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EDITOR'S NOTES

This issue marks a crucial transition in the history of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (WTJ). For more than two decades, Barry Callen served as the editor of the WTJ. In addition to the duration of his service, several things are noteworthy about his editorship. First, during his tenure as editor, the journal was never late. Second, Barry's tenure took place during a period in which the Wesleyan Theological Society's (WTS) membership grew significantly. In response, Barry worked tirelessly to encourage new members and younger scholars in particular to submit articles for publication. Consequently, Barry's tenure as editor saw more new authors publish in the journal than at any time in its history. In the last few years, Barry oversaw two important developments, namely, the inclusion of the WTJ in ATLA and a significant upgrade in publication quality and design. Suffice it to say, all the members of WTS and all the readers of the WTJ have benefitted enormously from Barry's leadership.

Even the present issue bears witness to Barry Callen's generosity and stewardship. When I assumed the role of editor, this issue was already half finished. Thus it is simultaneously Barry's last and my first issue as editor. A quick glance at the table of contents reveals two prominent themes. First, three articles are written from a missional point of view or with a view towards the church's work in mission. Second, four articles explore the theme of holiness. In addition to these thematic units, the issue includes articles on ordination, divine action, natural law, the family, and the Wesleyan quadrilateral, as well as a tribute to the 2014 winner of the Smith/Wynkoop book award and numerous book reviews.

Jason E. Vickers, Editor
September, 2014

THE *PROCESSIO*-*MISSIO* CONNECTION: A STARTING POINT IN *MISSIO TRINITATIS* OR OVERCOMING THE IMMANENT-ECONOMIC DIVIDE IN A *MISSIO TRINITATIS*

by

Peter Bellini

Introduction

In light of the resurgence of Trinitarian theological studies and the emergence of *Missio Dei* theology, there is a need for clear Trinitarian missional theology, a *missio Trinitatis*. A robust *missio Trinitatis* should address key issues and challenges within Trinitarian studies that impact missiology. One such challenge identified by John Flett in his *Witness of God* is that a viable connection has not been made between the being of God and the acts of God. Our theological attempts at locating mission in the being of the Trinity have failed, and the result has been a wedge driven between the immanent-economic aspects of the Trinity. The problem that will be addressed is twofold. First, how can we theologically locate mission in the immanent Trinity and keep its immanent and economic aspects undivided. Second, how shall we understand the relationship between the immanent and the economic dimensions of the Trinity?

In addressing the problem, I am proposing two solutions. First, a robust *missio Trinitatis* should necessarily locate the origin of the missional enterprise in the very nature of the tri-personal God. I will explore the work of Thomas Aquinas, Karl Rahner, and Hans Urs von Balthasar. These theologians have attempted to locate the missional enterprise in the processions or *processio* within the intra-divine relations of the immanent Trinity. Rahner's Rule establishes the methodological congruence between the two aspects of the Trinity and joins the work of salvation to the doctrine of the Trinity. Von Balthasar, who draws from Aquinas' work, locates the *missio* in the *processio* showing the latter to be definitive and causal to the former. Ultimately, the mission is located and connected with the persons of the Trinity.

Second, a Trinitarian mission theology should preserve the integrity of God's transcendent or ontological nature, as opposed to allowing it to

collapse into any construct of radical immanence, which in turn would permit the economic work to define the Trinity unilaterally and totally. It is then crucial to qualify Rahner's Rule as methodological and not ontological or epistemological. If Rahner's Rule is allowed to become a balanced and total equation, then there can be a tendency to collapse the immanent into the economic resulting in erasure of God's transcendence and a totalization of the eternal Triune God into natural, temporal and human terms. It can be argued that Catherine Mowry LaCugna's proposal, at times, seems to exemplify this problem. Thus, a qualifier is attached to Rahner's Rule that allows for methodological equivalence but not ontological or epistemological equivalence. The Rule is given the status of congruence with a remainder or approximate equivalence.

***Missio Dei* and the Immanent-Economic Divide**

The origin of the received *missio Dei* tradition is complicated and often debated. Up until recently, the standard narrative has been to trace the idea of the *Missio Dei* back to Barth, and then through to Karl Hartenstein who would give the concept a name and a voice. Redactors claiming this genealogy would also claim that both Barth and Hartenstein framed their versions of *Missio Dei* within a Trinitarian theological framework. In his book *The Witness of God*, John Flett would counter that there is no documentary proof for any of the *Missio Dei* claims attributed to Barth.¹ In citing Bosch, Flett refutes that the *Missio Dei* seems to have received at least its original stimulus in part from Karl Barth, whose primary concern was to let God speak and act for God's self, including missionally.²

Barth read a significant paper in 1932 at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in which he repudiated the notion that mission or its conception was a human activity or a work of the church, but that God alone acts on God's own behalf. Yet despite this admission, Flett argues that Barth never used *Missio Dei* language nor did he ground or develop a theology of mission in the Trinity, both which are erroneously attributed to him.³ In 1934 Flett notes that it would be Karl Hartenstein, missiologist and friend of Barth, who would coin the phrase *Missio Dei*, and at the 1952 Willingen

¹John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: the Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 12.

²*Ibid.*, 78-80.

³*Ibid.*, 120-122.

Conference of the IMC, the term was first promulgated.⁴ By 1958 missiologist Georg Vicedom would popularize it, and in 1991 David Bosch would canonize it and specifically canonize it in Trinitarian garb.

John Flett's thesis in *The Witness of God* is that from Karl Barth to current missiological studies unfounded claims are made that the *Missio Dei* has been solidly grounded in Trinitarian theology.⁵ Flett holds that prescriptively this needs to be the case, but descriptively it hardly has been the case because it is not supported in the literature, especially in the Barthian corpus.⁶ Locating mission in God was meant in part to be a corrective to a church-centered mission that at times allowed evangelization to advance on the coattail of colonization. As long as mission remained a product of the church, then any ecclesial agenda, theological, political or otherwise could be pawned off as the work of God.

Although such a corrective has addressed the initial problem by reclaiming the *missio* as an enterprise that originates in God's own being, Flett asserts that the *Missio Dei* may have created further problems for Trinitarian mission theology in that it drives a wedge between the immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity and between God's mission and the church.⁷ There is often a theological discontinuity or a wedge between God's being *in se* and God's action for the world that needs to be resolved. If mission is definitive of God, "God is a missionary God," then mission cannot be grounded in God's temporal actions in the world but must be founded in and not separated from the eternal nature of God's being.⁸ Flett poses the problem. Mission cannot be foreign to God's nature or actions. Not only is mission to be indigenous to both God's nature and actions, but it must be a function of both immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity, equally and undivided.

Rahner's Rule: a Methodological Balance

Much of the discourse on the immanent-economic issue centers around some response to Karl Rahner's axiom that the "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity."⁹ This axiom has come to be known as "Rahner's Rule," as coined by Ted

⁴Ibid., 123, 152-157.

⁵Ibid., 12.

⁶Ibid., 47.

⁷Ibid., 17-18.

⁸Ibid., 197.

⁹Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York, NY: Crossroads Pub. Co., 1970), 22.

Peters and has become a watershed and standard in Trinitarian theology.¹⁰ Rahner's work seeks to establish congruence between immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity by removing any wedge between the two, and uniting intra-Trinitarian processions with missions.

One of Rahner's concerns in uniting the two aspects is to ensure that the Trinity does not remain a mere doctrine or even a doctrinal mystery alienated from creation or our experience in salvation history.¹¹ There can be no ontological or methodological divide between *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino*, no possibility for two self-communications of the divine, or two trinities.¹² The one self-communication of the being of God is revealed through the Triune God in the economy of salvation, a three-fold revelation. God's three-fold activity in salvation history allows us to understand the tri-personal God in eternity without difference. God communicates God's Word through the eternal generation of the Son immanently and through the Incarnation of the Son economically, so that the Father may be known. In communicating God's Word, God also communicates God's love in the eternal procession and sending of the Spirit so that we may know God's love that is expressed as the Father generates and communicates the Son and breathes out the Spirit.

Rahner's axiom poignantly directs our understanding of the revelation of the Triune God. God's self-communication is real and experienced in the Son and the Spirit. For example God's self-communication in the Incarnation truly reveals the fullness of God. In opposition to the Scholastic notion that any member of the Trinity could have assumed the Incarnation, Rahner recognizes that such a move further divides immanent and economic aspects. Such a notion proposes that nothing specific of the immanent Trinity is conveyed in the economic merely the common essence of divinity, while Triune particularity is untouched, unrevealed, and irrelevant. However because the Incarnation is actually the Logos of God, the second person of the Trinity become flesh, then not only does the economic truly communicate the Divine, but it even communicates specifically the Divine person of the eternal Son. The Incarnation is Rahner's proof that the two aspects are convertible. The particularity of the Incarnation reveals the particularity of the hypostasis, in this case the

¹⁰Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 213 n.33.

¹¹Rahner, 21-22.

¹²Ibid., xiv.

Logos. Thus methodologically, the economic revelation in salvation history works. It truly communicates who God is and what God does.¹³ The immanent-economic connection is made.

For Rahner, there is no “real” God behind the God of our experience, which in essence would reduce the economics of the Son and the Spirit to mere appearances or created mediations, thus Arianism.¹⁴ The God we receive in salvation is the God of eternity. Rahner clarifies that “these three self-communications are the self-communication of the one God in the three relative ways in which God subsists.”¹⁵ The economy of the Trinity is faithful to unveil the immanence of the Trinity because ultimately there is only one divine self-communication immanently and economically. There is no distinction methodologically. Rahner’s attempt to fortify the integrity of the economic revelation is significant for mission in that it is an attempt to reconnect mission with the intra-Trinitarian life.¹⁶ In fact since the economic reveals the immanent in salvation history, and what we know of the latter comes from the former, then “the doctrine of the “missions” is from its very nature the starting point for the doctrine of the Trinity.”¹⁷ God’s mission in the world reveals the very nature of the tri-personal God.

Thus in Rahner, there has been a thoughtful attempt at repairing this internal breach within the Trinity that tends to dislocate mission from the immanent tri-personality of God. The integrity of the Incarnation prevents a wedge to be driven between the immanent and economic aspects at least methodologically. Not only is the immanent the economic and the economic the immanent, but also, according to LaCugna, “Rahner’s principle on the identity of economic and immanent Trinity ensures a commensurability between mission and procession.”¹⁸ There is a qualified congruence between the *processio* and the *missio*.

Thomas Aquinas and Hans Urs von Balthasar: the Processio-Missio Connection

Rahner strikes a methodological balance between immanent and economic aspects of Trinitarian theology and touches briefly on the primacy

¹³Ibid., 28-33.

¹⁴Ibid., 37-38.

¹⁵Ibid., 35.

¹⁶Ibid., 30.

¹⁷Ibid., 48.

¹⁸Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1991), 213.

of mission as a starting point. However, it is Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar who further joins mission with the *ad intra* relations of the divine persons by retrieving Aquinas' foundational work, in which the *missio* is intertwined with intra-Trinitarian relations, namely the *processio*. Von Balthasar, as part of the Catholic Ressourcement, draws from the fountain of Aquinas. For Aquinas and von Balthasar the immanent processions locate and define the mission in terms of the relations of the Son and the Spirit to the Father in eternity and in the *oikonomia*. The nature and action of the *processio* extends to and expounds the *missio*.

Before examining von Balthasar's retrieval of Aquinas, let us review Aquinas' own understanding of the Trinity and its processions, and mission. Aquinas construes the intra-Trinitarian relations of persons through analogy. Aquinas draws somewhat from Augustine's psychological model of the Trinity that parallels the knowing and willing self. There are two processions, "the action of the intellect, the procession of the Word; and the other from the action of the will, the procession of love."¹⁹ Aquinas posits an immanent processional doctrine of Word and Love. The immanent modes of procession are the intellectual mode of knowing, and the volitional mode of will/love.²⁰ The object known and loved, God, is within the knower and lover, God.²¹ For example, if I know and love my wife, then the knowledge of her is in my mind, and the love of her is in my heart. Both knowledge and love are internalized. In this sense internal or immanent processions of knowledge or Word and will or love are subsistent within God.

In the *Summa Theologica* Volume One, Question 27, Articles 1-3, Aquinas' account of the intellectual mode begins by way of similitude or comparison with creation and its highest activity, the act of cognition. God's self-awareness or self-knowledge generates the Word of God, just as a thought is generated within our own minds when we behold an object. The object in this case is God's own self. The Word is the thought or reflective knowledge arising or generating from God's self-perception, a process of conception by intelligible self-reflection. God communicates

¹⁹Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition*. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Volume One (New York, NY: Benziger Bros, 1948), 154.

²⁰Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 19.

²¹Aquinas, 149.

his thought in language and meaning as Word and that Word is Son, the eternally begotten Son. Eternal generation occurs within the Divine nature bearing the Word in similitude to the Word's eternal origin in the Father.²²

As God relates to God's self in terms of generating self-knowledge, there is also the exertion of God's will towards God's self in the eternal generating of the Son, and that will is love, the procession of the Spirit. The dynamic of the will is inspired in love towards the good of God's self. The processions are God knowing and willing *ad intra*. The Father loves himself and the Son, and this is exuded in the Holy Spirit. The love of the Spirit is breathed out and exudes and flourishes from the Father through the generation of the Son into the spiration of the Spirit. God's eternal knowledge of God's self eternally generates the Word, and the will proceeds in love towards the goodness of God's self. The Spirit as love also becomes the mutual bond between Father and Son. The Father and Son love each other by the Holy Spirit, who is love proceeding.²³

The processions are immanent actions, *ad intra*, as knowing and willing are for us. It is essential that the processions are within the agent itself, in this case the Father.²⁴ The proceeding persons are consubstantial with the origin, the Father, and are not external but within the agent, preventing Arianism. The analogy of the procession is the internal generation of language and meaning that proceeds from within the mind. The Word is communicated as person, Son. Procession is the basis of the relation of origin and constitutes the person. It is a real relation of persons who are constituted in and as relations. The divine persons are defined by their "relations of origin," which are their processions from the Father. Relation of origin delineates distinction in God.²⁵ The act of the procession establishes the relation, and the relation constitutes and distinguishes the persons.²⁶ The Son is the Son because the relation of origin is to the Father. Aquinas acknowledges both subsistence and relations as constituting divine personhood and divine essence. A divine person is a "subsistent relation."²⁷

²²Ibid., 147-148.

²³Ibid., 190.

²⁴Ibid., 149.

²⁵Ibid., 159.

²⁶Ibid., 151, 204.

²⁷Ibid., 159.

Aquinas' work contends that the immanent processions that are definitive of the persons are also definitive of the missions, the missions of the Son and the Spirit.²⁸ Immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity are conjoined and continuous as the former is the source and foundation for the latter. God's same knowledge and love *ad intra* is communicated *ad extra*. Within God's own generational and processional knowledge are also God's knowledge of all creation, and in this knowledge is God's love for all creation. As God knows and loves God's self, so God knows and loves all of creation. All things are made and sustained by the generation of God's word and proceed out of God's love. The *processio* is defined by the nature of the relations and the distinctive properties of the person. The *missio* is also defined by the processional relations and distinctive properties of the person. In the case of the Word, the Son is eternally generated in the procession. The Word is distinct in person due to relation, Son. The procession defines and constitutes the person, Son. The procession defines and constitutes the Spirit as well. The procession of the persons also defines the mission, which for Aquinas is a "temporal procession."²⁹ Mission begins in the eternal procession and has a temporal effect in the world.³⁰

Thomas distinguished between "eternal procession" and "temporal procession" and between "visible mission" and "invisible mission."³¹ Eternal procession has been discussed. Temporal procession is simply mission in the world. It is the action of the eternal procession carried out in space and time. The temporal processions or missions begin with the *creation* and move to the *Incarnatio*. The visible mission is the visible embodiment of the divine person in mission; for example, the Incarnation. The invisible mission is the interior sanctifying work of the Son and the Spirit in the church and in the lives of believers. With these distinctions made it is clear that Aquinas tightly links mission with the processions of the persons in the immanent Trinity and not apart from them. In Question 43, Article 4, he lucidly declares, that mission means procession from the sender.³² Mission is tied to procession and the sender or origin.

Mission points to the sender and thus points to the origin in the Father and the procession of the Son.³³ Gilles Emery cites Aquinas that "A

²⁸Emery, 364.

²⁹Aquinas, 221.

³⁰Ibid., 220.

³¹Ibid., 220-223.

³²Ibid., 222.

³³Ibid., 220.

divine person's mission will have two constitutive features: (1) this person's eternal procession; and (2) the divine person's relation to the creature to whom this person is made present in a new way.³⁴ For example, the mission of the Word is the eternal generation from the Father, and the Incarnation, the Word made flesh. Immanent and economic are conjoined in one divine action that stems from the nature of God and not from contingency and need of salvation. Also mission is not an after thought connected back to God in order to substantiate a *Missio Dei* in the ontological Trinity. Emery explains the missional nature of the immanent processions and their relations in this manner:

The notion of missions is a part of the integrated theory of the immanent processions and Trinitarian relations of origin: a divine mission "includes" an eternal procession in itself. So the premier feature of mission is an origination relation as between one divine person and another. This relation is eternal and uncreated, like the divine persons themselves.³⁵

Mission is directly connected to the processions, the relations the processions represent, and the origin of the relation. Procession is missional since it involves a sender (the origin) and the sent (the relation of origin).³⁶ Aquinas puts it this way, "Thus the mission of a divine person is a fitting thing, as meaning in one way the procession of origin from the sender, and as meaning a new way of existing in another; thus the Son is said to be sent by the Father into the world."³⁷

Aquinas' missional theology grounds the divine missions in the divine persons who are forever one in the divine essence. Aquinas links the relations and processions of the immanent Trinity with the missions of Christ and the Spirit in the economic Trinity. The mission is the revelation of the distinctive personal properties of the Son and the Spirit. The temporal processions (missions) including creation, God's revelation to Israel, the Incarnation, Pentecost, and the birth and work of the church all originate from the Father and his divine action in the immanent eternal processions. The eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the gift of love, the Holy Spirit are revealed economically in creation, the creation of humanity in the *imago Dei*, the Incarnation, and the gift of salvation.

³⁴Emery, 364.

³⁵Ibid., 365.

³⁶Aquinas, 220.

³⁷Ibid.

Hans Urs von Balthasar retrieves Thomas' mission theory for his own *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, the second part of his *magnum opus* trilogy in 18 volumes, *The Glory of the Lord*, *Theo-Drama* and *Theo-Logic*. For von Balthasar the immanent *processio* of the divine persons becomes programmatic for the *missio* in a way in which not only is the economic work of the Trinity immutably grounded *ad intra* in God's transcendence rather than human experience, but also immanent and economic aspects are conjoined to resist any dualistic or reductionistic construct of the divine nature and Trinitarian activity. Mission is the guide and basis for Von Balthasar's theodramatic theory that centers on the person and mission of the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.³⁸ The eternal generation of the Son becomes and is the mission of the Son of man in the world. For Balthasar the Son, or Sonship, is itself the mission. "Son" is a processional and missional category. Son indicates his "Trinitarian relationship to the Father and the soteriological goal of his mission."³⁹ Von Balthasar discovers an *a priori* connection between person, defined by procession, and mission.⁴⁰ Mission is divinely personal.

Balthasar stresses that mission is not given *ex post facto* or is a function of human conditions and terms, but the second "person has been given a mission, not accidentally, but as a modality of his eternal personal being; if, as Thomas says, the Son's *missio* is the economic form of his eternal *processio* from the Father."⁴¹ With the second person of the Trinity, the relation of origin, Son, is the mission. For von Balthasar, mission becomes an aspect of being as exemplified in the Son. "Son" defines the person and the work, inseparably. The procession of the Son is the mission. Von Balthasar makes this connection in the Synoptic and Johannine "sending formulas" that are definitive of Christ's "sent-ness."⁴² Christ has a "mission consciousness" and understands himself in these terms as "one who is sent."⁴³

Space does not provide for a thorough scriptural unpacking of Christ's mission and sent-ness, but the point is that mission is grounded

³⁸Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*. Vol. III, *Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1992), 201.

³⁹Balthasar, *Persons in Christ*, 153.

⁴⁰Idid., 165-166.

⁴¹Ibid., 201.

⁴²Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology*, Vol. I, *The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 151-153.

⁴³Balthasar, *Persons in Christ*, 163-166.

in the immanent processions, in this case, the generation of the Son determines the mission of the Son. The sending of *missio* is rooted in the primordial *processio*.⁴⁴ Simply, the *processio* becomes definitive and causal of the *missio* in one divine action with eternal and temporal effects. The eternality of generation and procession within the Godhead does not cease in time but analogically and temporally manifests in mission with the “generation” of the Word and the “procession” of the Spirit in creation, incarnation, and in new creation. There is a continuum of the *processio* and *missio* of God that extends from the eternal divine action and relations into *creatio*, culminating with the *Incarnatio* and *theosis*.

Von Balthasar’s correlation between *processio* and *missio* thus far is in accord with Rahner’s Rule. With the processions *ad intra* taking on the form of *missio ad extra*, the immanent is revealed and experienced in the economic. Yet since *processio* can only be within a nature, the Divine nature, and *missio* pertains to created or contingent nature, there is an ontological difference, a remainder, and never simply an equating, whereby the economic order can never totalize the ontological nature of God, a necessary corrective to what could be construed as a reductive tendency in Rahner’s Rule.

In volume three of his Theological Dramatic Theory, Von Balthasar cautiously assures us that the economic reveals and interprets the immanent but is not fully, axiomatically identified with the immanent since the immanent is the ground and support of the economic.⁴⁵ He clarifies that the laws of the economic Trinity arise from the immanent Trinity, but they are not simply identical.⁴⁶ There is always a remainder. Von Balthasar is highlighting what would be more the methodological symmetry rather than the ontological. Both Thomas and Von Balthasar operate too strongly out of an analogical epistemology to allow the empirical to totalize the transcendent. There can be no univocal expression of God either in language or ontology.

It is vital to recall that Thomas’ and von Balthasar’s analogical ontology, an *analogia entis*, recognizes not merely similarity but more so the dissimilarity between the nature of God and God’s mission and our

⁴⁴Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, Vol. V, *Dramatis Personae: The Last Act* (San Francisco, CA.: Ignatius Press, 1998), 154.

⁴⁵Balthasar, *The Word Made Flesh*, 508.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 157.

understanding of both, preventing a strict immanent-economic equation. The *analogia entis* is Von Balthasar's move to preserve God's prerogative, freedom, mystery, and transcendence over against the totalizing tendency of univocity. Even in the Incarnation, which is the concrete *analogia entis*, the ontological difference between created and uncreated natures remains.⁴⁷ There is always a remainder due to the ontological gap between necessary and dependent being, and a remainder due to an epistemological gap that involves the noetic effects of sin and the mystery of apophasis. The remainder serves as a response to any attempt at making an ontological or epistemological equation of Rahner's Rule, which in essence would become Rahner's Reduction.

Problems arise when Rahner's Rule is made an ontological or even an epistemological equation. A different problem can arise when any one of the two postulates of Rahner's Rule defines the rule to the exclusion of the other postulate. On the other hand, Catherine LaCugna has called for the elimination of the immanent-economic distinction in favor of an experiential model that is defined and shaped by soteriology. Defining the Trinity in strictly empirical terms can lend to a tendency to collapse the immanent into the economic, resulting in erasure of God's transcendence and a totalization of the eternal Triune God into natural, temporal and human terms.

IT=ET—Catherine LaCugna and the Problem with the Equation

Catherine Mowry LaCugna's *magnum opus*, *God For Us*, has been a seminal work in the advancement of Trinitarian studies. In recovering the soteriological and practical nature of the doctrine of the Trinity, she built upon the work of Rahner. LaCugna is aware of the *aporia* in Rahner's Rule if it were to be interpreted as an ontological or epistemological equation. She states in her introduction to Rahner's *The Trinity* that "Both the distinction and the identity between the economic and immanent Trinity are conceptual, not ontological."⁴⁸ As a method it stands that "God truly is as God reveals God's self to be."⁴⁹ Nothing of God's essence or persons is lost. In *God For Us*, LaCugna reiterates her assessment that Rahner's Rule must be understood methodologically and not as an ontological or epistemological equation. She states, "but the distinction between eco-

⁴⁷Balthasar, *Persons in Christ*, 222.

⁴⁸Rahner, xiv.

⁴⁹Ibid.

nomic and immanent Trinity is strictly conceptual, not ontological.”⁵⁰ She later asks the question, “Is it literally true that the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity, as in the tautology $A=A$.”⁵¹ LaCugna answers that a “strict ontological identity” would result in Rahner’s Rule being no different than pantheism.⁵² There is always a remainder between *theologia* and *oikonomia* because “God’s self-communication in history is *not exactly* not identical with God’s eternal self-communication.”⁵³ LaCugna confirms that there is unity between *theologia* and *oikonomia* but not identity “either epistemological or ontological, between God and God for us.”⁵⁴ She acknowledges the ontological difference, but, at times, in her work she seems to conflate the difference.

Although, LaCugna built on the work of Rahner, she believes the corrective in Trinitarian theology needs to extend to Rahner’s theology as well. For LaCugna, Rahner is still caught up in the “stranglehold of the post-Nicene problematic when he uses the undeniable distinctions of persons in the economy to posit intradivine self-communication, *intradivine* relation, God in Godself.”⁵⁵ LaCugna’s work seeks to restore the work of salvation to the doctrine of the Trinity, as it was prior to Aquinas and Augustine and even Nicaea, when in her estimation *theologia* was not separated from *oikonomia*, and *oikonomia* revealed and defined *theologia*.⁵⁶ She believes most of the discourse and work around the doctrine from Nicaea until today to be hijacked by speculation. For LaCugna, this period is characterized by metaphysical speculation concerning the foundational and determining nature of *theologia* on the doctrine of the Trinity to the exclusion of the *oikonomia* of God, or how salvation is revealed to us and experienced by us through the persons of the Trinity. In order to overcome this “defeat of the Trinity,” she calls for a revision of the doctrine that would abandon the immanent-economic distinction and operate solely out of Trinity as *oikonima*.⁵⁷

Ultimately, LaCugna desires to do away with the immanent-economic distinction.⁵⁸ *Theologia*, unlike the immanent Trinity, is not a the-

⁵⁰LaCugna, 212.

⁵¹Ibid., 216.

⁵²Ibid., 217.

⁵³Ibid., 219.

⁵⁴Ibid., 221.

⁵⁵Ibid., 222.

⁵⁶Ibid., 221-222.

⁵⁷Ibid., 223.

⁵⁸Ibid.

ology of God's inner self or God *in se*, involving relations, processions, etc. *Theologia* is the "eternal mystery of God" communicated through the economy of salvation.⁵⁹ LaCugna would have all talk of theology proper, God *in se*, to be abandoned, as well as any intra-divine distinctions, self-communications or relations such as are found in Rahner.⁶⁰ Any theology that still seeks to define an inner life within the Divine is speculative and perpetuates an unnecessary division that renders the doctrine of the Trinity irrelevant.

For LaCugna, simply the ineffable mystery of *theologia* is revealed and known in the *oikonomia*, and ultimately "There is neither an economic nor an immanent Trinity; there is only the *oikonomia* that is the concrete realization of the mystery of *theologia* in time, space, history and personality."⁶¹ If *oikonima* is the ontological source for *theologia*, per LaCugna's recommendation, then we are unable to locate mission or any action in the ontological nature of God. Such a move not only undermines a Trinitarian foundation for mission but also undermines the very tri-personal nature of God and any intra-divine relations that inform the church's *koinonia*, *diakonia*, *apostelein*, and *leitourgia*. In abandoning our understanding of the immanent nature of the Trinity we would have to abandon the Nicene Creed and possibly its Johannine echoes that speak of the "eternally begotten Son" and the "Spirit who proceeds from the Father." Possibly, without the divine processions there would be no relations and distinction of persons, leaving us with Sabellianism and possibly Arianism.⁶²

Many consider LaCugna's work revolutionary and her accolades are many. However, her detractors are equally as numerous. Much of the attention centers on her rejection of immanent-economic terminology as well as her equating *theologia* and *oikonomia* that is tantamount to a rejection of the immanent Trinity. In *Rediscovering the Triune God*, Stanley Grenz surveys the resurgence of modern Trinitarian theology. In his section on Catherine LaCugna, he documents the charges of her critics that can be summarized as a collapsing of the nature of God into the economy of salvation.⁶³ With the numerous caveats previously cited in

⁵⁹Ibid., 221.

⁶⁰Ibid., 231.

⁶¹Ibid., 223.

⁶²Aquinas, 153.

⁶³Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 160.

which LaCugna emphasizes the ontological difference between immanent and economic and even *theologia* and *oikonomia*, it is difficult to want to read her as intentionally conflating, reducing or totalizing in any way. Yet, at times, it seems that is exactly what she is doing when she attempts to define fully *theologia* as *oikonomia* and remove any autonomy or self-relation from the ontology of God.⁶⁴

In defining the Trinity through soteriology, LaCugna is not exactly claiming that God is reduced to what is revealed in salvation history, though it can be construed as such. LaCugna is stating that for us that which is outside of the *oikonomia* is merely unspoken or apophatic. The problem is that if we keep the immanent-economic distinction we are left with a totalized equation, the “economic is the immanent.” If we follow LaCugna’s *theologia-oikonomia* nomenclature then we have a totalized equation, “*oikonomia* is *theologia*,” and this could lead to many unintended problems, such as Sabellianism, Arianism, a kenotic Trinity, a deflationary Trinitarian ontology, a compromise of divine freedom, an open view of God, pantheism or a host of other difficulties.

IT=ET and/or ET=IT: The Problem with the Equation

If LaCugna has unintentionally collapsed the nature of God into the *oikonomia*, then what we have is a makeover from Rahner’s Rule to LaCugna’s Conflation. In such a case there are several questions that would need to be addressed. Is Rahner’s Rule to be understood as an equation? Immanent Trinity (IT) = Economic Trinity (ET) and/or Economic Trinity (ET) = Immanent Trinity (IT). If so, how is it an equation, and how is it not an equation? Supposing that we look at Rahner’s Rule as an axiom with two postulates, what happens when one postulate, i.e., IT=ET, defines the entire axiom?

Several problems ensue if understood ontologically. First, if there were a strict identity between the two, an ontological equation, then the result would be two trinities. Second, there would be an erroneous conflation of the ontological difference between God and creation. Third, the result would be a kenotic Trinity that economically inflates into pantheism, a divinization of the world process. There is also a serious epistemological problem that follows from the ontological problem, especially in problems two and three. By deflating the immanent ontology into the economic, and causing the economic to serve an epistemological function

⁶⁴LaCugna, 320.

to know the immanent, what is known of God in human terms is all that God can be. God becomes the world, and more so God becomes what we understand the world to be. An immanent Trinity that implodes into the economic would be a kenotic Trinity that could only be defined and totalized by any configuration of human terms. Von Balthasar warns that the economic Trinity cannot be strictly identified with the immanent Trinity, "Otherwise the immanent, eternal Trinity would threaten to dissolve into the economic; in other words, God would be swallowed up in the world process."⁶⁵

Some of these questions have been addressed in part thus far. First, Rahner's Rule is to be construed as methodological, as Rahner, von Balthasar and LaCugna concur. Methodologically, the Rule conjoins the being of God with the acts of God and restores salvific value to the doctrine. They also concur that the Rule cannot be an ontological equation, though it seems that LaCugna has a tendency to commit this error. The Rule cannot be an equation because simply there is an ontological difference between God and creation. The terms are never univocal or equal. God is eternal, infinite, perfect, necessary and all of the other traditional characteristics that we attribute to God. We are none of these. God's economic revelation of salvation is not necessary for God but for us.

There is a difference between necessary uncreated being and contingent created being and how they relate. The nature of the relations between the immanent relations of divine persons and the economic, salvific relations between God and humanity are different. God's self-communication in eternal intra-divine community is not salvific but perichoretic. The nature of self-communication is the same immanently and economically. It is eternal holy and perfect love, but the goal and reception of that communication differ due to the ontological difference. When God communicates to us, it is not "Light from Light; True God from True God; Begotten not made; One in being with the Father." It is more like God from God-man to man. True God-man to fallen man.

The ontological difference in this case is between Creator and creation. The difference is communicated through the Incarnation. The ontological difference between God and man within the Incarnation is the Incarnation itself that is both bridge and gap simultaneously. The Incarnation unites the divine nature with human nature, the immanent and ontological nature of God with the ontology of humanity and depen-

⁶⁵Balthasar, *Persons in Christ*, 508.

dent being without confusion. We become partakers of the divine nature in Christ. In the Incarnation, the immanent is the economic and the economic is the immanent, but as we are in Christ, our experience says that “the immanent is *in* the economic, and the economic is *in* the immanent, not a totalization. In our experience of the Incarnation, Rahner’s Rule cannot be an ontologically balanced equation, but it does have congruence with a remainder and may be stated as \approx or approximately equal to, yet with an infinite remainder. The economic is the epistemological starting point for the immanent, but it is not the ontological foundation for the immanent. It also cannot be an epistemological equation but remains similarly an approximation, less the immanent Trinity is emptied and totalized in human terms.

It cannot be that our experience of the economic is the full experience of the immanent. This is the pitfall of equating experience with ontology and making the economic transcendental to our knowledge and experience of God. Our experience then becomes the boundary of ontology and ontology becomes the boundary of experience. It cannot be so. Thus we must declare that the economic methodologically conveys the immanent and is conjoined with the fullness of the immanent but is not to be conflated or equated with the immanent.

Conclusion

Mission theology begins with the Trinity. There are many challenges in constructing a *Missio Trinitatis*. One such challenge is to locate the source of mission in the Trinity itself and then to resolve the immanent-economic tension that follows. Rahner’s Rule provides methodological ballast to any *intra-extra* divide within the Trinity. Aquinas and Von Balthasar locate mission with the processions of the persons themselves, as the *processio* becomes causal and definitive of the *missio*. Problems arise when Rahner’s Rule becomes an ontological or epistemological equation, or when *oikonomia*, totalizes the Trinity and eliminates the processions. It is debatable whether LaCugna falls into this error. If it is the case then it is a conflation that compromises the very nature of the Divine in terms of simplicity, freedom, transcendence, and God’s essence. Rahner’s Rule always has a remainder in order to preserve the ontological nature of the Trinity, to locate mission in the intra-Trinitarian relations, and to uphold the integrity of God’s freedom and transcendence.

DISCERNING JOHN WESLEY'S MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY

by

William Payne

This article examines John Wesley's ecclesiology from the vantage point of the Christmas Conference when he established American Methodism as an independent church. Like a river cutting its way to a sea, the confluence of divergent ideas and discrete events merged to sculpt the contours of Wesley's evolving ecclesiology over a protracted period. In the mature Wesley, the coalesced influences produced a circumscribed ecclesiology that ultimately birthed the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) and led to the ordination of preachers for other parts of the Methodist connection. Hence, the Christmas Conference may serve as a focal point from which one can discern the broad outlines of Wesley's missional ecclesiology. Even though this article focuses on Methodism, it related to all the churches that claim Wesley as their spiritual father.

Background

From the mid-1720s to 1738, John Wesley sought to recover the essence of primitive Christianity by means of ecclesiology. He writes, "In my youth I was not only a member of the Church of England, but a bigot to it, believing none but the members of it to be in a state of salvation. I began to abate of this violence in 1729. But still I was as zealous as ever, observing every point of the Church discipline, and teaching all my pupils so to do."¹ His zeal followed him to Savannah, Georgia, where liturgical experiments, Anglo-Catholicism, and ecclesial discipline bewildered his parishioners and caused conflict.² During this time, the Mora-

¹John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*. 3rd edition. 14 Vols. ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991). Individual citation will be in the following format: (date:volume:page). 1991:8:268-269.

²Stanley Ayling gives a comprehensive account of Wesley's ecclesiastical life in Georgia (*John Wesley* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1979], 66-87).

vians pushed Wesley on the state of his soul. Inwardly, he knew that he lacked living faith and the assurance of salvation.

Upon his return to England and in light of his disappointment in America, Wesley underwent a heartwarming experience in 1738. At the moment when he knew his sins were forgiven and that God loved him, ecclesiology yielded to soteriology.³ From this perspective, his personal transformation laid the theological, experiential, and practical foundation for the ensuing Methodist revival.

In the following years, Methodism would operate as a church within the Church, a religious society, and a reform movement. Wesley's ecclesial emphases and polemics from the 1740s through 1784 presupposed that Methodism had a real relationship with a real church. They also presumed that Methodism was not structured to be a separate church. Methodism became a separate church by necessity, not by Wesley's original design. As such, it can be argued that the American crisis became the precipitating event that pushed Wesley to formulate a fuller missional ecclesiology.⁴

The Christmas Conference

In 1784, Wesley sent 24 Articles of Religion amended from the Anglican 39 Articles, a Sunday Service, and ordained Methodist preachers to found a Methodist church in America with two general superintendents. He remained the titular head. Wesley's "Letter to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury and Our Brethren in North America,"⁵ justifies his actions and gives a rationale for an American Methodist church.

By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the mother-country, and erected into independent States. The English Government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical. . . . No one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. . . . In compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch.

³Luke Keefer argues that the early Wesley sought to regain primitive Christianity by means of ecclesiology. His Oxford and Savannah experiments point to this. However, after Aldersgate, Wesley switched his focus from ecclesiology to soteriology. Luke Keefer, "John Wesley: Disciple of Early Christianity," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19, no. 1. (Spring 1984): 20.

⁴Durward Hofler, "The Methodist Doctrine of the Church." *Methodist History* 6, no. 1. (1967): 25.

⁵Wesley, *Works*, 1991:13:251-252.

Lord King's "Account of the Primitive Church" convinced me many years ago, that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. I have been importuned to exercise this right . . . but I have still refused, not only for peace sake, but because I was determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the national Church to which I belonged.

In America there are no bishops, neither any parish Ministers. There is none, neither to baptize, nor to administer the Lord's supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

It has been proposed to desire the English Bishops to ordain part of our Preachers for America.⁶ But to this I object. . . . They are now at liberty, simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church.

Wesley's letter came in response to one sent by the American preachers in 1780. In the previous year the southern preachers had formed themselves into a presbytery and ordained each other.⁷ Francis Asbury was not present at the 1779 Fluvanna Conference in Virginia because he had secluded himself in Delaware due to the hazards of wartime travel and the problem with state loyalty oaths, especially the one in Maryland. However, he and friends did attend the 1780 Fluvanna Conference with the intent of maintaining the connection and stopping the schism. After much conferencing, the southern preachers agreed to suspend their administration of the sacraments and reaffirmed the old plan for one year provided Wesley responded to their complaint.⁸

In the first paragraph of his letter to the American connection, Wesley argues from a legal perspective. American Methodists had the right to

⁶Wesley did ask the Bishop of London for help in solving the priest problem. However, he refused to ordain any Methodists. The Bishop of London oversaw all missionary matters.

⁷Robert Strawbridge, a former lay preacher in the Irish connection and successful American circuit rider, had done the same thing before Wesley's missionaries had regularized American Methodism in accordance with the European model. He may have been the inspiration for the southern "mutiny." For more information, see William Payne, *American Methodism: Past and Future Growth* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2013), 65-70.

⁸For an extensive description, see Payne, *American Methodism*, 101-108.

establish their own church because America was independent from England. In fact, the Church of England no longer existed in America and the Protestant Episcopal Church had not come into being.⁹ Even though Wesley ranted against the corruption caused by nationalizing Christianity at the time of Constantine, one wonders if he hoped that American Methodism would become a state church in the areas where Anglicanism had enjoyed that status before the war. One could imply this from a literal reading of his sermon "On the Church." Regardless, by 1784 the age of state churches had ended in the mid-Atlantic and southern states.

In the second paragraph, Wesley argues from an ecclesiastical and a scriptural perspective. First, in the New Testament and primitive churches no distinction existed between the function of bishop and elder (priest). Both were biblical presbyters. The dissimilarity in function occurred as a product of corruption and natural evolution. The distinction dates to the time of Constantine.¹⁰ Wesley distinguished between the New Testament Church, the primitive church, and the early church. According to Wesley, in the early church a bishop pastored a local, independent congregation which remained in connection with all the other churches. In the New Testament period the apostles exercised spiritual authority over the entire connection.¹¹ Wesley thought that he stood in the tradition and teachings of the apostles in the same way as Paul. As a missionary bishop, he had administrative and spiritual oversight over the Methodist connection. The similarities between Methodist organization and Wesley's interpretation of the New Testament hierarchy are striking.

Wesley's New Testament typology¹² defined "church" as a congregation of believing people having a living faith united under the leadership

⁹The process of forming a Protestant Episcopal Church in which the clergy did not swear an allegiance to the English Crown began in 1783. However, the church was not official until 1790.

¹⁰Wesley, *Works*, 1991:7:274. At other points he argues that it was a natural evolution that was in accordance with the principles of the New Testament and early Church.

¹¹Curiously, he believed that the Jerusalem Council illustrates this fact even though its apparent leader was James the brother of Jesus who was an elder (cf. Acts 15:13-21 and 21:18).

¹²The word "typology" is used in place of "model." Wesley rejected the "New Testament Model" as proposed by Calvin. See Albert Outler, "Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?" in *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. Don Kirkpatrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1964), 15.

of the Holy Spirit and a local bishop.¹³ In this sense, the term has a geographical orientation. As such, one could talk about the Church of England as a discrete church without excluding other geographic manifestations of church, for example, the church in Virginia, Charleston, or New England. Wesley held to a modified concept of national church without excluding independent congregations from the church simply because they were not in fellowship with the national church.¹⁴

Second, Wesley believed that a presbytery of duly ordained priests could ordain bishops when none existed. Wesley borrowed this concept from the Alexandrian School in the early church. As in other ways, Wesley's opinion about ordination and episcopacy evolved. Early in the revival Wesley refused to allow the bishops to silence him or his movement. His scriptural mandate and his authority as a priest required him to fulfill his calling even if the bishops did not approve.¹⁵ The world was his parish. As an Oxford don, he was not limited to a bounded parish. In fact, he believed that he had a special dispensation from God and an extraordinary calling to do his work. In this regard, he did not submit to the bishops as "spiritual governors."

The 1744 Conference asked, "How far should we obey the bishops?" Wesley responded, "In all things indifferent. And on this ground of obeying them we should observe the canons, so far as we can with a safe conscience."¹⁶ However, in 1745, he still opined that the bishops transmitted a certain ordination grace. "We believe it would not be right for us to administer either Baptism or the Lord's Supper unless we had a commission so to do from those bishops whom we apprehend to be in a succession from the Apostles."¹⁷

In 1756, Wesley still felt compelled to affirm the episcopacy and argued that it was a scriptural form of church government even if it was not the only allowable one. He writes:

¹³Wesley, "Of the Church," *Works*, 1991:6:392-401.

¹⁴Albert Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 307. For a good example of this, see Wesley, "On the Church: in a Letter to the Rev. —," *Works*, 1991:13:253-254.

¹⁵"I know God has committed to me a dispensation of the gospel; yea, and my own salvation depends upon me preaching it. . . . If then I could not remain in the Church without omitting this, without desisting from preaching the gospel, I should be under a necessity of separating from it, or losing my own soul" (Ibid., 1991:6:408-409).

¹⁶Ibid., 1991:8:280.

¹⁷Ibid., 347.

I still believe the episcopal form of government to be both scriptural and apostolical: I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the apostles. But that it is prescribed in Scripture I do not believe. This opinion, which I once heartily espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*. I think he has unanswerably proved that neither Christ nor his apostles prescribed any particular form of church government, and that the plea of the divine right for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive church.¹⁸

By 1761, Wesley furthered modified his position on episcopacy by arguing against apostolic succession, the basis by which ordination is restricted to duly ordained bishops. He writes, "I deny that the Romish Bishops came down by uninterrupted succession from the Apostles. I never could see it proved; and, I am persuaded I never will."¹⁹ Furthermore, in 1785, the year after the Christmas Conference in which he ordained ministers for the American connection, Wesley declares, "I firmly believe that I am a scriptural επίσκοπος, as much as any man in England or Europe."²⁰ Wesley used a play on words. He affirms that he is a bishop in the New Testament meaning of the term without affirming that he is a bishop in the Anglican tradition.

The third paragraph argues from an "of-necessity" perspective. Frequently, Wesley uses the concept of necessity to rationalize his actions. Out of necessity, he preached in the fields because the churches shut their doors to him. By necessity, he had to obey God rather than human authority. By necessity, he established societies and classes in order to disciple the masses of awakened people because the Church of England was indifferent to their needs. He prayed extemporaneously because the situa-

¹⁸*Arminian Magazine*, 1779:598-601. Quoted in Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1970), 146.

¹⁹Wesley, *Works*, 1991:3:44-45.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 1991:13:253. Some have argued that Erasmus of Crete ordained John Wesley Bishop of the Methodist Societies in England, Ireland, and Scotland in December, 1763. For a good summary, see *The Methodist Quarterly Review* 1878 at <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/the-methodist-review/the-methodist-quarterly-review-1878-was-wesley-ordained-a-bishop-by-erasmus/> (accessed March, 26, 2013).

tion demanded it. Finally, because of necessity, he ordained Methodist ministers to serve the societies in America.²¹

The fourth paragraph summarizes the others. Even though Wesley believed that the Church of England was the best constituted national church in the world, he did not wish that the American Methodists should be obligated to it. Following his instructions and the materials that he sent, they were at full liberty to follow God's leading.

Article 13. One must assume that Wesley intended the MEC to subscribe to Article 13 since he included it with the church's founding documents. It reads: "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."²² When referring to this Article of Religion in 1785, Wesley writes, "Here is a true logical definition, containing both the essence and the properties of a church."²³

This represents the Anglican view. During his life, he expanded on it and he qualified it, but he never abandoned it. Accordingly, the visible church is marked by the pure preaching of the Word, the due administration of sacraments, and proper order. Some have argued that the ecclesial emphasis in this article conflicts with Wesley's pietistic emphasis. Certainly, the mature Wesley stresses that faith, holiness, Christian experience, and love should be defining qualities of an individual Christian who is a member of a visible church. Still, he does not define a local or national church in terms of these characteristics. As such, only an apparent contradiction exists.²⁴

²¹"Judging this to be a case of real necessity, I took a step which . . . I had refrained from taking for many years; I exercised that power which I am fully persuaded the great Shepherd and Bishop of the church has given me. I appointed [ordained] three of our labourers to go and help them, by not only preaching the word of God, but likewise by administering the Lord's supper and baptizing their children" (Wesley, *Works*, 1991:13:256).

²²Article 13 is contained in the Historical Section of the *United Methodist Discipline*. Available at <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=1650> (accessed March 10, 2013). It is the same as the 19th Anglican Article of Religion.

²³Wesley, *Works*, 1991:13:254.

²⁴Jose Miguez-Bonino distinguishes between Wesley's explicit ecclesiology and his implicit ecclesiology. The former is objective and the latter is subjective. "Wesley refuses to dissociate the elements which represent both traditions: the objective elements of the Protestant and Catholic traditions (word, sacrament,

When American Methodists separated from the Church of England, they became “a visible church” in the same sense that the Church of England was a visible church. At that time, in addition to the pure preaching of the Word, they needed the due administration of the sacraments and proper order. As a missionary bishop, the Christmas Conference was the means by which Wesley provided for these.

Preaching and Ordination. In the Anglican tradition, through the laying on of hands, a bishop gave a person authority to preach. As such, the clergy had an exclusive authority derived from and beholden to the institutional church in accordance with apostolic succession.²⁵ Ordination also assumed that one had been taught what to preach and that one preached in accordance with apostolic tradition.

Before 1784, Methodists preached the pure word of God without the benefit of ordination. Wesley circumvented the ordination issue by insisting that his preachers were evangelists, not pastors. According to his interpretation of scripture, pastors and evangelists represented two separate orders of ministry within the church. Pastors were in the tradition of the Levitical priesthood. Evangelists were in the tradition of the prophets. Pastors needed ordination. They had a representative ministry that required them to teach the faith, administer the sacraments, and maintain order. Evangelists did not need ordination. In fact, in “The Ministerial Office” Wesley argued against it. In his mind, evangelists exercised an extraordinary ministry. Wesley used this concept as a justification for not ordaining his preachers. It also kept the Methodists within and dependent upon the Church of England.

Order. Early in his ministry, Wesley averred that the New Testament plainly described three orders of ministry (bishops, priests, and deacons). As he matured, he modified this position. In his sermon “On

order) and the subjective elements of the pietistic tradition (experience, inward holiness, prayer, fellowship). The ecclesiola is his solution for bringing the streams together in a practical way.” See “Toward a Substantive and Open Conception of the Church: An Attempt to Assess the Values and Shortcomings of Wesley's Ecclesiology,” *Journal Methodist Theological School in Ohio*. 7, nos. 1 and 2 (1969): 22.

²⁵“It is not enough to be inwardly called of God to preach, as many imagine themselves to be, unless they are outwardly called by men sent of God for that purpose” (Wesley, *Works*, 1991:7:274). Wesley does not argue with this statement. Rather, he argues that it does not apply to the prophetic order of which Methodist preachers belonged.

the Church,” he refused to defend the accuracy of the three-fold order because he knew that the church included many patterns of organization that do not fit the official ecclesiastical definition. Additionally, as was previously shown, he acknowledges that the episcopal pattern is not the only one allowed by Scripture.

In high church tradition, order represents a third mark and the episcopacy relates to the essence of that order. The mature Wesley believed that episcopacy existed to serve the church and that it was not a part of the church’s essence. For this reason he came to maintain that he functioned as a scriptural bishop even though he was never ordained to a third order of ministry. Additionally, although he denied the Anglican and Roman Catholic “myth” of apostolic succession²⁶ and argued that there was nothing “magical” about the laying on of a bishop’s hands, he did not repudiate the idea of apostolic succession. Rather, he contended that apostolic succession was the passing down of the teaching of the apostles and the pursuing of their example.²⁷

Interestingly, Wesley “ordained” Coke as a general superintendent and not a bishop. Since Coke was already a priest, being appointed a general superintendent with the laying on of hands was functionally equivalent to being ordained a bishop in that Wesley set him apart to an order of ministry with administrative and spiritual oversight responsibilities that included the authority to ordain. Wesley acknowledged the biblical ministry of the bishop, believed that he was a functional bishop, and ordained Coke to do the ministry of a bishop, but would not call Coke a bishop because the term was packed with historical, ecclesiastical, and theological meanings that he wanted to avoid. Ultimately, under Coke’s influence,

²⁶Ibid., 1991:13:253. Also, “I deny that the Romish Bishops came down by uninterrupted succession from the Apostles. I never could see it proved; and, I am persuaded I never will” (Ibid., 1991:3:44-45).

²⁷H. Ray Dunning captures the essence of Wesley when he refers to the mark of Apostolicity. “Rather than interpreting [this mark] to mean some highly questionable line of apostolic succession handed down from the apostles, it may be seen as the continuation of the apostles’ mission. This mark is present in the church when, empowered by the Spirit, the members of the body exercise the apostolic witness to the Gospel. Hence it is in the event of function that the church becomes apostolic.” “Toward A Wesleyan Ecclesiology” in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1967): 116.

he and Asbury arrogated that term for themselves.²⁸ Wesley never approved of it. In a letter to Asbury in 1788, Wesley wrote, "How dare you suffer yourself to be called Bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought! Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never by my consent call me Bishop! For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake put a full end to this!"²⁹

The status of Methodist ordination was further convoluted when Wesley ordained the Methodist ministers at the time of separation as elders instead of priests. According to Wesley, elders and priests share the same order of ministry.³⁰ Both are New Testament presbyters. The distinction in words suggests that Wesley intended a distinction in ministry focus. In the high church tradition, a priest serves a sacerdotal function within a local congregation. Like a priest, an elder was set apart by the church for the purpose of serving the church in the specialized ministry of sacrament and order. However, a Methodist elder was more than a priest because he also preached the Word, itinerated, and sought to save souls like an evangelist. As such, the ordained circuit rider had sacerdotal, evangelistic, and temporal oversight responsibilities. The evolution of the office of presiding elder illustrates this.³¹ It should be reaffirmed that Wesley rejected the Roman Catholic understanding of the priesthood.

Typically, today an ordained Methodist clergyperson functions more like a parish priest than a Methodist preacher of old. There can be no

²⁸At the Christmas Conference, Coke argued that a superintendent was a functional bishop. His many sermons at the conference referred to the office of bishop. It is likely that many people began to call Asbury and Coke bishop at that time. However, neither the Christmas Conference nor Wesley designated Coke and Asbury as bishops. While revising the *Discipline* in 1787, Coke and Asbury changed the word superintendent to bishop. This became a point of contention.

²⁹Francis Asbury, *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, ed. Elmer Clark, J. Manning Potts, and Jacob S. Payton, vol. 3 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1958); hereinafter cited as Asbury, *Journal*, 1, 2 or 3. Asbury, *Journal*, 1958:3:65.

³⁰In "The Ministerial Office" (Wesley, *Works*, 1991:3:273-281), Wesley goes to great length to show the difference between priests and prophets whom he also calls preachers. Priests were called to offer sacrifices and attend to holy things. Prophets were called to preach and declare the word of God. He then equates the office of priest with that of a pastor-bishop in the New Testament. The office of prophet is equated with that of an evangelist.

³¹For a detailed analysis of this, see Fred Price, "The Role of the Presiding Elder in the Growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1784-1832" (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1987).

doubt that the ordination of Methodist preachers and the establishment of the MEC perpetuated a system that Wesley wanted to avoid because it combined the offices of pastor and evangelist in one person. In fact, ordination has led to the cessation of a functional itinerancy and the establishment of a professional class of Methodist pastors who no longer work for the larger community or pursue the evangelistic mandate with the vigor of the circuit riders.

Visible and Invisible Church. Article 13 does not contrast the visible and invisible church. However, the distinction existed in Wesley's mind. In "An Earnest Appeal," he states that the Church of England is composed of the Anglicans in England when they are visibly joined with a living faith to hear the pure word of God preached and to partake of the sacraments. When they are dispersed, the true believers compose the invisible church. One can be a member of the visible church without being a member of the invisible church. However, one should not be a member of the invisible church without participating in the visible church. It is in and through the visible church that a true believer receives the sacraments, hears the preaching of the word of God, and receives other things requisite for growth in grace in accordance with Wesley's order of salvation and expanded understanding of the means of grace.³² He opposed solitary religion for this reason. He understood that it takes a village of faithful believers to raise a disciple.

Wesley parses the Article of Religion about the church so its component parts reflect specific emphases from the Evangelical, Reformed, and High Church traditions.

[Article 13] mentions three things as essential to a visible Church. First: Living faith; without which, indeed, there can be no Church at all, visible or invisible. [Evangelical emphasis] Secondly: Preaching, and consequently hearing, the pure word of God, else that faith would languish and die. [Reformation emphasis] And, Thirdly, a due administration of the sacraments, —the ordinary means whereby God increaseth faith. [High Church emphasis]³³

³²Wesley divides the means of grace into prudential and institutional. As a word of caution, he says that people should not neglect the means of grace, nor should they overly rely upon them. The warning reflects the controversy surrounding the Fetter Lane Society.

³³Wesley, *Works*, 1991:8:31.

In reference to this, Colin Williams argues that the problem revolves around his priority of emphasis.³⁴ There can be no doubt that Wesley held to all three traditions to some extent.³⁵ However, Wesley did not attempt a complete synthesis of the three emphases or successfully hold them in a creative tension. Rather, he demonstrated an eclectic tendency by prioritizing selected elements from each tradition, specifically, the ones that most coincided with his own needs and experience. Eclecticism and prioritizing are hallmarks of Wesley. This reflects his pragmatic and “of necessity” disposition.

Because an unbroken succession of apostolic ministry determines due administration, not apostolic succession, Wesley argued for the legitimacy of Reformed Churches because they preach and teach the faith once delivered to the saints.³⁶ For the same reason, Methodist preachers were participating in the apostolic tradition. As such, after the Christmas Conference, they stood within the company of the faithful who duly administer the sacraments. Before the Christmas Conference, Methodist itinerants preached the word of God in power and in purity without the benefit of ordination. At that time, the emphasis was not on doctrine, but on conversion and sanctification.

The evangelical emphasis on living faith forms the bedrock of Methodism. Without it, there is no church or any true believer because the visible church is a congregation of faithful, believing people.³⁷ This is the gift that the Methodist revival offered to the Church of England. Faith should

³⁴Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1960), 142.

³⁵This is why the “Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task” of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* declares that United Methodists are fully catholic, fully reformed, and fully evangelical.

³⁶“The Church has a perpetual succession of Pastors and Teachers divinely appointed and divinely assisted. And there has never been wanting, in the Reformed Churches, such a succession of pastors and teachers; men both divinely appointed and divinely assisted; for they convert sinners to God. . . . Their teachers are the proper successors of those who have delivered down, through all generations, the faith once delivered to the saints” (Wesley, *Works*, 1991:3:42).

³⁷In the sermon “Of the Church,” Wesley translated “faithful men” in the Article as “congregation of believers” on the basis of the Latin *coetus credentium*; actually the Latin version had *coetus fidelium* (Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns of Church Renewal*. (Dovers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1980), 74.

not be understood in terms of mental assent to doctrines and creeds. Nor can it be reduced to attending church and receiving the sacraments. Furthermore, the proper response to the preaching of the pure word is faith and the inward witness of a righteous God (awakening). A believing faith is a personal faith. Wesley's faith journey proved this to him. Living faith is a sure trust and confidence in the atoning work of Christ. It affirms that Jesus Christ is Lord and that he died for me and forgave me of my sins. It requires one to live in obedience to the commandments of Christ. It evidences itself by the new birth, the assurance of salvation, and a personal transformation that signals growth into the image of Christ in this life. Wherever a community of people have that reality in their midst, there one will find the true church.

Clearly, Wesley's primary point of emphasis fell firmly on living faith. Being a part of the high church tradition and holding to the Reformation imperatives are implied in Wesley's theology, but they are not unique to it. The Wesleyan distinctives relate to living faith and other attributes of personal religion. Scripture, tradition, and reason inform faith, but without experience, one does not have faith and is not a true Christian. Article 5 of the former Evangelical United Brethren Confession of Faith reflects the spirit of Wesleyan ecclesiology better than the aforementioned Article 13. It combines variant strands into one coherent statement.

We believe the Christian Church is the community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. We believe it is one, holy, apostolic and catholic. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.

Summary of Wesley's Ecclesiology

According to Frank Baker, Wesley viewed the church as an historical institution and a fellowship of believers. He described the historic church in terms of an institution that is organically linked to the apostolic church by a succession of bishops and inherited customs. It was served by a priestly class who duly expound the Bible and the sacraments in such a way as to preserve the ancient traditions on behalf of all who were made members by baptism. As a fellowship of believers, the church shares both the apostolic experience of God's living presence and a burning desire to

bring others into this personal experience. Ordinary people from within the fellowship of believers are called and equipped by the Holy Spirit for the ministry of the prophet/evangelist/preacher. One does not need to be ordained to serve in this capacity. The first view sees the church as an ancient institution to be preserved, the second, as a faithful few with a mission to the world. The first was traditional rule. The second was a living relationship.³⁸ As incongruous as the two versions seem, they may be regarded as complementary.

Wesley had a deep respect for the Church of England. For that reason, he never separated from it, nor would he allow those under his charge to separate from it before the Christmas Conference in America. The Methodist movement depended on the Anglican Church. However, Wesley also believed that the English Church needed to be revitalized. His own personal experience of God convinced him of this. Methodism grew out of a passion for revitalization, holiness, and experiential faith. Through this mix, Wesley developed a concept in his ecclesiology that combined essential aspects of institutional Christianity with evangelical faith.

Missiological Implications

American Methodism began as a missionary movement under the leadership of immigrant preachers from Europe. Missionaries directed the movement from 1770 to the early 1780s. Asbury and Coke served as missionary superintendents. The following sections will elucidate missiological implications from Wesley's mature ecclesiology.

The Ministry of Evangelism. When the Bishop of Oxford accused Wesley of breaking church order through his "of necessity" irregularities, Wesley articulated a soteriological bias that relativized ecclesiastical concerns. He wrote, "What is the end of all ecclesiastical order? Is it not to bring souls from the power of Satan to God, and to build them up in His fear and love? Order, then, is so far valuable as it answers these ends; and if it answers them not, it is nothing worth."³⁹ The emphasis on evangelism represents a primary missiological implication of Wesley's ecclesiology.

The first discipline of American Methodism evidences Wesley's evangelistic bias. Section VII borrowed from Wesley's "Duties of a Helper" and laid a basis for the evangelistic zeal that characterized early

³⁸Baker, *John Wesley*, 1970, 137.

³⁹Wesley, *Works*, 1991:12:80-81.

Methodism.⁴⁰ Note: “You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work.”⁴¹ Time was a critical commodity for a preacher who had to attend to many obligations. Some preachers wanted to prioritize theological studies and used them as an excuse not to engage in personal evangelism. The *Discipline* affirmed the value of education⁴² but not at the expense of saving souls. “Gaining knowledge is a good thing, but saving souls is a better. . . . If you can do but one, let your studies alone. I would throw by all the libraries in the world rather than be guilty of the loss of one soul.”⁴³

In the same way that Wesley would not be restricted to the bounds of a parish,⁴⁴ early Methodist itinerants were not appointed to a church or society. Rather, they worked a geographical area. Even though they attended to established societies, they always attempted to grow the circuit and win more people to Christ. This represents an additional ecclesiological point. Early Methodism was decentralized and not congregationally based. The society, preaching houses, and classes were missional outposts from which Methodism spread to the larger area. Congregationalism does not reflect Wesley and works against his missional ecclesiology. Congregations are not ends unto themselves and preachers do not exist to serve them. Rather, both preachers and congregations are called to reach into the community, win the population to Christ, and expand the Methodist infrastructure.

The Problem with Ordination. Wesley strongly argued that the work of the itinerant evangelist was a separate ministry from the work of the parish priest. An evangelist works with the pastor, but is not limited to the pastorate. He or she does not need ordination because he or she is not called to a ministry of order and sacraments. In fact, early Methodism does not apply the term “pastor” to its preachers even after they received

⁴⁰For this section, see Payne, *American Methodism*, 113-114.

⁴¹MEC, *A Form of Discipline*, 1787, 13, and Wesley, *Works*, 1991:8:310.

⁴²Early Methodism did not emphasize “formal” education but it did value learning.

⁴³MEC, *A Form of Discipline*, 1787, 35.

⁴⁴“On scriptural principles I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God in scripture commands me, according to my power to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another’s parish. . . . Whom then shall I hear, God or man? A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me; and woe is me if I preach not the gospel. . . . I look upon all the world as my parish,” Wesley, *Works*, 1991:1:201.

ordination. The itinerants were not pastors. As such, Methodism should make a distinction between the two orders of ministry without elevating one over the other. The local church needs the evangelist and the pastor. The revival nature of the church is hindered when the two orders are merged into one office.

Wesley confused this pattern at the time of the Christmas Conference. Subsequent to it a small number of presiding elders traveled large circuits preaching, conducting quarterly conferences, and serving the sacraments. Non-ordained circuit riders also traveled circuits. When the circuit rider was not present, local preachers and a team of lay leaders (class leaders, exhorters and the like) pastored the flock. In time, many of the local preachers also received ordination.

In reality, the local preachers needed ordination more than the circuit riders. The ordained itinerant was an evangelist in the pattern of Paul, Timothy, and Titus. He was absent from the local societies more than he was present. When a large cadre of located circuit riders and ordained local preachers rose up to give direct pastoral support to the local societies, conflict, power struggles, and competition between the traveling and local preachers greatly distracted early American Methodism from its mission. This would have been avoided if Asbury had designated the local preachers as the pastors without diminishing the work of the circuit riders. Also, this would have retained the creative tension that Wesley envisioned in that the circuit riders would have remained fully focused on evangelism, church planting, expanding their circuits, and their prophetic calling; while the local line would have tended to the spiritual growth of the saints by serving as the parish pastors. This is the model that Wesley rightly advocated in the Ministerial Office. Unfortunately, he failed to apply this insight to American Methodism when he formed it into a visible church.

Ironically, today most Methodist Churches have the services of an ordained pastor or a licensed local pastor, but they wholly lack the services of the itinerant evangelist. That may be the main reason why Methodism is stagnant and declining in America and Europe. Modern Methodism needs to evaluate this problem. If it looks back to the original plan, it will acknowledge the difference between the evangelist and pastor and it will reconstitute the office of the itinerant in a new and contextualized fashion. Regardless, the practice of calling stationed pastors itinerants is a misnomer that misrepresents the missional nature of Methodism. Also, it does injustice to those apostles of early Methodism who gave themselves to poverty, purity, chastity, obedience, and ceaseless itineration.

The Visible Church. Parachurch and missionary organizations should relate their ministries to a visible church. Wesley believed in the visible church as a conduit for redemption. Anyone who wants to follow Christ needs to participate in the life and ministry of a local church where the sacraments are administered. In fact, Wesley established an independent Methodist Church in America because the Methodists did not have access to a visible church.

Second, from the very beginning, Methodism functioned as a missionary movement within an institutional church in much the same way as missionary orders function within Roman Catholicism. One could not be a member of a society or class without being a part of an institutional church. Mission and church went together. As a revival movement within an institutional church, Wesley did not want his Methodists to separate from the church. The mother church gave them credibility. But, more importantly, Wesley wanted his people to be a revival influence in that tradition. Many revivals had occurred in England. Unfortunately, most flagged and amounted to little because they did not revive the Church of England.⁴⁵ Wesley believed that his Methodists were called to reform the church. History taught Wesley that Methodism could not accomplish that goal as a schismatic sect.⁴⁶

This represents an important missiological implication. When a revival occurs within an institutional church, the revival leaders should not seek to remove the revival from the church, even if the church is perceived as a corruptible influence or a hindrance to it. God wants to reform the church. Revivals are a means by which God accomplishes that purpose. When revival movements separate from the institutional

⁴⁵In reference to this, Wesley said, "If these lived and died in the churches to which they belonged, notwithstanding the wickedness which overflowed both the Teachers and the people therein, they spread the leaven of true religion far and wide, and were more and more useful until they were in paradise. But, if upon any provocation or consideration whatever, they separated, and founded distinct parties, their influence was more and more confined; they grew less and less useful to others, and generally lost the spirit of religion themselves in the spirit of controversy" (Works, 1991:13:226).

⁴⁶See "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel, Near the City-Road, London" (Ibid., 1919:7:419-430) and "Reasons Against a Separation from the Church of England" (Ibid., 1991:13:225-232).

church, they hinder that objective of God and become schismatic.⁴⁷ According to Wesley, it is for this cause that many of the revival movements cease to exist after a few years and leave little trace of their being.

Third, American Methodism confuses this point to some extent because it relates to a mother church and a founding parachurch. The mother church never gave American Methodism freedom to form itself into a visible church because the Bishop of London refused to cooperate. Wesley acted on behalf of the universal church and as the leader of the mission organization when he formed the American Methodists into an independent church. At this point, Wesley demonstrated a dynamic understanding of ecclesiology. It should be the goal of every mission to form its converts into a native church and to bequeath to them all things necessary for that to happen, including ordination. Denominational extension should not be the goal of missions. Rather, mission organizations should seek to partner with local believers and equip them to grow indigenous churches. Even as modern Methodism seeks to maintain a global "connection," it should extend a generous autonomy to local conferences in the majority world so they can adapt Methodism to their local contexts.

Fourth, a person who separates from the church separates from God. From this, an idealist might argue that there is no salvation outside the visible church. Wesleyans must contend that God calls the visible church to include revival movements within the church to be a vehicle of salvation in that it preaches the pure word of God to awaken sinners. Also, it offers the means of grace and the discipline necessary to bring people along the lifelong path that leads to full salvation. As such, salvation does not come from the church, but one maintains it in and through participation in the church. The church mediates God's grace to the individual and the world by its preaching, sacraments, service, teaching, and fellowship.

The Invisible Church and the Visible Church. The church is much more than an institution or a denomination. It is the Body of Christ, a body that becomes visible through duly constituted congregations of faithful saints. That is, the invisible church becomes visible whenever faithful people gather together in Christ's name. Experience taught Wesley that the church was inclusive of all people who had a living faith including those who lacked the due administration of the sacraments and

⁴⁷By Wesley's definition, neither the Reformation Churches nor the American Methodist Church were schismatic. However, when the English Methodists left the Church of England, that was schismatic.

the pure preaching of the word. Wesley separated from the Fetter Lane society over the issues of sacraments and quietism. Still, he was convinced that its members were a part of Christ's church because they had living faith. No place is this "Catholic Spirit" clearer than in his sermon "On the Church."

On the other hand, Wesley was convinced that the Anglican Church was the best-organized church and the nearest to New Testament ideals. However, he knew that many of its clerics lacked living faith, lived dissolute lives, did not preach the pure word of God, and distained Methodism.⁴⁸ Some of his colleagues argued that these problems invalidated the ministry and sacraments of the corrupted priests and necessitated the Methodists forming themselves into a new church. Wesley rejected this. The efficacy of the sacraments does not depend on the purity of the celebrant, but on the promises of God to work through his institutional church.

Wesley's view makes two things clear. First, the form of church organization is less important than the function of that organization. The visible church exists for a purpose. When a duly constituted church fulfills its purpose, it is a legitimate church. Second, the church cannot be limited to a single form or institution. Those churches that assume that there is no real church outside their denomination are incongruous with Wesley. Methodists cannot follow Wesley and be bigoted or insular in their understanding of church structure. The church exists wherever people gather together in Jesus' name for praise, prayer, instruction, witness, and service. Function is more important than form.

Based on this, one can assume that Wesley would be in agreement with many of the premises behind the ecumenical movement. He believed that an essential unity pervaded the Christian faith, an oneness that transcended denominational or geographical barriers. He celebrated that unity in his travels and in his writings. He studied the singularities of other church traditions and borrowed from them freely. Additionally, he attempted to build bridges across denominational lines. However, he never sacrificed his own Christian heritage. On issues not essential to the faith, Wesley agreed to think and to let think. This trademark of Wes-

⁴⁸Ibid., 1991:8:322; Ibid., 1991:13:195. When the priests began to preach against Methodism, Wesley suggested that his followers listen politely as long as their consciences allowed them.

leyanism should guide how modern Methodism engages multi-faith and inter-denomination dialogue.

The ecumenical movement needs to hear Methodism's story. However, any effort to denude Methodism of its evangelical distinctives in order to make it more palatable to the ecumenical movement will lead to a compromise of Methodism. Furthermore, from the perspective of Wesley's life and writings, one cannot show that he would have accepted the implications of pluralism. For sure, he would oppose theocentric theology and universalism. He was totally committed to a christocentric faith and the ministry of evangelism, a ministry that called people to flee from the wrath to come. Of late, it seems that a renunciation of divine judgment goes hand in glove with an affirmation of universalism and lifestyles contrary to social holiness. This may be the new antinomianism. Clearly, Wesley would strongly oppose antinomianism and all associated theologies, be they unconditional election or universalism.

The concept that function is more important than form also lends itself to the indigenization principles of modern missiology. One should not call Wesley a contextual theologian, but one could argue that he was in line with modern concepts of indigenization and adaptation. This is possible because Wesley does not attempt to define Christian in terms of creeds or institutions. Rather, he emphasizes faith and character. Orthopraxy is more important in the life of an individual than orthodoxy, although both are needed. From this perspective, one can do missions in the spirit of Wesley without doing denominational extension.

The Case of Need and Pragmatism

It has often been said that need is the mother of invention. No place is this sententious euphemism clearer than with Wesley. Regarding some of his irregularities (e.g., field preaching, extemporaneous praying, forming of societies, lay preaching and the like), Wesley states, "Yet, it is true that I have in some respects varied, though not from the doctrines, yet from the discipline, of the Church of England; although not willingly, but by constraint."⁴⁹

Before the Christmas Conference, the American preachers did not constitute "the due administration" because they lacked ordination. It was for this reason that Wesley ordained several people for ministry in America. He justifies this irregularity on practical grounds. "Judging this to be

⁴⁹Ibid., 1991:13:255.

a case of real necessity. . . . These are the steps which, not of choice, but necessity, I have slowly and deliberately taken.”⁵⁰ The message from this is clear. First, the church institution is important, but faithfulness to ministry calling is more important. The institution exists to facilitate ministry and to be a channel of God’s grace. When the institution forestalls the work of God, it can and must be circumvented without being abandoned.

Second, if something works, if God blesses it, and if it is not against the clear teaching of Scripture, then it should be employed. This calls for experimentation and observation on the mission field. It also requires an open mind. This should be a quality of a Wesleyan missional ecclesiology. Conversely, if something does not work in the field, a new approach must be found even if the old method is tried and true in another context. Wesley wanted to see results. He was not against bending the rules or being irregular for the sake of achieving his ministry objectives. In *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, Wesley documents the various aspects of Methodism that he discovered and determined to use because they produced tangible results in accordance with his goals.⁵¹ They include the society, classes, bands, the select society, special classes for penitent people, love feasts, watch-night services, the Poor House, and readings of the work of God in other denominations to encourage faith and fight a party spirit. One could add exhorters, lay preaching, the circuit system, field preaching, conferences, and the like to the list.

When the first missionaries imported Methodism to America, they had to adapt it to the American context. In so doing, it became more functional and indigenous. The modification of the conference structure, the election of bishops, accommodating the spirit of democracy, the increased role of society members, and the “Methodizing” of camp meetings are examples of modification that helped the American connection better situate itself to capitalize on prevailing contextual opportunities in the various regions in which it labored.

It is lamented that missionaries struggle with indigenous churches even though they may strive for them. Contextualization challenges biases prior and external to the new setting. In the American case, Wesley did not approve of all the of-necessity modifications that the American preachers made after he constituted them as an independent church. His many attempts to direct and control American Methodism via Bishop

⁵⁰Ibid., 1991:13:256.

⁵¹Wesley, *Works*, 1991:8:248-268.

Coke and strategic letters led to an unfortunate incident in which the preachers struck his name from the Minutes.⁵²

Ordination and the Conference Structure

Since ordination is not based on apostolic succession, one can assume that local churches on the mission field may properly ordain or appoint members in their midst to a representative ministry to serve sacraments, preach, and maintain church order. As in the case with American Methodism, it is best to have the mother church or para-church organization bless the ordination of the new pastors in the mission church. This maintains integrity and continuity with the global church and prevents the appearance and/or reality of schism.

The Fluvanna Conference in 1779 illustrates this issue. The assembled preachers felt disjointed from Wesley and frustrated that they could not serve the sacraments to their people. As such, they formed a presbytery and ordained themselves. Asbury became very troubled by this. He believed that the Methodist preachers should not make a unilateral decision. Rather, they should seek input from him. In the end, Wesley validated their concerns when he formed them into an independent church. Had Wesley refused to ordain American Methodists, part of the American connection would have separated from him.

The connectional system and the conference structure were very important to Wesley, but they are not of the essence of the church. As stated earlier, Wesley was a pragmatist who adopted those methods that worked best. Most of his distinctives were discovered, not developed. As such, one can assume that Wesley would alter his conference structure if a new structure could better meet the needs of the local communities of faith and his mission goals. In and of itself, this is a mission emphasis and a distinctive of Methodist ecclesiology.

Luke Keefer states that Wesley's study of Acts led him to a dynamic concept of ecclesiology. This opened him to pragmatic innovations and discoveries. From Acts, Wesley discovered that "the Spirit providentially led the church to forms of government and ministry that enhanced the spread of the gospel."⁵³ Based on this, he determined that the true church was a missionary church and that the form of church government and practice were purely functional issues.

⁵²Asbury, *Journal*, 1:538 and 3:50-51.

Summary of Missional Implications

As a Wesleyan scholar and mission historian, Howard Snyder expands on the concept of “marks.” His work builds on the distinction between the church as an ancient institution to be preserved and as a faithful few with a mission to the world.⁵⁴ According to Snyder, classical theology errs in that it emphasizes one, holy, catholic, and apostolic as defining marks related to the church’s essence to the neglect of diverse, charismatic, local, and prophetic. The first set of marks reflects the church as institution. The second set reflects the church as organic body in mission.⁵⁵ The true church is both. Snyder’s ecclesiological insights are timely and very much in the spirit of a Wesleyan missional ecclesiology. Early Methodism manifested the second set of marks more than the first. At the Christmas Conference, Wesley attempted to merge the two sets together. However, American Methodism has failed to synthesize them effectively.

Since the Christmas Conference, Methodism has struggled between being a duly constituted church and a revival movement. In the process of becoming a church, Methodism became respectable, emphasized a professional clergy, compromised its evangelistic zeal, focused on congregations, and ceased to relate to the masses in a meaningful way. Wesley anticipated this outcome of “respectable” Methodism. To his credit, Asbury attempted to hold American Methodism to its original vision while making strategic changes in keeping with necessary contextualization. In the end, American Methodism followed the path of the other mainline denominations and ceased to be a revival force that resembles the movement from which it emerged. Ecclesial renewal must seek to rediscover the creative tension that was lost when Methodism moved from being a revival movement to being a respectable, visible church.

This article has outlined Wesley’s missional ecclesiology from the perspective of the Christmas Conference. It opines that Wesley’s actions related to the American mission demonstrate his missional ecclesiology

⁵³Keefer, “John Wesley,” 1984, 26. “The determinative question regarding ecclesiastical practices was the degree to which they contributed to or detracted from the missionary task of the church” (Ibid.).

⁵⁴Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, 1980, 137.

⁵⁵Howard Snyder with Daniel Runyon, *Decoding the Church: Mapping the DNA of Christ’s Body* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2002), 21-26.

better than attempts to synthesize one from his various writings over his entire career. Additionally, since American Methodism was born as a missionary church, a missional ethos remains in its ecclesial DNA. The revitalization of American Methodism will require the reclamation of its missional character. To do this, it must recapture the dynamic elements of Wesley's missional ecclesiology.

MISSION-SHAPED DISCIPLESHIP IN A VIRTUALWORLD

by

Philip Meadows

Jesus said, “My prayer is not that you would take them out of the world, but that you would protect them from the evil one. . . . As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself that they too may be truly sanctified” (Jn. 17:15-19). Mission is a discipleship issue. Jesus sets us apart from the world and the power of worldliness and then sends us into the world as a sanctifying presence. This essay explores what it means for Christians to be *in* but not *of* the “virtual world.” This is the realm of life on the internet in which we express our personalities, develop our relationships, and participate in community.

Culture theorists are divided in their interpretation of virtual life. Instrumentalists argue for technological neutrality and our freedom as “users” to take digital technology into our own hands and shape our own lives and lifestyles. Determinists argue that we are both users and “used” by our technologies as they embed us in social forces that dominate our lives in often hidden ways. Christian approaches to the internet and virtual life have mirrored this division. There are those who think we should embrace virtual life as something to be sanctified, using it for the purposes of discipleship and mission.¹ And there are those who think real Christians should sanctify the real world by resisting virtual life as something that inherently dissipates authentic spirituality.²

¹Cf. Philip R. Meadows, “The Gospel in Cyberspace: Reflections on Virtual Reality,” *Epworth Review* 2:2 (1995); “Wesleyan Theology in a Technological Culture,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (2006); “Church and Discipleship in a Digital Culture,” *Mission Studies*, 29 (2012). Also, John Jewell, *Wired for Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004); Douglas Estes, *SimChurch: Being the Church in the Virtual World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009); Elizabeth Drescher, *Tweet if You Love Jesus: Practicing Church in the Digital Reformation* (New York: Moorehouse Publishing, 2011).

²Cf. Douglas Groothuis, *The Soul in Cyberspace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997); Albert Borgmann, *Power Failure: Christianity in the Culture of*

This places us on the horns of a dilemma. We either side with the determinists and risk damning the world or we side with the instrumentalists and risk losing our souls. But I seek an alternative way forward that affirms the instrumental value of virtual life without resorting to the naivety of technological neutrality, and that acknowledges the deterministic tendency of virtuality without yielding to the inevitability of technological domination. I interpret the virtual world as a social arrangement within the fallen creation that is under the thrall of “principalities and powers.” As such, it is neither inherently good nor bad, but capable of being redeemed in and through the sanctified lives of mission-shaped disciples of Christ. I will conclude by drawing on the resources of Wesleyan theology and spirituality for outlining key practices that might help us live as a sanctified and redemptive presence in the virtual world.

The Virtual World

The New Testament concept of “world” (κόσμος, *cosmos*) has its roots in the idea of “building” and “construction,” but eventually came to mean the “order of things” in the largest possible sense.³ This is the way Paul uses the term when he speaks about “the God who made the world and everything in it” (Acts 17:24). It can also mean the sphere of human life in which kingdoms are built in all their splendor (Matt. 4:8). More specifically, it denotes the fallen condition of humanity at enmity with God and in rebellion to the lordship of Christ. In the gospel of John, we find Jesus warning his disciples to expect persecution because they “do not belong to the world” but are chosen “out of the world” to share in his witness against sin or “worldliness” (Jn. 15:18-25; cf. 1 Jn. 2:15).

1. The Way of the “World.” Oliver O’Donovan says that this fallen world is “not the real and good world that God has made . . . but a fantasy world of sinful imagination, a nothingness that will destroy us if we love it.”⁴ The “world” represents our human attempts to re-construct the cosmos according to our own sinful desires, driven by the temptation to live in a world of our own preference, a self-centered and idolatrous

Technology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003); Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, the Gospel, and Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

³Craig Gay, *The Way of the (Modern World): Or Why It’s Tempting to Live As If God Doesn’t Exist* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 5.

⁴Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Leicester, Apollos: 1994), 227.

reality which we love as an end in itself. Christ is the light of the world because he reveals what it means for human life to be rightly ordered by love of God and neighbor. Jesus associates salvation with life in the “kingdom,” which is creation brought under the reign of God. When Jesus says, “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn. 18:36), he means that it is not reflected in or accomplished through the evil imaginings of sinful humanity.

John Howard Yoder describes the “world” as any aspect of culture that is no longer conformed to the “creative intent” of God.⁵ So, we can speak about the “world” of politics or the “world” of economics which are creaturely realms that exist in a “blend of order and revolt.”⁶ We might say that the “virtual world” is a realm of human life that stands within the fallen creation. It is neither inherently good or bad, but simultaneously good and bad. In the imagination of fallen humanity, the virtual world may be constructed as an end in itself in order to satisfy our self-centered and idolatrous desires. If there is any possibility for goodness, however, it consists in a potential to fulfill the creaturely destiny of life under the reign of God.

2. The Virtual Cosmos. Sociologists argue that human beings are “world building” people who engage in the “social construction” of reality.⁷ It is the natural tendency for societies to create, over time, their own settled ways of thinking about and living in the world, as well as the capacity to envision how it might be bettered. Technological development is an expression of this impulse to master the world we are given and create the world that we want. The world-building process is deterministic insofar as we are born into a ready-made social world and become habituated to its ways through the largely “taken-for-granted” nature of everyday life. The capacity for world building may be thought of as instrumental, however, insofar as it can be brought under the agency of individuals and groups who construct their own lifestyles and take control of their own destinies in socially sanctioned or subversive ways.

⁵John Howard Yoder, “The Otherness of the Church” in Michael Cartwright (ed.), *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald press, 1998), 55.

⁶*Ibid.*, 56.

⁷Cf. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: Penguin, 1991); Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Our technologies do not merely construct worlds, they also divide and re-order them. The industrial technologies of modernity divided everyday life into the worlds of labor and leisure, work and home. The digital technologies of an emerging postmodern context, however, have divided everyday life into offline and online, embodied and disembodied, “real” and virtual. The virtual world is constructed as a space of freedom from the limitations of embodiment, as well as an opportunity to enhance and enrich our embodied lives. From an instrumental perspective, we make our own way in the world through the power to explore our identities, diversify our relationships, and broaden our communities beyond the limits of space and time. From a determinist perspective, the practices of virtual life are inevitably transforming us into “social cyborgs,” as embodied life becomes ever more disciplined by the ways of virtuality. Either way, the virtual world is reconfiguring the way we educate our children, collaborate in the workplace, spend our leisure time, do our shopping, pay our taxes, and engage in politics.

I am defining the virtual world as a disembodied realm of persons, relationships and communities that exists on the internet, and especially through the use of digital social media. In a material sense, the “internet” is merely a vast web of connections between digital devices. When speaking about the virtual world, however, there is a shift of emphasis from the physical networking of devices to the virtual networking of people who use them. The concept of “cyberspace” is used a metaphor for describing the experience of immersion and interactivity with others through our participation on the internet. At one level, we can be immersed in the virtual world as a “habitable space” in socially constructed environments like Second Life.⁸ In this computer-simulated realm, your “avatar” can earn a living, buy some land, build a house, go to church, even get married and settle down. The trend for online games is towards constructing multiplayered environments, whether mediated through computers or networkable gaming consoles.⁹ The popularity of social networking websites, however, has turned the internet into a more generalized habitable space in which one can “associate” with others and “gather” into virtual communities around a variety of shared interests or purposes.¹⁰

⁸Cf. Tim Guest, *Second Lives: A Journey Through Virtual Worlds* (London: Hutchinson, 2007).

⁹Cf. Edward Castronova, *Exodus to the Virtual World* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

¹⁰Cf. Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

In another sense, we are immersed in the virtual world as a “convergent realm” that overlaps and transforms our experience of embodied reality through the ever-greater diffusion of social media with everyday life.¹¹ This convergence is maximized through the use of mobile technology, from smart phones to GPS-enabled devices which keep us seamlessly connected to the internet through cellular networks and wireless hotspots. We are interfaced to a virtual world of relationships and services through a range of devices that we wear about our person, hold in our hands, and carry in our bags: mobile phones, net books, palm tops, digital pads, and smart clothes. This trend can be seen in the transformation of “personal media” devices, such as mobile phones, toward greater integration with social media applications like Facebook and other “Web 3.0” technologies. But what are the values and virtues that keep us connected to the virtual world as habitable space of an convergent realm? And what kind of questions are being raised by those at the interface?¹² Much of what follows comes from my own personal observations, but also incorporate the critical reflections of technologists and cultural exegetes from a “secular” perspective.

3. The Values of Virtuality. First, the virtual world offers unfettered expressivity. The experience of freedom from the body makes it possible to construct virtual identities or “avatars” of our own choosing. Social networking enables us to do this by sharing a steady stream of photos, videos, blog posts, tweets and other status updates. Through this kind of “life-logging” we imaginatively communicate who we are, or would like to be, by managing the perceptions that others have of us. Unconfined by the realities of physical embodiment, our avatars are not bound to mirror the givenness of our age, sex, interests or employment. Although such freedom can be celebrated as an extension of the normal process of identity formation, there are also concerns about the inadequacy of “constructed” identities. There is a significant difference between representations and real persons, between sharing messages and mutual intimacy,

¹¹Cf. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

¹²Cf. Davey Winder, *Being Virtual: Who You Really Are Online* (Chichester: Wiley, 2008); Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget* (London: Penguin, 2011); Andrew Keen, *Digital Vertigo* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2012).

between virtual transparency and fully human authenticity. The soulful intimacy of face-to-face relationships exceeds anything offered by remote sharing. The bodily intimacy that expresses tangible care simply cannot be reproduced by virtual means. In general, it still matters to us that virtual appearances should be truthful re-presentations of embodied selves; and there is no substitute for being accepted as we are, in body and soul.

Second, the virtual world offers limitless connectivity. There is no doubt that digital media are enabling us to be more connected to others. Indeed, immersion in digital culture is the experience of being pervasively connected to everyone, everywhere and always. The dangers of disembodiment are mitigated somewhat by the benefits of “telepresence,” or the digitally-mediated sense of being somewhere else, or being with someone else, despite being separated by space and time. And the advantages of this “always on” environment range from overcoming the feeling of absence to the profound experience of sharing life with others across national boundaries and time zones. This may be contrasted, however, with an ambivalence about being “tethered” to the internet. There are those who long to be alone but suffer from “disconnection anxiety”; and there are those who crave undivided attention in a culture of streaming texts, tweets, and status updates. There is a difference between multiple connections and meaningful relations, between easy contacts and costly friendships. Comforting words and empathetic gestures cannot always substitute for practical actions and fully human embrace. In short, more connected does not necessarily mean better connected.

Third, the virtual world offers boundless community. The exponential growth of online social networks is what happens when millions of tethered selves seek to express their inherent human desire for friendship, and the impulse to co-create our own social worlds with other like-minded people. Many virtual communities are formed around shared interests that converge on the issues of embodied life. They offer everything from crisis support to knowledge sharing, and spiritual pursuits to social activism. Social networking sites such as Facebook have become massively popular by creating digital spaces in which virtual communities can form spontaneously. Nevertheless, there is a difference between collaborative networks and virtuous communities. Online groups can be just as exclusive and vicious as any other, and arrangements of mutual self-interest are not known for cultivating relationships of costly and unconditional friendship. Amidst the seemingly endless possibilities of social networking, it would seem that there is no substitute for the engagement and neighborliness of physically present, embodied, and face-to-face community.

In her research with digital natives, Sherry Turkle notices deep longings for values and practices that lie beyond their immediate experience. For her, technological development constantly forces us to consider “whether it serves our human purposes”; and, in doing so, we have to determine what those purposes are.¹³ “When we are at our best, thinking about technology brings us back to questions about what really matters.”¹⁴ In the end, Turkle asks all the right questions, but has no answers. Although she says the “Luddite impulse” is not an option, her concluding advice is tinged with nostalgia: to unplug, slow down, be still, practice solitude, be more deliberate, and have more critically reflective conversation.

Social analyses of the virtual world typically leave us in a state of ambivalence. They can examine the division and convergence of embodied and disembodied realms in everyday life and account for the experience of those who live at the interface between them. What they cannot do is settle the argument between utopian and dystopian visions of virtual life, or settle any kind of direction for how our virtual world building should proceed. They can observe that embodiment seems to matter, but they cannot say why it should. They can describe how disembodiment can become an addiction, but they cannot say why it should be a problem. And if the determinists are right, then our emerging digital natives will gradually become naturalized citizens of a world that they no longer have the conscious resources to critique. Our present instrumentalities will determine their “taken-for-granted” ways of life. The virtual world will go uncontested in its power to divide and re-order daily life in its own image, for better or for worse.

4. Creaturely Witness. Brent Waters argues that late moderns and post-moderns share a fear of finitude, especially when seen in the inherent limits of being embodied creatures. He claims the finitude of embodiment is “encountered as an adversary that can only be overcome, or at least kept at bay, by either mastering or transcending it.”¹⁵ In this respect, “technology becomes an instrument for recreating or uncreating created order, and a striking symbol of rebellion against the creator.”¹⁶ He concludes that “humans are in need of being saved from the tyranny of

¹³Ibid., 285.

¹⁴Ibid., 294-95.

¹⁵Brent Waters, *From Human to Posthuman: Christian Theology in a Post-modern World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 118.

¹⁶Ibid., 120.

attempting to construct a destiny that can only be properly received as a gift, a good and eternal gift.”¹⁷ We see all this in the aspirations and ambiguities of virtual life.

Drawing on the evangelical ethics of O’Donovan, Waters argues that theological reflection on technological culture must proceed Christologically. “Jesus Christ reveals the origin, temporal unfolding and the destiny of the world as God’s creation.”¹⁸ In his life and death, Jesus shows that the world is neither to be dominated or escaped, but reconciled to God. Through the resurrection, God has vindicated the finite and embodied order of creation; and the exaltation of the risen Jesus represents the final destiny of humanity in a new creation of loving communion with God. The incarnation also reveals that God is working providentially to direct all of creation to its destiny and that human beings, in the divine image, have been “chosen by God to be the agents that align creation to its created order.”¹⁹ It is only through the presence and power of the Spirit, however, that we can repent of our desire to dominate the world and live as God’s agents of transformation.

Waters does not propose any constructive approaches to redeeming technological culture (or indicate whether that is even possible), although he does conclude by recommending Albert Borgmann’s focal practices as a means of resistance. In the end, therefore, he resorts to a form of nostalgia, no less than the sociologists. Tempted by such tactics, Graham Ward has cautioned against using “tradition as the basis for some Luddite critique,” as a theological failure “to read what is going on here in terms of God’s grace.” He warns theologians against being “victims of that melancholic pathology–nostalgia.”²⁰

Nevertheless, Waters provides a useful theological framework for thinking about Christian discipleship in a virtual world. Beginning with the incarnation should not drive us to deny the value of virtual life, but it should inspire us to overcome the virtual world’s denial of embodiment and the purposes of God for creation. On the one hand, we can adopt a limited instrumental approach to our technologies as we have the opportunity to develop and order them towards God and for the good of cre-

¹⁷Ibid., 105.

¹⁸Ibid., 95.

¹⁹Ibid., 117–8.

²⁰Graham Ward, “Between Virtue and Virtuality,” *Theology Today*, 59 (2002), 56.

ation. On the other hand, although technology also has a determinative influence over human life, it can never be totalizing because God's redemptive work in the world constantly invites our participation.

Returning to the work of John Yoder can help to shape these insights into a more missional approach. For Yoder, the world is not merely without direction. It is insufficiently self-conscious to explain its own nature and problems. It is the responsibility of God's people to embody a life of holy difference in order to help the world truly understand itself in the light of the gospel.²¹ From this perspective, the world cannot know what it means to be "virtual" apart from that which is not virtual; and it cannot know whether being virtual is either good or bad apart from being confronted by a way of life that does not take virtuality as its destiny. The providence of God and the true destiny of creation must be made visible in a people whose lives are being conformed to Christ, through the power of the Spirit, in the midst of the virtual world.

Yoder argues that the church is gathered to be "a new social wholeness" that "gives meaning to history," and to be a kingdom-shaped community from which our "missionary instrumentalities are derived."²² In short, authentic Christian communities will form disciples who live as uncompromising witnesses to the gospel wherever they are dispersed in the world. He posits four *notae missionis* (marks of mission) for communities of mission-shaped disciples: holy living as "moral non-conformity" in the world; disciplined fellowship that binds us to this responsibility; uncompromising witness in the face of opposition; and taking up our cross by surrendering to the providence of God in the here and now of daily life.²³

In summary, the foundational issue to be addressed is the need to be formed as disciples who accept the limits of creatureliness and are capable of putting to death the disorderly desires of virtual worldliness. We can affirm our engagement with virtual life insofar as it can be made instrumental to the way of holiness. The determinative power of virtuality cannot be overcome by withdrawal from virtual life because the virtual world is practically inescapable. Moreover, a lack of intentional engagement with the virtual world makes us easy prey to its ways and represents a fail-

²¹Yoder, "The Otherness of the Church" in Cartwright, *Royal Priesthood*, 57.

²²Yoder, "The People of God in the World" in Cartwright, *Royal Priesthood*, 74.

²³*Ibid.*, 81-87.

ure to participate in God's purposes of redemption over all creation. Rather, it is through the practice of disciplined fellowship that we keep ourselves accountable to the spirit of holy non-conformity and our readiness to count the cost of uncompromising witness.

The Power of Virtuality

In Scripture, the concept of the "world" is also connected to the spiritual reality of "principalities and powers." So, John refers to Satan as "the prince of this world" (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and that "the whole world is under the control of the evil one" (1 Jn. 15:19). Paul repeats this view when he says that sinful humanity has "followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air" whose "spirit" is at work in them (Eph. 2:2). The powers are not presented as having raw control over the world, but as operating through human allegiance to sin; seducing, deceiving and captivating them in patterns of complicity.²⁴ The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus joined to be a power encounter which accomplishes the liberation of humanity from captivity to the guilt and power of sin (Rom. 6:11-12; 7:9). The writer to the Hebrews argues that, through the incarnation, Jesus subjected himself to the power of sin and death in order to break its tyranny through his own death and resurrection (Heb. 2:14-15). Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, however, humanity has also tasted "the powers of the coming age" (6:5), and can live in freedom from the power of sin.

This section explores how a theology of the principalities and powers can provide a link between sociological analyses of the virtual world and the challenge of virtual life for authentic mission-shaped discipleship.

1. Worldly Powers. William Stringfellow was among the first to articulate a relationship between the biblical concept of principalities and powers and human social systems.²⁵ Wherever human beings make social arrangements, they are influenced and inhabited by the powers of sin and death. This includes "all institutions, all ideologies, all images, all movements, all causes, all corporations, all bureaucracies, all traditions, all methods and routines, all conglomerates, all races, all nations, all idols."²⁶ These powers are not inherently evil, but were created in Christ with the

²⁴David Wells, *God the Evangelist* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 77.

²⁵Some key biblical texts include: Colossians 1:16-20; 2:15; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26; 2 Corinthians 4:4.

²⁶William Stringfellow, *An Ethics for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land*, 3rd ed. (Waco, TX: Word, 1979), 78.

vocation of forming and sustaining social life in the world under the rule of God. After the fall, however, they are in a state of confusion and disorderliness: they have abandoned their true vocation, and declared autonomy from God.²⁷ The original design for humankind to exercise dominion over the powers has been reversed, as the powers dominate human life with their own rule of sin and death.²⁸ They are not benign, but aggressive, maintaining this control through the power of deception. Human beings are blinded to the true nature of their own operations, and hold us captive to false promises of self-centered empowerment.²⁹

Jacques Ellul, a contemporary and close friend of William Stringfellow, described late modern technological culture as being enthralled by the power of "technique." This power is manifest in a commitment to technical efficiency that holds out the promise of adapting life to the ends of our own choosing, with ever greater prediction and control. Indeed, he argues that technique functions as an "autonomous power"³⁰ by promising us freedom while enslaving and adapting us to its own technological imperatives. By inadvertently sacralizing this power, we have created for ourselves an artificial world in which valued ways of life are being dismantled, adapted, and assimilated to the demands of a "technical civilization."³¹ It is not difficult to see how the power of technique has culminated in our construction of the virtual world.

For Ellul, the world of technique and the kingdom of God are opposing realms of life that do not coincide; we live in the world by necessity, and we live in the kingdom by choice. The Christian life is cast in dialectical and agonistic terms, as a struggle to live under the rule of God in a world that enthralls us with its propaganda of technological mastery. Those who are set free in Christ, however, are called to embody "the presence of the kingdom" in order to critique and combat the powers of darkness through the guidance and power of the Spirit.³² For a person to be in the world, but not of the world, "means that his thought, his life,

²⁷Ibid., 80-82.

²⁸Ibid., 84.

²⁹Cf. William Stringfellow, "Strategems of Demonic Powers" and "Traits of the Principalities" in Bill Kellermann (ed.), *Keeper of the Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

³⁰Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (Random House, 1964), 134.

³¹Ibid., 78f, 128f.

³²Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom* (New York: Seabury Press, 1967).

and his heart are not controlled by the world, and do not depend upon the world, for they belong to another Master.”³³ Fellowship with Jesus means discovering that we are “not confronted by the material forces of the world but by its spiritual reality” as a power of worldly conformity. This fellowship assures us that we can fight against these spiritual realities in order to “break the fatality” that hangs over us.

The pattern of this warfare is three-fold.³⁴ First, it requires a realistic assessment of the social conditions under which we live, and discernment of the powers that shape them. Second, we are required to embody God’s will in the midst of daily life. Third, the resulting incarnational presence entails a state of continual watchfulness to limit the influence of the powers and to preserve the order of the kingdom in our lives. It is a call to discipleship that embodies an alternative way of life “in which everything, to the smallest detail, is questioned from the perspective of God’s glory.”³⁵ This everyday witness cannot be prescribed in the form of ethical systems—projects or programs—without resorting to the kind of moral and missional “technics” that ultimately quench the Spirit and play into the hands of the enemy.³⁶ Indeed, conforming to this technical mindset has been a massive failure in the modern church, resulting in practical atheism, anemic discipleship, and missionary impotence.

In order to engage this life and death struggle with the powers, the church must become a community of disciples who are full of spiritual vitality and set free to subvert the technological domination of everyday life as it unfolds around them. “Believers, then, are those who have the wisdom and strength to rob material realities of their seductive power, to unmask them for what they are,” and “to put them in the service of God.”³⁷ For Ellul and Stringfellow, however, engaging the powers is mostly confined to the non-conformist and subversive activity of the church. Although the Spirit of Christ is present in the midst of the history, to empower the life of faithful discipleship, the dialectic between kingdom and world seems to leave little room for affirming the providence and goodness of God in fallen creation as such.

³³Ibid., 7.

³⁴Ibid., 35f.

³⁵Ibid., 148.

³⁶Ibid., 118-122.

³⁷Jacques Ellul, *The Subversion of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 190.

John Yoder was deeply influenced by Ellul, but provides a more rounded approach to the connection between powers, church, and world. Although he still understands the nature of the powers from a dialectical perspective, he insists that they do not hold unlimited sway over the world, since they “cannot fully escape the providential sovereignty of God, who is still able to use them for good.”³⁸ Our salvation, as human beings in the present age, cannot come by ignoring, setting aside, or destroying the powers, but by unmasking their operation and thus breaking their sovereignty. Yoder says, “God is working in the world and it is the task of the church to know how he is working.”³⁹ The redemptive reality of divine providence can only be distinguished from the disordered reality of fallen power by a community of persons who are seeking to live in the kingdom. From this starting point, the church can contribute to “the creation of structures more worthy of human society”⁴⁰ through a combination of “revolutionary subordination” and “creative transformation.”⁴¹ The goal of mission is not that the powers will be Christianized or destroyed, but rather “tamed.”⁴²

Walter Wink goes further still by claiming that the powers are not only to be resisted, or even re-ordered, but actually redeemed. He argues that this fact of redemption is not merely an eschatological hope but a present reality because what “fell in time can be redeemed in time.”⁴³ For Wink, “the good news is that God not only liberates us from the Powers, but liberates the Powers from their destructive behaviour as well.”⁴⁴ The church has the spiritual task of “recalling the Powers to their created purposes in the world.”⁴⁵ It is our responsibility to help the powers become good, so that they might do good in the “humanizing purposes of God.”

Since Wink reduces the reality of the powers to the “inner spirituality” of social systems, however, his language of spiritual warfare is little

³⁸John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd Edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 142.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 155.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 154.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 185.

⁴²Yoder, *He Came Preaching Peace* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985), 114. Cited in Marva Dawn, *Powers, Weakness and the Tabernacling of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 28.

⁴³Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be* (London: Doubleday, 1998), 31-32.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 27-29.

more than a theological gloss on a basically social-psychological struggle to liberate humanity from the oppressive power of worldly institutions.⁴⁶ Yoder would argue that such a reduction, which places responsibility for redeeming the powers in human ingenuity, is doomed to failure because we are faced with an “split in the cosmos” that only the mission of God can heal.⁴⁷ In what follows, I will attempt to unmask the power of virtuality as it exerts itself through a split in the cosmos between virtual life and the creative intent of God and then show what it might mean for mission-shaped disciples to live as participants in God’s mission of redemption.

2. The Power of Virtuality. I tentatively suggest that the power of virtuality has two significant traits: (1) as it operates through the process of simulation; and (2) as it forms us in the habits of hyperreality. Jean Baudrillard claimed that we now live in a “desert of the real,” a world in which film, television, and computer images seem more “real” to us than the prosaic experience of everyday life. The virtual world is not just a representation of the real world, but has become a starting point from which we now understand and inhabit all of reality. This is what Baudrillard means by the “precession” of simulacra. The constant consumption of our simulations has now come to shape what we take to be the real thing, including the transformation of our personalities, relationships, and communities. And this plunges us into a state of “hyperreality” which is an inability to distinguish between the givenness of our embodied lives and the ways we have constructed them for ourselves.⁴⁸ Baudrillard’s theory helps us outline a process of simulation which I will interpret as a power and correlate with the effects of digital technology on daily life.

The first stage of simulation is that we make a faithful image or copy of something real which, according to the “sacramental order,” we value precisely because it reflects the real thing. In this way, digital technology provides a means for extending our everyday lives in the virtual world. So, for example, we build a profile, add friends, and join groups on Facebook in order to represent ourselves and interact with others online. At

⁴⁶Cf. Dawn, *Powers*, 15-19.

⁴⁷Wink, *The Powers That Be*, 161.

⁴⁸What follows is an elaboration of what Jean Baudrillard describes as “successive phases of the image” in *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 6-7. Cf. Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality* (Vintage, 1995); Albert Borgmann, *Holding On to Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

this stage, we appreciate the benefits that the virtual world affords to set us free from the limits of space and time imposed by the flesh. Theologically speaking, the power of virtuality appears in its most instrumental form and is capable of redemption.

In the second stage of simulation, the image “denatures” or distorts the original, not necessarily in its imperfection, but because its features exceed those of the real thing. So, we may discover all the constructive possibilities that digital technology opens up for virtual life. Our avatars can seem more expressive than our embodied personalities, and our online relationships can seem so much more flexible and convenient than the demands of embodied engagement. Not only that, but we can be connected instantly and globally through social networks and online gatherings with those we know in the flesh, as well as those we have never met face-to-face. We experiment with our profiles and status updates on Facebook to present just the kind of self-image and lifestyle we want, and in order to manipulate the impression others have of us. But we also may discover that our simulations belong to the “order of maleficence” insofar as they reveal the possibilities for both good and evil. There is a “dark side” of the virtual world in which the evils of the human imagination converge across embodied and virtual life, from ruthless pornographers to cyber-sex offenders, online predators to cyber-bullies, and identity thieves to cyber-terrorists. For Christians, the virtual world can become a realm of freedom from God in which we become easy prey to our sinful nature.

In the third stage of simulation, the image becomes something quite different from the real thing, but since it still “pretends” to be a copy, it actually conceals the fact that the original is lost. So, our newly constructed and much improved avatars, contacts, and networks all pretend to represent our embodied lives, but actually begin to take on a virtual life of their own. In this “order of sorcery,” we begin to sense the value of virtual life as an end in itself. The virtual world becomes its own self-contained realm of meaning. Almost inadvertently, the world of Facebook becomes our preferred place to be and to interact with others in ways that make everyday life pale in comparison. As the split in the cosmos is completed, our lives become increasingly disembodied, disconnected from the order of creation, and dis-ordered around our own self-centered desires.

Finally, we enter the stage of pure simulation, in which our images no longer even pretend to be real, because they have actually become real

things. The distinction between reality and simulation, givenness and artifact, has completely dissolved and our experience of the world has become “hyperreal.” So, digital technology effectively creates a desire for virtual life as “better than real” or even most real. The world of our own imagining and construction is so much more exciting, more beautiful, more inspiring, and generally more interesting than anything we might find in the givenness of daily life. Facebook is not merely about logging our embodied lives online, but turning our embodied lives into resources for constructing a world of our own. And, as we give precedence to our virtual lives, the virtual world redefines what we mean by authenticity, friendship and community. Furthermore, our embodied lives become reshaped in ever more virtual terms so that we prefer to adopt digitally-mediated relationships with people we know in the flesh. The power of virtuality is sacralized and extends its rule over embodied life as we give ourselves up to the ways of the virtual world.

This process is revealed in Sherry Turkle’s research on accounts of technology use. She observes a narrative “arc” that goes “from seeing simulation as better than nothing to simply better.” One interviewee claimed that Second Life was his “preferred way of being with people.”⁴⁹ Turkle concludes that “simulation not only demands immersion but creates the self that prefers simulation.”⁵⁰

While Turkle laments this trend, there are others who self-consciously acknowledge and celebrate this process of simulation. The immense popularity of immersive online games has become the object of serious academic study, and a new science is emerging to explain how the virtual world can be used intentionally to transform everyday life for the better. Jane McGonigal observed that “the real world just doesn’t offer up as easily the carefully designed pleasures, the thrilling challenges, and the powerful social bonding afforded by virtual environments.” She claims that “in today’s society, computer and video games are fulfilling *genuine human needs* that the real world is currently unable to satisfy.”⁵¹ There is an emerging hunger “for more and better engagement from the world around us . . . for more satisfying work, for a stronger sense of community, and for more engaging and meaningful life.” She concludes that

⁴⁹Ibid., 161.

⁵⁰Ibid., 285.

⁵¹Jane McGonigal, *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World* (London: Vintage, 2012), 3.

“reality is broken” in a way that can only be fixed by embodying the values and practices of the virtual world in everyday life, and especially through the “power of games.”⁵² What she does not consider, of course, is that the power of virtuality may actually be responsible for breaking the real world, and creating the kind of hunger that it alone can fix.

From an instrumentalist perspective, virtual life is experienced simply as supplementing, enhancing, or augmenting our embodied lives and creaturely values. From a determinist perspective, however, the split in the cosmos is not reconciled but reversed, as embodied life has become instrumental to virtuality. The process of simulation does not lead to the abandonment of embodied life, but reshapes it in the image of the virtual; and there is a fear that real losses will be concealed behind convincing simulations.⁵³

First, the danger is not that we might become less personal, but that we become hyperpersonal. It is that we might be tethered to the internet in a kind of perpetual “out of body experience” in the midst of everyday life. This is manifest when the value of unfettered expressivity gets embodied in the flesh; and embodied life becomes just one more medium to present the “real self” that we have become used to online. Some have lamented a loss of true intimacy, while others are concerned about the constant (and often reckless) oversharing of personal messages for popular consumption.

Second, the danger is not that we might become withdrawn, but that we become hyper-relational. It is that we might be tethered to the internet in a state of “continuous partial attention” towards others, even our closest family and friends. This is manifest when the value of unlimited connectivity gets embodied in the flesh, and embodied life becomes a means for our hyper-personal selves to surf on the shallows of superficial relationships, never fully open or attentive to anyone. Some have lamented the loss of true relationality, while others are concerned about becoming

⁵²McGonigal is committed to the design of “alternate reality games” which enhance our engagement with the “real world” in terms of personal and social transformation, from curing cancer to stopping climate change, spreading peace, and ending poverty (Ibid., 6-15).

⁵³For some explorations of this challenge, cf. Peggy Kendall, *Rewired: Youth Ministry in an Age of IM and MySpace* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007); Jesse Rice, *The Church of Facebook: How the Hyperconnected are Redefining Community* (Colorado Springs, CO: David Cook, 2009); Adam Thomas, *Digital Discipline: Real Christianity in a Virtual World* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2011).

overwhelmed by token friendships, “always on” but lacking the depth and demands that make them worth having.

Third, the danger is not that we might become hopelessly individualistic, but that we become hyper-social. It is that we might be tethered to the internet, being “alone together.” This is manifest when the value of unbounded community gets embodied in the flesh; and embodied life becomes a means for our hyperrelational selves to form groups of mutual self-interest but low expectation. Some have lamented the loss of true fellowship, while others are concerned about seeking community without cost, continually in touch but never available in the flesh, boundless in scope but without the bonds of responsibility.

3. Power Encounter. Stringfellow, Ellul, Yoder, and Wink all drew from the seminal work of Hendrick Berkhof on the powers, but Berkhof himself gives the clearest view of Christian discipleship and mission as a power encounter. Although we are inescapably immersed in a world ruled by the powers, the redemption of their instrumentality is also “inescapable since the victory of Christ.”⁵⁴ The church is a community of disciples in whom “another Power is working more powerful than those which rule other men.” Through the might of the indwelling Spirit “the strength of the Powers is limited in the life of the individual believer.”⁵⁵ “Power strives against Power.”⁵⁶

At the most basic level, this limiting of the powers puts us in a defensive posture, sometimes through withdrawal, but always by withstanding their influence and standing our ground. Berkhof claims, however, that the very presence of the church in a world ruled by the powers is “a superlatively positive and aggressive fact.” Beyond the “borders” of the church, we are called to participate in Christ’s work of redeeming the powers as a missionary act by “dethroning” them, and “descralising” their effects on everyday life. The effect of this missionary engagement is to “neutralise” the powers, so that they can be made instrumental to the kingdom by subjecting “their resources to serve man as defined by the divine intention.”⁵⁷ Unless the church is set free in Christ, and full of spiritual vitality, any attempt to engage the powers will take us no further

⁵⁴Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977), 45.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 48.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 44.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 59.

than a certain degree of “humanisation.”⁵⁸ For Berkhof, it is not our task to “redeem” the powers as such; but to live under the lordship of Christ as those through whom the redemptive power of the Spirit is extended into the world.⁵⁹

When engaging the power of virtuality it is crucial to remember that the victory of Christ over the powers began with the incarnation and was also revealed through his embodied life and ministry. The same Spirit that empowered his own ministry is now at work in our bodies, so we can participate in his continuing mission.

First, the incarnation vindicates embodiment within the created order, as the medium through which God has chosen to work out his plan of redemption. Second, it was the mission of Jesus to heal the divisions of the world by announcing and embodying peace in his life and ministry. All the splits and oppositions in the cosmos are finally healed through the death and resurrection of his own body (Eph. 2:14-17). Christian mission will entail healing the division between embodied and virtual life by dying to the power of virtuality and living as new creatures in Christ. The power of virtuality is only redeemed through an embodied life that enfolds the virtual, rather than a virtual life that enfolds the body. Third, the incarnation also reveals that embodied life is not an end in itself, but instrumental to our life with God. Our mission will not idolize the flesh or our gadgets, but recognize that the ultimate end of any convergence between them is a deeper life with God, expressing itself as holy love of neighbor. In short, the power of virtuality is only redeemed through the embodied lives of mission-shaped disciples in whom the virtual world is made instrumental to the kingdom of God.

Real Christianity

John Wesley was a pietist for whom “real Christianity” is marked by the life of God in the soul, making us holy from the inside out. This pietist principle has much promise and potential for understanding discipleship in the virtual world. First, it makes outward embodiment subordinate, though inseparably connected to an inward relationship with God. For Wesley, real Christianity is not settled by the “form of religion” but having the “power of godliness” at work in soul. In other words, “real life” flows from the real presence and sanctifying power of the Spirit in the heart,

⁵⁸Ibid., 61. Arguably, the mistake was made by Walter Wink.

⁵⁹Ibid., 63.

expressing itself in the holy love of God and neighbor. The forms of life we adopt, however, are also sanctified insofar as they become means of grace through which the life of God in the soul is cultivated. Similarly, the church is made real as real Christians gather in the real presence of God to help one another live as a holy presence in the world. Anything less than this is just a “dead sect.”⁶⁰

From this perspective, I suggest that the power of godliness is capable of being expressed through both embodied and virtual forms of life, or more accurately through the convergence that exists between them. Moreover, it is through the sanctification of this convergence that the power of virtuality can be dethroned and redeemed. The virtual world need not be opposed to the “real world” since it can be made “real” through the sanctifying presence of real Christians, among whom virtual life becomes a means of grace. If we can speak about the authenticity of “virtual church” at all, then it must be on these terms. From a Wesleyan perspective, however, we are better off setting aside ecclesiological wrangling about what constitutes “real church” by focusing on communities of real Christian discipleship.

The strength of the pietist principle, however, is also its greatest weakness. Founding real Christianity on the inward experience of God’s presence has also led to problems of private spirituality and solitary religion. The subordination of embodiment can turn into a sundering of inward and outward, leading to a spirituality that gets disembodied from the disciplines of personal discipleship and the corporate life of the church. The history of modern Christianity has been plagued with this tendency towards disembodiment: evangelism is reduced to making converts; conversion is reduced to inner spiritual experience; and the management of inner experience has become the purpose of the church.

It is not difficult to see how privatized spirituality can fall easy prey to the power of virtuality. In a culture where people are migrating from embodied life into the virtual world, the obvious solution is to do internet evangelism, make virtual converts, and incorporate them into virtual churches. By making this move, however, the power of virtuality over the church is made complete. If we turn to Wesley for an affirmation of virtual life, therefore, it is crucial that the pietist principle be set alongside

⁶⁰John Wesley, “Thoughts Upon Methodism,” in Thomas Jackson (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, 1872 ed., AGES digital CD-ROM, Vol.13 (Rio, WI: 2002), 320. Hereafter, *Works*.

his understanding of real Christian discipleship as spiritual combat against the disembodied powers of worldliness.

1. The Mystery of Godliness. Wesley defines “world” not as the “outward frame of things” but the “inhabitants of the earth” who are not “alive to God” but who live without the fear of God, embracing evil and walking in their own ways. In the early Methodist movement, he observed that the life of God in the soul rises and falls in inverse proportion to their degree of “friendship with the world,” and urged them to avoid unnecessary attachment to non-Christians.⁶¹ This is because he has a very high view of “friendship” as the intimate fellowship that exists between those who share the same way of life and help one another pursue it vigorously. Those who are seeking holiness are set apart from those ensnared in worldliness as people belonging to opposing kingdoms: walking different paths, to different ends, with different principles, and under the rule of different masters.⁶² The kind of intimacy required of true friendship should be reserved for those who help us “on our way to heaven.”⁶³

Wesley’s caution does not turn on the good or evil intentions of worldly people as such, for our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual power of worldliness that works through them. Like a contagious disease, this power creeps up on us by stealth, dampening our zeal for God and increasing our desire for the things of this world by “insensible degrees.”⁶⁴ It works in a “secret and unobserved manner” by dulling our spiritual senses, creating an indifference towards godliness, and finally captivating us to worldly pursuits even “before we are sensible of attack” or “conscious of our loss.”

This prohibition against friendship with the world does not entail withdrawing from the world, or being indifferent towards people of the world. The providence of God has placed us in the world with a myriad of personal relationships for the purpose of loving our neighbor: bearing them goodwill, desiring their happiness, encouraging “all the good that is in them,” and honoring them as creatures made capable of fellowship with God.⁶⁵ For Wesley, then, our posture towards the world is not one of

⁶¹Wesley, Sermon 80, “On Friendship with the World,” *Works* 6:¶1-7.

⁶²Wesley, Sermon 81, “In What Sense We are to Leave the World,” *Works* 6:¶7-8.

⁶³*Ibid.*, ¶23-24.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, ¶9f; cf. Friendship with the World, ¶13f.

⁶⁵Wesley, Friendship with the World, ¶8-9.

friendship as such, but of mission. Ultimately, Wesley is warning us against friendship with the principalities and powers, not against loving relationships. It is salutary to remember that even relational evangelism is a power encounter that comes with a health warning: "If you do not raise their hearts to heaven, they will draw yours down to earth."⁶⁶

Having established the missional posture of discipleship, Wesley also makes it clear that the fallen world is not a God-forsaken place, nor is humanity bereft of goodness. Christ is the Lamb that was "slain from the beginning of the world," and his "sanctifying Spirit began to renew the souls of men." There is a "mystery of godliness" at work in the universal movement of prevenient grace. Alongside this, however, there is a "mystery of iniquity" that undermines the sanctifying mission of God by infusing love of the world.⁶⁷ This "energy of Satan" disorders people's hearts and captivates their lives to habits of sinfulness. It has always been the vocation of God's people to reveal the mystery of godliness in the world through a life that overcomes the power of sin. The mystery of iniquity, however, works subversively in the church to dissipate our spiritual lives and dupe us into exchanging our missional posture for friendship with the world.

For Wesley, the grand stumbling block to the spread of the gospel is the lives of Christians.⁶⁸ How great, therefore, is the "watchfulness they need who desire to be real Christians, considering what a state the world is in!"⁶⁹ Real Christianity is situated in an agonistic struggle between the sanctifying power of the Spirit and the worldly power of Satan, between the mystery of godliness and the mystery of iniquity at work in the world.

2. Prevenient Virtuality. The influence of the powers has been limited by the preventing or prevenient grace of God as a universal benefit of the atonement towards fallen humanity. This grace is "preventing" insofar as it restrains the powers and prevents us from collapsing hopelessly into the ways of sin and death. It also accounts for the emerging sense of ambivalence and discontent towards virtuality that is manifest in a hunger for authentic personhood, intimate relationships of unconditional love, and communities of mutual service.⁷⁰ And this grace is "prevenient"

⁶⁶Wesley, *Leave the World*, ¶19.

⁶⁷Wesley, Sermon 61, "The Mystery of Iniquity," *Works* 6:¶2-4.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, ¶32.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, ¶35.

⁷⁰Wesley, Sermon 72, "On Evil Angels," *Works* 6:¶II.9.

insofar as it invites and inspires human co-operation, to participate in the victory of Christ over the powers, and become co-workers with the Spirit in the way of salvation and holiness.

On the one hand, the “mystery of godliness” is at work in the fallen world. This gives us a basis for affirming technological developments that contribute to the pattern of human flourishing revealed by the incarnation. It also opens up the possibility that virtual life can be made instrumental to the way of salvation and holiness through the redemptive agency of real Christians. Wesley would caution us, however, not to befriend virtual life uncritically because the power of virtuality works by stealth to ensnare us in the ways of simulation and hyperreality.

On the other hand, the “mystery of iniquity” is at work among the people of God. We are reminded that it does not take the powers of virtuality to disembody the church or dissipate its witness in the world. Being gathered in the flesh does not guarantee that people are really present to each other; being geographically local does not mean people will love one another; being face-to-face does not mean people will share lives together; and being in a neighborhood does not mean people will love their neighbors. The power of worldliness is at work in both the embodied and virtual realms of life to undermine the church’s participation in the mission of God.

Indeed, we are duly chastened by seekers and believers alike who have found greater authenticity in the spiritual life of virtual communities than locally embodied congregations.⁷¹ This preference for virtual life should be taken as the symptom of an underlying spiritual disease, and an opportunity for self-examination. From this perspective, the future of mission will not depend on planting virtual churches, or making embodied churches more technologically relevant. Unless we are seeking real Christian discipleship, we will have no real witness in the virtual world and no basis for discerning its benefits or withstanding its dangers.

3. Mission Spirituality. I conclude by outlining four core values for Wesleyan spirituality which could function as a “rule of life” for mission-shaped discipleship as a power encounter in the virtual world.

a. Seeking Holiness. First, being a sanctifying presence means seeking holiness as whole-life discipleship in which our embodied and virtual lives are reconciled by the reality of holy love. The question concern-

⁷¹Cf. Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 161f.

ing virtual life is not ultimately settled by the things we do, but by the kind of people we are and a witness that flows from the inside out. The life of God in the soul puts forth branches in both the embodied and virtual realms of everyday life; and holiness means reconciling these through lives of spiritual integrity and authenticity. This lived communion with God is both the origin and the end of mission-shaped discipleship. It is the source of our spiritual life, and it is the life we have to share with others, in the flesh and online.

Seeking holiness adopts a resistive posture by rejecting all aspects of the virtual world that are inconsistent with the Christ-like life. We take up our cross by putting to death the habits of hyper-reality that inhibit our growth in love for God and neighbor. Those who follow Jesus must remember that the incarnate love of God is expressed through the inescapably embodied love of neighbor. We are to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and imprisoned. But seeking holiness also adopts a redemptive posture as we love God and neighbor by exploring the full potential of virtual relationships for soul care and faith sharing. The challenge of mission-shaped discipleship is to envision how these activities can be incorporated into the flow of everyday life and the embodied witness of the church. For example, ministries offered through face-to-face relationships can be enhanced and followed up virtually, while the soulful ministries of virtual relationships tend to find their natural fulfillment in embodied encounters and the irreducible value of fully human embrace.

b. Spiritual Discipline. Second, being a sanctifying presence is embodied through the use of spiritual discipline as we seek holiness through works of piety and mercy. The test of any discipline is whether it becomes a “means of grace” that sustains a life-transforming communion with God. In general, works of piety help us remain attuned to the presence and purposes of God, and works of mercy serve to connect others with God’s love in body and soul. The challenge for mission-shaped discipleship is to envision how a combination of embodied and virtual practices can become means of grace that keep us connected to the reality of God in both resistive and redemptive ways.

Spiritual discipline can help us resist the dissipation of being “tethered” to the internet by turning to the disciplines of solitude and spiritual retreat as a way of re-centering our lives in God. Practices of “technology fasting” have also become popular among non-Christians as a means of resisting the overwhelming power of virtuality in daily life. In the hyper-reality of an “always on” culture, disciplined works of mercy can re-attune

us to the necessity of bodily presence and undivided attention in the service of others. Spiritual discipline can also be redemptive by developing virtual works of piety through the use of online prayer guides, Bible study and *lectio divina*, for example.⁷² Our mobile devices make it possible to carry these resources into the routines of daily life, while also making them more collaborative. Although the virtual world can provide a limited context for soul care through spiritual conversation, bodily needs can only be addressed by proxy. Nevertheless, embodied works of mercy can be enhanced through virtual relationships between and beyond the limitations of face-to-face encounters.

c. Sharing Fellowship. Third, being a sanctifying presence is maintained through sharing fellowship in which we watch over one another in love. When small groups gather with the explicit purpose of sharing life deeply, they can help one another discern the presence and leading of the Spirit, and hold one another accountable for the life of obedience that flows from it. The rhythm of mutual accountability and spiritual direction that comes from regular Christian fellowship is the heartbeat of real Christianity. The challenge of mission-shaped discipleship is to envision the kinds of fellowship that can help us be more attentive and faithful to God in the everyday convergence of embodied and virtual life.

Sharing fellowship has a resistive dimension insofar as it encourages patterns of critical self-reflection and mutual accountability about our engagement with the virtual world. In small groups, we can resist the reduction of personal relationships to superficial contacts by investing in a few spiritual friends with whom we share through thick and thin, for better and for worse. While the powers of virtuality may entice us to float on a hyper-real sea of shallow connections, real Christian fellowship is about penetrating the depths of true communion with others in the common pursuit of God. Sharing fellowship also has a redemptive dimension insofar as it encourages mutual spiritual direction across both embodied and virtual realms of everyday life. Christian conference can become a means of grace when real disciples extend their fellowship in forms of virtual “society,” especially in very small groups of deep spiritual friendship akin to virtual “bands.”⁷³

⁷²Cf. Teresa Bythe and Daniel Wolpert, *Meeting God in Virtual Reality: Using Spiritual Practices with Media* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2004).

⁷³David Bell has argued for a recovery of the “now-neglected sociological concept” of Bundt, which he defines as “an elective grouping, bonded by affective and emotional solidarity, sharing a strong sense of belonging.” Although his argument remains undeveloped, he suggests that the concept of “virtual Bundt”

d. Evangelistic Witness. Fourth, being a sanctifying presence has an impact in the world through the practice of evangelistic witness within the providential unfolding of everyday life. From a discipleship perspective, evangelism is specifically directed towards the spiritual needs of others by developing transformational relationships as means of grace. Through these relationships, we share life and faith with the expectation that people will be awakened to the reality of God and seek out the truth for themselves. The challenge of mission-shaped discipleship is that unbelievers may encounter the gospel through witness of real Christians, whether face-to-face or online.

Evangelistic witness must resist the temptations of virtuality to disembody the gospel into the communication of information rather than bearing the cost of long-term transforming relationships. In a hyper-real world of avatars and constructed identities, our conversation must be kept a real, authentic, and transparent reflection of who we are in Christ, body and soul. Evangelistic witness in the virtual world may be taken up redemptively as a means for connecting with spiritual seekers through evangelistic websites and social networks that are “always on” and “always available,” anywhere to everywhere. What is more, virtual community can become missional by extending Christian conference to real seekers in the virtual world as a form of initial spiritual guidance. From this perspective, contemporary approaches to internet “e-vangelism”⁷⁴ may have redemptive value if they are made truly instrument to the mission of God by real disciples who extend their everyday witness into the virtual world. We can become co-workers with God’s prevenient grace by leading them to their true destiny as new creatures in Christ. Finally, the power of virtuality is submitted to the kingdom of God when seekers are incorporated into embodied communities of authentic discipleship, and equipped by the Spirit to live without compromise as a sanctifying presence in the world.

may “allow us to disentangle ourselves from . . . arguments about online community; by recognizing that the problem is at least in part the over-freighted term ‘community’ itself.” Cf. David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures* (London: Routledge, 2001), 107.

⁷⁴Cf. Andrew Careaga, *e-Vangelism: Sharing the Gospel in Cyberspace* (Lafayette: Vital Issues Press, 1999). There have been a plethora of books published on this topic in recent years.

HOLINESS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK: BLACK CAT IN A DARK ROOM?

by

Arseny Ermakov

It may surprise a Wesleyan student of biblical theology to discover that Jesus and the Gospels pay very little attention to the issue of holiness, at least on the level of language. The Gospel of Mark is no exception. A handful of instances ascribe holiness to God, divine beings, certain persons, and sacred spaces. The appearance of holiness discourse in Mark seems to be at most occasional and incidental.

There are only seven passages in Mark using *hagios* (“holy”) or its derivatives. Four of them refer to the Holy Spirit (Mk. 1:8; 3:29; 12:36; 13:11), one attributes holiness to angels (8:38), another to John the Baptist (6:20), and once when Mark calls Jesus *ho hagios tou theou*—the Holy One of God (1:24). Neither holiness nor sanctification makes its way into the *kerygma* of the Markan Jesus. Such sporadic appearance gives an impression that holiness exists on the margins of Mark’s theological thought and discourse.

The history of Markan scholarship seems to support this point; holiness has never been recognized by scholars as an important issue for the Second Gospel’s agenda.¹ Mark’s unfamiliarity with Q makes things even worse as the Sermon on the Mount, Lord’s Prayer and the emphasis on Jesus’ table fellowships have been left out.² So, the issue of holiness in the Gospel of Mark clearly poses quite a challenge to biblical scholars of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Are we looking in a dark room for a black cat that isn’t really there?

¹See for example, William L. Lane, “From Historian to Theologian: Milestones in Markan Scholarship,” *Review & Expositor* 75.4 (Fall 1978): 601-617, or William R. Telford, *Writing on the Gospel of Mark* (GABR 1; Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2009).

²Michael F. Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission* (LNTS 331; New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 104.

In order to find an answer to this question, I would like to take a closer look at the Markan language, the appropriation of scriptural traditions, and the Gospel's holiness-related themes through the prism of Second Temple Judaism (2TJ). This perspective, in my opinion, allows us to have a maximalist outlook on the problem, provides us with more interpretative possibilities, and might even compel us to reconsider the place of holiness in Markan theological thought. But first, I would like to make some comments on the previous approaches to the issue of holiness in the Gospels.

Minimalist Approach

The first problem affecting our reading of holiness in the Gospels is a widespread minimalistic understanding of the concept. Holiness is traditionally defined through the terminology of separation or withdrawal. Studies of holiness in the Bible usually start with a take on *qadosh/hagios*, which is often treated as a static and exclusively priestly category. Holiness has been described as a status of separation referring to transcendence of YHWH or his Otherness. It also refers to the separation of people, things, places, and times dedicated to God.³ So holiness, presumably, is a description of a special status of separation and privileges that come with it.⁴ To my mind, this minimalistic understanding of holiness unnecessarily simplifies the issue and limits interpretive possibilities.

Like any other word in the Bible, *qadosh* or *hagios* acquires its meaning and connotations from the context, sometimes in spite of its alleged lexical meaning. There is no need to read separation in every instance of holiness language. In some contexts, it does describe separateness or, put in more positive terms, being set apart (Lev. 20:26). However, in other

³See for example, W. T. Purkiser, *Exploring Christian Holiness. Volume 1. The Biblical Foundations* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1983), 18-19; Donald S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1971), 40-41, 44. More recent studies: Diane Leclerc, *Discovering Christian Holiness: The Heart of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2010); Jon Huntzinger, "Goodness and Worship: A Perspective on Old Testament Holiness," in *The Holiness Manifesto* (ed. W. Mannoia and Don Thorsen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 32; David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification* (NSBT 1; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 17.

⁴Pancratius C. Beentjes, "Holy People': The Biblical Evidence," in *A Holy People: Jewish and Christian Perspectives on Religious Communal Identity* (JCP 12; ed. M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Swartz; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 13-14.

settings, holiness may refer to power, wholeness, perfection, goodness, morality, and even life.⁵ Moreover, holiness in the Scriptures has never been equated with God's withdrawal or absence. On the contrary, holiness constantly indicates the presence of God in the human or heavenly realm. I strongly believe that, in order to restore the balance in our theological universe, we ought to see holiness primarily as a concept of presence rather than one of withdrawal.

A revised perspective on holiness and recognition of the fact that the word acquires its meaning in a certain context might bring a dramatic change to our interpretation. For example, the designation of Jesus (and other characters) in the Gospels as holy has been traditionally interpreted as a status of belonging to God; this is fair enough.⁶ However, Markan scholars have always been puzzled with the title the Holy One of God. One part of the problem, as Morna Hooker points out, is the very limited usage of the title in the Hebrew Bible, which does not describe any messianic figure.⁷ There is a struggle to identify its meaning and importance for Mark. Scholars often note that the title has been oddly paced in the narrative; it looks undeveloped and probably represents a new twist on such OT titles as a holy man or the holy one of Israel.⁸

One thing is clear. The emphasis on the status of separation does not take interpreters far. However, if we suggest that "the holy one of God" may refer to Jesus manifesting the powerful presence of God, this would make perfect sense in the Markan context of the coming Kingdom of God. The contagious holiness of Jesus, like the contagious holiness of YHWH in the Old Testament, extends the realm of purity through exorcisms, forgiveness of sins, purification, and healings in order to restore the holy people of God.

⁵Arseny Ermakov, "'Be Holy, for I am Holy': Holy God and Holy People in the Book of Leviticus" (A paper presented at the Annual Conference of Australasian Center for Wesleyan Research, Sydney, 2013), 1-4.

⁶See for example, Terence Paige, "Holiness in the New Testament," in *Be Holy: God's Invitation to Understand, Declare and Experience Holiness* (ed. Joseph Coleson; Indianapolis: WPH, 2008), 45.

⁷Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to St Mark* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; ed. H. Chadwick; London: A&C Black, 1991), 64.

⁸For example, Edwin K. Broadhead, *Naming Jesus: Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNT Sup. 175; Sheffield: SAP, 1999), 97-100; Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 82.

But there is a more troubling issue in the Gospels with understanding holiness as a status of separation. As we all know, the Pharisees understood holiness in terms of separation. A great example of that comes from *Sifra* in its comment on Lev. 20:7, which Jacob Neusner traces back to the pharisaic interpretation of the matter.⁹ It reads,

A. "For I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I'm holy": B. "Just as I am holy, so are you holy. Just as I am separate [*parash*], so you be separate [*perushim*]" (Parashat Shemini Pereq 12:3).¹⁰

It is evident that the pharisaic tradition and later rabbinic teachings equate *parash* (separate) with *qadosh* (holy). So, the name *perushim* or "the Pharisees" should be understood as equivalent of *qedoshim*, i.e., "the holy ones."¹¹ The pharisaic understanding of holiness as separation has underlined their practices and attitude:

Whoever undertakes to be a *haver* sells to an *'am-ha'aretz* neither fresh fruit nor dried, buys from him no fresh fruit, does not enter his house as guest, and does not accept him as guest if he wears his own garments (*m. Demai* 2:3a-e).

For the Pharisees, separation and abstention from unclean things and sinful people is a practical reflection of holiness. If holiness is indeed about separation then we would have to agree with Marcus Borg that Jesus utterly rejects holiness by bridging the boundaries of purity and of the social order.¹² This is an unsettling thought for a tradition with holiness at its core. It is clear that this minimalistic understanding of holiness as a status of separation does not take Wesleyans far in the study of the Gospels.

If we want to advance further in our understanding of holiness in the Gospels, we will have to go beyond this minimalistic approach that unnecessarily narrows our horizon. At the methodological level, it means that immediate, narrative, and inter-textual contexts have to be taken

⁹Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 79.

¹⁰Jacob Neusner, *Sifra: An Analytical Translation* (3 vols.; BJS 139, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 2:227.

¹¹Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1998), 73.

¹²Borg, 135-155.

seriously for defining meaning and connotations of the word “holiness.” At the same time, the conceptual perception of holiness has to be changed as well. We would have to move away from a static category of status of separation to a more dynamic and dialectical concept of holiness that embraces both notions of presence and being set apart.

Reductionist Approach

The existence of holiness language on the margins of the evangelists’ agendas has forced some scholars, who believe that holiness somehow must be in the text, to bring it back to the center by explaining it through the major New Testament theological concepts or the categories of denominational theology. Holiness has been reduced to the issues of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, love, discipleship, prayer, the great commandments, and so on. The most worrying trend is reducing holiness to concerns of modern individualistic morality.¹³ This reductionism in holiness studies, often dictated by our cultural, denominational, or practical concerns, dangerously ignores the gap between modern and ancient perceptions of holiness and purity.

It seems to me that the Wesleyan concern for holiness, with its theological vocabulary and the emphasis on separation, is mostly rooted in the Protestant/Puritan tradition rather than in the biblical one. I suggest that holiness has to be treated as a legitimate issue of biblical theology and looked at in its historical-religious context. By reducing the biblical concept of holiness to particular modern issues or theological categories, we unnecessarily limit our horizon. For example, the issues of sacred time or sacred spaces rarely attract our attention. The sense of them is largely lost in evangelical theology and practice. It is not so with the Gospels. We find two disputes over sanctification of the Sabbath day in Mark (2:23-28; 3:1-6) and there is Jesus’ action in the Temple concerned with profanation and defilement of the holy place by the sinful priesthood (11:15-18).

In order to navigate between minimalist and reductionist approaches and avoid their pitfalls, I will look at Mark through the prism of Second Temple Judaism since it is a natural historical-religious context for the Gospels. Moreover, recent studies in Ancient Judaism have revealed, among other things, a great concern for holiness and purity among reli-

¹³Kent Brower and Andy Johnson, “Introduction: Holiness and the *Ekklesia* of God,” in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament* (ed. K. E. Brower and A. Johnson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), xvi.

gious groups and the general populace of the time.¹⁴ I believe that the issues of holiness in Mk would make sense in a Greco-Roman context as well since the vocabulary of holiness and purity had been widely used by the ancient pagan religions of the Mediterranean region.¹⁵

Second Temple Judaism as a Context for Holiness in Mark

Second Temple Judaism (2TJ) provides us with three interrelated contexts important for understanding holiness in the Gospels: holiness discourse in the Torah, eschatological expectations, and holiness concerns and practices within Jewish religious groups at the time.

First, Torah and its interpretation find themselves at the heart of 2TJ. Recent studies of holiness and purity in the Pentateuch by Jacob Milgrom, Baruch Schwartz, Philip Jenson, Jay Sklar and others have demonstrated that the idea of holiness does not exist in a vacuum and is interconnected with the wider web of concepts.¹⁶ This broad conceptual framework includes, apart from holiness and its derivatives, such concepts as purity-impurity (and their derivatives), profanation, sin-abomination, atonement, and so on.

What is more important is that holiness is located at the center of this web. Sacrificial, purity and ethical systems are designed in order to maintain holiness of the sanctuary and of the people, including both the priestly class and the whole nation of Israel. The goal is securing the life-giving presence of YHWH, the Holy One. Both Leviticus (19-20) and Deuteronomy (14:1-2) see holiness as a covenantal concept. Thus, the Torah's call to be holy is the call to covenantal faithfulness.

¹⁴See for example, John Gammie, *Holiness in Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); Jo B. Wells, *God's Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* (JSOT Sup. 305; Sheffield: SAP, 2000); M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and J. Swartz (ed.), *A Holy People: Jewish and Christian Perspectives on Religious Communal Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

¹⁵See for example, Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan, eds., *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

¹⁶See for example, Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: a Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2004); Baruch J. Schwartz, "Israel's Holiness: The Torah Traditions," in *Purity and Holiness: Heritage of Leviticus* (JCP 2; ed. M.J.H.M. Poorthuis, J. Schwartz; Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1999); Philip P. Jenson, "Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World" (JSOT 106; Sheffield: SAP, 1992); Jay Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions* (HBM 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005).

When we come to Mark, we have to bear in mind this broad conceptual framework for holiness. The Gospel's language concerning, for example, sin and impurity, or obedience to the commandments of the Law should be understood in this Jewish context of concern for the holiness of the people of God.

The second context is the idea of restoration for the people of God in Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic literature. The restoration of Israel has always been connected with the restoration of her holiness.¹⁷ Isaiah provides a good example. The prophet foresees the restoration of the people, first of all, as restoration of their holiness and purity. It is not accidental that the way from exile to the Promised Land, the way of the Lord, is called the holy way in Isa. 35. It is open to the righteous and pure ones.

The way of the Lord is, of course, one of the important Markan themes as well. The holiness of the people in Isaiah is connected with the return of the Holy One of Israel and his holy spirit, establishment of the everlasting covenant, and life according to God's will. The eschatological picture of the Holy One of Israel coming down on Zion and dwelling among his holy, pure and righteous people is attested in all Isaianic traditions (Isa. 29:17-24; 32:16-20; 33:5-6; 43:14-28; 51:1-11; 61-62; 65:17-25). *TrtIsa* sees restoration of the people as the fulfilment of Exod. 19:6. The restored people of God will be called "priests of Yahweh" (61:6) and "the holy people" (62:12). As Rikki Watts and others have shown, Isaianic Second Exodus plays crucial role for understanding Markan narrative and activities of Jesus.¹⁸

The third context is so-called "the quest for holiness" in 2TJ that manifests itself in theology and practices of the Pharisees, Qumran sectarians, John the Baptist's movement and others. The concern for holiness in Second temple Judaism is not exclusively priestly issue. Gedalyahu Alon suggests that following purity or kashrut rules in everyday lives was dictated by a concept of common holiness.¹⁹ Eyal Regev²⁰

¹⁷See Arseny Ermakov, 'Holy Community in the Gospel of Mark' (Ph.D. Thesis, The University of Manchester, 2009), 53-59.

¹⁸Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2000).

¹⁹Gedalyahu Alon, "The Bounds of the Laws of Levitical Cleanness," in *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World: Studies in Jewish History in the Times of the Second Temple and Talmud* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977), 190-234.

²⁰Eyal Regev, "Pure Individualism: the Idea of Non-Priestly Purity in Ancient Judaism," in *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 31/2 (2000): 176-202.

and John Poirier²¹ have also argued that in 2TJ concern for holiness and purity goes beyond temple and embraces every-day lives of the faithful Jews. In Mark, Jesus' *halakhic* disputes with the Pharisees about Sabbath, purity, and the commandments as well as his relations with the sinners should be understood in this context of the quest for holiness.

So, Jewish national and religious identity as the holy people of God was defined by worshipping Holy God in his holy temple, by obedience to the Holy Word, and by sanctification of holy times.²²

Can We Find Holiness in Mark?

It is time to return to the main question of this article. Can we find holiness in Mark? I think that the illumination provided by Second Temple Judaism will help us to find the cat in the dark room.

Conceptual framework. We have already mentioned that Mark is aware of holiness language. Let me put a positive spin on it. He explicitly uses holiness language in his description of Jesus, the Spirit, angels, and John the Baptist (1:8, 24; 3:29; 6:20; 8:38; 12:36; 13:11). The Gospel of Mark not only has a holiness discourse but also clearly reflects other interconnected concepts from the wider holiness framework, such as purification (1:44), water cleansing (1:4; 7:3), repentance (1:4, 15; 6:12), purity (1:40), sin—sinners (3:29; 2:15-16; 8:38; 14:41), uncleanness (1:23, 40; 5:8), defilement (7:2, 15), forgiveness of sins (1:4; 2:7, 10; 3:29; 4:12), righteousness (6:20), obedience to God's will (3:35), the judgment of sinners (4:29; 8:38; 12:9), and so on. Apart from direct use, holiness discourse is implied in appropriation of the temple and cultic language (11:17; 12:33; 14:58), including the scenery of the heavenly Temple and glory (8:38). The holiness issues are also implied in the context of following the commandments of the Torah (10:17-22; 12:29-34) and in the scenes of fellowship and healing/exorcism where contact with the unclean is involved (1:40-45; 5:1-20, 24-29).

Scriptural traditions. The Gospel of Mark, through appropriation of different scriptural traditions, indicates the presence of an underlying holiness discourse. First, the Leviticus tradition finds its way into Mark. The Gospel indicates that the religious and social life in the story is, to

²¹John C. Poirier, "Purity beyond the Temple in the Second Temple Era," in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122/2 (2003): 247-265.

²²Hannah Harrington, *Holiness: Rabbinic Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 6.

some extent, governed by the commandments given in Leviticus. It is also evident that the priestly and sacrificial language found in the Gospel is rooted in the Leviticus tradition. Moreover, some stories in Mark are clearly built on Leviticus' rules of purity and the concern about the contagious power of a touch: cleansing of the leper (1:40-45), the Gerasene Demoniac (5:1-20), healing of a woman with a blood discharge (5:24-34), and so on.

Allusions to and direct citations of Lev. 19 in the commandments (Mk. 10:19; 12:31), on the one hand, point to the importance of the tradition to early Judaism and Christianity and, on the other, imply the dynamic understanding of the holiness of the people that is shared in the Gospel of Mark. At the same time, the text reflects not only Leviticus tradition but Second Temple views on the connection between purity and holiness.²³ So, the presence of Leviticus tradition in the narrative clearly indicates ancient holiness concerns.

Second, as Markan scholars in recent years have shown, the Gospel is heavily influenced and shaped by prophetic traditions and the Psalms.²⁴ Through citations and allusions from Malachi, Zechariah, and Isaiah, Mark adds a few deft touches to his picture of the restoration of the people. Most of the references are clearly connected with the issues of holiness/sinfulness of the people. The issue is being developed from the beginning of the Gospel with the preparation of "the way" motif that is taken from both Isaiah and Malachi (Mk 1:2-3) and understood in the narrative as the call to repentance and cleansing (1:4-5, 15).

The issue of holiness finds its climax at the end with the images of suffering and vindication of the righteous one (Mk. 15-16) taken from Psalm 22. The themes of hardness of heart, blindness, and deafness (4:12), abandonment of the commandment of God (7:6-7), profanation of the temple (11:17), the judgment of the sinners and gathering of the elect (13:24-26), the righteous servant (14), and the shepherd and the new flock (6:34; 14:27) also emphasize the presence and importance of the idea of the restoration of the holiness of the people. The determinative

²³See Yair Furstenberg, "Defilement Penetrating the Body: A New Understanding of Contamination in Mark 7.15," in *New Testament Studies* 54/2 (2008): 176-200; Johnathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁴For example, Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993); Rikki Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000).

influence of prophetic tradition and the Psalms is probably the reason why direct holiness discourse in the Gospels is limited.

Third, Mark uses theophanic and apocalyptic imagery from the Exodus and Daniel traditions that imply holiness language connected with the presence of the Holy God, holy angels, holy heavenly temple, and holy figures. Thus, Mark shows that from the open heavenly temple the Holy Spirit descends and the Holy God speaks from his throne as he is pleased to see Jesus in his holy presence (1:10-11).²⁵ Another theophany happens on the mountain of transfiguration (9:2-8). Jesus was transformed²⁶ and his clothes became dazzling white which could indicate both cleansing and reflection of glory, heavenly holiness (9:2-3). Then he finds himself in the company of the holy figures of Moses and Elijah (9:4). And God's holy presence descends in the cloud on the mountain and the disciples (9:7).

Other images picture the coming of the Son of Man in glory with holy angels (8:38; 13:26) and of him sitting at the right hand of God in the heavenly temple (14:62). Such images of an exalted and enthroned figure in the presence of the Holy God are strongly connected with the symbolic world of Jewish apocalypticism and early mysticism.²⁷ At the center of this world is the heavenly temple with the Holy of Holies where God himself resides on his throne surrounded by holy angels. The most distinctive feature of this place is the supreme level of purity and holiness.²⁸ Nobody and nothing that does not meet such requirements can be there. In this framework, the picture of the Son of Man residing beside God on the throne or coming in glory with angels to perform judgment clearly implies the supreme holiness of Jesus.

Themes. Apart from the language, there are many themes in the Gospel that connect with the issues of holiness. The theme of righteous-

²⁵T. Levi 18:6-7: "The heavens will be opened, and from the temple of glory (τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς δόξης) sanctification (ἁγίασμα) will come upon him, with fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac. And the glory of the Most High shall burst forth upon him. And the spirit of understanding and sanctification (πνεῦμα συνέσεως καὶ ἁγιασμοῦ) shall rest upon him."

²⁶On the language of transformation, see Chester, 13-119.

²⁷For detailed study, see Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse* (WUNT II, 142; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation. Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (WUNT, 207; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

²⁸See for example, 4Q400 fr. 1, 1:2-4.

ness and holiness of the people starts to develop straight from the beginning of Mark's narrative. Israelites are called by John the Baptist (a righteous and holy man—Mk. 6:20) to prepare the Way of the Lord, which is understood as repentance of sins and cleansing (Mk. 1:4). The scene of Jesus' baptism is also full of holiness allusions connected with theophany and the divine sonship motif. Jesus' opposition to unclean spirits is another important theme where Mark emphasises the uncleanness of the spirits and opposes it to the holiness of Jesus. Cleansing of a leper (Mk. 1:40-45), healings (Mk. 5:21-43), exorcisms (Mk. 1:21-26; 5:1-20), *halakhic* disputes over Sabbath (Mk 2:23-27; 3:1-6), and most importantly over purity (7:1-23), clearly mark the concern for holiness.

The presence of the Holy Spirit and the problem of the Jerusalem Temple and its fate also contribute to Mark's take on holiness. But there is an overarching motif that brings all holiness themes together—representation of Jesus by Mark as the holy one of God. Placed in the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus and sandwiched between two major Markan Christological titles, "the Son of God" (Mk. 1:1, 11) and "the Son of Man" (2:10), "the Holy One of God" title (Mk. 1:24) could be seen as a programmatic statement about the identity and ministry of Jesus. If this is so, then "The Holy One of God" title gains its definition throughout the whole of the Markan narrative. The holiness of Jesus is expressed in different ways and connected with major Christological titles. Most of the Markan titles show holiness connotations in the context of Second Temple Judaism (Messiah, the Son of God, and the Son of Man). So, "the Holy One of God" title could actually play a crucial role for understanding of Markan Christology as well as Markan ecclesiology.²⁹

The Holy One of God in Markan narrative points to the exclusiveness of Jesus and his mission. He belongs to God, acts on his side, and battles evil and unclean cosmic opposition in order to release and restore the people of God. The Holy One of God reveals his holiness through acts of power, moral conduct, and the ultimate fulfilment of God's will. The Holy One of God is the manifestation of supreme heavenly holiness that is recognized by people, unclean spirits, angels, and the Holy God himself.

The Holy One of God among the people of God is the one who restores the holiness and purity of the nation and (re)creates the new holy

²⁹For possible connections, see Kent E. Brower, "The Holy One of God and His Disciples," in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament* (ed. by K. E. Brower and A. Johnson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 57-75.

people of God. The contagious and transformative power of Jesus' holiness enlarges the realm of purity and reduces the dominion of uncleanness through healings, exorcisms, and forgiveness of sins. Such concern for purity and holiness has to be understood in the eschatological context of the coming Kingdom that reveals the powerful presence of the Holy God himself.³⁰

Conclusion

To my mind, the presence of holiness discourse in Mark strongly corresponds with and reflects the context of Second Temple Judaism. The hope for the restoration of the holiness of the people of Israel and the so-called quest for holiness among religious groups of Second Temple Judaism³¹ create a sound religious-historical background for reading Mark's Gospel. So, the presence of both the wider holiness discourse in the narrative itself and the concern for holiness in early Judaism join to clearly indicate the appropriateness of a maximalist approach to the holiness language. Read in this way, holiness, instead of being on the margins of the Markan Gospel, reveals itself to be woven into the fabric of its narrative. In the quest for a black cat in a dark room, we have actually stumbled across an elephant in the room that has gone largely unrecognized by mainstream scholarship.

³⁰Craig A. Evans, "'Who Touched Me?' Jesus and the Ritually Impure," in *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity, and Restoration* (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 39; ed. B. Chilton and C. Evans. Leiden: Brill, 1997), 376.

³¹Borg, 71.

COUNTERACTING CLASSIFICATIONS: KESWICK HOLINESS RECONSIDERED

by

Andrew Russell

For more than 135 years, Evangelicals have been congregating each summer in the Lake District of northern England. Beginning in June of 1875, several hundred “ministers and a goodly company of Scripture-readers and missionaries” gathered in the village of Keswick for “the promotion of practical holiness.”¹ The convention was repeated the following year and adopted the motto “All One in Christ Jesus,” convinced that ecclesial unity was the handmaid to holiness. The commitment to Galatians 3:28 was serious business. The twenty-sixth Keswick convention, for example, featured the Presbyterians J. Elder Cumming and A. T. Pierson, the Methodists J. B. Figgis and Charles Inwood, the Baptist F. B. Meyer, the Congregationalist G. Campbell Morgan, and numerous Anglicans such as Evan H. Hopkins, Handley Moule, and H. W. Webb-Peploe.² Keswick embraced and benefitted from a diverse set of Church traditions.

The diversity also contributed to the perennial difficulty of identifying the Keswick message with precision. Both curious and critical observers repeatedly asked for greater theological clarity. In 1896, more than twenty years after the convention’s inception, J. Elder Cumming told an audience that “Many still put the question, What is the teaching that characterizes these gatherings at Keswick? And that question has not yet received for many a definite answer.”³ In 1906 several Keswick leaders formerly responded with a collection of four essays entitled *Holiness by Faith: a Manual of Keswick*.⁴ The following year, however, *The Keswick*

¹T. D. Harford Battersby, “Kewick Union Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness,” *The Christian’s Pathway of Power* 2, no. 19 (August 1875), 160.

²*The Keswick Week* (1900). A complete list of speakers for each year is found in Maurice Rowlandson, *Life at the Keswick Convention: A Personal Recollection* (Carlisle: OM Publishing, 1997), 163-82.

³J. Elder Cumming, “What this Teaching is,” *The Keswick Week* (1896), 37.

⁴H. C. G. Moule et al., *Holiness by Faith: A Manual of Keswick Teaching* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1906). The work included essays by H. C. G. Moule, F.B. Meyer, J. Elder Cumming, and Hubert Brooke.

Convention: Its Message, Its Method, and Its Men was released after the publishers admitted there remained “a widespread need for a more detailed statement concerning the history of the convention, its teaching, and its results.”⁵ This work included twenty essays by twenty individuals, all of whom were active convention participants. And yet the ambiguity persisted. In 1918 prominent speakers were still giving their sermons titles such as “The Message of Keswick” and “What Keswick Stands For.”⁶ By 1933, two years before the convention’s Diamond Jubilee, W. Graham Scroggie was compelled to reiterate “Keswick’s Distinctive Message” given the “numberless people who think of the convention in various ways.”⁷ Although widely recognized as a distinct holiness movement, its theological distinctions remained vague.

The passage of time has done little to clarify Keswick’s central tenets with substantial specificity. Theologically, numerous studies describe Keswick with conflicting terminology. For example, Catherine Albanese’s popular college textbook *America, Religions, and Religion*, refers to the “Calvinist Keswick theology of sanctification.”⁸ Similarly, Allan Anderson’s *Spreading Fires* identifies “the Reformed and Keswick position” as one of three distinct holiness groups at the turn of the twentieth century.⁹ Historians Ann Taves and Richard Kyle also describe Keswick theology as Reformed.¹⁰ In other works, such as *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, Randall Stephens claims that the Keswick movement was one of several holiness “extensions” deriving from Wesley.¹¹ Likewise, in the

⁵Charles F. Harford-Battersby, *The Keswick Convention: Its Message, Its Method and Its Men* (London: Marshall brothers, 1907), vii.

⁶H. C. G. Moule and W. Y. Fullerton in *The Keswick Week* (1918).

⁷W. Graham Scroggie, “Keswick’s Distinctive Message” in *The Keswick Convention* (1933), 78.

⁸Catherine L. Albanese, *America, Religions, and Religion*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub., 1999), 171.

⁹Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007), 24.

¹⁰Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 332; Richard G. Kyle, *Evangelicalism: An Americanized Christianity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 73.

¹¹Randall J. Stephens, “The Holiness/Pentecostal/Charismatic Extension of the Wesleyan Tradition,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). 269-70.

Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology, Stephen Holmes describes Keswick theology as “neo-Wesleyan.”¹² Yet in David Bebbington’s *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England*, Keswick is contrasted with both the Reformed and Wesleyan positions on sanctification,¹³ a distinction that is also acknowledged in Melvin Dieter’s *Five Views on Sanctification*¹⁴ and Gregory Boyd and Paul Eddy’s *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology*.¹⁵ Keswick, simply stated, can be found all over the theological map.

The seemingly nebulous nature of Keswick’s theology, however, is considerably clarified when examined through the lens of three different polarities or dichotomies common within evangelical understandings of holiness. More specifically, evangelicals have historically asked three basic questions when framing personal holiness:

Is sanctification a crisis or a process?

Is sanctification fundamentally active or passive?

Is sanctification achieved by instantaneously or gradually eradicating the sin nature?

Keswick’s answers to these questions not only distinguished the movement from the contemporaneous Wesleyan and Reformed positions, but also drew regular and vitriolic criticism until the middle of the twentieth century. As this essay will argue, from early decades of the convention to the middle of the twentieth century, the heart of Keswick theology was neither Wesleyan nor Reformed and these labels obfuscate our understanding of all three traditions.

HOLINESS POLARITIES

The Keswick Conventions were always intended for Christians. They were not, clarified W. W. Martin in 1946, “designed for the purpose of evangelism” and presupposed “that every man and woman who comes . . . already has the assurance of forgiveness of sins.”¹⁶ Like all evangelicals,

¹²Stephen R. Holmes, “British (and European) Evangelical Theologies,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, ed. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 249.

¹³D. W. Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000).

¹⁴Melvin Easterday Dieter, *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1987), 151-83.

¹⁵Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002).

¹⁶W. W. Martin, “The Secret of Victory,” *The Keswick Week* (1946), 18.

the Keswick constituency believed that at the moment of conversion a person was justified or declared to be righteous by God. Many individuals, however, resonated with the experience of Keswick convention founder T. D. Harford-Battersby. Although sin's penalty was removed, its power was felt stronger than ever. Year after year, countless Christians came to Keswick asking the same question: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"¹⁷ Year after year Keswick provided the same basic answer.

"We have but one theme," wrote Henry Bowker, "to speak of Christ in His provision and action through the Holy Ghost for our daily lives."¹⁸ The network of Keswick speakers consistently promised audiences and readers that believers could escape the sinful thoughts and actions that seemed inevitable. They testified that they had discovered a "secret" to holy living, one that brought peace and rest to a troubled soul. Addressing the convention in 1890, H.W. Webb-Peploe claimed "before I expected failure, and was astonished at deliverance; now I expect deliverance, and am astonished at failure."¹⁹ Holiness was more than an elusive dream reserved for a select few. It was a privilege available to and intended for Christians "in the office as well as in the pulpit, in the castle as well as the cottage, in the lands where heathen darkness can almost be felt as in the quiet Christian atmosphere of this land of liberty."²⁰ The key to *experiencing* holiness was not difficult, but it did require the correct answer and response to three important and common either/or questions regarding sanctification.

Polarity #1: Crisis versus Process

Evangelicals of all stripes agreed that an individual's justification was an event distinct from and prior to sanctification. But the consensus quickly splintered concerning *when* sanctification occurred and how long it took. For many of those in the Reformed tradition, sanctification was a lifelong and often arduous process. According to Charles Hodge sanctification

¹⁷The quotation, which comes from Romans 7:24, includes a discussion of an individual's struggle with sin.

¹⁸Henry Bowker, "What and Why," *The Life of Faith* 11, no. 21 (January 1889), 1.

¹⁹H. W. Webb-Peploe, quoted in J. B. Figgis, *Keswick from Within* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1914), 105.

²⁰Harford-Battersby, *The Keswick Convention: Its Message, Its Method and Its Men*, 4-5.

was “a gradual triumph of the new nature implanted in regeneration over the evil that still remains after the heart is renewed.”²¹ Charles Spurgeon likewise insisted that the scriptural term “growth in grace” clearly referred to the idea of “progressive sanctification.”²² Others disagreed. The Methodist tradition followed John Wesley by recognizing the possibility of a second blessing in which a believer is perfected in love or entirely sanctified. Although Wesley himself never claimed to have obtained such a level of holiness, others did, often identifying the exact moment in which their sanctification was realized. “Neither in any part are we directed to seek holiness *gradatim*,” said Adam Clarke. Rather, “we are to come to God for an instantaneous and complete purification from all sin, as well as for an instantaneous pardon.”²³ Like justification, sanctification could be pinpointed to a “crisis” in which the privilege was entered by faith. As such, “it won’t do to try to grow into a clean heart” asserted T. B. Smithies after his own crisis experience in 1845. “It needs a definite transaction, and I felt that it came to a *must be* to-night.”²⁴ In short, the evangelical world proposed two different and opposite answers to the question of sanctification’s temporal nature. For some holiness was a process; for others it was a crisis. The Keswick movement said it was both.

When Keswick forerunner Robert Pearsall Smith addressed a crowd at Oxford in 1874 he said “it is to bring you to a crisis of faith that we have come together.”²⁵ The subsequent Keswick conventions also sought to bring participants to a crisis. Throughout the decades speakers were adamant that a Christian’s quest for holiness was inaugurated in a moment. “At Keswick,” explained Charles Harford, “stress is laid upon a crisis . . . which has taken place in multitudes who, by simply faith, have yielded themselves to God, and whose lives have been from that moment transformed.”²⁶ The reason so many Christians were dissatisfied with and

²¹Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (New York: Scribner, 1873), 224.

²²Charles H. Spurgeon, *Sermons Preached and Revised by C.H. Spurgeon: Sixth Series* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1860), 321.

²³Adam Clarke, *Discourses on Various Subjects Relative to the Being and Attributes of God, and His Works in Creation, Providence, and Grace*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (New York: M’Elrath and Bangs, 1830), 178.

²⁴George Stringer Rowe, T. B. Smithies (Editor of “the British Workman.”): *A Memoir* (London: T. Woolmer, 1884), 32-33. Original emphasis.

²⁵*Account of the Union Meeting for the Promotion of Scriptural Holiness*, (London: S. W. Partridge, 1874), 42.

²⁶Harford-Battersby, *The Keswick Convention: Its Message, Its Method and Its Men*, 6.

disquieted by the habitual sin in their lives was that they had never *fully* given themselves to God. They had not, in other words, submitted their lives to God upon receiving the offer of salvation. "Oh friends," said Hubert Brooke in 1890, "there is no such thing as real peace, real blessing, real calm, real settled joy in the Lord, as long as there is a divided ownership."²⁷ As a result, Keswick challenged audiences to solemnly yield everything to the Lord. "Your God in heaven answers the prayers which you have offered for blessing . . . by this one demand: *Are you willing to surrender yourselves absolutely into His hands?*"²⁸ A fully surrendered life was the prerequisite to a holy life and occurred through a crisis moment.

Many Christians, Keswick further emphasized, were unaware that their lives were not fully surrendered in the first place. According to Evan Hopkins, there was a tendency for Christians to understand their relationship to God as a Constitutional Monarchy. "So you may know Christ as King; but he is only to you a Constitutional Sovereign, and YOU ARE PRIME MINISTER, and very much that is done in the kingdom of your soul is done, not by the King, but by you."²⁹ Speakers urged convention participants to reflect carefully on whether or not Christ was truly their master. In other instances, Keswick leadership inquired as to whether or not audience members were harboring some secret sin. Speaking on the second night of the convention in 1896, J. Elder Cumming said, "we urge you, to begin with, to go upon your knees before God and present yourselves to Him, asking that He may search and try your heart, and, if there is anything wrong that has been keeping you back, that God may make it known to you."³⁰ Slow-paced hymns such "There is Sin in the Camp" likewise confronted the possibility of unacknowledged transgressions.

There is sin in the camp, there is treason today!

Is it in me? Is it in me?

There is cause in our ranks for defeat and delay,

Is it, O Lord, in me?

Something of selfishness, garments or gold,

Something of hindrance in young or in old,

²⁷ Hubert Brooke, "The Life of Submission to Christ," *The Life of Faith* 12, no. 140 (August 1890), 145.

²⁸ Andrew Murray, *Absolute Surrender and Other Addresses* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 6. Original emphasis.

²⁹ Evan H. Hopkins, "Self-Conquest," *The Keswick Week* (1907), 56.

³⁰ J. Elder Cumming, "What This Teaching Is," *The Keswick Week* (1896), 38.

Something why God doth His blessing withhold;
Is it, O Lord, in me? Is it in me? Is it in me? Is it, O Lord, in Me?³¹

Only by identifying such hindrances could an individual make the absolute surrender that was necessary to begin a life of holiness.

The act of surrender was not a mere formality. Keswick speakers insisted that the decision to yield all things to God could not be made lightly. "If we are to do it intelligently and deliberately and definitely, we are also to do it thoroughly" said W. Graham Scroggie in 1922. "There must be no reserves; Christ claims to be Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all. He asks for the throne-room in our life."³² Scroggie's concern, which was shared by all Keswick speakers, was that an individual's crisis would be disingenuous and therefore ineffective. The issue was repeatedly addressed. "Latent in the heart of every great hour of decision" cautioned J. Milton Thompson, ". . . there lies what I call *the peril of superficial consecration*; a consecration which will slowly evaporate when we return to the common round and the daily task . . . and reveal the fact that we never fully yielded our wills to Him."³³ Surrender could be neither partial nor insincere. God demanded all and could not be fooled by a "counterfeit consecration."³⁴ "From the nature of the case," said A. T. Pierson in 1903, "God must have *all* or He really has *none*."³⁵

The sermons and songs produced the desired outcome. Each year, multitudes were brought to a crisis after discovering clandestine sins, idols, or simply an unacknowledged refusal to submit all things to God. "The Lord showed me . . . there was a chamber in my heart which I was reserving for another, and refused to give up to the Lord, and now I had 'lost the key'" reported one anonymous participant from the 1882 con-

³¹Philip P. Bliss, "There is Sin in the Camp" in James Mountain and Mrs. Evan Henry Hopkins, eds., *Hymns of Consecration and Faith*, New ed. (London: Marshall Brothers, 1902), no. 43.

³²W. Graham Scroggie, "Now, Then, Do It!" in Herbert F. Stevenson, *Keswick's Authentic Voice: Sixty-Five Dynamic Addresses Delivered at the Keswick Convention. 1875-1957* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), 375.

³³J. Milton Thompson, "The Peril of Superficial Consecration," *The Keswick Convention* (1934), 263.

³⁴Charles Inwood, "Counterfeit Consecration" in Stevenson, *Keswick's Authentic Voice: Sixty-Five Dynamic Addresses Delivered at the Keswick Convention. 1875-1957*, 117-23.

³⁵Arthur T. Pierson, *The Keswick Movement in Precept and Practise* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1903), 77. Original emphasis.

vention. "I offered it to him on Wednesday night, and He soon found the key and took possession, and now 'the government' is 'upon His shoulders.'"³⁶ Other testimonies reveal that the crisis could be painful. "During the first days of the convention I was very much humbled. The Holy Ghost so operated on me that I felt myself to be the most guilty wretch on the face of the earth." The anguish, he continues, was relieved only "after making a full surrender of myself, body, soul, and spirit."³⁷ Inaugurated at Keswick, holiness had a definite beginning, which according to one observer marked "an epoch in the life of many."³⁸

For most individuals a considerable amount of time separated the crisis experience from his or her earlier conversion. Many of Keswick's most prominent leaders, including T. D. Harford-Battersby, lived and even ministered for years before making their surrender absolute. Speaking on Israel's wandering in the wilderness, A. B. Simpson lamented "oh! how vivid a picture it is of the emptiness and failure of the Christian life which hesitates wholly to follow the Lord and to enter into the fullness of our inheritance."³⁹ Theoretically, however, a crisis experience could closely follow on the heels of conversion. F. B. Meyer went even further by insisting that "it is a great mistake to teach that consecration should be separated from conversion by either days or weeks or years." In reality, he continued, "at consecration we are only taking up the position which we ought to have taken up when first we were brought into the kingdom of God."⁴⁰ A crisis was ideally coupled with conversion but experientially it came later.

Although a moment of crisis was necessary, it was not sufficient for a life of holiness. The initial call to surrender oneself fully was followed, often immediately, with a call to continual, repeated surrendering. "We have been urged by God's messengers to make. . . a real definite, decisive, conscious, surrender" said Charles Inwood toward the end of the convention in 1894. "I want, however, to plead with you to-night, not so much for

³⁶ "Testimonies," *The Life of Faith* 4, no. 45 (September 1882), 197.

³⁷Ibid., 200.

³⁸E. R. B., "How it Struck a Visitor for the First Time," *The Life of Faith* 12, no. 141 (September 1890), 171.

³⁹A. B. Simpson, *The Christ in the Bible Commentary, Book One* (Camp Hill, PA: Wing Spread Publishers, 2009), 308. Simpson began publishing his commentaries in 1888.

⁴⁰F. B. Meyer, "The Pots Shall be Like the Bowls Before the Altar," *The Keswick Week* (1900), 93.

that one act of abandonment to God, precious though it may be, but rather for a whole life of abandonment.”⁴¹ The crisis itself, in other words, was not a terminal point but rather “only a portal to a fuller life.”⁴² An absolute surrender to God, insisted Keswick, marked the beginning of a new disposition in which *real* growth in holiness became possible. Writing in 1884, Evan Hopkins explained that “Following the initial act, the habit or attitude of surrender is formed; and as the progress is made, so the thoroughness of dedication to God deepens and increases.”⁴³ Sanctification was like a journey taken by railway, he later told an audience. Although passengers must board the train in a moment (crisis), there remains a great distance to be covered in route to the destination (process).⁴⁴

The post-crisis process of sanctification was indefinite, a point that was repeatedly emphasized throughout the years. Andrew Murray reminded an audience that “there is abundant room for growth,” even for those who are absolutely surrendered.⁴⁵ Hopkins likewise said that “our sanctification can never in this life reach a point beyond which there is to be no further progress.”⁴⁶ Despite such claims, Keswick’s call for a “higher” or “victorious” Christian experience led many to interpret or accuse the movement of promoting sinless perfection. These charges prompted J. Elder Cumming to tell the convention in 1895 that “we are not going to repeat in every second sentence here that we do not teach sinlessness. We say it once and for all.” Practically speaking, he continued, no one should be asking the question, “where must I stop in this growth of the divine life?”⁴⁷ Sanctification was like a mathematical function inching closer to but never arriving at an asymptote. There was always room for growth, at least in the earthly life.

For generations Keswick refused to reduce sanctification to either a crisis or a process. Its own brand of holiness not only required both, but

⁴¹Charles Inwood, “Utter Abandonment to the Spirit,” *The Keswick Week* (1894), 99-100.

⁴²W. W. Martin, “The Secret of Victory,” *The Keswick Week* (1946), 20.

⁴³Evan H. Hopkins, *The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1884), 60.

⁴⁴Evan H. Hopkins, “Crisis and Process,” in Stevenson, *Keswick’s Authentic Voice: Sixty-Five Dynamic Addresses Delivered at the Keswick Convention. 1875-1957*, 332.

⁴⁵Andrew Murray, “Carnal & Spiritual,” *The Keswick Week* (1895), 52.

⁴⁶Hopkins, *The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life*.

⁴⁷J. Elder Cumming, “What this Teaching Is,” *The Keswick Week* (1896), 41.

insisted that the later was dependant on the former. Sanctification was “a crisis with a view to a process.”⁴⁸ As such, each convention sought to prompt listeners to *completely* yield or surrender themselves to God in order to initiate greater progress toward holiness. Although perfection was not obtainable, a life characterized by increasing victory over sin rather than constant defeat was available to those who were willing to say, in the words of Francis Havergal:

In full and glad surrender
I give myself to Thee,
Thine utterly and only,
And evermore to be.”⁴⁹

Polarity #2: Active versus Passive

An additional polarity existed within evangelical theologies of sanctification when Keswick emerged during the final quarter of the nineteenth century. More specifically, personal holiness was understood to be either passive or active in nature. Again, the spilt often, though not always, occurred between Wesleyan and Reformed communities. For those directly or indirectly indebted to Wesley, holiness was a matter of faith. Preaching in 1765 the Methodist founder insisted that sanctification was derived from faith rather than works. “Faith is the condition, and the only condition, of sanctification, exactly as it is of justification.”⁵⁰ Phoebe Palmer likewise emphasized the role of faith, insisting that God was able and willing to cleanse anyone who in faith lay himself or herself on the “altar” of Christ.⁵¹ When William Boardman’s *The Higher Christian Life* was released in 1858, he remarked that the book was designed to illustrate that “*full trust* expresses the sole condition of *full salvation*.”⁵² Such a claim had not been shared by everyone in his Reformed tradition, which frequently called for intentional discipline and regular “mortification.” In a sermon titled “Striving After Perfection,” Jonathan Edwards insisted that sanctification was a hard-fought, continuous battle. “Where there is

⁴⁸ Hopkins, “Crisis and Process,” 332.

⁴⁹ Francis R. Havergal, “In Full and Glad Surrender” in Mountain and Hopkins, eds., *Hymns of Consecration and Faith*, no. 88.

⁵⁰ John Wesley, “The Scripture Way of Salvation” in *Works* 6:49.

⁵¹ Phoebe Palmer, *Present to My Christian Friend on Entire Devotion to God*, Revised ed. (London: Alexander Heylin, 1857), 21.

⁵² William E. Boardman, *Higher Christian Life* (Boston: Henry Hoyt, 1858), vi. Original emphasis.

true hatred of sin, it won't be idle; but it will be manifest in striving against it, laboring more and more to mortify it, and get rid of it" he told his Northampton congregation. "True enmity against sin will be manifested in hostile acts."⁵³ As such, evangelicals tended to describe Christian holiness as either passive or active in nature. As far as Keswick was concerned, activity was *never* a means to holiness.

In 1870 Robert Pearsall Smith compiled a collection of essays under the title *Holiness through Faith: Light on the Way of Holiness*. He recalled the moment of realization that holiness was not derived from exertion. "Then in my despair, my eye rested on the words 'purifying their hearts by faith,' How my soul leaped at these words, as in a moment I saw the possibility of my deliverance 'by faith.'"⁵⁴ Smith's experience was not unique. An increasing number of evangelicals were concluding that sanctification shared more in common with justification than previously assumed. Speaking at the convention in 1932, the Baptist W. Y. Fullerton reminded his audience that "holiness comes the way justification comes. . . . As we receive grace and pardon, we receive holiness from Him."⁵⁵ For Keswick, sanctification by faith was the sequel to justification by faith.

Many people initially found the concept of holiness by faith counter-intuitive, assuming that "human effort was the chief element in sanctification."⁵⁶ However, those attracted to and active within the Keswick community consistently admitted that their personal efforts to become holy always failed. Romans 7:15 was typical. "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." Walter Sloan testified in 1883 that his efforts had been trapping him in a cycle of "failure and confession; always going back and forward and never getting any further . . . trying to live under the old covenant, when I ought to be living under the new covenant."⁵⁷ Like justification, Keswick concluded that sanctification was not a matter of travail.

⁵³Jonathan Edwards, "Striving After Perfection" in *Works* 19:687.

⁵⁴Robert Pearsall Smith, *Holiness through Faith: Light on the Way of Holiness*, Rev. ed. (New York: Anson D.F. Randolph & Co., 1870), 25. Original emphasis.

⁵⁵W. Y. Fullerton, "A Keswick Apologia," *The Keswick Convention* (1932), 113.

⁵⁶H. W. Webb-Peploe, "Early Keswick Conventions," in Harford-Battersby, *The Keswick Convention: Its Message, Its Method and Its Men*, 40.

⁵⁷Walter B. Sloan, "Testimony Meeting," *The Life of Faith* 5, no. 58 (October 1883), 195.

If effort was the primary hindrance to holiness, rest was the catalyst. No single word was more important for describing an individual's new disposition at the moment of crisis or the ensuing process. To cease striving for holiness and restfully allow God to bring it about was the antidote to a defeated life. Evan Hopkins told the convention in 1895 that "If you are struggling you are using your strength; using your strength is not letting it go."⁵⁸ Likewise, in 1931 Bishop Taylor Smith adamantly declared, "No, not human effort, not wrestling faith, but resting faith: that is the secret."⁵⁹ Participants frequently testified that the secret worked. Lenard Shaw utilized the following verse to illustrate the moment he realized that "holiness . . . did not come by *striving*, but by *trusting*."

Long I'd sought with will unbended
To attain the promised rest;
Till at length, all struggles ended,
Simply trusting I was blest.⁶⁰

Holiness, in other words, required an intentional shift from active pursuit to passive reception and was, according to Keswick, the most natural interpretation of Christ's words in Matthew 11:28—"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

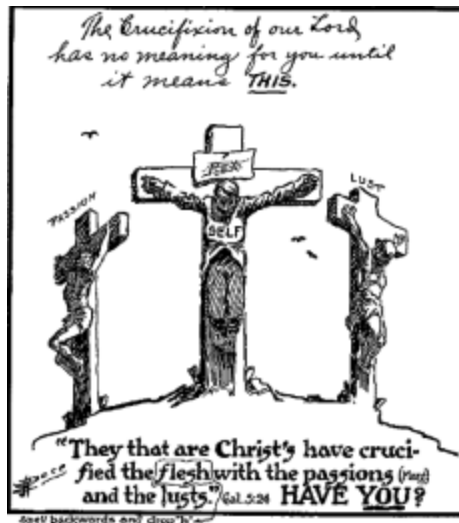
Giving up one's efforts was commonly described as giving up oneself. The "self," taught Keswick, was the source of fruitless exertion and had to be acquiesced or disposed of. F. B. Meyer was fond of telling people that "i" was the center of "sin" and that if the letter "h" was elided, then the word "flesh" was "self" spelled backwards. His point, of course, was that self was the source of all sin, "the curse of our life before regeneration and after," and had to be done away with, a point Ernest J. Pace cleverly illustrated on several occasions.⁶¹

⁵⁸Evan H. Hopkins, "Satan, Circumstances, and Self," *The Keswick Week* (1895), 57.

⁵⁹Taylor Smith, "The Rest that Abides," *The Keswick Convention* (1931), 63.

⁶⁰Leonard K. Shaw, "From Twilight to Sunlight; or, Rest Sought and Found," *The Life of Faith* 12, no. 140 (August 1890), 148. Original emphasis.

⁶¹F. B. Meyer, *Back to Bethel: Separation from Sin and Fellowship with God* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1901), 43; E. J. Pace, *Christian Cartoons* (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Company, 1922), 17; E. J. Pace, *Pictures That Talk: Series Two* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1929).



Evan Hopkins repeatedly emphasized the same thing. "The self-life is not something that is to be improved, or sanctified, or repressed; the self-life is something that is to be terminated, brought to an end."⁶² In fact, the only way to let go of the hindering and sinful self was simply to consider it dead. Here Romans 6 was particularly important. Keswick maintained

⁶²Evan H. Hopkins, "Self-Conquest," *The Keswick Week* (1907), 56.

that there was an important connection between an objective fact stated in verse 6 and a subjective appropriation prescribed in verse 11. Verse 6 states, “knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin.” The crucifixion of the old man (i.e., the self) with Christ was understood as a legal or judicial deliverance from sin. However, experiential holiness emerges when this judicial deliverance was appropriated. Verse 11, which states, “Even so reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin,” was seen as an imperative to acknowledge that the sinful self is deceased, no longer possessing the authority to rule. “I am freed from sin,” declared W. Y. Fullerton in 1932, “because I reckon that I died when Christ died. I am freed from sin because I reckon that when Christ died, sin died.”⁶³ Holiness became possible only after the self was viewed as a corpse.

Giving up the self, everyone agreed, was difficult and required divine assistance. It was a challenge convention participants acknowledged through hymns such as “Oh, Give Me Rest from Self!”

My savior, Thou has offered rest;
Oh, give it then to me,
The rest of ceasing from myself,
To find my all in Thee

This cruel self, oh, how it strives,
And works within my breast,
To come between Thee and my soul,
And keep me back from rest

How many subtle forms it takes
Of seeming verity,
As if it were not *safe* to rest
And venture all on Thee

O Lord, I seek a holy rest,
A victory over sin!
I seek that Thou alone shouldst reign
O'er all without, within.⁶⁴

⁶³W. Y. Fullerton, “A Keswick Apologia,” *The Keswick Convention* (1932), 111.

⁶⁴Evan H. Hopkins, “Oh, Give me Rest from Self!” in Mountain and Hopkins, eds., *Hymns of Consecration and Faith*, no. 30.

Although letting go of the self and its efforts culminated in the crisis experience, many Keswick participants admitted there could be a weaning process. One of Keswick's most popular hymns, "None of Self, and All of Thee," described the gradual death of self that ultimately produced a full surrender. Composed by Theodore Monod at William Cowper-Temple's Broadland's Conference in 1874, the lyrics stated:

Oh, the bitter shame and sorrow,
That a time could ever be,
When I heard the Savior's pity
Plead in vain, and proudly answered,—
"All of self, and none of Thee."

Yet He found me; I beheld him
Bleeding on the cursed tree;
Heard Him pray, "Forgive them, Father,"
And my wistful heart said faintly,—
"Some of self, and some of Thee."

Day by day His tender Mercy,
Healing, helping, full and free,
Sweet and strong, and ah! So patient,
Brought me lower while I whispered,—
"Less of Self, and more of Thee."

Higher than the highest heavens,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lord, Thy love at last hath conquered:
Grant me now my soul's petition,—
"None of self, and all of Thee."⁶⁵

Regardless of how long it took to generate a crisis, the effort, struggle, and striving presented in Romans 7 ceased only after the self ceased.

With the self removed, God could then proceed to bring about the holiness desired and demanded. This, said Keswick, was the message of Galatians 2:20, which states "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me." A variety of examples were used to explain how Christ's power displaced human effort. Evan Hopkins said in 1895 that Christ was like an engine and believers like train cars, the latter which could be moved only by attaching or coupling to the

⁶⁵Theodore Monod, "None of Self, and All of Thee" in Mountain and Hopkins, eds., *Hymns of Consecration and Faith*, no. 53.

former by faith.⁶⁶ More than fifty years later Fred Mitchell explained sanctification to the convention with a similar idea. “Imagine a boy riding up a steep hill against a head wind, when he hears the sound of a motor lorry overtaking him.” Any such boy, he went on to say, “would catch hold, and then the motor lorry would take him easily to the top. He would get there not by effort of his own; but he must take hold and keep hold.”⁶⁷ Ernest J. Pace likened God’s power to a stream waiting to turn a water wheel to those who would allow it.⁶⁸



All such illustrations were designed to communicate the belief that holy living and divine vitality were available by passive reception rather than strenuous exertion. After all, reasoned Keswick, Christ had told the Apostle Paul “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 2:9).

Such power, cautioned Keswick, was not necessarily permanent. No single act of self surrender, said George Macgregor, “is sufficient, but must be followed by an attitude of never-ceasing dependence, hourly and

⁶⁶Evan H. Hopkins, “The Faith Life,” *The Keswick Week* (1895), 31.

⁶⁷Fred Mitchell, “The Discipline of Faith,” *The Keswick Week* (1947), 162.

⁶⁸Pace, *Christian Cartoons*, 84.

momentarily, on the Lord Jesus as our Keeper.”⁶⁹ An individual would always be tempted to reclaim the crucified self and consequently return to his or her previous toils and acts of sin. “Here is one inexhaustible paradox of this great matter”; explained Handley Moule. “On one side a true and total self-denial, on the other, a daily need of self-crucifixion.”⁷⁰ Satan, as was often pointed out, worked diligently to resuscitate the crucified self. Speaking in 1896, Evan Hopkins warned that “the devil will try to come and dislodge you, he will come with all his wiles and he will say, ‘There is no danger now, you need not be afraid now.’” The consequence, he continued to tell the audience, “is that you step out of that position, you get outside the fort.”⁷¹ The self was like a weed that continues to reappear even after being trampled underfoot.

For Keswick, the rest that accompanied the death of self was not synonymous with inactivity. On the contrary, holiness derived from passivity “begets intense activity” for the Lord.⁷² The reason was simple. “If you come and give yourself up as an empty vessel and trust God to fill you,” explained Andrew Murray, “God will do his own work.”⁷³ The same power that purified Christians also enabled productive service for those who would simply allow it. “All real service,” said J. Stuart Holden, “is but the effluence of the Holy Spirit through yielded and filled lives.”⁷⁴ As such, active Christian service was always encouraged so long as it emerged from a disposition of surrender and rest. After all, noted J. B. Figgis in 1882, “it is not the Martha work but the Martha spirit that God finds fault with.”⁷⁵ No one ever left a Keswick convention under the impression that holiness resulted in isolated contemplativeness. As Hubert Brooke noted, the “wholehearted” surrenders generated at Kes-

⁶⁹G. H. C. Macgregor, *A Holy Life and How to Live It* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 69.

⁷⁰H. C. G. Moule, *Thoughts on Christian Sanctity* (London: Seeley & Co., 1886), 30.

⁷¹Evan H. Hopkins, “The Triumphant Position,” *The Keswick Week* (1896), 91.

⁷²Evan H. Hopkins, “The Faith Life,” *The Keswick Week* (1895), 30.

⁷³Andrew Murray, *The Deeper Christian Life: An Aid to Its Attainment* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1895), 61.

⁷⁴J. Stuart Holden, *The Price of Power* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1908), 46.

⁷⁵J. B. Figgis, “‘Cumbered,’ or, Martha and Mary,” *The Life of Faith* 4, no. 47 (November 1882), 231.

wick “in very many cases led to an increased activity of service.”⁷⁶ The Keswick constituency was not composed of naval gazers.

Keswick's position on the activity/passivity polarity regarding sanctification was unequivocal: holiness was *never* a matter of exertion. Like justification, sanctification came through faith and was generated by God's power. All that was required was a letting go of oneself and its laborious efforts. Although putting away the self culminated in a moment, the Christian needed to vigilantly watch for its reemergence and act accordingly, always ready to reaffirm its death. Only after a person was emptied of self could God fill his chosen vessels to accomplish kingdom work that would otherwise seem unimaginable. Power was the corollary to a purity rooted in passivity. “When I am weak,” said Keswick, “then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).

Polarity #3: Eradication versus Counteraction

Evangelicals have always been stalwart defenders of original sin, the concept that the sin of Adam and Eve is inevitably transmitted to all subsequent generations and plagues them with a corrupt or fallen nature. When John Taylor of Norwich questioned the idea in *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, both Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley were prompted to compose lengthy responses, insisting that it constituted a nonnegotiable component of Christian theology.⁷⁷ Less clear, however, was what precisely happened to this corrupted nature after regeneration. For those in the Reformed tradition, an individual's sinful nature was gradually deadened, although never finally exterminated in this life. In John Owen's *Mortification of Sin in Believers* he claimed there was a “real physical efficiency on the root and habit of sin, for the weakening, destroying, and taking it away.”⁷⁸ Charles Hodge likewise insisted sanctification included “the removing more and more the principles of evil still infecting our nature.”⁷⁹ By contrast, many of those in the Wesleyan tradi-

⁷⁶Hubert Brook, “Christian Holiness and Evangelical Work” in *Holiness by Faith: A Manual of Keswick Teaching*, 139.

⁷⁷John Taylor, *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination*, 3rd ed. (London: J. Waugh, 1750); Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1758); John Wesley, *The Doctrine of Original Sin: According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* (Bristol: E. Farley, 1757).

⁷⁸John Owen, “On the Mortification of Sin in Believers” in *The Works of John Owen*, 16 vols., vol. 6 (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), 19.

⁷⁹Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 221.

tion believed that an individual's sin nature was dissolved at the instant of Christian perfection or entire sanctification. The Methodist preacher James Rogers, for example, happily testified to the moment in which "all inbred sin was removed" from his wife, a change in constitution he himself had experienced years before.⁸⁰ Keswick introduced a third holiness alternative by denying that a person's sin nature was ever eradicated in this life, either gradually or instantaneously.

In Romans 7:19 Paul says "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing." Those who came to Keswick agreed that the source of this undesired behavior was the flesh, an inherited and inherent tendency to sin. "From the central part of our nature," said Evan Hopkins, "sin reigns over the whole man."⁸¹ The flesh was considered the primary obstacle to holiness, repeatedly frustrating well-intentioned efforts and shattering sincere resolutions. It was also relentless, never relaxing and perpetually pursuing the host it lived within. "If you enter a monastery," warned J. Russell Howden, "you do not leave the flesh, the self-life, behind you. You take it with you."⁸² The flesh, in other words, applied to everyone, including ascetics. Although the guilt incurred through this sin nature had been pardoned for Christians, its power was not automatically broken. For Keswick, many evangelicals were defeated in their pursuits of holiness because they had a fundamental misunderstanding of this carnal nature and how Scripture intended the Christian to respond to it.

Contrary to theories that sanctification was metaphysically achieved by eradicating this nature, Keswick insisted that God himself held it in check by implanting a new nature, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2). In other words, God elected to make holiness possible not by destroying the tendency to sin, but rather by introducing an additional, controlling force. There were a variety of terms used to explain this theory; the most common was "counteraction." Evan Hopkins repeatedly explained to his audiences that "this tendency to evil may be divinely *counteracted* by the indwelling Spirit, but it is not removed."⁸³

⁸⁰ Thomas Jackson, ed. *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (London: John Mason, 1837), 387.

⁸¹ Hopkins, *The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life*, 10.

⁸² J. Russell Howden, "The Way of Victory" in Herbert F. Stevenson, *The Ministry of Keswick*, Second Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), 102.

⁸³ Evan H. Hopkins, "Important Distinctions," *The Life of Faith* 12, no. 137 (May 1890), 88.

This, he said, was precisely the point of Galatians 5:17, which states “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would.” Although the passage describes a conflict, said Hopkins, “the whole inner experience of the conflict is changed when, instead of trying to conquer the ‘flesh’ ourselves, we commit all to Him who is ‘able to subdue all things unto himself.’”⁸⁴ Speaking on the same passage at the convention in 1931, Guy H. King explained “These two natures, according to Scripture, are contrary to one another and in incessant conflict.” He further emphasized that “each of us may determine according to which principle we shall lead our lives. Either we shall lead them with the flesh governing, or we shall allow that new nature, the Spirit, to counteract the flesh.”⁸⁵

Although the term counteraction was most common, Keswick utilized a variety of additional terms or phrases to express the same idea. Addressing the convention in 1934, W. W. Martin said that the method of sanctification was “not by eradication or annihilation of the old nature, but by its *continual subjection* and *paralysis* through faith.”⁸⁶ Donald Barnhouse spoke of a “constraining force” provided by God in sanctification since “the old nature will still be there.”⁸⁷ Many others simply noted God himself was able to “keep” those who were willing.

“There is in Him,” said Charles Inwood in 1909, “an abundance of power; and you can be set free, and kept from the dominance of the carnal by the super-mighty power and dominance of the Holy Spirit of God.”⁸⁸ Regardless of the term implemented, there was a firm conviction that the carnal nature of humanity was subjugated rather than destroyed. After all, reasoned Keswick, the opening words of Jude’s benediction seemed to assume such was the case. “Now to him who is able to keep

⁸⁴Evan H. Hopkins, “Difficulties Answered,” *The Life of Faith* 12, no. 140 (August 1890), 152.

⁸⁵Guy H. King, “The Secret of Sanctification,” *The Keswick Week* (1931), 86.

⁸⁶W. W. Martin, “The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: Purity through the Blood,” *The Keswick Convention* (1934), 136. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁷Donald Grey Barnhouse, *God’s Methods for Holy Living* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1937), 68.

⁸⁸Charles Inwood, “The Unveiling of the Carnal,” in Stevenson, *Keswick’s Authentic Voice: Sixty-Five Dynamic Addresses Delivered at the Keswick Convention. 1875-1957*, 79.

you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing.”

The concept of counteraction endured for decades, in part, because it could be explained through memorable analogies, many of which were initially provided by Evan Hopkins. The likening of the sin nature to gravity was a favorite. “The law of gravitation,” explained Hopkins in 1893, “is not suspended when, instead of sinking, you float on the water within the life-belt; but it is *counteracted by a superior law*.” In the same way, he continued, “we do not triumph by virtue of our own struggles and efforts to keep from sinking, but by abiding in the life-belt and letting Christ have the whole weight of our load, which he counteracts by His superior power.”⁸⁹ Any example of one force overcoming another force was quickly enlisted for explaining how the sin nature was held at bay.

The insistence on the counteraction principle was more than mere speculation. According to Keswick, any theory of eradication had dangerous implications. The assumption that the flesh must be gradually “mortified, starved out, and thus weakened,” according to Hopkins, “falls miserably short of our actually privileges of that which is really possible.”⁹⁰ In other words, gradual eradication imprisoned believers within the seventh chapter of Romans. The theory of instantaneous eradication was even more perilous, ultimately leading well-intentioned people to erroneously assume Christian perfection and deny their dependence on God. H. W. Webb-Peploe solemnly warned the convention in 1885 that “the man who believes in a sanctification which eradicates sin from his person, as a principle, must be satisfied with his own condition, and be able to take his place more or less independent of the Savior.”⁹¹ Although eradicationists denied such accusations, Keswick was resolute in its position. When convention speaker Reuben A. Torrey published his *Fundamental Doctrines of Christian Faith* in 1918, the chapter on sanctification declared that “those who teach ‘the eradication of the carnal nature’ are grasping after a great and precious truth, but they have expressed that truth in a very

⁸⁹Evan H. Hopkins, “Deliverance from the Law of Sin” in Stevenson, *Keswick’s Authentic Voice: Sixty-Five Dynamic Addresses Delivered at the Keswick Convention. 1875-1957*, 161. Original Emphasis.

⁹⁰ Evan H. Hopkins, “Three Lines of Teaching on Holiness,” *The Life of Faith* 11, no. 124 (April 1889), 71,72.

⁹¹ H. W. Webb-Peploe, “Sin” in Stevenson, *Keswick’s Authentic Voice: Sixty-Five Dynamic Addresses Delivered at the Keswick Convention. 1875-1957*, 31.

inaccurate, unfortunate, and unscriptural way. . . .”⁹² Right living required the right understanding of the Christian’s nature.

Counteracting the flesh was always contingent on an individual continuing to yield himself or herself to God. Just as Peter began to sink when removing his eyes from Christ, so too would the victorious Christian who ceased relying on God. The iron, in other words, remained glowing hot only as long as it remained in the fire. “Here then,” said Hopkins when discussing the counteraction principle, “we have, not a state, but a maintained condition.”⁹³ It was precisely for this reason that Andrew Murray so regularly exhorted his audiences to “abide” in Christ, a reference to John 15. “He does, indeed, keep down the power of the old nature, so that it does not regain dominion over the soul.” However, he continued, “with most Christians the abiding is so feeble and intermittent, that sin continually obtains the ascendancy, and brings the soul into subjection.”⁹⁴ A counteracted sin nature could never be taken for granted.

In short, Keswick created a new holiness polarity by denying that the sin nature was ever eradicated. A holy life, on the contrary, was possible only because God counteracted or disabled the sin nature. It was a theory that permitted and promoted a victorious life without delay. It also provided an explanation for those who had reached such a life and then backslidden. Although the counteracting power of God was always available for those who were willing to submit, it could be taken away as quickly as it was given. “Now, however old a Christian you are,” said W. Y. Fullerton in 1916, “you know that you always walk beside a precipice.”⁹⁵ God’s power alone prevented the victorious Christian from falling off the ledge.

CRITICS

Although the early Keswick conventions only attracted several hundred participants, by the turn of the century that number had grown to several thousand. The attention surrounding the convention and its network of

⁹²Reuban A. Torrey, *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918).

⁹³Hopkins, *The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life*, 22.

⁹⁴Andrew Murray, *Abide in Christ: Thoughts on the Blessed Life of Fellowship with the Son of God* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1882), 189.

⁹⁵W. Y. Fullerton, “The Expression” in Herbert F. Stevenson, *The Ministry of Keswick*, First Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), 315.

speakers quickly made the term “Keswick” a household name within the evangelical ranks. After the convention in 1907, a visitor from the continent commented that “I have seen Westminster Abbey, I have seen Windsor Castle, and now, *best of all*, I have seen the Keswick Convention.”⁹⁶ The notoriety was accompanied by an increased scrutiny of the convention’s message, specifically, what Keswick “stood for.” Despite Keswick’s best efforts to present itself as a unified movement in pursuit of holiness, outsiders had serious misgivings. According to numerous critics, Keswick was on the wrong end of at least one polarity, a fault that could not be dismissed.

The Wesleyan Critique

Most of those within the Keswick constituency came from denominations outside of the Wesleyan tradition. One notable exception was Charles Inwood, an ordained minister from the Methodist Church of Ireland. Inwood labored tirelessly on behalf of the Keswick message for thirty-six years. In addition to providing countless convention addresses, it is reported that he spread the message of Keswick in at least twenty-eight different countries.⁹⁷ Other Methodists concluded that Keswick was simply repackaging Wesley with different terminology. Writing for the *Methodist Review* in 1901, the American James Mudge said “We are disposed to think that, when all of Wesley’s words are taken into consideration . . . he did not really hold to an extent of sanctification essentially different from that taught by the Keswick leaders.”⁹⁸ Lamenting the pride and stubbornness within his own tradition, Mudge suggested that Keswick was a movement “to be considerably patterned after.”⁹⁹ Yet this attitude was not the norm. For most of those seeking to follow in the steps of Wesley, Keswick presented a defective approach to genuine holiness.

From 1903 to 1911, four different individuals from the Wesleyan tradition published negative assessments of the Keswick movement. The first came from Christian Wismer Ruth with *Entire Sanctification: A Second Blessing*. Ruth was an evangelist from Indianapolis with the Holiness Christian church and early worker for the Church of the Nazarene. Although committed to uniting churches of the holiness movement, those

⁹⁶Walter B. Sloan, *These Sixty Years: The Story of the Keswick Convention* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1935), 62. Original Emphasis.

⁹⁷Ibid., 39. According to Sloan’s index, Inwood is referred to more than any other individual.

⁹⁸James Mudge, “Keswick Teaching,” *Methodist Review* 83 (1901), 261.

associated with Keswick were not eligible. Keswick, said Ruth, maintained one of five spurious understandings of sanctification. "According to this theory the individual in reality can never become holy; that while he within himself is not holy, Christ's holiness is imputed to him, and for his sake the individual is counted holy."¹⁰⁰ Such a position, said Ruth, was "folly" and tantamount to antinomianism. True holiness, he explained, involved the "eradication of inbred sin and *imparted* holiness."¹⁰¹ The point was nonnegotiable. The "only people who . . . have any experience or testimony to sanctification" are those holding to the eradication theory.¹⁰² For Ruth, a theory of counteraction or repression was enough to invalidate the whole movement. After all, he reasoned, I John 1:7 clearly stated that "the blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin."

Ruth was not alone in his concern over Keswick's concept of counteraction. In 1907, William Baxter Godbey published his own assessment of the movement with *Keswickism*. Licensed by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1853, Godbey became famous for his raucous revival meetings and the promotion of radical holiness after his own experience of entire sanctification in 1868. Although frequently straying from the topic at hand, his book intends to demonstrate that biblically and historically sanctification is "clearly enunciated as the indispensable sine qua non of ultimate salvation without which no one shall see the Lord."¹⁰³ As such, a correct theological understanding of sanctification is imperative. Here Godbey insists on the eradication theory by likening sanctification to uncontaminated honey. "In regeneration you find a bee-hive. In sanctification all the wax and trash of every kind, including dead bees, are strained out of your honey, so it is pure and delicious." By contrast, he continued, "the suppression theory keeps you always cleaning up your heart ground simply for the same obnoxious weeds . . . to spring up again and keep you always at work."¹⁰⁴ The implications were serious. The salvation of the world was hindered because "the Lord's people are so

⁹⁹Ibid., 262.

¹⁰⁰C. W. Ruth, *Entire Sanctification: A Second Blessing, Together with Life Sketch, Bible Readings and Sermon Outlines* (Chicago: Christian witness company, 1903), 25.

¹⁰¹Ibid. Original Emphasis.

¹⁰²Ibid., 26.

¹⁰³ William B. Godbey, *Keswickism* (Louisville, Ky.: Pentecostal Pub. Co., 1907).

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 27-29.

encumbered with the weeds in their own garden, that they have neither time nor strength to go and help their neighbor out of the swirling floods of sin and wickedness.”¹⁰⁵ The Keswick theory of counteraction was largely to blame.

Godbey did not question the motives of those associated with Keswick. On the contrary, many were well-intentioned, including the group of Keswick missionaries he encountered while traveling in India. “I found those dear Keswickal people exceedingly devout, humble, zealous, and oh, such praying for the descension and infilling and enduement of the Holy Ghost, it seemed to me I never heard before.”¹⁰⁶ However, in Godbey’s judgment, their claims to sanctification were “simply a good case of regeneration, as they only claim to have sin suppressed and kept down by grace in a subjugated state.”¹⁰⁷ The reason, he continued, was that the state of Christianity in Europe had sunk to such depths that numerous individuals wrongly assumed they were justified Christians. As a result, any experience with the Holy Spirit was wrongly interpreted as sanctification “when in fact it is either conversions or reclamation.”¹⁰⁸ In the final analysis, Keswick was simply misguided. “While we have many heresies in the movement we do not so classify Keswickism, as it is a deficiency rather than a heresy.”¹⁰⁹ Despite warnings that “these people are Calvinists . . . they are Keswickists and you can’t change them,” Godbey claims to have successfully won over the Indian missionaries to his own eradicationist position.¹¹⁰ For Godbey, Keswick was correctable.

Addition complaints against Keswick theology were raised by Aaron Merritt Hills, who served as president of the Texas Holiness University and Iowa’s Central Holiness University. Hills was not always opposed to Keswick. Originally a Congregationalist from Scotland, he had been positively influenced by both F. B. Meyer and Reuben Torrey, the later who had been a classmate at Yale. “I love them both for the good they are doing to others and for the guidance and help they brought me in one of the critical seasons of my life.”¹¹¹ When he published *Holiness and Power*

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 29.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 49.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 48.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 54.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 59.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 51.

¹¹¹Aaron Merritt Hills, *Pentecost Rejected: and the Effect on the Churches* (Cincinnati: Office of God’s Revivalist, 1902), 63.

for the Church and the Ministry in 1897, both Meyer and Torrey along with a variety of other Keswick personalities were quoted approvingly.¹¹² The mutual fondness was soured, however, apparently after Hills received a frosty reception by Torrey and the Moody Bible Institute a few years later. By 1902 Hills was accusing both Meyers and Torrey of “belittling” the experience of Pentecost by denying the Holy Ghost’s ability “to cleanse the heart from inbred sin.”¹¹³ He further argued that “if the repression theory of Torrey and Meyer is correct . . . this would logically make Satan mightier than God” since God would be unable to remove that which was originally implanted by Satan.¹¹⁴ Soon Hills was applying such criticisms to the Keswick movement as a whole.

In 1910 Hills published *Scripture Holiness and Keswick Teaching Compared*. As the title makes clear, Keswick did not represent the biblical position, in part, because the movement’s theology was so “painfully indistinct” and inconsistent. “With such nebulous teaching,” he said, “we do not wonder that many hungry-hearted people go year after year to Keswick, and come away as mystified and hungry as ever.”¹¹⁵ One thing that was not indistinct, however, was Keswick’s understanding of the carnal nature. As with Ruth and Godbey, the central issue was the theory of counteraction. “Choking down or repressing sin, or counteracting it, is not the process of cleansing the heart” he argued. “The divine method of dealing with sin is always by extermination. All must see that the extirpation of inward pollution is scriptural.”¹¹⁶ Hills recognized that Keswick deserved credit for “laboring with us to lift the tone of piety” and insisted that none of his comments were “in any sense personal.” But ultimately the movement was misguided since what “is called holiness by Keswick teachers is only the obedience of regeneration.”¹¹⁷ In Hills’ estimation, Keswick’s counteraction theory represented an unbiblical and low expectation of what a Christian was prescribed to expect and experience after conversion.

Keswick was criticized the following year as part of Harmon Allen Baldwin’s *Objections to Entire Sanctification Considered*. Baldwin was an

¹¹²Aaron Merritt Hills, *Holiness and Power for the Church and the Ministry* (Cincinnati: M.W. Knapp, 1897).

¹¹³Hills, *Pentecost Rejected: and the Effect on the Churches*, 30.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 61.

¹¹⁵Aaron Merritt Hills, *Scriptural Holiness and Keswick Teaching Compared* (Manchester: Star Hall, 1910), 131.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 51.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 135.

active leader within the Free Methodist Church and an assiduous student of Wesley. Sixteen objections to his understanding of holiness were discussed; “Keswickism” was first. “One of the most dangerous enemies of the experience of holiness which has re-arisen in the last few years clothed in modern apparel is what is commonly called “suppression.”¹¹⁸ Although adherents to this position are “often very pious,” he cautioned, “they give us to understand that such a thing as the entire eradication of the carnal nature from the soul is an impossibility in this world.”¹¹⁹ Such a claim, he continued, is without any biblical warrant. On the contrary, Scripture is filled with exhortations “to get rid of the old man, not suppress him . . . not hide him behind the door like a dirty house keeper does the filth, but let the Spirit of God kill him and rid the house of his presence.”¹²⁰ Furthermore, the suppression theory actually “makes God a perjurer” since, according to Baldwin, God had sworn an oath to Abraham that He would grant holiness.¹²¹ Although Rueben Torrey, F. B. Meyer, and H. W. Webb-Peploe were singled out as representatives of the Keswick position, their arguments against eradication were not directly addressed. Baldwin was content that leaving his readers with a selection of scripture passages would suffice. His concerns over the counteraction theory were not short-lived. He returned to the topic again in 1926 with *The Carnal Mind*.¹²²

Wesleyan concerns against the Keswick concept of counteraction or suppression endured well into the middle of the century. In 1941, Henry Brockett published *Scriptural Freedom from Sin*. Although the work was a detailed response to H. A. Ironside’s *Holiness, the False and the True* rather than Keswick in general, the work was adamant that “the repression of continually active indwelling sin” was unbiblical and “makes Christ to be only a partial Deliverer.”¹²³ In 1953 the Nazarene W. T. Purkiser likewise

¹¹⁸Harmon Allen Baldwin, *Objections to Entire Sanctification Considered* (Pittsburgh: Published for the author, 1911), 11.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 13.

¹²¹Baldwin claimed such an oath is described in Luke 1:73-75.

¹²²Harmon Allen Baldwin, *The Carnal Mind: A Doctrinal and Experimental View of the Subject* (Chicago: Free Methodist Pub. House, 1926).

¹²³Henry E. Brockett, *Scriptural Freedom from Sin: A Defense of the Precious Truth of Entire Sanctification by Faith and an Examination of the Doctrine of “the Two Natures”* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1941), 47. Harry A. Ironside, *Holiness: The False and the True* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1912).

defended the “Wesleyan doctrine” with *Conflicting Concepts of Holiness*. Responding to the views of C. I. Scofield and the Bible institutes, which Purkiser said were influenced by “the Keswick conference in this century,” consecrated believers are “completely cleansed from every remaining particle of inherited sin”¹²⁴ By the 1960s the tone had softened significantly and amicable offers of dialogue were extended. According to George Failing, a minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Keswick was simply one of several holiness developments after Wesley, particularly appealing to those with Calvinistic sympathies. To be sure, the movement was guilty of failing “to teach real deliverance from the power and practice of sin.”¹²⁵ However, pointing to the works of F. B. Meyer, Andrew Murray, and Evan Hopkins, he concluded that “one cannot but thank God for it [Keswick].”¹²⁶ Four years later, in the first issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, W. Ralph Thompson identified the counteraction theory as the primary theological difference between the Keswick and Wesleyan views of sanctification. “Experientially,” he cordially added, “both schools of thought stand together.”¹²⁷

Wesleyans had much in common with the Keswick movement. Both insisted that sanctification was by faith and required some form of a crisis experience. But the polarity concerning the eradication or counteraction of the sin nature was a consistent deal-breaker. For decades neither side was willing to entertain an alternative explanation of what happened to the carnal nature at the moment of sanctification, which often ignited rather less-than-holy debates. For Wesleyans, the counteraction theory undermined God’s ability to provide *real* deliverance from sin. For Keswick, the eradication theory implied that a sanctified Christian no longer required God’s grace. Both sides were sure the biblical evidence supported their own view.

¹²⁴W. T. Purkiser, *Conflicting Concepts of Holiness: Some Current Issues in the Doctrine of Sanctification* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1953), 15-16.

¹²⁵George E. Failing, “Developments in Holiness Theology after Wesley,” in *Insights into Holiness: Discussions of Holiness by Fifteen Leading Scholars of the Wesleyan Persuasion*, ed. Kenneth Geiger (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1962), 31.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 26.

¹²⁷W. Ralph Thompson, “An Appraisal of the Keswick and Wesleyan Contemporary Positions,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 1, no. 1 (1966): 16.

The Reformed Critique

Nearly all Wesleyan critics described Keswick theology as “Calvinistic,” a label that continues to be applied today. But many in the Reformed tradition disagreed with this categorization, insisting that Keswick’s true affinities were located elsewhere. In fact, some of the most volatile critiques of the Keswick movement were composed by those who explicitly identified themselves with Calvinism. Unlike the Wesleyan tradition, which primarily opposed Keswick over the issue of eradication, the Reformed evaluations often challenged the movement on its approach to all three polarities.

Prior to the beginning of the Keswick convention in 1875, the holiness campaigns of individuals such as William Boardman and Robert Pearsall Smith troubled many Reformed leaders. John Charles Ryle is a good example. Educated at Oxford, Ryle was a prominent Anglican Evangelical that exercised some influence across the Atlantic through his writings. In 1880 he became the first bishop of Liverpool. Ryle was quick to recognize that evangelical teaching on holiness was evolving and published his concerns in 1877 with *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots*. Although intentionally avoiding personal names, he was explicitly concerned with “the higher life” theology, a title associated with the burgeoning Keswick movement. Ryle heartily agreed with holiness revivalists that the “standard of living has become painfully low in many quarters” and that “sanctification, in its place and proportion, is quite as important as justification.”¹²⁸ But he had grave concerns that the topic was not resting on the “right foundations.” Those foundations required the correct approach to the crisis/process and activity/passivity polarities.

Ryle rejected the notion that sanctification required a crisis experience of any kind. The “theory of a sudden, mysterious transition of a believer into a state of blessedness and *entire consecration*, at one mighty bound, I cannot receive.” Scripture, as he understood it, presented holiness exclusively as “gradual growth in grace” without any distinct moment of consecration. In fact, the very idea of a post conversion experience created a “new-fangled” division nowhere described or implied in Scripture. As such, Ryle suspected that when individuals claimed to be consecrated, “they were in reality converted for the first time!”¹²⁹ He fur-

¹²⁸J. C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1956), vii.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, xv.

ther argued that promoting an experience of consecration functionally aligned the movement with Roman Catholicism. "It is well known that Romish writers often maintain that the Church is divided into three classes—sinners, penitents, and saints." In the same way, he continued, those "who tell us that professing Christians are of three sorts—the unconverted, the converted, and the partakers of the 'higher life' of complete consecration, appear to me to occupy very much the same ground!"¹³⁰ Such a comparison was serious, especially when considering that several of Keswick's early leaders had been active within the Oxford movement several decades before. Whether or not the accusation was warranted did not matter. Real holiness, according to Ryle, was not sequentially dependent on an event following conversion.

Ryle also took issue with the claim that personal holiness did not require effort. "I doubt it," was his answer to the question "Is it wise to proclaim in so bald, naked, and unqualified a way as many do, that the holiness of converted people is *by faith only, and not at all be personal exertion*?"¹³¹ According to Ryle, there were no less than "twenty-five or thirty distinct passages in the Epistles where believers are plainly taught to pursue active personal exertion." Those who interpreted the phrase "yield yourselves" in Romans 6 to mean stop fighting or struggling were badly misinterpreting Paul's message. The word "yield," he explained, "will not bear the sense of 'placing ourselves passively in the hands of another.'" On the contrary, "any Greek student" understands that the word really means "actively 'presenting' ourselves for use, employment, and service." The true Christian was a soldier engaged in "holy violence, a conflict, a warfare, [and] a fight" against sin and the forces of evil.¹³² The call to put on the full armor of God in Ephesians 6:11 made this clear. Far from producing heightened levels of holiness, history demonstrated that passivity only produced antinomianism and extremism.

The Keswick concept of counteraction or suppression had not yet been fully developed when Ryle composed his *Holiness* in 1877. Just two years prior one observer for *The London Quarterly Review* concluded that Robert Smith did not actually promote the "abolition of sin from the nature . . . but of the perfect acceptance of an obedient soul, obedient through faith working by love, on the part of God for Christ's sake, and in

¹³⁰Ibid., xiv.

¹³¹Ibid., viii. Original emphasis.

¹³²Ibid., xvi.

virtue of union with him.”¹³³ A more concrete description of the counteraction theory emerged by the end of the decade. Although not using the specific term counteraction, in 1878 Evan Hopkins was claiming that Christ was an “overcoming power” to the natural tendency to sin just as lifebelt keeps a person from sinking.¹³⁴ Regardless of when the theory was fully in place, there were hints within Ryle’s critique that the counteraction concept was beginning to emerge. More specifically, he expressed concern over the language “Christ in us” that some were using to explain the mechanics of sanctification, an error derived from misunderstanding Galatians 2:20. He further warned that in at least one instance the results were disastrous after believers concluded that “Christ lived in them, and *undertook* everything for them!” Ryle’s ultimate concern was simply that when people speak of “Christ being in us” they “take care to explain what [they] mean.”¹³⁵ For later Reformed critics, as we shall see, the phrase did not mean that Christ counteracted or suppressed an inveterate sin nature.

Ryle apparently made peace with the young Keswick movement and agreed to speak at the convention in 1879. Joining D. L. Moody on the platform, he appeared at the convention again in 1892. Other Reformed critics, however, never came to terms with Keswick. The most notable was Benjamin B. Warfield, who arrived at Princeton in 1887. Like his predecessors Charles Hodge and Archibald Alexander Hodge, Warfield carefully monitored signs of doctrinal innovation that conflicted with his own Presbyterian heritage. Although the first formal Keswick convention was not held in the United States until 1913, its message had long since been established. In addition to a large corpus of literature, individuals such as F. B. Meyer, Andrew Murray, H. W. Webb-Peploe, and G. Campbell Morgans were prominent speakers at Moody’s Northfield Conferences. In fact, after attending the Northfield Conference in 1895 one Englishman remarked that “there is no need of any one’s going to Keswick who was at Northfield in August last; for the cream of Keswick teaching was to be found there.”¹³⁶ When Keswick conferences were held in Princeton, New Jersey from 1916-1918, the Princetonian pounced.

¹³³“The Brighton Convention and Its Opponents,” *The London Quarterly Review*, no. 89 (October 1875), 114.

¹³⁴Evan H. Hopkins, *Thoughts on Life and Godliness* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1878), 14.

¹³⁵Ryle, *Holiness*, xiv. Original emphasis.

¹³⁶H. W. Webb-Peploe, *The Victorious Life: The Post-Conference Addresses Delivered at East Northfield, Mass., August 17-25, 1895* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Co., 1896), iii.

Warfield assessed Keswick teaching at length in 1918 with an essay in the *Princeton Theological Review* titled "The Victorious Life."¹³⁷ The critique was primarily concerned with the movement's "chief promoter," who Warfield identified as Charles Gallaudet Trumbell.¹³⁸ A graduate of Yale, Trumbell was particularly influential by serving as editor of the *Sunday School Times*. According to Warfield, Keswick theology was faulty in several ways, including an inappropriate approach to all three polarities discussed in this chapter. To begin with, the movement was impatient with God's "recreation of a lost race," unable to understand "why He should proceed by a process." More specifically, "these impatient souls . . . must at all costs have all that is coming to them at once."¹³⁹ As a result, they developed the incorrect belief that the deliverance from the power of sin (sanctification) could be obtained in a moment similar and subsequent to the deliverance from the penalty of sin (justification). Such separation of justification and sanctification was not only "crass," but actually created "two different kinds of Christians, a lower and a higher variety."¹⁴⁰ For Warfield, the distinction was patently false. "All Christians of course know that our Lord delivers His people from the power as well as the penalty of sin; they would not be Christians if they were not entrusting to Him their complete deliverance from both."¹⁴¹ Sanctification, in other words, fully commenced at the moment of justification.

Warfield was likewise critical with the coupling of holiness and passivity. Quoting extensively from Trumbell's own works, Warfield concluded that the concepts of surrender and abandonment implied in phrases such as "let go and let God" were a form of quietism. "It appears that on our act of subduing ourselves to God there follows a quietism, when He takes the reins." This, he continued, was "the fundamental teaching of the whole school."¹⁴² For Warfield, quietism was a particularly dangerous error because "it may easily run over into antinomianism."¹⁴³

¹³⁷Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "The Victorious Life," *The Princeton Theological Review* 16, no. 3 (1918). The essay was posthumously republished along with eleven others in *Perfectionism*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931).

¹³⁸Warfield also spends time critiquing individuals such as Robert C. McQuilken, A. B. Simpson, and W. H. Griffith Thomas.

¹³⁹Warfield, "The Victorious Life," 321-22.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 330.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 328.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 335.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 352.

It was also without any biblical warrant. In a later essay he noted the incompatibility between Hannah Whitall Smith's "Quietism" and II Peter 3, particularly verse 18.¹⁴⁴ "Precisely what Peter does in this passage is to require Christians to engage actively in advancing their life of faith" he argued. "Precisely what he says we are to do is 'to exert ourselves,' and to exert ourselves that we may be found on the great day of judgment 'unsullied and faultless' in His sight. . . . There is no Quietism here."¹⁴⁵ Simply put, Keswick was running down the wrong path in its pursuit of holiness. Sanctification required activity.

Warfield also criticized the counteraction theory, identifying a number of substantial shortcomings. In the first place, it was a "fatally inadequate conception of salvation" because it failed to provide "deliverance from sin itself—the corruption of the heart which makes us sinners." Stated differently, "To keep a sinner, remaining a sinner, free from actually sinning, would be but a poor salvation."¹⁴⁶ The theory was also illogical, analogous to a bad tree bearing good fruit. Holy living, he reasoned, cannot emerge from a corrupted nature. "Here too, as in every other sphere of activity, the *operari* follows and must follow the *esse*: a thing must be before it can act, and can act only as it is."¹⁴⁷ Third, the counteraction theory, if true, necessarily implied sinless perfection, a claim that Keswick consistently denied. According to Warfield, if the force counteracting the sinful nature is "infinite God," then "it would seem clearly impossible that the principle of sin should ever be traceable in the effect at all." The theory, in other words, "renders it impossible for the Christian to sin."¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, said Warfield, the Scriptures were unambiguous. "They teach that the Spirit dwells within us in order to affect us, not merely our acts, in order to eradicate our sinfulness and not merely to counteract its effects."¹⁴⁹

The passage of time did little to ameliorate the Reformed objections to Keswick. In 1955, James I. Packer reiterated Warfield's assessment in

¹⁴⁴Warning of the coming of Christ, the verse [RSV] states, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

¹⁴⁵Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "The 'Higher Life' Movement," *The Princeton Theological Review* 17, no. 1 (1919): 80-81.

¹⁴⁶Warfield, "The Victorious Life," 340.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 341.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 343.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 344.

the *Evangelical Quarterly*.¹⁵⁰ The tone of the article was particularly acrimonious and, as the editor later recalled, generated “some very unsanctified reactions from those who disagreed with it.”¹⁵¹ Packer’s hostility was fueled by a negative experience while studying at Oxford in the 1940s.¹⁵² The Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, of which Packer was a member, was heavily influenced by Keswick and its message of victorious Christian living. Despite his numerous acts of consecration, sustained victory over sin was never experienced. Eventually, the distraught Packer was helped by the Puritans, particularly John Owen’s *On Indwelling Sin in Believers* and *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers*. These works, along with Warfield’s essays, provided the base for his own critique of Keswick.

Although only fourteen pages in length, Packer managed to challenge the Keswick approach to all three holiness polarities. Sanctification was not inaugurated through a crisis experience. There was no “act of consecration and faith distinct from that which embraces Christ as Savior.”¹⁵³ Rather, sanctification was a process began at the moment of regeneration and progressively carried out until glorification. Likewise, holiness was not in any sense dependant on passivity. For Packer, the very idea that “If I do anything to defeat sin, sin will defeat me” was not only “express quietism,” but completely incompatible with the Reformed faith.¹⁵⁴ Sanctification was a “work of God” to be sure, but “He performs it by eliciting the active participation of its subjects.” Christians, he further added, “are to work with all their might, knowing that God supplies the might. This is the ‘activism’ which characterizes the Reformed faith.”¹⁵⁵ The counteraction theory was also problematic. “This is a doctrine of the sanctification of our *acts*, offered as a substitute for the Reformed doctrine of the sanctification of our *persons*.”¹⁵⁶ The theory was therefore guilty of minimizing rather than magnifying the work of the Spirit. By the time Packer finished his essay, Keswick theology had been attacked with

¹⁵⁰James I. Packer, “‘Keswick’ and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1955): 153-67.

¹⁵¹F. F. Bruce, *In Retrospect: Remembrance of Things Past* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 188.

¹⁵²A more complete description of this period is found in Alister E. McGrath, *J. I. Packer: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1997), 13-28.

¹⁵³Packer, “‘Keswick’ and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” 158.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 155-56.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 162.

fusillade of pejorative terms including attenuated, delusive, depressing, impoverished, irreligious, and shallow. His only concluding advice came in the form of a question. "May we venture to suggest that the Convention would more effectively promote its avowed aim by reforming its tradition according to the Word of God?"¹⁵⁷

It is important to note that the criticisms of Warfield and Packer extended beyond the three polarities addressed here. More specifically, both the Princetonian and Puritan accused Keswick of being Pelagian, a somewhat awkward charge to conjoin with Quietism. Simply put, they assumed that to "let go" implied a Pelagian act of the will and to "let God" implied a Quietist disposition. It is also worth noting that Packer softened his tone considerably over the decades. Although he still referred to its Keswick teaching as "pietistic goofiness" in 1998, his 1984 book *Keep in Step with the Spirit* was able to acknowledge four "strengths."¹⁵⁸ Regardless of whether Packer's criticisms were accurate or fair, the point remains that not everyone in the Reformed tradition identified with Keswick's perspective on the holiness polarities. From the early days of the convention through the middle of the twentieth century it was repeatedly made known that Keswick was *not* Reformed. In Packer's words, "the two differ as chalk from cheese."¹⁵⁹

Summary

The Keswick movement and its approach to holiness prompted an abundance of polemical literature. These criticisms reveal that both the Wesleyan and Reformed traditions found Keswick to be substantively different from their own positions on holiness by denying that a Christian's sinful nature is ever eradicated. The Reformed tradition further added that Keswick was misguided by promoting a crisis experience subsequent to conversion and denying that sanctification required activity or effort. The distinctions between the three positions or dichotomies are summarized in the following table.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 167.

¹⁵⁸Wendy Murray Zoba, "Knowing Packer: The Lonely Journey of a Passionate Puritan," *Christianity Today* 42, no. 4 (1998): 33; James I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan, N.J.: F. H. Revell, 1984), 148-50. The strengths of Keswick teaching included its focus on 1) the "real perplexity" of Christian sin, 2) the "real pitfalls" of self-confidence, 3) the "real privilege" of union with Christ, and 4) the needs of "real people" to make "repentance the foundation-principle of their daily living."

¹⁵⁹Packer, "'Keswick' and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification," 160.

	Crisis/Process	Passive/Active	Eradication/Counteraction
Reformed	Process	Active	Eradication
Wesleyan	Crisis	Passive	Eradication
Keswick	Crisis and Process	Passive	Counteraction

In retrospect, it is not difficult to see why so many are tempted to classify Keswick teaching as Wesleyan. After all, Keswick encouraged a crisis experience and insisted that passivity was an indispensable component of holiness. It is likewise easy to see why nearly all Wesleyans labeled Keswick “Calvinistic.” In addition to a constituency that included Anglicans, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, the movement’s theory of counteraction appeared tantamount to progressive eradication because there would never be a *full* deliverance from inbred sin in the present life. In reality, the Keswick view of sanctification was never truly Wesleyan or Reformed, but rather an alternative to both.

CONCLUSION

Keswick teaching has been difficult to classify for a variety of reasons. A diverse group of Anglicans, Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Quakers defies simple categories. In addition, the movement intentionally circumscribed its theological concerns around holiness. Issues that would otherwise divide evangelicals, such as baptism, church polity, or universalism, were indefinitely tabled. As a result, historians often default to the “Reformed” label simply because the participation by Methodists was relatively low. Others recognize the emphasis on holiness and default to the “Wesleyan” label. Neither label is appropriate or precise since “Reformed” means a great deal more than “not Wesleyan” and vice versa. When the three holiness polarities described in this essay are considered, Keswick stands alone. Sanctification was both a crisis and process, passive in nature, and a matter of God perpetually counteracting inbred sinfulness. All three points were consistently emphasized and criticized from the early years of the convention to the middle of the twentieth century. Although the theological discrepancies may seem rather inconsequential today, at the time they were of crucial importance to the evangelical population and consistently generated bellicose responses. Referring to Keswick’s theology as either “Reformed” or “Wesleyan” blurs substantial distinctions among all three traditions and thereby minimizes a particularly important component of evangelicalism.

“KESWICKFIED” METHODISM: HOLINESS REVIVALISM AND THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH MISSION IN INDIA, 1870-1910

by

Luther Jeremiah Oconer

Nothing captures the character of early Indian Methodist evangelical culture more than the observation made by John F. Goucher during a tour of India in 1912. “I heard more about the Holy Spirit in the time I was in India (it was a visit of a few months), than in thirty years from the preaching here in America,” remarked the influential Methodist Episcopal Church (hereafter MEC) minister from Baltimore.¹ Emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit indeed permeated the life and culture of the MEC mission enterprise in India which has, to some extent, been alluded to in recent academic forays on Indian Pentecostalism.² This was not only indicative of the form of revivalism which found prevalence in Indian Methodism, but also suggestive of the influence of the Holiness movement, broadly conceived, to MEC missionary thought and practice in India.

Therefore, in this paper I would like to probe into the contours of this holiness presence by looking into the many ways holiness revivalism was employed by prominent MEC missionaries in India from 1870-1910. Beginning with the arrival of William Taylor in 1870, this holiness revival legacy was kept alive by a long line of missionary bishops and their constituents for years. I argue, however, that standard perfectionist Wesleyan terms did not find eminence within the MEC Indian mission; and second, evidence suggests that especially towards the end of the nineteenth

¹As quoted in Brenton T. Badley, *Warne of India: The Life-Story of Bishop Francis Wesley Warne* (Madras: Madras Publishing House, 1932), 17.

²See for example, Gary B. McGee, “‘Latter Rain’ Falling in the East: Early-Twentieth-Century Pentecostalism in India and the Debate over Speaking in Tongues,” *Church History* 68, no. 3 (1999): 651-52; idem, “The Calcutta Revival of 1907 and the Reformulation of Charles F. Parham’s “Bible Evidence” Doctrine,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6, no. 1 (2003): 123-43.

century, the mission had increasingly become “Keswickfied” or turned to non-perfectionist or moderate forms of holiness expressions. Hence, I endeavor to: first, outline the holiness revival work of Taylor and the early manifestations of the influence of the American Holiness movement in Indian Methodist spiritual culture; second, probe into the holiness advocacies of Bishops James M. Thoburn and Francis Wesley Warne as a lens to how holiness piety was articulated in the field; and finally, investigate Indian Methodism’s holiness culture in the years surrounding the highly documented Great Indian Revival of 1905-07.

However, I need to clarify first the term “Keswickfied,” which I am using throughout this paper. It primarily refers to non-perfectionist or moderate expressions of holiness doctrine which were popularized through the annual Keswick convention “for the promotion of practical holiness” in the resort town of Keswick in northwest England which first met in 1875.³ The most generally accepted concept of holiness that later emerged from these annual conventions and became known as definitive Keswick spirituality was essentially a *via media* understanding that was neither Wesleyan nor Reformed, in their strictest sense.⁴ It shied away from the Wesleyan perfectionist notion of the “total eradication” of sin while staying in agreement, to some extent, with the Reformed notion of the inevitability of sin in this life. But what made Keswick different from Reformed is that it also retained a modified Wesleyan optimism which taught that the sinful nature can be “suppressed” through the “Spirit-filled life” or through the constant “indwelling” or “fullness” of the Spirit. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Keswick’s ambivalence to totally embrace mainstream Wesleyan/Holiness notion of holiness is reflected in its preference for more nuanced catchphrases such as “higher life,” “deeper life,”

³For a quick summary on the Keswick movement, see, for example, Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, Studies in Evangelicalism, no. 5 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1987), 104-06. For a thorough treatment, see Charles W. Price and Ian M. Randall, *Transforming Keswick* (Carlisle, Cumbria: OM Publishing, 2000).

⁴We should note, however, as Charles Price and Ian Randall argue, that in its early stages both purveyors of the Wesleyan instantaneous crisis experience and the distinctive Reformed-inspired non-perfectionist Keswick articulation as it is known today shared the platform at Keswick, and were in tension for the first seventy years of the movement. It was only after the post-war years that the latter indisputably became representative of Keswick thought. See Price and Randall, *Transforming Keswick*, 14-15.

“victorious life,” and “fullness of the Spirit” to describe a less finite ideal for the Christian life or a “more moderate form” of holiness piety.⁵

***Prima Facie* American Holiness Movement Influence**

Dana Robert's work, to a significant degree, helps uncover the influence of the Holiness movement within the MEC mission in India as she investigates the role of holiness piety in the work of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society (hereafter WFMS). Among the prominent India missionaries who turn up in her work include Lois Parker and Annie Ryder Gracey, WFMS founding members; and Isabella Thoburn, one of the first two missionaries sent by the WFMS, who was known to have endorsed holiness piety to her colleagues in India.⁶ In another study, Gary B. McGee brings to fore Minnie Abrams, an important figure in the rise of Indian Pentecostalism, who also came from the same WFMS-holiness backdrop. A former WFMS missionary and graduate of Lucy Rider Meyer's Chicago Training School, Abrams publicized the events surrounding the revival at Pandita Ramabai's Mukti mission in Kedgaon through her *Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire* (1906). The book would later help provide the impetus for a Pentecostal schism within the MEC mission in Chile, which eventually gave birth to the Methodist Pentecostal Church in Chile.⁷

Even as Robert and McGee help unearth the role of holiness revivalism in Indian Methodist life and culture, a more thorough inquiry is still

⁵For a summary of Keswick distinctive teachings, see J. Robertson McQuilkin, “The Keswick Perspective,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 151-83. For the most recent treatment on Keswick history to date, see Price and Randall, *Transforming Keswick*. See also Donald W. Dayton, “Pneumatological Issues in the Holiness Movement,” in *From the Margins: A Celebration of the Theological Work of Donald W. Dayton*, ed. Christian T. Collins Winn, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, No. 75 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2007), 115.

⁶ Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*, The Modern Mission Era, 1792-1992 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 149. Thoburn in a letter to a missionary candidate in 1896 counseled: “Seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and he will sanctify and perfect your preparations for this service.” As quoted in James M. Thoburn, *Life of Isabella Thoburn* (New York: Eatons & Mains, 1903), 259.

⁷ Gary B. McGee, “‘Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire!’ the Mission Legacy of Minnie F. Abrams,” *Missiology* 27 (1999): 515-22; McGee, “Latter Rain,” 664. See also Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 244-48.

wanting. We are thereby led back to the influence of holiness heavy-weight, albeit controversial, William Taylor, who came to India to help spur the growth of the fledgling MEC mission there. Upon his arrival in 1870, Taylor began unprecedented revival campaigns initially within the MEC confines of North India, and further advanced the mission's initial incursion into Cawnpore deeper into Bombay (now Mumbai), Poona (now Pune), Calcutta (now Kolkata), Madras (now Chennai) and Bangalore to the utter disregard of existing comity agreements and much to the embarrassment of the MEC Missionary Society.⁸ Unsurprisingly, Taylor's holiness revivalism specialized in the conversion of the "already-converted," finding success among European and British "nominal Christians," mostly Anglicans, who would later form the bulk of MEC membership in what was to become the South India Conference in 1876.⁹ Also supporting Taylor, as he moved further south, were a steady stream of "self-supporting" missionaries who continued and oversaw the churches he helped established. These men and women were mostly either recruited from his preaching tours in the United States or Eurasians (mostly Indian-born Britons) awakened through his meetings in India.¹⁰ Though Taylor left the country in 1875 to assist in Dwight L. Moody's

⁸For a comprehensive account of William Taylor's self-supporting ministry in India, see William Taylor, *Four Years' Campaign in India* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1875); idem, *Ten Years of Self-Supporting Missions in India* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1882). See also David T. Bundy, "Bishop William Taylor and Methodist Mission: A Study in Nineteenth Century Social History, Part II," *Methodist History* 28, no. 1 (1989): 3-7; idem, "The Legacy of William Taylor," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 18 (1994): 172-76; Guy D. Garrett, "The Missionary Career of James Mills Thoburn" (Ph.D. Diss., Boston University, 1968), 69-74.

⁹See David O. Ernsberger, "Story of the South Indian Conference," in *India Mission Jubilee of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Southern Asia : Story of the Celebration Held at Bareilly, India, from December 28th, 1906, to January 1st, 1907, Inclusive*, ed. Frederick B. Price (Calcutta: Methodist Publishing House, 1907), 168; Bessie R. Beal, *Bishop John Edward Robinson* (Lucknow, India: Centenary Forward Movement Methodist Church in Southern Asia, 1958), 7.

¹⁰Among Taylor's recruits were future bishops John E. Robinson, William F. Oldham, and Homer C. Stuntz. Taylor continued to recruit missionaries for India even after his stint there. For a list of pioneering "Taylor" missionaries in South India, see, for example, Taylor, *Ten Years*, 143, 49. Robert also mentions the existence of WFMS "Taylor" missionaries in Dana L. Robert, "Holiness and the Missionary Vision of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1869-1894," *Methodist History* 39, no. 1 (2000): 25-26.

evangelistic tour in England, he continued to recruit “Taylor” missionaries for South India. He was later elected missionary bishop of Africa at the 1884 General Conference.¹¹

In the shadow of Taylor’s renowned work in India was James M. Thoburn, who assumed leadership of the mission after the highly esteemed MEC India pioneer William Butler in 1865. It was Thoburn’s vision of MEC expansion from what he felt was their “little corner” in northern India that led him to resort to holiness revivalism by inviting Taylor, whom he first met in a camp meeting in Ohio in 1858.¹² Thoburn also turned to holiness Methodists for support of the South Indian “conquest” by raising funds through several National Holiness Association (hereafter NHA) camp meetings during his furloughs in the 1870s. It was at the 1876 Epworth Heights camp meeting in Loveland near Cincinnati where he first met renowned African-American evangelist Amanda Berry Smith. Smith held a seven-month revival tour in India, mostly within MEC turf, beginning November 1879, which she extensively chronicled in her autobiography, to which Thoburn wrote the introduction.¹³ Thoburn was later elected bishop in 1888.

Beyond Taylor, Thoburn and Smith, another missionary at the forefront of holiness revivalism in South India was Taylor recruit and “camp meeting apostle” William B. Osborn, founder of the famous Ocean Grove Camp Meeting in New Jersey in 1869. He first came to India in 1875 as a self-supporting missionary and was quickly appointed as presiding elder to the Bombay and Madras Districts. Osborn established the first “regular camp meeting of the American type” in Lanowli (now Lanovla) in 1878. Named “Epworth Heights” like the one in Loveland near Cincinnati, the Lanowli camp hosted annual “straight holiness” camp meetings, perhaps an allusion to its direct connection with the NHA.¹⁴ Osborn also paved

¹¹Bundy, “Bishop William Taylor, Part II,” 7-10.

¹²James M. Thoburn, *My Missionary Apprenticeship* (New York: Philips & Hunt, 1884), 278-79. Cf. Garrett, “Missionary Career,” 69.

¹³Amanda Berry Smith, *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord’s Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the Colored Evangelist*, with an Introduction by James M. Thoburn (Chicago: Meyer & Brother, Publishers, 1893), v-x, 300-30. See also James M. Thoburn, “Wayside Notes: An Autobiography, Chapter XXXIV,” *Western Christian Advocate*, 23 August 1911, 9.

¹⁴Taylor, *Ten Years*, 350-54; Kenneth O. Brown, *Holy Ground, Too: The Camp Meeting Family Tree* (Hazleton, PA: Holiness Archives, 1997), 49, 85.

the way for the “tabernacle meetings” of NHA pioneers John S. Inskip, William MacDonald and John A. Wood in 1880.¹⁵

Holiness revival culture was also equally kept alive on the other side of the famed Ganges River even as Taylor, Thoburn and their band of self-supporting recruits blazed the trail southward. Among a number of MEC camp meetings in the North or Christian *melas*, as they commonly called them in India, the most prominent was the annual *Dasehra* meeting—the flagship of holiness promotion in North India.¹⁶ First launched in 1871, the *Dasehra* meeting was an outgrowth of what one missionary believed to be “a genuine revival movement” inspired by Taylor’s work in the North.¹⁷ Held during the popular Indian holiday from which its name was derived, the *Dasehra* meeting is a four or five-day revival gathering every October in Lucknow for the spiritual uplift of missionaries and national workers, and for the promotion of “Higher Life or Full Salvation.” The gathering was initially held in a large tent at the Lal Bagh cricket field, but was later moved to the MEC English church sanctuary. Thoburn led almost all of the meetings during its formative years and was instrumental in their success.¹⁸ MEC theologian James Mudge, who for eight years was stationed in Lucknow (1873-1881), “prominently” helped organize a number of *Dasehras* and claimed to have experienced a “mem-

¹⁵For a detailed account of this visit, see William McDonald and John E. Searles, *The Life of Rev. John S. Inskip : President of the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness* (Boston: McDonald & Gill, 1885), 329-41.

¹⁶*Dasehra* is also spelled “Dashera,” “Dussera,” “Dussehra,” and “Dasara.” I am using the one used in most MEC literatures. For example, see John N. Hollister, *The Centenary of the Methodist Church in Southern Asia* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House of the Methodist Church in Southern Asia, 1956), 96-97. The holiday having been derived from the words *dash* (ten) and *hara* (kill), commemorates Ramas’s slaying of a ten-headed beast. See Francis W. Warne, *The Revival in the Indian Church* (New York: Board of Foreign Missions Methodist Episcopal Church, 1907), 8-9. The largest MEC camp meeting in North India was the Rohilcund (now Rohilkhund) camp meeting in Chandausi, which also featured holiness preaching. A detailed description is found in Martin Van Buren Knox, *A Winter in India and Malaysia among the Methodist Missions* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1892), 57-67; William Butler, *From Boston to Bareilly and Back* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1886), 407-25.

¹⁷William A. Mansell, “Normal Revivals,” *Indian Witness*, 19 August 1909, 7.

¹⁸A brief history of the *Dasehra* meetings is found in James Mudge, “Long Ago in Lucknow V,” *Indian Witness*, 15 February 1910, 7-8. See also Harvey R. Calkins, “A Paramount and Present Duty,” *Indian Witness*, 7 October 1909, 3.

orable blessing or baptism” at the 1879 meeting.¹⁹ He also extensively defended standard holiness teachings while editor of the MEC weekly *Lucknow Witness*.²⁰ Other notable personalities who have taken charge or have made their mark in *Dasehra* included Bishops Francis W. Warne, William F. Oldham, John E. Robinson, Edwin W. Parker and Brenton T. Badley; Jashwant R. Chitambar, the first Indian Methodist to be elected bishop; Henry Clay Morrison; and popular MEC missionary E. Stanley Jones, among others.²¹ Lucknow *Dasehra* was also the first annual inter-denominational or “united gathering” for holiness promotion in India. It later spurred similar gatherings at Mussoorie, Sialkot, Coonnoor, Jabalpur, Darjeeling, and other mission stations, mostly under the auspices of the Student Volunteer Movement (hereafter SVM).²²

While the *prima facie* influence of North American Holiness movement appears to account for the predominance of “Pentecostal” talk within the MEC mission enterprise in India, this changes once “doctrinal content” is added into the mix.²³ It should be noted that standard perfec-

¹⁹Mudge, “Long Ago in Lucknow V,” 8.

²⁰A good example of this was Mudge’s series of replies to a number of inquiries on the subject of holiness from June to October 1874. See James Mudge, “Perfect Holiness,” *Lucknow Witness*, 12 June 1874, 82; idem, “An Appeal for Light,” *Lucknow Witness*, 12 June 1874, 83; idem, “Can Christians Be Sinless,” *Lucknow Witness*, 3 July 1874, 107; idem, “Cleansed from Sin,” *Lucknow Witness*, 10 July 1874, 114; idem, “That Misread Verse from Scripture,” *Lucknow Witness*, 21 August 1874, 162; idem, “Letters on Sanctification,” *Lucknow Witness*, 11 September 1874, 186-87; idem, “A Substantial Agreement,” *Lucknow Witness*, 18 September 1874, 195; idem, “The Main Thing,” *Lucknow Witness*, 9 October 1874, 218. For more on Mudge’s connection with the Holiness movement, see William C. Kostlevy, “Mudge, James,” in *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement*, ed. William C. Kostlevy, Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, no. 36 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001).

²¹Edwin Parker, for example, took charge of the 1899 meetings. See James H. Messmore, *The Life of Edwin Wallace Parker, D. D., Missionary Bishop of Southern Asia, Forty-One Years a Missionary in India*, with an Introduction by James M. Thoburn (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1903), 269. For E. Stanley Jones’ early involvement, see, for example, “Sidelights on the Dasehra,” *Indian Witness*, 15 October 1908, 7; E. Stanley Jones, “The Lucknow Dasehra Meetings I,” *Indian Witness*, 11 November 1909, 4-6.

²²Helen S. Dyer, *Revival in India: “Years of the Right Hand of the Most High”* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1907), 24.

²³See phrase used in Michael J. McClymond, “Issues and Explanations in the Study of North American Revivalism,” in *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, ed. Michael J. McClymond (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 11.

tionist Wesleyan terms did not find eminence, at least among prominent MEC figures in India with known links to the Holiness movement. This can be initially discerned through Taylor's revivalism as observed by Thoburn:

Brother Taylor taught the doctrine of full salvation in a way which was new to me and all the rest. He made but slight use of the word "holiness," and was equally sparing in using the word "sanctification," but from the first he drew a clear distinction between the "infancy" and "manhood" of the Christian life. He also avoided the terms "sanctify," "entire sanctification" and "perfection," but often said, "You must receive the Sanctifier instead of sanctification." His favorite statement was, "You must receive Christ for all you need." He laid down no rigid rules, made no mention of dress, ornaments, or style.²⁴

Even though Taylor's connection with the Holiness movement is widely acknowledged, his approach deviated from popular expressions and the moral legalism mostly associated with the movement.²⁵ It is also important to note that his insistence on receiving the "Sanctifier" rather than "sanctification" is not only implicitly pneumatological in persuasion, but also comes closer to what would later be associated with Keswick—the emphasis on the "Blesser" rather than "blessing."²⁶ It was this approach, which stood aloof of standard Wesleyan/holiness expressions, and some-

²⁴James M. Thoburn, "Wayside Notes: An Autobiography, Chapter XXV," *Western Christian Advocate*, 21 June 1911, 9. For an example of Taylor's sermon in one of the National Association camp meetings, see William Taylor, "Perfect Loyalty to God," in *The Double Cure or Echoes from National Camp-Meetings*, ed. William McDonald (Boston and Chicago: Christian Witness Co., 1894), 254-66.

²⁵Taylor wrote: "I am not a member of the National Holiness Association nor any other association except the Methodist Episcopal Church but I advocate heart purity from the daily experience of it for thirty seven years..." in Taylor, *Ten Years*, 306. See also Kathryn T. Long, "Consecrated Respectability: Phoebe Palmer and the Refinement of American Methodism," in *Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and John H. Wigger (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2001), 305.

²⁶For this emphasis on Keswick, see J. B. Culpepper's contrast between Wesleyan/Holiness and Keswick teachings in David T. Bundy, "Keswick and the Experience of Evangelical Piety," in *Modern Christian Revivals*, ed. Edith W. Blumhofer and Randall H. Balmer (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 132. Bundy also writes that Taylor was "appreciated" by "'Keswickian' evangelicals." See Bundy, "Legacy of William Taylor," 172.

what closer to the non-perfectionist and more moderate Keswick “higher life” spirituality that characterized holiness revivalism within the MEC mission in India. The writings of Bishops Thoburn and Warne, missionary bishops in India and pioneering leaders of the Malaysian and Philippine MEC mission, provide important insights.

The Holiness Advocacies of Bishops Thoburn and Warne

The son of Ulster Methodist immigrants from Ohio, James Mills Thoburn (1836–1922), according to Bishop Warne, was “one of the greatest believers in and teachers of holiness of heart and life.”²⁷ Though biographers like Warne and recent scholars alike position him as a “holiness” person, it is interesting to note that Thoburn, in his later years, emphatically disassociated himself from the movement.²⁸ This was manifested, for instance, in his criticism of the lack of cultural adaptability of the holiness tabernacle meetings conducted by Inskip, McDonald, and Wood in 1880, in stark contrast to his praise of Amanda Smith’s meetings in Calcutta.²⁹ Even as Thoburn acknowledged the Holiness movement as a “genuine and searching revival,” he, nevertheless, regretted that “its leaders created a formal organization, set up a new standard of Christian life, struck back in return for blows, and differed among themselves.”³⁰ On

²⁷Francis W. Warne, “The Church of Pentecost,” *Methodist Review* (1922): 190.

²⁸For Thoburn’s standard holiness biography, see William F. Oldham, *Thoburn: Called of God* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1918). For a shorter one, see, for example, Francis W. Warne, “Thoburn—Saint, Statesman, Seer: A Character Sketch,” *World Wide Missions*, December 1904, 1-3. Cf. William C. Kostlevy, “Thoburn, James Mills,” in *Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement*, ed. William C. Kostlevy, Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, no. 36 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 252-53. See also Warne, “The Church of Pentecost,” 190.

²⁹James M. Thoburn, “Wayside Notes: An Autobiography, Chapter XLV,” *Western Christian Advocate*, 8 November 1911, 9; Thoburn, “Wayside Notes, Chapter XXXIV,” 9. Thoburn’s detailed account of Smith’s successful evangelistic campaign in Calcutta is found in Smith, *An Autobiography*, v-x. James Mudge shared a similar perception and commented that Smith’s efforts “did much good” than that of the three. See James Mudge, “Long Ago in Lucknow I,” *Indian Witness*, 6 January 1910, 7.

³⁰James M. Thoburn, “Wayside Notes: An Autobiography, Chapter XLIV,” *Western Christian Advocate*, 1 November 1911, 9. Thoburn’s opinion is reminiscent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South bishops address to their 1894 General Conference. See John L. Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 148.

such account, Thoburn, as his son would aptly put it, “quietly withdrew” from the movement,³¹ and eventually from its most-cherished perfectionist doctrine.

As a point of fact, Thoburn did not claim an experience of entire sanctification, even admitting in his 1911 autobiography that his continued search for the experience had “ended in a more or less constant disappointment.”³² While biographers interpret Thoburn’s experience of a “pouring” of the Holy Spirit on May 1866 as his sanctification experience, Thoburn did not equate it as such.³³ He in fact claimed to have struggled for it until getting “illumination” from Taylor, realizing that what mattered most was the “Sanctifier” and not “sanctification.”³⁴

Parallel to Thoburn’s repudiation of the Holiness movement’s leadership and lack of sanctification experience was a growing sense of uneasiness to classical Wesleyan/Holiness expressions that propelled him to develop a doctrine of holiness and its accompanying themes in light of Pentecost:

So far as my own course was concerned, the longer I remained in the work, the more was I led to make a very sparing use of the current terms, such as “sanctification,” “holiness,” “holiness people,” “justification,” “mere justification,” etc. At all times words or phrases which are likely to suggest party names, or to indicate party feeling, should be avoided. In my own preaching I tried to make the work of the Holy Spirit as prominent as possible; in fact, it was at that time that I began to study the whole subject of personal piety, personal equipment for work, from the standpoint of the office and work of the Holy Spirit in the believing heart.³⁵

³¹James M. Thoburn, Jr., “Some Thoburn Traditions,” *Central Christian Advocate* (Kansas, Mo.), 21 April 1909, 10.

³²Thoburn, “Wayside Notes, Chapter XXV,” 9.

³³Thoburn, *My Missionary Apprenticeship*, 156-57. See James M. Thoburn, “Wayside Notes: An Autobiography, Chapter XXVIII,” *Western Christian Advocate*, 3 May 1911, 9-10.

³⁴Thoburn, “Wayside Notes, Chapter XXV,” 9. Thoburn’s biographers seem to suggest that this was his sanctification. See, for example, Oldham, *Thoburn*, 62-63; Warne, “Thoburn—Saint, Statesman, Seer: A Character Sketch,” 2. Although William Kostlevy points to 1868 as Thoburn’s sanctification, he may be referring to the same occasion. See Kostlevy, “Thoburn, James Mills,” 252.

³⁵Thoburn, “Wayside Notes, Chapter XXXIV,” 9-10.

Even if one of the causes of Thoburn's misgivings to Wesleyan expressions was due to their close identification with the Holiness "party," he had a much bigger concern: "Concerning these phrases it may be remarked that while some of them are Scriptural, all were unknown in the Church of Pentecost."³⁶ Hence, Pentecost was to be the yardstick by which holiness teachings were to be measured. It was also a recurring theme that guided much of his work in India.

While the use of pneumatological language within North American Methodism reached its peak in the 1890s as Donald Dayton points out,³⁷ with Thoburn, however, this began much earlier. After speaking on "the work of the Holy Spirit" at a Holiness camp meeting in Round Lake, New York in 1876, holiness advocate Bishop Randolph S. Foster, who was in the audience, confessed: "I have been a Methodist preacher for forty years, but I have never heard the work of the Holy Spirit described as we have heard it just now." He also endorsed Thoburn to preach it in other camp meetings, thereby resulting in Thoburn's camp meeting tours that summer.³⁸ Thoburn throughout his episcopacy (1888-1908) further promoted this emphasis, which eventually climaxed with the publication of *The Church of Pentecost* (1899).³⁹

Born out of requests from the camp meeting tours he made years earlier, *The Church of Pentecost* outlined Thoburn's "mature reflections, meditations and conclusions" on the subject of Pentecost in relation to empowerment for service, spiritual fruits and gifts, holiness, and missions, among others.⁴⁰ Here we find a different concern for Thoburn—holiness was neither the goal nor beginning of the Christian life.⁴¹ It was only one of the many "blessings" resulting from an "abiding union" with Christ, which he considered "the highest aim and fondest desire of the believing heart."⁴² Thoburn further equated this "abiding union" with the

³⁶James M. Thoburn, *The Church of Pentecost*, Rev. ed. (Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye, 1901), 76.

³⁷See Dayton, *Theological Roots*, 91-92.

³⁸As quoted in James M. Thoburn, "Wayside Notes: An Autobiography, Chapter XXXIII," *Western Christian Advocate*, 16 August 1911, 9.

³⁹See Thoburn, *Church of Pentecost*.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 3-4. See also Warne, "The Church of Pentecost," 188.

⁴¹In the Holiness Movement, Christian perfection becomes the beginning of the Christian life contrary to that of Wesley who saw holiness as the goal, see Melvin E. Dieter, "The Wesleyan Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 40.

⁴²Thoburn, *Church of Pentecost*, 62.

phrase “fullness of the Spirit,” which for him had both a “special” and a “normal” manifestation. A “special” fullness of the Spirit referred exclusively to special empowerment for special purpose (e.g., prophecy and preaching), while “normal fullness of the Spirit” may pertain to both power (e.g., spiritual fruits and normal spiritual gifts) and holiness.⁴³ Hence, in another section of the book, it was in this “normal” sense that he addressed the issue of the persistence of sin in believers by pitting Wesleyan, Reformed and Keswick views against each other through the following illustration:

A story is related of two good men who were once disputing on this subject, and, as often happens in such cases, their discussion had seemed only to drive them farther apart. “I am quite certain,” said one of them, “that I sin more times in a day than I have hairs upon my head. It is absurd to talk about being saved from all sin.”

“I should be sorry to hold such a view,” was the reply. “I trust in a Savior who saves from all sin, both in heart and in life.”

“I fear you do not know your own heart; if you did, you would not talk in this way. The heart is prone to evil, always and everywhere.”

“Yes, I know that very well; but the evil can be taken out of it. A plot in my garden is full of weeds, but they can all be pulled up and carried away, and not the smallest weed will remain.” “But a new crop of weeds will immediately appear; the ground is full of their seeds and their roots.”

“But I can burn a fire on the ground and destroy both roots and seeds.”

“That is a bad illustration, my friend; in such a case more weeds will spring up out of the ashes than if no fire had been burned on the ground.”

⁴³Ibid., 68-76. Thoburn’s position appears to be much more consistent with the Keswick movement, where the former was referred to as “fillings of the Spirit” and the latter as “fullness of the Spirit.” See David T. Bundy, “Keswick Higher Life,” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, Revised and Expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 821. Cf. Ian M. Randall, “Old Time Power: Relationships between Pentecostalism and Evangelical Spirituality in England,” *Pneuma* 19 (1997): 58.

At this point a friend who had been listening ventured to interject a remark. "You differ, my brethren," he said, "concerning the possibility of utterly destroying the weeds in the garden plot. One of you thinks fire will permanently destroy the weeds, while the other is sure that it would only increase their next growth. But in one thing I feel certain you will both agree with me. We must all agree that no weeds will spring up in that garden plot so long as the fire is kept burning."⁴⁴

Undoubtedly, Thoburn neither favored the classic Wesleyan view on holiness—"one who thinks fire will permanently destroy [eradicate] the weeds [sin]," nor the Reformed view—"more weeds [sin] will spring out of the ashes." He instead endorsed a *via media*—"no weeds [sin] will spring up in that garden plot *so long as the fire [Spirit] is kept burning.*" Simply put, though sin cannot be totally "eradicated," it can be "suppressed" through the ever constant burning of what Thoburn referred to as the "sacred fire which God kindles upon the altar of the heart" or what he also called "normal fullness of the Spirit."⁴⁵ By this time, such "suppressionist" position was already made popular in Keswick circles by a number of well-known evangelists, including Frederick B. Meyer, a Baptist minister from Australia who wrote that the "fullness of the Spirit" is a state where "the flesh has no chance. It is within him; it may strive to entice him (James 1:14); it may even stretch out its hands in answer to the solicitation of the devil from without; but it is carefully watched by the Holy Ghost. Its every movement is resisted."⁴⁶

Hence, in light of Thoburn's affinity with non-perfectionist Keswick-inspired articulation of holiness, it is easy to understand why he fit well in the non-perfectionist-exclusive Northfield Conference, where Moody invited him to speak in the summer of 1890.⁴⁷ Moody, as David Bundy

⁴⁴Thoburn, *Church of Pentecost*, 209-10. However, such imagery may have not originated from Thoburn. James Mudge, a former colleague of Thoburn in India, also used a similar illustration in an article he wrote for the *Lucknow Witness* in 1874. See Mudge, "The Main Thing," 218.

⁴⁵Thoburn, *Church of Pentecost*, 209-10.

⁴⁶Frederick B. Meyer, *The Present Tenses of the Blessed Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1892), 127.

⁴⁷James M. Thoburn, "How Christ Came to India XVI," *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, 17 April 1912, 24-25. Due to its emphasis on unity, Northfield cautioned its speakers against the use perfectionist language. See Price and Randall, *Transforming Keswick*, 57; Bundy, "Keswick and the Experience of Evangelical Piety," 131.

argues, carried this Keswick influence through his Northfield Conference, which focused more on “ecumenical” or non-perfectionist expressions of holiness and millenarianism.⁴⁸ Northfield helped inspire commitment towards overseas missions, and was instrumental in the founding of the SVM by members of the Young Men’s Christian Association in 1886.⁴⁹ Additionally, it was at Northfield where the perennially famous evangelist inaugurated what was later named “The Bishop Thoburn’s Fund for India,” which enabled its participants to support MEC work in India even up to the early decades of the twentieth century.⁵⁰ On a similar note, Thoburn’s Pentecost spirituality was also showcased at the SVM quadrennial international convention in 1902.⁵¹

We can also find a similar pattern in Bishop Warne, who was elected missionary bishop for the Southern Asia field in 1900. Born and raised in Erin, Ontario, Canada from a Cornish Methodist ancestry, and later transferred to Illinois, Francis Wesley Warne (1854–1932) was recruited to India by Thoburn in 1887.⁵² A missionary colleague who had known him for years summed up his work in a letter: “Through it all in your ministry you have majored on the Holy Spirit.” Truly, Warne’s interest in

⁴⁸Bundy, “Keswick and the Experience of Evangelical Piety,” 124, 31. For more on Moody’s English tour, see Kent, *Holding the Fort*, 132-68.

⁴⁹For more of SVM’s connection with Keswick, see Price and Randall, *Transforming Keswick*, 116-19; Michael Parker, *The Kingdom of Character: The Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (1886-1926)* (Lanham, MD: American Society of Missiology and University Press of America, Inc., 1998), 36-41.

⁵⁰James M. Thoburn, “How It Began,” in *The Bishop Thoburn Fund for India* (New York: Methodist Episcopal Church Board of Foreign Missions, 1907), 2-6; N. L. Rockey, “How Organized,” in *The Bishop Thoburn Fund for India* (New York: Methodist Episcopal Church Board of Foreign Missions, 1907), 6-8. For further details, see Hollister, *Centenary of the Methodist Church*, 237.

⁵¹James M. Thoburn, “Spiritual Men Needed for Spiritual Work in Missions,” in *World-Wide Evangelization; the Urgent Business of the Church: Addresses Delivered before the Fourth International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1902), 65-68.

⁵²For Warne’s autobiography, see Francis W. Warne, *Bishop Frank W. Warne of India: His Conversion, Call to the Ministry, and Other Spiritual Experiences* (New York: Board of Foreign Missions Methodist Episcopal Church, 1915); idem, *A Covenant-Keeping God: A Narrative of Personal Experiences* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1925). His standard biography is found in Badley, *Warne of India*.

the Holy Spirit began early in his career—he had memorized William Arthur's *Tongue of Fire* (1856), studied “the abundant writings on the Holy Spirit” by Daniel Steele, and the writings on the same subject by Samuel A. Keen, famous MEC holiness evangelist who introduced “Pentecostal meetings” in MEC annual conferences in the 1890s.⁵³ Bishop William F. Oldham also credited Warne for the “tidal waves” that have swept “great multitudes into an experience of full salvation” in India.⁵⁴ Most notable was his role in the MEC “Jubilee Revival” that began among Bengali girls and boys in Asansol in North India—an outgrowth of the Indian Revival of 1905-07,⁵⁵ which first broke out in the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist mission in Khassia Hills, Assam Province, and later in Pandita Ramabai's Mukti mission in Kedgaon.⁵⁶ Bishop Benton T. Badley later wrote that Bishop Warne's preaching had been “a direct preparation for this and he was ready to take this tide at the flood.”⁵⁷ Warne's efforts were indeed pivotal for the outbreak of the revival in MEC churches, mainly in the North, which he documented in his *Revival in the India Church* (1907).⁵⁸ One of the many examples which underscored not only Warne's lead role in the revival, but also the motif that was central to his preaching is found in his account of a meeting in Muttra in 1905:

I said to the young woman: “Come into this vacant space and ask the women and the girls to join you in seeking the fullness of the Spirit for service.” Instantly impelled by the power of the

⁵³Francis W. Warne, *Ideals That Have Helped Me* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1928), 37. Warne's undeniable interest in the pneumatology is further attested in a number of articles he wrote for the *Methodist Review*. See, Francis W. Warne, “Jesus and the Holy Spirit,” *Methodist Review* (1915): 946-57; idem, “The Holy Spirit the Distinctive Power in Christianity,” *Methodist Review* (1925): 409-24; idem, “The Holy Spirit and World Service,” *Methodist Review* (1930): 364-76. For more on S.A. Keen, see Dayton, *Theological Roots*, 91.

⁵⁴Warne, *Bishop Frank W. Warne*, 3-15.

⁵⁵John E. Robinson, “Days of Power and Blessing at Asansol,” *Indian Witness*, 21 December 1905, 3-4; Warne, *The Revival in the Indian Church*, 9-11; Badley, *Warne of India*. Cf. McGee, “Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire,” 518.

⁵⁶See Dyer, *Revival in India*; John Pengwern Jones, *India Awake* (Calcutta: F. Kehl, 1905). See also Gary B. McGee, “Pentecostal Phenomena and Revivals in India: Implications for Indigenous Church Leadership,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20 (1996): 114, 16; McGee, “Baptism of the Holy Ghost & Fire,” 517-19; idem, “Latter Rain,” 651-53.

⁵⁷Badley, *Warne of India*, 17-18.

⁵⁸Warne, *The Revival in the Indian Church*.

Spirit, about 150 women and girls, up to that time apparently unmoved, arose and followed her, and broke out in a roar of agony. For several hours there was much weeping, confessing, and crying for mercy, as I had never before heard among timid Indian women. In front of the altar the men, preachers, and other workers present, cried aloud for hours, under the awakening and convicting power of the Spirit.⁵⁹

It was this first-hand experience of the awakening in India as evangelist in addition to the formative influence of holiness teachers and Thoburn that would eventually reverberate in Warne's treatises on holiness. To begin with, Warne, like Thoburn, expressed reservations to Wesley's holiness expressions even though he continued to speak at NHA camp meetings up until the 1920s. Warne revealed this in his book, *Ideals That Have Helped Me* (1928): "With all the teachings of Methodism concerning new birth I am in fullest accord. I am not, however, I confess, in such full accord with Methodist terminology as used by specialists in their teaching of holiness."⁶⁰ Consequently, he compared the teachings "Jesus and the Holy Spirit" as found in John 14 and "John Wesley on Perfection" placing them side by side, and noted: "Please note that in John Wesley's summary 'The Holy Spirit' is not mentioned even once, and in the summary emphasized by Jesus such popularly used terms as 'sanctification,' 'holiness,' 'heart purity,' and a 'second blessing' are not emphasized."⁶¹ Just like Thoburn, Warne believed that Pentecost terminology was better than "Methodist phraseology," and suggested that it was its non-divisive or ecumenical underpinnings, a trait also associated with Keswick, that spelled success for MEC work in India. He maintained:

In all these years there have been no divisions and strife about sanctification neither among our missionaries nor our Christians who are Indians.

When I have asked myself the explanation, I have found it in the fact that in India we have emphasized not so much Methodistic terminology, as that used in St. John's Gospel [John

⁵⁹Ibid., 8. Also cited in J. Tremayne Copplestone, *Twentieth-Century Perspectives, the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1896-1939*, History of Methodist Missions, vol. 4 (New York: United Methodist Church, 1973), 842.

⁶⁰Warne, *Ideals*, 52.

⁶¹Ibid., 53-56.

14-15] and the Acts of the Apostles. Hence, our Indian revival has often been called the “New Acts of the Apostles.”⁶²

While, unlike Thoburn, Warne claimed to have experienced sanctification in 1871, he described it, nevertheless, in a language which strikingly resembled that of his highly esteemed predecessor.⁶³ He called the event his “Abiding Life” or “Abiding Blessing” experience because “it describes a life of holiness in the language that Jesus used.”⁶⁴ Warne further explained this in a manner that defied conventional Wesleyan/Holiness logic in *Ideals*. After a litany of accounts regarding the post-Pentecost infillings in the Book of Acts, he arrived at the conclusion: “That leads me to state that I believe that not sanctification alone, but after heart-cleansing the fullness of the Holy Spirit is full salvation.”⁶⁵ Here we find a re-appropriation of traditional Wesleyan terminology—sanctification was not full salvation. It was only as a precursor to the “fullness of the Spirit,” which Warne equated with full salvation.⁶⁶

Although Warne, like Thoburn, saw the “fullness of the Spirit” as the ultimate object of the Christian life, he, nevertheless, explicated it more in terms of empowerment for special service in the same vein as Thoburn explained the “special” manifestation of the “fullness of the Spirit.” For instance, citing the post-Pentecost infillings of Peter, Paul and Stephen, Warne argued that they were not only filled once, but on several occasions as “special preparation for special service.”⁶⁷ This was a recurring motif in Warne’s writings and preaching, emphasizing it as a normative Christian experience.⁶⁸ Warne’s main difference with Thoburn, however,

⁶²Ibid., 56-57. See also similar claim in Badley, *Warne of India*, 139-40.

⁶³Warne, *Bishop Frank W. Warne*, 10-13; idem, *Covenant-Keeping God*, 21-26.

⁶⁴Warne, *Covenant-Keeping God*, 29. Warne’s alternative phrase was also similar to the phrase popularized through Andrew Murray, *Abide in Christ: Thoughts on the Blessed Life of Fellowship with the Son of God* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895).

⁶⁵Warne, *Ideals*, 59.

⁶⁶Ibid., 60. Bishop Brenton T. Badley wrote: “Bishop Warne’s preaching, with its emphasis on the need and possibility of experiencing the fullness of the Holy Spirit, was supremely significant throughout his career. It was his own way of teaching Biblical holiness, or John Wesley’s ‘Christian Perfection.’” Badley, *Warne of India*, 16.

⁶⁷Warne, *Ideals*, 57-58.

⁶⁸See Warne, “Jesus and the Holy Spirit,” 946-57; idem, “The Holy Spirit the Distinctive Power in Christianity,” 409-24; idem, “The Holy Spirit and World Service,” 364-76.

rested in the fact that he maintained holiness as a crisis experience and then positioned it as a requirement rather than the result of a Spirit-filled life.⁶⁹

But this becomes rather vague when Warne's sparse statements on the problem of sin are added to the equation—they hint at a "suppressionist" position shared by Thoburn and the incipient non-perfectionism at Keswick. For instance, in his article "Jesus and the Holy Spirit" (1915), Warne pointed out: "When we read that Jesus 'was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,' we should also remember that even Jesus resisted by 'the power of the Holy Spirit.' Can one even imagine a Christian 'full of the Holy Spirit' and at the same time falling into gross sin—or any sin?" This is further reinforced in his review of Thoburn's book, where he quoted with approval Thoburn's garden metaphor as we have mentioned earlier.⁷⁰ Even so, based from extant materials, Warne did not pursue this question in detail with the same intensity and frequency he had with themes pertaining to spiritual empowerment.

Bishops Thoburn and Warne's articulated holiness through the use of similar New Testament Pentecostal imagery—one of the varied ways Methodist intelligentsia sought to redress, or worse, reject what they perceived to be a problem-riddled doctrine inherited from the founder of Methodism.⁷¹ Theologian James Mudge, Thoburn's former colleague in India, for instance, did not only find Wesleyan terms anachronistic, but also endorsed the "simple, natural, reasonable, scriptural" Keswick writings as a viable alternative to be "considerably patterned after."⁷² While there is no evidence to suggest that the two bishops openly endorsed Keswick like Mudge did, their treatises did highlight non-perfectionist holiness themes which did not drift far from those that gained popular appeal at Keswick. A new picture emerges, nonetheless, as we probe into MEC Indian holiness culture in the years surrounding the Great Indian Revival of 1905-07.

⁶⁹Warne's view then comes closer to those who advocated a "three blessings" teaching—those who saw sanctification or the "second blessing" as a precursor to a "third blessing" of Spirit baptism. See Dayton, *Theological Roots*, 95-100.

⁷⁰Warne, "Jesus and the Holy Spirit," 948; idem, "The Church of Pentecost," 193-94.

⁷¹A helpful summary of the views of these individuals is listed in Peters, *Christian Perfection*, 175-76.

⁷²James Mudge, "Keswick and Its Teaching," *Methodist Review* 83 (1901): 262.

“Keswickfied” Indian Holiness Methodism

The non-perfectionist Keswick-associated influence codified in the writings of the two bishops indeed help reveal the content of holiness Methodist culture in India. Notably, this culture, as we have summarized earlier, increasingly moved towards non-perfectionist language parallel, if not similar, to those that found popular appeal through Keswick. However, this culture did not progress without outside influence given MEC missionaries’ interaction with other “Holy Ghost” evangelicals beginning in the 1890s and with growing intensity in the years surrounding the Great Indian Revival in 1905. British India, in a way, became a crucible for American, British, Australian, and European popular evangelicalism as Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Brethrens, Baptists, YMCAs and YWCAs, Bible Societies and other Protestants interacted through joint endeavors during that period. Recent inquiries on Indian Pentecostalism are just beginning to unravel the existence of this interdenominational network, which McGee, for example, acknowledges as coming from both Wesleyan Holiness and Keswick springs.⁷³

But while scholars are generous to grant Wesleyan Holiness influence some equal credit, it was clear that in the ensuing interplay among evangelicals in India, the non-perfectionist and more moderate Keswick variety of holiness piety was the most dominant.⁷⁴ It seems fair to argue that in the years surrounding the Great Indian Revival of 1905 even the MEC mission, the supposed carriers of Wesleyan perfectionism have already been, to a large extent, “Keswickfied.” The already-present Keswick impulse within the MEC, as we have demonstrated in the previous section, was further buttressed by the confluence of two external factors arising from the resurgence of the missionary movement in the late nineteenth century, namely: SVM and YMCA work, and the direct involvement of the Keswick movement itself in Indian evangelical culture.

First, the influence of the SVM and YMCA within the MEC was made apparent not only through newly arrived MEC missionaries

⁷³See McGee, “Latter Rain,” 651-52; Jay R. Case, “And Ever the Twain Shall Meet: The Holiness Missionary Movement and the Birth of World Pentecostalism, 1870–1920,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 16, no. 2 (2006): 6.

⁷⁴The important role played by Keswick in India in the outbreak of the Revival is attested in Dyer, *Revival in India*, 24-30. See also McGee, “Pentecostal Phenomena,” 114; idem, “Latter Rain,” 651-52.

inspired by their Keswick-Moody campus revivalism, but also through the ubiquitous missionary conventions and student conferences organized by the two organizations throughout India. A good example of this was the six SVM conferences of 1895-96 in six major Indian cities, which was attended by student and missionary delegates from the MEC. The meetings featured keynotes on the "deepening of the Spiritual Life" by famed YMCA leader and MEC layman John R. Mott and SVM founder Robert P. Wilder and other denominational representatives including John E. Robinson, *Indian Witness* editor and future MEC bishop.⁷⁵ Robinson's address seamlessly fitted with the prevailing motif when he urged a "pentecostal revival" among "thousands of nominal Protestant Christians" by leading them into a "genuine experience of personal salvation and of the filling of the Holy Spirit."⁷⁶

Second, Keswick's growing involvement with missions and its concomitant presence in India also enabled it to cross paths with the MEC mission. Keswick, in fact, when it began accommodating overseas mission concerns beginning in 1887, helped inspire hundreds to take the missionary cause. Some of these recruits would end up in India through missionary societies under the auspices of the Church of England and Nonconformist churches, and would eventually gain distinction during the Great Indian Revival.⁷⁷ Also, Keswick's first delegation of short term missionaries came to South India in 1889 to conduct Keswick meetings. In the ensuing years, other revivalists who itinerated to India on behalf of Keswick included the popular F. B. Meyer in 1909.⁷⁸

⁷⁵A *Spiritual Awakening among India's Students: Addresses of Six Student Conferences of the Student Volunteer Movement Held at Jaffna, Lahore, Calcutta, and Madras*, (Madras: Addison & Co., 1896), vi-vii. A collection of speeches under the heading "Deepening of the Spiritual Life" is found on pages 1-68. For more on Mott and Wilder's articulation of holiness, see Michael Parker, *The Kingdom of Character: The Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (1886-1926)* (Lanham, MD: American Society of Missiology and University Press of America, Inc., 1998), 37-40.

⁷⁶A *Spiritual Awakening*, 75-76.

⁷⁷Price and Randall, *Transforming Keswick*, 105-13. See also James Goudie, "The Keswick Convention & Foreign Missions," *Indian Witness*, 4 October 1906, 12. Among those who rose to prominence during the Revival was Congregational minister Robert J. Ward, founder of the Indian "prayer circle" movement. See Dyer, *Revival in India*, 28-29.

⁷⁸Price and Randall, *Transforming Keswick*, 110-12; McGee, "Calcutta Revival," 126.

Direct interactions of the MEC with the more palpable manifestations of the Keswick movement in the country climaxed as it joined united efforts to sustain the Revival. The *Indian Witness*, for its part, launched a passionate campaign in 1905 to promote Keswick-inspired “prayer circles” by reprinting an article from the Keswick mouthpiece *Life of Faith* on the history of the “Circle of Prayer for World-wide Revival” inaugurated at the 1902 Keswick convention.⁷⁹ *Witness* editor Edward Saunderson became one of the founders of the “India segment” of this movement, which made official ties with the Keswick leadership when it was launched in 1906.⁸⁰ This direct interaction even reached the upper echelons of the mission as well. In July 1909, for example, Bishops Warne and Robinson joined other evangelical leaders as signatories to a letter addressed to the delegates of the Keswick convention asking them to pray that the revival in India may “not be allowed to cool.”⁸¹ The torrent of Keswick-related articles in the *Witness* during the period is also compelling. It published reports and open letters to the delegates of the Keswick conventions,⁸² made calls for readers to pray for the success of the convention,⁸³ and reprinted articles of popular Keswick writers such as F. B. Meyer, Andrew Murray and its foremost woman evangelist Jessie Penn-Lewis.⁸⁴

Thus, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the influence of Keswick arising from the coalescing of its American and British streams had been cemented in Indian Methodist life and culture. This cannot be more illustrated than what happened to Osborn’s “straight holiness” camp meeting in Epworth Heights in Lanovla—by 1910 it was already being called the “Lanovla Convention” and its two cottages already named “Northfield” and “Keswick.”⁸⁵ The preeminence of

⁷⁹“The Circle of Prayer for World-Wide Revival,” *Indian Witness*, 5 October 1905, 3.

⁸⁰“The India Segment of the Circle of Prayer for World-Wide Revival,” *Indian Witness*, 19 April 1906, 1.

⁸¹“Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Assembled at the Keswick Convention,” *Indian Witness*, 15 July 1909, 6.

⁸²“A Letter to the Keswick Convention,” *Indian Witness*, 26 July 1906, 5.

⁸³See “The Keswick Convention and India,” *Indian Witness*, 18 July 1907, 9.

⁸⁴See, for example, Andrew Murray, “Spirit of Love,” *Indian Witness*, 25 June 1908; Jessie Penn-Lewis, “A Message of the Hour: The Need of the Church,” *Indian Witness*, 13 December 1907.

⁸⁵“The Lanovla Convention,” *Indian Witness*, 4 December 1910, 6-7.

Keswick also reached its peak even at the MEC's very own *Dasehra* gathering that some participants even considered Henry Clay Morrison's perfectionist preaching there in 1909 a novelty. "Holiness, the desire of God for his people, was held before us as something attainable in life. Though brought up a Methodist, we have never listened to such a careful and earnest presentation of these doctrines which concern the higher life of the Christian," wrote one Methodist who attended the event.⁸⁶ The predominance of Keswick eventually spilled over the banks of Indian Methodism and would set the stage for the early character of holiness revivalism in Malaysia (which also included Singapore), and the Philippines through the leadership of Indian-born Briton William Fitzjames Oldham, who was elected to oversee these two fields in 1904.⁸⁷

Conclusion

The ubiquitous manifestations of holiness revivalism in early Indian Methodism at first glance seem to have been filtered through the American Methodist experience of the Holiness movement. However, a closer examination of the content of the writings of Bishops Thoburn and Warne suggests otherwise. Not only do their writings reveal the erosion of traditional Wesleyan perfectionist views of holiness within the MEC Indian mission, but also the emergence of non-perfectionist pneumatological expressions which would later find more affinity with what would later become definitive Keswick spirituality. Additionally, the interdenominational efforts in the years surrounding the Great Indian Revival of 1905-07 further "Keswickfied" the mission as it came into close contact with popular Indian evangelical culture, which was dominantly shaped by the work of the SVM and the continuous stream of Keswick holiness piety into British India.

⁸⁶K, "The Lucknow Dasehra Meetings II," *Indian Witness*, 11 November 1909, 5.

⁸⁷For Oldham's holiness revival work in the Philippines, see Luther J. Oconer, "Holiness Revivalism in Early Philippine Methodism," *Methodist History* 44, no. 2 (2006).

A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO SOCIAL HOLINESS ACCORDING TO JOERG RIEGER¹

by

Nathan Crawford

The Roman Catholic and Latin American theologian Hugo Assmann wrote an article in the 1980s asking the question, “Is social holiness enough?”² His answer is, at its base, “No, social holiness is not enough.”³ He offers appreciation for the Methodist tradition and its commitment to the idea of social holiness, but critiques Methodism by saying that it has glossed over some of the historical and systematic structures that stand in the way of holiness as a social phenomenon. He says that holiness has been basically articulated outside of the sinfulness that occurs in and is mediated by historical structures.

In order for the doctrine of social holiness to truly have an impact, it must confront these structures. But it must not only offer a theoretical analysis of such structures. It also must provide a way for such holiness to be lived in opposition to the sinfulness produced by such structures. For Assmann, Methodism has failed to articulate the doctrine of social holiness in a way that confronts these historical, sinful structures by developing a way of living and being that is in contrast to them. This paper offers an answer to Hugo Assmann.

In what follows, I offer a general guideline for the way that social holiness functions and is lived out. This is not meant to be a practical theology, but to lay the ground for the kind of community that effectively pursues social holiness. In order to offer such a construction, I rely on the

¹This essay was written for a panel on the book series, *Explorations in Social Holiness*, published by Emeth Press and edited by Nathan Crawford, Jonathon Dodrill, and David Wilson. The panel was held at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society, Seattle, WA.

²Hugo Assmann, “Is Social Holiness Enough?—A Catholic Reading,” trans. Lewistine McCoy in *Faith Born in the Struggle for Life: A ReReading of Protestant Faith in Latin America Today*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 26-37.

³*Ibid.*, 37.

thought of the Methodist theologian Joerg Rieger. Rieger's theology is deeply committed to presenting a witness of holiness in a social way by articulating how social holiness mediates certain historical structures. He deals with contemporary problems, namely the questions of empire and capitalism, in a manner that proposes to not only critique but also to offer serious alternatives. These alternatives are developed through a strong reliance upon Christian doctrine and the formation of a community of holiness that pursues God in all it does.

The Postmodernity Context

Rieger's approach to theology begins by analyzing the context within which he does his thinking. This situation is broadly termed postmodernity. The context of postmodernity is typified by the fact that one cannot gloss over his or her involvement in various structures of exclusion. The theologian needs to examine these structures and understand them in order to see one's own blind spots.⁴ Postmodernity shows us the rupture that exists which "disrupts the false security of modern thought."⁵ This rupture is found in the fact that no longer can one claim to have an absolute point of reference on which to ground thought. Rieger makes explicit that the thinker no longer stands in an immediate relationship to that which one thinks: there is now acknowledged to be mediation between the two. Part of this mediation has been a series of structures that have been used to exclude and isolate various peoples. Rieger's project, in part, says that finding truth begins with dismantling those structures that lead to exclusion.⁶

The task of theology is to make a difference by facing the various problems present in our contemporary world, often the results of structures of exclusion.⁷ One of the first problems that theology must face is that of itself, especially in its First World context. Within this situation theology is never devoid of the residue of the modern self and other structures of exclusion and must find ways of countering them.⁸ This focus on the modern self has led to the repression of various "others." Oftentimes these moments of repression—whether gender, racial, class,

⁴Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blindspots in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 10-11.

⁵*Ibid.*, 9.

⁶*Ibid.*, 137.

⁷*Ibid.*, 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

or another—are kept separate in the First World. This separation keeps the analysis of repression from dealing with the multiple ways in which it occurs and is excluding people from society. These moments of repression create otherness through the continued reinforcement of the structures of exclusion.⁹ The communities that are able to counter and resist these forms of repression are those where the images of self and God are “reassessed in the midst of the messiness of life in the Empire.”¹⁰ In doing so, one can begin to critique those ways of thinking that have buttressed exclusion while also beginning to offer alternatives.

Dominance of “Empire”

For Joerg Rieger, the structure that must ultimately be countered by social holiness is that “Empire” that is defined by “top-down” forms of power and tends to be all-pervasive and transform society into its own image. It takes many different shapes and forms. For examples, he includes the imagery of a soldier dropping bombs from above on to the weaker below, where empire is the soldier “bombing” those underneath. Another example he uses is that of the “humanitarian” who goes to “teach them [people in the two-thirds world] how to fish.” He points to the common idea that it is better to teach people to fish rather than to just give them fish. However, this ultimately points to the idea that only certain people actually “know” how to fish—namely the humanitarian—and that a group’s needs must be met in a certain way—fishing the way that the humanitarian does. And it is hard to fish if one has no bait because it has been taken by others, usually those associated with the “humanitarian.”

From these examples, we can tell that for Rieger empire partly manifests itself in the way in which societies presuppose that those “on top”—politicians, the rich, the powerful—represent the common interest, while those on the bottom of a society—the poor, the immigrant, the colored—represent various special interests.¹¹ Empire has a way of shaping all things so that everything comes downward and ultimately buttresses forms of “top-down” power, keeping those on top in power while keeping the oppressed oppressed.

⁹Ibid., 153.

¹⁰Nestor Míguez, Joerg Rieger, and Jung Mo Sung, *Beyond the Spirit of Empire: Theology and Politics in a New Key* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 32.

¹¹Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 53.

One of the places that we find the problem of empire operating is in the models of charity often used in the local church, and even in many denominations. Rieger says that many of these models assume that marginalized and oppressed people are “lifted up” when the church bestows charity upon them. This “lifting up” is meant to help the receivers to become like the members of the church(es) doing the work and offering the help. The church almost has an expectation that those helped will become like them both economically and culturally. We often see this when churches and other community advocacy groups try to help people get their own piece of the “American pie” or to achieve the “American dream.” There is an implicit, sometimes even explicit, endorsement of the means used to bake such “pies” or realize such “dreams.” These means are almost always intertwined with the top-down forms of power associated with empire.

On a more global level, this often happens in international development when people assume that God is with those doing the developing (they are the “missionaries”) and not on the side of the poor or those who need help. For Rieger, the goal of such modes of thinking is “to raise others up to higher levels defined by those who consider themselves to be at the top.”¹² The problem is that the empire solidifies itself through the people at the top and keeps those on the bottom at the bottom.

Thus, empire is a problem that must be countered. In the rest of this article I will outline one of the ways that I think that theology offers a counter to the structures of exclusion that are perpetuated in imperial ways of thinking and acting. I do so by focusing on how Rieger develops an understanding of social holiness for Christian communities. The first move that the communities must make is to offer an alternative structuring of existence. Empire structures the inhabitants of its world around top-down forms of power; in contrast, the church works under a logic of mutuality and giving, reorienting the community through the rethinking of the nature of God and God’s relationship to humanity. Both are viewed through the prism of love where God gives and the relationship is restored by God’s gift. This restructures the way that the community operates.

Restructuring Community

The restructuring of the community, to one pursuing social holiness, begins with rethinking the idea of God. For Rieger, this means that theol-

¹²Joerg Rieger, *Globalization and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 39-40.

ogy must offer an alternative way of thinking about God that counters the exclusionary practices of empire. Rieger says that the concern should not be about whether one makes a confession of belief in the Trinity or divinity of Christ, but about what that confession brings to a community's life—and, by extension, those individuals who are part of the community and how they challenge dominant notions of top-down power.¹³ Rieger states, “[T]hat a more fundamental interest in liberation theology lies in the doctrine of God. Any orthopraxis is ultimately related to God’s own praxis, which precedes all human action.”¹⁴

Theology thinks God and this thinking leads to the way that people act. Our practice of Christian faith is utterly formed through what kinds of things we think God does, as we try to imitate these. He takes this impetus from Jesus, a day laborer from Galilee who ended up being executed by the empire in which He lived.¹⁵ The God revealed in Jesus cannot be easily assimilated into empire and exclusionary ways of thinking and doing. This means that the community of God must also work against such practices. Thus, as a liberation theologian, Rieger pursues this line of thinking about God that has God active in the barrios and slums, in the ghettos and hills, and in all other places where the poor and oppressed are.

He believes that a problem currently exists that requires theology to understand how the idea of God has been complicit in the procurement of top-down power differentials within the context of globalization.¹⁶ Much of contemporary theology has buttressed an idea of God as a Supreme Being, ruling from a great throne and shouting commandments to God’s people. It is a top-down God in that this God always operates out of a place of power in relation to human beings and the rest of creation. Rieger says, “[T]he principles of classical theism matched the requirements of the empire and provided valuable support for its goals.”¹⁷ Classical theism ends up affirming top-down, unilateral forms of power, like those used within empire. However, if Christianity is to be true to the God of biblical revelation, the idea of God needs to operate counter to this logic of the “top-down.”

¹³Ibid., 55.

¹⁴Joerg Rieger, “Developing a Common Interest Theology from the Under-side,” in *Liberating the Future: God, Mammon, and Theology*, ed. Joerg Rieger (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 133.

¹⁵Joerg Rieger, *Globalization and Theology*, 8-9.

¹⁶Ibid., 55.

¹⁷Ibid., 9.

By contrast, God becomes that which is counter to the “status quo,” a counter empire.¹⁸ The new ways of thinking of God as counter-empire offers resistance to the various pseudo-religious concepts that operate in the logic of capitalism. One such example is the idea of the “invisible hand of the market.” This idea functions theologically as a divinity that guides the market to some divine ends. Of course, this idea is in service to empire over and against Christianity.¹⁹ The way to begin to counter this is through a rethinking of the idea of God.

Rieger begins to offer such a counter to empire by looking for God in and through Christian theology based on biblical revelation. We find God where grace is, where grace irrupts. As Rieger looks at our world, he finds grace occurring as Christianity deals with the various issues that arise from “asymmetries of power in both global and personal relationships.” These places of asymmetrical power are where God’s grace is needed and where it comes to the fore. He calls these places of pressure and says that it is in the midst of these places of pressure that God’s grace comes alive.²⁰

Furthering this idea, Rieger says, “[Grace] is tied to the lives of those who are different, those whom we usually do not notice because they inhabit a lower class or because they are born into a race or gender that we consider less prestigious; it opens our eyes for God’s own ways of bringing about a new creation in the midst of pain and suffering.”²¹ And, for Rieger, we begin thinking about God from these places because the grace of God cannot be commodified here; it does not work for the continued power of the top, but seeks to embrace those on the bottom. Grace, coming from the One beyond commodification, cannot be reduced to some economy; rather, it is pure gift and is found in places of pressure.²²

In light of the above, the rethinking of the idea of God needs to begin from places of pressure which works against empire and its hegemonic forms of power. Thus, God cannot be reduced to one more “pure master signifier.”²³ The thinking and naming of God must overcome the various structures of exclusion that have been developed in light of the

¹⁸Míguez, et al., *Beyond the Spirit of Empire*, 163.

¹⁹Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 65ff.

²⁰Joerg Rieger, *Grace Under Pressure*, 9-10.

²¹*Ibid.*, 52.

²²*Ibid.*, 47.

²³Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 143.

modern approach to God.²⁴ In doing so, the idea of God is put to use as that which does not embrace the forces of exclusion. God functions in this theology as what exposes the “dissonances and tensions” that have been “repressed in the dominant theological discourses.”²⁵ Theology should move into that which is “repressed” by being “systematically excluded from the worlds of labor: the long-term unemployed, exploited children, commodified nature. . . .”²⁶ For theology, Christ is the one who brings out that which is repressed in the religious and political economies of his time by showing the gap that existed between the haves and the have-nots.²⁷ By mediating this gap, theology seeks the truth of the contemporary situation through its thinking about God.

Theology begins from its awareness of what is going on in the world as a place of oppression and exclusion. In contrast to the logic of exclusion at work in the world, God’s logic is that which works from the bottom-up—God’s sovereign power comes from God’s weakness in taking on the form of the servant. Theology takes place in the cracks and fissures that come from the relationship between God and the excluded.²⁸ Theology addresses these exclusions by seeing how the idea of God disrupts the hegemonic thinking of the current empire by reshaping “the way things really are.”²⁹

Rieger points to the example of how the story of Jesus works in the Roman Empire and Paul as a place where we can see this taking place. He says that the Roman Empire tried to co-opt the story of Jesus through the development of “classical theism” by using it as a story that buttresses Empire.³⁰ Jesus as Lord now means that Jesus is the political Lord sitting on his ruling throne. In contrast, the story of the early Christians (as found in the Gospels and Paul) points to the Lord crucified by the Roman Empire as a criminal on a cross. Rieger says, “A day laborer in construction from Galilee who led a movement of the common people and who ended up on one of the crosses of the empire—Paul kept reminding his constituents of this cross—could not easily be assimilated by the empire and its concentration of power in the hands of the few.”³¹ Jesus, then, is

²⁴Ibid., 145.

²⁵Ibid., 180.

²⁶Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 115.

²⁷Ibid., 115-16.

²⁸Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 173.

²⁹Ibid., 176.

³⁰Rieger, *Globalization and Theology*, 9.

³¹Ibid., 8-9.

not what is found in the empire but what counters the empire through the living of a life that cannot be assimilated by empire.

The reason that the idea of Jesus is able to counter empire is because of the bottom-up logic used. This logic can be used by theology to counter empire.³² It means that these communities are inherently democratic by giving all people the ability to participate and question the community. Theology cannot be inclusive if it does not work from the bottom-up.³³ The bottom-up approach begins with those people on the bottom of society, the oppressed, marginalized, and the excluded. By beginning here the bottom-up approach focuses on a community that resists the structures of empire through its inclusion of the excluded. In this way, theology is concerned with the kind of justice that is inherent to the Judeo-Christian tradition. This justice is concerned with restoring to full relationship with the community any and all who have been excluded or pushed to the margins. This comes from the covenant of God to humanity in and through Jesus of Nazareth which extends beyond any boundaries or margins.³⁴ Thus, theology uses the logic of the bottom-up in order to construct a way of thinking the communities of resistance to empire.

Reimagining the Holy Community

In order to root this logic of the bottom-up in a more explicitly theological manner, Rieger turns to the doctrine of Christology. The incarnation serves as a place for him to think about the nature of what communal holiness through a bottom-up logic might look like—"the typical religiosity that goes from the greatest to the least comes to a halt and is turned around. This has implications for our images of God and, ultimately, for Godself."³⁵ He goes on to say, "As the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ turns things upside down, we might say that the incarnation is the logic of downturn."³⁶ The incarnation gives Rieger a theological site to use as a place of resistance to empire and as a place for reimagining holiness.

However, resistance is not enough in light of the incarnation. Rather, it would be reactionary to simply label as "good" or "just" that which sees itself as countering empire. Instead, the incarnation teaches us that we

³²Ibid., 3.

³³Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 12.

³⁴Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 137.

³⁵Ibid., 129-30.

³⁶Ibid., 130.

must find our way into “the way, the truth, and the life” that is Jesus Christ. By doing so, we enter into an alternative truth of Christ in regards to empire; now resistance is to any structure or way of thinking that tries to limit “Christ’s reality and against whatever keeps us from following Christ.”³⁷ Thus, when Rieger looks at Nicaea and Chalcedon, he brings out the fact that the similarity between the two is their unwillingness to bring closure to the doctrine of Christ as they refuse to fully explain the connection between God and Christ, Christ and humanity, etc. This would resolve the tension and paradox of the doctrines. The councils teach us that a necessary part of thinking theologically is to work open-endedness into our ways of thinking, even when it seems to be least expected.³⁸ Christology shows the way into the logic of a community of resistance that works from the logic of the bottom-up.

The openness that comes with the doctrine of Christology, for Rieger, is central to the construction of a doctrine of social holiness. Theology must be open, following the line of thought embraced at Nicaea and Chalcedon. This is because if theology is not truly open then it blocks “any real encounter with others.” For Rieger, many attempts at openness are simply elaborate moves to closure through generalization. He says that people in positions of control tend to construct generalizations so that they “talk about *the poor, the oppressed, the Chinese, the Tarahumara Indians, and so forth. . .*”³⁹ This type of openness ends in a top-down construction of the other as part of some hegemonic group. In contrast, the type of openness needed is that which is open to people in these groups *as people*. This openness comes through listening before speaking.

Thus, if theology is to operate from the bottom-up, listening is the place to begin. The truth of theology is based on openness and listening. This is because these allow one to be shaped by the subject matter rather than being in control of it.⁴⁰ Listening means that we are now involved in the truth of the situation as we embrace those excluded from or oppressed within empire. Listening opens us to the truth of the contemporary context—that the suffering of the oppressed, marginalized, and

³⁷Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 318.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 100.

³⁹Joerg Rieger, “Liberating God-Talk: Postcolonialism and the Challenge of the Margins,” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, eds. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 211.

⁴⁰Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 186.

excluded comes from the perpetuation of societal and economic structures. When one embraces this, it leads to “the kind of anger that generates resistance.”⁴¹ Thus, listening is the beginning of resistance.

For Rieger, the community of holiness has a new orientation, one of openness and listening. Theology opens into this type of community as it places itself in a position of receptivity through its listening to the coming of the other as God, others, texts, and the self.⁴² This listening works from a logic of the bottom-up because it always begins with the other. This other comes in the form of a multiplicity of discourses and it is the task of theology to balance and relate these differences.⁴³ In order to do this, though, theology must embrace a constant renewing of its own habits of listening so that it never closes the community.

It would be easy for the community to simply listen for those it has always listened for; however, if the community is committed to resistance, it has to always keep itself open to all discourses that come from all places and learn how to balance these with others.⁴⁴ By doing so, theology can develop in a way that counters empire. This is because theology is always self-critical in that it consistently reflects on the witness of the church. If theology listens rightly, it does so through non-hegemonic forms that show the community its own blind spots and where its unconscious desires lie.⁴⁵ As such, this community of resistance sees how empire might affect it and resists this. It does so through its commitment to welcoming the other, the excluded, through its embrace of openness and listening.

Openness and listening are cultivated through the means of grace that Methodists, following Wesley, often term “works of mercy.” Rieger points out that, for the Christian tradition, the means of grace are where we learn to listen to the Other/other since they are channels through which we receive the grace of God or they are links connected to God which help us maintain relationship with God.⁴⁶ These means of grace are traditionally thought of as acts of piety, like prayer, fasting, reading Scripture, meditation, etc. However, Rieger champions Wesley’s expansion of the notion of the means of grace to include works of mercy. In

⁴¹Rieger, “Liberating God-Talk,” 216-17.

⁴²Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 178.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 162.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 166.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 194.

⁴⁶Rieger, *Grace Under Pressure*, 82.

Wesley's view, the grace of God flows from works of mercy not only to those upon whom mercy is bestowed but also to those actively engaged in performing mercy. Rieger adds a note of caution, though, saying, "The biggest problem is the patronizing touch that has often accompanied works of mercy. God's grace is not to be found first of all in our status and prestige but under pressure. . . ." ⁴⁷ Thus, works of mercy are accomplished in and through a bottom-up approach that works with and embraces the other.

Rieger offers this concluding sentiment: "If works of mercy are a means of grace . . . [they] . . . are no longer about charity or social action, done by some on behalf of others. Rather, works of mercy seek to promote relationships of solidarity, where the unilateral flow of power from the top down is challenged and where *all* are recipients of God's grace." ⁴⁸ Thus, God's grace flows to and through the community involved in performing true works of mercy. By bringing together works of mercy with works of piety, Rieger believes that Wesley demonstrates the fact that we cannot separate the love of God (the divine Other) from our neighbor (the human other). ⁴⁹

When the church practices works of mercy and is built on openness and listening, then it is truly pursuing the task of social holiness. Rieger, in a book co-authored with Kwok Pui-lan, ⁵⁰ draws on Letty Russell's image of the "church in the round." For Russell, the church in the round is a gathering of the marginalized, the oppressed, to a round table, with no head and no behind. The round table brings inclusiveness and hospitality which leads the community of such a church to engage in both reflection and action. The leadership of such a church is not top-down, but comes from bottom-up, with all people bringing their gifts and talents to serve the church and the broader community. And, this church is built upon a "communion of hospitality," meaning that all are welcome since it is an inclusive and open community.

⁴⁷Ibid., 24.

⁴⁸Ibid., 35-36.

⁴⁹Ibid., 33. Later, Rieger says, "Without works of mercy as means of grace—ways of receiving God's grace through relations with others, relations that are no longer understood primarily as social service or activism—we will not know who we are or where to go" (Rieger, *Grace Under Pressure*, 52).

⁵⁰Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012).

For Rieger and Pui-Lan, such a model is important because it attends to “power differentials and the role of the margins.”⁵¹ With such an understanding of church, there is a decentralization that takes place, with the community all pursuing similar goals but no one person or body is in charge, making decisions. Rather, the community is responsible for the acts of the community, for responding to the needs and margins of the people. This keeps the top-down logic from manifesting.⁵² They say, “This implies an open invitation to all members of the body of Christ to participate in ministry, instead of limiting ministry to the clergy, religious professionals, and a group of privileged lay members.”⁵³

For Rieger, the church pursuing social holiness is tied together in its collaboration in common projects that end up benefitting all people. Thus, the church is not about its own uniformity or inherent similarities but in finding God’s grace in places of pressure and then participating in these.⁵⁴ This means that the church is never limited to a “building” or “sacred space.” The church must be thought of as “beyond walls” and not “bound by rigid traditions.”⁵⁵ This is not to say that the church pursuing social holiness eschews tradition, just that maintaining tradition is not the main goal of church. Rather, the church only acts as church when it goes beyond itself to help those under pressure, to participate in the God who reveals Godself in and through the Jewish day laborer who was crucified by the empire, the laborer who walked and talked with the prostitutes, tax collectors, and other “sinners.”

Countering the Structural Sin of Empire

In conclusion, let me briefly make explicit how the social holiness of the church functions as a counter to the structural sin of empire. First, it is a community with a conception of an alternative sovereignty that reorients life in a different way. This alternative sovereignty is built on the Triune God who gives up the form of divinity to take on the form of humanity as a day laborer from Nazareth. This restructures life around the giving up of one’s position of power in order to embrace the other. This leads to the second way that the church functions as a community of social holiness: it works within a christomorphic, bottom-up logic. The incarnation of

⁵¹Ibid., 120-121.

⁵²Ibid., 121-122.

⁵³Ibid., 124.

⁵⁴Ibid., 77.

⁵⁵Ibid., 118.

Christ founds the church. The church is the Body of Christ. As such, the church works from the bottom-up as Christ did, embracing the last first and the first last. It also opens its doors to all, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or woman.

The church can do this because as a community of resistance it is based upon openness and listening. This is the orientation of the church. The church is open to all people from all places and all times. Its openness comes through its listening to these people and learning the truth about the way that the world is. When it does this, the church can actively resist those sinful structures that exclude and separate by being a place which reconciles those who need it. Lastly, the church is a community of social holiness because there is no exclusion. The church should function in such a way that no one is excluded or oppressed. Rather, the church is always open and never brings people in just to exploit them, but allows these people to change the way that the church may think about certain things. This is how the early Christians embraced the Gentiles.

ORDINATION AND POWER RELATIONS: A CULTURAL ANALYSIS FROM THE RITUAL THEORY OF PRACTICE

by

J. Matthew Price

SYNOPSIS: The changing perspectives on ordained ministry corresponds to various conceptions for how power is shared in the life of the church and amplified through the practices associated with ordination into ministry. This paper will look at various historical accounts of ordination rites, particularly the imposition of hands, through the lens of Catherine Bell's ritual theory of practice in order to evaluate pathways into faithful ministry within a global context.

The Adaptability of Ministry and Confusion about Ordination into Ministry

In 1956, Richard Niebuhr co-authored a volume on Christian ministry noting the “adaptability and variety” of ministerial office within the Christian church.¹ The distinctions and authority of priest, vicar, minister, preacher, or pastor vary with tradition and time. Denominational identities within the Church universal are bound up in the meaning attached to the role of the designated leader within the body of believers. To one group, a presiding priest is necessary for communal celebration; and to another, the entire work of the people (*leitourgia*) is put into question. This confusion of pathways into leadership is exemplified by a recent Google search of “ordination + Wesley” that revealed no less than eleven sidebar ads for free ordination, notably the Universal Life Church reveling in “over 20 million ministers ordained worldwide!”²

In the increasing variability of what ministry might look like in contemporary context, it is no wonder that there is growing suspicion of what it means to become ordained clergy. An example of an aggressive reaction

¹H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams, *The ministry in historical perspectives*. (New York: Harper, 1956), viii.

²Main page, www.themonastery.org (accessed March 19, 2013).

to ordination was offered by George Barna and Frank Viola, in which they have identified ordained clergy (“pastor”) in a pejorative manner as those seeking to be considered “a special caste of Christian” creating an “obstacle” for laity seeking to serve the church and world, and that these clergy do so by the means of an office that “both Scripture and church history are opposed to.”³ Moreover, professional clergy, in their estimation, are recognized by the “fallacy of ordination.” This is but one example in recent literature ascribing to a view of ordained clergy as that which is inadequate and insufficient for ministry in the contemporary church.⁴

From a first-person perspective, while serving in Africa during the past decade, I observed foreign missionaries and local church leaders bemoan the need for dual orders of ministry (elder and deacon). The primary consideration was to single out one order, particularly that of elder, as a legitimizing credential for those on the political margins of the church in order to attract the attention of the ecclesial centers of power. Few leaders—missionary or local—considered the need for ordained clergy other than as a requirement to meet credentialing standards that arise from outside the immediate context. During this same period, a fellow missionary commented on the inutility of ordained ministry and the rising costs of educational preparation. This was a shock to the (my) system since theological education was a key aspect of my responsibilities. As this bewildering reality set in, it was not long before I discovered similar attitudes among American university students since returning to the United States, especially among those preparing for ministry. These culturally divergent groups shared converging suspicions and common ignorance regarding the vocation of ordained ministry.⁵

Confusion reigns concerning ordination because there has been no ecclesiological consensus among various Christian historical traditions

³Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity?: Exploring the roots of our church practices* (BarnaBooks, 2002, 2008), 105-143, esp. 106, 123, 127.

⁴Marjorie Warkentin, *Ordination: A biblical-historical view* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 162; Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The shaping of things to come: innovation and mission for the 21st century*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 68.

⁵A sampling of questions asked by American freshman ministry majors include: “Why get ordained?” “Why do we need ordination classes?” “Is ordination incredibly expensive?” “What is the major benefit of ordination?” “What do I do if I want to be ordained in a different denomination than I already belong to?”

about its practice. Irenaeus, the bishop of a 2nd century Roman colony located in present-day Lyons (France), expressed one of the earliest arguments for ordained ministry in his work *Against Heresies*. Orthodoxy, or “vivifying faith,” according to the Gallic bishop, was the primary concern for a designated order of ministry for church leadership. Polycarp was noted as one of a succession of bishops as “having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true.”⁶ The desire for orthodoxy is affirmed in a more contemporaneous context, according to William Willimon, by seeking the ordained clergy as essential to the importance of passing on the “apostolic faith” through the laying on of hands in ordination. In this way, the minister becomes a “guardian” and “witness to the received faith of the church” and not a purveyor of “personal or idiosyncratic” ideologies.⁷

The clarity of successive generations blurred as the Church passed through the Middle Ages as ordained ministry demarcated lines of official authority which was tied as much to the authority of the local monarch as it was to the Church’s bishops. As James Papandreas identified the medieval view of ordained clergy as a movement from “what began as the recognition of God’s choosing . . . [to] eventually become the confirmation of an appointment by the highest level of the hierarchy.”⁸ In the sixteenth century, the Reformers began to deflect the trajectory of apostolic ministry in view of their changes to Roman liturgical practices. Revisions led by Luther included the ordination rites. The role of ordained ministry involved the struggle for truth (what is true?) as well as a struggle for power (who is right?). The Radical reformers went even further in stretching the boundaries of adaptability in Christian ministry by upending traditional meanings and rites associated with ordained ministry. Examples of re-ordination were common among formerly Roman Catholic priests, e.g., Menno Simons. The Reformers attempt a

⁶Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III.4, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/augustine/arch/irenaeus/advhaer3.txt> (accessed March 1, 2013).

⁷William Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 49.

⁸James L. Papandreas, “The History and Meaning of Ordination in the Pre-Reformation Church” (paper presented at United Methodist Ministry Study Symposium, November 2009, <http://www.garrett.edu/gmedia/pdf/communications/Symposium-Ordination-Paper-Papandrea.pdf> (accessed February 28, 2013).

reformulation of church hierarchy in terms of who might preside, pray over, and lay hands upon those seeking ordination. The practice of ordination turned from guarding spiritual truth to seeking political power.

Legitimate questions about ordained ministry have been asked by doctors of the early Church,⁹ radicalized village pastors of middle Europe, and emerging church thought leaders of the last decade, and students from north American and the Global South. The church may revitalize its ritual practice of ordination as means of distributing equitable power between clergy and laity through mutual empowerment.

Ordination as Ritual Activity from a Variety of Perspectives

A brief survey of recent literature on ordination and its rites identify two common practices as central rituals in ordination among most traditions: the prayer of confirmation and the laying on of hands.¹⁰ There is still some contention about the inherent importance of either practice.¹¹ Ralph F. Smith, a Lutheran, contends the priority of theological reflection over ritual experience in the prayers spoken and hymns sung within the service of ordination. These practices were usually “obscured by ritual profusion,” according to Smith, especially in the grand gestures of anointing and investiture of medieval Roman Catholic practice.¹² While this may be true to some extent, Smith maintains a false dichotomy between experience and reflection in that ordination is an expression of ritual experience as much as it is theological reflection. The emphasis of this view leans toward reflection without meaningful consideration of the actual practices of the ritual activity.

After an exhaustive treatment of the ritual gesture of laying on of hands in the New Testament, John F. Tipei, a Pentecostal scholar, noted that ordination rites as entry into ministry are not found in the New Testament other than as a specific commissioning toward a temporary task,

⁹Irenaeus is recognized as a Doctor in the Anglican Communion but not in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions.

¹⁰Thomas C Oden, *Becoming a Minister* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987); Ralph F. Smith, *Luther, ministry, and ordination rites in the early Reformation church* (New York: P. Lang, 1996); Edward C. Zaragoza, *No longer servants, but friends: A theology of ordained ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999); John Fletcher Tipei, *The laying on of hands in the New Testament: Its significance, techniques, and effects* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009).

¹¹See Tipei, 266-267, 278; Smith, 218-219.

¹²Smith, 2, 218.

such as those acts performed upon Paul and Barnabus for their first missionary journey in Acts 13:1-4.¹³ The importance of such actions, according to Tipei, are found in the Holy Spirit's prior work within the persons being sent and not the prayers and gestures of those sending. The ritual meaning of "the laying on of hands in Christian ordination is difficult" to define biblically, to cite Tipei's study, and therefore it cannot be considered the "only means of entering ministry."¹⁴ Is the rite of ordination even necessary? To further complicate the subject, a selection of recent Methodist thought, on the other hand, considers the laying on of hands as the "central liturgical gesture" of the ordination service.¹⁵

Dennis M. Campbell, a Methodist educational leader, lamented the "problematic ecclesiology" of contemporary Methodism. This discontent was attributed by Campbell to a weakened theology of ordination. Ironically, his argument notes Wesley's "problematic" relationship with the Anglican church of the 18th century. The problem arose with Wesley's "extraordinary" ordination of Thomas Coke as a superintendent of American Methodists "by the imposition of hands and prayer" in 1784. Wesley was not a consecrated Anglican bishop and had no legitimate authority to ordain elders (presbyters) within the Anglican ecclesial order.¹⁶ Wesley viewed himself as a "scriptural *episkopos*," especially to the American Methodists. Legally, there was no penalty for Wesley to act in such a way on behalf of believers in another country, as it would have, had he ordained elders for English Methodists. Theologically, Wesley believed in the importance of the sacraments for spiritual well-being, and therefore, to quote Campbell, "extraordinary ordinations were done precisely to avoid administration [of the ordinary sacraments] without ordination."¹⁷ The only way for Wesley to offer coherence theologically in this situation was to bend the rules ecclesiologically.

¹³Tipei, 248.

¹⁴Tipei, 278.

¹⁵Willimon, 32. See also Oden, 116; Zaragoza, 77.

¹⁶Dennis M. Campbell, *The yoke of obedience: The meaning of ordination in Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 62-63.

¹⁷Campbell, 79. This is not the view of Smith, 202. The sacramental duty of ordained clergy is not seen as a primary motivation for Luther's revisions of the ordination rite. Rather, it was to emphasize the continuity of the "*ministerium verbi*" (preaching of the Word) through ordained ministry following the historical era of the Reformation.

The physical gesture of the laying on of hands and the spoken gesture of prayer are key elements in ordination rites only in that they are also the main points of disagreement concerning what actions should be recognized as authoritative and essential for those entering ordained ministry. The practices of prayer and the imposition of hands then beg the question: are these actions theologically necessary if there is no coherence in ritual practice? If so, then what basis is there for ritual continuity between successive generations of competing theological traditions? The importance of the ritual becomes most apparent in its absence. What if the practice of the laying on of hands was removed from the ordination rites? Does it change the role of the participants concerning the focus of divine worship and the ministry of the church? Does it change the recognition of true doctrine and its divinely appointed messengers? Does it change the understanding of how God is revealed in the midst of the faithful community? If no, then the ritual gestures should not be considered essential to the theological basis for participation in ministry. If yes, or even maybe, then one must deal with a particular ritual activity, in this case, the imposition of hands that is associated with ordination, and admit that this ritual activity communicates an empowering theological significance by its use.

A Closer Look at the Theory of Ritual and the Practice of the Ordination Rite

Three views of defining ritual activity offered by Mark Searle may clarify some of the confusion associated with ordination rites.¹⁸ The *formal* definition of ritual is associated with “pre-patterned” behavior that brings distinctiveness to mundane actions. What is it about this behavior that distinguishes it from all other similar actions? Tipei’s historical study makes no allowance for the evolving cultural significance underlying the practice of the laying on of hands between earlier Rabbinical practice, its depiction in the New Testament, and later developments in its use by the early Church. Since Tipei sees no textual continuity in Scripture between the rabbi’s hand placed on the disciple’s shoulder and that of the bishop’s hand upon the ordinand’s head, the practice itself is not considered nor-

¹⁸The three definitions of ritual are explained in further detail in Mark Searle, “Ritual,” in *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship*, ed. Paul Bradshaw and John Mellon (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2009), 10-11.

mative for authorizing ordained ministry even by the time of Hippolytus in the third century CE.¹⁹ This limited view of cultural change unnecessarily constricts the full biblical vibrancy of the ritual gesture among the participants (notably that of reflexive submission to one another as Christ's followers, see Ephesians 5:21 for the full implications of this act of submission). The *functionalist* view of ritual connotes "social cohesion and cultural coherence in the face of various kinds of threats."²⁰ This is the issue faced by Luther and the Radical Reformers as well as Wesley and the early Methodists. The ritual action responds to the question: What necessary social behavior enables group survival through current conflict into subsequent generations? As they sought change within the church, the Radical Reformers continued to affirm that ordination was an essential function as a survival instinct in the midst of ongoing conflicts with church authorities. Wesley also used ordination to enable the continual expansion of Methodists in America. Finally, the *symbolic* definition of ritual views action primarily as communication of meaning. What does this action mean for the individual participants and for the group as a whole? Significance is conveyed through the ritual action by those with a voice in its practice.

Catherine Bell offers a reminder that understanding ritual activity, and recognizing its importance, is not a response to the question "how does ritual do what we say it does?" (attributed to anthropologist Maurice Bloch), rather it answers the question "how is it that ritual activities are seen and judged as the appropriate thing to do?"²¹ Her question assumes the mutual importance of the phenomenological experience and the theological insight needed to understand the symbolic significance of the ordination rite. Whereas much of the literature cited in this paper emphasizes the theological weight of what transpires in the ordination rites, very little thought has been given to the rites themselves and what they might signify as practiced among the participants.

Bell used four features of practice which assist in finding ritual significance within human activity. Analyzing ordination rites as practice will highlight Pierre Bourdieu's emphasis on practice as the ability to "confront the act itself" in order to find the "sense of ritual."²² Practice,

¹⁹Tipei, 268-269, 274.

²⁰Searle, 11.

²¹Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 115.

²²Bell, 80.

defined by Bell, is situational, appropriated, misrecognized, and negotiated.²³ First, a practice is situational in that it can never be separated or analyzed apart from its context. Second, a practice is strategic in that there is a constant and continual appropriation of power, though the meaning of the act itself remains ambiguous, resisting intellectual oversight and theoretical grounding. It is manipulative, constantly forming, and manipulated, being formed. Third, a practice is misrecognized, in a sense of disguise, oversight, being blinded by the light, or looking through a glass darkly, to borrow a scriptural metaphor. What is “actually accomplished” through a practice may not be fully known even by the participants. Finally, a practice results in the negotiation of power relations among participants in what Bell calls “redemptive hegemony.”²⁴ The ritualization of redemptive practice is intentional, in a sense “hegemonic,” since they are “designed and orchestrated to distinguish . . . what is being done in comparison to other . . . activities.”²⁵ Ordination is “from above,” within ecclesial hierarchy, Willimon writes cautiously, but only so far as the Spirit guides the leadership, otherwise it would be a “blasphemous action.”²⁶ This is affirmed by Tipei in that the rituals of ordination, especially the laying on of hands, becomes “channels of power by which charisms for ministry are transferred from God, the divine source.”²⁷ And, in this way, power relations among participants may not always be equalized but are always empowered by the mere participation in the practice. The imposition of hands can be further explored to illustrate how a practice becomes ritualized and mutually empowering.

Laying on of hands in ordination cannot be separated from its liturgical or social context. It cannot be extracted or dissected from what happens within the community’s practice of this ritual. Luther’s revision of medieval ordination rites illustrates the importance of the ecclesiological context. Luther made two major changes to the medieval rite of ordination. The hymn “Veni Creator Spiritus” was used primarily in Roman liturgy, praying “O Finger of the hand divine . . . who doest the tongue with power endow.” This hymn was sung during the election of a pope, consecration of bishops, and ordination of priests. Luther replaced this

²³Ibid., 81-86.

²⁴Ibid., 83.

²⁵Ibid., 74.

²⁶Willimon, 37-38.

²⁷Tipei, 275.

hymn with “Veni Sancte Spiritus” noting the gifts of the Holy Spirit without the anthropomorphic imagery of fingers and hands at work in the process. He may have replaced the song, but Luther continued the practice of the imposition of hands, albeit without the embellishment of anointing with oil. As Smith put it, unction was replaced by prayer and hymn: the spoken in place of the enacted.²⁸ The changes made by the Reformer make sense in light of the decision to diverge from the view that ordination is a “sacramental moment” in the “pontifical tradition.”²⁹ The key ritual gesture of laying hands upon the ordinand was not changed. Some spoken aspects of the liturgy were reformed to emphasize discontinuity with Rome but the use of the visible rite still allowed for participants to sense continuity within the Church universal. The practice of ritual can only be understood where it is situated communally and historically. In liturgical practice, context matters.

Laying on of hands becomes a strategic appropriation of power in the era of the Radical Reformation. Interestingly, in almost every case, according to George Hunston Williams, the Radical Reformers persisted in the tradition of ordination in spite of drastic changes in other liturgical practices.³⁰ Various groups pushed formerly Catholic priests into re-ordination, such as the Unitas Fratrum (1467), Martyr’s Synod (1527), Menno Simons and his followers (1527), and the Italian Waldensians or “barbs” (1530).³¹ One of the most telling accounts in appropriating power conveyed through ordination rites was the case of lay leader Conrad Gerbel. This layperson administered the sacrament of baptism upon former priest George Cajacob Blaurock “since there was no ordained minister to perform such work” in the house of Felix Mantz.³² This event on 21 January 1525 marked the historical beginning of the tumultuous Anabaptist reform movement in Europe. The desire to reform the church actually led a repudiation of former ordinations among priests and the validation of lay leadership giving rise to a “lay apostolate,” which was, in fact, a lasting contribution of the Radical Reformation.³³ The ritual of ordination itself was used to redefine power relations between groups within the church.

²⁸Smith, 222.

²⁹Ibid., 218.

³⁰Williams, George H, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), xxx.

³¹Ibid., 176, 211, 393, 522ff.

³²Williams, 122; Willimon, 48; Tipei, 269.

³³Williams, 860-861.

Laying on of hands as a ritual practice can be misrecognized even to the point of subverting its ritual significance. An example of misrecognition is found in Wesley's imposition of hands and the prayer of episcopal ordination upon Thomas Coke in 1784 at Bristol and Coke's leadership of the subsequent Christmas Conference in Baltimore. This functional use of ritual to overcome leadership deficiencies among Methodists in America becomes quite symbolic in terms of how Wesley's use of the ordination rites changed the theological significance of ordination as ordered succession of leadership within the church. The change in ritual practice preceded theological confusion regarding ordained ministry.

Turning again to Catherine Bell, she asserts the importance of "seeing and judging" a practice to ascertain if it is the "appropriate thing to do." In Anglican church orders, an elder (presbyter) cannot ordain another one, only a bishop may do so. The bishop of London has already refused Wesley's demand to ordain leaders for Methodists in America. In Wesley's mind, the distinction between church offices was not held to be scripturally significant; otherwise, Wesley would not have offered such an exemption in practice for American Methodists.³⁴ Even still, Wesley called Coke a "superintendent" as an anglicized interpretation of the scriptural term *episkopos*. Under scriptural authority and not ecclesial authority, Wesley acted to rearrange the lines of authority depicted in the rites of ordination within his theological tradition. About a decade later, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America changed "superintendent" to "bishop" in its official designations.³⁵ Hermeneutical gymnastics and theological oscillation are not a sufficient explanation of Wesley's decision to ordain Thomas Coke. Situating Wesley within the socio-cultural context of Britain in which the Act of Conformity was passed in 1662 followed by the non-conformist reactionary movement has to be considered as part of Wesley's decision as much as the given scriptural and theological bases for this change in ritual practice. The practice itself led to a reworking of how the rites of ordination were understood theologically among his followers, and even today a consistent and coherent understanding of the rite of ordination remains allusive within Methodism.³⁶ To comprehend fully

³⁴James F. Puglisi, *The procession of admission to ordained ministry: The first Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Wesleyan Rites: A comparative study*, vol. 2 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 171.

³⁵Campbell, 71.

³⁶Campbell, 94-97.

the practice of laying on of hands only happens through a misrecognition of what is accomplished in the action.

Finally, the laying on of hands provides an example of “redemptive hegemony.” Returning to the example of Wesley and Coke, Bell again offers insight into what this means for the ritual activity of ordination. Bell’s question, “how is it that ritual activity is seen and judged as the appropriate thing to do?” may be responded to in two ways.³⁷ First, the source of power makes an indirect claim upon the community: the Anglican church identified the limitations of power that Wesley could wield in recognizing leaders as well as the exemption of its authority upon the independent Methodist churches in America. The hegemonic order is considered as a point of reference by the participants in giving significance to practice, but not to the detriment of the individuals involved. Wesley worked within the inherited structures but also sought new ways in structuring the significance of the practice of ordination for American Methodists. Secondly, because this is so, the process of ritualization then becomes, per Bell, “the way for people to experience a vision of a community order that is personally empowering.”³⁸ The power relations between participants are negotiated in ritual activity in a way that “reduces anxiety” and “exaggerates real conflict to release tension” as a kind of “social catharsis.”³⁹ The use of tactile behavior in the ordination rite of the laying on of hands realizes a primitive and basic mode of social communication in human relationships.⁴⁰ The physical gesture becomes not just a way of reinforcing an idea of community and the continuity of authority but it becomes the impetus for making ordained clergy into the “community persons” that they are called to become.⁴¹ As such, there is no hierarchical order but rather focused specializations for ministry responsibilities. There is an intensive commitment required by ordinands more in line with the vow of the Nazirites (Numbers 6) than the inheritance of Levitic priesthood or charismatic prophet,⁴² and the need for “massive permis-

³⁷Bell, 116.

³⁸Ibid., 116.

³⁹Ibid., 71.

⁴⁰Ashley Montagu, *Touching: The human significance of the skin* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 208, 216-217.

⁴¹Willimon, 18.

⁴²See Dozeman’s categories regarding biblical understandings of ordained leadership offered in the Old Testament. Thomas Dozeman, *Holiness and ministry: a biblical theology of ordination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

sion giving” throughout the institutional organization of the church to equip and release all of God’s people into divinely-enabled vocation.⁴³

To be holy is to submit oneself completely to the divine calling of spiritual servanthood; and, to be an ordained minister, is to live out this submission in a way that embodies the broken-and-poured-out experience of the cruciform life. This calling is anathema to Western equalitarian sensibilities and non-Western realities of two-tiered society. According to this notion, all human relationships seek to place oneself either above or below another; and, the Western ideal is that all relationships are equal. The biblical ideal of holiness rejects both notions and calls the Christian, especially the ordained minister, into a posture of submission in all human interactions. This act of submission extends from the historical succession of church authorities laying hands upon ordinands to the submission of all participants to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the ritual moment.

The ritualized activity of ordination beckons the church to review its adaptability to its multiple contexts in the world. The reform of the church does not require a reconstitution of what it is, such as happened among the radical Reformers.⁴⁴ The church as a whole must recognize the need a new examination its liturgical practices and its theological commitments in light of ever-changing contexts. Ecclesiological renewal is especially important with respect to upcoming generations of leaders faced with new challenges in the Western world and a flourishing of new leadership in the Global South.

Further Challenges of This Study

The challenge of this study seeks to respond honestly to questions about current practice through anthropological considerations as well as theological insights. The study of ordination uncovers the underlying theological affirmations within historical and contemporary practice. The manner in which the church practices the rites of ordination reveals its theological moorings or lack thereof.

The study of ordination has been the subject of considerable attention in my denomination of the Church of the Nazarene, particularly

⁴³See the APEPT model suggested by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The shaping of things to come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 165-181, esp. 180.

⁴⁴Williams, 687.

regarding what is necessary educational preparation toward ordination. There has been little thought, however, to the ritual significance of the ordination rite. Recently, there has been movement toward a more reflective posture on the practice of ordination, particularly among Methodists.⁴⁵ Yet a theological basis for ordination cannot be formalized until adequate attention is given to the cultural context of the practices involved. If Catherine Bell's analysis of ritual practice offers anything to the study of ordination, it is the encouragement to look at the practices within their socio-cultural context before looking for derivative meanings from the scriptural record or disembodied theological speculation. An honest appraisal of ecclesiological tradition includes phenomenological analysis as much as theological reflection. This commitment is the least those that are ordained into Christian ministry can do in order to bring clarity to the muddled relationship between laity and clergy,⁴⁶ to find continuity between various theological traditions,⁴⁷ and to recognize the empowering significance of the Christian vocation of ministry in a variegated yet vibrant church within a complex global context.

⁴⁵See Oden; Campbell; Zaragoza; Willimon; Dozeman.

⁴⁶Peter Casarella, "Eucharist: presence of a gift" in *Rediscovering the Eucharist: ecumenical conversations*, ed. Roch A. Kereszty (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 199-225, esp. 216-217.

⁴⁷The following resource is a general ecumenical comparison of ordination practices and a model for further study: James Puglisi, *The process of admission to ordained ministry: Contemporary rites and general conclusions*, vol. 3 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001). And, Zaragoza (1999) offers a template for evaluating ordination services regardless of denominational affiliation.

DIGNITY, JUSTICE, AND FLOURISHING WITHIN THE HUMAN FAMILY: METHODIST THEOLOGY AND THE ENRICHMENT OF PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND LIFE

by

Kenneth M. Loyer

Introduction

One way of approaching the relationship between Wesleyan communities and the world beyond Christianity is to explore common ground between Methodist theology and wider public discourse and life. The themes of dignity, justice, and flourishing, which are increasingly common in the latter, find theological parallels in the former. While these are by no means the only similarities or areas of mutual concern, the fact that they figure prominently in both cases makes them an apposite subject of inquiry. Even with all that Methodists and Wesleyans stand to gain from sources outside their own theological heritage, an analysis of dignity, justice, and flourishing suggests the potential for Methodist theology to advance the understanding and practice of these principles not only within the church but also in the broader society. Theological reflection in Methodist and Wesleyan traditions shows noteworthy potential toward those ends because of its holistic character and soteriological orientation as expressed in the *via salutis*. A critical extension of Wesley's theological intuitions and insights can therefore serve to enrich public discourse and life, particularly regarding the themes of dignity, justice, and flourishing within the human family.

How can Christians maintain authentic Christian beliefs and practices at the same time as they relate constructively to non-Christian persons and communities? An answer emerging from the present study highlights the importance of identifying shared concerns and seeking the fulfillment of these three ideals in particular through a deeper theological grounding than is normally associated with them, the benefits of which have key implications not just for advancing Christian, and especially Methodist, theology but also for the work of societal renewal more broadly.

The themes of dignity, justice, and flourishing are not by any means new. They have helped to shape intellectual and societal life for centuries and in numerous ways, despite considerable debate from various points of view over the definition of each. In recent years, each one has enjoyed a certain emergence or perhaps resurgence as indicated by various publications aimed at scholarly audiences, the wider public, or both. In what follows, rather than attempting a sweeping survey of the roles that these concepts have played in academic and popular thought, this paper will highlight one prominent example showing the contemporary relevance in each case. That initial move will lead, in turn, to an exploration of convergence with theological teachings and possible extension from Methodist sources.

Dignity

The recent interest in dignity in the world beyond Christianity is reflected in the book *Human Dignity* by George Kateb, the William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Politics, Emeritus, at Princeton University.¹ Kateb offers an intentionally and self-described secular perspective,² grounding dignity in our existence as human beings. It is, according to Kateb, an existential value that pertains to the identity of a person as a human being and the status of humanity as the highest being in creation. Over against critics of the idea of dignity, Kateb maintains that neither human rights nor morality can alone suffice. The concept of human dignity must be defended and utilized in order to account for the equal status of all persons.³ Moreover, the dignity of the human species rests on its uniqueness among all other species.⁴ The exceptionally fitting task of humanity can be seen in what Kateb calls a stewardship of nature, which is a labor that only humanity can perform and, as “atonement” for the harm that human

¹George Kateb, *Human Dignity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011).

²“Let us keep open the secular possibility of exploration, because if theology goes down, then in disappointment we might be moved to think that since there is no irrefutable theological system, there can be no idea of human dignity. We must be willing to think about human dignity with the assumption that it was not bestowed on us or imputed to us by some higher non-human entity, whether divine, demonic, or angelic” (ibid., xi).

³Ibid., 1-113.

⁴Ibid., 113-173.

beings have done to nature, must perform.⁵ Attentive to the problems associated with human life, including the “immeasurable wrong” that human beings in various ways commit, Kateb points out the need to avoid excessive pride about our humanity and to limit claims about human dignity as appropriate.⁶ Nevertheless, he insists that human beings have inherent dignity and that the idea of this dignity should not be disowned, no matter what else one might say about humankind, because it is a central feature of human existence.

Although Kateb takes great care to avoid theological language in his account, human dignity bears an undeniable similarity with the doctrine of creation. That congruence provides the tools necessary to recast the concept of dignity with greater theological depth and clearer public import.

In particular, Judeo-Christian teaching on the *imago Dei* reveals the basis for such an understanding. As we read in Genesis 1,

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping things that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.⁷

For God to create us in this way makes human beings, as Wesley says, “capable of God.”⁸ That is, God’s free and gracious gift to all people, as persons created in God’s image, means that we are capable of knowing, loving, and obeying God. This gift of our creaturely reality, patterned after the very image of God, makes all human beings persons of sacred dignity. It is a gift prior to and independent of anything we do, though along with it comes a responsibility for us to live up to the calling that God has given us as human beings.

⁵Ibid., x and 205-211. It is striking, especially given his unabashed interest in a secular defense of human dignity, that Kateb uses this distinctively theological term to describe the possibility of humanity to serve nature.

⁶Ibid., xiii and 174-217.

⁷Genesis 1:26-27. All Scripture passages are taken from the NRSV.

⁸John Wesley, Sermon 60, “The General Deliverance,” (1781), §§I.5, III.6, 12, ed. Albert Outler, vol. 3 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, (Nashville, Tenn.: 1984—), 2:441, 448, 450.

Yet the problem of sin, our tragic, willing rebellion against God, defaces this image in which God has made us. As a result, what is desperately needed is the renewal of God's image, which is one of Wesley's favorite descriptions of salvation.⁹ Mercifully, God has made abundant provisions for the renewal of the divine image in us through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Such renewal is essential because of two issues rightly identified by Kateb, the wrongdoing in which we are all complicit and from which we must turn away, and the common good that we should pursue instead. In one way or another, we all have missed the mark in our personal and social lives. One manifestation of such wrongdoing is our mistreatment of the world around us. For those ways in which we have failed in our God-given task of caring for the world, including for one another, we must repent. Kateb's appeal to the human stewardship of nature echoes the biblical call for human beings to care for the earth that God has made and constitutes a penetrating challenge from outside the world of Christianity that, if heeded, could help us to become more faithful Christians. In the wake of any sin, repentance is absolutely necessary as a matter of both turning away from what would denigrate our dignity or that of others, and turning toward what respects our created dignity as human beings and reflects that dignity in how we live.

Working toward the common good requires us to honor the dignity of other human beings and treat the rest of the created order, and ourselves, appropriately. Theologically speaking, the doctrine of the image of God teaches that what God asks of us as creatures made in the divine image is to exercise dominion over the world in a way that reflects God's own dominion, shown most clearly in loving, self-giving service through the person of Jesus Christ. God has designated humankind as God's own vice-regents and has given us the honor of having dominion over other creatures so that we might be "the more strongly obliged" to bring honor to our Maker.¹⁰ Humanity's calling toward the world is to act—in a necessarily public way—on behalf of God for the good of the created order, to care for one another and the rest of creation as representatives of the God "whose mercy is over all his works" (Psalm 145:9), or in other words, to

⁹Cf. "The One Thing Needful."

¹⁰John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament*, on Gen 1:26. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesleys-notes-on-the-bible/notes-on-the-first-book-of-moses-called-genesis/#Chapter%2BI>. Accessed August 1, 2013.

imitate God as the very children of God that the Father's great love, freely lavished on us, has made us to be (1 John 3:1). Understood in that sense, dignity assumes a force and magnitude befitting of its reality as both a gift and a responsibility for us all under God.

Justice

Another key principle that has received widespread attention in both academic and popular discourse is justice. Notably, Michael J. Sandel, the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Professor of Government at Harvard University, has drawn from his experience teaching political philosophy, including a popular course called "Justice," in writing *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*¹¹ In this best-selling book, Sandel employs three influential theories of justice in order to approach some of the most difficult moral issues of the day, such as government bailouts, immigration, abortion, stem cell research, and the role of markets, as well as the personal ethical questions that we confront in our everyday lives. One approach, utilitarianism, says that justice means maximizing utility or welfare to produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number. A second approach sees justice as a matter of respecting freedom of choice, "either the actual choices people make in a free market (the libertarian view) or the hypothetical choices people *would* make in an original position of equality (the liberal egalitarian view)."¹² According to a third approach, justice involves the cultivation of virtue and thinking together about the common good.¹³

While Sandel invites people of all political persuasions on a journey of reasoned debate and moral reflection, he reveals near the end of the book his own predilection for a version of the third theory of justice as expressed in what he calls "a politics of the common good."¹⁴ In this discussion, he addresses the place of religion in politics. His concern is not Christianity *per se*, but rather to identify an appropriate role for moral and religious convictions of any sort to play in public discourse. In the process, he outlines what a new politics of the common good might look like, with attention to such themes as sacrifice, service, solidarity, civic virtue, and a politics of moral engagement.¹⁵

¹¹Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York, N.Y.: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009).

¹²*Ibid.*, 260.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 261.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 263-269.

There are obvious connections between contemporary discussions about justice and the common good as represented by Sandel's work, on the one hand, and Christian theology, and particularly Methodist doctrine, on the other. For example, both are concerned with the conditions necessary for rightly ordered lives and the social impact of such lives. These parallels allow us to account for justice in a way that shows both deeper theological substance and greater public significance and urgency.

The deeper theological substance derives from the foundation of virtue and justice in God. In his sermon "An Israelite Indeed,"¹⁶ Wesley critiques the proposal of Francis Hutcheson in *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) that the essence of virtue is benevolence or love of our fellow creatures, a claim that is representative of Hutcheson's autonomous ethical theory divorced from any theological ground. Against Hutcheson, Wesley insists on the love of God as "the true foundation both of the love of our neighbour and all other virtues," in accordance with Christ's own designation of this commandment as the "first and greatest" (Matt 22:38).¹⁷ He further asserts that truth and love are to be understood as integrally united, and in a direct correlation with holiness:

This then is real, genuine, solid virtue. Not truth alone, nor conformity to truth. This is a property of real virtue, not the essence of it. Not love alone, though this comes nearer the mark; for "love" in one sense "is the fulfilling of the law" [Rom 13:10]. No: truth and love united together are the essence of virtue or holiness.¹⁸

Benevolence, as Wesley goes on to say, is surely part of the good life, but must be fixed on "its right foundation, namely, the love of God, springing from faith, from a full conviction that God hath given his only Son to die for my sins."¹⁹ Here Wesley states plainly the connection between truth and love that is vital to genuine virtue and holiness, including the commitment to justice in personal and public life.

Even with all that Sandel and others appropriately emphasize about the importance of justice, because of its foundation in God the very

¹⁶John Wesley, Sermon 90, "An Israelite Indeed," (1755), ed. Albert Outler, vol. 3 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, (Nashville, Tenn.: 1984—), 3:278-289.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, §2, 3:280.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, II.11, 3:289.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

notion of justice reaches an order of public magnitude that is even greater still. The God of all creation, the God of Israel and the God and Father of Jesus Christ, takes justice very seriously. This is a God of justice, whose throne is founded on righteousness and justice (Psalm 89:14), and who is therefore not content to watch injustice thrive and spread. Out of love for the world, God acts. God heard the cries of the Israelites enslaved in Egypt and acted, through Moses, Aaron, and others, to set them free. God sent the prophets to speak to the people and bring them back from their waywardness, by showing them what the Lord requires, as in Micah's famous pronouncement: "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Most significantly of all, the one true God came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ, whose mission, clearly expressing the justice of God, was a recapitulation of the words of the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19; cf. Isaiah 61:1-2). In his life, teachings, healings, and especially his suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus restored our broken relationship with God. As St. Paul explains, "God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). So we are now justified by God's grace "as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness"—and δικαιοσύνης can be translated "justice"—"because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus"; or as one translation reads, God "did it to demonstrate his justice (δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ) at the present time, so as to be just (εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον) and the one who justifies (δικαιοῦντα) those who have faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:24-26). Acting justly, and indeed mercifully, God gave for us in sacrificial love so as to be just and to justify us. Wesley stated the matter succinctly: justification is God's work "*for us*" through Jesus Christ, setting right what we had done wrong toward God, ourselves, and this world.²⁰

²⁰Justification "implies what God *does for us* through his Son" (John Wesley, Sermon 5, "Justification by Faith," (1746), II.1, ed. Albert Outler, vol. 1 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, (Nashville, Tenn.: 1984—), 1:187).

For us to play our proper role in the great drama of our salvation means that God's justice demands something of us. God has given so much—the very Son of God in flesh and blood, teaching, healing, suffering, dying, and rising again for us and our salvation—to repair our relationship with God! Because of God's mercy toward us, we too should learn to be merciful, especially toward those who suffer. The Scriptures state repeatedly the high ethical demands placed on all who believe in Christ, including the command to give up themselves for his sake and pattern their lives after his life. As St. Paul writes, "For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them" (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Elsewhere the call is intensified: "be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Gal. 5:1). Of course, Jesus himself spoke freely of the cost of discipleship, as in his demanding words, "If any wants to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it" (Luke 9:23-24). The point is simple to grasp but difficult to embody: followers of Christ should be willing to give of themselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ. If more Christians lived out that commitment on a daily basis, the world would be a more just place.

For these and other reasons, a religiously informed public philosophy has the potential to energize and advance contemporary discussions about justice and the common good. Moral and religious arguments can do so because they stress that justice is more than just a noble ideal; it is an obligation and essential principle toward which to strive. Moreover, these arguments reinforce the point that the common good is a natural consequence of just relationships and a justly ordered world. The love of Christ decisively shows that God's commitment to justice takes the form of self-giving mercy. If God was willing to do so much for the justice of God and the common good, then with God's help we can—and must—give of ourselves in pursuit of just relationships, a just world, and the good of others.

Flourishing

Along with dignity and justice, flourishing is a third topic that has generated considerable interest and discussion in recent public life. The

two previous examples emerged from the domains of philosophy and politics, and either field could suitably proffer a representative study on flourishing. To broaden the selection of sources, however, we turn to another field, albeit a related one, psychology. In *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*, Martin E.P. Seligman, the Zellerbach Family Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, indicates that flourishing is very much also of interest to psychologists just as it is to the wider public.²¹ Seligman is a leader in the field of positive psychology, a branch of psychology that focuses on positive human functioning and seeks to achieve “a scientific understanding and effective interventions to build thriving individuals, families, and communities.”²² Positive psychology is primarily concerned with using psychological theory and techniques to understand and achieve emotionally fulfilling aspects of human behavior.

Flourish presents Seligman’s new concept of what well-being is, a construct measured by positive emotion (which he calls “the pleasant life”²³), engagement (depth of encounter through life experience, such as the feeling of losing self-consciousness or complete absorption in a task²⁴), meaning (“belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self”²⁵), relationships (the salubrious effects of friendship and constructive social interaction²⁶), and achievement (“accomplishment for the sake of accomplishment, in its extended form” of potential positive social consequences).²⁷ Seligman then spends the second half of the book outlining a series of ways for individual and communal flourishing with attention to character, intelligence, psychological fitness, growth, optimism, and the effect of politics and economics on well-being.²⁸ His conclusions are, not surprisingly for a positive psychologist, remarkably optimistic about the potential for human flourishing, and his work repre-

²¹Martin E.P. Seligman, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being* (New York, N.Y.: Atria Paperback, 2011).

²²Martin E.P. Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Positive Psychology: An Introduction,” *American Psychologist* 55/1 (2000): 5–14.

²³*Flourish*, 16.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*, 17.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 20.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 19.

²⁸*Ibid.*, chapters 6–10.

sents the notably widespread interest among trained professionals and lay people alike about what makes life worth living.

As with dignity and justice, flourishing itself can be envisaged anew, with all its potential impact for individuals, communities, and society as a whole. If, as Seligman suggests, well-being is based on such measurable factors as engagement, relationships, and meaning, then there is definite common ground between this view of well-being and what Christians know to be the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, healing relationships, bringing new life and purpose, giving us strength for the journey, and promoting through holiness of heart and life the knowledge and love of God and love for our neighbor. That work, historically a hallmark of how Methodists have approached the Gospel, provides a formative vantage point from which to consider flourishing. As Wesley explains,

I believe the infinite and eternal Spirit of God, equal with the Father and the Son, to be not only perfectly holy in himself, but the immediate cause of all holiness in us: enlightening our understandings, rectifying our wills and affections, renewing our natures, uniting our persons to Christ, assuring us of the adoption of sons, leading us in our actions, purifying and sanctifying our souls and bodies to a full and eternal enjoyment of God.²⁹

Sanctification entails, as Wesley says elsewhere, God's work "*in us*" by the Holy Spirit.³⁰ The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of Christians yields a specific kind of flourishing, namely, ever-greater holiness and happiness in God.

In the face of criticism, Wesley tirelessly maintained that entire sanctification or Christian perfection was not only a realistic possibility under grace but also a gift for which every Christian should earnestly pray and seek to receive from God in faith. He addressed various misunderstandings of and objections to this teaching, most notably in the tract *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection as Believed and Taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, From the Year 1725, to the Year 1777*.³¹ In short, Wesley con-

²⁹John Wesley, *Letter to a Roman Catholic*, in *The Works of John Wesley*, edited by Thomas Jackson (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1958-1959), 10:82.

³⁰Sanctification implies "what God *works in us* by his Spirit" (John Wesley, Sermon 5, "Justification by Faith," II.1, *Works*, 1:187).

³¹*A Plain Account of Christian Perfection as Believed and Taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, From the Year 1725, to the Year 1777* (Bristol, 1777; reprint edition, London: Epworth Press, 1952).

sidered the doctrine of Christian perfection so central to Methodist teaching that he referred to it as the grand *depositum* of Methodism to the world.³² Ironically, the doctrine once thought uniquely crucial to Methodist identity has to a great extent fallen into obscurity among Wesley's heirs.³³ Yet the theological core of that teaching has been affirmed, at least on paper, in the doctrinal sources of Wesleyan and Methodist church traditions. For example, the article "Of Sanctification" from the Methodist Protestant *Discipline* states:

Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth from all sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in his holy commandments blameless.³⁴

In *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, Article XI of the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church describes both sanctification and Christian perfection:

We believe sanctification is the work of God's grace through the Word and the Spirit, by which those who have been born again are cleansed from sin in their thoughts, words and acts, and are enabled to live in accordance with God's will, and to strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerate believer may obtain

³²"This doctrine is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly He appeared to have raised us up" (To Robert Carr Brackenbury, September 15, 1790, in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, M. A.*, edited by John Telford [London: Epworth Press, 1931], 8:238).

³³Robert E. Chiles traces this shift in the American context in *Theological Transition in American Methodism, 1790-1935* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1965).

³⁴*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church—2012* (Nashville, Tenn.: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), par. 104, p. 70. This article was placed in the *Discipline* by the Uniting Conference of 1939 (which united The Methodist Protestant Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church, and The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, under the name The Methodist Church), but it was not one of the Articles of Religion voted on by the three churches.

by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving one's neighbor as one's self. Through faith in Jesus Christ this gracious gift may be received in this life both gradually and instantaneously, and should be sought earnestly by every child of God.

We believe this experience does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue to guard against spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over every temptation to sin. He must respond wholly to the will of God so that sin will lose its power over him; and the world, the flesh, and the devil are put under his feet. Thus he rules over these enemies with watchfulness through the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁵

Because this way of life, made possible by God's grace, involves deliverance from the power of sin and evil and, positively, love of God and neighbor, it is flourishing of an exceptional sort. Rooted in God's magnanimous, sacrificial love, this flourishing is life-giving in two remarkable senses: it is life-giving both for those who walk this way of salvation and for those within the sphere of influence of such persons. A journey into the heart of God, sanctification has profound implications socially as well as individually; through their compassionate and selfless acts, those on this journey enrich the lives of others by extending to them active benevolence born out of gratitude to the one Christians know as the ultimate source of happiness and well-being, the triune God.³⁶ The human understanding and experience of flourishing can therefore be enhanced in relationship to God, as that relationship highlights not only the extent of flourishing that is possible but also the societal benefits of happiness in God.

Lives shaped by the way of salvation can promote dignity, justice, and flourishing in extraordinary ways. Such formation leads us to recog-

³⁵*Book of Discipline*, par. 104, p. 73.

³⁶In Wesley's words, just as "there is one God, so there is one religion and one happiness" (John Wesley, Sermon 120, "The Unity of the Divine Being," [1789], §22, ed. Albert Outler, vol. 4 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, (Nashville, Tenn.: 1984—), 4:70). That one religion and one happiness is, "in two words, gratitude and benevolence; gratitude to our Creator and supreme Benefactor, and benevolence to our fellow creatures" (Ibid., §16, 4:66-67).

nize the fundamental gift of our own dignity as well as that of others. It immerses us in the justice of God revealed supremely in Christ's self-sacrifice to set the world aright and calls us to imitate Christ in giving of ourselves for the good of others, not simply as a fitting goal for those so inclined but as an imperative for us all. Finally, our sharing in God's life through the *via salutis* ushers us into a life of flourishing in the love of God and neighbor and invites us to experience and then reflect that life and love in ever-deepening dimensions.

For Christians from all ecclesial traditions, dignity equates to a gift, justice to an imperative, and flourishing to an invitation, with each freely extended to all people, whether Christian or not. Given the holistic scope of the approach to the Gospel taken by the Wesley brothers and early Methodists, Christians from Wesleyan and Methodist churches should highlight these interests and pursue them with particular vigor and zeal. A vibrant, flourishing life occurs when we live in justly ordered relationships with God and with others by recognizing and celebrating our own God-given dignity and that of others. Dignity, justice, and flourishing so conceived reveal the essence of human worth and potential over against the dominant cultural measures of value and meaning such as self-gratification, status, wealth, influence, and possessions. Toward that end, faithful Christians, including Christians from the Methodist and Wesleyan family, can make profound, indispensable contributions to democratic, pluralistic societies.

Trinitarian Depth

In addition to the theological parallels and potential noted already, the concepts of dignity, justice, and flourishing, when considered collectively, reflect a certain trinitarian depth suggestive of their origin in God. This claim constitutes a clearly theological argument at this stage, so it is not something that everyone in the public square will understand or accept. Yet its importance for Christians and for the life of the church does not depend upon universal understanding or acceptance.

The doctrine of the Trinity, as the distinctively Christian teaching about God, states that God's actions toward the world are common and undivided among the three persons of the one God. Even with this affirmation of the unity of action, and indeed substance, among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, sometimes one person of the Trinity figures with particular prominence in any given action of God in and for the world. The doctrine of appropriations sheds light on the connection

between dignity, justice, and flourishing on the one hand and the doctrine of the Trinity on the other.

Dignity derives from our existence as human beings. It pertains to the identity of a person as a human being, and thus to the gift of human life in creation. The doctrine of God the Father has special significance for the Christian understanding of creation. The dignity of human beings comes as a gift from God, the source of all life, who has created all human beings, without exception, in the very image of God. While God has given human beings dominion over the world, that dominion entails a call to care for the earth in a way that represents the Father's care for the entire created order (Gen. 1:26-27, Matt. 6:26).

Justice involves an appropriate ordering of relationships, including fair treatment and due consequences for our actions. Here the theological correspondence is the doctrine of God the Son, the person of Jesus Christ. As Paul declares, "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Cor. 5:19). Through Christ we are set right, graciously restored to a proper relationship with God and with our fellow human beings, and made heirs and sharers together in God's promise in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:6).

Flourishing, as that state of life marked by fulfillment and satisfaction, is reminiscent of the Christian teaching about sanctification, in which the Holy Spirit figures prominently. God has poured out the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34). The Spirit of God gives life and peace: "if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom. 8:10-11). While God's work, first of all, creating us in the very image of God gives us and all people inherent dignity, and God's work for us in Christ brings us back to right relationship with God, God's work in us through the Holy Spirit changes us from within. It does so by conforming us to Christ and to the abundant life that he came to give, which is a flourishing in the very fullness of love, joy, peace, and all the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

The trinitarian depth of dignity, justice, and flourishing points to what, from a theological perspective, is the grounding of these concepts in the Christian doctrine of God. Historically, God's actions toward the world are said to proceed from the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

The relationship among dignity, justice, and flourishing can be understood in a somewhat analogous way, as issuing from what is foundational, in this case the dignity of the human person, which is nothing anyone could earn but is simply given to us in our created status. The dignity of the human race creates the necessary conditions for justice in our personal and social lives, from which flourishing for us and others logically follows. Theologically speaking, and now moving in reverse, human flourishing in sanctification derives from the just ordering of our relationships both with God and with others as modeled and achieved for us through the justifying work of Jesus Christ; and that justice of God, in turn, assumes the prior dignity of the human race as having been created in the image of God, an image marred by sin to be sure, but never obliterated and yet wonderfully healed and restored in Jesus Christ, who is himself the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). Dignity, justice, and flourishing may not be, *prima facie*, distinctively theological terms, but they refer to ideas with clear theological parallels and therefore to deeply theological realities. The fact that they do so helps to substantiate their objective, universal source, standard, and goal, namely God.

Ultimately, of course, dignity, justice, and flourishing are not abstract, theoretical, disembodied concepts, but rather virtues to be lived out and shown to the world. The church should lead the way, in word and deed, in service to the wider world—to all our neighbors, who are our sisters and brothers in the human family. The church should do so precisely by promoting true dignity, justice, and flourishing as found in the love that gives life, that is, in God's love so richly displayed in the reconciling, heart-renewing, world-transforming life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Methodism and the Enrichment of Public Discourse and Life

How then can Methodism serve to enrich public discourse and life, particularly regarding the understanding and practice of dignity, justice, and flourishing within the human family? The broader question is this: How should we, as Christians in the Methodist and Wesleyan global family, seek to interact with the world around us, in both the language that we use and the lives that we live? For decades, reflective of a crucial shift from Methodist to mainline, The United Methodist Church (of which I am a lifelong member) has stressed the importance of translating theological claims and commitments into generic, sometimes even atheological,

language more readily intelligible to other churches and the wider world. That approach encourages thought and action aimed at social and political relevance, but the problem is that the theological content tends to get lost in translation, along with any particular ecclesial identity and mission.³⁷

A better strategy, I believe, is for Christians in Methodist and Wesleyan traditions to seek, in humility and yet deep faith and conviction, a more distinctively Wesleyan witness in engaging the world. In that work, finding common ground with other groups in the wider public discourse remains critical. However, the purpose of Methodism as boldly described at the first Methodist Conference in London in 1744—"To reform the nation, and in particular the Church, to spread scriptural holiness over the land"³⁸—calls for more than what a strategy of translating theological language into more widely recognized terminology can itself accomplish. What that audacious vision for the purpose of Methodism calls for is something that is harder and far more demanding than simply translation, yet in the end also vastly more fulfilling and fruitful: actual demonstration, pointing the world to the depth and beauty of life with God. This is our challenge and task, and it is a God-sized one, only attainable in and through the Holy Spirit.

So without retreating from the world into the safety and isolation of our own ecclesial enclaves (a caution properly issued by advocates of the translation method), Christians in Methodist and Wesleyan traditions should speak and practice, both in the church and especially in the world, our own distinctive language—that of the way of salvation, toward the

³⁷In *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2011), George Hunter argues that the shift from Methodist to mainline was no accident. According to Hunter, the move from Methodist to mainline in The United Methodist Church, far more than simply a natural shift, was a strategic effort carried out by church executives. Whatever the intentions driving this change, the results have proven, by almost any measure, woefully unfruitful at best and downright disastrous at worst. Affirming the insights of Scott Kisker in *Mainline or Methodist? Rediscovering Our Evangelistic Mission* (Nashville, Tenn.: Discipleship Resources, 2008), Hunter maintains that the shift to mainline "sucked much of the identity, vitality, and reproductive power out of our once-great movement" (10). Methodists at least of the UMC variety now have an identity crisis, particularly in America, where the UMC as a whole has yet to experience growth since it came into existence, but has seen only decline in numbers and influence instead.

³⁸"The 'Large' Minutes," §4, *Works*, 10:845.

goal of both personal and communal sanctification—thus giving witness to its truth and offering freely to others this gift endowed by God to our theological heritage. While we must learn a genuinely public vocabulary for public life, and the ability to be bilingual in that sense is critical, that is not our native language. Our native language is the way of salvation; the biblical grammar of creation, fall, God's prevenient and all-atoning love in Jesus Christ, repentance, justification, sanctification, and Christian perfection not only ensures our continuity with historic Methodism but also, and thereby, makes possible a faithful, vibrant Methodist witness to the Gospel today.

Of course, people outside the church may not easily understand that language or accept it as valid. It might even sound to them as utter foolishness (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25). Yet many such people probably can, without much difficulty, appreciate the beauty of this way of life as it is actually lived out, a life of self-giving love that honors the dignity of all people regardless of age or condition, pursues justice in public as well as personal life, and shows that, contrary to popular opinion, flourishing consists of more than mere wealth, social standing, or self-indulgence. We can love others, and love ourselves rightly, because we have first been loved by God. The way of salvation, which is our grace-enabled participation in the life of God, confounds yet even more wondrously perfects human aspirations for lives marked by dignity, justice, and flourishing. For that language, graciously beckoning to be both spoken and lived, promises the greatest possible common good through Christ's saving mediation for and presence in the world: true dignity, justice, and flourishing not only within the human family as such, but in fact in the kingdom of God.

JOHN WESLEY AND THE NATURAL LAW OF JEAN PORTER AND PAMELA HALL

by

A. C. Weissenbacher

There is some debate surrounding whether or not John Wesley can be considered among natural law thinkers. According to Harald Lindstrøm, Wesley's thoughts on how heathens know right from wrong is not a "natural form of percipience,"¹ and Thomas Madron makes a case that Wesley gives little regard to natural law.² Wesley himself describes human nature in his sermon "Original Sin" as wholly evil and continuously so, which appears to exclude the possibility of him as a natural law thinker. On the other hand, David Hempton describes Wesley's political support of the Hanoverian Dynasty as based on their protection of civil and religious liberty, which are principles that Wesley views as being derived from the law of nature.³ Additionally, as detailed by Leon Hynson, Wesley uses an appeal to natural law to challenge the institution of slavery in his tract "Thoughts upon Slavery," and thus Hynson places Wesley in the camp of natural law thinkers.⁴

If one conceives of "ungraced nature" as essential to a true natural law or if one views natural law as a set of moral precepts accessible to all through reason without relation to God then there is not a natural law ethic in Wesleyan thought. Jean Porter, however, advocates that the conception of natural law as a set of moral precepts accessible to all through reason is rather a feature of a modern natural law theory which does not adequately represent the natural law of Thomas Aquinas. Various modern

¹Harald Lindstrøm, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Stockholm: Nya Bokförlags Aktiebolaget, 1946), 47.

²Thomas Madron, "The Political Thought of John Wesley" (Ph.D. Diss., Tulane University, 1963).

³David Hempton, *The Religion of the People* (Routledge: London, 1996), 80-89.

⁴Leon Hynson, "'Wesley's Thoughts Upon Slavery': A Declaration of Human Rights," *Methodist History* 33:1 (October, 1994).

writings describe natural law as a system for deriving a comprehensive set of moral rules, assessing, confirming, and systematizing them.⁵ This Kantian description gives moral rules a function similar to mathematical ones where “if correctly applied, they determine the uniquely correct answer to any moral question that may arise in a way that is compelling to any impartial, rational individual.”⁶ In contrast to the modern approach, however, the medieval account of natural law identifies natural law in its primary sense with a natural capacity for moral judgment or the very general principles through which this capacity operates.⁷

I argue that Wesley’s doctrines of prevenient grace, sanctification, and the Wesleyan Quadrilateral method of reflection display the medieval approach to natural law theory as interpreted by Jean Porter and Pamela Hall despite some points of divergence. Porter and Hall describe a natural law which underdetermines moral norms, is oriented to the ultimate end of human life represented by the Beatific Vision, and must be discovered and appropriated through time by individual and communal experience and reason.

It is assumed that Wesley would have been exposed to Thomas Aquinas during his time at Oxford; however, I will not explore where and how he may have been directly appropriating the thoughts of Aquinas or his interpreters. Whether and how Wesley’s theology was directly influenced by Aquinas is beyond the scope of this study. I rather examine Wesley’s doctrinal formulations and note the points of convergence or divergence to Aquinas as interpreted by Porter and Hall in order to show that conversation between Wesleyan theology and the Catholic natural law tradition is possible. Wesleyan theology can provide a valuable contribution to natural law discussions where what is at stake is God’s design of creation and human nature as well as the substance, origin, and functional ability of the human conscience.

⁵See Germain Grisez, “The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on *Summa Theologia*, 1-2, Question 94, Article 2,” in *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Anthony Kennedy (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 340-382; John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Joseph Boyle, “Aquinas and Prescriptive Ethics,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 49(1975): 82-95.

⁶Jean Porter, *Moral Action and Christian Ethics*, New Studies in Christian Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8.

⁷Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 28.

Wesley does not give a systemic treatment of natural law, although he gives it fair address in his sermon "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law." Here he establishes natural law as being a copy of the divine mind, given to humanity at creation but destroyed in the Fall, and thereafter reinscribed by God into humanity in some measure.⁸ I will develop Wesley's views further by deducing additional thoughts upon natural law from various references to sin, human nature, prevenient grace, and socially mediated moral reflection located in other select sermons of Wesley.

Synderesis and Virtue

Natural law begins with a grasp of that which is to be desired in life. The notion of "good" is the first thing that is apprehended by practical reason, giving rise to the primary natural law principle: "Good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided."⁹ People have a natural inclination to the proper act and end. This immediate, non-inferential grasp of principles is what Aquinas refers to as *synderesis*, which is essentially the ability that God gave humanity in creation to understand the basic notions of a moral life. Synderesis, however, does not provide specific knowledge of genuine goods, but rather provides a general way to characterize the end of an action as something to be desired. The possibility remains that one could be mistaken about goods, choosing goods that may satisfy immediate desires but which do not promote the best possible flourishing or which act against one's ultimate end in God. It is then up to the agent through moral reasoning to reflect on how certain ends and the means by which to achieve them pertain to concrete situations.

Wesley, however, affirms in his sermon "Original Sin the total depravity of humanity in an apparent contradiction to the basics of natural law." He deplores those who talk of a good human nature. People may have been created in the *Imago Dei*; however, the image has now "altogether become abominable," including "whatever is formed, made, fabricated within; all that is or passes in the soul; every inclination, affection, passion, appetite; every temper, design, thought."¹⁰ No good is mixed with the evil, and humanity is completely ignorant of its depravity. Yet in

⁸The Works of John Wesley, ed. Albert Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), II:6-9. Hereafter: *Works*.

⁹Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. I-II, Q. 94, A.2. Hereafter: *ST*.

¹⁰*Works*, II:173, 175.

the same sermon Wesley also mentions that heathens are able to recognize vice, even that which is inborn.¹¹ Apparently humanity's lack of knowledge regarding its fallen state does not fully extend to a lack of being able to discern morality. The capacity to recognize evil implies knowledge of a standard and a hierarchy of desirability where one can fail to obtain the best.

Wesley further elaborates on heathen morality in the sermon "The Almost Christian." Heathens are capable of discerning and following negative moral precepts as well as teaching each other not to be unjust, not to steal, oppress the poor, defraud others of their rights, and to owe no one anything.¹² Heathens have regard for truth and justice as well as expecting and giving love and assistance to one another. To summarize the characteristics given, it appears that the heathen has a natural recognition of at least the portion of the Decalogue that treats justice due others, and he or she is able to fulfill a portion of Jesus' greatest commandment regarding the love of one's neighbor, expressing charity, even though he or she does not love God. Furthermore, the heathen may avoid sin for the love of virtue and not simply out of the desire to avoid punishment. Apparently, by the very title of the sermon, heathens are capable of such good as to be considered nearly Christian.

The tension between Wesley's description of total depravity and the ability of the heathen to be almost Christian is resolved primarily through his understanding of prevenient grace. Total depravity for Wesley applies to the pure nature state of humanity; however, both Wesley and Aquinas reject that such a state actually exists. Jean Porter affirms that the natural law of Aquinas does not presuppose access to a state of pure nature,¹³ and Wesley himself states clearly, "There is no man that is in a state of mere nature."¹⁴ Humanity receives the natural law from God, and Wesley terms this reception "prevenient grace." As stated by Leon Hynson in his discussion of Wesleyan ethics, "God, in some measure, re-inscribed the law in the heart of his dark, sinful creature, through his prevenient grace, this, the law of God, the moral law, a concomitant of human nature, first by creation and then by grace."¹⁵

¹¹*Works*, II:183.

¹²*Works*, I:132.

¹³Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 385.

¹⁴*Works*, III:207.

¹⁵Leon O. Hynson, "Creation and Grace in Wesley's Ethics," *Drew Gateway* 46, no. 1-3 (1976): 53.

Prevenient grace is universal and independent of any special revelation. According to James Weldon Smith, even if the most enlightened and intelligent heathens were ignorant of the truths which relate to the eternal Son of God and the Spirit of God, they still have knowledge of the natural law through prevenient grace.¹⁶ As to the substance of this natural law, its fundamentals according to Wesley's sermon "Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law" are a conscience so as to discern good from evil and a degree of freedom or liberty so that a person can choose one and refuse the other.¹⁷ It also involves a certain restoration of the moral law in all people according to the sermon "On Working out our own Salvation."¹⁸

Additionally, it is not unusual for Wesley to reserve the idea of good for those actions that are performed after Christian conversion. Although he does not use the vocabulary of Aquinas, for Wesley one receives the infused virtues, of which love is primary, upon conversion. As Wesley states in the sermon "Almost Christian," conversion fills the heart with a love that "takes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul."¹⁹ True good must be done with the love of God. Thus the term "good" can be reserved for actions done through the infused virtues, yet this does not preclude that natural goods can be grasped by non-believers or that they can pursue what most consider good, moral activity. When a non-believer engages in moral actions, these actions may not be good strictly speaking since they are done without the infused virtues, yet they are in some sense good since they are a reflection of God-given, prevenient grace.

Stephen Long discusses how both Wesley and Aquinas understand the moral life primarily in terms of similar gifts, beatitudes, and virtues, where the virtues that Aquinas associates with charity are nearly identical to the holy tempers that Wesley develops in his "Sermon on the Mount" discourses, and likewise for the vices opposed to charity.²⁰ Additionally, virtue for both is not the fulfillment of natural human potential, but rather involves a will and intellect oriented to proximate goods and an

¹⁶James Weldon Smith, "Some Notes on Wesley's Doctrine of Prevenient Grace," *Religion in Life* 34, no. 1 (1965): 78.

¹⁷*Works*, II:6.

¹⁸*Works*, III:207.

¹⁹*Works*, I:137.

²⁰D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley's Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2005), 174, 195.

ultimate good, God, all of which are external to the human person.²¹ God has given people natural passions which orient them toward natural human flourishing.

In a discussion of the characteristics of the meek in his sermon "Upon the Lord's Sermon on the Mount: Discourse Two," Wesley discusses how the meek do not desire to get rid of natural passions, even unpleasant ones such as anger and fear, but rather master and orient them to proximate and ultimate goods.²² This subjection and mastery is achieved through acquired virtues. Obtaining the ultimate good is impossible through the natural virtues, and, therefore, infused theological virtues are required. Charity is imperfect "unless some form be super-added to the natural power, inclining it to the act of love."²³ People receive the infused virtues through grace, orienting them to their final end in God.

Receiving these infused theological virtues, however, is not a passive endeavor. According to Long, "Theological virtue is not a mere passive reception independent of the person's will and intellect. It requires active striving which nevertheless does not achieve its end through its own efforts."²⁴ Having acquired virtues makes one more amenable to receiving the infused virtues, but acquired virtues are not explicitly required. Wesley himself encourages Christians to perform works of mercy and piety on the way to perfection. Repentance and its fruits are necessary to full salvation, yet they are not necessary either in the same sense or degree with faith, indicating that virtuous acts are important, yet inner transformation comes from God alone.²⁵

The Teleological Nature of Natural Law

An essential characteristic of the natural law according to Thomas Aquinas is that humans are oriented to proximate ends and then to a final end, which is ultimately God.²⁶ Pamela Hall affirms that "without teleol-

²¹Ibid., 175; Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 158-159.

²²*Works*, I:490.

²³ST II-II, Q. 23, A. 2.

²⁴Long, 198.

²⁵ Kenneth Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 282-286, in a commentary on Wesley's sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation."

²⁶Pamela M. Hall, *Narrative and the Natural Law: An Interpretation of Thomistic Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 28.

ogy, the natural law would be without function, could not be at all as Thomas defines it.”²⁷ There are three sets of precepts of the natural law corresponding to the hierarchy of inclinations. The first guides the preservation of life and the second guides to the production of offspring, both in their begetting as well as raising them to self-sufficiency. These first two are proper to all living creatures. The third governs goods specific to humanity, namely, to know the truth about God and to live in society.²⁸ These flow from the first principle that good is to be done and pursued while evil is to be avoided.

Jean Porter affirms that lower creatures are “directed towards their final end by the natural unfolding of their causal powers.”²⁹ They instinctually pursue the first two principles of the natural law by defending their life, obtaining food, and mating. Porter also mentions that any action which can be described as a rational fulfillment of one of the basic inclinations is justified.³⁰ This suggests that whatever lower creatures must do to fulfill these inclinations, including predation or lethal self-defense, is essentially good.

Wesley, however, disagrees. His account of nature as nature is one that is essentially sinful, leading to a different account of non-human animal teleology that goes beyond immediate earthly flourishing and the first two precepts of the natural law. His description of the pre-fall state of the non-rational animal kingdom, found in his sermon “The General Deliverance,” provides his understanding of creaturely teleology. The state of the non-rational animal kingdom was primarily centered on humanity as humanity was centered upon God, and God’s blessings then came through humanity to the rest of creation.³¹ It was in obedience to a God-centered humanity where non-rational animals found happiness and the fulfillment of their teleology.³² Wesley establishes the pre-fall state and the ultimate happiness of nature as nature as a form of universal domesticity, yet one that does not diminish the faculties, strength, or swiftness unique to each creature.

While it is useful to use the term “non-rational animals” to refer to the beings in question, the term would not be an accurate descriptor of

²⁷Ibid., 18.

²⁸ST I-II, Q. 94, A. 2.

²⁹Porter, *Moral Action and Christian Ethics*, 139.

³⁰Ibid., 109.

³¹*Works*, II:440.

³²*Works*, II:441.

pre-fall creation according to Wesley—where animals originally had a degree of understanding, will, passions, and freedom of choice. These were oriented toward obedience to humanity as humanity was obedient to God. When humanity fell, other animals fell as well. Their fall involved losing most of their pre-fall faculties except for the passions and a rudimentary sense of rationality that varies depending on the animal's complexity. Non-human animals lost their happy state in relation to humanity and began to fulfill their nature through predation so that “not only the feebler creatures are continually destroyed by the stronger; not only the strong are frequently destroyed by those that are of equal strength; but both the one and the other are exposed to the violence and cruelty of him that is now their common enemy, man.”³³ Creatures now fear humanity instead of existing in harmony with and in holy service to men and women.

The sermon “The General Deliverance” reveals that Wesley holds that nature is intelligible and that every creature manifests a certain orderly pattern of action to maintain its existence, grow, and reproduce—which is in agreement with Porter. He also agrees with her in that there is “a teleology grounded in norms of flourishing proper to kinds of creatures.”³⁴ Wesley, however, proscribes a negative morality to the object of much post-fall creaturely activity even though it is pursued in the service of flourishing.

Porter, in contrast to Wesley, does not explicitly touch on the moral nature of the means by which non-human animals pursue flourishing. While it is unlikely that Porter would arrive at the same imaginative speculations as Wesley regarding the pre-fall animal kingdom, her account of the “robust concept of nature”³⁵ in her natural law at least opens the door to moral discussions about the non-rational animal kingdom that are impossible in traditions that ground morality in reason alone. She recognizes this potential in her review of Martin Rhonheimer's book *Natural Law and Practical Reason* where she takes him to task for failing to consider the moral component of pre-rational nature.³⁶

Wesley also adds an ultimate end for non-human animals that is analogous to that for humanity: one of godly domesticity in relation to a

³³*Works*, II:444.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 89.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 6.

³⁶Jean Porter, “Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomist View of Moral Autonomy: Book Review,” *Theological Studies* 62, no. 4 (2001): 851-853.

humanity that is in the service of God, which also includes fulfilling the immediate precepts of the natural law in ways that do not involve predation or exploitation. This ultimate end for non-human animals is only analogous to humanity's ultimate end in God since this end is not a true Beatific Vision. Wesley agrees with Porter's statement, "it is not even thinkable that God could bestow charity or the Beatific Vision on a cat,"³⁷ when he states unequivocally in "The General Deliverance" that "we have no ground to believe that they [non-human animals] are, in any degree, capable of knowing, loving, or obeying God."³⁸

While Wesley's analogous Beatific Vision for non-human animals may not enjoy the support of evolutionary biology that occurs when one limits the ultimate teleology of non-human animals to the maintaining of life and reproduction according to kind,³⁹ it does take seriously the fallen state of the natural world. It also takes into account Romans 8 where we are told that the created world itself awaits a redemption that is dependent upon the redemption of humanity and challenges current natural law discussions to do the same.

The lack of a Beatific Vision for the non-human animal kingdom in Aquinas' account of the natural law is likely because Aquinas apparently denies a place for non-human animals in the Kingdom of God.⁴⁰ He does, however, allude to an analogous Beatific Vision in *Summa Contra Gentiles* when he states, "other creatures cannot attain the ultimate end [God] except by a participation in its likeness."⁴¹ This appears similar to Wesley in that non-human animals can experience God in their relation with humanity; however, this knowing and loving God is likely limited to earthly existence given Aquinas' apparent denial of the possibility of their existence in the eschatological Kingdom of God.

The teleology of non-human animals aside, union with God as a person's ultimate and supernatural end is that to which the natural law for humanity is finally directed. Both Wesley and Aquinas set forth deification as the final end of humanity, a deification based on 2 Peter 1:4 that

³⁷Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 393.

³⁸Wesley, "The General Deliverance," 244.

³⁹Jean Porter locates the premises of natural law in the context of evolutionary biology in chapter 2 of her book *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*.

⁴⁰ST I-I, Q. 75, A. 3.

⁴¹Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles* 3-2, 111.

does not blur the ontological distinction between God and creation.⁴² The quote from Aquinas, “For perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause. And thus it will have its perfection through union with God,”⁴³ is similar to where Wesley describes the Beatific Vision as “being renewed in the image of God, and having communion with him, so as to dwell in God, and God in you.”⁴⁴ The attainment of this Vision is enabled through grace. However, such a movement requires human cooperation, but such a cooperation is also enabled by grace.⁴⁵

According to Porter, natural law also stresses the importance of a terrestrial form of perfection through the development of virtue.⁴⁶ Wesley’s doctrine of entire sanctification takes into account a human perfection of virtue in this life, supporting Porter’s statement that “the practice of the virtues represents the greatest possible terrestrial perfection of the human person.”⁴⁷ In entire sanctification, one’s heart is purified from all sin, both inward and outward. It is the full practice of the virtues, a perfection of love, seen both as a gift of God and something that one must work to attain. Entire sanctification, however, does not properly represent the Beatific Vision since it is not absolute perfection, which belongs to God alone.

For Wesley, one can lose entire sanctification. It is always capable of being improved, and it admits both mistakes and ignorance.⁴⁸ Even so, the concept of sanctification provides a teleological orientation to the natural law. As stated by Porter, “the theory of the natural law being presented is tethered to an ideal of terrestrial happiness, but the terrestrial happiness in question is directly oriented toward a still more complete form of happiness which it anticipates.”⁴⁹ Sanctification is the ideal for Wesley, and it anticipates the Beatific Vision.

⁴²Long, 158.

⁴³ST I-II, Q. 3, A. 8.

⁴⁴John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (New York: Lane and Scott, 1850), 621.

⁴⁵Long, 184.

⁴⁶Ibid., 379.

⁴⁷Ibid., 222.

⁴⁸*Works*, II:100-105.

⁴⁹Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 396.

Natural Law and Indeterminacy

It is yet to be determined if Wesley holds that natural law gives rise to universal moral precepts or whether there can be diverse expressions of law that are not immediately classified as sin. In his sermon "A Caution against Bigotry" Wesley contrasts a Methodist with a non-Methodist Christian. The non-Methodist described is not only seen as differing in religious opinion and practice, but he or she is also presented in the eyes of the Methodist as being anti-scriptural, anti-Christian, "guilty of gross superstition and idolatry," and having brought in numerous innovations to the Christian practice "without any warrant either from antiquity or Scripture."⁵⁰ Even though the person has expressions that could be regarded as immoral from a Wesleyan perspective, Wesley also holds that this same person can be of God, evidencing God's work, and thus be deserving of support and having their character defended.⁵¹ The fact that one would defend this person's character indicates that virtue exists to defend. This case reveals the existence of differing Christian moral expressions. Christians themselves may differ vastly in act and practice, yet all of these acts and practices can be a reasonable and virtuous out-working of God's law.

This point is driven home in Wesley's sermon on Christian unity entitled "Catholic Spirit." He says that Christians "cannot all think alike; and, in consequence of this, secondly, they cannot all walk alike; but in several smaller points their practice must differ."⁵² Wesley does not say that in these differences one segment is deficient and should, therefore, be converted. Both are an adequate outworking of God's law. If Christians who have received greater specificity to the natural law through revealed divine law cannot be equal in their expressions of it, then the greater human race will differ to an even greater extent. The implication is that revealed divine law is under-determined and that the under-determination of natural law is greater still.

While Wesley focuses on Christian unity when faced with diversity, he does not answer how it is possible that Christians can vary in their expressions of the revealed law of God and yet still be considered as fulfilling it. It is here that the Porter and Hall's language of moral indeterminacy provides clarity. Porter states that "our generic concepts of morally

⁵⁰*Works*, II:71.

⁵¹*Works*, II:77.

⁵²*Works*, II:82.

significant kinds of actions are indeterminate, in the sense that we can never eliminate the possibility that a real doubt may arise with respect to the scope of their application.”⁵³ Porter provides the theoretical underpinnings that make intelligible Wesley’s acceptance of diverse Christian practices and practical encouragement for unity among Christians.

Porter describes how observations do not always lead to one uniquely correct description of an object or event. “Most of our empirical concepts are open-ended, in the sense that we can never exhaustively determine in advance the specific cases that will or will not apply.”⁵⁴ All empirical descriptions are essentially incomplete, not just those words where vagueness is inherent in their usage like “thing” or “stuff.”⁵⁵ Concepts in normal usage where one would expect a clear consensus as to a definition are not so perfectly defined that a peculiar case cannot call the definition into question. A prime example is the definition of life. While most people and societies agree on what constitutes being alive, the definition of life is in dispute in certain unusual cases such as with viruses.⁵⁶

Such reasoning applies to moral concepts. According to Porter, “It is always possible that we may confront a problem . . . that can only be resolved, if at all, by means of a decision to count certain features of a particular case rather than others.” “A decision of this sort will be rational, in the sense that it can be supported by reasons in terms of the accepted framework; yet, those reasons will underdetermine the decision that they support.”⁵⁷ This does not mean that there are widely divergent ideas regarding practical concepts such as “life” or “murder,” but there are disagreements on whether certain peculiar kinds of actions count as murder. Common examples include the aborting of a zygote, euthanasia, or certain forms of lethal self-defense. It is always possible to add another detail to a definition, and no definition is exhaustively complete. Given the indeterminacy of moral concepts due to the limitations of human language, there will be different instantiations of natural law, even among applications of the less general, revealed moral law of Christianity.

Does the underdetermination of moral norms mean a moral relativism for Porter and Wesley? Martin Rhonheimer accuses Jean Porter of

⁵³Porter, *Moral Action and Christian Ethics*, 22.

⁵⁴Ibid., 23.

⁵⁵Ibid., 24-25.

⁵⁶Luis Villarreal, “Are Viruses Alive?,” *Scientific American* 291, no. 6 (2004): 100.

⁵⁷Porter, *Moral Action and Christian Ethics*, 32.

promoting an agenda “of a theologically warranted kind of moral relativism under the concept of ‘moral pluralism.’”⁵⁸ He accuses her natural law theory that is unable to conclude which “traditions, social practices and religious faiths are truth supporting and which are not.”⁵⁹ At best, according to Rhonheimer, her formulations cannot make judgments on whether particular instantiations of morality are “truth supporting,” only that they are adequate “species-specific patterns of behavior.”⁶⁰ Wesley’s strong doctrine of sin certainly disqualifies him as a complete moral relativist; however, his case of the Methodist/non-Methodist Christian, where he shows that the moral law can be instantiated in at least some diverse forms, subjects him to some of the same criticism that Rhonheimer levels against Porter.

Porter does recognize that knowledge of the natural law is impeded by sin,⁶¹ and that there are some kinds of actions that are never morally justifiable.⁶² Sin does not, however, explain all the differences found in instantiations of the natural law. Moral norms can be universal when they are described in general terms, such as not killing the innocent; however, according to Porter, “Norms and ideals must be formulated in terms of the paradigmatic kinds of actions that would count as either instantiations or transgressions of the norms/ideals in question.”⁶³ People may agree on the general prohibition against killing the innocent, but significant work must be done to determine what counts as “innocent” or “killing.” A foundation is given to everyone in natural law, but it has to be specified in concrete societies. Christian revelation does provide some concretization, but even that must be further specified.

Due to the indeterminacy of moral norms, the virtue of prudence is required, and both Porter and Wesley give a primary place to prudence in their conceptions of the natural law. Porter states that “this virtue [prudence] does not generate moral norms directly, it plays an important, albeit indirect role in the development of moral knowledge at the individ-

⁵⁸Martin Rhonheimer, *The Perspective of the Acting Person: Essays in the Renewal of Thomistic Moral Philosophy* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 284.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 304.

⁶⁰Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 363.

⁶¹Jean Porter, “A Response to Martin Rhonheimer,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19, no. 3 (2006): 386.

⁶²Porter, *Moral Action and Christian Ethics*, 36.

⁶³Porter, “A Response to Martin Rhonheimer,” 151.

ual and communal level.”⁶⁴ In his sermon “The Reformation of Manners” Wesley argues for the primacy of prudence over all other natural virtues: “This wisdom [prudence] will instruct you how to suit your words and whole behavior to the persons with whom you have to do, to the time, place, and all other circumstances.”⁶⁵

Recognizing the limited nature of human language does not commit one to moral relativism, it only commits one to the belief that moral absolutes have a certain indeterminacy that requires prudence to determine how to apply the absolute to the practical situation. It is not that there are no universal rules or that a rule is wrong in certain situations and must have an exception. The rule exists, but one must determine if the situation fits the rule, and one must speak in terms of correct understanding and application of the rule. The very nature of human language makes this difficult in peculiar cases. This can lead then to different instantiations of the moral law that are reasonable and achieve human flourishing.

This also shows that someone who disagrees on a particular of the moral law need not necessarily be perverse. Variations of human morality are not only due to human sinfulness. There can be different cultural configurations of the natural law that are not necessarily deficient or distorted. It is possible that each person in a moral disagreement can be pursuing human flourishing in what he or she sees as a reasonable manner, and yet it leaves open the possibility of there being better ways to pursue flourishing (or realizing that one’s position is morally untenable), which can be arrived at through reasoned, mutual dialogue. Under-determination can allow for common ground with others for discourse instead of merely viewing the other as sinful from the outset.

Promulgation and the Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Because the natural law under-determines moral norms, it is necessary for humanity to develop specificity in its various societal expressions. According to Pamela Hall, “General principles of the natural law must be further articulated (and supplemented) according to the special needs of individual communities.”⁶⁶ Hall says this is accomplished through a narrative process where individuals and societies reflect on their actions through history, consequences, how they have or have not achieved

⁶⁴Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, 51.

⁶⁵*Works*, II:318.

⁶⁶Hall, 41.

desired goods, and whether those are the goods worth pursuing. The human inquiry into the good has a social nature. "We are dependent upon community and law to articulate better the natural law for individuals."⁶⁷ Hall uses the example of German robbers, first advanced by Aquinas,⁶⁸ to illustrate this narrative method of specifying the natural law.

A tribe of Germans obtained the goods necessary for existence by raiding their neighbors. After a time there were no goods left to raid. In the face of starvation, the tribe was forced to turn to other methods, such as agriculture, for survival, and in doing so they came to see that a life of raiding was not in line with the natural law. It was not merely consequence avoidance that prompted the ethical reappraisal of their chosen mode of living. If that were so then the tribe may have ceased raiding until such a time that the neighbors replenished their goods and then commenced raiding anew.

External consequences are not enough in themselves to convince someone that an action itself is wrong. Hall says rather that it is when "the act necessarily deprives the agent (or community) of some good to which he or she is directed by the teleology of human nature"⁶⁹ that one comes to grasp the action as unjust in itself. One must apprehend a standard of justice from which one's action falls short. External consequences can prompt such reflection, but in the case of the Germans, it was only when the tribe began to reflect on justice, on their desired goods, what true good was, and how their actions were not conducive to that true good that they effected a permanent change, coming to a more clear understanding of natural law.

Understanding of the natural law is progressive and historical through a process of inquiry that goes on individually and communally.⁷⁰ This does not mean that people are simply a product of their society. The relationship between community, family, and friends is dialectical in that one's choices "reject, renew or alter these relationships."⁷¹ Individuals in community engage in certain actions and reap certain consequences both good and bad. Through time, the individuals in community then reflect

⁶⁷Ibid., 111.

⁶⁸ST I-II, Q. 94, A. 4.

⁶⁹Hall, 97.

⁷⁰Ibid., 41.

⁷¹Ibid., 111.

on their natures, their actions, and the goods constitutive of true flourishing. They modify behavior as needed and teach the next generation, who then choose what to accept or reject, allowing new forms of behavior to evolve, which in turn themselves become objects of reflection and promulgation.

It has already been determined that Wesley agrees that the natural law underdetermines moral norms and that different cultures, even Christian ones, can develop differing specificity without necessarily being sinful. It has also been shown that this does not commit him or Porter to a position of moral relativism. What remains is how Wesley conceives of the promulgation of natural law. What has been termed the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” serves to recognize and enact a method where, individually and communally, human progress toward the good on an individual and communal level requires time, appropriate kinds of experiences, and the support of others serving as teachers and friends.⁷²

The term “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” was coined by Wesleyan scholar Albert Outler in his 1964 collection *John Wesley* as a way to define the four-fold approach John Wesley used in his theological reflections: Scripture, reason, tradition and experience. Scripture is superior to the others, followed by tradition, which supplements doctrine where Scripture is silent, interpreting obscure passages and serving as an appeal for doctrinal controversies where the parties involved have come to a scriptural impasse. Tradition is more than a means by which to explicate Scripture; it is a “living spring” of Christian insight into life.⁷³ Experience then substantiates scriptural truth. Reason, as a gift of God to humanity, then assimilates and articulates the data provided by Scripture, tradition, and experience.⁷⁴ Through this four-fold method the natural law is developed and taught.

The thoughts of Hall provide the theoretical foundation as to why there is a need for the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. The very existence of the Quadrilateral, even though the term itself was coined by a later interpreter to describe Wesley’s methodology, demonstrates that Wesley recognizes the need, as stated by Pamela Hall, for “communal aspects of

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Albert Outler, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in John Wesley,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20, no. 1 (1985): 10.

⁷⁴Stephen Gunther, Ted Campbell, Rebekah Miles, and Randy Maddox, *Wesley and the Quadrilateral: Renewing the Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 77-78.

inquiry into the good for human beings.”⁷⁵ The Quadrilateral is more than an expedient way to determine who is wrong in a moral conflict. It is not that one party is necessarily immoral, but rather that all sides could be dealing with reasonable outworkings of underdetermined moral norms; therefore, all sides should be engaged in ongoing reflection through scripture, reason, tradition, and experience to further clarify and promulgate the natural law.

Conclusion

Wesley’s moral theology is similar to medieval accounts of natural law as explicated by Porter and Hall. The heart of both Wesley’s moral theology and that of Aquinas’ natural law is found in 2 Peter 1:4 where the Christian moral life is revealed as the perfection of the human person and community through participation in the life of God. They both reject pure nature, yet a grasp of the natural law does not require special revelation. According to Wesley, God makes *synderesis* possible through preventive grace which restores an element of the *Imago Dei* that was lost in the Fall. The natural law is oriented toward human flourishing, both terrestrially and in the attainment of the Beatific Vision upon death. While Wesley may differ on the teleology of non-human animals, giving them an analogous Beatific Vision, and ascribing morality to objects of non-human acts, Porter’s natural law theory is at least open to dialogue concerning such a topic, even though her writings currently leave it undeveloped. Both Wesley and natural law appeal to virtue as the means to the Vision, and neither Porter nor Wesley should be read as being preoccupied with an ethic of obligation based on rule-following.

In line with Porter, Wesley views natural law as underdetermining moral norms, revealing the necessity for prudence and continual communal reflection for the development of the natural law. Hall discusses the need for such communal development of the natural law, and Wesley’s method of using Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience provides a method for such promulgation. Natural law must be discovered and appropriated through time by individual and communal experience and reason, even for the greater specificity to natural law as found in the special revelation found in Scripture.

Additionally, the natural law explicated by Porter and Hall assists in making sense of potential confusions in Wesley’s sermons. Wesley states

⁷⁵Hall, 104.

that people are completely depraved and incapable of good, yet a heathen can be capable of a morality to the extent to seem almost to have the infused Christian virtues. He discusses how Scripture is central to forming moral norms, yet Christians can live out the moral law in diverse, reasonable ways without a particular party being sinful. The similarity of Wesley with the natural law explicated by Porter and Hall reveal the potential for ecumenical dialogue and that the Wesleyan tradition has a place in and can benefit from conversations regarding natural law.

JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN'S THEOLOGY OF DIVINE ACTION: TOWARDS A MORE INTEGRATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF HIS DOCTRINE OF CREATION

by

Jacob Lett

Introduction

A recipient of the Biennial Prize of the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology, Nicholas Saunders states, "Of all the challenges science has raised for theology perhaps the most fundamental is that it has brought to question the doctrine of divine action."¹ Furthermore, from 1990-2005 the Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences and the Vatican Observatory joined to sponsor international research on theological, philosophical, and scientific perspectives on divine action. This research "produced six scholarly volumes with contributions from over fifty distinguished scientists, philosophers, and theologians."² Additional exploration into recent studies on divine action quickly reveals a host of research written in the last twenty years by theologians, philosophers, and scientists.³ Jürgen Moltmann is one theologian who has provided a con-

¹Nicholas Saunders, "Does God Cheat at Dice? Divine Action and Quantum Possibilities," *Zygon* 35, issue 3 (2000), 517. In addition, when asked what the future is of the science and theology debate, John Polkinghorne replied, "The most discussed topic at the moment is divine action." See, Lyndon F. Harris, "Divine Action: An Interview with John Polkinghorne," n.p. [cited 14 November 2012]. Online: www.crosscurrents.org/polkinghorne.htm.

²"The CTNS/Vatican Observatory Project." n.p. [cited 10 March 2013]. Online: www.ctns.org/research.htm.

³David J. Bartholomew, *God, Chance and Purpose: Can God Have It Both Ways?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, eds., *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); Colin E. Gunton, "Creation and Providence: God's Interaction with the World," in *The Triune Creator: a*

temporary construction of the relationship between the Creator, creation, and how He acts within it. Furthermore, John Polkinghorne comments that Moltmann is a significant theologian to contemporary science and theology because he works at the interface of the two disciplines.⁴

In 1985, referring to Moltmann's early works *Theology of Hope*⁵ and *The Crucified God*⁶ Warren McWilliams stated,

If a full treatment of creation, providence, and eschatology would be necessary to develop a Christian view of God and the world, Moltmann is lacking all of the necessary components to present a comprehensive theodicy. Although other criticisms might be addressed to Moltmann's understanding of God and theodicy, the lack of attention to the basic God-world issue, especially in terms of the doctrine of providence, seems to be a serious gap in his theological program.⁷

Historical and Systematic Study (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); 146-174, Paul Gwynne, *Special Divine Action: Key Issues in the Contemporary Debate* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1996); John C. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence: God's Interaction with the World* (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation, 2005); Robert John Russell, Nancey Murphy, and Arthur R. Peacocke, eds., *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame, 1995); Robert John Russell, Nancey Murphy and C. J. Isham, eds., *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications, 1996); Nicholas Saunders, *Divine Action and Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Thomas F. Tracy, "Theologies of Divine Action," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science* (ed. Philip Clayton; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 596-611; Terry J. Wright, *Providence Made Flesh: Divine Presence as a Framework for a Theology of Providence* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009); Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination*. Pentecostal Manifestos 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

⁴John Polkinghorne, "Jürgen Moltmann's Engagement with the Natural Sciences," in *God's Life in Trinity* (eds. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2006), 61-70.

⁵Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

⁶Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

⁷Warren McWilliams, *The Passion of God: Divine Suffering in Contemporary Protestant Theology* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University, 1985), 49.

McWilliams assessment of Moltmann's lack of attention to the God-world relationship, especially its association to a doctrine of divine action, could actually still be partially affirmed even after the publishing of Moltmann's *God in Creation*.⁸ Though one might expect Moltmann to thoroughly address the God-world relationship and its connection to divine action in *God in Creation*, this does not seem to be Moltmann's primary agenda.⁹

It is not until 1997 that Moltmann intentionally enters the divine action conversation in an article published in one of the volumes constructed by the research initiative mentioned above.¹⁰ In this essay, Moltmann very briefly considers how his theology of creation and incarnation apply to the contemporary divine action debate, but he is by no means thorough or integrative.¹¹ In 2001, Moltmann published another essay in an edited book that further integrated his theology into the divine action debate.¹² Compared to the previous essay, Moltmann is much more thorough in outlining his theology and stating its implications for divine action. The problem in this essay though is that he only addresses God's self-limitation (*zimsun*) and kenosis and their application to divine action. This creates a very limited view of divine action, which will be detailed in second section.¹³

As far as secondary literature is concerned, there is no scholarly work devoted to *thoroughly* outlining, critiquing, or stating the implica-

⁸Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). He does sporadically address divine action in *God in Creation* though. See, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 9, 11, 12, 55, 65, 73-88, 164, 192-196, 208-212, 278-287, 305, 311-313, 336, 341-342, 356.

⁹Noted Moltmann scholar Richard Bauckham points out that the primary agenda in *God in Creation* was to provide a theological perspective for understanding evolution and combat the ecological crisis. See, Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 183.

¹⁰Jürgen Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos and God's Interaction with the World from a Trinitarian Perspective," in *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (eds. Robert J. Russell, Nancey Murphy, and Arthur R. Peacocke; Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame, 1997), 205-210.

¹¹This will be demonstrated in sections 1 and 2.

¹²Jürgen Moltmann, "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (ed. John Polkinghorne; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 137-151.

¹³Sarah Coakley also recognises this dilemma in Moltmann's article. See, Sarah Coakley, "Kenosis: Theological Meanings and Gender Connotations," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (ed. John Polkinghorne; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2001), 202.

tions of Moltmann's understanding of divine action. Works concerning Moltmann's doctrine of creation are plentiful, while works relating it to divine action are limited.¹⁴ On the other hand, there are scholars who do use or critique specific parts of Moltmann's theology in their own construction of divine action. Primarily, these scholars rely on Moltmann's perspectives of panentheism and God's immanence in creation.¹⁵

It seems Moltmann and secondary literature prefer borrowing specific standpoints from his theology to justify explicit points, while forgetting to define the limits and integrate these perspectives with other theological themes. On the one hand, this is surprising given that Moltmann believes that the God-world relation is of "fundamental importance to systematic theology."¹⁶ On the other hand, Moltmann does not consider

¹⁴Works on Moltmann's doctrine of creation: Salai Hla Aung, "The Doctrine of Creation in the Theology of Barth, Moltmann, and Pannenberg: Creation in Theological, Ecological, and Philosophical-scientific Perspective" (Ph.D. diss., University of Regensburg, 1998); Richard Bauckham, "Evolution and Creation in Moltmann's Doctrine of Creation," *ER* 15 (1998): 74-81; Joseph Randall Davis, "The Groaning of Creation: Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Suffering Creationism" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996); A. J. Torrance, "Creation Ex Nihilo and the Spatio-Temporal Dimensions with Specific Reference to Jürgen Moltmann and D.C. Williams," in *The Doctrine of Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History, and Philosophy* (ed. Colin E. Gunton; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 83-103.

¹⁵T. David Beck, *The Holy Spirit and the Renewal of All things: Pneumatology in Paul and Jürgen Moltmann* (PTMS; Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick, 2007), 210; Philip Clayton, "Panentheism Today: A Constructive Systematic Evaluation" in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 257-258; Denis Edwards, "A Relational and Evolving Universe," in *In Whom We Live* (ed. Clayton and Peacocke), 202; Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1992), 184-185; Ruth Page, "Panentheism and Pansyntheism: God in Relation," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 222-232; Arthur Peacocke, "Articulating God's Presence in and to the World Unveiled by the Sciences," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 137-156; Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 100-101; Wright, *Providence Made Flesh*, 130.

¹⁶Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 205.

his understanding of divine action as a completed system, but as a "thought experiment" which is inherently open to discussion.¹⁷

Therefore, given Moltmann's inadequate integration of his theology into understanding divine action and the general lack of secondary literature, the objective of this research is to 1) provide a detailed account of Moltmann's understanding of divine action, 2) acknowledge the areas where Moltmann's integration of his doctrine of creation into his understanding of divine action is not sufficient, and 3) develop the general implications for divine action further. The material will be constructed in a systematic and integrative method by interpreting divine action through one key aspect of each of the following lenses of Moltmann's doctrine of creation: *eschatology*, *incarnation*, and *Trinity*.¹⁸ The conclusion will state why it is necessary to integrate the three lenses, develop the general characteristics of divine action based upon that material, and suggest further research. The intention of this research is not necessarily to critique Moltmann's theology of creation, but to ask what the implications and characteristics of divine action are if such a theology was assumed.

Eschatology: Creation as an Open System and Divine Action

In this first section, we will explore divine action through the lens of Moltmann's theology of creation understood in light of eschatology. To stay true to Moltmann's theology, eschatology finds itself at the beginning, rather than the end of this system.¹⁹ The foundation of this perspective will be laid by showing how Moltmann understood God's creation as eschatologically oriented. Moltmann states, "The revision of the doctrine of creation which is, in [his] view, needed today (both for exegetical reasons, and for reasons of experience and our dealings with nature) is a changeover to *an eschatological understanding of creation*."²⁰ Furthermore, Moltmann also states that eschatology has been given "inadequate

¹⁷Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 205, 210.

¹⁸The specific "key aspect" used for each lens/section will not be original to this research, but will be a concept Moltmann already has applied to some degree. The balanced integration of these lenses is the under-researched component this research will seek to explore.

¹⁹Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 209; Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 11, 16.

²⁰Jürgen Moltmann, *The Future of Creation: Collected Essays* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 116.

consideration” in the divine action debate.²¹ Although there are numerous parts of Moltmann’s eschatological doctrine of creation that could be explored here, we will primarily consider Moltmann’s understanding of creation as an *open system*, which is his basis for *creatio continua*.²² After these two ideas are explained, we will consider their implications for divine action.

“Creation as an open system” weaves in and out of almost all of Moltmann’s major works.²³ Before Moltmann’s account of an open system is described though, it would be easier to understand if his brief comments on a “closed system” were outlined. Pointing towards theologians like Thomas Aquinas and Rudolf Bultmann, Moltmann notes how they view the original creation in Gen. 1 as a non-historical, static reality. Describing a closed system Moltmann states, “History only begins with the Fall of man and ends with the restoration of creation in redemption. Creation itself has neither time nor history.”²⁴ According to Moltmann,

²¹Moltmann, “Reflections on Chaos,” in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 209.

²²The rationale for looking at this particular area is not unwarranted. Moltmann himself briefly considers open systems and *creatio continua* and their relationship to divine action. See, Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis,” in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 150-151; Moltmann, “Reflections on Chaos,” in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 205-210.

²³Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 46, 116-130, 189-190; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 17, 18, 50, 100, 163, 183, 203-208, 210, 212-214, 263-264, 315, 328, 348; Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis,” in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 150-151; Moltmann, “Reflections on Chaos,” in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 206, 209; Jürgen Moltmann, *Science & Wisdom* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 33-53, 199; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: a Universal Affirmation* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 219, 226, 275; Jürgen Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness, Arise!: God’s Future for Humanity and the Earth* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 70, 207-208, 221; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (trans. by Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 101, 209-210, 235, 252; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 101, 185, 232. Moltmann notes that Augustine was the first to emphasise the open nature of the universe, suggesting that “the present is thus constituted by the convergence of its remembered past and its anticipated future.” See, Moltmann, “Reflections on Chaos,” in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 206.

²⁴Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 116-117: Moltmann also notes that it is from this view of creation the German word for creation, *Schöpfung*, finds its meaning, indicating a complete, perfect creation.

creation understood this way is perfect, complete, and self-sufficient, and corresponds in the history of religion to what Mircea Eliade terms, "the myth of eternal return."²⁵ Moltmann also believes that this view of creation can be described as a *deistic model* of creation. God is only needed to describe the "contingent beginning" of the world, but left it self-sufficient to run according to the laws of nature.²⁶

However, according to Moltmann, "Modern exegesis of the Old and New Testaments will not allow us to maintain this notion of creation."²⁷ Though Moltmann does not explain this in detail, he does mention three Old Testament findings that substantiate this claim. First, Israel's view of creation was moulded by their experience of God in history, namely the exodus, covenant, and journey to the Promised Land. Therefore, the Israelites had specifically a "soteriological understanding of creation."²⁸ Second, in the Yahwist and Priestly Documents, God's historical relationship with the world began at creation, as opposed to those who think it did not begin until after the Fall. Initial creation itself was a historical process and is aligned towards its relationship with the Creator in its *future*. Thus, Moltmann states, "In Old Testament theology creation is an eschatological concept."²⁹ Finally, Moltmann states that the phrase "in the beginning God created" demonstrates that God created *time* concurrent with creation in the beginning. To Moltmann, time can only be understood through alteration. Only the fact that things can change signifies time. Therefore, according to Moltmann, "If creation is subject to change and is open to time from the beginning, then it cannot be a closed system; it must be an open one."³⁰

²⁵Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 116-117. See, Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return: Cosmos and History* (trans. Willard Trask; Princeton: Princeton University, 2005).

²⁶Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 207.

²⁷Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 117. Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 35-36. Moltmann's "salvation-historical approach" to understanding creation seems to be taken primarily from L. Kohler, G. Von Rad, and W. H. Schmidt. See, Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 189-190.

²⁸Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 118; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 36.

²⁹Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 118; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 36.

³⁰Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 118, 120; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 36, 39.

From here, Moltmann begins his development of creation as an open system, which seems to primarily come from philosopher Ernst Bloch.³¹ Nowhere in Moltmann's works does he set out to clearly define what he means by open systems but three general categories can be ascribed. The following three categories will be used to explain what Moltmann means by creation as an open system: undetermined nature, participatory, and anticipatory.³²

First, creation as an open system means creation, matter, and life have an *undetermined nature*. What does the Moltmann mean by this? First, Moltmann believes the present and future of creation is not entirely determined by the past.³³ He states, "The material structures already show a margin of undetermined behaviour. When we pass from atomic structures to more complex systems, we discover greater openness to time and a growing wealth of potentiality."³⁴ *Potentiality* and *possibility* are key words to understanding what Moltmann means by the undetermined, open nature of the material universe. Creation, from the beginning, was made open to new, changing possibilities. Creation was not perfect, as in the closed system, but perfectible.³⁵ Accordingly, God is not merely *supreme reality*, as in Aristotelian metaphysics, but is also *supreme possibility*. Moltmann notes, "We can then view divine Being as the supreme possibility, as the source of possibilities, and as the transcendental making-possible of the impossible."³⁶ All in all, what Moltmann first means by

³¹Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 70. Michael Gilbertson and Colin Gunton also note that Moltmann arrived at this idea from Bloch. See, Michael Gilbertson, *God and History in the Book of Revelation: New Testament Studies in Dialogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2003), 177; Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 217.

³²Moltmann describes open system in a variety of ways, but these three categories seem to be mentioned the most.

³³Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 190; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 50, 203; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 199-200; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 221.

³⁴Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 127: Human beings are the most complex material structure, and therefore display the most indeterminate behaviour.

³⁵Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 120.

³⁶Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 150: Moltmann develops this idea from Kierkegaard and Heidegger that God is more than the supreme *actuality*, but is the supreme *possibility*: "higher than actuality stands possibility." See, M Heidegger, *Being and Times* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 63.

open systems is that material structures and forms of matter are open to further development, complexity, and potentiality.

Second, understood as an open system, creation by nature is *participatory*.³⁷ The systems of this universe are participatory in the sense that they were created to communicate and exchange energy with other life systems. Moltmann states, "It seems that the universe contains within itself the trend towards the universal symbiosis of systems of life and matter, by virtue of 'the sympathy of all things' for one another."³⁸ Similar to how joy can be "infectious" among people, Moltmann states that energy and life can be exchanged and communicated between the smallest structures of reality, atoms and molecules, as well as in larger structures.³⁹ Therefore, matter and life are not self-sufficient, but rely upon the open, communicative, and inter-dependent nature of systems.

Moltmann notes that by stating the above, "[He is] communicating the universe is the self-transcending totality of a diversity of communicating, individual open systems. All individual systems of matter and life, all their complexes of communication as a whole, 'ex-ist' into a transcendence and subsist out of that transcendence."⁴⁰ Here, Moltmann understands this "transcendence" of creation as God. The "transcendent encompassing milieu" with which the open systems of creation are exchanging energy and communication with is God.⁴¹ To summarise, God created the smallest, as well as larger structures of reality, open to the exchanging and communicating of life and energy between the other created systems and between Himself, so that this exchanging of energy would produce new possibilities for creation. Creation, to Moltmann, is literally "open to God"⁴² and his possibility-producing energy.

³⁷Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 190; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 163, 203-206; Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 207, 210; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 122, 199-200; Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 275; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 221. Moltmann arrives at these ideas from Prigogine's idea of the experience of time in "dissipative systems." See, Ilya Prigogine, *From Being to Becoming. Time and Complexity in the Physical Sciences* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1980).

³⁸Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 205.

³⁹Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 275.

⁴⁰Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 205.

⁴¹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 204-205.

⁴²Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 205.

Finally, Moltmann describes creation as an open system as *anticipatory*.⁴³ To Moltmann, according to the Old Testament view of creation and to an understanding of open “biosystems” creation must be open to the future.⁴⁴ In contrast to Thomas Aquinas, Moltmann states, “The notion of a perfect, self-sufficient equilibrium in the resting, stable cosmos contradicts the biblical, and even more the messianic view of a creation aligned towards future glory.”⁴⁵ God created a world that was shaped anticipating its future destiny. The more openness to communication increases the greater the anticipation for greater and richer possibilities increases. Creation cannot survive unless it is open to the realm of future possibilities.⁴⁶ Therefore, creation “has neither its foundation, nor its goal, nor its equilibrium, within itself, but which is from the very outset ec-centrally designed, and aligned in the direction of the future.”⁴⁷

Altogether, when Moltmann employs the description of creation as an open system, he is describing the proper Old Testament interpretation that from the very onset of creation, God introduced time and development, participation and communication, and openness to the future. The systems of matter in creation are literally open to communicating and participating in the energy of God and other systems of matter with the potential that greater possibilities for creation will be realised. In addition, creation is not self-sufficient and independent, but is reliant upon the energy of God and the potential of the future.

Implications for Divine Action

Moltmann places the above idea of creation as an open system in the context of his view of both God’s *creatio originalis* and *creatio continua*.⁴⁸ The

⁴³Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 117-119, 127, 190; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 100, 203-214; Moltmann, “Reflections on Chaos,” in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 207, 210; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 199-200; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 100-101.

⁴⁴Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 118; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 221, 247: According to Ernst Von Weizsacker, open biosystems will die if they are not open to the future. See, Ernst Von Weizsacker, *Offene Systeme I*, Stuttgart: Klett, 1981.

⁴⁵Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 208.

⁴⁶Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 205.

⁴⁷Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 207.

⁴⁸Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 116-127; Moltmann, “Reflections on Chaos,” in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 208-209; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 34-44.

idea of God's original and continual creative activity stream throughout many of Moltmann's works.⁴⁹ Moltmann seeks to redefine the term 'creation' as the whole of divine creative activity. He states, "If 'creation' is to be the quintessence of the whole creative activity, the corresponding doctrine of creation must then embrace creation in the beginning, creation in history, and the creation of the End-time: *creation originalis-creation continua-creatio nova*."⁵⁰ The idea of limiting God's creativity in history to simply *preserving* creation is unbiblical.⁵¹ According to Moltmann, the Old Testament term *Bara* is more frequently used by the prophets to describe God's activity in Israel's present history than for His initial creation and its preservation.⁵²

Similarly, Moltmann believes the New Testament's witness to God's continual activity is understood eschatologically.⁵³ Given the open, unfinished nature of God's creation, Moltmann believes that God's goal for creation, eschatology, provides the significance and "inner motivation" of present divine action.⁵⁴ That is to say, according to Moltmann, "If we speak of 'God's continuing action in the world,' we must also speak of God's intention and goal. The eschatological horizon of the creation of all things, the divinization of the cosmos, and of the eternal creation, has been lacking in the [divine action] discussion up to this point."⁵⁵

⁴⁹Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 116-124; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 55-56, 81-86, 193, 196, 208-209, 348; Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 208-209; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 34-44; Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 226-228; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 205; Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 209; Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 286, 290-291.

⁵⁰Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 55; Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 118-119; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 37. Moltmann believes that the theory of evolution finds its place in theology in the idea of "continuous creation." See, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 196-214. In fact, evolution seems to be Moltmann's primary motivation in stressing continuous creation. It is not until later that Moltmann directly applies this to divine action. See, Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (ed. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 208-209.

⁵¹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 208.

⁵²Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 121; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 208.

⁵³Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 123; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 208.

⁵⁴Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 119; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 55-56, 209; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 205.

⁵⁵Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (ed. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 208-209.

Now, to address the objective of this research, how does Moltmann directly relate the above material to divine action? To Moltmann, if we are to describe creation as an open system, then we must give equal attention to God's continual creative action to His original action in Gen 1. Furthermore, God's present action must not be limited to God's "preserving activity." Creation as an open systems means that God's "renewing activity" and "innovating activity" are equally significant.⁵⁶ Again, God's renewing and innovating activity must be understood through eschatological action. Moltmann states, "The renewal of the world takes place through anticipations of the new creation of all things through rebirth."⁵⁷ What is this new creation that orients God's present divine action? According to Moltmann, it is God's indwelling in creation and creation's participation in the existence of God that substantiates divine action.⁵⁸ Altogether, Moltmann states, "It is in the gift of the future and the stream of new possibilities that we have to perceive God's activity in the history of open systems of matter and life."⁵⁹ Furthermore, Moltmann believes that the above material is compatible with modern science and present day divine action discussion. It is important to quote Moltmann in length here:

The theological insights [above] seem increasingly consistent with the discoveries of modern science. As we now know, chaotic, complex, and evolutionary systems of matter and life are built up in such a way as to display a growing openness to time and to an abundance of possibilities. . . . It would be difficult to imagine their future in a world system which has been brought to completion, one in which all possibilities have been realised and the future has become wholly a part of the past. . . . If, however, our starting point is the expectation of God's "indwelling" of creation, then the future of the world can only

⁵⁶Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 209; Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 209. Moltmann still affirms the classical view of God's "preserving activity," but believes that this must be understood in balance to God's innovating activity.

⁵⁷Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 209. Also see, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 209-211; Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 150-151.

⁵⁸Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 209-211; Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 209.

⁵⁹Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 150-151.

be imagine as the openness of all finite life systems to the abundance of eternal life.⁶⁰

Unfortunately, Moltmann does not expand on this idea. Although Moltmann states, "If theology wants to sum up God's creative activity, then it must view creation as the still, open creative process of reality,"⁶¹ his material linking this to divine action overall is very general and does not map who influenced him. There is also no secondary literature that specifically addresses this area of Moltmann's research.

On the other hand, other theologians also connect open systems and eschatology to divine action.⁶² Nancey Murphy's recent essay is very helpful in this regard.⁶³ In this essay, Murphy notes that it is "unnecessary" to substantiate divine action by hypothesising the indeterminate nature between the quantum and human levels. Instead, Murphy insists that a clearer account must be made about how God works in the inside at the quantum level.⁶⁴ Relying primarily on scientific and philosophical language, Murphy makes a convincing argument that divine action can and should be found at the quantum level of reality or whatever is the smallest form of reality. At this level, Murphy supposes, aligned with modern scientific findings, that entities at the quantum level have no ability to determine their own behaviour, though such entities have certain properties and structures. Assuming such, Murphy believes God acts respecting the

⁶⁰Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 209.

⁶¹Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 119.

⁶²For example, see, Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 184; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 390-391; Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 29.

⁶³Nancey Murphy, "Divine Action in the Natural Order: Buridan's Ass and Schrodinger's Cat" in *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (eds. Robert J. Russell, Nancey Murphy, and Arthur R. Peacocke; Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame, 1997), 324-357. It certainly would not go unwarranted to use Murphy's material to supplement Moltmann's material, given that Moltmann positively comments on Murphy's essay. See, Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 208.

⁶⁴Murphy, "Divine Action in the Natural Order" in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 327: Though critiquing Polkinghorne not Moltmann here, she indirectly is speaking to Moltmann's idea because he believes that at the smallest and at larger forms of reality there is indeterminate behaviour. See, Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 127.

integrity of the structure of these entities (for example, God will not cause an electron to have a positive charge), while at the same time God created these entities open to being directed by Himself.⁶⁵ Using Murphy's theory in Moltmann's language, God created matter open to Himself, so that He could direct the indeterminate matter towards its eschatological goal.

Though a more nuanced understanding of open systems and divine action is needed, Moltmann does not provide this. Before open systems and divine action is developed more, we must remember that we are specifically seeking to understand divine action in the context of an integrative system, not merely through one aspect of Moltmann's theology. That being the case, Moltmann's idea of creation as an open system cannot be taken out of its context of Moltmann's understanding of God's self-limitation, *zimsum*. Not only is creation literally open to God, but God is also open to the world. This will significantly change the way we interpret divine action through Moltmann's doctrine of creation and will demonstrate why one cannot simply take specific perspectives to substantiate particular views of divine action.

Incarnation: Creation through Zimsum and Divine Action

In both of the essays where Moltmann seeks to relate his theology to divine action, he uses *zimsum* as a foundational component.⁶⁶ In fact, Moltmann even declares that a theological model of incarnation, focusing on *zimsum*, is so complex that it can adequately explain and integrate the four most significant models of understanding God's action in the world.⁶⁷ Moltmann's material on the kenosis of Christ and its implications for divine action will not be able to be developed here. This should not change the outcome though, because Moltmann believes that both Christ's kenosis and *zimsum* speak of God's self-limitation, self-emptying, and self-humiliation.⁶⁸ Speaking of *zimsum*, Moltmann states, "This self-restricting love is the beginning

⁶⁵Murphy, "Divine Action in the Natural Order" in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 333-343.

⁶⁶Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 146-148; Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 208.

⁶⁷Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 207-209: According to Moltmann, these models are the Thomistic-model of double causality, the interaction model, the whole-part model, and the model of open-life processes.

⁶⁸Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 86-88; Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 146-148; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 60-64; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 119.

of that self-emptying of God which Phil 2 sees as the divine mystery of the Messiah.”⁶⁹ Alan Torrance also acknowledges the contribution of Moltmann's use of *zimsum* because it realises the cohesion of creation and the incarnation.⁷⁰ Keeping that in mind, this section will first explain Moltmann's understanding of *zimsum*, and second, assuming Moltmann's use of *zimsum*, the implications for divine action will be stated.

Moltmann begins using the concept of *zimsum* first in his book *The Trinity and the Kingdom*,⁷¹ and then he proceeds to use the concept throughout many of his other major works.⁷² Moltmann often borrows ideas from Jewish theology, especially in his doctrine of creation.⁷³ Such is the case with his use of *zimsum*, which derives from Jewish Kabbalistic tradition based in Jewish rabbi and mystic Isaac Luria.⁷⁴ Since Augustine, Moltmann states, “Christian theology has called God's work of creation an act of God outwards.”⁷⁵ Moltmann challenges this theology with the

⁶⁹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 88.

⁷⁰Torrance, “Creation Ex Nihilo” in *The Doctrine of Creation* (ed. Colin E. Gunton), 89-90.

⁷¹Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 59, 108-111, 119, 159, 174.

⁷²Moltmann, *The Coming of God* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 298-299, 379; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, xv, 78, 80, 86-91, 102, 156-157, 159, 334, 341; Moltmann, “God's Kenosis,” in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), xiii, 38, 146-148; Moltmann, “Reflections on Chaos,” in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 206-211; Moltmann, *Science & Wisdom*, 54-67, 120-121, 123, 184; Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 328-329. For a general reference to Moltmann's use of *zimsum*, see, Anna Case-Winters, “The Promise of Process-Panentheism,” in *Reconstructing a Christian Theology of Nature*, (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 125-144; David Rainey, “Jürgen Moltmann: Creation and the Restructuring of Trinitarian Panentheism,” (paper presented at Tyndale Conference, England, 16 June 2012). For a good general critique of the spatiotemporal issues in Moltmann's *zimsum*, see, Torrance, “Creation Ex Nihilo” in *The Doctrine of Creation* (ed. Colin E. Gunton), 83-103.

⁷³Moltmann, *God in Creation*, xv.

⁷⁴Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 87; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 109, 279: It seems Moltmann arrived at Luria's concept of *zimsum* via Gershom Scholem's work. See, Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1954). Moltmann also notes other Christian theologians who make use of the concept of *zimsum*: Nicholas of Cusa, J. G. Hamann, Friedrich Oetinger, F. W. J. Schelling, A. Von Oettingen, and Emil Brunner. See, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 87; Moltmann, “God's Kenosis,” in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 146; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 119.

⁷⁵Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 86; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 108. For more details on Moltmann's critique of Augustine, see, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 112-118.

question: how can there be an “outward aspect” of an omnipotent and omnipresent God? He replies, “If there were a realm outside God, God would not be omnipresent. This space ‘outside’ God would have to be coeternal with God.”⁷⁶

Instead, Moltmann suggests that before God could externally create a non-divine world, “He withdrew into himself in order to make room for the world, and to concede it a space.”⁷⁷ This is where the importance of *zimsum* comes in, which literally means “concentration” or “contraction” and indicates a “withdrawing of oneself into oneself.”⁷⁸ So, God literally contracted his own presence and power from within Himself, in order to create a world which is neither of the divine essence or being.⁷⁹ According to Moltmann, “nihil” from “creation ex nihilo” is only validated by the concept of *zimsum*; the nothingness from which God’s creation finds its space came into being from His withdrawal into Himself.⁸⁰ Quoting Scholem’s understanding of Luria, Moltmann states, “In the self-limitation of the divine Being which, instead of acting outwardly in its initial act, turns inwards towards itself, Nothingness emerges. Here we have an act in which Nothingness is called forth.”⁸¹

According to Moltmann, this has three implications.⁸² First, in contrast to Karl Barth, Moltmann states, “The space which comes into being and is set free by God’s self-limitation is a literally God-forsaken space.”⁸³ Moltmann speaks of the “annihilating character” of creation, which endangers creation by the lack of the presence of its Creator and by its own non-being. This creates space for sin and godlessness.⁸⁴ Second, God’s self-humiliation and restriction does not begin with His commitment to the world at its initial creation, nor in the kenosis of the Son described in Phil 2. Rather, God “took the form of a servant” and restricted his omnipres-

⁷⁶Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 86. Also, see, Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 109; Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 328.

⁷⁷Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 62.

⁷⁸Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 87; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 109.

⁷⁹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 87; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 109; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 62; Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 329.

⁸⁰Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 87; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 109.

⁸¹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 87.

⁸²Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 87-94.

⁸³Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 87. For Moltmann’s description on his differences from Barth, see, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 334-335.

⁸⁴Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 87-88.

ence and omnipotence before He created the world in order to create the world.⁸⁵ Here, you can sense God's love and commitment for His creation by His self-determination to withdraw Himself and create space for the other.⁸⁶ According to David Rainey, God's self-limitation "is not essential limitation, it became kenotic limitation."⁸⁷

The final implication, according to Moltmann, deals with creation's space being literally inside of God.⁸⁸ The "outward" aspect of God creating "still remains in God who has yielded up the 'outwards' in himself."⁸⁹ Furthermore, Moltmann asks, "Must we not say that this 'creation outside God' exists simultaneously in God, in the space which God has made for his omnipresence?"⁹⁰ God determined before He created that creation would literally dwell in the space of Himself.⁹¹ It is God's self-restriction then that makes it possible for His people to declare: "In him we live and move and have being" (Acts 17:28).⁹²

Additionally, this concept of *zimsum* validates the theological differentiation needed between the Creator and the created. On the other hand, Moltmann states, "This difference is embraced and comprehended by the greater truth which is what the creation narrative really comes down to, because it is the truth from which it springs: the truth that God is all in all" (I Cor 15:28).⁹³ Here, Moltmann links the initial "self-limitation" of *zimsum* to "eschatological delimitation." God's initial limitation assumes that the whole creation will be consumed by his presence.⁹⁴ In this, Moltmann reflects that language of Dante: "His Glory, in whose being all things move, pervades creation."⁹⁵ At this point, Moltmann at times links God's invading presence, substantiated through His initial self-limitation (*zimsum*), to the final, new creation.⁹⁶ At other times, though, he states

⁸⁵Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 88.

⁸⁶Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 62-63; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 111; Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 329.

⁸⁷Rainey, "Jürgen Moltmann," 6.

⁸⁸Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 88-90.

⁸⁹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 88.

⁹⁰Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 109.

⁹¹Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 120, 123.

⁹²Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 299.

⁹³Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 89.

⁹⁴Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 110-111.

⁹⁵Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 89.

⁹⁶Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 40, 89; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 110-111.

that it is God's self-limitation that provides grounds for God's present indwelling.⁹⁷

Implications for Divine Action

Now, we will look at how Moltmann applies the concept of *zimsum* to understanding divine action. Of all the areas of Moltmann's theology that he has integrated into understanding divine action *zimsum* receives the most treatment.⁹⁸ Though Moltmann does not structure his material this way, it seems he applies his use of *zimsum* in three interconnected ways.

The primary way in which Moltmann applies the concept of *zimsum* to divine action is by using it to affirm human freedom. According to a model of *zimsum*, "God as eternal and omnipresent restrains Godself to allow creation to be, thereby giving it time and providing it with a habitat of its own."⁹⁹ In order to create the world, God had to self-limit Himself by restricting his omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, and by doing so He gave His creation space, freedom, and relative independence.¹⁰⁰ Why did God create the world this way? Moltmann answers, "Because creation proceeds from God's love, and this love respects the particular existence of all things, and the freedom of the human beings who have been created. A love that gives the beloved space."¹⁰¹

Not only by restricting His power, presence, and foreknowledge does God allow creation space and freedom, Moltmann also uses *zimsum* to explain God's own experience of His creation. *Zimsum* provides founda-

⁹⁷Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 298-299; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 123. More details on linking *zimsum* to God's presence will be included in section 3 and the conclusion.

⁹⁸Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 210-211; Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 147-151; Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 206-207, 209; Moltmann, *Science & Wisdom*, 54-67, 120; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 59-60; Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 328-329. It seems Moltmann came across the idea of linking *zimsum* to divine action from Alexandre Safran. See, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 341.

⁹⁹Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (ed. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 206-207.

¹⁰⁰Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 147-148; Moltmann, *Science & Wisdom*, 62, 120.

¹⁰¹Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 147.

tion to God's openness and suffering patience with His creation.¹⁰² Moltmann states, "God's omniscience is limited by God to such an extent that the future is open and experimental even to God."¹⁰³ Furthermore, not only is the future open and unknown to God, but Moltmann applies this to God's power as well. Taking direction from Hans Jonas and Kierkegaard, Moltmann interprets power as a relational term. God self-limits his almighty power so that he can experience and suffer with His creation.¹⁰⁴ Aligning himself with Russian Orthodox theology, Moltmann states, "We discover [God's] almighty power in His almighty suffering patience."¹⁰⁵ That being said, God does not act in the world like a dictator, nor are His actions normally found through special divine interventions.¹⁰⁶ Instead, if interpreted through the concept of *zimsum*, then "God acts in the history of nature and human beings through his patient and silent presence, by way of which he gives those he has created space to unfold, time to develop, and power for their own movement."¹⁰⁷ God tends to act in, through, with, and out of His created beings. This action is first made possible though because of God's immanence—His suffering love and patience with His creation.¹⁰⁸ In sum, "We therefore have to see God's inexhaustible patience and his active capacity for suffering as the root of his creative activity in history," states Moltmann.¹⁰⁹

Moltmann integrates his use of *zimsum* to divine action in one other way, though he mentions this connection only fleetingly. Moltmann states, "The eternal and omnipresent God is self-limited such that God

¹⁰²Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 211; Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 147-149; Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 207; Moltmann, *Science & Wisdom*, 63-67.

¹⁰³Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 207.

¹⁰⁴Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 147-148; Moltmann, *Science & Wisdom*, 63-64.

¹⁰⁵Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 149.

¹⁰⁶Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 211; Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 149; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 67.

¹⁰⁷Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 149: Moltmann believes that this understanding is Scriptural (See, Exod 19:4; Num 11:12; Deut 1:31; Isa 53:4, 66:12; Ps 103:8; Matt 8:17; Heb 1:3)

¹⁰⁸Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 210-211; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 59-60.

¹⁰⁹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 210.

can inhabit the temporal, finite creation and impel it from within without destroying it, guiding it to its completion, that is, to its externalization and divinization.”¹¹⁰ At this point, though not stated explicitly by Moltmann, it seems he is linking the third implication of *zimsum* mentioned above: God’s initial self-limitation provides the grounds for His present and future indwelling. Could Moltmann have construed divine action differently had he given a stronger consideration to the aspect of God indwelling His creation? Unfortunately, Moltmann does not develop this component any further and focuses primarily on using *zimsum* to explain God’s action through divine suffering, patience, and human freedom.¹¹¹

In this section, how Moltmann integrates *zimsum* and open systems also needs to be acknowledged. By patiently enduring the history of nature, God “makes possible ever-new possibilities . . . it is the gift of future and the stream of new possibilities that we have to perceive God’s activity in the history of open systems of matter and life.”¹¹² In other words, by “waiting” and allowing humans freedom and development (*zimsum*) God can then act through creating new possibilities for creation. This is what Moltmann refers to as *creation continua*.¹¹³ God’s action then is seen in His opening up new possibilities and in the invitation, freedom, and empowerment He gives to humans to choose and accomplish these possibilities.¹¹⁴

Overall, the material above represents the primary themes and emphases of Moltmann’s understanding of divine action in relation to his doctrine of creation. Positively, Moltmann’s connection of *zimsum* to divine action offers a creative contribution to divine action by affirming human freedom through divine suffering and patience. God immanently participates in the experiences, choices, and pains of creation. By doing

¹¹⁰Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 207.

¹¹¹The third section will seek to develop this idea further.

¹¹²Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis,” in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 150-151.

¹¹³Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis,” in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 149.

¹¹⁴Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis,” in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 149-151. To Moltmann and Pannenberg, if God does not suffer with creation then the openness of the system would close in on itself through human sin. This would eventually lead to the ultimate destruction of creation. It seems this is why it is so important for Moltmann to emphasise God’s suffering with His creation because it is only through His suffering that He is able to keep communication open with creation. See, Moltmann, *Future of Creation*, 121-122; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 78.

so, He is able to act in the world through empowering creation "so that He may come to His Kingdom together with them."¹¹⁵ On the other hand, while Moltmann does offer this creative contribution, it seems he too one-sidedly emphasises God's self-limitation and kenosis. It appears he almost paralyses God from any present action in history. God's direct action is seen in creating new possibilities for the future of creation, though how God does this in Moltmann's framework is not clear as Sarah Coakley points out.¹¹⁶ Moreover, it is still left up to humans to choose these future possibilities, which "can be used for further development but also for annihilation."¹¹⁷

Furthermore, Alan Torrance demonstrates that Moltmann's use of *zimsum*, as the space in God where God is not, leads to a new understanding of panentheism. Torrance then notes that Moltmann's use of *zimsum* may actually align him closer to a Newtonian "container model of space" than a more "relational" understanding of space. This could then connect *zimsum* to Newton's mechanical understanding of the universe.¹¹⁸ Torrance also shows that Moltmann's understanding of *zimsum* caused him to fail to interpret the world in the Trinitarian fashion he intended to construct.¹¹⁹ Although Moltmann uses *zimsum* to make room for creation to exist without the dominance of God's presence, he creates a problem of existential distance between the Creator and creation. Therefore, by focusing on *zimsum*, Moltmann may have unintentionally interpreted the world as the deistic mechanical model he hoped to avoid.¹²⁰

Although Moltmann believes his doctrine of creation understood through *zimsum* is so complex that it can adequately explain the four

¹¹⁵Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 148.

¹¹⁶Coakley, "Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. John Polkinghorne), 202-203.

¹¹⁷Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 150.

¹¹⁸Torrance, "Creation Ex Nihilo" in *The Doctrine of Creation* (ed. Colin E. Gunton), 88-90. According to Max Jammer, Newton was heavily influenced by Henry More. More was a scholar of Cabbalism and his concept of space Jammer connects to Luria's use of *zimsum*. See, Max Jammer, *Concepts of Space: The History of Theories of Space in Physics* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1993), 46-50.

¹¹⁹Torrance, "Creation Ex Nihilo" in *The Doctrine of Creation* (ed. Colin E. Gunton), 102.

¹²⁰Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 207.

most significant models of divine action,¹²¹ it seems his material is limited and may not succeed in explaining divine action as thoroughly as he hoped. Though *zimsum* can offer a positive contribution to divine action discussions, one may wonder if on its own it is as substantial as Moltmann proposed. Perhaps if Moltmann were to consider his thought that God's initial self-limitation provides the basis for God's present and future inhabitation, then other forms of divine action may have a stronger foundation. Additionally, if Moltmann integrated *zimsum* with his material on the Trinitarian presence in creation, then his conclusions on divine action may have developed differently. According to Torrance, a doctrine of creation "demands to be articulated and interpreted in irreducibly Trinitarian ways . . . that is, it speaks not of some cosmological process but of the dynamic presence of the divine communion with the created order."¹²² With this in mind, the next section will seek to develop Moltmann's Trinitarian understanding of creation and its implications for divine action.

Trinity: Perichoresis as the Model of the God-World Relation and Divine Action

The final creation lens which divine action will be viewed through is Trinitarian. Moltmann suggests that an "explicitly Trinitarian conception of God" should be fundamental to the divine action discussion.¹²³ According to his *Trinitarian model*, God's action in this world should be seen "through God's presence in all things and God's *perichoresis* with all things."¹²⁴ Though Moltmann does address God's presence in creation as God's *Shekinah*, *perichoresis* sums up Moltmann's understanding of the God-world relation the greatest and is the most underdeveloped theme in Moltmann's understanding of divine action.¹²⁵ Moltmann clearly stresses

¹²¹Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 207-209.

¹²²Torrance, "Creation Ex Nihilo" in *The Doctrine of Creation* (ed. Colin E. Gunton), 102.

¹²³Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 205, 208.

¹²⁴Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 208.

¹²⁵To Moltmann, *perichoresis* is the foundation for *Shekinah* and both speak of God dwelling in His creation. See, Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 278; Jürgen Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 137; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 258; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 122; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 112; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 175-176.

the importance of *perichoresis* and a Trinitarian understanding of divine action, though his integration of such is not as clearly substantial or influential as his use of open systems and *zimsum*. Therefore, this research will now seek to explain Moltmann's general usage of *perichoresis* and his integration of *perichoresis* and divine action, and then we will look out how Moltmann could have better explained God's activity through His perichoretic relation to the world.

Moltmann's use of the idea of *perichoresis* streams throughout many of his works.¹²⁶ According to Moltmann, the idea of *perichoresis* originates in the theology of the Greek fathers; the first to use the word was Gregory of Nazianzus. John of Damascus then picked up on the term and used it in his Christology and later in his theology of the Trinity.¹²⁷ According to Moltmann, the Greek word *perichoresis* was translated into Latin first as *circumincessio*, which means dynamic interpenetration. Later, it was also translated as *circuminsessio*, meaning enduring, resting indwelling.¹²⁸ Defining the term, Moltmann also states, "The substantive means 'whirl' or 'rotation'; the verb means a movement from one to another, passing round and going round, surrounding, embracing, enclosing."¹²⁹ *Perichoresis* appears in the New Testament twice (Matt 3:5, 14:35) to describe "the surrounding world."¹³⁰ The Church did not clearly use and define the term until the Council of Florence (1438-1454),

¹²⁶Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 278, 301, 327; Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 137; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 16-17, 224, 240, 242, 258, 259, 307, 353; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 116-124; Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 67, 195-96, 224, 269, 285, 287, 304, 306, 308-309; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 112-113, 152-156, 161-162, 165, 167-169, 172, 186, 242; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 150, 157, 174-178, 186, 188, 198-199, 245; Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, 143, 152, 177, 272. For a strong general reference to Moltmann's use of *perichoresis*, see, Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 100-122.

¹²⁷Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 117; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 152-153; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 174-175. For a general reference to Gregory's use of *perichoresis*, see, J. P. Eagen, "Toward Trinitarian *Perichoresis*: Saint Gregory the Theologian," *GOTR* 39.1 (1994): 84-93.

¹²⁸Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 152-153; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 174-175. Moltmann makes use of both of these definitions in his usage of *perichoresis*.

¹²⁹Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 153.

¹³⁰Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 153.

“which finally formulated a dogmatic definition which was supposed to serve the ecumenical unity of the Western and the Eastern churches.”¹³¹

Moltmann employs the term *perichoresis* in three different ways.¹³² The primary way in which Moltmann uses it is to describe the Trinity.¹³³ Moltmann is critical of those who describe the unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit in metaphysical terms of divine substance or the one divine subject.¹³⁴ Rather, according to Veli-Matti Karkkainen, “Moltmann represents a radical social Trinitarianism that begins with three persons and works from that toward unity rather than vice versa.”¹³⁵ Moltmann insists theology to stay true to the biblical testimony should depart from the three Persons and seek to describe unity afterwards, rather than starting with one God.¹³⁶ Moltmann demonstrates that the unity of the three Persons “lies in their *fellowship*, not in the identity of a single subject.”¹³⁷ Furthermore, this unity should be “understood as *communicable* unity and as *open, inviting unity, capable of integration*.”¹³⁸

This is where the concept of *perichoresis* is so important. According to Moltmann, “Jesus the Son and God the Father are not one and the same, but are one in their reciprocal indwelling. The *perichoresis* of the divine persons describes their unity in a Trinitarian way.”¹³⁹ To Moltmann, *perichoresis* defines the unity of the three Persons in terms of “mutual resting,” “reciprocal indwelling,” “a round-dance with one another,”

¹³¹Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 153-154: The formulation was: “On account of this unity the Father is wholly in the Son, wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father, wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father, wholly in the Son. No one precedes in eternity or exceeds the other in magnitude or is above the others in power.”

¹³²Jürgen Moltmann, “God in the World—the World in God: Perichoresis in Trinity and Eschatology,” in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 372-378.

¹³³Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 302; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 117-118; Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 67, 306, 308-309; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 112-113, 153-156, 161-162; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 150, 157, 174-178, 186, 245; Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, 143.

¹³⁴Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 153; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 149-150.

¹³⁵Karkkainen, *Trinity*, 110.

¹³⁶Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 19, 149.

¹³⁷Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 95.

¹³⁸Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 149.

¹³⁹Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 153.

and a "circulatory character of the divine life."¹⁴⁰ Like John of Damascus, Moltmann affirms the Johannine unity of the Son and Father through *perichoresis*: "I am in the Father, the Father is in me" (John 14:11).¹⁴¹ In sum, Moltmann states, "The doctrine of the *perichoresis* links together in a brilliant way the threeness and the unity . . . the unity of the triunity lies in the eternal *perichoresis* of the Trinitarian persons. Interpreted perichoretically, the Trinitarian persons form their own unity by themselves in the circulation of divine life."¹⁴²

The next way in which Moltmann uses *perichoresis* is to describe the unity of Jesus Christ's divinity and humanity.¹⁴³ According to Moltmann, "In Christology, *perichoresis* describes the mutual interpenetration of two different natures, the divine and the human, in the God-human being Jesus Christ."¹⁴⁴ Additionally, Moltmann uses *perichoresis* in Christology to describe how God descended into earthly time and dwelled with humanity.¹⁴⁵ He also uses *perichoresis* in Christology to explain how Jesus' sufferings are divine sufferings and Jesus' death was the Father's death.¹⁴⁶

The final way in which Moltmann uses *perichoresis* is in the doctrine of the Church. First, he uses it to describe how the fellowship of the church corresponds to Trinitarian *perichoresis*, and second how the church exists through the Spirit in the Trinitarian unity of God.¹⁴⁷ Moltmann believes this connection is founded upon Jesus' prayer in John

¹⁴⁰Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 154-155; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 174.

¹⁴¹Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 153; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 174. It should be stated that not all understand John of Damascus' use of *perichoresis* in the same way Moltmann does. See, Michael L. Chivavone, "The Unity of God as Understood by Four-Twentieth-Century Trinitarian Theologians" (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), 125-127.

¹⁴²Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 175.

¹⁴³Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 278; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 116-117; Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 67; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 113, 153; Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, 143, 177.

¹⁴⁴Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 153.

¹⁴⁵Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 113.

¹⁴⁶Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, 177.

¹⁴⁷Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 224, 240, 242, 258-259; Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 195-96, 224, 308-309; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 113, 156-157, 161-162, 172; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 157, 198-199; Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, 152.

17:21: "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us."¹⁴⁸ The first dimension of Jesus' prayer is that the Church through its fellowship, community, and unity reflects the Trinitarian unity of God.¹⁴⁹ Moltmann states, "The true unity of the church is an image of the perichoretic unity of the Trinity, so it can neither be a collective consciousness which represses the individuality of the persons, nor an individual consciousness which neglects what is in common."¹⁵⁰ The second dimension of the prayer is the mystical element. The church "does not just 'correspond' to the Trinitarian unity of God, but it also 'exists' in the triunity of God which is open to the world."¹⁵¹ According to Johannine theology, "God and human beings indwell each other mutually in love: 'He who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him'" (1 John 4:16).¹⁵²

Implications for Divine Action

In Moltmann's first essay on divine action (1997), he attempts to integrate the concept of *perichoresis* into the divine action debate by discussing theism, deism, and pantheism. Though a *theistic model* of God once adequately explained God's action in the world, modern science has dismantled it making use of a *deistic model*. Moltmann shows that modernity only needed a god to establish the beginning of creation. From there, creation stood independent from God, only needing the laws of nature. Finally, Moltmann believes that deism led the current generation to a *pantheistic model*.¹⁵³ From here, Moltmann develops his theological model of divine action by recommending a *Trinitarian model*. The Father created the world through the Son in the Spirit. Though God is transcendent, he is also immanent in the world through his creative Spirit. It is at this point Moltmann makes use of his understanding of God's *perichore-*

¹⁴⁸Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 156, 161.

¹⁴⁹Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 309; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 161-162: A community that reflects the triune God looks like Acts 4:32-37.

¹⁵⁰Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 224.

¹⁵¹Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 161-162.

¹⁵²Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 156-157.

¹⁵³Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 207. Moltmann suggests the following book to understand what he means by contemporary pantheism: Erich Jantsch, *The Self-Organising Universe: Scientific and Human Implications of the Emerging Paradigm of Evolution* (New York: Pergamon, 1980).

sis, signifying that "God acts upon the world not so much through interventions or interactions, but through God's presence in all things."¹⁵⁴ Moltmann then relates *perichoresis* to the God-world relationship suggesting that through His Spirit God dwells in the world and the world dwells in God. Moltmann believes that from this model, "God's actions in the world' and 'God's interactions with the world' are only a part of God's comprehensive *perichoresis* with all things and with their relations. Causality is only one aspect of this network of relationships."¹⁵⁵ Unfortunately, Moltmann does not develop or elaborate on this connection any further and his conclusions on divine action seem to disregard this brief material on a Trinitarian-perichoretic model in favour of an emphasis on open systems and *zimsum*.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, in Moltmann's second essay on divine action (2001) he restricts this understanding of a perichoretic God-world relation to the consummation of creation.¹⁵⁷

At this point, it is worth exploring Moltmann's material on the perichoretic God-world relationship more. Following which, implications for divine action that Moltmann could have established will be developed. A *perichoretic model* for understanding the God-world relation is mentioned throughout many of Moltmann's works.¹⁵⁸ The foundation of Moltmann's doctrine of creation is based upon his Trinitarian concept of *perichoresis*. The starting point for his understanding of creation is that

¹⁵⁴Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 208.

¹⁵⁵Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 208. Moltmann does not include any material on *panentheism* in this essay.

¹⁵⁶Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 148-151; Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 208-210.

¹⁵⁷Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 144.

¹⁵⁸Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 277-278, 326-327; Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 137; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 16-17, 258-259; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 116-124; Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 195-96, 285; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 167-169, 186; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 157, 198-199. It seems Moltmann arrives at the idea to link *perichoresis* to the God-world relation from his predecessor at Tübingen, Johann Tobias Beck and from Hegel's idealistic system. See, Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 277, 326-327. Kevin Vanhoozer cautions theologians from applying *perichoresis* to the God-world relation. See, Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), 139-174.

the God-world relationship reflects the reciprocal indwelling and mutual interpenetration of Trinitarian *perichoresis*; God and the world mutually dwell in one another and interpenetrate one another.¹⁵⁹ Just as each Person in the Trinity allows space for the Other to inhabit through *perichoresis*, so God becomes the space or dwelling place of this world (*zimsum*).¹⁶⁰ In the same way, God dwells in the world through His divine presence. In Old Testament theology, we see this in the doctrine of *Shekinah*.¹⁶¹ God's dwelling in creation is always pneumatic. In other words, through "the aspect of the Spirit in creation, the relationship of God and the world must be viewed as a perichoretic relationship."¹⁶² Hear Moltmann speak about the relationship between God and His creation through the Spirit:

If the creative, life-giving divine Spirit is in all things, then the Spirit is also the soul of the world and extends over all material things, just as the soul extends through the whole body. For the efficacy of the God's Spirit in the world, *perichoresis* is an appropriate term. This is a term in Trinitarian theology for mutual indwelling and reciprocal interpenetration which brings out the unique unity of the triune God. The community of God with his creation corresponds to the inner community of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit: God's Spirit is in creation, and 'creation lives and moves in him' (Acts 17:28).¹⁶³

Therefore, through the Spirit the world lives in God and God lives in the world. Moltmann states, "We remain in a human way in God: God becomes our living-space, our dwelling place and our free space. God remains in us in a divine way: we become his living space, his dwelling place, and his free space."¹⁶⁴ Though this seems to be a present reality to Moltmann, the "perfect perichoresis of God and the world" will come at

¹⁵⁹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 16-17.

¹⁶⁰Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 116-118.

¹⁶¹Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 278; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 122. For more on Moltmann's use of the doctrine of *Shekinah*, see: Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 15, 87, 96-97, 150, 154; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 54, 59-65, 108, 117, 122-127; Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 11-12, 40, 47-56, 61-62, 67, 96.

¹⁶²Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 258.

¹⁶³Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 137.

¹⁶⁴Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 124.

the eschatological horizon of new creation when God will become "all in all" (I Cor. 15:28).¹⁶⁵

Some have argued for divine action from Moltmann's panentheism, though *perichoresis* is not developed.¹⁶⁶ This is puzzling because "Moltmann's panentheism is *perichoretic*," as John Cooper states.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, given both Moltmann and secondary literature's general lack of integration of this model, this research will now seek to explore the general implications of divine action based on Moltmann's understanding of the perichoretic God-world relation.¹⁶⁸

First and foremost, it is suggested that the doctrine of creation lens of Trinitarian *perichoresis* should be the foundation for divine action in Moltmann's theology. It seems Moltmann is more concerned with applying open systems theory and *zimsum*. However, divine action would merely be limited to empowering human freedom unless he first provides a foundation for God's presence in the world. Terry Wright's recent book, *Providence Made Flesh*, is a very well researched work on the relationship between God's presence in creation and divine action. Wright notes, "The aim of [his] study has not been to develop a doctrine of providence but to suggest that the conceptual framework of God's presence is the most appropriate foundation and context for such development."¹⁶⁹ God's presence in creation, his *perichoresis* with all things through the Spirit, should be foundational. Whereas Moltmann's concept of *zimsum* can be used to conceptualise creation's influence on God, his concept of *perichoresis* can also substantiate God's influence in creation through his pneumatic presence.

¹⁶⁵Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 277-278, 326-327; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 167-169, 186. Moltmann believes that in God's perichoretic presence, we discover that the "already" and "not yet" are intertwined. In other words, the future reality that God will be all in all is also a present reality. See, Moltmann, "God in the World" in *The Gospel of John* (ed. Bauckham and Mosser), 379.

¹⁶⁶For example, see, Peacocke, "Articulating God's Presence," in *In Whom We* (eds. Clayton and Peacocke), 148-150; Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 20, 27-28. For a strong general reference on Moltmann's panentheism see, John W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers—From Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 237-258.

¹⁶⁷John Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers*, 25.

¹⁶⁸Open systems theory and *zimsum* will be integrated into this in the conclusion.

¹⁶⁹Wright, *Providence Made Flesh*, 225.

Second, *perichoresis* not only provides the foundation for divine action, but also the location. Unlike Karl Barth, Moltmann does not conceive God acting sovereignly over his creation. Contrasting himself from Barth's view of God's sovereignty, Moltmann states, "We are not therefore assuming that there is 'in God himself an above and a below, a prius and a posterius, a superiority and a subordination post-order . . . this means we have not, either, understood the relationship of the triune God to the creation of his love as a one-sided relationship of domination."¹⁷⁰ Instead, reflecting the mutual indwelling of Trinitarian Persons, the Spirit of God dwells in Creation as the "wellspring of everything that lives"; there is no such thing as solitary independency.¹⁷¹ Therefore, it seems appropriate to say that God's acts not so much *on* or *over* creation, but *in* creation. Here, Arthur Peacocke adopts Moltmann's Trinitarian panentheism and relates it to divine action: "The 'external' God of classical Western theism can be modelled only as acting upon such a world by intervening...but according to this [panentheistic model] God is *internally* present to all the world's entities, structures, and processes."¹⁷² In a *perichoretic model* then, God's *internal* presence in all material structures becomes the locale of divine action. Nancey Murphy helps bring language to this again. According to Murphy, God acts in and with the physical properties of creation by influencing the undetermined nature at the quantum level.¹⁷³ In sum, if *perichoresis* is considered foundational, God's action would not be primarily seen through His intervening and acting on creation, rather it should be seen as God working with and in the natural processes and structures of His creation through His indwelling Spirit.

Finally, if *perichoresis* means mutual indwelling and mutual influence, then God's immanent experience of creation needs to be noted. It is precisely Moltmann's view of God's immanence in creation that has created controversy though. Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson believe that Moltmann's view of God's presence in the world is limited by his emphasis on God's immanent indwelling and suffering with the world. Grenz and Olson state, "Reigning, lordship, judgment, and praise are all muted if

¹⁷⁰Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 258.

¹⁷¹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 16-17, 258.

¹⁷²Peacocke, "Articulating God's Presence," in *In Whom We* (eds. Clayton and Peacocke), 148-150.

¹⁷³Murphy, "Divine Action in the Natural Order," in *Chaos* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 325-357.

not absent from Moltmann's later works."¹⁷⁴ They continue by stating, "Moltmann's social and political apathy to hierarchy distorted his otherwise creative and insightful approach to theology. It led him to overemphasise the immanence of God to the detriment of God's transcendence."¹⁷⁵ If Grenz and Olson are correct, then God's perichoretic relationship to the world only provides a basis for the world's influence on God. However, remarking on Grenz and Olson's critique, T. David Beck shows that though the question can be raised on Moltmann's insufficient material on transcendence, a proper view of Moltmann's understanding of the Spirit of God would demonstrate both the immanent suffering of God in creation and His transcendent authority above all things. Beck then demonstrates that to Moltmann the Spirit is God's presence in creation and should be the foundation for divine action.¹⁷⁶ Colin Gunton also notes that though "theologies of immanence" too often give too much authority to scientific theories, if they are found in "a doctrine of a free and transcendent Spirit" they "leave open the possibility for a conception of divine involvement in the world."¹⁷⁷ To add to this conversation, Paul Fiddes argues that God's immanent suffering in creation does not paralyse His action, but it is precisely God's suffering love that empowers His action.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, Moltmann's view of *perichoresis* is vital to answering his adversaries. To Moltmann's Trinitarian doctrine of creation, the "Creator Spirit who indwells creation" is able to link God's

¹⁷⁴Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 184.

¹⁷⁵Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 184. Philip Clayton also critiques Moltmann's emphasis on God's immanence and suffering in that these concepts are foreign to the patristic fathers. See, Clayton, "Panentheism Today," in *In Whom We* (eds. Clayton and Peacocke), 257-258.

¹⁷⁶Beck, *The Holy Spirit*, 210-212.

¹⁷⁷Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 184, 188, 192. Though Gunton does not directly criticise Moltmann here, he does warn against Teilhard de Chardin's understanding of immanence and evolution (188). Moltmann does seem to affirm Teilhard de Chardin's position. See, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 211.

¹⁷⁸Paul S. Fiddes, "Creation Out of Love," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (ed. John Polkinghorne; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 167-191. Dennis Edwards also seems to take this position. See, Dennis Edwards, "A Relational and Evolving Universe Unfolding within the Dynamism of the Divine Communion," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 199-210.

immanence in the world and his transcendence over the world.¹⁷⁹ In other words, “the distance between the transcendent subject and the immanent work has ended.”¹⁸⁰ In *perichoresis* then, God can immanently suffer with His creation, but it is precisely because of this that God can also act and influence His creation through His Spirit.¹⁸¹

Altogether, it is suggested that Moltmann give a stronger emphasis to His Trinitarian doctrine of creation understood through *perichoresis*. God’s perichoretic presence in and with all things is the foundation and means of divine action. Perhaps if Moltmann considered this in relationship and in balance to *zimsum*, then his doctrine of creation could more adequately explain the four models of divine action as he suggested it could.¹⁸²

Conclusion: Integrating Open Creation, *Zimsum*, and *Perichoresis*: The Character of Divine Action

So far, this research has sought to construct a system and explore the implications for divine action based upon one key aspect of each of the following lenses of Moltmann’s doctrine of creation: *eschatology*, *incarnation*, and *Trinity*. Though at times there appears to be some integration, overall Moltmann and secondary literature prefer emphasising specific standpoints from his theology to justify explicit points, while forgetting to define their limits and integrate these perspectives with other theological themes. Again, this seems surprising given that Moltmann believes that the God-world relation is of “fundamental importance to *systematic* theology.”¹⁸³ By showing how the three lenses used in this research are interdependent in Moltmann’s doctrine of creation, the final objective of this research is to warrant why Moltmann should have first considered the implications for divine action in light of a holistic, integrated understanding of his doctrine of creation before emphasising specific perspectives. Finally, the general characteristics of divine action based upon this integrated understanding will be stated, along with suggestions for further research.

¹⁷⁹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 103. Also, see, Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 207.

¹⁸⁰Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 285.

¹⁸¹Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis,” in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 148.

¹⁸²Moltmann, “Reflections on Chaos,” in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 207-209.

¹⁸³Moltmann, “Reflections on Chaos,” in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 205.

The primary reason why Moltmann should consider divine action in a more integrative method is because open systems, *zimsum*, and *perichoresis* are interrelated and interdependent in Moltmann's doctrine of creation.¹⁸⁴ Viewed linearly, it seems in Moltmann's doctrine of creation that *zimsum* is the foundation of the *perichoretic* God-world relation, and this God-world relation is the foundation of open systems and *creatio continua*. How is that so? First, to Moltmann it is precisely because God self-limited His omnipresence in order to conceive space for creation (*zimsum*) that God also can inhabit and indwell creation through His Spirit (*perichoresis*). God makes within Himself space for creation and by doing so He is able to dwell in His creation through His creative Spirit without either destroying each other.¹⁸⁵ In other words, self-limitation becomes the basis for the Spirit's inhabitation. Additionally, Moltmann connects this idea to his Christology. By restricting His presence and creating a world void of His presence, God reverses this by pervading the world in Jesus Christ. Through the life, death, and exaltation of Christ, God again becomes omnipresent through the Spirit of Christ.¹⁸⁶ God and the world mutually indwelling and interpenetrating one another correspond to *perichoresis* in its Christological and Trinitarian forms. Therefore, it is suggested that Moltmann cannot speak of the implications for divine action viewed through his concept of *zimsum* without equally considering the implications of God indwelling His creation (*perichoresis*).

Secondly, in Moltmann's doctrine of creation God's indwelling Spirit provides basis for open systems and *creatio continua*. Moltmann integrates this all by stating,

A world which has been created by God, and which continues to be created every moment, is bound to be a world *open to*

¹⁸⁴Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 298-299; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 100, 103, 163, 183, 207, 211-214; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 123; Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness*, 207.

¹⁸⁵Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 298-299; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 207; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 123.

¹⁸⁶Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 90-91. It is very difficult to determine if *zimsum* is ever overcome in Moltmann's thought. In Moltmann's Christology and Pneumatology, there are times where Moltmann makes it clear that God "delimits" His presence in the Spirit of Christ. However, there are other times where complete delimitation is confined to the new creation. See, Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 298-299; *God in Creation*, 40, 89; Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 123; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 110-111.

God. It does not revolve within itself, either in absolute or in relative completeness and self-sufficiency. It exists in the presence of the Creator and lives from the continual inflow of the creative Spirit . . . it has its foundation, not in itself, but outside itself—in him . . . in this sense it is an “open system.”¹⁸⁷

In other words, the indwelling Spirit is the holistic principal that holds creation together, breathes life into it, and preserves it from annihilation, but it is also equally the principle of creativity and evolution that opens up new possibilities for creation and is the foundation of *creatio continua*.¹⁸⁸ Open systems and the forward movement of creation (eschatology) cannot be taken out of the context of pneumatology. While eschatology might provide the goal of action, a perichoretic-pneumatology provides the means. As Colin Gunton suggests, “We must hold that it is God the Spirit, and not the automatic forward movement of the universe, who enables the world to become what it is projected to be.”¹⁸⁹ Creation is open to God in the sense that all forms of matter and life are imbued and vulnerable to the “continual inflow of the creative energies of the Spirit of God.”¹⁹⁰ In the third section, it was indicated how Moltmann gave inadequate significance in his understanding of divine action to the perichoretic God-world relation. However, here in his doctrine of creation, it seems that the indwelling Spirit is fundamental to His understanding of open systems and *creation continua*. Once again, it seems essential, given the interdependent nature of these aspects of Moltmann’s doctrine of creation, that divine action is considered in light of an integrated system. If it is not, then the implications can be easily misconstrued.

Therefore, in light of this understanding that the three lenses explored in this research should be considered in relationship to each other, what are some general characteristics of divine action? First, according to Moltmann’s doctrine of creation, God’s action in creation, especially among humans, is primarily *relational*. According to a model of

¹⁸⁷Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 163.

¹⁸⁸Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 100.

¹⁸⁹Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 188.

¹⁹⁰Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 183. Also see, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 212: Moltmann obviously distinguishes himself from deism here, but he also separates himself from pantheism by interpreting creation pneumatologically through his Trinitarian doctrine of creation. Moltmann connects these ideas with Author Peacocke. See, Arthur Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004), 203.

zimsum, "Creation proceeds from God's love, and this love respects the particular existence of all things, and the freedom of the human beings who have been created. A love that gives the beloved space."¹⁹¹ God, unlike a dictator, self-restricts his omnipotence in order to give His beloved relative freedom to make their own choices. If solely viewed through *zimsum*, God's relation to the world is that of freedom, space, and time. However, if we equally consider the perichoretic God-world relationship, then we must also speak of Trinitarian history in creation. As well-known Moltmann scholar Richard Bauckham points out,

The relationship between God and the world is a two-way relationship, in which God is affected by the world as well as affecting it. Moltmann's understanding of the cross, from which his Trinitarian thought originally developed, is central here, in that it entails divine passibility, though this is by no means the only way in which the God-world relationship is reciprocal. The two-way relationship means, of course, that God himself has a history.¹⁹²

If we understand creation as a system open to God's indwelling presence and influence, then divine action is portrayed as a mutual relation between God and creation where God allows his creation to influence Himself and creation can equally be influenced by God through the indwelling Spirit. According to John Polkinghorne, this is consistent with modern science. Polkinghorne states, "Quantum theory has also contributed to a growing recognition that nature is deeply *relational* and that atomism is only part of the picture. Once two quantum entities have interacted with each other, they can retain a power of mutual influence that is not diminished by spatial separation."¹⁹³ Understood *relationally*, God's action can be best described through perichoretic terminology: mutual participation, spaciousness, physical openness, and reciprocal influence.

Second, according to Moltmann's doctrine of creation God's action in creation can be primarily understood as *natural*. What does it mean

¹⁹¹Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 147.

¹⁹²Bauckham, *Theology of Moltmann*, 173-174.

¹⁹³John Polkinghorne, "God and Physics," in *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (eds. Khaldoun Sweis and Chad Meister; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012). 469. Also, see, Murphy, "Divine Action in the Natural Order" in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 349-350.

that divine action is *natural*? It is normative for God to regularly act in, through, and with the natural structures and properties of creation. According to Moltmann's pneumatological doctrine of creation, "The whole creation is fabric woven and shot through by the efficacies of the Spirit. Through the Spirit God is present in the very structures of matter."¹⁹⁴ Viewed through *zimsum* we notice that divine action respects the integrity of the natural properties of creation. On the other hand, an open creation is not understood as complete, mechanical, or determined as in deism, but participatory, anticipatory, and communicative as in Trinitarian panentheism.¹⁹⁵ That being said, according to Moltmann's theology, "God acts in the whole of the natural world, by God's immanent and differentiated presence to all things, not only through the laws of nature of which we have a partial understanding, but also through those processes and regularities of nature that are still unknown to us."¹⁹⁶ Speaking of Moltmann's understanding of the perichoretic God-world relation, Bauckham notes, "The creative activity of the immanent Spirit is not distinguishable, as a supernatural intervention, from the processes of nature, but is an unobtrusive accompaniment of them."¹⁹⁷ Of course, Moltmann primarily uses this to substantiate a Christian understanding of evolution.¹⁹⁸ At the same time, it seems appropriate to also apply this understanding to the Spirit's creative action in salvation or redemption history. The perspective is the same though. God does not normally act *on* creation by intervention or supernatural action. Rather, God brings about his eschatological goals for creation by regularly acting *in* ways that respect the integrity of his creation, but direct and guide the undetermined, open nature of matter.¹⁹⁹

Finally, if Moltmann's doctrine of creation is assumed, then theology would speak of the *unity* of divine action. When speaking of divine

¹⁹⁴Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 212.

¹⁹⁵Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 190

¹⁹⁶Edwards, *How God Acts*, 61.

¹⁹⁷Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 192.

¹⁹⁸Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 192; Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 185-214.

¹⁹⁹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 214. This view is compatible with modern science. See, Robert Russell, "Divine Action and Quantum Mechanics: A Fresh Assessment," in *Quantum Mechanics: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (ed. Robert Russell; et. al.; Berkeley: Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2001), 293-328.

action, it is normative to dichotomise God's action and human freedom. As Colin Gunton states, "All doctrines of divine agency may be conceived to threaten human freedom unless very carefully delimited-for if the creator does everything, it appears that the creature does nothing."²⁰⁰ So, how might we conceive of a framework that speaks in terms of the *unity* between divine and human action? According to Moltmann, "In reality relationships are just as primal as the things themselves."²⁰¹ Assuming such, if everything in creation, including God's presence, lives in relation to the other (open systems), then we can speak of the natural exchange of energy between two entities. According to Gunton, "We may understand the Holy Spirit as the divine energy releasing the energies of the world, enabling the world to realise its dynamic interrelatedness."²⁰² In other words, through God's indwelling Spirit (*perichoresis*) God can literally empower and energise humans to participate with Him in the creating process. In fact, it seems Moltmann would prefer a world where God and His creatures participate together in His continual creativity activity, "so that He may come to His Kingdom together with them."²⁰³ Therefore, human action and divine action need not be understood as antitheses. Instead, true divine action realises rather than exploits human freedom. Perichoretic presence should be the amalgamating force that binds both together in harmony and cooperation. Divine and human action are both equally valid forms of God's presence and work among His people. Altogether, the general character of divine action based upon a more integrated understanding of Moltmann's doctrine of creation would speak of divine action as relational, natural, and unifying.

In conclusion, given that Moltmann considers his understanding of divine action as a "thought experiment" open to discussion,²⁰⁴ this research is the first attempt of secondary literature to provide a general

²⁰⁰Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 187.

²⁰¹Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 211. Bauckham clarifies this claim: "For this principle [Moltmann] can, of course, claim scientific support, implicit, for example, in his use of the term 'symbiosis', but theologically he grounds the principle in the Trinitarian *perichoresis*." See, Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 185.

²⁰²Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 153.

²⁰³Moltmann, "God's Kenosis," in *The Work* (ed. Polkinghorne), 148.

²⁰⁴Moltmann, "Reflections on Chaos," in *Chaos and Complexity* (eds. Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke), 205, 210.

analysis of Moltmann's theology of divine action and to develop it further based on a more integrative understanding of his doctrine of creation. In light of the lack of secondary research, this research is more general and explorative in nature. The more nuanced areas of Moltmann's theology still need to be developed, a more thorough explanation of divine action is needed based on such, and further research is still required.²⁰⁵ In 1963, Langdon Gilkey remarked that in 20th century theology the doctrine of divine action "was left a rootless, disembodied ghost, flitting from footnote to footnote, but rarely finding secure lodgement in sustain theological discourse."²⁰⁶ In 2007, in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, Charles Wood stated, "The situation has not changed markedly since Gilkey wrote. Put plainly, the doctrine [of divine action] has simply been overwhelmed by the challenges it has faced."²⁰⁷ Though much research and development is still needed, this research was an initial attempt to understand divine action in light of a contemporary theologian who works to integrate science into his theology.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵Suggestions for further research: 1) Specific divine action theories should be explored and explained in light of a more integrated approach to Moltmann's doctrine of creation, 2) Moltmann's theology of divine action should be thoroughly compared to other contemporary constructions of divine action, 3) other areas of Moltmann's theology should be considered (Christology, Pneumatology, etc.), 4) a thorough integration and comparison of Moltmann's theology to modern scientific claims on divine action should be researched, and 5) this research primarily contributed to Moltmann's theological development, but it should also be tested to see if it can contribute to the contemporary divine action scene.

²⁰⁶Langdon Gilkey, "The Concept of Providence in Contemporary Theology," *JR* 41 (1963): 174.

²⁰⁷Charles M. Wood, "Providence" in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Ian Torrance; Oxford: Oxford University, 2007), 93.

²⁰⁸John Polkinghorne, "Jürgen Moltmann's Engagement with the Natural Sciences," in *God's Life in Trinity* (eds. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2006), 61-70.

FAITH INTEGRATION, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND THE WESLEYAN QUADRILATERAL: A PERSONAL WITNESS

by

Don Thorsen

I once spoke with a past Provost of Azusa Pacific University, where I teach. He asked me why the School of Theology, of which I am a part, does not place more emphasis on apologetics, the endeavor to defend Christianity through rational and empirical disputation. From his administrative perspective, promoting apologetics would help to raise the status of the University, as it has done for nearby Christian universities.

I responded by saying that the Wesleyan heritage of Azusa Pacific has historically placed more emphasis on Christian faith and its integration with all life and learning, rather than on apologetics. Certainly, both the School of Theology and I teach apologetics, but our theology values inclusiveness and integration more than exclusiveness and polemicism. It is important to defend Christianity outwardly from its critics; it also is important inwardly to promote broad-based learning, mutual understanding, and ingenuity among Christians, churches, and their institutions of higher education. The emphasis on faith integration helps to balance the kind of teaching, learning, research, and application of truth that needs to occur in academia, regardless of whether its sources are Christian or non-Christian.

John Wesley affirmed the age-old dictum that “all truth is God’s truth.” Consequently, institutions of Christian higher education as well as the churches require a great deal of Christian faith and its integration, relative to the wide-ranging and fast-changing world in which we live. To that end, Wesley conceived of religious authority and theological method in ways that welcome truth wherever it may be found. He wanted to expand on the degree to which Christianity is relevant and contributive to the world since he believed in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to aid Christians in all their endeavors. Wesley left a theological heritage of truth-seeking and faith integration that has influenced me as well as Azusa Pacific University.

My Understanding of Faith Integration

I am Professor of Theology in the Azusa Pacific Graduate School of Theology and Chair of the Department of Theology and Ethics. Primarily, I train men and women who are preparing for clergy and lay positions of leadership in Christian churches and intend to witness on behalf of the gospel of Jesus Christ in both word and deed. In this setting, the topic of faith and its integration is important to me personally and professionally. Personally, faith and faith integration are important because they permeate my life and scholarly pursuits in theology. Professionally, I teach faith and faith integration to my masters and doctoral students in the Graduate School of Theology in preparing them for ministry.

Of course, the Christian understanding of faith is a complex reality to define, even from a biblical perspective. On the one hand, faith is somehow thought to be divinely initiated and enabled (e.g., John 6:63-65; Ephesians 2:8-9). On the other hand, people experience and grow in faith in ways that, humanly speaking, may be analyzed historically, theologically, behaviorally, and in other ways (e.g., Matthew 8:10; Hebrews 10:22). The former understanding is difficult to assess since divine (providential, spiritual, and gracious) dynamics are not easily thought to be analyzable empirically and rationally. The latter understanding is easier to assess, but not without pitfalls. Here is my stance:

Although paradoxes remain in Christian understandings of faith, I affirm that faith can be sufficiently deliberated and that its integration in relationship to all dimensions of life is both needful and beneficial to people, individually and socially.

I began my professional efforts in integrating faith into my theological understanding of Christianity with the publication of my book *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology*.¹ In it I talk about how John Wesley utilized scripture as the primary resource available to Christians for reflection upon God and matters related to God. In addition to scripture, Wesley talked about the secondary—albeit genuine—religious authorities of church tradition, critical thinking, and relevant experience as important contextual factors in theological reflection. Sometimes this combination

¹Don Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990; rpt. Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2005).

of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience is referred to as the “Wesleyan quadrilateral.”

Faith integration requires dynamic interaction between these interdependent religious authorities. Azusa Pacific University affirms this dynamic interaction in its *Position Statement on Evangelical Commitment*: “Reflecting our Wesleyan-Holiness heritage, we consider right living important along with right belief. We seek truth primarily through Scripture and integrate other sources such as reason, tradition, and experience.”² Because the Wesleyan quadrilateral incorporates relevant experience, along with other religious authorities, “right living” in addition to “right belief” is emphasized. This prevents faith integration from being reduced to cognitive integration alone. On the contrary, the Wesleyan tradition of Christianity has emphasized a holy, holistic approach to integration that expresses hope and love as well as faith. Indeed, the methodological use of the Wesleyan quadrilateral is found widely among Christians in the greater Wesleyan, Methodist, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions.³

Thus, faith integration represents a complex undertaking that includes more than the consideration of right belief or doctrine (what Christians sometimes refer to as *orthodoxy*); it includes right practice (*orthopraxis*) and a right heart (*orthokardia*). To these could be added other concerns for right society, right community, and so on. In determining such beliefs, values, and practices, Christians historically look to God as their ultimate authority. However, in determining knowledge about God and matters related to God, it is thought that there are various religious authorities to which Christians may appeal in their search for truth, individually and collectively.

Faith Integration and My Discipline

As a Protestant Christian, I respect the Reformation tradition of *sola Scriptura* (Latin for *scripture alone*) championed by Martin Luther and John Calvin. However, neither Luther nor Calvin had a simplistic understanding of scripture as the exclusive religious authority used by Christians. John Wesley understood the sophisticated ways that Christians

²*What We Believe: Our Identity and Values in Community* (Azusa, CA: Azusa Pacific University, n.d.), 20.

³Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 86-87.

have always undertaken theological reflection, and he made explicit how Christians function in practice. For example, church tradition provided central beliefs, values, and practices, such as the ecumenical creeds and the biblical canon itself. I affirm this integrative Wesleyan approach to understanding the nature and practice of theology.

Wesley affirmed the importance of reason, logic, and critical thinking in the work of theology. He regularly used inductive and deductive reasoning in studying scripture, tradition, and experience. Wesley's inductive approach extended to the investigation of all religious authorities, since truth can be found beyond scripture throughout the created world.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Wesley to Christian understanding of religious authority and theological method was his explicit inclusion of *experience*. He did not think that he was doing anything innovative, but acknowledging experience as a legitimate religious authority with longstanding influence upon Christianity. To me, experience involves more than individual religious experience. It includes other individual experiences not generally thought to be religious; experience includes collective experiences of society, institutions, and churches, and it includes scientific investigation that extends to the physical, biological, and social sciences.

One of the influences of Wesleyanism on my theology is a growing emphasis on the contextual nature of theology. Theology is not done in a vacuum; it is important to be aware of the contextuality of theology as well as one's own socio-cultural "situatedness" in theological reflection. Even in the study of scripture, it is important to understand scripture's situatedness, including its genre, historical context, and literary context. Historical and critical care needs to be taken in interpreting and applying scripture in theological studies as well as in one's personal life and ministry. The experiential dimensions of theology are crucial in an increasingly postmodern age when people—Christian and non-Christian—question the nature of faith and its legitimacy in relationship to truth, justice, and witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Theology and My Faith

My disciplinary training in theology has helped me in my Christian faith development. Although I have not always called myself Wesleyan, this tradition served as the foremost theological influence throughout the various stages of my maturation as a Christian, intellectually and existen-

tially. I grew up in the Free Methodist Church that was “fundamentalist” in some of its thought and practices. So, when I attended Stanford University as an undergraduate student, my Christian worldview was sorely challenged. I found refuge intellectually in the existentialism of Søren Kierkegaard.⁴

As a Master of Divinity student at Asbury Theological Seminary, I discovered how my Wesleyan background could help me better integrate some of the intellectual tensions I was experiencing with regard to my understanding of Christianity. For example, I progressively learned how to balance faith and reason, scriptural truth and error, *sola Scriptura* and *prima Scriptura*, common grace and prevenient grace, divine predestination and human freedom, belief and practice, Christian life and the Holy Spirit, positional holiness and progressive holiness, love and justice.

My focus on Wesleyan theology continued in my doctoral studies and early scholarly publications. Although I have been drawn to alternative theological traditions, such as existential and postmodern theologies, Wesleyanism has served as an anchoring worldview sufficient to help me navigate through questions, concerns, and doubts that I have had. After all, life can be difficult and a Christian worldview should be sufficient to aid one in marriage, parenting, and ministry as well as in epistemology, science, and apologetics. Ironically, my students can often see the benefits of multidisciplinary studies for apologetics, but it takes them time to see the constructive benefits of such studies for the integration and application of their Christian beliefs, values, and practices.

The Wesleyan tradition of Christianity is not perfect; it has its theological and ministerial weaknesses. For example, in church history, Wesleyans have tended to be overly optimistic with regard to the perfect degree to which—in my perspective—Christians become “entirely sancti-

⁴I was especially influenced by Kierkegaard’s paradoxical description of faith as the “highest passion, the holy, pure and humble expression of the divine madness.” See Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. by Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941, 1954), 37. I disagree with William Hasker’s caricature of those who represent H. Richard Niebuhr’s “Christ and culture in paradox” type as descriptive of a novice or amateur who “first sets out on the path of faith-learning integration.” His threefold typology of compatibilism, transformationism, and reconstructionism as strategies for faith integration is inadequate, especially given Hasker’s familiarity with Niebuhr’s book on *Christ and Culture*. See William Hasker, “Faith-Learning Integration: An Overview,” in *Christian Scholar’s Review* 21, no. 3 (March 1992): 240, n. 12.

fied.” Be that as it may, Wesleyanism has helped me to have a greater sense of intellectual resolve and integrity in affirming faith in a faithless world, promoting ministry to people (and churches) who have become cynical, and advocating justice among those who thought that Christians did not care about more than personal piety.

Faith Integration and My Teaching

When I teach about faith in my theology courses, I often begin by using the book I wrote entitled *An Exploration of Christian Theology*.⁵ The book represents a general introduction to Christian beliefs, values, and practices that provides a broad spectrum of views, including Catholic and Protestant, evangelical and progressive, modern and postmodern. As a consequence, students are challenged to decide for themselves with regard to developing their understanding of Christianity.

An Exploration of Christian Theology also talks about the historical and critical interpretation of scripture, which challenges students to wrestle with the biblical genre as well as the historical and literary contexts of texts.⁶ Keith Reeves and I go into greater depth in talking about the variety of ways that Christians interpret the Bible in our book *What Christians Believe about the Bible*.⁷

In these classes, I investigate the challenges of contextuality in understanding scripture and the whole of theology in books I assign that present Christianity from Third World perspectives. For example, I assign *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, eds. John Parratt, and *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, eds. Virginia Fabella and R. S. Sugirtharajah.⁸ Third World Christians not only challenge my students to think about the contextuality and inculturation of scripture and of Third World

⁵Don Thorsen, *An Exploration of Christian Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

⁶I like the maxim used by Ben Witherington III: “A text without context is a pretext to say whatever you want.” See “Transfixed: We Have Seen His Glory,” Lectureship on Holy Living, Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA, 4 February, 2013.

⁷Don Thorsen and Keith Reeves, *What Christians Believe about the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

⁸John Parratt, ed., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Virginia Fabella and R. S. Sugirtharajah, eds. *Dictionary of Third World Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).

theology; they challenge my students to explore their own contextuality, their own situatedness, about which they largely are unaware.

Third World Christians also challenge my students about the enduring social problems caused by the ongoing effects of western colonialism, and the need to be proactive in dealing with problems related to poverty, starvation, disease, bigotry, racism, and sexism. As such, I teach students about the contributions of liberation theologies, racial and ethnic theologies, feminist theologies, postcolonialism, and other Christian attempts to balance physical as well as spiritual advocacy on behalf of people, modeled upon the life and ministry of Jesus.

Students are both challenged and threatened by studying the variety of cultural, scientific, and social-scientific perspectives applied to understanding Christian faith and its integration intellectually and in ministry. I do not intend to deconstruct their Christianity, though a bit of deconstructionism is unavoidable. But I do not leave them without guides for constructing (or reconstructing) a theological worldview that is more honest and integrative as well as biblical. *An Exploration of Christian Theology* helps students to a certain degree, but I also use authors who may serve as evangelically-oriented compasses for navigating through familiar and unfamiliar beliefs, values, and practices.

For example, I like to use *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* by Gregory Boyd and Paul Eddy. They present a variety of evangelical Christian viewpoints that challenge students to decide for themselves with regard to a number of theological issues such as divine providence and human freedom, sanctification, spiritual gifts, and women in ordained ministry.⁹ Books that I assign by Thomas Oden and Roger Olson also help to provide thoughtful evangelical responses to the challenges of modernism, postmodernism, and other intellectual views relevant to Christian faith and its integration.¹⁰

Although some evangelical Christians yearn for one definitive understanding of scripture, the word “evangelical” is just as contested as is the word “Protestant.” The abundance of multiple-view books published

⁹Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002, 2009).

¹⁰For example, see Thomas C. Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology* (New York: HarperOne, 1992); and Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

by InterVarsity and Zondervan emphasize the diversity of evangelicalism and also to the *de facto* wide acceptance of that diversity. At Azusa Pacific, the diversity of Christianity is welcome within the irenic parameters of the University's "Statement of Faith," influenced by Wesley's concept of a "catholic spirit"—a welcoming, hospitable spirit.¹¹ Our welcome not only extends to Christians from other theological traditions but also to truth that may be found in other academic disciplines, including those that represent the humanities and sciences.

Steve Wilkens and I have done extensive work in classes and in publications to expand evangelical Christians' understanding of their faith and its interrelationship with culture, humanities, and sciences. Consider the book we co-authored entitled *Everything You Know about Evangelicals Is Wrong (Well, Almost Everything): An Insider's Look at Myths and Realities*.¹² In this book we try to dispel caricatures of evangelical Christianity and promote a more convincing presentation of our beliefs, values, and practices that does not fear issues such as evolution, politics, racism, sexism, and homosexuality. Instead, we encourage critical engagement with all aspects of society, truth, and higher education.

In classes, I developed student learning outcomes (SLOs) that embody this critical, multidisciplinary approach to theology and also to ministry. Consider the following three SLOs:

1. Students will demonstrate critical theological thinking by integrating Scripture, church tradition, and experience in theological deliberations.
2. Students will demonstrate critical thinking by engaging diverse theological viewpoints.
3. Students will engage church and society by critically applying their theology.¹³

¹¹John Wesley, "Catholic Spirit" (sermon 39, 1740), in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 2, ed. Albert C. Outler, Bicentennial ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 79-96.

¹²Steve Wilkens and Don Thorsen, *Everything You Know about Evangelicals Is Wrong (Well, Almost Everything): An Insider's Look at Myths and Realities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

¹³These student learning outcomes may be found in my syllabi, and they are used as program learning outcomes for the Graduate School of Theology. Rubrics have been developed by the Graduate School in order to help instruct students and to assess their writings. The rubrics are not independently published, but they are available upon request.

In classes, I discuss these SLOs at length and talk about their implications for theological reflection and their applicability in ministry contexts. The first SLO implies use of the Wesleyan quadrilateral; the second SLO emphasizes the importance of investigating alternative Christian views (and non-Christian views); and the third SLO points out that theological reflection needs to be applied socially as well as personally and ministerially. The three SLOs are also used as program learning outcomes. So they permeate ministerial training in the Graduate School of Theology.

It is ironic that, at Azusa Pacific University, professors in many academic disciplines have to convince students about the integrative relevance of Christian faith for their scholarly studies. In the School of Theology, professors—including myself—have to convince students about the integrative relevance of academic disciplines outside classical religious studies. By using the Wesleyan quadrilateral, I am increasingly able to show the insight and benefits of interdisciplinary Christian studies that include psychology, sociology, biology, geology, literature, music, art, and so on. Often my students integrate such disciplines in their day-to-day lives, but without conscious awareness. My classes, teaching, and publications are designed to help them become more self-aware and effective in developing their Christian beliefs, values, and practices.

Faith Integration, Wholeness, and Holiness

As a representative of the Wesleyan tradition, I argue that faith integration permeates all that we do as Christians. Wesleyans appeal primarily to scripture, but they incorporate so much more with regard to what is authoritative historically, rationally, and experientially. These interdependent religious authorities intend to approximate a kind of wholeness (or holism) that cannot be found by examining issues individually. No doubt, God does not want us to appeal to scripture alone without a realistic understanding of the dynamic interaction of religious authorities needed in truthful, wise, and relevant decision-making. Thus, one of my goals is to challenge Christians to become more self-aware and intentional about how they view their faith and practice.

The emphasis on wholeness in the Wesleyan tradition is mostly discussed in terms of holiness, but Christians sometimes caricature holiness without understanding its complexity as a description of the nature of God and of the kind of people God wants us to become. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory,” is the way that Isaiah 6:3 (NRSV) describes God. Likewise, 1 Peter 1:16-19 says:

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Faith integration is not merely a cognitive activity; it should pervade all dimensions of a Christian’s life. Since Christians are supposed to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength,” then they are to do so wholly, entirely, and by the grace of God (Mark 12:30).

Of course, Christian love is not supposed to stop with “upward” love toward God; it must include “outward” love toward others, individually and socially, as Christians have “inward” love for themselves.¹⁴ Self-love has been maligned from time to time by Christians, but Wesley thought that holiness, which he understood primarily in terms of love, presupposed a holistic, healthy love that embraced oneself as well as love for God and others.

Faith integration, including holiness, must apply to faithful praxis (orthopraxis) in addition to faithful belief (orthodoxy) and a faithful heart (orthokardia). Such integration includes holy relations between people one-on-one and holy relations toward others corporately and socially, which includes utilization of the cardinal virtues of wisdom, moderation, justice, and courage. Examples of the social applications of Christianity include compassion ministries that treat the symptoms of poverty, starvation, illness, and other impoverishments that affect people. Examples also include advocacy ministries that treat the causes of poverty and other social problems. From Wesley’s perspective, Christians need to become politically and economically proactive in addition to being proactive in making disciples.

In my theology classes, I teach holiness in all its dimensions. In my scholarship, I have published two books on the topic of holiness. The first was co-edited with Kevin Mannoia and entitled *The Holiness Manifesto*. It contains a consensus document by the same name.¹⁵ The “Holiness Man-

¹⁴These spatial words are metaphors that I draw from chapter titles used by Richard Foster to describe three categories of prayer. See *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home* (New York: HarperOne, 1992), 5, 79, 167.

¹⁵Kevin W. Mannoia and Don Thorsen, eds., *The Holiness Manifesto* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

ifesto” is intended to inspire 21st-century Christians to uplift holiness in their preaching, teaching, and ministry.¹⁶ The second book was co-edited with Barry Callen and entitled *Heart and Life: Rediscovering Holy Living*.¹⁷ It includes chapters that deal with the experience of holiness and its relationship to contemporary culture as well as to what scripture says about it.

Conclusion

Faith and faith integration pervades my life, including my scholarship and teaching. They are not tangential but, by the grace of God, are inextricably bound up with who I am as a Christian and how I live, teach, and write. Methodologically, the Wesleyan quadrilateral serves as an invaluable heuristic tool—a guide to complex, integrative decision-making. It helps me to articulate and instruct others with regard to how they may become more complete and successful in both living and communicating their Christian beliefs and values to others in ways that are truthful, redemptive, and relevant to the ever-changing needs of people.

¹⁶“The Holiness Manifesto,” in *The Holiness Manifesto*, 18-21.

¹⁷Barry L. Callen and Don Thorsen, eds., *Heart and Life: Rediscovering Holy Living* (Lexington, KY: Aldersgate Press, 2012).

TIMOTHY L. SMITH AND MILDRED BANGS WYNKOOP BOOK AWARD

Robert W. Wall with Richard B. Steele,
1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, The Two Horizons New Testament
Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.

The Timothy L. Smith and Mildred Bangs Wynkoop Book Award is named in honor of the outstanding scholarly contributions of historian Timothy L. Smith and theologian Mildred Bangs Wynkoop. We offer this award as a Society to recognize a recent publication of distinction in a research area related to the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. Each book that is honored is judged to have helped the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition to be better understood and/or promoted. Such a work is deemed to make a substantive contribution to the author's particular field of study and to the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition generally. The book must have been published no longer than two years prior to its nomination as an award recipient.

This year's award goes to Robert W. Wall and Richard B. Steele for their contribution on *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* in The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary series. This volume is a part of a series that has a stated purpose that is different from your typical commentary: "seeking to bridge the existing gap between biblical studies and systematic theology." And part of the stated aims is that such works are to offer "exegesis of the New Testament texts in close conversation with theological concerns." This allows, on the one hand, for Wall to engage in a deliberate theological interpretation of Scripture, something he unashamedly does here. This does not occur to the neglect of his biblical exegesis but in constant conversation with it (and that has received initially strong review from the biblical guild). Two examples will suffice here. First, his work on the problematic and often misinterpreted passage of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 that deals with the Ephesian women and their role within the church does not merely repeat stale historical explanations what these women might or might not have been doing but instead reexamines the text exegetically in terms of vocabulary and the like. Second, his treatment of the familiar passage of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 unpacks exegetically what it might mean to

consider Scripture as inspired that echoes emphases that John Wesley himself articulated in his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* centuries ago but that few exegetes have discovered since. He then follows up his analysis of each book with a theological reading of that book, based on core beliefs of the apostolic Rule of Faith according to Tertullian. This is solid, insightful work, as Wall engages these often ignored texts theologically as the Church's sacred Scriptures.

But that is only part of what makes this work distinction. Richard Steele offers three historical case studies—after each of the three Pastoral Epistles—that pick up on the major theme or issue that Wall has identified in his work. These studies substantiate these key themes in the Pastoral Epistles in distinctive ways. Each of these studies illustrates how Christian communities of faith lived out or responded to the types of issues that these scriptural texts themselves addressed. So these studies provide useful examples as to how the issues of the text have “played out” within the Church. That these come from the Methodist traditions makes this all the more noteworthy. Combined together, their work offers a wonderful contribution to biblical studies, systematic theology, historical studies, the Wesleyan tradition, and ultimately the Church in the ways that they bring different disciplines back into conversation.

Rob and Rick, thank you for your gift, not only of thought but also the modeling of what it might look like to engage in interdisciplinary work like this, where theology, historical studies, exegesis, and even practical theology might meet and work together. On behalf of the Wesleyan Theological Society, I present to you the 2014 Timothy L. Smith and Mildred Bangs Wynkoop Book Award.

BOOK REVIEWS

Leithart, Peter J. *Between Babel and Beast: America and Empires in Biblical Perspective*. Theopolitical Visions. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012. 200 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1-60899-817-3.

Reviewed by Rachel L. Coleman, Ph.D. student, Regent University School of Divinity, Virginia Beach, VA.

Readers have no need to fear that Peter J. Leithart's *Between Babel and Beast* is merely one more monochromatic critique of "empire" as an anti-biblical human creation. Leithart offers instead a completely new model for the discussion of Scripture's polyvalent presentation of "empire." This often hard-hitting volume is divided into three sections. In the first, Leithart presents his model of Scripture as a "tale of two imperialisms"—the Abrahamic empire (now lived out in the church) and world empires that compete with the former. According to Leithart, world empires exist in one of three forms: "Babelic" empires, which seek to impose a single political and cultural pattern on the world and are founded on the blood of innocents; "bestial" empires, which are openly hostile to God's people and are founded on the blood of the saints; and "cherubic" empires, which leave space for the church to exist as the worshiping people of God (53). The church, God's empire, is a concrete historical entity that coexists with and interpenetrates the others. "Under Jesus and filled with the pentecostal Spirit, the ecclesial empire is a historical form of international community. The church is the eschatological empire already founded" (52).

The second section of the book, which Leithart perspicaciously predicts will cause the most uproar among conservative American readers, is a critique of "Americanism," which he boldly describes as a "quasi-Christian, biblically laced heresy" (xii) that equates the United States with "God's new Israel, the political harbinger for all future ages, the redeemer nation that performs periodic regenerating sacrifices for the world" (151). Leithart reminds readers that, even in its founding, the United States was a "post-Christendom Christian nation," historically posterior to the collapse of the theological and moral constraints that Christendom had placed on rulers and states. The church herself had been one of those

constraints, but “beginning with the Puritans, and more insistently since, heretical American typology has pushed the church to the political margins and replaced it with the American nation itself” (110). This form of nationalism has so deeply penetrated the American psyche and so tightly intertwined itself with religion that it has rendered the American church impotent as a voice of challenge to power. “Americanism is the *de facto* political theology for most American Christians. American churches cannot critique and confront American power because promotion of Americanism is what American churches stand for” (111).

The final section of *Between Babel and Beast* is dedicated to a review of recent U.S. involvement on the world stage, examined through the dual lenses of the typology of empire developed in Part I and the exposé of American nationalism in Part II. Leithart’s conclusion is that, while America does not fit the category of “beast,” its Americanist heresy nevertheless allows it to support and ally itself with bestial regimes in a dangerous compromise with evil. “We play with beasts, and our Americanist lenses do not allow us to see the danger. We fund our favorite beasts, then turn a blind eye when they devour the saints. It is a dangerous position, not only for the Christians who suffer at the hands of our allies but also for the United States. Those who consort with beasts might become bestial, and beasts do not long survive” (150).

The most glaring shortcoming of *Between Babel and Beast* is the author’s conscious choice to write what is essentially two volumes in one: the narrative and argument that are developed in the seven chapters of the book plus the wealth of important information that is detailed in excessively long footnotes. The first footnote runs through three pages and contains insight into the author’s methodological and vocabulary choices that are key to interpreting his argument and that should have been included in the main text. Leithart is very well aware that what he calls “encyclical” footnoting leaves us with a secondary text that is “a detachable, errant appendix” to the book (x). Instead of warning the reader away from this “wonkish” style (x), he would have served the reader better by incorporating some of the footnoted information into the body of the book.

While Leithart’s volume is not overtly Wesleyan, it offers Wesleyan readers in the United States a challenging opportunity to consider with brutally honest frankness what is our stance in the face of the prevailing Americanism that surrounds us. Like John Wesley and William Wilberforce confronting the slavery and racism of eighteenth-century England,

will we be willing to consider that the prevailing worldview lenses worn even by “good Christian folk” might not be showing us God’s perspective on reality?

Between Babel and Beast is a much-needed exposé of the development and nature of Americanism, its pervasive influence at all levels of culture and religion in the United States, and the threat of what it could become. Leithart’s assessment and interpretation of Americanism in the light of his biblical typology of empire are painfully direct and will likely provoke visceral and hostile reactions from some evangelical readers, but his call to repentance is a timely and urgent invitation to the American church. Readers may find much with which to disagree in this volume, but taking seriously Leithart’s challenge to honestly reexamine the national actions, ethos, and worldview in the light of “de-Americanized” Scriptures (151) should prove fruitful in the contemporary quest to understand the nature of discipleship, the church, mission, and political theology.

Nassif, Bradley. *Bringing Jesus to the Desert*. Ancient Context, Ancient Faith. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 133 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-310-31830-9.

Nathan Crawford, Director of Youth and Young Adults, Trinity United Methodist Church, Plymouth, IN; Adjunct Online Professor, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

In *Bringing Jesus to the Desert*, Bradley Nassif provides an interesting and easy-to-read guide to a number of different theological conversations. First, he introduces the reader to discussions on Christian spirituality, especially as it relates and revolves around the “desert” in Eastern Orthodox theology. Second, he opens various avenues within which Western Christianity may enter into mutually enriching conversation with their Eastern brothers and sisters. Third, he introduces the reader to a number of interesting characters in the history of the Christian church, many of which have been incredibly influential yet often ignored. In all, Nassif opens a number of avenues for theological and spiritual reflection while providing the guidance necessary to allow people to take these avenues.

Before beginning, though, I would be remiss to not mention the “Ancient Context, Ancient Faith” series published by Zondervan and edited by Gary M. Burge. This is a great idea. The series provides introductory level texts that engage people in various elements of Christian history that may have been previously unknown. Also, the texts provide a litany of pictures and graphics that make the books a joy merely to flip through, let alone actually read and digest. Nassif’s contribution on desert spirituality provides a merely perfect complement to the series as it is ripe for icons, pictures of Eastern Orthodox Temples from around the world, Eastern Christians, and even pictures of Nassif’s family. The series gives the template for Nassif’s original and engaging text, and he does well by making a fantastic contribution to the series.

With that said, Nassif’s argument takes the form of an introduction: he wants to introduce a predominately Western and (taking into account that Zondervan is the publisher) evangelical audience to some tenets of the spirituality coming from the tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy (Nassif is also involved in the ongoing dialogue between Eastern Orthodoxy and evangelicalism). He focuses on the “desert fathers and mothers” because their lives present us with a form of and testament to the spiritual life that our world longs for (21). The desert becomes the place for radical discipleship to take place for these spiritual mentors: in the desert they, like

Christ, spend time being cleansed and learning the practices that lead them to love God and neighbor. For the desert fathers and mothers, “The desert was a place of death, testing, repentance, and spiritual warfare.... It is a place where the victory of Christ over sin, death, and the devil was proclaimed, fought, and won” (29). The desert provided the place and space for pursuing a life of pure love in order to love God and love neighbor outside of the desert.

The bulk of the book is a series of biographies—in the form of chapters—on various desert fathers and mothers. In each chapter, the author provides a brief biographical sketch. The biography sets the stage for some sort of crisis moment, which leads the person to abandon his or her life in order to follow God more fully in the desert. Nassif writes extended chapters on Anthony of Egypt, Makarios of Egypt, Pachomius, and Melania, along with writing a chapter on “colorful characters” containing thoughts on John the Little, Moses the Ethiopian, and Simeon the Stylite. By focusing on this diverse group of people, Nassif is able to highlight various forms of living the spiritual life in the desert. He is also able to show that this pursuit was done by both men and women. In essence, he provides a number of places for the reader to connect with a desert father or mother and to learn from him or her in order to pursue a more holy, spiritual life.

For those of us from the Wesleyan-Methodist tradition, Nassif provides an ideal text for engaging in dialogue with our Eastern brothers and sisters. Specifically, we can have discussions on the nature of spirituality and what practices help us to fulfill our calling to love God and love neighbor. Nassif also gives us an insight to the ongoing discussions around *theosis*, which have been prevalent in studies on Wesley in the last couple decades. While the Eastern understanding of *theosis* is different, there is still ample opportunity for engaging in charitable conversation around the idea.

In all, I recommend *Bringing Jesus to the Desert*. It is a more-than-adequate text for a number of reasons, most notably for its ability to summarize important understandings of Christian spirituality from Eastern Orthodoxy. Nassif opens the doors of what it means to be Christian and practice Christianity to more than just our Western ideas. In this way, he gives all Christians a book that can help them grow in faith and understanding.

Hempton, David. *The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Vol 5 of *The I. B. Tauris History of the Christian Church*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2011. 242 pages. ISBN 978-1845114404.

Reviewed by Kevin M. Watson, Assistant Professor of Historical Theology and Wesleyan Studies, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA.

Scholars are not necessarily known for being concise, particularly when writing surveys of worldwide Christianity. Indeed, writing surveys that are both thorough and concise is nearly impossible. One cannot help but be amused by David Hempton's opening line in the preface to *The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century*: "Writing a general history of worldwide Christianity in the long eighteenth century (c. 1680-1820) is both a sacred responsibility and a fool's errand" (xv). I sense that Hempton would have liked a more generous word limit for this volume, since he outlines an impressive list of key topics and events that occurred during this time period, and then concedes that he simply cannot do justice to them all. And yet, to those who are familiar with Hempton's previous work, it will come as no surprise that he weaves together a nuanced and compelling account of Christianity in the long eighteenth century, without sacrificing a careful handling of the evidence. He even throws in a touch of humor.

The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century is dense and does not waste words. Hempton's historiographical sketch of previous surveys of the history of Christianity in the eighteenth century, for example, is just over one page. Despite its brevity, this sketch is a remarkably helpful introduction to the literature. The goal of the series within which his volume is situated provides Hempton with the research trajectory for this survey, which intends to be "both new and traditional, familiar and unfamiliar; must accept that Christianity has been both imperialist and subversive; must pay attention both to the past's complexities and to the ways that Christianity has shaped the present; and must recognize at the most profound level that Christianity is in its essence a missionary religion" (xix).

The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century is organized in two parts. The first part narrates the expansion of Christendom from Europe to the rest of the globe. The second part describes the transformation of Christianity, particularly within Europe. The material in part two will be more familiar to readers of this journal, with part one tending to break more new ground.

The first chapter provides an overview of the rapid growth of Christianity throughout the world in the long eighteenth century. Hempton uses an imagined “scholarly space visitor” who is investigating world Christianity, arguing that this visitor would find that “eighteenth-century Christian art and architecture outside Europe would reveal plenty of examples of Christian art with little or no influence from Europe... plenty more deriving from European colonial influence..., and yet more illustrating various kinds of hybridity and indigenization” (18). This passage is typical of the way Hempton brings depth and breadth with few words. Hempton further discusses the reality of colonialism in the long eighteenth century, and argues that “it is an exaggeration to view all British Protestant missionaries as the mere foot soldiers of empire or to see Protestant missions as unalloyed cultural imperialism” (31). He concludes the chapter by noting the diversity of expressions of Christianity in this era.

Readers of this journal will particularly enjoy Hempton’s extended discussion, in the second chapter, of Thomas Coke as a missionary. Hempton focuses particularly on Coke’s self-understanding as a missionary, highlighting Coke’s struggle with whether it was permissible to pursue happiness as a missionary, or whether his goals ought to consist entirely of self-denial. Hempton finds that Coke’s self-perception is as “a naturalist, anthropologist, ethnographer, diplomat, political trouble-shooter, missionary preacher, world transformer, elite networker and divine instrument” (52). He also provides a helpful reminder that Coke has received less scholarly attention than have other early American Methodist leaders.

Chapter three considers the interactions between European missionaries and the people they hoped to convert in other parts of the globe. He concludes the first part of the book by calling for nuance in accounts of encounters between Western missionaries and indigenous people, “narratives of encounter require terminology that leaves room for agency . . . flexibility, complexity, differential power dynamics and a clear sense of change over time and place” (104).

The second part of this work focuses on changes that occurred in Christendom, especially in Western Europe. Chapter four considers the impact of the Enlightenment, science and religion, religious toleration and religious liberty, the rise of anti-slavery sentiment, and secularization. Chapter five focuses on the international religious revival that occurred in eighteenth-century Protestantism, with particular focus on Method-

ism. Chapter six starts with the prevalence of religious establishment at the beginning of the long eighteenth century, seeking to understand the way that establishment was challenged and changed by the major political revolutions in eighteenth-century Europe. He concludes by comparing and contrasting the American and French revolutions.

The contribution of *The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century* is difficult to assess. On the one hand, all of the fine hallmarks of David Hempton's scholarship are present in this volume. The scope of the survey is remarkable, given its size. It contains repeated calls for balance, nuance, and taking historical figures seriously on their own terms. The book is well written and a pleasure to read. On the other hand, the value of the book for classroom use as a survey of Christianity in the long eighteenth century is limited by the strict word count given to Hempton. In this case, the book would be more useful as a basic text for a course on the history of Christianity in this era if it had been less economical with words and page count. The book points in a host of intriguing directions for further study, but often leaves the reader wanting more.

Scholars of the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition will appreciate Hempton's recognition of the significance of Methodism for the period the book covers, an unsurprising observation since he is one of British Methodism's finest historians. However, scholars hoping to benefit from new research on early Methodism will be disappointed to find that the section on Methodism is largely drawn from *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (Yale UP, 2005). Survey history, of course, is not intended to be a place where one makes significant original scholarly contributions.

Where the book makes a significant contribution to scholarship on eighteenth-century world Christianity is in its weaving together of a more traditional survey (which tends to focus primarily on major individuals, usually European males, and events, usually in the West) with more recent scholarship that recognizes the importance of popular religious experience and focuses on the reception of the gospel in a variety of contexts. Hempton's determination to bring nuance to this task is seen on nearly every page and carries through to the final sentence: "Christianity's worldwide expansion was not without its cruelties and cultural impositions, but neither was it devoid of heroism and humanitarianism, sacrifice and service" (199). David Hempton is an exceptional choice to author this volume. He does an admirable job of modeling how survey history can include both well-known people and events as well as the people whose lives have received less attention, but are no less significant to the story.

Timothy S. Laniak. *Finding the Lost Images of God*. Ancient Context Ancient Faith. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 142 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-310-32474-2.

Reviewed by Nathan Crawford, Director of Youth and Young Adults, Trinity United Methodist Church, Plymouth, IN; Adjunct Online Professor, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

In *Finding the Lost Images of God*, Timothy S. Laniak provides a text for learning about the historical background for some of our conceptions about who God is. The author takes a number of different biblical images for God and places them in their historical and textual context. For Laniak, good biblical interpretation leads to a good understanding of how Christians should think about the Christian God. In his promotion of good biblical interpretive habits, he believes that he opens the possibilities for what commonly used images for God in Scripture mean for Christians and their understanding of the Triune God.

The images of God that Laniak chooses to explore are God as (in this order) architect, artisan, farmer, monarch, warrior, shepherd, and patron. Whether or not it was intentional, Laniak's structuring of the book provides a narrative understanding of God, moving from the God who is the architect and artisan of creation to the God who takes humanity as God's own and acts as humanity's patron. In doing so, the author provides an interesting approach to the biblical narrative by focusing on the various ways that these images help to illumine the revelation of God in creation. The structure also helps us see the way in which these images contain much interplay. Laniak consistently comes back to the images he has previously discussed, especially that of God as architect, giving the reader a general sense that all these connect to each other. Thus, the picture that Laniak paints contains a multitude of textures, building and interacting with each other to bring out the best understanding of God possible.

This reviewer also appreciates Laniak's willingness to deal with images of God that may not be as popular or accepted in the contemporary world, especially that of God as monarch and warrior. While there may be disagreement with some of Laniak's conclusions, the reader can appreciate the fact that he deals with images that are prevalent in Scripture but often lacking in contemporary thinking on God. The idea of God as monarch is especially foreign in our democratic world. However, Laniak mines the image to show the reader that this is an understanding

of God that must be dealt with because of its importance in the biblical narrative. As well, he shows how God as monarch and as warrior provide clues into the character of God as revealed in the biblical witness. In all, then, readers' understanding can expand by dealing with material that is foreign and may make them slightly uncomfortable.

The real problems with the text do not come from Laniak's authorship, but from the nature of the book and the series to which it belongs. First, these are introductory texts. The books in this series are intended to open readers to discussions to which they may not be privy and to issues of which they may not even be aware. They offer glimpses into contemporary dialogues on various controversies. But, because of its introductory scope, the book glosses over various facets of the historical background of some images it portrays for God. The text merely whets one's appetite. Along with this, another problem is the use of graphics and pictures in the book itself. These graphics and pictures are there to help the reader understand better the world to which Laniak introduces his readers; however, more often than not, these graphics and pictures feel like filler or a neat trick instead of actually offering insight into what Laniak writes.

In all, however, Laniak provides an insightful text that opens the reader to the discussions surrounding biblical images used to describe God. In doing so, he does believers a service for helping to understand the Christian scriptures and the God to whom these texts point in more profound ways.

Felleman, Laura Bartels. *The Form and Power of Religion: John Wesley on Methodist Vitality*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012. 105 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1-61097-778-4.

Reviewed by Stanley J. Rodes, Assistant District Superintendent, Intermountain District Church of the Nazarene; Adjunct Professor, Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, ID.

Laura Felleman's *The Form and Power of Religion* is a contribution to an important conversation surrounding a question that looms in every pastoral setting and weighs heavily on those charged with the oversight of pastors and local churches: how does one gauge a pastor's effectiveness? As Felleman describes in the Preface, the book was occasioned by the expansion in 2008 of a paragraph in the *Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church dealing with what actions might be taken with regard to ineffective pastors in the denomination (viii). The difficulty lies, she notes, in that the measure assumes a level of consensus on what effectiveness is and a standard that not only can be communicated but also fairly applied. Felleman, herself both a pastor and a Wesley scholar, engages the conversation by proposing that United Methodists would do well to consider this important matter in light of John Wesley's convictions and conclusions on the subject. To her credit, in the 100 pages of *The Form and Power of Religion* Felleman manages to present a concise presentation of Wesley's approach to sustaining "Methodist vitality" and does so in a manner that is both accessible to the lay reader and, with its extensive documentation, inviting to the academic.

Felleman organizes her contribution around John Wesley's warning in *Thoughts Upon Methodism* that Methodists will surely degenerate into "a dead sect, having the form without the power of religion" unless they "hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out" (quoted on page 1). To lay the groundwork for her distillations of Wesley's thoughts on these three pillars, Felleman introduces her thesis that Wesley's own spiritual journey and his counsel to countless Methodists argue for *both* the form and the power of religion (rather than power *instead* of form) as essential to Methodist vitality. While affirming that "exterior religion" cannot bring about the "interior renovation" needed, she asserts that, in Wesley's view, "practicing the form of godliness while waiting for the power of godliness was the only way to renew the image of God" and to assure that Methodists remain "a vital faith community" (5). In the three middle chapters of this brief volume, she

takes the reader on a fast-moving journey into Wesley's life and ministry, exploring what he seems to have meant by "the doctrine, spirit, and discipline." Her orientation of the reader to key periods in Wesley's life is very helpful to those newer to Wesley, giving them much-needed context for the larger discussion. In the final chapter, "Designing Methodist Vitality," Felleman undertakes the task of translating for a twenty-first century audience Wesley's plan for preserving vitality, suggesting those elements of his approach that might prove useful (with some adaptation) to church leaders today in designing a "Methodist vitality program."

It is evident that Felleman has two primary concerns as she seeks to position some markers of effectiveness beyond the hard data of attendance and donations routinely collected in denominational annual reports. First, she wants to call Methodists to a fresh embrace of Wesley's doctrinal standards. These standards, she argues, revolve around his "order of salvation" and establish the objective to which the forms of religion are to be aligned in order that the transforming effect of the power of religion might be experienced. Second, Felleman is concerned with *how* such transformation actually takes place. Understanding *how* is a critical aspect of designing a viable vitality program that can be reported on meaningfully.

In relation to her first concern, Felleman outlines Wesley's order of salvation with the help of a series of descriptive terms inspired by his distinction between the "almost" and the "altogether" Christian. She proposes that pastoral effectiveness involves a program that successfully moves persons forward along a series of stages: from the *asleep* to the *almost* to the *awake* stage, and then on to the *abiding* and the *altogether* stages and finally to the *angelic*. People engage this continuum first by means of participation in the mere *form* of religion; but, as they respond, the form is *empowered* (by grace through faith, she affirms) in the lives of the responsive specifically at the point where they progress from the *almost* stage to the *awake* stage and then on from there through each succeeding stage. The primary goal is to see everyone come into the *altogether* stage (the *angelic* stage is that of glorification).

While the alliteration may be a helpful mnemonic device, it does have its awkward moments and feels a bit forced. For example, the "awake" stage is not to be confused with the state of those *awakened* to their need of God. Rather, in Felleman's scheme, those so awakened are *almost* Christians, while the *awake* are those who have been justified. The *altogether* stage describes those who have been perfected in love of God

and neighbor, while those who are being sanctified belong to the *abiding* stage. One objection that could be raised here is that, rather than using the phrase “altogether a Christian” in so narrow a sense, Wesley used it to describe the whole range of transformation evidenced in one who is no longer only an “almost Christian,” beginning first with that faith by which one is actually born of God (see *The Almost Christian*, §II.3).

The critical role of the form of religion in bringing persons into the reality of the power of religion is worked out in greater detail in a chapter entitled, “Examining Methodist Discipline.” The relationship of the form of religion is portrayed in several helpful graphics showing the various disciplines (or “prudential regulations,” as Wesley put it) in their role of conveying life-giving and life-sustaining grace. Particular attention is given to the practice of Wesley’s Methodists of making resolutions and conducting examinations to track faithfulness and encourage spiritual progress.

But it is in the middle chapter on the Methodist spirit that Felleman’s more basic and compelling interest seems to come to light; namely, how does the grace of God work in an individual, moving her from stage to stage? Is there any objective way of verifying the transformation someone may claim to have transpired? This is the question begging to be answered for those seeking to gauge pastoral effectiveness at its most basic level. To answer it, Felleman introduces Wesley’s concept of the spiritual senses as the underpinning of his pastoral practice: just as the physical senses can perceive and evaluate the evidence of the physical realm, so the spiritual senses (fully enlivened by the working of the Holy Spirit) perceive the evidence of the spiritual realm. She then proposes a point-by-point correlation between the spiritual senses and each stage of the “order of salvation.” According to Felleman, the relationship is integral. For example, the once-dormant but now regenerated spiritual senses give discernment to those in the *abiding* stage and, to those in the *altogether* stage, they engender trust that Christ has cleansed from all unrighteousness (39). “The spiritual senses also help the will,” she says, and “make the choices that are in conformity with the will of God” (40). Elsewhere, Felleman asserts that the spiritual senses communicate the perception of the divine realm and this, in Wesley’s understanding, increases the feelings of certainty regarding religious truth (50). In instances like these, it seems that Felleman portrays the spiritual senses in a way that competes with and even supplants Wesley’s more specifically pneumatologically-centered language.

In the end, however, it is of little account. In a thought-provoking closing chapter, Felleman takes on the task of answering the question she posed at the beginning: what might we learn from Wesley to promote and gauge Methodist vitality in the present day? For starters, despite her extensive treatment of the subject, she concludes that Wesley's theory of the spiritual senses is outdated. Additionally, Felleman states matter-of-factly that his notion of assurance of salvation is not transferable to the twenty-first century because it promotes an understanding of certitude that is at odds with recent findings of neuroscience and thus will not prove credible to the scientifically literate. This is no small move on the part of a Wesleyan and is one that certainly should fuel further dialogue on a Wesleyan understanding of the witness of the Spirit.

However one may respond to either of these judgments, the value of the last chapter is that it genuinely strives to provide ideas and approaches to increase pastoral effectiveness. Felleman suggests specific ways in which a "church vitality program" can update aspects of Wesley's own vitality program, keeping instruction on the way of salvation front and center and retaining a balance between doctrine, spirit, and discipline. Forms of religion aid in preserving this balance, she reiterates, and as believers "breathe out" by faithful participation in these forms, they are then poised to take in a new measure of the power of God. While emphasizing that Wesley was "always careful to explain the relationship between the form and power of religion in such a way that one did not overshadow the other" (92), Felleman repeatedly affirms that at the core of any vitality program is the "heart religion" given by grace through faith (93). *The Form and Power of Religion* is a thought-provoking read for anyone motivated by the desire (or, dealing with the pressure!) to be effective in pastoral ministry.

Sample, Tex. *The Future of John Wesley's Theology: Back to the Future with the Apostle Paul*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012. 119 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1610976299.

Reviewed by E. Maynard Moore, President, WesleyNexus, Inc., Bethesda, MD.

This is a short book by academic standards, but it reflects very serious scholarship concerning John Wesley's writings and careful analysis of the works of the Apostle Paul. It is not a simple comparative analysis. It is much more a constructive theology within historical context. Sample, Professor Emeritus of Church and Society at the Saint Paul School of Theology, has written a dozen previous books that reflect his commitment to the emerging church and community organizing in the American southwest. This book brings forward his continuing concern to articulate the principle of social justice within a theory of the common good.

Sample suggests that we have been taught to read Paul through the lens of John Wesley but says that, for building the church of the future, we must read Wesley through Paul. Many of us have struggled while in seminary (and later when preaching) with the language of Wesley: justification, rectification, sanctification, redemption, reconciliation, prevenient grace, liberating grace, responsible grace, etc. By reading Wesley through Paul, Sample helps us to make sense of these doctrines, not only in the context of Wesley's theologizing, but (importantly) in our time.

The key context for Paul was the *ecclesia*, the assembly of the faithful, but Sample wants us to consider that, for Paul, the *ecclesia* was a political community, albeit an alternative one, "one that grows from God's apocalyptic action in Christ that brings about new creation" (49). For Paul, the *ecclesia* is a charismatic community, a community created by our participation in the Spirit. This highlights an interesting distinction between these two thinkers, for Wesley saw God's salvific act as consequential for the individual, bringing that person into the community of faith. For Wesley, it is an individual/community dynamic; for Paul the dynamic is community/individual.

Does this make any difference? From Sample's treatment, the response is both "yes" and "no," because God's call to us is to live in the Spirit, but this is a relational task, not a solitary existence. Wesley saw this, and his sermons are full of exhortations to feed the hungry, visit the prisons, care for the widows and orphans, and educate the masses. The "warmed heart" does not shrink into itself. When one is "born into the

new faith in Christ,” one is called into “participation in the Spirit,” addressing all those evils encountered in a society where inequality and suffering exist.

This is where Wesley actually connects so strongly with Paul. Sample affirms (along with New Testament scholar Victor P. Furnish) that Paul’s stance toward the world is one of “critical engagement” (69). The critical issue for Paul was not an attempt to “christianize society” but rather how members of the *ecclesia*, Christian believers, are to conduct themselves there. They are to be transformed by “the renewal of their minds” (Rom 12:1) in order to “work for the good of all” (Gal 6:10). We who participate in the Spirit work for the good of all people because everyone is to benefit from the love of God who “shows no impartiality” (Rom 2:11).

In getting to this point, Sample surveys the thinking of many important Wesley scholars with whom we are familiar: Ted Campbell, Kenneth Carder, Theodore Runyan, Randy Maddox, Kenneth Collins, Manfred Marquardt, Stanley Hauerwas, Richard Heitzenrater, Ted Jennings, Daniel Day Williams, Dale Martin, and others. By pulling the key thoughts of these scholars into the discussion, Sample brings together a very rich theological discussion on topics that are central to Wesley’s preaching and writing, now linked in an illuminating fashion with Paul, on whom Wesley was relying at so many points in his own thought. Wesley’s encounter with Paul’s Letter to the Romans on that critical evening in May 1738 at Aldersgate was just the beginning of a lifetime of influence.

Sample utilizes the concept of justice as the theme that brings this all together. Sample states that “Wesley’s main goal is the restoration of the image of God in all its wholeness in human life” and it is therefore misplaced for us to think of Wesley’s chief concern solely in terms of the individual (52). As Sample says, “his prodigious work on behalf of the poor, his sharp opposition to slavery and his support of human rights, his teachings against wealth, his burning passion to spread scriptural holiness across the land, and his personal energy, unstinting commitment, and long-lived witness on behalf of these efforts among many others, bespeak a man on fire with a passion for justice” (53).

As a person of his time, Wesley did not see systemic social issues and structures in the ways we do now, and to back up his claims he had to appeal to the natural law tradition of the Enlightenment in ways that we do not. But Sample shows how Wesley drew upon the insights of Paul in ways that we often overlook, especially Paul’s *dikaiosyne* (justice/righteousness, as rooted in Isaiah), and shows that here is where we, too, can begin as we develop principles of justice within a theory of the common good.

Coakley, Sarah. *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay "On the Trinity."* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 365 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-521-55826-6.

Reviewed by Joshua McNall, Assistant Professor of Religion and Philosophy, Oklahoma Wesleyan University, Bartlesville, OK.

In the much-anticipated first installment of her planned four-volume systematic theology, Anglican theologian Sarah Coakley (of Cambridge) seeks to uncover the contemplative connection between what may seem some rather unrelated topics: sexual desire, desire for God, and the doctrine of the Trinity.

As Coakley notes, these subjects form a rather unconventional starting point for dogmatic inquiry. Yet as she goes on to clarify, this work is not a conventional systematic theology: it is a *théologie totale*. In Coakley's words, this method "attempts to incorporate insights from every level of society and to integrate intellectual, affective and imaginative approaches to doctrine and practice" (352). This is done by giving attention to contemporary issues (in this case, sexuality and gender) and by allowing the various loci of Christian doctrine to be illumined by particular realms of aesthetic expression (in this case, art and iconography). As currently conceived, the second volume will cross-pollinate a theological anthropology with the issue of race and the medium of poetry. Volume three will merge music with atonement and a discussion of the public institutions of the prison and the hospital. Finally, volume four will bring the series to its culmination with the subject of Christology as approached through a liturgical understanding of the Eucharist.

The goal of this imaginative theology is the overcoming of what Coakley sees as false divides: the "binary disjunctions" between belief and practice, between thought and affect, and between academic and accessible writing. But how does this relate to volume one? How do the subjects of gender, sexuality, and the Trinity cohere to form a fitting starting point for theological reflection? Coakley's answer is an ontology of desire.

The overarching thesis of the volume is an attempt to turn Freud on his head. Thus: "Instead of 'God' language 'really' being about sex, sex [or sexual desire] is really about God—the potent reminder woven into our earthly existence of the divine 'unity,' 'alliance,' and 'commingling' that we seek" (316). "Desire, on this view, is the constellating category of selfhood, the ineradicable root of the human longing for God" (26).

The theological key to this endeavor is, in many ways, a reinvigorated and prayer-based understanding of the Holy Spirit. In Coakley's vision, the Spirit "has the capacity to draw humans together in union and also subtly to interpose between them" (15). Thus, the Spirit both enflames and chastens the human heart. With regard to the Trinity, Coakley claims that it is the Spirit—through the practice of contemplative prayer—that intercedes for us and thereby ushers us into relation with the triune God. In this "incorporative" approach to the Trinity, based largely upon a particular reading of Romans 8, the Spirit is granted a qualified "priority," both "logically and experientially speaking" (128). Thus, the Spirit is "perceived as the primary means of incorporation into the trinitarian life of God" (111).

Unfortunately, as Coakley argues, this "incorporative" approach to the Trinity has been largely overshadowed by what she terms a more traditional and "linear" understanding of the Godhead. Here, the vast majority of church tradition (as seen in Christian iconography) has diminished the Spirit to an ever-shrinking "pigeon," hardly visible between the masculine dyad of the Father and the Son. The root of this failure is to be found in a patriarchal institutionalism, with its, at times, legitimate concerns over both the sectarian and sexual dangers inherent within certain strands of charismatic mysticism.

Still, as Coakley argues, some vestiges of the "incorporative" approach to the Trinity may be mined from such (perhaps surprising) figures as Origen, Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and, chiefly, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. When this is done, Coakley's hope is that the patient practices of prayer might allow the Spirit to unmask our false hierarchies and misdirected desires. The goal is a renewed vision of the interwoven themes that form the title of the work: *God, Sexuality, and the Self*.

In response to Coakley's project, there is much to praise within this volume. Her style is both academic and accessible, and the writing is at points so beautiful that the reader may be compelled to think of this as a work of art, as well as of scholarship. The use of iconography, the social sciences, and field work within some local charismatic congregations will ensure that even readers who have spent years immersed in Trinitarian theology will find something fresh and thought-provoking. For those in Wesleyan traditions, Coakley's prayer-based emphasis upon the Holy Spirit and her critique of patriarchal hierarchies is both instructive and refreshing. Likewise, her refusal to allow such emphases to slide toward either a secular feminism or a sectarian mysticism is also praiseworthy. She is, it seems, "a reasonable enthusiast."

Yet there are also weaknesses within the work. First, nearly the entire argument hangs on Coakley's understanding of the Spirit within Romans 8. So it is unfortunate that relatively little space is dedicated to an exegetical defense of this reading. Second, for a volume dedicated to a *practical* re-thinking of the subjects of God, gender, and sexuality, it seems singularly odd that Coakley offers no (!) concrete suggestions as to how her theology should help the church with the pressing questions of homosexuality and the myriad of other LGBT issues. If a *théologie totale* is truly concerned with how theology works "in the field," then it is hard to view this omission as anything other than a dodge.

Third, and finally, there is within such apophatic and contemplative theology a frequent lack of clarity as to what is being proposed. In fairness, this need not always be a weakness. When dealing with the subjects of sexuality and the Trinity, one must at points "kneel" silently in the presence of that which we do not fully understand. Yet at other points this "dazzling darkness"—one of Coakley's favorite phrases—raises an important question: "Is this [mystical and Platonic apophaticism] mere talking in riddles" (333)? While Coakley claims the contrary, many readers (including this one) will not be so sure. In any case, no serious student of Christian dogmatics can afford to ignore this new arrival upon the landscape of English theology. Even in its opaqueness, the darkness is, at points, dazzling.

Noble, T. A. *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Theology of Christian Perfecting*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013. 242 pages. ISBN-13:978-1620327203.

Reviewed by Al Truesdale, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Christian Ethics, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO.

Holy Trinity: Holy People contains the 2012 Didsbury Lectures. The lectures are Tom Noble's effort to frame the doctrine of sanctification in Trinitarian terms. To accomplish this, he places the doctrine of Christian holiness in the "context of the great central doctrines of the Christian faith [as] summarized in the creeds and shaped within that most comprehensive of the Christian doctrines, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity" (98). Noble believes the mainstream of the Christian church has taught that "Christians may be truly sanctified not only in outward consistency of conduct, but inwardly in such a way as to be truly among the 'pure in heart'" (5). The route to his goal leads through exegetical, historical, moral, and theological terrain. His journey aims at answering the question, "What basis is there for [a] positive view of Christian holiness [*vis-à-vis* the negative views of Luther and Calvin] in the central Christian doctrines—atonement, incarnation, and Trinity?" (5).

Along the way, Noble first treats *Christian perfecting* as taught in the Holy Scriptures and church tradition. Then he critically examines the doctrine of Christian holiness as taught by John Wesley and the American Holiness Movement. Wesley is treated in historical context, and his limitations are candidly aired. Noble's most creative work involves developing a profile for Christian perfecting understood from the perspective of Christ's atonement, the incarnation, and the Trinity. The range of ancient and contemporary resources used to develop the project is impressive and smoothly integrated into the narrative.

Holy Trinity: Holy People attempts to free the doctrine of Christian holiness from all forms of subjectivism, the primacy of individualism, faulty understandings of the atonement, claims that cannot be sustained by Scripture and church tradition, and by a transparent examination of Christian experience. Noble sees Christian holiness primarily as a life of worship and Christian practice embedded in Christian *koinonia*. As the crown of his vision of Christian perfecting, he defines Christian holiness in terms of the interpersonal love that marks the mutuality of Triune life. But instead of moving directly from the mutuality of Triune life to indi-

vidual Christian perfecting, Noble begins with the church as the image of the Holy Trinity. True Christian perfecting must first be understood as corporate, ecclesial holiness. Only then can Christian holiness as 'personal' be approached.

Thinking of Christian holiness in merely individualistic terms has been one of the major failures not just of Wesleyan theology "but of all evangelical Protestant thinking. We have succumbed to the spirit of the age in concentrating sometimes almost exclusively on the journey of salvation, the *ordo* or *via salutis*, of the individual" (220). Moreover, Christian holiness "must not only take a corporate form in loving fellowship within which persons are nurtured, but it must also take the form of mission, centered in evangelism, the preaching and embodying of the gospel, the good news of the Compassionate Savior." Only a redemptive holiness can correctly reflect the holiness of the Triune God (222). However, as important as the *missio Dei* is for Christian perfecting, its importance is penultimate. Worship of the Triune God now and in the age to come is the "ultimate purpose of the church" (222).

One good way to explain *Holy Trinity: Holy People* is to think of it as creative revisionism. The subtitle signals this. The primacy of *Christian perfecting* must condition everything said about *Christian perfection*. Although Noble insists upon an important role for entire sanctification, not before the doctrine has been extensively revised and purged of claims not supported by Scripture, classical Christian doctrine, John Wesley at his best, and Christian life transparently examined can the doctrine be substantiated. Along the way, John Wesley's understanding of Christian holiness comes in for some serious criticism. We must not "expect too much from Wesley" (74). But most of the revision is reserved for sanctification as it has usually been understood in the American Holiness movement. The language of "consecration," for instance, used to identify Phoebe Palmer's "shorter way" or "altar theology," can leave the impression that "sincere, personal consecration will effect my entire sanctification." So stated, the key to entire sanctification becomes the *subjective* consecration of the individual rather than the whole person being transformed by the *objective* work of Christ on the cross. Only Christ's objective work can so completely deal with sin in humans that it becomes possible "to be purified from self-centered sinfulness and to live in the power of the Spirit" (152-53).

John Wesley, Noble insists, must not be blamed for misunderstandings of Christian holiness generated by the American Holiness move-

ment, whose leaders “lacked a deep immersion in classical literature and biblical languages.” This often engendered “a simplistic and even a well-intended but sometimes manipulative presentation of the doctrine” (74).

By the time Noble has reconstructed the doctrine of entire sanctification, its bases have been reconfigured, its orientation redirected, and its territorial claims significantly constrained.

One of Noble’s major contributions is his tackling the role of *simul justus et peccator* in Christian perfecting. While insisting on the provision of Christ on the cross, the power of the Holy Spirit to cleanse Christians of double-mindedness toward God, and to empower them for holy living, Noble also boldly examines the implications of our continuing fallenness, and our participation in corporate evil. In a much needed move, he restricts our claims to self-knowledge and motives, and makes confession of sin a vital part of the holy life. “Although we do not deliberately and flagrantly transgress the laws of God, yet at the same time we need a life-long attitude of confession and penitence towards God, not only for what we used to be, but also for our present short-comings and faults” (192). After Noble’s treatment of *simul justus et peccator*, he concludes that “a full understanding” of our continuing fallenness reveals that the historic Christian tradition on Christian perfection as taught by the Eastern Fathers and Wesley, and Luther and Calvin “is perhaps not so far apart as has been thought” (192). One will find it difficult to locate a chasm between Noble on “Christian perfecting” and John Calvin who extolled a life of true righteousness defined as “being pervaded with God’s holiness” and “following whither God calls” (*Institutes*, 3.6.2), or between Noble and Jonathan Edwards for whom the work of the Holy Spirit is to effect “a uniformity of sanctification” in all aspects of a Christian’s life (*Religious Affections*, Part 3.10).

In important respects, Noble’s book will challenge denominations influenced by the American Holiness Movement. But they would do well to pay heed to the revisions for which he calls. Embracing “the theology of Christian perfecting” would require some major adjustments. For example, “perfecting” would have to take precedence over “perfection.” Subjectivism and individualism would need to be sublimated to a doctrine of corporate, ecclesial holiness. Worship as the center of Christian holiness—in contrast to “what happens to me”—would have to become the loadstone of Christian holiness. Ecclesiology would have to acquire a central importance. Serious attention would have to be given to the doctrine of the Trinity as the model for Christian life and practice. A major

reconsideration of our fallenness, recognition of our inescapable participation in corporate evil, and a psychologically and sociologically informed consideration of claims regarding purity of motives would have to be inaugurated. Finally, an almost seismic reconsideration of the role of individual and corporate confession and penitence would have to be incorporated into corporate worship, preaching, counseling and Christian witness.

Jobes, Karen E. *Letters to the Church: A Survey of Hebrews and the General Epistles*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. 478 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0310267386.

Reviewed by Amy L. B. Peeler, Assistant Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL.

Once in a conversation with Dr. Jobes, I commented on “theology of the Gospels and Paul” to which she gently responded, “And don’t forget the theology of Hebrews, Peter, and James.” As a Hebrews specialist myself, I felt sufficiently chided. To prevent forgetfulness of such vital texts, Dr. Jobes has produced a scholarly yet pastoral, thorough yet beautiful textbook on the catholic epistles. Divided into four major sections (Hebrews, Letters from Jesus’ Brothers, Letters from Peter, and Letters from John) and prefaced by a weighty introduction, Jobes’ text familiarizes the reader with the major issues of each letter in such a way that makes this an indispensable teaching and reference tool.

For students, the cover page for each chapter states a succinct set of goals increasing the chance of purposeful and productive reading. Along the way, Jobes inserts frequent charts that distill her prose, especially helpful for the visual learner. Moreover, the chapter begins with a few brief paragraphs that help bridge the gap between the first century and the present time. Then, she organizes the chapters thematically; this is no commentary in disguise. In so doing, the chapters give an excellent overview of the impact of these letters that is often easy to forget in the intricacies of verse-by-verse analysis. Focusing on themes also gives her the freedom to cover a broad range of topics related to the books. If students need a refresher on such key Biblical Studies discussions such as Jewish apocalypticism, Greco-Roman philosophy, or text criticism, just to mention a few, they will find them along the way.

That is not to say, however, that this is only a text for the novice. Two more unique features make this a valuable reference tool. First, Jobes leaves no major critique untreated. She gives voice to those who have raised concerns with these letters and patiently answers each criticism. Her riposte against pseudepigraphy is the best example. Beginning with the introduction, she sets the terms of the debate and the history of the discussion. Then, for each letter—for all of them have faced serious questions about their authorship—she gives the reasons why the traditional author has been questioned and how those concerns could be answered. Jobes conducts these discussions without sounding defensive because the

reader has access to the arguments on both sides. Nevertheless, supported by her arguments, Jobes affirms that the letters if not written by the apostle named were “written by a close personal associate of the apostle and enjoyed a lineage of recognition in the churches going back to their apostolic origin” (12).

Second, she provides a compendium of references to outside sources, frequently with lists, but even more often, with sidebars of the text itself. The reader has access to the background material right away and can analyze its impact on the interpretation of the letters.

Of special importance for the Wesleyan reader are her treatments of apostasy and perfection. She begins the discussion of “Perseverance and Apostasy” by listing out all the texts that talk about perseverance in Hebrews, providing a contextual understanding for the issue. Next she clearly delineates the meaning of apostasy. These are not small sins, but a turning away from what God has done in Christ. That being said, she also recognizes that the key question—“What does he mean that it is ‘impossible’ for those who have ‘fallen away’ to be brought back to repentance?”—has generated a spectrum of interpretive options. To address the issue, she organizes the discussion around several key questions, beginning with, “Are the people described genuine Christian believers?” (137). She concludes that, while the language the author uses certainly seems to indicate that they are believers, “he is presenting a sermon that treats his audience according to their self-profession as Christians without being able to truly see their hearts” (138).

The second—“Is the consequence described eternal damnation or something else?”—leads her to make the firm statement that Hebrews indicates those who wander from the faith cannot come back either because they will never desire to return or because the Spirit will never convict them again and they will have no opportunity to be reconciled (140). Nevertheless, the present-day pastor or teacher must “continue to present opportunities for repentance without giving up” (141) seemingly because a person who desires to return is not truly an apostate. She concludes by saying that Hebrews ushers these warnings to keep Christians from being lax about sin. Believers do not know where even a little sin could lead or if one could return once having arrived there. Without completely falling to one side or another of the debates, Jobes presents Hebrews’ possibility of losing one’s salvation (softened by her allowance that these apostates were never really believers) and the power of the warning to believers who have not yet committed this act. Although she

does mention Augustine and the Donatists, I might have liked to see more discussion of how church history dealt with this question (Novatian, Tertullian, etc.) when the longing for repentance was a reality and not just a hypothetical situation.

About perfection, Jobes equates this terminology with justification when applied to believers (125) and affirms that it is an “eschatological state” (126). Although it is not equated with moral perfection, she demurs, it is related to holiness “which does bring moral virtue into view” (126). Peter’s call to holiness, which “might be exasperating if you think it means that a Christian is to be as morally pure and perfect as God himself,” is an expectation for human holiness as lived out by Jesus Christ. This holiness demands distinction from the world, but not separation and must involve both personal and communal holiness (331–32). So while she may not argue for the real possibility of perfection (which “most Christians,” she says, “would find an impossible goal”), she does not dampen the exhortation for changed lives as preached by these authors.

Jobes’ text has only a few faux pas when considered as a textbook. First, the chapters begin with a section entitled “Why [insert letter] is important to you.” While the connections Jobes draws between first-century context and present context become increasingly more powerful as the book progresses, this way of setting the discussion could turn off the generation of students who are tired of things being tailored to them and instead want to adjust their lives to fit into something ancient. Second, while most of the artwork is both aesthetically pleasing and applicable, at times there seems to be inserted a picture simply to have a picture. The compelling need of the editor to insert pictures might have been alleviated by some reduction in text. This is especially true toward the end of the first chapter for each letter where Jobes summarizes the theological content, which often reads like a word study. Jobes mentions themes covered more thoroughly and interestingly in the following chapters, making these sections seem unnecessary.

Those small issues aside, if an inquisitor of things biblical needs a thorough yet condensed introduction to any of the general epistles, Jobes’ *Letters to the Church* should be a sought-after resource.

Knight, John Allan. *Liberalism versus Postliberalism: The Great Divide in Twentieth-Century Theology*. AAR Academy Series. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013. 313 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0199969388.

Reviewed by Justus H. Hunter, Ph.D. candidate, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.

This is an ambitious book. *Liberalism versus Postliberalism* revisits the major methodological dispute in late twentieth-century North American theology, drawing upon recent work in analytic philosophy of language. The text's range is impressive, and Knight includes insightful analyses of diversely complex material. He aims at a way through the liberal-postliberal divide.

Knight approaches that divide *via* a fundamental disagreement in the philosophies of religious language. Liberals and postliberals, he contends, fundamentally disagree about meaning and reference. This disagreement has two salient features that account for the apparent intractability of the debate and offer the possibility of a way forward. First, both camps adopted common philosophical positions on meaning and reference in the 1960s and held them to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Second, both camps are mistaken as to the latter; subsequent analytic philosophy developed alternative accounts of meaning and reference from those adopted by liberals and postliberals.

Knight's text is divided into three parts: the first on liberal theology, the second on postliberal theology, and the third offering a critical and constructive argument against both camps. Following a promising introduction, Knight analyzes the historical sources of the liberal (as opposed to postliberal) position by detailing the common concerns and themes of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Harnack. He then recites the falsification challenge presented by Anthony Flew in the 1960s, which sets the scene for the ensuing analysis of liberalism and postliberalism. Knight proceeds to demonstrate how both liberals and postliberals adopted a set of commitments on meaning and reference in the philosophy of language in response to the falsification challenge. Liberals, Knight contends, accepted a descriptivist theory of meaning and reference from Frege and Russell, and they proceeded to work out how religious language can satisfy descriptivist conditions for meaning and reference. In an intriguing chapter, Knight argues that Schubert Ogden develops the most satisfactory and "purified" liberal method on descriptivist grounds.

Part two opens with recitation of Frei's dissertation on Barth, postliberalism's chief inspiration. Postliberalism follows Barth's rejection

of liberal theology by rejecting descriptivism, drawing its account of meaning from Wittgenstein and ordinary language instead. Knight demonstrates the reliance of both Frei and Lindbeck upon the later Wittgenstein for an account of meaning. His analysis of Frei, much like the Ogden chapter, is formidable and distinctive. While Frei's more supportive interpreters might object, he advances a compelling argument.

Knight opens his critical and constructive chapters by observing that both descriptivism and ordinary language philosophy are *passé* among analytic philosophers of language. Moreover,

There are reasons for thinking that the philosophical problems with descriptivism and ordinary language philosophy also spell problems for liberal and postliberal theology as they were practiced in the latter part of the twentieth century. Fortunately . . . developments in analytic philosophy . . . also make possible a way forward, beyond the divide between liberal and postliberal theology. (228)

Knight draws upon the work of Saul Kripke, Scott Soames, P. F. Strawson and others to develop a series of arguments against descriptivist and ordinary language accounts of meaning and reference. Finally, he attempts to "navigate" the divide between liberalism and postliberalism by appeal to William P. Alston. Alston's philosophy of language, he contends, retains the animating concerns of both liberalism and postliberalism, while avoiding Knight's objections against descriptivism and ordinary language philosophy.

Knight's thesis is provocative and, if true, momentous. He importantly returns the methodological debate to a key point of philosophical disagreement. Furthermore, he is careful to reflect the complicated theological motivations for respective philosophical positions. His ability to derive philosophical positions from Ogden and Frei is exemplary. The clarity and care given to theological and philosophical analysis are remarkable. *Liberalism versus Postliberalism* demonstrates both the demands and possibilities of a theological engagement with analytic philosophy.

Still, there are notable omissions. I find no engagement with Paul DeHart's critique of postliberalism and analysis of Frei and Lindbeck, some of which contradicts Knight's analysis in chapters seven and eight. More importantly, Knight presents no substantial engagement with the most direct and extensive postliberal proposal on truth and meaning:

Bruce Marshall's *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge, 1999). This oversight reflects a disagreement with Donald Davidson, Marshall's chief analytic influence. As much is implied in Knight's repeated appeals to Scott Soames and Soames's hero, Saul Kripke. Yet Davidson's ilk are still well-represented among analytic philosophers, and some (e.g., Ernest Lapore and Kirk Ludwig) have offered substantial rebuttals to Soames' criticisms that Knight cites. A similarly rigorous engagement with Marshall's work would significantly enhance Knight's argument.

There is also a curious imbalance in the book's pace. I have noted the excellent, lengthy, and detailed analysis of the work of Ogden and Frei. But when Knight turns to the analytic philosophers in his final chapters, his descriptions and analyses are far too brief for those unfamiliar with analytic philosophy in general and philosophy of language in particular. Given his audience and aims, the balance seems entirely off. As a result, one worries this book will not receive the consideration it merits.

This is unfortunate, because Knight has offered a very important work with a very compelling proposal. *Liberalism Versus Postliberalism* is a significant contribution to the enduring debate on theological method in North America and recent reappraisals of postliberalism. In the literature on postliberalism, which is divided into largely isolated liberal and conservative conversations, Knight's book is a rare contribution to both. *Liberalism versus Postliberalism* is highly recommended for specialists, but it would also serve nicely as an introduction to liberalism, postliberalism, and key twentieth-century debates on theological method.

Maddock, Ian J. *Men of One Book: A Comparison of Two Methodist Preachers, John Wesley and George Whitefield*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011. 256 pages. ISBN: 13:978-1-60899-760-2.

Reviewed by Mark K. Olson, Adjunct Instructor of Theology and Bible, Nazarene Bible College, Colorado Spring, CO, and Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN.

Ian Maddock is Lecturer in Theology at Sydney Missionary and Bible College. In this book, which is based on his Ph.D. thesis, he seeks to compare and contrast the preaching ministries of John Wesley and George Whitefield. I found the book both enjoyable to read and informative on a scholarly level. For Wesley scholars, Maddock's study helps to position Wesley and what he taught within the larger context of the Evangelical Revival and within the context of his preaching ministry.

The introduction (chapter one) begins with a brief biography of both men. Maddock follows this with an informative discussion of the core issues that led Wesley and Whitefield to separate in the early 1740s (primarily over unconditional election), and how that separation has affected scholarship down to the present time. He correctly notes that both theological camps tend to support their leader and lay most of the blame for the separation on the other man. Maddock's approach is to give both men a fair hearing and, for the most part, he is successful. There are a few times when his loyalty to Wesley is apparent.

The next four chapters compare and contrast the preaching ministries of Wesley and Whitefield. Chapter two examines their approach and philosophy of itinerant field-preaching. Chapters three and four look at their preaching styles and sermon structure, including their use, interpretation, and application of the Bible. Chapter five surveys the core doctrines that both men stressed in their sermons. This is followed by a conclusion (ch. 6) that summarizes the similarities and differences in the preaching ministries of Wesley and Whitefield. Maddock's study of each area is thorough and in-depth, including copious footnotes at the bottom of the page for those seeking additional information.

Field-preaching (that is, preaching outside of a church) was quite controversial in eighteenth-century British society, and Maddock's handling of the subject in relation to these two evangelists is quite interesting. Wesleyans often celebrate that their leader looked upon "all the world" as his parish, but Maddock points out that Whitefield embraced the same call ("The whole world is now my parish"). What caught my interest in

this section is how each man's personality helped shape his philosophy and approach to field preaching. Whereas Whitefield eagerly embraced field-preaching as his special calling, Maddock shows that Wesley remained more reticent toward the practice. This in turn reflects Wesley's more reserved personality in contrast to Whitefield's extroverted disposition. Maddock does not directly address the personality differences between these two men, but throughout this study I found them to be a key factor in explaining why each man's preaching ministry developed as it did.

Whitefield is remembered for his dramatic, extempore preaching style in contrast to Wesley's more reserved, didactic approach. Yet, as Maddock explains, both men were equally committed to preaching clear, simple sermons, with the aim to convert the listener. What interested me is Maddock's insight into their use of the Bible in relation to their preaching styles: Whitefield approached scripture as a sacred script to be acted out, whereas Wesley approached the sacred text as a resource from which to teach and persuade.

Maddock's examination of the core doctrines that Wesley and Whitefield proclaimed is informative. He shows that, on a general level, both men held similar views regarding human sinfulness, justification by faith, and regeneration (including sanctification). Where both men parted paths was over the issue of imputation in relation to human sinfulness and justification, and over Christian perfection in relation to sanctification. To explain further, Whitefield stressed that Adam's transgression is credited to all his posterity and that Christ's active (perfect obedience) and passive (suffering and death) righteousness is imputed to believers so that their past, present, and future sins are forgiven. Wesley parted paths here. Rejecting Whitefield's (i.e., Calvinist) doctrine of perseverance of the saints, he taught that imputation includes only the forgiveness of past sin, not present and future sin. Regarding Christian perfection, Wesley championed the belief Christians can live without sin in this life. Whitefield parted paths at this point and taught that sin's guilt and power have been broken, but inbred sin remains throughout this life. Believers, therefore, can live a life of full devotion to God, but this devotion is never free from all sin. Despite their differences in theological language, their views on a saving relationship with Christ and on practical Christian living were far more similar than different. They both taught that Christians should live a holy life evidenced by good works.

Maddock has provided an excellent and useful study. By examining both the preaching ministries of Wesley and Whitefield in relation to each other, the reader not only gains a better understanding of each man but also important insights into the Evangelical Revival itself. My only caveat is that Maddock never addresses the development of Whitefield's theology in relation to his preaching. While most students of Wesley (including Maddock) are well aware of his pivotal theological changes in 1738, fewer realize that Whitefield went through a period of theological transition toward Calvinism in the same year. We see this when we compare his pre-1738 sermons (e.g., "On Regeneration") with his post-1738 sermons. Maddock does not address this subject and instead treats all of Whitefield's sermons as an expression of his Calvinism (including the sermon "On Regeneration").

Webster, Robert. *Methodism and the Miraculous: John Wesley's Idea of the Supernatural and the Identification of Methodists in the Eighteenth Century*. Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2013. xi + 206 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1609470487.

Reviewed by Walter N. Gessner, Lead Pastor, South Zanesville Church of the Nazarene, Zanesville, OH; Adjunct Instructor, Nazarene Bible College, Colorado Springs, CO; Ph.D. student, Regent University School of Divinity, Virginia Beach, VA.

In *Methodism and the Miraculous*, Robert Webster sets out to establish that not only was John Wesley aware of the debates taking place about supernatural activity during the eighteenth century, but also seeks to make the case that Wesley had a fundamental belief in such occurrences and that Wesley's ideas on the supernatural also contributed to Methodist identity. This most intriguing and challenging work is the product of wide and comprehensive research of Wesley's collected sources that treat historical, philosophical, doctrinal, and experiential elements of Wesley's understanding of the supernatural. This understanding would, according to Webster, establish "belief in preternatural and supernatural events" as "a vital component for the self-identity of Methodists living in a rapidly changing world" (11).

Webster draws from Wesley's wrestling with religious epistemology and his defense against those who saw him as fundamentalist to connect grace, knowledge, and experience. This connection would form a construct of Wesley's belief in the supernatural and the continuation of supernatural experience in the church beyond Pentecost and the ancient church—a construct that Wesley considered for the renewal of the church in his day. At the center of supernatural experience is the existence of an invisible and eternal world that Wesley defended with a view of testimony for the establishment of knowledge and that could be sustained historically and by reason.

The first two chapters set Wesley in dialogue with thinkers of the Enlightenment. Webster sees this context as important to Wesley's epistemology and as framing his understanding of the supernatural in an increasingly skeptical culture. With this understanding, Wesley's concepts of original sin, faith, self-deception, and grace take shape through the experience of the effects of the supernatural on the natural order, and that experience offers divine knowledge to the eternal invisible world. For Wesley, human testimony to such experiences was a reliable witness and

faith an extra sense for perceiving the supernatural. Portraying Wesley in dialogue with these thinkers, Webster considers how Wesley offered a critical review of their positions, while also being open to their value for his understanding of the supernatural in general and in his own experience at Aldersgate in particular.

The third chapter continues the examination of Wesley's dialogue with Enlightenment thinkers by considering the presence of evil in the world. Webster treats three specific issues that Wesley used in understanding evil and the supernatural in salvation, the work of grace, and liberation: original sin, earthquakes, and demonic possession. In each of these issues, Wesley appeals to biblical, historical, and orthodox positions and to God's salvific work through the presence of evil, even when the devil and demonic activity might seek to distract and disrupt that work. Webster draws again upon Methodist testimony and experience to articulate Wesley's belief and practice with regard to the presence of and liberation from evil and evil spirits.

The next two chapters delve into Methodist testimony and experience of the supernatural. For Wesley, dreams and visions were means of encountering one's own nature, prophetic revelation, and God's presence. While enlightened thinkers were pondering the workings of the mind, Wesley and the Methodists were considering God's divine interaction for salvation. Visions and dreams were ways that God pours out grace in redemption and offers assurance of that redemption. Within this context, Webster describes the Holy Spirit's presence and transformative work as confirmed by way of visions and dreams. Also woven into the Methodist fabric was the place of healing in God's re-creative work. Webster traces the understanding of healing experience through the medieval church and the Reformation to offer a backdrop to eighteenth-century England and Wesley's view of supernatural and secular forms of healing. Diet and exercise were seen as restorative, but Wesley also understood healing through the love and grace of God. As a transforming power, supernatural healing complemented natural forms and were experienced through fasting and prayer as well as the power of the crucified Savior in the Lord's Supper.

In a way that seems to assert, "I said all that to say this," Webster tackles Methodism and the interest in the gifts of the Holy Spirit moving into the nineteenth century in what he sees as proto-Pentecostal. Considered in this last chapter is Wesley's belief in an invisible world and the miraculous and, by extension, subsequent Methodist experience of the

Holy Spirit after Wesley's death. With the gifts of the Holy Spirit being experienced and known to Methodists, Webster leaves room for Methodist experience that balances Pentecostal experience and Wesleyan practice, concluding that belief in the supernatural offered religious identification for Methodists.

This book effectively reengages dialogue for Wesleyans with the supernatural that may have been muted by several religious movements in the subsequent centuries. Through written journals, testimonies, and letters, Webster reveals knowledge of the supernatural by Wesley and how that knowledge shaped his belief in the supernatural that became part of the fabric of early Methodist identity. The work is valuable for further Wesleyan studies beyond the Methodist tradition to other faith traditions that have a claim on or interest in the place of the supernatural in Wesley's order of salvation.

Van Lieburg, Fred, ed. *Opwekking van de natie. Het protestantse Réveil in Nederland*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2012. 311 pages. ISBN-13: 978-90-8704-263-9.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Research Professor of World Christian Studies, New York Theological Seminary, New York, NY.

The volume, “The Awakening of the Nation: The Protestant Revival in The Netherlands,” edited by Fred van Lieburg, is a collection of essays presented at celebrations of the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the Réveil Archive Foundation (Stichting Réveil-Archief) in Amsterdam. This large archival collection, now in the Special Collections Department of the University of Amsterdam, is a gold mine of data about the Réveil across Europe as well as in The Netherlands.

The Réveil or “Revival” in The Netherlands was part of a Europe-wide revival that took place primarily within the Reformed traditions of Switzerland, Germany, France, and The Netherlands during the nineteenth century. It drew inspiration from and was influenced by the older Pietist traditions and by the British Wesleyan Methodists as well as the British/Scottish Free Church traditions. It was not a uniform theological system but a pattern of Christian spirituality built around a simple theological core: personal conversion, the necessity of developing personal habits of piety, sanctification, the authority of the Bible, and a keen awareness of sin. It relativized or quietly (generally!) rejected the doctrines of total depravity and predestination. Grace, it was taught, was available to all. Among other things, this movement encouraged Bible reading (founding of Bible Societies) and global mission as well as social services and deaconess institutions.

The Réveil was, in most areas, generally conservative, religiously, politically, and socially. In The Netherlands, this made it easy for Groen van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper, the one-time Holiness advocate and editor of a Holiness periodical, to “hijack” the Réveil as an important component of his conservative anti-revolutionary political party. The Netherlands was the only country where the Réveil gained political power; when the political party failed, the Réveil became a failed political and religious persuasion. The essays explore a range of issues related to the Réveil and sources for its study.

Dick Kuiper, “Kerngroepvorming, met name binnen het Amsterdamse Réveil. Over sociale lagen en familiërelaties in de lange negentiende eeuw (1815-1914)” [Shaping the core group, especially within the

Amsterdam Réveil: Family relations and social strata during the extended nineteenth century] (1815-1914) (11-62). Kuiper documented the multi-generational relationships of the key families that provided funding and leadership for the Réveil. These bourgeois families in Amsterdam, as well as the networks of Réveil families in The Hague, Utrecht, Rotterdam and other cities, are a study in the evolution of power and influence in Dutch religious and cultural life.

Jasper Vree, "Het Réveil als partij in de Nederlandse samenleving. Opkomst, groei, doorwerking, en geschiedschrijving (1833-1891)" [The Réveil as a party in Dutch society. Emergence, growth, impact, and history] (63-110). Vree examined the process of the shift of the leaders of the Réveil from "reviving" the church to "reviving" the nation in their own image. G. Groen van Prinsterer and his disciple Abraham Kuyper were quick to grasp the possibility of using the revived church persons as a power base for contesting the larger cultural issues that were moving in liberal directions after the revolution of 1848. Their "Anti-Revolutionary" party had a short term of influence and for a time to experience a personal revivalistic conversion was also to unite with a political cause.

Mart van Lieburg, "Het vroege diakonissenwezen in Nederland (1836-1886)" [Early Deaconess thought in The Netherlands (1836-1886)] (111-68) contests the traditional assumption of solitary German Pietist (Theodore Fliedner) influence in the development of the Protestant deaconess movement. She documents the search for models in other areas of Europe, including Catholic models by the early founders of the Deaconess centers. What is missing in this analysis is a discussion of the relationship between the work of Fliedner and the other leaders of deaconesses in Germany, France, and Switzerland. Van Lieberg notes that the historiography that attributes to the deaconess movement a major role in the emancipation of women needs to be nuanced: their new roles were limited to service and the quest for equality was a struggle yet to come.

Maartje Janse, "Vereniging en verlangen om verenigd te werken. Réveil en civil society" [Unity and the desire to work united: Réveil and Civil Society] (169-84) focuses on the social activism of the Réveil, often sacrificially funded by the wealthy families of the larger cities. She demonstrates that mission and the desire to improve the lives of the poor and disenfranchised often trumped social and theological particularities.

Bart Wallet, "Het Réveil als 'joodsche hervorming'" [The Réveil as 'Jewish Reform'] (185-210). The involvement of Jewish converts to Christianity and their participation in the Réveil is an important feature of that

movement in The Netherlands. In The Netherlands, persons of Jewish ethnicity played significant roles in the national leadership and at local levels. This essay is an important contribution to discussions about the history of Jewish-Christian relations.

Bart Jan Spruyt, "Tracasserie religieuse. De on vervulde belofte van een 'nader Réveil,'" [Religious Hassle: the unfulfilled promise of a 'deeper Réveil'] (211-40). The author examines the gap between the cultural transformation, in conservative directions, and that was hoped for by political leaders and thinkers of the Réveil and the social and intellectual revolutions that shaped late nineteenth-century Dutch culture.

Fred van Lieburg, "Een wereldwijde opwekking in het protestantse vaderland. De historiographie van het Nederlandse Réveil," [A worldwide revival in the Protestant fatherland: the historiography of the Dutch Réveil] (241-80) provides a careful and suggestive status quaestionis of studies in the Dutch Réveil.

The findings of the studies are summarized by Herman Paul, "Slotbeschouwing: het international evangelicisme in de vroege negentiende eeuw," [Final remarks: international evangelicalism in the early nineteenth century] (81-88). Appended were two important articles that describe the history of the Réveil Archives. Jan de Bruijn, "Het ontstaan van het Réveil-Archief," [The origin of the Réveil Archive] (289-96) provided general indications of their contents. Family collections received before 1955 were listed by Klaas van der Hoek, "De collectie van de Stichting Réveil-Archief," [The Collection of the Réveil Archive Foundation] (297-302).

These articles are substantial, well-documented, and make substantial contributions to the ongoing discussion of European Christianity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The volume will be an important touchstone for future study of the Réveil in The Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe. Among the contributions of the volume are (1) attention to the networks and key interpersonal relationships that created and led the movement; (2) attention to the theological issues as well as the political issues that framed the Réveil; (3) evidence that the quest for democracy was both insistent and limited for lower class men and for women, and greatly hampered by the unwillingness of the Réveil leadership to make effective common cause with persons and movements who did not share their theological beliefs; and (4) evidence that the revival engaged the energies and resources of more than the elites, although the voices of the non-elites are not as strongly represented as might be

wished. This is also a problem of sources: the archival sources are from the elites. More detailed social analysis of the period will be needed to adequately describe and analyze the roles of the “common people” in the revival and in the efforts to reshape Dutch society and culture. The articles also hint, normally without comment, at the significant international networks of the Réveil and the foreign influences on the trajectories of the movement. While there is a considerable literature discussing these influences in The Netherlands, the careful analysis of those networks and comparative analysis of the various expressions of the Réveil on the European Continent, from Russia to The Netherlands and from Sweden to Spain and Italy are yet to be done.

There is one final lament: there is an index of personal names. Unfortunately, there is no index of geographical terms, organizations, or specialized Réveil terms/concepts. All of these would have made the volume much more useful.

Studebaker, Steven M., and Robert W. Caldwell III. *The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards: Text, Context, and Application*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012. 246 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1409405726.

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A renaissance in the study of Jonathan Edwards's theology of the Trinity began in the early twenty-first century, largely sparked by Amy Plantinga Pauw's influential *"The Supreme Harmony of All": The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathon Edwards* (Eerdmans, 2002). She argued Edwards understood the Trinity by way of two models that, while remaining in unresolved tension, were nonetheless complementary and useful. The Augustinian psychological model described the Son as the eternally subsistent idea of the Father, and the Spirit as the equally subsistent mutual love between them. The social model depicted the Trinity as a community or family of three persons, an emphasis on the intrinsic distinctiveness of persons at odds with Reformed theology's adherence to divine simplicity. Plantinga Pauw's interpretation has come to dominate the field, drawn upon in subsequent works and strongly endorsed by Michael J. McClymond and Gerald R. McDermott in their magisterial *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford, 2012).

It is this consensus that Studebaker and Caldwell seek to challenge. Rather than two models in tension, they argue Edwards grounds the entirety of his Trinitarian theology in the Augustinian "mutual love" model. Thus, Edwards "did not intend to affirm an essential plurality in God" (77) as the social model would seem to imply. Instead, the mutual love model enabled Edwards to accentuate the distinctiveness and relationally of the three persons while remaining within the boundaries of Reformed orthodoxy. In "every place the modern [social] model of the Trinity surfaces," they argue, "we see evidence that Edwards actually presupposed the mutual love model" (81-82). Here they deepen an argument advanced in their earlier works (which was critiqued in McClymond and McDermott), mounting a careful and extensive defense. At the same time, they make a strong case for the centrality of the Trinity for Edwards' entire theological project.

The subtitle indicates their approach. The helpful introduction is followed by a section entitled "Texts and Doctrines," which provides the

entire text of two of the most important writings by Edwards on the Trinity: *Discourse on the Trinity* and the third chapter of *Treatise on Grace*. Following this are two chapters that present the core of Edwards' thinking: "The Trinity Unveiled" on the immanent Trinity, and "The Trinity Revealed" on the economic Trinity. In "The Trinity Unveiled," they argue that for Edwards "the goodness of God consists in the fulfillment of the divine disposition for self-communication" (62). Goodness is "an interpersonal concept and essentially consists in the desire and act of sharing happiness or love with another person" (63). Thus, there must be plurality in the Godhead "because the communication of infinite happiness of God—divine love—requires an infinite object of goodness" (63).

The actual form this plurality takes is a result of the two modalities possessed by a spiritual being: intellect and will. God's self-communication by way of intellect brings forth the "subsistence of the Word or the Son" (63); the completion of the divine disposition to communicate goodness is through the "Spirit as the divine will subsisting in the interpersonal love of the Father and Son" (64). In this way, Edwards makes a rational argument for the inner logic of the Trinity on purely philosophical grounds.

In "The Trinity Revealed," they argue that Edwards adhered to the Augustinian concept that the immanent Trinity shapes the economic: "God's Trinitarian being affects his Trinitarian revealing in such a way that the latter reveals the former" (85). Here they show how Edwards accentuates the work of the Spirit, "first christologically, as the agent of the human and divine natures of Christ, and second soteriologically, as the grace of God that fills the hearts of the redeemed with a love for Christ" (97). Edwards closely identifies the Spirit with love and grace; the Spirit communicates God's love to the redeemed and draws them into eternal union with the Trinity. Thus, the "Trinity is not only the cause, but also the content of redemption" (3).

Part 2 ("Historical Context") relates this portrayal to Edwards' inherited tradition and contemporary situation. The first chapter argues that Edwards is deeply rooted in the mutual love tradition of Augustine and Aquinas, and draws upon the emphasis on divine goodness found in Richard of St. Victor and Bonaventure. The second chapter places Edwards within his own eighteenth-century context, showing his faithfulness to reformed orthodoxy as well as his desire to mount a sophisticated defense of the doctrine of the Trinity against deist and Socinian critics.

Part 3 ("Pastoral Application") extends the argument to show how Edwards' trinitarianism fundamentally shaped his preaching as well as his understanding of the Christian life, creation, and heaven. Among their

many observations is that Edwards' understanding of creation as the product of God's self-communication is "a basis for an evangelical theology of creation care" (211). Especially interesting is Edwards' argument that redemption inverts the hierarchy of heaven. Angels, who are superior in wisdom and strength and closer to God in the scale of being, are now surpassed by Jesus Christ who is fully human and marked by grace, humility, servanthood, and forgiveness, and by the redeemed community, itself characterized by grace, holiness, and love.

Central to Edwards' understanding of the Christian life "is that grace is the Holy Spirit," that is, the encounter with and reception of a person. Thus, salvation is not only concerned with justification but transformation by the Spirit. The Spirit draws believers "into relationship with the Son and the Father" as well as "the community of the saints" (171). Edwards expands evangelical emphases on new birth and personal relationship with God "in Trinitarian and pneumatological directions" (189).

Edwards scholars will need to assess the persuasiveness of this portrayal of Edwards' Trinitarian theology. But whether it is grounded in the tension of two models or solidly and creatively in the mutual love model, there is no question Edwards has a remarkably dynamic vision of the Trinity and an especially strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit.

From the perspective of the Wesleyan tradition, there are obvious comparisons. To Edwards' modalities of intellect and will, for example, Wesley adds liberty as a third aspect of a spiritual being. But more interesting is Edwards' philosophical defense of the immanent Trinity, and the manner in which it shapes his entire theology. John Wesley had little interest in such "speculative divinity"; his "practical divinity" led him to begin in effect with the economic Trinity, and let that in turn reveal something of the immanent. Indeed, as Jason Vickers argues in *Invocation and Assent* (Eerdmans, 2008), the Wesleys were more interested in worshiping and being shaped by the Trinity than in mounting an apologetic in its defense. For his part, Edwards found nothing to be more practical for theology and practice than the immanent Trinity.

Equally striking are the commonalities. Both Edwards and Wesley identified grace with the Spirit, and emphasized the work of the Spirit to a degree beyond their theological predecessors. Both understood salvation to entail relationship, and found the point of salvation to be the transformation of the heart in love. For both love was the central attribute of God. Perhaps this is why they were the two preeminent theologians of the eighteenth-century awakening, and continue to have lasting impact for theology and renewal today.

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