

WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL



Published by the Wesleyan Theological Society
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, Idaho 83686

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Wesleyan Theological Society

ISSN-0092-4245

This periodical is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Chicago, IL 60606. E-mail: atla@atla.com, or visit <http://www.atla.com/>. Available on-line through BRS (Bibliographic Retrieval Series), Latham, New York, and DIA-LOG, Palo Alto, California.

Available in Microform from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Dept. I.R., Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Other than the most recent issues, the journal is available electronically at the address below:

WTS on the Web: www.wtsweb.org

Views expressed by writers are not necessarily those of the Wesleyan Theological Society, the Editor, or the Editorial Committee.

Printed by
Old Paths Tract Society
Shoals, Indiana 47581

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EDITOR'S NOTES

It's hard to believe that it's been almost two years since we convened at Mount Vernon Nazarene University to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wesleyan Theological Society (WTS). In a highly illuminating plenary address, Doug Strong narrated the history of the WTS in part by calling attention to prominent themes that have surfaced over the years in both the annual meeting and the pages of the Journal. Many of those themes are represented in this issue of the Journal, including the doctrine of Scripture, preaching and the sacraments, the life and work of John Wesley, soteriology, and the relationship between religion or theology and science.

At the 50th anniversary annual meeting, we also spent time looking forward, identifying questions that need to be raised and addressed in the future. Sadly, in the year and a half that has passed since that meeting, we received word of the death of John Webster. A Wesleyan by birth and early formation, Webster spent the last two decades raising a very interesting question, namely, what makes theology *theological*? During that same time, we Wesleyans have been preoccupied with a very different sort of question, namely, what makes Wesleyan theology *Wesleyan*? As a tribute to Webster, the fall 2017 issue will feature a symposium in which several scholars will answer the question, what makes Wesleyan theology *theological*? While space is very limited, please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to submit a paper that addresses this important question.

Jason E. Vickers, Editor
Fall, 2016

SMOKY THE COW HORSE AND WESLEYAN UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

by

William J. Abraham

When I found some of my work on scripture prompted a witty reference to *Smoky the Cow Horse* in a recent volume on the authority of scripture I was intrigued. Unfortunately I had no clue about the relevant referent. So I had to hunt around the internet to find out about *Smoky the Cow Horse*. Here is what I found:

Smoky the Cowhorse is a novel by Will James that was the winner of the 1927 Newbery Medal. The story details the life of a horse in the western United States from his birth to his eventual decline. It takes place after the 1910s, during which the West dies away and automobiles are introduced. Smoky is born in the wild, but is captured and trained by a cowboy named Clint. Clint is taken by Smoky's intelligence and spirit, and uses him as his personal steed. Under his guidance, Smoky soon becomes known as the best cowhorse around. Unfortunately, Smoky is among a number of horses stolen by a horse thief. When Smoky refuses to allow the thief to ride him, being loyal only to Clint, he is beaten repeatedly in punishment. Developing an intense hatred for humans from this treatment, Smoky eventually attacks and kills the thief.¹

This sounds like a great book to read. The reference to this interesting novel comes in a fascinating essay on Wesleyan theology and the authority of scripture by Thomas H. McCall.² The point made by the ref-

¹This the information provided at <http://www.bing.com/search?q=smoky+the+cow+horse&filters=ufn%3a%22smoky+the+cowhorse+will+james%22+sid%3a%22c4e07cca-3322-76b3-789f-0e93e407c193%22&q=MB&pq=smoky+&sc=8-6&sp=1&cvid=CAA14A25CA644E25817159B46E912165&FORM=QBLH>.

²Thomas H. McCall, "Wesleyan Theology and the Authority of Scripture," in D. A. Carson, ed., *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

erence to *Smoky the Cow Horse* clearly involves a general assessment of my *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology*;³ however, it was not easy to get the exact point at issue from a first reading. My sense is that McCall thinks that I am proposing that many theologians and movements have treated scripture as a kind of handbook of epistemology. This is as far from their minds as it is from writing a novel like *Smoky the Cow Horse*. Those whom I claim were committed to an epistemic conception of scripture never intended to think of scripture in this way. Thus they could not have failed in this enterprise. As they never intended to do anything of the sort, my whole narrative is flawed from the outset.

McCall's provocative comment is made in an important essay in a fascinating book that deserves to be read and pondered at length. The book is *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*.⁴ Given its length, over 1200 pages, I hope that readers will not be discouraged. McCall's essay fits in a historic section. As its title, "Wesleyan Theology and the Authority of Scripture," suggests, it is one of nine historical overviews that runs from the third century to the present. The book is an extraordinary effort to assert and defend what McCall identifies as the classical teaching of the church on scripture. There is a fine introduction and a finale that takes the form of frequently asked questions where the editor initially sets the platform for the volume as a whole and then finishes with a short catechism. In between we have sections dealing with historical topics, biblical and theological topics, philosophical and epistemological topics, comparative religious topics, and a final section with a single essay devoted to thinking holistically.

The book is a delight to peruse in terms of the splendid scholarly apparatus, the quality of the writing, the depth and range of scholarship, and the determination to provide a singular focus that holds it all together. I especially welcome the essays devoted to epistemological issues as these are not just exceptionally well done; they rightly draw attention to the breakthroughs in epistemology that have occurred over the last generation. Regrettably, much contemporary theology lives in blissful ignorance of this work. The fact that it is brought in to defend what many will consider indefensible will not help in the cause of spreading the good

³*Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology, From the Fathers to Feminism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998).

⁴D. A. Carson, ed., *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

news of epistemology; the last thing many theologians want is another debate about the inerrancy of scripture advanced by analytic philosophers. Moreover, theologians in my experience have come to ignore if not loathe philosophy and have turned to “Cultural Studies” and “Critical Theory” as their favored intellectual buttress. However, this should not worry us too much, for work in the epistemology of theology will sooner or later be indispensable for future work in Christian theology. Theologians cannot run away and hide from the epistemological claims they advance explicitly or tacitly.

In the present context I would like to draw attention to one essay that dovetails with my response to McCall. In a characteristically superb essay by Michael C. Rea on authority and truth, it becomes clear that there might be less to gain initially from the work of analytic philosophers than the editor might have desired. Rather than resolve problems related to the authority of scripture, it may well simply draw attention to a whole new set of problems that deserve attention. Rea’s final conclusion is worth quoting at some length.

As I see it . . . our views about the nature and scope of biblical authority shed, all by themselves, relatively little light on the most interesting questions about the truthfulness of problematic passages of scripture. Consequently, it is a mistake to treat the topic of biblical authority as somehow lying at the heart of debates about the reliability and inerrancy of scripture. Far more pertinent to these latter debates are questions about the nature of God and divine authorship: In what sense is God an (or the) author of Scripture? What are God’s aims in Scripture? What might be God’s aims in this or that part of Scripture? Is God the sort of author about whom β is true?⁵ These are the questions that promise to shed the most light on the topics that really worry us. Of course, some of them—especially the last one—will involve us in questions about authority; but none of them are fundamentally about the nature of authority, and all of them seem to be questions different from those that have occupied so much of the literature.⁶

⁵“(β) G is the author of the Bible, and necessarily, for any text τ authored by God and for any individual S other than God, τ has foundational authority over S in the domain defined by the text itself.” Ibid., 896.

⁶Ibid., 898.

Rea has set a fine agenda here for the analytic theologian. What he makes clear is that speaking of the authority of scripture is but the beginning of our theological and philosophical conversation; indeed, if Rea is right, it does not get us very far in securing the truth of scripture. I could not agree more.

Rea's conclusion allows me to pivot back to the essay for we both are interested in epistemological issues related to scripture and McCall clearly thinks I have gone serious astray in my proposals. So now let me take up three distinct issues, his odd conception of the "classical" account of Scripture, his awkward way of handling historical debates about pietism and Methodism, and his misplaced reading of my contrast between a soteriological conception of scripture and an epistemic conception of scripture. Beyond that I take up the topic of reading theological texts from an epistemological point of view, for getting clear about this is crucial for the current discussion. I shall then conclude with some remarks on the significance of *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* for contemporary theology.

First, let's look at McCall's view of a traditional account of scripture. This vision, enunciated with aggressive abandon by B. B. Warfield over a century ago, argue for a "church doctrine" of inspiration that was supposedly held from the beginning.⁷ The aim here is to fault the critic on the grounds of being innovative, reformist, revisionist, or even heretical. So what is the content of this classical account of scripture? I quote in full:

Throughout most of the history of the Christian church, Christians have held that "the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself. . . . [and] since everything asserted by the inspired authors of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully, and without error the truth which God wanted put into sacred writings." The Bible is God's Word, the Bible is absolutely trustworthy and utterly reliable (thus "infallible" or "inerrant"). Despite their disagreements among themselves on many matters, Christians of various

⁷B. B. Warfield, "The Church Doctrine of Inspiration," in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948).

ecclesial and theological commitments consistently have held this view or something close to it. In fact, I take this to be settled enough that I shall henceforth refer to it as the “classical” account of Scripture.⁸

This account of scripture involves significant qualifications and ambiguities. On the one hand, it limits the inerrancy to what God intended, so we do not know if it applies to everything asserted in scripture with respect to, say, history, or not; or whether or not we should read the early chapters of Genesis in line with or against current proposals, say, about the age of the universe. On the other hand, we get the very strong claim that scripture is absolutely trustworthy and utterly reliable and thus infallible or inerrant. On the one hand, the quotation inside our quotation is offered as what Christians have held throughout the history of the church. On the other hand, we are offered the qualification that there are disagreements on many matters. Without some account of what these disagreements are then our classical account is going to be seriously vague. The outcome of these observations is that we are promised a sure word from God in scripture and are then disappointed when we look at the details of the small print that we find in the contract. We turn to the bible to find out what God wants us to believe and then find out that understanding depends on finding out what God wants to tell us, something we have to work out on our own. If we already knew what God wants to tell us in scripture, then we can read scripture and find out what God wants to tell us. This is not exactly a circle but it is serious epicycle to the theory.

Furthermore, the source of the quotation within the quotation is fascinating. It comes from *Dei Verbum*, one of the very best but flawed documents to emerge from Vatican II. One thing is sure about this document: it is not a mere repetition of what has been said in the past. At the very least it is a significant development of what has been said in the past by the Roman Catholic Church. In my view, it is decidedly a change from what has been said in the past, where, for example at Trent, it is patently clear that both scripture and oral tradition were seen as dictated by the Holy Spirit. Any claim to robust continuity here is simply bogus, denials from Rome notwithstanding. I can certainly understand why McCall chose this quotation; it displays his splendid irenic and ecumenical disposition; and it also highlights indirectly that much of Protestantism and

⁸Ibid, 171.

Roman Catholicism have indeed shared a common view that scripture was dictated by God.

It is not enough to say in response to the reality of dictation that nobody really believed in “mechanical dictation” and thus dismiss the significant body of evidence concerning dictation. The addition of the adjective “mechanical” is a distraction; folk really did believe in dictation. Moreover, dictation and claims about divine speaking as the critical causal action behind the production of scripture were obvious sources of all sorts of claims that confuse divine inspiration with divine speaking, divine revelation, divine authorship, and the like. They are in addition the obvious sources of claims about infallibility and inerrancy. As the popular saying goes, “God said it; that settles it; I believe it.” It is precisely because of the difficulties with dictation that it was abandoned under pressure and that *Dei Verbum* carefully shields its claims to the truth of scripture by insisting that it all depends on what God wanted. Behind this is a generation of remarkable historical and biblical scholarship that is one of the great achievements of modern Catholic scholarship that was developed against the grain of earlier church teaching on scripture.⁹

What is at issue here is quite simple. The whole idea of a classical account of scripture is a myth. Once we take serious soundings in the historical materials available we can see the shifts and changes that have taken place in the account of scripture offered up by theologians and church teachers. Even when we identify this or that account, we cannot ignore the surrounding claims about divine action, about human reception, and about interpretation in which it is embodied. McCall has given us an abstraction dressed up as something classical, a term of art designed to mask the radical differences and to create intellectual guilt as it relates to significant descriptive and normative work on the doctrine of scripture. Thus ‘classical’ is a much stronger evaluative term than, say, traditional or conventional.

This takes us naturally to a second issue, namely, his misplaced reading of pietism and Methodism. At one level I welcome his criticisms of recent historiography. We need the kind of careful work that shows up in both his essay and in the foregoing essay by John D. Woodbridge.¹⁰ They

⁹Some of the fruit of this is available in Raymond E. Brown, S. S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S. J., Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm., eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Upper Saddle Road, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990).

¹⁰“German Pietism and Scriptural Authority,” *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 137-170.

both challenge Donald Dayton to produce much more textual evidence for his claims about pietism and Methodism. They rightly sniff out an alien Barthian reading of the texts, draw attention to facile polemics by Wesleyans about the introduction of scholastic and Calvinist elements into Methodism, and readily insist that deep piety is not alien to a more scholastic approach to theology. McCall is also cautious in his selection of figures for his gallery of exhibits from the Wesleyan theological tradition that runs from Wesley through Thomas O. Summers and that upholds a traditional view. McCall also does a nice job of reiterating William Lane Craig's demolition of the claim that the Free Will Defense in theodicy is incompatible with the verbal, plenary inspiration of an inerrant bible. He is also aptly nuanced in his comments on the so-called Wesleyan Quadri-lateral, being fully aware of my spirited objection to the epistemological nonsense it involves.

So why am I uneasy? Initially, it is the case because I think that McCall is cooking the books in his selection of sources. Thus he fails to look at the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church which does not adopt Wesley's views of dictation and inerrancy; and this was the very article on scripture that Wesley himself approved and sent over to his followers in North America.¹¹ Now we might argue that somehow Wesley's views on dictation and inerrancy were presupposed by this decision on his part or can be inferred from the article itself. These moves are surely a stretch. Moreover, we need far more attention to the canonical commitments of the prior Anglican tradition and its long-haul reception in Methodism to do justice to what is at issue in the Wesleyan theological tradition. To be fair, this work remains to be done in the future, so I do not want to make a meal of this objection.¹²

Furthermore, McCall reads the extremely important work of Dayton in an insensitive manner, as if Dayton is unaware of the logical compatibility between a reading scripture as an inerrant text and as a means of

¹¹Thus, "Article V—of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation. The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary for salvation; so that whatsoever is read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." See *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 64.

¹²For a provocative reading of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Anglican Church related to scripture see Oliver O'Donovan, *On the Thirty Nine Articles, A Conversation with Tudor Christianity* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1986, 49-64.

devotion. What Dayton is concerned to bring to our attention is an orientation represented by pietism and an orientation represented, say, by scholastic orthodoxy. He is inviting us to look at pietism as an ethos and emphasis in theology that is to be contrasted with the ethos and emphasis of orthodox scholasticism. This kind of work cannot be dismissed by a neat little syllogism of the sort beloved by some analytic philosophers. Evaluation requires sensitive judgment. McCall's attempted demolition of Dayton sidesteps this desideratum.

I think both McCall and I would be in agreement about taking far more seriously the scholastic rendering of the Methodist tradition represented, say, by Richard Watson. Indeed I consider it a disgrace that the theologians he cites have been dismissed as scholastic and Calvinist by the last generation of Wesleyan historians and theologians. Reading someone like Watson is an art just as reading a figure like Aquinas is an art. However, our encounter with these and those who follow them will not be adequate if our primary concern is to shore up the bogus classical account of scripture he wants to take as normative for today. For too long, figures like Borden Parker Bowne and Henry Sheldon, for example, have been coopted into a narrative of Liberal Protestant decline that does not begin to do justice to their concerns or their theological conclusions. Both these figures were deeply pious; they provide a serious defense of their theism; they set about dealing with questions that were genuinely new for our tradition; and, in the case of Sheldon, left us a splendid volume of systematic theology that gathers dust on library shelves.¹³ Perhaps I am asking too much at this point, but I regret the lost opportunity to give more sensitive space to the complex historiographical issues at stake in a unit explicitly directed to historical topics. The impression one gets is that McCall is simply cherry-picking the material to fit his case to provide a quick kill to the story he rightly finds unsatisfactory.

In any case, even if we agree to the existence of a classical account of scripture or even a classical Wesleyan account of scripture, this will not settle the normative questions we have to face in the development of historical investigation as applied to scripture. It is not for nothing that these issues have come back on the agenda with the arrival of postmodern proposals in the philosophy of history.¹⁴ So the crucial question at issue is

¹³Henry C. Sheldon, *System of Doctrine* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1903). I happen to have two copies of Sheldon on my shelves.

¹⁴See my "Post(modern) Biblical Historiography: An Interim Report from the Front Lines," forthcoming.

whether the account marshalled in this essay and the volume as a whole is the best way forward for Wesleyan and Methodist theologians. This is not just an issue of the historical narrative we tell ourselves; it is also a question of the normative moves we want to make in systematic theology and in the epistemology of theology.

McCall thinks we should recover our classical Wesleyan account of scripture, avoid the endless wrangling over the process of inspiration, and come to the table with an adequate doctrine of sanctification. Thus he ends his paper with an emphatic assertion of the difference a doctrine of sanctification should be. It should take up the idea of “. . . the Holy triune God giving Holy Scripture as a means of grace whereby the Holy Spirit transforms sinners into truly holy persons by uniting them to the incarnate Son.” On first reading I missed the content and import of this remarkable statement. On a second reading I nearly fell off my chair. I thought for a moment I was reading a sentence from the work of one of my favorite contemporary Reformed theologians, John Webster.¹⁵ I am even tempted to reach for an etiological narrative of recent developments in evangelical theology in North America, but that would be pure speculation on my part.

What is fascinating is that this is an assertion that would readily fit incompletely in my own ontology of scripture. So we now come to our third consideration, namely, his misplaced reading of my account of a soteriological account of scripture over against an epistemological account of scripture. McCall's proposal is as good a soteriological account of scripture as may be captured in under thirty words. Notice that there is not a hint of an epistemic conception of scripture in this description. So there is no talk about authority, norm, criterion, warrant, and the like. Yet a good portion of his essay is tasked with showing that somehow I am confused at this point.

McCall identifies my objection to the classical account as the “Formation vs. information” objection. This is important enough a designation of my position to be picked up in the final, catechetical section written by the editor, D. A. Carson. The unit is worth quoting in full:

6.3. Haven't some Wesleyans (especially William Abraham) argued that, since the Bible was given for purposes of transformation than information (which seems to be the focus of atten-

¹⁵See his important volume, *Holy Scripture, A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

tion in inerrantist formulations), the emphases of the traditional position on truth are fatally misdirected? Indeed, that is one of the arguments sometimes deployed. The argument expresses a legitimate concern, but it does not undermine the traditional view in any way. On the contrary, it encourages us to appreciate the classical view helps even more. A small analogy helps: a physician acquires a body of knowledge in order to heal people—but it is altogether desirable that that body of knowledge be true and reliable if real healing is to take place. One cannot legitimately sideline the importance of the truthfulness of Scripture by observing, rightly that the purpose is more than truth telling.¹⁶

So what is happening here?

McCall likes much of my long-winded narrative in *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology*. He rightly notes that folk can differ on the details of my claims and then correctly points out that my narrative has implications. It calls for “a recovery of a way of thinking of canon that is soteriological rather than epistemological in outlook, and to pave the way for fresh work in the epistemology of theology.” But right there the trouble starts, it would seem. Lurking in my work, he thinks, is a fatal ambiguity “between assertions made as truth claims (which sometimes seems to fall under what he (Abraham) calls ‘epistemology’) and epistemology per se (or ‘epistemology in the stricter philosophical sense’) which is concerned with higher-level reflections and with more technical discussions that are to be found in philosophical classrooms.”¹⁷ Sorting out what is meant by an epistemic conception of scripture is crucial if there is to be a meeting of the minds here.

To be clear about my position, I grant immediately that I have claimed that epistemic criteria “are means of demarcating truth from falsehood, reality and illusion, rationality from irrationality, knowledge from opinion.”¹⁸ In oral presentation I often use this when first introducing my position. But should this be taken to mean that I think that scripture does not transmit information and even that such information is soteriologically formative? Not at all. Suppose I say “Katie the cat is on the mat.” And suppose the context is one where I have been asked about the

¹⁶*The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 1160–1161.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 189–190.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 190.

whereabouts of Katie the cat. This locution can be taken as a means of demarcating truth from falsehood, reality from illusion, and so on. I am making the illocutionary act of asserting that Katie the cat is on the mat. However, this is an odd if not perverse way of missing the illocutionary act involved in claiming that *epistemic criteria* are means of demarcating truth from falsehood, reality from illusion, and so on. The very mention of the term 'epistemic criteria' should settle the issue. One does not normally say, "Katie the cat is on the mat," to do anything other than make an assertion about Katie the cat on the mat. The context of my remark should make it clear to a fair-minded person that it is the higher-order conception of epistemology that is view. It is shorthand for the more formal account that McCall identifies. Even so, I welcome this opportunity to make clear that when I speak of epistemic criteria I use it generally in the sense represented by the second, higher-level sense. I do not think there is ambiguity in my work at this point, but if there is, the record is now straight.

Why does all this matter? Is this not getting into the weeds of the kind of conceptual analysis that is so boring to many who listen in? Being clear here matters because it gives McCall the leverage to raise doubts about my proposal that are essentially a distraction. He thus indirectly chides me for opening up the option of a story about scripture that somehow denies that scripture contains assertions and thus does not contain information. This is simply ludicrous; it is a creature of his own imagination that has nothing to do with my work across the years. I think he would readily agree to this, for he is working off a provisional thought experiment. Of course, scripture gives us information on a host of issues and that information is crucial for our salvation. However, pursuing this option allows him to set the formation against the informational, a move reiterated, as I have already noted, by the editor. We are dealing at this point with a red herring. We are formed in part by having information about our sin and God's salvation. I nowhere deny this platitude. My concern is to contrast a soteriological *conception* of scripture over against an epistemic *conception* of scripture. So I nowhere deny that scripture gives us information; but giving information does not mean that we should construe the text involved as an epistemic norm. If this is not clear I am at a loss as to how to make it clearer beyond what I have written at great length.

McCall then tries out an alternative interpretation of my work as an admonition to resist the temptation to read the bible as if it were a *treatise*

on epistemology. This is certainly closer to the quarry I am pursuing. He then seeks to refute this by insisting that this was never the intention of the folk I cite and therefore my work has the unfortunate ontological status of *Black Stallion*, *Smoky the Cow Horse* and other fictive creatures of equine lore. He thinks that by treating scripture as an epistemic criterion I mean that scripture is essentially a handbook on epistemology. Will this objection stand up to scrutiny? I think not.

I do not claim that the bible has been treated as a treatise on epistemology, as if it were a kind of handbook in epistemology for students. My claim is that in the *reception* of scripture it has been received again and again as an epistemic norm and that this has had serious consequences for the epistemology of theology and thereafter for the very content of Christian theology itself. My most dramatic claim is that I think it can lead to the very internal self-destruction of Christianity. This in fact is the burden of my *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology* and I am not going to rehearse that story here. It is obvious that scripture is not a book about such matters as perception, warrant, justification, and the other paraphernalia of epistemology. It is fundamentally a book about God and about salvation. That is what I mean by a soteriological reading of scripture. My claim is that in accounts of scripture—in doctrines of scripture—it has been turned, for example, into an epistemic criterion for theology. It is this kind of account, accounts that are epistemological in content, and not the content of scripture itself that was the target of my criticism. McCall simply misses this point.

The relevant engagement will have to take into account the full content and importance of what I have argued rather than simply focus on merely the soteriological orientation I propose with respect to our doctrine of scripture. Thus it will require at a minimum dealing with the proposals laid out in William J. Abraham, Jason E. Vickers, and Natalie B. Van Kirk, eds., *Canonical Theism, A Proposal for Theology and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). I recognize that McCall rightly cannot satisfy this desideratum in his essay due to limitations of space but there is a real danger of offering a reductionist and therefore distorted account of my position on scripture.

We now have three options on the table as to what might be meant by treating scripture as an epistemic norm in theology. It can mean, (a), that scripture conveys information that is true rather than false; it can mean, (b), that scripture is a treatise on epistemology; and it can mean (c) that scripture has been construed as an epistemic criterion in the

sense allowed by general discourse in epistemology. (a) is true; (b) is non-sense; and (c) has been central to debates about the authority of scripture. It is (c) that is at issue in my work. McCall has fastened on (a) and (b) and seems to think that discussing these can dispose of my objections to (c); and beyond that can undercut my alternative positive ontology and theology of scripture. I hope I have made clear that he will need to go back to the drawing board if we are to have a serious debate about (c).¹⁹

Even then, we must be cautious. There are all sort of interesting epistemic suggestions and claims that are given in scripture. Think of the claim that the pure in heart see God. Or ponder the material in Romans about the epistemic significance of sin. Or gather together the remarkable insistence in Exodus that God make himself know through his word to the prophet and through his mighty acts in history. These are not causal remarks but they do not amount to a full scale epistemology of theology; they belong precisely in fresh work in the epistemology of theology that integrates them with wider extra-biblical work in epistemology generally.²⁰ I think that this work has been inhibited by betting the epistemological store on an epistemic conception of scripture, for it looks as if this is all we need in theology. To be sure, this need not be so, but in my experience it is so; hence my aggressive stance on these matters. This also applies to the incredible indolence in the Wesleyan and Methodist tradition in the aftermath of the ecstasy related to the reception of the Quadri-lateral a generation ago. Theologians, students, and clergy thought they had the goods in hand, all the while ignoring the varied epistemic suggestions to be found in Wesley himself.²¹

¹⁹The relevant engagement will have to take into account the full content and important of what I have argued rather than simply focus on merely the soteriological orientation I propose with respect to our doctrine of scripture. Thus it will require at a minimum dealing with the proposals laid out in William J. Abraham, Jason E. Vickers, and Natalie B. Van Kirk, eds., *Canonical Theism, A Proposal for Theology and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). I recognize that McCall rightly cannot satisfy this desideratum in his essay due to limitations of space but there is a real danger of offering a reductionist and therefore distorted account of my position on scripture.

²⁰For an example of this kind of work see my "The Epistemology of Jesus: An Initial Investigation," in Paul K. Moser, ed., *Jesus and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 149-168.

²¹On this see my *Aldersgate and Athens* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010).

Even as I reject McCall's reading of my work, I think he is on to something extremely important that I have too readily taken for granted. I am grateful to him for making me unpack what I have neglected. This observation is prompted by the suggestion that I am misreading the history I recite because I have not come to terms with the intentions behind the many writers I cover in my narrative. Because they do not set out to do what I think they are doing, then my claim that they fail falls by the wayside. Failing to do *x* implies intending to do *x*; and as the movements I sketch never intended to appropriate scripture in the epistemic way I suggested, my claims that they failed simply fall to the ground. Thus I have not shown

that any of them in fact *were* concerned with understanding the Bible as a handbook of epistemology. This would not be beating a dead horse—it would be flailing away at one that shares ontological status with The Black Stallion, Smoky the Cow Horse, and other fictive creatures of equine lore.²²

I have already denied that this is an accurate reading of my position; it is the issue of reading of a writers intentions that I now want to pursue. Does failing to do *x* necessarily imply or require intending to do *x*? Could one fail to do something if one never intended to do *x*? What counts as intending to do *x*? Does one have to have some inner mental state in order to intend to do *x*? Does this inner state have be one of which one is aware? Does one have to expressly indicate, say, by verbal pronouncement, that one intended to do *x* after becoming aware of the relevant mental state? Or might it be that one can show, or reveal, or display, that one intended to do *x* without any of these conditions, that is, without there being any identifiable mental state of which one is aware and that one explicitly states? No doubt we can find examples where we can track the relevant mental state and its expression verbally; and philosophers love such examples for they allow the kind of precisionist, formal analysis to which they are wedded if not addicted. So I can consciously intend to take my dog Murphy for a walk, make it explicit by telling my neighbor, and then fail to do so because Murphy is hiding under Siobhan's bed and refuses to cooperate. But this does not cover the waterfront. Many of the actions we perform are never accompanied by this apparatus of mental

²²*The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 191. Emphasis as in the original.

state and explicit expression. It is very important that we eschew a highly intellectualist conception of action that does not deal with how we actually do things. We often do x, and then fail to achieve what in retrospect can be accurately described as doing x by third-person observers. Our own intentions may never have explicitly occurred to us. This applies to our efforts to discern the epistemological claims of theologians, past and present.

It is easy to illustrate with a pertinent example. I have students who make all sorts of epistemological claims with great certainty, make elementary mistakes in the process, and unfortunately have no clue what they are doing. In doing this some of them have picked up this bad habit from the theologians they read. They display what they are doing without explicitly intending or saying what they are doing. And once the deed is done, it is entirely proper to speak of failure in this respect. Their failure to specify their intentions and express them is utterly beside the point. They were doing epistemology without knowing it and failing abysmally in their execution. Or at the least I think it is plausible to think of their actions in this manner. I think this applies in many of the theological texts I review in my *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology*.

Here is another way to consider the issue at hand. R. G. Collingwood once noted that every stated proposition is an answer to a question.²³ So suppose someone says, "Barack Obama is president of the United States of America." This is to answer the possible question, "Who is the current president of the United States of America?" Hence one way to find out if someone is making an epistemological claim is to look at their various propositions and see what kind of question is being asked. Now, suppose someone says: "Scripture is the primary norm of truth in theology." There is no mention of epistemology here; but surely this is an answer to the obvious epistemological question, "What is the relevant norm of truth in theology?" There are many ways of posing epistemological questions to theology but this is certainly one of them.

To be sure, one can argue over how we should demarcate the field of epistemology. For my part I work with an expansive conception. So I take epistemology to be a critical investigation of the central concepts related to knowledge, rationality, justification, understanding, reason, evidence,

²³This is one of the central claims advanced by Collingwood in his work, *Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), chapter iv, 21-33.

warrant, experience, perception, testimony, deduction, induction, and the like. I take the epistemology of theology to be something along the lines of a critical examination (historical and normative) of the central epistemic concepts and proposals developed by Christian theologians to secure the truth of Christian truth claims. With this in hand I can then read, say, the works of Symeon the New Theologian, and begin to identify some of the central epistemic claims that show up in his work.²⁴ Note the use of the evasive passive here. Symeon does not think of himself as an epistemologist of theology; nor did he set out to write a handbook of the epistemology of theology; he would be mystified by such claims, as his work is centrally concerned with crucial issues in ascetic theology. However, this is irrelevant. He deploys epistemic concepts and makes epistemic claims that one can readily articulate and bring it into focus. Indeed, his work represents a salient version of what is known as the spiritual senses tradition in the epistemology of theology.²⁵ My work in *Canon and Criterion* is an extended deployment of this strategy; it tells a story of the moves made in epistemology of theology from the Fathers to feminism.

All that said, I repeat it is a pleasure to see more recent work in epistemology show up in a specific unit partly devoted to this work. It may take some time before we sort through how to bring this work to bear on the reading of theological texts. For my part I am grateful to McCall for enabling me to see how difficult it is to learn the relevant hermeneutical art involved. There is plenty of room for further conversation here. This naturally takes me to a brief comment on the significance of this volume in general for contemporary theology.

It is tempting to note that we are in a sorry state if we need a book of this length to shore up the account of scripture favored by McCall and perhaps most of the contributors in this volume. We seem to need a second book, a book longer than the bible itself, to secure the bible's infallibility and inerrancy. However, we should resist this temptation to think this way as superficial and misplaced. It is surely right and proper to have

²⁴See my forthcoming essay in the *Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*.

²⁵See for an extended treatment of this tradition Paul G. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley, eds., *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in the Western Christian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

lots of work on how we should think about scripture that seeks to deal with the new material—both negative and positive—delivered up by new generations. The editor has done us sterling service in gathering together this fine network of scholars to make the case that has been central to his own admirable piety and scholarship across the years. I would recommend that readers turn to his introduction and his finale before dipping in at their leisure to the rest of the units. Doing so will clear the air of potential prejudices and misunderstandings that we are liable to bring to our reading. It should help us avoid verbal disputes that poison the wells from the beginning.

This volume represents a stream of Christian theology that has a complex pedigree, that of right has a worthy place in the work of Christian theology, and that deserves to be read with generosity and care. Given the contentious times in which we live; and given the extent to which this stream has been shut out of the mainstream academy; this last imperative to ponder this work with care needs to be emphatically repeated until it is heeded. To be sure, there are moments when this volume itself provides grounds for inhibiting this assessment—there are times when one worries that the books are being cooked to secure a desired outcome—but we meet this across the board in scholarship; we should be intellectually secure enough to deal with it. I do not hesitate to recommend it be taken up as a rich contribution to the debate about scripture. This heavy volume should end once and for all the caricatures we find among our students and in much contemporary theology.

The evangelical theologies of the last generation are a mixed bag. This volume makes clear that the doctrine of scripture developed at Princeton in the nineteenth century continues to flourish within the options available. It is not going to disappear any day soon. Scholars will fight to the death to maintain it. It is too deeply embedded in their noetic structure; they sincerely believe that abandoning it means the death of Christianity; and they are all too aware that it is constantly under attack from within evangelicalism. To use a legal analogy, we seem to be in a position where the doctrine of scripture has to be litigated anew in every generation; so the defense team has to be at the ready to go to court all

²⁶Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited, Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), comes to mind immediately.

over again to establish their case afresh. With the embrace of analytic philosophy and theology by some evangelicals, a doctrine of the inerrancy of scripture stands poised for a whole new lease of life.²⁶ As a result there will be all sorts of new insights and arguments to ponder; and I predict that there will be deep crisis within brought on precisely by the work of those who labor in this vineyard. Paradoxically, defense leads to a whole new round of worries and subsequent revision from within. For this reason alone I can understand why rhetorically it is inevitable that there will be much talk about the enduring authority of scripture and about the merits of a classical account of scripture; such discourse operates as an aspirational sign of unity that masks all sorts of interesting and fruitful turmoil within.

I have been attempting here to understand the tenacity that lies behind a volume like this. Substantial pastoral, intellectual, and spiritual concerns are in play. However, it is important to register that there are also pastoral, intellectual, and spiritual concerns in play on the part of those who remain unpersuaded, and who are at pains to develop a constructive vision of the ontology and proper function of scripture in theology and in the church. For my part, my concerns have been manifold. I want to sort out the conceptual issues swirling around discourse about inspiration, revelation, divine speaking, divine authorship, and the like. I have found the resources and skills of analytic philosophy invaluable in this domain. They are also crucial in rendering an apt story of the history of the doctrine of scripture. Furthermore, I desire to stop the hemorrhaging of students and younger scholars, not least in the evangelical tradition, from their moorings in the Gospel due to the obvious difficulties that they find in doctrines of infallibility and inerrancy. There are no guarantees in play here but theology is widely populated by folk who started out in evangelicalism and abandoned it because they did not find that the theory fit their immersion in the texts of scripture. In a culture that still bears the disjunction between conservatives and liberals it was easy for them to opt for a version of the latter or leave the faith altogether. Equally, in the pews one finds lots of folk who turn to the scriptures with doctrines of infallibility and inerrancy in hand and are bitterly disappointed with what they find. More generally, I want to develop a comprehensive vision of scripture that fits the data and warrants available to us, and one which opens up much better ways of thinking about the epistemology of theology. It is too easy to depict the critic as an alien agent,

deeply embedded in heretical and secular agendas that ultimately undermine the great canonical faith of the church.²⁷

My own central motivations are the reverse of this. I am all in on commitment to the truth of the Gospel, to the indispensability of scripture, and to the articulation and defense the catholic and apostolic faith of the church. I have seen firsthand the spiritual terror visible in the faces of those who encounter any rejection of the doctrine of the infallibility and inerrancy of scripture. My advice to such folk is to insist that they retain their vision of scripture until they can find a better one. Certainly this volume will help them to stay the course. In reading it they will also find much food for thought and plenty to exercise their theological muscles. They should also be clear that many will not be persuaded. There are real alternatives for securing the riches of scripture as embedded in the manifold spiritual and intellectual treasures of Christianity. One such option is a vision that sees scripture in soteriological terms and relocates it in the rich canonical heritage of the church.

²⁷Carson seems to think that the authority of scripture is hotly debated today because “We live in a time when many voices scramble to impose their own understandings of life, culture, and much else _ the “age of authenticity,” in the words of Charles Taylor, when what makes us “authentic” is that we adopt an intrinsic suspicion of authorities so that we can be free to be ourselves. From the Bible’s perspective, this is, in part a reprehensible flight from God, a form of idolatry.” See *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 1157. Casting critics as those who commit idolatry is surely a shabby and dysfunctional way of dealing with the opposition. It is one thing to challenge Professor Carson’s theology of scripture; it is surely an entirely different matter to worship a false god.

JOHN WESLEY'S NON-LITERAL LITERALISM AND HERMENEUTICS OF LOVE

by

Rem B. Edwards

Whether John Wesley was a biblical literalist or inerrantist is an ongoing debate among Wesley scholars, as exemplified by G. Stephen Blakemore's article in the spring of 2016, issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*.¹ Blakemore defends a strong inerrantist view and suggests a slightly weaker literalism. His "minority report" defends inerrancy while rejecting what he calls "wooden literalism,"² to which he gives little attention. He cites many authorities on inerrancy but pays relatively little attention to what Wesley himself said, except for a reference, given shortly, where Wesley seems to endorse inerrancy.

The best way for us to find out what Wesley really thought about any given issue is not to consult other authorities; it is to review Wesley's own writings thoroughly to obtain the most complete picture we can of what he actually said. Regrettably, like the rest of us, Wesley was not always logically consistent. Blakemore's quote, where Wesley seems to affirm both infallibilism and literalism, is, "Nay, if here be any mistakes in the Bible, here may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth."³

It is difficult to see how anyone could be an inerrantist without being a literalist, though these are logically independent concepts. Inerrantism says that every sentence in the Bible is true; literalism (in the relevant sense) says that every word, phrase, or sentence in the Bible is to be construed literally. If some biblical language is metaphorical or figurative, the problem is that metaphors can be interpreted in many different ways by fallible human beings. So which particular interpretation is the right one,

¹G. Stephen Blakemore, "How to Know the Words are 'The Word'? Re-evaluating the Legitimacy of Biblical Inerrancy as a Wesleyan Commitment," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 51:1, 65-91.

²Ibid., 85, n. 47.

³Ibid., 89, n. 55. Blakemore cites this from Wesley's *Journal*, July 24, 1776.

the inerrant one, and how we are to discern that one? Many metaphors must be de-metaphorized or de-mythologized—in our own very human ways. But taking figurative language literally is absurd, Wesley insisted.

This article shows that and why Wesley was not a literalist or an inerrantist in practice. It identifies his own most important rules for dealing with biblical language. First, construed literally, some biblical language may be “absurd,” perhaps only “figurative,” or spoken only “after the manner of men,” or defective in some other way. Second, “No Scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works.” Scripture interprets Scripture only in the light of love.

Randy L. Maddox suggests that Wesley may have been a biblical literalist—as long as the language was Hebrew or Greek, and one is an expert in both; but he was not a modern biblical inerrantist, because God did not directly dictate everything in the Bible. Even for the inerrantist, everything must be interpreted within the framework of certain doctrinal assumptions, pre-selected as fundamental.⁴ Obviously, these are significant qualifications, but this is not the whole story.

Wesley's own first very clearly “stated rule in interpreting Scripture” was “never to depart from the plain, literal sense, unless it implies an absurdity.”⁵ Variations of this rule appear in at least a dozen or so of his writings.⁶ As expressed elsewhere, “This is true, if the literal sense of these Scriptures were absurd, and apparently contrary to reason, then we should be obliged not to interpret them according to the letter, but to look out for a looser meaning.”⁷ In other formulations, “nor contradicts other Scriptures” was added.⁸ Wesley taught logic at Oxford and wrote a logic textbook, so he well understood that where two texts contradict each other, if one is true, the other is invariably false. He did not deny that the Bible sometimes contradicts itself, but when it does, love comes first.

“Unless it implies an absurdity!” Every self-professed biblical literalist requires such an escape clause! In this sermon on “Free Grace,” Wesley did not strictly define “absurdity,” but his many examples of non-literal

⁴Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 36-38.

⁵John Wesley, “Of the Church,” *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984—), 3, 50.

⁶*Ibid.*, 3, 473, n. 22.

⁷Wesley, “The Love of God,” *Works*, 4, 337.

⁸Wesley, “A Call to Backsliders,” *Works*, 3, 215; and Wesley, “Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount,” *Works*, 1, 473.

biblical expressions, given later, will elucidate this. Obviously, Wesley's qualifications of "absurd," "contrary to reason," and "contrary to even more basic Scriptures" open many doors very widely for Wesleyans (for his day and ours) to the very latest and best in biblical scholarship, the natural sciences, the social sciences, philosophical theology, and textual hermeneutics, as shown in what follows. Admittedly, there is much disagreement about what counts as the "very latest and best"! More importantly, these qualifications open the door for Wesley's values-based hermeneutics of love, his primary principle of biblical interpretation, grounded in love, loving, and loved ones—creaturely and divine.

Wesley was not consistently, strictly, or usually a literalist or inerrantist, even if he occasionally claimed to be. In practice, he understood the Bible literally and without errors only when it proclaimed nothing absurd or unloving. He also identified many scriptural absurdities without hesitation. As this discussion will show, he frequently advised his hearers and readers to disregard the literal or unethical meaning of biblical texts, presumably because they are in some way absurd when taken at face value, and to "look for a looser meaning." To summarize in advance, Wesley thought that biblical language may be absurd and unloving as it stands if it:

1. contradicts other scriptures regarded as more basic—e.g., the love texts.
2. is taken literally when only metaphorical or "figurative"—his usual word for it, or is misleadingly metaphorical,
3. is oversimplified or exaggerated,
4. is "after the manner of men" or culture-bound,
5. is contrary to reason or experience, or
6. is clearly unethical, unconscionable, or unloving.

In 2011, William J. Abraham complained that Wesley belonged to a tradition that thought of "Scripture as a criterion of truth without qualification."⁹ The following discussion will show that Wesley thought of Scripture as a criterion of truth only with many qualifications—all of the above, maybe more.

Please now consider eleven instances where Wesley explicitly refused to take biblical words, phrases, or sentences literally, presumably because

⁹William J. Abraham, "The Future of Scripture: In Search of a Theology of Scripture," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 46:2, 13.

somehow absurd or otherwise unloving and unconscionable.¹⁰ His own many examples did not cover every such anomaly in the Bible, but they give us plausible guidelines for dealing with all of them.

1. Despite what 1 Timothy 6:10 says, Wesley insisted that money is not *literally* the sole root of *all* evil because “There are a thousand other roots of evil in the world, as sad experience daily shows.”¹¹

The problems here are oversimplification and being contrary to both experience and most of the rest of the Bible. The love of money is not the whole or even the main story about sin. Taken literally, this sentence is obviously false. There are many other real roots of, sources of, or basic motives for sin or wrongdoing. Oversimplification is often accompanied by exaggeration. Regarding the love of money as the “sole root” of every human evil immensely overemphasizes its significance and scope. Daily human experience says otherwise. So does the Bible—again and again.

2. He may have affirmed explicitly that in the Lord's Supper, “This is my body” (1 Corinthians 11:24) is “not to be taken literally,” as it seems to be in the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, because what looks like bread, tastes like bread, and is usually said to be bread, really is nothing but bread.¹² (We might say, “What looks like a duck, acts like and duck, and quacks like a duck, really is a duck.” Something like this common sense insight was functioning when early American Methodists insisted on referring to Wesley's “Superintendents” as “Bishops.” They thought that what looks like a Bishop, acts like a Bishop, and quacks like a Bishop really is a Bishop!) Perhaps the sermon containing these words about bread was not first written by Wesley, but he would have agreed and may have preached it. In his own commentary elsewhere on this verse, it means, Wesley explained, that “this broken bread is the *sign* of

¹⁰A much briefer explanation of ten of these eleven instances is given in Rem B. Edwards, *John Wesley's Values—And Ours* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2013), 158-161. In the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 51:1, 2016, Timothy R. Gains recognizes, with several other Wesleyan scholars, that there is “a dearth of literature” on Wesleyan moral theology and Wesleyan ethics. I believe that my book is just such a well-researched and helpfully organized book, written by a philosopher specializing in ethics and the philosophy of religion who is also a lifelong Methodist.

¹¹Wesley, “Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, I,” *Works*, 1, 476.

¹²Wesley, “Popery Calmly Considered,” *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. John Emory. (New York: T. Mason and B. Waugh, 1831), 5, 811.

my body,”¹³ thus not literally the body of Christ that still looks, tastes, and smells like bread.

The difficulty here is that taking “body” literally would be contrary to reason, experience, and the obvious facts. Wesley rejected transubstantiation on rational/empirical grounds. It confuses signs with realities. It takes sensory metaphors literally but not empirically, if that makes any sense at all. It is a potentially misleading metaphor.

3. Wesley insisted that the “fear and trembling” mentioned by St. Paul (Philippians 2:12) “cannot be understood literally” because our master does not want us “to stand trembling and quaking before him.”¹⁴

The issue here seems to be that, understood literally, this would make God’s requirements unethical, unconscionable, and unloving. Kierkegaard should have read Wesley! But Wesley’s own revival preaching caused many to tremble and quake.¹⁵ Wesley himself did not completely avoid “terror preaching.”

4. 1 Chronicles 16:30 denies that the earth moves and says it stands still and always will. So do Psalms 93:1, 96:10, and 104:5 in their own way. Wesley clearly did not believe this, even though he did not comment on these verses in his *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*. Both Testaments presuppose a three-story universe in which the heavens are above, the flat but circular earth is centered between the heavens above and the waters (or fires) beneath the earth, and the sun rotates daily around the earth, as in Ecclesiastes 1:5 and Psalms 19:6.¹⁶ This is known to us as the Ptolemaic worldview.

John Wesley was definitely not Ptolemaic; he was a Copernican who knew that the earth rotates daily on its axis and annually around the sun. Wesley understood and clearly affirmed Copernican cosmology, and in doing so he clearly went far beyond both infallibilism and literalism. In practice, he outright rejected both in the name of reason or what was then called “natural philosophy.” Some texts are just plain factually mistaken and can’t be excused or classified simply as misleading metaphors.

¹³Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, 1 Corinthians 11:24. Available on line through the Wesley Center at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesleys-notes-on-the-bible/>. This includes his explanatory notes on both testaments. Italics added.

¹⁴Wesley, “On Working Out Our Salvation,” *Works*, 2, 204.

¹⁵See Albert C. Outler’s comments on the effects of Wesley’s preaching in *Works*, 1, 200-201.

¹⁶The three-story universe is expressed in or presupposed by many biblical texts such as: Genesis 1:8-10, 14-18; Isaiah 40:22; Job 22:14; 26:7-14; 28:24; Proverbs 8:26-29; Mark 16:19; Luke 16:23-24, 26; Revelation 4:1-2; 12:7-12; 20:1, 3, 10.

The best evidence for Wesley's Copernicanism is found in his "Christian Library." There he published many books very cheaply for popular consumption and education, so that even the poor could buy and read them. This "Library" included several books that explained and defended the Copernican Theory.¹⁷ These were originally written by other authors, but Wesley abridged them, rewrote them to his own satisfaction, and republished them in his own name.

In my own book, *John Wesley's Values—and Ours*,¹⁸ my relevant example of his non-literal literalism on scientific topics quoted the words "not always to be taken in the literal sense" from one edition of Wesley's *Compendium of Natural Philosophy*. It was originally written by Charles Bonnet, but Wesley republished it in his own name and with his explicit endorsement. Here, commenting on "those scriptural expressions which seem to contradict the earth's motion," we find, "This general answer may be made to them all, that, the scriptures were never intended to instruct us in philosophy, or astronomy; and therefore, on those subjects, expressions are not always to be taken in the literal sense, but for the most part, as accommodated to the common apprehension of mankind."¹⁹ I have since learned from Randy Maddox that these words are not part of Wesley's original text. They are part of the revision introduced into this and later editions in North America, where the editors chose to replace much of Wesley's discussion of astronomy with text drawn from James Ferguson, *Astronomy Explained Upon Sir Isaac Newton's Principles* (London: for the author, 1756); see p. 48 for this quote. It is unclear if Wesley would have agreed with Ferguson. . . .²⁰

¹⁷Two of the most important of these Copernican books were published in the first two volumes of John Wesley's *Compendium of Natural Philosophy*. The first volume, written first by Charles Bonnet, explains and defends the Copernican worldview in Part V. It is available online at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/a-compendium-of-natural-philosophy/>. The second volume contains Wesley's *Extract of Mr. Duten's Inquiry Into the Origin of the Discoveries Attributed to the Moderns*. Chapter 14 of this affirms and defends the Copernican worldview. It is available online at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/a-compendium-of-natural-philosophy/extract-of-mr-dutens-inquiry-into-the-origin-of-the-discoveries-attributed-to-the-moderns>.

¹⁸Edwards, *John Wesley's Values—And Ours*, 159.

¹⁹John Wesley, *Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, (Philadelphia: Jonathan Pounder, 1816), 2, 139-140.

²⁰Randy L. Maddox, "The Rule of Christian Faith, Practice, and Hope: John Wesley on the Bible," *Methodist Review*, 3, 2011, 11-12, n. 38.

Unclear or not, it is obvious enough that Copernican Wesley simply did not believe the biblical picture according to which the flat earth stands still in the center of a three story universe and the sun rotates daily around the earth. Whether or not he wrote, “not always to be taken in the literal sense,” Wesley clearly did not accept biblical expressions of this obsolete cosmology as either true or literal. On rational grounds, (we would say “scientific grounds”), Wesley adopted the unbiblical, modern, scientific, Copernican cosmology and understood the biblical world-view non-literally, indeed as untrue, in its light.

Wesley’s example of how Wesleyan Christians should deal with the best-established theories of natural science is highly significant for us today. It allows us access to the very best of today’s natural sciences and philosophies, even though they do not speak with one voice about everything. Even philosophers can be good Methodists! What Wesley regarded as “philosophy” included “natural philosophy,” which we call “natural science.” What Wesley did for his own Copernican/Newtonian era models for us what we should do for our own Darwin/Einstein/Quantum era (even if this means giving up a literal Adam and Eve and the original perfection of all creation in the Garden of Eden, which Wesley himself was definitely not ready to do).

5. Commenting on “the books were opened” and God’s judging people by what is written in them on the “day” of judgment (Revelation 20:12), Wesley called this “a figurative expression, plainly referring to the manner of proceeding among men.”²¹ He speculated (with others) that the judgment “day” of the Lord might take a thousand years, (not literally one day), because there will be so many people to be judged.²² Note the temporality attributed here to God. Are we to take this literally, or, was this was meant only according to “the manner of proceeding among men,” in which case it was culture-bound?

The problem here might be that that this biblical language is misleadingly metaphorical, or that it reverts to cultural or then-traditional modes or images of thinking and speaking, or perhaps it is simply inaccurate. Anyhow, given Wesley’s example, should we take “day” or “days” in the creation story seriously, even if he clearly did?

6. He may have been on the wrong track in this instance, but Wesley subscribed to the classical “*totum simul*” theory of God’s eternity as “all of

²¹Wesley, “The Great Assize,” *Works*, 1, 358-359.

²²*Ibid.*, 360.

time all at once," which means that there is no literal or real-to-God successiveness at all. Time is real to us, but not to God, in classical theology. Logically, this should apply even to the six days of creation, but surprisingly, in his commentary on Genesis 1:31, Wesley insisted on taking this particular real-time-in-God passage literally. He wrote, "So that in six days God made the world. We are not to think but that God could have made the world in an instant: but he did it in six days, that he might shew himself a free agent, doing his own work, both in his own way, and in his own time."²³

Usually, however, Wesley insisted that all biblical and theological theistic expressions with temporalistic overtones—like all of God's actions in a literal past, present, or future, or God's *foreknowledge* and *afterknowledge*, or God's past, present, or future plans and deeds, or God's purposes ordered and expressed in time, or God's interacting with people as they exist in real time and history, or God's change of mind in light of positive human responses (as in the book of Jonah), etc.—only speak "after the manner of men,"²⁴ and each is thus a mere "condescension to our weakness." He asked rhetorically, "But can we possibly imagine that these expressions are to be taken literally?"²⁵

Regrettably, his answer was negative. With that stroke, he dismissed almost everything that the Bible says about God! Temporalistic theists (Process, Relational, and Open) do not dismiss such things; they *can* imagine taking literally much temporalistic or process language about God, and in that respect they are much closer to biblical theism than were the classical theologians. One can be a temporalistic theist, however, without taking all biblical temporalistic language about God literally, for example, without believing that God created the universe in literally six days. What counts as an "absurdity" always depends on the presuppositions we bring with us to the hermeneutic process, and on how intelligible or overall defensible they are. Temporalistic theists insist that we should *not* classify all biblical affirmations of successiveness in God as totally misleading non-literal myths or metaphors. Wesley's classical metaphysical presuppositions about God's timeless eternity were much more Greek than biblical. His own theology was more culture-bound to Greek philosophy in some respects than to biblical theism. Fortunately,

²³Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*, Genesis 1:31.

²⁴Wesley, "On Predestination," *Works*, 2, 417.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 420-421.

his values were mostly biblical, highly plausible, and very relevant to us today.

7. Wesley assumed that God is a disembodied or incorporeal spirit having no spatial or temporal properties whatsoever. Explaining the “image of God” concept in Genesis 1:27, Wesley said, “That man was made in God’s image, and after his likeness; two words to express the same thing. God’s image upon man, consists, in his nature, not that of his body, for God has not a body, but that of his soul. The soul is a spirit, an intelligent, immortal spirit, an active spirit, herein resembling God, the Father of spirits, and the soul of the world.”²⁶ Wesley was a Cartesian mind/matter dualist who had few difficulties with the idea of disembodied souls.²⁷

If God has no body, it follows logically that the story of God’s showing only his back-side, etc., to Moses in Exodus 33:22-23 must be interpreted as metaphorical (as must all physicalist images of God). According to Wesley, in this story “hand,” “face,” and “back-side” are being expressed only “after the manner of men.”²⁸ These are culture-bound and misleading metaphors. More generally, “The words, figuratively transferred from one thing to another, do not agree with the things to which they are transferred, in . . . their literal sense. So hands and eyes, when applied to God, are not spoke in any part of their literal signification.”²⁹ He did not say so, but this also applies to God’s literal masculinity or femininity. Wesley did not get into that!

8. Wesley repeatedly emphasized being “born again,” but he insisted that this biblical expression must be construed analogically, not literally. He even thought that Jesus himself was a self-conscious non-literalist about it! When Jesus was asked how people can be “born again” (John 3:4), he answered, Wesley explained, “They cannot be literally. ‘A man’ cannot ‘enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and be born.’ But they may, spiritually. A man may be ‘born from above,’ ‘born of God,’ and ‘born of the Spirit’—in a manner which bears a very near analogy to the natural birth.”³⁰

²⁶Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*, Genesis 1:27.

²⁷Edwards, *John Wesley’s Values—And Ours*, 228-235.

²⁸Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*, Exodus 33:22-23.

²⁹Wesley, *Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, 2, 437. For more details on Wesley’s rejection of time or process in God, see Edwards, *John Wesley’s Values—and Ours*, 45-49.

³⁰Wesley, “The New Birth,” *Works*, 2, 191-192.

So, Wesley acknowledged, Jesus himself realized and explained that he did not always speak literally! More on Jesus as a non-literalist who understood that some metaphors can be misleading comes next.

9. As seen in John 11:11-14, Jesus thought that his disciples sometimes deceived themselves when they construed his words literally. When he told them that deceased "Lazarus has fallen asleep," they took him literally. They "thought he meant taking rest in sleep," and they responded, "if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." About this Wesley commented, "Sleepeth—Such is the death of good men in the language of heaven. But the disciples did not yet understand this language. And the slowness of our understanding makes the Scripture often descend to our barbarous manner of speaking."³¹

Metaphorically, "sleep" means "death." Literally, "sleep" means "sleep." Wesley classified this poetic metaphor as "the language of heaven." The literal was a "barbarous manner of speaking." Metaphorical language is very good if not taken literally or not otherwise culture bound or misleading. Metaphors are the poetic language of worship, devotion, and heaven. They are the primary language of love and intrinsic evaluation. May we come to "yet understand this language"!

10. Wesley definitely thought that all Scriptures (as in Romans 8:28-30 and Ephesians 1:3-6) that affirm or imply predestination are incompatible with God's own goodness, morality, love, justice, and mercy. Here we have his most conspicuous case of Scripture interpreting Scripture, that is, of fundamental texts that deny or reinterpret other texts. Because predestination texts are grossly unethical and unconscionable, they are just plain wrong and should not be understood literally or regarded as infallibly true. What such scriptures mean is a matter of interpretation, but many morally and spiritually offensive biblical texts, along with those on predestination, seem quite clear. Predestination, Wesley declared, is "grounded on such an interpretation of texts . . . as flatly contradicts all the other texts . . ." especially "all those particular texts which expressly declare, 'God is love.'"³² Logically, where some scriptures, like "God is love," are regarded as more fundamental or true than others, their contradictions must be false. If loving Scriptures ever conflict with unloving Scriptures, those affirming God's love and goodness are always more basic.

³¹Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, John 11:11.

³²Wesley, "Free Grace," *Works*, 3, 552.

Wesley cited *many* predestination texts, which, by the way, are quite substantial. He also acknowledged that these texts can be plausibly *interpreted* as affirming God's predestination of everything, including who will and who will not be saved and go to heaven. His judgment was that *these texts and interpretations are simply wrong!* Why? Because predestination makes God not merely unloving, but downright malicious. Predestination texts turn God into a devil! Any such text "destroys all his attributes at once. It overturns both his justice, mercy, and truth. Yea, it represents the most holy God as worse than the devil; as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust."³³ The most fundamental Christian truth is, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). That is the text that properly "interprets" all other scripture.

Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace" was composed and preached to combat George Whitfield's Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. It clearly states his hermeneutical principle of love for interpreting all biblical texts: "*No Scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works.*"³⁴ In dealing with current "hot button" social issues, Wesleyans today would do well to note that Wesley deliberately disregarded all biblical texts (metaphorical or not) that are incompatible with God's goodness and love. We should constantly remember, "*All who love are of God.*" All texts suggesting otherwise are non-literal or otherwise fallible, so there really is at least "one falsehood in that book," maybe more. How do we identify them? Look for whatever is absurd or unloving. That is how we tell the difference between what is after the manner of men and what is after the manner of God.

11. A final example of rejecting the clear meaning of a biblical text in the name of love is what Wesley said about Malachi 1:2-3 and Romans 9:13, both of which say that God loved Jacob but hated Esau.

The assertors of this doctrine [predestination] interpret that text of Scripture, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," as implying that God in a literal sense hated Esau and all the reprobated from eternity. Now what can possibly be a more flat contradiction than this, not only to the whole scope and tenor of Scripture, but also to all those particular texts which expressly declare, "God is love?"³⁵

³³Wesley, "Free Grace," *Works*, 3, 555.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 556.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 552.

Despite the very obvious literal meaning of this text, Wesley absolutely refused to accept or believe it at face value. He clearly regarded it as fallible and false, taken literally. But how else can we take it? Its meaning is very clear. Wesley did not even try to re-word or interpret it in a loving way. As far as Wesley was concerned, "God . . . hated Esau" was simply untrue because it is unloving. Are there any other unloving things in the Bible?

To generalize Wesley's values-based position on absurd-because-unloving biblical words, phrases, and sentences: *No biblical text is true, literally or otherwise, if it is incompatible with God's love, justice, mercy, and goodness.* Such "truth" would be the ultimate absurdity! As Wesley acknowledged, "There are some Scriptures which more immediately commend themselves to every man's conscience" than others.³⁶ Here, conscience is the judge of Scripture, as Scripture is of itself.

In many other instances,³⁷ Wesley explicitly identified scriptural expressions as "figurative," "analogical," or "after the manner of men," and deliberately advised against taking them literally. The eleven examples given thus far well confirm that Wesley was no biblical literalist or infallibilist. He also applied his hermeneutics of love to many other morally and spiritually perplexing problems in the Bible, but that is a story told elsewhere.³⁸

Wesley firmly insisted that *we should not regard any biblical texts as literally true or infallible if they are absurd or otherwise logically or rationally incompatible with the main love-themes of the Bible.* No list of Wesley's basic love themes is likely to be complete, but here are some of the most obvious and important instances. All of these are more carefully and fully elucidated elsewhere, as the footnotes below indicate.

³⁶Wesley, "On Charity," *Works*, 3, 292.

³⁷See Wesley, "On the Sabbath," *Works*, 4, 272-273; "Self-Denial," *Works*, 2, 245; "The Important Question," *Works*, 3, 183; "The Reward of the Righteous," *Works*, 4, 402; "A Call to Backsliders," *Works*, 3, 215; "Of the Church," *Works*, 3, 53; "On Knowing Christ After the Flesh," 3, 99; "The New Creation," *Works*, 2, 508-509; "The Great Assize," *Works*, 1, 358-359; "In What Sense We Are To Leave the World," *Works*, 3, 145. For other instances, search Wesley's *Works* for "absurdity," "the manner of men," "figurative," "analogical," and related terminology.

³⁸See Edwards, *John Wesley's Values—And Ours* for well documented and detailed examples of how Wesley applied his hermeneutics of non-absurdity and love to such issues as slavery, 162-163, allowing women to speak (preach) in church, 163, treating women as "agreeable playthings," 163, womens' absolute obedience to their husbands, 163-164, etc.

1. God is love. Love is God's most important perfect-making attribute, not reason, as Classical theologians had it.³⁹

2. God is a Universalist who loves, wills to save, and gives prevenient grace to everyone, everywhere, of every religion, even while yet sinners.⁴⁰ But people are free to refuse God's universal grace.

3. Jesus came to show us how to love and how much God loves the world.⁴¹

4. Because he first loved us,⁴² we should love God with all that is in us, and we should love every person, indeed every creature that God has made,⁴³ as we love ourselves. We should think, feel, choose, and act accordingly. That is the essence of Christian ethics.⁴⁴

5. Salvation, now present, involves the restoration of the dominance of love in our souls, the rebirth within us of the image of God, understood primarily as the image of love.⁴⁵

6. Sanctification, saint-making, which takes forever, is the ongoing process of striving for and gradually achieving perfection in love, both here and hereafter.⁴⁶ This involves both God's help and our cooperation. Absolute perfection is absolute love, "entire sanctification," which some achieve in this world, Wesley thought. Yet, obviously, most of us are still striving for it.

Wesley defined a "Methodist" as "one who has 'the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him'; one who 'loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength.'"⁴⁷ He defined an "almost Christian" as one who

³⁹Ibid., 37-49, 191-193.

⁴⁰Ibid., 61-64, 152-155, 186-189.

⁴¹Ibid. References to "Christ" and "Jesus" are scattered throughout the book. See the Index.

⁴²Ibid., 54-55.

⁴³This includes animals who, Wesley thought, we should also do unto as we would be done unto. For details on Wesley's complex and for the most part incredibly advanced thoughts about animals and our moral duties to them see: Ibid., 73-82.

⁴⁴Ibid. The whole book is relevant here, especially 200-208.

⁴⁵Ibid., 57-64, 179-185, 191-194. Wesley had a very complex understanding of "the image of God," but he was one of the earliest theologians to insist on the priority of love in that image. Classical theologians insisted on the priority of reason as the image of God in us.

⁴⁶Ibid., Ch. 5.

⁴⁷Wesley, "The Character of a Methodist," *Works*, 9, 35.

either does little more than believe all the doctrines of Christian orthodoxy, which even the devils do, or else one who excels in good works while manifesting little else of true Christianity. An "almost Christian" may have well-developed Christian systemic and/or extrinsic values, but not Christian intrinsic values.

To explain this a bit, systemic values are beliefs, laws, or conceptual values of some kind. Wesley thought that the devils in hell fully affirm and have faith in all orthodox Christian doctrines, but they act hatefully, not lovingly. Externally, they do not act in ethical ways; thus they lack in extrinsic Christian moral values. Internally, they lack love; thus they fail in internal Christian intrinsic values. So do many highly dogmatic and legalistic Christians who equate saving faith with nothing more than believing the right rules and doctrines, but who do not *act* or *feel* in Christian ways. They value what Wesley called "opinions" more than good works, or people, or God; and their "hearts" are all wrong.

By contrast, worldly persons (who prevail in human societies) are not much into beliefs, theories, and orthodoxy. They just want worldly prosperity and success, and they will believe almost anything that "works" for them. Some of them respond to the "prosperity gospel" and act on Christian extrinsic moral values because they regard them as efficient means to selfish worldly ends. Viewed externally, they may look and act like altogether Christians, (as Kierkegaard and many others understood). Systemically, they are guided by the right "commandments" or rules of behavior. Extrinsically, in practice they obey these commandments. They consistently do all the right things, but not from love, and not as means to Christian or unselfish ends. Internally, they lack Christian motives and tempers. They act morally "because it pays," "because it is good business," because it will bring "prosperity," because of self-interested "reciprocal altruism," or because doing so is basic to an egoistic "social contract." They fall short of inner intrinsic Christian motives, dispositions, virtues, and values.

An "altogether Christian," by contrast, manifests all three dimensions of Christian values, properly developed and prioritized. This is an ongoing process of striving for and practicing perfection in all three dimensions of value. He or she has the right faith⁴⁸ and does the right thing⁴⁹ from love,⁵⁰ that is, through "faith working by love."⁵¹

⁴⁸Edwards, Ch. 4.

⁴⁹Ibid., Ch. 3.

⁵⁰Ibid., 142-146.

⁵¹Wesley, "The Almost Christian," *Works*, 1, 131-141.

Given the dominance of love themes in Wesley's whole theology, we should not be surprised to discover that love was his principal guide to interpreting the Scriptures. When two scriptures are in conflict, which one comes out on top? The love scriptures. In light of what has been said, Wesley's claim that "All Scripture is infallibly true,"⁵² must be understood to apply only with significant qualifications. Biblical language is infallibly and literally true only if it is not absurd, which means: not contradicted by more fundamental scriptural texts, not construed literally when metaphorical, not misleadingly metaphorical, not oversimplified or greatly exaggerated, not culture bound, not contrary to reason and experience, and not ethically unconscionable and unloving. It really does not matter if the Scriptures are errant and fallible as long as they motivate us to love and show us how, who, and what to love. Wesley did not name his "Quadrilateral;" Albert Outler did. And Wesley may have suggested otherwise, but in dealing with Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience in actual practice, Scripture was not always absolutely first and foremost—except for "God is love" and the love commandments.

When interpreting the Scriptures, Wesleyans today would be well advised to follow and promote Wesley's own hermeneutical guidelines. Our churches would be much stronger, saner, and more growing, effective, peaceful, harmonious, confessional, fulfilling, compassionate, and loving if we did. And if we did, our Wesleyan churches might not split apart, and our divinity schools would not fire some of our most promising and competent theologians.

⁵²Wesley, "The Means of Grace," *Works*, 1, 388. For a book-length analysis of the themes developed in this and the two preceding paragraphs in a much broader Christian context, one not centered on Wesley, see Rem B. Edwards, *Spiritual Values and Evaluations*, (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2012).

“LO! FOR US THE WILDS ARE GLAD”: CHARLES WESLEY’S PROCLAMATION OF ISAIAH

by

David M. Stark

In his study of Charles Wesley’s preaching, Randy Maddox reports, “There are over 1350 occasions where we can identify with some confidence the text on which Charles Wesley preached. Of these occasions, the book on which he preached most often was Isaiah (about 210 times, or 15% of the total)!”¹ While we do not have manuscripts of these sermons—Charles Wesley was primarily an extemporaneous preacher—we do have Wesley’s collected hymns. As other scholars have shown, these hymns were written near the time Wesley preached on the same text.² They serve a similar exegetical and experiential function as the sermon.³

¹A great debt of thanks is owed to Randy Maddox for his help in directing this project. Randy Maddox, “Digging Deep Into the Mine: Charles Wesley and the Bible” *Proceedings of the Charles Wesley Society* 15 (2011): 15-40, 30.

²For instance, in the 1740 edition of *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, there are hymns on Isaiah 35, 45, 55, and 64. At the same time, records show that Charles was preaching from these texts in 1739 and 1740. Isa. 35: (9/4/39; 10/1/39), Isa. 45: (10/28/39; 5/4/40; 8/3/40), and Isa. 55: (9/24/39; 4/7/40; 6/16/40) (*The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A. Vol 1.* S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. and Kenneth Newport, eds. (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2008). There is no evidence of his sermons on Isa. 64 until 7/26/41. Concurrent preaching and hymn writing seems to have been Charles’s pattern for most of his ministry. While writing about the controversy over Christian perfection in the early to mid 1760’s, Charles directed Joseph Clowney to read his hymns from this period as illustrative of his “private judgment and mind” on the matter (John R. Tyson, *Assist Me to Proclaim: The Life and Hymns of Charles Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 250).

³So Tyson asserts: “In many instances the hymns amount to poetical commentaries on specific Bible verses. . . . Often the sermon text that Wesley contemplated for the next day’s engagement became, in his meditative preparation, the point of departure for a hymn. He subsequently sang the hymn before the congregation or multitude (if they gathered outdoors), to announce the beginning of the evangelistic service. It was ‘given out’ to the people by singing it in a dialogue format, as Wesley ‘lined it out’ for them and they sang it back to him” (252-3).

And, they were often used within Wesley's own preaching.⁴ Thus, by attending to the hymns on Isaiah one can gain insight into the theological and rhetorical significance of the book in Wesley's preaching. What this essay will show is that for Charles Wesley, the book of Isaiah became an experiential word that spoke to present circumstances and engaged the fullness of God.

1. Isaiah as Experiential Word

One of the reasons Charles Wesley may have drawn heavily from Isaiah is that the book seems to have facilitated his own experience of God. While suffering through a trying ministry in Georgia, Wesley journals about reading Isaiah 51 and feeling "renewed in confidence."⁵ The next day he writes, "I find the Scripture an inexhaustible fund of comfort," and, as proof, he cites Isaiah 50.⁶ Obviously, Isaiah was not the only scripture through which Wesley experienced God's presence. Nevertheless, it is striking how frequently he experiences something of God as a result of reading from this prophetic book. For instance, on November 9, 1736, Wesley reports finding no rest. Then, he reads Isaiah 48:9 and writes, "My soul immediately returned to its rest."⁷ Near the moment of his spiritual transformation—May 21, 1738—Wesley reads Isaiah 40:1 and noted, "I

⁴c.f. Wesley's journal entry on August 26, 1739: "I called upon them in Christ's words, 'Come unto me, all that are weary' [Matt. 11:28]. The tears of many testified that they were ready to enter into that rest. God enabled me to lift up my voice like a trumpet, so that all distinctly heard me. I concluded with singing an Invitation to Sinners" (*Manuscript Journal*, Vol. 1. 190). See also Thomas Marriott, "Wesley Papers," *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*; Jun 1847; 3; in *British Periodicals* 546-8.

⁵Sunday, March 28, 1736: "In my walk~~ed~~ at noon I was full of heaviness. Complained to God that I had no friend but Him, and even in Him could now find no comfort. Immediately I received power to pray, then opening my Bible read as follows: 'Hearken unto me, ye that seek the Lord. Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn . . . Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their reviling[s]. Awake, awake . . . flee away. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die . . . and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor?' [Isa. 51:1-13] After reading this no wonder I found myself renewed in confidence" (*Manuscript Journal*, Vol. 1. 16).

⁶Isa. 50:7b-9a: "I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?" (*Manuscript Journal*, Vol. 1. 17).

⁷*Manuscript Journal*, Vol. 1. 62.

now found myself at peace with God. . . ."⁸ The next day, Wesley reports being "greatly strengthened" by Isaiah 43. In fact, Wesley regularly records such powerful encounters throughout his journal.⁹

Such experiences were something Wesley sought to foster in his hearers. As John Tyson explains, "Wesley's hymns, like his sermons, were intended not simply to narrate evangelical doctrines and experience, but to *induce* them."¹⁰ In fact, one of the aspects of proclamation that Wesley looked for in evaluating lay preachers was the extent to which they could induce an experience of the power of God. Thus, in the summer of 1751 as Wesley examines a lay preacher, he writes, "His false English and low vulgar, ridiculous expressions, I pass over, but with my strictest observation *I could not perceive one word that was accompanied with the power of God.*"¹¹ Clearly, fostering an experience of the power of God was central to Wesley's understanding of the role of preaching.

Homiletician, Henry Mitchell, asserts that by speaking to the human senses through images and pictures the preacher is better able to lead his

⁸*Manuscript Journal*, Vol. 1. 108.

⁹For further examples see: Isa. 43 as word to not fear (5/25/38). Isaiah 30:18-19 as "oracle" to guide Miss Claggett (5/28/38). Opened Isaiah for a "sign"; read Isa. 45 about seed justified (6/7/38). Asked for a "sign"; found "answer" in Isa. 54:7 (9/16/39). Note also that these experiences are both personal and corporate. Once, while trying to cut short the proclamation of Howell Harris (because of his "ungenerousness"), Wesley journals: "I asked again, 'Would you have my brother Harris proceed, or would you not? If you would hear him, I would be silent all night.' Again they forbade me in strong words upon which I gave out, Break forth into joy Your Comforter sin, etc. [Isa. 52, Part II, HSP 1742]. They did break forth as the voice of many waters or mighty thunderings. O what a burst of joy was there in the midst of us!" ("June 28, 1741," *Manuscript Journal*, Vol. 1. 316). Again, while preaching at the Foundery on Sunday, June 24, 1750, Charles records: "My text was, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord' [Isa. 40:1], and his consolations were not small with us. At the Sacrament they abounded. Pour Mrs C— told me she was in an agony, the pangs of labour nothing to what she felt. I believe God owned me more this day on account of one who, in an abusive letter, had affirmed, that the Lord was departed from me" (*Manuscript Journal*, Vol 2. 596). Clearly, an experience of the words of Scripture was an important aspect of Wesley's encounter with Isaiah. As he notes in his journal on Thursday, November 10, 1748: "Expounded Isaiah 35 at the Foundery, and lost all my burdens among my brethren" (*Manuscript Journal*, Vol 2. 559).

¹⁰Tyson, 57, emphasis added.

¹¹Tyson, 192, emphasis added.

or her hearers to experience the word.¹² We see this approach illustrated in Charles Wesley's proclamation of Isaiah where he draws heavily on imagery, metaphor, and sensory language. In his hymn on Isaiah 32:2 ("like streams of water in a dry place"), Wesley writes:

My soul, a dry and barren place,
Gasp for the cooling streams of grace;
O might they thro' the desert roll
Refreshment to my gasping soul!

Jesus, I thirst for thee, not thine,
I want the well of life divine;
The well of life divine thou art,
Spring up eternal in my heart.¹³

Wesley's proclamation of Isaiah speaks of moving out of dry, barren places. It induces a longing in the listener for cool streams. We are led to *feel* the gasp in our souls that is the need for Christ. Assessing the whole of Wesley's hymns, Tyson asserts, "Charles's verses are full of graphic images and language. His phrases are short and well chosen—full of color and action—and they communicate in vivid word pictures the author's excitement and emotion."¹⁴

What Tyson observes of Wesley's sensory-laden hymns seems especially appropriate of those based on Isaiah. Many of the images that color Wesley's language are those prevalent in the book of Isaiah itself. Within his journal, Wesley regularly refers to Isaianic metaphors such as "wolf/lamb" (3/18/40; 9/22/40; 7/18/43; 10/15/46; 2/25/47), "seed/remnant" (6/7/38; 6/9/40; 11/2/46; 1/11/47; 2/1/47), "wilderness" (9/4/39; 5/4/40; 9/16/44), and "eyes/ears" (9/4/39; 9/24/39; 5/7/40). He also frequently draws on the "arm of the Lord" (c.f. Isa. 52:10), "waters" (c.f. Isa. 55:1), and "eagles" (c.f. Isa. 40:31). Furthermore, both of Charles's

¹²Henry Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching: Revised Edition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008) 19.

¹³"1018. Isaiah xxxii. 2." *Scripture Hymns*, 1762.

¹⁴Tyson, 267. Compare this report of Charles Wesley's preaching with William Pipes study of "Old Time Negro Preaching," which he says features short words, simple elliptical sentences, slang, dialect, metaphor, practical example, narrative, and a little poetic prose—words that are meant to be heard rather than read (*Say Amen, Brother! Old Time Negro Preaching: A study in American Frustration* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 141.

"favorite" Isaianic passages—Isaiah 35:1-10 and 55:1¹⁵—prominently feature imagery and sensory language.¹⁶

A second technique typically used for inducing experience in proclamation is the use of first person pronouns. Mitchell asserts these pronouns *must* be present in preaching if the proclamation is to be experienced as real. First person pronouns invite hearers to conjure "vicarious experiences."¹⁷ Again, Charles Wesley's practice seems to illustrate the point. For instance, with his hymn on Isaiah 26:13-14, Wesley accentuates the first person by transforming the text's lone reference to "us" into a veritable soliloquy:

1 O Lord, my God, with shame I own That other lords have sway'd,
Have in my heart set up their throne, And abject I obey'd.

4 But ended is the shameful hour, Th' usurper's reign is past,
Blasted their strength, o'return'd their power, And I am sav'd at last.

6 Those other lords no more are mine, No more their slave am I,
I tread them down with strength divine, I all my sins defy.¹⁸

Joanna Cruickshank observes of Wesley's hymnology, "The repeated use of the first person encourages the reader or singer to 'own' the experience described in the hymn, interpreting it in the context of their own experience."¹⁹ Indeed, as Wesley records in his journals, his hymnic and homiletic proclamations of Isaiah lead others to own the words they hear. For instance, Wesley reports on October 19, 1739: "Mrs Chad informs me she received remission of sins some time ago, *in* Isaiah 53, and has had continual joy ever since."²⁰ Again, Wesley journals on February 28, 1748:

¹⁵Though the records are incomplete, it is clear that Wesley preached from Isaiah 35 and 55:1 at least 20 times each (Maddox, "Digging Deep"), 30.

¹⁶Isa 35:1-10: "wilderness/desert," "singing," "weak hands/feeble knees," "fearful heart," "eyes/ears," "waters," and "highway." Isa 55:1: "thirsts," "waters," "eat," and "buy wine and milk without money."

¹⁷Mitchell, 22.

¹⁸"Isaiah xxvi. 13, 14," HSP 1742. Note that every one of the eight verses prominently features first-person singular pronouns. The other verses are simply omitted for space.

¹⁹Cruickshank, 31. Agreeing with Marshall and Todd, *English Congregational Hymns*, 79, Cruickshank adds: "the hymns show 'not the expressive venting of feeling but rather the evangelical directing of feeling'" (25).

²⁰*Manuscript Journal*, Vol. 1, 216, emphasis added.

Expounded Isaiah 35, and the word was with power, as at the beginning. Many cried under it, and one woman, [said] "I have found forgiveness this moment!" I spake with her afterwards at our sister Baker's, and she told me she was just before quite sunk down in sorrow, when a light was darted into her heart. "It set me a trembling," she added, "and, soon after, a joy came such as I never felt before. I am quite another creature. I am so light I cannot express it."²¹

Notice in these reports that the hearers echo the preacher's metaphorical language and use of the first person. It is not simply that the preacher tailored his message to the audience.²² Rather, Charles Wesley seems to design his proclamations so that the audience will experience something in and through his words.²³

2. Isaiah as A Word for Today

A second and related move Wesley makes is to locate in scripture a word that speaks (in)to present circumstances. Again, Isaiah proves to be a fruitful source for such proclamations. Wesley sees in these prophetic texts a way of speaking about suffering. Thus, on July 23, 1743, after a mob led by the mayor's son assailed the Methodists in St. Ives, Wesley opened his Bible and preached from Isaiah 54: "Thou shalt not be put to shame. . . . No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper."²⁴ The next year, while Charles was preaching in an upper room in Leeds, the floor collapsed. Over one hundred people were injured, including a teenager who broke his leg in two places. The teenager had come to make a disturbance, but after the floor collapsed he kept saying, "I will be good, I will be good." When things settled down, Wesley reports preaching from Isaiah 30:13: "Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant."²⁵

²¹*Manuscript Journal*, Vol. 2, 523. (For further examples see f.n. 4 and 5.)

²²Tyson reports of Wesley: "he always tried to tailor his message to his audience" (65).

²³The designed effect is what Wesley reports happening to John Hooper at Baptist Mills. Hooper "saw with the eye of faith our Lord as interceding for him with his Father. *The word by which faith came* was, 'Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands' [Isa. 49:16]" ("October 30, 1739," *Manuscript Journal*, Vol. 1, 219, emphasis added). "The word by which faith came"—that is the experience that Charles designs for his audiences through his hymnic and homiletic proclamations.

²⁴Tyson, 145.

²⁵"March 14, 1744," *Manuscript Journal* Vol 2, 395.

These unique occurrences and interpretations are part of a larger pattern in Charles Wesley's proclamation. As Cruickshank explains, many of Wesley's hymns "provided early Methodists with a model of how to suffer in particular situations."²⁶ Thus with Isaiah, Wesley regularly encouraged Methodists to view persecution as an embodiment of Isaiah's vision about wolves and lambs.²⁷ In a hymn based on Isaiah 11:6-7 Wesley proclaims:

Cruel as wild beasts we are,
'Till vanquish'd by thy mercy's power,
Men, like wolves, each other tear, And their own flesh devour.
But if thou pronounce the word That forms our souls again,
Love and harmony restor'd Throughout the earth shall reign;
When thy wondrous love they feel, The human savages are tame,
Ravenous wolves, and leopards dwell, And stable with the lamb.²⁸

Isaiah's metaphors seem to speak directly to the experience of Charles Wesley and his fellow Methodists. Open air preaching becomes an instantiation of Isaiah's vision of a way in the wilderness.²⁹ Thus Charles Wesley versifies Isaiah 42 to proclaim:

1046 [Isaiah 42:11-12]
1 Ye desarts so wild your offerings bring,
Your God reconcil'd ye villagers sing;
Exult in his passion ye rude mountaineers,
For lo, your salvation with Jesus appears!³⁰

²⁶Cruickshank, 108.

²⁷Typical is the entry in Charles' journal from February 25, 1747: "I often told my companions, 'Now God is at work for us. He is contriving our escape. He can turn these leopards into lambs, can command the heathen to bring his children on their shoulders, and make our fiercest enemies the instruments of our deliverance'" (*Manuscript Journal Vol. 2*, 494-5). See also March 18, 1740: "Preached at the usual place, from Isaiah 11[:6], 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,' etc. Set my eyes on the man that had been most violent with me on Sunday, and testified my love. He thanked me and seemed melted" (*Manuscript Journal Vol. 1*, 224-5).

²⁸Hymn #989 *Scripture Hymns* (1762). An earlier expression of this idea can be found in the last verse of Charles' hymn on Matthew i.21: "Pour but thy blood upon the flame, Meek, and dispassionate, and mild, the leopard sinks into a lamb, and I become a little child" (*Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1740). See also Wesley's hymn from 1772: "Soon as of thee possess'd I am, The leopard sinks into a lamb" (*Preparation for Death* [1772] Hymn XXXIII).

²⁹c.f. journal entries 9/4/39; 5/4/40; 9/16/44.

³⁰*Scripture Hymns* (1762). See also 1038 [Isaiah 41:18-19]: "2 There in the smiling wilderness, My fertilizing Spirit shall dwell; And plant the fair Elysian trees, Whose leaves the sickly nations heal."

Another common Isaianic image that Wesley applies to the ministry of the Methodists is that of a preserved seed or remnant. For instance, in the Summer of 1740 Charles describes how the “stillness controversy” had divided the Fetter Lane Society and nearly destroyed it. However, he writes, “we have gathered up between twenty and thirty from the wreck, and transplanted them to the Foundery. *The remnant has taken root downward, and bore fruit upwards* [Isaiah 37:31-32]. A little one has become a thousand.”³¹ More than two decades later, Wesley continued to draw on this imagery. With a hymn on Isaiah 1 Wesley proclaims:

950 [Isa 1:9]
 Had not the Lord reserv'd a seed,
 A remnant sav'd by sovereign grace,
 His judgments shower'd upon our head,
 Had swallow'd up the British race,
 Sunk us beneath the ambient wave,
 And buried in a fiery grave.

Here Wesley makes a special point of highlighting that the seed, which he implies refers to those who practice religion like the Methodists, is the remnant in both the Church and in Britain.

The interesting point here is not that Wesley is inventing *a way* to make an ancient text speak into his contemporary circumstance. No, *Wesley is reading and preaching with the grain of Isaiah*. The argument Wesley makes about his faith and government is based on and correlative to the argument the book of Isaiah makes about Judean faith and politics. They have become corrupt and are judged by God, but there is hope through a holy remnant (c.f. Isa. 6:12-3).³²

Furthermore, Wesley's comments about people—who act as wolves/leopards but who can be transformed—is not far from the political and

³¹Cited in Tyson, 95, *emphasis added*. Again, in 1746, Charles frames ministry in the midst of opposition as a small remnant growing in a context of loss. He writes, “Sunday, November 2. Preached in the street, close to the popish chapel, from Isaiah 1:9, ‘Except the Lord of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom,’ etc. I put them in mind of their late consternation, and deliverance in answer to the mourning, praying few” (*Manuscript Journal* Vol. 2, 480).

³²See also, this hymn based on Isa 6:13: “Divided 'gainst itself so long How could a kingdom stand, Had we not a Redeemer, strong To prop our tottering land? Had he not left himself a seed Who deprecate the woe, Who day and night for mercy plead, And still suspend the blow” (“Hymn VII. For Concord,” *Hymns for the Nation* (1781), 11-12).

religious vision of Isaiah. The two texts that feature wolves are Isa. 11:1-10 and 65:17-25. While both foreshadow elements of new creation, the former text speaks about a change in political leadership (i.e., 11:10: "the root of Jesse"), and the latter highlights that temple worship will be different (i.e., 65:25: "they will not hurt or destroy on my holy mountain").

Indeed, both Isaiah and Charles Wesley understand their work as that of reform. This is a work that proclaims judgment and hope. It acknowledges that there is suffering and persecution, but it also sees deliverance like water in the desert. This reform may start with a small band of faithful followers, but that seed will grow into a great movement. These connections between Isaiah and the Methodist movement show that Charles Wesley's use of Isaiah is something more than creative application (though there is some of that). Rather, Wesley was a close reader of Isaiah and found in its imagery and theology a pattern that was being enacted (again) in the eighteenth century Methodist movement.

3. Isaiah as a Word that Engages the Fullness of God

Finally, at the head of this movement is God. John Tyson describes Wesley's approach to the Bible as primarily Christ-centered.³³ Indeed, there is significant evidence to confirm this thesis.³⁴ Typically, Wesley uses "Jesus" to name and define what he means by "God."

However, Charles Wesley seems to be doing more with Isaiah than merely discovering and describing Christ. Specifically, Wesley seems to be

³³"It mattered not where the biblical passage began; Charles's exposition of it found a Christ-centered focus and managed to preach full salvation (justification and sanctification) through it. Hence, he tended to 'evangelize the Old Testament,' and treat it as though it were contemporary with Christ and the New Testament church" (Tyson, 259).

³⁴For instance, in a hymn expounding Isaiah 2:17-18—a passage that does not even mention God, much less Christ—Wesley pens: "No inferior god we praise, No dependent deity; The whole Godhead we confess Resident, O Christ, in thee" (XXVI, *Trinity Hymns*, 1767). This hymn seems to be so Christologically focused as to approach condensing the God-head to the person of Christ. A second illustration of Charles's Christological interpretation of Isaiah lies in his exposition of Isaiah 44:6. Here he writes:

The King of saints, the Lord of hosts, Almighty to redeem,
In him his ransom'd people trusts The One great God supreme:
Jesus, thou art to us made known Fulness of deity:
There is no other God but One, No other God but thee
(*"III," Trinity Hymns*, 1767).

Here, Wesley seems to conclude that there is no other God but Jesus.

paying close attention to the details in the text. For instance, he notices that the book of Isaiah describes itself as sealed for a time. Modern redaction critics like Hugh Williamson make much out of this detail. For Williamson, the post-exilic “unsealing” of the book is what leads to the editing of chapters 1–39 and the creation of Deutero-Isaiah.³⁵ For Charles Wesley, the un-sealing of the book required a hermeneutical key. Thus, he writes on Isaiah 29:11 (“Read this; I cannot for it is sealed”):

Proud learning boasts its skill in vain
The sacred oracles t’ explain,
It may the literal surface shew,
But not the precious mine below;
The saving sense remains conceal’d,
’Till by the Spirit of faith reveal’d,
The book is still unread, unknown,
And open’d by the Lamb alone.³⁶

This reading is still Christological, but it also wrestles to interpret some of Isaiah’s cues while highlighting the role of the Spirit.

In his essay on Charles Wesley’s preaching, Randy Maddox describes Wesley’s hermeneutic as growing “to include challenging any suggestion that the emphasis on grace and forgiveness in the New Testament should be posed against emphasis on Christian faithfulness to God’s ways—as embodied in the Old Testament law and echoed in New Testament writers like James.”³⁷ As Wesley comes to value the Old Testament as a source that illuminates God’s ways, he moves beyond what might be described as a simple christological hermeneutic. Thus, he can say of his quietist opponents in the 1740’s: “They all reject the whole Old Testament, and most of the New. . . . [but] Let all scripture (seeing as all is given by inspiration of God) be *equally* dear to you.”³⁸

A surprising number of Wesley’s *Trinity Hymns* (1767) draw inspiration from Isaiah. In one example, Wesley reflects on God’s use of “we”

³⁵Williamson argues that Deutero-Isaiah (DI) was influenced by Proto-Isaianic (PI) material, that DI saw the PI material as sealed until his time, and that DI linked with PI material to highlight the fact that the foreseen time had come (Hugh Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah’s Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1994), 240.

³⁶“1008,” *Scripture Hymns*, 1762.

³⁷Maddox “Digging Deep,” 28-9.

³⁸Maddox, “Digging Deep,” 29, citing Wesley letter to Grimsby Society and William and Elizabeth Blow (MARC, DDCW 6/32).

and upon the announcement of the tri-fold “holy” in Isaiah 6. He proclaims,

1 Hail holy, holy, holy Lord, Whom One in Three we know,
By all thy heavenly host ador’d, By all thy church below!
One undivided Trinity With triumph we proclaim:
Thy universe is full of thee, And speaks thy glorious name.

2 Thee, holy Father, we confess, Thee, holy Son adore,
Thee, Spirit of true holiness, We worship evermore:
Thine incommunicable right, Almighty God, receive,
Which angel-quires and saints in light And saints embodied give.

3 Three Persons equally divine We magnify and love:
And both the quires ere long shall join To sing thy praise above:
Hail holy, holy, holy Lord, (Our heavenly song shall be)
Supreme, essential One ador’d In co-eternal Three.³⁹

This hymn shows that while Wesley clearly understands Christ to be present in the temple with Isaiah, so too are the Holy Spirit and God, “the holy Father.”

In another *Trinity Hymn*, Wesley articulates something of the economy of God by reflecting on Isaiah 48:16, “And now the LORD GOD, and his SPIRIT hath sent ME”:

1 Jehovah is but One Eternal God and true:
The Father sent the Son, His Spirit sent him too,
The everlasting Spirit fill’d, And Jesus our salvation seal’d.

2 Senders and sent we praise, With equal thanks approve
Th’ economy of grace, The Tri-une GOD of love,
And humbly prostrated before The One Thrice holy God, adore!⁴⁰

Here, Wesley reflects on a passage that seems to come from a divine voice who speaks of the Lord God and “his Spirit.” These observations lead Wesley to announce the Trinity.

In a final example, Wesley seems to be so guided by the text that he nearly moves beyond traditional Trinitarian theology to equate Jehovah and Christ.

1 Bridegroom of his church, and head, And husband is the Lord,
By the universe he made Acknowledg’d and ador’d,
The One God for ever blest, Supreme, omnipotent I AM,
God made flesh, and manifest On earth in Jesus’ name.

³⁹“CIX,” *Trinity Hymns* (1767).

⁴⁰“CII,” *Trinity Hymns* (1767).

2 Different from the Father then Is Christ another God?
 No: Jehovah dwelt with men, And bought us by his blood:
 Christ the true Jehovah was, And is, and shall be evermore:
 God expiring on a cross, Let earth and heaven adore.⁴¹

This hymn is based on Isaiah 54:5 and John 3:29. Both passages speak of a bridegroom. Isaiah links that figure with the Lord of Hosts. John, of course, points to Jesus. Wesley, however, stays neutral. He does not rule out the claim of either biblical text. Rather, he conflates them.

Thus, what is central to Wesley's exposition of Isaiah is not a simple Christology. Indeed Charles Wesley would not follow what Flemming Rutledge has recently labeled, the "Jesus *kerygma*"—a teaching that "focuses almost exclusively on the person and teachings of Jesus . . . [and] neglects the God of Israel."⁴² Rather as Isaiah guides his exposition, Wesley can read with Christ, but just as often he will move beyond a simple Christology to engage the fullness of the Triune God.

Conclusion

As the text most frequently proclaimed by Charles Wesley, Isaiah played an important theological and rhetorical role in Wesley's life and ministry. In many ways, Isaiah fits nicely within some of Wesley's regular practices and tendencies. Devotionally, Isaiah personally comforted and guided Wesley. Rhetorically, the book's rich metaphors and first-person language gave Wesley a handbook of sensory-laden speech that only strengthened his focus on experiential preaching. Theologically, Isaiah served as an easy example to illustrate the inspiration of God. Wesley could use Isaiah to articulate the nature of the Triune God and to demonstrate that what God has done in Christ is inseparable from what God has been doing throughout history, especially Old Testament history.

At the same time, Isaiah seems to shape Charles Wesley's understanding of the Methodist movement. The Methodists were the seed that God had planted, the remnant that will survive trying times. Field preaching is the way that blooms and bursts forth like water in the wilderness. Even opponents came to be seen as Isaiah's wolves—beasts that God would tame and transform.

In all these ways Isaiah shapes Charles Wesley's hymns and homilies. It is this book's language and theology that spoke to Wesley and was used

⁴¹"XI," *Trinity Hymns* (1767).

⁴²Flemming Rutledge, *And God Spoke to Abraham: Preaching from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 5.

by Wesley to speak to anyone who would hear, as he would say, “all the precious promises of the gospel, *summed up in Isaiah 35*”⁴³:

2 Lo! for us the wilds are glad,
All cheerful green arrayed;
Opening sweets they all disclose,
Bud and blossom as the rose.

5 See these barren souls of ours
Bloom, and put forth fruits and flowers,
Flowers of Eden, fruits of grace,
Peace, and joy, and righteousness.

6 We behold (the abjects we)
Christ th’incarnate Deity,
Christ in whom thy glories shine,
Excellence of strength divine.

9 God, your God, shall surely come,
Quell your foes, and seal their doom;
He shall come, and save you too:
We, O Lord, have found thee true!⁴⁴

⁴³“September 25, 1748,” *Manuscript Journal Vol. 2*, 552, emphasis added.

⁴⁴“Isaiah XXXV,” *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1740).

WESLEY, WORD, AND TABLE: THE RISE AND FALL OF EUCHARISTIC PRACTICE IN EARLY METHODISM

by

Mark H. Mann

Beginning in the early 1990s, when I was a student at a self-described “Wesleyan Holiness” seminary, one of the most startling realizations that my education has provided is clarity about the many differences between John Wesley’s theology and the theology and practices of those today who call themselves “Wesleyan.” Nowhere is this more evident than in the doctrine and practice of the sacraments, including the relationship between preaching and the sacrament of the Eucharist. For instance, Wesley affirmed the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist,¹ promoted regular and frequent attendance at the table,² and understood preaching within the church as a precursor to and preparation for being fed at the table. Meanwhile, many of those who call themselves Wesleyan have embraced a memorialist doctrine of the Eucharist, which we practice relatively infrequently (once a month at best), while emphasizing what Jim Fitzgerald has called a ‘preaching centered’ worship and piety that has gener-

¹See John and Charles’ Wesleys preface to *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1945), which they excerpted from Brevint’s *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*. Real presence is also affirmed in many of the hymns. Take, for instance, Hymn IV: “Let all who truly bear the Saviour’s Name, Their faithful Hearts with us prepare, And eat the Pascal Lamb . . . By Faith his Flesh we eat. . . .” or Hymn CXVI which calls upon the Lord to ‘shew thy Real Presence here.’ Of course, this doesn’t mean ‘real presence’ in the same way that Catholics or Lutherans would affirm it. Anglican doctrine officially affirms that the sense in which Christ is present in the elements is a mystery. Ted Campbell seems to miss this point when arguing for a Calvinist reading of John Wesley in *Wesleyan Beliefs: Formal and Popular Expressions of the Core Beliefs of Wesleyan Communities* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 53-57.

²Wesley makes this clear in numerous places, including especially his sermon “The Duty of Constant Communion” (Sermon 101).

ally led to the marginalization and denigration of the Eucharist in worship.³

It is my contention that the marginalization of the Eucharist in much of contemporary Christianity is highly problematic for a variety of biblical, theological, and practical reasons. However, such is not the central aim of this paper. Instead, I wish to elucidate Wesley's convictions and teachings on the relationship between Word and Table, and therefore highlight the extent to which the beliefs and practices of his American successors mark a radical departure from Wesley. So, in what follows, I address first the Anglican context in which Wesley developed his convictions about the role of the Lord's Supper in worship, then Wesley's own attempts to incorporate these convictions within the Methodist movement, and, finally, developments in American Methodism subsequent to Wesley's death that ultimately marginalized the Eucharist and gave rise to the preaching-centric ecclesiology and piety we find in much of the Wesleyan movement today.

Anglican Ecclesiology and the Role of Preaching and the Eucharist

As anyone who has studied the history of the Church of England knows, it is very dangerous to say anything definitive about its teachings and practices. Certainly one may point to the 39 Articles and the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) which have, since 1563 and 1662 respectively, been a persistent mooring for Anglican theology and practice, but there has been anything but unanimity in how these should be interpreted and enforced. This is exactly what we should expect from an ecclesial tradition that defines itself both as a *via media* and as 'broad'! Nevertheless we may start by saying that Article 19 ('Of the Church') explicitly lays out a connection between Word and Table in stating that the church, in its most basic sense, is the "congregation of [the] faithful . . . in the which the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments [are] duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance. . . ."⁴ The BCP would likewise situate the chief role of preaching, at least when it comes to Sunday worship, in the

³James N. Fitzgerald, *Weaving a Rope of Sand: The Separation of the Proclamation of the Word and the Celebration of the Eucharist in the Church of the Nazarene* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999).

⁴This is also made clear in the BCP liturgy for which the sermon is situated within the larger worship service that culminates in the celebration of the Eucharist.

form of a homily preceding the celebration of the Eucharist,⁵ and Anglican canons would dictate that the faithful should be present at the table no less than three times a year. By Wesley's time, however, this minimum requirement had generally become the standard practice in most Anglican parishes, indicative of the generally low-church ebb that had set into church life in decades following the Glorious Revolution of 1688.⁶

Which is not to say that such practice was universally embraced. Early in the English Reformation, demonstrating the connections between Anglican theology and practice and those of Christian antiquity had been important for making the argument that the Church of England was the one holy catholic and apostolic church in England. Such a view would become especially important within the so-called 'high church' faction of the church, represented by such groups as the Caroline divines (e.g., William Laud and Jeremy Taylor) in the 17th Century and the Tractarians in the 19th.⁷ In the generation immediately preceding Wesley, it was the Non-Jurors who carried the high church banner. The Non-Jurors were a group of prominent bishops and priests who had opposed the Catholicism of James II, but then refused to sign an oath of allegiance to William and Mary because they understood this to contradict the oath that they had already made to James, who was still alive, albeit in exile. The Non-Jurors advocated a primitivism that looked to the early church as the model for sacramental theology and practice, which put them at odds with the lion's share of the church of their time. Although he had little patience for Non-Juror politics, John and Charles' father, Samuel, was nevertheless sympathetic to their primitivism and sacramentalism (advocating at least monthly Eucharistic observance) and exhorting his sons to embrace the same.⁸ The Non-Jurors also had many followers at Oxford at

⁵This would further be affirmed by Wesley in the orders for service that he would provide for the Methodists: a homily was to precede the administration of the Eucharist. Cf. Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 6ff, 120ff.

⁶Fitzgerald, *Weaving a Rope of Sand*, 53-55.

⁷I first began to consider the Anglican perspective on Wesley's sacramentology about a decade ago when reading the passing remark by an Anglican historian that Wesley was a key figure in the recovery of the Eucharistic practice in the Church of England as a kind of precursor to the Oxford Movement and its attempt to "recover" a High Church Anglicanism. Unfortunately, I did not note the source, and have since then never been able to find the quote again!

⁸See Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Abingdon: 1991), esp. 23-26.

the time the Wesley's sojourn there, which would have a marked impact on their own theology and practice.⁹

Word and Table in Early Methodism

We often speak of the movement spawned by the coming together of the Wesleys, Whitefield and other members of the Oxford Holy Club as the "evangelical revival." Given the emphasis on repentance and "heart religion" it was exactly that; but it was also so much more. It was also a sacramental revival, and this was evident from the very beginning. These first Methodists embraced, as Wesley's sermon title puts it, "the duty of constant communion."¹⁰ In this sermon, Wesley shows his primitivism by affirming that early Christians received the Eucharist as often as every day, and arguing that contemporary Christians should celebrate as often as possible as well. He and the fellow Holy Clubbers could actually imagine achieving such an ideal given their lives in a university town filled with churches and chapels, and in seeking to do so they received the nickname, to add to others, "the Sacramentarians." John Clayton, one of the Wesley's fellow Sacramentarians, would exert a special influence on the rest of the group in this respect, leading them in readings about early church theology and practice, and connecting them with some of the Manchester Non-Jurors, whose concerns were not merely for the frequency of Eucharistic practice, but also for reform of the liturgy based upon ancient Eucharistic practices.¹¹

Wesley would take what he had learned from Clayton and the Non-Jurors with him to Georgia, where his Savannah parish would become the proving ground for his emerging ecclesiological and sacramental convictions.¹² There, he would make revisions to the Eucharistic liturgy of the BCP and introduce weekly practice of the Eucharist during Sunday morning worship; all, it seems, with great success for the growth of his parish.¹³ However, Wesley would also introduce some practices that would get him into trouble and, ultimately, lead to his untimely departure

⁹This is all spelled out in great length and detail by Geordan Hammond in the first chapter ("John Wesley's Conception and Practice of Primitive Christianity") of his *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 13-41.

¹⁰Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion."

¹¹Hammond, 37-41.

¹²Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 34-40.

¹³Hammond, 37-41.

from Savannah—namely, his enforcement of a rarely used requirement that those wanting to communicate must have signed up beforehand. This practice would become especially problematic one ill-fated Sunday in August of 1737 when a certain young woman named Sophia Williamson failed to sign up to communicate but approached the table anyway.

What would transpire for John in the year following his return to England is typically viewed through the lens of his so-called “evangelical conversion” at Aldersgate, his subsequent embrace of “all the world as his parish,” and his attempts to take the gospel to all of the highways and byways of Britain. Thus the story gets told that, before Aldersgate, Wesley was a high church Anglican, but afterwards he became a low-church evangelical Methodist, a prototype of the 19th century Holiness movement evangelist. It is, however, far closer to the truth to say that, following Aldersgate, Wesley became something of an “evangelical sacramentarian”—that is, one who combined his pre-Aldersgate sacramentalism with his post-Aldersgate evangelicalism, in whose life, work, and teachings both Word (evangelical preaching) and Table (sacramental practice) would serve as dual foci around which the elliptical life of the church and church worship would revolve.

There are numerous instances in his life and work where Wesley’s enduring sacramentalism remains evident, the first of which came quite shortly after Aldersgate in his controversy and falling out with the Moravians. What Wesley had learned from his encounter with the Moravians was that believers are justified and assured of their salvation only by the grace of God given through faith. But, Wesley was troubled by the Quaker-like quietism of the Moravians, who had such an aversion to “works” that they advocated quietly waiting for direct assurance of salvation and rejected the notion that there are any practices through which grace may be mediated, including the sacraments. This was completely counter to Wesley’s belief in the means of grace, chief of which was the Lord’s Supper, which he often referred to as the “grand channel” of God’s grace.¹⁴ It was this difference that would ultimately lead Wesley to part ways with his Moravian friends.¹⁵

The enduring importance of the means of grace, for Wesley, would also play a significant role in the development in Methodist societies,

¹⁴John Wesley, “Sermon on the Mount—Discourse Six,” Sermon 53.

¹⁵See, among other places, Christopher J. Cocksworth, *Evangelical Eucharistic Thought in the Church of England* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 63-65.

classes, and bands. These are first articulated in the 1739 General Rules of the United Societies under the category of “ordinances of God,” the first three of which are “The Public Worship of God, The Ministry of the Word [and] the Supper of the Lord.” Wesley would press upon the Methodists that preaching by itself does not constitute true worship. As Wesley indicated in an address to the 1766 Methodist Conference, preaching at a worship service without the Lord’s Supper is an “essentially defective” form of worship.¹⁶ As Christopher Cocksworth points out, Wesley believed that the role of the Eucharist, as a means of grace,

was not merely to confirm the Word, [but] it actually could be the Word. . . . [Thus,] the extraordinary successes the Wesleys were seeing from their preaching ministries were overshadowed by the claim that the Eucharist has a functional superiority to the other means of grace, including the Word.¹⁷

This is why, throughout his life, Wesley would require that Methodists regularly attend their local parishes on Sundays to hear the Word preached and to receive Communion. Of course, this would create some tensions with local parish priests and bishops given the infrequency of Eucharistic practice in most of England at the time. This would have two results. First, in some areas the growth of Methodism exerted pressure on parish priests to celebrate communion more often than before, something that Wesley was keen to applaud.¹⁸ In other places, where official church attitudes were perhaps not so positive toward Methodism, Methodists began (sometime between 1739 and 1745) to celebrate the Lord’s Supper outside of the confines of the church.¹⁹ We find in Wesley’s journals, for instance, numerous accounts of Communion being served in Methodist meeting halls, chapels, and outdoor services. Often at such events there was a service of both Word and Table. An observer at one such service in Spitalfield in 1769 recounts:

¹⁶*Minutes of the Methodist Conferences* (London: 1812), 58. Cited in Fitzgerald, 74. Of course, there were other setting where preaching could be conducted without the Eucharist, but not in worship services.

¹⁷Cocksworth, 66.

¹⁸See, for instance, his October 11, 1764 journal entry in which discusses the rise and fall of attendance at a Norwich parish due to the frequency of Eucharistic administration.

¹⁹Wesley recounts his denial of extra-ecclesial Eucharistic practice in a 1739 journal entry (*Works* 19:472), but then in 1745 describes this practice as if it had been happening awhile (*Works* 20:111)

Today I learned for the first time to know Mr. John Wesley. . . . He preached today at the forenoon service in the Methodist Chapel . . . to an audience of more than 4000 people. His text was Luke 1:68. The sermon was short but eminently evangelical. He has not great oratorical gifts, no outward appearance, but he speaks clear and pleasant. After the Holy Communion, which in all English Churches is held with closed doors at the end of the preaching service, when none but the Communicants are usually present, and which here was celebrated very orderly and pathetic [sic].²⁰

Such services would easily garner Wesley criticism by Anglican leaders claiming that he was setting up an alternative church, but to his dying day Wesley would publically reject this notion.²¹ If we are to take Wesley's claims at face value, both the preaching and celebration of the Eucharist among Methodists were intended primarily for the reform and revitalization of the Church of England, the truest and most scriptural embodiment of the Church in all the world. He would also point out that he always encouraged Methodists first to receive communion in their local parishes and only ever when an ordained Anglican priest was the celebrant (although it was not unheard of for lay Methodist preachers to celebrate despite Wesley's refusal to condone this practice). In sum, regular Sunday services of Word and Table were the expected norms in the early decades of Methodism.

²⁰This is the account of a professor from Sweden, Johan Henrik Liden, which I have found cited in several sources, all of which appear to be drawing upon Richard Heitzenrater's *The Elusive Mr. Wesley* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1984), vol. 2, 87-88.

²¹See, for instance, a letter addressed to William Black and dated August 19, 1758, in which he states: "By all means proceed by common consent, and think not of *separating* from the Church of England. I am more and more confirmed in the judgment which our whole Conference past on that head in the year 1758." He explicates the judgment to which he refers in the pamphlet "Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England" (London: W. Strahan, 1758). This is not to say that Wesley never found warrant for some Methodists forge their own churches. And, honestly, many of his actions would betray openness to separation and even encourage the Methodists, especially in America, to move toward schism. Chief among these was the ordination of Thomas Coke and then Francis Asbury.

We also find the centrality of Eucharistic celebration in early Methodism evidenced in their hymnody. In 1745, John and Charles published “Hymns on the Lord’s Supper,” a collection of 146 hymns all intended to be used during communion celebration. The hymns were inspired by the Eucharistic theology of Richard Hooker, Jeremy Taylor and, especially, Daniel Brevint, whose 1673 “The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice’ had influenced the Wesleys’ views about the sacraments as ‘means of grace’ and was thus abridged as an introduction to the collection. According to Geordan Hammond, this was ‘the mostly widely used collection of Wesleyan hymns other than the General Collections, [demonstrating] that the Wesleys led a revival that was both sacramental and evangelical.’”²²

A further evidence of John Wesley’s Eucharistic-centered ecclesiology and spirituality, ironically, concerns the very actions Wesley made that would set the table for the final split between American Methodists and the Church of England and, thereby, allow for the split between Word and Table in American Methodism.²³ The War for Independence had left the American Methodists bereft of ordained clergy, for bishops and priests had been largely recalled to England during the colonial uprising. This meant that there were too few clergy to meet the regular sacramental needs of American Methodists. With the close of the war, and concerned that there were not enough priests in America ordained to deliver the Lord’s Supper to the Methodists, Wesley urged the bishop of London, who had episcopal oversight of the American church, to ordain and send new clergy to the United States. But the bishop was facing an ecclesiastical crisis. Since the 1534 Act of Supremacy, which officially established the Church of England, the “head” of the Church of England has been the English monarch.²⁴ But George III, the English king at the time, was no longer sovereign over the American colonies and, likewise, there was seri-

²²Hammond, 64-65. Hammond is agreeing with and commenting upon a similar sentiment expressed by J. Ernest Rattenbury, *Eucharistic Hymns*, 11, 150.

²³Cf. David Rainey, “The Established Church and Evangelical Theology: John Wesley’s Ecclesiology,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12:4 (October 2010) and Joseph Wood, *Tensions Between Evangelical Theology and the Established Church: John Wesley’s Ecclesiology* (University of Manchester Dissertation, 2012).

²⁴This would be changed to “governor” at the coronation of Elizabeth I because it was seen as scandalous that a woman would be the “head” of the church.

ous question as to whether the Bishop of London or any other English ecclesial hierarchy had any authority in the United States.²⁵

For this reason, Wesley's ordination of Coke and Asbury to be "General Superintendents" for the American Methodists should not necessarily be seen as an intentional and official act of schism because, in truth, there was no official Church of England in America from which to split. Indeed, why couldn't the Methodists be considered a proper expression of the Anglican heritage in America?²⁶ Demonstrating his desire to maintain liturgical continuity between the Church of England and American Methodism, in 1788 Wesley sent to the fledgling Methodist Episcopal Church a prayer book for the administration of their worship. The *Sunday Service of the Methodists* (SSM) was an abridged but largely faithful version of the BCP, with only a few minor additions, such as opportunities for extemporary prayer during worship.²⁷ Otherwise, the theology and liturgy of the original had been kept intact. Wesley also made a point to clarify his belief that the church is most centrally a Word and Table com-

²⁵The complexity of this situation is evident in the ordination of Samuel Seabury to be the first bishop of the fledgling Episcopal Church in America. Seabury, an avowed loyalist (for which he had spent time in prison during the war) was elected to be bishop in 1783 by a small group of Anglican priests still ministering in New England. However, to become a bishop according to Anglican canon law required ordination by three sitting bishops, thus requiring a return to Britain since there were no remaining bishops in America. It also required that he take an oath of allegiance to the king, which he could not do, now, as an American citizen. So, instead, he had to be ordained by three bishops in the Scottish Episcopal Church. This occurred in Aberdeen in November of 1784, just two months after Wesley ordained Thomas Coke, and resulted in accusations of schism very similar to those that Wesley and the Methodists would endure. Realizing the complexity of the situation, Parliament would eventually recognize Seabury's ordination, thus recognizing the Episcopal Church as the legitimate expression of Anglicanism in America. Cf. Robert W. Pritchard, *A History of the Episcopal Church*, 3rd revised edition (NY: Moorehouse Publishing, 2014), ch. 4.

²⁶In fact, there was considerable conversation between some Methodist and Episcopal leaders regarding reunion. On the Methodist side this was spearheaded by Thomas Coke and from the Episcopal by Bishop William White, with Coke claiming the John Wesley was fully behind the reunion and offering that all Methodists bishops would be ordained again by Episcopal bishops. Unfortunately, Wesley died, causing Coke to hurry back to Britain and most Methodists and Episcopalians (including both Francis Asbury and Samuel Seabury) were not keen to the idea. Cf. John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury & the Methodists* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 195-198.

²⁷Tucker, *American Methodist Worship*, 119-22.

munity “in which the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments [are] duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance . . .” and stress his hope that the Eucharist would be practiced at least every Sunday that an ordained minister was present.²⁸ Unfortunately, this would not be the case. The frequency of Eucharistic practice and use of the SSM would diminish in America, and the close relationship between Word and Table that Wesley had worked so hard to forge would begin to unwind almost immediately after his death.

The Shift to Preaching-Centered Worship in American Methodism

One might say that Wesley’s plans for Methodist worship in America to maintain the Anglican dual foci of Word and Table in worship were doomed to failure from the beginning. The first problem was geographical distance. Methodists in America, while looking to Wesley as their father in faith, simply did not have the kind of interaction with him that would allow Wesley to inculcate in them all that was important to him. Wesley had expressly forbidden Methodist preachers who were not ordained from administering the sacraments and had stressed that American Methodists, like those in Britain and Ireland, should regularly attend Sunday worship at Anglican churches. But, again, priests were few and far between in the colonies and often turned away Methodist communicants. The War for Independence only deepened the problem. Not only were there growing suspicions among Methodists toward Anglican priests for their allegiance to the crown (and, it should be mentioned, toward Wesley, who did not fully support the colonial cause), but nearly all Anglican clergy were recalled to England after the war began. So, for the entire duration of the war, there had been few priests to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, and Methodist worship by default became preaching-centered.²⁹ Moreover, many American Methodists had lost their taste for the kind of formality of the liturgical prayers that Wesley had included in SSM, preferring instead to use more extemporary forms of worship.³⁰

²⁸Ibid. Cf. John Wesley, SSM, ii.

²⁹Fitzgerald, 80.

³⁰As Lester Ruth notes, whenever early American Methodists had to choose between formality and the free expression of the “heart,” they nearly always chose the latter. See the introduction to Ruth’s *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality: A Reader* (Abingdon, 2005). Cf. Ruth, *A Little Heaven Below: Worship at Early Methodist Quarterly Meetings* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 135-45; and Karen Westerfield Tucker, “Form and Freedom: John Wesley’s Legacy for Methodist Worship,” in *The Sunday Service of the Methodists*, ed. Tucker (Kingswood, 1996), 17-30.

A second problem was the leadership that Wesley appointed for the American Methodists. In September of 1784, Wesley ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to be “elders” (priests) and Thomas Coke to be a “superintendent” (bishop), with further instruction to ordain Francis Asbury as co-superintendent upon arriving in America. Coke would ordain Asbury in December, with the approval of the sixty or so itinerant preachers in attendance, at the Christmas Conference in Baltimore. Coke, who had already been an Anglican priest before Wesley ordained him superintendent, was generally in agreement with Wesley’s ecclesiology and ideals regarding worship, liturgy, and the centrality of the Eucharist. However, Coke was quickly eclipsed by Asbury as the leader of American Methodism, and Asbury did not share Wesley and Coke’s convictions on this matter. As Fitzgerald points out, Asbury “never was persuaded by Wesley’s call for constant communion, and did not celebrate it frequently himself.”³¹ Moreover, Asbury was also concerned that frequent administration of the Eucharist was both impractical and becoming divisive in the spread of Methodism. Where there was a dearth of clergy to celebrate it, Methodists had begun to ordain themselves, a practice that Asbury wished to counteract. Plus, many converts to Methodism did not have an Anglican background and Asbury did not want disagreements about Eucharistic practice to form a rift in the movement.³² The end result was that, in 1792, the SSM was stripped down from 314 pages to 37, and relegated to a somewhat marginal place in the *Discipline*. No more than a year after Wesley’s death (and likely linked to the fact that Wesley was no longer around to oppose this marginalization) the Eucharist had been demoted from the chief of the “means of grace” to a “special event” to be celebrated roughly once per quarter. Similarly, the Eucharistic hymns of the Wesleys would be used less and less, each new Methodist hymnal containing fewer and fewer.³³

Not that Methodists would lose their “taste” for the sacrament. As Lester Ruth indicates, the Lord’s Supper was a frequent event at quarterly meetings and annual camp meetings, and could even serve as a kind of

³¹Fitzgerald, 96.

³²Fitzgerald, 90-95.

³³Fitzgerald, 98, where he also notes that Communion and Love Feasts became commonly celebrated together. This resulted in confusion of the two by which the Eucharist became increasingly a ‘special event’ practiced only occasionally (like a love feast) rather than a regular aspect of Methodist worship.

response to an altar call, with celebrants approaching the table as if it were a mourner's bench. Methodist minister Thomas Sargent gives us a powerful account of one such event in 1804:

We met the rising sun by administering the sacraments to about one thousand communicants, all of who were in ecstasies of joy. By ten o'clock we had at the lowest calculation eight thousand souls on the campground . . . God came near, sinners fell in abundance, Christians rejoiced and shouted, and a glorious sacrifice of praise ascended to God.³⁴

But, while this example demonstrates that Eucharistic practice remained an important component of Methodist religiosity, it also expresses the significant changes that had occurred. The Eucharist had become a "special" event, generally divorced from the regular worship and preaching of the church. Moreover, as noted by the fact that only one in eight of those in attendance actually received the Eucharist, participation had become limited only to official Methodists in good standing. The Lord's Table had been transformed from a means of grace and converting ordinance to a means of enforcing Methodist membership and discipline.³⁵

Perhaps even more damaging to the perpetuation of Wesley's understanding of the sacraments, American Methodists came to see the sacraments less and less as distinct "means of grace." Randy Maddox has noted that 19th century Methodists gradually came to affirm a different kind of "moral psychology"—that is, the understanding of how one makes moral decisions and experiences moral transformation and development—than the one held by Wesley. The result of this was a shift in the way that Methodists came to view means of grace. According to Maddox, Wesley believed that persons are transformed by God's grace through participation in both communal and personal activities that "habituate" their "tempers" and "affections." (Think, for instance, of an athlete who hones her abilities through rigorous and continuous practice, which thus makes

³⁴Thomas Sargent, *Extracts of Letters*, cited in Lester Ruth, *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality*, 119.

³⁵Ruth, *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality* (119-20), notes that this shift had become institutionalized by 1798, citing a change made by Coke and Asbury in the *Discipline* "We must also observe, that our elders should be very cautious how they admit to the communion persons who are not in our society. It would be highly injurious to our brethren, if we suffered any to partake of the Lord's Supper with them, whom we would not readily admit to our society on application made to us."

successful performance habitual rather than conscious.) So, for Wesley, participation in the means of grace was the absolutely essential “method” by which believers would experience God’s forgiveness of sins and growth in sanctification. However, under the influence of Thomas Reid and Scottish Common Sense Realism, in the 19th century a more “top-down,” decisionistic moral psychology began to take hold in the United States. According to this philosophy, human morality is a function of moment-by-moment, conscious decisions to act morally. Because decisions and actions flow from the heart, the key to living a holy life is to have one’s heart completely given to God through entire consecration—a decision to turn the will and life completely to God, by which God completely cleanses and purifies the heart. Such a moral psychology aligned perfectly with the revivalism emerging in American frontier religion, and was popularized by holiness movement advocates like Charles Finney and Phoebe Palmer, both of whom were popular preachers who considered the chief purpose of preaching to be a “decision” for Christ to be made at the altar. Thus, the altar call came to replace the Lord’s Table as the appropriate response to the preaching of the Word.³⁶

Conclusion

With rare exception, all of the tendencies and the practices that would marginalize Eucharistic practice in American Methodism following the death of John Wesley would be embraced and institutionalized in the various groups associated with the Wesleyan holiness movement.³⁷ Ironically, then, those groups that sought the recovery of Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection would all but ignore the very practice that Wesley would identify as the “grand channel” of God’s sanctifying grace. Given the individualistic spirituality fostered by preaching-centered ecclesiology

³⁶Maddox first spells this out in “Reconnecting the Means to the End: A Wesleyan Prescription for the Holiness Movement,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33.2 (Fall, 1998): 29-64. I also deal with this both as an outgrowth of certain anthropological assumptions found in Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection (especially his distinction between sins “properly so-called” and “improperly so-called”) in my *Perfecting Grace: Christian Holiness and the Human Sciences* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

³⁷Fitzgerald spells this out at length in relation to the Church of the Nazarene in the final chapter of *Weaving a Rope of Sand*. For the Free Methodist Church, see Douglas R. Callum, “From Simplicity to Multiplicity: Sunday Worship among Free Methodists,” in Tucker, *The Sunday Service*, 173-194.

and spirituality and the large number of “Nones” (at least in America) who “love Jesus” but “hate the church” and are leaving church in droves, all who consider ourselves the children of Wesley would do well to consider following the example of our Methodist sisters and brothers and embrace the more Christological and communal conceptions of church and spiritually embedded in regular worship that maintains a vital connection between Word and Table.

A CHANGE OF HEART IN BRISTOL? JOHN WESLEY'S DOCTRINE OF ELECTION IN PERSPECTIVE, 1739-1768

by

Joel Houston

Introduction: Bristol, 1739

Some cried aloud, “even as in the agonies of death.”¹ Others were “seized with strong pain”² and “violently trembled” and still others “sunk to the earth; they dropped on every side as thunderstruck.”³ Strange happenings indeed had descended on Bristol. Happily, however, the outcome of those who were strangely afflicted was the same. As John Wesley records in his journal entries throughout the early spring and summer of 1739,⁴ those that witnessed his proclamation of the gospel and experienced the subsequent charismata were delivered unto rejoicing and a sense of peace in the Holy Spirit.⁵ To be sure, this was a remarkable result in such a short time after “submitting [himself] to be more vile”⁶ by proclaiming the gospel through the vehicle of open air preaching.

What was the reason that so many were afflicted with extreme manifestations of supposedly divine power? Wesley ventures an answer in his entry for Thursday, April 26th:

¹Wesley, 17 April 1739, *Journal 3* (BE), 19:49.

²Wesley, 17 April 1739, *Journal 3* (BE), 19:49.

³Wesley, 26 April 1739, *Journal 3* (BE), 19:49.

⁴Journal 3 encompasses the events in Bristol and beyond, and serves as an adequate indicator of the extent and nature of the charismatic manifestations that attended the early days of the revival. See, Wesley, *Journal 3*, (BE), 19:2-114.

⁵This language of deliverance to peace in the Holy Spirit attends many of the accounts. See entries for April 18th, April 21st, April 23rd, April 26th etc. 1739. Happily, there are also first-hand accounts of personal transformation on offer, as solicited by Charles Wesley. See Jonathan Barry, Kenneth Morgan, Eds. *Reformation and Revival in Eighteenth-Century Bristol* (Alan Sutton Publishing: Great Britain, 1994), 76-103.

⁶Wesley, 2 April 1739, *Journal 3* (BE), 19:46.

While I was preaching at Newgate on these words, 'He that believeth hath everlasting life,' I was sensibly led, without any previous design, to declare strongly and explicitly that God 'willith all men to be *thus* saved.' . . . Immediately one and another and another sunk to the earth: they dropped on every side as thunderstruck. . . . In the evening I was again pressed in spirit to declare that Christ 'gave himself a ransom for all.' And almost before we called upon him to set to his seal, he answered. One was so wounded by the sword of the Spirit that you would have imagined she could not live a moment.⁷

On April 27th, the next day, Wesley reports that the town of Newgate "rang with the cries of those whom the Word of God cut to the heart."⁸ Wesley was convinced that there was a correlation between the veracity of his message, that "God 'willith all men to be *thus* saved'" — a proclamation of unlimited atonement, and the divine manifestations that were allegedly increasing in number and severity. The journal entries for April 8th, 10th, 23rd, 26th, 29th, and May 9th⁹ all mention the message of unlimited atonement and a variant form of the theme of "free grace"¹⁰ (the dates encompass the preaching of the incendiary sermon of the same name on April 26th, 1739) followed by enthusiastic spiritual and physical responses.¹¹

It is not enough to suggest that it is *simply* the proclamation of the gospel that caused Wesley's hearers to have so dramatic a response. Per-

⁷Wesley, 26 April 1739, *Journal* 3 (BE), 19:51-52.

⁸Wesley, 27 April 1739, *Journal* 3 (BE), 19:51-52.

⁹Wesley, 26 April 1739, *Journal* 3 (BE), 19:48-57. These are only the *overt* references to preaching a dimension of unlimited atonement. Several other journal entries could easily be explicated to contain similar themes.

¹⁰A favorite expression of both Wesley and Whitefield.

¹¹As Luke Tyerman notes, charismatic responses of this sort were not restricted to John Wesley's preaching of atonement, nor were they even restricted to the Methodist Revival or even the Continent. Of the charismata, Tyerman comments, "It is no part of our purpose either to explain, justify, or condemn them . . . the reader is merely reminded of the wondrous and glorious fact, that the great Methodist revival of religion, begun in 1739, stood not alone; for God, in His sovereign mercy, was working works quite as great in Germany, America, and Scotland." Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1870), 1:223. The limited scope of this paper, however, space permits only to account for John Wesley's perceived understanding of the correlation between his preaching and the "acts of God" in question.

haps, in Wesley's view, it was *especially* the declaration of the unlimited nature of Christ's atonement proclaimed in contradistinction to the High-Calvinist sensibilities that had dominated Bristol that created the prime conditions for divine intervention.¹² To be sure, Wesley hardly made an effort to conceal his anti-predestinarian sentiments.

Public response to the charismata indicated that it was unwelcome and regarded as suspicious (not only from the residents of Bristol, but also, Wesley's own family¹³) least of all because of the apparent ring of enthusiasm that seemed to emanate from the city. However, as though to bolster the authenticity of the happenings, Wesley's journal cites independent verification of the charismata from a medical professional who could "hardly believe his own eyes and ears," concluding that it was neither "fraud" nor "natural disorder," but rather, "the finger of God."¹⁴ Furthermore, charismata occurred among those who were verbally outspoken concerning the events (and possibly even against those who professed confessional faith), apparently even experiencing a charismatic "salvation" experiences for themselves.¹⁵

Wesley believed that, not only were the responses legitimate in terms of their divine origin,¹⁶ but that they also created a sincere, lasting change in the life of those that experienced a touch from "the finger of God."

¹²Alan Clifford has argued convincingly that Calvin himself would not recognize the doctrine of limited atonement as espoused by John Owen and others. As a result, it would be unfair to suggest that all Calvinists at all times have affirmed the troublesome tenet. However, it was precisely this tenet that Wesley so chiefly objected to (see sermon, *Free Grace*), and one that, in his early Bristol preaching, Wesley felt he was usurping with his proclamation of unlimited atonement. See Alan Clifford, "Authentic Calvinism" in *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790, An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

¹³Wesley, *From the Revd. Samuel Wesley Jun. 16 April 1739*, (BE), 25:634.

¹⁴Wesley, 27 April 1739, *Journal 3* (BE), 19:53.

¹⁵"One of these had been remarkably zealous against those that cried out and made a noise, being sure that any of them might help it if they would. And the same opinion she was in still, till the moment she was struck through, as with a sword, and fell trembling to the ground. . . . In this pain she continued twelve or fourteen hours, and then her soul was set at liberty." Wesley, July 30th 1739, *Journal 3* (BE), 19:82.

¹⁶Wesley, *To the Revd. Samuel Wesley, Jun, 10 May 1739* (BE) 25:646. "And this I know to be of God, because from that hour the person so affected is a new creature, both as to his inward tempers and outward life. Old things are passed away, and all things become new."

Wesley explains, "such a change was then wrought appears (not from their shedding tears only, or falling into fits, or crying out: these are not the fruits, as you seem to suppose, whereby I judge, but) from the whole tenor of their life, till then many ways wicked; from that time holy, just, and good."¹⁷

Shortly after the committed Calvinist Ralph Erskine endorsed the events as being invested with divine agency (and strikingly, after a particularly Calvinian manner)¹⁸ Wesley discussed the matter with his great partner in the revival, George Whitefield on July 7th. Wesley notes, "I found [Whitefield's] objections were chiefly grounded on gross misrepresentations of matter of fact. But the next day he had an opportunity of informing himself better: for no sooner had he begun (in the application of his sermon) to invite all sinners to believe in Christ, than four persons sunk down close to him, almost in the same moment." Wesley, likely not without the hint of a smile, recommended, "from this time, I trust, we shall all suffer God to carry on His own work in the way that pleaseth Him."¹⁹ It is not coincidental that Wesley makes special mention the con-

¹⁷Wesley, 20 May 1739, *Journal* 3 (BE), 19:60. Wesley did exercise caution with regard to interpreting the charismata. On June 23rd Wesley commented that he exhorted his followers to "try the spirits, whether they be of God . . . I warned them all these were, in themselves, of a doubtful, disputable nature; they might be from God, and they might not; and were therefore not simply to be relied on (any more than simply to be condemned), but to be tried by a farther rule to be brought to the only certain test—the Law and the Testimony." Wesley, June 23rd, 1739, *Journal* 3 (BE), 19:73. Ironically, Wesley immediately notes, "While I was speaking one before me dropped down as dead, and presently a second and a third. Five others sunk down in half an hour, most of whom were in violent agonies. 'The pains' as 'of hell came about them, the snares of death overtook them.' In their trouble we called upon the Lord, and He gave us an answer of peace." Wesley, June 23rd, 1739, *Journal* 3 (BE), 19:73. Also, "Two or three of our company were much affected, and believed she spoke by the Spirit of God. But this was in no wise clear to me. The motion might be either hysterical or artificial. And the same words any person of a good understanding and well versed in the Scriptures might have spoken. But I let the matter alone; knowing this, that 'if it be not of God, it will come to nought.'" Wesley, 22 June 1739, *Journal* 3 (BE), 19:73

¹⁸"When they are brought by the saving arm of God to receive Christ Jesus, to have joy and peace in believing, and then to walk in Him, and give evidence that the work is a saving work at length, whether more quickly or gradually accomplished, there is great matter of praise." Wesley, *From Ralph Erskine*, June 30th, 1739, *Journal* 3 (BE), 19:76.

¹⁹Wesley, July 6, 7th 1739, *Journal* 3 (BE), 19:78-79.

tent of Whitefield's address: his characteristic call to *all* sinners, despite what the logical implications of Whitefield's predestinarian theology would suggest.

Salvation: Calvinistic or Arminian?

One may be forgiven if a certain degree of confusion were to set in at this point in the narrative. If Wesley was preaching the doctrine of unlimited atonement in Bristol 1739 as, in the negative sense, his expression of his antipathy towards absolute predestination,²⁰ and in the positive sense, an articulation of his early evangelical Arminian theology, why did it seem as though God was delivering individuals in a manner consistent with a Calvinian soteriology? That is to say, in a mode that seems more akin to Calvinism than Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism? Bristol residents are reacting *specifically* to the message of universal atonement yet are converted in a somewhat irresistible fashion (irresistible grace?), appear to have a lasting change, such that could be consonant with a kind of implied perseverance or at the very least permanence (final perseverance?). Individuals are rarely seen (if at all) exercising their foreknown gift of faith in terms of conscious volition,²¹ and are instead apparently divinely (or at least indiscriminately) nominated for salvation. Indeed, the divinely restored capacity for human agency that Wesley prized so highly is conspicuously absent throughout the recounting of charismata in Bristol.

Was Wesley inconsistent between his thought on election and what he chose to endorse by way of theology made manifest, particularly in these conversion experiences? Or perhaps a shade darker: did Wesley believe these manifestations attested to a greater argument in favor of Calvinian soteriology, yet neglected to observe and declare such in order to save face by preserving his theology and position in the revival?

In short, no, Wesley was not inconsistent and not duplicitous. In fact, Wesley's endorsement of the charismata that allegedly visited Bristol in 1739 functions as an able lens to examine the salient points of his perspective on election generally, as well discover the core of his theology of predestination. Perhaps more importantly, Wesley's handling of the Bristol charismata also demonstrates the ultimate priority and eventual resting place of Wesley's tumultuous relationship with a problematic doctrine. It will be demonstrated that Wesley prioritized Christian unity and ultimately,

²⁰As the content of the sermon, *Free Grace* would suggest.

²¹See Wesley, *On Predestination* (BE), 2:417.

the conversion of sinners above a static definition of doctrine made manifest, or one that would not allow the rigid lines of dogma to be blurred.

Understanding Election

The first order of business is to dispel the notion that Wesley required his doctrine of election, particularly with respect to the individual salvific experience, to manifest in any particular way. To be sure, the litmus test of a life thoroughly transformed must be passed, yet Wesley's sentiment to Whitefield, that "we shall all suffer God to carry on His own work in the way that pleaseth Him" was born from a place of genuine personal conviction. For example, Wesley allowed the experiential testimony of those that,

may remember some time when the power of the Highest wrought upon them in an eminent manner . . . and at that time it is certain they had no power to resist the grace of God. They were then no more able to stop the course of that torrent which carried all before it, than to stem the waves of the sea with their hand, or to stay the sun in the midst of heaven.²²

Such a concession no doubt demonstrates the fact that Wesley believed that individuals had legitimate conversion experiences of an immediate and dramatic nature.²³ Wesley's caution to the believer²⁴ is to avoid constructing an entire paradigm of predestination on experience alone, particularly with regard to the repugnant doctrine of reprobation.²⁵

²²Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Works (Jackson), 10:204.

²³It must be delineated that here the issue is concerning conversion experiences that manifest *outwardly* in a sudden and even violent transformation. Indeed, as Wesley attested, the moment of sanctification is instantaneous. However, this only speaks to the forensic dimension of the believer's standing before God. On this head, Wesley and Whitefield would undoubtedly be in agreement—God does not save individuals over the course of time, leaving the possibility of an interruption in the saving process.

²⁴Particularly in *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Works, (Jackson), 10:204.

²⁵How easily then may a believer infer, from what he hath experienced in his own soul, that the true grace of God always works irresistibly in every believer! That God will finish wherever he has begun this work, so that it is impossible for any believer to fall from grace! And, lastly, that the reason why God gives this to some only and not to others, is, because, of his own will, without any previous regard either to their faith or works, he hath absolutely, unconditionally, predestinated them to life, before the foundation of the world! Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Works (Jackson), 10:205.

Wesley clearly taught that everyone who was born of God, is “sanctified in an instant, yet undoubtedly grows by slow degrees.”²⁶ It is therefore not unreasonable to conclude that if the instantaneous Bristol conversion experiences could operate within Wesley’s soteriological paradigm, they were an entirely allowable phenomenon, but must be accompanied by a sense of striving, or work: “inasmuch as God works in you, you are now able to work out your own salvation.”²⁷

If the principle of instantaneous conversion in the physical sense is allowed, the question may still be asked, what of the apparently indiscriminate nature of the charismata, even saving those who do not wish to be saved?²⁸ Does this violate Wesley’s sense of the necessary human response involved in the new birth?

Wesley’s career voices a complex response to this question; one that shifted for approximately 30 years until finally settling late in the 1760s. Early in the predestination controversy of the 1740s, Wesley made several concise statements articulating his position on unconditional election. Concerning his quarrel with Whitefield, Wesley penned an irenicon on Wednesday, August 24th, 1743, stating “with regard to . . . unconditional election, I believe, that God, before the foundation of the world, did unconditionally elect certain persons to do certain works; as Paul to preach the Gospel.” Wesley added that “[God] has unconditionally elected some persons to many peculiar advantages, both with regard to temporal and spiritual things. *And I do not deny, (though I cannot prove it is so,) that he has unconditionally elected some persons, thence eminently styled “the elect,” to eternal glory.*”²⁹ A tentative Wesley was willing to postulate that it was possible that God may exercise sovereignty over human response in the question of salvation, yet such an exercise could never violate His goodness and mercy.³⁰

²⁶Wesley, *Letter CCXL*, 27 June 1760 (Jackson), 12:275. Also, Wesley, *On Working Out Our Own Salvation* (BE), 3:204: “All experience, as well as Scripture, show this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual.”

²⁷Wesley, *On Working Out Our Own Salvation* (BE), 3:207.

²⁸See previous n.15.

²⁹Wesley, *Letters* (Jackson), 13:507-509.

³⁰Wesley on reprobation: “How is this consistent with either the divine justice or mercy? Is it merciful to ordain a creature to everlasting misery? Is it just to punish man for a crime which he could not but commit? How is man, if necessarily determined to one way of acting, a free agent? To lie under either a physical or a moral necessity is entirely repugnant to human liberty. But that God [should be] the author of sin and injustice, which must, I think, be the consequence of

Adumbrating Wesley's resting position on the matter, there is a hint that as early as 1743 Wesley was prepared to relegate positions on predestination to the realm of opinion only: "I spent an agreeable hour with our old fellow-laborer, Mr. Humphreys. I found him open and friendly, but rigorously tenacious of the Unconditional Decrees. O that *opinions* should separate chief friends! This is bigotry all over."³¹ Nearly a decade thereafter, Wesley's view hardened slightly (most likely due to his conflicts with John Gill in 1751 over the doctrine of final perseverance). Writing to Charles on August 8th, 1752, Wesley retracted certain elements of his position, no longer allowing a sense of unconditional election:

Perhaps the occasion of this latter affirmation was, that both you and I have often granted an absolute unconditional election of some, together with a conditional election of all men. I did incline to this scheme for many years: But of late I have doubted of it more and more: First, because all the texts which I used to think supported it, I now think prove either more or less; either absolute reprobation and election, or neither. Secondly, because I find this opinion serves all the ill purposes of absolute predestination; particularly that of supporting infallible perseverance.³²

Wesley softened, however, and approximately thirty years later, in 1765 and 1768 respectively, Wesley's mellowed perspective allowed a more ecumenical and conciliatory position.³³ Writing Tuesday May 14th, 1765, Wesley commented,

Mr. H[aweis] and Mr. N[ewton] hold [unconditional election], and yet I believe these have real Christian experience. But if so, this is only an *opinion*: It is not 'subversive' (here is clear proof to the contrary) 'of the very foundation of Christian experience.'

main[taining] this opinion, is a contradiction to the clearest ideas we have of the divine [natur]e and perfections. Wesley, "To Mrs. Susanna Wesley" 29 July 1725, *Letters* (BE), 25:175. It is worthwhile to note the similar reactions to the doctrine of predestination from many of the Cambridge Platonists, particularly, Henry More (who could not "swallow down that hard doctrine concerning fate.") and Ralph Cudworth to whom "predestination was chiefly abhorrent because it was one form of determinism." See Gerald Cragg, *The Cambridge Platonists* (New York: OUP, 1968), 10.

³¹Wesley, *Journal* Thursday, April 3rd (Jackson), 2:11.

³²Wesley, *Letters* (Jackson), 12:114.

³³George Cell highlights this fact as well, *Rediscovery of John Wesley*, 249.

It is 'compatible with love to Christ, and a genuine work of grace.' Yea, many hold it, at whose feet I desire to be found in the day of the Lord Jesus. If, then, I 'oppose this with my whole strength,' I am a mere bigot still.³⁴

And in 1768, Wesley condemned the practice of fierce theological dispute, believing it to be harmful to healthy religious practice,

I did attack predestination eight-and-twenty years ago; and I do not believe now any predestination which implies irrespective reprobation. But I do not believe it is necessarily subversive of all religion. I think hot disputes are much more so; therefore, I never willingly dispute with any one about it. And I advise all my friends, not in Scotland only, but all over England and Ireland, to avoid all contention on the head, and let every man remain in his own opinion.³⁵

Bristol Revisited

There are two angles from which one may assess Wesley's doctrine of election in light of Bristol and Wesley's subsequent writings and disputes. One may argue that in 1768, Wesley, weary from debate simply returned to his original 1739 position—that when it comes to election, *res ipsa loquitur*. In the interests of peace, talk of predestination is to be ignored in polite company. As noted, such a perspective contains within it a sort of snide resignation, one that suggests that even if Wesley felt that the conversion experiences occurring in Bristol bore testimony to a Calvinian soteriology, or worse, rampant enthusiasm, he hesitated to say so for fear of despoiling the momentum of the revival.

To adopt this perspective, for all of the economy of the bare facts, is to bypass the core principle of Wesley's thought on election. An alternative view, is that in 1739, the core of Wesley's doctrine of election was constructed in the charismatic furnace of Bristol not with the materials of dogma and partisan theology, but rather, Christian unity, charity, and evangelical zeal. This core remained with Wesley throughout the travel of

³⁴The comment is sourced from a letter to John Newton. See n.32, Wesley, *Journal* 13, Tuesday, 14 May 1765 (BE), 21:510.

³⁵Wesley, *To The Rev. Mr. Plenderlieth, may 23rd 1768*, Letters (Jackson), 12:246.

his thought on election; 1768 is not merely a return to the position of 1738, but a *reinforcement* of it.³⁶

The difference between perspectives is subtle, but important. Wesley did not simply believe that experiences of charismata were beside the point, or that how one was saved was irrelevant to either the Calvinist or Arminian. Instead, these dimensions are minimized in relation to the very essence of election: the saving act of God towards fallen humanity. The multi-faceted and varied experiences of believers gave voice to the rich testimony of personal experience; *varied, yes, but grounded in unity*. As such, Wesley could, with theological integrity, endorse the Bristol charismata as from the Lord, and worthy of praise. Allan Coppedge is correct in suggesting, "the Calvinists with whom Wesley was associated . . . were as committed to the official theology of the Church as he was. . . . Since they were both operating within this theological context, Wesley refused to categorize their differences as essential doctrine. He called upon Calvinists 'so far as in conscience thou canst (retaining still thy own opinion)' to join him in cooperative efforts wherever possible."³⁷

Conclusion

Wesley endorsed the Bristol charismata as the outpouring of God's spirit on the people of Bristol. As such, the divine outpouring did not need to function as a reification of his exact thought on election, and as a result, if it appeared more Calvinian, so be it—souls were won into the Kingdom. In viewing the charismata this way, Wesley demonstrated the core of his doctrine of election—that salvation is wholly of God, it may come upon individuals suddenly in an outward sense (though that is not always the case), and it will create good fruit as evidenced in changed lives (without

³⁶To be sure, the *Free Grace* controversy that ensued shortly after the Bristol charismata marred the relationship between Wesley and Whitefield (largely due to Wesley's pugnacious spirit) and obscured the passion for the *missio Dei* so evident in the initial stirrings of the revival. While a full recovery between the two was hardly actualized, a return to the "catholic spirit" was surely evidenced.

³⁷Coppedge, *Theological Debate*, 172.

comment concerning the finality of such a change).³⁸ While the subsequent years featured heated disagreement indeed, Wesley remained resolute that the fundamental tenet of election must be the saving of sinners by a sovereign God.

Students of Wesley, Whitefield and Methodism generally are often pointed to the events of the *Free Grace* controversy for a number of reasons: to bolster theological opinion, to construct a historical portrait of a leader or perhaps to simply understand the formative pressures of the early revival. Indeed, one would do well to study the *Free Grace* controversy and understand the personalities, theological complexities and situational nuances that contributed to so painful a division. This paper has argued that one would do better to examine the early stages of the revival in Bristol and wonder, along with Wesley and Whitefield, about the miraculous work that was wrought in Newgate and beyond as a product of the powerful preaching, pastoral leadership, and ultimately the Gospel, operating as the power of God for salvation. Something both Wesley and Whitefield believed fervently.

³⁸Not all scholars take such an optimistic view of the ecumenism extended to differing theological parties in light of the revival charismata. While not overtly negative in his assessment, Harry Stout argues that only experience, not theology really mattered. Stout comments, "As long as the foundation was individual experience and the sensation of grace, whatever—or whoever—created it received theological legitimacy at once. Whitefield's stated theological preferences were, of course, Calvinistic and predestinarian. But other revivalists could, and did, build quite different theological frameworks that enjoyed the same experiential legitimation. *In the end the revivals were simply not about theology but experience.*" Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 206.

THE PIETIST LINK TO WESLEY'S DEATHBED CONFESSION

by

J. Steven O'Malley

There is a largely ignored relationship between Wesley's dying words, "The Best of all, God is with us!" and the enduring German Pietist influence in his life and ministry. In particular, we contend that Wesley's declaration reflects the influence of Gerhard Tersteegen on Wesley via Wesley's translation in Georgia of Tersteegen hymns, as found in Zinzendorf's Moravian hymnal.

Tersteegen (1697–1769) was an influential German Pietist, of an "unsectarian" (and some would say "radical") bent, with German Reformed roots, whose letters, addresses, and correspondence provide a life context for his hymns. These hymns included the most influential of all Pietist hymns, "Gott ist Gegenwärtig." That hymn was translated from German to English by Wesley while a missionary in Georgia (1735–38). He discovered it within the Moravian hymnal produced by Count Zinzendorf. He translates the title, "Lo, God is Here!" His translation is a creative rewrite of the hymn, recasting its central theme in an English context. It is one of two Tersteegen hymns he translated in this collection of 35 German hymns found in Zinzendorf's *Herrnhut Hymnal* (1735). While en route to Georgia, Wesley records in his journal his practice of studying German. His pedagogical method was to learn the language by the translation of these German hymns, as well as those in the Hallensian *Frelinghuysen Hymnal*, which enabled him to complete his translation task after his arrival in Georgia.¹

¹John Wesley, October 21, 1735, *Journal*, I, entry for Tuesday, October 14, 1735), ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley*, 18:137. The hymns in the Moravian hymnal consisted of no Reformation hymns, instead, there were devotional hymns from the following sources: the Lutheran Paul Gerhardt, the Silesian mystic Johann Scheffler, the Halle Pietists Joachim Lange, Frelinghuysen, Rothe, and Winckler, the Moravian hymns of Zinzendorf, Spangenberg, Anna Dober, and Maria Böhmer, the radical Pietism of Gottfried Arnold, and Tersteegen, who represented "contemporary mysticism of Reformed origin."—W. Reginald Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 310.

"Gott ist Gegenwärtig" was translated as a sequel to another Tersteegen hymn, "Verborgne Gottesliebe Du," which Wesley renders as "Thou Hidden Love of God."² These two hymns function together (as a couplet) in Wesley's unfolding, pre-conversion spirituality as a twofold witness to (a) an expression of his sense of longing for a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ, and (b) his anticipation of the joy of that deeply desired breakthrough of grace, as articulated by Tersteegen. "Gott ist Gegenwärtig" is translated as a foretaste of the divine peace of soul that marks the awakened and converted life in Christ. The Pietist witness embedded in this hymn was first encountered by the young Wesley when he met a group of Moravians aboard ship, amid a life threatening storm, during his maritime journey to the New World. Their courageous and confident faith, which had contrasted with his fear of impending death, and the question posed to Wesley by their leader, Spangenberg, "do you know Jesus Christ?"³ had initiated a spiritual journey for the young Anglican missionary which would not be consummated until his Moravian-based Aldersgate experience, following his return to London in 1738. This journey featured a spiritual quest for a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was indicated by his response to Spangenberg: "I said, 'I do (know Jesus Christ),' . . . but I fear these were vain words."⁴

Wesley's Pietist links in his early ministry predate this encounter with the Moravians. His mission to Georgia had been arranged under the auspices of the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which itself was modeled and encouraged by the first Protestant overseas mission organization, the Halle mission society of the Halle (Lutheran) Pietists, headed by A. H. Francke.⁵

However, it was Wesley's crisis of salvation which defined the crucial encounter with the Moravians. The Moravians had been dispatched to Georgia on mission from their base at Herrnhut. Zinzendorf dispatched them to become the diaspora or seed of Christ to be planted in the soil of the New World for the salvation of the lost.⁶ The mission of this company

²"Verborgne Gottesliebe Du," in Gerhard Tersteegen, *Ein Hundert Geistliche Lieder*, Heft I (München: Strube Verlag, 1997), 49.

³Wesley, February 7, 1736, *Journals and Diaries*(1735-38), 18:23.

⁴Wesley's conversation with Spangenberg, in John Wesley, February 9, 1736, *Journals and Diaries* (1735-38), 24.

⁵The Halle connection to the SPCK is acknowledged by W. Reginald Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1992).

⁶*Ibid.*

of Moravians in Georgia was to be a contingent of emigres who were disenfranchised Austrian Pietists from Salzburg, as well as native Americans.

Wesley found he could not sing the joyous, faith-based hymns⁷ he found within this Moravian hymnal, nor could he find equivalent expressions for them in English, without his life being transformed by them.⁸ German Methodist Bishop John Nuelson remarked that in these hymns "John Wesley found the clearest expression of his teaching of salvation," being a "conviction he held before his conversion, which he never gave up afterwards."⁹ With precision, Nuelson contended in his study of Wesley's use of these German hymns that the Methodist doctrine of perfection was "decisively influenced" by them. According to Samuel Jackson, Wesley's early editor, Tersteegen exemplified for Wesley the "necessity of . . . entire regeneration, the means of attaining it, and the by-roads which lead astray from it."¹⁰ The message of his hymns became a model for "true Christianity," which Wesley elsewhere described as "having the form, and seeking the power of godliness."¹¹ It is important to attend to the themes of this Pietist hymnody if we are to understand its impact upon Wesley's subsequent ministry.

First, there is the motif of "real" or "true Christianity." In 1739, Wesley explained in a letter to James Hervey that his reason for undertaking his ministry in Georgia was his "desire to be a Christian."¹² The theme reverberates through Wesley's writings, as in his homily on "The Sermon on the Mount, VI," where we hear that Christ has "laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity: the inward tem-

⁷Another Tersteegen hymn he translated is the well-known "*Gott ist gegenwärtig*," that is translated "Lo, God is here, let us adore!"—Nuelson, 49.

⁸He later refers to the enduring value of the lines of the hymn "Thou Hidden Love of God" for him in his *Plain Account* (1766): "Is not this the language, not only of every believer, but every one that is truly awakened? But what have I wrote, to this day, which is either stronger or plainer?—John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," *Doctrinal and Controversial Treatises II* in *Works*, 13:140.

⁹Nuelson (38) here references, in addition to this Tersteegen hymn, the second verse of Paul Gerhardt's "Jesus Thy Bounteous Love to me."

¹⁰Samuel Jackson, ed., *The Life and Character of Gerhard Tersteegen* (London, 834), vii–viii.

¹¹John Wesley, "The Nature, Design and General Rules of the United Societies (1743)," in *The Methodist Societies, History, Nature and Design*, ed. Rupert E. Davies, *The Works of John Wesley*, 9:69.

¹²John Wesley, "Letter to James Hervey" (March 20, 1739), in Albert Outler, *John Wesley* (Oxford, 1964), 71.

pers contained in that holiness 'without which no man can see the Lord.'"¹³ As evidence of his continued concern for this motif, he included in his Christian Library an English translation of the proto-Pietist, John Arndt's *True Christianity* (1605), where the hallmark is confessing Christ with one's life and not merely one's verbal confession.¹⁴

Second, if Arndt provided the central motif for Wesley's Kingdom-driven soteriology, it was his Georgia encounter with Tersteegen's declaration of "Lo, God is here!" ("Gott ist Gegenwärtig"), which directed him to seek the reality referenced by that phrase. The quest proved decisive for the young Wesley. Tersteegen (1697–1769) has been called by Reginald Ward "the most fascinating character in the whole history of religious revival."¹⁵ Ward goes on to explain that Tersteegen's writings convey a winsome spiritual tranquillity and skill in "... the imaginative exposition of scripture in a class-meeting context which has probably never been equaled."¹⁶ Wesley's work with these hymns precipitated an inward spiritual crisis that helped place this Anglican missionary on a trajectory leading to Aldersgate. According to one Quaker scholar, Rendel Harris, Tersteegen "... influenced John Wesley, and through him whole masses of English-speaking people."¹⁷

In the second Tersteegen hymn translated by Wesley, "Thou Hidden Love of God, Whose Height" we meet a song which has frequently been reprinted in British, American, and Canadian hymnals.¹⁸ The words of

¹³John Wesley, "Sermon 26. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Sixth (Matthew 6:1-5)," in Albert Outler, *The Works of John Wesley; Sermons I*, 1: 572f.

¹⁴This work appeared in the first volume of The Christian Library in 1749.

¹⁵Reginald Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1992), 230.

¹⁶Ward, 235f. He also observes that, of the leaders of the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century, only Jonathan Edwards, Charles Wesley, and Gerhard Tersteegen left a literary legacy that surpasses their pastoral and evangelistic service.

¹⁷Rendel Harris, "The Influence of Quietism on the Society of Friends: A Lecture Delivered at Bryn Mawr College, April 30, 1900," (Philadelphia: Leeds Press, 1900), 11. See also J. Steven O'Malley, "Pietistic Influence on John Wesley: Wesley and Gerhard Tersteegen," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (fall, 1996), 48-70, which also treats Wesley's involvement in the tensions between Hallensian Pietists and Moravians, in the context of his work as an SPCK missionary.

¹⁸John Nuelson, *John Wesley und das deutsche Kirchenlied* (Nashville: The Historical Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1938), tr. by Theo Parry, Sidney H. Moore, and Arthur Holbrook, as *John Wesley and the German Hymn* (Yorkshire: A. S. Holbrook, 1972), 38, 78. Nuelson found that this hymn appeared in 33 hymnals of Methodist and other church bodies that were in use in 1938.

this hymn offer a reflection of Wesley's personal spiritual yearning that would find resolution at Aldersgate.¹⁹ Wesley wrote

Thou hidden love of God, whose height,
Whose depth unfathomed no man knows,
I see from far Thy beauteous light,
Only I sigh for Thy repose.
My heart is pained, nor can it be
At rest until it finds rest in Thee.

The hymn continues, "I see from afar your beauteous kingdom of peace" ("o Friedensreich so schöne"). The context of Tersteegen's thought here suggests that the object of his yearning is cognitively manifested through the external hearing of the gospel, but only in the depths of the soul, called the *Seelengrund*, is the seeker able to longingly desire Christ's indwelling presence. Verse eight underscores this point, saying "Herr, rede du zum Seelengrund, da gib mir dich zu hören," which Wesley creatively renders, "Speak to my inmost soul, and say, 'I am thy love, thy God, thy all.'" ²⁰ In brief, Christ's royal kingdom becomes present to those inclined to His appearing, as the incarnate Son of God. He is the personification of the divine agape, who is to be received through the Spirit-anointed "Name of Jesus." The timing for this encounter helps prepare the young Wesley for his subsequent crisis moment with saving grace which occurred following his return from Georgia to London, when he visited the Moravian meeting in Aldersgate on 24 May 1738. Wesley's prevenient, wooing grace of God (John 1:9) finds an analogue in Tersteegen's concept of the *Grundneigung* (or seminal inclination). Here is the heart-softening, beckoning influence of the Spirit who, in the name of Jesus-Immanuel, is ever seeking to turn our wayward beings from self toward God.

Given Wesley's early encounter with the Tersteegen hymns, and their implications for his own conversion experience, we now ask, was this only a passing phase or did this outlook persist in the later Wesley? In his "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection" (1766), his spiritual autobiography of sorts, Wesley cites a passage from an early sermon from 1733, "The Circumcision of the Heart." In this sermon we find Wesley reappropriating anew the fourth verse from Tersteegen's *Vorborgne Gottesliebe Du*:

¹⁹Nuelson, 38, draws this inference.

²⁰Ibid, 120.

Was ist es mehr? Was hindert mich?	Is there anything beneath the sun
Dass ich nicht ein kann gehen	That strives with Thee, my heart to
In deine Ruhe wesentlich	share?
Und darin este stehen?	Ah, tear it thence, and reign also,
Es ist dir, ja, o Liebe kund.	The Lord of every motion there. ²¹

From this poignant verse Wesley appears to have discerned, in the prayer of Tersteegen, the articulation of the inward aspiration of an awakened seeker. Here was a quest he now owned, together with a host of nominal Christians in every age. This homily also includes Wesley's observation that

I never heard that anyone objected to this. And indeed, who can object? Is not this the language, not only of every believer, but of everyone that is truly born awakened? But what have I wrote to this day, that is either stronger or plainer?²²

The second entry in this couplet of Tersteegen hymns contains words which Wesley would utter in his final meditation. The young Wesley had rendered *Gott ist gegenwärtig* as "Lo, God is here, Let us Adore!" Here resounds the expression which comes from Wesley's lips at the end of his earthly life, "The best of all is, God is with us." Here is the complete first verse of this hymn, with Wesley's translation:

Gott ist Gegenwärtig, lasset uns	God Himself is with us: let us now
anbeten,	adore Him,
und in Ehrfurcht, vor Ihm treten.	And with awe appear before Him.
Gott ist in der Mitte, alles in uns	God is in His temple, all within
schweige,,	keep silence,
Und sich innigst vor Ihm beuge.	And before Him bow with rever-
	ence. ²³

Wesley's attraction to the piety of Tersteegen was also a choice he made in the midst of being confronted with two rival schools of German

²¹John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, in *Works*, 11:140.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Gesangbuch der Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche* (Zürich: Verlag Christlichevereins Buchhandlung, 1969), Hymn 167, and *Gerhard Tersteegen: Sermons and Hymns*, II (Stoke-on-Trent: Harvey and Tait, UK, n.d.), 26. The author heard this hymn rendered in German by a concert choir in Moers, Germany, during the tricentennial observance of the birth of Tersteegen in 1997. There was likely no other Anglo Methodist present to bear witness to that occasion.

Pietist hymnody: that of Halle, the home base for the Lutheran Pietists, and Herrnhut, Count Zinzendorf's Lusatian estate which had become of the Moravians, whose ministry dated to the days of John Huss in the fifteenth century. Wesley would visit both of these locations in the autumn of 1738, three months following his conversion in the Moravian meeting at Aldersgate in London (May 24, 1738). The Hallensians, under the leadership of Francke, were alarmed by the heterodox appearance of Moravian hymnody, with its undue focus upon *Gefühl*, or the sense of becoming one with the Redeemer through deep inward feeling. Conversely, Moravians had been on guard against the perceived legalism, or *Gesetzlichkeit*, of the Hallensians, with their *ordo salutis* structured through the steps of *Busskampf* (a penitential struggle) culminating in a moment of *Durchbruch* (or a breakthrough) of grace, which were prerequisites to a seeker's peace with God in Christ.²⁴

Traveling from Halle to Herrnhut on his post conversion journey, Wesley found himself perched between these counter forces of spirituality. His introduction to this altercation had been his firsthand exposure to the dispute between the Salzburger and the Herrnhutters. The former were Austrian Lutherans of Halle persuasion. They had settled in Austria and then were forced out in the Counter Reformation which reclaimed that land for Rome. Refugees from this expulsion were now being relocated to Georgia through the cooperative arrangement between the Halle Mission Society and the Anglican Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). Conversely, he learned of the Moravian perspective from Spangenberg, whom Zinzendorf had dispatched from Herrnhut to lead the Georgia-bound company of Moravian missionaries. To Zinzendorf, this group was viewed as the diaspora of the Lord, who were commissioned to give their lives in love for the suffering Lamb of God, to whose devotion the Georgians would be summoned.²⁵ Over against these

²⁴J. Steven O'Malley, Gerhard und Johann Wesley im Zusammenhang ihrer Welt, in Dietrich Meyer und Udo Sträter, ed., *Zur Rezeption mystischer Traditionen im Protestantismus des 16. Bis 19. Jahrhunderts*; Schriftenreihe des Vereins für Rheinische Kirchengeschichte, 152 (Köln: Rheinland-Verlag GmbH, 2002), 305-328, here 306. For an account of Wesley's encounter with the Halle/Herrnhut altercations, see also Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 307-314.

²⁵Wesley had two Halle colleagues in Georgia, who warned him against Spangenberg. See W. Reginald Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Regime (1648-1789)*, (Cambridge, 1999), 133-134; see also Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge, 1992), 134-141.

polar alternatives, Wesley found a measure of solace in the spirituality of Tersteegen's hymns.²⁶

By locating Wesley's language for experiencing the saving presence of God in the hymns of Tersteegen, we are offering a more focused identity to the kind of Pietist influence which influenced Wesley in his early ministry. The Moravian hymnal which was the source of his encounter with their hymnody, was the first of his numerous encounters with a movement which traced its origins to the followers of the martyred Jan Huss in the fifteenth century. They had come to be known as the Unity of the Brethren, or the *Unitas Fratrum*.

Over the long course of his ministry, Wesley would experience a series of encounters with the Moravians, ranging from the endearing to the challenging. These contacts might be summarized as follows. Mixed with the problematic encounters, the ones which were endearing included the first one, his discovery of the Tersteegen hymns which provided an enduring message, remembered by him in his last moments of life, and one later one, which provided him with a key element within his theology of grace.

First, Wesley's initial encounter with the Moravians under Spangenberg en route to Georgia was positive, as this study has shown.

In a second decisive encounter with Moravians, it was a member of the Moravian Fetter Lane Society, Peter Böhler, who introduced the young John Wesley, upon his return from Georgia, to the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith, viewed as the basis for instantaneous assurance in the new birth.²⁷

Third, Wesley's trip to Herrnhut, following Aldersgate in 1738, provided him with an unexpected encounter with one of its principal spokesmen, Christian David, who, in four homilies, impressed upon Wesley the distinction between "the state of those who are weak in faith," based on the gift of pardon, and the "new heart" received "through the constant indwelling of the Holy Ghost." David likened this transition to "the state of faith the apostles were in, from our Lord's death . . . until the descent of the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost," when they received assurance of

²⁶Ward, *Awakening*, 236.

²⁷Wesley wrote, "when Peter Böhler, whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ, that it had those two fruits inseparably attending it, 'dominion over sin, and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness,' I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new gospel." John Wesley, May 24, 1738, *Journals and Diaries I*, (1735-38), 18:247f.

faith consisting of "new hearts" and the "gift of the Holy Ghost."²⁸ Parenthetically, this statement from David, heard at Herrnhut, does not reflect the thought of Zinzendorf, nor that of the Unity of the Brethren.

Fourth, a negative encounter with the Moravians occurred during Wesley's sojourn in the Moravian Fetter Lane Society in London, following his return from Germany in 1739. Peter Molther, a member of that Society, advocated an extreme form of "stillness" as the required prerequisite to "assurance" of faith. By contrast, Wesley followed David in maintaining the validity of degrees of faith, progressing from a cognitive belief in justification to the fullness of faith in the gift of the "new heart" through the Holy Ghost.²⁹

This issue of degrees of faith came up again in an argument with the leader of the Moravian community of Herrnhut, Count Zinzendorf, during the Count's visit to London in 1741. In contrast to the position on degrees of faith which Wesley had learned from David, Zinzendorf was contending that, through the imputation of Christ's grace, "In the moment he is justified, he is sanctified wholly."³⁰ The issue was whether weak faith in Christ's offer of salvation is valid or whether it must be discounted until a full measure of faith is experienced. For Zinzendorf, it was all or nothing: the seeker is to wait in quietude until the promise of

²⁸John Wesley, August 8, 1738, *Journals and Diaries I (1735-38)*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard Heitzenrather, *Works of John Wesley*, 18:269. Christian David became convinced of this understanding of full salvation through his encounter with Johann Adam Steinmetz, pastor of the Jesus church, a megachurch located among refugees of the Counter Reformation in Teschen, Silesia, where a revival was underway between 1709 and 1730. It had been birthed by a childrens' revival in 1708-9, and, according to Ward (*Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, Cambridge, 1992, 54-92), represents the first breakout of revival in the churches of the Protestant Reformation.

²⁹"[David] yet again explained from the Scriptures which describe the state the apostles were in, from our Lord's death until . . . till the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. They were then 'clean,' as Christ himself had born them witness, 'by the word which he had spoken unto them.' They then had faith, otherwise He could not have prayed for them, that their 'faith' might not 'fail.' Yet, they were not properly converted; and they were not delivered from the spirit of fear; they had not new hearts; neither had they received 'the gift of the Holy Ghost.' John Wesley, August 8, 1738, *Journals and Diaries I, (1735-38)*, 18:270.

³⁰John Wesley, Thursday, September 3, 1738, *Journals and Diaries I (1735-38)*, 18:213.

saving grace, both justification and sanctification, are fully imputed to the seeker. That would come, the Count insisted, when a seeker would be ecstatically embraced in an affective encounter with the love of Christ, as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Wesley's reply saw Zinzendorf to be collapsing both justification and sanctification into an imputed event received through a subjective, and affective encounter with Christ as the Lamb of God. To Wesley, such a position was fraught with antinomian implications.³¹

These four contacts indicate how the Moravian influence on Wesley became a multifaceted phenomenon, steering a meandering course through his life and ministry. Nevertheless, it was his initial encounter with the Tersteegen hymns, embedded in the Moravians' hymnal, which provided the anchor for his own preaching of saving grace. That encounter was reinforced by Aldersgate, and by his interactions with Böhler and David, which shaped his sense of what it meant to live in the gracious presence of the living God, as the Tersteegen hymn directed. He revisited this moment of discovery with the German hymn in his *Treatise on Christian Perfection* in the year 1766. Finally, it was borne out in his last words, on his deathbed in 1791.

In conclusion, Wesley's pre-Aldersgate encounters with the German Pietists, and with the hymns of Tersteegen, in particular, certainly played a formative role in defining Wesley's understanding of the new birth. Furthermore, the fruit of these encounters resurfaced as a personal credo in his death-bed testimony. This interpretation of the significance of Wesley's deathbed declaration is offered with the hope that it may also insert an international and ecumenical dimension into the discussion of the significance of Wesley's closing earthly testimony to his faith in Christ.

³¹Unlike the Count, Christian David had become convinced of his position by a recent visit to a major revival which was in progress in the neighboring province of Silesia. Here he had learned of the distinction between justifying and sanctifying faith, with the former being the expression of the "faith of the disciples after Calvary" and the latter being the expression of their faith at Pentecost, with the infilling/baptism of the Holy Spirit. David had been confirmed in this view under the leading of pastor Adam Steinmetz at the megachurch of Protestant refugees in Teschen, Silesia, organized under the support of Francke at Halle. David thereafter returned to Herrnhut intent on introducing that new understanding in that community. See discussion in Ward, *Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 34-92.

THE VITAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOLINESS AND HEALTH: REKINDLING JOHN WESLEY'S HOLISTIC VISION OF SALVATION

by

Joe Gorman

Much has been written about John Wesley's lifelong passion "to spread scriptural holiness over the land."¹ Not nearly as much attention has been paid to the relationship of Wesley's holistic soteriology to his commitment to promote and preserve health in his daily ministry, sermons, letters, and other publications.² Today we primarily remember Wesley for

¹John Wesley, *Minutes of Several Conversations*, Q.3, in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, third edition (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprint ed., Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1979), VIII:299. Hereafter cited as *Works* (Jackson).

²A selection of notable exceptions includes: James G. Donat, "John Wesley on the Estimation and Care of Nervous Disorders," in *Brain, Mind and Medicine: Essays in Eighteenth-Century Neuroscience*, eds. Harry Whitaker, C. U. M. Smith, and Stanley Finger (New York: Springer, 2007); Joe Gorman, "John Wesley and Depression in an Age of Melancholy," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34:2 (Fall, 1999): 196-221; William C. Guarrant Jr., *Organic Wesley: A Christian Perspective on Food, Farming, and Faith* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2015); Melanie Dobson Hughes, "The Holistic Way: John Wesley's Practical Piety as a Resource for Integrated Healthcare," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 47 (2008): 237-252; Deborah Madden, 'A Cheap, Safe and Natural Medicine': *Religion, Medicine and Culture in John Wesley's Primitive Physic* (New York: Rodopi B. V., 2007); Deborah Madden, "Medicine on Demand: John Wesley's Enlightened Treatment of the Sick," in *Perfecting Perfection: Essays in Honor of Henry D. Rack* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015); Deborah Madden, "Wesley as Advisor on Health and Healing," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, eds. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Randy L. Maddox, "A Heritage Reclaimed: John Wesley on Holistic Health and Healing," in *A Living Tradition: Critical Recovery and Reconstruction of Wesleyan Heritage*, ed. Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2013); Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley on Holistic Health and Healing," *Methodist History*, 46:1 (October 2007); Randy L. Maddox, "Reclaiming the Eccentric Parent: Methodist Reception of John Wesley's Interest in Medicine," in *Inward and Outward Health: John Wesley's Holistic Concept of Medical Science, the Environment, and Holy Living*, Deborah Madden, ed. (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2008);

his passion for saving souls and serving the poor while forgetting that he also saved many lives by offering common sense medical advice for many maladies of his day.

We might well wonder, then, about the relevance of an eighteenth century clergyman, such as John Wesley, to our present public health concerns. While Wesley's journals, diaries, and sermons are well-known among the scholarly Wesleyan community, very few Wesleyans in local churches are aware of Wesley's considerable skills as a medical practitioner. Starting early in his career and lasting throughout his long life, Wesley collected, analyzed, and evaluated medical data regarding the common diseases and healthcare practices of his day. In a letter to Patty Chapmen in 1775, we see him asking diagnostic questions much like a physician:

You only tell me in general that your health is declining: But you do not say in what manner, or from what cause. When did you begin to feel any decay of health? In what manner was you affected? What did you imagine it was owing to? How have you been since, from time to time? What means of recovery have you used; and with what effect? Write to me as plainly as you can on these heads. . . . It is our duty to take care of our bodily health; but what is this to an healthful mind?³

Wesley asks about the time of Chapman's illness, its symptoms, possible causes, recurrence of symptoms, and any attempted treatments and their efficacy. He also reminds Chapman that her bodily health is not an insignificant matter, but is her Christian duty to care for.

The "care of our bodily health" was not merely a pragmatic concern for Wesley, but a deeply held theological conviction. Wesley understood Christ's ministry to the physical needs of people not simply as a potential means to salvation, but as crucial to Christ's saving work. Ministries to the physical and spiritual needs of people were inseparable for him. Wes-

² contRandy L. Maddox, "Reclaiming Holistic Salvation: A Continuing Wesleyan Agenda," in *Holy Imagination: Thinking about Social Holiness*, eds. Nathan Crawford, Jonathan Dodrill, and David Wilson (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2015); H. Newton Maloney, "John Wesley's Primitive Physick: An 18th-century Healthy Psychology," *Journal of Health Psychology*, Vol. 1(2): 147-159; Philip W. Ott, "John Wesley on Health: A Word for Sensible Regimen," *Methodist History* (April 1980): 193-204; Philip W. Ott, "John Wesley on Health as Wholeness," *Journal of Religion and Health*, 30:1 (1991): 43-57.

³Letter to Patty Chapman, 15 March 1775, in *Works* (Jackson), XIII:89.

ley and the early Methodists collected food for the hungry, visited the sick, established schools for children, provided clean water, clothes for widows, medicine for the sick, hospitality to the imprisoned, assisted the weak and sick by building medical clinics, and gave microloans to start small businesses.⁴ Wesley learned early in his ministry that loving his neighbor meant not only saving their soul, but also caring for their sick body. The healing wrought in sanctification was both for the body and the spirit. There was no tension for him between healing sickness, alleviating suffering, and saving lives. Instead, he understood each of these elements of human life to be included in God's healing of souls wounded by sin.

Primitive Physic

In 1745 Wesley published a pamphlet, *Collection of Receipts for the Use of the Poor*, to aid his often overwhelmed Methodist lay stewards in caring for the increasing numbers of the sick attracted to the early Methodist revival.⁵ In 1746 Wesley opened medical clinics in London and Bristol to care for the both Methodists and non-Methodists alike. The remedies offered in the *Collection* soon proved to be inadequate to the variety of diseases most often encountered by the Methodist stewards in their several times a week visits to the homes of the sick. In response to this growing need, Wesley "corrected and expanded" it, publishing the *Collection* as *Primitive Physic: or An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases* in 1747.⁶ As Deborah Madden notes of this evolution of Wesley's health ministry into *Primitive Physic*:

The collection now spanned 199 pages, which included a 24-page Preface. The diseases and illnesses treated, arranged in alphabetical order, increased from 93 to 243, whereas Wesley's suggested remedies swelled from 227 to 725. By the twenty-third edition, the scope had expanded to 288 diseases, matched with 824 remedies.

⁴John Wesley, *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* (1749), in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 9:272-280. Hereafter abbreviated as *Works*. See especially p. 279, footnote e: loans for microenterprises were not to exceed five pounds or about \$750 in today's currency.

⁵Deborah Madden, "Wesley as Advisor on Health and Healing," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, eds. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 178-179.

⁶John Wesley, *Primitive Physic: or An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*, Introduction, A. Wesley Hill, (London: Epworth Press, 1960).

Primitive Physic went through twenty three editions during Wesley's lifetime. The twenty-third edition was revised by Wesley himself during the last year of his life. *Primitive Physic* was the best selling of all Wesley's works and stayed in print well into the 1880s.⁷

In *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, Wesley provides several important clues about his own evolving sense of theological responsibility to care for the sick that are poor. He also describes the process that led him to begin offering medical care:

I was still in pain for many of the poor that were sick; there was so great expense, and so little profit. . . . I saw the poor people pining away, and several families ruined, and that without remedy. At length I thought of a kind of desperate expedient. "I will prepare, and give them physic myself." For six or seven and twenty years, I had made anatomy and physic the diversion of my leisure hours; though I never properly studied them, unless for a few months when I was going to America, where I imagined I might be of some service to those who had no regular Physician among them. I applied to it again. I took into my assistance an Apothecary, and an experienced Surgeon; resolving at the same time, not to go out of my depth, but to leave all difficult and complicated cases to such Physicians as the patients should choose. I gave notice of this to the society; telling them, that all who were ill of chronical distempers (for I did not care to venture upon acute) might, if they pleased, come to me at such a time, and I would give them the best advice I could, and the best medicine I had. Many came.⁸

While it may sound strange to us that a minister be involved in medicine, in the Anglican tradition in which Wesley was trained, priests were expected to offer medical care as a regular part of their ministry. Most Anglican priests were located in rural areas where medical care was often unavailable. What doctors or apothecaries were present were often unavailable to the poor, charged exorbitant sums for their services, or offered remedies that were often confusing, especially to the uneducated.⁹ In this context the "care of souls" extended beyond the spiritual dimen-

⁷Randy Maddox, "John Wesley on Holistic Health and Healing," *Methodist History*, 46:1 (October 2007), 4.

⁸*A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, paragraphs XII.1-4, in *Works* (Jackson), VIII, 263-264.

⁹*Primitive Physic*, 26-29.

sion to include physical health. From his days studying at Oxford, Wesley was fascinated by medicine. Reading medical textbooks may be as close to an actual hobby as Wesley ever came. Randy Maddox has counted nearly 100 medical works that Wesley cited or read over the course of his long lifetime.¹⁰

Wesley's motive for collecting the remedies that made their way into *Primitive Physic* was to make accessible to the poor the most effective, low cost, home remedies of his day.¹¹ *Primitive Physic* was designed as a self-help manual, giving those with little money, time, or other resources permission and opportunity to care for themselves, preserve their health, and participate in their own healing. Wesley intended *Primitive Physic* to be like having a doctor constantly at hand. Fully aware that he could not be everywhere, Wesley put into print the treatments he offered face-to-face. He asks, "Who would not wish to have a Physician always in his house, and one that attends without fee or reward? To be able (unless in some few complicated cases) to prescribe to his family, as well as himself?"¹² The prescriptions for healing and health in *Primitive Physic* proved to be such an essential part of early Methodist ministry that Wesley instructed his lay preachers to ensure that every Methodist home owned a copy of it.¹³

Why the title *Primitive Physic*? It is "primitive" in the sense that its remedies are natural, readily available, and graciously given by God for the reversal of the effects of the fall. It also reflects Wesley's desire to recover the vitality of the "primitive" New Testament church. It is "physic" in the sense that it has to do with "the art of healing," and those natural medicines whereby the afflicted can be actively involved in the preservation and restoration of their own health.¹⁴ It was for this reason that the various therapies offered in *Primitive Physic* were items commonly found in most households, especially among poor households.¹⁵ It made no

¹⁰Randy Maddox, "A Heritage Reclaimed: John Wesley on Holistic Health and Healing" in *A Living Tradition: Critical Recovery and Reconstruction of Wesleyan Heritage*, ed. Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2013), 129.

¹¹*Primitive Physic*, 33.

¹²*Ibid.*, 27-28.

¹³*Minutes of Several Conversations*, Q.42, in *Works* (Jackson), VIII:319.

¹⁴*Primitive Physic*, 23.

¹⁵Diane Leclerc, in *Singleness of Heart: Gender, Sin, and Holiness in Historical Perspective* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2001), 67, suggests that many of *Primitive Physic's* home remedies may have originated from women.

sense to Wesley to recommend medicines that were expensive or hard to find. Even in the publication of the book, Wesley kept the cost as low as possible. A similar medical self-help book of the day, William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* (1760), sold for 6 schillings, whereas the *Primitive Physic* sold for only one schilling.¹⁶

Wesley's theology of healing and health is not confined to the pages of *Primitive Physic*. While Wesley's involvement in medical issues began as a "desperate expedient,"¹⁷ his lifelong involvement in healthcare was deeply rooted in his holistic soteriology represented throughout all his works:

By salvation I mean, not barely (according to the vulgar notion) deliverance from hell, or going to heaven, but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy, and truth.¹⁸

Salvation for Wesley was not mere salvation from sin in order to get to heaven, but salvation of the totality of what it means to be human. Such a holistic understanding of salvation extends not only to the healing of one aspect of human life to the exclusion of all others, but to every facet of humanity. A fully alive, flourishing, holy person is spiritually vital, physically robust, emotionally resilient, and mentally vigorous. Holiness heals. The healing effected in sanctification is extensive. It does not separate, but integrates the human person.

An important implication of Wesley's holistic soteriology is that he did not separate the spiritual well-being of his followers from their overall well-being. It was this holistic approach to ministry that led him to be as concerned with the physical and mental health of those to whom he ministered as he was with the vitality of their spiritual life. The following excerpt from a letter to Miss Hetty Roe, better known as Hester Ann Rogers, expresses his holistic pastoral theology: "Do you feel no intermission of your happiness in God? Do you never find any lowness of spirits? Does time never hang heavy on your hands? How is your health? You see

¹⁶Madden, "Wesley as Adviser on Health and Healing," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 182.

¹⁷*A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, paragraphs XII.1-4, in *Works* (Jackson), VIII, 263-264.

¹⁸*A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part I, Works*, 11:106.

how inquisitive I am, because *everything relating to you nearly concerns me*.”¹⁹

Salvation, as renewal in “the whole image of God,”²⁰ extends to the total person. Because of this holistic understanding of holiness, Wesley prescribed to his followers spiritual, physical, and mental exercises he believed promoted the health of the entire person. Even though Wesley was a preacher and not a physician, he observed throughout his long ministry how physical health or disease negatively influenced the spiritual lives of those to whom he ministered.²¹ He was adamant that we must do all we can to care for not only the health of others, but our own health as well. His pastoral counsel in a letter to Ann Bolton included the urgent admonition: “At all hazards get [medical help]. It is your bounden duty. You are no more at liberty to throw away your health than to throw away your life.”²² Throughout his sermons, letters, and other writings, Wesley weaves together a unique tapestry of holiness and health.

A crucial implication of Wesley's all-encompassing soteriology is that we do not love God with our spirit and then eat as bodies. We do not love our neighbor as a soul and then exercise or sleep as bodies. We *are* our bodies. We are whole persons. We are souls, *nephesh*, living beings.²³ Holiness is thus embodied and undivided for Wesley.²⁴ For this reason our physical, mental, and emotional health is inextricably related to our relationship to God and others.

¹⁹Letter to Miss Hetty A. Roe, 16 September 1776, in *Works* (Jackson), 13:78. My emphasis.

²⁰*A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, in *Works* (Jackson), XI:444. See also “Heavenly Treasure,” Sermon 129 (1790), in *Works*, 4:164.

²¹Maddox, “John Wesley on Holistic Healing and Health,” 5.

²²Letter to Ann Bolton, 13 July 1774, in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, edited by John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931), 6:327-8, Wesley Center Online, accessed July 7, 2014, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1774>.

²³For a discussion of “soul” as a holistic concept comprising body, mind, and spirit, see Joel Green, “What Does it Mean to be Human? Another Chapter in the Ongoing Interaction of Science and Scripture,” in *From Cells to Souls—and Beyond: Changing Portraits of Human Nature*, ed. Malcom Jeeves (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004): 179-198.

²⁴*Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth*, eds. Samuel M. Powell and Michael E. Lodahl (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012).

Sensible Regimen

The power to serve others is the fruit of a healthy life. Wesley's theology of healing and health assumes God's graciousness, but also requires cultivation. Wesley has strong words for one of his preachers, John Trembath, regarding his responsibility to nourish his own soul:

O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste which you have not; what is tedious at first will afterwards be pleasant. Whether you like it or no, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way: else you will be a trifler all your days, and a pretty, superficial preacher. Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer. Take up your cross, and be a Christian altogether.²⁵

Recognizing that robust health does not occur by accident any more than mature Christians, Wesley prescribed in *Primitive Physic* a "sensible regimen"²⁶ for "preserving health" and living a long, flourishing life. The regimen was simple, but required exacting self-discipline. Here, as in other places, Wesley stresses that the spiritual journey is an interactive relationship. That is, God acts upon us, but we must also respond to God.²⁷ Wesley's treatment of the intimate interrelationship between holiness and health expresses the cooperative nature of grace. God initiates, but we must also respond.²⁸ We respond to God's grace in faith, but we must also take responsibility to cultivate our spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health by engaging in the means of grace.²⁹

As is well known, Wesley was a champion of rules, rhythm, and regimen. In *Primitive Physic* he touts the rule of life that nourished his own robust health as a reliable guide for others. As much as we may resist having a specific health regimen mapped out for us, Wesley recognized the value of a regular rhythm in our eating, drinking, exercise, and sleep for healthy living. While we may not be fans of such exacting regimen, Wes-

²⁵Letter to John Trembath, 17 August 1760 in *Works* (Jackson), XIII:254.

²⁶See Philip W. Ott, "John Wesley on Health: A Word for Sensible Regimen," *Methodist History*, (April 1980): 93-204.

²⁷See, for example, "The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God," Sermon 19 (1748), in *Works*, 1:442.

²⁸See Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994).

²⁹"The Means of Grace," Sermon 16 (1746) in *Works*, 1:376-397.

ley was convinced that his own robust health and long life was due in large part to the constancy of his personal habits:

Observe all the time the greatest exactness in your regimen or manner of living. Abstain from all mixed, all high-seasoned food. Use plain diet, easy of digestion; and this as sparingly as you can, consistent with ease and strength. Drink only water, if it agrees with your stomach; if not, good clear, small beer. Use as much exercise daily in the open air, as you can without weariness. Sup at six or seven, on the lightest food: go to bed early, and rise betimes. To preserve with steadiness in this course, is often more than half the cure. Above all, add to the rest, (for it is not labour lost) that old fashionable medicine Prayer. And have faith in God who *killeth and maketh alive, who bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up*.³⁰

Wesley's writings on health are difficult to dismiss if for no other reason that he lived so long and well. When Wesley was eighty-two-years-old, for example, he spent a week slogging through the melting snow and muddy streets of London "begging" for the poor. As a result of about thirty hours spent soliciting funds that week, he raised two hundred pounds or the equivalent of around \$30,000 in today's currency.³¹ In his *Journal* entry for January 1, 1790, the eighty-six-year-old Wesley writes: "I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much . . . ; my motion is weak and slow. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labour. I can preach and write still." As Outler notes of Wesley's self-assessment, "In the year still remaining Wesley preached more than a hundred oral sermons and wrote out seven sermons for publication."³² Wesley's vitality, even at the end of his life, was the fruit of a life well-lived and extremely self-disciplined.

Health and Mission Integrally Related

Health and mission were integrally related for Wesley. He was convinced that a healthy life will produce enough abundance to supply its neighbor's needs. "Let thy plenty supply thy neighbors' [needs]," he exhorted.³³ Phys-

³⁰*Primitive Physic*, 29.

³¹Richard Heitzenrater, "The Poor and the People Called Methodists," in *The Poor and the People Called Methodists*, ed. Richard Heitzenrater (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2002), 31, 223.

³²Albert C Outler, "An Introductory Comment" to "On Worldly Folly," Sermon 126 (1790) in *Works*, 4:131.

³³"On Worldly Folly," Sermon 126 (1790), in *Works*, 4:134.

ical health and the ability to serve our neighbor were thus vitally related for him. Robust physical health enhances our ability to love and serve God. A vital spiritual life invigorates the body and mind as well as inspires the discipline necessary for engaging in a regular and healthy rhythm of life. The tangled relationship between spiritual and physical health is expressed in Wesley's correspondence with his friend, Alexander Knox:

Dear Alleck, . . . I am nearly concerned in all that concerns you. . . . it will be a double blessing if you give yourself up to the Great Physician, that He may heal soul and body together. And unquestionably this is His design. He wants to give you and my dear Mrs. Knox both inward and outward health. And why not now. Surely all things are ready: believe, and receive the blessing. There can be no doubt but your bodily disorder greatly affects your mind. Be careful to prevent the disease by diet rather than physic. Look up, and wait for happy days!³⁴

Health cannot be divided into parts, inward or outward, for Wesley or scripture. Holiness, as renewal in the whole image of God, extends to the total person. The root meaning of the word health provides important clues about the vital relationship between holiness and health. As Wendell Berry notes, "the concept of health is rooted in the concept of wholeness. To be healthy is to be whole. The word health belongs to a family of words, a listing of which will suggest how far the consideration of health must carry us: heal, whole, wholesome, hale, hallow, holy."³⁵ Holiness for Wesley thus embraces heart and life, spirit and body, inward and outward health.

Wesley recognized that when we are healthy of mind, body, and emotions, we are best able to serve the weak, vulnerable, sick, and poor. Unhealthy people are typically more concerned about their own needs than the needs of others. In Wesley's understanding, if we are not at our full capacity for health, we are less able to work for God's purposes. While we are not always in total control of our health, it is possible through our own actions to "disable [ourselves] from doing good." Even though Wesley was writing about the misuse of wealth in the following passage from

³⁴Letter to Alexander Knox, 26 October 1778, in *Letters* (John Telford), 6:327-8, Wesley Center Online, accessed June 1, 2016, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1778>.

³⁵Wendell Berry, "The Body and the Earth," in *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977), 103.

A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, the theological principles expressed here apply not only to the misuse of wealth, but also to the neglect of health:

For by this needless and continuous expense you disable yourself from doing good. You bind your own hands. You make it impossible for you to do that good which otherwise you might, so that you injure the poor in the same proportion as you poison your own soul. You might have clothed the naked; but what was due to them was thrown away on your own costly apparel [e.g. by the neglect of your health]. You might have fed the hungry, entertained the stranger, relieved them that were sick or in prison; but the superfluities of your own table swallowed up that whereby they should have been profited. And so this wasting of thy Lord's goods is an instance of complicated wickedness; since hereby thy poor brother perisheth, for whom Christ died.³⁶

When we do not care well for ourselves Wesley says, we “disable [ourselves] from doing good.” The ministry we might have otherwise given to those in need is left undone. Those who wait for us to preach to them, wait in vain. Those we might have otherwise served in the name of Christ remain in need. In short, when we “disable [ourselves] from doing good,” we fail as God's stewards. When our health compromised, so is our ability to love our neighbor as our self. As faithful stewards, we are thereby constrained to “do no harm” and “do good” to others by nourishing our health as a means of grace.³⁷ For Wesley health is a precondition for doing good. In this sense, when we care for ourselves by nurturing our

³⁶*A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part II*, in *Works*, 11:260.

³⁷For a compelling case to extend Wesley's understanding of instituted means of grace to such “prudential” means as self-care practices, see Richard P. Heitzenrater, “The Exercise of the Presence of God: Holy Conferencing as a Means of Grace,” in *Perfecting Perfection: Essays in Honor of Henry D. Rack* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015): 61-80. While I don't believe that Heitzenrater would disagree with my counting the care of our health as a means of grace so long as it bears “fruit,” it is important to note that connecting self-care practices with means of grace is my idea and not that of Heitzenrater. Similarly, Randy Maddox affirms that the first two General Rules function as means of grace for Wesley. February 27, 2016 email with author. See also Randy Maddox, “Randy Maddox: John Wesley says, ‘Take care of yourself,’” *Faith & Leadership* (July 30, 2012), accessed March 12, 2016, <https://www.faithandleadership.com/randy-maddox-john-wesley-says-take-care-yourself>.

health, eating well, sleeping adequately, and exercising regularly, we nurture the life of God in both spirit and body. Holistic health nourishes the soul and affirms God's redemptive work in the totality of human life. The holiness of God calls us not only to love God and our neighbor, but to love ourselves in such a way that we are sustained in the ongoing journey of loving God and neighbor. Love of God, self, and neighbor are thus inextricably interconnected.

As a result of his holistic soteriology, the telos of holiness for Wesley was the health of our entire life—spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional. Salvation and sanctification heal from sin and reverse the effects of the fall by promoting well-being in every facet of human life. When we flourish in our relationship to God and our health, so does our ability to do good to all. The neglect of our health, however, does harm both to ourselves and others. The first two of Wesley's General Rules for his Methodist societies were: "[do] no harm" and "[do] good."³⁸ These rules apply equally to spiritual and bodily health. When bodily health is neglected, it is impossible to love God and our neighbor with the energy of a fully healthy person. Unnecessary illness prevents us from doing the good that might have otherwise been done to the poor, naked, hungry, or stranger. Clearly, health was integral to Wesley's sense of mission. When talking about the practice of fasting, for example, Wesley cautions against fasting to such an extent that we cause ourselves "to be unfit for the works of our calling. This also we are diligently to guard against; for we ought to preserve our health, as a good gift of God. Therefore care is to be taken, whenever we fast, to proportion the fast to our strength. For we may not offer God murder for sacrifice, or destroy our bodies to help our souls."³⁹

For this reason, Wesley was eager to root out of his own life and that of his followers anything that impaired their health. One of the places where this is expressed most clearly is in his "A Letter to a Friend Concerning Tea." In this letter Wesley tells his friend that he has sworn off tea drinking because of its excessive cost. In one year of not drinking tea he has saved fifty pounds; and, as a direct result, he has been able to feed and clothe fifty poor folk. He also speaks of tea as a poison to be avoided in order to be as healthy in life and fruitful in ministry as possible.⁴⁰ Even

³⁸John Wesley, *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies* in *Works* (Jackson), VIII:270-71.

³⁹"Sermon on the Mount, VII," Sermon 27 (1748), in *Works*, 1:609.

⁴⁰"A Letter to a Friend Concerning Tea," 10 December 1748, in *Works* (Jackson), XI:507, 513.

though Wesley later revised his views on tea to the point that he resumed tea drinking,⁴¹ this letter establishes the principle that whatever may impair health is to be avoided at all costs. Some of his tea drinking dialogue partners claimed that whether or not one drank tea was an insignificant matter. Wesley's response is strong: "This is not an indifferent thing, if it affects the health either of myself or my brethren. . . . Much less is it a small thing to preserve my or my brother's health . . . O think it not a small thing, whether only one for whom Christ died be fed or hungry, clothed or naked."⁴²

Nurturing personal health also has direct implications for public health. In one of his several Sermon on the Mount sermons, Wesley says that we are to be "burdensome to no man."⁴³ Wesley's words raise a crucial aspect of the stewardship of our lives. Yes, we care for our bodies because they are a good gift from God; but we also care for them so that we may not be a burden to others, whether it's our loved ones or the public healthcare system. The care of our health is not merely a private matter, but is also a very important public health issue that affects the well-being of all of us, spiritually, socially, and economically.

Self-Care

While Wesley never uses the phrase "love of the self" or "self-love," his theology of health is consistent with the use of the terms. William Shakespeare, deceased some eighty-seven years before Wesley's birth, said of self-love: "Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin as self-neglecting."⁴⁴ In his *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*, Wesley extends the usual argument for not killing another to including anything that is "hurtful to the health, or life of thy own body, or any other's."⁴⁵ In his commentary on Deuteronomy 5:17, he asks,

Are you guilty of no degree of self-murder? Do you never eat or drink any thing because you like it, although you have reason to believe, it is prejudicial to your health? Have you constantly

⁴¹See Samuel J. Rogal, "John Wesley Takes Tea," *Methodist History*, 32:4 (July 1994): 222-228.

⁴²"A Letter to a Friend Concerning Tea," XI:511-12.

⁴³"Sermon on the Mount, VIII," Sermon 28 (1748), in *Works* 1:619.

⁴⁴William Shakespeare, Dauphin in *Henry V*, accessed June 19, 2016, .

⁴⁵John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*, accessed May 24, 2016, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesleys-notes-on-the-bible/notes-on-the-second-book-of-moses-called-exodus/#Chapter+XX>.

done whatever you had reason to believe was conducive to it? . . . Have you done unto all men, as in like circumstances, you would they should do to you? . . . Have you laboured to deliver every soul you could from sin and misery? Have you shewed that you loved all men as yourself, by a constant, earnest endeavour, to fill all places with holiness and happiness, with the knowledge and love of God?⁴⁶

For Wesley the damage of our health was tantamount to committing suicide. His probing questions also demonstrate his conviction that withholding good from others when it is in our power to give it, is nothing less than the murder of one for whom Christ died. As Wesley notes in the 1755 Postscript to *Primitive Physic*, his enduring motivation for offering “cheap, safe and common” medicines was the Golden Rule: “And this I have done on that principle, whereby I desire to be governed by my actions, ‘*Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, the same do unto them.*’”⁴⁷

A Concrete Example: Lifestyle Diseases

A rekindling of Wesley’s holistic soteriology in our day will enhance the health of all of us, whether it be ourselves, parishioners, clergy, local communities, or creation itself.⁴⁸ Let me give one concrete example of how Wesley’s all-encompassing vision of salvation and healing can be appropriated in our day.

Today we hear more and more about “Lifestyle diseases.”⁴⁹ Lifestyle diseases are those diseases associated with certain lifestyle choices and habits and which are potentially preventable. Type 2 diabetes, for example, was almost unheard of in people under thirty a generation ago.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷*Primitive Physic*, 34.

⁴⁸See Randy Maddox, “Anticipating the New Creation: Wesleyan Foundations for Holistic Mission,” *Asbury Journal* 62 (2007): 49-66; Randy Maddox, “Reclaiming Holistic Salvation: A Continuing Wesleyan Agenda,” in *Holy Imagination: Thinking about Social Holiness*, eds. Nathan Crawford, Jonathan Dodrill, and David Wilson (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2015): 41-54; and Howard Snyder with Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011).

⁴⁹For a global perspective on lifestyle diseases, see the *UN Chronicle*, <http://unchronicle.un.org/article/lifestyle-diseases-economic-burden-health-services/>, accessed June 8, 2016.

Today, it is estimated that three in ten American children will develop type 2 diabetes if they adopt the standard American diet (SAD) and inactive lifestyle. Here are a few “fast facts” related to diabetes in the U.S.:

- Total yearly costs associated with diabetes are \$245 billion in the U.S.
- As many as 1 in 3 American adults will have diabetes in 2050 if present trends continue.
- Diabetes kills more Americans every year than AIDS and breast cancer combined.
- A person with diagnosed diabetes at age 50 dies 6 years earlier than a counterpart without diabetes.⁵⁰

One of the most heartbreaking things about type 2 diabetes is that it is almost always preventable. Type 2 diabetes is not to be confused with type 1 diabetes, however, because type 1 diabetes is believed to be genetically-caused rather than the result of lifestyle choices.

Wesley observed that many illnesses of his day were brought about by unhealthy habits. He makes the astute observation that chronic diseases are most often caused by

the constant course of life we lead, what we do, or neglect to do, habitually every day, that if right establishes our health, if wrong, makes us invalids for life. . . . every man [is] the real author of all or most of his own miseries. Most of the complaints which the learned call chronic diseases, we must undoubtedly bring upon ourselves by our own indulgences, excesses or mistaken habits of life, or by suffering our ill-conducted passions to lead us astray or disturb our peace of mind.⁵¹

Wesley is careful and compassionate to acknowledge that some may suffer from chronic diseases not by malicious intent, “but from custom, or

⁵⁰American Diabetes Association, “Fast Facts - Data and Statistics About Diabetes,” http://professional.diabetes.org/content/fast-facts-data-and-statistics-about-diabetes/?loc=dorg_statistics, accessed June 10, 2016.

⁵¹John Wesley, *An Extract from Dr. Cadogan's Dissertation on the Gout and All Chronic Diseases* (1774), A Compared Edition, James G. Donat, 1996-2005, ¶W17, 10; ¶W4, 7. Wesley is careful to note at the beginning of this tract that he has not uncritically appropriated it: “A few things in [Dr. Cadogan's] excellent tract have been censured with some reason.” Thank you to Randy Maddox for providing an electronic copy of this text.

mistake, not knowing their daily diet to be unwholesome [sic] and productive of their diseases.”⁵² This describes well the condition of many of those afflicted with type 2 diabetes in the United States. Many so afflicted have been born into families who know very little about nutrition or may have been raised in socio-economic contexts that are “food deserts.”⁵³

Wesley was intimately involved enough with the various health issues of many of his followers to understand that chronic diseases cannot always be traced back to our own doing. Some diseases have complex and possibly unknowable causes. Wesley, ever the compassionate counselor, writes to this effect in a letter to Miss Loxdale: “I believe Mr. W—’s nervous disorder gave rise to many, if not most, of those temptations to which many persons of equal grace, but firmer nerves, are utter strangers.”⁵⁴ Family background and socio-economic context are significant determinants of public health. Public health is very much a social justice issue.⁵⁵

Reducing risk for type 2 diabetes is simple, even if not easy. The top three suggestions from WebMD for lowering risk of type 2 diabetes sound like they come straight from *Primitive Physic*: lose weight, get active, and eat right.⁵⁶ Throughout his writings Wesley extols the healing powers of exercise and wholesome foods for the promotion and preservation of health. He says of exercise, for example:

The power of exercise, both to preserve and restore health, is greater than can well be conceived.⁵⁷

Exercise, especially as the spring comes on, will be of greater service to your health than a hundred medicines.⁵⁸

⁵²Ibid., ¶W35, 16.

⁵³See Kendra G. Hotz, “Big Momma Had Sugar, Imma Have It Too”: Medical Fatalism and the Language of Faith Among African-American Women in Memphis,” *Journal of Religion and Health*, 53:5 (October 2014). For examples of two websites that address the issue of food deserts, see the following: *Nutrition Digest*, 38:1, <http://americannutritionassociation.org/newsletter/usda-defines-food-deserts>; Food Empowerment Project, accessed June 8, 2016, <http://www.foodispower.org/food-deserts>.

⁵⁴Letter to Miss Loxdale, 8 October 1785, in *Works* (Jackson), XIII:132.

⁵⁵See Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011).

⁵⁶WebMD, accessed June 10, 2016, <http://www.webmd.com/diabetes/type-2-diabetes-guide/type-2-diabetes?page=2#1>.

⁵⁷*Primitive Physic*, 24.

⁵⁸Wesley, Letter to Lady Maxwell, 23 February 1767, in *Works* (Jackson), XII:343.

Every day of your life take at least an hour's exercise, between breakfast and dinner. If you will, take another hour before supper, or before you sleep. If you can, take it in the open air; otherwise, in the house. If you cannot ride or walk about, use within a dumb-bell or a wooden horse. If you have not strength enough to do this for an hour at a time, do it twice or thrice. Let nothing hinder you. Your life is at stake. Make everything yield to this.⁵⁹

We must not miss the urgency of his words in the last statement: "Your life is at stake. Make everything yield to this." Caring for our health is not opposed to the holiness and happiness that God intends for humans. Rather, it is integral to the flourishing kind of life that God intends for humans and all of creation. Seeking to live a vibrant life is not optional for Christians.

Wesley also never ceased speaking about the importance of a simple and disciplined diet:

steadily observe both that kind and measure of food, which experience shows to be most friendly to health and strength.⁶⁰

Add to [exercise] a strictly temperate diet, and few chronic diseases will remain long.⁶¹

Abstain from all mixed, all high-seasoned food. Use plain diet, easy of digestion; and this as sparingly as you can, consistent with ease and strength.⁶²

Wesley taught that not all physical illness can be prevented or healed by prayer, exercise, or diet. Some illnesses are so deeply rooted in genetics, life-long lifestyle choices, emotional abuse, acute illness, and other physical infirmities that only a limited relief of the pains experienced in this life can be hoped for in some cases. As evidence for this claim, note Wesley's following letter to Miss Betsy Ritchie:

Since I saw her, I have had the pleasure of receiving two letters from ; and I am more and more convinced, that she has sustained no real loss from her late trials. Indeed the greatness of

⁵⁹*Thoughts on Nervous Disorders*, in *Works* (Jackson), XI:520.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹John Wesley, *An Extract from Dr. Cadogan's Dissertation on the Gout and All Chronic Diseases* ¶10, 5.

⁶²*Primitive Physic*, 29.

them proved the greatness of her grace; otherwise, she must have utterly fainted. *But I am afraid the poor tenement of clay has received such a shock as will not easily be repaired.* The wonderful behaviour of Mrs. was more than it was well able to bear. But the comfort is, He with whom we have to do is the Physician.⁶³

Wesley acknowledges in another context the complex individuality of disease when he offers the following counsel: “. . . the medicine which cures one man, will not always cure another of the same distemper. Nor will it cure the same man at all times.”⁶⁴ This is one of the reasons that he provides several treatments for each illness listed in the *Primitive Physic*.

Appropriating Wesley's insights about exercise and wholesome food in our churches as both a means of grace and means to greater health can lead to significantly lower rates of type 2 diabetes in our communities. It is easy to imagine that if Wesley were alive today, he would deliver a very clear message to pastors and churches regarding the kinds of ministries we can offer to our communities to combat the unprecedented raise in type 2 diabetes, both in the U.S. and throughout the world.

Appropriating Wesley's Holistic Soteriology

How can Wesleyans appropriate Wesley's insights for promoting and preserving the health of the whole person in our day?

1. We affirm Wesley's holistic insights into the complex ecology of being human. Humans are an intricate and interrelated web of spirit, body, mind, and emotions, and not reducible to any one element.⁶⁵
2. We acknowledge the importance of following a sensible regimen of eating nutritious food, neither too much nor too little,⁶⁶ and getting regular exercise as means of grace for more vibrant health.

⁶³Letter to Miss Betsy Ritchie, 6 October 1778, in *Works* (Jackson), 13:60. My emphasis.

⁶⁴*Primitive Physic*, 29.

⁶⁵For an example of another non-reductionist, wholly physical anthropology, see Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, & the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁶⁶See also Michael Pollan's popular aphorism regarding food: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), xv.

3. We remain committed to the healing of the whole person. While our understanding of human biology has changed considerably in its complexity since Wesley's day, God's purpose in salvation and sanctification remains the same: the healing of the soul "in all its faculties"; or, what Wesley also referred to as ". . . a renewal of heart, not only in part, but in the whole image of God."⁶⁷ Wesley called God's healing work in human beings "soul therapy." Employing the biblical concept of soul as the whole person, Wesley says of "the religion of Jesus Christ": "It is *θεραπεία ψυχῆς* [*soul therapy*], God's method of healing a soul which is *thus diseased*. Hereby the great Physician of souls applies medicine to heal *this sickness*: to restore human nature, totally corrupted in all its faculties."⁶⁸ He is clear that God's salvific reach extends to every area of human need. This is good news, indeed, for churches, local communities, and all of creation.⁶⁹
4. We continue to devote ourselves to ministry and justice for all persons, especially the weak, vulnerable, and poor. Wesley's commitment to care for the health needs of the poor was not an add-on to the rest of his ministry, but was an organic overflowing of his passion to spread scriptural holiness (understood as whole-hearted love of God and neighbor) throughout the land.⁷⁰
5. Wesley presses each of us to take responsibility for our own health. His personal healthiness offers important lessons as we think about the stewardship of our own health so that we might love God, neighbor, ourselves, and all creation as long and as well as we can.
6. We are challenged to extend Wesley's theological insights into the public health arena. Largely as a result of anemic theologies of salvation that do not take seriously the breadth of God's redemptive work in humans or creation, theology has been largely marginalized as a significant conversation partner in discussions

⁶⁷A *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, in *Works* (Jackson), XI:444. See also "Heavenly Treasure," Sermon 129 (1790), in *Works*, 4:164.

⁶⁸"Original Sin," Sermon 44 (1759) in *Works*, 2:184.

⁶⁹Howard Snyder with Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011).

⁷⁰*Minutes of Several Conversations*, Q.3, in *Works* (Jackson), VIII:299.

of public health. As we rekindle Wesley's holistic soteriology in our context, Wesleyans will be empowered to bring theology and medicine into significant conversation with each other.⁷¹ While medicine and theology may disagree about holiness, both are unequivocally committed to human health, happiness, and flourishing. Each has much to learn from the other. The health of all of us will vastly improve if we rekindle once again in our day Wesley's holistic theology of salvation.

7. We have a timely and much-needed message for our churches, communities, and all creation. The Wesleyan message of inward and outward holiness is one that is especially well-suited and needed for the complex health needs of the twenty-first century. Rising healthcare costs and obstacles to equal healthcare accessibility as well as the need for accurate healthcare information, demonstrate that Wesley's integration of spirituality, psychology, and health offers churches, pastors, and communities in the Wesleyan tradition a message of very good news, indeed. The goal of Wesley's holistic soteriology offers a compelling picture of the true end of human beings and informs Wesleyan mission in the world:

This is the religion we long to see established in the world, a religion of love and joy and peace, having its seat in the heart, in the inmost soul, but ever showing itself by its fruits, continually springing forth not only in all innocence—for “love worketh no ill to his neighbor”—but likewise in every kind of beneficence, in spreading virtue and happiness all around it.⁷²

Wesley's holistic soteriology and practical theological insights regarding health are crucial for promoting health, holiness, and happiness as well as addressing public health issues in our own day. Let us join hands with God and each other to make health, holiness, and happiness flourish in our churches, communities, and all creation!

⁷¹See *Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health*, ed. Ellen L. Idler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Of particular interest for the concerns of this paper is Karen D. Scheib's chapter, “Christian Commitment to Public Well-Being: John Wesley's “Sensible Regimen” and *Primitive Physick*,” 113-132.

⁷²*An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, in *Works*, 11:46.

“JUSTICE, MERCY, TRUTH,” A THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT IN THE SERMONS OF JOHN WESLEY

by

M. Andrew Gale

“. . . and that, in our whole lives, we are moving straight toward God,
and that continually; walking steadily on in the highway of holiness,
in the paths of justice, mercy, and truth.”

*John Wesley (The Witness of our Own Spirit, 1746)*¹

John Wesley had a profound way of weaving his lived experience of faith, drawing from his Anglican history, with theological concepts to create new understandings and practices of commonly utilized terms. One example of this unique ability to synthesize concepts is his use of “justice, mercy, truth.” This phrase, and variations of it, is used consistently throughout his sermons. The phrase becomes almost rhythmic and syn-copated, “justice, mercy, truth,” embedding the core concepts in the minds of his listeners. But how did he intend this phrase to be understood? As one will see, “justice, mercy, and truth” is a prominent concept in Wesley’s sermons that represented the way he viewed the character of God, the *imago Dei*, and humanity’s response to God’s faithfulness in the midst of a broken world. In this article I begin by setting the context for the phrase, offering ideas on its origination and the prominence of its usage in Wesley’s sermons. Next, I explore each of the key words, justice, mercy, and truth, in the context of Wesley’s life and writing. Finally, I will close by exploring how this concept, understood holistically, reflects Wesley’s theology of the restoration of the *imago Dei* as both inward transformation and outward practice.

Context of the Phrase

Prior to looking at the phrase and its meaning, it is pertinent to understand the context from which the phrase emerges. Two important aspects help set this context: the origination and prominence. First, I offer a brief

¹Sermon 12: “The Witness of Our Own Spirit,” 12 (*Works*, I: 307).

hypothesis on the origination of the phrase “justice, mercy, truth.” In my research, I could not find any definitive place where Wesley might have lifted the phrase in its entirety. Though different writings and preachers of his time used phrases similar or which had components of Wesley’s phrase, none fully captured it in the way he finally did. Nonetheless, there are three places from which elements of this phrase seems to originate: scripture, ecclesial liturgy, and the sermons of other preachers of his time.

When looking at the phrase in its entirety, there are only a few passages in the King James Version used in Wesley’s time that use all three words. Psalm 89:14 is the only passage which uses all in one thought: “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.”² Here the words correspond to the nature of God. Though the words are all used in the same thought, they are not used as a set as with Wesley’s usage. Psalm 85:10³ is another passage which contains both mercy and truth, but chooses the complementary term righteousness over justice in the translation of “*sedeq*.” Micah 6:8⁴ is a final Old Testament verse that captures both the ideas of justice and mercy, but does not mention truth directly. This verse, as opposed to the Psalm counterparts, focuses on humanity’s actions rather than God’s character. The passage from Micah becomes a prominent passage in Wesley’s sermons, but when using it he often maintains the verb form of justice, “to do justly” and thus does not connect it directly to the phrase “justice, mercy, truth.”

As with the Old Testament, in the New Testament there is not a singular location where the phrase as a whole could have been lifted. One can gain some insight on the phrase, though, when, in a footnote explanation of Matthew 23:23⁵ he uses the phrase “justice, mercy, truth” instead of the phrase given in the passage of “judgment, mercy, faith.”⁶

²Psalm 89:14, KJV.

³“Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” (Psalm 85:10, KJV)

⁴“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth there require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8, KJV)

⁵“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” (Matthew 23:23, KJV)

⁶John Wesley, *The New Testament with Explanatory Notes* (Oxford University Press, 1869), 78.

The brevity of the note does not leave room for him to expand on his rationale for using a phrase different than that of the passage other than to assume it was more colloquial for his readers.

Though scripture certainly contains the concepts of justice, mercy, and truth, for Wesley to use the phrase so consistently suggests that it is drawn from other sources as well. One suggestion is that elements of the phrase may have originated in Anglican Church liturgy. In the 1703 publishing of the Book of Common Prayer by the Church of England there are a passages that describe justice and truth, passages with justice and mercy, and passages with mercy and truth, but there none where all three appear together. Justice and truth are most often used in reference to prayer for governance and not connected to the theological connotations presented by Wesley.⁷ A similar reference is found in the final of the 39 articles of the Anglican tradition. In that article it exchanges judgment for mercy when it refers to the swearing of an oath "according to the Prophet's teaching in justice, judgment, and truth."⁸ Justice and mercy appear together when it expresses that it is no longer time for mercy, but time for justice.⁹ Finally, mercy and truth are used when quoting Psalm 25:10, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth."¹⁰ This incorporates some of the language, but still does not fully capture the meaning with which Wesley used the concept.

A final place where one finds some clues to Wesley's phrase is in the writings and sermons of other preachers of Wesley's time. A variation of the words justice, mercy, and truth are found in Wesley's use of an early sermon by William Tilly. Wesley's sermon "On Grieving the Holy Spirit," dating back to 1733, is an abridged revision of Tilly's earlier work.¹¹ In it, Wesley writes of varieties of sin and explains that presumptuous sin is "the greatest opposition to God's will, contempt of his mercy, and defiance of his justice." This phrase is taken from Tilly's 1708 sermon found in a book of sermons titled *Sixteen Sermons . . . Upon Several Occasion*. In the original, Tilly writes that the sin of presumption is "the greatest oppo-

⁷*The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the Use of the Church of England* (Oxford University Press, 1703).

⁸*Ibid.*, 22.

⁹*Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 46.

¹¹Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity*, First edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 146.

sition to God's will, contempt of his holiness, and defiance of his justice."¹² Wesley's use is not exact, but from the earliest writings of Wesley we see him begin to tinker with ideas presented by his predecessors. As Wesley continued preaching, and as evidenced in his later writing, the phrase became more solidified as justice, mercy, and truth. This phrase exhibits, as other scholars have noted, Wesley's acute ability to piece together a concept utilizing ideas from many different sources, including in this case scripture, Anglican tradition, and experience, to create a new robust concept.

But how prominent is this phrase in the sermons of John Wesley? Wesley employed the exact phrase, "justice, mercy, truth" thirty-two times in twenty-four different sermons. The date of these sermons range from as early as 1738 to as late as 1790. The phrase spans nearly his entire preaching career. On three of these occasions Wesley uses the phrase with other key concepts, like in his sermon "On Attending the Church Service" where he chided some clergy and laity for not being concerned "for piety, justice, mercy, and truth."¹³ Though using the same phrase thirty-two times is enough to draw attention, the phrase gains even more attention if one adds the times when Wesley exchanged one word for comparable words like wisdom,¹⁴ holiness,¹⁵ or love of God.¹⁶ This brings the total usage to over forty times. On top of that, there are forty-four additional times when at least two of the three key words are used in the same thought.

Though the exact usage of the phrase seems to originate from Wesley, it was used enough that it was adopted by other preachers of Wesley's time. Francis Asbury used the same phrase in his writings.¹⁷ The phrase also seems to gain clarity throughout the sermons of Wesley. Though it is used consistently throughout his sermons, the addition of other words and variation in order seems to lessen and by the 1780s the phrase

¹²William Tilly, *Sixteen Sermons, All (except One) Preach'd before the University of Oxford, At St. Mary's Upon Several Occasions* (London, England: Bernard Lintott, 1713), 330.

¹³Sermon 104: "On Attending the Church Service," 15 (*Works*, III: 470).

¹⁴Sermon 15: "The Great Assize," II:10 (*Works*, I: 364).

¹⁵Sermon 117: "On the Discoveries of Faith," 7 (*Works*, IV: 31).

¹⁶Sermon 16: "The Means of Grace," I:2 (*Works*, I: 378).

¹⁷Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church: From August 7, 1771, to December 7, 1815*, vol. 3 (N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1821), 21, 24.

emerges as "justice, mercy, truth." Now that a brief introduction has been given for the context of the phrase I will look at each word individually before offering thoughts on the concept as a whole.

Justice

In his sermons and through his life one finds there is both a theological and pragmatic, or missional, undergirding for many of the concepts preached by John Wesley.¹⁸ Though post-enlightenment thinking would allow for the bifurcation of the theological and the pragmatic, Wesley uses them interchangeably. This can be seen even in his use of the phrase "justice, mercy, truth." For example, when looking at the concept as a whole, the theological characteristics of "justice, mercy, truth" are amplified in the sermon "The Lord our Righteousness" when he discusses Jesus' character in relationship to the Trinitarian concept: "his eternal, essential, immutable holiness; his infinite justice, mercy, and truth."¹⁹ But, at the same time, in other sermons the concept is a missional mandate, as when Wesley states that in all outward actions toward one's neighbor that a Christian is "to walk in justice, mercy, and truth."²⁰ The multi-layered understanding that is true for the concept as a whole can be seen in each word individually. In this section I look at justice within these two lenses. Theologically, Wesley discusses justice as God's justice toward fallen humanity. Pragmatically, justice is expressed in the idea of equality, tied to the golden rule.

The first layer of justice which Wesley uses is to understand God's justice. A foundation for God's justice was instilled in him by his mother, Susanna, who left her childhood religious upbringing in the Dissent (Puritan) church to join the Established Church.²¹ One component of her

¹⁸Though "missional" has only been used in recent history, Howard Snyder explains that the understanding of the church that is expressed through the word *missional* has deep resonance with the life and teaching of John Wesley. See Snyder's chapter, "The Missional Flavor of John Wesley's Theology" in Darrell L. Whiteman and Gerald H. Anderson, eds., *World Mission in the Wesleyan Spirit*, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 44 (Franklin, Tenn: Seedbed, 2014). Or Howard A. Snyder, *Yes in Christ: Wesleyan Reflections on Gospel, Mission and Culture*, Tyndale Studies in Wesleyan History and Theology, vol. 2 (Toronto: Clements Academic, 2010).

¹⁹Sermon 20: "The Lord our Righteousness," I:1 (*Works*, I: 452).

²⁰Sermon 8: "The First Fruits of the Spirit," I:5 (*Works*, I: 236).

²¹John Fletcher Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain Account of His Life and Work*, ed. James Richard Joy (Eaton & Mains, 1903), 22.

childhood faith that she was significantly against was the doctrine of predestination. In a letter to John in 1725, the year he entered into ministry, she writes of her disagreements with strict Calvinism. "For 'tis certainly inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God to lay any man under either a physical or moral necessity of committing sin and then punish him for doing it."²² John Wesley had a deep appreciation for his mother and her theology influenced the way he understood his faith. The idea that God's justice is intricately connected to freewill is woven in sermons throughout Wesley's life. Humanity's freewill led to disobedience, but this is seen in a second understanding of justice, the redemptive Christ that satisfies justice.

Wesley used the word justice in a legal sense in the sermon "The Way to the Kingdom" discussing God's justice as punishment for sin.²³ This concept of justice is tied closely to Jesus as justification, as appeasing God's justice, something humanity could not do on their own. Another example can be found in "The Fall of Man" where Wesley interplayed the justice of punishing sin with mercy as the universal remedy.²⁴ Justice connects humanity to the work of Christ. As is evidenced in the last quote, the interplay of justice and mercy is common in Wesley's sermons. God acts as both the one requiring justice and also giving mercy. Though justice and mercy are both attributes of God's interaction with humanity, one is not to disregard one in favor of the other. In "A Call to Backsliders," Wesley challenges the listeners that they should beware that they do not "so presume upon the mercy of God as utterly to forget his justice."²⁵

In a pragmatic sense, Wesley's beginning point for justice is drawn from the Aristotelian view of justice as "to each his due."²⁶ For Wesley, justice was treating someone commensurate with their worth as being made in the image of God, contrary to one's propensity to simply care about one's own well-being. In "The More Excellent Way" he equates justice with "rendering to all their due, in every circumstance of life."²⁷ Wesley's praxis of justice was founded on the golden rule: a person is to treat

²²Susanna Wesley and Charles Wallace, *Susanna Wesley the Complete Writings*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 113.

²³Sermon 7: "The Way of the Kingdom," II:5 (*Works*, I: 228).

²⁴Sermon 57: "On the Fall of Man," II:9 (*Works*, II: 411).

²⁵Sermon 86: "A Call to Backsliders," 1 (*Works*, III: 211).

²⁶Aristotle and Joe Sachs, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Newbury, Mass: Focus Pub./R. Pullins, 2002).

²⁷Sermon 89: "The More Excellent Way," III:2 (*Works*, III: 269).

another person the way they desire to be treated. "The grand measure of justice, as well as of mercy, is, Do unto others as thou wouldst they should do unto thee."²⁸ He describes the golden rule as one "of mercy as well as justice."²⁹ Though the golden rule was to be followed by Christians, it was also given the status of natural justice, a justice that is to be followed by all humanity regardless of religious inclination. Though the golden rule is a preferred stance toward humanity, Wesley was keenly aware that humanity is not bent toward caring for others. Wesley wrote: "All human creatures are naturally partial to themselves, and, when opportunity offers have more regard to their own interest or pleasure than strict justice allows."³⁰ There are many places one can see Wesley's pragmatic unfolding of justice as the golden rule, two of which are his work to end slavery and to help the materially poor.

Wesley was outspoken in his lifetime against the injustice of slavery and did not oppose it on a purely economic foundation, but on the foundation of human dignity and the natural rights of freedom and liberty for all people.³¹ In *Thoughts Upon Slavery* he denied "all slave-holding to be consistent with any degree of natural justice."³² Wesley's theology of justice was not new, ideas of justice as equality, or what he terms natural justice, had been in theological discourse since the early church.³³ But his views of justice as equality challenged the current cultural paradigms of his time. For instance, Wesley also moved to a more egalitarian stance on issues of gender even though his time was marked by a still predominately male-dominated society.³⁴ He based his justice on the theology of *theimago Dei*, all people deserved to be treated fairly because they were

²⁸Sermon 25: "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse V," IV:7 (*Works*, I: 565).

²⁹Sermon 30: "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse X," 22 (*Works*, I: 660).

³⁰Sermon 95: "On the Education of Children," 11 (*Works*, III: 352).

³¹David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 42.

³²John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (W. Whitestone, 1775), 17; Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 215.

³³For example: Lactantius, Anthony Bowen, and Peter Garnsey, *Lactantius: Divine Institutes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 310.

³⁴Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal* (InterVarsity Press, 1980), 63.

made in the image of God oppose the inhumanity of the slave trade on the basis that no one in society was to be treated as if they were less than human. Wesley's fight against slavery was expressed both in Britain and in his time in the United States. The importance of this fight was felt from the early days of his ministry to the final months of his life. The last letter he wrote before his death was to William Wilberforce encouraging him to continue the fight against the injustice of slavery.³⁵

The measure of justice, doing to others as you would have them do to you, spoke not only to slavery, but to his desire to aid the materially poor. Wesley understood a compensatory relationship between the wealthy and the poor was necessary, which is why many of his sermons contain instructions toward that end. Two sermons that stand out as representations of this are "The Use of Money" and "The Good Steward." Though in the prior sermon he spoke directly about one's fiduciary duty to the less fortunate, in the latter sermon Wesley took it a step further identifying not only monetary resources, but "our souls, our bodies, our goods, and whatever other talents we have received."³⁶ Toward the end of "The Good Steward" Wesley narrated the questions God will ask of humanity about how they used the resources allotted them. Here one finds the heart of Wesley's theology of justice for the poor. After asking whether the person supplied for their daily needs and the needs of their family, the person is asked by God if they had restored "the remainder to me, through the poor, whom I had appointed to receive it."³⁷ Wesley not only challenges societal norms, but reorients the view of justice to incorporate a holistic, interconnected view of worth grounded in the golden rule. The challenge to live justly was not something accomplished from a distance; only through engagement could one experience God's call to the golden rule. The importance of engagement can be seen clearly through the second component of the phrase, Wesley's view of mercy.

Mercy

Mercy, like justice, carries with it both theological and pragmatic underpinnings. Wesley's view of works of mercy elevated their sacramental value, but it was also lived out in the way he organized his Methodist

³⁵Robert Eugene Chiles, *Scriptural Christianity: A Call to John Wesley's Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 133.

³⁶Sermon 51: "The Good Steward," I:2 (*Works*, II: 284).

³⁷Sermon 51: "The Good Steward," III:5 (*Works*, II: 295).

societies. One of the most lasting images of John Wesley was not what he said, but the way he chose to live out the difficult gospel he was calling others to live. Works of mercy became a cornerstone of his life, something that he modeled and, through his sermons, gave credence to as part of the life of any Christian. In this section I will explore Wesley's theological understanding of works of mercy as a means of grace and give examples of how he practically participated in works of mercy throughout his lifetime.

In regard to the "doing of good" Wesley stated that to set aside being merciful is just as offensive to God as setting aside the fundamentals of religion.³⁸ For Wesley, works of piety and works of mercy were highly interconnected. Ken Collins states, "in a comparison of the value of works of piety and works of mercy, Wesley actually prefers the latter. . . ."³⁹ His preference for works of mercy led him to see them as a significant means of grace. Works of mercy being a means of grace was not an introduction by Wesley in his time, his stress on good works comes from his Anglican background.⁴⁰ But the depth of concern and emphasis placed on the importance and validity of works of mercy as a means of grace coupled with his theological understanding of justice elevated the role of mercy in the church. Randy Maddox frames the relationship of works of mercy and means of grace when he explains that "Wesley was aware that such actions [works of mercy] were not typically identified as means of grace. In his mature opinion, they not only qualified as such, they could be valued as highly as any of the other means."⁴¹

In response to some who wondered why they should help the poor if the souls of the poor were ultimately going to suffer eternity separated from God, Wesley offered a strong rebuttal: "Whether they will finally be lost or saved, you are expressly commanded to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked. If you can, and do not, whatever becomes of them, you shall go away into everlasting fire."⁴² Wesley believed Christians were to engage in

³⁸Sermon 24: "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse IV," I:4 (*Works*, I: 534-5).

³⁹Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 267.

⁴⁰Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal*, 119.

⁴¹Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, Tenn: Kingswood Books, 1994), 215.

⁴²Sermon 24: "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse, IV," III:7 (*Works*, I: 546).

works of mercy not only for the sake of those they were serving, but for the sake of their own salvation. Theodore Jennings captures Wesley's view well when he writes, "[i]n visiting the marginalized, we invite them to transform us, to transform our hearts, to transform our understanding, to transform us into instruments of the divine mercy and justice."⁴³

To recognize the need for works of mercy, it is crucial to understand the context from which Wesley wrote. The extent of inequality in Britain during Wesley's time is best understood by his phrase, "complicated misery."⁴⁴ Christine Pohl offers some insight to Wesley's use of the phrase "complicated misery" in terms of those living in vulnerable situations in Britain. "The complicated misery that Wesley encountered was a complex intertwining of several fundamental problems: the absence of true religion, a deep social alienation, degradation and oppression, and acute physical need."⁴⁵ Wesley did not view the misery he saw as a passive consequence of an industrializing and urbanizing world, but connected the "complicated misery" of the poor with the "complicated wickedness" of those who oppressed the poor. Wesley considered this wickedness to be not only found in the hearts of those who consciously oppressed, but, as Pohl writes, it "was also directed at those who did not recognize any connection between their lifestyle and the ongoing misery of other human beings."⁴⁶ As is common for Wesley, works of mercy that were so prevalent in theological writing were of no use if they were not lived out in the lives of those who called themselves Christians.

During his life Wesley practically engaged in a wide variety of merciful actions. Wesley raised funds and collected clothing for the poor through donations from the wealthy. Wesley regularly visited the sick and those in prison. He assisted with housing for marginalized in the community including widows and orphans. He helped with a school in Kingswood, a vulnerable community. He started a medical dispensary which is believed to be the first free medical clinic in London, gave jobs to marginalized women processing cotton at the Foundry, and started a loan program as early as 1746.⁴⁷

⁴³Theodore W. Jennings, *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 57–8.

⁴⁴Sermon 67: "On Divine Providence," 13 (*Works*, II: 540).

⁴⁵Christine D. Pohl, "Practicing Hospitality in the Face of 'Complicated Wickedness,'" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 11.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁷Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 268.

On top of that, Wesley's call to works of mercy extended beyond himself. Works of mercy were part of the regimen of Methodist societies from the outset which included visiting persons in prison and the poor.⁴⁸ Even early on, to remain in a class members had to express their salvation by living by three General Rules: avoiding evil, doing good, and employing the means of grace.⁴⁹ Though acts of justice and mercy were pivotal to Wesley's theology, they were seen as nothing if not founded on the final element of Wesley's phrase, truth.

Truth

The final word I will explore in Wesley's concept is truth. Understanding the foundation of truth he espoused sheds light on the entire phrase. When exploring the use of the word truth in Wesley's sermons, one finds a wide variance in his usage. Though it is not the only way the word truth is used by Wesley, God's love is one way truth is understood in his sermons. For this section I will once again look at truth in both its theological and practical components. Theologically, truth is understood as God's love. Practically, truth is found in the practice of radical love.

Though Wesley uses the word truth in many different ways throughout his sermons, when utilized within the phrase "justice, mercy, truth," truth is understood as God's redeeming love for humanity. Another way of expressing this may be to say that the *true* nature or essence of God is love. Wesley even uses the phrase, "the love of God" as a replacement for truth in the sermon, "The Means of Grace." In the opening paragraphs Wesley discusses the actions of Christians and how Christians can be led to believe those actions, the means, are the end. "They forgot that 'the end of' every 'commandment is love, out of a pure heart, with faith unfeigned. . . .'"⁵⁰ The foundation of God's nature or truth, is love. Wesley ended that section of his sermons referencing back to Mathew 23:23 where Jesus admonishes the Pharisees for holding strictly to sacrifices, but, as Wesley paraphrases "they were not exact in the weightier matters of the law, in justice, mercy, and the love of God."⁵¹ For Wesley, God's love is the impetus to love everyone regardless of their circumstance. This love propels people to live justly and love mercy which Wesley sees as possible within

⁴⁸Maddox and Vickers, *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, 45.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁰Sermon 16: "The Means of Grace," I:2 (*Works*, I: 378).

⁵¹*Ibid.*

the world. God's love was the foundational, animating principle and, though one gains an understanding of God's love through reason, tradition, and experience, it was in scripture that one finds its substance.

One of the places Wesley eloquently developed his view of God's love theologically was in the sermon, "Scriptural Christianity." In this sermon Wesley gave a detailed account of what the love of God was capable of doing in the life of a Christian. The outcome: love for everyone. Wesley helped explain who is considered part of the "everyone" he affirmed. He said one cannot forget to love those one has "never seen in the flesh" or those one knows nothing about. One must be willing to love the "evil" and "unthankful." The depth of this love extends to enemies.⁵² Wesley understood the difficulty in loving one's enemy as God commands. This sermon was first given at Oxford in 1744 in front of a crowd of people who might have considered themselves enemies of Wesley. He had recently been stormed by a mob during a Methodist leader conference. This sermon would be the last time he was asked to preach at Oxford.⁵³ The practice of Christianity is the often difficult practice of love for everyone that is derived from the love Christians receive from God.

As the sermon "The Means of Grace" revealed, there is a distinction for Wesley in acts of mercy for the sake of humanity and the "performance of good that followed the inner renewal by God's grace, prompted and shaped by love."⁵⁴ Wesley's understanding of the grace found in works of mercy was not founded on the singular desire to alleviate poverty, but a way to express God's love to humanity. The distinction may be imperceptible to those on the outside, but it is a marked difference in motives for Christians engaging in works of justice and mercy. In "The More Excellent Way," after his discussion of the role of justice as equality, giving everyone their due, Wesley adds that the expectation for a Christian is more than what justice and mercy require, "but a Christian is called to go still farther—to add piety to justice."⁵⁵ Here, he reminds the listener that the requirements for the world are to treat others with justice and to live out acts of mercy, what one might call living by natural law.

⁵²Sermon 4: "Scriptural Christianity," I:5 (*Works*, I: 163).

⁵³John Wesley, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 97.

⁵⁴Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 103–4.

⁵⁵Sermon 89: "The More Excellent Way," III:2 (*Works*, III: 269).

But the difference for a Christian is that these actions are done through piety, through the love of God, which must be at the center of all the Christian does.

Once again, it is important to note that Wesley did not think of God's love in an essentially abstract sense, but recognized the power of this theological concept to effect practice within the world. Indeed, God's truth, exhibited through God's love, was only truly understood if it affected practice. One way this can be seen in the concept of "justice, mercy, truth" is the numerous times the word "practice" is found prior to the phrase. Of the thirty-two times the phrase is used, nine times it is connected to the idea of practice. The use of the word practice connected to "justice, mercy, truth" spans the sermons of Wesley from 1738 to 1790, but over half of the uses come from his later sermons, from 1783 and beyond. Here one finds the unique nature of Wesley's phrase, that it is intimately connected to the character of God, but also understood as a mandate for missional living in the world. For Wesley, the Bible was not hopeful idealism, but practical, living justice given by the God of justice who created humanity.⁵⁶

God's truth reveals God's justice and mercy. Truth is the imperative component for participation in God's justice and mercy. When Wesley used the phrase "justice, mercy, truth" as founded on the truth of God's love, which naturally motivates humanity to act justly and love mercy, it becomes apparent the inseparable nature of the concept. Then, as one puts these concepts together, justice (seeing others as possessing dignity and worth given by God), mercy (caring for others as God cares for humanity) and truth (the love of God which is found in scripture and lived out in God's people) one begins to see the depth of the concept. "Justice, mercy, and truth" when understood as a holistic phrase represents not only the way God intended humanity to live, but the way in which God intends to redeem humanity.

Justice, Mercy, Truth as the Restoration of the Imago Dei

Now that a foundation of the words inherent in the phrase have been explained, there are four ways this phrase gets utilized in the sermons of John Wesley that make it such a rich concept holistically. In this final section I will explore these ways the concept of "justice, mercy, truth" is used and how that opens a robust reading of the concept in his sermons. For

⁵⁶Jennings, *Good News to the Poor*, 123.

Wesley, “justice, mercy, truth” represents 1) the character of God, 2) the character of the *imago Dei* as God intended, 3) the restoration of the *imago Dei* to God and, finally 4) the restoration of humanity to one another.

The first use of “justice, mercy, truth” is connected to God and God’s character. The description of God as representative of justice, mercy, and truth is common throughout Wesley’s writing. In “The New Birth” he writes about the nature of God being love and that “God is full of justice, mercy, and truth.”⁵⁷ In “Free Grace,” Wesley discusses God’s nature as being comprised of “justice, mercy, and truth.”⁵⁸ These are two examples where the exact phrase is used to describe the nature of God. In “On the Discoveries of Faith” Wesley sets out his Trinitarian view of God. In describing the relationships between Jesus and God the Father, Wesley describes Jesus by saying, “He that is infinite in power, in wisdom, in justice, in mercy, and holiness.”⁵⁹ Here he exchanges the word truth for a similar word, but one that emphasizes an important characteristic of God for Wesley. It is important to note the fervor with which Wesley viewed God as Trinitarian.⁶⁰ For Wesley, the Trinitarian God is representative of the social nature of God. “Justice, mercy, and truth” create a divine triad of characteristics that are representative of God’s Trinitarian character. Though the phrase emerges when discussing the character of God, it is found even more frequently when expressing the character of God imparted on the image of God.

The second aspect of the phrase is its connection to the *imago Dei*. Justice, mercy, and truth not only represent God’s character, but they tie the character of God with humanity. In “The New Birth” Wesley explained “‘God is love:’ accordingly, man at his creation was full of love; which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth; so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator.”⁶¹ Here, humanity, made in the image of God, is characterized as possessing the characteristics of God’s justice, mercy, and truth. Notice the distinction, though, that humanity was full of God’s justice, mercy, and truth at its creation, not necessarily in its cur-

⁵⁷Sermon 45: “The New Birth,” I:1 (*Works*, II: 188).

⁵⁸Sermon 110: “Free Grace,” 29 (*Works*, III: 558).

⁵⁹Sermon 117: “On the Discoveries of Faith,” 7 (*Works*, IV: 31).

⁶⁰For example: Sermon 20, “The Lord Our Righteousness” and Sermon 55, “On the Trinity.”

⁶¹Sermon 45: “The New Birth,” I:1 (*Works*, II: 188).

rent reality. The fall distorted humanity, and thus distorted the characteristics of justice, mercy, and truth that it possessed. But the fall was not representative of complete destruction. Reconciliation is possible; Wesley believed in the capacity of humanity to experience redemptive transformation.⁶²

The belief that God's intended character of the *imago Dei* is seen in the concepts of justice, mercy, and truth undergirds much of Wesley's view of justice, in general. As mentioned, justice is tied to the *imago Dei* and is given to all people. All people are created in God's image, in God's justice, mercy, and truth, which endows them with the right to be treated as a child of God. There is no exception to this. God's love is for everyone. And the transformation that Wesley envisaged was one of reconciliation with God and with humanity.

Though the image of God has been distorted, there is hope for reconciliation. This represents the third understanding of the phrase, the restoration of the *imago Dei* to God. Wesley writes, "While thou seekest God in all things thou shalt find him in all, the fountain of all holiness, continually filling thee with his own likeness, with justice, mercy, and truth."⁶³ Humanity's reconciliation must be seen through the lens of Wesley's "deep optimism of grace."⁶⁴ Wesley believed reconciliation with God was possible and that part of this reconciling process was restoring the divine justice, mercy, and truth that was lost from the fall. This reconciliation takes places within each person as justification. The concept of justification plays an important role in the reconciliation of God's justice, mercy, and truth. But justification is not understood as a singularly spiritual or individualistic undertaking, but as expressed in his view of mercy; salvation is intimately linked to care for others. Justification and works of mercy are dual components of the same process in the life of the Christian.

As this dual nature of salvation implies, the restoration of the *imago Dei* is not complete with restoration toward God, but must include a fourth and final movement, the restoration of humanity to one another. As noted above, God is understood as social, Trinity. Thus, the restoration of the image of God is a social undertaking as well that happens in our current world. Rebekah Miles says that "Helping people grow in the

⁶²Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal*, 144, 146.

⁶³Sermon 28: "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse VIII," 4 (*Works*, I: 614).

⁶⁴Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal*, 146.

image of God meant a ministry of restoration involving all parts of their lives—including their physical bodies.”⁶⁵ John Wesley melded the two concepts of the *imago Dei* and “justice, mercy, truth,” in part of his first discourse on “The Witness of the Spirit.” Wesley said as one encounters the Spirit that “we are inwardly conformed, by the Spirit of God, to the image of his Son, and that we walk before him in justice, mercy, and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in his sight.”⁶⁶ In God’s image humanity was created and through God’s image humanity is to care for one another. The Trinitarian God and the *imago Dei* are co-imitators of justice, mercy, and truth.

The correlation between inward transformation and outward action is touched upon in the last quote from Wesley, but it can be seen with clarity in Wesley’s sermon, “On Living Without God.” In it he states, “Indeed nothing can be more sure, than that true Christianity cannot exist without both the inward experience and outward practice of justice, mercy, and truth.”⁶⁷ Thus, justice, mercy, and truth are not just the characteristics of God and the characteristics of the *imago Dei* as God intended. Justice, mercy, and truth represent the way humanity reconciles with God (seen as an inward transformation) and with each other (outward practice). Justice, mercy, and truth represent the fully orbited restoration of the *imago Dei*.

John Wesley made a profound impact on theology by taking concepts and ideas that were common in his era and offering depth and clarity that illuminated their meaning in the life of his listeners. Wesley took time to develop each of these words for his listeners. Through his sermons one gains insight on how he understood justice as equality, mercy as a means of grace, and truth as God’s love. Through his life, one recognizes these not simply as abstract concepts, but as a practical outflow of the life of a Christian. “Justice, mercy, and truth” represents both the inward movement toward God and the outward movement toward the reconciliation of humanity through the power of God, a call to love God and to love others as God loves.

⁶⁵Miles, Rebekah L., “Happiness, holiness, and the moral life in John Wesley” in (Maddox and Vickers, *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, 210).

⁶⁶Sermon 10: “The Witness of the Spirit, Discourses I & II,” I:6 (*Works*, I: 274).

⁶⁷Sermon 130: “On Living Without God,” 14 (*Works*, IV: 174).

TERTULLIAN'S DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION AND ITS THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

by

Christopher Bounds

While the language of Christian perfection is found repeatedly in the literature of the Apostolic Fathers, the first theologian to give it a clear, comprehensive treatment is Irenaeus in *Adversus Haereses*. Book one of his treatise provides a detailed description of Gnostic systems of Christian perfection and the last four books give the church's teaching in multiple discussions.¹ Clement of Alexandria at the end of the second century pens two treatises with a focus on Christian perfection: *Paedagogus* and *Stromata*.² Origen follows in the first half of the third century by writing extensively on the subject in Alexandria and Caesarea.³ Like Irenaeus, Clement and Origen seek to distinguish Gnostic forms of perfection from the church's understanding.

Greek patristic literature, therefore, from the second and third centuries is replete with the language of Christian perfection and expresses highly developed doctrines of it. Perfection appears as common soteriological language in Gnostic and orthodox communities. With this serving

¹For examples of the language of Christian perfection in the Apostolic Fathers, see Clement of Rome's *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 1:2; 9:2; 44:2,5; 49:5-50:3; 53:5; 55:6; 56:1; Ignatius of Antioch's *Epistle to the Ephesians* (short) 14-15, (long) 8,15; *Epistle to the Philadelphians* (short) 1, 3; (long) 1, 3; *Epistle to Polycarp* (long) 1-3; *Didache* 1.4; 6.2; 10.5; 16.2; *Epistle of Barnabas* 1.5; 4.11; 6.8-19; 14.4-8; Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians* 3:1-3; 12.1-3; and *The Shepherd of Hermas* 2.9.1; 3.5.1-3. The key passages on Christian perfection in Irenaeus' book one of *Adversus Haereses* are 1.6.1-1.8.4; 1.11.5; 1.13.1,6; 1.21.1-4; 1.29.3; 1.31.2. The rest of his teaching can be found in 2.preface; 2.26.1; 2.28.1-2,9; 2.30.7; 3.1.1; 3.2.1; 3.3.1; 3.12.5,13; 4.9.2-3; 4.11.2-5; 4.20.12; 4.27.1; 4.37.7-4.39.4; 5.1.1-3; 5.6.1-2; 5.8.1-5.9.3; 5.21.2; 5.36.3.

²For Clement of Alexandria's central discussions of Christian perfection, see *Paedagogus* 1.1; 1.6; *Stromateis* 2.19,22; 4.1, 17-26; 5.1,10; 6.1, 8-9, 12; 7.3, 10-14.

³While Origen writes on Christian perfection in a number of his treatises, his best and most complete teaching on Christian perfection is his *Commentary and Homilies on the Canticle of Canticles*.

as an historical, literary, and theological context, the purpose of my paper is to explore the doctrine of Christian perfection as it is expressed and developed among the emerging Latin Christian writers of the period, specifically Tertullian. As the first major Latin theologian, conversant with and dependent upon the work of Irenaeus, the Greek apologists, and Apostolic Fathers, the language of Christian perfection is expected.⁴

For those who claim to be heirs to John Wesley's legacy in general and his theology of Christian perfection in particular, exploring the earliest Latin expressions of the doctrine are essential for two reasons. First, Wesley believed the study of the early Patristic writers is second in importance only to the Scriptures, viewing them as the "most authentic commentators on scriptures."⁵ Among the Ante-Nicene Latin writers, Tertullian and Cyprian, a third century North African bishop directly influenced by Tertullian, are most significant for Wesley.⁶ Second, while Wesleyans have focused their attention on Eastern patristic formation of Christian perfection, they have neglected its early Western expression and development.⁷ The first significant Latin treatment of the doctrine is Ter-

⁴For a discussion of Tertullian as the first major Latin theologian and his dependence upon earlier Greek fathers and apologists, see Eric Osborn's *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-26.

⁵John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson, ed., (14 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), X:484, 492-3.

⁶John Wesley, "A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Conyers Middleton," Jackson, X:79; Richard Heitzenrater, "John Wesley's Reading of and References to the Early Church Fathers," in S. T. Kimbrough, ed., *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002): 25. Heitzenrater uses Frank Baker's definitive and exhaustive accounting of Wesley's reading found in the Duke Divinity School Library.

⁷The Wesleyan Theological Society met at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, November 2-3, 1991. Some of the papers, which were published before or after the meeting representing the Eastern focus on Christian perfection include: Randy Maddox, "John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences, and Differences," *Asbury Theological Journal* 45:2 (Fall 1990): 29-53; A. M. Allchin, "The Epworth-Canterbury-Constantinople Axis," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 26:1 (Spring 1991): 3-36; K. Steve McCormick, "Theosis in Chrysostom and Wesley: An Eastern Paradigm on Faith and Love," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 26:1 (Spring 1991): 38-103; Troy W. Martin, "John Wesley's Exegetical Orientation: East or West," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 26:1 (Spring 1991): 104-138; David Bundy, "Christian Virtue: John Wesley and the Alexandrian Tradition," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 26:1 (Spring 1991): 139-63.

tullian, whose understanding of it influences the later views of Western Christianity through the North African church.

Specifically, a simple method is used for my study: a close reading of passages in Tertullian that directly mention, address, and/or develop the term “perfectio” in its various grammatical forms as it relates to humanity. While Latin has other vocabulary for perfection, “perfectio” is the one appropriated by Tertullian to translate the Greek “τελειότης,” used by the New Testament and by earlier fathers to describe Christian perfection.⁸

1. Tertullian's Doctrine of Christian Perfection

While Tertullian does not devote a treatise to Christian perfection, as does his contemporary to the east, Clement of Alexandria, or offer any developed teaching on perfection like Irenaeus, he does use the language. In contrast to many of the major Greek fathers of this period, his references to perfection are limited. However, evidence of an operating conception of Christian perfection exists, clustered around four discussions: (A) Gnosticism, (B) God, (C) creation, redemption and consummation, and (D) knowledge.

A. Perfection and the Gnostics

Like Irenaeus, Tertullian recognizes the language of human perfection as common to Gnostic teaching. Gnostics call their initiates “perfect,” who trace their seed of “perfection” back to the aeon Sophia and its maturation through the reception of “perfect” knowledge.⁹ More specifically, Tertullian states that the Valentinian Gnostics believe there is a “perfect” unbegotten, invisible aeon named Bythos. With his consort Sige, he fathered other aeons, who in turn begat others, until there were a total of thirty

⁸Two resources are used to track down Tertullian's references to Christian perfection: Gerta Claussen's *Index Tertullianus*, vol. II (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1975) and the *Library of Latin Texts: Cetedoc Library of Christian Latin Texts* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2005). All references to Tertullian's work come from E. Dekkers, J. G. P. Borleffs, R. Willems, R. F. Refoulé, G. F. Diercks, A. Kroymann, eds., *Tertulliani*, pars I: *Opera catholica – Aversus Marcionem* in *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina 1 (Turnhout, 1954) and A. Gerlo, A. Kroymann, R. Willems, J. H. Waszink, J. G. P. Borleffs, A. Reifferscheid, G. Wissowa, E. Dekkers, J. J. Thierry, E. Evans, A. Harnack, eds., *Tertulliani*, pars II: *Opera Montanistica* in *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina 2 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 1954).

⁹Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 41.4; *Adversus Valentinianos* 25.2.

aeons, forming the Pleroma.¹⁰ Through inappropriate desire for knowledge of Bythos, Sophia, one of the lowest aeons, brought forth a material being named Achamoth, who exists outside the Pleroma. Achamoth in turn birthed the Demiurge, who has three substances: the material and animal which arose from Sophia's impropriety, and the spiritual which came from Sophia's nature as member of the Pleroma.¹¹ The Demiurge then fashioned the visible world and formed Adam in his image and likeness, with "image" referring to his material existence and "likeness" to his "animal." He also unknowingly imparted to Adam a spiritual nature. Adam's trifold nature then divides among his three sons: Cain, Abel and Seth.¹²

According to Tertullian the Gnostics teach all human beings descend from one of these three lineages or natures: from Cain the material, from Abel the animal, and from Seth, the spiritual. Humans who are material are destined for destruction.¹³ Those who are animal have the possibility of ascent to the level of the Demiurge, while the spiritual are destined for the Pleroma. Only the spiritual, "perfected" by knowledge of their true spiritual state, are the "perfect" in this life.¹⁴

B. Perfection and God

Again like Irenaeus, Tertullian uses the language of perfection to describe Christians. He states that before Christ's passion on the cross, no human being was "perfect"; he calls a person who has been baptized a "perfected servant of God;" and he refers to people who have been brought to the wisdom of God in Christ as the "perfect."¹⁵ To begin to treat Tertullian's conception of Christian perfection, however, his understanding of God's "perfect" goodness must be addressed.

When Tertullian talks about divine perfection, he ties it almost exclusively to God's goodness.¹⁶ In *Adversus Marcionem*, Tertullian contrasts God's "perfect" goodness to Marcion's "imperfect" deity. Because

¹⁰Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 7-8.

¹¹Ibid., 9, 13, 17.

¹²Ibid., 20, 29.

¹³Ibid., 32.

¹⁴Ibid., 25.2-3.

¹⁵Tertullian, *De pudicitia* 11.3; *De paenitentia* 6.1,15; *Adversus Marcionem* 5.6.2.

¹⁶See Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 45.2; *Adversus Marcionem* 1.24-25, 2.13; *De resurrectione mortuorum* 14, 15.

the Marcionite deity determines to redeem only some people, but not others; because he saves only the human soul, but not the body; and because salvation is not “perfectly” wrought in the present, but reserved for the future, he is shown to be “imperfect.” In contrast, by implication, God’s “perfection” requires that all people have the possibility of salvation, that the entirety of human nature is redeemed, and that there is in some sense a “perfect” deliverance from the soul’s enemies in the present life.¹⁷

Tertullian moreover argues that God’s perfect goodness is the standard for Christian virtue and is “more perfect” than ordinary human views. Human moral understanding is deficient on two levels: it has limited understanding of virtue and it offers little empowerment for its realization. God however as a “perfect master” provides “perfect knowledge” of goodness, showing the necessity for outward and inward conformity to revealed divine law, and empowers Christians to “faithfully do his will.” Christians alone therefore make effort to realize a truly blameless life.¹⁸ God’s goodness requires the obedient Christian to love God as a “perfect father” with dutiful affection.¹⁹

C. Perfection in Creation, Redemption and Consummation

While Tertullian does not use the language of perfection to describe humanity’s original state in creation, he does teach that humanity was made by God in the divine image and likeness for a particular end: “perfect sinlessness.”²⁰ Like Irenaeus and earlier Greek fathers, Tertullian makes a distinction between the divine image and likeness in humanity, with image referring to Adam’s substance as body and soul, with focus on the human soul, and likeness representing the Holy Spirit’s presence and moral conformity to divine goodness.

More specifically, Tertullian connects the divine image to the soul’s creation as the breath of the Holy Spirit. The human soul is an actual substance created by the Spirit endowed with rationality, emotions and will. While the soul is a corporal substance capable of existing apart from the body, it requires the body for the “perfection” of its actions.²¹ Body and soul function as a distinct but harmonious unitary whole. As the image of

¹⁷Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 1.24-25.

¹⁸Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 45.1-7.

¹⁹Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2.13.5.

²⁰Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 2.10-12.

²¹Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* 17.6-8.

God, the soul receives and conveys the likeness of God to humanity. This likeness establishes human communion with God. While the image of God can exist in humanity without the divine likeness, it is incomplete.

According to Tertullian, as created in the Garden, humanity mirrored God's perfect goodness through the divine image and likeness. However, in contrast to divine goodness, which is part of God's immutable nature, Adam's goodness only existed through the grace of creation. It was therefore subject to change: either growth and development or corruption and brokenness. Humanity's first parents were given the gift of free will, through which they could follow the divine commandments given to them or not. This choice was bestowed by God in order to enable every human being to "justly possess" the goodness already inherent in them and thereby grow in holiness. Adam was under no necessity to sin and had the ability to walk with God in "perfect sinlessness."

Sin therefore for Tertullian is accidental to humanity's created nature and is volitional. Because of Adam's willful disobedience in the Garden, humanity lost God's likeness, while still retaining the divine image. Since the fall, every human being undergoes physical death, experiences deprivation of the Holy Spirit, suffers from irrationality, and bears a corrupted soul. Tertullian states, "Every soul, then, by reason of its birth, has its nature in Adam until it is born again in Christ; moreover, it is unclean all the while it remains without this generation; and because unclean, it is actively sinful, and suffuses even the flesh, by reason of their conjunction, with its own shame."²²

Redemption comes through Christ's recapitulation of Adam. By the incarnate Son's life of perfect obedience to the Father, overcoming all of the devil's temptations and modeling the life of holiness intended for all humanity at creation; by the voluntary sacrifice of his perfect humanity on the cross as the penalty for sin and purchasing human redemption with his blood; and by triumphing over death through his bodily resurrection, Christ reverses the sin of Adam. Tertullian consequently calls Christ "the more perfect Adam."²³ Through Christ's incarnate life, he states, "God held converse with man that man may learn to act as God. God dealt on equal

²²Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 40. Quote taken from Tertullian, "Apology," trans. S. Thelwall, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, eds. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 40.

²³Tertullian, *De monogamia* 5.6.

terms with man that man might be able to deal with equal terms with God. God was found little, that man might become very great.”²⁴

What Christ accomplishes objectively for human life, the Holy Spirit applies subjectively. Tertullian uses the language of perfection to describe this four-part application. First is true repentance. Repentance demands all acts of known sin be renounced and put away, making the person a catechumen: a candidate for the remission and cleansing from sin through baptism. Speaking of repentance in relationship to baptism, Tertullian states, “We are not washed in order that we may cease sinning, but because we have ceased, since in the heart we have been bathed already.”²⁵ This repentance is connected to John’s baptism of repentance in the Gospels, which prepares for, but does not “perfect” a person.²⁶

Second is water baptism in the name of the triune God, followed by an anointing with oil and the imposition of hands. Because human nature is a unitary whole of two substances—body and soul; and because both substances participate in human sin, although in different ways; God uses physical elements, water and oil, to bring about a spiritual effect in the human soul.²⁷ Through the waters of Christian baptism, the guilt and penalty of sin are absolved, preparing the way for the Holy Spirit. Through anointing with oil and the laying on of hands, the newly baptized receive the Spirit, restoring the divine “likeness” lost in the fall and establishing them in holiness.²⁸ While Tertullian does not use the language often, he refers to baptized believers as the “perfect” ones and “perfected servants of God.”²⁹

Third is the process of sanctification, bringing the Christian into greater conformity to the moral example of Christ. The perfection experienced in baptism is dynamic and not static. As Christians learn more about Christ and as the Holy Spirit leads the Church to the “perfection” of teaching on how to live in its culture, the Spirit enables Christians to experience more fully the will of God “on earth as it is in heaven.”³⁰

²⁴Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2.27. Quote taken from Tertullian, “Against Marcion,” trans. Peter Holmes, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, 2.27.

²⁵Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 6. Quote taken from Tertullian, “On Repentance,” trans. S. Thelwall, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, 6.

²⁶Tertullian, *De baptismo* 10.6.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 5-7.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 6-8.

²⁹Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 6; *Adversus Marcionem* 5.6; *De pudicitia* 11.

³⁰Tertullian, *De virginibus velandis* 1; *Apologeticum* 45; *De oratione* 4.

Sanctification requires not only outward alignment to God's will, but inward conformity as well. Tertullian asks, "What is more perfect, to forbid adultery or to restrain from even a single lustful look?"³¹ Tertullian in his *De cultu feminarum* illustrates this point, "You must know that perfect modesty, that is, Christian modesty, requires not only that you never desire to be an object of desire on the part of others, but that you even hate to be one."³²

Sanctification entails the love of God and neighbor. Tertullian teaches that God is a "perfect father" who must be loved with dutiful affection.³³ Love of God produces obedience to God. Ultimately, "perfect love" for God casts out fears of suffering and enables a believer to die for Christ.³⁴ Humanity is to be loved as well. He states, "For our religion commands us to love even our enemies, and to pray for those who persecute us, aiming at perfection all its own, and seeking in its disciples something of a higher type than the commonplace goodness of the world. For all love those who love them; it is peculiar to Christians alone to love those who hate them."³⁵

The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is a process by which the soul is increasingly renewed, advancing in faith and holiness daily. As the mind is formed in virtue, it "perfects" the flesh. As patience, the supreme mark of holiness as seen in Christ, grows in the "inward man," the body lives out that patience, imitating Christ in deeper and fuller ways.³⁶

As already implied, this sanctifying work leads to the highest imitation of Christ in life for Tertullian: chastity and martyrdom. First, it calls Christians to renounce the lusts of the flesh and never marry as Christ did or to never remarry. However, if this "perfection" is too high, then Christians must practice faithful monogamy, as Christ does in his faithful relationship as a husband to the church.³⁷ Second, the work of the Holy Spirit enables Christians when necessary to express the highest form of perfection in the present life, the ultimate act of Christ imitation, physical

³¹Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 45.3.

³²Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum* 2.2.1. Quote taken from Tertullian, "On the Apparel of Women," trans. S. Thelwall, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4.

³³Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2.13.5.

³⁴Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 12.4-5; *De fuga in persecutione* 9.3.

³⁵Tertullian, *Ad Scapulam* 1.3.

³⁶Tertullian, *De patientia* 13.5-7.

³⁷Tertullian, *De monogamia* 5.1-4.

suffering and death by martyrdom, which alone ushers the soul into the intermediate state of paradise.³⁸

Finally, ultimate perfection is brought in bodily resurrection at final judgment.³⁹ After death, the souls of Christians await resurrection with the saints in Hades, experiencing a foretaste of the judgment to come.⁴⁰ In bodily resurrection, all souls receive back “the self-same bodies in which they died” although transformed to fit life in eternity.⁴¹ Only body and soul incorruptibly whole in perfect union with each other make Christians truly human.⁴² This resurrection is made possible by the bodily resurrection of Christ. It is his resurrected humanity that is the pattern for Christian resurrection. Human beings in God’s consummated kingdom have now reached full development and perfection; they are now incorruptibly sinless, perfect like God.

D. Perfection and Knowledge

Significant for Tertullian is the role of knowledge in Christian perfection. He connects repeatedly the language of perfection to revealed wisdom and knowledge. In his treatise *Ad nationes* Tertullian argues that the person who has true knowledge of God, leading to proper “fear of the Lord,” possesses “full and perfect” wisdom, even if ignorant of all else.⁴³ Because humanity is unable to fully grasp divine truth in one moment, the Holy Spirit superintended the unveiling of God and the Gospel gradually over time, allowing them to be brought to “perfection.”⁴⁴ Divine wisdom and truth existed latently under “figures, allegories, and enigmatical types” in the Old Testament, but is revealed fully in Christ.⁴⁵

Divine knowledge and wisdom is necessary for the “perfection” of faith. People are unable to exercise faith “perfectly” in a God not yet fully revealed to them.⁴⁶ This is one of the reasons why Tertullian encourages delay in baptism, until people are duly prepared. Even when Scripture appears to advocate immediate baptism like the Ethiopian eunuch with

³⁸Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 8.7; 12.4-5, 9-11; *De fuga in persecutione* 14.2-3.

³⁹Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* 17.6-8; 40.6-10; 58.1-10.

⁴⁰Tertullian, *De anima* 46, 48.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 46.

⁴²Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* 45.17.

⁴³Tertullian, *Ad nationes* 2.2.4.

⁴⁴Tertullian, *De virginibus velandis* 1.4.

⁴⁵Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.6.2.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 4.29.3.

Phillip, there was careful reading and instruction in God's word before the eunuch experienced the "perfect" work of salvation through baptism.⁴⁷ Knowledge of the Gospel is an indispensable means of God's grace that "renews all things from carnal to spiritual" and empowers a life of obedient conformity to the "perfect knowledge" of God's goodness.⁴⁸

II. Tertullian's Doctrine of Christian Perfection in Theological Context

Through a careful examination of Tertullian's use of the language of perfection, a clear comprehensive doctrine rises to the fore. He believes Christian perfection is the renewal of the image and likeness of God in humanity through the work of Christ and the indwelling Spirit. This restoration manifests itself supremely in the perfect love of God and neighbor, in the fruit of the Spirit, particularly in patience, and in a life free from willful sin. Perfection is initiated in repentance and baptism, develops and matures throughout life, and culminates after death when a Christian takes up incorruptibility in final resurrection.

A. *The Greek Fathers of the Second and Third Centuries*

Significantly, Tertullian's conception of Christian perfection demonstrates essential continuity with the Greek fathers of the second and third centuries, albeit with some minor differences. Three points are crucial here. First, like Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, it is clear that Tertullian does not reject the idea of Christian perfection; rather he opposes Gnostic teaching on it.⁴⁹ More specifically, like Irenaeus in *Adversus Haereses*, the language of perfection in Tertullian sets up a contrast between the perfect Gnostic aeon Bythos and the church's perfect God; between the Gnostic understanding and ordering of fall, creation and perfect redemption and the church's teaching on creation, fall and perfect redemption; and between the Gnostic teaching on humanity's progression to perfection in the Pleroma and the church's doctrine of human perfection in consummation with God.

⁴⁷Tertullian, *De baptismo* 18.2.

⁴⁸Tertullian, *De oratione* 1.2; *Apologeticum* 45.1.

⁴⁹See Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* are 1.6.1-1.8.4; 1.11.5; 1.13.1, 6; 1.21.1-4; 1.29.3; 1.31.2; 2.preface; 2.26.1; 2.28.1-2 9; 2.30.7; 3.1.1; 3.2.1; 3.3.1; 3.12.5, 13; 4.9.2-3; 4.11.2-5; 4.20.12; 4.27.1; 4.37.7-4.39.4; 5.1.1-3; 5.6.1-2; 5.8.1-5.9.3; 5.21.2; 5.36.3; Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogus* 1.1; 1.6; *Stromateis* 2.19, 22; 4.1, 17-26; 5.1, 10; 6.1, 8-9, 12; 7.3, 10-14; and Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 7-9, 13, 17, 20, 29.

Furthermore, like Irenaeus and Clement the language of perfection sets up a contrast between Gnostic knowledge and true Christian knowledge. The Gnostics based their doctrine on secretive knowledge passed down to a select few. This knowledge is perfect, enlightening the “spiritual” scattered among humanity, allowing them to comprehend God. Perfection and redemption for the Gnostics is tied to this secret knowledge. Tertullian countered that the Church has been given “perfect” knowledge through the revelation of Christ and the Holy Spirit, accessible to all humanity, which perfects Christian faith, enabling illumination and reformation in believers.⁵⁰

Second, while some Tertullian scholars like Gerald Bray believe Tertullian teaches Adamic perfection before the fall, Tertullian never uses this language.⁵¹ He only uses it to describe humanity’s purpose: “perfect sinlessness.”⁵² Here again, Tertullian follows Irenaeus. Human beings can only be made perfect through the exercise of will, by developing as divine image bearers and embracing the goodness given to them in creation. Adam was not made perfect, but had every means by which to realize perfection.⁵³

How then can Tertullian and Irenaeus call the baptized Christian “perfect?” If baptism restores to humanity the divine likeness lost in the fall, then does this not imply a perfect humanity in the Garden? The difference between Adam and the baptized Christian here is the Christian has experienced essential spiritual development: through the knowledge of God and the Gospel; through the exercise of free will in repentance, preceding and following baptism; and through a life lived by faith in Christ.⁵⁴ The Christian has grown through wise decisions made in life, while Adam has yet to make any choice at the commencement of his creation.

Third, as noted by Tertullian scholars like Osborne, Steenberg, and Daniélou, there are differences between Tertullian’s doctrine of Christian perfection and Irenaeus’ teaching.⁵⁵ Many of these are differences, how-

⁵⁰Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 7-9, 13, 17, 20, 29.

⁵¹Gerald Bray, *Holiness and the Will of God: Perspectives on the Theology of Tertullian* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1979), 68-73.

⁵²Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 2.10-12.

⁵³Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.38.3-4.

⁵⁴Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 2.10-12; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.38.3-4.

⁵⁵See Eric Osborn’s *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West*, 163-70; Matthew C. Steenberg, *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 88-103; and Jean Daniélou, *Les origines du christianisme latin* (Paris: Cerf, 1978), 291-310.

ever, are ones of emphasis and not disagreement. For example, Irenaeus ties divine perfection primarily to God's uncreated nature and supreme love, while Tertullian connects it with divine goodness; Irenaeus emphasizes human participation in the divine nature as the basis for perfection, while Tertullian focuses on obedience to God's law; Irenaeus has a more robust understanding of human perfection in love as a fulfillment of the two great commandments, while Tertullian places emphasis on love as dutiful affection, with perfection being complete freedom from sin.⁵⁶

Perhaps, what distinguishes Tertullian's teaching on perfection most from the Greek fathers is his greater recognition of sin after baptism. While he expects baptized Christians to be free from sin, he acknowledges in reality that sin remains too often in them. With the exception of mortal sin like adultery, idolatry, and murder, Christians can be forgiven their transgressions and reconciled to the church through confess and mortification, leading them to greater conformity to Christ's life. Because of repentance before baptism and the grace given in baptism, Christians have the means by which to live a life free from sin, but Tertullian recognizes that many do not.⁵⁷

B. Latin Fathers of the Third Century

Among the Latin fathers of the third century, Tertullian articulates the clearest doctrine of Christian perfection. This does not mean however that other Latin writers of the era neglect it completely. Like Tertullian, their theology is embedded in discussions of particular problems arising in the church and must be extracted from them. Most significant among these fathers is Cyprian, who reflects the central ideas on Christian perfection found in Tertullian: the love of God and neighbor, restoration of the *imago dei*, and freedom from sin.

Cyprian's most extensive comments on Christian perfection are found in *De bono patientiae*, a treatise with obvious literary dependence upon Tertullian's work on the same subject. Specifically, in his discussion of the patience exhibited by Jesus Christ, Cyprian states,

And that we may more fully understand, beloved brethren, that patience is a thing of God, and that whoever is gentile, and

⁵⁶For a detailed discussion of Irenaeus' doctrine of Christian perfection with these particular emphases, see Christopher T. Bounds, "Irenaeus and the Doctrine of Christian Perfection," *The Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 45.2 (Fall 2010), 45-60.

⁵⁷See Tertullian's *De patientia* and *De paenitentia*.

patient, and meek, is an imitator of God the Father; when the Lord in his Gospel was giving precepts for salvation, and, bringing forth divine warnings, was instructing his disciples to perfection, he laid it down and said, "you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them which persecute you that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. . . . Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." He said the children of God would thus be perfect.⁵⁸

Like Tertullian, Cyprian ties perfection to Jesus' command to love God and neighbor. In *De bono patientiae*, the love of neighbor is connected to the practice of patience with the enemy, which imitates and reflects God's longsuffering love for humanity. He describes it here as the distinguishing mark of Christian perfection.⁵⁹ Elsewhere, in *De lapsis* Cyprian makes clear Christians can only "be perfect" when their "heart and mind" are focused in the love of God, unshackled by the love of possessions, enabling them to "cleave to Christ with undivided ties."⁶⁰ As with Tertullian, this perfect love of God enables Christians to offer their lives freely without worldly constraint in the perfect imitation of Christ: martyrdom.⁶¹

Cyprian also links Christian perfection to the restoration of the divine likeness in humanity, again following Tertullian's lead. In *De bono patientiae* he states that perfection occurs through new birth, when the divine likeness lost by Adam is restored and manifests itself through the Christian practice of patience.⁶² Cyprian in particular connects the *imago*

⁵⁸Cyprian, *De bono patientiae*, 5. Quote taken from Cyprian, "On the Advantage of Patience," trans. Earnest Wallis, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5, 485. The same methodology used for the study of Tertullian's doctrine of Christian perfection was appropriated with Cyprian. The primary sources consulted were taken from *Thasci Caecili Cypriani opera omnia* (*Corpus scriptorium ecclesiasticorum latinorum* 3, 3, edited by W. Hartel, 1871).

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 5. Cyprian mentions perfection in relationship to humanity in a short treatise *On the benefits of Good Works and Mercy*. In this exhortation to charitable acts Cyprian employs among a variety of examples the story of the rich young ruler in Mt. 19:17-21. In this story Jesus tells a young man that perfection with a person's obligation to care for the poor which is the fulfillment of the second great commandment—to love neighbor (Cyprian, *On Good Works and Mercy* 1).

⁶⁰Cyprian, *De lapsis* 11.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 11.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 5.

dei in humanity to God's moral goodness, manifested supremely in Christ's submission to the Father in the incarnation; his life of humble service to humanity; his benevolence to sinful humanity; his death on behalf of enemies; and his empowering resurrection. Furthermore, Christ's "full and perfect" patience makes possible the restoration of divine likeness in humanity.⁶³ Because Christ lived a life of patience, Christians through the Holy Spirit are able to do the same.

For Cyprian the restoration of humanity's divine likeness, with patience as its distinguishing mark, necessitates freedom from sin. Cyprian concurs with Tertullian; Adam's sinful disobedience rooted in impatience led to the loss of divine likeness. For Christians to be "perfected"—to have the likeness of God restored—they must live in obedience to God, free from willful sin (that which caused Adam and others to lose God's likeness in the first place) and have the *imago dei* "shine" in all their actions.⁶⁴

As already intimated, Cyprian believes in the possibility of Christian perfection in this life. He speaks of the apostles as ones who "were perfected." Their perfection involved actively loving their enemies, having the divine image restored in their lives, and becoming like God in all their virtues.⁶⁵ In contrast to the Greek fathers of the second and third centuries, however, Tertullian and Cyprian recognize more readily the presence of sin in believers after baptism; not all Christians experience the perfection anticipated in and conveyed through baptism.⁶⁶ Perfection, nevertheless, remains the possibility and expectation for the Christian in the present life.

CONCLUSION

In placing Tertullian's doctrine of Christian perfection within the flow of late second-century and third-century thought, I have tried to show that his theological conception has great continuity with the Greek

⁶³Ibid., 5.

⁶⁴Ibid., 5-6.

⁶⁵Ibid., 5.

⁶⁶Perhaps, as it has been observed by Danielou about the Latin patristic tradition, there is a greater focus on personal subjective reflection, leading Tertullian and Cyprian to recognize their own impatience. While they affirm Christian perfection, they hesitate to use the language as often as the Greek fathers because of their own self-knowledge of lack of inward conformity to Christlikeness. See Jean Daniélou, *Les origenes du christianisme latin*, 291-310.

tradition he inherited, as well as with the fledgling Latin church. While his corpus of literature does not provide a detailed account of Christian perfection and has limited use of its language in comparison to the Apostolic Fathers, Irenaeus, Clement, and Origen, it still reveals a robust doctrine operating among the earliest Latin fathers.

More specifically for Wesleyans, the early third-century Latin church bears witness to the power and hope of the Gospel to restore the *imago dei* in Christians, perfect them in love, and set them free from the power of sin. All in the present life.⁶⁷ Historic Wesleyan teaching on Christian perfection aligns with the primary thrust of Tertullian's theology and the early church. Wesleyan doctrine on sanctification is not original, but rooted in the earliest Christian instruction.⁶⁸ With a doctrinal pedigree that stretches to the beginnings of Christianity in general, and the Latin church in particular, our Wesleyan denominations have greater reason to believe in the hope of Christian perfection in this life.

⁶⁷See the critical review Dallas Willard gives contemporary evangelicalism in *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 1-60.

⁶⁸To see historic Wesleyan teaching on Christian perfection that reiterates the ideas in Tertullian's doctrine and the Apostolic Fathers, see John Wesley, "Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection," *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, XI: 414-427; "Christian Perfection," *The Works of John Wesley*, VI: 1-22; and his sermon, "On Perfection," *The Works of John Wesley*, VI: 411-424.

CHRISTIAN LOVE IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE: SPEAKING TO THE POINT WITHOUT LOSING OUR WAY

by

Brandon Yarbrough

Our experiences of love are multi-dimensional, and we ordinarily use the term “love” in many different ways, such that the word has come to have multiple, diverse senses and referents in our everyday discourse. Very different *kinds* of acts are commonly identified and characterized as love. Wherever the idea of love is present we inherit (i.e., *with us* remains) the task of determining the meaning of “love” *for those* who apply the idea to their situation, a task which requires us to measure what is *there for* us to see and hear, to measure that which appears to us within a framework of certain dimensions. *Through* rather fallible acts of selective attention to love’s presence in our lives, we interpret love *as* something *for* someone. No understanding of love comprehends the multiplicity of love; instead, meanings of love are reductions that promise more or less intellectual and practical value. This short essay is an attempt to make two moves: first, I move to introduce the reader to one way to “map” the idea of love within conceptual parameters originally recommended to us in Plato’s *Symposium*, conceptual parameters capable of providing structural support for the development of a public discourse of love that “measures” acts of love in terms of the apprehensions, desires, and relations that constitute those acts; second, I move to identify and characterize the “point” of Christian love, as a not-so-pointy point consisting of attention to Jesus Christ and the implicit love of God in the world, desire for the kingdom of God, and relations characterized by charity, or agapic love.

A “Map” of Love

With respect to the idea of love, we find it written that love is “the desire to possess the good always,”¹ that love is “the natural weight of the soul

¹Plato, *The Symposium*, ed. by M. C. Howatson and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield, trans. by M. C. Howatson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 2008, 43.

that carries it to its place,”² and also that love is “a violence”³ which is “unreasonable”⁴ to the extent that love is “its own justification, reason, and end.”⁵ We also find it written that love is “a bond”⁶ and that love “must be understood as a relation of some kind,”⁷ perhaps as a “generalized symbolic medium of communication”⁸ or as a “gesture immanent and transcendent” to the *ipse*-identities of two persons.⁹ In these ways, and in others, acts of love are often described and measured according to the desires and relations involved in those acts. When we look closely we discover that different accounts of love “hinge” on different “pictures” of human desires and relations. In order to compare the ideas, or pictures, of love that guide our understandings of love, we need to pay attention to the way we ordinarily use these ideas and then clarify the conceptual parameters within which talk of love takes place in human lives.¹⁰ We

²Pierre Rousselot, *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages: A Historical Contribution*, trans. by Alan Vincelette (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press), 2002, 124.

³*The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages*, 169.

⁴*Ibid*, 189.

⁵*Ibid*, 197.

⁶*Ibid*, 159.

⁷Robert E. Wagoner, *The Meanings of Love: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Love* (Westport, Greenwood Publishing Group), 1997, 14. Wagoner writes: “However love is defined, it must be understood as a relation of some kind.”

⁸Niklas Luhmann, *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1986.

⁹Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press), 2007, 128.

¹⁰Why write about ideas of love? If we carefully distinguish between different kinds of love, work diligently to clarify the specific differences that warrant our classifications, and then synthesize a conception of love to function as a genus within our system of classification, we achieve representational sophistication, but have not shown how love comes to “get a hold on life.” If we look at classical descriptions of the natural bond between a mother and child, of relations of mutuality, of formal relations among hosts and guests, of sexual desires, and so on, we may be able to trace “family resemblances,” but we have not yet discovered “the power of love” that “makes the difference” in the life of a lover. When we look for “idea” we cease looking for mere commonalities (in space) and begin looking for regularities (in time), for a “hinge” that opens a virtual field of potential movement in word and deed. To look for ideas of love in literature amounts to looking for the origins of definitions, or limitations, at work in an author’s use of the language to talk about love and for the differences of evaluation that emerge from different “pictures.”

need some great mind to take up this cause, someone capable of drawing a map of the diverse applications of the language of love in our literature and in our lives. As is often the case, Plato, having anticipated our need, has already made provisions for us that we should not ignore.

In the *Symposium*, through the discourse and intercourse of the character Socrates, Plato recommends that we measure talk of love and acts of love according to a picture of happiness (a measure of desires), according to a picture of immortality (a measure of relations), and according to a picture of unconditional commitment to acknowledge the real (a measure of apprehensions).¹¹ Christian traditions have largely

¹¹In *The Symposium*, the character Phaedrus proclaims that love is “the oldest god” and “the source of our greatest blessings” because erotic desire brings persons into relations that give birth to pride and the desire to avoid shame, which then give birth to virtuous habits of relation (p. 9). According to Phaedrus, erotic desires are the origins of the perfection of relations. Pausanias does not object to the idea that love is the oldest god because it gives birth to virtue, but he complicates the picture by making a distinction between “heavenly love,” or rightly-ordered desire, and “common love,” or wrongly-ordered desire, suggesting that a kind of perfection of relations (in the mind and heart) remains prior to the love-desire that gives birth to virtuous habits (p. 12). Thereafter, Eryximachus gives an account of a harmony-making power in the universe that pervades all living bodies and reconciles hostile elements so as to provide for the perfection of relations prior to our love-desires (pp. 18-21). Of course, in this way, Eryximachus ignores the problem of wrongly-ordered desire, and he is subsequently ridiculed for espousing a theory that simply eliminates “hiccups” (p. 22).

Aristophanes takes the problem of wrongly-ordered desires more seriously. He describes disorders of human desire and relation as effects of estrangement from our essential natures and love as a desire that generates wholeness, or fulfillment, by urging us to (re)unite ourselves with another who promises fulfillment (pp. 22-28). A person’s nature pre-determines the form of her erotic desire (e.g. whether she desires sexual relations with males or females) which predetermines the contents of her relations. While Aristophanes’ myth recognizes that problems may arise that threaten to block our paths toward fulfillment, his account is of little help to anyone concerned to know why *this* disorder has befallen *that* one *there*. All problems of desire are lumped together under the general explanation—estrangement from essential nature. One wants to know, *through* what idea or experience has Aristophanes come to understand our condition in this way. Where Aristophanes is silent, Agathon provides an answer. While he agrees, in principle, that lovers desire fulfillment and that love-relations promise fulfillment, Agathon emphasizes the roles played by our desires for the beautiful and the good—two ideas through which we come to understand what constitutes human fulfillment (pp. 28-32).

Then, Socrates speaks. According to Plato’s mouthpiece, we desire something that we lack because we want to be *happy* (like the gods), and (also like the

appropriated these measures, though they have cultivated different pictures. We measure apprehensions according to pictures of faith; desires, according to pictures of hope; and relations, according to pictures of charity. Taken together, these measures represent a map of acts, such as love, a map that provides us with a matrix for the evaluation of various human acts, a map that allows us to trace the presence of various ideas of love across various attempts to evaluate similar acts over time. To the extent that both believers and non-believers acknowledge the importance of attention to these dimensions of love and agree to measure love according to the apprehensions, desires, and relations that constitute acts of love, we share common ground, such that it is possible for believers and nonbelievers to render and discuss their ideas of love in these terms, without losing their ways.

Christian Apprehensions

While Christian love is a fruit of the Spirit that comes from being held and guided by God's love and not merely the product of our efforts to grasp "the love of God," efforts to "come to terms with" God's love and seek to understanding the meaning of "Christian love" are important to the life of faith. The writings of the New Testament warn that it is possible for us to misunderstand (or be deceived) concerning the nature of God's love and to respond inappropriately to God's love; so, we are exhorted to "work out [our] salvation."¹² It is, therefore, worth asking, with reverence

gods) we want to possess the good *always*. The only way humans can enjoy the happiness and immortality of the gods is by "giving birth" to beautiful things (pp. 33-50). In this way, Socrates for two "measures" of love—one concerned with the quality of the desire (happiness) and one concerned with the quality of the relations actualized through the desire (immortality). With these "measures," one could "map" acts of love by plotting them on an x-axis of happiness (of desires), cf. hope, and a y-axis of immortality (of relations), cf. charity, but Plato does not stop here. At last, Alcibiades stumbles drunkenly into the symposium claiming that he desires give birth to beautiful relations with Socrates and complaining that Socrates has denied him the opportunity to actualize a beautiful thing; however, it becomes clear that Alcibiades, unlike Socrates, is not ultimately concerned with truth. He is not unconditionally committed to truth, like Socrates. He does not share the faith, so he desires what he thinks is beautiful, but he is separated from the beautiful because he does not apprehend what is *truly* beautiful, according to Socrates. Add to our x-axis and y-axis a z-axis of apprehension (of the Unconditional), cf. faith.

¹²Philippians 2:12; Cf. Jer. 7:1-8 ; Luke 21:8; 1; Cor. 6:9; Gal. 6:7; Col. 2:8; 1 John.

and seriousness: what is the meaning of “Christian love”? Inspired by Plato’s discourse on love, Foucault writes: “the lover’s task . . . is to recognize the true nature of the love that has seized him. . . . It is not the other half of himself the individual seeks in the other person; it is the truth to which his soul is related. Hence the ethical work he will have to do will be to discover and hold fast, without ever letting go, to that relation to truth which was the hidden medium of his love.” Foucault’s account of “the lover’s task,” reminds us that true love is not merely the result of learning I-facts, you-facts, he-facts, she-facts, calculating compatibilities, imagining wholeness, and then acting accordingly so as to secure for ourselves and others the possibility of some shared happiness. True love, above all, is a matter of keeping in step with the spirit of love.¹³ In Foucault’s terms, the Christian task is to hold fast to the relation to truth which was the medium of the love of God in Jesus Christ, to keep in step with the Holy Spirit of the love of God in Jesus Christ. Christianity is not a program for self-improvement that happens to emphasize love; rather, the Christian task is to cultivate *nearness* to God—with respect to self-knowledge, absolutely localizing self-knowledge; with respect to actions toward others, intimate participation in the eternal life of self-giving love—through the imitation of the love of God in Jesus Christ and through obedience to His commands.¹⁴

Drawing near to God involves obedience to God’s commands, for it is through our reception of God’s commands, or hearing of God’s call, that we are introduced to how we (and other creatures) are known and loved by God. It is also through our acts of obedience, or doing of God’s will, that we come to know ourselves (and others) as we are known and loved by God. According to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus

¹³Cf. Galatians 5.

¹⁴If the reader is baffled by the phrase “absolutely localizing self-knowledge,” I recommend to the reader all of, or at least Part III of, Ingolf Dalferth’s *Theology and Philosophy*. I will only mention here that “localizing self-knowledge” is knowledge *orients* someone’s life within some “world of possibility” and recite that “absolute localizing self-knowledge . . . depends on two basic conditions: we must be able to identify and know the divine knowledge because we must know how we are known by it; and we must be able to identify and know ourselves in light of this divine knowledge because we must know ourselves as we are known by it.” Ingolf U. Dalferth, *Theology and Philosophy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers), 1988, 2001, 211.

taught that the greatest commandment(s) are to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love your neighbor *as yourself*.¹⁵ As is well-known, this command departs from ancient laws of limited retaliation, the *lex talionis*, and insists on an ethics of unconditional commitment to the good of the other.¹⁶ The synoptic gospels testify to us that Jesus Christ encouraged and embodied an inclusive understanding of neighborliness, or friendship, and that Jesus Christ commanded and demonstrated an unconditional commitment to the good of the other and equal regard for the well-being of the other,¹⁷ and in the Gospel of John, as Jesus anticipates betrayal, death, and abandonment, he speaks a new command, namely that his followers are to love one another, *just as I have loved you*.¹⁸ With these words, Jesus Christ's own self-giving nature is made into the measure of our natures, and at the cross, Jesus Christ's obedience to the direction of God calls us beyond autonomous self-love,¹⁹ to embody compassionate service and cultivate within ourselves not only a will to embrace the other but also an openness to sacrifice for the sake of others.²⁰ Through attention to Jesus Christ, we come to know the ordi-

¹⁵Cf. Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34.

¹⁶Cf. Luke 10:29-37.

¹⁷Timothy P. Jackson notes that the desirability of *agape* has been sharply criticized by meritarians (as well as naturalists, liberalists, and feminists). Thus conceived, love is considered objectionable to the meritarian, who argues that the performance of unconditional commitment and equal regard is impossible, undesirable, the impoverishing because the extension of such concern necessarily exhausts an inordinate amount of our personal resources. Instead, the meritarian argues, that persons should commit themselves to the well-being of great persons, to the exclusion of concern for the well-being of lesser persons, because such an ethics most efficiently distributes a persons' resources, including his/her psychic energy. However, since the practice of love is generative of the capacity to love (i.e., love is not a zero-sum game), the calculus of the meritarian is misleading. Therefore, Timothy P. Jackson argues that, as commanded by Christ, Christians should unconditionally commit themselves to the good of others (though not necessarily obeying the commands of others) and to an equal regard for others (though not necessarily issuing in unlimited sacrifice). Timothy P. Jackson, *The Priority of Love: Christian Charity and Social Justice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2003, 40.

¹⁸Cf. John 13:34-35.

¹⁹Cf. John 15:12-13.

²⁰Cf. John 14:6.

nary perversity of our wills.²¹ We come to see *how* we suffer self-seeking, autonomous attitudes that distance persons from their neighbors and distort our self-concepts, and we come to see *that* autonomous self-love is an imperfect substitute for, though not necessarily an obstacle to, the love of God in Jesus Christ.²²

Of course, in practice, whenever we look to Jesus Christ for guidance, questions of emphasis may arise. For example, some feminist theologians, like Barbara Andolsen, have criticized other theologians for what they consider to be an overemphasis on images of the crucified Christ and the virtue of self-sacrifice. According to the argument, what motivates these points of emphasis is an androcentric view of the human predicament in which the predominant sin is pride. However, on the basis of a historical account of the lives of women, Andolsen suggests that the sins of women are typically more related to sloth than pride and argues that hyper-attention to the cross by those who have sought to identify and characterize the love of God in Jesus Christ has discouraged women from seeking to develop their potentials, to engage in appropriate acts of self-

²¹While sin is generally construed as a self-seeking autonomy that distances persons from God and neighbor, any decision/behavior performed or, metaphorically, any inclination to perform actions “without love” is sin. To the extent that ignorance can cause persons to make unrighteous decisions or to act “without love,” ignorance may be considered one cause of sin (cf. Luke 23:34). To the extent that persons cannot summon the volitional strength to act “with love,” weakness of will may be considered one cause of sin (cf. John 9:41). Finally, to the extent that persons voluntarily choose to act “without love,” perversity of will may be considered one cause of sin (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). Moreover, the urge to sin is something that all persons experience (and have succumb to, according to the First Epistle of John), but the love of Christ is understood by Christians as an effective remedy for sin.

²²Liberty can be imagined as *freedom from* impositions, or constraints, on the will and as the *freedom for* achieving the desires of the will, i.e., as the actuality of empowerment. Moreover, liberty can be imagined as the capacity for *autonomous* self-determination (i.e., the ability control one’s own course(s) of action) and as *theonomy* (i.e., obedience to the will of God). Christian liberty involves both *freedom from* sin and *freedom for* righteousness and love. Moreover, the faithful practice of Christian liberty is primarily a matter of surrendering to God’s will and consenting to appreciate and reproduce the love of Christ. The spontaneous and joyful disposition to do good characteristic of Christian love is not identifiable as a form of autonomy, i.e., as the absence of external and internal constraints on the exercise of one’s powers of infinite negativity and self-determination.

assertion, which would amount to a corrective move away from the sin of sloth.²³ For this reason, in her theological ethics, Andolsen emphasizes measures of mutuality, and she proclaims that situations demanding sacrifice should be viewed as “symptomatic of disruptions in the primordial harmony” and that sacrifices should never be performed *for the sake of sacrifice*.²⁴ It is important to remember that the love of God in Jesus Christ is not reducible to some sacrificial tendency. At the same time, we are called to practice an openness to sacrifice for the sake of others.

It is also important to remember that the Apostle Paul not only identified love as the greatest commandment;²⁵ his writings also suggest that without love no action is virtuous.²⁶ Love, according to Paul, is not simply the most desirable virtue among qualitatively similar virtues; rather, in his view, love is a necessary condition for the realization of the good. With this in mind, Timothy P. Jackson has argued that Christian ethics misses its point whenever it opens a “field of action” not bound by commitment to the good of the other, equal regard for the good of the other, and openness to sacrifice for the sake of the other. In other words, Jackson argues that “agapic love” is the *sine qua non* of Christian ethics, and he reminds us that every virtuous act of a human person is preceded by acts of self-giving love—for example, love in the form of child care.²⁷ He reminds us that our development into responsible agents capable of moral action becomes possible only if we receive unmerited, self-giving care as infants. It is through receiving and then (later) giving care that we become motivated and equipped to cultivate responsible subjectivities and communities. We do all this only after worth has been bestowed to us from beyond ourselves.²⁸

²³Barbara H. Andolsen, “Agape in Feminist Ethics,” in *Feminist Theological Ethics: A Reader* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 1994, 151. For Andolsen, mutuality, as opposed to self-sacrifice, imagined as Trinitarian relationality is the cornerstone of Christian ethics. Andolsen argues that mutuality is the grounds for love and self-giving, so that self-giving should occur only in pursuit of mutual love. Viewing mutuality as analogous to friendship, Andolsen contends that mutuality is a reciprocal relationship conferring worth and benefit to all parties involved. Commitment to mutuality means satisfying the basic needs of the most needy whenever the needs of all parties are not able to be met and attempting to distribute occasions of sacrifice among related parties over time.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 155.

²⁵Cf. 1 Cor. 13:13.

²⁶Cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3.

²⁷*The Priority of Love*, 69.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 63.

Having received such care, having had worth bestowed to us, it is possible for us to acknowledge this care *as* gift and *as* grace, to know ourselves in a way that calls us to extend grace to others, to make them lovers or, more precisely, to subject them to experiences analogous to those which made us into lovers. Having participated in love, having welcomed the worth we have received through the self-giving love of others and having recognized that it was not absolutely necessary that we receive such worth, our knowledge of love demands that we prioritize acts of love in our lives. In this way, we come to know that “care’s agenda is to make others caring,” and in our appreciation of the presence of love in our lives, we may come to see the advantage that believers have over nonbelievers, namely, the advantage of the distinct opportunities cultivated in and through our worship of God to attend to the implicit love of God in the world and the advantage of holy encouragement to consent to the world *as* an act of the love of God.

In her writings, Simone Weil has identified three occasions for us to attend to the implicit love of God in the world. First, the believer is provided with an occasion to experience the implicit love of God in the exchange of grace and gratitude that takes place between relatively strong and weak persons, an experience that becomes possible only when we consent to the necessity of certain relations in the world, not desiring that the world should be otherwise. Second, experiences of beauty challenge us to “give up our imaginary position as the center” of the world, to consent to the fact that individuals are no more central than other points in the world and to the spiritual truth that our true center is not a thing among other things in the world. Finally, we are given occasion to experience the implicit love of God when we participate in religion, fixing our attention upon images of God. It is, in no small way, listening and looking to “the image of God” that actually *make the difference* in the lives of believers.

Therefore, we should not underestimate the importance of attention to the other in the life of faith. In Weil’s view, attention is the one thing needful,²⁹ and in her view, attention consists of an openness to an object and a readiness to be penetrated by that object in such a manner that knowledge is not simply ignored in the process.³⁰ The kind of attention that Weil had in mind is only possible for persons willing to engage in the

²⁹Cf. Luke 10:38-42.

³⁰Weil writes: “Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object; it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of.” Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, 62.

difficult work of recognizing their own limitations and inadequacies. In her writings, therefore, humility becomes an indispensable fruit of the Spirit of the love of God, and she regarded attention to the will of God as the most basic Christian virtue, arguing that the love of God has “attention for its substance.”³¹ Furthermore, she not only argued that loving God consists of attentive obedience to God’s will, she also insisted that *through* attention to God’s will, we are called to attend to our neighbors in their afflictions, and Weil also insisted that when persons truly capable of attending to their neighbors in their afflictions actually attend to their neighbors in their afflictions, they provide their neighbors with the remedy their neighbors most need in their afflictions. By paying attention to the face and the commands of Jesus Christ, the implicit love of God in the world, and our neighbors in their afflictions, we may act so as to become *nearer* to the love of God.

Christian Desires and Relations

Human desires and human relations are regulated by a variety of objects of hope and heuristic ideas—for example, goodwill and Kant’s categorical imperatives, the will to power and Nietzsche’s eternal return, nirvana and Buddha’s path to enlightenment, assurance and Marion’s individuality, happiness and Plato’s immortality. Christianity has provided us with pictures of the kingdom of God to orient our hopes and with pictures of charity, or agapic love, to orient our relations.³² These pictures guide the

³¹Weil also writes: “Prayer consists of attention. It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God. The quality of attention counts for much in the quality of prayer. . . . The development of the faculty of attention forms the real object and almost sole interest of studies.” *Waiting for God*, 57.

³²Note: “charity” here does not mean the giving of surplus resources to needy persons, in a one-sided affair. Isasi-Diaz rightly objects that this fails as ethically good behavior and argues that giving is only ethical if it is conceived and performed in a context of solidarity, where solidarity refers to a state of affairs in which diverse persons and groups share in common responsibilities and interests. Solidarity consists of imagining relationships with a view to the actualization of mutuality, crafting a politically effective strategy for pursuing mutuality, and committed action for the sake liberating oppressed persons/groups. Such commitment to mutuality requires willingness to act on behalf of others, arising from a sense of being bound to one another. Finally, solidarity is required because the “charity” of oppressors cultivates within the oppressed an unhealthy dependency, and only by means of solidarity will an oppressed people sustain itself without the resources of their oppressors. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, “Solidarity: Love of Neighbor in the 1980s,” in *Feminist Theological Ethics: A Reader*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 1994, 77-87.

way Christians measure acts of love. Of course, in theory and in practice, we often appropriate these ideas only partially and imperfectly. So, in an important sense, “Christian love” is not a point within our map, but a multi-dimensional field of action in which possibilities of desire and relation arise. Having acknowledged as much, what I want to emphasize, here and now, is that the ideas that guide our actions are not equally worthy guides, and we need to engage in the difficult work of discussing our ideas, arguing for this idea and against that idea, in order that we might come to discern which guiding lights prepare the way for us to keep in step with the spirit of love and which do not.

In *Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom*, Ellen Ott Marshall describes Christian hope as a “sense of possibility that generates and sustains moral agency,” a sense of possibility informed by a particular object, a vision of *basileia tou theou*.³³ Like H. R. Niebuhr before her, she argues for a theological ethics of hope that is informed by the unsettling work of negotiating between the realities of history and the ideals of faith,³⁴ and she introduces reasons why and develops an account of how Christians need to constantly evaluate and occasionally adjust our visions of *basileia tou theou*, as well as other, preliminary objects of hope. Marshall is intensely concerned that, in our practices of hope, we should remain accountable to the perils and promises of our shared existence.³⁵ In my view, we should undoubtedly embrace these insights; however, we should then turn and resist Marshall’s reduction of *basileia tou theou* to “a community in which . . . we are free from inhibiting structures and free for self-realization, mutually rewarding relationships, and self-expression.”³⁶

Marshall’s patterns of evaluation demonstrate that she is more committed to the heuristic idea of *self-realization* than the idea of charity, or agapic love. Here is the problem: the rhetoric of self-realization, with its several attachments to “my essence,” tends to exaggerate our potentials for independence from one another and often obscures from view the extent to which human persons remain vulnerable and dependent throughout their lives. In my view, insofar as the work of love is prior to the work of justice, we ought to prioritize the work of identifying and participating in

³³Ellen O. Marshall, *Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom: Toward a Responsible Theology of Hope*. Nashville (TN: Abingdon), 2006, xiii, xv.

³⁴*Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom*, 4, 10.

³⁵*Ibid*, xx.

³⁶*Ibid*, 71.

opportunities to practice charity as we work toward the object of our hope—"the flourishing of the whole" in the kingdom of God. Like Marshall, I think it is important for us to construct responsible accounts of hope that may be put to use to provoke and sustain moral agency—accounts which both "convey a promise and issue a call."³⁷ However, whereas Marshall's account of Christian hope and love primarily serves to orient desires toward extant potentials and issue a call to perform duties of justice, I contend that a more faithful account of Christian hope and love would orient desires, first and foremost, toward the future of the kingdom of God and call us to perform, above all else, duties of charity. Of course, Marshall is concerned that persons expect future potentials and perform duties of charity, and, like Marshall, I think that we ought to work to help each other locate extant potentials and perform duties of justice; however, the accounts of hope and love that we would give proceed from different points of departure and carry significantly different philosophical, anthropological, and theological commitments.

In my view, human persons are animals, vulnerable to innumerable possible afflictions, who inherit opportunities for human flourishing only as a consequence of virtuous caregiving. This fact, however, becomes obscured by the essentialist rhetoric of self-realization predominant within much western ethical discourse, or in an account of human flourishing that only seeks to secure various kinds of freedoms for individuals to independently actualize potentials infallibly known to be essential to "my flourishing," and so to "our flourishing." This way of imagining human personality tempts us to forget that "it is most often to others that we owe our survival, let alone our flourishing, as we encounter bodily illness and injury, inadequate nutrition, mental defect and disturbance, and human aggression and neglect,"³⁸ and that "it is by having our reasoning put to the test by others, by being called to account for ourselves and our actions by others, that we learn [to practice independent practical reasoning]."³⁹

Like other animals, humans are characterized by a capacity for practical rationality such that reasons for action develop within us prior to reflection.⁴⁰ However, unlike other animals, humans normally develop

³⁷Ibid, 8.

³⁸Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing Company), 1999, 1.

³⁹*Dependent Rational Animals*, 148 (see also 95).

⁴⁰Ibid, 5-6, 55-56.

beyond an “initial animal state of *having reasons for acting in this way rather than that* towards the specifically human state of *being able to evaluate those reasons, to revise them or abandon them and replace them with others*.”⁴¹ Ethics, or “the study of our choices about the good life, both individually and in the whole picture of a good life that our choices, taken together, create,”⁴² is possible for humans because we normally develop a capacity for independent practical reasoning in and through our communities. Like Marshall, I think that humans should use this capacity to form habits of action that contribute to “a flourishing system . . . a community in which human beings have their basic needs met and the positive conditions necessary to realize their full potential.”⁴³ However, I do not think that we should attempt to strictly proportion our caregiving in accordance with potentials we perceive only through the autonomous lens of “the essence,” first, because theories of “the essence” (for example, ego theories) are positive in the worst sense of the term—they posit something to function as an instrument towards predetermined ends, but, as lovers, we are called to remain open to the guidance of the spirit of love—and, second, because acts of charity ordinarily develop within and among human persons imperceptible potentials, which only become apparent after persons receive some form of generosity.

Nevertheless, we ought to pay attention to the potentials characterizing *this* body and *this* life and allow what is *there for* us to see and hear to inform our ethics of hope and love. At the same time, as we study the potentials of bodies and lives, we should remember that human bodies and human lives often contain potentials that remain imperceptible. We are often surprised by our bodies and the bodies of others, by our lives and the lives of others. Though we have, indeed, crafted many useful generalizations concerning human bodies and human lives, our bodies and our lives are still characterized by an inescapable unpredictability—a depth of mysterious that is only weakly conceivable often inconceivable, and potentially which is never fully represented in our calculations. Therefore, if as we develop our hopes we strictly limit our attention to calculations regarding human potentials, we are likely to develop a tendency to construct fields of action that yield habits of justice that, ironically, fail to “make space for” divine personal and social transformations.

⁴¹Ibid, 91.

⁴²Robin W. Lovin, *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 2000, 16.

⁴³*Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom*, 70-71.

While the strength of our hope is bound to our ability to conceive of an object of hope, we may still want to cultivate that peculiar dimension of Christian hope, realized among the saints, which is rooted in faith that “[God] is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.”⁴⁴ If life were a game of achieving maximum managerial responsibility, we would be well advised to focus our efforts only on actualizing and defending some calculation of potentials. However, those who remember that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” and who believe that “with God all things are possible” know they have reasons to wait for salvation, reasons to hope for redemption, and reasons to practice charity unconditionally, motivated, at times, only by a sense of possibility that arises from faith in the power of the love of God.

Furthermore, a real tension exists between duties of justice and duties of charity, such that the act of emphasizing one often changes the way we conceive of the other, and a compelling case can be made for prioritizing charity. As Timothy P. Jackson argues, in *The Priority of Love*, the presence of the virtue of charity, or agapic love, is indispensable to the growth of moral persons because “our adult capacity for balancing competing interests and for keeping valid contracts comes only after our unconditional nurturance by others while we are weak and dependent children, incapable of either stating our interests or entering into binding agreements.”⁴⁵ In his view, “[agapic love] involves three basic features: (1) unconditional willing of the good for the other, (2) equal regard for the well-being of the other, and (3) passionate service open to self-sacrifice for the sake of the other.”⁴⁶ Throughout the book, Jackson stresses that practices of agapic love are not incompatible with practices of justice but practices of love do “precede and transform” the meaning of justice insofar as practices of love are productive of worth which “justice” functions to distribute.⁴⁷ To the extent, then, that Christian ways of relating to others are regulated by the

⁴⁴Cf. Ephesians 3:20.

⁴⁵*The Priority of Love*, 7.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 28, 33-34. Jackson writes, “I prefer to speak of love ‘preceding and transforming’ justice to accent three points: (1) *agape* undergirds modern, a.k.a. ‘naturalist,’ conceptions of justice in that it nurtures individuals and groups into the capacity for self-conscious interests that distributive and retributive principles then adjudicate; (2) *agape* affirms the importance of giving people their due, thus it never falls below what justice (as *suum cuique*) requires; yet (3) *agape* occasionally transcends justice so understood, thereby displaying the leavening priority of the good to the right (*tsedaqah* to *mishpat*)” (pp. 33-34).

heuristic idea of agapic love,⁴⁸ Christian hope should not be viewed as a program for self-realization that consists merely of appraising extant potentials and making space for their actualization.

Instead, Christians hope that the love of God may produce unexpected worth in others because they know that the love of God has done it for them. We have been saved by grace. Therefore, that which generates and sustains Christian agency is not only our abilities to imagine potentials for “self-realization, mutually rewarding relationships, and self-expression.” Even where potentials remain unseen, trust in the creative power of the love of God may provide the sense of possibility needed to fulfill duties of charity and justice. Together with the prophets, we may come to know and confess:

Though the fig tree does not blossom,
 and no fruit is on the vines;
 though the produce of the olive fails
 and the fields yield no food;
 though the flock is cut off from the fold
 and there is no herd in the stalls,
 yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
 I will exult in the God of my salvation.
 God, the Lord, is my strength;
 he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
 and makes me tread upon the heights.

In short, we ought not rule out from the outset, especially not on account of our rather questionable attachments to the rhetoric of self-realization, the possibility of growing, by the grace of God, into persons who come to genuinely embody the enduring sense of possibility that inspired the psalmist to hope in the love of God “even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.”⁴⁹

Concluding Remarks

Thomas Aquinas argued that, “in the order of generation,” hope is prior to love and that, “in the order of perfection,” love is prior to hope. His point is not at odds with the three-dimensional map of apprehensions, desires, and relations that I have now introduced and developed for the reader. As I have argued that Christian love consists of attention to Jesus Christ and

⁴⁸Cf. 1 John 4:8, 16.

⁴⁹Ps. 23:4.

the implicit love of God in the world, desire for the kingdom of God, and relations of charity, I have trusted that the reader would resist the temptation to think that these “coordinates” are independent determinations. I have trusted that she is well-aware that acts of attention, desire, and relation co-order one another in an interdependent fashion, that we are never touched by sin and salvation only on one “plane.” Furthermore, I remind the audience that the map of love and the point of Christian love that I have sketched may prove useful to those interested in comparing such maps and points and empower us to evaluate acts of love and ideas of love more competently and take the Lord’s name more seriously and more carefully.

Finally, as my fellow Wesleyans consider this map of love, it is my hope that each might hear again the call to let God’s love lead us, not only forward but upward—beyond merely human fulfillment into new birth and eternal life. At this very point, it is easy for us to lose our way. We know that Wesley wanted his theology of God’s grace to be *true to experience*, and he was never fully satisfied with theoretical accounts of salvation preoccupied with mere imputations from God’s bench. In pursuit of a *real* salvation, Wesley developed an account of the impartations of God’s love. Like Aquinas before him, Wesley thought that virtue was realized in persons as they participated in God; in other words, he thought that human persons, as they participate in God, are really empowered to receive, interact with, and reflect God’s perfect love to the world. Also like Aquinas, Wesley believed that God’s love was the centerpiece of Christian theology and practice. Unfortunately, Wesleyans often emphasize the shadow of Christian love, without acknowledging the structure of Christian love, so that *sinlessness*, rather than *God’s love*, becomes primary. As a result, we sometimes become preoccupied with self-assessment and self-improvement to the extent that we lose sight of the power of God’s love at work within and among us. If our goal is to perfectly reflect the perfect love of God, then we will certainly need to address the sin within and among us as God’s love warms and refines our hearts. However, we must avoid merely humanistic (or narcissistic) efforts to *use* “God’s love” merely as a stimulant for some self-improvement project aimed by “humanity” (or “my essence”) at eradicating our own sinfulness. When Christian love is being exercised, sin is being exorcised. As a matter of paradox, the obverse does not hold true.

For us, the challenge is to remember that Christian perfection does not consist of errorless executions of will-power (e.g., to become maxi-

mally efficient managers); instead, Christian perfection consists of true reflections of God's perfectly self-giving love-power. We are called to share God's love in such a way that our actions can be received and understood by others *as love that comes from God* and in a way that is understood by us as *love for God*.⁵⁰ As Wesley constantly enjoins, the goal is *renewal in the image of God*—the reflection of God's love into the world. As such, the perfection that God's love calls us to embody is not unattainable. We are not called to embody absolute freedom from "ignorance or mistake, or infirmities or temptations";⁵¹ rather, we are called toward the embodiment of a kind of "perfection realizable within human limitations."⁵² However, living and working toward Christian perfection is not equivalent to seeking "self-realization" insofar as renewal in the image of God entails the *relocation* and *transformation* of "the human" in the drama of God's love for God's creation and "self-realization" only entails the *use* of "God's love" for the sake of bringing the history of humanity, or the individual, to climax. We must not forget that to love and reflect God's love is to love God for the love of God!

⁵⁰Note that I do not think it appropriate for us to insist that Christian love is *exclusively for God*. God's love for us stirs within us compassionate love *for others*. The point I aim to make, here and now, is similar to that point Rush Rhees once made in conversation with someone who preferred to speak of religious participation in terms of the attempt to find the meaning of life. Rhees reminds us: "For the great saints, the love of God was not a matter of finding the meaning of life. If I do love God, then I pray that I may love him more perfectly. And I want to say: I cannot love God without offering my life to God. But it is turning things upside down to say that this is first and foremost a concern with the meaning of life; or even that it is a conviction that there is some meaning in life. Anyone to whom the love of God was important *because* it gave meaning to life, would be only imperfectly religious. For the religious person the love of God is important because of God. It cannot be for any other reason." Rhees, Rush, "Religion, Life, and Meaning (B)," in *On Religion and Philosophy*, ed. D.Z. Phillips and Mario von der Ruhr, Cambridge (UK: Cambridge University Press), 1997, 192.

⁵¹John Wesley, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. by Albert Outler & Richard P. Heitzenrater. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon), 1991, 73.

⁵²Theodore Runyan, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon), 1998, 231.

A MODERN RELATION OF SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY

by

Bradford McCall

Introduction

Impressed by William Paley's logic and eye for detail, the young Charles Darwin accepted the conventional observation that organisms were adapted exquisitely to their environments. This remarkable fact, Darwin agreed at the time, could only be explained by reference to the existence of an intelligent and benign creator.¹ Having overcome the initial objections of his father, Charles accepted Captain Fitzroy's offer to be his gentlemanly companion on an exploration of various unknown lands, setting sail in 1831 on what would turn out to be an endlessly fascinating five-year voyage around the globe on the *Beagle*. It was a journey that would give surprising new direction to Darwin's own life and also provide information about nature that has agitated the religious sensibilities of many Christians ever since.

After returning home, Darwin's earlier belief in the special creation of each distinct species transmuted into a strong suspicion that the origin of different living species had occurred gradually, in a purely natural way. Among the many questions that Darwin and other naturalists who thereafter studied the specimens he collected on the voyage began to ask: Why do small but distinct variations appear among geographically distributed species of birds and other animals? Specific differences in species, Darwin began to suppose, could be accounted for without divine special creation if there had been minute, cumulative changes in living organisms over an immensely long time. In fact, following his return from the voyage of the *Beagle*, Darwin writes of his own views, "The old argument from design in nature, as given by Paley, which formerly seemed to me so conclusive, fails, now that the law of natural selection

¹John F. Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010, Kindle Edition), 6.

has been discovered. There seems to be no more design in the variability of organic beings and in the action of natural selection, than in the course which the wind blows.”²

In offering the mechanism of natural selection, Darwin gave a new kind of answer to what had previously been viewed as a strictly theological question. After he published his theory in 1859,³ Darwin effectively made natural science the new kind of ultimate explanation by making science itself able to provide a new answer to a very old theological question. After all, if natural science can account for something as complex as living organisms, including things as simple as the fish’s eye and eventually as complex as the human brain, had not science then taken over theology’s place in the task of making life’s designs fully intelligible? If natural selection is the ultimate cause of apparent design, do classic theological explanations matter at all? What good is theology if science can provide a satisfying answer to one of humanity’s most burning questions?⁴ These questions are still quite alive today—over one hundred and fifty years later.

People throughout the ages have attempted to understand the universe and their place within it. In attempting to develop a worldview that

²Charles Darwin, *Autobiography*, <http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?itemID=F1497&viewtype=text&pageseq+1>.

³In the wake of the *Origin of Species*, religion underwent a significant reformulation. God, who had been seen as the primary artist of nature in the former years, began to be viewed as a more distant deity— even more so than the developments of Newton had relegated him. Responses to the theory of evolution by religious communities proceeded along several lines, from outright rejection by the fundamentalists, to cautioned acceptance by the religious moderates, to unquestioned acceptance by theological liberals. Fundamentalists viewed Darwinism as an attack on the tenets of Christianity, and therefore rejected the insights gleaned from the science of evolution. Scientifically, there were also mixed reactions to the advent of Darwinism, ranging from outright rejection, to qualified acceptance, to full embrace. Following his famous teacher Cuvier, Louis Agassiz asserted that the major groups of animals do *not* represent ancestral branches of a hypothetical evolutionary tree but, instead, document a great plan that was used by the Creator to design the many different species in existence today. Asa Gray, however, was a Presbyterian Christian scientist who heartily accepted Darwinism. Gray spent much of his life arguing on both a popular and a scientific level for the compatibility of evolutionary theory and religion by contending that natural selection was not inconsistent with a deity superintending the process of evolution. Another response to Darwinism comes from the likes of Thomas Henry Huxley, who represented a ferocious attack on the tenets of Christianity, veiled in the guise of his newly coined terminology of “agnosticism.”

⁴Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution*, 13.

explicates their position in the world, religions have typically played a very important role, but since the scientific revolution, and particularly since the biological revolution onset by Darwin, science has also played a crucial role. How should we attempt to understand the relationship between religion/theology and science? In what follows, I will attempt to answer this overarching question by cursorily examining several attempts in the past to classify the theology and science relationship. I will also develop my personal view of the relation between theology and science, and thereafter I discuss some Catholic contributions to this project of understanding theology in an evolving world. I then revisit some previously published material to argue that kenosis and emergence can add to the discussion of understanding the theology and science relationship.

A Delineation of Models Regarding the Relationship Between Science and Theology

In this section of the paper, I delineate several aspects of previous models of the relationship between religion/theology and science. John Hedley Brooke and Geoffrey Cantor, for example, argue that neither religion nor science is reducible to some sort of timeless essence; rather, both must be understood in their historical particularities—they are inextricable from the times in which they arise.⁵ Within the academy today, there are four general ways of responding to the main question of this essay. On the one hand, we have those who think there are no real limits to the competence of science, what it can do, and what it can explain. Richard Dawkins, for example, writes that since we have modern biology, we have “no longer . . . to resort to superstition when faced with the deep problems: Is there a meaning to life? What are we for? What is man?”⁶ According to Dawkins, science can address and answer all of these questions. Mikael Stenmark calls people like Dawkins “scientific expansionists.”⁷ What they have in

⁵John Hedley Brooke and Geoffrey Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature: The Engagement of Science and Religion* (Glasgow Gifford Lectures) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1.

⁷Mikael Stenmark, *How to Relate Science and Religion: A Multidimensional Model* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), xi. Note that Stenmark gets the terminology of “scientific expansionists” from Loren R. Graham, *Between Science and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). Graham notes that expansionists write in such a way that the boundaries of science “include, at least by implication, value questions” (Graham, *Between Science and Values*, 6).

common is that they think science can and should be *expanded* in such a way that the only kind of knowledge that we can have is of a scientific variety.

On the other hand, there are people that contend science should be heavily informed by or shaped by religion. These thinkers aver that the boundaries of religion—not those of science—can and should be expanded in such a way that religion dictates science. Stenmark calls these individuals “religious expansionists.”⁸ For instance, in this camp one will find such thinkers as Alvin Plantinga, who, while noting that it is naive to expect contemporary science to be religiously or theologically neutral, advises that “a Christian academic and scientific community ought to pursue science in its own way, starting from and taking for granted what they know as Christians.”⁹ I contend that we must take religious expansionists as serious as we take scientific expansionists.

There is yet another group of views on the theology and science relationship, one that contends science cannot be ideologically neutral. Steven Rose, Richard Lewontin, and Leon J. Kamin, for example, are representatives of this view; they write that they “share a commitment to the prospect of the creation of a more socially just—a socialist—society. And we recognize that a critical science is an integral part of the struggle to create that society.”¹⁰ Stenmark calls these thinkers “ideological expansionists.”¹¹

In contradistinction to the three above mentioned models, there is a fourth group of thinkers that defend the idea that science and theology or ideology ought to be restricted to their own separate areas of inquiry; Stenmark calls these people “scientific and religious restrictionists.”¹² An example of this type of thinking can be found in the writings of Stephen Jay Gould, who argues that science and religion should exhibit a respectful noninterference, and are in fact autonomous, non-overlapping

⁸Stenmark, *How to Relate Science and Religion*, xii.

⁹Alvin Plantinga “Science: Augustinian or Duhemian?” *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (1996): 377.

¹⁰Richard Lewontin, Steven Rose, and Leon J. Kamin, *Not in Our Genes: Biology, Ideology, and Human Nature* (Westminster, London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990), ix-x.

¹¹Stenmark, *How to Relate Science and Religion*, xiii.

¹²Stenmark, *How to Relate Science and Religion*, xiv.

“magesteria.”¹³ The magisterium of science regards the empirical realm, whereas religion regards questions of ultimate meaning and moral value.¹⁴

It should be noted that both science and religion have social dimensions, and as such, they are social practices, meaning that they are “Socially established cooperative human activities through which their practitioners . . . try to achieve certain goals by means of particular strategies.”¹⁵ I agree with Stenmark here. I contend that science and theology have social practices that *overlap*. It is often claimed that science is the paradigm of dispassionate inquiry, where positions of truth are critically examined, and nothing is believed on the basis of authority; instead, the scientific community disinterestedly applies the scientific method. I question this claim, and contend instead, with Kuhn,¹⁶ that all scientific truths are socially constrained. Moreover, since the practice of science is a learned activity, it, like religion, employs the usage of authority. Philip Kitcher agrees, writing, “individual scientists identify certain people within the community as authoritative on issues that are not agreed on throughout the community.”¹⁷

Personal Model of the Science and Theology Relationship: Overlap

Early in my postgraduate education, I encountered Process philosophy, and my life has been forever changed as a result. This section of the paper will briefly recount the results of this encounter with Process philosophy, its continuing relevance for me, and how my advocacy of a monistic Process-based view of the overlapping relationship between science and theology looks in practice. In my studies over the last fifteen years, I have interacted heavily with Process philosophy, and have invariably inculcated much of what I have been exposed to since my entrance into a postgraduate degree program. In these postgraduate studies, I have consis-

¹³Stephen Jay Gould, *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (New York: Ballantine, 1999), 5.

¹⁴Gould, *Rock of Ages*, 6.

¹⁵Stenmark, *How to Relate Science and Religion*, xvi.

¹⁶Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹⁷Philip Kitcher, *The Advancement of Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 84 n. 36.

tently sought to *integrate*¹⁸ my new learning with my undergraduate degree in biology. So then, in what follows, one may find an explication of how I have come to view the science and theology relationship as one that should be characterized by a *monistic* understanding of the two domains that is based on a Process worldview (i.e., ideologically based), and is discernible by an *overlapping* of the two domains.

Process philosophy is based on the conviction that the central task of philosophy is to construct a cosmology in which all intuitions grounded in human experience can be reconciled. Whereas cosmologies were traditionally based on religious, ethical, and aesthetic as well as scientific experiences, cosmology in the modern period has increasingly been based on science alone. In the broadest sense, the term “Process philosophy” refers to all worldviews holding that process or becoming is more fundamental than unchanging—or static—being.¹⁹ The term has widely come to refer in particular, however, to the movement inaugurated by Whitehead and extended by Hartshorne.

¹⁸While I here use the term “integrate,” this should not be taken to mean that I indiscriminately agree with Ian Barbour’s characterization of what he calls the “Integration” position of the science and religion relationship (cf. Ian Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science* [New York: Harper and Row, 1990], 77). Due to this highly read book, most of the discussion post 1990 has classified the science and religion relationship as being one of the following: conflict, independence, dialogue, or integration. Because I view the notion of there being a “conflict” between science and religion as a specious concept, based more so on John William Draper’s polemic against the Catholic Church, as expressed in his *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1874), as well as my contention that the putative relation known as “dialogue” is nebulous (regardless of which view one might hold, they should be committed to “dialogue” with opposing views), I would—if I had to use Barbour’s delineations—be an integrationist. But overall I agree with Brooke and Cantor (John Hedley Brooke and Geoffrey Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, 275) and van Huyssteen (J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, *Duet or Duel? Theology and Science in a Postmodern World* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998], 3) who argue that Barbour’s classification scheme is too a-historical, universal, and static to fruitfully map the way science and religion have interacted.

¹⁹One can find advocacy of these views in an anthology entitled *Philosophers of Process*, which includes selections from Samuel Alexander, Henri Bergson, John Dewey, William James, Conway Lloyd Morgan, Charles Sanders Peirce and Alfred North Whitehead, with an introduction by Charles Hartshorne (Douglass Browning, *Philosophers of Process* [Manhattan: Random House, 1965]).

So how does my monistic advocacy of a Process-based view of the overlapping relationship between theology and science actually look like? One side of this task of reconciling science and theology involves the replacement of the materialistic worldview, with which science has been associated primarily since the nineteenth century, with “panexperientialism,” which allows religious experience to be taken seriously. The term panexperientialism was coined in 1977 by American theologian-philosopher David Ray Griffin, and is a combination of the terms “pan,” meaning all, and “experience.” The theory of panexperientialism is summarized in Griffin’s 1998 book *Unsnarling the World-Knot: Consciousness, Freedom, and the Mind-Body Problem*,²⁰ in which he argues that in panexperientialism, Whitehead advocates a monistic metaphysic; thus, the traditional problems of mind-body interaction are not present in Process metaphysics because reality, at its base, is not bifurcated into purely mental or physical categories. This Process metaphysical doctrine states that all individual actual entities—from electrons to human persons—are essentially self-determining and possess a capacity for “feeling” or a degree of subjective interiority. Although all actual entities possess experience, it is not necessarily conscious experience; Whitehead argues that consciousness presupposes experience, but not vice versa. Panexperientialism is a significant departure from the dominant metaphysical theories of idealism (all is mind), dualism (mind and matter are equally fundamental), and materialism (all is matter).

The other side of the task of reconciling theology and science involves overcoming exaggerations from the religious/theology side that conflict with necessary assumptions of science, the main exaggeration of which involves the idea of divine power. Whitehead and Hartshorne do believe that a metaphysical description of reality points to the necessity of a supreme agent to which the name “God” can meaningfully be applied (arguments for the existence of God are developed more fully by Hartshorne²¹ than by Whitehead). But they—and I—strongly reject the traditional view of divine power, according to which God, having created

²⁰David Ray Griffin, *Unsnarling the World-Knot: Consciousness, Freedom, and the Mind-Body Problem* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1998).

²¹For example, Charles Hartshorne, *Man’s Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Company, 1941); see also Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection and other Essays in Neoclassical Metaphysics* (La Salle: Open Court, 1962).

the world *ex nihilo*, interrupts its basic causal processes at his whim—a doctrine that not only creates the problem of evil, but also conflicts with the assumption of methodological naturalism that no such interruptions can occur. Their alternative proposal is that the power of God is persuasive, not coercive, with power intermediate between the omnipotent God of classical theism and the absentee God of deism (see, e.g., Whitehead 1929²², 1933²³; Hartshorne 1984²⁴). I contend that this is a better portrayal of God, especially in view of the long and winding road of biological evolution through the processes of natural selection. Indeed, with Barbour, I contend that process metaphysics is the most promising mediator between theology and science in today's academic environ.²⁵

Catholic Contributions to my Personal View

My advocacy of a monistic Process-based view of the overlapping relationship between theology and science is aided by the interaction with the sciences modeled by the history of philosophical inquiry in the Catholic tradition, which gives me a method to emulate in its re-articulation of Aristotelian positions by Thomas Aquinas, for example. I see much value, additionally, in employing science as a “handmaiden” to theology, a role first envisioned by Philo Judaeus in the first century, later expressed in medieval theology as employed by Augustine in the fourth century, and fully embraced in the early twelfth century by Hugh of Saint-Victor. Our current Pope, Francis, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, offers something akin to this position, writing that “The Church is herself a missionary disciple; she needs to grow in her interpretation of the revealed word and in her understanding of truth. It is the task of exegetes and theologians to help “the judgment of the Church to mature.”²⁶ The other sciences also help to accomplish this, each in their

²²Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality. An Essay in Cosmology* (Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh During the Session 1927–1928) (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

²³Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1933).

²⁴Charles Hartshorne, *Creativity in American Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

²⁵Jan Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?* (New York: HarperOne, 2000), 34.

²⁶Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 12.

own way.”²⁷ I suggest that this means that the other sciences, biology for example, can critique, hone, and refine theology, thereby making it more robust. The Pope goes onward to state, “For those who long for a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all and leaving no room for nuance, this might appear as undesirable and leading to confusion. But in fact such variety serves to bring out and develop different facets of the inexhaustible riches of the Gospel.”²⁸

The Catholic philosopher and theologian John Haught takes pains to let science be science, and to simultaneously let theology be theology. The scientific method, Haught insists, should have nothing to say about purpose, values, or even God’s existence. Rather, it should stick to dealing with physical causes and avoid attempting to give ultimate explanations. To understand how theology may in some sense be explanatory of life’s apparent designs without posing as an alternative to evolutionary accounts, one must develop what Haught calls a “layered explanation.”²⁹ By layered explanation, he simply means that everything in our experience can be explained at multiple levels of understanding, in distinct and noncompeting ways. The idea that there can be a plurality of compatible explanations for a single event or phenomenon is an ancient one, endorsed by great thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Kant, and Haught argues that it is a valid methodology even in this age of science.

In other words, ultra-Darwinists like Dawkins and Dennett need not insist that natural selection rather than divine creativity accounts for living design. In a layered understanding, different levels of explanation are simultaneously operative. Just because natural selection can account for the design of a fish’s eye at one level of understanding, for example, this does not necessarily exclude divine creativity as an explanation at a deeper level. Since theology operates on a different explanatory level—alongside of, and not in conflict with—from scientific accounts of phenomenon, evolutionary biologists should not expect to see divine influence intervening directly in the life-process at the level where natural selection is operative. Nor should they smugly conclude that they have ruled out divine creativity as a valid theological idea just because they see

²⁷Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 34.

²⁸Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 35.

²⁹Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution*, 23.

no “evidence” of direct divine manipulation in the formation of biological complexity.³⁰

Moreover, thinkers from Plato to Alfred North Whitehead have acknowledged that things cannot be actualized without being patterned (or ordered) by some “formative” principle(s). In contemporary scientific usage, information is identified—at various levels—as the set of principles that organize subordinate elements into hierarchically distinct domains. Haught avers one dimension that gets lost in modernity’s simplistic reductionism is the dimension of “information,” which means, he says, that more is going on in evolution than merely molecular or atomic activity. Indeed, complex organizational principles inform the more elemental levels, and he loosely assigns the name “information” to these principles, noting that information is not reducible to its constituent matter and energy.³¹

When faced with information, Haught contends, contemporary science has alighted against something distinct from the material causes that had lent credence to reductionist views of life (and by extension, to mind). Analytically basal, the DNA molecule appears to be composed of simple “chemical components,” but at a deeper level of understanding, the informational arrangement of genetic codons—A, T, C, and G—is the most significant feature of the cell. The specific sequence of genetic codons of entities is, after all, what determines what the entity is phenomenologically. Chemically speaking, if you look at DNA, one will not notice the informational content that the constituent atoms and molecules are carrying. However, at a deeper “reading level,” the informational arrangement of the codons is all-important. My existence as a member of the *Homo sapiens sapiens* has to do not only with my evolutionary ancestry, but also with the specific sequence of nucleotides in my DNA.

Haught states that even if I descended continuously from a common living ancestor, and even if my genetic makeup differs quantitatively from that of chimpanzees and bonobos by only a minute amount, the “informational” difference is great enough to produce both biological and ontological distinctiveness. In the arena of information, then, I am discontinuous with the rest of life. Even though I remain continuous with all animals at the level of my evolutionary, atomic, molecular, and metabolic

³⁰Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution*, 25.

³¹Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution*, 50.

constitution, the specific informational content embedded within my genes is what counts the most. It must be stressed that this informational aspect is naturally derived, with Haught stipulating that the information content is not an instance of “intelligent design.”³² What Haught proposes, however, is that an awareness of the informational content “silently at work in the universe”³³ offers at least one way to understand how different levels of both being and value can descend from earlier instantiations of the evolutionary advance without being completely reducible to them (i.e., they are emergent—I am using the distinctively philosophical sense of the term as it will be developed later in this essay).

We are also aided in our endeavor to understand theology in an evolutionary world by Thomas Aquinas’s characterization of God working through secondary causes. Catholic priest and philosopher Denis Edwards stipulates that Aquinas perceived God to act in and through creatures, or natural causes, enabling them to be truly causal in their own right, by enabling them to be, to act, and to become.³⁴ Aquinas notes that God acts through intermediaries, imparting to them the dignity of having causal powers. In respecting their dignity and integrity, God grants secondary causes their proper autonomy. Edwards points out that for Aquinas, God is “always and everywhere at work” through secondary causes.³⁵ I resonate with Aquinas’s attempt to salvage the particularity of divine action in our scientifically driven world.³⁶ In contrast to Aquinas, however, I view God to work not only primarily through secondary causality, but also *exclusively* through it, through the perhaps unknown laws of nature, much alike to Edwards.³⁷

An Assist From Previously Published Material

In this section, I review some contributions from previous work to my advocacy of a monistic Process-based view of the overlapping relationship between theology and science. In light of the current worldview, marked by the scientific notion of evolution, new models of divine action are necessary. Recently, a collection of essays by theologians and scientists

³²Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution*, 50-51.

³³Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution*, 51.

³⁴Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action* (Theology and the Sciences) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 80-81.

³⁵Edwards, *How God Acts*, 81.

³⁶Edwards, *How God Acts*, 83; cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.105.7ad1.

³⁷Edwards, *How God Acts*, 83.

explored creation as *The Work of Love*, pointing to divine action as kenosis.³⁸ The resurgence of kenotic theology has been helpful in reformulating divine action in an evolutionary world. The kenotic theology that advocated in “Kenosis of the Spirit into Creation”³⁹ maintains that the Spirit of God, who *is* love,⁴⁰ completely shares and imparts himself *into* creation. Indeed, the Spirit “poured Himself out” into creation, thereby causing it to leap forth from chaos and become a structured and orderly system of life-bearing entities. Affirmed in this essay is the notion that creation is a kenotic act of *self-offering* inasmuch as the creation of matter and the world has its ontological origin in and through the agency of the Spirit. Thus, one may accurately posit that creation, in a qualified sense, possesses the Spirit from its very origin. Instead of reducing the created world into a pantheistic entity, however, God is an “all embracing unity” and the world exists “in” God in the sense that God is the ground of being for the created world (panentheism is herein advocated).

In “Emergence Theory and Theology: A Wesleyan-Relational Perspective,”⁴¹ it is noted that the earth, in the emergentist view, is an active, empowering environment—even an empowering agent—that brings forth life by various interdependent processes. Herein, support for the assertion of Morowitz is given, who states that evolution is the overall process, but emergence punctuates the steps of the evolutionary epic.⁴² Moreover, in this essay it is noted that Wesleyan theology conceptualizes God’s sovereignty and power in a manner that allows for the creativity of that which emerges to be exercised within limits.⁴³ Indeed, Wesleyan theology in general is keen to highlight the relational nature of God’s love,⁴⁴ a love that insists on embracing and working with creatures,⁴⁵ versus over

³⁸John Polkinghorne, ed. *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

³⁹Bradford McCall, “Kenosis of the Spirit into Creation,” *Crucible* 1, no. 1 (May 2008).

⁴⁰1 John 4:16.

⁴¹Bradford McCall, “Emergence Theory and Theology: A Wesleyan-Relational Perspective,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 44, no. 2 (2009): 189-207.

⁴²Harold J. Morowitz, *The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 191.

⁴³See Wesley’s “Thoughts upon God’s Sovereignty,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 10:362-63.

⁴⁴As relational, God both affects and is affected by those with whom he relates.

⁴⁵Cf. Michael E. Lodahl, *God of Nature and of Grace: Reading the World in a Wesleyan Way* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2003), 27.

and against them, which connotes a process marked by not only time, but also perhaps by diversions (the term “diversions” being preferable to “errors” because errors implicate an irreversibility).⁴⁶

Divine sovereignty under such a model is one that “gives power over to the created for the sake of a relationship of integrity.”⁴⁷ Because God is love, he takes risks with creation, working with it over a long period of time through the processes of evolution, rather than creating by divine fiat.⁴⁸ God accepts these risks, says Nancy Murphy and George Ellis, “in order to achieve a higher goal: the free and intelligent cooperation of the creature in divine activity.”⁴⁹ The process of evolution, Murphy and Ellis go on to say, reflects God’s “noncoercive, persuasive, painstaking love all the way from the beginning to the end, from the least of God’s creatures to the most splendid.”⁵⁰ One may assert, then, that the defining theme in Wesleyan-relational theology is that God fundamentally exists in relationship, which means that both God and creatures are affected by others in give-and-take relationships, and all that God does is for the purpose of relationship. This essay highlights Wesleyan-relational theology’s basis in panentheism, noting also an implication that arises from the literature: the resultant possibilities for God. This implication creates space for a Wesleyan-relational perspective on the emergence process, a perspective that is not only warranted, but also fruitful for further research.

The essay “Emergence and Kenosis: A Proposed Pneumato-Theological Synthesis,”⁵¹ agrees with Oskar Gruenwald, who says, “An unprecedented challenge and opportunity for philosophy today is to mediate the emerging dialogue between science and religion.”⁵² Elsewhere, it has been said, “creation and evolution, between them, exhaust the possible explanations for the origin of living things. Organisms either appeared on the

⁴⁶See John B. Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 251.

⁴⁷Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 272.

⁴⁸Cf. Lodahl, *God of Nature and of Grace*, 64-67.

⁴⁹Nancy Murphy and George F. R. Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 246.

⁵⁰Murphy and Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe*, 246.

⁵¹Bradford McCall, “Emergence and Kenosis: A Proposed Pneumato-Theological Synthesis,” *The Proceedings of the 2009 Student Symposium on Science and Spirituality*. Chicago: Zygon Center for Religion and Science.

⁵²Oskar Gruenwald, “Philosophy as Creative Discovery: Science, Ethics and Faith,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* XI (1999): 157.

earth fully developed or they did not. If they did not, they must have developed from pre-existing species by some process of modification. If they did appear in a fully developed state, they must have been created by some omnipotent intelligence.”⁵³ However, this essay offers another option—a pneumatological interpretation of emergence, one that “reads” the philosophical concept of emergence through theological lens.

The reasoning set forth in this essay is in support of the overall thrust of (Neo-) Darwinian evolutionary theory; in fact, in it the author proudly propounds his support for Neo-Darwinism. Indeed, he contends that the Godhead creates and refines his “creation” in and through the process(es) of evolution. However, he also affirms that the evolutionary process is marked by long periods of stasis, which are followed by sudden increases in complexity. McCall suggests that these sudden increases of complexity may be the result of emergence working within God’s *telos*, inasmuch as emergence is the means through which the Godhead actualizes the evolutionary advancement. In order to argue for the coherency of a triangulation between evolution, emergence, and final causality, this essay dialogs extensively with current proponents of emergence theory, and suggests the uniting factor between evolution and emergence may be kenosis.

In “Emergence and Kenosis: A Theological Synthesis,”⁵⁴ McCall surveys Philip Clayton’s book, *Mind & Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness*,⁵⁵ applying some of its philosophical principles to a theological interpretation of emergence. The author asserts, for instance, that the Spirit’s primal act of kenosis onsets the long and laborious process of complexification displayed by pre-biotic and biotic evolution, which pro-

⁵³Douglas J. Futuyma, *Science on Trial: The Case for Evolution* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 197.

⁵⁴Bradford McCall, “Emergence and Kenosis: A Theological Synthesis,” *Zygon: Journal of Science and Religion* 45, no. 1 (2010): 149-164.

⁵⁵Philip Clayton, *Mind & Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004). As a Ph.D. student in a doctoral seminar at Regent University on 6 June, 2007, Philip Clayton told me in personal communication that he holds the assumption that final causation conflicts with the explanatory paradigm of the biological sciences, and is therefore undesirable. So then, if he argues that God does something biologically impossible, then he opens up a chasm between himself and biological scientists. Clayton said that he follows Thomas Aquinas, with God being the primary cause, and with creation being the secondary cause(s).

vides the notion of emergence much explanatory power and thus expands its fecundity. The complexification of matter, then, has its ontological origin in and through the agency of the Spirit of God. As such, the concept of *creatio continua* is defended. This essay contributes to a systematic theology of creation by constructing a theological synthesis between kenosis and emergence.

In "Emergence and Kenosis: A Wesleyan Perspective,"⁵⁶ the entailments of Clayton's third chapter within *Mind & Emergence* are first reviewed, in which he develops the role of emergence in the natural sciences and in evolution, highlighting its immanent aspect, which may be his most important contribution to the dialogue between theology and science found within this book.⁵⁷ Clayton argues that whereas "biological processes in general are the result of systems that create and maintain order (stasis) through massive energy input from their environment," there comes a point of sufficient complexity after which a phase transition suddenly becomes almost inevitable.⁵⁸ In this essay, after reviewing and interacting with Clayton, McCall suggests that Clayton contributes four things, principally, to a Wesleyan perspective on emergence: first, emergence is in direct opposition to reductionism. Second, any position on creation in an evolving world must take seriously both evolutionary continuity and the increase in organizational complexity marked by organisms within the natural environ. Third, strong emergentism focuses more so upon the whole than upon the parts, yet is inherently monistic. And fourth, emergence theory represents an explanatory ladder of nature that eventually leads outside the natural sciences, opening up new avenues to speak possibly of a deity.

⁵⁶Bradford McCall, "Emergence and Kenosis: A Wesleyan Perspective," in *The Future of Wesleyan Theology: Essays in Honor of Laurence Wood*, Nathan Crawford ed. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick: 2011): 155-170.

⁵⁷I contend that emergence comports well with the advocacy of the immanence of God acting in evolution through the Spirit. Much recent theology, like that of Jürgen Moltmann (*God in Creation* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993]), John F. Haught (*Deeper than Darwin: The Prospect for Religion in the Age of Evolution* [Cambridge: Westview, 2003]), and Denis Edwards (*Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* [Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004]), speaks eloquently of God's immanence in nature. It should be noted that the Hebrew term *ruach* denotes God's active and creative presence throughout creation, and is amenable to an immanentist depiction.

⁵⁸Clayton, *Mind & Emergence*, 78.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to explicate how one should understand the relationship between theology and science. In so doing, I have noted that the scientific expansionist, religious expansionist, ideological expansionist, and scientific and religious restrictionist positions all fall short of an adequate explanation of the relationship between theology and science. Additionally, I have developed my personal view of the relation between theology and science, which is demonstrable as a monistic Process-based view marked by an overlapping of the two domains. In so doing, I have highlighted the panexperientialist aspect of my personal view, which implies that not just humans but even subatomic particles have a capacity for subjective interiority. Also, I noted that the other side my personal view of the relationship between theology and science involves overcoming the exaggeration of divine power, with this essay opting to view God's power as one of persuasion rather than coercion.

My advocacy of a monistic Process-based view of the overlapping relationship between theology and science is aided by the interaction with the sciences modeled by the history of philosophical inquiry in the Catholic tradition, which gives me a method to emulate in its re-articulation of Aristotelian positions. In particular, I highlighted Haught's advocacy of a layered explanation, by which he means that everything in our experience can be explained at multiple levels of understanding, in distinct and noncompeting ways. Moreover, in this section I examined how Haught advances the notion that information is identified in contemporary scientific usage as the set of principles that organize subordinate elements into hierarchically distinct domains, a concept that points to realities beyond what the principles of physics alone can explain.

Following this, I revisited some previously published material to argue that in light of the current worldview, marked by the scientific notion of evolution, new models of divine action are necessary. I point out that kenosis is a cogent concept to express divine action in an evolutionary world. Moreover, I noted that in a series of articles, Bradford McCall reviews select literature regarding emergence theory, with reference in particular to its relation with Christian theology, highlighting its basis in panentheism, and noting an emergent (pun intended) implication from the literature: the resultant possibilities for God—an implication that creates space for a broadly relational perspective of the process of emergence. So then, the concept of emergence can also be additive to

the discussion of theology in evolving world. In sum, I view a monistic Process-based view of the overlapping relationship between theology and science as the most constructive and most tenable response to Darwinism in today's society.

WHY OORD'S ESSENTIAL KENOSIS MODEL FAILS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF EVIL WHILE RETAINING MIRACLES

by

John Sanders

The central claim in *The Uncontrolling Love of God* is that love never controls anything. From this Oord develops a model of divine providence called “essential kenosis” which seeks to “solve” the problem of evil while also retaining a traditional belief in miracles.¹ He claims this model is superior to both process theology and to freewill theism (both traditional Wesleyan and open theist approaches). According to Oord, process theology solves the problem of evil but it does so at the expense of rejecting miracles in general and the bodily resurrection of Jesus in particular. Traditional freewill theism affirms miracles but it fails to solve the problem of evil *completely*. The essential kenosis model is better because it overcomes these problems. First, it resolves all aspects of the problem of evil in such a way that God cannot be held responsible for, or even have a question asked about, why God did not prevent a genuine evil from occurring. “A God worthy of our worship cannot be Someone who causes, supports or allows genuine evil” (68). Second, essential kenosis upholds miracles, particularly, the resurrection of Jesus. Hence, essential kenosis is put forth as a superior model to both process theology and freewill theism regarding theodicy and miracles because it has all the benefits inherent in these models but without the costs associated with them.

Unfortunately, an examination of the internal consistency of the essential kenosis model reveals that the proposal cannot affirm both (1) a complete solution to the problem of evil and (2) traditional belief in divine authorship of miracles. Though essential kenosis provides a successful theodicy it cannot realistically support miracles such as the bodily resurrection of Jesus. In the end, we are back to the choice between views which remove God from any questions regarding evil (such as process

¹Thomas Jay Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: an Open and Relational Account of Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

theology and essential kenosis) and those which affirm divine responsibility for miracles (such as Arminianism and open theism). This article first discusses Oord's criticisms of two freewill views concerning evil. Then it describes the essential kenosis model. The final two sections examine the essential kenosis model in relation to evil and miracles to show why, according to its own definitions, it cannot both absolve God of responsibility for evil and also affirm miracles.²

Oord's criticisms of the freewill tradition on evil

Theologically, Oord's lineage is from the freewill tradition which rejects theological determinism. He believes that humans have libertarian freedom and, thus, can say no to God and live in unloving ways. He also believes that God does not micromanage creation and that God has dynamic omniscience (God knows past and present events exhaustively and future events are open, not known, even for God). Yet, he thinks that other models in the freewill theistic tradition are unsatisfactory. Though Oord does not explicitly criticize process theology it seems that he would fault it for undermining miracles. The strong suit for process theology is that it gets God completely off the hook for evil. The same cannot be said for traditional Arminian theology or open theism. He characterizes the typical Arminian position as exemplified by Roger Olson and Alvin Plantinga as "God empowers and overpowers" (86). That is, God occasionally overpowers entities such as water, wind, and humans to bring about an event that God desires. In this model God does not want evil events to occur but God "allows" them for some good reason we are not aware of. This leads Oord to claim that this model suffers from "explanatory inconsistency" (88) and thus "makes God responsible for failing to *prevent* genuine evil" (89).

Though Oord has much in common with open theism he rejects it as well. In this model God creates *ex nihilo* and voluntarily decides to limit the divine self by not controlling everything in creation. Yet, on some occasions, such as the resurrection of Jesus, Oord says "God overpowers a creature or situation" to bring about what God wants to occur (90). Oord thinks this model has more "explanatory consistency" than the "God empowers and overpowers" (Arminian) model but it fails for the same reason: God could override the freedom or agency of creatures or violate

²There are other issues with Oord's proposal but this paper examines only the explanatory consistency of the model on its own terms.

the regularities of nature (92). Oord strongly rejects the notion that God is voluntarily self-limited. Oord says proponents of open theism typically put forth two different responses to the criticism that God should have prevented a particular evil (93). First, God has made a voluntary promise to seldom or never override the sovereignty of entities. Second, the “free-process” view, enunciated by William Hasker and John Polkinghorne says God grants genuine autonomy to all the entities God created (from humans to molecules) so if God occasionally controlled an entity it would disrupt the regular processes of life.³ Oord says these moves are insufficient to render God blameless for every evil event. He holds that a self-limiting God who is truly loving “would become un-self-limited” (94) in order to prevent evils.

Oord criticizes open theist John Sanders regarding evil via the metaphor of motherhood: “A loving mother would prevent pointless harm to her child if she were able” (138).⁴ Oord is correct that the open theist model can explain God’s overarching strategies and responsibilities regarding evil but it cannot explain any singular instance of evil. Open theism rules out a number of explanations of evil but some unanswered questions remain which entails that we need to trust God in the midst of questioning as did some biblical writers.⁵ However, Oord wants a view free of any and all questions about divine responsibility and so concludes that “Sanders fails to solve the problem of evil” (144). Oord is correct that

³Though Oord cites two books on evil by open theist William Hasker he does not engage these works. See Hasker *Providence, Evil, and the Openness of God*, (New York: Routledge, 2004) and *The Triumph of God Over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008).

⁴Both Sanders and Oord think of God as a parent. However, Sanders uses a number of other metaphors (which Oord rejects) to understand God’s multiple roles and responsibilities. For Sanders, God is in some respects like a parent but not in all respects since God alone is responsible for the well-being of the entire cosmos. No single metaphor says all that we need to say about divine responsibilities and roles. See Sanders, *Theology in the Flesh: How Embodiment and Culture Shape the Way We Think About Truth, Morality, and God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).

⁵See, for example, Psalm 13:1 and Habakkuk 1:1-4. Oord’s position rejects the biblical theme of lament or even protest against God for failing to act. For Oord, questioning God about not preventing an evil is misinformed since there is nothing God can do about such evils. On trusting God in the midst of questions about suffering see Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, revised edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 68-70 and 275-6.

open theism and Arminianism do not “solve” the problem of evil in the sense that no questions about God’s responsibility remain.

To summarize this section, the main problem Oord finds with Arminian and open theist approaches is that they “make God responsible for failing to *prevent* genuine evil” (89). After all, God could override the freedom or agency of creatures or violate the regularities of nature (92). Such views claim that God loves creatures yet fail to exonerate God from all responsibility for failing to prevent evils. Oord sets forth his own model to remedy this situation.

The essential kenosis model

The divine essence is love which entails that God must help others and give them what they need to flourish. Love is incapable of controlling others. In this model “God must love” (161). God does not choose to love, it is simply the way God is. This implies God must necessarily create. It also means that “God’s self-giving, others-empowering nature of love necessarily provides freedom, agency self-organization and lawlike regularity to creation” (169). God must give independence to the simplest entities such as cells and not control them in any respect.

This model is contrasted to two other views (163). First, God does not voluntarily place limits on what God does as is the case for most freewill theists. Rather, God’s essence (not will) limits God’s relations with creatures. The other option is to say that external forces limit what God can do (process theology).⁶ In essential kenosis God neither chooses to limit the divine self nor is God limited by things that are not God. Instead, God is by nature limited because love constrains who God is and what God does. God simply cannot do otherwise.

For Oord, love “*cannot* control others entirely” (181) so God never controls any other entity. Oord’s main criticism of Arminian and open theist approaches is that they allow God to control and coerce entities. It is crucial to his argument to understand what he means by coerce and control. He gives four senses of what it means to “coerce” an entity (181-3). (1) Psychological pressure: someone feels pressure to do something

⁶For Oord, God is not limited by external forces as in standard process views but solely by the divine nature. In process thought God lacks the power to move a spoon from one side of a table to another. For Oord, God cannot do this for two reasons. First, God lacks the type of body necessary to move a spoon. Second, because God loves the self-organization of the spoon and the regularities of nature.

but their free will is not removed; (2) Physical violence: coercive acts that result in physical harm to others; (3) Physical control: for example, when a parent places a toddler in a crib even though the child does not want to be there. Oord says that when he uses the words *coerce* or *control* he does not mean these first three senses. Rather, he means (4) what he calls “*metaphysical coercion*” which “involves unilateral determination, in which the one coerced loses all capacity for causation, self-organization, agency or free will” (183).

Oord criticizes the Arminian and open theist models for entailing that God unilaterally determines some events to occur which seems “to require God to control creatures completely” (139). Oord claims open theists and Arminians affirm “*metaphysical coercion*” which means that God destroys the self-organization, freewill, and agency of the entity. With an understanding of the essential kenosis model and an awareness of the problems Oord seeks to overcome in the other models we are now in position to examine the essential kenosis proposal regarding evil and miracles.

Essential kenosis and evil

One of Oord’s goals is to produce a theodicy in which no questions can be raised about why God allowed or failed to prevent a particular harm from occurring. He says that God is completely off the hook for any and all evils because God cannot control any entity or event. God cannot prevent a rock from going through a windshield killing the parent of the children in the car nor can God stop a cancer from growing. Since God cannot prevent any of these harms we should never think God blameworthy for failing to avert them. God does not “allow” them because God cannot prevent them.

The reason why God is not culpable in any respect for evils is that God neither metaphysically controls nor physically controls any entity or event. For Oord, the divine essence is love so God must love all entities. He repeatedly says that “love never controls” another entity. This is presented as the crux of his theodicy. The title of the book is “*The Uncontrolling Love of God*” which gives the impression that his theodicy hinges on the nature of God’s love. However, Oord clearly admits that not all types of control are bad. For instance, pushing someone out of the way of a moving truck or placing an unruly toddler in a crib can be loving acts. If love sometimes requires us to control others in certain respects then it is

false to say “love *never* controls.”⁷ Hence, genuine love is not necessarily uncontrolling. Recall that Oord criticized Arminian and open theistic views because God failed to control some natural events such as a rock crashing through a windshield killing the mother. This yields an astonishing conclusion that runs counter to much of the book: essential kenosis is not the key reason in Oord’s theodicy for why God does not prevent physical instances of suffering and evil.⁸

Oord agrees with his fellow freewill theists that love does not ordinarily coerce someone but that there may be times when love requires such actions. In fact, both sides can agree that God is essentially loving which means that Oord needs another explanation as to why God cannot prevent physical harms. The key to his theodicy is his claim that God is spirit or incorporeal (176-9). “If parents can sometimes stop one child from injuring another, why can’t God?” (176). He answers that God is a spirit without a localized body so God has no physical body to step between two humans intent on harming one another. “God does not have a wholly divine hand to scoop a rock out of the air, cover a bomb before it explodes or block a bullet before it projects from a rifle. While we may sometimes be blameworthy for failing to use our bodies to prevent genuine evils, the God without a localized divine body is not culpable” (178-9).

Many Christians will be surprised by this since it is a longstanding and widely held belief that God is incorporeal yet is capable of bringing about physical states of affairs. Oord believes it “necessary” to his theodicy that God lacks the sort of body that could produce physical states of affairs such as pushing someone out of the way of a truck.⁹ For Oord, God is essentially loving which rules out metaphysical control and God is incorporeal which excludes physical control. Hence, the title of the book “The Uncontrolling *Love* of God” is only partly correct. God is uncontrolling in the metaphysical sense like God is essentially loving and uncontrolling in the physical sense because God lacks a body to produce physical effects.

There are a couple of other issues with Oord’s theodicy that arise from his discussion of metaphysical control. Such control involves over-

⁷To be consistent, Oord can only mean this in the sense of metaphysical, not physical, control but he fails to adequately explain this.

⁸I thank Manuel Schmid for this insight.

⁹In personal correspondence Oord assured me that God’s lack of a localized body was “necessary” to his theodicy.

riding the agency and self-organization of entities. He says that a parent putting an infant into a crib is a case of bodily coercion but is not a case of metaphysical coercion. The reason why is that when a parent places a child in a crib the child retains (a) some capacity for causation, (b) self-organization (a body), and (c) agency or free will (though these are constrained). On this account, when a police officer places someone in handcuffs the arrested person retains agency and self-organization. Oord uses the example of Jesus driving the money changers from the temple to claim that Jesus did not control others entirely, metaphysically coerce them, or unilaterally control them (184). Oord never explains why it is the case that if a parent puts a child in a crib then it is not metaphysically coercive but if God brings this same event about then it involves totally overriding the agency, freedom, and self-organization of the person.

Another issue for his understanding of metaphysical control arises when he discusses the case of a child named Eliana who has a debilitating condition caused by genetic mutations. Oord says that God must empower these mutations because to prevent them from forming would be unloving on God's part. To "prevent them would require God to . . . override . . . agency and self-organization to her body's basic organisms, entities, and structures" (172). Consequently, a loving God necessarily empowers cancer cells and genetic mutations to harm creatures. Many Christians will be unable to swallow this because it means not only that God cannot prevent cancer cells it means that God cannot even want to prevent them. Divine love for the cancer is what prevents God from helping a human overcome cancer. For Oord, it seems God must love all entities equally so God cannot love Susan more than God loves the cancer cells in her body. God cannot show preferential treatment to one entity over another. However, Oord's key metaphor for God is a loving parent and parents acting out of love do show favoritism to their children over cancers and viruses. When we take antibiotics to destroy certain bacteria are we acting in unloving ways? Most of us do not think we act immorally when we take antibiotics but Oord says it is immoral for God to destroy them.

Another problem is when Oord claims that open theists and Arminians believe that God occasionally "entirely controls" (metaphysically coerces) entities in order to bring about a specific state of affairs. This criticism is made numerous times but Oord provides no substantiation for this claim and I am not aware of any freewill theist who would affirm that God exercises Oord's sense metaphysical control on people or objects.

Take the case of putting a child in a crib. What freewill theist would say that God “totally” controlled the child if God brought it about that the child was placed in a crib? Who would say that in such a situation God destroyed the child’s self-organization and agency such that it lacked any causation? Arminians and open theists are going to affirm physical coercion not metaphysical coercion so Oord’s criticism is misplaced.

Furthermore, this renders Oord’s definition of metaphysical coercion problematic. Oord says a parent placing an unwilling child in a crib involves physical not metaphysical control because the child retains self-organization and some causal abilities. Oord never explains why a parent placing an unwilling child in a crib does not destroy its self-organization or agency but if God brings it about that the child is in the crib then God has obliterated the child’s self-organization and agency.¹⁰ This is a serious failing since he places so much weight on the notion of metaphysical control.

This section has argued that Oord does get God off the hook for evil in the sense that God cannot be blamed for failing to prevent any evil. God lacks the sort of localized body Oord believes is necessary to produce physical effects. Because God is incorporeal God cannot physically control any entity or event to change a state of affairs. Because God essentially loves God never metaphysically controls any entity because that would override its self-organization and go against the law-like regularities of nature. Even though there are some surprising implications to his theodicy it seems to get him where he wants to go. But can this model of God also affirm miracles?

Essential kenosis and miracles

A goal of the book is to affirm miracles such as the bodily resurrection of Jesus while at the same time absolving God of any responsibility for failing to prevent evils. His theodicy asserts that God cannot physically control any entity or alter the regularities of nature. How then can essential kenosis support miracles? He says “miracles are neither coercive interventions nor the result of natural causes alone. Miracles occur when creatures, organisms or entities of various size and complexity cooperate with

¹⁰David Basinger says “It may well be that no being can unilaterally control another in the sense that the former can cause the latter to be devoid of all power of self-determination.” *Divine Power in Process Theism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 30.

God's initiating and empowering love" (200). Oord says that God *never* suspends "the lawlike regularities in nature unilaterally" (191) but always works with the existing entities and laws of nature. Oord says that in many of the miracle accounts in the Bible entities such as water, wind, and humans had to cooperate with God. This is fine, but exactly what role does God have in a miracle? He says "special divine action involves God giving new forms of existence to which creatures or creation might conform" (199). It is unclear what this means. Oord does not provide any concrete examples but does say that God invites creatures to "cooperate to enact a future" (200). This sounds as if the only thing God actually does is to put forth "possibilities" to creatures. Oord rejects that God can exercise physical or metaphysical control but he does not believe either of these is needed to account for miracles. "The Bible gives no explicit support to the view that miracles require divine control" or that miracles "require God to coerce" (201). How does God bring about miracles if God cannot move a grain of sand one millimeter?

Oord first discusses what he calls "nature miracles" in which God performs a special action on "inanimate objects and systems of nature" (205). Examples of these are the strong wind at the Red Sea, Jesus's turning water into wine, and feeding the multitudes. In feeding the multitudes Jesus worked through the inanimate bread and fish. Oord fails to say exactly what God did to bring about this miracle since God cannot unilaterally change the laws of nature regarding bread and fish nor can God alter the self-organization of fish.

Oord says that "Jesus calms wind and waves" (206) during a storm on the Sea of Galilee, that Jesus walked on water and turned water into wine. He claims that these miracles occurred without suspending the lawlike regularities of nature or altering the self-organization of the water molecules. Did the molecules listen to God's invitation to bring about a novel situation and cooperate with God? Oord says "it makes little sense to say that inanimate objects involved in natural miracles respond to God" since they "likely have no intentions or free will" (207). Oord states he needs to explain "how God acts noncoercively without relying entirely upon intentional creaturely cooperation" (207). Exactly! How did God turn water into wine and calm storms without suspending the law-like rules of nature or physically controlling these entities?

He proposes three possible explanations. First, when God identifies an opportune random event at the quantum level God calls upon entities "to respond in good and surprising ways" (209). He says this does not

“afford God the capacity to do just anything” since God is relying on random events and does not “control” them. God simply relies on random events to produce incredible results at opportune moments. Exactly what does God do? Oord says only that God “coordinates” random events and gives no explanation of what this amounts to. This “explanation” is vague and fails to show how God was responsible for these miracles.

The second strategy is that “God offers novel possibilities to intentional agents and calls them to respond in ways that subsequently affect inanimate objects and natural systems” (209). He mentions chaos theory and the butterfly effect as possible explanations for how intelligent creatures affect inanimate entities. He suggests that the Israelites and Egyptians may have done things that affected weather patterns which in turn could have produced chain reactions that led to the plagues and to the formation of a strong wind which allowed the Israelites to cross the Red Sea (210). Once again, no details are provided and we are left wondering what role God had in these events since Oord says it was brought about by *human* actions causing nature to respond in these ways. What did God do here? Oord does not say. He does not believe the notion that God “persuaded” molecules to form plagues and a strong east wind will work since such entities lack the robust type of freewill required for divine persuasion to occur. He rejects that God can physically control atmospheric conditions: “God cannot override the lawlike regularities we see in the world” (208). If God cannot persuade atmospheric conditions or water and God cannot physically control them then there is no real basis to claim that God calmed a storm or that Jesus multiplied fish and bread. In this model there is no genuine way to affirm that God is responsible for miracles. In his theodicy, Oord claims it is impossible for God to prevent storms but then he turns around and says that God dissolved a storm on the Sea of Galilee. He cannot have it both ways and maintain “explanatory consistency.”¹¹

¹¹An additional problem for Oord’s second strategy is to explain how God calls to intelligent beings and offers them possibilities. Oord says that Moses intuited God’s “still small voice” to go to the Red Sea at a particular time (210). Neurons are important for brain function and thoughts. Since, in Oord’s model God cannot control electrical impulses or particular neurons to formulate thoughts in our minds then how does God persuade us or offer us new possibilities? What does Oord mean by divine persuasion and call if God cannot activate a single neuron?

The third strategy to explain miracles is that God believes with high probability that a strong east wind is going to blow all night long on a particular day at a certain location of the Red Sea so God guided the Israelites to that location on that day (210). This explanation provides a plausible account for this miracle story and may work for some others. However, this strategy does not explain the other nature miracles such as turning water to wine and feeding the multitudes. What in those situations would have provided God with knowledge of probable future events that water was going to simply change itself into wine at just the right moment when Jesus wanted it to?

Overall, the three strategies Oord suggests for how God works in the universe are just tossed out without any substantive explanation. Simply invoking quantum mechanics and chaos theory is not sufficient to explain how God was able to bring about these events mentioned in biblical narratives. Does the God of essential kenosis actually have the ability to bring such events about? Oord fails to show how this is possible. In fact, the first two strategies (random events and chaos theory) sound like a just-so story—they just happened the way God hoped they would. Oord's explanations do not allow us to ascribe genuine responsibility to God for nature miracles.

Oord does not discuss the narratives of Jesus' healing people but it seems doubtful that any of his three strategies can explain them. Saying they were the results of random events or the product of chaotic forces that occurred long ago will not explain why they happened when Jesus wanted them to occur. He does suggest why divine healings *fail* to occur. "The organisms, body parts, organs and cells of our bodies can resist God's offer of new forms of life that involve healing. These creaturely elements and organisms have agency too, and this agency can sometimes thwart miracles" (213). A key problem for Oord is that he says both that God wants to change entities such as viruses and cancers and also that God must empower cancer cells and viruses to be all they can be. It is contradictory to claim that God must love the integrity of cancer cells and also claim that God wants to destroy the cancer cells. God cannot love Susan more than God loves the cancer cells and so cannot heal her. Then what about the cases in the gospels where Jesus healed people? If the essential kenosis God necessarily loves and sustains diseases then it does not make sense for Oord to claim that Jesus healed people of such things. If God must empower cancer cells to thrive then what does Oord mean when he says that cells can resist God's offer to change and heal the larger

entity? To be consistent Oord should say that God never wants to heal Susan of cancer because God loves those cancer cells. Similarly, Oord should say that since God necessarily loves the self-organization of storms and diseases that Jesus did not bring about the cessation of a storm or heal people of their infirmities.

What about the bodily resurrection of Jesus? It is central to the Christian faith so how does Oord account for it? To find out he refers us to a few pages in another book of his.¹² Here he affirms the bodily resurrection of Jesus and says that though he was dead, Jesus' body and spirit "cooperated" with God's raising activity (152). What does it mean for a dead person to cooperate? Oord mentions cases of resuscitation in emergency rooms to claim that "dead bodies are not entirely without agency, value, relationship, or freedom" (151). Unfortunately, Oord does not explain what "agency" and "freedom" bodies possess that have been dead longer than 24 hours and have begun to decompose. He notes that there is a difference between resuscitation and resurrection but what they have in common is a body that can return to life. Jesus' dead body still existed so it could respond to stimuli and so "played a cooperative role in the resurrecting action of the almighty God of love" (151).

Oord does not explain what "cooperate" means here.¹³ Perhaps he means that the inert molecules in the dead body listened to God's call. God somehow presented the dead molecules of Jesus's body with a novel possibility of returning to life and these molecules somehow activated themselves back to life. That the dead molecules had freedom, however, seems to be rejected by Oord when he says that though he is open to the possibility that the smallest entities have a measure of free will, he does not see how that would make a difference for miracles.¹⁴ So what happened? Was it a random event for which God was very grateful? If so, then it can hardly be said that "*God* raised Jesus from the dead" (Rom. 10:9). Did a butterfly flap its wings in Australia which set off a chain of chaotic events that resulted in the dead body of Jesus returning to life at just the right time and place? Oord speaks of God's "resurrecting action"

¹²Oord, *The Nature of Love: a Theology* (St. Louis, MO.: Chalice, 2010), 150-153.

¹³Oord's view has a problem explaining the resurrection of the dead who are totally decayed or cremated. They now lack self-organizing structure so how can they be resurrected in the eschaton since there is no body left to "cooperate" with God?

¹⁴*Uncontrolling Love*, 210 n. 38.

on Jesus' body but none of his three ways of explaining miracles plausibly has a role for God to play in this event.

Also, Oord's model has the problem that since God necessarily loves the self-organization of entities and never wants to make changes to the regularities of nature so God cannot even want to resurrect the dead body of Jesus. To do so would be unloving. Oord's version of an essential kenosis model entails a deity who cannot be responsible for miracles and, in fact, cannot even want to bring them about. In order for Oord to avoid a just-so story of the resurrection and other miracles he needs a deity who can do more. A deity who can exercise physical (not metaphysical) control over Jesus' dead body could plausibly resurrect him. However, this would render his view vulnerable to the same criticism he makes against the freewill models: God should prevent more evils. Since Oord denies that God can physically control any entity the resurrection of Jesus is a fortuitous event for which God is quite grateful. This gives "explanatory consistency" to the essential kenosis model but the cost is to forfeit the traditional Christian claim that the resurrection of Jesus was an event *brought about by God*. Oord admits that his model seems, to Arminians and open theists, to undermine miracles. In fact, it fails to support nature miracles and the resurrection of Jesus for the very reasons used to defend God's non-culpability for evil. In order to protect his theodicy Oord resorts to just-so stories to affirm miracles.

Conclusion

Oord claims that the essential kenosis model has the internal consistency to both get God completely off the hook for evil and also affirm that God can bring about miracles. However, the amount of control sufficient to bring about miracles would be sufficient to prevent evils. If God cannot prevent evils then God cannot author miracles. Oord cannot have it both ways. If Oord affirmed that God can exercise physical control at times then God could produce miracles but then his position would face the same question he raises against open theism and Arminianism: why does God not prevent more evils? Since Oord denies that God can exercise physical control over any entity he absolves God of responsibility for not preventing evils. But then he fails to give a plausible way to uphold the resurrection of Jesus and other miracles.

In addition, Oord needs to explain a couple of items. First, if a parent can lovingly use physical control without overriding the self-organization and agency of the entity, then why is it the case that if God brought

about the same event it would destroy the self-organization of the entity? Second, why did God successfully calm a storm on the Sea of Galilee when it is unloving for God to disturb the law-like regularities of nature? How can God turn water into wine or resurrect the dead body of Jesus if God cannot physically control any entity and it is unloving to change their self-organization? Similarly, how can he claim that God wants to heal people of diseases when he also claims that the divine nature must love and empower those very diseases?

The book claims to solve all aspects of the problem of evil while retaining core doctrines such as the resurrection of Jesus. In this model God is not responsible for evils but the cost is that God is not responsible for miracles such as the resurrection of Jesus. All theological models have benefits and costs and Oord has not found a way to have his cake and save it too.¹⁵

¹⁵I want to thank William Hasker, Ryan McLaughlin, Richard Rice, and J. Aaron Simmons for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

BOOK REVIEWS

Lüdke, Frank and Norbert Schmidt, eds. *Evangelium und Erfahrung: 125 Jahre Gemeinschaftsbewegung*. Schriften der Evangelischen Hochschule Tabor 4. Berlin, Münster: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2014. 203 pages. ISBN-13: 978-3-643-12272-8.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Research Professor of World Christian Studies, New York Theological Seminary; Honorary Fellow, Manchester Wesley Research Centre.

Scholarship on the Gemeinschaftsbewegung (Community Movement) in Germany has been little studied in English, and this volume does not address that problem! However, it does provide an important step in research on that Holiness tradition within the Lutheran church in Germany. Organized in 1888 at a conference in Gnadau, it grew out of the interaction between Lutherans and the Holiness revivals of the nineteenth century in the United States and England. Quickly, as did most continental Holiness movements, it declared its independence from Anglo-Saxon revivalism, distanced itself from the Methodist traditions, and affirmed its identity in the State Church.

The Foreward (“Vorwort”; 1-5) provides an overview of the book. Six of the essays were presented at a conference celebrating the 125th anniversary of the Gemeinschaftsbewegung held at the Evangelischen Hochschule Tabor in Marburg on der Lahn. The last two essays of the volume were written earlier, but had remained unpublished. The essays are precise, careful case studies with far-reaching implications. Unfortunately, there is no index to facilitate access to the rich data presented. There is a helpful bibliography (“Neupietismus-Bibliographie”; 197-201) arranged in chronological order that introduces the most important books on the movement. All of the scholars (biographical information; 203) have made other important contributions to the study of this tradition.

The titles of the essays provide accurate indications of the theses of the articles. Martin Jung, “Wort Gottes für jeden Tag—Evangelische Losungsfrömmigkeit im 19. Jahrhundert am Beispiel von Wilhelmine Canz” (“The Word of God for Each Day: Evangelical Piety Slogans in the 19th Century, the Example of Wilhelmine Canz”; 7-33), discusses the

simplistic slogans that became rallying points and served to give theological definition to the piety of the movement. Bernd Brandl, "Der Einfluss der internationalen evangelischen Missions- und Evangelisationsbewegung auf Gründungsphase des Gnadauer Verbandes" ("The Influence of the International Evangelical Mission and Evangelism Movement in the Foundational Phase of Gnadauer Association"; 35-63), sketches briefly the influence of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century mission societies on the movement and the role of mission activity originating from within or influenced by the same.

The essay of Hartmut Lehmann, "Die evangelische Gemeinschaftsbewegung im kirchenpolitischen Raum" ("The Evangelical Community Movement in the Church Political Sphere"; 65-80), is in many ways a lament that the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Holiness and other pacifist movements in Germany did not speak out against militarism, musing as to whether a concerted effort by these groups might have spared Europe its most recent devastating wars. Instead, fixated on internal boundaries, church politics, and a concerted simplistic battle against Pentecostalism, they were easily led into militarism and nationalism.

The work of Thorsten Dietz, "Glaube und Gewissheit—Variationen einer pietistischen Schlüsselfrage bei Theodor Christlieb, Theodor Jellinghaus und Karl Heim" ("Faith and Certainty—Variations of a Key Pietistic Issue: Theodor Christlieb, Theodor Jellinghaus and Karl Heim"; 81-110), discusses the way three major theologians dealt with assurance. Klaus vom Orde, "Wie pietistisch ist die Gemeinschaftsbewegung" ("How Pietistic is the Community Movement"; 111-142), contributes an important historiographical study indicating the difficulties of even posing this question.

The final three essays are case studies. That of Jan Carsten Schnurr, "Zeiterfahrung und Zeitkritik auf pietistischen Glaubenskonferenzen der 1960er bis 1980er Jahre am Beispiel der Ludwig-Hofacker-Konferenz" ("Contemporary Experience and Criticism of Culture in the Pietist Faith Conferences of the 1960s to 1980s, Exemplified by the Ludwig-Hofacker-Conference"; 143-175), examines how matters of modernity effected the Gemeinschaftsbewegung, using the annual spirituality conferences as a case. Christoph Mehl, "Glauben und Handeln in der Industrie—Der christlicher Unternehmer Ernest Mehl (1836-1912)" ["Faith and Action in Industry—The Christian Entrepreneur Ernest Mehl (1836-1912)"; 177-188), reflects on how the values of the movement were expressed in the business philosophy and practices of an ancestor. The final essay by co-editor Frank Lüdke, "Evangelisation und Diakonie bei Theodor

Christlieb"; 189-196) addresses issues of ministry in the work of an important pastor/theologian/activist.

This volume is and will remain an important contribution to the study of Pietism, specifically Neupietismus (Neo- Pietism), the Lutheran State Church in Germany, the Gemeinschaftsbewegung and the global Holiness Movements.

Loyer, Kenneth M. *God's Love through the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley*. Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2014. 295 + xv pages. ISBN-13: 978-0813225999.

Reviewed by Edwin Woodruff Tait, Contributing Editor, *Church History Magazine*.

One day shortly before I went off to graduate school to study church history, my fiercely pious Holiness grandmother remarked to me that she was worried I was “reading too broadly.” The specific theologian she was concerned about was not Tillich or Bultmann or even Barth, but Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas has not received much love in the Wesleyan tradition. To many Wesleyans and other Pietists, a scholastic philosopher/theologian like Aquinas exemplifies the dangers of an overly rationalistic approach to the Christian faith. Even those who wish to build ecumenical bridges with Catholicism and Orthodoxy are far more likely to find common ground with the Eastern Church, following the example of Albert Outler. The Orthodox suspicion of scholasticism and emphasis on the close links between true theology and practical holiness are congenial to many Wesleyans, and Western Catholicism, particularly in its Thomist form, often seems dry and intellectually arrogant by comparison. In particular, Wesleyans tend to suspect that the Western Catholic approach to the faith emphasizes institutions and rituals and rationally articulated doctrines to such a point that the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit gets lost in the elaborate structure. And yet upon my matriculation to graduate school, it turned out that the professor who spoke most about my need to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit was the curmudgeonly medieval philosophy professor, Fr. Ed Mahoney.

This excellent book by Kenneth M. Loyer explains why it might be that a confused young Wesleyan would find such an unexpected reinforcement to his Pietist heritage in the admonitions of a learned Catholic scholastic. The thesis of the book is that Aquinas has much of value to say to Wesleyans about the Holy Spirit.

Loyer begins by arguing that Wesleyans talk a great deal about grace but not nearly enough about the Spirit. (He is obviously thinking of United Methodists and not the kind of Holiness circles I grew up in.) He seems particularly concerned with the rise of various kinds of liberation theology in United Methodism and what he sees as the “politicizing” of the doctrine of sanctification. United Methodists, Loyer suggests, badly need a renewed understanding of holiness that transcends (while it

includes) political efforts for social justice. This richer understanding of holiness is possible only through a richer doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

The second chapter articulates Wesley's doctrine of the Holy Spirit and his view of sanctification as participation in the life of the Trinity through the work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart. Loyer argues that this deeply orthodox theology of sanctification provides the basic resources for the renewal he calls for, but that because of Wesley's pragmatic focus and lack of systematic development of his ideas, further exploration is needed. Loyer finds resources for such an exploration in Aquinas.

The next three chapters explore Aquinas' pneumatology in detail, focusing respectively on the Holy Spirit as the love of God personified, on the Spirit as the mutual bond of love between the Father and the Son, and on God's gift of the Spirit as the foundation for the Christian life. Loyer repeats in chapter 6 nearly all the points made in the previous three chapters that are relevant to his argument. Chapters 3-5 are therefore best treated (at least by readers primarily interested in Wesley) as extended documentation for chapter 6, where the meat of the argument is found.

The extended final chapter (nearly 100 pages) brings Wesley and Aquinas together. Loyer argues that Aquinas and Wesley together offer the Church as a whole rich resources for renewing the doctrine and experience of the Holy Spirit. Neither of them, according to Loyer, is guilty of neglecting the Holy Spirit, as many theologians have accused the Western tradition in general of doing. Aquinas' approach is more theoretically rich, but Wesley's approach is focused more on practical experience. However, this is a difference of emphasis: Wesley certainly pays attention to intellectual distinctions, and Aquinas is deeply concerned for Christian practice and experience. Together, they offer the Western church an understanding of the Holy Spirit as the personified love of God, by sharing in whom Christians are made holy.

Loyer also argues that Wesleyans and Thomists have much to offer each other. Aquinas can help Wesleyans put their pneumatology in a more fully developed Trinitarian context. Exposure to Wesleyan emphases can help Thomists rediscover Aquinas' teaching on sanctification, which he suggests has not been totally neglected by Thomists but "is capable of further development." If this sounds as if the give-and-take is not entirely equal, that is because (if I am reading Loyer correctly) he does not think it is. He appears to think (as I do) that on the whole Aquinas is a more profound theologian than Wesley and that on the

whole Wesleyans have more to learn from Catholics than vice versa. Or perhaps he is simply exercising good ecumenical humility: it is always a good idea to emphasize the ways in which your tradition can learn from the other rather than the things you think the other side can learn from you.

Nonetheless, I think Loyer could (without violating charity or humility) have stated more forcefully the case for Catholics having something to learn from Wesleyans, and particularly from Wesley. The Roman Catholic Church has, in contemporary Western society, an abysmal record in terms of evangelizing its own members. Ex-Catholics are sometimes said to be a larger group in American society than any other religious body, except for the Catholic Church itself. Anyone who comes from an evangelical background and is interested in Catholicism runs considerable risk of being knocked flat by the stream of people going the other way. The rich liturgy and theology and spirituality of Catholicism, which are quite rightly so appealing to many who come from less mature Christian traditions, often seem to have little effect on those who have grown up surrounded by them. The Wesleyan movement arose in response to a very similar situation in eighteenth-century Anglicanism. Although the United Methodist Church today is hardly a beacon of vibrant evangelism (hence the need for renewal for which Loyer speaks), the Wesleyan tradition has taken many forms and has a wide appeal within evangelical Protestantism beyond the limits of specifically "Wesleyan" denominations. Certainly, Catholicism has plenty of its own renewal movements, including the mendicant orders of the thirteenth century and the Dominican order to which Aquinas belonged. Still, the work of the Wesleys has great relevance to the issues faced by contemporary Catholics (and by contemporary Christians in general), and Loyer might have said so more explicitly. That being said, Loyer's decision to focus more on what Wesleyans can gain from Aquinas is reasonable and praiseworthy.

One obvious reason why many on each side (though particularly on the Catholic side, given the relatively undogmatic nature of Wesleyanism compared both to Catholicism and to Reformed Protestantism) may hesitate to follow Loyer's suggestions is the fear that the "other side" is guilty of serious doctrinal error. Or, less polemically, are Wesley and Aquinas really compatible in their basic theological commitments? Loyer believes that they are, at least on the points discussed in his book (he does not address at length questions of ecclesiology or sacramental theology on

which Wesley and Aquinas obviously differed). He points to two issues where there is apparent conflict: Aquinas' affirmation of the role of merit in salvation, which Wesley denied, and Wesley's affirmation of the possibility of assurance of salvation, which Aquinas denied. Loyer does not try to resolve these issues entirely, but he does suggest that Wesley and Aquinas are closer than many suppose. Aquinas views merit as itself the gift of grace, and Wesley did not deny that our cooperation with grace is a necessary part of our salvation. With regard to assurance, Aquinas denied absolute certainty of salvation but left open the possibility of a strong degree of confidence in one's relationship with God. Loyer does not show, or attempt to show, that the two theologians are in entire agreement on these issues, but he builds a reasonable case for a rapprochement.

This book is a welcome contribution to ecumenical scholarship by placing in conversation two theologians who are too often considered as radically different. Wesleyans are, on the whole, more likely to express appreciation for the Eastern Church than for Latin scholasticism, and they have precedent in Wesley for this bias (even though Wesley's "Eastern" tendencies may have been exaggerated at times). Following the precedent of Otto Hermann Pesch's work on Luther and Aquinas, Loyer suggests that Wesley and Aquinas have very similar concerns and offer similar visions of pneumatological renewal, but do theology in very different "modes." Wesley's pastoral and soteriological doctrine of the Spirit fits nicely, according to Loyer, into the richly speculative account of the Spirit found in Aquinas. Intellectual exploration and experiential piety do not have to be enemies, nor are the riches of the classical Christian tradition of "God-talk" antithetical to the urgent task of articulating and embodying a doctrine of Christian holiness in the contemporary world. On the contrary, Loyer suggests, without relying on those riches we will inevitably impoverish our theology, reducing it to a feverish attempt to be "relevant." Loyer's book is well worth reading by anyone who cares about the renewal of the Church in the twenty-first century or about ecumenism between Thomist Catholicism and Wesleyan evangelicalism.

Green, Joel B. and David F. Watson, eds. *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading Bible as Scripture*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012. 336 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1602586277.

Reviewed by Richard P. Thompson, Professor of New Testament and Chair, Department of Philosophy and Religion, School of Theology and Christian Ministries, Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, ID.

Over a decade ago, a collection of essays dealing with Wesleyans and the reading of the Bible, which were first published in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, was released. At that time, *Reading the Bible in Wesleyan Ways* (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2004) was the only recent collected work to consider general issues associated with Wesleyan perspectives in biblical interpretation. But this new collection, *Wesley, Wesleyans, and Reading Bible as Scripture*, has taken these considerations further by offering seventeen targeted essays on key issues that arise in biblical interpretation within the Wesleyan tradition, beginning with John Wesley and extending to the present.

The work itself is divided into three parts. The first part, entitled “Wesley on Scripture,” includes four essays that are historical in focus and consider different aspects of John Wesley’s use of Scripture within his own eighteenth-century context. Two essays were written by Wesley scholars, and two essays were offered by biblical (New Testament) scholars. Randy Maddox, in his essay “John Wesley—‘A Man of One Book,’” emphasizes how Wesley believed that the Bible was understood most faithfully when read “comparatively” (i.e., in different versions, with scholarly tools, in light of the whole canon, and light of God’s saving purpose) and “in conference” with the Holy Spirit, other readers, Christian tradition, and the book of nature. Kenneth Collins, in his essay “Scripture as a Means of Grace,” notes that, although Wesley affirmed the “God-breathed nature of the Bible” and believed that repeated readings resulted in transformed lives in ways that no others writings ever did, his understanding was in a twofold process of inspiration, one that emphasizes not only the Spirit’s role in the writing of biblical texts but also the divine assistance of prayerful church readers by the Spirit (22). Collins emphasizes that, for Wesley, the use of Scripture as a means of grace must ultimately promote and nurture the love of God and neighbor (32). Robert Wall, in his essay “Reading Scripture, the Literal Sense, and the Analogy of Faith,” suggests that Wesley’s exegesis provided the foundation for theological readings of

Scripture that were guided by the analogy of faith. Although some persons often gravitate to Wesley's emphasis on Scripture's literal sense, Wall places Wesley's use of that expression within his own historical context, distinguishes it from modern usage, and links it to "a *particular* communion of readers wise for sanctification" (42). Joel Green, in his essay "Wesley as Interpreter of Scripture and the Emergence of 'History' in Biblical Interpretation," evaluates Wesley's biblical interpretation in light of eighteenth-century practice. Green underscores Wesley's historical interests while not forcing him to live anachronistically by the standards of historical criticism. But Green also recognizes in Wesley the staunch commitment to read the Bible as the church's Scriptures, which shapes the life of the church and the lives of God's people (61-62).

The second part, entitled "The Nature and Authority of Scripture among Wesleyans," includes seven essays that consider significant theological issues regarding Scripture at the beginning of the twenty-first century and how the Wesleyan tradition might address them. The first three essays consider the role of Scripture among different groups of Methodists. Reginald Broadnax, in his essay "Scripture among African American Methodists," reflects on Wesley's thought regarding slavery as a preface to some final remarks in framing an "African American Methodist hermeneutic" (77-82). As Broadnax notes, Wesley did not appeal directly to Scripture in his arguments against slavery (76-77). Surprisingly, Broadnax does not consider how Scripture may have informed Wesley's argument apart from direct scriptural citation. As a result, there is little connection between the portion of this essay that deals with Wesley and the last part that outlines some beginning thoughts about an African-American Methodist hermeneutic. The two essays by Justo González ("Scripture among Hispanic Methodists") and by Meesaeng Lee Choi and Hunn Choi ("Scripture among Korean Methodists") consider more particularly the place of Scripture among Hispanic Methodists and Korean-American Methodists. These authors emphasize similar themes. Both González and the Chois suggest the reading of Scripture, among Hispanics and Korean Americans, are informed both by a hyphenated existence (i.e., they live on the "hyphen" between their Korean origins and the American culture) and by marginality. Such contexts offer space for "hermeneutical creativity—reading from the margins for the marginalized" (111-12). For both authors, the focus is on reading biblical stories in ways that remind contemporary Christian readers of who they are and what their identity is.

The remaining four essays in the second part focus on specific theological issues associated with Scripture in the twenty-first century. William Abraham, in his essay "Scripture and Divine Revelation," seeks to clarify the relation of revelation to Scripture. Although Abraham distinguishes Scripture from divine revelation, he insists that Scripture mediates special divine revelation and therefore has an indispensable role within the church in providing access to the truth about God. Douglas Koskela, in his essay, "A Wesleyan Understanding of the Authority of Scripture," offers a useful approach to the topic of biblical authority that is directly shaped by Wesleyan thought and practice. That is, rather than thinking about biblical authority in terms of power or knowledge, Koskela helpfully focuses on the formational dimensions of Scripture to speak of its authority as it shapes the church and calls her to be God's holy people. Jason Vickers, in his essay "The Holiness of Scripture," asks how the Bible *itself* is holy. At the heart of this essay is Vickers' insistence of the Wesleyan perspective that God's presence is in the midst of the church in and through the Holy Scriptures (158). Yet his description of many readings of Scripture in terms of "functional deism" is a most useful assessment of those who exclude or forget God in those readings. David Watson, in his essay "Scripture as Canon," suggests the concept of "canon" offers more to the reading of Scripture than merely define the basic contours of the collection of texts. Looking to Wesley's practice, Watson contends that canon calls for reading Scripture in community, for reading Scripture in ways that shape the community, and for relating the community of faith with the wholeness of Scripture (162).

The third and last part, entitled "Wesleyans Working with Scripture," includes seven essays that consider how "working within the Wesleyan tradition shapes one's approach to Scripture in relation to the life of the church" (xiii). D. Brent Laytham, in his essay "Scripture and Social Ethics," offers a fresh perspective of reading the Bible in ways that intersect with contemporary social issues. His use of one particular issue, gambling, is particularly helpful, in that the Bible states nothing directly about it, yet both Wesley and many Christians do. Steven Koskie, in his essay about a contemporary Wesleyan theological hermeneutic of Scripture, affirms that such a hermeneutic is more about the identity of Wesleyan interpretive communities of faith than about interpretive techniques or methods. Elaine Heath, in her essay "Reading Scripture for Christian Formation," notes that the legacy of both John and Charles Wesley is seen in understanding the role of Scripture in terms of Chris-

tian formation: for John, the emphasis was in the reading of Scripture; for Charles, it was in the engagement of Scripture through his hymns. Heath concludes that “increasing holiness of heart and life—a holiness that is deeply personal and inward and is profoundly social and outward—is the test of whether one’s approach to Scripture is in keeping with a Wesleyan vision” (225). Karen Westerfield Tucker, in her essay “The Place of Scripture in Worship,” offers a substantive yet concise account of exactly what the title describes, most notably in the Methodist tradition. Michael Pasquarello III, in his essay “The Place of Scripture in Preaching,” reminds his readers that, although they may not mirror Wesley in their contemporary preaching, his use of Scripture in preaching helps them to see that “it needs to be practiced as a seriously theological, exegetical, and pastoral discipline that focuses its critical attention on how the whole of faith and life of the church comes to expression in preaching” (253). Lacey Warner, in her essay “Scripture and Evangelism,” considers how Wesleyan readings of Scripture, which emphasize salvation, formation, and discipleship of believers, lead to evangelism. Warner’s reflections on what she describes as a “Wesleyan ecclesial evangelism” (273-75) offer a helpful corrective to many popular views of evangelism that are more individualistic in focus and subordinate doctrines of the church, the sacraments, etc.

There is much about this collection to be commended. It is the product of esteemed colleagues and friends of this Society. The variety of topics that are covered, the quality of essays throughout the collection, and the scope of the project are all noteworthy. Some essays are more accessible than others, so that the collection as a whole is more appropriate for the pastor or graduate student. However, like all collections, there are some omitted topics that leave at least this reviewer wishing that such areas were addressed. For instance, there is nothing within this collection that deals with the unique issues associated with the Former Testament, including such matters as the Law and violence. Another puzzling omission is the topic of women and the authority of Scripture. Since some prominent Wesleyan theological voices have addressed this issue elsewhere, one would have expected this to be considered in this context. Nonetheless, even with these omissions, this book is highly recommended to those interested in thinking seriously about what it means to read the Bible as Scripture in Wesleyan ecclesial contexts.

Heintzman, Paul. *Leisure and Spirituality: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015. 324 pages. ISBN 978-0801048722.

Reviewed by S. Scott Mapes, D. Min. candidate in Science and Theology, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and Lead Pastor, Paden City, WV, Church of the Nazarene.

When I was a student at an experimental school on the Clarion University (PA) campus, my survival strategy academically was to take the most enjoyable options available. In the area of eighth grade history, I settled upon Sports and Society and stayed with this class for as long as possible. My “evil” plan lasted for only a year and a half until I was forced to study political science.

As I started reviewing Paul Heintzman’s *magnum opus*, *Leisure and Spirituality*, my mind traveled back to those high school days of studying the impact of leisure activities on human society. Surely that was just fun, right? Like many of you, I was unaware of an academic discipline called leisure studies and of associate professors of leisure studies such as Heintzman (University of Ottawa). Could this be a respectable field of study? It does not take long in reading this book before one realizes that this discipline is a serious and valuable one for us Wesleyan-Holiness scholars.

In the “Introduction,” Heintzman argues that, while the leisure hours in Western society have increased since the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution, the amount of leisure time today is much less than it was during ancient Rome and the medieval period. Should this be a concern? According to J. I. Packer and leisure scholar Leland Ryken, it should be, because “all leisure . . . is a gift from God that, when used properly, ‘provides rest, relaxation, enjoyment, and physical and psychic health’” (xx). Hence, Heintzman contends for a spiritual understanding and valuing of leisure.

The author’s case is made in six parts. In Part 1, “Leisure in Contemporary Society,” seven concepts of leisure are introduced: state of being, activity, free time, symbol of social class, state of mind, meaningful experience, and a whole-life perspective (chapter one). With these in mind, seven contemporary leisure issues are examined: patterns of time use, consumption, boredom, inequality of opportunities, quality of activity, the lack of a spiritual dimension, and the work-leisure relationship (chapter two). Helpful summaries of related studies are scattered throughout the text.

Part 2, “The History of the Leisure Concept,” explores leisure’s classical history in the Greek, Roman, early Christian, and medieval Christian eras—with an in-depth focus on Aristotle’s understanding (chapter three)—and “The History of Leisure as Activity” (chapter four) during the Renaissance, Reformation, and the modern era. Special attention is given here to Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the Puritans. In essence, Heintzman discovers a greater emphasis on leisure during the classical and medieval periods and on work during the “Reformational” and industrial periods (78).

For the Christian reader in general, Part 3—“The Biblical Background to Leisure”—would be of special interest, as the author first studies in some depth the Sabbath from the perspectives of ancient Israel, the Mosaic law, the prophets, Jesus, and the New Testament (chapter five). From this foundation, Heintzman goes on to “The Biblical Concept of Rest” (chapter six), examining the theological meaning of rest in light of Deuteronomic history, the Chronicles, Psalm 95, Hebrews 3–4, and Matthew 11:28–30. This third part of the text concludes with a consideration of other biblical words and themes related to leisure, such as the words *eukaireō* and “be still” and the themes of festivals, feasts, dance, hospitality, and friendships (chapter seven).

The issue of work in relation to leisure is the focus of Part 4. In light of our contemporary setting where the number of hours at work and the degree of life satisfaction are inversely proportional, Heintzman guides us on a historical journey through the ancient world, early Christianity, the Middle Ages, and the Reformation. Assessing the state of leisure in the years following the Reformation, there is a confusion of the meanings of job, work, and vocation; the “deification of work” (143) through the influence of the Puritans and Pietists; and a secular hijacking of the Protestant work ethic (chapter eight). The solution for these problems requires, as Heintzman often reasons in his book, a forward look backwards to the biblical record. Therefore, he examines carefully the concepts of work in both Testaments, settling upon the balanced view of work and leisure as modeled in Ecclesiastes (chapter nine).

In Part 5, “Christian Perspectives on Leisure,” Heintzman critiques the seven concepts of leisure (chapter one) from a Christian perspective. In demonstrating that Roman Catholics favor a classical understanding of leisure and that Protestants lean toward an activity/time approach to leisure, he argues that a balance should be achieved between qualitative and quantitative approaches to leisure (chapter ten). Furthermore, as

Heintzman approaches work and leisure from a holistic perspective, he borrowed a rubric from Japanese researcher Kunio Odaka, which considers five ways of living in regards to work and leisure: work-oriented-unilateral, leisure-oriented-unilateral, split approach, integrated approach, and identity approach. In considering these five approaches, however, the Christian must always keep in mind the Golden Rule as the controlling ethic (chapter eleven).

The concluding section—Part 6, “A Leisurely Spirituality”—begins with a plan for “Leisure and Spiritual Well-being” (chapter twelve), including the components of balance, time and space, openness, personal and/or human history, nature, trips away, solitude, and connections with others. Heintzman reminds the reader to consider all of these elements in one’s leisure-spiritual life, including those that may seem like opposites but may work well together. In the final chapter, the author discusses how “leisure-spiritual coping” (chapter thirteen) can take place during times of incredible stress in life. The coping approaches here are all previously mentioned in the text—with the exception of “sacralization and grounding” (238-39)—but they are placed by Heintzman in a framework for life application.

This book, on the whole, is very well researched and written. I found only one hermeneutical error related to a proof-texting use of Ezekiel 16:49. Otherwise, while at times the argument seemed repetitive, the technical work is exceptional. The bibliography is extensive and includes many familiar names to the student of theology, but there are also a host of new scholars to those of us unfamiliar with the leisure studies field. *Leisure and Spirituality*, in short, would be an excellent primer on leisure studies.

Heintzman’s approach to the subject is very Wesleyan, whether he himself professes to be one of us or not! First, his emphasis on life balance echoes the *via media* of Wesleyan-Holiness theology and ethics. Furthermore, he persistently warns against the narcissistic pursuit of pleasure and fulfillment in leisure apart from the considerations of life together with others. On this point, he even dares to critique Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of “flow” as being insufficient by itself to judge the value of leisure activities.

Finally, as a student of science and theology, I would recommend this book to anyone studying in the areas of ethics, neuroscience, cognitive science, and Mindfulness Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. This indeed is worthy of a share in your personal library budget.

Vickers, John, ed. *The Letters of Thomas Coke*. Nashville: Kingswood, 2013. 787 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1426757716.

Reviewed by Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait, Managing Editor, *Christian History*.

Everybody has something to say about Francis Asbury, and for a person with only a grammar-school education, Asbury had a lot to say for himself. I edited an issue of *Christian History* about Asbury in 2015; in our sweeping treatment of Asbury's life and influence on American Methodism, Thomas Coke appeared only as a cameo, in two paragraphs and one picture.

Such an imbalance between Asbury and Coke has featured in many prominent American tellings of the Methodist story. And in a sense, it is justified, at least on this side of the Atlantic: Asbury's influence on what actually did happen in American Methodism is far greater. But Coke—combining a missionary zeal every bit the equal of Asbury's with a more extensive education and a greater commitment to remain within Anglicanism—represents other paths that American Methodism *could* have taken. In this magisterial volume of his letters—edited by John Vickers and representing a lifetime's labor of love tracing back to the publication of Vickers' *Thomas Coke, Apostle of Methodism* (Epworth, 1969)—that story and those alternate paths come through very clearly.

The earliest letters in the collection date from 1775, a little less than two years before Coke's Methodist fervor led him to be driven out of his parish at Easter 1777, after which event he devoted himself full-time to the Methodist movement. The final letters were written on board ship in 1814 as he voyaged towards India, making plans to convert a continent he would not live to see, dying at sea on May 3, 1814. The almost forty years represented by the correspondence show Coke to be a man of seemingly boundless energy, a forceful personality, and vast quantities of plans. The letters cover nine visits to America and continual tension over whether he would settle there permanently; arrangements for publication of his biblical commentary and other works to support Methodism and especially its missions; various aborted negotiations on both sides of the Atlantic to reunite Methodists and Anglicans; countless extinguishing of ecclesiastical fires among British Methodists; Coke's supervision of missions to the West Indies; and his happy but tragically short two marriages late in life (he married for the first time at 58; his first wife Penelope died after six years of marriage and his second wife Anne after only one year). In addi-

tion to every surviving letter from Coke, Vickers has printed all surviving letters to Coke from John Wesley and Francis Asbury, as well as certain other letters important to understanding Coke's life and correspondence; these appear either interwoven between Coke's own missives or in appendices.

The letters illuminate both the American and British Methodist stories. The British story shines in much more detail here (and perhaps gets more extensive editorial footnoting). Despite his very real pastoral concern for Methodists in the new country, Britain was where Coke focused the majority of his energy, and the letters outline controversies among preachers and between Methodists and the larger society, especially after Wesley's death, where Coke was called in to mediate. With the hindsight of history, we repeatedly watch him deciding to settle his affairs and move to the United States (under Asbury's repeated urging in terms like "what God will do with the old I can not say but I think the new world will be converted by 1000 in a year" [432]). And yet he is continually called back to Britain, or remains there, to deal with one more crisis. At last we hear Asbury in 1809 bemoaning "the people say it is so many years since you were here, and we never expected to see you again" (576), and finally simply sending in reports of the great work in America without bothering to plead any more for Coke's return.

This is a very valuable book. It gives British and American Methodists a richly textured account of their own early post-Wesley history, and it also gives American Methodists a salutary reminder that they are not the center of the universe. In companion with Vickers' *Apostle of Methodism* and his edition of Coke's journals, it also gives a picture of Coke the man, who lives and breathes again in these pages. Coke did not do half of what he intended to do. But what he did do was amazing enough.

Pritchard, John. *Methodists and their Missionary Societies, 1900-1996*. Foreword by Andrew Walls. Ashgate Methodist Studies; Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014. Xxxii + 333 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1472409140.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Research Professor of World Christian Studies, New York Theological Seminary; Visiting Professor, Seoul Theological University.

During the twentieth century, Christianity grew quickly. While there is no single factor that caused that growth, the role of the various mission societies was an important part of that development. Some of these were associated with the British Methodists. John Pritchard has established himself as the foremost specialist on the British Methodist mission through his earlier volume, *Methodists and their Missionary Societies, 1760-1900* (Ashgate Methodist Studies; Ashgate, 2013). The volume reviewed here is the second of the two-volume project, designed to stand alone, as was the earlier tome.

Like its predecessor, it is a passionate non-triumphalist interaction with the period under consideration. It continues to develop the themes of the global struggle for social justice and further describes the complicated and central roles of non-missionaries in the development of the national churches. It analyses the slow and sometimes painful process toward liberating the mission churches to full autonomy.

The disruption of World War I and the subsequent loss of moral authority of the European churches led to changes in both the mission program and in how it was received in other countries. There was an increased focus on medical mission, educational mission, and other forms of social ministry. Thus, there was an attempt to regain the moral “high-ground” through service. This touched many parts of the world. Through the carefully developed index, many will find information about Methodist mission and Methodist missionaries to the different countries and regions. The twentieth century also saw increased participation of women in mission, although the administration of the Methodist Missionary Society remained firmly a male domain.

The move toward national and regional autonomous churches led also toward increased collaboration as well as a rethinking of the traditional structures of mission. In principle, the ending of the Methodist Missionary Society was not viewed as the end of engagement with the rest of the world, but a change in how financial and personal resources were shared, a new appropriation of the Methodist concept of connexionalism.

Behind these changes was a reality that was constant from the beginning of Methodist mission, when Thomas Coke was forced to beg door-to-door for funds to sustain the nascent project. The stories and accompanying data reveal that mission was never a significant priority of the European Churches. This incidentally was true not only of the Methodists, but arguably of most other Protestant mission as well. As a result, the story of Methodist mission in the twentieth century is also the story of struggle and privation, as a few endeavored to meet great needs with minimal resources. Survival and ministry required missionaries to continuously adapt and to trust their converts.

Despite these handicaps, the author argues that Methodist mission positively touched many lives and educated a generation of national leaders, not only in Africa, but also in the Caribbean, Oceania and Asia. As well, the educational structures provided a base from which generations of students, especially in Africa, could begin the process of developing theological articulations and paradigms to serve their own cultures, and also the rest of the Christian world.

The abbreviations used throughout the work will be vexing to those who would read quickly, but the five-page list of abbreviations (xv-xix) will help the persistent. There is also a glossary of idiosyncratic Methodist terms as well as discussion of issues of place names. This book will be an important touchstone in the history of Methodist mission, and hopefully a resource for reflection for all who engage in cross-cultural mission. As well, the volume is one of those rare volumes that is both a good read and leaves the reader wishing that more had been said!

Brunn, Dave. *One Bible, Many Versions: Are All Translations Created Equal?* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013. 205 pages. ISBN: 9780830827152.

Reviewed by Ben Boeckel, Ph.D. in Religious Studies (Old Testament), Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX.

English speakers have more Bibles than they know what to do with and, as a result, have more Bibles about which to argue regarding which is “best.” Dave Brunn’s *One Bible, Many Versions* offers a refreshing perspective on this discussion by bringing the first-hand experience of a Christian missionary who translated the Bible into a non-Indo-European language (Lamogai). By drawing on this experience, Brunn tries to defuse misunderstandings about Bible translations present in the English-speaking world and demonstrates how Bible versions are “mutually complementary” (17).

The book’s ten chapters follow a logical progression that nicely presents hard data, but also treats philosophical and theological issues in an appropriate manner. Chapter one recounts aspects of Brunn’s experience as a Bible translator who tried to balance word-for-word and thought-for-thought interpretations of the Bible. To achieve such balance, he considers the interpretive moves made by English Bibles, which leads to the observation that reportedly literal versions “take turns being the most (or least) literal among their peers” (31). This point segues into chapter two’s discussion of form and meaning, where Brunn shows the impossibility of true “formal equivalence.” The chapter concludes by illustrating the need for dynamic translations.

Chapter three studies the intersection of theory and practice in translation. Brunn outlines a continuum of Bible versions ranging from highly literal to modified literal to idiomatic, as well as “unduly free” translations. Significantly, the chart that illustrates this spectrum has blurred lines between the categories, which shows their flexible nature. Brunn argues that a given Bible version does not occupy a single point on the continuum, but rather aims for an ideal range that is not always met.

Chapter four introduces the idea of a word’s semantic range (though Brunn avoids such technical terminology). Brunn points out that words in a translation’s target language never align perfectly with the semantic range of the word in the original language. Thus, some amount of “adjustment” is required in biblical translations. In chapter five, Brunn gives reasons why translators might make such adjustments and nicely illustrates these with examples from English Bibles.

Chapter six brings the concept of divine inspiration into dialogue with the task of translation. Brunn shows the compatibility of necessary translation practices, such as omitting words in a translation (e.g., when a Greek definite article is not needed in English), with the doctrine of inspiration. As a whole, the chapter would have been better had Brunn not stated his own doctrine of inspiration (verbal, plenary, infallible, and inerrant), especially since some of his examples arguably imply that the text's meaning is more inspired than its words. For instance, Brunn justifies idiomatic translations of Greek monetary terms by saying that English translators "knew the actual value did not really matter" (125). If that is so, one might employ the parlance of speech act theory to argue that inspiration applies more to scripture's illocutionary acts than its locutionary ones. Regardless of one's doctrinal preferences, chapter six remains a useful, if at times provocative, discussion.

Chapter seven introduces what Brunn calls the "Babel factor," which does not receive a clear definition, but seems to designate the challenge of translating the Bible into language families unrelated to Greek and Hebrew. This is where Brunn's experience of translating the Bible into Lamogai is on full display. He makes a compelling case that many of the debates surrounding biblical translation in the English world presuppose aspects of English's own peculiarity or of Indo-European languages more generally. He shows that "literal" English translations sometimes rely on ambiguity that would be impossible in languages unrelated to Greek (e.g., a literal translation of the genitive construction, "labor of love", would be impossible in Lamogai).

The interpretive moves of New Testament writers when quoting the Old Testament occupies the discussion in chapter eight. Brunn uses 2 Peter 1:21 to argue that the Holy Spirit guided the New Testament writers in their translations, which can allow us to extrapolate helpful principles for modern translation practices. One problem here is that the verse from 2 Peter applies specifically to prophecy, not necessarily to books such as Acts. That being the case, it is problematic to claim this verse proves that a given New Testament translation of the Old Testament is not "an act of human will" (148). That quibble aside, the chapter does raise the intriguing issue of exploring how New Testament interpretations of the Old Testament might provide a model for Christian translations of scripture.

Chapter nine advocates viewing different Bible versions as complementary. It also turns to more theoretical questions such as, "how much interpretation is acceptable." Especially instructive is Brunn's analysis of

gender pronouns in the Bible to demonstrate that even literal Bible versions “interpret.” The chapter concludes by revisiting the doctrine of verbal inspiration and suggests a modification to the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* that would apply the doctrine to prefixes and suffixes, in addition to words. It is unclear how this section fits with the rest of the chapter. The final chapter concludes the book with a summary of Brunn’s findings and with a call to use the plethora of English Bibles in a way that unifies rather than divides the Church.

As a whole, Brunn’s text is an enlightening study. Although his theology of scripture seems quite Reformed, most of his discussion of Bible translation is instructive for Wesleyans. This is especially so on the topic of what “literal” means. Brunn’s work lays to rest the idea that any one version of the Bible is consistently the most literal. He gives plenty of examples where the NASB, KJV, and ESV fall short of such ideals. By contrast, he also provides examples of idiomatic versions opting for translations that are decidedly literal. These points function well within the book’s larger argument that Bible versions should be complementary and produce unity, not contradictory and divisive.

As a final observation, the present writer believes a discussion of linguistic philosophy could have aided the book’s argument and permitted a more nuanced treatment of inspiration. However, this would have detracted from one of the book’s greatest assets: its accessibility. Brunn writes in a style that most readers can comprehend. He presupposes no knowledge of linguistic theory or of Greek and Hebrew. As such, the book could be easily featured in undergraduate and graduate classrooms, where it would be both a good introduction to the practice of Bible translation and an effective conversation-starter as a counterpoint to most Wesleyan articulations of inspiration. The book could also help inquisitive laypeople who want to know more about the differences between English Bible versions. To conclude, *One Bible, Many Versions* is understandable and compelling. Even if one disagrees with aspects of the theology that underpin the book, it remains a helpful exploration of the practical side of Bible translation from a missionary’s perspective.

Coates, Gregory R. *Politics Strangely Warmed: Political Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015. 71 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1498201568

Reviewed by Nathaniel J. Napier, Associate Pastor, Cleveland First Church of the Nazarene, Cleveland, TN; and D.Min. candidate, Mercer University McAfee School of Theology, Macon, GA.

Even more so than John Wesley's Aldersgate experience, there is nothing more strangely warmed than Wesley's politics. It has been an easy chore for theologians and pastors of the Wesleyan tradition to appropriate John Wesley's teachings on spirituality, practices, and doctrine. Here, Wesley is the consummate evangelical whose teachings are able to cross the hermeneutical bridge that spans his eighteenth-century context and our own. His politics, however, is a different reality. How is one to appropriate a figure who historically defended a "hierarchical, top down concept of political authority and its consequent exclusion of the people from the political process?" (43). Unlike other theological traditions that invoke political theologians such as Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Luther, and others, Wesley simply did not spend much time developing a politic, especially one that could be appropriated on a secular scale. When he did offer piecemeal commentary on politics, it was often disparaging of democratic republicanism and affirming of strict interpretations of Romans 13. It seems history has left Wesleyans with a superlative discipleship director, but one easily forgotten within the realm of the political. In this succinct monograph, Gregory Coates attempts to right that wrong and span that bridge.

Coates' work is not an attempt to revisionistically apply Wesley's political ideals. He is interested in thinking about politics within the "spirit" of Wesley rather than the "law" of Wesley. A Free Methodist, Coates suggests we look toward that tradition as an embodiment of "Wesleyan civic engagement and political theology" (via the life of Free Methodist founder B. T. Roberts) (xvii). Thus, Coates states about his project, "Drawing from the thesis of Theodore Weber as proposed in his magisterial *Politics in the Order of Salvation*, I hope to show that Robert's work as the populist organizer of the Farmers' Alliance in New York represents a concrete manifestation of the implications of Wesley's doctrine of the political image of God. Indeed, Roberts' activism, when properly understood, was more faithful to Wesleyan theology than John Wesley himself" (xviii).

Coates attempts to make this argument by first introducing the reader to various interpretations of Wesley's politics. The reader is taken through the forest of Wesleyan readings: those that adapt Wesley for progressive political agendas and those that discover in Wesley a conservative approach to politics and civil obedience. Following typical Wesleyan scholarship, one discovers that Wesley really is all things to all people. This chapter offers readers a synopsis of the literature on Wesley's political thought and stages the tensions within Wesley that makes the appropriation of his politics difficult.

For example, Coates rightly notes that one must differentiate between Wesley's politics and his economics. Although one could argue that Wesley would support the powers of rule as ordained by God (and thus the unfair systems supported therein), one must admit that Wesley's communalism would call into question a system that prizes individuality and private property (10). Once the dust of disparate interpretations settles, however, Coates concludes Wesley provides a trajectory of civil engagement heretofore unexplored.

Enter B. T. Roberts, chapter two. Like other Holiness figures in the nineteenth century, Coates places Roberts within the pantheon of ministers compelled to make the gospel available to the poor. Indeed, the Free Methodist tradition articulated its mission under this rubric, "to maintain the bible standard of Christianity and to preach the Gospel to the poor" (34). Roberts considered the nineteenth-century Populist movement as an asseverative way to engage the political and create economic change. As a result, he was formative in shaping and developing the Farmers' Alliance that pushed back against laissez-faire capitalism, attempted to overcome systemic financial evils, and created an alliance that would find representation at the local, regional, and national legislative levels. Coates paints a picture of Roberts as a political activist grounded in a sanctified vision of the world, one that extends not only to the church but into society as well.

The most well-known example of making the gospel available to the poor was the controversy over pew rental. Pew rental had become a widespread practice in the Methodist tradition, yet Roberts found no gospel warrant for giving preference to the affluent. He wrote virulent critiques of the practice as discriminating against the poor and found an ethical stance for his position in the New Testament. Thus, Roberts can be interpreted as a Wesleyan incarnation of how one's theological convictions shape political actions; there is no bifurcation between personal piety and social responsibility.

Following Coates' original intent to read Roberts through Theodore Weber's thesis, chapter three carefully outlines Weber's thought and positions Roberts as an actualization of Wesley's political image of God. At this point, any lingering questions about how to appropriate Wesley's historical positions into a contemporary context is brought into conversation with Wesley's *ordo salutis*. No amount of revisionism can make Wesley a champion of the masses, yet when one brings Wesley's politics into conversation with his soteriology (Weber's central argument), there is opportunity to embody a Wesleyan politic (44). In other words, it is possible to be more Wesley than Wesley, as Coates mentions in his thesis statement. Considering the full scope of the *ordo salutis*, Coates offers Roberts as one who fulfills Weber's way forward with Wesley: one committed to the political agency of all people, critiques unjust power structures, and promotes the idea that government ought to work toward the common good.

Coates does not claim to be offering a re-reading of Wesley, nor does he claim anything original in this study. His main contribution to Wesleyan studies is to introduce B. T. Roberts as a representative of Wesleyan political action, one grounded in Wesley's theology. His way around Wesley's embarrassing, antiquated, politics is via Theodore Weber's thesis. Thus, the work is an overview of the debate about Wesley's engagement of the political and a reading of Roberts' life in light of Weber's thesis. Coates' thesis assumes Weber to be correct, and if that is so, Roberts has incarnated a politics strangely warmed.

Lacking from this argument, however, is a demonstration of the ways in which Roberts understood himself to be appropriating the teaching of Wesley. Coates uses lots of Wesleyan language and situates Roberts in the Wesleyan tradition, but to argue that Roberts understood himself as an heir to Wesley's theology requires proof that Roberts engaged in his activity *because* he was Wesleyan. Plenty of non-Wesleyan Holiness people engaged in similar activities in the nineteenth century. It is clear that Roberts is situated within the Holiness context, but evidence from Roberts *himself* suggesting *dependence* on the teachings of Wesley for his political activism would have strengthened his argument. His status as a Methodist minister does not mean by default that he looked to Wesley for inspiration.

This monograph might also have been strengthened with a justification as to the merits of Weber's thesis. Weber's work is a landmark study. One would be hard pressed to write a work on Wesley and political theology without accounting for Weber. Although this is the case, Coates

appropriates Weber without any stated reasons for doing so. There is no new material here; it is simply a re-presentation of Weber's argument and placing Roberts as its archetype. The reader is left asking, "Why Weber and not someone else?"

Despite these suggestions, however, Coates' text is a good introduction to the difficulties of interpreting Wesley's political theology. Wesley's politics are not easily assimilated into the present, but Coates is able to demonstrate that with proper theological care the Wesleyan tradition need not relegate the political to other theological traditions. Indeed, if one looks past the first blush of Wesley's politics, and toward the theology he proclaimed, one may find an unsuspecting partner in political theology after all.

Watson, Kevin M. *Pursuing Social Holiness: The Band Meeting in Wesley's Thought and Popular Methodist Practice*. New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2014. 240 Pages. ISBN-13: 978-0199336364.

Reviewed by Timothy R. Woolley, Adjunct Lecturer in Wesleyan Theology and Spirituality, Cliff College, Derbyshire, England.

As many Wesleyans rediscover the value of mutual accountability in discipleship, through initiatives such as the Inspire Movement in Britain and Ireland and Covenant Discipleship groups in the United States, Kevin M. Watson offers a timely re-examination of the theology, organisation and reality of early Methodist band meetings.

Watson roots Wesley's understanding of the importance of small gatherings for fellowship in two developments, which then become a synthesis which he seeks to trace in the life of band meetings during Wesley's life time. Firstly, Watson identifies the emergence of Anglican Religious Societies in the late seventeenth century and the establishment of one at Epworth by his father Samuel in 1701. Here, Watson might have also usefully considered the possible influence of Susanna Wesley's Puritan spirituality, with its emphasis on frequent and thorough self-examination of heart and life, on the *raison d'être* of the band meetings. The other influence Watson cites is the development of the Moravian *Banden* in Herrnhut in 1727, and here he briefly mentions Wesley's visit to Georgia in relation to his encountering Moravian spirituality. In light of Geordan Hammond's recent account of this period *John Wesley in America* (Oxford, 2014), it is interesting to consider here whether Wesley's experience of discipleship development through the religious society which met at his house in Savannah from April 1736 (Hammond 139-48) may have impacted upon his later organisation of bands. Watson contends that the two sources for Wesley's theological conception of the band meeting are to be found in an Anglican emphasis on disciplined attendance to the means of grace and in Moravian piety with its accent on the experience of justification by faith and the witness of the Spirit. He then examines how these themes are found in the practice of bands and the experience of band members during Wesley's lifetime.

Watson offers an exploration of the specific purposes of early Methodist small groups—class meetings, bands, select societies, penitent bands—that cautions both against a modern ill-defined adoption of 'small groups' as a panacea for all ills and an overly rigid historic interpretation of their purposes within Wesley's structured approach for growth in disci-

pleSHIP. For when Watson examines the actual operation of band meetings, using a commendably wide range of primary sources, it becomes clear that whilst Wesley's *Rules and Directions* for the conduct of bands underpinned much of what happened in such meetings, the early Methodist people were unafraid to adapt the form to suit their needs, whilst retaining Wesley's broad purpose. Despite having no official sanction in *Rules and Directions*, the unofficial office of 'Band Leader' became widespread, and was often filled by women. The admission to bands of those seeking faith for the first time, rather than seeking to receive entire sanctification as Wesley intended, is also recorded on a number of occasions, often at Wesley's own behest. This pragmatism regarding the practice of small group meetings is a reminder that the contrast between normative 'official' guidelines and operant local custom was present in Wesley's time just as it is in many Wesleyan traditions today, and that Wesley himself was not afraid to deviate from his own stated discipline if doing so better served an individual's faith development.

Post-Wesley, Watson offers a brief discussion of evidence for the continuing of bands in the early part of the nineteenth century. This for British Methodism was a time of both fragmentation and revivalism, and Watson perhaps needs more clarity on which 'Methodism' his discussion of evidence has in focus here. His concluding evidence from the 1843 'Rules of the Original Methodists' where band meetings and fellowship meetings are now conjoined raises interesting questions, though not in this case about a possible 'significant shift in the conception of band meetings' (180) in Wesley's connexion: the Original Methodists arose from a schism in Nottinghamshire amongst the Primitive Methodists, themselves separated from the original connexion since 1811. If the Original Methodists represented a shift in understanding in band meetings, it is from the practice of Primitive Methodism which needs examination to demonstrate it. This is not to say that such a shift had not taken place too in aspects of the original connexion's practice: opposition to the role of women in a band meeting in Derby in 1832 seems to have been instrumental in another schism from Wesleyanism, that of the short-lived Arminian Methodists, suggesting that attitudes towards female participation in bands had altered in some places in Wesley's connexion in the forty years since his death. Both of these cases suggest that the place of bands amongst the crowded field of disparate British Methodist groupings after Wesley's death would benefit from further research with similar rigour to that demonstrated by Watson.

Watson's work concludes with appendices that include various original regulations and advice for bands and religious societies drawn up by John Wesley, George Whitefield and Charles Perronet, and firsthand accounts from William Seward and Samuel Roberts, the latter of which must have taken painstaking transcription by Watson. This is a detailed and very readable study which will become a key text on Wesley's organisation of early Methodism in relation to the development of discipleship, and which will hopefully act as spur to further research beyond the initial period that Watson has so thoroughly covered.

Railton, Nicholas M. *James Craig (1818-1899): Judenmissionar—Evangelist—Gemeindegründer*. Schriften der Vereins für Schleswig-Holsteinische Kirchengeschichte 58. Husum: Matthiesen Verlag, 2013. 320 pages. ISBN: 978-3-7868-5503-3. 49 Euros.

Suarsana, Yan. *Pandita Ramabai und die Erfindung der Pfingstbewegung. Postkoloniale Religionsgeschichtsschreibung am Beispiel des "Mukti Revival."* Studies in the History of Christianity in the Non-Western World 23; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013. 412 pages. ISBN: 978-3-447-10069-4. 98 Euros.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Research Professor of World Christian Studies, New York Theological Seminary.

These two tomes are important for the history and historiography of the Holiness and Pentecostal Movements. The first deals with James Craig, a little known Irish Presbyterian missionary to northern Germany, and the second is a study of the famed Indian Christian activist and theologian, Pandita Ramabai. Both authors have made crucial contributions to an eventual analysis of the global Holiness networks of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both authors have made other important contributions to Holiness and Pentecostal historiography.

James Craig studied at Belfast College, University of London and University of Giessen and was ordained in February 1845. He arrived in Hamburg in May 1845. There as a newly minted missionary, he sought to work for the revival of the Lutheran congregations as well as work, relatively successfully, for the conversion of the Jews, eventually establishing the Jerusalem Church in Hamburg. He found that the Lutherans were not interested in being revived, but that there was a persecuted minorities in that church, the *Erweckungsbewegung* (Revival Movement) and *Heiligungsbewegung* (Holiness Movement), the members of which were willing to cooperate with him and who shared similar goals. These were heirs of the Pietist, especially Moravian traditions, with influences from Anglo-Saxon, Swiss and French sources.

Craig participated in many of the trans-European networks of non-Catholic Protestant, including the Tract Societies, Bible Societies, mission societies, Inner Mission, and ministries to sex-workers. In tracing these networks using archival sources from throughout the United Kingdom and Germany, Railton provides a major service. Scholars of the Holiness movements will find the names of many persons they recognize: Beskow,

C. G. Blumhardt, C. F. Spittler, Paschkov, Radstock, J. H. Wichern, Zinzendorff, and a host of others. Methodists from both the United States and England were active in Germany in this period and are mentioned as are Darbyists and Baptists. The theological isolationism of the Presbyterian tradition became less important than the ministry goals. Craig's willingness to work across these boundaries was complicated by the rising tide of nationalist thinking in Europe after the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), subsequent re-unification of Germany, and consequent deterioration of the relations between England and Germany.

The largest problem of the volume is that the extensive notes (225-88) will not assist those new to the period in Europe, especially Germany, to identify and understand the significance of their inclusion! Also, although periodicals from Craig's networks published in Germany and England were skillfully used, it would be expected that a lot more could be found in periodicals from the intersecting regional networks, especially in Denmark, France, Russia, Sweden, and Switzerland that normally contain significant data on the Pietist, revivalist and Holiness Movement networks.

The volume of Suarsana on Pandita Ramabai has a number of goals: (1) a discussion of the historiography about Pandita Ramabai; (2) an analysis of the claims about her by Pentecostal historian theologians; (3) description and analysis of the colonial situation in which Pandita Ramabai was formed and from which she ostensibly partially extricated herself using her religious pilgrimage; and (4) a discussion of the reaction to the theological shifts of Pandita Ramabai by her erstwhile Anglican colleagues. The sources, both primary and secondary, primarily in English, although not extensive, are used very well in the arguments. The data are presented, supported by an awareness of post-colonial theory, using network theory and discourse analysis.

The most significant problem of the work is its lack of awareness of the Global Radical Holiness Networks into which Pandita Ramabai moved. The hints are all there, but not treated as a meaningful set of data. For example, there are: (1) her close relationships with Alfred S. and Hellen Dyer, Quakers with Holiness/Keswick and Methodist connections fighting against colonialism in India, and other vices; (2) the sending by Pandita Ramabai of her daughter Manoramabai to North Chili, New York, to the recently minted Free Methodist college of B. T. Roberts; (3) Ramabai's involvement with Camp-Meetings and Holiness Conventions; (4) Ramabai's involvement in the Holiness revivals in Eastern India dur-

ing the early nineteenth century; and (5) the close connections with Albert Norton and Francis Willard. Pandita Ramabai participated in the Radical Holiness networks of the United States, England and India. She was a close associate or acquaintance of many and early Pentecostal leaders who came from those networks, and from the larger European and global Radical Holiness networks.

Especially important was the intense relationship with Minnie Abrams, whose volume, *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost and Fire* (1906) was first published serially in *The Indian Witness*. The title and contents of Abrams's book would not have been revolutionary to the Radical Holiness Movement of the United States, England, France, Switzerland, Germany, or Scandinavia. Among those thinkers, discussions of "Baptism of the Holy Ghost" and "Pentecost" had been going on since the 1870's. Abrams was shaped in that movement. This is crucial, for her involvement in this network also help explain the eventual disillusionment with American and British Pentecostalism, reflecting concerns first clearly expressed by Alfred S. Dyer. Interestingly, Pandita Ramabai continued to receive and support Scandinavian Pentecostal missionaries to India at Mukti. Her ministry was willed to the Christian and Missionary Alliance, whose approach to Pentecostal phenomena, "forbid not, seek not," was consistent with the Radical Holiness networks of pre-Pentecostalism days. The archives at Mukti (there is a microfilm edition of her archives and remaining library at Mukti that appears not to have been used) contain significant documentation of these relationships. Despite this major concern about the tome, it will be a necessary starting point for subsequent research on Pandita Ramabai and the evolution of Christianity and social reform in India.

Both of these volumes will reward a patient reading by persons concerned with the international development and influence of the Holiness Movements. Both contribute significantly to our knowledge of the period. Readers will find the tables of contents essential for locating material in the volumes. The indexes of both leave out key figures and other data from the text and notes. Both tomes are major achievements of careful scholarly work.

Dayton, Donald W. and Douglas M. Strong. *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage: A Tradition and Trajectory of Integrating Piety and Justice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014. 208 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-8010-4961-3.

Reviewed by William Kostlevy, Director Brethren Historical Library and Archives, Elgin, Illinois.

Few scholars have left a deeper mark upon their times than Donald W. Dayton. The son of one of the first Wesleyan Methodist educators with an earned doctorate, Dayton is also the direct heir of Burned-Over District Wesleyan Methodist pioneers. As a result, this is a deeply personal reflection upon one of the most intriguing contemporary academic questions: What is Evangelicalism and where did it go wrong? But the story of how a young academic without a union card, also known as Ph. D., turned a series of essays originally published in an obscure counter-cultural journal, the *Post-American*, into a cogent argument that Evangelicalism itself had been a key and neglected contributor to the great social causes of the early 1970s, including Black liberation and feminism, is told here for the first time in this new edition of an “Evangelical classic.”

It should hardly surprise us that not all contemporaries, including a young Calvin College historian George Marsden, agreed. Nothing better illustrates their radically different perspectives on American religious history than how the two scholars treat Charles Finney. Dayton's Finney was a misinterpreted prophet of the great social causes of the 1960s, while Marsden's Finney was a “sensationalist” with decidedly anti-intellectual tendencies. At stake in the debate was the question of the nature of Evangelicalism itself. Was it a socially conservative movement focused upon individual conversion or a program for social regeneration? In arguing for the former, Marsden questioned the importance of Finney and the closely related reformers who founded the Wesleyan Methodist and later Free Methodist churches. In Dayton's presentation like that of the earlier work of Timothy L. Smith, Finneyite and perfectionistic Evangelicals take center stage. In effect, the real issue becomes one of identifying what constitutes authentic Evangelicalism. What is in fact remarkable is the extent to which Dayton's interpretation has become normative for at least Wesleyans and many Pentecostals. Interestingly, Dayton himself has grown frustrated with the category of Evangelicalism itself, as his further research and experience in so-called Evangelicalism have made him more fully aware of its deep divisions and inherent contradictions.

What makes this edition particularly valuable is the important introduction by Douglas M. Strong, author of the classic *Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious Tensions in American Democracy* (Syracuse University Press, 1999). As a scholar whose own scholarship is deeply indebted to Dayton, Strong has an appreciation for the formative role that *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* has played among academically oriented Evangelicals. Further, Strong locates “the Dayton thesis” in its proper historic context. He deals with the debates that it inspired and the role it played in the remarkable Chicago Evangelical sub-culture of the early 1970s, including Dayton’s role in the landmark 1973 Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Responsibility. Also helpful are the *Postscripts* written by Strong after several of Dayton’s chapters, which often provide insights into subsequent scholarship.

Strong describes the Dayton Thesis in this way: “From 1830s-1890s ... Evangelicals led the charge in social movements to abolish slavery, to advance women’s rights, to advocate for the poor, to urge temperate use of alcohol ... and to work against urban blight” (19). While some historians would still insist that this is an overstatement, it is remarkable how many elements of the thesis have found their way into the standard narrative of American history. In 1957 few scholars seriously believed Timothy L. Smith’s shocking claim that John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Samuel Hopkins were more important creators of the “egalitarian, perfectionist optimism of the spiritual inheritance of America” than Benjamin Franklin and Jean Jacques Rousseau. And the most commonly used college textbooks, including those by the popular Charles and Mary Beard, actually told the American story without reference to even Charles Finney. While often unacknowledged, Don Dayton has played no insignificant role in this transformation of the standard narrative of American history. While the emergence of the women’s movement and the greater sensitivity to social and cultural forces has played a role in this transformation, one should not underestimate the role of Dayton himself and his small tract for the times first published as *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*. Today Finney and the so-called Second Great Awakening are often highlighted as key elements in antebellum reform movements such as abolitions and women’s rights.

But what is most remarkable to this reviewer is how well and accurately Dayton’s original text reads after forty years. In even his most provocatively titled chapter “The Evangelical Roots of Feminism,” Dayton does not claim too much. He is keenly aware of the ambiguities and con-

traditions of his subjects. As he notes almost prophetically, in the early 1970s it “was the abolitionists who discovered feminist exegesis” (140). This is even more remarkable, given the fact that Dayton’s subtle interpretive essays were first published as popular essays. Equally impressive is his concluding chapter, “Whatever Happened to Evangelicalism?” The distinctions, questions, and answers Dayton proposes have never been equaled in discussions of the decline of Evangelical social action. This chapter should be read with Dayton’s later attempt to answer the same question *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*. Together, they provide one of the most important interpretive lenses for understanding contemporary Christianity not only in the United States but around the world. The Wesleyan community is indeed indebted to Douglas M. Strong for his work in this edition of what will certainly be one of the landmark texts of modern Christianity.

Thompson, James W. *The Church according to Paul: Rediscovering the Community Conformed to Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. 289 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-8010-4882-1.

Reviewed by Ryan K. Giffin, Ph.D. candidate in Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, and Pastor, Paris Church of the Nazarene, Paris, KY.

In *The Church according to Paul*, James W. Thompson offers what he refers to as a “comprehensive examination of Paul’s ecclesiology” (ix). Thompson introduces his work with a survey of factors contributing to the decline of the church in Western society along with some of the more recent attempts at church renewal, including the “missional” and “emerging” church movements. This brief survey clears the space Thompson apparently hopes to fill with his study, as the stated task of the book is “to offer the theological foundation for the rediscovery of the church by examining Pauline ecclesiology within the larger framework of the apostle’s theology” (19-20).

Thompson begins in chapter 1 with an overview of the key themes in Pauline ecclesiology as these themes appear in 1 Thessalonians. The decision to begin with 1 Thessalonians is defended by Thompson with the argument that this is probably Paul’s first letter and thus “introduces the basic themes of ecclesiology that Paul will develop as he encounters new questions” (23). The chapter focuses on Paul’s distinctive vocabulary in 1 Thessalonians for the church (*ekklesia*, “the believers,” “the elect,” “the calling,” “the holy ones,” “children of light,” “family of God”). A major conclusion Thompson draws from his analysis is that “[f]rom the beginning, the church has lived in tension with its culture because it was brought together by beliefs that most people do not accept” (48).

In chapter 2 Thompson attempts to show how Paul’s christology is definitive for his churches, arguing for a Pauline “corporate christology” in which the identity of the church is derived from its incorporation “in Christ.” This is followed in chapter 3 with an examination of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism as practices that express the unity and solidarity in the Pauline communities, resulting in the creation of distinctive boundaries between the churches and the society at large. In the next chapter Thompson explores how Paul’s churches undergo transformation in the present as they simultaneously look back to their past entrance into Christ and forward into the new creation as a community of both memory and hope.

In harmony with one of the centerpieces of the so-called “new perspective on Paul” (though Thompson never invokes this phrase), it is argued in chapter 5 that Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith is primarily a corporate concern for a united community of Jews and Gentiles. Next comes a discussion in chapter 6 of the understanding of “mission” in Paul. The fundamental mission of the Pauline churches in Thompson’s view is not to respond to any sort of overt social ethic or missionary mandate, but to demonstrate the reconciling power of the gospel in a dark world.

In chapter 7 Thompson examines the nature of *koinōnia* according to Paul, arguing that although the apostle views the church as basically a local entity in the traditional seven undisputed letters, the collection for the saints in Jerusalem is indicative of his desire for one united fellowship in which the various local assemblies are connected in their sharing of resources. Thompson moves to the traditionally disputed epistles in chapter 8 where he suggests that the largely implicit theme of the universality of the church found within the undisputed Pauline letters becomes explicit within the disputed letters. The vision of the cosmic church in Colossians and Ephesians constitutes what Thompson refers to as the real “megachurch,” while the Pastoral Epistles focus on the preservation of the apostolic faith among the churches in Paul’s absence.

The final chapter of the book is devoted to a discussion of leadership, in which Thompson argues that leadership concerns in Paul’s undisputed letters are not related to ecclesiastical offices and official positions but to “the task of pastoral care of the membership and the various forms of instruction” such as teaching, exhortation, comfort, and admonition (241). Paul’s vision of church leadership is shaped by his vision of the church as a distinctive community conformed to the death and resurrection of Christ, a vision that “has rarely been put into practice” (242). The work concludes with a synthesis of the primary aspects of Paul’s ecclesiology, along with an attempt to bring these aspects into dialogue with contemporary ecclesiology.

Departing from standard studies of Paul’s ecclesiology that tend to focus either on separate studies of each epistle in turn or on Paul’s various “images” for the church, Thompson opts for a integrated approach to his subject matter. The departure may be a welcome one for readers interested in a synthetic yet substantive overview Pauline ecclesiology. *The Church according to Paul* provides just that, highlighting many of the significant features of Paul’s view of the church and attempting to bring

those features into dialogue with contemporary ecclesiological models. Some might wish Thompson had devoted more space to making explicit connections between Pauline and contemporary ecclesiology, as he sets up the book to do this in the introduction but then proceeds to limit these connections to very brief conclusions at the end of each chapter and one 6-page conclusion at the book's end. Still, further and fuller connections should be relatively easy to make for most readers on their own, and whatever Thompson's work may lack in "application" is compensated for by its rich and sober exegesis of the biblical text.

However, Thompson's work is not without other limitations. Though still the majority view, some would contest his approach to Pauline authorship, as Thompson appears to accept only the seven "undisputed" epistles as Paul's own. Others will notice a lack of attention to Philippians in comparison with the "major" Pauline epistles and 1 Thessalonians. And one may be surprised by Thompson's somewhat selective use of sources, as he offers little to no interaction with many of the major critical commentaries on Paul's epistles.

Nonetheless, Thompson's work has much to commend to it from a theological perspective. The definitive role of Paul's corporate christology for the identity of the church functions as a potent corrective for contemporary churches whose identity has more often been shaped by trendy business models and self-help books than by the biblical vision. That Paul's theology of justification is primarily about the unity of the people of God registers a biblical challenge to theologies that perceive justification as an exclusively individual concern. The clear evidence from Paul's letters that the church has lived in tension with its surrounding culture since its earliest days serves as a strong exegetical caution for a contemporary church that is often tempted to exchange theological conviction for the sake of cultural relevance. All of this and more are brought to the fore in *The Church according to Paul*, resulting in a portrait of the church that, if embraced, would surely impact the contemporary church for the better.

In the end, Thompson's work will prove most helpful for those interested in extended exegetical discussions about the nature of the church according to Paul. This monograph is to be commended as a clear exegetical guide for anyone attempting to grapple with the contemporary theological implications of Pauline ecclesiology. Thompson's careful exposition of Scripture with an eye towards connections with contemporary ecclesiology is perhaps *The Church according to Paul's* greatest contribution.

Sweeden, Joshua R. *The Church and Work: The Ecclesiological Grounding of Good Work*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014. 170 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1556352058.

Reviewed by Rustin E. Brian, Lead Pastor, Renton Church of the Nazarene, Renton, WA; Adjunct Professor of Theology, Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa, ID) and Seattle Pacific University (Seattle, WA).

Toil, labor, or work is fundamental to the human condition. The question is, what role does work play in human existence and community, and furthermore, how might work be evaluated? Joshua Sweeden rejects the immortal words of 1980's pop band Loverboy by arguing that humans are meant to work for more than just the weekend. In fact, for Sweeden, work is intended to be healthy, life-affirming, and, more than anything else, good. When properly understood, and healthily engaged in, work is, in many ways, an end in itself. Work, at least as it was intended to be, is good. Like much of the field of scholarship that Sweeden surveys, his argument for the goodness of work assumes the use of a protological lens. He goes much further, though, ultimately employing a teleological approach to the understanding and evaluation of work. How did God originally conceive of human work? What role was work to play in the creation and maintenance of human identity and community, both pre- and post-fall? How does work reflect and contribute to the coming kingdom of God? Answering these questions is no easy task, especially in light of Sweeden's preference for practical rather than theoretical analysis. To build his case, the author spends a good deal of time surveying classical and more contemporary understandings of work. He understandably limits the scope of his research to those understandings of work that reflect both the Church and the "West." While this survey is quite foundationally important, Sweeden's ultimate concern is with real work, and therefore with real humans, and real communities. For Sweeden, the goodness of work, or the lack thereof, requires ethical deliberation, which in turn requires community. "Guiding the response [of practical rather than theoretical evaluations of work] is an argument that considerations of good work are ultimately ethical deliberations, *i.e.*, that good work, like ethics, is a question of practice and performance that demands nurturing, support, and evaluation within a hermeneutical community" (70-71). The hermeneutical community that Sweeden is most interested in here is the Church.

Sweeden critiques understandings of work that can instrumentalize people by placing the emphasis on the product(s) created, or services rendered, both of which ultimately give way to the need for speed, efficiency of production, and thus profitability. Instead, Sweeden argues for an understanding of work that does not forget about the value of the labor within the production process, ultimately seeing this process as more than merely the production of a product, but as the production of authentic human beings and authentic human community. Pope John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* (1981) is vital to Sweeden's argument, as is Dorothee Sölle's *To Work and to Love* (Fortress, 1984). These two works are skillfully and critically appropriated through Sweeden's use of the work of Brian Brock, Darrell Cosden, Miroslav Volf, and especially John Howard Yoder. Additionally, a clear preference for Marx's understanding of work/labor over that of Adam Smith's understanding is implicit throughout *The Church and Work*. With the engagement of each new source, Sweeden is careful to offer a critical assessment of the author's penchant for the preference of the theoretical over the practical. It is clear that, for Sweeden, the goodness of work is to be judged by its excellence rather than its efficiency, a distinction that has been helpfully explained by Alastair MacIntyre in his *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, 1989). Good work is excellent work. Excellent work is life-giving, life-forming, and ultimately assists in the development and maintenance of authentic human community. Excellent work can only be done with and for others. It assumes, therefore, a community. Sweeden's work is firmly consistent on this focus: good work is done in and for authentic community—the Church in particular. In the end, "good work, therefore, is the public work of the Body of Christ enacted in various contexts by members of Christian communities" (139). Good work reveals true humanity, the *imago Dei*, and serves as a witness to the already/not-yet kingdom of God.

In developing his understanding of good work in the life of the Church and how such work comes to be understood as good (or not), Sweeden relies on the work of Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, and in particular his "four agents of communal hermeneutical process." Yoder identifies these four "agents" as agents of direction, agents of memory, agents of linguistic self-consciousness, and agents of order and due process. By the agent of direction, the community understands its distinct vision and purpose (84). Understanding a community's unique vision allows for critical moral reasoning that serves that vision. The agent of

memory allows a community to remember its story, and thus its previous moral reasoning (85). According to Yoder, Christian Scripture acts as this agent for the Church. The agent of linguistic self-consciousness serves as a way to prevent a community from offering solutions that are verbal or linguistic only, to real-life problems (85). This agent keeps a community focused on practices rather than just words or ideas. Finally, the agent of order and due process safeguards the role of the entire community in decision making, rather than allowing decisions to be made by only those who are most assertive or physically dominant (86). Sweeden appropriates these “agents” from Yoder in the hope of practically demonstrating how a community can evaluate work to be good or bad. Working together, these agents ensure that work is fairly valued, healthy, productive, and ultimately done in service to the larger community. These agents ensure purpose and value to work that is done, and therefore to workers. To these agents, Sweeden adds a few more of his own: agents of embodiment, agents of situation, and agents of ritual. For Sweeden, an agent of embodiment is a figure that embodies the purpose, values, and vision of a particular community, offering a further guarantee that work is being evaluated by a particular standard (88). He provides the examples of Dorothy Day, or even of Mary (for Roman Catholic women in particular), as examples of agents of embodiment. The agent of situation is a way of affirming the rootedness of a particular community to a particular place, community, land, or environment (90). All communities, churches in particular, must exist necessarily within a particular neighborhood or location. The life of a church in Hollywood, CA will necessarily be different from that of a church in Hollywood, FL, and certainly different from that of a church in Mumbai, India. Although the substance of their faith may be the same, the situation of a given community will necessarily result in a very different flavor or style. According to Sweeden, this is a good and necessary part of a community’s particularity. Finally, Sweeden’s added agent of ritual accounts for particular habits, customs, routines, or traditions of a particular community (93). These add further distinction and identity to particular local communities. Sweeden’s three added “agents” all have the goal of ensuring that communities develop and maintain thoroughly practical understandings of what constitutes good work. Given the practical goal of Sweeden’s work, I would deem these three added “agents” as both good and useful.

The heavy use of Yoder, though, might strike the contemporary reader as problematic and deserves a pause. To what extent can we plun-

der the wealth of Yoder's theology without affirming the long, covert, and somewhat systematic sexual exploitation of women of which the Menonite theologian is guilty? Plundering the Egyptians is one thing, but can we plunder unfaithful Christians? And, to that point, are any of us faithful? The same questions have been around for a long time regarding other brilliant thinkers. Is Martin Heidegger's work problematic, given his Nazi designs? Is John Wesley's practical theology subject in light of how poor a husband he was? On a more pop culture level, can we watch the *Cosby Show* and be entertained by a man who was, by all accounts, systematically and sexually exploiting women, even women on his show? I don't pretend to have the answer for this question as it pertains to Yoder, and this is not a critique of Sweeden, so much as an honest question coming from someone who is also deeply appreciative of Yoder's work. When the source of so much practical wisdom has proved to be so foolish and unfaithful, can his words and teachings continue to be the source of anything that is to be called good? Is this not a direct challenge to Sweeden's aversion to the theoretical in favor of the practical? Here I suppose I might tip my hand and suggest that perhaps we need not throw out Yoder altogether, in the same way that we might not need to be so allergic to theoretical foundations for practical wisdom. I would concur with Sweeden that, for good work to be good, it must be judged to be so by a community pursuing the good. This is all highly practical. Sweeden's added "agents" are very helpful in this regard. Perhaps, in the end, a positive place can be made for theory alongside of practice, for surely beauty can still emerge from a source that is ugly and problematic.

The Church and Work is a very helpful resource both in its survey of history and its diagnosis for a healthy understanding of work as good. Sweeden's evaluative lens proves to be both protological and eschatological, with its ultimate goal of a community of faithful Christ-followers, living authentic lives with one another, for the sake of the world. Sweeden's use of, and additions to, the work of Yoder is masterful, and serves his thesis well. Sweeden is correct, "Christians want to know the implications of their faith for everyday life and the implications of their everyday life for faith" (155). *The Church and Work* goes a long way in helping the Church to understand just how to understand everyday life as a gift, and how this gift might benefit others.

Vondey, Wolfgang and Martin William Mittelstadt, eds. *The Theology of Amos Yong and the New Face of Pentecostal Scholarship: Passion for the Spirit*. Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies 14. Leiden: Brill, 2013. 290 pages. ISBN 978-90-04-25174-8.

Reviewed by David Bradnick, Lecturer, York College of Pennsylvania, York, PA.

Arguably, Amos Yong is the most influential contemporary Pentecostal theologian, as demonstrated by *The Theology of Amos Yong and the New Face of Pentecostal Scholarship*. This collection of essays summarizes and assesses Yong's theological contributions, not only to Pentecostal scholarship but to the broader discipline of theology and beyond. The book's contributors represent a variety of perspectives, so the editors are to be commended for their efforts to facilitate dialogue concerning Yong's theology around a table that is open to many different voices.

Martin William Mittelstadt examines Yong's use of a Luke-Acts hermeneutic. He argues that this interpretive lens places Yong firmly within the Pentecostal tradition, but it has also motivated Yong to dialogue with a multitude of issues, such as inter-religious relations, disability, and politics. Mittelstadt commends Yong for these efforts and expects him to continue such contributions, but he also urges other Pentecostal scholars to take up these conversations that have been initiated by Yong.

L. William Oliverio contends that Yong can be understood as an ecumenical theologian, attempting to navigate the complexities of the late modern world. For him, Yong's Pentecostal intuitions provide a robust metaphysical and hermeneutical framework for addressing these issues. However, Oliverio calls for a broader application of Yong's program into the "lived faith of Christian communities" and the mission of "forming Christian disciples today" (61).

Christopher A. Stephenson analyzes Yong's underlying methodology. He suggests that Yong uses "empirical investigation" to make epistemological and hermeneutical claims and that he reflects on theological method more than any other Pentecostal theologian. Stephenson is supportive of Yong's work, but he also maintains that there are areas of his thought that require further consideration, namely Yong's rejection and seemingly simultaneous application of substance ontology.

Steven M. Studebaker explores Yong's trinitarian theology. He argues that Yong's Pentecostal background, particularly his pneumatological sensibilities, provides the foundation for his trinitarian thought, but he does

so without neglecting traditional Christian constructions. Yet Studebaker submits that, even though Yong has advanced the conversation, much more trinitarian dialogue needs to occur among Pentecostals, especially with Oneness Pentecostals.

Tony Richie summarizes and addresses Yong's pneumatology and his theology of religions. He proposes several ecclesiological and soteriological implications of Yong's work before suggesting its pastoral and practical applications. Richie compares Yong to an "early American pioneer," calling him a "trailblazer who moved beyond theological frontiers into uncharted territory" (121). Obviously, he is a proponent of Yong's work and sees further potential waiting to be mined by Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals alike.

Jacob D. Dobson explores Yong's ecumenical and interreligious concerns through the lens of Yong's theology of hospitality. He proposes that Yong's theology can both assist in tearing down theological boundaries and in healing hostilities to bring reconciliation.

Jeff Hittenberger examines Yong's theology of disability. He summarizes Yong's appeal to the Church, which is to respond to Christ's call of receiving the kingdom of God by embracing persons with special needs, including the many gifts that they have to offer.

Andrew James Carver looks at Yong's theology through the lens of film and contemporary culture. He argues that Yong and Pentecostals should consider developing a theology of image and that film may be an effective tool for interreligious dialogue. Carver maintains that such endeavors are "pregnant with possibility" (177).

Wolfgang Vondey engages Yong's interaction with science, tracing his theology along three methodological foci: Pentecostalism, pneumatology, and renewal. Overall, he is encouraged by the inroads made by Yong into the science-religion dialogue, but the validity of his claims is still open for evaluation, especially because Yong is not a scientist. Furthermore, Vondey argues that Yong's interaction with science lacks a robust trinitarian focus.

Mark Mann converses with his colleague's theology from an Evangelical position. He asks if Yong should be situated within a traditionalist or reformist school of thought. He comes to the conclusion that Yong does both. Mann argues that Yong has a "deep commitment to traditional Christian doctrine" (218), but he is also willing "to open up Christian beliefs to correction" (217).

Paraskevè (Eve) Tibbs evaluates Yong's theology from an Eastern Orthodox perspective. Tibbs provides a very gracious critique of Yong's

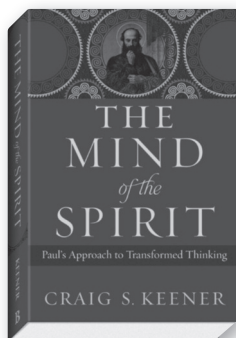
work, but she concludes that his pneumatology and theology of religions are largely not compatible with Orthodox theology, seeing them as “non-Christological and non-ecclesiological” (223). In my opinion, these terms do not accurately portray Yong’s theology. Yong suggests bracketing Christology for the purposes of inter-religious dialogue, but his theological approach is far from non-Christological. By using Irenaeian imagery, the two hands of God, Yong signifies that the Son cannot be divorced from the Spirit. Although he believes that the Spirit is distinct from the Son, Yong also maintains that their missions are thoroughly integrated with one another. Thus, it is more accurate to state that Yong’s approach is not *exclusively* Christocentric and ecclesiological.

David A. Reed considers Yong’s theology in relation to Oneness Pentecostalism. He suggests that Anglicans may not have been so hasty to marginalize Oneness, as did the Assemblies of God in the early twentieth century. Although this is an interesting exercise in historical hypotheticals, it does not change the current state of Pentecostalism. Thus, Yong’s proposal may be the best option. In relation to Yong’s recommendation to bracket Christology as a way of initiating interreligious dialogue, Reed rightly asks, “if and when Christology is allowed back in the conversation” (254)?

Originally, theologian Ralph Del Colle was slated to write an essay from a Roman Catholic perspective, but his untimely death made this impossible. Instead Vondey offers a reflection on the importance of Del Colle’s academic contribution, not only for the Church universal, but also upon Yongian and Pentecostal theology. I cannot understate the thoughtfulness and brilliance of this chapter on the part of the editors in writing a memorandum for Del Colle.

In conclusion, the essays in the volume succeed at both introducing its readers to Yong’s thought and delving deeper into some of the implications of his work. But two issues concern me. First, although it is understood that not all topics could have been considered herein, it is notable that no chapters were written from feminist, minority, or global Pentecostal perspectives. Perhaps a second volume is in order to cover these topics. Second, an overarching objective of its editors is to bring Yong’s theology into dialogue with mainline theology, but I fear that the costly price of the book may hinder some from engaging with it. My hope is that the publisher will release a less costly paperback edition to fulfill the purposes set forth by the editors.

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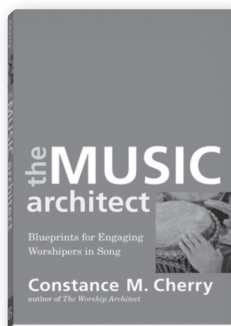
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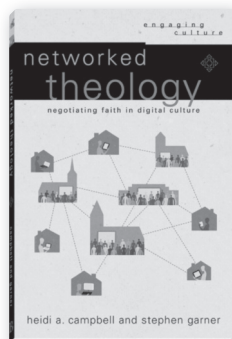
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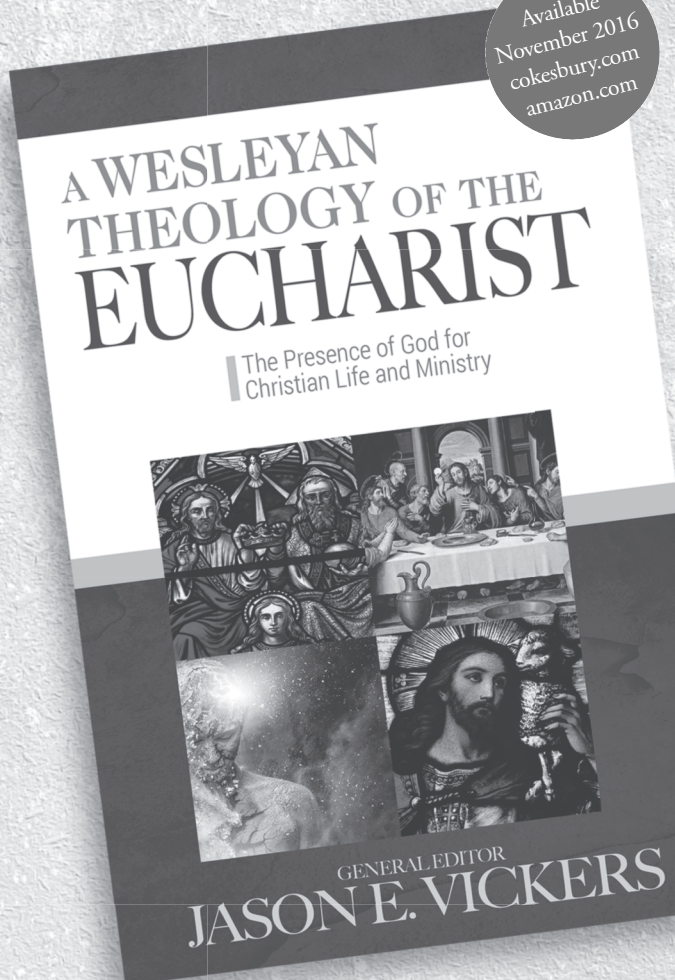
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