholes manifest new manners of causal interaction, which means that, for example, biological processes are not merely reducible to physics, but require genuine biological explanations instead (Philip Clayton, “Emergence of Spirit: From Complexity to Anthropology to Theology,” *Theology and Science* 4, no. 3 [2006]:294).

Pereira's¹⁵ (EP) four features of emergence within the text of *Mind & Emergence*.

For example, Clayton converts EP's construct of ontological physicalism into a more realistic paradigm of ontological monism, arguing that all matter (i.e., reality) is composed of one basic type of "stuff" and that mere physics (i.e., physicalism) is not sufficient to account for the various manners in which this "stuff" is expressed in the world. Clayton essentially adopts EP's construct of property emergence which entails the notion that genuinely novel properties emerge from complex systems when material particles attain an appropriate threshold of organizational complexity. EP's notion regarding the irreducibility of emergence is modified by adding that there are forms of causality that are not reducible to physical causes, and that causality should guide our ontology.¹⁶ Finally, EP's conception of downward causation in reference to emergent systems is virtually adopted, with Clayton defining the concept as the "process whereby some whole has an active non-additive causal influence on its parts."¹⁷

Before offering his definition of emergence, the classification of emergence theories within the twentieth century (i.e., strong and weak—relying on Bedau),¹⁸ is recounted by Clayton. Strong emergentists postulate that evolution produces ontologically distinct levels of organs/isms which are characterized by their own distinct regularities and causal forces. In contrast, weak emergentists maintain that, as new patterns emerge, the causal processes remain those that are fundamental to known physics.¹⁹ A property of an organ/ism is weakly emergent if it is reducible to its intrinsic qualities, so that weakly emergent properties are "novel" only at the level of description; this is in contrast with strongly emergent organs/isms in which the cause is neither reducible to any intrinsic causal

¹⁵Charbel Nino el-Hani and Antonio Marcos Pereira, "Higher-Level Descriptions: Why Should We Preserve Them?," in *Downward Causation: Minds, Bodies and Matter*, Peter Bøgh Anderson et. al., eds. (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2000), 118–142.

¹⁶Clayton, *Mind & Emergence*, 5.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁸Mark Bedau, "Weak Emergence," in J. Tomberlin, ed. *Philosophical Perspectives: Mind, Causation, and World*, vol. 11 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997):375–99.

¹⁹Clayton, *Mind & Emergence*, 9.

capacity of the parts nor to any relation between the component parts. Strong emergence involves “downward causation” from the whole to the parts. Clayton asserts that weak emergence leaves us with the old dichotomy of physicalism and dualism.²⁰ The largest difference, however, between strong and weak emergence is that strong emergence rejects the reduction of biology to micro-physics.²¹

Clayton offers his own view regarding emergence theory and, in so doing, radicalizes the immanence of God. He writes that emergence is “that which is produced by a combination of causes, but cannot be regarded as the sum of their individual effects.”²² He develops the role of emergence in the natural sciences and in evolution, which is his most important contribution to theology and science. Particularly within biology, one can see multiple instances of where that which emerges becomes a causal agent in its own right.²³ He maintains that whereas “biological processes in general are the result of systems that create and maintain order (stasis) through massive energy input from their environment,” there comes a point of sufficient complexity after which a phase transition suddenly becomes almost inevitable.²⁴

In the book entitled *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion*, Clayton and Davies edit contributions from various authors, seeking to introduce readers to emergence theory, outline arguments in its defense, and answer the most powerful objections against it. Emergence, Clayton herein notes, has grown out of the successes and failures of the scientific quest for reduction.²⁵ Whereas weak emergence is the starting-point for most natural scientists, strong emergence has received much support in recent years, and several contributors to this text (including Ellis, Silberstein, Peacocke, Gregerson, and Clayton) posit that it is a viable option in the natural sciences. Though coming to the text from disparate disciplines and commit-

²⁰Ibid., 10.

²¹Ibid., 58.

²²Ibid., 38.

²³Ibid., 65.

²⁴Ibid., 78. Note his general agreement with Stuart Kauffman, *Investigations* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 35.

²⁵Philip Clayton, “Conceptual Foundations of Emergence Theory,” in *The Reemergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis From Science to Religion* (ed. Philip Clayton and Paul Davies; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.

ments, the various essayists all agree that emergence theory is potent in its explanatory capacity.

For example, Deacon stipulates that the term “emergence” connotes the image of something coming out of hiding, coming into view for the first time, something that is without precedent and perhaps a bit surprising.²⁶ Peacocke argues that there are good grounds for re-introducing the concept of emergence in naturally occurring, hierarchical, and complex systems that make up the basic parts of the physical world.²⁷ Gregerson stresses that the presence of God must be part of any ultimate explanation of why the course of evolution is moving upwards in the direction of increased complexity, rather than aimlessly bouncing to and fro, generating nothing but evolutionary “noise”.²⁸

Gregersen notes that terming events as emergent processes, means, almost by definition, an “emerging from” or a “growing out of” something that is already established.²⁹ Emergence is “unprecedented” only in its outcome, not in the means by which it gets there. Gregersen also contends that the world may be explained as a fertile abode created by God for the purpose of self-organization and emergence.³⁰ This picture of the earth as a fertile abode will become more central in our later highlighting of the possibilities for God present in creation and explored through emergence theory.

Gregory Peterson argues elsewhere that there are three broad interpretations of emergence: reductive, non-reductive, and radical. Apparently, and in application although not explicitly stated as such, these three ranges of interpretation are equivalent to those that are more broadly clas-

²⁶Terrence W. Deacon, “Emergence: The Hole at the Wheel’s Hub,” in *The Reemergence of Emergence*, 121. Interestingly, Kim, being forthright, acknowledges that there are two challenges to emergence: how to show that emergence is not reducible to epiphenomenalism, and to give examples of emergence that go beyond supervenience and irreducibility (Jaegwon Kim, “Being Realistic about Emergence,” in *The Reemergence of Emergence*, 201).

²⁷Arthur Peacocke, “Emergence, Mind, and Divine Action: the Hierarchy of the Sciences in Relation to the Human Mind-Brain-Body,” in *The Reemergence of Emergence*, 257–278.

²⁸Neils Henrik Gregersen, “Emergence: What is at Stake for Religious Reflection?,” in *The Reemergence of Emergence*, 300.

²⁹Niels Heinrich Gregersen, “Emergence in Theological Perspective: A Corollary to Professor Clayton’s Boyle Lecture,” *Theology and Science* 4, no. 3 (2006):310.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 315–316.

sified as “strong” and “weak” by Clayton. Radical emergentists emphasize both epistemological and ontological openness. Accordingly, Clayton is a radical emergentist. Radical emergence, according to Peterson, is good for both theology and science; nevertheless, radical emergence also has its dangers, possibly leading to what might be referred to as an emergence-of-the-gaps.³¹

Peterson’s goal in this essay is twofold: first, to categorize the primary senses of emergence as they occur in relevant fields of philosophy, theology, and science; and second, to suggest how these different senses may be useful for the theology and science dialogue.³² He suggests that seven elements of the emergentist position need to be explored and enunciated carefully in order for emergentist positions to be coherent. One requirement of an emergent entity is that it be capable of some kind of higher-order description. Second, it is typically claimed that these emergent wholes obey various sorts of higher-order laws. Claims of higher-order description and higher-order laws lead to a third claim for emergent entities, that of unpredictable novelty. Peterson notes, fourth, that emergent positions imply that lower-level parts are necessary for the existence of the whole. Fifth, lower-level entities are insufficient for emergent entities. Sixth, some emergent entities are capable of top-down causation—that is, they are causally efficacious. And finally, emergent entities are characterized by “multiple realizability.”³³

Many advocates of emergence theory highlight the basis of such a view in the panentheistic relation of God and the world.³⁴ Regarding

³¹Ibid., 709.

³²Gregory R. Peterson, “Species of Emergence,” *Zygon* 41, no. 3 (2006): 689.

³³Ibid., 693–695. It is important to note here that all seven of Peterson’s elements of the emergentist’s position are fundamentally relational in character, meaning that, without the relation to other parts, they would not exist. In support of this relational emphasis, Neil Campbell, in his highly used introductory biology college textbook, writes that “with each upward step in the hierarchy of biological order, novel properties emerge that were not present at the simpler levels of organization. These emergent properties arise from interactions between the components.... Unique properties of organized matter arise from how the parts are arranged and interact. . . [insomuch as] we cannot fully explain a higher level of organization by breaking it down to its parts” (Neil A. Campbell, *Biology*, 3rd ed. [Menlo Park: Benjamin Cummings, 1991], 2–3).

³⁴See Tyron L. Inbody, “Reconceptions of Divine Power in John Wesley, Panentheism, and Trinitarian Theology,” in Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord, eds., *The Nature and Thy Name is Love* (Nashville: Kingswood, 2001), 180–191.

Clayton's usage of it, a strong case could be argued that emergence and panentheism are two sides of the same proverbial coin regarding his metaphysics and cosmology. Indeed, in an essay from 1999, Clayton defines panentheism as the view that the world is within God, though God is at the same time more than the world.³⁵ Panentheism seeks to stress that the infinite God is as ontologically close to finite things as can possibly be thought without dissolving altogether the distinction between Creator and created. Panentheism does not change biblical statements about God; it changes the philosophical framework that has too long dominated Christian attempts to conceive the relationship of God and world. Like many relational theologians today, Clayton breaks fundamentally with the Aristotelian notion of God as unmoved mover, which he finds to be sub-biblical.³⁶ Panentheism attributes all the functional regularity within the natural world to conscious divine intention, providing a thoroughly theological reading of physical regularities, one that is fully consistent with natural law.³⁷

The appeal of panentheism is that the energies at work at the physical level are already divine energies, and physical regularities are already expressions of the fundamental constancy of the divine character. Thus, panentheism claims that if the world remains within and is permeated by the divine, then it is possible to speak of divine purposes and goals being expressed even at the stage at which there are no conscious agents. The lawful behavior of the natural world is an expression of divine intention-

Also see Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson, eds., *Adventures in the Spirit: God, World, Divine Action* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); and Nicholas Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).

³⁵Philip Clayton, "The Panentheistic Turn In Theology," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 38 (1999):1.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 1.

³⁷Philip Clayton, "Panentheism in Metaphysical and Scientific Perspective," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 84–85. See also Marcus J. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2003), 66–67. Though Polkinghorne is hesitant to embrace panentheism fully, he nevertheless uses language akin to it (J. C. Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science, and Understanding* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000], 92–95).

ality.³⁸ In the concluding paragraphs of this essay, Clayton turns in a more speculative direction and attempts a constructive theological account of the evolutionary process of emergence. Scientifically, panentheism arises out of emergence theory; theologically, it arises out of the dialectic between the infinity and the finiteness of God. A relationship of difference-in-sameness characterizes God's relation to the world, which is neither construed as external to God nor as identical with God.³⁹

Much recent theology, like that of Moltmann⁴⁰ and Edwards⁴¹ speaks eloquently of God's immanence in nature. Peters and Hewlett respond directly to the challenge of natural selection, arguing that, although we do not directly see God's oversight in nature, we can know it by revelation to be there; God is hidden and revealed, present at the heart of nature but always transcendent, working through natural mechanisms.⁴² There is thus no point in looking for the interface of the divine and the natural.⁴³ As interrelatedness epitomizes the life of the Godhead, so also does unlimited interrelatedness characterize the relation of God and creation. God can be "Other" and simultaneously participate in the creation in a way analogous to the distinction and coinherence of the persons in the Trinity. Moltmann understands creation as consisting of community and intimacy, with the Creator at increasing levels of complex-

³⁸Philip Clayton, "Emergence of Spirit and Four Responses," *CTNS Bulletin* 20, no. 4 (2000):17.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 18. Also see John W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006). Moltmann makes a rather compelling case that a loving God could only be related to a free world of enduring significance if God contains that world and its inhabitants are within Godself rather than standing outside of it and them. His central theme, then, is panentheism (Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, trans. Margaret Kohl [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003]).

⁴⁰Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993); cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (trans. M. Kohl; London: SCM, 1981).

⁴¹Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004); cf. Denis Edwards, *The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1999).

⁴²Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett, *Evolution from Creation to New Creation: Conflict, Conversation, and Convergence* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 167.

⁴³Nicola H. Creegan, "A Christian Theology of Evolution and Participation," *Zygon* vol. 42, no. 2 (2007):504.

ity.⁴⁴ In a collection of essays edited by Clayton and Peacocke entitled *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, Peacocke argues that the turn to panentheism offers great promise as a doctrinal resource for contemporary theology and its understanding of God's relation to the world.⁴⁵

More pointedly, Peacocke notes that the Spirit makes things able to make themselves, which affirms a panentheistic perspective.⁴⁶ The immanent creator Spirit is continuously creating and continuously breathing life into the creation.⁴⁷ In agreement, Doncel asserts that theologians today are correct to contemplate this long process as God's continued creation, mediated by the interplay of laws and chance.⁴⁸ The Spirit is present "in, with, and under" the processes of biological evolution within the created world.⁴⁹ The notion of emergence, it should be noted, is compatible with the working of the Spirit in empowering creation from within.

Like Clayton, Crain adopts a panentheistic perspective, one in which God is in but not totally constituted by all things natural, but in a way that Crain argues is consistent with classical philosophical theism and Christian discourse about divine transcendence. Crain argues that the standard panentheistic metaphor that the world is the body of God should be complemented by the metaphor that God is the body of the world. This panentheistic grammar implies that God is radically immanent within the world in virtue of continuously giving it the gift of being. Crain contends that "both the divine presence in the world and divine action in the world are nonintrusive, noninvasive, and noninterventive."⁵⁰ Contemporary theology should strive to understand how "God empowers the world from

⁴⁴Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 19.

⁴⁵Arthur Peacocke, "Introduction," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, xix.

⁴⁶Arthur Peacocke, "The Cost of New Life," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, John Polkinghorne, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 21.

⁴⁷Interestingly, Terrence Fretheim writes that "God's creating in Genesis 1. . . includes ordering that which already exists.... God works creatively with already existing reality to bring about newness" (Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 5).

⁴⁸Manuel G. Doncel, "The Kenosis of the Creator and of the Created Co-creator," *Zygon* 39, no. 4 (2004):798.

⁴⁹Peacocke, "The Cost of New Life," 32.

⁵⁰Steven Crain, "God Emodied In, Bodying Forth The World: Emergence and Christian Theology," *Zygon* 41, no. 3 (2006):670.

within, especially in bringing human free agents among God's creations" and how God is "continuously sustaining and energizing [the world's] story . . . from within."⁵¹

In consistently arguing for a panentheistic relationship of God and the world, Küng forms the basis of his conclusions regarding evolutionary progress. According to such a view, God works in and through the regular structures of the world, being present to the world dialectically in that he is transcendent in his immanence, all the while immanent in his transcendence. Accordingly, God makes possible, permeates, and perfects creation, as the divine is in, with, and among its causal operations (being the origin, center, and goal of the process). Concerning the personhood of God, Küng asserts that God is personal, but more than a person, affirming the Augustinian conception of God as being more inward than the innermost part of our body, yet also affirming simultaneously Bultmann's conception of God as "wholly other."⁵²

At the close of the ninth chapter in *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit*, Edwards avers that a proper view of panentheism is fully Trinitarian: it does not place all of the creating activity on one member of the Godhead, nor does it contend that the creation is currently related to the Godhead by only one member of it. Further, a proper view of panentheism understands God as "wholly other" than creation, but also radically interior to everything therein due to the interpenetrating Spirit that permeates it. This view understands the universe as evolving within the life of God, with the creating Spirit enabling evolving entities to have their own autonomy and integrity. As a result, creation is a two-way relationship between God and created things; both can affect and be affected by the other.⁵³

Implication: Possibilities for God

In his book *The God of Nature*, Knight offers support for a way of thinking about divine engagement with the world known as emergence. Higher levels of complexity naturally unfold in this model as a result of

⁵¹Crain, "God Embodied In," 672; cf. Philip Clayton, "Emergence From Physics to Theology: Toward a Panoramic View," *Zygon* 41, no. 3 (2006): 685.

⁵²Hans Küng, *The Beginning of All Things*, trans. John Bowden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 109.

⁵³Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 136.

the interplay of chance and natural law upon the possibilities and potentials that God bestowed into creation at its beginning and through his continued panentheistic presence in the world.⁵⁴ In agreement, Peacocke asserts that the activity of God's Spirit within creation proceeds by no assured program, but is precarious instead.⁵⁵

Similarly, Polkinghorne states that the Spirit is the carrier of divine wisdom, even in chaos.⁵⁶ As such, the potential for novelty and relative stability lies between the two poles of order and disorder within chaotic systems.⁵⁷ The breath of life enables and empowers emergence of creation and creatures, inasmuch as this Spirit of emergence endows creation with the ability to unfold by "natural" processes according to their inherent possibilities and potentialities.⁵⁸

Creation from a pneumatological standpoint, as Dabney affirms, begins with the Spirit, which in turn means that the world is not defined by necessity, but by possibility instead, for the Spirit is the possibility of God.⁵⁹ According to Tanner, the Spirit has historically been seen to either work immediately (proximately) or gradually.⁶⁰ So, then, the Spirit could be seen just as much at work in the ordinary events of history as in its unusual happenings, i.e., in exploring paths (possibilities) not usually

⁵⁴Christopher C. Knight, *The God of Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 35.

⁵⁵Peacocke, "The Cost of New Life," 21. Peacocke's reference here to "spirit" is somewhat compatible to Loder and Neidhard, who define spirit to mean "a quality of relationality, and [a] way to conceptualize the dynamic interactive unity by which two disparate things are held together without loss of their diversity" (James Loder and W. Jim Neidhard, *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of Spirit in Theology and Science* [Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1992], 10).

⁵⁶Interestingly, "The author of Genesis," says Keller, "assumed that the universe was created from a primal chaos: something uncreated, something Other, something that a creator could mold, form, or call to order" (Keller, *The Face of the Deep*, xvii).

⁵⁷John Polkinghorne, "The Hidden Spirit and the Cosmos," in *The Work of the Spirit* (ed. Michael Welker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 174. See also, Lodahl, "Creation Out of Nothing?," in Stone and Oord, eds., *The Nature and Thy Name is Love*, 233.

⁵⁸Michael Welker, "Introduction," in *The Work of the Spirit*, xii.

⁵⁹D. Lyle Dabney, "The Nature of the Spirit," in *The Work of the Spirit*, 78.

⁶⁰Kathryn Tanner, "Workings of the Spirit: Simplicity or Complexity?," in *The Work of the Spirit*, 87.

taken. Welker agrees, and notes that the Spirit works modestly, in a continuous fashion in and through natural processes, as well as in novel occurrences.⁶¹ Huchingson also concurs, and notes that primordial chaos was essential to God's creation because it was the source of innumerable possibilities, potentialities, and novelties, without which the immense variety of nature would not be possible.⁶²

Guntton asserts that just as God the Father "took his time" in dealing with the erring world in Christ, so too did he "take his time" in bestowing creative and causal powers unto the Spirit in creation. Thus, the created world is a project, of sorts, of the Spirit in that the creation takes time to become what it was intended to be.⁶³ In this view, creation ventures forward by enacting various possibilities that are available to it, the success of which is measured only in the propagation of itself (i.e., in retrospect). In a sense, God is not the "creator" per se, but creativity instead, which is consonant with Kaufman's view. Indeed, Kaufman advocates that thinking of God as "serendipitous creativity" instead of "the creator" is congenial to conceptions of the term "emergence", as outlined by such thinkers as Morowitz and Clayton.⁶⁴ Kaufman admits to the profound mystery of conceiving "God" in this manner, but intimates that thinking of God as creativity and not as the "creator" implies that God can—and has!—produced novel things from unknown causes in the evolutionary epic.

According to an article by Kaufman, thinking of God as creativity also enables us to bring theological meanings into significant connection with modern evolutionary thought. For Kaufman, the word creativity refers simply to the coming into being of something novel and important. He suggests that, instead of taking it for granted that "God" is the name of a creator who has brought everything into being, it is illuminating to think of God as the religious name for the profound mystery of creativity—that is, the mystery of the emergence in and through evolutionary processes of

⁶¹Michael Welker, "Spirit in Philosophical, Theological, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives," in *The Work of the Spirit*, 227.

⁶²James E. Huchingson, "Engaging James E. Huchingson's *Pandemonium Tremendum: Chaos and Mystery in the Life of God*," *Zygon* 37, no. 2 (2002): 396–397.

⁶³Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 93.

⁶⁴Gordon D. Kaufman, *In the Beginning . . . Creativity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 36.

novelty in the world. After rethinking creativity as God, we would be “able to connect the enormously meaningful ancient symbol God with central features of our modern thinking about the origins of the cosmos, the evolution of life and other features of the cosmos, and the emergence and development of human life and culture on planet Earth.”⁶⁵

Peacocke states that the randomness and lawfulness that are built into creation are what one would expect if the evolving universe is to be able to explore options and to experiment with the fullest range of possibilities.⁶⁶ Edwards concurs, and asserts that the Spirit of God is intimately interior to each creature, leading the world into the future of God, to which it is always open, exploring innumerable possibilities through seemingly random processes.⁶⁷ Also, in speaking of evolutionary novelty, Edwards is in agreement with Clayton’s conception of emergence, stating that “while the new is completely dependent on its preexisting parts, it is not reducible to its components.”⁶⁸ Edwards gives us the method in which the Spirit opens up these possibilities for the “new” in an emergent universe. The Spirit is the communion-bringer in the world (i.e., as the interior presence of God that empowers being and becoming)⁶⁹ in ways appropriate to each.⁷⁰ As a result of the communion in the

⁶⁵Gordon D. Kaufman, “A Religious Interpretation of Emergence,” *Zygon* 42, no. 4 (2007): 918. Note that whereas I am sympathetic with Kaufman’s intent, the mere equation of God with an impersonal concept like creativity may be too much for Wesleyan’s to accept. Others also are sympathetic with Whitehead’s view of creativity, but stop short of equating creativity with God (see Robert C. Neville, *Creativity and God: A Challenge to Process Theology*, new ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

⁶⁶Arthur Peacocke, *Theology For a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming—Natural, Divine and Human* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 118.

⁶⁷Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 44.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 44–45.

⁶⁹cf. Richard Taylor, *The Go-Between God* (2nd edition; London: SCM, 2005).

⁷⁰Similarly, Morowitz argues that the Spirit powers—even empowers—emergence by noting that the Spirit is the selection that rules between God’s immanence and the development of the earth (Harold J. Morowitz, *The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex* [Oxford: Oxford University, 2002], 197–198). Note that Morowitz’s contention that the Spirit empowers emergence is consonant with Wesley’s claim that God’s power is fundamentally an empowerment of the other versus being a controlling factor (ref. Sermon 66, “The Signs of the Times,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, Albert C. Outler, ed. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987], 4:43).

universe wrought by the Spirit, the godhead is present to each creature, embracing each in love.⁷¹

Edwards focuses on the Spirit's distinct role in creation as being that of "the immanent Life-Giver that enables all creatures to be and to become,"⁷² which is similar to how Pannenberg writes that the Spirit "is the principle of the creative presence of the transcendent God,"⁷³ and who also notes that "the Spirit of God is the life-giving principle, to which all creatures owe life, movement, and activity."⁷⁴ In stating that the Spirit is the immanent Life-Giver within creation, Edwards also agrees with Moltmann, who writes that the Spirit is the "unspeakable closeness of God."⁷⁵

Future Directions: Wesleyan Contributions to the Discussion

The fact of panentheism is rather well documented in current scientific, philosophical, and theological literature.⁷⁶ Interestingly, John Wesley perhaps anticipated the concept of panentheism.⁷⁷ He writes, "There is no point of space, whether within or without the bounds of creation, where God is not."⁷⁸ He adds, "Perhaps it cannot be proved that all space is filled with matter. But the heathen [Virgil] himself will bear us witness . . . 'All things are full of God.' Yea, and whatever space exists beyond the bounds of creation . . . even that space cannot exclude him who fills the heaven and earth."⁷⁹ Going further, Wesley notes the intimate presence of God within creation, saying, "Nay, and we cannot believe the omnipotence of God unless we believe his omnipresence. For seeing . . .

⁷¹Edwards, *Breath of Life*, 47–49. See also Lodahl, "Creation Out Of Nothing?," in Stone and Oord, eds., *Thy Nature & Thy Name Is Love*, 233.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 117.

⁷³Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (trans. W. Geoffrey Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 2:32.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 2:76.

⁷⁵Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 12.

⁷⁶See John W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

⁷⁷Inbody notes this, but does not elaborate on it. See Tyron L. Inbody, "Reconceptions of Divine Power in John Wesley, Panentheism, and Trinitarian Theology," in *Thy Nature & Thy Name Is Love*, Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord, eds. (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2001), 176.

⁷⁸John Wesley, Sermon 111, "On the Omnipresence of God," in *The Works of John Wesley*, Albert C. Outler, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 4:42.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 44.

that] nothing can act where it is not, if there were any space where God was not present he would not be able to do anything there . . . [but] ‘God acts everywhere, and therefore is everywhere.’ ”⁸⁰

The metaphor that God is the body of the world, a common claim in modern depictions of panentheism, also finds consonance with Wesley, who writes “Perhaps what the ancient philosopher speaks of the soul, in regard to its residence in the body, that it is *tota in toto, et, tota in qualibet parte*, might, in some sense, be spoken of the omnipresent Spirit, in regard to the universe: That he is not only ‘All in the whole,’ but ‘All in every part.’ ”⁸¹ Similarly, Wesley elsewhere notes that “God is in all things, and . . . we are to see the Creator in the glass of every creature; that we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God . . . who by his intimate presence holds them all in being, who pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is in a true sense the soul of the universe.”⁸² One does not have to buy into Wesley’s antiquated language of “soul” in order to glean from his comments that God is panentheistically—in modern terms—related to the universe.

I would like to complement the insights of Wesley noted above with those found in Sigurd Bergmann’s book, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature*, wherein grounds are given to assert that it is the Spirit who is the source of life, who is in all things, and that all things are therefore in God. So much is this so that “God’s Spirit is the principle of evolution.”⁸³ One of the most valuable insights found within Bergmann’s book is that the Spirit vivifies (foundationally), permeates (ontologically), indwells (incarnationally), and consummates (liberationally) creation.⁸⁴ Life, then, is a manifestation of the all-encompassing Spirit who, in a characteristically Wesleyan-relational manner (though not noted as such by Bergmann), comes alongside the creation and relationally influences it toward greater complexity.⁸⁵

⁸⁰Ibid., 44.

⁸¹John Wesley, Sermon 67, “On Divine Providence,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, Albert C. Outler, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 2:538.

⁸²John Wesley, Sermon 23, “Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, III,” *Works* 1:516–517.

⁸³ Sigurd Bergmann, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature* (trans. Douglass W. Stott: Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 2005), 223.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 170.

⁸⁵ As Inbody notes, relationships are constitutive of all reality, even divine reality (Inbody, “Reconceptions of Divine Power,” in Stone and Oord, eds., *The Nature & Thy Name is Love*, 182).

So what does all of this mean? I contend that a picture of the world as being contained within God, construed as such by Wesley as well as modern theology and philosophy, offers a model by which God can interact with the world through non-interventive ways, a fact that Clayton also highlights. It has been well established that Wesley understood the perfecting of God's creation in relational and processive⁸⁶ terms⁸⁷ inasmuch as God lures created things through a proverbial myriad of possibilities open to them, as John Wesley put it, by "strongly and sweetly influencing all, and yet without destroying the liberty of his rational creatures."⁸⁸ Seen in this light, God presents a vast array of possibilities to created things, which offers a multitude of different ways by which their complexity may be increased.⁸⁹

Whereas instances of emergence are well attested in the literature, and theories of emergence also abound, the uniting principle amongst these concepts is lacking. In all these cases, what is lacking appears to be the metaphysical basis of emergence theory,⁹⁰ which is a lacuna that a Wesleyan-relational perspective could perhaps adequately fill. Indeed, perhaps the development of a Wesleyan-relational metaphysical basis for emergence in the natural world will succeed in linking panentheism,

⁸⁶This term is not to be misconstrued as a reference to Process theology.

⁸⁷See Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord, "Introduction," in Stone and Oord, *Thy Nature & Thy Name Is Love*, 9.

⁸⁸John Wesley, Sermon 118, "On the Omnipresence of God," *Works* 4:42–3. According to Morowitz, emergence shows that the unfolding of the cosmos is neither totally determined, nor totally random, an idea with which Clayton would seemingly agree (Harold J. Morowitz, *The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex* [Oxford: Oxford University, 2002], 193).

⁸⁹In light of contemporary cosmology, Keller refers to the Genesis 1 narrative of creation as "seven days of self-organization," invoking reference to the scientific notion of autocatalysis. Keller notes that this "signifies emergence as creation from the chaos of prevenient conditions" (Keller, *The Face of the Deep*, 196). However, I will reaffirm, with Wesley quoted above, that these self-organizing, autocatalytic systems require divine influence. Polkinghorne also notes that (self-)organizing principles in nature might be interpreted theologically as expressions of God's creative will (John Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker. The Gifford Lectures, 1993-94* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 78).

⁹⁰Cf. James W. Haag, *Emergent Freedom: Process Dynamics in Theological, Philosophical, and Scientific Perspective* (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2007), 37. He notes that many scholars use the term emergence to explain *what* it is and *why* the term is employed, but too few scholars note *how* it works.

emergent possibilities, and God.⁹¹ I suggest that one such avenue that could be further fleshed-out is the notion of *kenosis* being depicted as a “pouring into” versus merely a “self-emptying,” both of which have biblical foundation. In this projection, creation would be seen as the result of the kenotic “pouring” of the Spirit *into* the primal, chaotic matter that was present in the beginning (cf. Gen 1:2).⁹² By being poured into the primal creation, God the Spirit would be present to it in its evolutionary path toward increasing complexity, relationally guiding, luring, and wooing it to his goal of communion with an “other.”

Moreover, if God is love that is poured out for others (1 Jn. 4:8; 3:16), then, according to Trinitarian doctrine, God has never been anything else. In other words, if the operations of God as attested by the testimony of the Scriptures lead us to confess that God is love and thus loves the *other*, then it makes theological sense that God is eternally communicating with, and communing with, a world of some sort.⁹³ In a Wesleyan-relational view, *kenosis* would be the avenue by which God could be the ground of all being. This conceptualizing of *kenosis* would provide also a basis for the relationality of God to the world, the result of which is the advancement of the evolutionary paradigm, of which humans are the pinnacle.

⁹¹Here I am building from Clayton, who notes that “emergence propels one to metaphysics, and metaphysical reflection in turn suggests a theological postulate above and beyond the logic of emergence” (Philip Clayton, “Panentheism in Metaphysical and Scientific Explanation,” in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, 91).

⁹²I have argued this point elsewhere in “The Kenosis of the Spirit Into Creation,” *Crucible* 1, no.1 (2008).

⁹³Thus, relational theology views the reality of the universe and God as thoroughly interdependent. Ogden asserts that “it is not meaningful to talk [about God’s love] at all unless the structure of God in itself involves real, internal relatedness to others . . . to accept others as love is to be really, internally related to them” (Schubert M. Ogden, “Process Theology and the Wesleyan Witness,” in Stone and Oord, *Thy Nature & Thy Name Is Love*, 42–43. However, this is not to imply that the world has always existed *necessarily*. Rather, as Lodahl argues, if the world has in fact always existed, it is only because of God’s overflowing love (Lodahl, “Creation Out of Nothing?,” in Stone and Oord, eds., *The Nature and Thy Name is Love*, 238).



Dr. Barry L. Callen

A TRIBUTE TO:
DR. BARRY L. CALLEN

**UPON RECEIVING THE WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S
*LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD, 2009***

by

Richard Thompson

The Lifetime Achievement Award of the Wesleyan Theological Society is intended to be *the* premier recognition of the Society for one of her members whose life and contributions have left a distinguished and lasting mark on her history and have also shaped in some fashion her future. It is most fitting that our award for this year is bestowed to Dr. Barry L. Callen, an alumnus, longstanding faculty member and administrator, and now professor emeritus of Anderson University, our host institution. There is probably no member of the Society who needs any explanation as to why Dr. Callen has been selected to receive this high honor. While the list of his credentials is long, let me highlight several areas that are noteworthy.

We should begin by noting something important. Dr. Callen is a product of the Church of God (Anderson) where the faithful (including his own family) nurtured and encouraged him from his youth. His conversion as a thirteen-year-old occurred at the altar of the tabernacle on the Free Methodist campgrounds in East Liverpool, Ohio, where his grandparents owned a cottage. And it was only weeks after that experience that his home church drafted him to read the Sunday morning Scripture before hundreds of worshippers. As he puts it, "I was very nervous. My eyes glazed as I

began reading the assigned psalm. Although soon unable to see the words in my Bible, I was too embarrassed to stop, so I went on—making up biblical verses until it seemed that the right amount of time had elapsed! No one ever admitted noticing my desperate diversion into the world of biblical authorship” (Callen, *A Pilgrim’s Progress*, 2008, 100-101).

Since Dr. Callen apparently pulled off without a hitch the big task of biblical authorship, it was no wonder that his local congregation soon had him preaching, too. And so, while his undergraduate studies at Geneva College focused on high school teaching in the area of history, it is no surprise that, after graduation, he decided to attend seminary. While the plan was to pursue his studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, circumstances closed that door while another providentially opened, which led to Anderson, Indiana, and the relatively young seminary there. Little did he realize how monumental the decision to step through that open door would be for his career and his substantive contributions to the Church of God and the Wesleyan/Holiness movement at large.

Apparently, Anderson College (now University) saw something remarkable in this fledgling scholar. Thus, rather than letting him depart for what he anticipated to be a career in pastoral ministry, the college in 1966 appointed him upon graduation with his Master of Divinity degree to a one-year sabbatical replacement in the undergraduate program, only to follow that up with the invitation to join the college’s faculty long-term. He accepted only with the stipulation that he first pursue additional graduate studies, including the Master of Theology degree in Christian theology from Asbury Theological Seminary in 1968 and the Doctor of Religion degree from Chicago Theological Seminary in 1969. So when Dr. Callen returned to Anderson in 1969, a relationship was reinstated with that university that extends to this day. He has taught with distinction in both the undergraduate and graduate programs of the university. In 1988, Dr. Callen was named by the Anderson University Board of Trustees as the first “University Professor,” a special faculty rank to recognize a senior and distinguished scholar-teacher of the faculty. In addition to his teaching, his leadership in the Anderson academic community is evident in the wide variety of positions that he has held, including: department chair, founding director of the Center for Pastoral Studies, dean of the School of Theology, dean of the Undergraduate College, Vice President for Academic Affairs of the University, Secretary of the Board of Trustees, and founding Editor of Anderson University Press.

While Dr. Callen's teaching and administrative accomplishments during his tenure at Anderson University are numerous and noteworthy, one should never lose sight of the fact that he offers to us a model of one who effectively balances the roles of teaching, administration, and scholarship. While carrying heavy responsibilities in teaching and administration, Dr. Callen managed to squeeze out a few hours here and there for writing, with the result that now he has authored or edited more than thirty books. Of particular note are his works: *God As Loving Grace*, published by Evangel Publishing House in 1996; *Authentic Spirituality: Moving Beyond Mere Religion*, published by Baker Academic Press in 2001; *Discerning the Divine: God Through Christian Eyes*, published by Westminster/John Knox Press in 2004; *The Scripture Principle*, which he co-authored with Clark H. Pinnock and was released by Baker Academic in 2006; and a commentary on the New Testament book of Colossians (Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007). Callen has also authored the intellectual biography of Clark Pinnock (*Journey Toward Renewal*, 2000) and biographies of several other prominent church leaders. He has contributed chapters to a number of book collections, written articles in a range of journals, and published a documentary history of his own fellowship, the Church of God (*Following the Light*, 2000).

The careful work in recounting the history of the Church of God and her educational institutions may be most revelatory of Dr. Callen's passion as a scholar and servant of the church. In 1992 he published the history of Anderson University, *Guide of Soul and Mind*, and in 2007 his work *Enriching Mind and Spirit* was released, offering brief histories of all the higher education institutions of the Church of God. However, it should be noted that no history comes from an unbiased observer, and so through these works one finds Dr. Callen subtly weaving a distinctly Wesleyan philosophy of higher education in his accounts of these institutions. His most recent work, *The Church That God Intends* (2009), offers a fresh look at the history and theology of the Church of God. His first novel will also be released in 2009.

As important as these publications are as contributions to religious studies, Christian higher education, and the history of his church, it seems to me that Dr. Callen's monumental contribution, both to the Wesleyan Theological Society specifically and to the Wesleyan/Holiness movement generally, has come in his extended tenure as editor of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*. When Dr. Callen assumed the editorship of the journal

in 1992, an increasingly tenuous financial situation threatened the long-term viability of the journal, not to mention the Society itself. However, these difficulties are now only found in the memories of those past years, with no small part of the journal's (and the Society's) rejuvenation due to Dr. Callen's consistent and tireless leadership as editor for the last seventeen years. With diligence and determination, he has maintained a consistent schedule so that two issues of the journal are released each year, one in the spring and another in the fall.

Over the span of these years as editor, Callen's work translates into the editorial oversight of over 500 contributions (mostly articles and book reviews) from 231 different scholars. And we all know what this editorial work entails: the editor is the unseen force in the background who makes each author look better. During his tenure in guiding the journal's publication, the articles accepted and published in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* have reflected an increasing diversity in the kinds of disciplines represented, so that not only the areas of systematic theology, historical theology, and church history that dominated the earlier years of the journal, but also biblical studies, philosophy, practical theology and Christian education are now increasingly represented. Simply put, this Society is deeply indebted to Dr. Callen for his commitment and leadership as editor of our journal, which represents us well by offering this Society's scholarship to the church around the world.

There is one more side to this man that reveals something about his heart. In 2001, Dr. Callen with three others founded a Christian mission organization called Horizon International, which is now a significant player in assisting AIDS orphans in the countries of southern Africa. Horizon International is currently responsible for the total care of over 1,500 orphans scattered across South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and troubled Zimbabwe, with many others now pre-screened and ready for sponsorship. In fact, Horizon International is the only western organization operating legally in Zimbabwe. There is no disputing the fact that this pandemic of AIDS may be one of the worst if not *the* worst human disaster in the world's history. As Dr. Callen notes, "I am grateful to be part of one Christian group that is doing something about it, one child at a time. As John Wesley once insisted, there is no holiness that is not also social holiness!

Dr. Callen, the Wesleyan Theological Society presents you with this *Lifetime Achievement Award* to honor your accomplishments, thank you for what you have contributed to the Society, and to praise God for the

divine grace that you continue to share through your teaching, writing, editing, and other ministries.

The Callen Response to Receiving the WTS *Lifetime Achievement Award*, March, 2009

Some 130 years ago, Daniel Warner, primary pioneer of the Church of God movement (Anderson), *walked out* of the holiness association in this state [Indiana], looking outside all church associations for the perfect church that God intends. His vision—holiness is the key to Christian unity, and thus effective Christian mission. His irony—we'll have to separate in order to get together! Well, although a loyal son of Warner's tradition, obviously I have chosen to *walk back in*.

Being among you across recent years, I have watched both the soul-searching and the witnessing of the Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions. I've been very much at home. God indeed does want a sanctified, Spirit-filled, and unified people, and we'll have to stay *together* to help it be a reality. For the opportunity to be one of you, and to serve the great cause of Christ with you, I am in your debt.

I recall last year when this Lifetime Achievement Award was given to Dr. Rob Staples. Many of you, especially the Nazarenes, celebrated an outstanding teacher with whom you once were privileged to study. My situation has been a little different. Rather than being your teacher, I have sat at your feet and learned. Over my seventeen years as your journal editor, I have worked at close range with your most creative writings, having now edited and published nearly 250 of you. You have been *my* teachers, and I am much the better for it.

Whatever I have done for the Wesleyan Theological Society has been an honor, and I am very aware that I have not done it alone. I have served with an amazing group of people on the WTS Executive Committee—actually, over several generations of its membership. I was nominated by Dr. Susie Stanley for the role of editor (thanks for your confidence!) and then followed the editorship of a truly outstanding man, Paul Bassett. Now we all are in debt to George Lyons and others at Northwest Nazarene University for the new CD that makes available in digital and searchable form all *WTJ* issues from the journal's beginning in 1966.

I already have expressed in writing to the members of the WTS Editorial Committee, past and present, my appreciation for their wisdom and helpfulness over the years. Richard Thompson is one of them. If I had

known in advance that Dick was writing and delivering the tribute about me tonight, I probably would have especially sweetened his appreciation message!

My 2008 autobiography is titled *A Pilgrim's Progress*. There and elsewhere, I have observed that the larger Christian community is on a crucial journey. Reflecting the view of my own ecclesial community, I believe that the continuing progress of this divinely-inspired journey will necessarily go through a holiness message, probed, retooled, proclaimed, and boldly lived by the church's best—many of whom are in this room tonight.

Over the years I have watched the Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions give leadership to serious dialogues with scientists, philosophers, psychologists, historians, biblical scholars, educators, open theologians, process theologians, Eastern Orthodox patriarchs, and more. The depth, range, and unifying power of the tradition rooted in the Wesleys keeps being evidenced in all of these dialogues, and with many of you in the lead.

To have been with you in this process of dialoging, probing, and publishing about this great tradition has been a personal privilege. And, since you have not yet voted me out of the editorship, so far as I know, I look ahead with excitement to more of the process, and I certainly thank you for the kind and generous recognition of your *Lifetime Achievement Award*.

**2009 Smith-Wynkoop Book Award
presented by the WTS to . . .**

Randall J. Stephens

for the book

***The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism
in the American South***

Tribute by

Stan Ingersol

The Timothy L. Smith-Mildred Bangs Wynkoop Book Award is named for a historian and a theologian. Children of their own time, each was an active participant in the effort to create a post-World War II evangelicalism that was vibrant, post-fundamentalist, and socially-responsible. Smith and Wynkoop exemplified a paradigm that the Quaker philosopher, Elton Trueblood, set forth in the book *The New Man for Our Time*. Trueblood's ideal Christian balanced three elements: piety, social concern, and intellect. Wynkoop and Smith exemplified these traits in their writings, conversation, and public speaking. And when it came to the intellect, they were committed to careful research, originality, and bold thesis.

This year the award named in their honor is given to Randall J. Stephens for *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South*, a synoptic history of the relationship between holiness and pentecostal religion in a particular region of the United States.

For over a century, the relationship between the holiness and pentecostal movements has resembled a squabble among siblings competing for attention and dominance. At its heart, the rift is theological in nature.

Early on, Wesleyan-holiness preachers concluded that pentecostals had slipped into “wildfire,” eccentric emphasis, and bad theology. Pentecostals returned the “compliment” by concluding that Wesleyan-holiness people had shut out the true work of the Holy Spirit. Beyond the theological differences, other dimensions of this estrangement were purely social—including competition between the two groups for the allegiance of America’s plain folk.

The initial effort to cover this ground was Vinson Synan’s *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement* (1971). Although his book contained factual errors, there was gradual acceptance of Synan’s basic thesis, namely that the Wesleyan-holiness movement was the nest in which pentecostalism was hatched. In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of articles, some of them published in *The Wesleyan Theological Journal*, fleshed out various dimensions of this process. The theological relationship between the two movements also became the problem that Donald Dayton addressed in his doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago, and in the book based upon that research, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (1987).

So, what has Stephens contributed to this discussion? *The Fire Spreads* is the first synoptic history of the relationship between holiness and pentecostal religion since Synan’s groundbreaking work of 35 years ago. But Synan worked on a national canvass; Stephens narrows his focus to the South and works in greater depth. And, whereas Dayton fleshed out theological transitions that gave rise to pentecostalism, Stephens’ work is essentially a social history of the two movements.

The author has benefitted from the years of steady research in holiness studies and pentecostal studies that have occurred since the early 1970s, and he has integrated this research into his narrative. But he also has come to the material with fresh eyes, looked at old primary sources in a new way, examined many new primary sources, and has written a more vivid account than any predecessors. And, most importantly, he has adopted a different viewpoint.

In Stephens’ viewpoint, holiness religion is considered in its own right, as an integral part of the story of Southern religion. Most scholars of pentecostalism treat the holiness movement simply as a prelude to pentecostalism, and they rush through it to get on to the main theme. Generalists in the study of American religious history have followed their lead. Stephens not only breaks with this mindset; he stands it on its head. He tells the story of the Southern holiness movement in detail, allowing the

voices of the holiness people to emerge through his text, and giving face to them through his judicious selection of photographs. Indeed, Stephens devotes 186 pages to the Southern holiness movement before shifting the subject to pentecostalism's emergence. His point is clear: the holiness movement is not merely incidental to pentecostalism's rise, but has its own place in the mosaic of Southern religion.

Other points deserve emphasis. Stephens has integrated religious and social history. He tells a story of religion that is embedded in its cultural context, not divorced from it. His focus on regionalism is part of this integration. But he also sets his story within the context of the agrarian movement (or populism) and the changing fortunes of race and gender in the South. He has produced a highly readable book, a fact noted by many reviewers. And the quality of his work is underscored by the fact that Harvard University Press is his publisher.

Randall Stephens teaches in the History Department at Eastern Nazarene College. Timothy Smith, at the outset of his career, did the very same. Like Smith, Stephens has already developed wide-ranging interests within the historians' guild. He is the editor of *The Journal of Southern History*, an online journal, and he is also the editor of *Historically Speaking*, published by the Johns Hopkins University Press for The Historical Society, located in Boston, Massachusetts.

BOOK REVIEWS

Clarke, F. Stuart. *The Ground of Election: Jacobus Arminius' Doctrine of the Work and Person of Christ*. Studies in Christian History and Thought. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006. 120 pages + xx. ISBN: 9781842273982.

Reviewed by J. David Belcher, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri.

The aim of Clarke's thin, though no less weighty, volume—"so long (fifty years!) in preparation" (v)—is quite simple: to provide a coherent study of the doctrine of the person and work of Christ in the theology of the Dutch reformer, Jacobus Arminius. Clarke understands his investigation to be an essential contribution to Arminius studies, especially insofar as there is as yet no such existing comprehensive investigation of Arminius's Christology. Clarke is equally attempting to shed more light on the significance of Arminius's thought for future generations, given certain modern interpretations that depict Arminius as merely an opposing shadow to Calvinism and Reformed predestinarianism. In other words, by way of his Christology, Clarke is attempting to show that Arminius's theology of election and grace is a viable theological position that must be given due consideration apart from popular (mis)understandings.

Clarke positions his own work on Arminius's Christology amidst three previous, comprehensive studies of Arminius's system of theology: Carl Bangs' *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation*, Richard A. Muller's *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacobus Arminius*, and Eef Dekker's Dutch volume, *Rijker dan Midas*. I would suggest that Clarke has made a strong place for his own work alongside these three monumental Arminius studies as an indispensable resource, one which scholars, students, and pastors could ignore only with great

negligence. On the one hand, Clarke demonstrates astute facility in both Latin and Dutch and thus, alongside the above three authors, offers a comprehensive grasp of Arminius' original writings otherwise absent in studies of Arminius that work with only English translations of his work. On the other hand, his rather extensive use of Arminius's letters and correspondence—and especially insofar as some of the letters referenced are not discussed in the above three works—marks Clarke's work as an important contribution to understanding Arminius's often difficult style of thought.

Clarke's method of approach is "two-pronged" (xvii): both historical, insofar as he seeks to uncover the development of Arminius' thinking with respect to predestination; and thematic, insofar as he seeks to expound upon the theological subjects in which Arminius discusses the person and work of Christ. However, this approach makes the structure of the book somewhat odd. The book proceeds after an introduction with five chapters, concluding with an epilogue. While the first chapter discusses Arminius research from the time of Arminius' death up to the year 2000, chapters two, three, and five set out the work of demonstrating the historical development of Arminius' thought on predestination, weaving Christology into that development. Chapter four, the longest chapter in the book which proceeds in the more "thematic" approach, comes as a sort of *interruption* of the development between chapters three and five. Because of its length, though, this interruption is a bit too jolting, making it somewhat cumbersome to jump back into the historical approach in chapter five. At the head of chapter four, Clarke acknowledges that the theological development "becomes increasingly complicated as we approach [Arminius'] transfer from pastor in Amsterdam to professor in Leiden, and almost impossible after 1603" (61), but he then proceeds to analyze Arminius' disputations in a reconstructed chronological order, making special note of where Muller or Dekker have gotten the chronology wrong (e.g., 62-63).

The two-pronged approach, then, seems to evidence ambivalence on Clarke's part with respect to the goal of his book. While bringing an historical/developmental approach in tandem with a thematic/systematic approach is a praiseworthy venture, the thematic approach plays a minor role in the other chapters, and Clarke seems only to have inserted the thematic/systematic approach into his developing narrative to make sense of otherwise scarce historical evidence during that time period in Arminius's

life. The result of the chapter, however, is a somewhat meandering survey, such that the loci presented read more as mere summaries than helping his thesis along. In fact, if there is a thesis to this book, it is perhaps that “the work and person of Christ is central to all God’s dealings with his human creation since the Fall, and in particular that predestination is an integral part of the work of Christ, not just God’s response to human faith” (“Introduction,” xix). This, of course, explains the title of the book, that Christ is “the ground of election” [*fundamentum electionis*].

Chapter one, “Arminius Studies from 1609-2000,” is a helpful framing of the research in Arminius’s theology since the time of his death, and especially in order to situate Clarke’s subsequent investigation in that legacy. Chapter two, “The Reluctant Theologian: Pastorate and Predestination from 1591-1603,” uses Arminius’s earliest letters to set up some of his initial forms of thought, before moving on to the *Dissertation on Romans 7*, with a brief touch on the *Analysis of Romans 9*, then with lengthier treatments each of the *Friendly Conference* with Junius on predestination and Arminius’ *Examination* of William Perkins’s pamphlet on predestination. A significant move that Clarke makes in this chapter is with his claim that Arminius’ interaction with Junius fostered in him the acceptance of Junius’ “Christocentric bias” (26). Clarke marks this as a turning point for Arminius to a Christocentric doctrine, from which he would never turn back. Chapter three, “The Christology of a General Practitioner, 1599-1603,” relies even more heavily on Arminius’ letters written during the time of his pastorate in Amsterdam. The last half of the chapter focuses on the transition from Amsterdam to Arminius’ post as professor at Leiden, and specifically on his earliest orations and public disputations at the university. A significant point made in this chapter is that Arminius had worked out a well-integrated doctrine of the work and person of Christ prior to his arrival at Leiden, as evidenced in his first public disputation, *De Natura Dei* (60).

Chapter four, “*Synopsis: The Roots of Arminius’ Christology*,” is Clarke’s “thematic” chapter, and thus proceeds by way of short, point-by-point summaries, sometimes longer engagements, of a host of themes each related to Arminius’ Christology in his disputations. Another significant element to this chapter is the rather sharp introduction of polemics, as it is here that Clarke exerts his greatest efforts against the work of Richard Muller (as well as Eef Dekker). He strongly attempts to defend Arminius against Muller’s charges of subordinationism in the former’s

doctrine of the Trinity (63-67), while Clarke himself later notes that “Arminius has a (no doubt regrettable) habit of stipulating that Christ and the Spirit are subordinate to the Father” (88, and cf. 174).

A small point with respect to one of Clarke’s claims in chapter four. Clarke notes, “Neither Bangs, Muller or Dekker appears to have heard of [Howard] Watkins-Jones” (5), and particularly the latter’s book, *The Holy Spirit from Arminius to Wesley*—a book Clarke draws from on pages 65-66. Bangs, however, certainly had heard of Watkins-Jones, and even owned this book. To this day, his copy is located in the Carl Bangs Collection at Nazarene Theological Seminary’s William Broadhurst Library in Kansas City, Missouri.

Chapter five, “The Return of Controversy, 1604-1608,” focuses in closely on the predestination controversy, especially as it is brought to bear upon his interaction with his volatile colleague Franciscus Gomarus, and his *Declaratio Sententiae*, presented before the States General at the Hague in 1608. Clarke here wants clearly to delineate how Arminius’ doctrine of predestination is utterly Christocentric. Finally, in chapter six, “Epilogue: How Great the Harvest,” Clarke addresses the counterpoint of Arminius and Calvin that has persisted since Arminius’ death, suggesting that while Arminius wished to break with the more “extreme Augustinian views of predestination” that persisted in his Reformed forbears (169), Arminius’ own opinion of Calvin (and more broadly the Reformed tradition) was “a combination of extremes of both admiration and repugnance” (171).

There are three criticisms I would raise with respect to Clarke’s book. One of the biggest shortcomings of the work is its myopic scope—from an historical perspective, that is. Though he gives exhaustive—sometimes inordinately long—treatments of Arminius’ original writings, along with some biographical information, Clarke does virtually no work to place Arminius in his historical context, rarely if ever citing Arminius’ contemporaries in Leiden. Both Richard A. Muller and more recently Keith D. Stanglin in his new book on Arminius’s doctrine of assurance have shown that such an historical method provides but an anemic picture of Arminius at best and suffers from misinterpretations and over-generalizations at worst.

Another unfortunate matter is the lack of any definition of the fairly central term, “Christocentric.” Though Clarke does in one place link the term to a comparison he is attempting to draw between Arminius and

Barth (110)—and thus it could be inferred that he means to signify a neo-orthodox understanding of the term—he also gives very little evidence to defend such a comparison, and the comparison itself seems to suffer from not truly grasping the significance of Barth’s own “Christocentrism.” Nonetheless, if Clarke wishes not to be pinned down by the rather penetrating criticisms of a Richard Muller, then so loose a usage of the term “Christocentric”—a term Muller believes should be cast into a theological hinterland—should at the very least be clarified.

What I felt was most lacking with Clarke’s book, however, is its brevity. If Clarke’s book was indeed fifty years in the making, perhaps he needed to be done with it, but there are many passages that could have used much more exposition. The subtle hints at the influences of Lutheran teaching on Arminius, or the implicit claims of Arminius’ anticipation of Barth’s doctrine of election, are left far *too* subtle and implicit. These are indeed promising claims that have real credence, but they need to be carefully expounded—perhaps Clarke simply recognized that they remained out of the scope of his book. Perhaps we can expect more to come from Stuart Clarke, who has proven with this fine work that he is a scholar from whom we can surely learn.

Stamm, Mark. *Let Every Soul Be Jesus' Guest: A Theology of the Open Table*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006. 223 pages. ISBN: 0687493838.

Reviewed by Richard Heyduck, Pittsburg, Texas.

In *Let Every Soul Be Jesus' Guest: A Theology of the Open Table*, Mark Stamm examines a nearly universal practice in United Methodism. Even the prominent divide between liberals and conservatives is bridged by a common commitment to the Open Table. The difficulties with the practice of the Open Table lie in two directions: the possible sidelining of church discipline and the call for transformative discipleship, and in fully pursuing the trajectory of openness.

Stamm's conviction is that the heart of Methodist identity is expressed in its invitations. He shows that Charles Wesley's "Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast," an invitation to communion, has also been widely used as an invitation to faith in Jesus. The hymn's invitation suggests no set of activities that must precede coming to the table. The urgency is too great to delay, and sinners should come *now*.

Stamm carefully develops his case through consideration of the biblical sources, the initial tradition of a closed table (he considers the testimony of Justin Martyr), and the development of the tradition through John Wesley. His account of the liturgical history between Justin Martyr and Wesley is very brief, treated in mere summary form.

Turning to Wesley, Stamm considers not only his theology of the Open Table, but the relationship between Methodism and Anglicanism. In this context, Stamm builds on Wesley's position as a faithful innovator who sought to conserve the tradition of the church while reviving the church and extending its outreach so that more might come to faith.

One of the strengths of Stamm's book is his consistent and careful attention to counter-arguments. At each stage of the argument Stamm looks to the broader context that would offer objections or qualifications to the practice of the Open Table. His discussion of Wesley notes that the contemporary question about admitting non-baptized seekers to communion was much less of an issue in Wesley's day, given the near universality of baptism in 18th-century England. Therefore, while Wesley urged baptized, but unconverted people to come to the table, churches today face a different setting of inviting the unbaptized.

Stamm uses the language of *exception* to cover this anomaly. As an exception to the clear liturgical norm that baptism (and conversion) ought to precede communion, the exception to the norm, in both Wesley and

current United Methodist practice, finds its justification in terms of the urgency to extend grace to all. Making exceptions, Stamm argues, has been a key practice of the Methodist tradition, dating back to Wesley.

Stamm also considers Methodist experience, looking at 19th-century and current examples. He traces early Methodist use of the Cranmerian liturgy, passed on by Wesley. The Open Table in the 19th century, however, tended to rely on non-Wesleyan justifications. In recent years, liturgical leaders within United Methodism have taken their cue from developments at Vatican II and have moved away from the centrality of the sacrificial and penitential imagery in the traditional liturgy, while retaining the practice of the Open Table. Considering the other trends in Methodist theology over the past century, I think shifts in atonement theology have played a greater role in some of these liturgical shifts, though these shifts are unacknowledged by Stamm.

The biblical call to transformative discipleship seems to be the strongest argument against the practice of the Open Table. Differing from its Wesleyan beginnings, contemporary United Methodism is not well-prepared to exercise such discipline in this area. Stamm suggests that a recovery of a strong practice of Christian discipleship, such as that found in Covenant Discipleship, as well as a consistent linkage of baptism, communion and discipleship in preaching, liturgy and hymns may lead the church to a place where strong instances of discipline can again find a home. To be truly helpful, however, such discipline will need to include not just the clergy but also the laity, and extend beyond issues of sexuality.

It is in issues of sexuality that Stamm sees the greatest inconsistencies in the practice of the Open Table. Stamm argues that the liturgical practice of making room for all at the table—when “all” includes “single persons of all ages, . . . little people, for single parents and their children, . . . persons with physical and learning disabilities, as well as those with mental illnesses”—ought to include “gay and lesbian persons” as well. Welcoming them to the table would seem to imply a similar welcome into church leadership and as clergy. While I am aware of the push to include gays and lesbians among the clergy, I am not aware of a similar push to include other excluded groups, children and the mentally ill for example.

This highlights a weakness of Stamm’s argument. While he advises the recovery of the catechumenate within Methodism, he doesn’t attend fully to the way such a practice develops middle ground between the “Yes” of the Open Table and the “No” of traditional fencing, offering a “Not yet.” Though not offered universally, United Methodist ordination is

offered broadly. It is, however, not offered immediately to all who come. When someone pursues ordination in the church, that person is offered a hopeful “Not yet,” with a pathway for eventual inclusion.

A major theological hole in Stamm’s work is inattention to the traditional Methodist *ordo salutis* (common to contemporary United Methodism). When we say with Wesley that Holy Communion can be a “converting ordinance,” what kind of conversion do we have in mind? While the Damascus Road and Aldersgate experiences are sometimes offered as illustrations of instantaneous conversion, Stamm softens the momentousness of these events by contextualizing them in the stories of life with God as a whole. Paul and Wesley were both clearly in an evolving relationship with God—a conversion of sorts—of which these particular events are merely conversion *experiences*. Stamm follows this with talk of conversion to “see the world in a new way.” Surely these are elements of the work of God in the life of the Christian, but the lack of conversion that was traditionally thought of as a barrier to participation in communion, that would elicit a defense of communion as a “converting ordinance,” would be the kind of conversion associated with justification and the new birth in the traditional *ordo*. The kinds of conversions that lead to growth in one’s relationship with God or in one’s holiness would not generally be seen as an impediment to communion.

Finally, although Stamm considers the possibility that the United Methodist commitment to the Open Table may be due to the American ideology of rugged individualism and independence, he doesn’t give sufficient weight to this possibility and its possible connection with Constantinianism. In his discussion of Justin Martyr, Stamm observes that in the second century baptism could mark one for martyrdom. Today we baptize babies and remark on how cute they are. In our faith-friendly era the distinction between Christians and non-Christians, between the converted and non-converted, is minimal. While the Methodist tradition has a long heritage of trying to fit in with the dominant culture, this happy relationship between church and culture has not been without critique in the church. An Open Table, welcoming all who want to come, while plausible on Stamm’s reading of the biblical, theological and liturgical traditions, also fits well with our American commitment to individual liberty and freedom of expression.

In spite of these oversights, Mark Stamm has given us a well-argued and highly readable book examining a nearly universal practice in United Methodism. His work is surely a step forward for United Methodists seeking to understand and express their faith.

Newport, Kenneth G. C. and Ted A. Campbell, eds. *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature and Legacy*. London: Epworth Press, 2007. xvii + 573 pages. ISBN: 9780716206071.

Reviewed by Kenneth M. Loyer, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.

Charles Wesley: Life, Literature and Legacy is a compilation of twenty-eight essays casting fresh light on this important, although sometimes overlooked figure of eighteenth-century church history. What emerges is a picture of the so-called “younger Wesley” as much more than simply the great poet of Methodism or obsequious assistant to his older brother John. Here Charles is presented in a balanced perspective that provides new insights into his personal and family life, voluminous writings, theological convictions, and ongoing impact for Methodists, Anglicans, and the wider Christian church today. Edited by Kenneth Newport and Ted Campbell, this volume combines quality scholarship and accessibility and is poised to advance the critical study of Charles Wesley in significant ways.

As a group, these twenty-eight essays evince an academic rigor that gives the collection a high quality. While some differences of opinion among the contributors remain (e.g., the claim that Charles was the “co-founder” of Methodism is a disputed one), here leading scholars in the field basically collaborate to provide a critical yet appropriately sympathetic account of Wesley’s life, literature, and legacy. The portrait of Charles presented here may make him look less saintly in some respects than he appears in previous portrayals, but his life becomes even more compelling as a result. Essays by Gareth Lloyd, John Lenton, and Richard Heitzenrater, for example, expose the deep tension in the relationship between Charles and John from the middle of the 1750s, when Charles ceased itinerating as a Methodist preacher. This strain on their relationship was due in part to Charles’s ecclesiastical conservatism over against John’s at least occasional leanings toward nonconformity.

Lloyd in particular observes that Methodist historians, eager to emphasize the unity of the Wesley brothers in evangelical mission, have typically overlooked the extent of this rift, and he further lays out the terms for a critical reassessment of Charles that is not hindered by such bias. Wesley’s family and personal life is also addressed in essays on his relationship with his mother Susanna (Charles Wallace); his relationship with his own children (Philip Olleson); his marriage (Anna M. Lawrence); his

partnership with his brother John (John A. Newton); his role in the development of Methodism (Henry D. Rack); and his relationship with John Fletcher (Peter Forsaith). These articles, and others, contribute to a more detailed—and more complex—account of Wesley the person than was previously known.

The collection also advances the interpretation of Wesley's vast body of literature. Treatments of Wesley's hymns are found, for example, in the contributions of J. R. Watson, who places Wesley in dialogue with his poetic predecessors; Frank Baker, who focuses on the Christmas hymns; and Campbell, who shows that Wesley's hymns have a broader range of doctrinal and liturgical topics than the distinctively Methodist understanding of the *via salutis* alone. While no study of Charles Wesley would be complete without due consideration of his extraordinary poetic output, a particular strength of this collection is the probing analysis of other kinds of writing produced by Wesley. Newport, for example, explores Wesley's sermons and shows the centrality of preaching to Wesley's ministerial career, and the second article by Lloyd examines Charles' letters and the differences in perspective on the Methodist movement that the Wesley brothers' correspondence reveals. Moreover, the subject of Charles' shorthand script—which is essential for a full appreciation of both his writings and his role in early Methodism—is taken up in an essay by the late Oliver Beckerlegge that has been updated by Newport. These and other essays in the collection contribute to a deeper understanding of Charles' writings.

Wesley's legacy is constructively examined from various points of view, including theological, hymnic, spiritual, and ecumenical. For instance, Jason Vickers locates Wesley in the context of trinitarian theology in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and then argues that Wesley is capable of contributing to the renewal of interest in trinitarian doctrine at present. Susan White characterizes Wesley's theology as at once integrated, affective, doxological, and metaphorical, and thereby of great value to the contemporary theological enterprise. Meanwhile, Andrew Pratt traces Wesley's influence on contemporary Methodist hymnody, which he finds to be substantial even though its effects are subtly nuanced. Wesley's spirituality is ably presented by Martin Groves and Paul Chilcote, the latter of whom focuses on Wesley's understanding of faith.

In light of the recent ecumenical convergence on the doctrine of justification, it would be fascinating to follow Chilcote's exposition of *this*

Wesley on faith in order to identify the possible contribution of Charles to present ecumenical dialogue. Also on the ecumenical front, essays by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., Geoffrey Wainwright, and Peter Nockles consider Wesley in relation to the East, to Calvinism, and to Roman Catholicism respectively. The critical and constructive work represented in this volume, drawing from historical as well as contemporary sources, demonstrates Wesley's ongoing significance as a theological and literary resource for the academy and the church today. As this sampling of contributions suggests, the essays in this collection do indeed advance the study of Wesley's life, literature, and legacy.

In this anthology, groundbreaking research is presented in an accessible way that shows impressive breadth as well as depth. Given the scope of the essays—some historical, others theological, and others still hymnic or liturgical in thrust, they represent as a whole a fruitful interdisciplinary approach to scholarship on Wesley that should prove stimulating for historians, theologians, hymnologists, and others alike. The extensive bibliography provides what is perhaps the most thorough list of works relating to Charles Wesley ever assembled, helpfully pointing readers to sources for further study. Adding to the accessibility of the work is a fitting publication year, the tercentenary of Charles's birth, a time of heightened interest in Wesley and his legacy. The influence of this lucid and informative book should be considerable within the academy, and may well extend beyond academic circles.

While this is certainly the most comprehensive volume to date on Charles Wesley's life and work, there is one rather glaring omission. The collection lacks a chapter devoted to Wesley on the sacraments. His *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (1745) have been the subject of at least two major monographs: J. Ernest Rattenbury's classic *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (Epworth Press, 1948; reprint: Order of St. Luke Publications, 1990) and, more recently, *The Altar's Fire: Charles Wesley's Hymns on the Lord's Supper, 1745* by Daniel Stevick (Epworth Press, 2004). In addition, many of Wesley's hymns outside of that collection have a clear sacramental emphasis as well. Therefore, it would have been appropriate to include in this collection an essay specifically on Wesley's sacramental theology. Without it, the collection seems somehow incomplete.

On a lesser note, brief biographical statements on the contributors would also have been a welcome addition. There is no doubt that many readers of this volume will be familiar with the professional backgrounds

and achievements of the contributors. Not all the readers, however, will recognize the names of these authors, and some may wish to learn more about them. Those who are relatively new to the study of Charles Wesley would likely benefit most of all from a short biographical note on each of the contributors. Such information would make more explicit the significance of this outstanding, geographically diverse cast of writers, which is surely one of the collection's strengths.

Despite these criticisms, this volume makes a noteworthy contribution to the renaissance of scholarship on Charles Wesley over the last few decades. As the editors note in the preface, they do not intend for this book to end the conversation about Charles, but rather to extend it. The quality and accessibility of the scholarship presented here should ensure that this objective is achieved.

Hansen, Collin. *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008. 160 pages. ISBN: 1581349408.

Reviewed by Matthew P. O'Reilly, Jay United Methodist Church, Jay, Florida.

With *Young, Restless, Reformed*, editor-at-large for *Christianity Today* Collin Hansen chronicles the current revival of Calvinism among young American evangelicals. Readers of this journal are likely aware of the Calvinistic resurgence and are unsettled by the news. Writing with engaging journalistic style, Hansen offers an inside look at what is moving the Calvinistic revival and why it is gaining such appeal. Though Wesleyan-Arminians will be disconcerted by the findings of this book, there is undoubtedly much we can learn from it about why Calvinism is growing in popularity.

The journalistic journey begins in Atlanta at the 2007 Passion Conference. Hansen suggests that the renewed interest in Calvinism among the young cannot be understood without considering passion (16). The author joined nearly twenty-three thousand college-aged students who descended on Atlanta to hear the preaching of John Piper and participate in energizing worship led by artists like Charlie Hall and Chris Tomlin. When one attendee was asked why he traveled to the conference to hear Piper, he responded, "He's so Jesus-centered in his preaching.... He doesn't just share anecdotal stories. I look to guys like Piper because he looks to Jesus" (13).

The appeal of Christ-centered preaching and teaching by Calvinistic pastors and theologians will show up again and again as one turns the pages of this book. From the opening chapter, the reader is inclined to think that young Christians are actually unapologetically interested in Jesus and would rather hear about his substitutionary death than pastoral attempts at comedy and anecdote.

If the reader did not get enough of Piper in chapter one, chapter two features his Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Neither fashionable nor sprawling, and lacking ample parking, Bethlehem draws droves of people from all walks of life to hear Piper preach on the alleged doctrines of God's meticulous sovereignty and irresistible grace. The author reports that the church's bookstore is stocked with Piper's own abundant writing as well as volumes by Luther, Calvin, John Owen, and Jonathan Edwards. Hansen rightly observes that, "the bookstore char-

acterizes the entire Calvinist resurgence” (34). He includes portions of interviews from Piper and church members and gives the reader a glimpse of the Calvinistic shape of the college ministry at Bethlehem. To his credit and in an effort to bring some balance to the book, Hansen includes in this chapter an interview with Roger Olson, author of *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (IVP, 2006), in which brief treatment is given to both differences and commonalities between Calvinism and Arminianism.

With the next two chapters, Hansen explores the more academically oriented strongholds of Calvinistic thought before returning to the more popular brand of Calvinism introduced in the closing chapters. Chapter three recounts the author’s tour of the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University and explores the influence of the writings of Edwards on the current Calvinistic resurgence. In chapter four, Hansen takes the reader along to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. The Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) largest seminary, Southern is led by R. Albert Mohler, Jr. who, during the early years of his presidency, brought the school back under the authority of the school’s original confessional document – the *Abstract of Principles*. All of the seminary’s faculty are now required to sign and expected to teach according to the *Abstract of Principles* which articulates Calvinist tenets like unconditional election, irresistible grace, and monergistic regeneration. This means that Southern, as one of the largest seminaries in the United States, is turning out Calvinist pastors in large numbers who, as Hansen points out, “will take Calvinism to pulpits throughout the SBC” (74).

Chapter five, entitled “Drug-Induced Calvinism,” introduces the reader to Sovereign Grace Ministries and its founder C. J. Mahaney, who brings together the rare blend of Calvinism and Charismatic practice. Chapter six highlights the New Attitude Conference which was founded by Joshua Harris and sometimes features Calvinist rap music. The final chapter takes the reader to Mars Hill Church which is led by Mark Driscoll who is spreading Reformed theology to the diverse counter-cultures of Seattle.

Young, Restless, Reformed is well written and engaging. A primary strength is found in the thorough way the author reports on diverse outgrowths of Calvinistic thought in the United States. However, do not come to this book expecting a work of systematic theology. As the subtitle indicates, it is journalism. One weakness is that Arminian thought is sometimes misrepresented. For example, it is mischaracterized as that

which “emphasizes free will over God’s sovereignty in salvation” (17). In another instance, the author suggests that the Arminian understanding of prevenient grace is trumped by the Calvinistic understanding of total depravity and seems not to realize that the doctrine of prevenient grace develops precisely out of the concept of total depravity (40). To make the point for the Calvinist view, the author oddly employs a key text for the Arminian understanding of prevenient grace – John 6:44.

Despite the unsettling nature of this book for Arminians, there are some characteristics of the Calvinistic revival from which Arminians can learn. First, the Calvinistic resurgence is marked by an emphasis on the transcendent majesty of God and his glory. There is no reason why Arminian preaching and teaching cannot be so marked as well, and undoubtedly it is in some quarters. Does not the doctrine of unlimited atonement assert the extravagant mercy of God and the expansive scope of God’s provision for atonement inviting all to come to him? Calvinistic churches are gaining followers in droves by proclaiming the God who is high and lifted up.

Second, the current growth in Calvinism involves movement toward and not away from rigorous theology and doctrine. Postmodernism has declared that people are not interested in theology. Exponential growth in a tradition that is known for its systematic theologies suggests otherwise. If college students are reading Jonathan Edwards, they are undoubtedly interested in theology. Wesleyan-Arminians have a rich heritage of practical divinity; we would do well to take it to both pulpit and classroom.

Young, Restless, Reformed provides a glimpse into the hearts and minds of those involved in the Calvinistic resurgence among young evangelicals today and sheds light on much of what is happening in current American Christianity. Despite our longing to be rid of Calvinism, it is currently on the rise. The present volume explains why, and for that reason every Arminian should read it.

Green, Joel B. *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008. 219 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8010-3595-1.

Reviewed by Aaron Perry, Associate Pastor, Calvary Community Church, Johnson City, NY.

Recent commentary series emphasizing theological interpretation (e.g., Brazos Theological Commentary, Two Horizons Biblical Commentary) have begun producing theological resources most pastors will find engaging and helpful in theological development and congregational discipleship. The *Studies in Theological Interpretation* series, to which *Body, Soul, and Human Life* belongs, is dedicated to constructive theological interpretation of Scripture in order to complement these commentaries. In this work, Joel B. Green, Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Fuller Theological Seminary, seeks to answer theological questions that arise in subjects of anthropology, sin and free will, salvation, and eschatology by providing a study of Scripture's portrayal of the human person in dialog with contemporary neurological science.

While some may question Green's use and consideration of the sciences in biblical interpretation, he begins to clear the ground by arguing that exegesis is already and has always been informed by science (23). Therefore, he articulates an understanding of the role of science in gaining a better grasp of the history of a biblical text's interpretation. He writes, "[D]oing exegesis in an age of science increases our awareness of the scientific assumptions of the third or fourth or even eighteenth centuries that have already shaped the history of interpretation—and that have the potential to set artificially the parameters for our own reading of biblical texts" (28). Further potential benefit of this method is the liberation "from certain predilections that might guide our work unawares and to all questions to surface that might otherwise have remained buried" (28-29). For newcomers to the monist-dualist dialog, Green offers definitions and a range of nuanced positions, specifying that in this work he is concerned with monists who "argue that the phenomenological experiences that we label 'soul' are neither reducible to brain activity nor evidence of a substantial, ontological entity such as a 'soul,' but rather represent essential aspects or capacities of the self" (31).

Green begins by asking what the human person is (chapter 2). While biblical studies and the natural sciences do not present an identical picture

of humans, he sees a great deal of agreement. First, biblical and scientific studies present relationality as a key element to being human. They both emphasize the fact that human life is embodied. Both Genesis and genetics show the close relation of humans to non-human creatures. However, Scripture moves beyond natural sciences to include the vocation of humanity with relation to the world by its emphases on human stewardship of creation and humanity's relation to God.

Chapter 3 turns to ask, given the close correlation between moral action and brain activity, how one can think of free will. Do human brains cause persons to do things? How does one deal with issues of moral accountability when brains are damaged? Green opens this discussion by highlighting ethical behavior in animals, neurological activity prior to the cognizant and free action of a person, volitional disorders associated with brain injuries, and the constant re-hardwiring of the brain by human experiences and relations. These observations underscore moral activity as an embodied and relational phenomenon. So, there is no such thing as "cool" reason—reason disassociated from emotional activity, which is located in the amygdale. Morality is not simply "bottom up" (neurologically determined) because human brains are in constant flux, being shaped by environments and communities.

How can one engage in biblical interpretation of free will with these scientific conclusions? First, Green sees sin as a sculptor of life from 1 Peter. Second, Green argues that James sees the causes of sin being internal, not the cause of our contexts. Third, Green argues that a Pauline view sees sin as the general human disposition. Specific sinful actions are simply expressions of rejection and dishonor of God spread among the human race. Thus, while scientific findings about predispositions, relational formation, hardwiring of the self in decision making all affirm that freedom is not solely about choice to do otherwise, biblical faith need not be compromised in its call to change in the community of the church, its insistence on adopting new practices that are right and repenting of ones that are wrong, enabling rewiring genetic predispositions that reflect the Kingdom of God.

The second theological question Green addresses is salvation (chapter 4). Given new studies in neuroscience of the brain activity of the religious (even non-Christian), how does that contribute to Christian views of conversion? Green argues that scientific evidence regarding the characteristics of the human brain broadens a reader's understanding of salvation

in Luke. Salvation is holistic. It involves whole persons—their bodies, communities, and worlds. Just as the scientific approaches show that transformation is a holistic enterprise, so does Luke's thickened description of salvation resist dichotomies between “act and process, between cognitive and moral change, between external and internal transformation” (138). We should not separate being from doing (131). In salvation, everything has become new!

Thirdly, Green addresses resurrection (chapter 5). He argues that an ontologically distinct soul is not necessary for personal identity beyond death and that this idea “stands in tension with key aspects of the resurrection message of the Scriptures” (144). Green starts by looking at the Old Testament belief about resurrection and its development as defense of God's justice. He stresses that the inhabitants of Sheol are separate from God. From here he looks at Jesus' parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man from Luke 16, arguing that the spatial and corporeal elements of the parable argue against this being disembodied souls between death and resurrection.

Finally, Green turns his attention to the 2 Corinthians 5 passage. First, Green urges that we see the distance between Paul, who hates death, and a Greek dualist who may look forward to it (171). Second, following Dale Martin, Green suggests that Paul wrote to strengthen unity among the wealthy—who were familiar with contemporary philosophy of the afterlife—and the poor, who were more familiar with fables and myth the rich would denigrate. As a result, he wrote to both rich and poor so that both could understand the Christian belief in resurrection. He pointed back to what he had already written in 1 Corinthians 15 (2 Corinthians 5:1) and the belief that the resurrection body, the *soma pneumatikon*, is made of imperishable stuff. The first body was suited for earthly living; the second is suited for heaven—the realm of the Spirit (174-75). This means that embodiment is necessary for continued identity and that the first body has nothing imperishable but requires God's work for transformation.

Professor Green, in typical fashion, has written an accessible and engaging work, relating biblical studies with natural science, specifically neuroscience, while consistently informing non-specialists of contemporary research. The chapters on salvation and free will are the theological strength of this work. However, a deeper theological engagement surrounding the intermediate is lacking. Simply put, because Green's discus-

sion of the intermediate state was from an earthly viewpoint (152), he left many theological questions concerning the afterlife unanswered. While Green may argue that such matters are beyond the biblical text, this reader hoped for potentially constructive reflections, drawing on the biblical narrative to the question of continued identity of the person outside bodily existence. Green's perspective, of course, is that disembodied identity is oxymoronic, but does he have a suggestion as to *how* God resurrects "me"? Indeed, Green recognizes the pertinence of this question, given the high turnover of the basic elements of human existence—that *what* is now *me* at the atomic level was once a tree, a dog, a star, another body, etc. (141-42). Could identity continue in the Triune memory of God? Could the fully-orbed memory of a perfectly relating Triune being provide personhood to a non-embodied being? Could the "soul" be a theological construct in light of embodied existence and one's physical death?

For those in the Wesleyan tradition, Green's work begins pressing on key questions of practical theology. Given neuro-scientific research, how can one think theologically about justification? How can one think about the practice of small groups and the necessity of relationship for transformation? Most intriguingly, Green opens up a new avenue for discussion around sanctification. Can we think of sanctification in terms of one engaging in practices that re-wire one's brain to produce different natural impulses? Could Wesleyan proponents of entire sanctification think of the brain becoming hardwired to be always and only loving? Green's work opens these questions for further research.

In all, Green's work is an excellent introduction to a non-dualist approach. He avoids both technical language and intricate details, thus providing a complement to further theological research and biblical study, as promised by the series to which this work belongs. Pastors will find the work helpful in shaping multiple aspects of pastoral life, including discipleship and pastoral care. Professors in several fields—philosophy, Christian ministry, biblical studies, psychology, theology—will find the work exemplary in broaching several disciplines to provide resources for the local church.

Oh, Gwang Seok. *John Wesley's Ecclesiology: A Study in its Sources and Development*. Lanham, MD and Oxford: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2008. 301 pages. ISBN: 0810859645.

Reviewed by Nell Becker Sweeden, Ph.D. student in Practical Theology, Boston University, School of Theology, Boston, MA.

In this volume in *Pietist and Wesley Studies*, Gwang Seok Oh offers an insightful and comprehensive historical overview of the variety of sources and the dynamic development of Wesley's ecclesiology throughout the course of his life. In his first section, Oh outlines the diverse theological sources that influence Wesley's ecclesiology and in the second he weaves together these ecclesiological sources over the course of Wesley's early, middle, and later life. This seminal work is a much needed companion for all who look to Wesley as a theological mentor in contextual explorations of ecclesiology.

Oh begins with Wesley's primitivist influences in his exploration of the early church as well as medieval Catholicism. Next, Oh traces the influence of the Reformers, reviewing Wesley's adoption of Anglican ecclesiology and uncovering the dissenting and reforming voices of English Puritans. Finally, Oh offers insight into the important influence of Pietism, noting possible sources in Spener-Francke pietism and the Moravians.

Of note in Oh's historical insights are the parallels he draws between tributary streams of ecclesiological influence and how these influences may have been mediated to Wesley indirectly by way of another tradition. Of particular interest is the connection between the Tertiaries of Medieval Catholicism and Methodism, which both involved interconnected groups of laypeople focused on fasting, prayer, worship, and benevolence.

The second part of Oh's work begins with Wesley's upbringing and the Puritan influence of his parents within his emphases on biblical scholarship and practical divinity. As Wesley's ecclesiology moved from the more formal Anglican ecclesiology of his early years to a practical ecclesiology following his Aldersgate experience, his ecclesiological focus continued to build upon these early influences of his parents in his concern for a life of holiness manifest in care for neighbor and inward piety. Similarly, in Wesley's work responding to the Methodists and their situations of need, his ecclesiology continued to develop as practical and evangelical in nature out of a "perceived need" for a salvation-centered church. As Oh notes, Wesley understood the church as a *saved* and a *saving* community.

Oh emphasizes Wesley's continued loyalty to the Church of England, together with how he varied from it out of his principle of necessity. Oh carefully traces these variances in Wesley's ecclesiology through the church as an act and mission in the world as well as a form and an institution. The structure of Wesley's Methodist societies is of note because of how they were organically ordered out of a need for Christian discipline—a community of believers working out their own salvation. Additionally, Wesley's Methodist revival further moved him toward developing ecclesial mission through preaching in the fields, by extemporaneous prayer, by employing lay preachers, by forming and regulating societies, and by holding yearly Conferences. This mission would continue to carry the influence of his Anglican, high-church theology of ordination and the sacraments. After his Aldersgate experience, Wesley moved toward understanding the sacraments as means of grace for nourishing the life of God in the Christian soul. Oh delicately unfolds the course of these variances near the end of Wesley's life, particularly through his insistence on constant communion through the administration of the Lord's Supper as a preventing, justifying, and sanctifying ordinance. This would, in turn, develop his differing position from the Church of England for the ordination of American Methodists. Oh respectfully questions Wesley's principle of necessity, while also maintaining Wesley's integrity in his seeking to uphold unity with the Church of England. Wesley's primary ecclesial motivation arose out of his fundamental understanding of the church as salvation-centered mission.

Drawing upon Albert Outler's earlier move away from the institutional and free-church polarity, Oh underscores Outler's characterization of Wesley's ecclesiological mission toward a church "truly catholic, thoroughly evangelical, and continually reformed" (268). What Oh achieves in identifying Wesley's ecclesiological sources and development is perhaps the same delicate balance and tension that Wesley himself sought as an Anglican minister and the leader of the People called Methodist. Oh finds that the intent of Wesley's ecclesiology is not a "*via media*" per se, but rather to hold together the necessary tensions within faithful and practical ecclesiology amidst contextual circumstances. In this sense, Oh reveals Wesley's ecclesiological development to be much more profound than a simple polarization of the institutional and evangelical church. It is instead a multifaceted weaving together of what he found to be the most important theological sources with the situational and soteriological needs of his people. Oh's work is an important historical and theological resource for church leaders, pastors, students, and theologians in understanding the complex and dynamic nature of Wesley's ecclesiology.

Markham, Paul N. *Rewired: Exploring Religious Conversion*. Distinguished Dissertations in Christian Theology 2. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2007. xi + 243 pp. ISBN: 1556352948.

Reviewed by Amos Yong, Professor of Systematic Theology, Regent University School of Divinity, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

This dissertation was not only co-supervised by Nancey Murphy (with Robert Song, at Durham University) but bears also the imprint of her work throughout. Besides contributing the Foreword to the book, Murphy's postfoundationalist theological method and nonreductive physicalist anthropology both have been largely adopted by Markham in this book. But *Rewired* is not just a rehash of Murphy's ideas in another voice, as powerful as such a synthesis might be for those who have followed her work over these last two decades. Instead, Paul Markham has woven Murphy's insights into a unique account of his own, one deeply informed by his Wesleyan roots, and directed toward the reconsideration of an evangelical theology of conversion.

There are four major sets of theses argued in *Rewired*, each set unfolding in the four chapters following the introduction. Thesis 1 is a retrieval of John Wesley as a practical theologian interested in a *via salutis*, one that emphasizes the sanctification or moral and affective transformation of human lives and relations within, amidst, and along with the creation and the cosmos. The second thesis presents an argument for Murphy's non-reductive physicalism—against (a reductive) materialism on the one side and various forms of dualisms on the other—buttressed by a theory of top-down higher order mental capacities supervening dynamically on physical brain states or base neural constituents. Thesis 3 presents a Wesleyan and neuroscientifically informed theology of conversion understood as a biological and socio-moral process of dispositional and behavioral transformation involving the gradual acquisition of the virtues of the Christian faith within tradition-specific purposes (teleological goals) via a divine-human synergism (wherein human beings cooperate with divine grace as manifest in the ecclesial community). The final thesis expands on the preceding by focusing on the sanctifying community that is the church, articulating in the process a theology of corporate conversion that sees people transformed holistically, relationally, and dynamically through habitual and religious interaction with others.

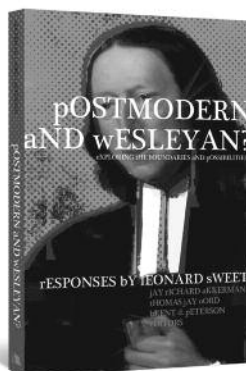
The various theses of the dissertation are clearly argued throughout. What is especially helpful has to do with one of the central supporting reasons that connect Markham's thesis 2 with thesis 3, specifically the claim regarding neuroplasticity and how that interfaces with a theology of conversion. Drawing on some of the recent research in the cognitive sciences—particularly that related to the automaticity processes undergirding the gaining and revising of procedural knowledge (of skills rather than of facts), the transforming of affect memories interwoven with past experiences, and the modulating of somatic markers intertwined with human intuitions or gut-feelings—Markham suggests that religious conversion considered neurobiologically and in Wesleyan terms can be understood as the automated but yet embodied transformation of human tempers. The result of such more or less automated processes occurring in tradition-dependent (ecclesial) communities is a re-figuration of the human narratives that come with the cultivation of (especially Christian) virtues and the reformation of character. Conversion can thus be understood in this Wesleyan key as the gradual sanctification of the mind, heart, and affections, resulting in transformed behaviors.

Markham's theses provide a rather stark contrast to research into neuroplasticity by Buddhist scholars and practitioners, which have focused mostly on the cognitive and somatic effects of meditation on brain states and processes. *Rewired* provides a more communal framework for understanding religious conversion that can complement Buddhist explorations about the neuroplastic mind; on the other hand, Buddhist perspectives may also be helpful for illuminating how specific Christian practices like prayer, contemplation, and worship can also mediate the transformation of character and the sanctification of the soul.

Markham currently teaches philosophy at Western Kentucky University and Asbury Theological Seminary. *Rewired* suggests that in the years and perhaps decades to come this philosophical theologian will continue to draw from the wells of the Wesleyan and evangelical traditions that have shaped his life and thought, and do so in ways that will be challenging for and yet also beneficial to the wider quest for an up-to-date evangelical theology.

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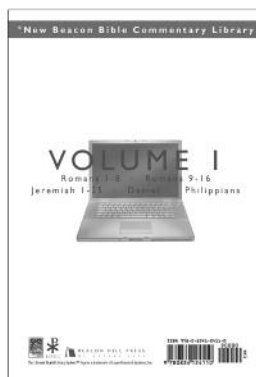
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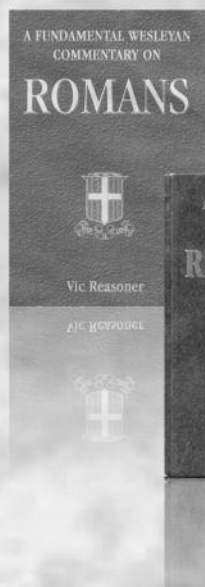
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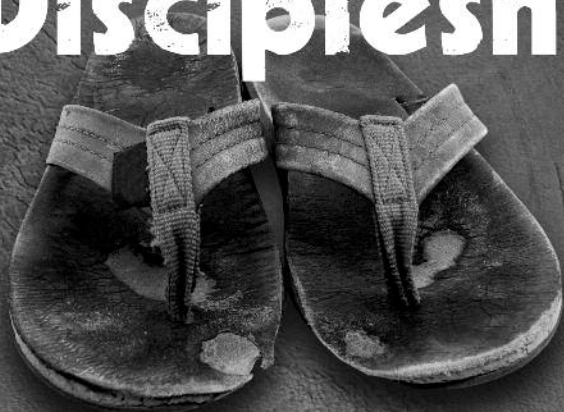
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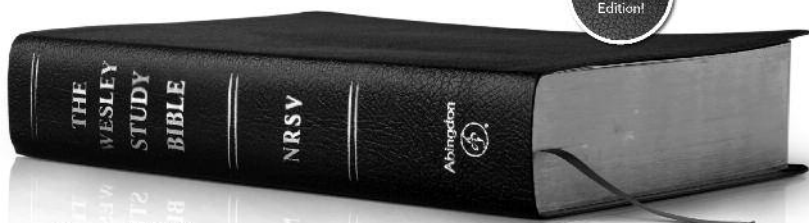
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