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## EDITOR'S NOTES

This issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (WTJ) consists of papers presented at last year's annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society. The President of the Wesleyan Theological Society (WTS), Dr. Scott Kisker, selected "The Church" for the conference theme. The presidential and plenary addresses, as well as several other outstanding papers from the conference, are included here.

Looking ahead, we are presently accepting submissions for the upcoming fall issue of the *WTJ*. In addition to the articles, we also welcome book reviews. The book review editor is Dr. Justus Hunter. His contact information can be found on the officers' page at the back of this issue.

Jason E. Vickers, Editor  
Spring 2018



# VISIBLY INVISIBLE

by

Scott Kisker

## *Introduction*

A while back I was reading some sermons by one of the leaders of the seventeenth century Dutch Pietist movement, called the Second Reformation. I am a church historian, basically a Pietist, and I don't own a cell phone. I have to do something while everyone else is playing Clash of Clans. The preacher was Jodocus van Lodenstein one of the great proponents of renewal within the Dutch Reformed Church. Two phrases from two different sermons jumped out at me.<sup>1</sup>

The first phrase was from a sermon entitled "The Coming Judgment": a topic not heard much in Western pulpits these days, probably to our detriment. Jesus, of course, was not nearly as skittish about such threats in his preaching as we are. In the sermon van Lodenstein warned his hearers in seventeenth century Netherlands that the Lord was not happy with his Dutch people. And, as God had warned Israel through the prophet Isaiah, God was now warning the church. The text he used was Isaiah 5:5-6, interestingly the same text John Wesley chose for his sermon, on God's Vineyard, to critique his own connection.<sup>2</sup>

And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jodocus van Lodenstein, Sermon, "Eternal Life," and "The Coming Judgment" in Carl J. Schroeder, *In Quest of Pentecost: Jodocus van Lodenstein and the Dutch Second Reformation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), 162-168, 191-194.

<sup>2</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 107, "God's Vineyard," in *Sermons III*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 3 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975-), 503-17.

<sup>3</sup>Biblical references are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

If you read on in Isaiah 5, the reason God was going to remove the hedge was the greed and debauchery, the economic injustice and decadence, of God's people. Basically they are cheating the poor and getting drunk. By removing the wall around the vineyard, God allows the garden to be overrun by weeds. The vineyard becomes indistinguishable from the wilderness that surrounds it. God gives His people over to what they want. They become no different from their surroundings. The church thereby becomes a place of disorder, and it surrenders its function in God's mission to the world.

### ***God's Saving Mission***

Often when church folk talk about "mission" we mean things *we* do to strategically target a particular group of people, or a need, or an injustice, or a cause. We talk about things like "being the hands and feet of Christ" (as if Jesus did not already have glorified hands and feet capable of passing through locked doors); or "building the Kingdom of God"; or doing something for the "transformation of the world."

The assumption behind such pious nonsense is that *we*, the church, can save. We have it in us to be or not be Jesus' body, or build or not build the kingdom, or transform or not transform the world. *We* can do it. Salvation is in our hands.

That is a heresy called Pelagianism, by the way, and much, if not most, of Wesleyan Methodist tradition has become riddled with it.

That is not the church's understanding of "mission" prior to the modern era. The word "mission," as David Bosch reminded us in his magnum opus, *Transforming Mission*, comes from the Latin verb "to send." And historically "mission" referred to *God's* action to redeem creation, not to ours. The Father sends the Son. The Father and Son send the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Mission and God's Order***

In that mission, "order" and even "garden," have a prominent place in the sacred narrative. That mission begins in the first few verses of Genesis, where we have a description of creation in which God's Spirit begins by hovering over the face of the deep, over the dis-order. "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless

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<sup>4</sup>David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1991), 228.

<sup>5</sup>Gen 1:1-2.



void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”<sup>5</sup> And here is the problem with formless void, with chaos, with the deep. It is no thing. Nothing. Nothing cannot sustain life.

And then God speaks. The Word of God goes forth as light and begins to divide the formless void and name its parts. God begins separating, ordering, naming. God creates some thing from no thing. There is day and night, heavens and earth, sea and land. And what God’s order does is create space in the void where life is possible.

God sends the Word and Spirit forth into the disorder, to establish a divine order, a protected space, where life can flourish; there are plants, fish, birds, and land animals. At each stage of creation, every day, God blessed the new order, named it good. And at the end of the sixth day, God created human beings, “male and female, he created them.”<sup>6</sup> (These seem to be ontological categories if we are going to speak scripturally.) And he created us in His image, to have dominion over the world as a reflection of God’s blessed dominion, of God’s sacred order.

We humans are given form. We are named and blessed as “very good” and intended to bear the blessing of God’s life giving order, of God’s law, of God’s kingdom to the rest of creation. We were to be God’s viceroys, emissaries of God’s reign, not our own. We were intended to participate in maintaining that sacred ordered space, that garden, wherein life can thrive.

But as the story in chapters 2-3 indicates, we humans decided not to live into God’s blessed order or into our own privilege as upholders of that order of blessing for the benefit of all creation. We chose not to bear the blessing of God, but to seek our own good in a disorder of our own choosing. Humans chose chaos, which cannot sustain life. We chose death, for ourselves and for all creation. And we brought curse not blessing.

God’s Word and Spirit were sent forth, and created a sacred space in the midst of chaos where life thrives, protected by God’s good life-giving order. We decided we wanted to see what would happen when we poked a hole in the protective order,—just a small breach of the wall around the vineyard. And the chaos began to spill in. Curse entered the realm of blessing. It came between God and humanity, between humans and other humans, between men and women, and between humanity and the rest creation. Sin, chaos, and curse: and rather than face it, humans chose to fake it. We hid—from each other, from ourselves, from God.

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<sup>6</sup>Gen 1:27.

And so we find ourselves in a creation where the disorder of sin threatens to overwhelm creation, our fellow humans, our bodies, and our souls. Our reason is disordered. Our desires are disordered. Our emotions are disordered. And we cower in the bushes, lest anyone know how disordered it all is. We are born, and we choose to become agents of disorder, agents of death.

### ***The Good News***

And yet . . . If scripture is true, God was not content to allow creation to return to formless void. God, our creator, loves the life and lives his order made possible. So God chose to intervene to slow the digression of chaos by directly engaging his collapsing creation and his disordered creatures to prevent total disintegration. This is what we Wesleyans call preventing grace.

God sent Word and Spirit again, and again, and again, and again. God promised a restored universal blessing through Sarah and Abraham. God revealed his Law to slaves he emancipated from Egyptians. God presented a vision of a *new age* through the prophets,—a new order where God’s kingdom comes and will is done “on earth as it is in heaven.”

And as the prophets foretold it, this “age to come” would be brought in by messiah, resurrection, and final judgment. That is what the people of God 2000 years ago were waiting for when a prophet from Nazareth began teaching, healing, and casting out demons. The very language of Jesus and the disciples, about the direction of history, is predicated on these two ages: “this age” and “the age to come.” There are over thirty references in the New Testament. I’ll give you three examples, one from each of the synoptics to remind you how common it is:

1. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in *this age* or in *the age to come* (Matthew 12:32, emphasis mine).
2. Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in *this age*—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in *the age to come* eternal life (Mark 10:29-30, emphasis mine).
3. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.” Jesus said to them,

Those who belong to *this age* marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in *that age and in the resurrection from the dead* neither marry nor are given in marriage (Luke 20:33-35, emphasis mine).

This “age to come” as anticipated by the disciples and others, including the Pharisees, would overturn injustice and oppression, restore God’s life sustaining order, and establish God’s reign. No more economic injustice. No more debauchery.

This anticipation is what was behind the disciples’ post-resurrection question to Jesus in Acts 1. The resurrection has happened. They naturally assumed the “age to come” was imminent. “Is now the time when you will restore the Kingdom to Israel?” Look at what Jesus replies.

It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and *you will be my witnesses* in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:7-8, emphasis mine)

Witnesses to what? What have they witnessed? They are talking to a person in a resurrected body, a body ordered by the law of eternal life. They have witnessed the new creation in the midst of a decaying one. They have seen the presence of the age to come in this age. But instead of coming as they expected, the new age appeared prior to the final judgment. It didn’t terminate this age, it invaded this age.

Like at creation, God sent Word and Spirit into the chaos of this age. But this time The Word didn’t divide, name and order, at least not immediately. This time the Word “humbled himself” before the chaos of creation, united with that creation. “The Word *became* flesh” to use the language of John’s Gospel.<sup>7</sup> This time, God sent forth his Word, Logos, reason, the order of his life-giving thought, and he died, like us. He laid down his life. Then, three days later, by his own authority, he took “it up again,” he rose, the first fruits of the new creation.

The new has come. And yet this new creation, this “new age,” is hidden from the old. It is a reality that is only accessible by faith, the “evidence, and conviction of things not seen,” as the writer of Hebrews 11:1 and John Wesley both define it).<sup>8</sup> The old disorder is still what we see,

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<sup>7</sup>John 1:14, emphasis mine.

<sup>8</sup>Wesley, Sermon 106, “On Faith,” *Works*, 3:492.

hear, taste, touch with our natural senses. It is still hemorrhaging, bringing death, and passing away. If we align our existence with it, we will pass away with it. But we don't have to.

Because of God's gracious action on behalf of destructive and self-destructive creatures, we humans have actual agency. There is now the possibility of freedom. And this is not what our disordered race usually calls freedom, which is simply license to be trapped by our disordered passions. This is real freedom, freedom to *not* be enslaved within a frustrated creation.

### **Seattle**

Several years ago I was in Seattle at a preaching conference and I went to breakfast pretty early. I was still on Eastern Standard Time and finally just gave in and got up. I wandered into the Mecca Café and sat down in one of the booths. A little while later three people, two men and a woman in their late twenties, came in and sat in the booth right behind me. Now I wasn't exactly eavesdropping . . . okay I was eavesdropping. But, hey, I was alone at my booth and the one guy, the back of whose head was about an inch from mine, wasn't exactly speaking quietly. In any case I learned some things from their conversation.

First of all, you can order alcohol at a diner in Seattle at 7:30 in the morning. I did not know that. A "Bloody Maria" is a "Bloody Mary" made with tequila instead of vodka. Did not know that. And a bit more shocking, if you arrive at strip clubs before 10 a.m. you can avoid the cover. Did not know that. But that gives you some idea of the world of the speaker.

That same guy told a story to his compatriots about a woman who had recently contacted him on *Facebook*. About nine years ago he had met this woman, there in Seattle. She was in an alley in the pouring rain with her 1-2 year old son. He compassionately invited them into his apartment. He stated emphatically that he had not slept with her. After that he developed a friendship, especially with the kid who was autistic.

She had moved to California shortly after that and he hadn't heard from her until now. She was coming up to Seattle and thought of him and looked him up. Her son, now eleven or so, wanted to see him. All that was lead up to the point of the story, which was all the ways he had put her off so he could avoid seeing them.

This 20-something was clearly in the midst of a chaotic life, numbing himself with alcohol before 8:00 a.m. and seeking fake connections with anonymous women on the cheap. But when a real relationship with another real broken human being presents itself, he runs. This guy is

trapped. Alienated from God, alienated from his fellow creatures, alienated from himself. And so are the people in our pews, teaching in our seminaries, playing in our praise bands, standing behind our lecturns. They've just learned to keep their disorder better hidden, or within more respectable limits.

### ***Order in the Church***

I want to go back again to the sermon by van Lodenstein and the first phrase that caught my attention. Remember, he's preaching on Isaiah 5:5-6. "And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down."

The Lord does this hedge and wall removal, van Lodenstein wrote (and this is what I found interesting), "if He takes away the designated means of grace."<sup>9</sup> And then van Lodenstein listed what he considers the designated means of grace: "The Word, the seals of the covenant (which refer to the sacraments), and the home-assemblies of the pious." God removes from the Church word, sacrament, and order.<sup>10</sup>

What struck me in this list, which are basically what John Wesley would call the "ordinary means of grace," was its ecclesiology (those visible aspects of a community that indicate the presence of the church).

Note especially that for van Lodenstein order, or as we Wesleyans might say discipline, did not refer to Bishops, elders, and deacons, or obscure rules governing how many working committees a local church has to have. Order meant small groups of laity gathered to promote piety, the "home assemblies of the pious."

For van Lodenstein, the house groups were the order. The presence of "home-assemblies of the pious" established and preserved "Church" as a visible alternative to the destructive forces of the world. They were the visible means by which people encountered the invisible reign of God. When these assemblies were absent God's people become no different from the dying world around them. We die.

### ***Wesley's Ecclesiology***

Note the connections between van Lodenstein's ecclesiology and that which formed early Wesleyan Methodism. Wesley understood the

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<sup>9</sup>Lodenstein, "Coming Judgment," 192.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

church, proper, to be a unity of those who have the “evidence, and conviction of things not seen.”<sup>11</sup> To use the synoptic categories referenced earlier, the communion of those who had encountered the invisible but present age to come.

In “Predestination Calmly Considered” (hardly a text promoting external visible unity) Wesley referred to real Christians as “those who are grafted into the good olive tree”<sup>12</sup> This “good olive tree” is “not barely the outward, visible church but the invisible, consisting of holy believers.”<sup>13</sup> In contrast, in the outward visible church “many of the reprobate are mixed in with the elect,” as St. Augustine put it.<sup>14</sup> There are “weeds and wheat” to quote another learned theologian.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes, as Wesley noted, those who “cry out, ‘The Church! The Church!’ and to pretend to be very zealous for it, and violent defenders of it,” are the same people who “have neither part nor lot therein, nor indeed know what the Church is.”<sup>16</sup> There are always “sheep . . . outside, . . . wolves within,” again St. Augustine.<sup>17</sup> Every “outward, visible church” includes people without saving faith.

Furthermore, each “outward visible church,” according to Wesley, is necessarily constituted by people who share opinions on doctrine and modes of worship. These divide and prevent external union, and make the unity of invisible church obscure. “Every man necessarily believes that every particular opinion which he holds is true (for to believe any opinion is not true is the same thing as not to hold it). Yet can no man be assured that all his own opinions taken together are true.”<sup>18</sup>

Now, every “outward, visible church,” every community of believers, must make choices with regard to faith and practice. Not to do so would be, as Wesley puts it, “speculative latitudinarianism, . . . an indifference to all opinions”<sup>19</sup> or “practical latitudinarianism, . . . an indifference as to

<sup>11</sup>Wesley, “On Faith,” *Works* 3:492.

<sup>12</sup>Wesley, “Predestination Calmly Considered,” *Works* 13:461.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>Saint Augustine, *The City of God (XI-XXII)*, trans. William Babcock, *The Works of Saint Augustine: a Translation for the 21st Century*, Vol. 1/7, (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2013).

<sup>15</sup>Matt 13:24-30.

<sup>16</sup>Wesley, “Of the Church,” *Works* 3:56.

<sup>17</sup>Saint Augustine, “Homily XLV on John 10:1-10” in Philip Schaff, trans., *Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 7, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 254.

<sup>18</sup>Wesley, “Catholic Spirit,” *Works*, 2:84.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:92.

public worship, or as to the outward manner of performing it.”<sup>20</sup> The former, Wesley says, “is the spawn of hell, not the offspring of heaven.” “It is an irreconcilable enemy, not a friend, to true Catholicism, . . . nearer the spirit of Antichrist.”<sup>21</sup> The latter is “an unspeakable hindrance to the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth.”<sup>22</sup>

And yet, for Wesley, there is also, always, visible evidence of the presence of the invisible church.

The first is a physical gathering. This gathering, according to Wesley, may be as small as two or three, who share “one body” and “one calling.” That “one calling” is being “called out of the world, (so the original word properly signifies,) uniting together in one congregation.”<sup>23</sup> A church, by this definition, is constituted by people who separate from the world, “flee the wrath to come,” and come together in a group, “any number of people, how small or great soever.”<sup>24</sup>

The second visible evidence of the true church is holiness. “Religion . . . properly and directly consists in the knowledge and love of God, as manifested in the Son of his love, through the eternal Spirit. And this naturally leads to every heavenly temper, and to every good word and work.”<sup>25</sup> “The Church,” and here Wesley meant the invisible unity of believers, “is called holy, because it is holy, because every member thereof is holy, though in different degrees, as He that called them is holy.”<sup>26</sup> This “olive tree,” wrote Wesley, “is the invisible Church, for it ‘consists of holy believers’ which none but the invisible Church does.”<sup>27</sup>

In congregations (of whatever size) and through holiness, the invisible church is made visible to, and distinguishable from, this chaotic age.

### *Home Assemblies of the Pious*

For Wesleyans in their first 100 years of existence, order or discipline meant such small groups pursuing holiness, the home assemblies of the pious. There were two in traditional Wesleyan order, and both had basically disappeared by the mid-twentieth century.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 2:93.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Wesley, “Of the Church,” 3:47.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 3:46.

<sup>25</sup>Wesley, “Spiritual Worship,” *Works*, 3:99.

<sup>26</sup>Wesley, “Of the Church,” 3:55-6.

<sup>27</sup>Wesley, “Predestination Calmly Considered,” *Works*, 13:461.

The first, the class, was for seekers and believers, all who desired to “flee the wrath to come.”<sup>28</sup> It was instituted as a means of grace to help seekers encounter the presence of the new age by faith, and enter it by new birth. These groups were limited to twelve men and women, all ages. To be a Methodist was to be in one of these groups. Class membership was membership. Class attendance was what counted, literally.

The question asked in class was pretty simple: How does your “soul prosper?”<sup>29</sup> Theologically it means how is your disordered psyche (what you think, feel, and desire) being reordered by the Logos of God? Where are you encountering the reign of God within you? The question allowed people to testify to the presence of God’s activity, and that in turn created an expectation of more.

The second group was voluntary, for those who knew they had tasted the age to come. These groups were married or single men, or married or single women. In these groups of three to five, people could deal with “temptations of such a kind as they knew not how to speak in a class [where] persons of every sort, young and old, men and women, met together.”<sup>30</sup> For even though people had experienced the new birth, sin had power over their disordered souls, even if it did not reign over them, “for the war was not over. . . . They had still to wrestle with flesh and blood, and with principalities and powers; so that temptations were on every side.”<sup>31</sup>

These band meetings, as Wesley called them, were confession groups where, believers could, as Wesley wrote, “pour out of their hearts without reserve, particularly with regard to the sin which did still ‘easily beset’ them, and the temptations which were most apt to prevail over them.”<sup>32</sup> Through confession, temptation and sin were disarmed.

Each week participants in the bands would answer five questions each in turn: 1. What sins have you committed since we last met? 2. What temptations have you met with? 3. How were you delivered? 4. What have you done that you know not if it be sin? 5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Wesley, “Rules of the Methodist Society,” *Works* 9:69; See also Wesley, “Awake Thou that sleepest,” *Works* 1:147; Matt 3:7 and Luke 3:7.

<sup>29</sup>Wesley, “Rules of the Band Societies,” *Works* 9:70.

<sup>30</sup>Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,” *Works* 9:267.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 9:266.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 9:267.

<sup>33</sup>Wesley, “Rules of the Band Societies,” 9:78.



To be part of a band meant being willing to come out of hiding, to shuck pretense, and to be vulnerable before a brother or sister in Christ. It meant acting as a priest one to another, acting in love toward another whose sin you know. It meant allowing someone, who knows your sin, to act in love toward you.

In the bands people expected that through confession God would fulfill God's salvific promise. They could "be healed" (James 5:16). God could "cleanse . . . from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). People began to move out of shame and hiding and move into the light. They began to expect that they could actually live as witnesses to the age to come in this present age.

### ***The Iconic***

What is the difference between an idol and an icon? Both are images, and yet one is clearly forbidden by the second commandment of the Decalogue, while the other the church has claimed is useful to worship and an extension of the logic of the incarnation. The difference is that the purpose of the first is to draw the observer to itself. The purpose of the second is to draw the observer through it to the divine reality beyond it.

Much of the stuff we do in American Wesleyan denominations to order our common life is idolatrous. It is about us being attractive to the world around. It is about drawing the world to us. It is about having quality programs, insuring engaging worship, offering competent need meeting services, and building large and popular institutions. We say to the world, "Come be with us. We have our act together. We are doing stuff that makes a difference. You should want us."

And we leaders are the worst, presenting ourselves as competent effective change makers. As far as I can tell, the ideal American pastor seems to be a cross between a corporate executive and a reality television star.

Wesleyan Methodism is dangerously close to becoming indistinguishable from a culture of consumerism and fame, where humans are defined by what we desire and valued by being desired. "I am what I desire. Desire me."

Our communities are intended to be icons of the eschaton, glimpses of God's life-giving order, and signs of the new creation. God intends them to be places where truth, love, mercy, and justice, are made visible; where the present age to come is manifest (yes, imperfectly), but in order that people, like my dining companion in Seattle, can be drawn through

them to the now present and coming reality “in, with, and under” them, as Martin Luther might say.

The vulnerability and honesty of the classes and bands, these “home assemblies of the pious,” challenge cultures of hiding, hypocrisy, and fear. When we allow ourselves to be true and vulnerable to our brothers and sisters we testify to a reality that stands in stark contrast to the one we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell on a regular basis. We become witnesses to the present age to come “in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

### ***Conclusion***

The second phrase from van Lodenstein that struck me was from another sermon entitled “Eternal Life” in which van Lodenstein encourages people to continue seeking deeper encounters with God.

The sermon elegantly nuances God’s action with our agency. In two sentences he manages to clarify both our human utter dependence on God and the necessity to act as we participate in God’s mission. He says, “Wait upon the Lord, for He is like a light that arises out of the East.” But then he adds, “Move always towards the East.”<sup>34</sup>

When we look at the state of the churches in the Wesleyan tradition, our denominations, our congregations, and our souls, we may be tempted to despair. None of us can make the sun rise. But if we want to hasten that experience, we should not simply wait in the dark. We should move in the dark, toward where God has promised light.

We cannot fix our denominations. We can’t even fix our own souls, but we could restore the designated means of grace, and reorder in the church. It will cost us. We will have to agree to seek to align our lives with God’s merciful protective order. We will have to step out of the shadows, confess the disorder of our souls and relationships, and be vulnerable to God and each other. And we will have to discipline ourselves to know one another in our weakness and not look away.

Then we will see how soon the light dawns. We can’t make the sun rise, but we can move toward the east.

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<sup>34</sup>Lodenstein, “Eternal Life,” 166.

# REASONABLE EXTREMISTS? CHRISTIAN FREEDOM IN A POST-CHRISTENDOM SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>

by

Philip R. Meadows

Speaking to a gathering of religious educators at the beginning of November last year (2016), the Archbishop of Canterbury was reported to have identified himself as a religious “extremist”! Justin Welby recalled his conversation with a “very senior politician” about recent efforts by the Government to drive through anti-extremism legislation based on so-called “British values.” The politician had taken it for granted that all reasonable people would think “liberal democracy” and the “rule of law” were more important than personal faith commitments. But Welby responded, “You’ve got a real problem, because for me, personally, my faith is more important than the rule of law, so you have an extremist sitting in here with you.” He explained, “We do not believe as Christians that the rule of law outweighs everything else, we believe that the Kingdom of God outweighs everything else.”<sup>2</sup> These comments were offered in a broader critique of religious illiteracy among Government leaders that he said rendered them incapable of distinguishing between Muslim extremists and evangelical Christians.

The British Government has defined extremism as “the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.”<sup>3</sup> This definition has sparked a great deal of controversy on almost every point, among politicians and policemen, lawyers and academics, media and security experts alike.<sup>4</sup> But one thing that unites the protest, is a concern for our historic freedoms of belief, speech and legitimate dissent, not to mention the need for holding Government itself to account.

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<sup>1</sup>First presented as a plenary address at the annual meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society, March 2017, at Asbury Theological Seminary.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/11/08/welby-government-assumes-believers-are-just-a-bit-bonkers>. Accessed on 6 January 2017.

<sup>3</sup>HM Government, *Counter-Extremism Strategy*, Command Paper 9148 (October 2015), 9.

<sup>4</sup>Joanna Dawson (Home Affairs), *Counter-Extremism Policy: An Overview*, Briefing Paper #7238 (House of Commons Library, May 2016).

Much recent criticism has been aimed at the proposed introduction of “Extremism Disruption Orders” (EDOs), designed to restrict the activities of people who are judged to be extremists, whether or not they have broken the law. The intention of EDOs is to disrupt the process of radicalization that leads to the spread of extremism, with the goal of “defeating extremism in all its forms.”<sup>5</sup> Because the definition of extremism is so vague, however, it runs the risk of criminalizing every ordinary person for merely holding unpopular, traditional or challenging views. At worst, this well intentioned but misguided policy has fuelled dystopian prophecies of Orwellian “thought police,” and the invention of “pre-crime” units aimed at preventing terror by silencing all forms of dissent in advance.<sup>6</sup> The breadth of concern is clearly symbolized by the national campaign, “Defend Free Speech,” supported by many unlikely allies, from the Christian Institute to the National Secular Society.<sup>7</sup>

Speaking as an evangelical Christian in Britain, I want to know how to sing the songs of the Lord in this strange new land (Psalm 137:4).<sup>8</sup> It raises pressing questions about the very nature of Christian freedom, how it shapes our vision of the church, and especially our witness in the world. And what I want to share with you is something I have learned from Wesley and the early Methodist movement: that the real issue is not whether evangelicals should insist upon the legislative freedom to practice their

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<sup>5</sup>Former Prime Minister, David Cameron, in HM Government, *Counter-Extremism Strategy*, 6. See also, Chapter 5, “Disrupting Extremists.” This view has been argued at length by Alex Schmid, *Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?* (International Centre for Counter Terrorism, 2014). He claims that “the distinction between acceptable “non-violent extremists” and unacceptable “violent extremists” is a false and illusory” (2). He concludes that “governments should challenge and resist all extremism, whether it is violent or not” (25).

<sup>6</sup>See Robert Gleave and Lawrence McNamara, “Non-violent extremism: some questions about laws and limits,” UK Human Rights Blog (22 May 2015). <https://ukhumanrightsblog.com/2015/05/22/non-violent-extremism-some-questions-about-laws-and-limits-robert-gleave-and-lawrence-mcnamara/>. Accessed on 6 January 2017.

<sup>7</sup><http://defendfreespeech.org.uk>.

<sup>8</sup>For a recent summary of Government policy by the Evangelical Alliance, see: [http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/politics/briefing-government-plans-on-extremism.cfm?mc\\_cid=eb907b0fc9&mc\\_eid=4362aa6148](http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/politics/briefing-government-plans-on-extremism.cfm?mc_cid=eb907b0fc9&mc_eid=4362aa6148). Accessed on 20 January 2017.

faith openly and without persecution. Of course, they should.<sup>9</sup> Rather, what stake is the freedom that all Christians have to follow Jesus with or without the protection of the state: a freedom for the obedience of faith that is secured by the cross and resurrection alone; a freedom to live and die for the sake of the gospel in the face of persecution. I will argue that embracing this freedom is the vocation of truly radical discipleship, and the challenge we face as evangelical Christian communities in an increasingly post-Christendom society.<sup>10</sup>

### ***The Charge of Extremism***

I am sure the Archbishop of Canterbury does not wake up on a morning thinking, “This is a good day to be an extremist!” It is a term of derision, not a badge of honor. Even so, the trouble with “extremism” is that it cannot be adequately defined. On the one hand, it is incoherent to define it as vocal opposition to fundamental values, if those values include the freedom to dissent. On the other hand, leaving the definition too vague runs the risk of sheer inconsistency, since one person’s reasonable behavior can seem extreme to another, and there is no objective way to arbitrate the difference.<sup>11</sup>

John Wesley had the same problem with the charge of “enthusiasm.” He described it as a “dark, ambiguous word,” that is “frequently used, yet

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<sup>9</sup>See a recent publication by the Lawyers’ Christian Fellowship and Evangelical Alliance, *Speak Up: A Brief Guide to the Law and Your Gospel Freedoms* (2016). It is worth noting, however, the legal disclaimers they offer (3).

<sup>10</sup>When I say “radical,” I mean it in the sense of holiness laid out by John Stott in *The Radical Disciple* (IVP, 2013), chapter 1. In the context of this paper, I would define “radical” as a form of discipleship that lays hold of our freedom in Christ, to be in the world but not of the world, and to stake our lives on the difference, no matter what the cost. When I say “society,” all my reflections have their origins in the context of Great Britain today, though they may be more or less parallel with other societies.

<sup>11</sup>Louise Casey notes the subjective nature of the Government’s definition, but still worsens the problem by claiming that extremism is holding any opinion that is “at odds with the views of mainstream society” (*The Casey Review: A Review into Opportunity and Integration* [Department for Communities and Local Government, December 2016], 143, §9.16). Presumably this means whether or not one breaks the law. There is a constant blurring of definition when it comes to “fundamental” British values and what may be simply considered “mainstream” views or the popular opinion about how those fundamental values are expressed.

so rarely understood.”<sup>12</sup> Henry Rack notes that it had become “a generalised term of abuse” with a more “precise religious meaning as well as various secular associations,” from breaches of church order to social disruption and political subversion.<sup>13</sup> David Dunn-Wilson argued that there “gradually grew up an unreasoning and ill informed “oral tradition” in which the Methodist was not depicted as a humble God-fearing person . . . but as an immoral and dangerous madman.”<sup>14</sup> This image was so successfully constructed that anyone associated with the movement could be persecuted “not for what they were but for what they were imagined to be.” No wonder Wesley urged people to “beware of judging or calling any man an enthusiast, upon common report,” since bringing “so heavy an accusation, without full proof,” is “neither consistent with justice nor mercy.”<sup>15</sup> Let me draw out some parallels between eighteenth century enthusiasm and today’s charge of extremism, in order to see the connection with evangelical spirituality.

### *The Nature of Enthusiasm*

From a theological perspective, Wesley defined enthusiasm as “a religious madness arising from some falsely imagined influence or inspiration of God.”<sup>16</sup> He does not deny that such madness can be found, but that it is falsely imputed to those who pursue religion of the heart: who have “that utter contempt of all temporal things, and steady pursuit of things eternal; that divine conviction of things not seen; that rejoicing in the favor of God; that happy, holy love of God; and that testimony of his Spirit with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” In other words, the charge of

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<sup>12</sup>See also Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 2nd Ed (OUP, 1951), 1. He observes that enthusiasm is “a cant term, pejorative, and commonly misapplied” (1).

<sup>13</sup>Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast* (Epworth, 1992), 275. He says enthusiasm was “a charge which in many ways included all the others.”

<sup>14</sup>David Dunn-Wilson, *Many Waters Cannot Quench* (Epworth Press, 1969), 64.

<sup>15</sup>Sermon, “The Nature of Enthusiasm,” All references to Wesley’s work are from Thomas Jackson (Ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, volume 5 (1872), ¶33-34. Hereafter, WJW.

<sup>16</sup>Sermon, “Nature of Enthusiasm,” ¶12. Or, in the Archbishop of Canterbury’s terms, the kind of evangelical faith that the Government thinks is “a bit bonkers” (op cit).

enthusiasm is made against “the whole spirit, and life, and power of the religion of Jesus Christ.”<sup>17</sup>

In his extensive historical study, Ronald Knox described movements of enthusiasm like early Methodism as “a recurrent situation in Church history,” in which an excessive form of piety tends to undermine the unity of the church and its relationship with the world.<sup>18</sup> On the whole, Knox affirms the tendency to embrace the supernatural dimensions of the Christian life as a vital corrective to the secularizing powers of worldliness, but argues that this tendency becomes dangerous when it is taken to the extreme.

First, it may be good to pursue the religion of the heart, the perceptibility of grace and to have high expectations of God’s power to transform our whole lives from the inside out. But enthusiasts are guilty of having too much ambition, striving for unrealistic heights of perfection in their own lives, and condemning those weaker brethren who are happy to settle for less. Second, it may be good to seek a less worldly life, and be more attentive to the guidance of the Spirit, through prayerful meditation on the scriptures. But enthusiasts are guilty of condemning those who like to have a foot in both worlds, “whose ambition is to qualify, not to excel.” Third, it may be good to know that we are citizens of heaven, and merely pilgrims through this barren land. But enthusiasts are guilty of half-hearted commitment to life in the world, as “they will submit themselves to every ordinance of man, but always on the protest.” Finally, it may be good to envision the church as a community that nurtures the pursuit of holiness, and a commitment to prophetic action in the world. But enthusiasts are always claiming to restore the spirit of the primitive church, and are averse to institutional Christianity, being utterly convinced that “a church in alliance with the world has unchurched itself.”

Knox commends early Methodism as “the call back to Christ in an age of Deism,”<sup>19</sup> but would have advised Wesley to curb his enthusiasm. And given his charges, we probably have to find him guilty! But Wesley

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<sup>17</sup>Sermon, “Nature of Enthusiasm,” ¶2-3. In short, the charge of enthusiasm is laid at the feet of those who are committed to plain scriptural Christianity, to “have the mind which was in Christ, and walk as He also walked,” and expecting “a daily growth of pure and holy religion” (¶37, 39).

<sup>18</sup>Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 1. The following summary is based on Knox’s broad definition (1-3).

<sup>19</sup>Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 590.

would probably have charged Knox with perpetuating nominal Christianity, and the church's captivity to worldliness. In the end, he turns the accusation back on his detractors, by claiming that "real enthusiasm" is nothing other than nominal Christianity itself; that "common herd of enthusiasts" who falsely imagine they are Christians, when they are not!<sup>20</sup>

There are two things at stake here. First, the charge of enthusiasm was leveled at those who pursued a life of uncompromising discipleship, who committed their whole lives to following the way of Jesus, and dared to imagine they experienced the power of his Spirit to change them into his likeness. Second, the charge of enthusiasm was leveled at those who engaged a life of evangelistic mission, who openly shared their faith with others, and dared to imagine the beauty of scriptural holiness was for all people. I suggest this same daring imagination lies behind the perception of evangelical "extremism" in Britain today. In the Archbishop of Canterbury's terms, we might say it is a faith commitment "that can so catch hold of someone that they think life itself is not worth living" apart from the freedom to express it without reserve. For all his criticisms and cautions, even Knox concludes his study with the warning: "If we are content with the humdrum, the second-best, the hand-over-hand, it will not be forgiven us."<sup>21</sup>

### *The Fear of Subversion*

In the eighteenth century, England was overrun with political anxiety. The lingering threat of Jacobitism was followed by the contagious spirit of revolution coming from Europe and America. Given the close connection between church and state at the time, enthusiasm was easily interpreted as a form of political subversion. Wesley had developed a reputation for breaking the laws of the church and stretching the laws of the land. For these reasons and more, Methodism grew to be a highly organized but little understood movement, and easily suspected of being unpatriotic.

The charge sheet was extensive. They were accused of rebellious and antinomian tendencies, because they dared to question the infallibility of both church and state. They were accused of excessive moral strictness, because they censured the sinful diversions of their day, from fashion to

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<sup>20</sup>Sermon, "Nature of Enthusiasm," ¶37. For Wesley, a mark of real Christianity is that people are so transformed by the love of God that they are compelled by love to freely share what they have so freely received (2 Corinthians 5:14).

<sup>21</sup>Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 591.



theatre, gambling, brewing and distilling. They were accused of intolerance and hate speech, because they rebuked their neighbors, and counted the aristocracy as sinners alongside the lowest classes of society. They were accused of undermining the economic stability of the nation, because the industries of worldliness were afraid of losing business. And they were accused of compromising family life and the household economy, by radicalizing sons and daughters, and turning them against their parents. Rack noted that the fear of subversion and the resulting persecution of the early Methodists could be interpreted as a scapegoat mechanism for re-establishing a sense of social cohesion.<sup>22</sup>

### *The Defense of Reason*

When faced with the charge of enthusiasm, Wesley invited his opponents to reason the case with him. He drew upon the principles of scripture, and looked to the traditions of the church for guidance. And he hoped they would merely find plain old scriptural Christianity, to which he assumed there would be no final objection.<sup>23</sup> Above all, he invited them to judge a tree by its fruit, and examine the real rather than imaginary effects of heart religion on individuals and communities. He believed they would find the most Christlike, law abiding, neighbor loving, peace-making, and hope-giving people in the world. On this basis, Rack famously described Wesley as a “reasonable enthusiast.”<sup>24</sup>

Recently, the Archbishop of Canterbury has invited the same kind of rational discourse, by arguing that religious leaders need to “stand up and take responsibility for the actions of those who do things in the name of their religion,” for better or for worse.<sup>25</sup> By this, I assume he means that Muslims and Christians alike must critically examine the extent to which violent extremism is rooted in the theological narratives of their respec-

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<sup>22</sup>Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 274. It is not difficult to see why evangelical Christians might be scapegoated as religious extremists today, as a means of atoning for the incoherence and failures of contemporary liberal democracy. From this perspective, the fragility of our pluralistic society is held together, at least in part, by the common rejection of expressly Christian influence in any area of public life.

<sup>23</sup>See, for example, his “Appeals” to Men of Reason and Religion, WJW 8:5-262.

<sup>24</sup>Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 388.

<sup>25</sup><http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/11/18/welby-time-to-stop-saying-isil-has-nothing-to-do-with-islam/>. Accessed on 6 January 2017.

tive faith traditions, and be prepared to give an honest account in the public sphere. Presumably, he would defend evangelical commitment to the Kingdom of God as a positive blessing to Britain, even where it might challenge the supremacy of widely held British values. If Wesley was a reasonable enthusiast, we might say that Welby is attempting to be a “reasonable extremist!”

Notwithstanding the strength of Wesley’s apologetic, his case would never be won on the basis of scriptural reason. Given the advance of Deism, this simply was not the way his opponents were reasoning any more, and they would never find the Methodists to be reasonable! Wesley was already experiencing a collision of worlds: one shaped by the historic traditions of Christian spirituality, and the other shaped by the emerging conditions of modern liberalism. The task for contemporary evangelicals is even more difficult. British society is now ruled by practical atheism and a secular paradigm of human rights. Evangelicals may share the same tendency towards enthusiasm as their Methodist forebears, but the process of secularization is now almost complete. It only seems reasonable for Christians to curb their enthusiasm, accept their place as one among many religious worlds, and keep their scriptural arguments out of view. At best, the church might hope to infuse biblical values into public discourse, so long as they are disconnected from the troublesome narrative that has taken hundreds of years to shake off. At worst, the powers of secular society threaten to contest and domesticate what we do in both the public and private spheres, by direct political action or by fear and intimidation.

As I see it, evangelical Christians will not win the argument against the charge of extremism by an appeal to the law, but by proving the truth of what we claim by living as radical disciples who love and bless our neighbors. Our claim to reason cannot be verified in the corridors of power, but down our streets and in our workplaces, when our lives become an argument that others may find hard to resist.<sup>26</sup> And our case will not be settled by how many sign a petition to assert their rights, but how many are ready to give up those rights for the kingdom of God, and his mission of love in the world. In practice, this means counting the long term cost of becoming ever more virtuous, visible and vulnerable before a watching world.

### ***The Powers that Be***

Of course, some evangelicals across the centuries have more than deserved the approbation of hate and violence. But how is it that the charge of

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<sup>26</sup>See Sermon, “The General Spread of the Gospel,” ¶22.

enthusiasm and extremism can be leveled at generally conscientious, law abiding, peaceful and reasonable people like the majority of early Methodists and contemporary evangelicals? One explanation can draw upon the law of unintended consequences. Current anti-extremism legislation in Britain was originally developed as a response to the threat of terrorism, and Islamist violence in particular.<sup>27</sup> However, the latest strategy has shifted from curbing violence to tackling the “ideology” that promotes it; and from dealing with openly terrorist organizations to ensuring there is “no uncontested space,” including private groups with no history of violence.<sup>28</sup> This will be most visibly contested in the contexts of unregulated teaching environments such as church Sunday Schools and homeschooling.<sup>29</sup> In practice, this means policing the views of individuals and groups, on the highly questionable assumption that even non-violent extremism is inevitably a precursor to acts of violence, and a threat to British society as a whole.<sup>30</sup> It is not difficult to imagine the unintended consequences for Christian communities who publicly agree with the Archbishop of Canterbury, that “the kingdom of God outweighs everything else.”

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<sup>27</sup>These range from the London bombings in 2005 ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7\\_July\\_2005\\_London\\_bombings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7_July_2005_London_bombings)) to the recent spate of attacks in France, Belgium and Germany ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism\\_in\\_Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism_in_Europe)). All links accessed on 6 January 2017.

<sup>28</sup>The emerging antidote to radicalization lies in establishing policies of “integration,” to promote greater “social cohesion.” This will be accomplished by criminalizing views that run against so-called fundamental values and enforcing the promotion of mainstream views even in the private sphere. It is not difficult to feel the totalitarian impulse behind this approach (Casey, *The Casey Review*, 116f, §7.48f). See also *Oral Evidence - Integration Review* (9 January 2017), 14-16, 19-21, 53. (<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/communities-and-local-government-committee/integration-review/oral/44991.html>).

<sup>29</sup>See a helpful article by Christians in Education, “The Casey Report: Alarm Bells for Home Educators” (<http://christiansineducation.co.uk/the-casey-report-alarm-bells-for-home-educators/>). All links accessed on 26 January 2017. It is quite likely that evangelical Christian efforts will be deemed “regressive” and responsible for “pulling communities apart” (128, §8.23).

<sup>30</sup>See Myriam Francois-Cerrah’s comments in the *New Statesman* (July 2015), “It is a sad indictment of the government’s attempts to tackle extremism properly that it continues to peddle the same, unsubstantiated, widely-debunked and frankly self-serving “conveyor belt” theory of extremism. This theory somehow holds that anyone with socially conservative views is merely a few steps away from blowing us all up” (<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/07/state-sanctioned-prejudice-heart-david-camerons-approach-countering-extremism>). Accessed on 6 January 2017).

We have seen how the narrative of enthusiasm had the power to connect evangelical spirituality with the threat of social disruption and political subversion. The same happens today under the label of “extremism.” As Justin Welby has lamented, there is a growing conflation of evangelicalism and terrorism in the public imagination.<sup>31</sup> The early Methodists were often tarred with the same brush as religious madmen, papists and revolutionaries, even though they worked to establish a greater level of public decency, law and order. The fear of enthusiasm was enough to justify severe persecution from all areas of society. An important question, therefore, is how Wesley and the early Methodists understood their freedom to spread the gospel under the conditions of great suffering, often characterized by the threat of personal violence and death. Ironically, the same enthusiastic spirituality that got them into trouble in the first place also provided the spiritual resources to redeem it, and turn it to the good of the movement.

### ***The Experience of Persecution***

At the first Methodist Conference, they addressed the question, “What may we reasonably believe to be God’s design in raising up the preachers called Methodists?” The answer was, “To reform the nation, particularly the church, and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.”<sup>32</sup> It was this kind of confidence in divine providence that gave warrant for stretching church order, and drawing the charge of enthusiasm. Wesley also insisted that early Methodism should remain a renewal movement within the Church of England, and would not permit registration as a dissenting organization. So, technically speaking, they breached the Conventicle Act against unlawful assembly, and refused to seek protection under the law from the Act of Toleration.

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<sup>31</sup>See Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defense of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2011). According to Bruce, most Europeans interpret terrorist attacks as “proof that any religion taken too seriously is dangerous.” They are most likely “to distinguish between privatized tolerance and liberal religion, which is fine, with any religion that makes demands on them and that insists on public presence. To the extent that some Christians now behave like a disadvantaged minority and make a fuss about their rights simply confirms the view of the secular or only nominally christian majority that religion is more trouble than it is worth” (223).

<sup>32</sup>Wesley, “Minutes of Several Conversations,” 1744, WJW 8:299.

Although early Methodism was widely viewed as illegal and dangerous, there was no formal government censuring of the movement as a whole. National life had a much more regional flavour, so the matter was left in the hands of local clergy and magistrates. In practice, this meant “justice” was prosecuted through sporadic instances of rioting and mob violence. These could escalate from the mere disruption of field preaching and society gatherings, to the destruction of buildings and private homes used as meeting places. Converts were often physically assaulted, and brought their whole families into danger.

But it was the preachers who suffered the most, with acts of brutality that often left them within an inch of their lives, and sometimes to die from their injuries. They were beaten, stripped naked and dragged through the streets; they were stoned, pelted with excrement, dowsed in filth, and ducked in ponds. And there are even accounts of preachers’ wives being abused, raped and beaten while pregnant.<sup>33</sup> Rioting often took the form of targeted attacks, directed and controlled by an unholy alliance of church leaders and local magistrates. The aristocracy might also fund the mobs, and join in the rioting themselves. Henry Rack has suggested that violent persecution may have seemed justified to local communities by a fear of Methodist “invasion,” with its threat to social values, economic stability, family ties and communal identity.<sup>34</sup> In this potent mix of xenophobia and outraged tradition, rioters and ringleaders were lifted up as local heroes.

In his *Advice to the People Called Methodists*, Wesley made people well aware of the personal cost associated with joining the movement. “Do not imagine you can avoid giving offense . . . You will give offense to the bigots for [your] opinions, modes of worship, and ordinances . . . to men of form, by insisting so frequently and strongly on the inward power of religion; to moral men, (so called,) by declaring the absolute necessity of faith, in order to acceptance with God. To men of reason you will give offense, by talking of inspiration and receiving the Holy Ghost; to drunkards, Sabbath-breakers, common swearers, and other open sinners, by refraining from their company, as well as by that disapprobation of their behavior which you will often be obliged to express . . . The consequence, humanly speaking, must be, that, together with your reputation, you will

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<sup>33</sup>See Dunn Wilson, *Many Waters*, 41-54. For a brief summary of typical forms of persecution, see Wesley, “Letter to Rev. Mr Bally,” WJW 9:97-98.

<sup>34</sup>Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 273.

lose, first, the love of your friends, relations, and acquaintance, even those who once loved you the most tenderly; then your business, for many will employ you no longer, nor “buy of such an one as you are;” and, in due time . . . your health, liberty, and life.”<sup>35</sup>

So, why were people still willing to forsake everything by freely counting themselves among the people called Methodists? This is an important question because it seems the signs of the times point to a similar escalation of intolerance towards evangelical Christians today. I might refer you to the frequent reprimands and dismissal of employees in the workplace, for sensitively engaging in private spiritual conversation or simply wearing a cross.<sup>36</sup> There are high profile cases brought against private businesses, from guest houses to cake shops, for retaining a traditional stance in regard to their ethical practice.<sup>37</sup> And we have seen an elderly and mild-mannered street preacher put into hospital by a violent mob for expressing traditional views about sexuality, and subsequently

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<sup>35</sup>Wesley, “Advice to the People Called Methodists,” WJW 8:394-6.

<sup>36</sup>Over the last year alone, we have seen disciplinary action taken against a teacher who gave a book on the Christian spirituality to a Muslim colleague after a friendly conversation about their faith commitments (April 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-35988115>); the prosecution of a school worker for sharing her views with an enquiring student (November 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-38130074>); the dismissal of a seasoned nurse, who simply offered to pray with people in hospital, who had themselves indicated a prior religious commitment (December 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/11/experienced-nurse-fired-job-offering-pray-patients-waiting-surgery/>). We have seen Christians in many contexts reprimanded for merely wearing a cross or other small symbols of faith at work. It is particularly troubling how many of these arraignments are against black Christians, who tend to have a more vibrant and evangelical faith than mainline, liberal, and predominantly white denominations. See also, the case of a nursery nurse who was eventually acquitted (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-33049535>). A helpful commentary on current issues is provided on the Christian Concern website (<http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/religious-free-dom>). All links accessed on 6 January 2017.

<sup>37</sup>See the case against the Ashers Baking Company: <http://www.christian.org.uk/case/ashers-baking-company/>. Ironically, Peter Tatchell, founder of the Stonewall, a charity set up to defend gay rights, has protested the recent judgment against the Ashers in the Court of Appeal, claiming the verdict is “a dangerous, authoritarian precedent that is open to serious abuse.” <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/ashers-bakery-cakes-gay-marriage-discrimination-northern-ireland-a7377916.html>. All links accessed on 6 January 2017.

convicted for inciting violence, while the mob itself went entirely unpunished.<sup>38</sup> Some pressure groups are intentionally scrutinizing the paperwork and practice of evangelical Christian charities, with the intention of prosecuting any sign of deviation from the advancement of secular-liberal values. Clearly the rights to freedom of expression can be easily limited by the rights of others to be freed from it!<sup>39</sup>

What I think we can learn from the early Methodist movement does not come from comparing the socio-political contexts, or how to defend our freedoms. Rather, Wesley teaches us that the underlying cause of our conflict is spiritual, and so it first requires a spiritual response. Of course, this brings us right back into the realm of enthusiasm, and may only deepen the charge of extremism still further.

### *The Nature of Our Struggle*

Having warned the Methodists about the threat of persecution, Wesley continues to advise them about how to stand firm. "Consider deeply within yourself, Is the God whom I serve able to deliver me? . . . I know not how to give up my reputation, my friends, my substance, my liberty, my life. Can God give me to rejoice in doing this; and may I depend upon him that he will? Are the hairs of my head all numbered; and does He never fail them that trust in him? Weigh this thoroughly; and if you can trust God with your all, then go on in the power of his might."<sup>40</sup>

Contrary to the spirit of Deism, Wesley believed that God is present in all things and powerfully at work in our circumstances. One definition of enthusiasm that he rejected outright was the conscious affirmation of divine providence, wisely governing the whole of creation, and graciously directing each of our lives.<sup>41</sup> His writings often celebrate how God miraculously preserved, protected and provided for those facing the dangers of persecution. Again, contrary to the spirit of Deism, he also believed in the reality of the Devil and that we are subject to the influence of evil spirits,

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<sup>38</sup>Paul Diamond, "The Barrister," in Rob Frost (ed), *Freedom Fighters: Defending Christian Freedoms in a Politically Correct Age* (Authentic, 2005), 77-83.

<sup>39</sup>This ambiguity is clearly set out in Evangelical Alliance, *Speak Up*, 5. Louise Casey cited the view that "universal human rights and norms should be the means by which we judge extremism" (*The Casey Review*, 143, §9.17).

<sup>40</sup>Wesley, "Advice," WJW 8:396.

<sup>41</sup>See Philip R. Meadows, "Wesleyan Theology for a World Context," in *Windows on Wesley* (Applied Theology Press, 1998), chapter 2.

who attack body and soul to undermine the work of God among us.<sup>42</sup> Dunn Wilson has charted how Wesley saw “the Christian life as part of the great cosmic battle between God and the Devil,” and taught the early Methodists to view their sufferings and persecutions as the wounds of spiritual warfare.<sup>43</sup> One way or another, persecution advanced the mission of God, as the faithful witness of their lives brought glory to his name and the salvation of souls.

Wesley frequently drew upon the biblical language of principalities and powers to account for the experience of suffering: from spiritual darkness to physical trials, and from ecclesiastical opposition to mob violence.<sup>44</sup> Commenting on Ephesians 6:12, he notes there are “evil spirits who range abroad” and “continually oppose faith, love, holiness, either by force or fraud; and labor to infuse unbelief, pride, idolatry, malice, envy, anger, and hatred.”<sup>45</sup> Viewing persecution as a matter of spiritual warfare made three things possible. First, they entered into battle armed only with faith, hope and love; trusting that God permits, limits and ultimately redeems our suffering.<sup>46</sup> Second, they sought confidence in the perfect love of God to set them free from the fear of death, and empowered them to count the cost of discipleship; doing no harm and taking every opportunity to alleviate the suffering of others.<sup>47</sup> Third, their commitment to the love of God and neighbor meant overcoming the powers of evil by resisting any temptation to retaliate, retreat or resign from the fight.

Here is the truth of Christian freedom for the church in all ages. It is a freedom from the powers of sin, fear and death. It is a freedom to spread the gospel in word and deed, in peace and love, despite the suffering we may have to face. It is a freedom that is not secured by the powers

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<sup>42</sup>See, for example, Sermon, “Of Evil Angels,” WJW 6.

<sup>43</sup>Dunn Wilson, *Many Waters*, 117f.

<sup>44</sup>This biblical theme was recovered by a number of theologians in the aftermath of the second world war (e.g., Jacques Ellul, Karl Barth) and has figured prominently in the work of John Howard Yoder. For a helpful summary, see Marva Dawn, “The Biblical Concept of ‘Principalities and Powers’” in Stanley Hauerwas et al (eds), *The Wisdom of the Cross* (Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>45</sup>Wesley on Ephesians 6:12 in *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Epworth, 1977), 721. Hereafter NTN.

<sup>46</sup>The weapons of their warfare were prayer and the word of God. 2 Corinthians 10:4, NTN, 667. Also, Ephesians 6:13-18, NTN, 721-723.

<sup>47</sup>Wesley, “The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies,” WJW8:287f.



of this world, but remains ours even when they turn against us. It is a freedom that comes from the expectation of persecution, and the reward of heaven. It is a freedom that comes from following Jesus, denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, and sharing his mission in the world. It is a freedom that comes from knowing the battle belongs to the Lord, that we have a God who raises the dead, and that he has the last word over our lives.

### *The Signs of the Times*

In the eighteenth century, the Government turned a blind eye to the eccentricities of Methodism as a nationwide movement, preferring informal toleration over systematic oppression. Acting with repressive zeal would have hoisted them on the same petard as the enthusiasts themselves.<sup>48</sup> In the twenty-first century, however, the British Government aims to see everything that is going on, through the surveillance of every space, in order to contest and control our lives from the top.<sup>49</sup> In principle, this should protect us all from the threat of violent extremists as well as mob justice. But the politicians of today appear to have abandoned the rationality of their forbears, by seeking to overcome extremism with ever more extreme measures of control, all in name of freedom. The former Prime Minister, David Cameron, justified the new legislation by claiming the Government had been “too tolerant of intolerance.”<sup>50</sup> And the potential implications of this new Government-sponsored “intolerance” extends from curbing the freedom of speech to criminalizing ordinary Christians for anything that might cause offense, in public or even private society.<sup>51</sup> Let me attempt to discern the spirits.

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<sup>48</sup>Dunn Wilson, *Many Waters*, 56-57.

<sup>49</sup>There are well established civil laws for limiting free speech within the bounds of public order, prosecuted through the local courts. The new legislation for Banning Orders and Extremism Disruption Orders makes these issues a matter of criminal law for the high court to settle.

<sup>50</sup>HM Government, *Counter-Extremism Strategy*, 5.

<sup>51</sup>The incoherence of the Government’s position has been widely observed, as being both illiberal and extremist, even on his own terms. Conservative politician David Davis has rightly warned, “We’ve got to be very careful that we don’t end up like the people we’re trying to defeat, forgetting what we’re defending” ([http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/10/01/theresa-may-extremism-laws\\_n\\_5912012.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/10/01/theresa-may-extremism-laws_n_5912012.html). Accessed on 6 January 2017). See also what Myriam Francois-Cerrah has called “state-sanctioned prejudice” and “an illiberal attack on our freedoms” (op cit).

### ***Secularization and the Spirit of Worldliness***

Ultimately, the only space which cannot be put under direct surveillance by the Government is our own conscience; and this is the spiritual battlefield upon which our freedom is finally contested. Whether we are visibly persecuted or not, the principalities and powers work invisibly, competing for our hearts and captivating our lives from the inside out. Gordon Rupp reminded us that “this fight of faith is the ultimate conflict in our human existence, and that the front line of the battle runs through the conscience of each individual.” He argues, “If we are beaten there, all is lost. Victory has gone to the principalities and powers. If we win there, then we are more than conquerors indeed.”<sup>52</sup> This applies both to the lives of individual Christians and whole Christian communities.

Wesley tells us there are always two kinds of spiritual power at work among us.<sup>53</sup> There is a “mystery of godliness” in which the “sanctifying Spirit” draws all humanity to Jesus, from darkness into the light of his kingdom. Alongside this is the “mystery of iniquity” that undermines the sanctifying mission of God by infusing a love of the world. This “energy of Satan” captivates people’s hearts and lives to sinful habits, imperceptibly and by degrees. In the early church, the principalities and powers attempted to thwart the spread of the gospel by the threat of physical violence. Under the terms of Christendom, however, all they had to do was domesticate the church by stealth, and dissipate its witness through the subtle temptations of worldliness.

Wesley claimed that “persecution never did, never could, give any lasting wound to genuine Christianity. But the greatest it ever received . . . was struck in the fourth century by Constantine the Great, when he called himself a Christian, and poured in a flood of riches, honours, and power upon the Christians; more especially upon the Clergy.”<sup>54</sup> The result was nominal Christianity, in both church and state. Over time, Wesley

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<sup>52</sup>E. Gordon Rupp, *Principalities and Powers* (Epworth Press, 1952), 97. He draws on Luther’s choice of the word *Anfechtung* to mean temptation, for its association with spiritual combat. See David P. Scaer, “The Concept of *Anfechtung* in Luther’s Thought,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 47:1 (1983), 15-30.

<sup>53</sup>Sermon, “The Mystery of Iniquity,” ¶2-4, WJW 6.

<sup>54</sup>Sermon, “Mystery of Iniquity,” ¶27. In this, he can be aligned with the tradition of radical Christianity over against the magisterial reformers of the sixteenth-century.

could see this same mystery of iniquity at work among the people called Methodists, especially in his warnings about the danger of increasing riches, and his fear of them becoming a dead sect.<sup>55</sup>

Britain today is an increasingly secularized society,<sup>56</sup> but the legacy of Christendom still casts a long shadow over the inherited churches. On the one hand, the mystery of iniquity exploits our lingering Christendom mindset by instilling the habits of “self-secularisation.”<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, it works through the secular powers to persecute those radicals who dare to stand firm, by oppressing them under the law.

A secularized church poses no threat to the powers that be.<sup>58</sup> On the contrary, it is even co-opted as an instrument in the fight against evangelical Christianity, despite advancing the cause of its own demise. But still, the ultimate threat comes from Christendom-minded people of all theological persuasions, who have been duped into thinking of Christian freedom in terms of individual autonomy, preserved by liberal democracy, and secured by the state.<sup>59</sup> We simply think that people are mad enthusiasts or religious extremists if they intentionally exchange this freedom for the lordship of Christ, knowing the cost it will entail.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the irony is most evident in so-called evangelical Christians who spend more time

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<sup>55</sup>Wesley, “Thoughts Upon Methodism,” ¶1, WJW 13:320.

<sup>56</sup>Steve Bruce argues that secularization is “an unintended consequence of a variety of complex social changes that for brevity we call modernization” (*Secularization*, 56). At the heart of this, is a capitulation to the values of liberal democracy.

<sup>57</sup>See Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File: Papers on the Subversion of the Modern Church* (IVP, 1983). I take self-secularization to include: (1) Fading commitment to the life of radical and whole life discipleship; which leads to (2) Compromising the demands of scriptural Christianity with secular norms; as this is manifest in (3) Declining participation in the structures of the visible church. These three are inseparably related.

<sup>58</sup>Louise Casey laments the fact some clerics do not belong to “the majority of peaceful, tolerant and liberal religious leaders” who endorse the fundamental values and mainstream views of society (*The Casey Review*, 136, §8.54). In essence, the opposite of “liberal” is “extremist.”

<sup>59</sup>This is often manifest, with a good dose of irony, in prayers for the persecuted church which is spiritually vital and growing made by those who are kept safe by the state but are spiritual dead and declining.

<sup>60</sup>See Philip Meadows, “Understanding the Mission Field Around Us,” in: Rob Frost, *Freedom Fighters*, chapter 12.

fighting for their rights to speak than they ever do in actually spreading the gospel.<sup>61</sup>

### ***Relativism and the Spirit of Offense***

Throughout most of my lifetime, evangelism has been the subject of scorn rather than prohibition, and censured only by the church's lack of proper confidence in the gospel. At worst, persecution may have come in the form of ridicule, and the fear of embarrassment has been more than enough to silence our witness. When the principalities and powers have won the battle in our hearts, we end up censoring ourselves. But now, the task of proclaiming the gospel as public truth, or simply sharing our faith with others in relational ways, can come under suspicion as an act of violence.

The fusion of liberal democracy with postmodern relativism has rendered all claims to truth as nothing more than the will to power, and made protection from being offended a fundamental human right. We might call it the tyranny of "political correctness." Roger Scruton argued recently that the law is meant to "defend the right to be offensive," not to criminalize it.<sup>62</sup> He observes that one of the most potent methods of silencing others today is to diagnose the offending view as another new phobia, in order to rule out any kind of rational dialogue.<sup>63</sup> Dissenting views are treated as contagious diseases to be quarantined and eradicated.

If Wesley is right about the nature of authentic discipleship, contemporary evangelicals must become reconciled to the idea that their lives

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<sup>61</sup>In 2013, Barna research indicated that evangelicals "have among the highest rates of failure in follow-through from conviction to action when it comes to sharing their faith. Nearly one-third (31%) believe they should evangelize, but have not done so—at least within the past year" (<https://www.barna.com/research/is-evangelism-going-out-of-style/>). There is, however, evidence of an increase in faith sharing among "millennials" in the USA (see, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/may/state-of-evangelism.html>). All links accessed on 6 January 2017.

<sup>62</sup>Scruton argues, "free speech is not the cause of the tensions that are growing around us, but the only possible solution to them" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34613855>. Accessed on 2 January 2017).

<sup>63</sup>Scruton discusses the examples of "Islamophobia" and "homophobia." In October 2015, one of the most outspoken feminists of the last generation, Germaine Greer, was initially banned from giving a university lecture for her view that transgender females are not "women." She was diagnosed with "transphobia" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34625512>. Accessed 6 January 2017).

will give “continual offence”; and we should heed his warning, that “you must consent to give up your principles, or your fond hope of pleasing men.”<sup>64</sup> For Wesley, the issue is not really freedom of speech at all. It is a freedom from the fear of “man.” The question is not whether the powers that be are willing to grant us freedom to live as disciples of Jesus, but whether we are willing to embrace the true freedom we have in Christ to live out the gospel, no matter what the cost.

Nevertheless, Wesley would caution us against any hint of bigotry or evil speaking,<sup>65</sup> because such things give lie to the truth we profess. We may expect persecution, but we don’t go looking for it; neither can we adopt any spirit of triumphalism. Rather, it is the patient love of God and neighbor, embodied by radical disciples in relationships of service, that earn us the right to speak the truth into the lives of others. And it must be done with sensitivity, gentleness and respect.<sup>66</sup> Even so, the freedom to love like that will still be offensive to those who are unwittingly imprisoned by the powers of this world.

### ***Pluralism and the Spirit of Intolerance***

Since the signing of the Magna Carta (1215), the powers that be have promised religious toleration of one kind or another.<sup>67</sup> In the eighteenth century, John Wesley summarized it as a “catholic spirit,” or the possibility of Christians being committed to the fixity and truth of their own commitments while yet respecting those who differ with justice and love.<sup>68</sup> It was a response to the factious spirit of late Christendom. It was not meant to provide an answer for the challenge of religious pluralism, or flat-out atheism for that matter. Modern liberal democracy has, however, held out a principle of toleration that adapts well to this situation, by making all religious beliefs a matter of private opinion, and carefully regulating how

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<sup>64</sup>Wesley, “Advice,” WJW 8:395.

<sup>65</sup>See Sermon, “A Caution Against Bigotry,” WJW 5; and “The Cure of Evil Speaking,” WJW 6.

<sup>66</sup>See the practical advice given in Evangelical Alliance, *Speak Up*, 8-10. Also, 1 Peter 3:15.

<sup>67</sup>In the seventeenth century, the Act of Toleration (1689) meant that non-conformists were free to register their own buildings, license their own clergy, and hold their own “opinions” regarding doctrine, modes of worship, and church governance. The toleration afforded by the established church was also to be mirrored in a refusal of bigotry among the non-conforming churches themselves.

<sup>68</sup>Sermon, “The Catholic Spirit,” WJW 5.

they may be expressed in the realm of public society.<sup>69</sup> Under the arrangements of Christendom, the church enjoyed an historic place of privilege, and its voice was heard above others. In our post-Christendom society, however, the church is just one more religious voice being silenced by the politics that formerly established its influence.

Worse still, there is now a form of coercive pluralism that forces us to think of “truth” as just one group’s version of reality, “goodness” as just one version of the moral life, and religious freedom as the power to choose for oneself what is true and good.<sup>70</sup> This is the new orthodoxy for a privatized spirituality that suits the secular ideals of our consumerist economy. It is what Nick Spencer has called “totaltolerance”; a hegemonic cultural perspective that has become a fundamental British value.<sup>71</sup> To critique this agenda is now an act of religious and political heresy.<sup>72</sup> From this perspective, the charge of extremism is about where the front line is drawn between the public and private. In general, it is acceptable for people to be radicals, so long as it is never expressed in public, or even private social gatherings that dissent from the status quo.

But Wesley’s commitment to social holiness meant the very idea of private spirituality was an oxymoron.<sup>73</sup> In his commentary on the Beatitudes, he says a peace-maker is one that “being filled with the love of God and of all mankind, cannot confine the expressions of it to his own family, or friends, or acquaintance, or party, or to those of his own opinions” but “steps over all these narrow bounds, that he may do good to every man, that he may, some way or other, manifest his love to neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies.”<sup>74</sup> This is what it means to be a child of

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<sup>69</sup>See Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Eerdmans, 1991).

<sup>70</sup>Wesley rejected this kind of “latitudinarianism” as the spawn of hell, not the offspring of heaven! See Wesley, “Catholic Spirit,” §III.

<sup>71</sup>Nick Spencer, “The Sociologist,” in Rob Frost, *Freedom Fighters*, chapter 10.

<sup>72</sup>Most recently, two street preachers were convicted of a public order offence for articulating and explaining the biblical texts on the uniqueness of Christ. The court essentially ruled that the text of scripture, and the words of Jesus, are a form of hate speech. <http://christianconcern.com/our-concerns/freedom-of-speech/street-preachers-who-quoted-bible-convicted-in-modern-day-heresy-trial>. Accessed 1 March, 2017.

<sup>73</sup>See Sermon, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse IV,” WJW 5.

<sup>74</sup>Sermon, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse III,” §II.4, WJW 5.

God and a citizen of the kingdom. Wesley muses, "One would imagine such a person . . . should be the darling of mankind." And, we might add, the social reality of peaceable Christian communities. Yet the objection against evangelical Christianity has always been the same: "If they would but keep their religion to themselves, it would be tolerable," but "they do so much mischief in the world, that they ought to be tolerated no longer." So, Wesley concludes that persecution "is the very badge of our discipleship" and "a sure portion entailed on all the children of God: If we have it not, we are bastards and not sons."<sup>75</sup>

So, what is the freedom we treasure? Is it a religious freedom secured by the privileges of a (more or less) established Christianity? A freedom to proclaim the gospel without opposition or persecution. Or do we treasure the freedom that radical discipleship brings? A freedom from the privatizing forces of contemporary culture. A freedom to strive for the gospel as public truth in a world of unbelief. A freedom for personal evangelism when it amounts to a form of civil disobedience. A freedom which the Spirit brings by gathering a community of discipleship that is willing to live the gospel with or without the sanction or protection of the powers that be.

### ***A More Radical Future***

I suggest there are three possibilities facing evangelicals in a post-Christendom society. First is to retrench: to fight for the historic privileges of Christendom and a revival of scriptural values. This seems unlikely. Second is to retreat: to form Christian enclaves and leave the nation to its own devices. But this seems irresponsible. Third is to radicalize: to understand the "signs of the times," and pursue the life of radical discipleship in a culture of unbelief. This will require a commitment to the formation of radical Christian communities that are capable of making disciples who are willing to stake everything on the truth of the gospel and the kingdom of God.

There are at least two reasons why the church needs to be more radicalized, not less. On the one hand, radicalization is the only antidote to the mystery of iniquity, which dissipates our vitality, domesticates our witness, renders the church irrelevant, and leaves us struggling for mere survival. On the other hand, radicalization is the only way we can offer the world a genuinely Christian alternative to the narcissism and nihilism that that per-

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<sup>75</sup>Sermon, "Sermon on the Mount, III," §III.3, 7.

vades secular society. In my view, the only answer to violent extremism, as well as the incoherence of liberal democracy, is the costly witness of holy love that we alone can bring.<sup>76</sup> Let me conclude by summarizing the nature of such radical Christianity as I see it, from a Wesleyan perspective.

First, radical Christians are those who know the freedom they have in Christ, through the gift of his Spirit, to lay down their lives for the kingdom of God. This freedom comes from an assurance about our identity as children of God, unconditionally forgiven, and growing in his love, joy and peace. This growth in grace comes from longing for the perfect love of God which casts out all fear, and sets us free to love our neighbor in word and deed. This love makes us bold to speak, and compels us to share the gospel with anyone whose heart has been broken, or life enslaved, by the powers of sin and death. And this boldness comes from surrendering our whole lives to the mission of God, trusting in his provision alone. Wesley invites us to pray, “I put myself wholly into thy hands: put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for thee, or laid aside for thee, or trodden under foot for thee; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely, and heartily resign all to thy pleasure and disposal.”<sup>77</sup> We need to be radicalized, because this kind of discipleship cannot be founded upon the freedom that the world gives.

Second, the church is summoned to be a community of radical discipleship, set free from the spirit of worldliness, to seek the kingdom of God in its life together. The General Rules of early Methodist society are a useful starting point. We are to be radically good, striving to love one another, as good stewards of all we have, to meet each other’s needs and bless the world around us. We are to be radically harmless, avoiding evil of every kind, by intentionally giving up those ways of the world that ensnare our hearts and captivate our lives. We are to be radically devoted, in worship and all the means of grace, to be ever more attentive to the presence of God, ever more filled with the Spirit of love, and ever more surrendered to leadership of Jesus in daily life.

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<sup>76</sup>The Christian Institute has published a helpful gallery of such radicals in *The Little Book of Non-Violent Extremists* (2016). In this, Wesley features alongside those whose radical Christian witness changed society for the better, such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Beecher Stowe, and William Wilberforce.

<sup>77</sup>John Wesley, *Directions for Renewing Our Covenant With God*, 2nd Edn (1781), ¶14.



And we might follow Wesley's advice to remember the doctrine, spirit and discipline with which the early Methodist movement first set out. We are to be radical in doctrine, as those who hear and obey the whole teaching of scripture, and the wisdom of Christian antiquity, in the pursuit of everyday discipleship. We are to be radical in spirit, as those whose zeal for the love of God and neighbor is the source and end of all we do.<sup>78</sup> And we are to be radical in discipline, as those who share from the heart in accountable fellowship, watching over one another in love, and helping each other wrestle against the mystery of iniquity that competes for the soul. It is in disciplined Christian fellowship that our spiritual warfare is engaged, on the front lines of our hearts, and without which all is lost. There is no such thing as a solitary radical.<sup>79</sup> Wesley said, "the prince of this world" fears real Christians, and is yet more afraid when "bodies of men are visibly united together with the avowed design to overthrow his kingdom."<sup>80</sup> We need to be radicalized because this kind of community cannot be founded on the freedom that the world gives.

Finally, the church has a Great Commission to go and radicalize people of all nations to the cause of Jesus, and the ways of his kingdom.<sup>81</sup> Today, the long term consequences of our failure to radicalize are becoming ever more apparent.<sup>82</sup> Without intending it, the church has accommodated itself to the manners of secular society, and the spirit of worldliness has largely sterilized its ability to reproduce.<sup>83</sup> But I am not pessimistic, because I have witnessed what God can do with a few reasonable extremists, meeting in front rooms, sharing life together, watching over one

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<sup>78</sup>Sermon, "On Zeal," WJW 7.

<sup>79</sup>See Wesley's comments on "solitary religion" in Sermon, "Sermon on the Mount, IV," §I:1-4.

<sup>80</sup>Sermon, "On God's Vineyard," §III.1, IV.1, WJW 7. Wesley also defined the church as a "theatre of divine wisdom," revealing the mystery of godliness against the powers that be (NTN, Ephesians 3:10).

<sup>81</sup>The authority we have to make disciples belongs to the risen Jesus himself, as we become co-workers with him in the kingdom of God (Matthew 28:16-20).

<sup>82</sup>Where the Christendom mindset has prevailed, the church has become self-secularized by the unintentional consequences of defective gospels. The social gospel of kingdom values may have succeeded at making activists for public issues, but has neglected the call to conversion. And the evangelical gospel of sin management may have succeeded at making converts, but not true disciples.

<sup>83</sup>In many ways, I share the view of sociologists who argue the process of secularization is irreversible, though perhaps not inevitable. See Bruce, *Secularization*, 52f.

another's souls, giving up the ways of this world, loving their neighbors, and inviting them to join the adventure of radicalization.<sup>84</sup> I have seen very ordinary people become so enthusiastic about their faith that they are simply compelled by love to share the gospel, and do so joyfully, no matter what the cost. I think Wesley would find himself at home among them.

Can our denominational structures adopt a more radical stance? I doubt it. Can local churches within those structures become more radical communities of discipleship? I do not know. But what I do know is that the missionary freedom of the Spirit is repeatedly displayed in new expressions of church, both within and beyond the old wineskins. I see these signs of the kingdom emerging in many places. Will they be radical enough? I hope so, but only time will tell.

Let me give the last word to those great prophets of our time, The Newsboys:<sup>85</sup>

When did it become breaking a rule  
 To say your name out loud in school,  
 When your name's the only one that sets us free?  
 When did it become incorrect  
 To speak the truth about life and death,  
 When your life gave us all eternity?  
 Even if it gets me convicted,  
 I'll be on my knees with my hands lifted.  
 If serving you's against the law of man,  
 If living out my faith in you is banned,  
 Then I'll stand right before the jury.  
 If saying I believe is out of line,  
 If I'm judged cause I'm gonna give my life,  
 To show the world the love that fills me,  
 Then I want to be guilty.

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<sup>84</sup>Rob Warner observes that the only effective counter narrative to secularization has come from voluntarist churches, which have the spiritual capacity for continual reinvention and growth. See, *Secularization and Its Discontents* (Continuum, 2010), 177.

<sup>85</sup>Newsboys, Album, "Love Riot" (4 March 2016).

# TRANSFORMING MERCY: JOHN WESLEY'S LEGACY IN MORAL THEOLOGY

by

Sondra Wheeler

Allow me to start with a disclaimer. As scholars of John Wesley go, I am an amateur: maybe even a talented amateur, but definitely not the real thing. I know this because I have had the opportunity to work with some of you actual scholars of John Wesley, the church historians and Wesley Studies professors and teachers of historical theology who have shared my institution at various times over many years. (I was always convinced that if you stopped Jim Logan on the street suddenly and shouted “March 23rd, 1774!” he would have been able to tell you what John Wesley was doing that day. If I meet him in heaven, I plan to try it.) I freely confess that I am not that kind of expert, not a historian at all in fact, but an ethicist, or if you prefer, a moral theologian. And so perhaps it is not surprising that what most strikes and captures me about Wesley’s work, both as a writer and as the leader of the church he inadvertently brought into being, could be thought of as his moral theology. Now, I know what they say about everything looking like a nail if you happen to be a hammer. But I am persuaded that there is more to it than that. I am going to argue that there really is something unique and powerful about Wesley’s thought in the area of how faith forms life, something rooted as deeply in his doctrine of God as in his understanding of the human person, which could be of enormous value to the church at large if it were more deeply understood and more widely appreciated. When I am done, those of you who have more expertise can judge whether or not I have made my case.

First it is necessary to do a little brush-clearing, to put to one side things I do not mean to say, as well as to disavow the more popular misconceptions of Wesley. These are commonplace in the works of secular historians, and even of some historians of Christian thought who have not read their primary sources with sufficient attention. For the truth is, interpreting Wesley’s writing *requires* attention. This is partly because it is unsystematic and occasional and sometimes even polemical, so that he often makes a point in ways that appear at odds with other statements. Such tensions must be negotiated in a responsible manner, with proper

regard for context and circumstance and the rhetorical conventions of the time, not to mention Wesley's intense personal style. Care is needed too because, like anyone who remains an active thinker and writer over many decades, Wesley modulates his views over time, so that it is necessary for a reader to mark where he is along the path of his development. But most of all, attention is needed because there is actual nuance to what he says, a particular way he understands the language and concepts of Christian tradition which leads him to some richly distinctive conceptions of the life of faith. It is these understandings which shape his personal practice, and equally the character of the leadership he gives to his emerging movement. It is here that I want to focus.

Despite this distinctiveness, it is important to acknowledge that John Wesley's theology is not, properly speaking, original. Wesley makes an excellent case study for an introductory course in the history of Christian thought, because it is easy to find precedents for his doctrinal positions, easy to find biblical or patristic or golden age Anglican antecedents for various aspects of his practical and constructive theology. This is just as well, since the idea of being found actually original would probably have dismayed him. He sought throughout no more than to be faithful in thought and effective in forming himself and others in discipleship, to renew the practice of a faith that he thought had been delivered intact to his forebears. The fact that much of the foundation of his theology can be found in the Articles of the Anglican Church would likely have been a matter of great satisfaction to him. Wesley is distinctive only in the way he understands how the elements of Christian doctrine and the commitments of Christian practice, including those which have been regarded as in acute tension, *fit together* in a unity that is not so much moderated or balanced as it is simply whole. This, I think, is his gift to the church, a case I hope to detail in what follows. But I should say here that I certainly do not expect to tell all of you anything you do not already know. Like Wesley, I will not be original. I will only try to highlight a particular aspect of his thought that I believe has potential for resolving struggles in our own hearts and minds as well as divisions within and between our churches.

The fact of these divisions is not news to any of you, and it is certainly no recent discovery. Many of its terms are framed already in the earliest texts of the New Testament, incorporated into Paul's wrestling with his churches in Galatia and Corinth. The same tensions run through the book of Acts, and leave their traces scattered through the work of the redactors of the synoptic gospels. One pole of the argument is named

explicitly in James as a “misunderstanding” of Paul’s teaching, and the struggle reappears in various forms through the whole history of the Christian church as debates over faith and works, grace and law, mercy and justice, and belief and practice. It rears its head in the recurrent contests with various forms of Gnosticism ancient and modern, particularly in those forms which focus on spiritual understanding and denigrate the significance of conduct in a material world. And of course, it is a flash point (among other issues) in what we call the Protestant Reformation. (As with the Mexican American War and the Civil War, the other side has a different name for the conflict.)

But perhaps the form of this tension we all know most intimately is the one that confuses and divides the lives of our own churches as we debate the centrality (or not) of standards for sexual behavior, or the moral tolerability of abortion, or what implications Christian convictions have for issues of national policy like health care or immigration. No one of us, I expect, wishes to say that our faith has no bearing on our conduct in this world, or conversely that our actual behavior is of no significance whatever to our spiritual state. But neither do we want to lay out the works that must be done to secure our salvation, or the sins that surely preclude it. We, like John Wesley before us, are all too much the grandchildren of Luther for that. (This is just as well, because I bet we couldn’t agree on which things to include on either list.)

So it seems we are all dragged into the latest round of this 2000 year old struggle, efforts to hold together salvation by grace through faith with the expectation of a life worthy of the gospel. And here is where I want to return to Wesley for a way forward, a way that might be able to unite the two parties (apologies to Doug Strong) that split our own church but also many others. Over and over we find the pious on one side and the social activists on the other, the prayer circle on one night and the Social Outreach Committee on another, the pursuers of spiritual disciplines over here and the champions of justice over there, the inclusionists on one hand and the separatists on the other, so that we are always being asked to choose between alternatives: devotion and action, rigor and charity, holiness and hospitality, or spiritual renewal and public reform. The fact is, we know better than to accept such false choices, know that there cannot be holiness without justice or lasting and effective reform without inward transformation, and we have both better theology and better historical models than to leave such dichotomies unquestioned. But we have not successfully navigated a different path, or successfully articulated one. I

think that Wesley's way of understanding Christian faith and life offers us a third way. This way is based upon his conception of the nature of God and therefore of the character of God's work in the world, and it not only rejects privileging one side of these tensions over the other, but actually denies that they can be separated one from the other at all since they are understood as reflections of God's own nature. I have some hope that a keener focus on that central understanding and a clearer representation of it might benefit the whole church, both Wesleyan and Reformed, indeed both Protestant and Catholic.

One last preliminary matter: intellectual historians, especially secular ones, sometimes identify John Wesley, with his expectation of an actual transformation wrought by faith, and his insistence on perfection as the orienting point of Christian life, as an optimist. They see him as one more inheritor of the Enlightenment, led by confidence in reason and the malleability of the social order to expect human individuals and the institutions they create to become ever better, as the darkness of superstition and ignorance gives way to the triumph of science and the spread of benevolence. No one who has read broadly and attentively in Wesley's works can make such a mistake. In reality, Wesley's picture of the human being after the fall and apart from God's healing grace is exceedingly dark. He views us as deprived not only of a genuinely good will and all capacity for true knowledge of God, but even of reason itself, so that "natural man" is left in a state not much distinguished from that of the other animals. It is not in humanity that Wesley's confidence rests.

One may protest that the human being altogether apart from divine grace is an entirely theoretical construct, as on Wesley's account no one ever really exists in such a condition. Preventing grace is universal in his understanding, restoring to all persons alike the capacities for reason and cooperation that make human society possible, as well as the essential foundations of religious knowledge and action. Nevertheless, it is of considerable significance that John Wesley understands these capacities *not* as natural abilities that survive the lapse into sin, but as new exercises of God's grace, the expression of divine agency rather than native human powers. It is this understanding that keeps his position from being a simple voluntarism, and grounds his description of Christian life firmly in his doctrine of God rather than in his anthropology. This is not the common grace of John Calvin, the residual human powers that endure after the fall but are of no salvific significance; rather preventing grace is the first move in the work of rescue of the errant creation, and the move is God's own. I

emphasize this because it starts us off on the right foot, insisting that God is not only the first actor, but the one whose action makes any response possible. At every point this pattern is repeated, so that what we learn as we follow Wesley's account of the way of salvation is not who we are and what we are capable of, but rather who God is, and what God's sovereign mercy is able to do in and for the world God is reclaiming as God's own.

Reviewing in this company the standard three-part schema of prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace that organizes Wesley's discussion of salvation looks like an instance of what my Tennessee-bred husband would call "teaching your grandmother to suck eggs." (This wonderfully apt phrase mystifies most of my students. But we're in Kentucky, so I am counting on you to recognize its meaning as presuming to instruct your betters.) Still, I must reprise that standard framework if only to nuance it somewhat, to call into question the mechanical and linear model of this divine work that students frequently carry away from their brief exposure to John Wesley's thought. So listen with patience if you will, and I promise to be quick.

Prevenient grace is the grace of God universally bestowed which enlightens the conscience and makes possible any knowledge of God. It awakens us to our need for God, and restores sufficient liberty to enable us to accept the grace offered in Jesus Christ. Justifying grace is the pardoning and reconciling mercy which forgives our sins and restores us to peace with God. It is offered to all on Wesley's view, but not received by all. Its reception is also the occasion of the new birth, the beginning of the new life in Christ. And sanctifying grace is the agency by which that new life develops and matures, the Holy Spirit's ongoing work within us to bring about holiness of thought and conduct. It transforms our behavior by transforming our hearts, as Wesley would put it: reshaping our actions by reshaping what we love and desire and fear. In total, then, grace as John Wesley understood it is the work of God in the human being, bringing about by God's power and goodness the awakening of conscience, the reconciliation of relationship, and the transformation of the inner person. All of these together equip us for the life of love to which we are called, and all together bring about the fullness of salvation, which renews in us the likeness to God in which we were created.

This is a quite standard reading of the standard sermons which fill our textbooks, the kind of straightforward account we expect candidates for ministry in our churches to be able to render on demand. And, I would argue, it is a little too flat-footed. It risks making what is a heuristic

device—parsing out what we might call the different stages and effects of the grace of God—appear as if it were an ontological description, a picture of distinct and different things that are in principle separable. This is a problem partly because we are, much of the time, only too happy to settle for part of the program, just enough grace to keep us from the fires of hell without the bother and inconvenience of actually having to be changed. But it also allows us to think of faith and works, law and grace, mercy and justice, as things which can be set against one another, as if the Almighty were not quite of one mind. Our way of talking obscures the fact that in God, who is unity itself, being, will and act are one, and all attributions of character traits are made by way of metaphor. Such oppositions as those between judgment, pardon and the will to righteousness cannot exist, for the Lord our God is one God.

Now I recognize that for some purposes, the conceptual distinctions between preventing, justifying and sanctifying grace are vital. The idea of preventing grace serves to make clear that God is the sole source of redemption, and that the initiative and motive power lies with God alone. The doctrine of justifying grace through faith reinforces the perfect sufficiency of mercy, what enables Jesus Christ to say to the thief dying beside him “today you will be with me in paradise”—and empowers Wesley himself to preach convincingly the good news as he rode with the condemned toward the gallows. The language of sanctifying grace helps to avoid any suggestion that our salvation is the product of, or in any sense rests upon, our own moral efforts, or that growth in holiness redounds somehow to our own credit. But along with these distinctions it is essential to make a different point which is just as near to Wesley’s heart. This is that in the activity of the Holy Spirit who is God at work in us, the conviction of sin, the grace of faith (which justifies), and the filling of the heart with God’s love (which is the core of sanctification) can no more be separated than heat and light can be severed from the radiance of the sun. For grace is not a thing, an object acquired and stored like a talisman to ward off guilt and anxiety. It is the work of Almighty God whereby we are reconciled and reconstituted as whole human beings, and the image so drastically damaged in us by sin is restored to its intended reflection of divine glory.

As God is one, so God’s will for the salvation of the world is one, whole and entire, impossible to dis sever. It is experienced by us as piecemeal and sequential because WE are in time, and so the work of redemption must be in us a process. Moreover, in those of us who have not come to entire sanctity, our own wills remain divided, a tangle of opposed



desires so that we frequently find our spiritual and moral lives characterized by one step forward and two steps back, heightening the sense of fragmentation. But God is undivided and eternal, the One to whom all times are present, and in the perfect unity of love never wavers from the purpose of reclaiming and restoring the creation—including each of us!—to an unclouded mirror of God's glory and joy.

This can give to divine grace an aspect of intransigence from our standpoint, a kind of relentlessness that presses us always onward, expressed for instance in Jesus' more alarming sayings like cutting off the hand that causes one to sin. But that is not the only way to view it. As a lifeguard cannot be satisfied with removing some of the water from the lungs of the drowning person, and the surgeon cannot content herself with removing most of the cancer that threatens the life of the patient, so God cannot engage in half measures. Our lives rest in and depend upon the life of God who is LIFE itself, and nothing which hinders that life in us can be allowed to remain. This, I think, is why John Wesley insists upon perfection in love as the natural and essential goal of the Christian life.

And this leads me (at last, you are thinking) to what I see as Wesley's distinctive gift to the church: his recognition that in God, the universal call to repentance, the free offer of unconditional pardoning love, and the insistence upon total transformation are not merely compatible, to be properly nuanced and held in the right balance or viewed as aspects of a paradox. They are *the same thing*. They are together the shape of perfect love toward a fallen world, unified as creation redemption and consummation are unified in that each makes sense *only* as part of a single story. No account of Christian conviction that leaves any aspect to one side, and no picture of Christian existence that allows us to counter-pose one to another can be truthful, for God's work of redeeming creation remains beyond all human power to dissect. It is here in Wesley's doctrine of salvation that we find his "moral theology" if you will, and what I see as his greatest gift to the contemporary church. In his conception, mercy has been transformed from part to whole, from mere pardon to reclamation, and so seen as itself transforming. It is not finally God's willingness to overlook evil, but God's determination to overcome it.

This way of conceiving of grace undergirds a distinctive picture of Christian faith and life, one that leaves whole what the church from earliest times has recurrently been tempted to divide, and often to place in tension one with the other. It preserves the gratuitous character of salvation, its quality of springing from the very being of God with no ante-

cedent but God's free goodness. It stresses the entire sufficiency of grace, the touchstone of Protestant piety which made early Methodism so powerful and liberating as an evangelical force in England and America. This it manages to do without producing the deformations of evangelical thought which have plagued the church since the first Christian communities were gathered, spiritual complacency and moral indifferentism. And it retains the upward pull of "growing into the full stature of Jesus Christ," which is so prominent in Paul himself (and so much less so in many of those who claim him as inspiration), without closing the door of the church to those whose conduct falls short of the standard, which is never less than Christ himself.

The question is whether we can embrace such an understanding without falling into the kinds of pathology that have recurred among those strands of Christian tradition that have stressed spiritual growth and the aspiration to actual holiness. I will leave to one side the lapse into "works righteousness" outright, and also the construal of holiness as a matter chiefly of worldly pleasures to be foregone rather than holy charity to be cultivated. These are possible, and certainly have occurred in such traditions, but they are not the distortions to which we in our day are most prone. I am thinking rather of other deformations. One is a constant anxiety about our own state, the self-preoccupation and self-doubt which taints all service to God and eats away at confidence and joy. This I raise partly because one sees signs of it in John Wesley himself, in the journal entries late in his life that yet struggle with the reality of his own faith. This is a pathology to which an age steeped in the fear of divine judgment often gave rise, but any experienced pastor can tell you it still rears its head today. Another, perhaps more prevalent in our time, is the temptation to read the story backward. This is the seemingly logical but fatal leap from the conviction that real faith leads to real transformation to the belief that we are in a position to discern with confidence the spiritual standing of other people based on our own judgments about their behavior. For what it is worth, I believe that the barriers to these distortions are also present within Wesley's work. I think he offers us concepts and practices that might preserve both the capacity to rest in the sure and sufficient mercy of God, and the desire continually to draw ever nearer to his likeness; both the ability for the church to serve as a community of moral reflection and accountability and the humble refusal to judge one who is, after all, the servant of another. The resources I have in view I will gather under the rubric of the sovereignty of grace.

This is, of course, a term of art, one of the touchpoints of conflict and disagreement between the followers of Calvin and of Wesley, each of whom embraced the concept while meaning quite different things by it. For Calvin, its necessary corollary lay in the doctrine of eternal election, which preserves the perfect freedom of God's mercy. For Wesley, conversely, God's sovereign will is expressed par excellence in the universality of the call to repentance, and the universal bestowal of the capacity to heed it. But despite the polemics on both sides, John Wesley is not simply an 18<sup>th</sup> century Pelagian. For all the activism that Wesley's message inspired, it is important to note that Christian life is on his model fundamentally receptive, its repeated pattern consisting in accepting what God gives and does. Thus, one employs a freedom restored by preventing grace, receives the reconciliation offered in Jesus Christ, and presents oneself for the healing and transforming work to be accomplished by the Holy Spirit. All the practices which distinguished Wesley's followers were only this: the means of grace, ways of waiting for a healing one could not effect in oneself. At every point, God is the actor, and the human being the recipient of God's saving work.

This account does not, of course, leave us simply inert. The renewed capacity of the will must be exercised in a particular way, the gift of pardon must be accepted, and the places and practices wherein God has promised to meet us and nurture our restoration must be steadily frequented. At every point the promptings of the Holy Spirit can be heeded or ignored, and the freedom restored by grace may be used to say, finally, yes or no, (NB: This has the effect not of resolving but of relocating the mystery of perdition, from the impenetrability of divine election to the opacity of human freedom as created and restored, which can yet be exercised to one's final undoing.) The sovereignty of divine grace as John Wesley conceives it means not that the fullness of salvation must inexorably come, but that it is genuinely possible, genuinely available to all. And if the mercy of God is not "irresistible," it is indeed indefatigable. In all those who remain willing to receive, God remains instant and powerful to act. In anyone so willing, or even willing to be brought to willingness, God's own will for the holiness of charity will be fulfilled in the end. And this conviction has a number of implications for how we understand and live out our lives in the moral community of the church. These I will try to sketch, along with a few connections to our current situation in the UMC and elsewhere, and then be done.

Wesley, as you all know, does not understand grace as an attainment or a state or a final decree regarding judgment. He views it as rather as the

disposition and activity of God in relation to God's creatures. Thus, it is permanently dynamic, like a flame that looks like an object but is really an ongoing event. Alive and unchanging in the eternal God "whose will is ever directed to his children's good," its work in us is a process. While God's loving disposition toward us is unshakeable, we are anything but, being always in the midst of change. As creatures caught in time, bombarded by sensory experience and susceptible to myriad influences, we cannot truly stand still, but only move in one direction or another. This underlies John Wesley's belief that, spiritually speaking, we are always either being drawn toward greater nearness to God, or else turning away. Even what appears in us as stability is in reality intensely active, the work of the Holy Spirit engaging to defend us against the powers (without and within) that would tug us toward the darkness.

This dynamic conception of grace entails that one is never done with coming to faith, never finished with repentance and reformation, never secure in any attainment of character. All must be continually nourished and sustained by the living mercy of God, as the candle's flame must be constantly fed by fuel and oxygen to remain alight. Even perfection as Wesley understands it is not static or fixed so that one might rest upon it. It is simply a state of being undivided in heart so that there are no competing motives to draw one from the path of obedient charity into intentional sin. But this as a human condition is realized in time; it is not immutable, not proof against confusion or despair or rebellion outright. Just as the promptings of the Spirit to repentance can be ignored, and the grace of justifying faith can be neglected and allowed to atrophy so that it hardens into indifference and finally into unbelief, so even perfection can wither and die. Worse, it can be distorted into self-righteousness or complacency that leads to spiritual pride, that most deadly of all sins.

On this understanding, all religious life is fruit of the ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit, an expression of God's will to redemption calling us away from destruction toward the light and life constantly poured into us. Therefore, holiness in us, even salvation itself, cannot be a possession or a status, but only a relationship, whose one sure sign is the "love of God shed abroad in our hearts," as John Wesley so loves to quote. But our continuing dependence upon grace need not be to us a source of uncertainty and unease. It can be instead a bulwark of perfect confidence and peace. If we can never be secure in our own right, never settled comfortably into the status of "once saved, always saved," never finished with the call to holiness of life and heart, neither can we ever fall from within the com-

pass of God's power and will to rescue. There simply is no place one can get to where one is out of the reach of God's mercy, deprived of the power to turn—or even beyond the risk of God's pursuit. The sovereignty of grace means that while it may be squandered, it cannot be closed off.

And, of course, what each of us may apply to our own case applies equally to everyone else in the broad and tragically divided church of Jesus Christ. It is not given to any of us to see the end of our own story, much less the final outcome of another's. Whatever positions we may reject, whatever behavior we may deplore, whatever we may in conscience be obliged to name as wrongdoing or corruption, only one thing can we know with certainty: that God remains at work in every believer, awakening and correcting conscience, offering pardon and new life, re-inscribing the image of God's own goodness in the creature made to bear God's likeness. All of which is to say that those we are convinced are wrong in judgment or action remain our sisters and brothers in faith. Rather than chiefly "on the wrong side" they are chiefly those in whom the same grace of God in which we trust is at work, "those for whom Christ died" as Paul says, and fellow journeyers with us on the way of salvation. (Plus, there is always the possibility that we might be wrong about whose conscience needs correcting.)

This last is the sort of thing we are ready to affirm in theory, but altogether averse to taking seriously in practice. It is always tempting to ignore all the elements of human construction that go into any specific ethical decision or concrete moral judgment. This is particularly the case when—as so often in our own highly polarized environment—our passions are deeply engaged in the argument. But even Thomas Aquinas, not usually regarded as some namby-pamby liberal, says that the only perfectly certain principle of moral theology is that good is to be done and evil avoided. This is because he sees that the work of moral reasoning is always partly constructive, and thus contingent. All actual choices involve judgments of fact and likely consequence, the motives and intentions of other people, the interpretation of texts and the application of rules and principles that frequently appear to conflict with one another.

At every point in the analysis there are ways for people of intelligence, good faith and good will to come to very different conclusions. One need not be a moral relativist to recognize this. However objectively true and false, right and wrong may exist in the mind of God, our access to that objective reality is qualified by ignorance, mistake, and sin. But this is no call to the abandonment of moral conversation and moral dis-

cernment in the church. (I'm a moralist, after all, and think we have too little of that, not too much.) It is a call rather to humility about our own judgments, and charity toward those who reach different ones. Above all, we dare not presume to move from opinions about any particular position or behavior to judgments about the state of someone's heart and mind before God. As Paul writes to the partisans of an earlier moral controversy in the church, "who are you to judge the servants of another? It is before their own Lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for he is able to make them stand" (Rom. 14:4).

One more note about the sovereignty of grace, and then I am done. Just as there is no way for us to delimit its power either in ourselves or in others, neither can its operation be confined to only some dimensions or spheres of human existence. We might well prefer that our religion remain a matter of inward conviction rather than outward behavior, or perhaps a matter of personal and private behavior that does not impinge upon public life, or have bearing upon the institutions that structure it. But as God will have all of you, your whole love and loyalty, so God will claim lordship over every aspect of your life in the world. Much has been made in some contexts of the "individualism" of Wesley's preaching and of the Methodist movement generally, with its appeal to personal conviction and personal conversion, and its emphasis on religious experience. And it is certainly true that our experience of ourselves as sinners is deeply individual, as is the inner awareness of God's gracious acceptance which triumphs over our alienation. It is to this, the loneliness of guilt and the intensely personal affirmation of knowing oneself embraced by God, that Wesley addressed much of his evangelical preaching.

But I suspect that this tells us more about the effects of sin than about the nature of God's grace. It is because we are encountered by God in our sins that we are encountered alone; as in the Garden, where the first disobedience leads immediately to the first recrimination, our relation with others is the first casualty of sin. Conversely, the first effect of grace received is to unite us into a body, and to turn us outward toward the world as the immediate venue of Christian life and growth. To be born again is immediately and essentially to be born into a family constituted by God's reconciling love, and sent out into the world with the message of reconciliation.

No one knew better than John Wesley that such a message had to be brought to people where they were, and that its proclamation of a loving God had to be made believable by being mirrored in the concretely loving

action of God's messengers. It was his experience of the destructive power of social structures like race and class and wealth that fueled much of his later preaching, and drew him (albeit reluctantly) into public witness about everything from the slave trade to taxation policy. To be faithful, we too must venture with care and tentativeness into the realm of public life, ready to listen as well as speak, to learn as well as teach. But if we do, a signal aspect of that witness must be in how it is offered. About any issue, after deliberation and study and prayer, we must learn to say with one of my wisest teachers, "this is what I think. But of course, I could be wrong. God help us, we could all be wrong."

## **PIETISM AND WESLEYANISM: SETTING THE STAGE FOR A THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION**

by

**J. Steven O'Malley**

This presentation begins with a personal word. Next year represents 50 years of uninterrupted service in theological education in the field of church history, in five universities and seminaries, with the longest being the last thirty-two years here at ATS. And, this year marks fifty years of my ordination as an elder in the Evangelical United Brethren, and subsequently the United Methodist Church. Entering ministry in the last class of EUB ordinands in 1967, I have often reflected on what it has meant to have been launched by a church which was itself “born in a barn” in Pennsylvania in 1767, but, after 199 years of expansion, died on a ball-room floor in Dallas TX in 1968. In the interim it had grown to almost one million members, worldwide. I may remain the last member in full service from the company of some five thousand EUB ministers and missionaries serving in 1968. Perhaps that is like being the “last of the Mohicans,” but I speak with gratitude to God. It was that rootage which informed my intent to open the topic before us today.

I welcome our participants in this opening session which reintroduces an earlier but often overlooked dimension of Wesleyan studies: the relationship of the Wesleyan movement to the larger context from which it emerged, the movement of evangelical Pietism, which significantly impacted the Protestant churches of the European continent in the early modern era. In view of recent research in both Pietism and Wesleyan studies, the hour now comes to identify and address a new range of questions which have the potential of redefining the scope and significance of research in both fields. This subject is being raised in a timely fashion. The denominational structures which have housed the Wesleyan movement are increasingly in disarray, especially United Methodists, and new configurations of renewal are beginning to surface which hold potential for moving beyond the polemical context in which they now find themselves. Throughout church history there were those moments of the faltering of old structures, which also led to the recovery of a fresh sense of



where God is directing the people of God in fulfilling kingdom purposes. I have the sense of speaking within that nexus today.

Our study is inaugurated in an era of extensive research in Pietism as well as in Wesleyan studies, although fewer efforts have been made to show the deep and extensive areas of interface between these two movements. Pietism came earlier, beginning with Spener in the latter half of the seventeenth century (though Arndt, whose *Of True Christianity* appeared in 1605, may be considered its John the Baptist). And so it continued through the mid to late eighteenth century, on the European Continent and in colonial North America. Methodism as a renewal movement in Anglicanism dates from the ministry of John and Charles Wesley in the mid eighteenth century through the forming of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1789. Among the many recent studies of Pietism in English, that of Douglas Shantz has been given recent acclamation in American Pietism research. However, his important study is limited in its treatment of the Reformed Pietist streams, which play a greater role in the EUB than the Methodist traditions.

Both Pietism and Methodism (in their 17th and 18th century expressions), arose as authentic moments within the saga, which Barth has called the *missio Dei*, extending from apostolic times now into the early modern era. That moment occurred amid the deconstruction of the body of Christendom in old Europe, with the downspiral stemming from the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) on the continent and the decadence in Britain within the context of the dislocations from the industrial revolution and an aggressive Deism. The Pietist response to that early modern crisis of society and its intellect was articulated by Reginald Ward, in his study of the Protestant Evangelical Awakening, with reference to the thought of a representative of Pietism whom he identifies as “the most remarkable figure in the history of revivalism,” Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769). What this obscure ribbon maker and self-educated lay theologian achieved, through his correspondence, hymns, revival addresses, and translations of forgotten classics of Christian mysticism, was this: the recovery of a vivid sense of the divine Presence amid an era when God was either excluded from consideration or was to be found, by the intelligentsia only “. . . at the end of a long argument.”<sup>1</sup>

At their core, here is precisely what both Pietism and Methodism were seeking: a fresh encounter with the living God at a time when that voice had been neglected, as well as a recovery of God’s saving mission for

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<sup>1</sup>W. R. Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien’ Regime* (Cambridge, 1999), 128.

a lost humanity. It would be a mission which often transcended both civil and ecclesial identities and loyalties. And here is what this discussion seeks to demonstrate: how Wesley was impacted by revival that began on the continent before it arrived in England, under his influence. Events on the Continent and in England have largely been read as disparate or separate events, distanced by language and culture from one another. My contention is that at their core they were both part of one larger event, and that it is incorrect to speak of distinct revivals instead of one revival, with different phases of development. There was the Pietist phase, and then there was the Methodist or Wesleyan phase. In other words, the Wesley narrative is not the beginning of our story, it is consummation.

What needs to be elucidated is that legacy, which, from one perspective, the Methodist revival in England was consummating. It was a work which entailed the reclamation of the Slavic and Germanic peoples before it reached the shore of the Anglican world. We usually think of a movement proceeding from the particularity of Wesley's work in Bristol and extending from there to the world parish, which he cited in one homily as "the General spread of the gospel." But here we invert: Our perspective is to view Methodism as a terminal point, not the beginning point, of an 18th century "General Spread of the Gospel."<sup>2</sup> Consider this: when Copernicus published his volume *On the Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies* (1543), he was stoutly resisted, by Catholics and Protestants alike, for demoting this earth from its exalted station as being at the center of the universe: but he knew he had to make his point. The universe is heliocentric, and not geocentric. Here was a humbling discovery that put humanity in a lower place in the cosmos than its hubris could easily tolerate. The analogy being drawn is that it may be somewhat destabilizing for Methodists to consider that their ecclesial origin, with Wesley in his formative years, was not precisely origin but consummation of a movement which had its birth in other times and places. And so, this lecture is an attempt to begin to connect these dots.

There are two parts to this presentation. First, there is a taxonomy of evangelical Pietism in four phases, to demonstrate the scope of its reach. Second, there is a reading of Wesley's life and ministry in light of areas of influence from each of these phases. Finally, there is a synopsis of where my work in Pietism studies is focused, particularly in the notes, in light of recent research in the field.

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<sup>2</sup>Here is a reference to Wesley's sermon by that title, found in John Wesley, ed. Albert Outler, *Sermons 2: The General Spread of the Gospel*, 494ff.

### **Part One: Four Phases in Pietism Studies**

Pietism is often identified as the movement for personal and ecclesial renewal in the post Reformation era of Protestant Orthodoxy, and in particular with the Spener/Francke/Zinzendorf movement in German Lutheranism plus the Moravians. Nevertheless, there has been an enlargement of the field, beginning with Albrecht Ritschl's inclusion of the Reformed tradition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>3</sup> and in the mid twentieth century, the heretofore little investigated field of radical Pietism has been opened to research.<sup>4</sup> The literature of Pietism has been introduced to Anglo readers through two in-depth surveys by the late F. Ernest Stoeffler,<sup>5</sup> with whom I organized the first North American consultation on the study of continental Pietism in relation to Methodism in the American Academy of Religion (1975), and I also acknowledge my debt to the acclaimed studies of Pietism and early evangelicalism on the European continent by the late Reginald Ward.

Four phases of the larger Pietist movement can be identified: the church phase, the radical phase, the early revivalist phase, and, as an appendage of the latter, the evangelical revival in England, which is the Wesleyan phase. Recent research, including Ward's last study<sup>6</sup> and Douglas Shantz,<sup>7</sup> have discovered the extent to which the early leaders of Pietism as a whole, but especially in the first two phases, were deeply influenced by the streams of late medieval mystical theology, which had thrived in Europe amid the decay of medieval Catholicism. Ward notes that the two centuries prior to the Reformation resulted in the greatest production of mystical literature in all of church history. It was largely repressed by Rome, and later by the Protestant Reformers, although the early Luther had positive encounters with the *Theologia Deutsch*, an anonymous tract of late medieval German mysticism. This literature was by and large the earliest script to appear in German rather than Latin, and

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<sup>3</sup>Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, 3 volumes, 1884.

<sup>4</sup>See the authorized English translation of Schneider's *German Radical Pietism*, Gerald MacDonald, translator, in J. Steven O'Malley, ed., *The Pietist and Wesleyan Studies Series* #22 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1997).

<sup>5</sup>F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Brill, 1966), and *German Pietism in the Eighteenth Century* (Brill, 1973).

<sup>6</sup>W. R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism; A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge, 2008),

<sup>7</sup>Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism (1660-1800)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

so it had an immense appeal among the growing ranks of the bourgeoisie in the commercial towns and even within the lower ranks of the nobility, especially among women. Ward's last volume, called *Early Evangelicalism*, demonstrated that virtually all of the major Pietist figures working within the parishes of the state churches, both Lutheran and Reformed, were heavily influenced by this literature. Among those writings, John Arndt's *True Christianity*, appearing in four volumes in 1605,<sup>8</sup> a century before the peak of the Pietist movement, was by far the favorite compilation of that literature. In fact, there were more copies of Arndt distributed in Germany, and, through numerous translations, in all Protestant states in Europe during the seventeenth century than there were copies of the Bible, in all languages. I had first read Arndt in seminary as a volume of early Lutheran devotional thought, only to be surprised on further investigation that it reproduces the thought of a wide variety of German mystics and primitive studies of science under the theme of the new birth, the major motif in Pietism.

The foremost names in the first phase of the movement, the church Pietists, were Philip Jacob Spener (d. 1705), August Hermann Francke (d. 1727), and Theodore Undereyck (d. 1693). They represent pastors and theologians who served within the context of the Lutheran and Reformed state churches of seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century Europe. They remained committed to renewal within the official Protestant church structures of the German Empire, analogous to Wesley's intent to renew Anglicanism from within.<sup>9</sup> Their parishes were the *Landeskirchen*, authorized by the Peace of Westphalia, which officially ended the destructive Thirty Years' War, leaving more than fifteen million dead, one-third of the Empire's population at that time.<sup>10</sup> Although Moravians operated outside the constraints of the European *corpus Christianum*, Count Zinzendorf, their main spokesman in that time, saw much of his work as complementary to that of the so-called church (*Landeskirchen*) Pietists.

The Radical Pietists, phase two within the larger movement of evangelical Pietism, represent a domain which has more recently become the subject of critical research, largely through the work of Hans Schneider and his circle at Marburg. His major study, *German Radical Pietism*, has

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<sup>8</sup>John Arndt, *Of True Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London, 1720).

<sup>9</sup>Recent scholars who view the church Pietists, in theological context, as the prime locus for understanding the movement as a whole include Martin Gierl.

<sup>10</sup>Representatives included Spener, Francke, and the hymnist Paul Gerhard.

been translated into English and now appears in our Asbury Theological Series on Pietist and Wesleyan Studies.<sup>11</sup> This study includes figures whose ministries were set apart from the state churches. Their leading representatives include the radical Pietist historian Gottfried Arnold, and the fore-named Gerhard Tersteegen. A large part of what sets radical *Pietists* apart from the earlier radical *Reformers* of the Protestant Reformation is their deep involvement in recovering late medieval German mystical theology as a basis for recovery of a genuine Christianity apart from the Christendom model, unlike the Anabaptists/Mennonites, who organized believers churches intending to restore a primitive church pattern of discipleship.

The major difference between them and church Pietists was the radicals' willingness to permit their ardent devotion to the mystical literature from overpowering their commitment to remaining politically correct as ministers within the official church bodies of that time. In that respect Wesley would not be a radical Pietist. The two centuries after the Reformation was the age when the mystical theology was most severely restricted and opposed, in all history. It was at that time that Pietism appears as an identifiable movement. In short, its appeal for heart religion appears in an era of spiritual drought, called Protestant Orthodoxy, culminating in arguably the most destructive war in all European history.

After the church and radical phases we encounter the early revivalists who grew out of Pietism, as our third phase. These are here identified as persons who emerged from the Pietist ethos of renewal but found themselves, due to the circumstances of their time in the early eighteenth century, as the progenitors of a new phenomenon heretofore not seen in Protestant Europe, which for the first time went by the term "revival" (or *Aufweckung*).<sup>12</sup> In that time and place, revival was not what we understand by that term, coming out of our American context, although there were some similarities. Rather, it was the product of perceived divine intervention in the midst of the collapse of civil and religious society. I often liken that moment to Ezekiel's image of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37:4), and whether they can live again. This situation was prefigured in the Peasants' War of the early Reformation era, but it only became dominant in the wake of the destructive conflict linked to the Counter Reformation in the early eighteenth century.

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<sup>11</sup>Hans Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, Gerald T. McDonald, tr. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2007).

<sup>12</sup>As posited by Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, *supra*.

The earliest representatives here include names rarely found in existing studies of Pietism and revivalism. Above all, there was the revivalist preacher in Silesia, Johann Adam Steinmetz, whose work there in the 1720s provides a heretofore unexplored impetus for the rise of early Methodism in England. That will be the new dimension of my research in this presentation. Revival also became manifest among later radical Pietists, like the Inspirationalists, who operated in the aftermath of the apocalyptic writers of the late seventeenth century, for whom the year 1700 was anticipated as the appointed date for the last judgment. Apocalyptic prophecy was then transmuted into revivalism.

The final (fourth) phase is this taxonomy of Pietism would be the Evangelical Revival in England in the eighteenth century, which was pre-figured by renewal figures in late seventeenth century Anglicanism, such as the Pietist immigrant-turned Anglican, Anthony Horneck (see Kisker's research here), and the circle associated with William Law, but finally and primarily this revival in England became represented by the Wesleys and primitive Methodism. And here we come to the main figure of our discussions on this occasion, as we consider the question of the extent to which John Wesley exhibited influences from each of the four phases of Pietism, as heretofore identified.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Part Two: John Wesley Encounters Pietism in its Ecclesial and Radical Phases***

First, as a movement, Pietism in all its phases was operating on two levels. The first was its role as a political faction set apart from the orthodox party in the Protestant schools of the Empire, and the second was the fluid movement of piety which developed at the grassroots level through authors and advocates and those—often lay persons—who warmly received or resisted their message. John Wesley's Pietist connections were at both levels. At a popular movement level, the young Wesley would eagerly read mystics and then Pietist authors and hymns before and during his Oxford days and, reaching a climax during his Georgia mission from 1735-1738, through books and personal interaction.<sup>14</sup>

Wesley's duties as an Anglican priest were being ordered through contacts with the Anglican Society for the Propagation of Christian

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<sup>13</sup>For a comprehensive review of recent research in Pietism studies, see Shantz, *Introduction*, 1-11.

<sup>14</sup>In the Georgia mission, he read Arndt, Arnold, and hymns from Terstee-gen, all usually identified with radical Pietism.

Knowledge (SPCK), then under influence from Anton Wilhelm Boehm, a product of the Lutheran Pietist program for world mission generated by Francke at the University of Halle (Germany). At Halle, Francke, an administratively gifted professor of theology, put together the structure and funding for the first ever Protestant society for world mission and evangelization. Through Boehm, the Halle Mission Society was presented to the British as prototype for the SPCK, the Anglican Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, a primary missional arm of the Church of England. Halle Pietism, with voluntary support from reborn Christian laymen and the official endorsement of the Prussian government in Berlin, birthed the first Protestant world missionary society. Its theology, built upon the ministry of Spener and then Francke, was embraced by the Prussian state as the religious foundation for its plan to consolidate the old Protestant states under its jurisdiction in the coming united Germany (the Second Empire launched by Bismarck). The practical outcome was a series of successful ministries launched by Francke, beginning with an orphanage, four levels of schools for all classes and genders, a publishing house printing over one million copies of the Luther New Testament, and mission projects across Eastern Europe as well as India. Three generations before William Carey, the reputed founder of Protestant missions there, representatives of Halle Pietism would arrive in India. This venture was predicated on the conversion and commissioning of Halle students to accomplish all these initiatives of social and missional reform. Wesley would visit the famed Halle centers in his pilgrimage to Germany after his Aldersgate conversion.

As an Oxford student, Wesley learned the saga of the persecuted Lutherans then enduring the wrath of the Catholic Counter Reformation against the Protestants who had relocated to Salzburg (Austria) and were then uprooted as refugees from that province. The Halle mission society arranged for the transfer of refugee Salzburger Pietists to the new British colony of Georgia, through their collaboration with the Anglican SPCK. Their intent was to keep the rival Moravians out of Georgia. By then, these two branches of the Lutheran Pietist movement, the Halle mission and the Moravian mission from Herrnhut, had fallen into protracted contention over how best to advance the incipient revival which had its beginnings on the Continent in the first decade of the eighteenth century. That dispute would be brought to America by these Salzburger immigrants under Halle jurisdiction and Moravians coming on mission to the New World under the direction of Count Zinzendorf, their leader at Herrnhut.

Commissioned as an Anglican missionary to serve the colonial population in Georgia, Wesley was instructed by the SPCK to “supply the wants” of the Lutheran ministers in that colony from the stock of books they provided him.<sup>15</sup> En route to Georgia, Wesley’s encounter with Spangenberg and the Moravians during the storm at sea brought him into relationship with the piety of the Moravians (the “other” side of the Lutheran Pietist movement now excluded from Halle). The altercation between Halle and Herrnhut was between two centers of Pietism then in contention over the preferred way to extend the revival then commencing on the Continent, now brought to the New World. Here Wesley encountered the political side of Pietism, but also its spiritual side, amid his own crisis in personal faith formation. When the young Anglican was attracted to the Moravians’ fervent piety and hymn singing aboard ship amid a ferocious storm at sea, it was Spangenberg’s question to Wesley, “do you know Jesus Christ?” which caught his attention,<sup>16</sup> and continued to agitate him during his three years of service in Georgia. This encounter drew him into the political issues of the two competing Pietist parties, as well as to Pietism as a movement of spiritual renewal.

We now turn to Wesley’s encounters with the more radical wing of the Pietist movement. Once in Savannah, we find him recording in his journal that he was now (March 24, 1736) reading Arndt’s *True Christianity* (1605), wherein he discovered anew that, though an Anglican missionary, he, standing in need of the new birth through the Holy Spirit, was really not a true Christian. This devotional classic from a Lutheran pastor immersed in medieval mystical writers, would later become a hallmark volume in Wesley’s Christian Library.

Wesley began his study of German aboard ship, with a view to translating into English the thirty-three hymns of the Moravian hymnal received from Spangenberg. Those hymns with which he found most resonance were from the Reformed/radical Pietist, Gerhard Tersteegen (d. 1769). Tersteegen was radical primarily in the sense of his compelling quest to recover the root of Christian spirituality apart from all formal institutional affiliations. He was a lucid voice for personal faith renewal in a polemical age, standing apart from, though not against, the established ecclesial bodies in his day. His winsome hymns and writings reflect

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<sup>15</sup>Gordon Hammond, “John Wesley’s Relations with the Lutheran Pietist Clergy in Georgia,” in Winn, et al, *The Pietist Influence in Christianity*, 136.

<sup>16</sup>John Wesley, *Journal and Diaries* (1735-38), February 7, 1736, 18:23.



themes from the master teaching document of that tradition, the Heidelberg Catechism (1563). His spirituality interfaced this ethos with themes from quietist and mystical writers from both Protestant and Catholic traditions, all marshalled to deepen awareness of the presence of God among the general populace who were drawn to his compelling hymns (the third most influential in modern German hymnody), correspondence, anthologies of spiritual writers, and, later, revival addresses. Indeed, Ward calls him the most fascinating figure in the entire history of religious revival.<sup>17</sup> It was in response to Spangenberg's question aboard ship in the storm, "do you know Jesus Christ?" that, sensing his answer was perfunctory, he was then drawn toward an earnest search for God's grace which found expression in translating Tersteegen's "Verborgne Gottesliebe Du" and especially his "Gott ist Gegenwärtig" (which he renders, "Lo, God is Here"). As I indicated in an article published in the last issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, the impact of these hymns was to prepare him for his Aldersgate encounter, and endured even to his deathbed confession in 1791.<sup>18</sup>

A third radical Pietist figure also looms in the background of Wesley's early reflections on historiography. Gottfried Arnold, author of the first modern treatment of church history, assisted Wesley in defining his view of church history. The influence of Arnold on Wesley's view of the Christian tradition has recently been examined by Thomas Buchan, who arrives at the nuanced conclusion that "it is via Pietist influence rather than traditionalism that Wesley's own church historiographical perspective can be best grasped."<sup>19</sup> Wesley had early on read Arnold's *Unparteiische Kirche und Ketzer Historie* in 1732-1733, along with several Anglican authors, including William Cave.<sup>20</sup> After a careful review of the evidence from Wesley, Buchan concludes that "there are elements of Wesley's mature ecclesiology that bear more marks of Arnold's influence" than can be found from his reading of contemporary Anglican divines, such as

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<sup>17</sup>W. Reginald Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge, 1992), 230.

<sup>18</sup>J. Steven O'Malley, "The Pietist Link to Wesley's Deathbed Conversion," in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Vol.51, No.2 (fall 2016), 79-88.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas Buchan, "John Wesley and the Constantinian Fall of the Church: Historiographical Indications of Pietist Influence," in Christian T. Collins Winn, et al, eds, *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 154, n.40.

<sup>20</sup>Buchan, 158.

Cave, who asserted the congruity of Anglican theology and polity with the norms established in Constantinian Christendom.<sup>21</sup> By 1748, Wesley had come to acknowledge that "orthodoxy, or right opinions, is at best but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all."<sup>22</sup> Further, Wesley reflects tacit agreement with Arnold's assertion that "those who make heretics are the heretics proper, and those who are called heretics are the real God-fearing people."<sup>23</sup> Buchan's carefully demonstrated argument here represents one of the most significant theological contributions of Pietist thought to the theological formation of John Wesley.

A final radical Pietist link for Wesley which needs further research is Wesley's use of the catechism from the seventeenth-century Huguenot turned mystic, Pierre Poiret. In 1745 Wesley published his catechism, *Instructions for Children*, which, according to Jean Orcibal, was "borrowed from Pierre Poiret."<sup>24</sup> His major work was to amass a vast literary collection which joined German and Latin mystical theology, and interpreted them as a radical Pietist in a major work *The Divine Economy*.<sup>25</sup>

In Wesley's use of the radical Pietists, there opened to him a range of spiritual writers who eschewed the existing *corpus Christianium* in favor of discerning a prophetic mission toward the imminent eruption of a new pneumatological community of reborn believers. Allegiance was being shifted toward this new direction, and away from any attempt to maintain the legitimacy of the decadent structures of Christendom. Like the earlier radical reformers (aka Anabaptists), radical Pietists took seriously the notion of a fall of the church with the Constantinian settlement. However, for Anabaptists the corruption of the resulting state was due to its coercive-

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<sup>21</sup>*Supra*, 159.

<sup>22</sup>John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," (#2) *Works*, (Jackson), 8:249, *supra*.

<sup>23</sup>Gottfried Arnold, *Die Unparteiische Kirche und Ketzer Historie*, n.p., cited in Buchan, 159. Cpr Wesley: "The bearing of a faithful testimony against the general corruption of Christians seems to have raised the outcry against Montanus. . . . As to the heresies fathered upon Montanus, it is not easy to find what they were. I believe his grand heresy was the maintaining that 'without' inward and outward holiness no man shall see the Lord." *Works*, Jackson 11:453, *supra*.

<sup>24</sup>Jean Orcibal, "The Theological Originality of John Wesley and Continental Spirituality," in Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* (London: Epworth, 1965), 93.

<sup>25</sup>P. Poiret, *L'Oeconomie divine*. (Amsterdam, 1687); Engl tr. *Dinine Oeconomy*, 6 volumes (London, 1713).

ness; for radical Pietists, it was due to its opposition to prophetic announcements of the new order of the age of the Spirit. Radical Pietists were implicitly Joachite in sympathy, whereas Anabaptists were restorationists.<sup>26</sup>

As for the church Pietists, in addition to the Francke/Halle influence on Wesley, via the SPCK, the name of the father of Lutheran Pietism, Philip Jacob Spener, comes into play, as follows. Wesley's first use of the class meeting in Bristol, after the Methodist revival began through his preaching there in 1739, was somewhat analogous to Spener's introduction of conventicles, or small groups for spiritual edification (the *collegia pietatis*) in his Lutheran parish at Frankfurt/Main.<sup>27</sup> For Spener, this was his structure introduced as a Lutheran pastor in the large commercial city of Frankfurt/Main, intended for actualizing Luther's spiritual priesthood within his parish. The classes in Wesley's early Methodism beginning in Bristol in 1739 functioned differently. Spener launched his conventicle as a pastor-led expression of Luther's "third order" of ministry, which the Reformer had hesitated to inaugurate in his day. Wesley designed his classes as lay-led products of the revival, designed as a means of nurturing the converted into true holiness of heart and life as well as the renewal of a moribund Church of England through its laity. The role of Wesley's classes within Anglican parishes resembled Spener's conventicle within his Lutheran parish, in that the Methodist class rules required each class member to "attend to the worship of God" in her regular Anglican parish. Further, it was Wesley's direct encounters with the Moravian bands in Georgia and in the London Fetter Lane Society which were the reference points in which he had been working out his own salvation—most particularly at the Aldersgate meeting in London in May

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<sup>26</sup>By Joachite, we reference the work of the Catholic Calbrian Monk of the thirteenth century, Joachim of Fiore, whose commentary on Revelation opened a threefold trajectory of history, as an economic rendition of the Trinity, with the expectation that the "third" age was imminent in his century. This opened a door to long term eschatological fervor in late medieval and radical reformation literature. Joachite themes found their way into late medieval mystical spiritual and in prophetic-driven revolutionary movements, such as the spiritual Franciscans. It then found its home in a radical stream of Protestant spirituality, as the bearer of the theme of a coming Kingdom of God that had scant patience for an Augustinian mixing of the Two Cities, functioning as the fratricidal dialectic undergirding the dynamism of history.

<sup>27</sup>This concept is first introduced in Phillip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria* (*Heartfelt Desires*), the "manifesto" of Lutheran Pietism, first published in Frankfurt, Main in 1675.

1738, after returning from Georgia, where he finally discovered, "I too believe in Jesus Christ."<sup>28</sup> Zinzendorf, who developed these structures for the Moravian communities, had himself been a student at Halle of Francke, who in turn was a protégé of Spener. Like Wesley, Spener balanced a political side with his evangelical side. They shared a commitment to renewal within the context of the *corpus Christianum*: the one, Lutheran, the other, Anglican. For Spener, the shape of that renewal was highlighted in his celebrated preface to Arndt's homilies, through which the budding Pietist enterprise found expression. In this programmatic work, the *Pia Desideria* (1675), Spener made well known his *ecclesiolae in ecclesiam* concept (the "little churches within the large church," as a major hallmark of what Shantz calls church-based Pietism.<sup>29</sup>

One last figure from the mainline church pietists who influenced Wesley is the influential Pietist scholar in Wurttemberg, Albrecht Bengel, father of German biblical scholarship, who was committed to godliness as the goal of the Christian life. His comprehensive *Gnomon on the New Testament* (1742), designed for pastors in sermon preparation, became the prototype for Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament* (1754). Wesley hailed Bengel as "the Great Light of the Christian World."<sup>30</sup> For example, in developing his understanding of justification, Wesley was alert to Bengel's emphasis upon the distinction between "servants" and "sons," in his exposition of saving faith.<sup>31</sup> As Shantz has noted, "Bengel's legacy was an emphasis on the original Greek text, philological commentary, and pious edification," which pointed the way for the future of German scholarship.<sup>32</sup>

### Conclusion

This study has presented the diversity within the Pietism which influenced John Wesley. Further study in these directions of influence would be useful for a developed understanding of how Methodism represents not the commencement but the consummation of a great work of God on the continent of Europe which proceeded from institutional renewal to revival, signifying the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit to effect the

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<sup>28</sup>John Wesley, *Journal* (May 24, 1738), *Journal I*, 449-484.

<sup>29</sup>Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism*, see chart on 207-208.

<sup>30</sup>John Weborg, "Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), in Donald K. McKim, ed., *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 186-187.

<sup>31</sup>Wesley, "On Faith," in *Works*, I.10, 357.

<sup>32</sup>Shantz, *Introduction*, 235.

profound re-creation of new life in Christ in place of a chaotic and irreparable civilization. Dare we recover these deeper dimensions of the meaning of revival in the traditions of Pietism, in light of the present church situation? So be it, may be our prayer.

***Wesley's Encounter with Pietist-based Continental Revivalism  
and its Import for his Faith Formation***

Recent initiatives to find links between Wesley and the earliest expression of Continental revivalism have included identifying a previously unexplored series of connections. A brief version of this account is offered here.

In August, 1738 Wesley traveled to Halle and also to Herrnhut, the Moravian community led by Zinzendorf. Wesley would soon find himself in disagreement with Zinzendorf on whether justifying and sanctifying grace are imputed only (Zinzendorf) or also imparted (Wesley). What is less known is the positive contact Wesley had while at Herrnhut with Christian David (1691-1751), who was Wesley's connection with the first revival in Europe, then in progress in Silesia.<sup>33</sup>

Here is the context. In the seventeenth century, Silesia, tucked between Poland, Prussia, Hungary, and Bohemia, was a Protestant state. During the Thirty Years War, the destruction there was horrific, and it continued even after the Peace of Westphalia supposedly allowed limited freedom for Protestants to worship freely. Only two cities escaped forced recatholization. Thousands of Silesian Protestants became refugees in neighboring Germany, and those who remained retreated to the hills outside the main cities, such as Teschen, where their Lutheran pastors changed to become field preachers, holding camp meetings in the bush, ministering to an underground church whose members could no longer worship in their buildings or receive sacramental grace, due to oppressive Habsburg military authorities, allied with Catholic clergy. Circumstances grew increasingly dire.

In this dark hour, an awakening began among the many disheveled children of these dislocated Protestants, from aged four to fourteen, who had retreated to the hills. They spontaneously began to assemble all across

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<sup>33</sup>The account of this event is found in Eric Swensson, *Kinderbeten; The Origin, Unfolding and Interpretations of the Silesian Children's Prayer Revival*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), especially 33-31. See also Ward, 71-77.

the provinces of Silesia to watch in reverence, then sing and pray fervently, several times each day, asking God to give back their churches, and in time this shifted into prophecies of coming divine intervention. This continued though the year 1707, when without warning an incursion of a strong Swedish army led by King Charles XII appeared on the scene, with soldiers praying and singing in their camps, to the delight of the children. Their intent was to enforce the violated peace treaty. Soon prayers were answered, as opposing powers agreed in conference to restore some Protestant churches and to plant six new churches for Protestants living in Catholic lands.

At this juncture, Francke, heading the great mission enterprise at Halle in Prussia, negotiated with authorities for a large refugee church to be built in the main city of Teschen, which he would fund and supply with preachers. He also envisioned it to become a second Halle to evangelize the Slavs and Hungarians to the east and south. The Jesus church was built there, forming in short order a congregation of forty thousand seekers, dispossessed of their churches. The task now was to join the continuing prayers of the children with action to serve and evangelize this displaced population and negotiate with authorities. Soon preaching began simultaneously in multiple languages to reach all hearers, and an outbreak of revival occurred, with supernatural manifestations of power and love. The head preacher, Johann Adam Steinmetz, whom Francke appointed, found himself doing something never before envisioned by Francke, whose interest was in shoring up beleaguered Protestants. And that was to be a channel for revival.

The present author located a rare copy of Steinmetz's revival addresses, which were presented under the heading of "Pentecost edification sessions."<sup>34</sup> The content of these addresses speak of the urgency to go beyond pardon (justification) to the gift of the sealing of the Holy Spirit. Soon this revival spread from Teschen through the neighboring lands, in their respective languages. Before this event, Pietism under Spener and Francke had featured renewal of church structures. Now, with the ground cleared of all such structures due to warfare, the event was a fresh break-

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<sup>34</sup>Johann Adam Steinmetz, *Von der Versiegelung der Glaubigen mit dem heiligen Geist. In einigen Pfingst-Erbauungstunden aus Epheser 4.42*, third ed. (Frankfurt/Main, Brönnner, 1857), 131; first edition published ca.1720 at Teschen, Silesia.

through of delivering and empowering grace as the response to prayer, to create new life in Christ *de novo*. It was an event more akin to the prayer of Ezekiel for the dry bones to live again. It is noteworthy that revival did not occur by the children merely copying the prayers of the Swedish troops, which is what the Protestant Orthodox church authorities reported, since these children had been praying for a year before the Swedes' arrival.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, a carpenter named Christian David, from Moravia, had built for Zinzendorf the first house for the Moravians at Berthelsdorf (before Herrnhut was built), and professed himself to be a religious seeker. On Zinzendorf's recommendation he was directed to go to Steinmetz at Teschen, because a great work of God was in progress there. David first experienced the power of the gospel of Christ while being visited in illness by Pastor Johann Christian Schwedler of Niederwiesa, a Lutheran church on the Silesian border, that was being swept by revival among the Silesian refugees there, fleeing imperial persecution in their homeland. Following this conversion, David reported that he continued to struggle with moving from "being justified" to "having the full assurance of faith." After counsel with Steinmetz, he came to understand and appropriate the whole economy of God with regard to salvation, from justification to the sealing of the Spirit in entire sanctification, as a gift available not just to a few (as the Calvinists held) but to all persons. He was confirmed in this faith by Steinmetz at his church in Teschen. A graduate of Leipzig and a follower of Spener's writings, he was also a close confidant to Zinzendorf.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the awakening at Teschen among these refugees became the basis for the success of the Herrnhut project, when that revival was transferred there, through the leadership of Christian David. It is noteworthy that a comparable children's revival was manifested at Herrnhut, igniting a revival there in 1727, which is viewed as a formative event for the success of the future Moravian mission.<sup>37</sup> Steinmetz had also been the revival preacher who first stirred the awakening in Moravia, leading to the exodus of David and others to their centers of refuge in Upper Lusatia where Zinzendorf was working.

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<sup>35</sup>Here is an important observation by Swensson, 26-35.

<sup>36</sup>This information was related to Wesley by David in personal conversation on August 10, 1738, as found in Wesley, *Journal and Diaries*, I, 275.

<sup>37</sup>Swensson, xiv.

It was in the wake of these events that John Wesley, fresh from his Aldersgate experience, enters the picture, by arriving at Herrnhut, following a visit to Halle. Wesley reports that on four occasions he heard sermons from Christian David who was the "first planter" of the "private bands," akin to the one that Wesley had joined in England, founded by Peter Böhler.<sup>38</sup> Three times David chose the subject of those who are "weak in the faith," that is, justified in Christ but without the "indwelling of the holy Ghost." He described the state in which the apostles were living from the crucifixion of their Lord until the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as a time when they "had faith" but "were not properly converted" and "had not new hearts nor received the gift of the Holy Ghost."<sup>39</sup> In David's fourth sermon, "concerning the ground of our faith," Wesley heard David speak against the "penitential struggle" (*Busskampf*), which Francke of Halle had required as a condition for justification, insisting instead that "the right foundation is not *your* contrition, . . . not *your* righteousness, . . . nothing that is wrought *in you* by the Holy Ghost; but it is something without you, viz., the righteousness and blood of Christ." Only on this basis "shall you be cleansed from all sin . . . being renewed day by day in righteousness and all true holiness."<sup>40</sup>

Two days later Wesley spent several hours with Christian David, whose preaching was having influence on the Moravian Brethren as well as Wesley, with its emphasis on the great objective work of Christ combined, notes Ward, with a "pietistic sense of his indwelling," through the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).<sup>41</sup> In conversation with Wesley, David related his spiritual pilgrimage to Wesley, and the message was joyfully received. This account appears to substantiate the claim made by Martin Schmidt that "it was this preaching that prepared John Wesley for conversion and that he owed more to David than to anyone, Peter Böhler only excepted."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>W. R. Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984ff), I, *Journal and Diaries*, (1735-1738), 270.

<sup>39</sup>Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries*, I, 271.

<sup>40</sup>Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries*, I, 272.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 273, n.98, also 271, n.90.

<sup>42</sup>Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley*, cited in Ward and Heitzenrater, *Journal and Diaries*, I, 273.



## **Conclusion**

Viewed through the devotional, as well as the theological and social dimensions of Pietism, this study has presented the diversity within Pietism which influenced the life and ministry of John Wesley. Further research in these directions of influence would be useful for a developed understanding how the Wesleyan movement represents not so much the commencement as the culmination of a great work of God on the European continent, proceeding from church renewal to revival signifying the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit effecting profound manifestation of new life in Christ, in place of a chaotic and seemingly irreparable social order. Dare we recover these deeper dimensions of renewal, and yes, even revival, in light of the present church situation? May it be so.

## **Postscript: John Fletcher and the Pietist/Revivalist Connection**

There are common sources for Wesley's use of the Pentecost motif in relation to sanctification through his contacts with the Silesian revival via Christian David and his later attraction to the recovery of Pentecost in the dispensational theology of John Fletcher. The context includes Wesley's early acknowledgement of the distinction between justifying and sanctifying grace, as referenced in his conversations with Christian David during the Herrnhut visit of 1738, which he later associates with the use of the language of "Pentecost" and "baptism in the Holy Spirit" through the influence of John Fletcher, his appointed successor.<sup>43</sup> This connection reflects the Pietist influences which were influential upon Fletcher before he arrived in England from his native Switzerland.

In order to understand the Pietist milieu in Switzerland during Fletcher's time there, some background information regarding two influential spiritual (or "radical" Pietist) groups not often acknowledged in the annals of the birth of Methodism is provided. These are the Philadelphians and their successors in the eighteenth century, the Inspirationists. On the Philadelphians: As previously observed, it was under the influence of Steinmetz's revival preaching, beginning at Teschen in Silesia, that the first awakenings erupted in Moravia, resulting in the exodus of refugees (including David) to Upper Lusatia, the site of Zinzendorf's estate at Herrnhut. As Ward indicates, revival was the only way to safeguard the inter-

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<sup>43</sup>See Laurence Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*; J. Steven O'Malley, ed., *Pietist and Wesleyan Studies* #15 (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2002).

ests of Protestants in Silesia since that province lay outside the imperial boundaries where protection to Protestants was guaranteed by the Peace of Westphalia.<sup>44</sup> This was the treaty which granted religious toleration to Protestants in the lands of the German Empire after the close of the Thirty Years War. When that same revival moved into Herrnhut, it changed the character of that community, putting David on a counter course from that of Zinzendorf with regard to soteriology. The former stressed a progressive view of the order of salvation, moving from justifying to the experience of sanctifying grace in the language of Pentecost, while the latter, following Lutheran monergism, stressed the immediate, imputed nature of saving grace based in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

By the time Wesley arrived at Herrnhut, these divisions and points of tension within the Herrnhut community were being overcome by a new wave of revival, initiated by Steinmetz and his preachers, with whom Zinzendorf collaborated. However, this surge of revival would also bring down upon Zinzendorf the conservative Saxon government, who ultimately halted Zinzendorf's revivalist agenda and forced Zinzendorf into exile to the Wetterau district in the Rhineland (where Tersteegen's ministry was also based). From there Zinzendorf could strengthen the Moravian movement which had already spread to Holland and England. In his absence, many Moravians remaining at Herrnhut would then swing over toward Lutheran Orthodoxy in their soteriology.

After leaving Herrnhut, Zinzendorf would thereafter give focus to the worldwide diaspora of his missionaries, with Moravian missionaries traveling throughout Europe and North America. It seems that his larger strategy was to connect with revival wherever it was to be found in the hopes of engaging or even co-opting it for his plans to extend the Moravian world mission, according to his Philadelphian interests.<sup>45</sup> However,

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<sup>44</sup>Due to the fact that Protestants in Silesia had to "face a crisis for which Spener and Francke had not prescribed, the total collapse of a church system and prospective assimilation into an alien nationality or religion. Ward, *Christianity Under the Ancient Regime, 1648-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

<sup>45</sup>Jane Leade began the Philadelphians in England in the late seventeenth century. Heirs to German mystical theology, they emphasized the community spiritual community of the Spirit as the culmination of history, as represented in the church of Philadelphia in Revelation 3. Philadelphian thought was transferred to Germany and was introduced in Zinzendorf's home town of Bethelsdorf, under the influence of his grandmother, a devotee of Leade. See Ward, *Christianity in the Ancient Regime*, 115-135.

the Moravian leader found the most compelling expression of revitalization near his relocated center at Herrnhag in the Wetterau. It was the awakening led by the New Prophets, who have already been identified as the Inspirationists. They were descendants of the French prophets of Cevennes, who had been driven into exile after brutal suppression in their apocalyptic-driven uprising against Louis XIV. The Inspirationists inherited the mantle of the earlier generation of Philadelphians, with their vision of a universal spiritual community of brotherly/sisterly love, unfettered by confessional divisions. This meant the New Prophets, now cut off from their French roots, had resurfaced after 1700 as revivalists, since they no longer were part of any church or nation to renew. They were clearly operating from a biblical framework of salvation history which anticipated an imminent general manifestation of Pentecost that would herald a coming age of the Spirit.

Disparate separatist groups, now living in refuge under the protection of minor German counts in the Wetterau, were won to the Inspirationists' unitive vision, and their leaders, E. L. Gruber (1665-1728) and later, J. F. Rock (1678-1749), proposed to extend the reign of Pentecost, with the baptism of the Spirit bringing sanctification and a disciplined life to all who were bound in legalism to divisive church confessions.<sup>46</sup> Somewhat akin to the revivalist methods of Steinmetz' Silesian Lutheran preachers—although the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were not encouraged by the latter—the New Prophets made use of fervent and unpartisan evangelistic camp meetings and voluntary prayer meetings, now operating outside the structures of the state churches. Their intent was to draw together all the children of God in a spiritual church, including the masses of dislocated religious seekers within and without the established religious structures of the day.

Zinzendorf attended a large Inspirationist love feast near Frankfurt, where he was swayed by Rock's Spirit-driven revivalism. Zinzendorf hoped to enlist Rock for the Moravians. To Zinzendorf's disappointment, Rock found the strictures of Moravian community life oppressive to the free work of the Spirit, and chose not to associate with the Moravians. Rock held Inspirationist revivals in Saxony, within proximity to the earlier revival centers opened by Steinmetz. Ward notes that the goal of their jubilant hymn singing, love feasts, and public evangelistic meetings was to

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<sup>46</sup>See the discussion of the Philadelphians as well as the New Prophets, or Inspirationists, in Shantz *Introduction*, 166-172.

form a network from the “children of the prophets and from all sects and peoples.”<sup>47</sup>

Having placed the Philadelphians and the Inspirationists in their larger context, we can now give focus to their operations in Switzerland. Although Fletcher hailed from the western French-speaking canton of Vaud (born at Nyon near Lausanne), the prevailing influence from Pietism in the central canton of Bern had permeated beyond that canton. Rational Reformed Orthodoxy did survive into eighteenth century Switzerland, and more in the German than the French speaking cantons. It was based in the Formula Consensus, signed at Bern in 1675, and took root in Vaud as well. The Formula forbade all deviations from high Calvinism, including Quietists like Antoinette Bourignon and Pierre Poirer (Tersteegen's mentor), as well as the Cartesians.<sup>48</sup> These restrictive policies were strongly resisted in the Vaud.<sup>49</sup> The Consensus was especially intended to keep Huguenots from evading the high Calvinist tenet of limited atonement. Fletcher was born into just such a Huguenot family. Pietists represented the cosmopolitan spirit, since they were connected with intellectual and spiritual currents abroad, whereas Orthodoxy was provincial and isolationist. The most repressive measure of Orthodoxy in Switzerland was the Association Oath of 1699, passed by the Bern council, which forbade discussions of the millennial kingdom, conventicles, and reading mystical writings.<sup>50</sup> As a consequence, many Pietists went abroad, or moved into separatism and found primal influence from the English Philadelphians like Jane Leade.<sup>51</sup> When Pietism returned in the next century, it came in the explosive form of revivalism, concentrating in the Bernese Oberland.

The great name associated with Swiss Pietism in the years of Fletcher's youth in the Vaud was Samuel Lutz (1674-1750), whom Ward notes was “pushed out of the way into the French-speaking Vaud,” and he “made his base [Vaud] the Pietist centre for the whole area.”<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Lutz was closely connected with the Steinmetz circle in Germany, and he impressed Christian David who visited him. Lutz also enter-

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<sup>47</sup>Ward, *Christianity under the Ancient Regime*, 124.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>49</sup>Ward, *supra*.

<sup>50</sup>See Paul Wernle, *Die Schweizerische Protestantismus im 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1923), 25.

<sup>51</sup>Ward, 88.

<sup>52</sup>For Leade, see Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, 23-24.

tained Rock, the leader of the Inspired, but he succeeded in drawing Rock's followers back into the official church body.<sup>53</sup>

A key factor in the Inspirationists involvement in Swiss revivalism was their commitment to the Dutch and German federal theology of Cocceius, a biblical/historical rather than an Aristotelian/scholastic approach to Protestant theology, which became influential in the Wetterau region (the base for the Inspired as well as the German Reformed) in the early eighteenth century.<sup>54</sup>

These contacts suggest that this influential figure in Fletcher's home area was the key to the main channels of Cocceian dispensational (*heils-geschichtlich*) thinking of that day, as well as to German proto-Pentecostalism. This line of influence reflects the pattern Fletcher develops in his *Checks to Antinomianism* during his later association with John Wesley and the Methodists in England.<sup>55</sup> Ward also notes that this kind of prophecy was not new in Switzerland, since "the Swiss had been exposed directly to the Cevennes [French] prophets and highly exposed to the

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<sup>53</sup>These direct connections between Pietist Pentecostal thinking in Germany and Fletcher's Switzerland are described by Ward in *Christianity under the Ancient Regime*, 125.

<sup>54</sup>See discussion in Ward, *Christianity under the Ancient Regime*, 124f: "The radicals [e.g., mainly the Inspired] in the Wetterau . . . derived from the Reformed federal theology the idea that church history could be divided into stages yielding an interpretation of the present. The present was the moment when the true seed scattered among all nations and confessions was to be gathered and the true word hidden in the letter of Scripture mystically revealed."

<sup>55</sup>In his sermon "On Zeal," Wesley writes, "that religion which our Lord established upon earth, ever since the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, is the entire connected system of Christianity," and in his homily "On the Church," he explains that the Holy Spirit is given to all believers in justification, but the full baptism of the Spirit is given to believers perfected in love: "that baptism of the Holy Ghost which the apostles received at the day of Pentecost is, in a lower degree, given to all believers." Wesley, Works (Jackson), 4:205; and Outler, *Sermons*, 3:45, "Of the Church"; and there is also the coming "Grand Pentecost" which Wesley foresees in the "General Spread of the Gospel" to all nations, in Outler, *Sermons* 2:498, as cited in Wood, *supra*, 166, 168, and 174.

Whose federal (covenantal) theology offered a strong challenge to Aristotelian-grounded Protestant Orthodoxy of the sixteenth century.—on Cocceius, see J. Steven O'Malley, *Pilgrimage of Faith; the Legacy of the Otterbeins* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1973), 44-92.; and the Fletcher connection by this author in "Exploring the Background for the Pentecost Connection in Early Methodism, found in Nathan Crawford, ed., *The Continuing Relevance of Wesleyan Theology; Essays in Honor of Laurence W. Wood* (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 28-37.

hybrid variety, Inspiration.”<sup>56</sup> Goebel also documents the extent to which this part of Switzerland was drawn into the Inspired mission field, since “numerous Swiss religious refugees had fled to the Wetterau” using the routes that the Inspired had taken south into Württemberg.<sup>57</sup> Further, the community of the Inspired in the Wetterau “continued to exercise pastoral oversight over the Swiss brethren for the rest of the [eighteenth] century.”<sup>58</sup>

To say that Fletcher could have escaped such pervasive influence in his home canton, which was the center for Lutz’s revival ministry, is not plausible. Fletcher corresponded with Lutz during his second return trip to his birthplace in Nyon (1778-1781), a convalescence trip due to physical illness, late in his ministry.<sup>59</sup> While there, a pastor invited him to preach, until the local authorities forbade the pastor from allowing him to hold meetings in the parish house, since this was the property of the state. For that reason, he held his meeting in the home of his brother, Henri Louis, where he preached on the “power to become sons of God” through the love of Jesus Emmanuel. Streiff notes that, during this time of ministry at Nyon, Fletcher read “with contentment” the apology of Samuel Lutz, and became convinced that he [Fletcher] “needed to focus on corresponding with the local population [concerning the great themes these men were advancing], since he had such little opportunity to preach.”<sup>60</sup>

Based upon this narrative account, it becomes apparent that Fletcher’s Pentecostal language, with which Wesley expressed his approval,<sup>61</sup> owes a profound debt to streams of Reformed and also radical Pietism, which fed the earliest expressions of revivalism on the European continent.

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<sup>56</sup>Ward, *Christianity under the Ancient Regime*, 126.

<sup>57</sup>Max Goebel, *Geschichte der wahren Inspirations-Gemeinden von 1688 bis 1850*, III; *Zeitschrift zur historische Theologie*, 19 (Coblenz, 1854-55), 129-131.

<sup>58</sup>Ward, *supra*.

<sup>59</sup>Patrick Philipp Streiff, *Jean Guillaume de la Flechere John William Fletcher, 1729-1785* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1984), 401-409.

<sup>60</sup>Streiff, 404. Enclosure mine.

<sup>61</sup>Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, 163-208.

# TRANSPPOSITIONS: THE NOTES OF THE CHURCH IN TRINITARIAN AND WESLEYAN KEYS

by

E. Jerome Van Kuiken

The traditional distinguishing marks or notes of the church (*notae ecclesiae*) are fourfold: unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity. As the Nicene Creed confesses, “We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.” But *why* are these the marks of the true church and *how* are they to be practiced? In this essay, I shall argue that the notes of the church find their grounding in the characteristics of the economic Trinity (that is, the Trinity at work in the world), which in turn express the eternal nature of the immanent Trinity (that is, God’s triune life independent of the world). Thus the church reflects the character of ultimate reality. After addressing the *why* question, I shall answer the *how* question by outlining ways in which John Wesley’s innovative, pragmatic Methodist movement embodied the notes of the church. As Methodist theologian Elmer Colyer has observed, much of Wesleyan theology historically has been insufficiently trinitarian. Happily, a number of Wesleyan theologians have contributed to the trinitarian renaissance of the last few decades.<sup>1</sup> My aim is to relate this renaissance specifically to ecclesiology, planting deep in the

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<sup>1</sup>Elmer Colyer, “Trinity,” in William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, repr. 2013), 505–21. Colyer lists the following Methodists as contributors to the trinitarian renaissance: Geoffrey Wainwright, Theodore Runyon, Manfred Marquardt, Stanley Hauerwas, Michael Pasquarello, and bishops Scott Jones, Timothy Whitaker, Will Willimon, and Walter Kaliber. Besides Colyer’s list, additional contributors include Methodists Jon Tal Murphree, *The Trinity & Human Personality* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel, 2001), M. William Ury, *Trinitarian Personhood: Investigating the Implications of a Relational Definition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), Dennis F. Kinlaw, *Let’s Start with Jesus: A New Way of Doing Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), Allan Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), and R. Kendall Soulen, *The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity Volume 1: Distinguishing the Voices* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011); Nazarenes Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), idem, *Participating in God: Creation and* (Please turn page.)

Trinity early Methodist practices while commending them as models to adapt for today's church.<sup>2</sup>

### ***The Problem of Projectionism***

Why is the church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic? The answer, I propose, is that the notes of the church echo the notes of the Trinity. But this claim risks the charge of projectionism. According to this accusation, too many theologians of the trinitarian renaissance have projected onto the Trinity their own ideals regarding social arrangements, whether in society at large, in gender roles, or in church governance. The subjectivism involved in such projection is exposed by the mutually contradictory models allegedly derived from the Trinity. Thus free-church theologian Miroslav Volf finds in the Trinity the basis for an egalitarian congregationalism while Greek Orthodox bishop John Zizioulas sees a strong hierarchy in the Godhead corresponding to an earthly episcopacy.<sup>3</sup> To cure such projectionism, theologians like Karen Kilby and Sarah Coakley promote an "apophatic trinitarianism" that stresses God's mysterious transcendence beyond our words and images.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(cont.) *Trinity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), and T. A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People. The Theology of Christian Perfecting* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013); Wesleyans Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) and Joshua McNall, *A Free Corrector: Colin Gunton and the Legacy of Augustine* (Minneapolis: Fortress 2015); and Evangelical Free Fred Sanders, *The Image of the Immanent Trinity: Rahner's Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005) and idem, *The Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).

<sup>2</sup>I build on the precedent of the British Methodist Conference's 1999 Statement Called to Love and Praise: *The Nature of the Christian Church in Methodist Experience and Practice*, available at [www.methodist.org.uk/media/822065/ec-called-to-love-and-praise240908](http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/822065/ec-called-to-love-and-praise240908).

<sup>3</sup>Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

<sup>4</sup>Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000), 432–45; idem, "Is an Apophatic Trinitarianism Possible?," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12.1 (2010), 65–77; idem, "Trinity and Politics: An Apophatic Approach," in Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, eds., *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 75–93; Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay "On the Trinity"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).



These apophatic advocates are right to warn against turning the Trinity into the idol of our ideologies. Nevertheless, it seems virtually impossible to avoid all suspicion of projectionism in God-talk, even for apophatic trinitarians. Kilby's stress on God's unknowability could be construed as arising from her opposition to knowledge-elitism on the part of theologians in relation to laity and in the case of Christians in relation to people of other faiths.<sup>5</sup> Coakley's blanking out of settled imagery for God might be taken as a function of her interests in postmodern philosophy, gender fluidity, and anti-patriarchalism.<sup>6</sup> Nor does the persistent human tendency toward projectionism automatically disprove the reality of that which we project. Rather, according to sociologist of religion Peter Berger, humans are wired for religious projection precisely because there is a transcendent divine reality of which our projections are also reflections.<sup>7</sup> The theological counterparts of this sociological model are the doctrines of the *imago Dei* and of divine accommodation in revelation: God has created humans to represent God and has condescended to self-reveal by means adapted to the cultural contexts of revelation's recipients. These doctrines climax in the Incarnation. It is the incarnate Word who, especially in John 17, sets the attributes of the church and the Trinity in an analogical relationship.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Transposing Up: From the Notes of the Church to the Economic Trinity***

All four notes of the church appear in John 17. Jesus prays that his followers may be one (vv. 11, 20–23) and holy (vv. 17, 19). He speaks of their being sent (Gk. *apostello*; v. 18) into the world “so that the world may believe” (v. 21),<sup>9</sup> thus indicating their apostolic mission and its catholic or universal scope. In the same breath, he links these notes of the church to the Trinity: the disciples are to be one as the Father and Son are one, not merely by imitation but by incorporation into the triune life—“I in them and you in me,” as Jesus tells his Father (v. 23). The church's holiness

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<sup>5</sup>Kilby, “Perichoresis,” 439, 444; idem, “Apophatic Trinitarianism,” 66, 71, 76–77; idem, “Trinity and Politics,” 83.

<sup>6</sup>Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, xiv, 1–2, 23–24, 54–59 and passim.

<sup>7</sup>As described in Mark H. Mann, *Perfecting Grace: Holiness, Human Being, and the Sciences* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 83–85.

<sup>8</sup>For a defense of reading John 17 in light of later trinitarian developments, see Francis Watson, “Trinity and Community: A Reading of John 17,” *International Journal of Theology* 1.2 (1999), 168–70.

<sup>9</sup>All Scripture quotations NRSV.

comes from being sanctified by the “Holy Father” in view of Christ’s sanctifying himself (vv. 11, 17, 19). In the wider context of the Fourth Gospel, the Son’s earthly self-sanctification echoes his preincarnate sanctification by the Father for his saving mission (10:36) and anticipates his bestowing the Holy Spirit on the disciples (1:33; 14:25 with 16:7; 20:22), thus hallowing them. The catholicity of the church springs from the Father delegating to the Son “authority over all people” (17:2; lit. “all flesh”) in keeping with Christ’s universal creative (1:3, 10), redemptive (1:29; 3:16–17), and judicial (5:22–29) roles, for everything belonging to the Father belongs also to the Son and vice versa (17:10). The apostolicity of the disciples is their sending by the Son who himself was sent by the Father (17:18, 21, 23, 25) and who, together with the Father, sends the Spirit to aid them in testifying (14:16, 26; 15:26–27; 16:7–15; 20:21–22).<sup>10</sup>

Yet the same Johannine material that compares the characteristics of the church and the Trinity also distinguishes them: the church’s unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity are *analogous*, not *equivalent*, to these qualities in the Trinity.<sup>11</sup> Christ is so uniquely one with the Father that confessions of his deity bookend this Gospel (1:1; 20:28). When Thomas asks the way to the Father and Philip pleads to be shown the Father, Jesus points to himself, not to the surrounding disciples (14:5–11). The same may be said for his other “I am” sayings in the Fourth Gospel. As in unity, so also in sanctity Christ is singular. As noted above, the Son is sanctified prior to his entry into the world and, once faced with the cross, he sanctifies himself so that his followers may be sanctified. Yet his sanctification involves no purging from personal sin: he sees others as slaves of sin and Satan but has no consciousness of guilt in himself; rather, he is the one who liberates others from sin (8:31–46; 14:30–31). Indeed, his holiness is that of God himself, for he makes divine claims (8:58; 10:30–39) and accepts divine worship (9:38; 20:28). While he claims that the disciples are not of the world just as he is not of world (17:14, 16), his sanctified difference from the world is at an ontological level, not merely a

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<sup>10</sup>For a more expansive discussion of the roots of the church’s unity, holiness, and apostolicity in the Trinity, see Dean Flemming, “A Sent and Sanctified Community: Missional Holiness in the Gospel of John,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (hereafter *WTJ*) 51.1 (Spring 2016), 133–44.

<sup>11</sup>During the Arian controversy, patristic exegetes like Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers, Cyril of Alexandria, and Augustine discerned this point clearly. See Joel C. Elowsky, ed., *John 11–21* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 4b; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 245–46, 250, 256–57.

moral level like theirs: he is the eternal Word who became flesh (1:14); they are flesh who have received his word (17:8). Concerning catholicity, again the verses cited above show that Christ has universal authority as Lord; his followers' universal mission, by contrast, derives its authority from the one who, *sui generis*, takes away the sin of the world and grants the gift of the Spirit (1:29–34; 20:22–23). Lastly, although both Christ and his disciples are sent into the world, he alone is sent down from heaven into the world (3:13, 31; 6:33, 41, 51; 13:3; 16:28) while they go forth from his earthly presence and from Palestine into the surrounding world.

This analogical relationship between the church and the Godhead may be expressed by a musical metaphor: the notes of the church are transposed into a higher key in the case of the Trinity.<sup>12</sup> But the Trinity in view in these verses is primarily the Trinity in its saving engagement with the world, not in its eternal internal relationships. In theological terms, the focus is on the economic Trinity, not the immanent Trinity.<sup>13</sup> The oneness of the church with the Father and the Son—"I in them and you in me" (17:23), as Jesus puts it—is specifically the church's incorporation into the union between the Father and the *incarnate* Christ, a union that expresses itself in the Son's willing the Father's will and imitating the Father's works (5:19–30; 7:16–18; 8:25–30; 10:25–38). The church's holiness arises from the Trinity's sanctifying of created beings and of Christ for his saving mission. The catholicity of the church reflects the catholicity of the Father's love toward the world and intention to place all things under the Son's saving and judging Lordship. The apostolicity of the church results from the sendings of Son and Spirit into the world. In no case is there any hint of a Gnostic flight from creation into the bosom of a purely transcendent, absentee Deity. Nor is Johannine salvation a matter of an Adamic grasping after divinity, unaided and unmediated by God's own initiative and condescension through Christ and the Spirit.

### ***Transposing Higher: From the Economic Trinity to the Immanent Trinity***

While John 17 and the whole of scripture foregrounds the economic Trinity, the acts of God *ad extra* take place against the backdrop of the being

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<sup>12</sup>I owe this metaphor to C. S. Lewis, "Transposition," in his *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1949, 1976, 1980), 91–115.

<sup>13</sup>See Sanders, *Triune God*, 144–53 on the history of this distinction and his qualms about it.

of God *ad intra*. Thus we hear Jesus recalling the glory and love which he shared with his Father before the world was (Jn. 17:5, 24). But what is the precise relationship between God's inner and outer life? The early church steered a middle course between conflicting heresies. On the one hand, it rejected the Sabellian teaching that the Trinity was simply limited to the economy as three temporary, successive modes by which the one God operated in history. The church also rejected the Arian demotion of Christ to the status of first and highest of God's finite creations. Both of these positions implied that God *ad intra* was a locked vault—we could know only God's will, God's effects, but never God's heart. On the other hand, the church also shied away from Eunomianism, the rationalist conceit that the divine essence was an open book which mortals could grasp comprehensively. God's essence ever exceeds our understanding, the Cappadocian Fathers taught, but we may know God truly in God's self-revelation as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These names denote eternal distinctions within the Godhead.<sup>14</sup>

In the twentieth-century trinitarian renaissance, this question of the relationship between the inward and outward life of God arose again. Karl Rahner laid down his "rule" that the economic Trinity was the immanent Trinity and the immanent Trinity was the economic Trinity. Wesleyan theologians Fred Sanders and Thomas McCall have described how Rahner's Rule came to be interpreted in two ways. First, "radicalizers" like Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Robert Jenson, and Bruce McCormack have held to the "Identity Thesis," which collapses the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity. On this account, God's biography simply *is* salvation history without remainder. Secondly, "restricters" like Hans Urs von Balthasar, Thomas F. Torrance, Paul Molnar, and Sanders and McCall themselves have embraced the "Identification Thesis": the economic Trinity is a true and faithful "image" of the immanent Trinity. God's character is no different *ad intra* than *ad extra*, and the relations among trinitarian persons in time really reflect their relations in eternity, yet divine freedom and transcendence and the graciousness of grace are preserved in a more robust manner than among the radicalizers.<sup>15</sup> In terms of the present essay, the Identity Thesis would

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<sup>14</sup>For a survey of patristic developments in trinitarian doctrine, see Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), chs. 3–5.

<sup>15</sup>Sanders, *Image*, esp. chs. 4–6; McCall, *Which Trinity?*, 129–55.

preclude any transposition beyond the economic Trinity. The Identification Thesis, however, discerns an “analogical interval”<sup>16</sup> between the economic and the immanent Trinity. Taking our cue from Sanders and McCall, we follow the Identification Thesis and transpose the notes of the church from the economic Trinity into the highest possible key: that of the immanent Trinity.

In the immanent Trinity, the unity and catholicity of the Godhead come to expression in the terms *homoousios* and *perichoresis*. According to Nicene orthodoxy, the Son and the Spirit are “of the same essence” or “substance” (*homoousios*) as God the Father. The three trinitarian persons share a strict unity of being, a unity immeasurably greater than the generic unity of three members of a species or the consensus among a triumvirate of individuals. Thus to worship one person of the Trinity takes nothing away from the other two, for the worship of any of the three persons is simply the worship of the one God. Their glory is undivided and their majesty, unfractured because each person constantly indwells or interpenetrates the others. This is the doctrine of *perichoresis*, of the relational unity of the trinitarian persons, which complements the doctrine of *homoousios*, of their substantial unity. Following T. F. Torrance’s notion of “onto-relations,” some Wesleyan theologians have thought together the relational and substantial unity of the Trinity: the substance or essence or being of God simply *is* the pure act of interpersonal relating, so that to be is to be in communion.<sup>17</sup> The homoousial, perichoretic unity of the trinitarian persons also means their catholicity, their being *katholikos*, that is, *kata holikos*, “according to the whole”: consistent with the *homoousios*, each person possesses the whole of the divine essence, while as per *perichoresis*, each one wholly indwells the other two.

This wholeness has implications for holiness. Nazarene theologian Thomas Noble has critiqued the Wesleyan tradition for deriving its view of holiness mainly from Old Testament monotheism and Hebrew etymol-

<sup>16</sup>David Bentley Hart, “The Lively God of Robert Jenson,” *First Things* (Oct. 2005). Retrieved from: [www.firstthings.com/article/2005/10/the-lively-god-of-robert-jenson-4](http://www.firstthings.com/article/2005/10/the-lively-god-of-robert-jenson-4).

<sup>17</sup>E.g., Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune*, esp. 170–81; Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, ch. 9. Cf. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 1996, 2016), for a brief exposition of which see Elmer M. Colyer, *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian & Scientific Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), ch. 8.

ogy, both of which lead to seeing holiness as separation from a profane, sinful world. This approach fails to allow the doctrine of the immanent Trinity to inform how holiness is conceived. Before the world or sin existed from which God could be separate, God was holy in the eternal Trinity. The essence of holiness, then, is not distinction from the finite world or sin. The essence of holiness is the mysterious, uncreated distinction-in-union of Father, Son, and Spirit, a union-in-relation characterized above all by self-giving love.<sup>18</sup>

Yet the trinitarian relations which constitute divine unity, catholicity, and holiness are not generic but uniquely specified. The Trinity is not a confraternity of lookalike triplets. Rather, each of the three persons has a particular identity, an identity formed and expressed in a particular set of relations to the other two divine persons. The broadest orthodox consensus, as articulated in the unaltered Nicene Creed, is that the Son and Spirit eternally derive their unique identities from the Father: the Son is begotten of the Father and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. In its battle against Arianism, the Western church eventually went further, linking the identity of the Spirit to the Son by adding the much-disputed *filioque* clause to the Nicene Creed. Nowadays, some are urging that the intra-trinitarian relations are reciprocal, such that the Son is begotten of the Father in the Spirit, the Father breathes forth the Spirit through the Son, and the Father receives the paternal identity reflexively by means of the Son's ever crying "*Abba*" in the Spirit.<sup>19</sup> In my view, there is much merit in these contemporary proposals. Even if we stay with the most minimal Nicene consensus, however, we may anchor the apostolicity of the economic Trinity and of the church in the immanent being of God. As Peter Bellini and Fred Sanders recently have reminded us, the missions of the Son and Spirit *ad extra* reflect their processions *ad intra*. Christmas and Pentecost find their archetypes in the Father's begetting of the Son and

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<sup>18</sup>Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People*, 209–11, 213–19; cf. Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune*, 136–38.

<sup>19</sup>Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 327–34, concurring with Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995); others include Thomas Smail, "The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity" in Christopher R. Seitz, ed., *Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001), ch. 10; Sanders, *Image*, 8, 173–87. Cf. the intriguing comments by Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 247, on Augustine's unusual description of the Father as existing *propter Filium* in *Tractatus in Ioannem* 19.

breathing out of the Spirit. “Fromness” in time echoes “fromness” in eternity.<sup>20</sup>

***Transposing Down: The Notes of the Church in the Key of Wesley***

The notes of the church, then, find their ultimate justification in the eternal triune life of God. Yet now that we have gained a vision of the church’s grounding in God, the question of implementing this vision remains. How are ecclesial unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity to be lived out? To answer this question, we must descend from the heaven of heavens of the immanent Trinity to the earthly, indeed “grassroots” level of Wesley’s practical divinity.

Half a century ago, Albert Outler sketched Wesley’s transposition of the notes of the church into a Methodist key:

1. The *unity* of the church is based upon the Christian *koinonia* in the Holy Spirit.
2. The *holiness* of the church is grounded in the discipline of grace, which guides and matures the Christian life from its threshold in justifying faith to its plerophory [i.e., fullness] in sanctification.
3. The *catholicity* of the church is defined by the universal outreach of redemption, the essential community of all true believers.
4. The *apostolicity* of the church is gauged by the succession of apostolic doctrine in those who have been faithful to the apostolic witness.<sup>21</sup>

Let us add some flesh to Outler’s outline. As he acknowledges in his essay, Methodism was meant to function as an “evangelical order” within the larger church. Wesley sought to preserve the unity of the church by organizing his Methodist societies as “little churches within the church” (*ecclesiolae in ecclesia*) rather than as a rival to Anglicanism. The scheduling and content of Methodist society meetings were designed as noncom-

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<sup>20</sup>Peter Bellini, “The *Processio-Missio* Connection: A Starting Point in *Missio Trinitatis* or Overcoming the Immanent-Economic Divide in a *Missio Trinitatis*,” *WTJ* 49.2 (Fall 2014), 7–23; Sanders, *Triune God*, 37–153.

<sup>21</sup>Albert C. Outler, “Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?,” in Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, eds., *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 218–19. As p. 211 indicates, Outler originally published this essay in 1964.

petitive supplements to the regular eucharistic services of the Church of England.<sup>22</sup> Within these societies themselves, Wesley sought to unite his Methodists around a common discipline (the General Rules of the United Societies) and doctrine (emphasizing applied soteriology).<sup>23</sup> If these societies softly echoed the Godhead by being “of the same substance” in teaching and praxis, they also shadowed triune perichoresis by fostering intimate life-on-life interaction.

At the heart of Wesley’s soteriology was the promise of sanctity: to share by grace in the holy love that is the very life of God. This, Wesley claimed, was the Methodists’ “grand depositum.” His distinctive doctrine of the present attainability of “entire sanctification” or “perfection in love” may have developed across his years of ministry, but his pursuit and promotion of it remained constant.<sup>24</sup> It was for this purpose, “to spread scriptural holiness over the land,” that he believed God to have raised up Methodism and to this end that Wesley structured his Methodist system of discipleship groups.<sup>25</sup> Their organization into societies, classes, bands, select societies, and penitent bands, each with a distinctive size, demographic, and educational mode, had the joint aim of advancing their members in holistic holiness.<sup>26</sup>

This holism bears directly upon Wesley’s catholicity. As the Godhead includes Spirit as well as Son as well as Father, so Methodists included laity as well as clergy, women as well as men, common laborers as well as the wealthy and titled, persons of African extraction as well as white Europeans

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<sup>22</sup>John Wesley, “Minutes of Several Conversations,” in Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (repr.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 8:320–22; cf. Outler, “Do Methodists,” 214.

<sup>23</sup>“Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three, that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness.”—John Wesley, “The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained,” in *Works* (Jackson) 8:472.

<sup>24</sup>D. Marselle Moore, “Development in Wesley’s Thought on Sanctification and Perfection,” *WTJ* 20.2 (Fall 1985), 29–53.

<sup>25</sup>Wesley, “Minutes,” 299–338 (quote from p. 299).

<sup>26</sup>For a useful description of the history, makeup, and educational modes of Wesley’s Methodist discipleship system, see D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley’s Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel, 1997). Matthew Nelson Hill, *Evolution and Holiness: Sociobiology, Altruism and the Quest for Wesleyan Perfection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), intriguingly relates Wesley’s system to contemporary sociobiological understandings of human development.



and Euro-Americans.<sup>27</sup> They also included holders of varied ecclesiastical opinions. Among these Wesley urged cooperation based on “catholic spirit” even amid disagreements over forms of worship and church polity (though not, note well, over core Christian dogmas).<sup>28</sup> All these diverse people came to be gathered into Methodism through the leadership of one who looked upon the whole world as his parish—a truly catholic vision!

Such catholic vision produced apostolic action. Wesley felt himself *sent* to proclaim the apostles’ gospel and promote the apostles’ practice.<sup>29</sup> He also sent others to do likewise, whether lay preachers to England or superintendents to America. These “irregular” sendings caused consternation among clergy who held to a traditional theory of apostolic succession as authority passed down from bishop to bishop. On this view, Wesley’s sendings were unauthorized since he was no bishop. Yet Wesley and his lieutenants John Fletcher and Francis Asbury came to see real apostolicity as fidelity to the apostles’ character and ministry rather than as strict formal continuity with the past.<sup>30</sup> Based on our proposed relation between ecclesiology and the Trinity, we may advance an analogy: the eternal processions within God break missionally into the economy of history in novel ways at Creation, the Exodus, Christmas, and Pentecost without losing the constancy of the divine identity. Just so the sending of the church may take innovative forms across cultures and generations without compromising the church’s essential identity, an identity forged by the apostolic “faith once for all delivered to the saints.”

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<sup>27</sup>See, e.g., the comments of Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980), 31–38, 62–64, 86–87; Henderson, *John Wesley’s Class Meeting*, 125; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 102–13.

<sup>28</sup>Sermon 39: “A Caution against Bigotry” and Sermon 40: “Catholic Spirit” in Kenneth J. Collins and Jason E. Vickers, *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2013), 408–30. Against misinterpreting the latter sermon as a justification for theological pluralism, see Thomas C. Oden, *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition*, rev. edn. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 112–14.

<sup>29</sup>See, e.g., Sermon 24: “Scriptural Christianity” in Collins and Vickers, *The Sermons of John Wesley*, 233–45.

<sup>30</sup>William Payne, “Discerning John Wesley’s Missional Ecclesiology,” *WTJ* 49.2 (Fall 2014), 24–47; John Fletcher, *The Portrait of St. Paul: Or, The True Model for Christians and Pastors*, trans. John Gilpin (Salem, OH: Schmull, n.d.); Hatch, *Democratization*, 82–86.

### ***Conclusion: Transposing the Trinity Today***

Wesley transposed the notes of the church into a key appropriate to his eighteenth-century Western context. His work begs to be transposed again into forms befitting our contexts today.<sup>31</sup> Yet we face a danger in emulating his pragmatic approach to ecclesiology: Wesley ministered in the context of Christendom, with its robust tradition of trinitarian orthodoxy. In our own uprooted, undogmatic setting, we lack sturdy safeguards against diluting Wesley's "practical divinity" into all practice and no divinity. The orthodox foundations upon which Wesley relied, including the "speculative divinity" which he eschewed,<sup>32</sup> require to be reconstructed in our post-Christendom milieu. In this essay I have mapped one route toward this goal by tracing the links from Wesley's ministry through the classical notes of the church and the economic Trinity to the immanent Trinity. Yet as the Wesley brothers well knew, one best teaches orthodoxy by doxology. It is all the more proper for an essay that has used a musical metaphor throughout to end with a Charles Wesley hymn from the church to the Trinity:

Jehovah is but One  
Eternal God and true:  
The Father sent the Son,  
His Spirit sent him too,

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<sup>31</sup>Free Methodist scholar and former missionary Howard Snyder has written several incisive books exploring such a transposition. In Howard A. Snyder with Daniel V. Runyon, *Decoding the Church: Mapping the DNA of Christ's Body* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 22–23, he proposes to expand the marks of the church: alongside our confession that the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, we must add that the church is diverse, charismatic, local, and prophetic. Such a proposal may be necessary when the full significance of the classical notes of the church has become diluted or distorted. My own preference is to reclaim the robust biblical and historical meaning of the classical notes, which includes Snyder's proposed counterpoints: unity in the body of Christ presupposes diversity of members and giftings (e.g., 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:1–16); holiness in Exodus and Ezekiel, the Gospels and Acts is expressed through supernatural power; catholicity embraces locality, for every local church in communion with the global church is a catholic church, a *précis* of the church universal; and the apostolic preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom fulfills the prophetic call for God's peace and justice to reign over creation.

<sup>32</sup>Henry H. Knight III, "A Trinity of Love", *Catalyst* (8 April 2015). Retrieved from: [www.catalystresources.org/a-trinity-of-love/](http://www.catalystresources.org/a-trinity-of-love/).

The everlasting Spirit filled,  
And Jesus our salvation sealed.  
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!<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Hymn 102: "Jehovah is but One," in Charles Wesley, *Trinity Hymns*, ed. Randy L. Maddox. Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition. Retrieved from: [https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/divinity.duke.edu/files/documents/cswt/67\\_Trinity\\_Hymns\\_\(1767\)\\_mod.pdf](https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/divinity.duke.edu/files/documents/cswt/67_Trinity_Hymns_(1767)_mod.pdf), 65–66.

## DIVIDED BECAUSE OF JESUS

by

**Kenneth M. Loyer**

Particularly during tumultuous times like these—amid swirling winds of conflict threatening the future of at least one ecclesial tradition within global Methodism, the United Methodist Church (of which, as a matter of self-disclosure, I am a lifelong member)—Wesleyan Christians are accustomed to hearing that Jesus is the source of our unity. Indeed, unity in Christ is a prominent theme in the New Testament. For example, the Apostle Paul affirms that such unity transcends ethnic, economic, and gender distinctions when he writes in Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Addressing the problem of factions in the church at Corinth, Paul appeals to the Corinthian Christians, “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Jesus himself prays for the unity of his followers—both his contemporaries and those who will believe in him through their message—“that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). As Jesus continues in that prayer, we see again that the emphasis on unity has a deeply missional purpose: “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23). Here and elsewhere, the New Testament consistently emphasizes the theme of unity in Jesus for all who follow him.

Yet an often-overlooked passage in John 7 provides a different, though not incompatible, view of the relationship between Jesus and unity: “the people were divided because of Jesus” (7:43). In what sense is it possible for people to be divided because of Jesus? That is the main question I set out here to explore.

In the context of John’s Gospel, people were divided because of competing understandings of the person and work of Jesus. In brief, there were three main camps: some called Jesus the prophet, others said he was the Christ, and still others responded skeptically because of their own

ignorance about the identity of Jesus. Before a more detailed review of each response, it will be useful to consider the setting for this story.

### ***The Setting***

Earlier in John 7, Jesus' brothers encouraged him to go from Galilee to Judea and to show himself to the world. Jesus would eventually go to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, but only in secret because he knew he was a marked man and he was waiting for the right time to teach publicly. Halfway through the Feast, when the crowds would be at their largest, Jesus went up to the temple courts and began to teach. By teaching in the temple courts at that time, Jesus would be able to reach many people.

In John 7:37-39 a dramatic scene begins in this way: "On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Those who believe in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.' By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."

In response to Jesus' teaching here, three opinions emerged among the people listening to him as John recounts in 7:40-42: "On hearing his words, some of the people said, 'Surely this man is the Prophet.' Others said, 'He is the Christ.' Still others asked, 'How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?'" An examination of those three responses will illuminate both the problem of being divided by Jesus and the antidote, then and now.

### ***Group Number 1: Jesus the Prophet***

When they heard Jesus' words, some of the people identified with the prophetic nature of Jesus and his mission. They called him "the prophet"—a title reminiscent of the triumphal entry in Matthew 21:10-11, where we read: "When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'"

Both there in Matthew 21 and here in John 7, the people who call Jesus the prophet seem to have an underdeveloped notion of the sense in which that title rightly applies to Jesus. Yes, Jesus speaks on behalf of God, which is essential to a prophet's role, but Jesus is more than one prophet among many, and he is more than even first among the prophets. There is

a fundamental difference between Jesus and other biblical characters with the title of prophet. Other prophets proclaim a message that points beyond themselves, and often away from themselves, to God.<sup>1</sup> They may in some sense represent God, but they are not God. The distinction between the human prophet and the divine source of the message is consistent and clear. Yet with Jesus, things are different. He is more than a divine spokesperson or religious teacher who points others away from himself and to God; Jesus points others directly to himself. For example, in John 7 we read that Jesus stood up at the festival and loudly exclaimed, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Those who believe in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them” (7:37-38). Here and elsewhere, Jesus points others to himself because he is both the messenger and the message in flesh and blood; he is a man whose identity was God. As affirmed in the *munus triplex*, the threefold office of Jesus Christ includes a prophetic dimension, but the ascription of the title “prophet” to Jesus—even if it is “the prophet” with the definite article perhaps implying something special about this particular prophet from Nazareth—is incomplete on its own and needs to be informed by the classical designations of priest and king in order to fund an appropriately well-rounded Christology.

The first group near the end of John 7, consisting likely of pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast, showed an initial openness to Jesus in calling him the prophet, as far as that title went. Ultimately, though, they appeared unable to grasp the essential truth that the prophetic aspect of Jesus’ identity and mission was, and is, just the beginning. A fuller understanding of who Jesus is and what he does must be found elsewhere.

### **Group Number 2: Jesus the Christ**

A second group in John 7 would succinctly summarize that fuller understanding. Upon hearing Jesus’ words, including his invitation for all who are thirsty to come to him and drink and to be filled with streams of living water by believing in him, this group responded with a clear declaration of faith: “He is the Christ” (7:41). These people believed in Jesus and immediately recognized him as the Christ. They did so on the basis of both his teachings and his signs—the latter being a particularly prominent theme in John’s Gospel, by which Jesus reveals his glory and others

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<sup>1</sup>For example, John the Baptist (John 1:8, 20, 27).

come to faith in him as a direct result. For example, earlier in John 7 we read that while Jesus' opponents tried to seize him (though no one laid a hand on him because his time had not yet come), "many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, 'When the Christ comes, will he do more signs than this man?'" (7:31)

In stark contrast to these people who believed in Jesus and acknowledged him as the Christ, John goes on to mention the stubborn unbelief of those in authority. The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about Jesus. "Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him" (7:32). Later, when the temple guards returned to the chief priests and Pharisees, they asked the guards, "Why did you not arrest Jesus?" The guards declared, "Never has anyone spoken like this!" (7:45-46) To that the Pharisees retorted, "You mean he has deceived you also?" (7:47)

The religious leaders had long ago made up their minds. In their judgment, those who believed in Jesus were badly mistaken. They asked, "Has any one of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed" (7:48-49).

The Pharisees implied that no authorized leader believed in Jesus, and yet Nicodemus, "a member of the Jewish ruling council" (3:1), spoke up. He asked, "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?" The Pharisees called for people to observe the law, but Nicodemus pointed to their own disregard for the law in this instance. They replied, "Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee" (7:50-52).

The Pharisees were angry and wrong (for example, Jonah came from Galilee). Moreover, they overlooked the right of God to raise up prophets from wherever he chooses. They allowed their pride and self-interest to blind them to the truth about Jesus, whereas this second group in John 7 stated in the confidence of faith, "He is the Christ."

### ***Group Number 3: The Skeptics and Their Questions***

The Pharisees were not the only ones to mention Galilee as this scene unfolded. A third group asked, "How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" (7:41-42) At that time there were different ideas about the Messiah's place of origin. Earlier in John 7, some of the people of Jerusalem reflected another opinion when they declared, "we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes,

no one will know where he is from” (7:27). Despite the fact that knowledge about the Messiah’s place of origin was a contested question, this third group correctly concluded on scriptural grounds that the Messiah would come from David’s family and from Bethlehem. Their problem was that they did not know enough about Jesus to understand that he was the fulfillment of that and every other messianic promise. In other words, these people knew Scripture but had an insufficient knowledge of Jesus. This situation is reminiscent of what Jesus says in John 5: “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39-40). For this third group of people in John 7, their skepticism was rooted in ignorance about Jesus and certain assumptions that proved to be wrong. Jesus had come to the Feast of Tabernacles from Galilee, but he was nonetheless born in Bethlehem and in the line of David just as Scripture had proclaimed would be the case. While this third group was technically correct in their reading of biblical prophecy concerning the origin of the Messiah, they could not see that Jesus had fulfilled that promise because they simply did not know enough about him or, even more to the point, they did not know him well enough. Had they been open to getting to know Jesus, they would have been surprised to learn how he wondrously fulfills the promises of God as the promised Messiah born in both the line, and city, of David. Their questions reflected a narrow-minded skepticism that an openness to being surprised by God and a genuine knowledge of Jesus, revealed in the Scriptures and vivified through encountering Jesus and believing in him, would have been able to overcome.

### ***The Problem of Being Divided Because of Jesus, and the Antidote***

This pericope illustrates the problem of being divided because of Jesus. Looking back on these three groups we see three different responses, and these responses, when considered together, not only highlight the problem of division over who Jesus is but also provide clues for finding a way forward beyond division toward unity in Jesus. The first group rightly named Jesus a prophet but, failing to grasp his priestly and kingly offices, settled for a needlessly diminished understanding of Jesus; he was, and is, more than they had realized. The second group identified him straight-away as the Christ. The third group hesitated to do so because, although they correctly interpreted scriptural teaching about the Messiah’s origins, they still did not know Jesus well enough to affirm his full identity as the



long-awaited Christ. Each of these two problematic tendencies—seeing Jesus as a prophet but nothing more, and employing a rigid hermeneutic that obscures rather than discloses deep Christological truths—can pose obstacles, then and now, to reaching an appropriately theological understanding of Jesus, and can thus leave people divided because of Jesus. The antidote, so gravely needed for such a time as this, is a full-bodied affirmation of Jesus as the Christ, or in other words, knowing Scripture and knowing Jesus.

Traces of that solution can be found in the context itself. The setting in which Jesus spoke was the Feast of Tabernacles, the great feast in the Jewish year celebrating the completion of the harvest and commemorating God's goodness to the Israelites during their desert wanderings. The name for that festival came from the leafy shelters in which people lived throughout the seven days of the feast. Metaphorically, a proper Christology can be seen as a shelter for our wilderness wanderings, a place of residence, a Spirit-inspired dwelling with God and others in God. Jesus' promise of streams of living water (7:38) refers to the Spirit, who had not yet been given but has since been poured out upon the church at Pentecost. Ironically, the words of Jesus that prompt this division or exposure of division are words that promise the gift of the indwelling Spirit uniting all those who come to Jesus and drink.

This is not the first case of Jesus bringing division, nor would it be the last. We see at least three other examples in John's Gospel alone. In the previous chapter, John 6, Jesus' description of himself as the bread of life triggers an argument among the Jewish audience; after hearing Jesus say, "This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (6:51), they "began to argue among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" (6:52) In that provocative discourse Jesus shared some difficult teaching about discipleship, but many people were not ready to receive life in the way he taught. Following the account of Jesus healing a man born blind in John 9, the Pharisees investigate the healing and find themselves divided: "Some . . . said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.' But others asked, 'How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?' So they were divided," John recounts (9:16). Jesus' teaching in the next chapter of John's Gospel that he is the Good Shepherd produces a similar outcome—more division. John explains, "At these words the Jews were again divided. Many of them said, 'He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?' But others said, 'These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes

of the blind?” (10:19-21) It seems to be a fairly regular occurrence for the teachings and actions of Jesus to result in disagreements and divisions. Perhaps that is fitting considering Jesus’ words in Matthew 10:34-36: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.” The inevitable result of Christ’s coming and his message of the kingdom of God—a message that he both taught and enacted, indeed embodied—is conflict in a world that rejects him and resists his lordship.

### ***Then and Now***

The situation in that first-century setting was not an isolated incident. Moreover, ever since Jesus came into the world, there have been people divided because of him. Perspectives about Jesus at the most basic level—who he is and how best to describe him—are varied today not only outside the church but also within the church as a whole and even within the Wesleyan/Methodist family of churches. Sometimes the divergences in our own day are no less significant than they were among Jesus’ original audience at the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7.

In the case of Methodist theology, Jason Vickers traces key Christological themes from the eighteenth century to the present in his article in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*. His findings show a remarkable, and even dizzying, breadth of perspectives, as suggested by the headings he chooses for each century: “The Eighteenth Century: Defending the Divinity of Christ,” “The Nineteenth Century: Confessing the Christ of the Ecumenical Creeds,” “The Twentieth Century: Critiquing the Christ of the Ecumenical Creeds,” and “The Twenty-First Century: Retrieving the Christ of the Ecumenical Creeds.”

For primary approaches to Christology as expressed in the ecumenical creeds to vary so widely within a single Christian tradition—from defending to confessing to critiquing radically and finally to reclaiming basic Christological orthodoxy—is nothing short of astonishing. One wonders how the boundaries of coherent teaching and theological continuity could possibly extend so far, or indeed whether they do. Specifically in the twentieth century, Methodist theologians guided by determinative philosophical and ethical approaches and concerns such as Boston Personalism, process thought, and liberationist approaches collectively criticized classical Christology in ways that shifted emphasis away from the

person of Christ and toward either the work or the offices of Christ, chiefly Christ's prophetic office. As Vickers notes, "with regard to the person of Christ, Boston Personalists, process, and liberation theologians often emphasize the humanity of Christ more than the divinity of Christ."<sup>2</sup> To be sure, a balanced and graciously orthodox Christology will include room for various perspectives within the larger context of affirming essential teachings about the person and work of Jesus. Clarity about such matters is critical, however, because there must be sufficient agreement on who Jesus is in order for people to be united in him in any meaningful sense.

Here Wesley can serve as a useful guide. His sermon "Catholic Spirit" is often cited as a resource for internal church struggles and disagreement, in many cases to support the customary conclusion that contemporary Methodists true to the spirit of Wesley should happily champion unity in diversity or some other theologically imprecise but earnestly cherished ideal. Yet this application of that sermon by Wesley is problematic from the very start—Wesley was not writing "Catholic Spirit" in response to theological or ethical divisions among Methodists but rather to address areas of divergence between Methodist teaching and the views of other Christian traditions. Nevertheless, granting the liberty of extending the logic of Wesley's argument to cases of disagreement between Methodists despite his stated intentions, we still find ample evidence that this sermon is commonly misunderstood to support preconceived notions of what we think it should say or must say. Even when Wesley was at his most catholic spirited he withheld his hand from Socinians, Pelagians, and anyone else who could not answer straightforward questions such as the following affirmatively:

Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, "God over all, blessed for ever"? Is he revealed in thy soul? Dost thou know Jesus Christ and him crucified? Does he dwell in thee, and thou in him? Is he formed in thy heart by faith? Having absolutely disclaimed all thy own works, thy own righteousness, hast thou "submitted thyself unto the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus"? Art thou "found in him, not having thy own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith"?

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<sup>2</sup>Jason E. Vickers, "Christology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, eds. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 568.

And art thou, through him, “fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life”?<sup>3</sup>

In short, Wesley acknowledged clear theological boundaries and those boundaries defined basic Christian orthodoxy regarding the person and work of Jesus. The goal was not simply theological correctness, of course, but love as implied by the question Wesley asks next: “Is thy faith . . . filled with the energy of love?”<sup>4</sup> Christological precision is not the antithesis of love, but rather a demonstration of it because our faith in Christ is faith in the One who is love’s source and goal, and who is love itself. Clarity about who Jesus is should not lead to less love; it leads to more love and greater love, and to a participation by grace in God’s own love which is endless and perfect, this love opened up to us in Jesus and poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Over against the persistent temptation to reimagine Jesus in our image and to make him fit in with the “prophets” of today, a responsible approach calls for allowing Jesus to speak on his own terms, not making him speak on ours. Jesus does not need us to filter him through our own self-interested schemas. It is enough for us simply to say in the confidence of faith, along with those in John 7 who had the courage to speak up in this way, “He is the Christ.” There must be room for us all, even the most biblically orthodox among us, to be surprised by Jesus, and that basic Christological affirmation provides us with the necessary space or at least constitutes a starting point.

Perhaps divisions tragically persist among some of Wesley’s heirs because ultimately we do not know Jesus like we should. As we get to know Jesus for who he really is, as we are surprised by him and his perfect and perfecting love, then through the Holy Spirit and by God’s grace we will discover genuine unity in Christ, and authentic, God-honoring diversity in that unity, as together we bear witness to the world. Wesleyan Christians, especially those in United Methodist contexts where unity is under threat and the church is in crisis, would do well today to stand faithfully with the universal church and its ancient yet ever timely confession of Jesus as the Christ, a confession that reflects the beauty and mystery of Christ and his gospel, which is the wisdom and power of God for the healing and salvation of our thirsty, sin-sick, and divided world.

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<sup>3</sup>Wesley, “Catholic Spirit,” I.13, in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 2, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 87.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, I.14, 88.

# THE PRECARIOUS CHURCH PARADOX AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD (ANDERSON)

by

Barry L. Callen

Humans are inclined to discrimination based on selfish definitions of insiders and outsiders, those *in* authority with power and those *out* who have little or none. We create exclusive clubs, nurture family and tribal loyalties, encourage nationalisms, and pour money and passion into political party preferences. Often the price is high for indulging in such popular discriminations. Many people get marginalized, sometimes demonized, or even eliminated.

One would expect a difference in the churches seeking “the mind of Christ.” Jesus announced that in his fellowship there no longer is to be discrimination based on race, gender, or national origin (Gal. 3:28). He disdained the selfish use of power and privilege, especially inside the community of faith. Sadly, however, Christian churches often have followed the restrictive social patterns of their host cultures, gathering communities of like-minded, like-looking, and like-acting people. They have divided themselves into “denominations” of the faith that have checkered histories of competition and even combat among themselves.

This destructive tendency is directly contrary to the teachings and modeling of the Master. It is the church gone inward, gone wrong, gone off balance, having lost the precarious paradox that should characterize church life.

## *The Precarious Paradox*

At the heart of Christian church life is supposed to lie a precarious and well-handled paradox. Keeping it in balance is essential and difficult. Its perversions take several forms—too open or closed, too high or low, too authoritarian or flexible, too conventional or contemporary, too individual or corporate, etc.

All believers are individual children of God, free in Christ, born one at a time by God’s grace. And yet, all believers also are accountable to one

another, members of the one church, the body of Christ. We are to be reborn individuals, gifted separately as God wills and responsible for our particular callings. And yet, we also belong together as the church. We are at our truest and best only when judged equal and fully functioning together. We are accountable one to the other since all gifts of the Spirit are intended for the good of the whole body.

So what is the precarious paradox? One way of defining it is *the one and the many*. There are to be individuals in the church but no individualism. Reflecting the Jewish heritage, we Christians have a corporate identity as children of God. We are individual children in one family, leading to the delicate and demanding doctrine of God's people. The church must have both *stable continuity* and *dynamic immediacy*. It must be comprised of mature individuals who have a sense of mature community. There must be regularized patterns of accountability and also the freedom for the exercise of charismatic endowments. The church is always many and necessarily one.

I suggest that the church as it ought to be is seen quite clearly (although not perfectly, of course) in the history of the National Association of the Church of God (Anderson). There is in this century-old history a healthy ecclesial balance. It is found on Zion's Hill in western Pennsylvania, center of the life of this African-American network of believers affiliated with the Church of God (Anderson).

### ***My High and/or Low Experience***

Dimensions of the ecclesial paradox often are referred to as "high" and "low" church. I was reared almost equidistant from the East Liverpool campgrounds in Ohio and Zion's Hill in Pennsylvania, one Free Methodist and relatively high church<sup>1</sup> and the other Church of God (Anderson) and considerably low church. My paternal grandfather was a Free Methodist minister, the "property" of his Pittsburgh Conference. That was the "high church" style of ecclesial life rooted in American Methodism and English Anglicanism before that.

Family circumstances led to my being reared in a congregation of the Church of God (Anderson) where I was infused with a much more low-church mentality. This congregation was only a few miles from Zion's

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<sup>1</sup>This denomination, reflecting John Wesley himself, is a mixture of high and low church, but certainly higher than the especially low-church congregationalism of the Church of God (Anderson).

Hill in Pennsylvania where my home pastor, a Caucasian woman, occasionally was a guest preacher (no clash of gender or race on those grounds).<sup>2</sup> In this reform movement, it is assumed that the Spirit should be free of human hands being laid on church life. There should be no strangling by organizational entanglements and restrictive creeds, no discriminating based on race, gender, and church labels more historically and culturally generated than biblically rooted.

This reforming Church of God fellowship arose in the revivalistic American Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, with the addition of aspects of the Anabaptist tradition. It has been a productive put-together intending to keep the precarious ecclesial paradox in better balance. It is in this hybrid ecclesial matrix that I first encountered the richness of African-American Christianity functioning as the National Association with its corporate center on Zion's Hill outside the little town of West Middlesex, Pennsylvania. I also have experienced there the precarious paradox being held in a healthy tension.

On one occasion I dialogued with a Free Methodist bishop about this delicate ecclesial tension. With some amusement, we observed together that the Church of God was cautiously seeking more organization to avoid unstructured chaos while the Free Methodist Church was attempting to democratize its more high-church structure that unintentionally can strangle the spontaneous work of God's Spirit (the opposite of its "free" ideal). We wondered if the two groups might "quietly pass in the dark," each seeking a better balance of the ecclesial paradox. My 1969 master's thesis at Asbury Theological Seminary was in part a study of the clash of these two church bodies of my childhood.<sup>3</sup>

### ***The Balance Embodied on Zion's Hill***

One community of believers in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition has grasped and embodied reasonably well the essential paradox that is the church at its best, a church life vibrant with immediacy and yet structured

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<sup>2</sup>I wrote the biography of my home pastor, Rev. Lillie S. McCutcheon, titled *She Came Preaching* (Warner, 1992).

<sup>3</sup>Under the direction of Dr. Harold Kuhn, the thesis was titled "The Church of God Reformation Movement: A Study in Ecumenical Idealism." My book *Contours of a Cause* (Anderson University School of Theology, 1995) is a study of the teaching tradition of the Church of God (Anderson), a movement committed to the *immediacy* of the ecclesial paradox (the dynamic cause) and struggling to find the necessary *stability/continuity* side of the paradox (the contours).

for accountability and continuity. It is the National Association of the Church of God (Anderson) that just celebrated its first century of existence.<sup>4</sup> Meeting in August 2016 as it has every year since 1917 on Zion's Hill in West Middlesex, Pennsylvania, the fellowship celebration was intense and the preaching and singing some of the best of the African-American tradition of Christianity.

But there was more, a careful balancing of the precarious paradox. There was a radical inclusiveness of individuals, a free sharing of a wide range of spiritual gifts, the presence and leadership of multiple genders and races without discrimination, a freedom of biblically-informed thought and vision combined with signs of obvious but not suffocating community accountability.

At this centennial celebration of the National Association, the precarious paradox of church life was highly visible and in good balance. There were powerful personalities and individual spiritual gifts dramatically displayed. Also on display was the wonder of the paradox when its wholeness is embraced. This is one people who are deeply united amidst all of their individuality. They are proudly together as the National Association and also a prominent part of a larger ecclesial whole, the Church of God (Anderson), and beyond that the whole body of Christ.

These sisters and brothers are staunchly loyal to the National Association, their corporate identity, while refusing to see this African-American entity as Black versus White, *us* against any *them*. The subject is Jesus, the common rallying point that blends diversity and holds in one the many human differences. The distinctiveness of this community of believers, these brothers and sisters bound by love, is characterized by an inclusivism that makes all Jesus believers at home and melts away artificial distinctions of race, gender, economic status, spiritual giftings, creedal backgrounds, and organizational identities. It's an ongoing experiment in exhibiting to the world the will of Christ for the church.

The National Association is a century-old expression of the wholeness of the ecclesial paradox, an immediacy with accountability, freedom without chaos, a viable community not sustained by high walls based on creedal nuances or practice preferences. These Christians, mostly African Americans, are from all over North America and the Caribbean. They are a

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<sup>4</sup>The original incorporated name was "The Western Pennsylvania and Eastern Ohio Camp Ground Association." It was changed in 1943 to "The National Association of the Church of God."



unique and distinct gathering and yet proudly part of the larger movement of the Church of God (Anderson). One of their ministers, the Rev. Dr. Diana L. Swoope of Akron, Ohio, is currently the elected Chair of the General Assembly of the Church of God. Her predecessor in that Akron pastorate, Rev. Dr. Ronald J. Fowler, a prominent preacher at the 2016 centennial celebration of the National Association, was for many years the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Anderson University in Anderson, Indiana.<sup>5</sup>

The historian of the National Association, Rev. Dr. James Earl Massey, was for many years the radio voice of the Church of God, Dean of the School of Theology of Anderson University, and author of the history of African-Americans and the Church of God (Anderson).<sup>6</sup> More recently, Rev. Dr. James W. Lewis also served as the seminary's Dean. A celebrated scholar in Church of God circles is the Rev. Dr. Cheryl J. Sanders.<sup>7</sup> Another African-American scholar reared in the Church of God, Dr. Rufus Burrow, Jr., recently reviewed the history of African Americans in the Church of God movement and noted especially the unfinished aspects of the uniting vision, downsides that still exist despite the much that deserves celebration.<sup>8</sup> Such interrelationships of leaders and mutual enrichments through diverse spiritual gifts and thoughtful self-criticisms are numerous and readily welcomed.

And yet, with all of this unitedness to the larger church, commitment to the particular identity and programming of the National Association remains strong among its constituencies. This fellowship is an instance of an individual relatively free of the cancer of individualism, the dignity of self-awareness and self-respect not plagued by a crippling self-centeredness. It is a display of many children in one family, the freedom

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<sup>5</sup>See Ronald J. Fowler, ed., *The Church of God in Black Perspective* (Shining Light Survey, 1970). He and I met as graduate students at Anderson University School of Theology and have been close friends and ministerial colleagues ever since.

<sup>6</sup>A widely heralded historical publication is Dr. Massey's *African-Americans and the Church of God* (Anderson University Press, 2005). The newly dedicated historical center of the National Association, located on Zion's Hill in Pennsylvania, is called the Davis-Massey Museum.

<sup>7</sup>See especially two works of Dr. Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People* (Fortress, 1995) and *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African-American Religion and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>8</sup>See Rufus Burrow, Jr., *Making Good the Claim* (Pickwick, 2016).

to affirm a particular fellowship without loss of the stability, continuity, and accountability of the whole body. The National Association is hardly a perfect ecclesial presentation, but I submit that it leans heavily in the right direction.

### ***Roots of the National Association's Ecclesial Vision***

In the background of Zion's Hill and the National Association are at least three critical things. They are (1) a prominent biblical metaphor (Exodus), (2) the lingering specter of American slavery, and (3) the crusading cause of a "radical" church renewal movement, the Church of God (Anderson) that emerged in 1880 on the fringe of the broader holiness revival. The pioneers of this movement were frustrated and disillusioned with the church community they knew, including most holiness revivalists who were staunchly committed to their denominations. The pioneers insisted that Christian holiness, truly experienced, should bring unity and not generate or perpetuate formalized and often corrosive divisions in Christ's body.

These "radical" reformers saw the division of the church into ingrown and competing denominations as a public denial of the unity that should be the fruit of holiness. They were "radical" in the root sense of going back to the foundations of the faith and disavowing the awkward structures of restrictive church creeds and authoritarian organizations that had evolved over the centuries. To echo Martin Luther King, Jr., they intended to be free, yes, free at last! A new Exodus was coming, one that would free God's people for a holy and unified life in the promised land. It is easy to see the link between such a radical holiness vision and African-American believers with fresh memories of slavery in the United States.

The earliest beginnings of the network of Christians that established its corporate identity on Zion's Hill in 1917 were unaware of the Church of God movement (then nearly forty years old and centered in the Midwest section of the United States). Instead, they were a local prayer band called "The Brothers and Sisters of Love," a group of Christ's disciples in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, a place that had been a prominent stop on the Underground Railroad. There were many local White "conductors" who had assisted escaping slaves headed north. Here was a relatively good place to establish God's unifying presence among beleaguered African-American believers.

Soon, however, contacts were made that began to tie this local band of love to a larger church movement with compatible commitments.<sup>9</sup> Even so, and with a color line still existing even in segments of the Church of God movement (despite its strong idealisms to the contrary), the fact that Zion's Hill was begun and fully owned by African Americans nurtured a needed pride of race without being soured by prejudice toward others. The Zion's Hill ministry was originally established "as a haven for saints who would experience ostracism and discrimination in churches that embraced the dominant racist, sexist, and elitist mores of the times."<sup>10</sup>

The radical reform instincts at the heart of the Church of God movement resonated naturally with African-American believers seeking freedom, identity, and dignity. Common to both were a new-Exodus mentality focused on freedom from slavery and human structures thought to be strangling the work of God's Spirit. Central to both was the call to a full embracing of the life-changing experience of holiness available to all in the Spirit of God. This call and embracing made much sense to African-American believers who long had been enslaved by human structures.

Such a commonality of perspective explains why the Church of God movement (Anderson), which now numbers about 250,000 adherents in North America (and many more elsewhere), is comprised of nearly twenty percent African-Americans. The movement's corporate structure in North America, Church of God Ministries, now gladly includes the National Association as one of its officially recognized "Partners in Ministry." This designation allows full functional autonomy to the National Association and provides open doors for cooperative ministry.

The Church of God movement only slowly became aware of the presence and value of its significant Wesleyan roots—many of its earliest adherents were disillusioned Methodists.<sup>11</sup> Noteworthy is Howard Sny-

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<sup>9</sup>One center of important contact was the nearby Emlenton Camp Meeting of the Church of God that dates back to the 1890s and has featured many of the leading voices of the Church of God movement.

<sup>10</sup>Cheryl Sanders, *Saints in Exile*, 134.

<sup>11</sup>This awareness was sharpened considerably when one of the minister-scholars of the Church of God movement, Barry L. Callen, served from 1993 to 2014 as Editor of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* and joined Steve Hoskins as co-editor of the book *Wesleyan Theological Society: The Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration Volume* (Emeth, 2015). Callen also became a leader of the more recent Wesleyan Holiness Connection, editor of its publishing arm (Aldersgate), and editor of the WHC's seminal volume *The Holy River of God* (Aldersgate, 2016).

der's characterization of John Wesley as a "radical" reformer who nonetheless lived and died a "High Church Anglican." Wesley embraced the precarious individual-community paradox by incorporating in his ministry and teachings the emphases of the "radical" Protestant tradition while continuing to be a loyal adherent of the established church. This "dynamic synthesis," reports Snyder, "kept biblical paradoxes paired and powerful" in ways that link spiritual experience and church structures.<sup>12</sup> The precarious paradox must remain carefully paired in order to be powerful in its mission witness.

The publication released on the occasion of the centennial celebration of the Christian community on Zion's Hill (August 2016) features "The Declaration of Interdependence of Congregations and Leaders of the National Association of the Church of God." It declares that "we joyfully embrace the indispensable nature of our connected life and are proud to be partners in ministry with the diverse constituencies and ministries of the international Church of God movement of Anderson, Indiana. We humbly pledge to seek agreement, alignment, and accountability to one another and for one another as we magnify the Lord and exalt His name together."

There it is, an excellent expression of the precious and precarious ecclesial paradox, unity in diversity, dignity and individuality without the cancer of individualism that divides and the chaos that dissipates. The paradox is not embodied perfectly, of course, but the vision of its intended perfection drives the National Association and its partner ministry body, the Church of God (Anderson). It is a kingdom-of-God vision that grows out of suffering and stretches toward transcending the human divisions and prejudices of fallen humanity that infect even the church.

One African-American gospel song captures well the power and joy of the Black social vision. It's "a new world a-coming!"<sup>13</sup> Beyond sin, pain, discrimination, and slavery, beyond the church in all of its self-serving forms, there is coming the shalom of God, a vision and hope most available to those particularly mistreated in this world. As one analyst of Black preaching has observed, "the congregation can celebrate in advance, and

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<sup>12</sup>Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* (InterVarsity, 1980, Seedbed, 2014), 123, 162. For a broader historical perspective beyond particular focus on John Wesley, see Barry L. Callen's *Radical Christianity: The Believers' Church Tradition in Christianity's History and Future* (Evangel, 1999).

<sup>13</sup>Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming* (N.Y.: Arno, 1968).

such celebration can be socially dynamic as Christians begin to live freely according to the patterns of life in God's new order."<sup>14</sup> Such "living freely" is implementing the precarious ecclesial paradox as God would intend.

### ***A Legacy Leaning Forward***

African-American historian Rufus Burrow, Jr., warns that persons who take their radical faith seriously will face persecution. The history of the Church of God movement provides dramatic examples of such seriousness and persecution, and sadly, as Burrow rightly points out, also some examples of accommodating to outside cultural norms at odds with its own teaching.<sup>15</sup> The African-American historian and theologian James Earl Massey—who was on Zion's Hill from his boyhood—offers this crucial wisdom, a correction to the perennial danger of cultural accommodation:

As races and diverse cultures continue to meet, every Church of God (Anderson) congregation should order its life with an openness to all within its reach. This is the time for inclusive churches, churches where everyone's Christian experience makes them welcome for worship, for membership, and for mission. . . . As Barry L. Callen has reminded us, "holiness enables authentic unity, which in turn increases a credible witness to the world."<sup>16</sup>

Gilbert W. Stafford, prominent theologian of the Church of God (Anderson), expands on this "openness" element of ecclesiology. The tradition of the Church of God is one of a resistance to "denominationalism" and a determination to be a reforming "movement," not just another organizational presence on the complex church scene.

The resulting challenge as Stafford sees it? The church that structures itself movementally in harmony with the early Christian movement must intentionally build networks of *interconnectedness* with the whole church.

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<sup>14</sup>David G. Buttrick, "Laughing with the Gospel," in Barry L. Callen, ed., *Sharing Heaven's Music: The Heart of Christian Preaching: Essays in Honor of James Earl Massey* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 131.

<sup>15</sup>Rufus Burrow, Jr., *Making Good the Claim* (Pickwick, 2016).

<sup>16</sup>Massey, *African Americans and the Church of God*, 255-256. He quotes Callen's *It's God's Church: The Life and Legacy of Daniel S. Warner* (Warner, 1995), 170. Warner was the primary pioneer of the Church of God movement (Anderson). Both Massey and Callen have received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Wesleyan Theological Society and admire greatly the rich ecclesiology seen lived out on Zion's Hill.

God has only one church and one mission.<sup>17</sup> Faith is to be a divinely-inspired Exodus event, a pilgrimage constantly calling believers toward fuller unity, catholicity, apostolicity, and holiness. In the Church of God tradition, it is holiness that is understood to be a key enabler of a more “catholic” expression of Christ’s body, an encourager of a fuller unity among believers determined to be about Christ’s mission.

The Hebrew heritage of Christianity, bolstered by the African-American Christian experience exemplified by the National Association of the Church of God, teaches the following. Authentic religion, God’s people living in proper paradox, is “far more than a system of ethics, a code of conduct, or a creed—‘orthodox’ as they may be. . . . No creedalism or ceremonialism alone will ever meet God’s requirement for the good life. Those who please God are only those who act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God (Mic. 6:8).”<sup>18</sup>

This wisdom has been learned the hard way in the African-American experience in the United States. It reflects the prophetic ministry and suffering of Jesus himself:

So in John’s Gospel we have a new language of participation instead of management. Cruciform and subversive friendship, as opposed to managerial friendship, is attentive rather than manipulative, organic rather than technical, relational rather than rational, open-ended rather than calculating.<sup>19</sup>

Stafford champions this “language of participation instead of management.” A church that thinks and acts movementally . . .

1. Is earnestly devoted to the Christian mission instead of being devoted merely to the survival of its own organizational structures.
2. Is infinitely flexible in its structured life as it responds to the Spirit instead of being stymied in traditional structures that inhibit the accomplishment of its mission.<sup>20</sup>

Such interconnected and yet freeing language about appropriate church life has been spoken by the Church of God (Anderson) movement

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<sup>17</sup>Gilbert W. Stafford, *Theology for Disciples* (Warner, 1996, 2012), 167.

<sup>18</sup>Callen, *Radical Christianity*, 150.

<sup>19</sup>Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (InterVarsity, 1996), 209.

<sup>20</sup>Stafford, *Theology for Disciples*, 168.

for more than one-hundred and thirty-five years. Now for a century it has radiated with considerable credibility from Zion's Hill in western Pennsylvania. It is a language of both stable continuity and dynamic immediacy. It is learned only when taught by the Spirit of the Christ.

One of the celebrated sons of the National Association of the Church of God, James Earl Massey, once said this:

It is time for all Christians to move visibly beyond previous preferences and boundary lines and make common cause with one another. We can and must move beyond attitudes of suspicion about others and pride about ourselves. We Christians must cease being competitive. . . . The visible unity of the church is a must to ensure that the task of the church will be fulfilled in proper time and order.<sup>21</sup>

In other words, if the world today is to know that God really was in Christ on its behalf, the church must provide more than quality buildings, ornate ideas, and sophisticated organizations and programs. The church must *visibly be* what the world needs and cannot provide for itself—real love, real community, real resolution to the ugly divides of tribe, gender, race, and the privileges of economic and social status. The world will never believe what it *cannot see in practice*. The church must continue announcing the good news in large part by becoming its living and public model.

All believers, regardless of racial, gender, or ethnic heritage, are indeed *one in Jesus Christ*! Zion's Hill in West Middlesex, Pennsylvania, is one good place to glimpse this ecclesial ideal coming into relatively clear focus. The goal is embedded in the music of the spirituals that fill its sanctuary. That deeply Christian music is "from strugglers intent to encourage other strugglers. This is music of courage to bless the weak, music of faith to inspire hope. This is music of searchers who have found something eternal and Someone immortal."<sup>22</sup>

The Christian community at large should take note of this personal freeing and community-building heritage of African Americans seen gathered annually on Zion's Hill. It also should dare to agree with Arnold J. Toynbee who once was deeply impressed by the continuing relevance of such music for all Christians. He saw in this music, arising out of the slave

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<sup>21</sup>James Earl Massey, in *Vital Christianity*, June 6, 1982.

<sup>22</sup>James Earl Massey, *Sundays in the Tuskegee Chapel, Selected Sermons* (Abingdon, 2000), 16.

experience, an ability to adapt to alien social environments by rediscovering Christian meanings long neglected by Western Christendom. These meanings include an experience and a music giving Christianity a fresh opportunity to “become the living faith of a dying civilization for the second time.”<sup>23</sup>

The music and preaching and teaching heard on Zion’s Hill are sounds of a fresh Exodus from bondage to liberation, from a forced and meaningless drudgery to a true and fulfilling community of faith and ministry. It is the wonderful sound of a pilgrimage people moving with God through this world’s wilderness as a new and united people on their way to the promised land.

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<sup>23</sup>Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Oxford, 1947), 129.



# EUCCHARISTIC ECCLESIOLOGY FOR JOHN WESLEY AND THE PEOPLE CALLED THE METHODISTS AT THE ECUMENICAL TABLE

by

SunAe Lee-Koo

## *Introduction*

When John Wesley led a people called the Methodists, they, as an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* (a little church in a big church; a Society in the Anglican Church), did not have an ambiguous understanding of their ecclesiology, for they carried a clear ecclesiology of the Anglican Church. As an Anglican clergy, he encouraged the Methodists to receive the Holy Communion at the Anglican Church in order to maintain the identity of the Methodists belonging to *ecclesia*, the Church of England. Wesley's emphasis on receiving the Communion constantly, however, became a cause to breach the Methodists from the Anglican Church in America when their need exceeded Anglican provision, especially as they faced refusal from the Anglican clergy. The Christmas Conference in 1784 was a necessary outcome of their hunger for the Holy Communion. Ordination among the Methodists led them to breach from the Anglican Church, and the Methodists became an *ecclesia in ecclesiae* (a church among many denominational churches). To be concerned with the historical transition from an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* to an *ecclesia in ecclesiae* is to see the Methodists through the lens of ecclesiastical characters.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, the probable "ecclesiological ambiguity" among the Methodists is evidence of a tension between the Methodist Societies in the Church of England and the Methodist Church of today as a denomination or denominations different

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<sup>1</sup>According to Webster's Dictionary, "ecclesiastical" is defined as relating to a church as an established institution; and "ecclesiology" is defined as the theological doctrine relating to the church. Recently increased attention on Eucharistic ecclesiology is shared in Jason E. Vickers, ed., *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry*. While this book shares various articles regarding different theological areas of John Wesley's understanding with the lens of the Eucharist, my paper is solely concerned with the Eucharist to see our place in the Church universal.

from the Anglican Church.<sup>2</sup> It may be valid to say that the Methodists have an ambiguous ecclesiology.

However, according to Wesley, there seems to be a clear, unaltered ecclesiology based on the Eucharist. The necessity and duty of constant Communion not only became the cause of the breach, but it also carried ecclesial characteristics of the Methodists, which cannot be altered, despite ecclesiastical transitions. Whenever the nature of the church is the focus, whether as the Society of the Anglican Church or a separate denominational Church of today, the Methodists have been the church universal. Through the lens of the Eucharist, it may be possible to see the Methodists as one of *ecclesiae in Ecclesia* (one of the churches in the church universal).

With this hope in mind, section II of this paper will deal with the ecclesial nature of the Methodists based on Wesley's understanding of the Eucharist, which is present in his sermon, "The Duty of Constant Communion," and in his brother Charles' collection of *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*. Various appellations of the Eucharist and theological implications in these documents will be examined in order to see the Methodists in an ecclesiological focus. In section III, eucharistic ecclesiology will clearly (not ambiguously) show the place of the Methodists in the universal church. How the Orthodox Church has developed the eucharistic ecclesiology in the ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church will be explored, particularly in the span of Vatican I and II. The post-conciliar tendency to find eucharistic nature in the Catholic Church has grown. The meaning of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church will be the focus in section IV, in order to see the shared sense of the eucharistic ecclesiology. The renowned Catholic liturgist, Kevin Irwin's *Models of the Eucharist* will be summarized. As a conclusion, section V will deal with the hope for all Christians to be ecumenical through the Eucharist, and how eschatological it is to hope for one church surrounding one ecumenical Lord's Table.

### ***Wesley's Understanding of the Eucharist***

Due to John Wesley's emphasis on constant Communion, the Methodist revival is called a "Eucharistic revival," as well as an evangelical revival.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ted A. Campbell, "Methodist Ecclesiologies and Methodist Sacred Spaces," *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*, ed. by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2007), 215. I refer to the "Methodist Church" not as a specific denomination in a certain period, but as a Church since 1784.

<sup>3</sup>J. Robert Nelson, "Methodist Eucharistic Usage: From Constant Communion to Benign Neglect to Sacramental Recovery," in *Methodist-Catholic Dialogue*, 89.

While he received the Communion at least once every four days, he advised “all the Methodists in England and Ireland, who have been brought up in the Church, constantly to attend the services of the churches, at least every Lord’s Day.”<sup>4</sup> He confirms his extract in 1732 from the Anglican liturgist, Robert Nelson’s *The Great Duty of Frequenting the Christian Sacrifice* (1707), when he publishes the sermon, “The Duty of Constant Communion,” in 1787. In his brother Charles Wesley’s *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* (1745), Wesley also includes a preface concerning the eucharistic theology extracted from another Anglican, Daniel Brevint’s *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* (1673).<sup>5</sup> In these two writings, Wesley uses different names of the Eucharist that have theological implications. These different appellations can shed light on Wesley’s desire for the Methodists to become faithful Christians whether as an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* or as an *ecclesia in ecclesiae*. Therefore, each different description will be the focus of this part.<sup>6</sup>

### The Lord’s Supper

Based on Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25, the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549 uses the term “The Lord’s Supper” while omitting the term “Mass.” The host of the Lord’s Supper is, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> The Lord takes initiative by giving us spiritual nourishment for our souls’ journey: “God offers one of the greatest mercies on this side of heaven” in

<sup>4</sup>Nelson, 89; John C. Bowmer, *The Lord’s Supper in Early Methodism* (London: Dacre, 1951), Ch. V; *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences from the First*, vol. I (London, 1812), 58.

<sup>5</sup>Although this book was against the Roman Catholic understanding of the mass and sought to put forward more ancient and scriptural teachings on the sacrifice, it was more devotional than apologetic in tone . . . Brevint presented the Eucharist as a commemorative memorial, a real means of grace, a trustworthy pledge and a once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ, calling forth the sacrifice of our lives and goods in response to his work . . . [with] a powerful sense of the Eucharist as a real encounter with the Christ of the cross.” Lorna Lock-Nah Khoo, *Wesleyan Eucharistic Spirituality: Its Nature, Sources and Future* (Australia: ATF, 2005), 38.

<sup>6</sup>*This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion*, 2004. Available at <https://www.umdiscipleship.org/resources/this-holy-mystery-a-united-methodist-understanding-of-holy-communion1>. Accessed on January 3, 2017. This also brings to attention the names of the Sacrament mostly based on the United Methodist Hymnal.

<sup>7</sup>John Wesley and Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper with A Preface Concerning Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, (London: 1825), Hymn 84; available at <https://archive.org/details/hymnsonlordssupp00wesl>; *This Holy Mystery*, 3; accessed on 10 February, 2017. The Lord who offers the Supper and invites the people is the image of God of preventing grace.

the means of “food of our souls.”<sup>8</sup> By this spiritual food, the communicants are nurtured and strengthened as Wesley describes, “we shall be insensibly strengthened, made more fit for the service of God, and more constant in it.”<sup>9</sup> The gift or mercy that God confers through this eucharistic food is the gift of becoming like God.

### Means of Grace

Because the mercy of God is conveyed through eucharistic food, the Lord’s Supper becomes one of the most powerful means of grace, through which God’s mercy is offered.<sup>10</sup> Wesley explains the means of grace in that by eating and drinking action of communion the inward grace in the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ is offered to us through the outward signs of bread and wine.<sup>11</sup> Wesley sees, through the Eucharistic food, God’s grace of forgiveness and strengthening nourishment for souls’ journey of becoming like God are offered to the communicants.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the Eucharist is understood as a means of God’s preventing (preventive) grace, for God is the host of the Supper; of God’s justifying grace, for God’s forgiving love is abound; and of God’s sanctifying grace, for God strengthens the communicants to go on the journey toward Christian perfection.

### Holy Memorial: Holy Mystery<sup>13</sup>

Pertinent to remembrance of the Lord’s suffering and death is another name for the Lord’s Supper: Memorial. It is the Holy Memorial of paschal

<sup>8</sup>John Wesley, Sermon 101, “The Duty of Constant Communion,” *The Works of John Wesley Vol. III*. eds. By Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), 431-32. Henceforth refers to *Sermons*.

<sup>9</sup>“The Duty of Constant Communion,” *Sermons Vol. III*, 438.

<sup>10</sup>John Wesley and Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper with A Preface Concerning the Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* (London, 1825). Preface, IV. 1-3; available at <https://archive.org/details/hymnsonlordssupp00west>; accessed on 20 February, 2017; “The Duty of Constant Communion,” *Sermons Vol. III*, 432. James White explains further: “Sacraments are an effective means of God’s presence mediated through the created world. God becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ is the supreme instance of this kind of divine action . . . ‘an outward sign of inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same.’” See, James F. White, *Sacraments as God’s Self Giving* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1983), 12-13.

<sup>11</sup>“The Duty of Constant Communion,” *Sermons Vol. III*, 430.

<sup>12</sup>“The Duty of Constant Communion,” *Sermons Vol. III*, 429.

<sup>13</sup>“The Duty of Constant Communion,” *Sermons Vol. III*, 436.

mystery. An interesting aspect in this Memorial is that Wesley points out the aspect of *anamnesis* (commemoration) in the first Passover. While it is not repeating the sacrificial death of Christ, the perpetual memory of the death of Christ provides us with an opportunity to be present at the Lord's crucifixion. It is not a Zwinglian memorial, but contemporaneity of the past here and now.

Come, Remembrancer divine  
 Give us to hear the dreadful sound,  
 Which told his mortal pain,  
 Tore up the graves, and shook the ground,  
 . . .  
 Repeat the Saviour's dying cry  
 In every heart, so loud  
 That every heart may now reply,  
 This was the Son of God<sup>14</sup>

The important factor of *anamnesis* is that our remembrance, Memorial, is the work of the Holy Spirit, as the hymn prayer invokes: "Come, Remembrancer divine." In *anamnesis*, we understand that the death of our Lord is the eternal Priest offering himself to God and giving himself to us. Thereby we are called to be in communion with Christ's sufferings and also with his glories.<sup>15</sup> In *anamnesis*, we experience here and now the historical "once for all" event of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, like the people of Israel who celebrate the memorial feasts during the Passover to participate in the blessings of the past saving works. Furthermore, in *anamnesis* one may understand and also experience the real presence of Christ at the celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>16</sup>

### Sacrificial Meal: Cosmic Sacrifice

When the Holy Eucharist is mentioned, "it implies a Sacrifice."<sup>17</sup> Wesley uses the term "Christian Sacrifice" for the traditional support of constant

<sup>14</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, no. 7.

<sup>15</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Preface, IV, 7- 8.

<sup>16</sup>"Eucharist" in Greek means thanksgiving and gratitude. Balthasar appeals to me by saying, "The memorial of the sacrifice of Christ must stand here before our eyes in its character of superabundant grace, without any kind of addition." Although it is limited, with this understanding I find a possible key in *anamnesis*, to open ecumenical dialogue. See, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology III: Creator Spirit*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 188.

<sup>17</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, nos. 116-127.

communion among the early Christians: daily, weekly, or four times a week and every saint's day.<sup>18</sup> He does not mention the term Eucharist in his sermon, but he often uses "eucharistic food" as a reminder of the sacrificial table. By eating the eucharistic meal at the Lord's Supper, the perpetual memory of Christ's suffering broadens the communicants' perspective on the sacrificial meal in a cosmic view; through the imagination of how bread is made from the corn field (by cutting off, being broken and crushed and baked in the fire).<sup>19</sup>

In this expressive bread I see  
The wheat by man cut down for me,  
And beat, and bruis'd, and ground;  
The heavy plagues, and pains, and blows,  
Which Jesus suffer'd from his foes,  
Are in this emblem found.<sup>20</sup>

This aspect of a sacrificial meal helps us to see the holy mystery of Christ's death in order to give us life. The concurrent images of "table" and "altar" indicate the mystery of life and death in the sacrificial meal at the Eucharist. One of the sections of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* is for God the giver of life, who purchased us with the sacrificial death of Christ the Son, and God the preserver of life, who also feeds and strengthens us to not fail by giving us the food of our souls. Therefore, it is bread of heaven, which is necessary for our spiritual nourishment till Christ becomes our full and final redemption.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Body and Blood of Jesus Christ**

The body and blood of Jesus Christ in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, Wesley understands, is in correlation in terms of Sacrifice and Sacrament.<sup>22</sup> When we use the signs for the Lord's Supper, we are to remember

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<sup>18</sup>"The Duty of Constant Communion," *Sermons Vol. III*, 430. The Bible and early church tradition become the guidelines of his reasoning.

<sup>19</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Preface, II. 2. The movie, *Babette's Feast* conveys the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharistic meal.

<sup>20</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, no. 2.

<sup>21</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Preface, III.5, 6, 12; VI.2, 23. The *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662 "used 'Table' and 'The Lord's Supper' instead of 'Altar.'"

<sup>22</sup>According to Mark Trotter, "The word *sacrament* is the Latin translation of the Greek word *mysterion*. From the early days of the church, Holy Communion was associated with the mystery that surrounds God's action in our lives. That means that at best our words can only circumscribe what happens, but not

what it represents: remember God who appointed; and remember Christ who represents. After the prayer of consecration (*epiclesis*: invocation of the Holy Spirit) upon the bread and wine, the faithful Christians take the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ.

Come, Holy Ghost, thine influence shed  
And realize the sign;  
Thy life infuse into the bread,  
Thy power into the wine.<sup>23</sup>

According to the Article of Religion XVIII (1784), the Methodists confess that “the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.”<sup>24</sup> As St. Francis of Assisi implies that you become what you eat, in partaking the Eucharist, we become the body of Christ to live out as the body of Christ for the world.<sup>25</sup>

### **Holy Communion**<sup>26</sup>

By the work of the Holy Spirit, the faithful communicants experience the true and real presence of the body of Jesus Christ at the Eucharist.<sup>27</sup> Holy

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define it. We cannot rationally explain why God would love us ‘while we were yet sinners’ and give his only begotten Son that we should not perish but have eternal life. That is the most sacred and unfathomable mystery of all. We can experience God’s grace at any time and in any place, but in the sacrament of Holy Communion we routinely experience that amazing grace: forgiveness, healing, nourishment, empowerment. . . . In a sacrament, God uses common elements—in this case, bread and wine (grape juice)—as means or vehicles of divine grace. It is the act of God through the grace of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.” See, *From a United Methodist Understanding of Baptism* used by The United Methodist Publishing House; available at ; accessed on 1 September, 2016.

<sup>23</sup>*Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, no. 72. Also see *epiclesis* (invocation of the Holy Spirit) in *The United Methodist Hymnal*: “Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and the blood of Jesus Christ . . .” nos. 10, 14. Without this prayer of *epiclesis* there is no Holy Mystery.

<sup>24</sup>Article of Religion XVIII; Rober Emory, *History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, revised by W. P. Strickland (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1856), 102.

<sup>25</sup>Francis of Assisi, *Francis and Clare*, trans. Regis J. Armstrong and Ignatius C. Brady (New York: Paulist, 1982), 26, 27. Francis compares eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with eating from the tree of Cross.

<sup>26</sup>“The Duty of Constant Communion,” *Sermons Vol. III*, 431.

<sup>27</sup>*Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, Preface, II. 5-6. See the term “venerable representation.” Regarding Real Presence debate in the 9<sup>th</sup> century: Until the Fourth Lateran Council decreed the Real Presence in the Eucharist, there had been (Please turn page.)

Communion with Christ happens when one receives the eucharistic food. By partaking in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the faithful have hope for conformity to Christ in his suffering and in his glory in the kingdom of God.<sup>28</sup> By this Communion, that is, conformity to Christ, Christians follow the Lord; therefore, it is our duty to be nourished by this eucharistic meal to keep following the Lord, sometimes dying with him in sacrifice.

Then when Christ presents “himself to God in this great temple, the world, at the head of all mankind,” we become his body in communion with him; and we become the body of Christ, the church, as the disciples of the Master, members of their head, and penitent sinners of their Savior.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, as the body of Christ, the temple of God, or the people of Holy Communion, as we receive our Lord himself, we consecrate all we have to Christ and “from that very moment that we give up ourselves to Christ”; as Christ has “given himself for us, all Christ possesses becomes ours, namely, his grace, his immortality, his glory.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>(cont.) debate on this issue since the ninth century. The debate between two Benedictines, Paschasius Radbertus and Ratramnus, was about the definition of the terminology: *figura* and *veritas*. While Radbertus understood *figura* as outward appearance and *veritas* as inward belief in what faith teaches, Ratramnus thought *vice versa*. Overlooking the different use of terminology, on the one hand, Radbertus understood the corporeal appearance of the Lord in faith as the Word made flesh becomes food to dwell in the faithful so that the faithful may be transformed into Him. It is essential to discern the Lord's Body in faith and know the power of the mystery in the Body, lest one eat the judgment for himself. On the contrary, Ratramnus considered the bread and wine in the Eucharist as mystic symbols of the body and blood of Christ. His focus on the figurative sense explains the body of Christ in the Eucharist not as corporeal food, but as untouchable spiritual body. Since both denoted the significance of faith and knowledge of the Eucharist, there might have been a possibility to complementarily link both understandings. However, history would not run according to the mindset of the twenty-first century. The debate would become a perennial issue until the fathers of the Fourth Lateran Council condemned the followers of Ratramnus, Berengarius of Tours, in favor of the literal and physical language. See, Paschasius Radbertus, “Paschasius Radbertus of Corbie: The Lord's Body and Blood (Selections),” *Early Medieval Theology*, George E. McCracken, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952), 90-108.

<sup>28</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Preface, VI.3.

<sup>29</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Preface, VI.12. We as the body of Christ journey together as the church, giving God for the sake of Christ our head.

<sup>30</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Preface, VIII.1. This gives us an opportunity to discuss *Sacrum Commercium* (holy exchange) between Christ (the head) and the church (the body), but that is beyond the scope of this paper.



Every time we consecrate ourselves before the eucharistic table in order to experience the grateful holy Communion, therefore, we offer ourselves by renewing our vows and promises to God.<sup>31</sup> Only then, through Communion can we anticipate future glory. Therefore, by Holy Communion, we strive to sanctify our bodies and souls, living for holiness in God.<sup>32</sup> This is grace of hope for a future in Jesus. This grace strengthens us, the faithful, to continue the journey of holiness in the eucharistic life.

### **Food for Holiness in Eschatological Hope**

Conformity to Christ means becoming perfect and holy like God. Becoming holy like God is holiness, which is possible only by being nourished and guided by the help of God.<sup>33</sup> The strength for the journey of holiness is what God promises to give us through the means of grace of the Holy Communion. God gives grace that preserves Christians from falling back to sin and temptation in the journey toward Christian perfection to be holy and become like God. Therefore, if a Christian hopes to become like God, constant Communion should be the food for the soul's journey: "we may obtain holiness on earth and everlasting glory in heaven."<sup>34</sup> This is hope in eschatology that the communicants receive from the Communion table.

The command of God for us to eat and drink the eucharistic food (the body and blood of Jesus Christ) for our souls' journey is for our happiness in holiness.<sup>35</sup> Through the constant Communion, the Lord provides food for our souls "with that living bread and wine which they represent; and sanctify [us] in body and spirit for that eternal happiness which they promise."<sup>36</sup> To Wesley, holiness is synonymous with happiness. Wesley's urging toward constant Communion gives us eschatological hope and

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<sup>31</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Preface, VIII.3. See the meaning of the word "consecrate": to make holy: *sacrum facere*: sacrifice.

<sup>32</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, nos.128-157 expresses *Offerimus* (we offer) in the Eucharist.

<sup>33</sup>"The Duty of Constant Communion," *Sermons Vol. III*, 429.

<sup>34</sup>"The Duty of Constant Communion," *Sermons Vol. III*, 430. In response to the objection of partaking in Communion, Wesley presents it as a choice between a happy life and miserable life, affecting not only our temporal, but also eternal life, because when we obey God's commandments with all diligence, God gives us a place in the kingdom of heaven; 431.

<sup>35</sup>"The Duty of Constant Communion," *Sermons Vol. III*, 437.

<sup>36</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Preface, V.7.

allows us to anticipate the grace of forgiveness of sins and of strengthening and maturing nourishment for our ongoing journey toward becoming like God, toward Christian perfection in holiness and charity and happiness. Therefore, receiving the spiritual food at the Holy Communion table is an obligation, not only because it is our duty to obey God's command, but also because it empowers us to continue our journey in communion with Christ. According to Wesley, the eucharistic food is the means of grace; of sustaining Christians to go on to perfection and happiness in holiness.

### **Soul's Journey of Charity: The Eucharistic Life**

God's grace offered through this eucharistic food is the mercy given to Christians in order for them to keep their baptismal covenant (to keep God's commandment).<sup>37</sup> Here the Lord's Supper, eucharistic food, is related to a life of keeping God's command, by which we are led to the kingdom of God. Grace from the Lord's Supper is the empowering grace of God for the baptized to keep their promise (baptismal covenant) to keep God's commandments: to fulfill the *Missio Dei*: love. It can be said that eucharistic food is for the covenant keepers' eucharistic life in union with Christ. When we are fed by the Lord with the body of Christ, the mercy of God strengthens us "to believe, to love and obey God" and "to perform our duty, and lead us on to perfection" and refreshes our souls "with the hope of glory."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, if there's anyone who says that she or he cannot live up to eucharistic life in keeping God's commandment of charity in becoming holy like God, it is renouncing one's baptism, and further renouncing Christianity.<sup>39</sup>

Hence, it is possible to say that Wesley's understanding of the Eucharist in terms of the Lord's Supper, the eucharistic meal or food for our souls for the spiritual journey, means of grace, Holy Memorial, Holy Communion, and the body and blood of Jesus Christ implies his vision of Methodists as the Christian faithful assembly that responds to the justifying and sanctifying grace initiated by God of preventing grace, and which focuses on continuing the journey of holiness toward perfection through the eucharistic life of love till we eat and drink in the kingdom of God. This surely gives us eschatological hope for the journey.

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<sup>37</sup>"The Duty of Constant Communion," *Sermons Vol. III*, 435.

<sup>38</sup>"The Duty of Constant Communion," *Sermons Vol. III*, 429. To love and obey God is the greatest commandment according to Matthew 22:38.

<sup>39</sup>"The Duty of Constant Communion," *Sermons Vol. III*, 435.

### Preparation: Repentance, Faith, Charity

Since the body and blood of Jesus Christ at the Lord's Supper is food for our souls' journey toward deification, Wesley guides us on how to prepare for the food for the soul: we are to receive the holy meal not with superstition or profaneness but duly.<sup>40</sup> He suggests a private prayer before partaking in the Lord's Supper. Yet, prayer is optional if time permits. However, there is an absolutely necessary preparation: "Repent you truly of your sins past; have faith in Christ our Saviour . . . ; amend your lives, and be in charity with all men; so shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries."<sup>41</sup> Repentance, faith, and charity are the substantial characteristics of the Christian journey toward holiness. The grace of forgiveness promised in the Communion guides the communicants to remember the death of our Lord.<sup>42</sup> In this remembrance, there is no excuse not to repent prior to the Holy Communion.

Wesley, in his sermon on "The Repentance of Believers," explains the inbred sin or evil root (such as temptations and pride) remaining in a believer after justification. He presents two aspects of repentance and faith: one as the gate of religion, and the other as required of the believers in order to continue and grow in grace because the believer's journey is not without temptations and sins.<sup>43</sup> In order for the justified to continue the journey of sanctifying love, repentance and faith and charity should always be involved in the course of holiness. In this sense, reiterated is Wesley's emphasis on constant Communion in order to not fall back to sin, but keep the promise made in our baptism, that is, the life of charity, keeping God's commandment.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, Preface, 3.

<sup>41</sup>"The Duty of Constant Communion," *Sermons Vol. III*, 436.

<sup>42</sup>"The Duty of Constant Communion," *Sermons Vol. III*, 429.

<sup>43</sup>Wesley, sermon 14, "The Repentance of Believers," *Sermons Vol. I*, 335, 341.

<sup>44</sup>"The Duty of Constant Communion," 436; Nelson notes that Wesley called Holy Communion a "converting ordinance," for there were people who experienced inner conversion during the Holy Communion. Wesley also describes forgiveness as a part of the grace given through the Lord's Supper. This might provide grounds for the open Communion in Methodist tradition, by which The UMC opens the Communion even to the unbaptized people. However, it is probable to say that many of the English people in the eighteenth century were baptized from an early age. Nelson, 89; <http://www.gwoodward.co.uk/guides/baptisms.htm>; accessed on 15 February.

Through the eucharistic revival, Wesley and early Methodists experienced the grace of God of forgiveness and nourishment for the journey toward perfect holiness in charity. The Eucharist kept the Methodists in unity with the Church, the body of Christ. Their identity in the eucharistic Communion let the Methodists be an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*. Therefore, we confirm the Article of Religion XIII of the Church:

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.<sup>45</sup>

However, when socio-political conditions such as the Revolutionary War changed on American soil, the reduced number of Anglican clergy became a critical issue, concerning the eucharistic identity confirmed through partaking in constant Communion. While the need for ordained clergy was clear, Anglican bishops refused to ordain the Methodists preachers; even worse was that the Anglican clergy refused to give the Eucharist to Methodists. Out of the necessity for spiritual nourishment, Wesley laid hands on the Methodist preachers to become ministers for the Methodists in America. It became scandalous because traditionally only bishops could ordain new clergy.<sup>46</sup> Eventually, at the Christmas Conference in 1784, the Methodists became an *ecclesia in ecclesiae* (Methodist Episcopal Church among many other Christian denominations), and have been so ever since.<sup>47</sup>

The Eucharist kept the Methodists in the Church; and the Eucharist still maintains the Methodists to be the Church. Whether as an *ecclesiola* in the Anglican Church in the past or an *ecclesia* as The United Methodist Church (or other sister churches) in the present, the identity formed through constant Communion at the Eucharist maintains Methodists as the body of the one same head of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. When we are the one body of Jesus Christ, the Spirit's work through *anamnesis* and *epiclesis* at the Eucharist will continue to strengthen our desire to be in communion with Christ, and with other parts of the one body. This provides space for the Methodists to get involved at the ecumenical dialogue.

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<sup>45</sup>Articles of Religion XIII, *The Book of Discipline of The Unite Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012).

<sup>46</sup>Merry E. Wiesner, *Early Modern Europe, 1450-1789*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 379.

<sup>47</sup>*This Holy Mystery*, 6.

***Ecumenical Dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic Church***

When the First Vatican Council (1869-70) was dismissed unexpectedly due to the Franco-German War, from the Council emerged an unbalanced interpretation of the Constitution of the Church: *Pastor Aeternus* (eternal shepherd), in which the papal primacy presented Roman Catholic's universalistic ecclesiology.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the papacy became an issue of debate not only among the Catholic theologians, but also among the Orthodox theologians.

A group of Orthodox theologians published a book, *The Primacy of Peter*, in 1963, hoping that their understanding of papal primacy would be made known to the Second Vatican Council. John Meyendorff (1926-1992) evaluates the problem of the primacy as the Roman primacy, not the primacy of Peter. As Meyendorff presents the primacy of Peter, he values the significance of faith in terms of the rock (Mt. 16:18), that is, the foundation of the Church. Therefore, he claims that Christ's universal mission was not limited to Peter alone, but extended to other apostles equally. Also, as Peter's mission work was in Antioch, Jerusalem, as well as Rome, Rome cannot be a special location; Peter has nothing to do with the bishop of Rome.<sup>49</sup> Emphasizing the faith of the bishop(s), he sees the pope as the successor to Peter's faith; and each church is on the rock. The ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church, therefore, has an organic ontological identity of the church: i.e., the confession of faith.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Prior to Vatican I, the debate in France between Ultramontanism and Gallicanism opened the Catholic discussion on the papal primacy. Joseph de Maistre and Mauro Capellari's views on Ultramontanism with respect to the absolute and infallible sovereignty to the pope regarding both spiritual and temporal matters were affirmed in Vatican I. On the contrary, Gallicanism saw that papal primacy as limited to spiritual matters only, in favor of bishops' rights. For further detail, see Hermann J. Pottmeyer's *Towards A Papacy in Communion: Perspective From Vatican Councils I & II* (New York: The Crossroad, 1998), 51-52.

<sup>49</sup>John Meyendorff, ed., *The Primacy of Peter* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 70-72, 75-78. Meyendorff introduces the difference between his Byzantine understanding of the primacy and the Western Catholic understanding. He implicates primacy, once known to be from divine origin but now regarded as nothing but imperial, i.e., human. It is evident that such a distorted impression of the primacy was triggered in 1204, when the fourth Western Crusaders sacked Constantinople, the center of the Orthodox church. When the Latin Patriarch was appointed in Constantinople, political primacy of Rome became cause for hostility from the Orthodox Church. Consequently, the Orthodoxy opposed Roman primacy, instead claiming more authority in Constantinople.

Nicholas Afanasiev (1893-1966) sees the papal primacy of Vatican I as a type of universal ecclesiology. Even though Afanasiev sees the necessary invitation of the primacy for occasions such as ecumenical councils, he opposes the predominant Catholic understanding of universal ecclesiology. His insistence on the identical rights or powers of patriarchs or popes with other bishops led him to depreciate universal ecclesiology, and eventually to endorse eucharistic ecclesiology.<sup>51</sup> Afanasiev affirms eucharistic ecclesiology, which corroborates the idea that wherever the eucharistic bread is partaken, there is the body of Christ, the church in its fullness. Afanasiev declares that every local church is “autonomous, because fullness of being belongs to the church of God in Christ, and outside it nothing is, for nothing can have being outside Christ.”<sup>52</sup>

Concerned with the papal primacy, he finds the nature and function of the primacy of Peter as the presider of the Eucharist, as the head of the assembly, on the day of Pentecost. With this image of the Petrine ministry in the Eucharist, he affirms that Peter was called to be a “rock on which the church is built.”<sup>53</sup> In this eucharistic ecclesiology, primacy is not over the church but in the church. Michael Plekon sums what Afanasiev presents in a clear-cut definition: “The Church makes the Eucharist, the Eucharist makes the Church.”<sup>54</sup> In eucharistic ecclesiology, the multitude of local churches is united in agape, and this agape is the power of the church. Thereby the unity of all churches can be described as a formula: “one plus one is still one.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Meyendorff, 67, 79, 84-87.

<sup>51</sup>Nicolas Afanasiev, “The Church Which Presides In Love,” *The Primacy of Peter*, ed. by John Meyendorff (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), 92-99. Cyprian’s ecclesiological understanding as the origin of the universal ecclesiology. Cyprian found the source of unity of the Church in One Christ in the concept of “the organic singleness” of the Roman Empire, and saw the Church as a single organic body of Christ, in which a local church is part of the universal Church. However, his ecclesiology does not have a figurehead.

<sup>52</sup>Afanasiev, 107.

<sup>53</sup>Afanasiev, 116.

<sup>54</sup>Michael Plekon, “Return to the Sources in Twentieth-century Orthodox Ecclesiology: The Case of Nicolas Afanasiev,” *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*, ed. S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007), 59.

<sup>55</sup>Plekon, 62. Alexander Schmemmann also describes the primacy in Ignatian terminology: “presiding in agape.” See “The Idea Of Primacy In Orthodox Ecclesiology,” *The Primacy of Peter*, ed. John Meyendorff (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), 163-165. Since Schmemmann’s view deals with ecclesiology regarding canonical tradition, I do bring his view into this part.

The Orthodox ecclesiological definitions regarding papal primacy and thus, developed eucharistic ecclesiology, were heard in Vatican II and declared *Lumen Gentium* (light of the nations) in 1964, juxtaposing it with *Pastor Aeternus*. *Lumen Gentium* offers a different nuance of the papacy from that of Vatican I. While *Pastor Aeternus* designates Peter as the “head of the other apostles,” *Lumen Gentium* identifies him as “the visible Head of the whole Church, governing the house of the living God.”<sup>56</sup> The prince-like-Roman Pontiff in Vatican I is represented in the image of shepherd and father.

In addition, Vatican II presents a more inclusive attitude concerning evangelism than does Vatican I. Whereas *Pastor Aeternus* describes the apostles as those “whom he had chosen for himself out of the world . . . to be [shepherds] in his Church,” *Lumen Gentium* concerns itself with those who are outside the Church: “Christ, whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, has through His apostles . . . the bishops, partakers” who take care of also “those who are not yet of the one flock.”<sup>57</sup> Vatican II plainly declares that the church is more than just a confederation of the multitudes. Afanasiev’s critique may have reminded bishops at Vatican II.

One of the Post-Conciliar documents, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (the church from the Eucharist), shows the Catholic Church’s reconciliatory approach toward the Orthodox Church: “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist”<sup>58</sup>; “the Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist.”<sup>59</sup> Post-Conciliar reinterpretation of ecclesiology in the Catholic Church caused a debate between Kasper and Ratzinger. With respect to the priority of the local Church, Kasper criticized Ratzinger’s concepts of the universal church, which was based on his envisioning of the

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<sup>56</sup>*Lumen Gentium*, no. 23; available at [http://www.catholicprimer.org/vatican\\_2\\_constitutions.pdf](http://www.catholicprimer.org/vatican_2_constitutions.pdf); accessed on 1 March, 2017; *Pastor Aeternus*, nos. 818, 819, 836. available at ; accessed on Marcy 1, 2017.

<sup>57</sup>*Lumen Gentium*, no. 27, 28; *Pastor Aeternus*, no. 818.

<sup>58</sup>Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n.1. available at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/special\\_features/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_20030417\\_ecclesia\\_eucharista\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharista_en.html); accessed on 1 March, 2017.

<sup>59</sup>*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 26; Plekon, 59. Afanasiev accompanied an ecumenical resourcement group of scholars with Jean Danielou, Yves Congar, Oscar Cullman, Gregory Dix, Bernard Botte, D. Chenu, and Henri de Lubac. Their influence, later, in Vatican II is evident as we have now Eucharistic ecclesiology or ecclesiological Eucharist in the Catholic Church.

first Pentecost at the Jerusalem Church.<sup>60</sup> However, John Zizioulas' Orthodox eschatological view of the local Church may provide a bridging gap.

Concerning the unique relationship between the "many" and the "one" in the Church, Zizioulas affirms the Eucharistic community, to which St. Paul's *koinonia* (fellowship) is referred: "We who are many are one body."<sup>61</sup> Understanding the one in the eucharistic context, he provides a new theological view on the church: to become one in Christ is to find catholicity, as the many become one ontological nature of the body of Christ. Zizioulas explains that *anamnesis* and *epiclesis* in the Eucharist are indispensable, without which the one ontological nature of the body of Christ cannot be accomplished. That people become united into one, transcending all divisions in the world in the eucharistic *anamnesis*, is the eschatological vision and prayer: "Thy Kingdom come." Since Zizioulas sees divisions as being demonic, he claims the dynamic character of the church in promoting oneness and resisting division. Thus, Zizioulas underlies the eschatological life of the church. While Zizioulas' eschatology implies moving toward the future Kingdom of God, Ratzinger's eschatology moves back to the prototype of the Jerusalem Church. Both share an eschatological perspective.

With the vision of the Jerusalem church on the Pentecost, Ratzinger shares the same concept of communion based on eucharistic ecclesiology with the Orthodox Church, as he affirms the church as "the communion of the Word and Body of Christ."<sup>62</sup> In order to overcome the issue of locality of the church, Ratzinger expounds *communio* ecclesiology: he sees the Orthodox eucharistic ecclesiology as making eucharistic community (locality) an internally ghettoized group. Through the concept of *communio*, Ratzinger sees the church as the body of Christ.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Ecclesiological Eucharist of the Catholic Church***

As the church shares its same ontological nature through the sharing of the body of Christ, its ecclesial nature is surely found in the Eucharist. It

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<sup>60</sup>Paul McPartlan, "The Local Church and the Universal Church: Zizioulas and the Ratzinger-Kasper Debate," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* vol. 4, No. 1, March 2004, 21-24, 28. Since both argue from same historical perspective, a full resolution does not yet appear.

<sup>61</sup>1 Corinthians 12:12.

<sup>62</sup>Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Called To Communion: Understanding The Church Toward*, trans. by Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), 79-81.

<sup>63</sup>Ratzinger, 83-88, 94-95. With this *communio* ecclesiology, Ratzinger emphasizes "We" to explain the structure of the college of bishops.



is interesting to see what John and Charles Wesley present through “The Duty of the Constant Communion” and *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* with respect to the theological and doctrinal implications per names of the Eucharist. They have been rediscovered and reaffirmed by the ecumenical dialogue, finally giving the Catholic and Orthodox Church an image of the church in consensus: the eucharistic community. To see how the Methodist Church’s (e.g., The UMC) understanding of the Eucharist is like that of the Catholic Church, by which the ground of the ecumenical dialogue may be set (according to God’s will), it is worth noting the meanings of the Eucharist described in *Models of the Eucharist* by Kevin Irwin.

### Cosmic Mass

We worship God for God’s creation and redemption. The bread and the wine of the Eucharist are gifts from God. The process of wheat and grape becoming food at the Eucharist involves all of creation, from the farmer’s labor to the baker’s sweat, from the sun and rain to the fire at the oven: “we take the good things of this earth and make them into fitting symbols for the body and blood of Christ. The actions—planting, harvesting, baking bread, and producing wine—are intrinsic to the Eucharistic action.”<sup>64</sup> As these gifts from the world are offered to be broken and eaten, we remember the Eucharist from the ground, earth, and cosmos. In this perspective, Irwin offers the concept of the sacramentality of bread and wine, as a means of experiencing God’s grace. This is compatible with the means of grace commonly shared among the Methodists, as we examine similar examples of cosmic perspective in the Hymns about the Lord’s Supper.<sup>65</sup>

### Eucharist

The Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of the entire Christian life” and is thus linked in a special way to the first Apostle.<sup>66</sup> Based on Henri de Lubac’s principle, “the Eucharist makes the church,” Irwin finds eucharistic ecclesiology in that the church is the assembly of the people. He indicates that the word, liturgy, means the “work of the people.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Kevin W. Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New York: Paulist, 1991), 53.

<sup>65</sup>See footnote 21.

<sup>66</sup>Irwin, 68; *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

<sup>67</sup>Irwin, 83.

Thus, the Eucharist that gathers people in unity accompanies the liturgy. The liturgical practices from other Christian denominations are hopeful for ecumenical unity.

### The Effective Word of God

“The Church is nourished at the twofold table of God’s word and of the Eucharist: from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness.”<sup>68</sup> The Eucharist is the body of Christ, and Jesus is the Incarnate Word of God. Therefore, the proclamation of the Word is important; “when we engage in the liturgy—by both word and sacramental action—God does something. God acts on our behalf. Through liturgical memorial we are drawn into God’s eternal act of salvation re-creation, and redemption.”<sup>69</sup> In this sense, preaching is an act of corporate memory and also constitutive of eucharistic action. Here comes the importance of a lectionary. The proclamation of the Word of God has been the major strength of the Methodist Church, and weekly sharing of a lectionary becomes common among many clergies.

### Memorial of the Paschal Mystery

Irwin explains the term, “commemoration,” translated from *anamnesis*, as being “remembered together;” “making memory together” with the Latin origin: “*cum + memorare*.” Jewish commemoration of the Passover, therefore, is not simply remembering something that happened once upon a time; rather it is a particular way of understanding time, to commemorate God’s saving acts in history “in the present” and also to “[lead] to its fulfillment in the future.”<sup>70</sup> Dix describes the Eucharist as *anamnesis* in that it is “the perpetual ‘re-calling’ and energizing in the church of that one sacrifice.”<sup>71</sup> Therefore, to commemorate in the Eucharist is to make memories of the paschal mystery together and experience the salvation of God “here and now” in perpetual contemporaneity.

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<sup>68</sup>Irwin, 97, recites from the *Lectionary for Mass*, n.10.

<sup>69</sup>Irwin, 102.

<sup>70</sup>Irwin, 124, 125, 135; Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre, 1945), 243; Balthasar, 208. Balthasar describes liturgical *memoriale* as a concept that “. . . already denotes there a memorial established by God to his covenant and a memorial established by men to the grace of God,” which is not like “recollection” or “repletion” of a past, but a perpetual contemporaneity.

<sup>71</sup>Dix, 243.

Irwin brings about the meaning of *anamnesis* from the Jewish commemoration of the Passover, and recites a rabbinic phrase: "To remember is to give life—to forget is to let die" and "Remembering is doing."<sup>72</sup> The *anamnesis* is the central action of making Eucharist; as the eucharistic prayer includes God's great deeds of salvation (*magnolia Dei*), we commemorate God's action. As we remember the Institution Narrative, we actualize the verbs (the Eucharistic action: take, bless, break, give) in commemoration.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, *anamnesis* is not just a part of the eucharistic prayer, but it is also the whole eucharistic liturgy.

Though the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662 reduced *magnolia Dei*, the Institution Narrative that remains in the Methodist Church allows people to commemorate the work of God's salvation: paschal mystery. In *anamnesis*, we depend on the work of the Spirit who works in our commemoration to be one body of Christ. However, there is a great need to educate the Methodists and spread the powerful action of the Holy Spirit through *anamnesis*.

### Covenant Renewal

By covenant renewal, Irwin presents the relationship between baptism and the Eucharist. With samples of covenant stories, he introduces the lectionary readings during Lent. When the liturgy is read during Lent, and the Eucharist offered afterwards, the Eucharist becomes an opportunity to renew our covenant with God. In the same manner, "the sin-forgiveness that was first accomplished in the water baptism is now reiterated through the Eucharist. . . . Part of the dynamism of the Eucharist as a sacrament of covenant renewal is that it is a sacrament of the forgiveness of sins."<sup>74</sup>

Wesley's sermon gives one of the reasons why we should constantly receive Communion: because of God's mercy of strengthening. The Methodist Church believes that the Eucharist is a means of grace, through which we receive God's empowerment, so that we can keep the commandment of God (charity), that is, our baptismal covenant.<sup>75</sup>

### The Lord's Supper

If the "Last Supper" reminds us of the night before Jesus' passion, the Lord's Supper leads us to commemorate the whole paschal mystery.

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<sup>72</sup>Irwin, 125. Wesley also reminds us of the first Passover in *anamnesis*; see page 5 of this paper.

<sup>73</sup>Irwin, 122-123.

<sup>74</sup>Irwin, 149-159.

<sup>75</sup>See pages 5 and 11 of this paper.

According to the liturgies during Holy Week, Mass is called “Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper,” “Commemoration of the Lord’s Passion.” It is significant in that we acknowledge Jesus as our Lord during Holy Week even before Easter. During Holy Week when we commemorate the Lord’s sacrifice, we celebrate the Eucharist in the name of the Lord’s Supper. The inseparable images of the table and altar are described in the Supper: the Lord’s Supper. Irwin introduces Robert Karris’ study on the gospel of Luke:

From the finding of the child Jesus in the manger (literally “feed box”) in Luke 2:12 to the meal with the disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), significant relations about who Jesus is and his rule and kingdom occur at meals . . . it is most often at table that Jesus shows particular compassion to those in need.”<sup>76</sup>

Out of this name, the Lord’s Supper, Christians can find the ground for unity in one body that is given to be fed and for charity that is exemplified to be given.

Since Mass was omitted from the *Book of Common Prayer*, the popular term for the Eucharist was the Lord’s Supper. The altar-table image is also commonly shared in the Preface of the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, concerning the sacrificial meal.<sup>77</sup>

### Food for the Journey

In *anamnesis*, people with the eucharistic prayer remember God’s work in the past, celebrate God’s work in the present, and anticipate God’s work in the future by praying: “. . . when he comes again,” “. . . looking forward to his coming in glory,” “May we come to possess it completely in the kingdom where you live for ever and ever.”<sup>78</sup> This eschatological hope in prayer confirms where we are: fulfilled but not yet complete. We are on the journey. Traditionally, the viaticum is the Eucharist given to those dying as the last sacrament of their earthly journey. Today, “the use of this ritual for viaticum reminds us that in a real sense, every act of communion is

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<sup>76</sup>Irwin, 178.

<sup>77</sup>The Lord’s Table is more often used today because the Supper may limit our commemoration to the Holy Week. See page 7 of this paper concerning the image of “altar-table” at the Eucharist.

<sup>78</sup>Irwin, 197-198.

viaticum, that is, food for the journey to everlasting life.”<sup>79</sup> By this, we are to receive the food from the Eucharist as viaticum until our last Eucharist.

The Eucharist in the means of “food of our souls” has been understood as our spiritual nourishment in the Methodist Church. Our journey in eschatological hope is nourished and strengthened by this eucharistic food. Though the Methodist does not practice the rite of viaticum, its profound meaning may deepen our sharing at the Ecumenical Table.<sup>80</sup>

### Sacramental Sacrifice

The Latin origin of the word, sacrifice, means “to make holy” (*sacrum facere*).<sup>81</sup> Thus, sacrifice should be understood in *anamnesis* when the eucharistic prayer states that “in this very memorial, the Church . . . offers in the Holy Spirit the spotless Victim to the Father.”<sup>82</sup> In *anamnesis*, what was accomplished once for all is made present, so that the Church can celebrate the Eucharist in the fullest sense. In *anamnesis*, when the eucharistic prayer leads people into a perpetual commemoration of the sacrifice of Jesus, “the priest acts in the person of Christ, meaning that his words and actions in the liturgy are always those of Christ. . . [in that sense] it is Christ who acts in and through the sacraments.”<sup>83</sup> In the person of Christ, on behalf of the whole church, the priest also states the prayer: “we offer” (*offerimus*). With this eucharistic prayer of *offerimus*, not only bread and wine, but also monetary gifts are offered. What we offer during the Eucharist is sanctified (*sacrum facere*).

Just as Irwin warns that the theology of the Eucharist in terms of sacrifice should be perceived in a sacramental context, it is not easy for the Methodist to follow, especially when we do not share the theology of the priest “in the person of Christ.” However, the prayer of *offerimus* is evident in the Methodist understanding of the Eucharist in terms of Holy Communion: Conformity to Christ, by which we become like God. In fact, we not only offer gifts of what we have, but also our being, ourselves, to God. Then we can humbly confess that we become like God because

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<sup>79</sup>Irwin, 205.

<sup>80</sup>See page 11 of this paper.

<sup>81</sup>Irwin, 217, 236.

<sup>82</sup>Irwin, 229; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, n. 79; available at [http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the . . . /general-instruction-of-the-roman-missal](http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the.../general-instruction-of-the-roman-missal); accessed on 8 March, 2017.

<sup>83</sup>Irwin, 234.

when we offer ourselves as a sacrifice to God who is holy, God makes us holy.<sup>84</sup>

### Active Presence

Since the Council of Trent, the phrase—real presence of Christ in the Eucharist—has been part of Catholic tradition. As Irwin presents it in terms of “active presence,” he explores the patristic era, medieval period, and the Council of Trent, in order to better explain of the term. He is cautiously aware of the danger of the “literal anachronism where we take a word and reuse it in a different time and place and presume that its meaning is obvious.”<sup>85</sup> Having said that, he notes that the phrase, “real presence,” was not an issue for the patristic authors. In the patristic era, symbols were regarded as very real. For example, the word “copy” was used in the liturgy, implying what is real; unlike today’s differentiation between a copy and the original. Thus, “symbolic reality” needs to be considered when we read the patristic liturgy, for paschal mystery is experienced truly and fully as the original in the patristic era.

By the medieval period, the term “transubstantiation” came to describe the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It was a necessary outcome as people became more interested in the consecrated eucharistic species (when the Latin liturgy and the less frequent Eucharist relative to the patristic era changed the emphasis of the Eucharist): “toward what participants *received from* the liturgy rather than what they *participated in* at the liturgy.”<sup>86</sup> When the mind of the medieval period did not share the symbolic reality in the patristic term, “a sign of a sacred thing,” there were debates about the body of Christ in terms of “sacramental presence” vs.

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<sup>84</sup>Wesley’s understanding of the Church is not individualistic but corporate. In his *Letter to a Roman Catholic*, Wesley states his belief in the Church in a collective sense of “us” and “our”: “Christ and his Apostles gathered unto himself a church to which he has continually added such as shall be saved; that this catholic (that is, universal) Church, extending to all nation and all ages, is holy in all its members, who have fellowship with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that they have fellowship with the holy angels who constantly minister to these heirs of salvation, and with all the living members of Christ on earth, as well as all who are departed [this life] in his faith and fear.” Geoffrey Wainwright, “Were Methodists Present at Constantinople 381?” *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*, ed. by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007), 23; See also page 9 of this paper.

<sup>85</sup>Irwin, 242.

<sup>86</sup>Irwin, 247.

“real presence.” The medieval people preferred realistic expression over sacramental.<sup>87</sup>

Eventually, by the time of Thomas Aquinas, the eucharistic presence of Christ was explained in terms of “substance” and “accident.” “The whole substance [of bread and wine is changed] into the whole substance [of Christ and this is called] transubstantiation.”<sup>88</sup> This is what the Council of Trent accepted as the Catholic Church’s understanding of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. According to Irwin, this was a reaction to the Reformers’ criticism; that’s why Trent did not say that transubstantiation should be the only term that describes real presence.<sup>89</sup>

While the medieval understanding was focused on sacrifice and presence, the contemporary Catholic liturgy tended to study the early church fathers.<sup>90</sup> Irwin presents contemporary understanding of the real presence of Christ in terms of “active presence” “in a unique and special way” as he recites Pope Paul VI’s interpretation: “after transubstantiation has taken place, the appearances of bread and wine undoubtedly take on a new meaning and a new purpose, for they no longer remain ordinary bread and ordinary drink, but become the sign of something sacred and the sign of spiritual nourishment.”<sup>91</sup>

At this point, it is worth noting how the Methodists understand the presence of the Lord at the Eucharist, as described in *This Holy Mystery*:

God, who has given the sacraments to the church, acts in and through Holy Communion. Christ is present through the community gathered in Jesus’ name (Matthew 18:20), through the Word proclaimed and enacted, and through the elements of bread and wine shared (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The divine presence is a living reality and can be experienced by participants.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>See footnote 28.

<sup>88</sup>Irwin, 251.

<sup>89</sup>Irwin, 255. Irwin sees the decrees on the Eucharist at the Council of Trent as open-ended, to be continued.

<sup>90</sup>Eventually a broader understanding of the ecclesiological Eucharist was published by Pope John Paul II’s encyclical on the Eucharist, in which he is concerned with the people and allows the use of the vernacular.

<sup>91</sup>Irwin, 259-260; Pope Paul VI, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” no. 46.

<sup>92</sup>*This Holy Mystery*, 11.

### Work of the Holy Spirit

All the models of the Eucharist mentioned above can be verified only when the Eucharist is enacted by the work of the Holy Spirit. The response to the presider's greeting: "And also with you" (*et cum spiritu tuo*), the eucharistic prayers such as *anamnesis* and *epiclesis*, and the prayers after the Eucharist, are the work of the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist, without eucharistic prayer, cannot be thought of, and eucharistic prayer without the work of the Holy Spirit cannot become paschal mystery. "It is a mystery that we can participate only at the invitation and through the ever sustaining power and love of God's Holy Spirit."<sup>93</sup>

The grace offered through the Eucharist and understood in the Methodist Church is the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit in the journey toward perfection, nourished by the eucharistic food, vividly agrees with the Catholic understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian lives toward eschatology. When we commonly experience the grace of God at the Eucharist because of the work of the Holy Spirit, there is an optimistic hope, though eschatological, for adding another name to the Eucharist: Ecumenical Table.

### *Toward Ecumenical Dialogue and Ecumenical Table: Eschatological Hope*

Having examined the theological meanings of the Eucharist in Catholic tradition, it is clear that the Catholics and the Methodists can speak for each other in many models.<sup>94</sup> The similarity and affinity in theological and spiritual meanings of the Eucharist can be a profound topic for ecumenical dialogue, because it seems that both can find commonality in an ecclesial nature based on the Eucharist. This optimistic idea can also be supported by the Orthodox understanding of the church as the body of Christ based on the Eucharist. Therefore, I purposely describe a virtual place for dialogue, "the Ecumenical Table," where the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church follows the command of Christ to be one, by taking food for the soul's journey from the one table that Christ offers.

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<sup>93</sup>Irwin, 289. See footnote 23.

<sup>94</sup>It may not be surprising because Wesley's understanding of the Eucharist was inherited from the Anglican Church, which also carried Catholic tradition and Reformed tradition. Also, recently The Book of Worship of The UMC shows openness toward catholic tradition regarding the Eucharist.



## Ecumenical Dialogue

According to Afanasiev, the Church as the eucharistic community of believers shares the same nature of the body of Christ. Therefore one church plus one church plus one church equals one church ( $1+1+1=1$ ). This oneness is the work of the Holy Spirit: "Where the Spirit is, there is the Church and all grace."<sup>95</sup> Hence, the characteristics of eucharistic ecclesiology are pneumatological and Christological.

Georges Florovsky (1893-1979) also claims the unity of the Church with this pneumatological nature of the eucharistic ecclesiology. It is interesting to see that Florovsky's description of the church as an organism, united by the Spirit, is similar to what the church experiences through the eucharistic prayer in *anamnesis*.

The unity in the Spirit unites the faithful of all generations in a mystical way that defeats time. This unity that overcomes time appears and is uncovered in the experience of the Church, and most of all in the Eucharistic experience. The Church is the living image of eternity in time."<sup>96</sup>

The Eucharist is pneumatological. The boundless work of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist makes the church and the mystical experience of the church, not limited by time. Beyond the boundary of time, the church experiences the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which the church is holy. Holiness in the mystical experience of the Pentecost is what the church experiences through the Eucharist, and holiness is the source of the church. In this sense, Florovsky understands that this nature of holiness of the church is a trace of the apostolic lineage since Pentecost: accordingly, apostolicity in holiness.<sup>97</sup>

There is a very similar statement made by John Wesley regarding holiness. That Wesley criticizes the Catholic understanding of apostolic succession in ordination for lack of "convert[ing] sinners to God" infers that he sees apostolicity in evangelism, which is spreading the Gospel. His

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<sup>95</sup>Michael Plekon, "Return to the Sources in Twentieth-century Orthodox Ecclesiology: The Case of Nicolas Afanasiev," *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*. Ed. by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 61-62.

<sup>96</sup>Sergei Nikolaev, "Bulgakov and Florovsky: In Search of Ecclesiological Foundations," *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*. Ed. by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 94.

<sup>97</sup>Nikolaev, 93.

sermon on evangelism, “The General Spread of the Gospel,” states the reason why God raised up the Methodists with repeating emphasis on holiness.<sup>98</sup> Accordingly, the reason is “to testify those grand truths”:

- That without holiness no man shall see the Lord;
- that this holiness is the work of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do;
- that he doth it of his own good pleasure, merely for the merits of Christ;
- that this holiness is the mind that was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ also walked;
- that no man can thus be sanctified till he is justified;
- and that we are justified by faith alone.

These great truths [are to be] declared on all occasions, in private and in public; having no design but to promote the glory of God, and no desire but to save souls from death.<sup>99</sup>

The Methodists’ focus on spreading holiness (scriptural holiness) is what Florovsky claims as the vital source of the Church’s apostolicity; the Methodist Church surely shares the ground of apostolicity with the Orthodox Church.<sup>100</sup>

Wesley declares the significance of the Eucharist to all believers without limiting it to the Methodists, for the believers experience the help of God through the journey in holiness by being nourished at the Eucharist. Constant Communion is necessary duty if one belongs to the body of Christ. By this, the eucharistic ecclesiology can be Methodist ecclesiology. Wesley sternly declares: “If any believer joins in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord’s Supper, let him be excommunicated, as bring confusion in to the church of God.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Wainwright, 31.

<sup>99</sup>John Wesley, sermon 63, “The General Spread of the Gospel,” *Sermons Vol. II*, 490-91.

<sup>100</sup>Wainwright summarizes Wesley’s thoughts on apostolicity: “that the Roman bishops came down by uninterrupted succession from the apostles: ‘I never could see it proved, and I am persuaded I never shall. But unless this is proved, your own pastors on your principles, are no pastors at all.’ Again, ‘if God had sent them [your pastors and teachers], he would confirm the word of his messengers. But he does not; they convert no sinners to God.’ Whether in terms of antiquity, continuity or fruitfulness, so much for the ‘apostolicity’ of the Church of Rome!” Wainwright, 29-30.

<sup>101</sup>“The Duty of Constant Communion,” *Sermons Vol. III*, 432.

Having shared common understandings in the perspective of the eucharistic ecclesiology, it is probable to say that the Eucharist makes the church one united in Christ. The Methodists' emphasis on the oneness of the people at the Eucharist is well described in one of the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*:

Who thy mysterious supper share,  
Here at thy table fed,  
Many and yet but one we are,  
One undivided bread.<sup>102</sup>

When Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944) sees the pneumatological nature of the eucharistic ecclesiology in the non-Orthodox Church, he states that when the church is described as the work of the Holy Spirit through the Eucharist, the one body of one Christ can be the most inclusive concept of the church, by which all Christian churches become one.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, he sees the Church in terms of *Ecclesia extra ecclesiae*, by which he means that "the power of the church [universal] extends beyond the institutional Church[es]"<sup>104</sup>: Based on all believers' priesthood,

All the people of God, not just the bishops, presbyters and deacons, celebrate the Eucharist. More precisely all concelebrate Eucharist, as the prayers in the plural indicate. . . . All were consecrated in baptism and chrismation for service to God in the Eucharist. All are also consecrated thereby to further service in the Church and the world, the service depending on one's place (topos) or position in the assembly.<sup>105</sup>

Bulgakov acknowledges the tension between "visible multiplicity and invisible unity."<sup>106</sup> At the same time, he is also aware that his opinion

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<sup>102</sup>*Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, no. 165.

<sup>103</sup>Nikolaev, 97. Sergius Bulgakov, "By Jacob's Well," *Sergius Bulgakov: A Bulgakov Anthology*, eds. James Pain and Nicolas Zernov (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 101. According to Bulgakov, "The Church is one as life in Christ by the Holy Spirit is one. Only participation in this unity can be of varying degrees and depths. Therefore, quite naturally, there are two aspects in the relation of Orthodoxy to non-Orthodoxy: a repulsion in the struggle of truth with an incomplete truth, and a mutual attraction of Church love."

<sup>104</sup>Nikolaev, 90.

<sup>105</sup>Plekon, 61; Nikolaev, 97. Bulgakov limits the Eucharist to only the baptized; the church of the baptized.

<sup>106</sup>Nikolaev, 90.

cannot represent all Orthodox understanding, because there is a conflict in the Orthodox Church regarding ecumenical conversation. Some people like Bulgakov focus on service in the Spirit, while others focus on “institutionalism of the one saving Church.”<sup>107</sup> To the latter, there is no reason for an ecumenical dialogue except for the conversion of the non-Orthodox to the Orthodox Church that is the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church according to the Orthodox claim.

It is an ironic and sad reality that no non-Orthodox is allowed to the Eucharist at the Orthodox Church, and that the Catholic Church does not open the Eucharist except to the Catholics and the Orthodox, while theologians and liturgists from both traditions share quite a deep knowledge of the eucharistic ecclesiology, that is Christological and pneumatological. Their powerful descriptions of the ecclesial nature as one body of Christ seem to limit the mystical presence of the Holy Spirit to their boundaries.

Christologically centered Eucharist brings our attention to the open arms of Jesus on the cross at the sanctuary of the Catholic Church and icons in the Orthodox Church, inviting all to the boundless divine love in the Eucharist. Stories brought forth from the pneumatological Eucharist make the believers (the church, regardless their denominations) vital in the journey of holiness. Thus, questions are raised: Can those two Churches claim the Eucharist as their own and negate what other Christians experience in the Eucharist? Does it not quench the work of the same Spirit of one God?

One of the major reasons that the Orthodox and Catholic Church limit the grace of God to themselves is in the issue of apostolic succession. Unlike Florovsky’s view on apostolicity in holiness, traditionally apostolic succession is understood in the consecration of ordination. It seems necessary to briefly see the consecration of ordination in the Orthodox Church, which shares its understanding of ordination with the Catholic Church, in terms of gift (*charism*).

Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983) explains that the consecration of the bishop is an essential form of primacy in the body of Christ.<sup>108</sup> The gift of grace is conferred at the consecration of the bishop. It is a special charism that has been succeeded unbrokenly by the Holy Spirit from the

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<sup>107</sup>Nikolaev, 97.

<sup>108</sup>Following after Afanasiev, Schmemmann tries to modify the papal primacy in Eucharistic ecclesiology; thence he suggests the primacy being in the Eucharist as a presiding elder.

apostles since Pentecost. The power of the synod is understood by witnessing the unity of the church in faith, life, and agape. Through the consecration of the bishop, the synod becomes the ecclesiological foundation: Only a bishop has authority to ordain a clergy who can celebrate the Eucharist. That is why Schmemann describes: "the Church is in the bishop and the bishop is in the Church."<sup>109</sup>

### Ecumenical Table?

While John Wesley saw the ground of apostolic succession in the Church's evangelism, he ordained Thomas Coke to strengthen the Methodists with the eucharistic food. Because he was not in bishopric, though Florovsky may find him in faithfully keeping apostolicity (in holiness in evangelism), his ordination is considered to be a sign truncated from apostolic succession to those who consider the ordination of clergy belongs to a bishop as the center of apostolicity.<sup>110</sup> That is why even though the Methodists became a Church (*ecclesia in ecclesiae*) due to the eucharistic need, they are refused the Eucharist by these two Churches who believe they have kept the Church's identity as the one, holy, catholic, apostolicity.

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<sup>109</sup>Alexander Schmemann, "The Idea of Primacy In Orthodox Ecclesiology," *The Primacy Of Peter*, ed. by John Meyendorff (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1992), 148, 154-161. Christian initiation that begins with baptism (especially infant baptism) is complete in the Eucharist after the novice is confirmed by the bishop. Therefore, one cannot receive the Eucharist without a bishop's confirmation.

<sup>110</sup>Russell E. Richey explains in his article, "Understandings of Ecclesiology in United Methodism," *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology* ed. by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007): "Those gathered in 1784 at the organizing Christmas Conference decided to call their new ecclesial entity the Methodist Episcopal Church, a name that they patented before the Protestant Episcopal Church did. They communed to Cranmerian cadences for the Eucharist and baptized with the Triune formula. They ordained deacons, elders and bishops with ritual little altered from the BCP, and lived into Anglicanism's threefold ministry. Although they could not claim apostolic succession, and early and often found themselves defending the legitimacy of their orders, Methodist Episcopalians still sustained an orderly laying-on of hands from John Wesley onwards. The Methodists did diverge from Anglicanism in positing that bishops were not a third order, a stance occasioned if not necessitated by John Wesley's extra-ordinary venture in ordaining Thomas Coke, who then ordained Asbury. Asbury's refusal to accept elevation to the episcopacy solely on Wesley's appointment and insistence that American preachers be invited to assent, established the principle that bishops be elected in conference." Richey, 153.

As we witness the gifts (*charism*) of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist, and as ordination is extended to us and many other Christians in various denominations, we hope and pray that the special grace of God given at the Eucharist may guide our journey together to be truly one as the one body of Christ that we share locally and globally. As long as we hold the power and vitality of the eucharistic ecclesiology and its ecclesial organic nature as the body of Christ, it becomes the church's prayer that the separatist tendency of the church as an ecclesiastical or hierarchical organization or institution may be overcome by the work of the Holy Spirit, who makes all one in Christ in the love of one God.<sup>111</sup>

Facing this history-old tension and conflict in ecclesiological understanding, eucharistic ecclesiology provides hope (eschatological though) that one day, all believers in Christ, regardless denominations, will meet at the Eucharist to experience and affirm the one body of one Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, and therefore glorify God together with one voice ("*Et cum spiritu tuo!*") toward the concelebrants from all denominations: *ecclesiae in Ecclesia*. On that day of eucharistic celebration, we might experience Wesley's catholic spirit:

And I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that we be in no wise divided among ourselves. Is thy heart, as my heart is with thine? I ask no farther question. If it be, give me thy hand. For opinions, or terms, let us not destroy the work of God. Dost thou love and serve God? It is enough.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>Having been born and raised in a Methodist family, what I've experienced and continue to experience in the church has become the foundation for my deductive reasoning. I hope that such an approach aligns with the work of the Holy Spirit, within whom the Eucharist makes the church.

<sup>112</sup>James H. Charlesworth, "Return to the Source in Twenty-first-century Methodist Ecclesiology: John Wesley's Ecclesiology in the Light of New Insights into the New Testament and Its Environment," *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*. ed. by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), 83; recited from *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996 [3<sup>rd</sup> edition]), 347. See also, Wesley, sermon 39, "Catholic Spirit," *Sermons Vol. II*, 89. Sadly, The UMC is on the verge of splitting over opinions that are not related to faith in Jesus. Can Eucharistic ecclesiology be a way of maintaining unity in diversity?

# JUSTIFIED AND GLORIFIED: THE INTERTEXTUAL CONNECTION BETWEEN ISAIAH 45:23 AND PHILIPPIANS 2:10-11 AND ITS ECCLESIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

by

Ryan Kristopher Giffin

In Paul's letter to the Philippians the following claim is made about Christ Jesus: "at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11).<sup>1</sup> This claim echoes one made centuries earlier by the God of Israel: "to me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall acknowledge God" (Isa. 45:23 NETS). The Philippians text makes a significant claim about Christ Jesus using the language of Isaiah 45, a text that makes a significant claim about the God of Israel. This being the case, it is not surprising that the significance of this particular echo of scripture for Christology and theology (proper) has already been explored by scholars at some length.<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 45 is (rightly) recognized as one of the clearest statements of monotheism in the Hebrew scriptures, and it is reappropriated into one of the grandest christological narratives in the NT.

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of the NT in this article are from the NRSV and those of the LXX are marked NETS and taken from Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>2</sup>For a small sampling see Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 98-153; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 1-60; Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 9-39; N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 680-89. For a recent study of the use of Isa 45:23 and other possible scriptural allusions in Phil 2:10-16 in light of the rhetorical situation of Philippians see David McAuley, *Paul's Covert Use of Scripture: Intertextuality and Rhetorical Situation in Philippians 2:10-16* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015).

However, any significance the echo of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10-11 might have for ecclesiology has gone largely unexplored. This is somewhat curious in light of what is generally recognized about the place of Philippians 2:6-11 in the overall argument of Philippians. Although some from a past generation of scholarship denied any simplistic ethical use of these verses,<sup>3</sup> it is now generally recognized that Paul was using the christological convictions expressed in this text to form his audience into a community that would reflect these convictions.<sup>4</sup> If this is accurate, then surely the echo of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10-11 carries at least a measure of ecclesiological import worthy of consideration.

In this article, based on an intertextual reading of these texts, I will argue that one aspect of that ecclesiological import may be discerned in the way that Philippians manifests a similar pattern in its portrayal of the people of God as does Isaiah 45:18-25 LXX.<sup>5</sup> To be more specific, my

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<sup>3</sup>E.g., Ernst Käsemann, "Kritische Analyse von Phil. 2, 5-11" ZTK 47 (1950): 313-60.

<sup>4</sup>See Stephen E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul*, JSNTS 36 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990). Fowl does not call for a simplistic "imitatio Christi" on the basis of Phil 2:6-11, but rather an analogous embodiment or "non-identical repetition" of the pattern displayed in this text in the Philippians's situation. See also Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 9-39.

<sup>5</sup>That the text of Isa 45:23 in Phil 2:10-11 parallels the LXX (as noted in the outer margin of NA<sup>28</sup>) more closely than the MT is widely recognized. See e.g. John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 360-61; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 223 n. 28. The words "intertextual reading" and the perspective on intertextuality adopted in this paper may need some clarification. At a basic level, there are at least three perspectives from which questions about the use of Scripture in the NT may be asked: (1) the perspective of the NT writer; (2) the perspective of the earliest audience; and (3) the perspective of contemporary readers. This third perspective presumes that the vast majority of readers who would be interested in the significance of the use of the OT in the NT are likely Christian readers whose primary interest is in Christian theology and praxis. Without diminishing the validity of the first two perspectives, a clear advantage of the third one is that it is not plagued by perplexing questions about, for example, what sort of accessibility to the OT texts the earliest NT audience possessed, their level of literacy, or, in the case of Philippians, where precisely Paul was imprisoned when he wrote the epistle. Additionally, any arguments advanced about the use of the OT in the NT from the perspective of modern readers would be tempered by the texts themselves and by whatever theological interests are at stake. The present



argument in this article is that *the clear echo of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10-11 encourages an intertextual reading of Philippians in light of Isaiah 45:18-25 LXX resulting in the recognition that both texts portray the people of God as a justified and glorified people of a justified and glorified God.*<sup>6</sup> I will begin by demonstrating that the people of God are understood as the justified and glorified people of a justified and glorified God in Isaiah 45:18-25 LXX. Next I will show that *God* is understood as justified and glorified in Philippians 2:6-11, and that *the people of God* are understood as justified and glorified in Philippians 3. The article will conclude with a brief reflection on the ecclesiological significance of all of this.

### ***The Justification and Glorification of God and God's People in Isaiah 45:18-25 LXX***

Isaiah 45:18-25 is housed in the portion of the book of Isaiah commonly referred to in modern scholarship as “Deutero-Isaiah” or “Second Isaiah,” Isaiah 40–55. Throughout these chapters the people of Israel are envisioned as being in bondage to the Babylonians, a tragic conundrum which would appear to indicate that the God of Israel has been thoroughly discredited, and that the gods of Babylon are superior to the God of Israel.<sup>7</sup> Yet ironically, these chapters present a resounding rejection of this worldview. Though Israel is in bondage, Israel's God has *not* been discredited. On the contrary, there is *none* superior to the God of Israel. One proof of this superiority is that God has the right to effect salvation for

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intertextual study is most interested in the perspective of contemporary readers of these texts. I will take what can be known of their historical contexts seriously, but my primary interest is neither in the perspective of the historical Paul or the historical Philippians, but in the significance of the echo of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10-11 for the sake of Christian theology, particularly ecclesiology, in the present. For a concise introduction to intertextual analysis of NT texts see G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012). For Paul's use of Scripture the classic study is Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>6</sup>For an extended version of the argument presented here see Ryan K. Giffin, *Justified and Glorified: The Ecclesiological Significance of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10-11*, GlossaHouse Thesis Series (Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse, forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup>See John N. Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 220. The Isaiah scholars cited in this article base their comments primarily on the MT, yet the overall summary of Isaiah 45:18-25 I am providing here is not materially different for the LXX.

God's people, even in what may appear to be the strangest of ways: by using King Cyrus II of Persia, a foreign king, to save Israel from idolatrous Babylon. If anyone wishes to be delivered from the fate awaiting them in the form of King Cyrus and his armies, they must look to the God of Israel and to no other (Isa. 41:10-14; 43:10-15; 44:6-8; 46:1-7; 55:1-3).<sup>8</sup>

The answer to the plight of Israel and the surrounding nations who have experienced the destruction of the Persian armies is intensely *theological*. The classic Jewish doctrine of God is the theological heartbeat of these chapters. N. T. Wright refers to Isaiah 40–55 as “one of the most resounding and robust statements of Jewish monotheism” in the Bible.<sup>1</sup> The audacity of the argument of Deutero-Isaiah is simply the outworking of the undeniable logic of the argument: If the God of Israel is the one sovereign transcendent creator of the world, the one who has rightly predicted in advance the devastation that has come by way of the Persian armies, then this God is the one and only Savior of the world. By virtue of the sole lordship of Israel's Lord, Israel's Lord is the only one who may be rightly sought for salvation.

The portion of Second Isaiah which presents this argument in its most explosive form is Isaiah 45:18-25, the portion which contains the text echoed in Philippians 2:10-11. J. Alec Motyer has broadly outlined Isa 45:18-25 under the headings of “creation” (v. 18), “revelation” (v. 19), “salvation” (vv. 20-22), and “affirmation” (vv. 23-25).<sup>10</sup> Attending to the LXX version of this text, the passage begins in v. 18 with a confirmation of the Lord as the maker of heaven and earth, the one who created all things and did this for a purpose:

Thus says the Lord,  
 who made heaven—  
 this is the God who displayed the earth and made it;  
 he himself marked its limits;  
 he did not make it to be empty  
 but to be inhabited:  
 I am, and there is no other. (Isa. 45:18 NETS)

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<sup>8</sup>For a recent synopsis of the historical situation behind this portion of Isaiah see Ben Witherington III, *Isaiah Old And New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 206-11.

<sup>9</sup>N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 73.

<sup>10</sup>J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 364.

This is followed in v. 19 with the affirmation that God's creative purpose has been plainly revealed by the God who speaks "righteousness" (or "justification"):

I have not spoken in secret  
nor in a dark place of the earth;  
I did not say to the offspring of Iakob,  
"Seek a vain thing."  
I am, I am the Lord,  
speaking righteousness [or justification]<sup>11</sup>  
and declaring truth. (Isa 45:19 NETS)

In vv. 20-22 the Lord summons those from the nations to court, where the Lord's irrefutable case is presented. Those from the end of the earth who were previously ignorant of God's sole lordship are invited to respond to the overwhelming evidence of God's sovereignty by turning to this God for salvation and away from the worship of gods that do not save:

Assemble yourselves and come;  
take counsel together,  
you who are being saved from among the nations!  
They did not know—  
those who lift up the wood, their graven image,  
and pray as if to gods  
that do not save.  
If they will declare it, let them draw near  
so that may know together  
who made from the beginning  
these things that are to be heard.  
Then it was declared to you,  
I am God, and there is no other besides me;  
there is no righteous [or just] one or savior except me.  
Turn to me, and you shall be saved,  
you who are from the end of the earth!  
I am God, and there is no other. (Isa 45:20-22 NETS)

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<sup>11</sup>Occasional alternatives to the NRSV and NETS translations will be placed in brackets throughout this article. For words from the English *just-* root (e.g., "justification," "justice," "just," or "justify") as appropriate glosses for words formed from the Greek *dik-* root in the LXX and the NT (such as the noun *dikaïosynē*, the adjective *dikaïos*, and the verb *dikaioō* in this text) see GELS, 169-70; LEH, 154; BDAG 246-49.

The passage crescendos in vv. 23-25—the most critical verses for our purposes in this study—with the declaration that every knee will bow, and every tongue confess to God that “Righteousness [or justification] and glory shall come to him” (v. 24 NETS). Those who turn to God will be justified and glorified. Those who do not turn to God, choosing instead to separate themselves, will be shamed:

By myself I swear,  
 “Verily righteousness [or justification] shall go forth from my  
     mouth;  
     my words shall not be turned back,  
 because to me every knee shall bow  
     and every tongue shall acknowledge God,  
 saying, Righteousness [or justification] and glory shall come to  
     him,  
     and all who separate themselves shall be ashamed.”  
 By the Lord shall they be justified,  
     and all the offspring of the sons of Israel  
     shall be glorified in God. (Isa. 45:23-25 NETS)

One of many noteworthy features of this marvelous text is that it portrays the people of God—those who turn to God for salvation—as the justified and glorified people of a justified and glorified God. Justification and glory will go to God, the “just” one, and those who turn to this God for salvation will themselves be justified and glorified by this God.

It is an echo of this text that appears in the central passage of the Epistle to the Philippians, Philippians 2:6-11. Once more, the general purpose of that passage is to shape the people of God into a community that reflects the way of acting narrated therein. Interestingly, whether Paul intended it or not, a reading of Philippians reveals that the people of God are portrayed in his letter as the justified and glorified people of a justified and glorified God, just as they are in Isaiah 45:18-25 LXX. In order to demonstrate that this is the case, I turn now to Philippians 2:6-11.

### ***The Justification and Glorification of God in Philippians: Philippians 2:6-11***

The story of Christ Jesus in Philippians 2:6-11 has been accurately characterized as the apostle Paul’s “Master Story.”<sup>12</sup> The comprehensive scope of

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<sup>12</sup>Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 88. In this volume Gorman argues that Paul’s spirituality of the cross is a narrative-shaped spirituality, and Phil 2:6-11 is the master story that shapes his spirituality.

the poetic narrative it articulates combines with its resonance throughout the Pauline epistles to implicate this text as a foundational one for Paul. In light of this, it is no surprise that this story of Christ has received a tremendous amount of scholarly attention.

The argument I am advancing here does not necessitate the detailed exegesis of Philippians 2:6-11 that has been undertaken elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> My driving purpose here is simply to demonstrate that in Philippians 2:6-11 God is portrayed as a justified and glorified God, and that this is communicated using the very language of Isaiah 45:23. Beginning with the first half of Paul's master story in vv. 6-8 Christ Jesus is described as one who is "in the form of God" and possesses "equality with God," and who did not consider this as something to be exploited. Instead, the downwardly mobile path of self-emptying, self-humbling, and costly obedience was the one chosen by Christ Jesus:

who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death  
—even death on a cross. (Phil. 2:6-8)

Every line of these verses is worthy of comment, but the first line is especially critical for the present study. How the participle *hyparchōn* (NRSV "though he was") in v. 6 is translated informs the interpretation of the entire text. Recognizing its grammatical dependence on the verb *hygēsato* ("regard" NRSV), there are three basic ways of rendering *hyparchōn* in this context. First, *hyparchōn* may be taken with the NRSV as a concessive participle, resulting in the translation "*although* he was in the form of God." Second, the participle may be rendered causally, resulting in the

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<sup>13</sup>Among the commentaries see esp. Fee, *Philippians*, 191-229; Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, WBC 43, rev. ed., (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 90-134; Reumann, *Philippians*, 333-83. For very recently treatments see James W. Thompson and Bruce W. Longenecker, *Philippians and Philemon*, Paideia Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 70-76; Joseph H. Hellerman, *Philippians*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015), 105-25.

translation “*because* he was in the form of God.” Third, *hyparchōn* may be construed in a temporal sense, resulting in the more neutral translation “*while being* in the form of God.” Most interpreters prefer the concessive rendering, which highlights the downward movement and reversal of status that follows Christ’s high status as one who was “in the form of God” subsequently described in vv. 7-8.<sup>14</sup> I credit this reading as critical to an understanding of the narrative pattern existing in the poem. However, I affirm the argument of Michael J. Gorman, who suggests that in Philippians 2:6 *hyparchōn* can, and indeed *must* be understood both concessively and causally.<sup>15</sup>

Gorman argues that Philippians 2:6-8 contains a narrative pattern that appears throughout the Pauline epistles, represented by the shorthand phrase, “although [x] not [y] but [z],” which means “although [status] not [selfishness] but [selflessness].” According to Gorman, this pattern may be seen in three types of Pauline texts: christological texts (e.g., Rom. 15:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-8), apostolic autobiographical texts (e.g., 1 Cor. 9; 1 Thess 2:6-8), and hortatory texts.<sup>16</sup> Based on how Paul uses this narrative pattern throughout his epistles, Gorman contends that the “although” portion of this pattern also really means “because.” He explains:

For Paul, the possession of a right to act in a certain way has an inherent, built-in mandate to exercise truly the status that provides the right by sometimes refraining from the exercise of that right out of love for others. This is not to deny one’s apostolic or general Christian identity (and associated rights), or to void it, or to put it aside, or to empty oneself of it, but to exercise it as an act of Christlike love.<sup>17</sup>

In the case of Philippians 2:6-8, this means that the “[x]” in Gorman’s diagram represents Christ’s already-possessed status of “in the form of God”

<sup>14</sup>See e.g. Hellerman, *Philippians*, 111 and the scholars cited there.

<sup>15</sup>I am indebted for much of the following discussion to Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 9-39.

<sup>16</sup>Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 22.

<sup>17</sup>Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 24. Gorman presents Paul’s refusal to exploit his own authority or rights as examples of this. In texts like 1 Cor 9:12-18 and 1 Thess 2:7 Paul is indicating that he acted as he did “(1) *although* he had certain rights by virtue of his status as an apostle, and (2) *in spite* of normal expectations of apostles, but also (3) *because* he is an apostle of the self-giving and loving crucified Lord. Thus in not throwing his weight around and in forgoing rights, Paul is acting *in* character, not *out of* character as an apostle” (Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 23-24).

and “equality with God.” Christ may either choose to exploit this status for his own advantage, or he may refuse to exploit it. The fact that Christ refused to exploit the status of divinity *is evidence that he truly possessed the status of divinity*. In other words, the “not [y] but [z]” portion of the pattern is *constitutive* of the “[x]” portion of the pattern. “Christ’s status of being ‘in the form of God’ (and thus possessing ‘equality with God’)—his [x]—was most truly and fully exercised, not in exploiting that status for selfish advantage ([y]), but in the self-emptying and self-enslaving that manifested itself in incarnation and crucifixion ([z]).”<sup>18</sup>

Gorman concludes that because the person who does “not [y] but [z]” acts *in character* for the person who *is* [x], it is correct to say that “*although* [x] not [y] but [z]” also truly means “*because* [x] not [y] but [z].” In Philippians 2:6 it is not only the case that Christ did not consider equality with God as something to be used for his own advantage *although he was in the form of God*; it is also the case that Christ did not do this *because he was in the form of God*.<sup>19</sup>

The point Gorman makes by arguing for the dual concessive and causal nature of *hyparchōn* is that Philippians 2:6-8 narratively describes *the identity and character of God*. This text is, in a word, “theophanic,” and therefore has significance for theology (proper). To be “in the form of God” is (however counterintuitive or paradoxical it may seem to some) to be kenotic and cruciform in character.

The dual concessive and causal character of the participle is accounted for by Gorman with the suggestion that there is both a “surface structure” and a “deep structure” to Philippians 2:6-8. The downward movement narrated in the surface structure of the text demands a concessive translation of the participle, yet the description of this downward movement as the movement of one who is in the form of God in the deep structure of the text demands a causal understanding of the participle. I find Gorman’s argument compelling: *hyparchōn* in Philippians 2:6 must be understood both concessively and causally.

It is this kenotic way of being and acting displayed in this one who is in the form of God that God the Father publicly justifies as truly “godlike” and which leads to the glory of God the Father, as the second half of Philippians 2:6-11 indicates:

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<sup>18</sup>Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 25.

<sup>19</sup>See Gorman, *Inhabiting*, 25.

Therefore God also highly exalted him  
 and gave him the name  
 that is above every name,  
 so that at the name of Jesus  
 every knee should bend  
 in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
 and every tongue should confess  
 that Jesus Christ is Lord  
 to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

This latter portion of Paul's master story indicates that the submissive worship due only to the justified and glorified God in Isaiah 45:18-25 will be appropriately given to Jesus Christ. Because Christ Jesus did not use his equality with God for his own advantage, but chose instead to empty and humble himself even to the point of death on a cross, "God also highly exalted him" (v. 9). To say that God has highly exalted Jesus because of the events described in vv. 6-8 is to indicate that God has recognized the incarnation and death of the crucified Jesus as a way of acting that is authentically divine.<sup>20</sup> The nature of the exaltation of Christ is expounded further in v. 9, which notes that God "gave him the name that is above every name." The "name" in view here is likely the title *kyrios*, "Lord," which will be confessed of Jesus by every tongue, as v. 11 intimates.<sup>21</sup> The LXX employs this same title for the personal name of the God of Israel. Richard Bauckham highlights the significance of this for Philippians 2:

The name itself is not Lord, which is not the divine name or even a Greek translation of the name, but a conventional Greek

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<sup>20</sup>C. F. D. Moule makes this point explicit with his rendering of 2:9a: "And that is why (i.e., the fact that Jesus displayed the self-giving humility which is the essence of divinity is the reason why) God so greatly exalted him. . . ." (C. F. D. Moule, "Further Reflexions on Philippians 2:5-11" in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on His 60th Birthday*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970], 264-65). See also Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 141; Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 100.

<sup>21</sup>Dean Flemming, *Philippians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2009), 120; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 72-73; Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Theology and Ethics*, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 195.



reverential *substitute* for the the name. However, the fact that it was a substitute—evidently among Greek speaking Christians *the* substitute—for the Tetragrammaton is certainly relevant to the meaning of the passage. It connects the unique identity of God (YHWH) closely with his sovereignty as a key identifying characteristic of his uniqueness.<sup>22</sup>

With v. 10 the echo of Isaiah 45 enters in to the poetic narrative. This verse combines with v. 11 to give the purpose of the exaltation of Christ and the giving to him the name above every name. God has highly exalted Christ “so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend” (v. 10). This statement about Christ, as in Isaiah 45 with reference to the God of Israel, indicates the submissive recognition of divine authority.

The phrase “in heaven and on earth and under the earth” interrupts the echo of Isaiah 45:23, but as Fowl notes, it “is clearly in line with the sentiments expressed there.”<sup>23</sup> The language of Isaiah 45:23 then picks up again in v. 11 where the poem declares, “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Again, Bauckham offers helpful commentary on the significance of the Isaianic language here in Philippians: “the worship of Jesus in Philippians 2 should be understood within the context of the Jewish monotheistic tradition, in which worship is recognition of the unique identity of the one God as sole Creator and Ruler of all things, and in which God’s sole deity is expected to come to be acknowledged in worship by the whole creation.”<sup>24</sup>

The text concludes with the doxological statement “to the glory of God the Father” (v. 11). God’s way of being God has been honored by the pattern of thinking, acting, and feeling manifested by the obedience of Christ Jesus.<sup>25</sup> God has ultimately vindicated the suffering and death of Christ Jesus in a way that leads to the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord, and in a manner that leads toward the glory of God the Father. The worship reserved in the OT for the one who says, “I am God, and there is no other besides me” (Isa. 45:22 NETS) is directed here to Christ, without

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<sup>22</sup>Richard Bauckham, “The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2:9-11” in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 131 and, along these lines, see also Bauckham’s *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 197-210.

<sup>23</sup>Fowl, *Philippians*, 103.

<sup>24</sup>Bauckham, “Worship of Jesus,” 136.

<sup>25</sup>The translation “pattern of thinking, acting, and feeling” is given to the Greek term *phroneō* (“mind” NRSV) in Philippians 2:5 by Fowl, *Philippians*, 88.

competing with or diminishing the glory of God the Father, but in fact enhancing that glory.

The second half of the poem of Christ in Philippians 2:6-11 is essentially God's *justification*, or *vindication*, of the character of Christ narrated in the first half of Paul's master story as the very character of true divinity. The ultimate humiliation of the obedient, suffering one referred to in Philippians 2:6-8 has resulted in the ultimate vindication of that same one in Philippians 2:9-11. Admittedly, the actual language of *dikaioynē* is not present in Philippians 2:6-11. However, God the Father's confirmation of true divinity displayed in Christ Jesus amounts to a justification of that display and ultimately leads to the glory of God, *and it is clear that the language of Isaiah 45 is used to make this point*. In Isaiah 45:23 LXX the confession of every tongue is that "justification" and "glory" will go to God. The echo of that text in Philippians 2:10-11 then invites readers of Philippians to consider that when every tongue confesses that Jesus is truly *Lord*, it is not far from saying that God's own saving way of being God has been "justified," or vindicated, in the person of Christ Jesus. Hence, *in the person of Christ, justification does indeed go to God and, as a result, glory will go to God (the Father) as well*.

Additionally, as I will show in the next section of this article, in Philippians 3 Paul indicates that he does not have his own justification, but has instead the justification that comes from God (Phil. 3:9). If Paul's own kenotic story in Philippians 3:2-11 parallels that of 2:6-11, then it gives at least an implicit warrant for understanding the turn in the latter portion of the Christ hymn as indeed God's justification of Christ Jesus's activity as narrated in the former portion, and for suggesting that Philippians 2:9-11 may be read in light of the justification and glory that will go to God in Isaiah 45 LXX.

### ***The Justification and Glorification of God's People in Philippians: Philippians 3:2-21***

In the third chapter of Philippians Paul engages in a discussion of justification from two different perspectives: his pre-Christian life, and his present life in the Messiah. The apostle begins in 3:2-4 with a word of warning:

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh—even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. (Phil. 3:2-4a)

Whatever the precise identity of those warned against here, Paul clearly sees them as at least a potential threat to the welfare of the Philippians, and the all-important discourse that follows in the remainder of the chapter emerges out of this warning to avoid them.<sup>26</sup> Paul continues in v. 4b, describing himself as a person who has more reasons for confidence in the flesh than these or anyone else, followed by a spelling out of those reasons in near check-list fashion in vv. 5-6:

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness [or justification] under the law, blameless. (Phil. 3:4b-6)

The characteristics listed in these verses are the epitome of a perfect Jewish pedigree. The first three characteristics speak primarily to the significance of Paul's Jewish ancestry. The next three elements speak to the significance of his personal devotion to the Jewish faith. The list crescendos in v. 6 with the claim of "blameless" with respect to the "righteousness under the law" (*dikaïosynē tēn en nomō*). Here the first occurrence in Philippians 3 of that all-important word *dikaïosynē* appears. No matter how one understands the phrase, Paul's claim is an impressive one. The relevant implication of the entire list is that Paul's pre-Christian Jewish piety is, to use Douglas A. Campbell's adjective, "irreproachable."<sup>27</sup>

Paul then transitions from the impressive bio in vv. 4-6 to emphasize in vv. 7-9 why he no longer has confidence in the flesh:

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness [or justification] of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ [or through the faith/faithfulness of Christ], the righteousness [or justification] from God based on faith. (Phil. 3:7-9)

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<sup>26</sup>For an overview of the identity of opponents (or potential opponents) in Philippians 3 see Reumann, *Philippians*, 469-70 and the literature cited there.

<sup>27</sup>Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 899.

As one who is now “in Christ,” Paul is able to look back on his irreproachable Jewish piety and reevaluate it, and indeed “everything” (v. 8), considering them now as losses. Paul’s gains and losses are elaborated in v. 9 using the language of justification. Two types of justification are contrasted. The apostle does not want to have his own justification that comes from the law, but one that comes “through faith in” (NRSV) or “through the faith of” (NRSV marginal note) Christ.

Here in v. 9 we run up against one of the seven places in the Pauline epistles where the hotly contested Greek phrase *pistis Christou* occurs (here; Rom. 3:22, 26; Gal. 2:16 [2x], 2:20 [faith in/faith of the Son of God], 3:22). Based on a number of considerations I find the subjective genitive translation compelling. Hence, in this context, I take Paul to be implying that Christ’s own faithfulness is not only the basis for God’s justification on his behalf, but also the basis for God’s justification of others.<sup>28</sup> The poetic narrative of Philippians 2:6-11, focused especially on Christ Jesus’s becoming “obedient to the point of death” (Phil. 2:8), is, then, an amplification of what Paul means by “the faith (or faithfulness) of Christ” here in Philippians 3:9.<sup>29</sup>

This faithfulness of Christ followed by God’s vindicating action is the saving activity of God through which “the righteousness from God” (v. 9) is revealed, i.e., God’s true righteousness/justice/justification. Hence, Campbell translates this phrase as “the righteous act of God,” by which Paul means essentially “the *life-giving* act of God made available in Christ, and so, in other words, of the resurrection and of subsequent life in glory—of the very experiences that he goes on to point toward in the rest of the sentence in vv. 10-11, as well as in vv. 12-21.”<sup>30</sup>

This righteous/justifying act of God through the faithfulness of Christ is explicated here and in the rest of Philippians 3 with the language of *participation*, beginning in vv. 10-11: “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:10-11). Paul then proceeds in vv. 12-17 to indicate how his

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<sup>28</sup>For a summary of the key arguments for the subjective translation see Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 110-19. For a defense of the translation “faithfulness” for *pistis* in this construction see Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Gal 3:1-4:11*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 248-51.

<sup>29</sup>See Fowl, *Philippians*, 154.

<sup>30</sup>Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, 906.

life is now oriented by the goal of becoming like Christ in his death and attaining the resurrection from the dead:

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. (Phil. 3:12-17)

In v. 17 the exhortation to imitate Paul reinforces the point that Paul's description of himself in Philippians 3 is not only for the purpose of showing how the pattern of Christ in 2:6-11 has been analogously repeated in his own life, but is also for the purpose of showing that the pattern displayed in Christ Jesus must characterize the people of God as well. In this way, Paul's brief autobiographical sketch is not merely *descriptive*; it is also *prescriptive* and *instructive*. Paul desires for the "in Christ" community to imitate him because he himself has analogously adopted the pattern described in 2:6-11, the pattern of Christ Jesus that is also to be in them (Phil. 2:5).

However, there are many who do not imitate this pattern, as the next portion of ch. 3 indicates: "For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is their belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things" (Phil. 3:18-19). These "enemies of the cross" have adopted a pattern of life that is in opposition to the pattern displayed in 2:6-11. Paul concludes the chapter by contrasting these enemies with a different group:

But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. (Phil. 3:20-21)

Interestingly, Paul uses the title “Savior” here with reference to Jesus, a title that rarely appears in Paul’s Letters.<sup>31</sup> Paul’s use of this rare title here is quite intriguing in light of the clear echo of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10-11. Those who read Philippians together with Isaiah 45:18-25 LXX will be alert to the fact that the same title is employed in both texts with reference to the Lord. Once again we notice language which Isaiah 45:18-25 LXX reserves for the God of Israel being attributed to Christ Jesus.

More importantly for the primary argument of this article, however, is this phrase: “He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory” (Phil. 3:21). This is the phrase in Philippians that most clearly communicates the glorification that awaits the people of God. Paul contrasts the false glory of the enemies, which is in their shame, with the true glorification awaiting those who wait for the Savior from heaven. Those whose bodies are marked by an analogous pattern of faithfulness displayed in the one true human who has already been vindicated, or justified, on the basis of his faithfulness are also destined for vindication, a future justification that includes glorious bodies that conform to the glorious body of their Lord. In this way, the people of God in Philippians are portrayed as a justified and glorified people of a justified and glorified God.

### ***Conclusion: The Ecclesiological Significance of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10-11***

The major purpose of Phil 2:6-11, the text in Philippians containing an echo of Isa 45:23, is not to offer a treatise on Christology but to present the people of God with a story of the justified and glorified one to whom their corporate life is to correspond. In other words, the primary thrust of Paul’s master story is *ecclesiological*. What significance might the echo of Isa 45:23 in Phil 2:10-11 have the people of God?

One clear point of significance resulting from the argument of the present article is this: *If the people of God will embrace the pattern of thinking, acting, and feeling in their life together, then they may rightly expect God to justify and glorify them in ways analogous to the justification and glorification of the people of God described in both texts.* Philippians indicates that embracing this pattern involves co-participation in the suffer-

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<sup>31</sup>This is the only place the title is used with reference to Christ in the seven Pauline epistles generally considered “authentic.” Outside of these, the title appears in Eph. 5:23; 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:4, 3:6.

ing, death, and the Resurrection of the one described in Paul's master story in 2:6-11 and refusing to walk as enemies of the cross. Christian communities that adopt this pattern have every reason to anticipate God's vindication of the suffering that will inevitably be granted to them as co-participants in the life of their crucified Lord (Phil 1:29), just as their Lord's humble obedience to the point of death has been finally vindicated by God.

One would be hard pressed to find an OT text that better supplements this message than the one echoed in Philippians 2:10-11. The suffering people of God are understood in Isaiah 45 LXX, just as in Philippians, as the justified and glorified people of a justified and glorified God. Contemporary readers of scripture should not ignore the significant amount of what Hays refers to as "thematic coherence" between both texts.<sup>32</sup> The loud-volume echo of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10-11 invites contemporary readers to take seriously this thematic coherence between these texts and the profound ecclesiological implications that emerge from them. In concluding this article, I draw attention to two of these implications.

First, to understand the people of God as the justified and glorified people of a justified and glorified God presupposes that the people of God will indeed undergo *suffering*. Suffering is a reasonable expectation of a people whose life together corresponds to the life of one who took the form of a slave and exhibited costly obedience to the point of death on a cross. The expectation of suffering implies, among other things, that any expectation of life together in the Christian community as life devoid of suffering must be seriously reconsidered. Indeed, part of what it means to know Christ is to know the sharing of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10).

At the same time, a further implication of understanding the people of God as the justified and glorified people of a justified and glorified God is that the people of God are a people who ought to be characterized by deep *hope*. If the people of God are right to anticipate God's vindication of their suffering in ways analogous to the vindication of Christ's own suffering, then they can be communities of hope even in the midst of suffer-

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<sup>32</sup>Hays identifies "thematic coherence" as one of seven "tests" for hearing echoes of Scripture in Paul's letters. See Hays, *Echoes*, 30. I suggest that the echo of Isa. 45:23 in Phil. 2:10-11 coheres quite well with the argument Paul develops in Philippians, and is certainly consonant with other Pauline texts (e.g., Rom. 8:28-30).

ing. Whatever sort of suffering Christian communities experience as they embrace the pattern of their Lord will ultimately be vindicated.

The purpose of this article has been to demonstrate that the clear echo of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10-11 encourages an intertextual reading of Philippians in light of Isaiah 45:18-25 LXX resulting in the recognition that both texts portray the people of God as the justified and glorified people of a justified and glorified God, and to explore the ecclesiological significance of this echo. I have argued that one of the clear correspondences contemporary readers may draw is that if the people of God will embrace the pattern of thinking, acting, and feeling displayed in the story of Christ in Philippians 2:6-11, they may rightly expect God to justify and glorify them in ways analogous to the justification and glorification of the people of God described in both texts. This has implications for Christian communities to embrace the truth that they will indeed suffer, and to embrace the hope that comes from knowing that just as the suffering of their Lord was ultimately vindicated, so also theirs will be vindicated, to the glory of God the Father.



# KNEELING, SHARIA LAW, AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: THE PECULIAR MORAL VISION OF JOHN WESLEY'S METHODIST ECCLESIOLOGY

by

Rustin E. Brian

## *Introduction*

Recently, many black athletes in the USA such as Colin Kaepernick and Brandon Marshall began kneeling during the singing of the national anthem prior to their games. The stated reason for their action was the peaceful protesting of a system of rule and governance that is believed to be unequal, in terms of race in particular. Such a view is clearly built upon contemporary issues as police brutality, including countless filmed incidents of police beating and often killing young black males, arguably without probable cause, as well as the Black Lives Matter movement. Kaepernick, a quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, and Marshall, a Linebacker for the Denver Broncos, are not alone in their protests. Many other professional NFL and NBA players have chosen to kneel as well. In fact, early in the NFL season a statement was issued that the entire Seattle Seahawks team would be kneeling together. This, however, did not happen, likely after the public outcry that followed that press release. Rather, they chose to link arms in solidarity, suggest the hashtag #buildabridge instead.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps what is even more important is the widespread nature of such peaceful protesting among US collegiate and high school sports. Examples such as the Arkansas Razorbacks Women's Basketball Team and the Wisconsin Badgers Men's Basketball Team are anything but exceptions to the rule. In fact, the kneeling protests involve white athletes as well, especially at the younger stages of the movement. Despite death threats, ridicule, the dropping of marketing sponsorships, and so much

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<sup>1</sup>Bob Condotta, "Seahawks WR Doug Baldwin reveals team's plan to 'inter-lock arms in unity' during national anthem Sunday," accessed January 24, 2017, <http://www.seattletimes.com/sports/seahawks/seahawks-wr-doug-baldwin-reveals-teams-plan-to-lock-arms-prior-to-sundays-game-against-miami/>.

critique by pundits and commentators of all varieties, it is clear that kneeling during the national anthem is not going away. It is a grassroots movement of peaceful protest akin to the Black Lives Matter and Occupy movements of recent years.<sup>2</sup>

The enormously critical response to the kneeling movement, especially from white, corporate America begs the question: does Democracy have a problem in the USA? Rioting and looting, such as occurred in Ferguson, MO between 2014–2015 and Baltimore, MD in 2015, is clearly frowned upon due to its destructive, violent, and haphazard nature.<sup>3</sup> In acknowledging the inappropriateness of such protests, though, one cannot help but ask why peaceful, non-violent protests are so strongly rejected and ridiculed, and its participants labeled “unpatriotic?” The recent Women’s March of January 22, 2017 is but another in a growing example of peaceful and heavily ridiculed protesting done against injustice, real or perceived, in the USA. What all these protests have in common is a belief that law and order, or justice, in the USA is not blind, as it is often described. Instead, such protesters claim that justice is visibly biased towards affluent, male, and especially, white people. Protestors are often accused of being “whiny” or seeking special treatment. In fact, they are seeking the opposite: broadly understood, equally administered, societal justice for all. These protestors are reacting to what they see as a form of special ethics for one group, but not for all. Surely special ethics do exist, and not all are treated equally and fairly. Justice, it would seem, is not, in fact, blind. This much I openly confess with those that kneel and with those that march. Their appeal for justice and fairness despite sex or race is a cause that needs to be continually supported and embraced.

In this paper, I will be looking at two clear examples of religious groups appealing to a form of special ethics, both of which, at times, seek to impose these ethics upon society as a whole. Both examples I will provide, the Sharia Law of Muslims and the Sermon on the Mount (and broader teachings of Jesus) for Christians, reveal peculiar moral visions

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<sup>2</sup>Lindsay Gibbs has provided a thorough account of the kneeling movement in an article for thinkprogress.org. <https://thinkprogress.org/national-anthem-sports-protest-tracker-kaepernick-284ff1d1ab3e#.o816j21pv>. Accessed Jan. 24, 2017.

<sup>3</sup>It is worth noting that both incidents of unrest, violence, and looting stemmed from what appeared to be unwarranted killings of young black men at the hands of police.

for both adherents, but also for the world. By peculiar, I mean a form of ethics, or a moral vision, that is dependent upon special revelation, faith, and discipleship, rather than being universally available or intuitive to all. I will argue that each group has the right to embrace and practice their own peculiar moral vision as a self-imposed system of religious and social ethics upon their own faith communities, but not upon society as a whole. Ideally, society will hold to universal principles of egalitarian justice for all—the type that those who kneel and march currently cry out for. Within such a society, such peculiar religious moral visions only enhance the social and religious ethics and expectations of adherents, but do not change the egalitarian principles for the broader society. Thus, the two, broader societal laws and rules concerning justice, and a peculiar moral vision, should be able to peacefully coexist. In conclusion, I will examine John Wesley’s 13 sermons on the dominant source for Christianity’s peculiar moral vision, the Sermon on the Mount, to assess whether or not he is helpful in terms of the allowance for a peculiar moral vision to exist peacefully within a broader societal framework of egalitarian justice. It will be seen that Wesley’s teachings hold much that is helpful, but also much to be critical of in this regard. In the end, my hope is simply to suggest that many of the teachings of Jesus—teachings that I whole-heartedly embrace—are peculiar and intended to be voluntarily adhered to rather than enforced by rule of law. This peculiar moral vision is predicated upon faith. As such, Christians should not expect those that do not follow Jesus to follow such peculiar moral teachings. With this in mind, my hope is that we can allow for the peculiar moral visions of others, being more tolerant of their beliefs and actions, so long as they do not harm or oppress others. The same, hopefully, will be allowed for ourselves as followers of Christ.

### ***Sharia Law***

Due to large increases in Islam, as well as immigration patterns, and the recent refugee crisis, there has been a significant and vocal rise in the desire to allow for Sharia Law to be practiced in the “West,” especially in places such as the UK, France, and Germany.

Sharia, or Islamic Law, offers moral and legal guidance for nearly all aspects of life—from marriage and divorce, to inheritance and contracts, to criminal punishments. Sharia, in its broadest definition, refers to the ethical principles set down in

Islam's holy book (the Quran) and examples of actions by the Prophet Muhammad (Sunna).<sup>4</sup>

Most seem to want Sharia Law to only be enforced for a nation's Muslim citizens, with many of these often living in close physical proximity—whether by choice or by placement (in the case of refugees). A recent Pew Study reveals that most Muslims who adhere to Sharia Law are in favor of overall society having broad egalitarian rules, regulations, and punishments, while allowing for Muslim citizens to voluntarily subject themselves to Sharia Law on top of these broader societal rules, regulations, and punishments. Some, though, desire for Sharia Law to be universally applied. Those that desire Sharia Law to be more universally applied seem to be most strongly concentrated in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Most other countries made up of large Muslim majorities seem to prefer the method mentioned above, wherein Sharia Law is not enforced by the government and not for all. Of particular interest, for the purposes of this cursory study, are Muslim minority groups in places like France, Germany, and the UK that desire to have Sharia Law operate as a stricter code of ethics, including its methods of correction and punitive measures, for small Muslim minority groups.

The question is, can two different ethical systems, or moral visions, coexist or overlap while maintaining fairness and justice for all? Additionally, how can it be determined that a given Muslim does in fact embrace Sharia Law? It is the case, for instance, that many Western Muslims do not desire Sharia Law, and do not embrace the rather archaic and brutal forms of punitive measures characteristic of Sharia Law. As Alastair MacIntyre has previously asked, “Whose Justice? Which Rationality?” With the assumption that punishments such as chopping off limbs, stoning, and a wide variety of executionary options are inhuman and unjust, regardless of a person's previous acceptance of such a code of ethics, the question that emerges is how might a peculiar moral vision such as Sharia Law exist alongside of, or overlap, a broader societal system of egalitarian rules and punishments? In short I would suggest that the two systems or moral visions should be able to coexist or overlap, provided that adherents voluntarily agree with such teachings and expectations, and that

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<sup>4</sup>The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society. Pew Study. April 30, 2013. [www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/](http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/). Accessed 12/20/2016 @2:45pm PST. Hereafter referred to as “Pew Study.”

punishments be confined to the realm of the spiritual, aside from short or long-term removal from one's faith community, for violation of spiritual and social laws. Thus, if a person agrees to the principle that one should not have extra-marital sexual relationships, and does engage in such a relationship, that person would be said to be spiritually punished, and perhaps removed from his or her religious community, but not stoned, as is the case with Sharia Law. This, it seems to me, is the problem with Sharia Law: the system of punishments, and not the peculiar moral vision offered by the teachings of Islam. If God can be the judge, can Sharia Law peacefully co-exist or overlap with broader societal egalitarian ethics? I would venture an answer that "yes, it can," though admittedly, this is a strong revisioning of the form and function of Sharia Law. Such a system does, I believe, exist within Christianity, specifically around the teachings of Jesus, the most famous of which is the "Sermon on the Mount." It is to that topic that we will now turn our attention in asking if a peculiar moral vision can co-exist or overlap with a broader societal egalitarian system of ethics, inclusive of punitive measures?

### ***The Sermon on the Mount***

The Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5–7, has long been held to be Jesus's most concise, thorough, and therefore His most important sustained teaching or sermon. In many ways, the Sermon on the Mount functions as a Gospel within a Gospel, summarizing the Gospel, the way of Discipleship, and outlining Jesus's expectations for His followers. In many ways, Jesus's teachings in this "sermon" are a summary and revision of the Old Testament Law, the following of which provided identity to the people of Israel. In many places Jesus ratchets up the expectations He places on individuals, whereas in other places, Jesus seemingly reduces or simplifies the expectations He places upon His followers. In this way, I believe that Jesus is redefining, reinterpreting, or revising the Law. As he says early on, "I have not come to abolish [the Law] but fulfill."<sup>5</sup> Coming after teaching of the importance of good works that are visible and appealing to others, Jesus is clearly not condemning or doing away with works. Instead, He perfectly fulfills the Law, shows His followers how to do this, and makes it possible, through his redeeming and reconciliatory work on the cross, and by the sending of the Holy Spirit—for them, and for us—to faithfully follow the Law.

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<sup>5</sup>Matthew 5:17b. All Scripture cited from NRSV unless otherwise noted.

The Sermon on the Mount is full of rules and ethical instructions, all of which are preceded by teachings about doing good works for, and in view of, others. Additionally, these teachings are bracketed by curious statements such as, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven,”<sup>6</sup> and “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”<sup>7</sup> Some of these rules and ethical instructions include:

- Do not murder (5:21)
- Do not get angry with a brother or sister (5:22)
- Forgive and be reconciled, even with those that have wronged you (5:23-26)
- Do not commit adultery (5:27)
- Do not look at a woman (or man) in lust (5:28)
- Do not get divorced (5:31)
- Do not swear falsely (5:33)
- Do not swear at all (5:34)
- Do not resist an evildoer (5:39)
- Love your enemies and pray for those that persecute you (5:44)
- Do not give money or aid to those in need in hopes of being praised by others (6:1-4)
- Do not pray in such a way that will gain your spiritual notoriety with those who observe you (6:5-6)
- Do not make a big deal out of fasting as a way of boasting about your own holiness (6:16-18)
- Do not hoard earthly treasures (6:19-21)
- Do not serve two masters: God and mammon (6:24)
- Do not worry about provision or the future (6:25-34)
- Judge yourself very critically before you dare judge others (7:1-5)
- Do not defile that which is holy (7:6)
- Do unto others as you would have others do unto you (7:12)
- Bear good fruit (7:15-20)
- Do not fall victim to self-deception (regarding your own holiness) (7:21-23)

In this sermon, Jesus expands and tightens the teachings of the Law. No longer is it enough to simply avoid adultery, or a sexual relationship outside the confines of Christian (or Jewish) marriage. Instead, Jesus tells his followers that if they look at a woman with lust, they have already com-

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<sup>6</sup>Matthew 5:20.

<sup>7</sup>Matthew 5:48.

mitted adultery with her in their heart. Certainly, the same can be said of women for men, and, I suppose, of same-sex lust as well. Jesus's clear and difficult point is plainly accessible: do not lust or follow through on lustful desires. A sexual relationship is meant for marriage, which we have no cause from within Scripture to assume was understood to be anything but the consensual union of two adults, one man and one woman. This example of the peculiar vision of the Sermon on the Mount is a great example to work with because it is clearly an example of a teaching that is voluntarily adhered to, and which is not universally agreed upon. Some societies and cultures place little value—or didn't used to—on marriage. Some do not believe consent is needed for marriage. Some do not believe that either or both need to be an adult to be married. Some affirm same-sex unions. Some believe in polygamy. And, almost all believe that a person can think whatever he or she wants in their head, so long as they don't act on these thoughts in anything but mutually agreed-upon, non-harmful ways. Even those societies and/or cultures that discourage divorce do not have any good reason to punish those who are unfaithful to their marriage vows, or who decide to terminate these vows.

Sticking with The Sermon on the Mount, we must inquire what, if any, punitive measures Jesus outlines for those that violate these teachings? Whereas the Old Testament did allow for stoning an adulterous woman, Jesus doesn't seem to be concerned with any present-day, physical punishments at all. Rather, Jesus teaches that adulterers are in danger of the fires of hell—a punishment that should certainly be deemed effective enough. Additionally, he encourages people to police themselves on this matter, offering the [surely] figural language of cutting out one's own eye, or cutting off one's own hand if it will prevent one from sinning. While some throughout history have literally adopted this teaching, removing eyes, limbs, and even genitals in hopes of avoiding sin, it is surely the case that Jesus does not literally intend his followers to do this. He never instructs a person to do this, after all. Thus, Jesus's teachings on adultery, lust, and divorce are stringent in terms of expectation, and yet the only punitive measures he outlines are spiritual, or involve self-denial. The idea of society punishing an adulterer or a couple seeking divorce through prison, stoning, castration, or any other form of physical punishment is surely foreign to the teachings and expectations of Jesus, here or elsewhere. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul gives a few examples of the occasional need to cast an adulterous person out of the community of faith, but only so that they will be forced to reconcile with God. While being excluded

from one's community would have drastic social and economic results, this is surely not the same as violent punitive measures or incarceration. The logic remains consistent throughout the New Testament: violators of God's laws—those that do not physically harm another person, that is—face eternal punishments, and possibly exclusion from their faith communities, but not physical punishment or incarceration.

Jesus's rules and expectations are very clearly delivered to his closest followers. They are delivered in the context of his pedagogical relationship with them. In fact, his rules and expectations are only intelligible in light of his teachings, and particularly in light of his own embodied life. His teachings and expectations, then, are insider teachings and expectations. Why then, have many Christians historically sought to impose the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount's peculiar moral vision on society as a whole, including the threat of coercive, punitive measures for those that violate Jesus's expectations? Is this any different from those that desire for Sharia Law to operate for Muslim adherents, or even for society as a whole? It is to this dilemma, we will turn in the final sections of this paper.

### ***Christians and Civil Law***

Christians in the United States have long sought to impose their moral vision upon the broader society. In fact, to this day, some of the more peculiar—and by peculiar I mean a form of ethics, or a moral vision, that is dependent upon special revelation, faith, and discipleship—ethical teachings of Jesus are part of the formal juris prudence of the United States. For example, a 2014 Detroit Free Press article claimed that adultery was illegal in 21 states, punishable by both fines and potentially jail time.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, though this is not something that Jesus talks about directly, laws against homosexuality, and sodomy in particular, have long been connected to Christian beliefs about human sexuality, and have found their way into societal laws as a result. In fact, until the Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Lawrence vs. Kansas* in 2003, many states held homosexuality, and sodomy in particular, to be an illegal offense punishable by fines and/or incarceration. In the end, homosexuality of any variety would simply be another form of adultery, if adultery is understood as any sexual relationship outside the confines of Christian

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<sup>8</sup>Jolie Lee, "In Which States is Cheating on Your Spouse Illegal?" in the *Detroit Free Press*, April 17, 2014. Accessed February 9, 2017.



marriage that takes place between two consenting adults, one man and one woman. Christians are not alone in this view of marriage, or of homosexuality for that matter. In fact, though there are exceptions to the rule, many, if not most Jews and Muslims support the definition of marriage provided above, and would subsequently disapprove of homosexuality. Of course, such views are changing rapidly as increasingly secular cultures clash against ancient religions such as Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Regardless of one's beliefs about the definition of marriage, or the propriety or impropriety of homosexuality, the question that emerges is, "should such activity be deemed criminal, and therefore punishable by the United States (or any) Government?" Should a person go to jail or pay a large fine for having a consensual extra-marital sexual relationship with another adult? And, for that matter, does the answer to this question change in any way if the sexual relationship is a same-sex sexual relationship? Increasingly, and I would suggest rightly, the answer to these questions is "no."

Now, this does not change the religious view of such activity. Jesus makes it quite clear that not only is adultery broadly conceived sinful, so too is lust. However, Jesus leaves the punishment for such activity to eternal judgment. In terms of this life, it might be suggested that the punishment is time served in that the peculiar moral vision of Christianity claims that a person caught up in such an affair alienates himself from others, from God, and even from himself. As Athanasius detailed long ago, such activity literally de-creates humans, moving us further and further away from the *Imago Dei* and towards nothingness, a shadow existence of sorts.<sup>9</sup> Such activity, it would seem, so long as it is not harmful to others in terms of violating their freedoms as defined by liberal democratic tradition, is stigmatized by the Church, destructive to the individual, frowned upon in every way, and yet, perfectly legal in terms of broader egalitarian justice. I see nothing in Jesus's life or teachings to suggest that the relationship between his standards and teachings and that of the broader justice system be anything different. His rules are stricter, his punishments are eternal, but are to be enforced only by He alone, in the judgment. On the contrary, Jesus seems perfectly fine to allow for the jus-

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<sup>9</sup>Athanasius suggests that sin dehumanizes humanity, and that the primary reason for the Incarnation, therefore, was to redeem, restore, and renew creation according to the image of the Son. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1944), 40-41.

tice system to carry out punitive measures on those that seek to harm and or kill others, though he is quick to suggest that his followers should be far more grace-filled, and therefore forgiving, even with violent criminals. Such teachings, however, are always delivered to individuals and not to the state. It makes sense for individuals, compelled by the moral vision of Jesus to strive to forgive enemies. It makes less sense, though, for secular courts, not in relationship with Jesus, to forgive those who commit violent crimes. In these instances, Christ-followers are called to be leaven, or salt and light, assisting and guiding the world, through our own practices of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation.<sup>10</sup> Again, such teachings are suggested but not imposed. That Jesus would have this any other way seems preposterous.

Thus it would seem that Christians are called to a higher way. Our peculiar moral vision is an example of special ethics, or an ethical system founded upon rules and expectations that are not universally applicable. We might claim that they are universally valid, but such an ethical or moral vision is only intelligible within the framework of a relationship with Jesus and his followers, the Church. Our posture, then, towards broader societal egalitarian justice should be that of obedience to the laws of the land within a broader posture best understood as witness. We are called to be witnesses to our neighbors and even unto the ends of the world of the ways of Jesus. We are to do so by embracing his teachings, by holding ourselves and each other accountable to this higher path, and by living faithful lives amidst and for the world. To continue with the example of adultery, Christians are to be people that honor their marriage vows, and who live chaste sexual lives within such vows, despite the rest of society suggesting that such vows are easily broken and exchanged for other vows. Rather than attacking other groups for making “war on marriage,” Christians are to defend their own marriages by taking their vows

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<sup>10</sup>There is a myriad of different views on this matter held by Christians. A great and somewhat contemporary debate on how we might best understand the relationship between the Church and the world can be found in the following books: John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations*, Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, and Stanley Hauerwas, *Against the Nations*. Richard B Hays offers a very helpful survey of these theologians along with a few others, on this matter, from the perspective of the moral vision of the New Testament and ethics of each in Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 215-290.

seriously, reconciling with each other in times of difficulty, loving and mutually serving one another, and staying married. In doing so, we bear witness to a more excellent way, while nonetheless allowing for our broader societies to hold to lower, or simply different, views of marriage. Witness, in the end, will be far more effective than enforcement. The entire history of the Church bears witness to this truth. But of course, it must be pointed out that the root of witness is the same as that of the word martyr.

### ***John Wesley on the Sermon on the Mount***

John Wesley's Methodist revival was spurred by the methodical nature of his Methodist Bands, and their unique way of blending together confession and accountability, devotion, study, teaching, and personal and communal piety. Methodism, at its very core, is a religious renewal and reform movement deeply committed to acts of charity for those in need. As such, Methodism was a moral revolution within the Church. Its relevance to this day is deeply connected with this moral vision of renewal and transformation of individuals, communities, and the world often called entire sanctification or Christian perfection. It would be a mistake not to point out that of Wesley's 141 published sermons, 13 of them are on the Sermon on the Mount. Wesley, like the great ecumenical leaders before and after him, taught a living, active, and profoundly moral version of Christianity. Indeed, for Wesley, Christianity does not possess a moral vision, it is a moral vision. For Wesley, then, theology and ethics are inseparable. And, if we are to understand ethics in light of the person and work of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, then the moral vision that emerges from the Sermon on the Mount is one that is deeply and inseparably embedded in the scandalous particularity of Jesus. Students of Wesley, those who claim his theological and ecclesial heritage would do well to discover/rediscovers these sermons.

Unfortunately, but understandably, Wesley was a product of his day. John Wesley loved the British Empire, and though he was willing to critique it, he desired to see the transformation of the Church and society—two things he saw as intimately intertwined due to the nature of the Church of England. In my opinion this is a gross error on his part, but one we can forgive him. Moreover, due to his views of British Civil Religion, he understood Jesus's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount to be intended for all, and thought that the reform of the laws of England around these teachings was a good and faithful thing. In this Wesley dif-

fers from the likes of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who suggests that Jesus was speaking directly to the disciples when he gives the hard teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, and that though the words might be intended for all, all are not yet ready for them.<sup>11</sup> Wesley, therefore, would have affirmed societal laws against adultery, for example, as a way of more closely following the teachings of Jesus.

With the admission that Wesley does not help with the proposal that peculiar moral visions such as the Sermon on the Mount, and perhaps Sharia Law, can coexist and even overlap with a system of broader egalitarian justice, I maintain that the central role afforded to the Sermon on the Mount in Wesley's sermons is of paramount importance. Wesley's sermons on the Sermon on the Mount serve as an antidote to personal, privatized understandings of the Christian faith, devoid of works of charity and compassion. These sermons perfectly embody James's admonition that, "faith without works is dead."<sup>12</sup> In Wesley's fourth sermon on the Sermon on the Mount, for example, he rails against the idea of solitary Christians, suggesting instead that "Christianity is essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it."<sup>13</sup> He goes on to urge, and in fact require, Christians to be in community with non-Christians as a form of witness. In his fifth sermon on the Sermon on the Mount, Wesley again argues for the universality of the "moral law," but he also indicates that following Jesus's teachings from the Sermon on the Mount will place one counter to the world. He asks the question, "Have we courage to stem the tide?—to run counter to the world?—to obey God rather than man?"<sup>14</sup> In the end, Wesley's sermons on the Sermon on the Mount are his core teachings, for in them he outlines exactly what entire sanctification, or his understanding of "the religion of the heart"<sup>15</sup> is. Wesley's gift to the world, Methodism and its pursuit of entire sanctification, is rooted firmly in the active, social faith of the Sermon on the Mount. The goal of his religious renewal might best be summed up by the ending of his second sermon on the Sermon on the Mount. May his words still ring true today.

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<sup>11</sup>Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Discipleship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 101.

<sup>12</sup>James 2:14-26.

<sup>13</sup>*The Works of John Wesley, Volume I: Sermons I (1-33)*, ed Albert Outler. "Sermon on the Mount 4, I.1." (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984), 533.

<sup>14</sup>Sermon on the Mount 5, IV.7 [sic], 565.

<sup>15</sup>Sermon on the Mount 13, III.2, 694.

For a little while you may say, "Woe is me, that I" am constrained to "dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar!" You may pour out your soul, and bemoan the loss of true, genuine love in the earth: Lost indeed! You may well say, (but not in the ancient sense,) "See how these Christians love one another!" these Christian kingdoms, that are tearing out each other's bowels, desolating one another with fire and sword! these Christian armies, that are sending each by thousands, by ten thousands, quick into hell! these Christian nations, that are all on fire with intestine broils, party against party, faction against faction! these Christian cities, where deceit and fraud, oppression and wrong, yea, robbery and murder, go not out of their streets! these Christian families, torn asunder with envy, jealousy, anger, domestic jars, without number, without end! yea, what is most dreadful, most to be lamented of all, these Christian Churches!—Churches ("tell it not in Gath,"—but, alas! how can we hide it, either from Jews, Turks, or Pagans?) that bear the name of Christ, the Prince of Peace, and wage continual war with each other! that convert sinners by burning them alive! that are "drunk with the blood of the saints!"—Does this praise belong only to "Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth?" Nay, verily; but Reformed Churches (so called) have fairly learned to tread in her steps. Protestant Churches too know to persecute, when they have power in their hands, even unto blood. And, meanwhile, how do they also anathematize each other! devote each other to the nethermost hell! What wrath, what contention, what malice, what bitterness, is everywhere found among them, even where they agree in essentials, and only differ in opinions, or in the circumstantial of religion! Who follows after only the "things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another?" O God! how long? Shall thy promise fail? Fear it not, ye little flock! Against hope, believe in hope! It is your Father's good pleasure yet to renew the face of the earth. Surely all these things shall come to an end, and the inhabitants of the earth shall learn righteousness. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they know war any more." "The mountains of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains;" and "all the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of our God." "They shall not" then "hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain;" but they shall call their "walls salvation, and their gates

praise.” They shall all be without spot or blemish, loving one another, even as Christ hath loved us.—Be thou part of the first-fruits, if the harvest is not yet. Do thou love thy neighbor as thyself. The Lord God fill thy heart with such a love to every soul, that thou mayest be ready to lay down thy life for his sake! May thy soul continually overflow with love, swallowing up every unkind and unholy temper, till he calleth thee up into the region of love, there to reign with him for ever and ever!<sup>16</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Liberal Democracy presumes certain universal rights, and a basic juris prudence for preserving freedom and justice for all. When the rights of some are violated or rejected in favor of the rights of others, violent or non-violent protesting is the primary means of making one’s voice heard. Recent protests have claimed that justice is anything but blind in the USA and that, in fact, it is quite biased—that there is a system of special rules or ethics applicable to some, namely the wealthy, white, and male, but not to all, namely those that are poor, black, and female. Such claims should be listened to, received, and changed to ensure egalitarian liberty and justice for all. Those that speak up and protest such inequality seek not a form of special ethics, but simply equality for all under the law.

That said, there are some, many, in fact, who choose to voluntarily adhere to a stricter moral vision than that which the overall society recognizes. Two such examples of this are Sharia Law for Muslims and the Sermon on the Mount (and broader teachings of Jesus) for Christians. It is my contention that such peculiar moral visions should be allowed to operate amidst and even overlap a given society’s broader egalitarian system of justice, so long as adherents to such peculiar moral visions voluntarily adhere to these moral visions, and that punitive measures aside from exclusion from one’s faith community be left to the afterlife, as well as time served. Moreover, Christians in particular, should not seek to impose the rules and expectations taught by Jesus upon their broader society that doesn’t recognize Jesus’s claim to Lordship, let alone follow him. Instead, Christians must adopt a posture of witness within a broader egalitarian system of justice, living lives that testify to this more excellent way taught by Jesus. Minus the cruel and unusual punishments, Sharia Law can arguably function in this same way.

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<sup>16</sup>Sermon on the Mount 2, III.18, 507-509.

# DOPEY THE DONKEY AND A RUSTY SHOTGUN: A REPLY TO MCCALL

by

William J. Abraham

## *Introduction*

Professor Thomas McCall has left the bar, headed for the door, and with his sharp-shooters loaded, called me out in my review of his essay on Wesleyan theology and the authority of scripture. I am delighted by the laudatory remarks at the beginning. McCall is fully aware that there are deep issues at stake in our exchange not just for the brand we represent but more broadly for the future of theology. Hence he was right to get on his horse and ride into town. All I have is my rusty old shot-gun, so perhaps I should surrender immediately. Certainly, I should and can immediately make some concessions. I am delighted that he did not intend to deploy the argument from guilt by association; I got that wrong. Equally, I am glad that editor of the volume does not intend to charge me with idolatry; he reserves this for the culture at large. Even though I no longer fall off my chair when I reread McCall's fine summation of a soteriological conception of scripture, it is a joy to see him reassert this with gusto.

It is less of a pleasure to find out that I have not learned my lessons from Muller's work on Post-Reformation work on Reformed Dogmatics; or that somehow I have not taken the measure of Webster's "scathing" review of my *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology* (even though I wrote a full response to his fine but deeply flawed review<sup>1</sup>). I must also report that, while I have for years benefited from a close reading of Alvin Plantinga's work in Reformed Epistemology, it has its severe limitations in securing my epistemic sanctification. It turns out that I am irresponsible and unfortunate in my handling of pertinent evidence; that I exhibit bellicosity; that I fail once again in the department of apt precision; that I have not shown appropriate care on certain matters; that I have advanced unsubstantiated charges. Moreover, I need to take up work in psychology and sociology before speculating about the motivations of readers. Maybe

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<sup>1</sup>See my " 'I Can See People, but They Look Like Trees Walking,' A Response to Professor Webster," in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54 (2001), 238-43.

I should lay down my rusty weapon, get back up on Dopey, my little donkey, and head back to the bogs of Ireland.

Actually, it is a joy to find someone riding for the same brand who takes his stand so resolutely. We are together in praying and working for the intellectual revitalization of our Methodist heritage, not least in revisiting the much neglected material of the nineteenth century. This is not a time for faint hearts. McCall is not fainthearted; he can ride a horse and shoot at the same time. McCall has also identified the crucial areas that still need attention: the so-called 'classical' conception of scripture, the best way to think of Methodism and its connection with pietism, and my contrast between a soteriological and an epistemic conception of theology. These are all vast topics and deserve a lot more attention than either of us can give them in an academic paper as opposed to academic monographs.

### ***Two Important Pieces of Background Music***

Permit two more introductory comments before I take them up. Both McCall and I are in our own way committed to the project known as analytic theology. This is a development over the last two generations in which theologians draw on the resources of analytic philosophy in order to illuminate and in some cases resolve various theological problems. McCall has in fact written a fine introduction to this field of inquiry.<sup>2</sup> I suspect that both of us find it a pleasing feature of our tradition that John Wesley was no fool when it came to philosophy; his writings are generally a model of clarity and intentionally persuasive argument. Wesley could think through a philosophical problem insightfully on horseback. However, there is no agreed account of what analytic theology should be; it is as contested as analytic philosophy has been in over a century and more of existence.

Two crucial differences within analytic theology that are relevant to our discussion are these. How far can we get precise concepts? And, how far can we eliminate subtle forms of judgment and secure exclusively logically rigorous arguments in developing our positions? Elsewhere I have contrasted these two sets of alternatives as a contrast between St. Basil and St. Alvin, referring affectionately to two distinguished philosophers, namely, Basil Mitchell and Alvin Plantinga.<sup>3</sup> Everyone agrees that there is

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<sup>2</sup>Thomas H. McCall, *An Invitation to Analytic Theology* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2015).

<sup>3</sup>See my paper, "Turning Philosophical Water into Wine," in *The Journal of Analytic Theology*. 1 (2013), 1-16.



a place in theology and philosophy for very precise concepts that spell out the necessary and sufficient conditions of their meaning; and everyone agrees there is a place with respect to certain topics and problems for logically rigorous arguments. The crucial disagreement is on how far we can secure precision either by way of our concepts or by way of our arguments; Mitchell, following John Henry Newman, insisted on the important place of judgment in both domains. For my part I stand firmly in the tradition of St. Basil at this point; and that on both scores noted. This rough and ready distinction will have to do for now. I leave it to McCall to indicate if he agrees with these contrasts and where he positions himself. All I want to say is that I suspect that his sympathies lies with the school of St. Alvin.

The relevance of this for our conversation is that I may never be able to give an account, say, of epistemology, which will satisfy McCall. This is not a criticism of McCall. It merely highlights that both us may be severely challenged to take the measure of each other's deep intuitions and what we take to be persuasive arguments. For my part, I am happy to provide a preliminary definition and then let exposition by example fill in the details.

The further introductory comment needed is that in *Canon and Criterion in Christian Theology* I did not set out to provide a comprehensive history of the concept and theology of canon in the Christian tradition. My aim was to provide soundings in the history of the theology that brought to light revolutionary changes in how the concept of canon was used, how debates about canon morphed into debates about norm and thus about epistemology, and how these changes continue to have a negative effect on our thinking about both scripture and epistemology. Nothing I have read or criticisms I have received has led me to make substantial changes on these fronts. So chiding me for not learning my lessons from Muller or perhaps for not properly representing Warfield are not going to take us very far. I read the relevant texts I was expounding very carefully; that is what taking soundings requires; disagreements about my interpretation will take us way beyond what I can cover here.

### ***The "Classical" Account of Scripture***

Let me now turn to our disagreements on "the classical account of scripture" that is crucial to McCall's position.

Provisionally, I like the way McCall reframes the potential difference between us. He reframes the issue as a debate about the nature of conti-

nuity and discontinuity in doctrines of scripture across the centuries. His argument is neat and to the point.

Note that Abraham claims that “*any* claim to robust continuity here is simply bogus” (11, emphasis mine). Really? This a very strong claim indeed: *any* such claim is bogus. On an eminently plausible interpretation, the summary I drew from the Catholic tradition includes the following propositions (among others):

(A) the Bible is written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and has God as its author;

(B) the entirety of the Bible is inspired by the Spirit and has God as its author;

(C) the Bible teaches that truth which God wanted to communicate in the Bible;

(D) the claims that the Bible makes as true are utterly reliable and absolutely trustworthy (thus “faithfully” and “without error”). I take it that each of these propositions is significant, and that any such continuity on these points would qualify as “robust.” But it is not hard to find commitments to each of (A)-(D) in the Roman Catholic and major Protestant theological traditions. This is not the place for extended arguments (which have, in any case, been made), but even a few examples will serve to show this.

Note the deft way the argument is framed. I made the serious mistake of a hasty generalization which is then undermined by delineating a precise set of conditions for robust continuity. This is followed up by various examples, like the material from Vatican II, to take us to the obvious conclusion that my bald generalization is at best implausible. Perceptive readers will be tempted to go further and conclude that I have made an elementary blunder in logic. This could well be the perlocutionary effect of McCall’s cautious assertions.

McCall is aware, of course, that I may want us to take far more seriously long-standing claims of dictation as pivotal in premodern accounts of scripture. He deftly turns my emphasis on this point into a neat proposition.

(T) any doctrine of Scripture that does not affirm dictation does not (or, alternatively and more strongly, *cannot*) enjoy “robust continuity” with the deeply traditional view.

This allows him then to accuse me additionally of confusion. I cannot hold these two propositions consistently at the same time: A) There is a doctrine held in common in the Christian tradition; and B) The whole ideal of a classical doctrine of scripture is a myth. So McCall does not need to use his sharp shooter; his lasso will do.

Why am I not suffocating at this point? First, I never claimed that all of the tradition has held to dictation in the premodern period. What I hold is that dictation was salient; that it was often the crucial warrant for claims about inerrancy; and that various theologians readily dropped it and slipped into language of divine speaking and divine authorship, most decidedly in the nineteenth century. In fact from my reading across the years I am skeptical of any account that would seek to provide a common set of commitments. Perhaps at best we have a family resemblance across the centuries.

Second, McCall misses the significance I attribute to the language of dictation in the history of theology and its variations in terms of speaking, authorship, words of God, and the like. This is not just one more item on the list of attributes of scripture that show up. Even if it cannot be universally secured; or even if any vision we come up with as regards criteria of continuity will allow us to claim compatibility with dictation; I will insist that the significance of dictation is being overlooked. This is not a matter of being intellectually stubborn on my part; it is a matter of considered but contested judgment. McCall will hammer away at conditions of robust continuity and discontinuity; he will engage in attractive footwork on this or that restatement or development, say, as shows up in Vatican II or the Chicago statement on inerrancy; he will be able to hold out and complain I have not produced evidence. However, I refuse to play this precisionist game from the outset. My reading of the relevant evidence simply ends up with a radically different judgment on how to read the narrative as a whole. Even my language of “myth,” of his claims being “bogus,” of my worries about “cooking the books,” will be taken, I suspect, *au pied de la lettre*. He will reach for the dictionary and take it literally and miss the crucial difference of judgment that is really at stake in the debate between us. My strong language here is intended to suggest a different perspective on the relevant issues.

### ***Our Understanding of Methodism***

A similar consideration is at play in our account of the doctrine of scripture in Methodism. Given that the terrain here is much more circum-

scribed, we may in fact be able to come much closer to agreement on a common tradition up to say, Sheldon. There are several narratives on the doctrine of scripture that we may want to deploy.<sup>4</sup> McCall will always be able to hold the line on his narrative because he can develop a vision of continuity with the tradition across the centuries that will work for this stretch of the history as well.

Thus he acknowledges the importance of attending to the canonical materials actually adopted, say, by The Methodist Episcopal Church. In fact his standard of success is minimalist in the extreme: all that he needs to show is logical compatibility with his criteria of continuity. What I find interesting at this stage is, say, the *difference* between what Wesley asserts and what the Articles of Religion assert. What they omit is as interesting as what they include. Here again we differ in our judgments of what counts as truly significant. This spills over more generally in how we may want to think of Methodism as a whole in contrast to the Reformed tradition.<sup>5</sup> McCall is impressed with the continuity with the Reformation. Hence he wants me to go back to school with Muller. What impresses me is the discontinuity and the very different center of gravity that is at play in pietism and Methodism. To be sure, we are dealing here with concepts where the boundaries are not sharp; where we disagree on how to sum up what is at stake in the whole. However, that is exactly the point at issue from my perspective; so claims about logical compatibility are not going to persuade me one way or the other.

### ***Epistemology Once Again***

The crucial issue remains on the table for attention. My views as to what counts as an epistemic conception of scripture remain obscure or underdeveloped; and it is not difficult to begin with a premise I accept and then by additional premises hoist me by my own petard. I think that this is a fair account of McCall's rejoinder. I begin with a caveat that is now familiar; there is no uncontested conception of epistemology available to us. I am happy for readers to look again at what I wrote and see if it goes far

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<sup>4</sup>A common one in the last two generations was the highly tendentious narrative of Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism 1790-1935* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965). Chiles read the history from a distinctively Barthian perspective.

<sup>5</sup>For my account of the place of Methodism in the history of Christianity see "The Place of Methodism in the History of Christianity," *Bulletin of the Irish Methodist Historical Society*, 2016.

enough for them. For those who want more they can consult my contribution to the epistemology of theology in *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*<sup>6</sup> and my contribution as joint editor and contributor to *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*.<sup>7</sup> For my take on Wesley's epistemology of theology consult my *Aldersgate and Athens, John Wesley and the Foundations of Christian Belief*.<sup>8</sup> I also readily admit that I found in responding to McCall a fresh opportunity to state what I mean by an epistemic conception of scripture. In fact I found McCall's comments wonderfully provocative. Yet my comments all turned out to be skittish and ambiguous. We are at the end of the rope on this conceptual debate; so be it.

However, this is not the end of the matter. McCall thinks he can lasso me on this front in the following manner. He rightly notes that I think scripture provides us with information, that it makes truth claims. Yes indeed! Lots of them, including crucial theological and moral truth claims, not to speak of extremely interesting but underdeveloped claims about how we come to know the truth about God. But then he thinks that it is strange to say that all this is incompatible with scripture understood as an epistemic criterion. Now we get a neat attribution of possible propositions to fill out how I might make these two claims coherent, or at least less than confusing.

Without further explanation, it seems that Abraham is affirming the following:

(α) Scripture makes truth claims (which, presumably, serve to demarcate truth from falsehood);

(β) something that demarcates truth from falsehood is an epistemic criterion;

and (γ) Scripture is not, and does not contain, epistemic criteria.

There is no contradiction here, of course, but McCall thinks it is confusing. Yes indeed, but it is only problematic if we import into the discussion a certain interpretation of my cryptic suggestion that epistemic criteria mark off truth from falsehood.

At this point we are introduced to Orrin the reflective wrangler and Tyril the mystic buckaroo.

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<sup>6</sup>Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

<sup>7</sup>William J. Abraham and Frederick D. Aquino, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>8</sup>Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010.

Suppose that Orrin takes Genesis 1:1 to be making truth claims: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Suppose further that Orrin takes this text to be asserting or entailing the following propositions (among others):

(G1) God exists.

(G2) God is the Creator of everything that is not God.

Suppose further that Orrin takes (G1)-(G2) to be true (and that such beliefs enjoy epistemic warrant or justification). If Orrin takes (G1) to be true, then Orrin has a defeater for some candidate-belief ( $\sim$ G1) that is inconsistent with (G1). Is it not then the case that Orrin has reason to reject as false a great many beliefs (e.g., atheism and pantheism)? Does not Scripture then give Orrin a "means of demarcating truth from falsehood?" Is Scripture not then "the relevant norm of truth in theology" (21)? And then is this not, by Abraham's own account, what counts as "epistemic criteria?"

Or consider the case of Tyrel the mystical buckaroo. Sometimes while riding Smoky on night watch under the big sky when the Milky Way is ablaze, and sometimes when the luminous evening alpenglow casts its soft light over the sage and rimrock, the magnitude and wonder and beauty of it all fill Tyrel with a numinous awe. He wonders if it is an experience of the divine; he wonders if he might be experiencing a revelatory encounter with the Creator. But the charming schoolmarm Nellie keeps reading impressive books by the high-falutin' Professor Ditchkens to him and telling him that there is no Creator, and he also then wonders if his experiences are only illusory (or perhaps even delusional). And then one day, while reading Genesis 1:1, the "internal instigation of the Holy Spirit" leads him to believe that the conjunction of (G1)-(G2) is true (and, assuming "Reformed epistemology" for the moment, this testimony or instigation gives warrant). He now has a defeater for the notions that such experiences must be illusory, and he need not be worried by the schoolmarm's claims. Is this not an instance of the Bible providing "means of demarcating truth from falsehood" and "reality from illusion?" Is this not—on Abraham's own account of what these are—an "epistemic criterion?"

This is all great stuff given certain epistemic presuppositions, not least in the last instance the epistemic proposals of Alvin Plantinga. So what do I say?

In the first case everything depends on whether Orrin has epistemic warrant for Genesis 1:1, for G1, and for G2. Are we supposed to roll over and simply accept Orrin's word for this? In fact, on a lot of standard doctrines of scripture, the warrant for Genesis 1:1 is derived from an account of scripture as authored by God, dictated by God, scripture as the Word of God, and the like. Without such a warrant G1 and G2 are insecure.<sup>9</sup> Nothing of the sort is claimed here by Orrin. We are just told he has epistemic warrant. So I am not for a moment prepared to grant this account of Orrin's epistemic situation. In the case of Tyril the mystic buckaroo we are given the familiar story worked out by Alvin Plantinga. However, I have elsewhere argued that this whole Reformed Project is deeply flawed.<sup>10</sup> So again this move has absolutely no purchase on me. I am tempted to think that McCall is having me on at this point for what he concludes is not a secure proposition about my position but a question: If this then is not Abraham's account, what counts as epistemic criteria?

We are now back where we started at the beginning of my treatment of what counts as an epistemic conception of scripture. All I can do is ask my readers to consult the relevant section of my paper and consider the bibliographic suggestions given above. I can only try a short nuclear strike to make my point. Imagine you were given a book, a strange book. It is bound, has an ISBN number, an author, a title, and a price tag, but it has only one page on which is written one sentence. That sentence is "Ireland is an Island." There is nothing more. Would anyone consider this to be a book about epistemology or one that provided what we normally think of as an epistemic criterion? Now consider the same book with this sentence, "Sinners are justified by grace through faith." Would anyone consider this to be a book about epistemology or one that provided what we normally think of as an epistemic criterion? These sentences are not epistemic criteria; they do, if true, give us information. However, it is only by adding in all sorts of contested epistemic assumptions that we can transform them into epistemic criteria. This is more or less what McCall tries to do. I refuse to play his game. My answer to his question has already been given and I leave it to readers to continue the conversation now that we have laid down our weapons for the moment.

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<sup>9</sup>I leave aside here the contested exegesis of Genesis 1:1; biblical scholars tend to make a lot of it; as a theologian I am much more relaxed.

<sup>10</sup>See the relevant section of *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*.

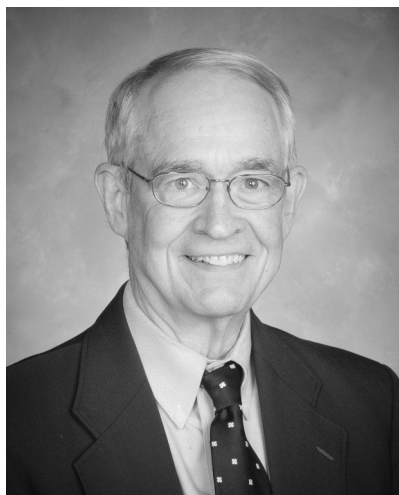
However, it would be a mistake to finish on this note. McCall in my judgment represents a long and distinguished heritage on scripture inside and outside our beloved Methodism. I sought to give a sympathetic reading of that heritage at the end of my paper. Furthermore, we both agree that the manifold heritage of Methodism is worth preserving, developing, and defending. Historical arguments and philosophical considerations will enter into how we proceed at this point. We equally agree that it is not enough simply to rehearse what has been said; there is a place for doctrinal criticism, for refreshing updating, and for doctrinal development. There is also a place for spirited disagreement between friends. As Wesley once noted in another context, we should provoke one another to love and good works. And good works include good works of history, theology, philosophy, and the like. We belong in the same tribe, we ride for the same brand. We both desire to see the full resources of scripture, not least its soteriological resources, be identified and used to the full. So the conversation and spirited discourse continues.



## TRIBUTE TO J. STEVEN O'MALLEY

by

Steven Hoskins



Someone once noted (I think that it was G.K. Chesterton) that in a faithless age (speak of the new reality what you will), but someone once noted that in a faithless age, it will be a rare privilege for anyone to introduce someone in whom they have confidence, and rarer still to introduce someone for whom they have affection. Tonight it is my privilege to introduce such a person—someone who has both my confidence and affection—the 2017 recipient of our society's Lifetime Achievement Award, Steven O'Malley.

Dr. O'Malley is a native of the monument city, Indianapolis, IN and he achieved the BA from his home city's Indiana Central College, today the University of Indianapolis, in 1964. After his years in Indianapolis, he attended Yale Divinity School where he graduated with the BD in 1967. Dr. O'Malley attended Yale during the same years as Stanley Hauerwas. Yale, by the way, still refers to that time as the Vader/Skywalker era, the days when Luke and Darth walked the Divinity School campus together. Fortunately, tonight Luke is the one with us to receive this award. After

Yale, he matriculated to the Graduate School of Drew University where he was awarded the PhD in Church History in 1970, writing his dissertation *The Otterbeins: The Postlude of Pietism* under the direction of Dean Bard Thompson. His work in Pietism and the Otterbeins would set the course for his career research in the history and theology of The Pietist Movement in Christian history and its ongoing effect upon and relationship with Wesleyan/Methodist/Holiness studies.

His work in pietism has been an affair of the heart for Dr. O'Malley, having grown up in and been made a Christian by the Evangelical United Brethren church. In 1967, he was ordained in the last class of Evangelical United Brethren ordinands and a year later came into the United Methodist Church with the rest of his denomination. This, of course, made him one of the driving forces in the continuing EUB underground holiness movement still active in the United Methodist Church. Steve will tell you that his ordination was perhaps the last official act of a church that was born in a barn in Pennsylvania in 1767 and died on a hotel ballroom dance floor in Dallas, TX in 1968.

In 1970, he returned to teach at his Alma Mater in Indianapolis and served there until 1972. Over the years Steve served on the faculties of Phillips Graduate Seminary, Enid, Oklahoma (1972-1975), the School of Theology, Oral Roberts University (1975-1985), and was the Florence Bell Visiting Professor, Casperson Graduate School, Drew University in 1999. Since 1985, he has been on the faculty here at Asbury Theological Seminary where he serves as the John T. Seamands Professor of Methodist Holiness History and the director of the Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements.

Dr. O'Malley has distinguished himself as scholar, teacher, leader, editor, and churchman. Among his many awards and achievements, he was voted the President of the Student Body at Indiana Central College in 1963, elected outstanding faculty member of the School of Theology, Oral Roberts University for the academic year of 1981-82 (no small achievement for a member of the WTS!), and received the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Evangelical United Brethren Heritage Center at United Theological Seminary in October 2007. From 1992-1996, he was a Fellow of the Wesleyan-Holiness Studies Project, funded by the Pugh Foundation here at Asbury Theological Seminary. Steve was the editor of the *Spiritus Journal* at ORU and served as the theological librarian at the seminary there creating valued collections of books, manuscripts, and pamphlets on the history of Methodism and the Christian faith. In addition to

the schools where he has served as faculty member, he has taught courses and directed dissertations at Drew University, London School of Theology, Middlesex University, and from 1997-1999 he led courses in mental health education for the Kentucky Alliance for the Mentally Ill. An outstanding expounder of the gospel, Dr O'Malley has preached in pulpits stretching from Indianapolis to Oklahoma to West Germany and he served as the guest pastor in the Austrian Conference of the United Methodist Church in the city of Graz from June-October, 1983.

Dr. O'Malley has also distinguished himself as a Church historian. In addition to teaching and mentoring his students in the various schools he has served, he has been a member of and presented papers to the American Academy of Religion, served as the President of the Pietism Studies Group, an affiliate unit of The American Society of Church History, read papers for The World Methodist Historical Society, The United Methodist Historical Society, The Indiana Historical Society and our own WTS where his articles "Pietist Influences In The Eschatological Thought of John Wesley and Jurgen Moltmann (1994)," "Pietistic Influence on John Wesley: Wesley and Gerhard Tersteegen (1996)," "German Pietism in Nineteenth Century America Via a Missionary Periodical (1999)," "The Radical United Brethren Secession of 1889 (2000)," "The Pietist Link to John Wesley's Deathbed Confession (2016)," and several book reviews have appeared over the years in the Wesleyan Theological Journal.

Dr. O'Malley has contributed chapters on pietism and church history to many books, he served as co-editor of *The Pietist and Wesleyan Studies Series*, Scarecrow Press, 1989-2005 with our own David Bundy, and serves as an editor with Larry Wood in the ongoing series *Revitalization* from Emeth Press, which includes the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary volume of the history of the Wesleyan Theological Society. His books include *Pilgrimage of Faith: The Legacy of the Otterbeins*, *Touched By Godliness: Bishop John Seybert and the Evangelical Heritage*, *Theology and German American Evangelicalism: Pietist Sources in Discipleship and Sanctification*, in the Pietist and Wesleyan Studies Series, Scarecrow Press, *Living Grace; A Design for Theology in the United Methodist Tradition*, translation and adaptation from the German of a volume by Walter Klaiber and Manfred Marquardt, and *On The Journey Home; The Mission History of the Evangelical United Brethren Church*, New York: General Board of Global Ministries, 2003, which was nominated for the Smith-Wynkoop Book of the Year Award from the Wesleyan Theological Society. In 2011 he co-edited Methodist

and Pietist: Retrieving the Evangelical United Brethren Tradition with Jason Vickers in the *Kingswood Books* series.

I met Steve in 1994 when we both gave papers at the Wesleyan Theological Society meeting in Oklahoma City at the hands of Paul Bassett, my teacher, who introduced me to the WTS and to so many of you. Dr. Bassett looked at me and said, “This is Steven O’Malley. He knows as much about the history of Pietism as anyone I know and he is a fine scholar (quite a compliment if you know Dr. Bassett)—you should be like him.” It was an interesting revelation. In my friendship with Steven O’Malley I have learned much from him and his generous spirit and excellent mind. He is a scholar’s scholar—meticulous, thoughtful and gifted, a Christian gentleman, the nicest scholar I know and has had a profound ministry among us. When I asked his students about him they related memories of incredible fondness in pursuit of Godly scholarship. “He believed in me,” one said, “and the work I was doing,” Another said, “he gently and unfailingly pushed me to get the best out of my scholarship, and his uncompromising kindness and rigor made my dissertation possible.”

Steve’s work as a scholar and leader continues. He recently served as the chair of the task force for the Celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, scheduled for October 2017 in the chapel of Asbury Theological Seminary, and he is currently the convener of the research colloquy on Pietism and Methodism for the Wesleyan Historical Society, a partner of the Wesleyan Theological Society. Just yesterday, he gave a fine paper on Pietism that generated much discussion and has set the stage for the conference that the Wesleyan Historical Society will be a part of celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of United Methodism at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH next year. In the coming year, Dr. O’Malley will celebrate 50 years of ordained ministry and 50 years of service in theological education to the academy.

Steve’s life and work have reminded us that holiness of heart, life, and erudition are the goals to which God in his grace has called us in our work and his example as scholar, teacher, and friend is an inspiration. For his achievements, career work, and friendship we are pleased to present the 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award of the Wesleyan Theological Society to Dr. J. Steven O’Malley, PhD of Asbury Theological Seminary. He is joined tonight by his wife, Angie. Please join me in honoring him.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Allen, O. Wesley, Jr. *Preaching and the Human Condition: Loving God, Self, & Others*. Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2016. 118 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1501818905.

Reviewed by Scott W. D. Donahue-Martens, Master of Sacred Theology Student, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA.

*Preaching and the Human Condition: Loving God, Self, & Others* offers a compelling vision for preaching that addresses existential elements of life. While Allen does not reduce all persons or situations into a single mold, he argues that everyone suffers. Suffering is part of the human condition, and so provides a point of contact between the biblical world and the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Allen notes that much of modern preaching provides superficial accounts of life or avoids theodicy entirely, highlighting the need for preaching that honors the deep suffering of individuals and society. Because people suffer, they need to hear the Gospel in light of that suffering. So Allen emphasizes the importance of preaching that grapples with suffering in a manner that is consistent, coherent, and comprehensible. This work reflects deep theological and homiletical method, and offers practical advice and reflection for preachers.

Allen narrows his scope for the human condition; he is concerned with “threats and damage done to the physical, intellectual, psychological, spiritual, material, and social well-being of human beings individually and human communities collectively” (6). He uses a three-dimensional model to describe preaching that takes into account what he calls “the human condition.” The model is based upon the greatest commandment from Mark 12:30-31, which serves as an explanatory device to describe how loving God, loving neighbor, and loving self are connected to how a person preaches on sin and suffering. Each dimension (loving God, neighbor, and self) receives its own chapter as a starting point for how a preacher may consider the task of preaching sin and suffering. The three dimensions are interconnected and inseparable, yet different traditions place an emphasis on different dimensions.

Allen shows the hermeneutical and theological implications of prioritizing one dimension over the others. He does this through the lan-

guage of “brokenness” (28). The chapter on “loving God” receives the most attention and explores brokenness in the vertical relationship between God and humans. The chapter on “loving others” focuses on the horizontal dimension or brokenness between humans and other humans. The final chapter considers brokenness with regard to self.

The three chapters are subdivided into sections that discuss the dimension, sin, and suffering. The sections on sin and suffering are further broken down into theological, biblical, and homiletical sections. By exploring the theological, biblical, and homiletical implications of each dimension, Allen systematically engages with questions of theodicy. The theological topics he explores include the nature of God, doubt, sin, guilt, and reconciliation.

Allen argues preaching on the human condition can improve by focusing on eschatology and ontology. Preaching eschatology “envision[s] the world as it might be in contrast to how it is” (80). Such preaching seeks to inspire people with a vision of God’s redemptive plan. Preaching ontology involves “show[ing] our hearers the nature of the Christian life individually and the church corporately” (81). This element of preaching focuses on what Christians can realistically hope to accomplish, in light of human limitations. Eschatology and ontology are important because they seek to balance “realism and hope” (80). While Christians are inspired by eschatology and ontologically equipped to work toward a world where suffering does not exist, there are limits to what can be accomplished.

Allen should be commended for his excellent contribution to preaching on suffering. In *Preaching and the Human Condition*, he skillfully combines theology with homiletics in ways that leave the reader equipped and enabled to address the human condition from the pulpit. The homiletical theory undergirding the work follows the turn to conversational approaches to preaching in postmodern homiletics. For example, he describes the sermon as a “proposal” which the congregation can accept or reject (56). The notion of a proposal is reflective of the broader homiletical shift that honors the beliefs and practices of the listener, as well as the listener’s ability to contextualize a sermon in their own life. This is especially important as preaching the topic of theodicy generally elicits strong emotions. Allen expertly demonstrates how conversational preaching can engage with suffering.

Allen argues that preaching the depth and breadth of the human condition must be done over time and in a way that allows the congregation to develop a “process of making meaning of and responding to sin

and suffering" (9). This cumulative approach to preaching is crucial as it seeks to form faithful people and challenges the reader to see the importance of cumulative preaching. Moreover, to empower and form, Allen argues, preaching should go beyond just telling. It should also show. These critical moves offer correctives to preaching that overly rely on the hortatory and imperative. The moves are contributions to preaching on the human condition. Throughout the work, Allen provides practical implications of homiletical theory that can improve preaching.

Preachers who do not ascribe to the conversational model will still find this work valuable. The descriptive nature of each chapter prevents Allen from imposing his particular theological school upon the reader. Allen's open methodology and three-dimensional approach invite readers from many backgrounds. The theological content of each dimension is succinctly and expertly explained. The mixture of theological and homiletical engagement is matched with practical advice that preachers should find useful. Those looking for immediate help will find it, even while the main focus is systematically addressing the human condition. Allen's five sermons skillfully illustrate his concepts and methods.

The work does seem to focus on Western, middle-class suffering. This suffering is real, and addressing it is necessary, yet it does not capture the entirety of suffering across the wide spectrum of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. The theological engagement with existentialism addresses forms of suffering in the United States, but those looking for a work that addresses suffering on a global scale, or in situations that are more destitute, may be disappointed. Nonetheless, Allen offers a portrayal of human suffering preachers in the United States should find beneficial.

Allen is optimistic that preaching can heal and change lives, especially with God's forgiveness and grace. Such optimism and intentionality is surely necessary in today's world. His threefold approach invites a diverse readership to recognize how their understanding of theodicy has been shaped by theological context. By using the greatest commandment to explore sin and suffering theologically, biblically, and homiletically, Allen provides a framework that allows the reader to see how theodicy is connected to larger theological beliefs and to life itself. Allen's three-dimensional model is particularly apt for the topic of the human condition, as it is open to diverse reflection that honors the complexity of life. Students, preachers, and academics looking to preach or teach on the human condition will find a wealth of insight in *Preaching and the Human Condition*.

Blackwell, Ben C., John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds. *Reading Romans in Context: Paul and Second Temple Judaism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015. 192 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0310517955.

Reviewed by Christopher G. Foster, Adjunct, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, OK.

Among the vast secondary literature on Paul and Romans, this compilation of accessible essays seeks a way forward in the history of interpretation. Nineteen emerging Pauline scholars address two underlying questions: What is the nature of Paul's relationship with Second Temple Judaism and its related literature? Does this literature provide any value for the study and interpretation of Paul and the book of Romans? *Reading Romans in Context* seeks not only to demonstrate the value of understanding Second Temple Judaism for understanding Paul, but also to foster an appreciation for extracanonical texts among students and wary evangelicals.

After giving the rationale and goal, the introduction continues by clearly explaining the method. Each chapter follows the progression of Romans, pairing a selection with a "thematically related Jewish text" (21). After introducing and exploring the theological nuances of the text under comparison, the author endeavors to illuminate Paul's similar, yet often distinctive concepts in Romans. The comparative method involves highlighting both similarities and differences while also noting "theological continuity and discontinuity" with Paul's Jewish contemporaries (21). Rightly, the authors avoid what Rabbi Samuel Sandmel called "parallelo-mania." The second half of the introduction gives an instructive overview of the Second Temple Period and its literature. This contains one minor misstatement concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are not *mostly* sectarian but roughly 25% sectarian. This does not detract from the overview's educational worth.

Twenty essays employ this comparative method and cover the gamut of Romans from beginning to end. The Jewish texts under comparison include selections from the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Josephus, and synagogue inscriptions.

Generally speaking, the beneficial comparisons in each chapter demonstrate that Paul draws upon his inherited Jewish thought, but as Wesley Hill notes, Paul often "radically reinterprets those traditions in light of God's surprising new action in Jesus Christ" (36). Here are a few examples. Based on the common background story of Abraham in Genesis, Mariam J. Kamell contrasts Ben Sira's view in Sirach 44:19-21 that Abraham was justified by obedience to the law with Paul's argument that



justification for Abraham came by faith in God and trust in His promise. Through this interpretation, Paul makes room for gentiles to believe and enter God's family. In an enlightening chapter on Romans 5:1-11 and the Qumran *Community Rule*, Mark D. Matthews addresses the discontinuity between Deuteronomic theology of blessings and curses and the apocalyptic view that the faithful suffer. Paul, like the *Community Rule*, draws upon the latter, but then centers the suffering of the faithful on Christ. Kyle B. Wells helpfully matches up Romans 8:1-13 with 4 *Ezra* to investigate the problem of humanity's evil heart. In contrast to the solution of willpower and commitment to the law in 4 *Ezra*, Paul sees liberation coming from Christ's sacrificial death and the enabling power of the Spirit. For Paul, the law is powerless to overcome the evil heart. Similarly, Ben C. Dunson compares Paul's emphasis on Holy Spirit-empowered transformation of believers (an external source) with 4 *Maccabees*' emphasis upon self-mastery through reason and the God-given mind (an internal source).

The editors and authors of this nontechnical collection have accomplished the book's purpose well. They demonstrate the value of studying Paul in light of his Second Temple Jewish contemporaries. Students will gain an appreciation for extrabiblical texts and see their importance in interpreting the New Testament, as these mostly Durham University graduates demonstrate. The method implemented bears dividends by making new insights and amplifying old ones. This shows that comparison of analogous texts brings to light distinctions one might not see otherwise. As with any comparative endeavor, mutual illumination should be the intended goal. While the comparator text does receive some treatment, the extracanonical texts really serve as a foil to enlighten Paul. This serves this succinct, exploratory volume well. The narrow scope of the chapters, however, leaves little room for deep engagement with current scholarship. Instead the chapters whet the appetite for further investigation and give the inquiring reader some leads with an informative further reading section at the end of each chapter. Discussion questions could have been incorporated to facilitate the additional goal of classroom use.

Overall, *Reading Romans in Context* is a worthwhile volume that will benefit nonspecialist readers of Romans (students and pastors) and Pauline scholars alike. Instructors will find this work valuable for students in courses on Paul, Romans, and intertestamental literature. Wesleyan's be assured; John Wesley himself draws upon Josephus in a similar way to illuminate the New Testament. This approach has worth and should be applied to other books of the New Testament. Fortunately, the editors are already producing a follow-up to this volume, *Reading Mark in Context*.

Brittingham, John Thomas, and Christina M. Smerick, eds. *This Is My Body: Philosophical Reflections on Embodiment in a Wesleyan Spirit*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016. 164 pages. ISBN 978-1-4982-0792-8.

Reviewed by S. Scott Mapes, Lead Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Paden City, WV.

In the Fall 1985 issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Daniel Berg reviewed the two-volume compilation entitled *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*. In his pointed review, Berg argued that this work was neither contemporary nor Wesleyan, if it could be considered a unified theology at all. Reviews such as this are not what any writer, editor, or compiler hopes to receive.

What, then, shall I make of this recent offering of essays from various esteemed scholars? Is this collection worthy of its billing, i.e., are these papers reflections of a philosophical nature, fairly exploring important themes related to embodiment and doing so in a Wesleyan spirit? I am happy to report that this book is accurately titled, even if one may disagree with particular conclusions or arguments.

In the forward, Jeffrey Bloechl summarized the book's theological task as ". . . not to take Wesley back to Augustine or Nyssa, but instead forward to what has been learned about body and embodiment after Wesley and indeed down to our own time" (p. x). The co-editors, in the introduction, acknowledged the problem that embodiment creates for minds accustomed to dualism and then offered a brief history of the philosophy of the body, examining the thought of Plato, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Luc Nancy, Judith Butler, George Lakoff, and Mark Johnson. The surprising neglect of embodiment in Christianity, a faith focused on the Incarnation, is noted, with Wesley's theology suggested as a potential corrective.

Two chapters make up the first subsection of the book, "John Wesley and the Body." In chapter one, Michael Lohdahl examines Wesley himself, acknowledging that he, for his time, had an open mind regarding science's focus on the physical world. His appreciation for the physical body, however, was miniscule—four paragraphs in his sermon "What is Man?"—after which Wesley retreated into a Cartesian dualism. This retreat, Lohdahl argues, cannot be embraced if one would develop a truly incarnational theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In chapter two, "The Body Obsessed," Eric Severson analyzes the ongoing battle with the two-headed "Hydra" of "the complete embrace of

reason” versus “the complete submission to the passions” (p. 29). In light of the philosophies of Patocka, Derrida, and Levinas, Severson argues that the Platonic attempts to domesticate religious passion must give way to a dispossession of self and society, leading to the possession of the self and society by God.

The second subsection, “Embodied Epistemologies,” begins with Jonathan Heaps’ chapter entitled “Reason’s Apprehension.” Heaps considers the epistemological effort to avoid the extremes of “a vertiginous slope of reductionism” and “fjords of Cartesian dualism.” In his effort to create a balanced theological epistemology, Heaps examines Moltmann’s two modes of knowing—perceiving and grasping—and Piaget’s concept of “perceptual relativity.” I don’t want to spoil the ending by revealing too much!

Based upon Deleuze and Guattari’s framework of a “Body without Organs (BwO),” Matthew Bernico explores the notion of “Paranoid Perfection.” Viewing desire as a produced creation rather than an expression of lack, Bernico examined BwO’s questioning of the normal Christian ordering of the organs, its invitation to experimentation, and its critique of “phallocratic” ethics. The theological goal here appears to be the removal of the paranoia of traditional holiness thinking and to move to a more dynamic and less political concept of radical transformation, as experienced in the Eucharist. This chapter, while troubling in some aspects, should be given a fair hearing as we study embodied faith.

The third subsection, “Church Bodies,” begins with chapter five, authored by Joyce Konigsburg and entitled “Divine-Human Relationships.” Konigsburg presents anthropomorphism as a troublesome and yet necessary part of theology, historically speaking. With a somewhat positive portrayal of eschatological or soteriological panentheism, the discussion transitioned to theophanies throughout salvation history and *hesychasm*—the integration of God’s presence into the body’s rhythms. These encounters reveal God, transform the person encountered within the context of community, and develop the relationship between God and humanity.

Declaring that “A Superhuman/inhuman Jesus often leads to a potentially dangerous focus on orthodoxy as entirely distinct from ethical and moral considerations” (p. 97), John Bechtold, in chapter six, examined Hegel’s dialectic as a means of developing a philosophy of embodiment. Instead of understanding the Hegelian dialectic in the classic paradigm of thesis and antithesis, leading to synthesis, however, Bechtold

encourages the reader to embrace Hegel's own understanding of the dialect as Being and Nothing, leading to Becoming. This essay is one of the more valuable in the collection.

The final subsection, "Altered Bodies," applies the philosophical reflections on embodiment to four contemporary concerns. First, Brannon Hancock, in "Fracturing," analyzes the "aesthetics of brokenness" inherent in both the Eucharist and the "body modification subculture." Focusing on the subversive forms of modification as exemplified by Fakir Musafar ("modern primitivism") and the Church of Body Modification, Hancock acknowledged the common ground of the broken body of Christ and the brokenness of modified bodies, but one drastic difference was noted: "much of the 'othering' of body modifiers *may*, at its root, finally be a solipsistic act, rather than living and being *for the Other*" (p. 121). The final question, however, is whether our Eucharistic practices are less self-focused than the mutilations of body modification! The theological implications could apply to other supposedly "self-less" practices.

A second area of concern, *anorexia nervosa*, is artfully addressed by Amanda DiMiele in light of the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. Acknowledging that anorexics do not view their "condition" as dysfunctional but as "the controlled pursuit of one's own positive ends" (p. 126), DiMiele focuses on the rigid discipline and the isolation of modern-day "fasting girls." Her conclusions serve as a reminder to the Church that bodies are not non-spiritual entities that require medical attention but are rather to be embraced for what they are.

Teri Merrick considers bodies and/or people that are sexually non-conventional in chapter nine, entitled "Listening to the Silence Surrounding Nonconventional Bodies." Merrick deals with a broad range of persons, from those with genetically-based conditions such as intersex bodies to those with genetically-marked predispositions such as transgenerism. Her call to engage in compassionate dialogue with the "nonconventional" should be well-heeded by Wesleyans, even if there may be some questions about the scientific data used to buttress her argument—such as her claim that one out of 2500 births are intersex.

Last, but certainly not least, Craig Keen offers a reflection entitled "A Mutilated Body at (Intercessory) Prayer." Keen begins by reminding the reader of the classical philosophical virtues of "health, strength, and beauty" (p. 156), with evil described, *a la* Augustine, as "the corruption of natural measure, form, or order" (p. 157). Despite our lingering expectations to the contrary, "Strikingly large numbers of human beings never

get over their afflictions, but live and die to one degree or another of debilitating agony, unfixed” (p. 159). As Keen points out, it is within this particular context of life that God’s grace and holiness works.

This collection maps a way forward for pastorally addressing and academically researching the implications of embodiment, providing a needed check to theological positivism in the American Holiness movement. *This is My Body* is of great value for theologians, philosophers, and those engaged in the study of science and theology. The text is graduate level, but bright undergraduates will also profit from the essays.

Chang, Kiyeong. *The Theologies of the Law in Martin Luther and John Wesley*. Lexington, Kentucky: Emeth, 2014. 292 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1609470746.

Reviewed by J. Gregory Crofford, Dean, School of Religion and Christian Ministry, Africa Nazarene University, Nairobi, Kenya.

Both Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Wesley (1703-1791) emphasized the doctrine of justification by faith. Famously, Wesley experienced his “heartwarming” at Aldersgate during a reading of the introduction to Luther’s commentary on Romans. Yet little research has been conducted comparing other key doctrines espoused by these two seminal thinkers. In a monograph based upon his Manchester PhD thesis, Korean theologian Kiyeong Chang focuses on the role that the law played in their thought, providing an in-depth analysis of how their understanding of the law interfaced with their broader theology.

Chapter 1 outlines the concept of the law. Luther viewed the Old Testament as a promise fulfilled in the New Testament gospel (13). The Law of Moses (or the written law) served to revitalize the weakened natural law, whereas the Law of Christ (or Law of the Gospel) added nothing new except the “law of mutual love” (18). Importantly for Luther, it is justification by faith that served as the soteriological basis for the Law of Christ (19). For his part, Wesley also held the law in high regard, warning against the error of antinomianism, using faith as a pretext to annul the law (42).

Chapters 2-4 present a Trinitarian treatment of the law, with successive chapters devoted to the relationship between the law and Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Regarding the Father, Luther taught the concept of the “hidden God,” one who is radically free and inscrutable in his ways (79). Chang brings out the contrast between Luther and Wesley, as Luther’s “hidden God” led him to espouse predestination, a doctrine that Wesley deemed incompatible with divine justice and mercy (81). On the atonement of Christ, Luther “often described Christ’s work as victory over sin, death, the devil, hell, the law, and the wrath of God . . .” (94). Yet even this is a qualified victory, since “Luther denied that there could be full achievement of righteousness in this life” (93). Wesley objected to Luther’s characterization of the law as something from which we are delivered; rather, Christ’s victory for the believer—Chang notes—is as a king who puts “all the sins the law convicts a believer of under his feet” (116). Finally, Chang underscores Luther’s view of the Holy Spirit as *Anfechtung*, where the Spirit opens the sinner’s eyes to the reality of hell yet also comforts believers (127-128). Likewise for Wesley, the Spirit by “convincing grace” makes the sinner aware of his or her spiritual condition through an understanding of the law of God (131).

Chapters 5-7 address faith and works, humanity and the law, and the law in practice, respectively. For Luther, it is faith that allows the believer to love God's law (153). Luther and Wesley concur that faith is productive of all love and good works. However, Chang contends that for Luther faith is the "whole of salvation," whereas for Wesley it is merely the "door of salvation" (169). Wesley insisted that salvation broadly conceived included a full restoration to the image of God (172), an optimism of grace lacking in Luther. For Luther, the condition of a believer is to be "at the same time both a sinner and a righteous man" (198), *simul justus et peccator*. Chang concludes the section with a consideration of how this tension works itself out in the social realm. Luther promulgated a doctrine of the "two kingdoms," the kingdom of God and the earthly kingdom, where a believer's conduct will differ depending upon the context (228-230). This contrasts with Wesley's single standard, an "ethic of Christian love" (239) applied uniformly in the private and public realms.

Chang does an impressive job of teasing out the various contact points between the law and other doctrines. He correctly demonstrates the centrality of faith, particularly justification by faith, as the organizing principle of much of Luther's thought. In the same way, he is correct to see in Wesley the central role that sanctification plays, particularly renewal in the image of God and love as the essence of holiness. Chang's thesis reminds the reader that theology is often shaped by biography. Luther's emphasis on faith was his solution to his acute fear of God's wrath and his uncertainty of his own salvation despite his heroic striving. Likewise, Wesley's "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6) was a hard-won synthesis of his sincere and prolonged pre-Aldersgate attempts at holiness and his transformed ministry following what many consider his evangelical conversion in May 1738.

While there is much to commend in Chang's monograph, one omission is notable. Though John Wesley's understanding of prevenient grace is mentioned repeatedly, neither the text nor bibliography reference Gregory Crofford's monograph on the topic, *Streams of Mercy* (Emeth, 2010), a surprising oversight given that the same publisher produced both monographs.

This weakness aside, *The Theologies of the Law in Martin Luther and John Wesley* makes a significant contribution to both Lutheran and Wesleyan scholarship. Though focused on the law, the concept serves as an effective lens to view a broader panorama of the theology of two theological giants. Instructors and students alike will benefit from the author's careful research.

Drury, Amanda Hontz. *Saying is Believing: The Necessity of Testimony in Adolescent Spiritual Development*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 175 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0830840656.

Reviewed by James R. Moore, Associate Professor of Educational Ministries, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL.

Dr. Amanda Hontz Drury (Ph.D. Princeton Theological Seminary) has been active in youth ministry for nearly twenty years. She now serves as Assistant Professor of Youth Ministries and Practical Theology at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana. Drury's work grows out of her doctoral research under the mentorship of Richard Osmer and Kenda Dean.

Drury's immediate and extended family have long been a part of The Wesleyan Church. This context and her childhood experiences of testimony form both the motivation and the lens through which the research was conducted. "These early, formative experiences at my church planted a seed, which grew into a hunch and eventually developed into the heart of this book: the role and function of testimony plays an integral part in the spiritual formation of adolescents" (14).

Testimony is more than description. It also constructs adolescent spiritual formation in both the speaker and the listener. This shaping ecclesial practice appears to be diminishing—particularly among the Wesleyan Methodists, Pentecostals, and African American churches where it has long been practiced. "Why put a microphone in front of a layperson when we have a highly educated pastor to speak on our behalf?" (60). Drury argues "engaging in the practice of testimony develops and deepens authentic Christian faith for adolescents." Thus, practices of testimony should be preserved despite perceived adolescent barriers of speaking in public, poor articulation of spiritual matters, and the general decline of public testimony (18-19).

Drury defines testimony broader than many, illustrating it in four quadrants. Quadrant one is a spontaneous testimony in a formal setting; quadrant two a written out testimony in a formal setting; quadrant three a conversational testimony in an informal setting; and quadrant four a planned written out testimony in a small group or informal setting. Further, the practice of testifying is spiritually formative; "one is transformed into like-mindedness with Jesus Christ" (23). Drury well articulates an understanding of spiritual formation that extends beyond theology and draws from many disciplines, including the social sciences. Drawing from



social construction theory, but within the parameters of a theological framework, testimony both describes and constructs a deepening Christian faith.

While Drury notes the tight link between narrative description and the construction or shaping of adolescent identity, she hesitates to guarantee particular actions result in formation. Nevertheless, she argues, when testimony happens, both the testifier and the listening community are formed spiritually.

Thus, in the first three chapters, Drury lays out her thesis with descriptions of her field research. These are informed by the writings of Peter Berger, Kenda Dean, Daniel McAdams, and Christian Smith (among others). It is puzzling that, while noted in the bibliography, Mezirow's transformation theory does not appear to contribute to the "spiritual transformation" discussion. Such is a loss, as numerous Christian educators have engaged and critiqued Mezirow's transformation theory.

The strength of the volume is in chapters four and five, where Drury speaks to both a theology of testimony as well as a practical theology of testimony practice. These chapters also bear the most critique. In chapter four, Drury brings Karl Barth and Phoebe Palmer to the discussion, a "theological concoction of oil and water" (91). These provide a theological context for a theology of testimony. Barth appeals to the narrative presentation of faith in Scripture and throughout history via the concept of *Zeugnis* which Drury translates "testimony" or "witness" (rather than solely "Enlightenment facts"); and Palmer as a Methodist revivalist helps Christians explore and describe their own spiritual narratives with testimony as a cornerstone of understanding sanctification. Drury does not let either Palmer or Barth off the hook. Palmer needs Barth to accentuate the external (versus existential) witness; while Barth needs Palmer to accentuate this very personal witness (Drury notes he well may have been speaking against the abuses of Pietism in his context).

As a result, Drury constructs a theology of testimony: "(1) Christians testify out of *gratitude* to the glory of God; (2) Christians are *empowered* (through the Holy Spirit) to testify; (3) testimony is and always has been the Christian's primary *means* of witness; and (4) testifying serves as a *seal* of one's experience and understanding of God" (101-102). Drury then explicates each of these points in four or five pages each. Unfortunately, an editorial oversight buries the heading for the third and fourth points in a smaller typeface than points one and two.

Chapter four could be strengthened by including a solid biblical theology of testimony, then moving toward interpretation through Barth and Palmer. Not only are Christians *empowered* to testify as a primary *means* of witness, but the biblical record clearly states that testimony emerges from the inner assurance of salvation from the Holy Spirit. Peter's verbal proclamation at Pentecost (Acts 2.32-33), or before the Sanhedrin (Acts 5.32), or Paul's continual witness to his Damascus Road experience all emit from the assurance the Holy Spirit brings to the heart of the believer.

In building a theology of testimony in a Wesleyan context, it would also have been helpful for Drury to have explored the argument from Wesleyan theologians, beyond minimal references to John Wesley, Wesleyan pastors, and family members that appear in the book. What does the Wesleyan tradition have to say about the subject, if it is abandoning a long-time ecclesial practice?

The final chapter culminates in a "practical theology" of testimony. Reflecting on her earlier comment that allowing the laity to testify is dangerous in itself how much more dangerous is it then for adolescent testimony? Drury proposes several guidelines for responsible adolescent testimony, including adolescents *seeing* where God is at work, *hearing* the language of testimony, and thus becoming able to *articulate* a responsible testimony. These are helpful guidelines; adolescents are not the only ones plagued by such misunderstandings. Many have watched "mature saints" fail miserably at seeing, hearing, and articulating God's work in their lives in theologically and practically spoken ways.

Drury concludes her book noting testimony is often an unrecognized practice in contemporary churches. Her call for "testimony clarity" and responsible practice deserve to be heeded. Then teenagers can "be nurtured to see the world through a spiritual lens . . . looking for the ways in which God interacts with their stories" (167). To this we say a hearty, "Amen!"

Laing, Stefana Dan. *Retrieving History: Memory and Identity Formation in the Early Church*. Evangelical Ressourcement: Ancient Sources for the Church's Future series. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017. 216 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0801096433.

Reviewed by Samantha L. Miller, Assistant Professor of the History of Christianity, Anderson University, Anderson, IN.

Stefana Dan Laing's *Retrieving History: Memory and Identity Formation in the Early Church* is a unique addition to the "Evangelical Ressourcement: Ancient Sources for the Church's Future" series. *Retrieving History* examines how early Christians thought about, composed, and used their own history in their present, which is precisely the aim of the Evangelical Ressourcement series in our own present. Laing argues that the early church understood itself as part of a historical narrative beginning as far back as creation, pivoting with Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection, and continuing to their present. Further, she argues that the developments of historical writing in the patristic period were in response to particular political and cultural realities as part of the church's identity formation.

Laing begins her book with an "invitation to the past" (1), stating that many evangelicals are reluctant to look at the patristic period as a source for faithful Christian living today. Laing invites them to reconsider this position generally and then to join her in this particular exploration of the way early Christians thought about history. Though it is questionable whether asking people suspicious of history to explore how ancients thought about history will solve this problem, Laing's work shows that the aim of patristic historical narratives was the imitation of Christ and the production of saints. This aim is one that should resonate with evangelicals.

From this invitation, Laing moves to an overview of the form and function of history and historical narratives in late antiquity, beginning with Herodotus and Thucydides and including Lucian's *How to Write History*. Laing first describes what she sees as the four main elements of ancient history (narrative, remembrance, imitation, and causation) and then explains that these elements produce the two primary functions of historical writings: the pedagogical purpose and the providential purpose. Historical accounts were written not primarily as objective recountings of events but as instructions for moral improvement providing a sense of greater purpose. Laing then argues that though the form is usually narrative and though there are clear agendas and pedagogical and providential

purposes, histories were intended to be true. That is, they were intended to be more accurate than myths, which are a different genre.

Each succeeding chapter is an analysis of one form of early Christian historiography: historical apologetic, including heresiology; hagiography, first martyrdom accounts and then *vitae*; and finally historical narratives such as Eusebius's *Church History*. For each type of writing Laing looks at a few particular examples and discusses how each example includes narrative, remembrance, imitation, and causation as well as how each example functions as identity-forming for the early church. First comes apologetic, making Christian orthodoxy known to pagans and heretics and tying Christians into a history beginning with Jesus and the apostles. As persecution increased, martyrdom accounts remembered the lives of those who came before as well as encouraged imitation of those saints. Once Christianity became legal, hagiography developed into lives of the saints, casting Antony, Macrina, Melania, and others as the new athletes for Christ. The authors made conscious choices to tie these narratives to prior history and to uphold these saints for imitation in the present. Finally, as the empire stabilized and there were a couple centuries' worth of Christian history, people began writing histories of the church. Laing examines Eusebius's and Theodoret's church histories for the various sources they used and motifs they created. She especially analyzes their understandings of causation and the way the devil replaced Fate (from classical histories) as the conventional cause of natural disasters, heresies, persecutions, and so on. Laing then ends her monograph with a summary of her argument and a plea for evangelicals to take history more seriously as part of our identity formation.

Laing's description of the four elements and two purposes of ancient historical writings are one of the contributions this book makes to the study of early Christian historiography. By using these elements that she discerns in all ancient historiography, Laing places early Christians in the tradition of ancient historians. Though the temptation with such a scheme is to over-generalize, Laing is careful to provide ample evidence and close, nuanced readings of her sources to show that these broad elements are, in fact, present and do indeed aim to instruct contemporary readers and hearers of these narratives. Laing has the added virtue of producing these close readings with clarity and a lightness of touch. Never does the reader feel bogged down in details, even as pages are full of quotations and footnotes. This monograph would make an excellent seminary-level textbook as well as an important resource for pastors as they think about identity formation in their own churches. For Wesleyans in particular, this book is

significant precisely because Wesley's own sources included the early church. Wesleyans ought to see this book as an opportunity to understand how historiography has purposes useful to the Church.

As good as each chapter is, the chapter on historical apologetic and heresiology needed more attention. In comparison to the other chapters, the identifications of the four elements here were more forced. The evidence is clean, but the reader is left unsure exactly how these writings are historiography. Additionally, the narrative of historiographical development that Laing tells is simple and needs nuance. It is true that we do not have church histories until Eusebius (and obviously do not have martyr accounts before there were martyrs), but it is not entirely true that each form of literature gave rise to the next. As a broad narrative, it works, but if one wants a more nuanced account, the reader will have to look elsewhere.

One final, small critique is whether it is fair to assess the "truth" of ancient histories with modern criteria. On the one hand, Laing is asking this on behalf of her audience—modern evangelicals—for whom the question of objectivity and a scientific historical method is paramount. How can they trust a history that isn't true? On the other hand, this question and Laing's engagement with it presumes a modern (post-Enlightenment) understanding of "true." Laing's argument would have been stronger if she had nuanced the discussion with a nod to the way antiquity understood truth, or at least that it was a different understanding than our post-enlightenment "objectivity." Her use of the word "accurate" does help the discussion along in positive ways, however.

These questions are minor given Laing's intent and audience. Laing shows evangelicals the resources and importance of history for their own faith by demonstrating the earliest Christians found history to be of central importance to their faith. In particular, Laing focuses on the attempt to describe Christian identity by grounding it in a long tradition because in the ancient world, the oldest traditions were most trusted. This is an important challenge to our own present moment in which we glorify novelty. By offering an analysis of ancient historiography that included apologetics, the ultimate purpose of imitating Christ, and spiritual warfare as the conventional cause of world events, Laing is offering evangelicals a way to understand themselves and their Christian identity as linked to this past. If readers are chronologically myopic, the recourse to ancient figures to show the use of history may not work. On the other hand, this may open some to a way of seeing history as important for identity formation in their own congregations. Let us hope for the latter.

McNall, Joshua. *A Free Corrector: Colin Gunton and the Legacy of Augustine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fortress Press, 2015. 329 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1451487961.

Reviewed by Rustin E. Brian, Lead Pastor, Christ Community Church of the Nazarene, Concord, CA, and Adjunct Professor of Theology, Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, ID.

Perhaps in Gunton, Augustine really did find his free corrector. If this is the case, though, one is reminded of the common phrase, “you get what you pay for.” Many thanks are due to Joshua McNall for elucidating this fact, and for his careful analysis of Gunton’s interpretation of both Augustine and his “afterlife.”

At the outset, McNall spells out Gunton’s concerns with Augustine and returns to them often, suggesting that a “monistic imbalance in Augustine’s Doctrine of God was connected to a damaging dualism in Augustine’s doctrine of creation.” (1) In short, Gunton is concerned Augustine’s doctrine of the Trinity was ultimately more monistic, or focused on God’s unity, than relational, or focusing equally on the three persons of the Godhead. Moreover, this monism caused Augustine to affirm unhealthy dualisms between Spirit and matter and therefore between God and creation. Ultimately, Gunton’s fear was that Augustine’s God looked much more like the Pantheistic and Monistic God of Plato, Plotinus, or both, than the God of the Bible. In drawing these conclusions, Gunton very much subscribed to the East-West distinction made infamous by Théodore de Regnon, with which John Zizioulas is also associated. (44) This position claims that the “East” was and remains fundamentally concerned with the relationship of the three Divine persons, whereas the “West” was and remains fundamentally concerned with the unity of the Divine persons. Thankfully, McNall attempts to correct this fallacy, pointing out how difficult it is to maintain such a position in reading Augustine’s *De Trinitate*. The same is true for the writings of the Cappadocians, among which Basil’s *On the Holy Spirit* stands out. In fact, Basil develops a complicated but orthodox theology of the Triune God that is one-in-three and three-in-one in a way strikingly similar to Augustine’s argument in *De Trinitate*.

Throughout McNall’s investigation of Gunton, it becomes clear that Gunton’s real opponent was Plato (although perhaps it really should have been Plotinus), and the dreadful influence of his dualism on Augustine’s thought, and through this, the teachings of the Church catholic. Gunton

was very concerned that the influence of Platonic thinking had crept into such important teachings as time, matter, and Trinitarian mediation in Augustine's work. (22) These ultimately led Augustine to affirm a fundamental dualism alien to Scripture. If this is true, then Gunton's concerns are highly warranted. Unfortunately, though, Gunton's concerns on this point prove to be highly suspect. First, Gunton doesn't take into account that much of Augustine's most important Trinitarian writing is polemical. (81) That is, his Trinitarian writing is written *contra* Arianism, and so it is necessarily slanted in the direction of combatting Arianism's heretical claims. Second, McNall points out that Gunton doesn't adequately account for Augustine's metaphorical and analogical language. (87) With these two important critiques, we can safely agree that Gunton misread and misrepresented Augustine.

Moving on from Augustine, McNall engages in a very interesting study of Augustine's "afterlife" in his most important commentators and critics: Boethius, Aquinas, Scotus, Descartes, Luther, Calvin, and Barth, *et al.* In all of these figures, he finds the unavoidable influence of Augustine, including his worst traits. As a helpful work-around, McNall suggests that Irenaeus be read, though anachronistically, to help temper Augustine's claims. Irenaeus's work was essentially lost for 1,000 years. Perhaps it is just now beginning to take hold in the way that Augustine's did so long ago. If so, McNall seems justified in desiring that Irenaeus's work play a more central role in the future of theological study.

While I enjoyed McNall's very helpful book, I did find myself wishing for a bit more on Gunton. In particular, I believe that a more thorough treatment of Gunton's primary works would have been an invaluable addition. This would have fit nicely in the first portion of the book, indeed as a first or second chapter. The pitfall of not including this material was that the book ended up with a lot of McNall on Gunton on Augustine, and much of this material being further filtered through Jaroslav Pelikan. The latter is an excellent and trustworthy source indeed, but still, I craved for more of Gunton's own voice. After the first half of the book, however the structure and content was very fitting and engaging, as the topic turned to Augustine's "afterlife." Overall, McNall has thoroughly considered, evaluated, and I dare say, solved, a lingering question that hangs over Gunton's work, as to whether or not Gunton's critiques of Augustine are fair and valid. Indeed much of McNall's work can easily be applied to theological studies in general, in regard to the lingering role of Augustine, or his "afterlife," as described by Gunton. This is no small task, and he is, indeed, to be commended!

McNall demonstrates that the early Augustine falls victim to the Platonic critiques of Gunton *et al.* McNall also demonstrates that the later Augustine carefully out-narrates his earlier work through orthodox, Nicene, contra-Arian Trinitarian arguments. Between these two Augustines lies what is likely his most popular of works, the *Confessions*. A question that lingers from McNall's intriguing work, then, is to which Augustine should the *Confessions* be associated? If associated with the works of the early Augustine, the so-called inward turn in the *Confessions* can possibly be dismissed by more orthodox commentators. If associated with the later Augustine, Gunton's critiques take on a grave magnanimity. In my estimation, McNall allows the *Confessions* to stand on their own, all the while demonstrating that the later work of Augustine is so thorough and orthodox, that the concerns raised by the early Augustine can be slackened. If I am correct, McNall's important and intriguing work should lead to further exploration not just in the study of Gunton, but in Augustinian studies as a whole. Thus, McNall's work should be required reading for students of Gunton's theology, and indeed all those that would seek to understand Augustine's continuing impact upon theology.



Netland, Harold A. *Christianity & Religious Diversity: Clarifying Christian Commitments in a Globalizing Age*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. 290 pages. ISBN-13: 978-080103857.

Reviewed by William T. Purinton, Professor of Humanities, Seoul Theological University, Bucheon, Korea.

Among Evangelicals in North America, there are few who are both keenly aware of the biblical and historical sources and the global contexts in all their complexity and unity and diversity, and capable of communicating well in both philosophical and theological discourse. Dr. Harold A. Netland stands high within that small group. He currently serves as Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Intercultural Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. In addition to his academic training under John Hicks at Claremont, he has mission experience in Japan, having taught at Tokyo Christian University.

The book is structured with two evenly matched parts each composed of four chapters. This provides a symmetry and balance that achieves the comprehensive goal of “clarifying Christian commitments in a globalizing age.” The two parts are: “Religion(s) in a Modern, Globalizing World” and “Christian Commitments in a Pluralistic World.” The discussion in the first part is historical, cultural, and sociological, while the second part is mainly philosophical in both materials and terminology.

The first chapter introduces the consensus views of key terms to our understanding of religious diversity. Those terms include “religion(s),” “culture,” and “worldview.” After a comprehensive survey of the definitions of “religion(s),” Netland describes religion as “provid[ing] an interpretive matrix within which particular groups of people understand themselves and what they regard as truly ultimate and order their lives accordingly” (28).

Chapter two relies on a brief survey of modern history to understand the meaning of “secularization,” “modernization,” and “globalization,” using standard Enlightenment Philosophers, including Rousseau, Kant, Voltaire, along with Locke and Spinoza. Netland duly notes the diversity of the Enlightenment, adding a helpful application of these views to Japan as a “focal point for assessing the global relevance of models of secularization” (page 68).

Chapter three, “Buddhism in the Modern World,” depicts a form of reverse “orientalism.” Rather than denigrate, “reverse orientalism” applauds and extols Asian cultures and religious traditions. An example is when we

read about the work of D. T. Suzuki to transform Buddhism into a global religion that fit well within modernism and was ready for export to the west. Suzuki was not alone in the crafting and propagating of modern Buddhism. The translation of Asian religious texts by Friedrich Max Müller was influential in the spread of oriental philosophy, as was the work of the Theosophists, up to the time when both Buddhism and Hinduism would be introduced to the American people at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893).

The fourth chapter "Jesus in a Global, Postcolonial World," extends the discussion to India, the United Kingdom, and Japan. With the discussion on India, we see a form of reverse "orientalism," when Hindus themselves adjust the religion to make it fit modernity and the expectation in the west of what "Indian religion" should be. From within this Hindu Renaissance, Netland introduces Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, Gandhi; from the west and Japan he introduces John Hick and Shusaku Endo. One of the real advantages of this book is Netland's use of Japanese-language materials in this chapter to more fully introduce and understand Endo.

The second part, "Christian Commitments in a Pluralistic World," begins with chapter five: "Can All Religions Be True?" As stated above, the language shifts in this part to philosophical terms. There is a level of reliance upon the Reformed Epistemology of Alvin Platinga which might cause our Wesleyan readers (and others outside Reformed traditions) some level of discomfort or uncertainty.

Chapter six, "On the Idea of Christianity as the One True Religion," begins a discussion of the possibility of an evangelical take on religious pluralism. Should evangelicalism be merely critical of pluralism or is there some potential dialogue? While the title and the discussion through this book were focused on Christianity as a unified whole, the actual diversity of cultures and confessions means that our task of "clarifying" is more complex. Or, as Netland says, "talk of *the* truth of Christianity or Islam, without qualification, [is] problematic" (184).

"Religious Diversity and Reasons for Belief" (chapter 7) employs philosophical literature and categories to help answer the questions of religious diversity, doubt, and ambiguity, with an awareness of natural religion. This chapter was not an easy read due to the complex arguments presented in precise terms. Both deductive and inductive theistic arguments are reviewed, with Netland turning toward a cumulative case approach. Netland adds "the extraordinary composition of the Bible over

a period of roughly 1,500 years, the life, teachings, death and apparent resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and the rapid growth of the early Christian community” to those proofs related to God’s creation alone. Together they assist our view that “Christian theism provides a more plausible explanation for these factors than other alternatives” (226).

Finally, chapter 8 (“Living with Religious Diversity as Jesus’ Disciples”) brings us to the post-9/11 religious world of complex relationships. First, the relationship between religions and violence is noted. Second, Netland reminds us that faithful Christians must also be good citizens. Third, we hear the witness of two documents: The Cape Town Commitment (2010) and “Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World” (2011). The challenging and conciliatory language in both documents help to add action steps for the entire book’s discussion of religious diversity. Two final topics are listed in the closing pages and act as a conclusion: interreligious apologetics and civic virtue. Netland reminds us all of the Golden Rule, as it can be applied beyond personal relationships to “broader social and political issues in religiously diverse societies” (253).

The end matters of this book include a bibliography and an index, allowing readers to both search within this book and to read further beyond this title. This book would prove helpful in theology and missiology courses at the graduate level, as a text that assists our hearing of diverse voices, including especially both Reformed and evangelical Christians.

Wade H. Phillips. *Quest to Restore God's House: A Theological History of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee): Volume 1 1886-1923 R. G. Spurling to A. J. Tomlinson, Formation-Transformation-Reformation*. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014. 663 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1935931447.

Reviewed by William Kostlevy, Director Brethren Historical Library and Archives, Elgin, IL.

As Melvin Dieter noted in his classic *Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century* (1980), no issue among Holiness Christians, not even the experience of full salvation, was more divisive and contentious in the late nineteenth century than the organization, nature, and character of the church. While some Holiness folks were content to duplicate the structures of historic Methodism, many of the most dynamic parts of the movement sought to restore the "Apostolic" or New Testament Church. The quest to restore the "Apostolic" church received its classic expression among groups calling themselves the Church of God.

The controversies that rent Holiness bodies were magnified among Pentecostals whose passion to restore apostolic Christianity went far beyond ecstatic spiritual experiences. Nowhere was this passion more in evidence than among the followers A. J. Tomlinson who would found several Church of God bodies, most notably the Church of God (Cleveland) and the Church of God of Prophecy. As Wade H. Phillips tells the story, Tomlinson's understanding of the true church went beyond a mere ecclesiastical institution. The word church signified something far greater – God's government on the earth. Unlike some scholars, Phillips highlights the Landmark Baptist roots of the church's pre-Pentecostal founder R. G. Spurling. As Phillips sees it, in 1886 Spurling's Christian Union was a reformulation of Landmarkism with intent of restoring the New Testament church. Although not yet Holiness or Pentecostal, A. J. Tomlinson would later insist that the actual restoration of a visible church or God's government on earth under Scripture dated to Spurling's 1886 founding.

If the restored church dated to 1886, its real numerical growth dates to the "Holiness-Pentecostal Transformation" that occurred during the decade following 1896. But it was with the arrival of A. J. Tomlinson that the story of the Church of God becomes truly distinctive. Drawing on his Quaker roots, his time at Shiloh Maine with Frank Sandford, his experiences with Martin Wells Knapp in Cincinnati and among other Holiness radicals, Phillips locates Tomlinson at the center of late nineteenth century Holiness radicalism. Especially significant was the time he spent with

Sandford. Like Sandford, Tomlinson was a charismatic and autocratic figure who believed that he was personally referenced in at least two Bible verses (Jer. 30.21, Isa. 66.2). In 1903 two events transformed Tomlinson's ministry. In May of 1903, during the preaching of George D. Watson in Indianapolis on the power of God's love, a cloud of discouragement that had been shadowing his ministry vanished. He was now ready to die for Jesus. A month later Tomlinson embraced Spurling's notion that the church was a visible corporate body. All that would remain was the establishment of a proper theocratic government with an actual seat of government in Cleveland, Tennessee. This last development would take over a decade to formulate and institute. Tragically, in Phillips telling, Tomlinson claimed too much, was too careless, and trusted some of the wrong people. The result was a power struggle that fractured his movement and left him leading only a faithful remnant under a new name, the Church of God of Prophecy. While told from the perspective of Tomlinson and his followers and clearly sympathetic to the tradition of the body he organized after 1923, Phillips is too good an historian and too faithful to the sources not to see that much of the fault for the division of the Church of God (Cleveland) rested with Tomlinson. Phillips' deeply moving and irenic conclusion speaks of God's mercy in other times of conflict and division.

There is much to applaud in this richly documented and thorough "theological" history. Phillips has spent years researching the history of the movement and locating important sources previously unknown to scholars. He has done much to restore the role of Spurling as key figure in the story he narrates. Further, by demonstrating the importance of Sandford in Tomlinson's life and thought, especially in Tomlinson's theocratic vision, we can now more clearly see Tomlinson in his proper historical context. Phillips has several important lessons for Wesleyans. He reinforces the close historic ties between early Pentecostalism and the Holiness Movement. The denial of these ties has hindered the understanding of not only the roots of Pentecostalism but the Holiness Movement itself. Further for Wesleyans, not without their own self-proclaimed and autocratic leaders, the story has an all too familiar ring. A charismatic leader, say a Ralph C. Horner, an Alma White, or a Seth C. Rees, divides a flourishing dynamic movement and ends up as a leader of a new and perhaps smaller insurgent remnant. As Phillips reminds us, even fallible leaders have enriched the church throughout history. Readers will not necessarily accept all of Phillips arguments or conclusion. But this is an important, well documented, and fascinating story that enhances our understanding of Holiness and Pentecostal Christianity.

Van De Walle, Bernie A. *Rethinking Holiness: A Theological Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. 192 pages. ISBN: 978-0801030673.

Reviewed by J. Russell Frazier, Coordinator of the D.Min. Programme and Senior Lecturer, Africa Nazarene University, Nairobi, Kenya.

Bernie A. Van De Walle (Ph.D., Drew University) is professor of historical and systematic theology at Ambrose University, the official post-secondary institution of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada and the Church of the Nazarene Canada, located in Calgary, Canada. He is the author of *The Heart of the Gospel: A. B. Simpson, the Fourfold Gospel, and Late Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Theology* as well as other academic publications.

The author first delivered the substance of this book to his denomination, the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, during a seminar. Thus, the writing style is “more accessible to students, pastors, and the interested person in the pew” (xiii). The author’s students believe that holiness is “a commodity, a lifestyle, or an ethic that one is expected to attain” (xii) which the author counters with the view that holiness is a theocentric category. He asserts his conviction as follows: “We can correctly understand the relation of holiness to ethics and morality only when we first understand it theologically” (xii).

In chapter one, the author asserts the universality of “The Desire and Need for Holiness,” underscoring three parties which desire holiness. While the author provides no statistical and little anecdotal evidence to substantiate his claim, he holds that the Church (the first party) evinces a desire for holiness based on the following: 1) a return to ancient worship; 2) a recent widened scope of salvation to encompass the whole person; 3) the increase of evangelical activism; 4) “the attempt to see God”; 5) the desire for the Church to demonstrate Christ; and 6) an increase of mutual scrutiny among the different generations within in the Church (2-13). The second party, nonbelievers, demonstrate a desire for holiness through a pursuit of spirituality and a demand for integrity and holiness within the Church. God is the third party desiring holiness. The author then stresses the need for holiness among the first two parties. An excursus concludes each chapter of the text; this one discusses five hurdles to holiness.

Van De Walle provides a biblical definition of holiness in chapter two. The theme of transcendence is the keynote. Holiness is “the tran-

scendence or absolute otherness that is basic to God's being" (xiii, 44). The author's singular focus on this understanding of holiness causes him to neglect large sections of the New Testament, such as the teachings of Jesus and the paraenesis of the epistles. An excursus on the Scripture's role in defining holiness stresses the formative role of the Scripture (rather than the mere conveyance of information).

In chapter 3, Van De Walle reinforces his definition of holiness in the prior chapter. He argues, correctly, that morality has a proper role in a right understanding of holiness but only a "secondary" role (51). He states, "Scripturally speaking, holiness first describes God's very mode of *being* and only secondarily his way of *behaving*" (51). Another section emphasizes the transcendence of God, and yet another interprets certain divine attributes in light of the transcendence of God (62). The Incarnation bridges the gap from divine holiness to human holiness (62), but it is understood in light of transcendence rather than immanence. The excursus at the close of this chapter focuses on human language and the nature of God (69).

"Holiness and the Nature and Purpose of Humanity" is the title of chapter four. The author discusses the creation of humanity and defines the *imago dei* in relational categories rather than substantive or functional ones, depicting Jesus as "the Archetype of Humanity" (84). When the author argues that pre-fall Adam was not yet perfected but was only innocent and thus cannot serve as the ideal human, it appears to leave open the necessity of the Fall for the moral perfection of humanity. In the excursus, the author states, "While this [humanity's 'chief end...to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever'] may have begun in the Garden of Eden, its complete expression was not fully realized there" (88). According to the author, the Fall was necessary to reveal the Archetype of Humanity, Jesus, and to allow humanity to enjoy and glorify God to its fullest.

Chapter five focuses on five major ways that the Scripture describes sin: missing the mark, irreligion, transgression, rebellion, and perversion (93ff.). Acknowledging the difficulties of defining sin, he prefers to describe sin as a mosaic because "Sin defies a simple definition" (98). The mosaic of sin portrays three themes: sin is willful; sin is relational; sin is an attack on God. As relational, sin damages the divine-human, the human-human, and the creation-human relationships. The excursus gives warnings on living in a "God-shrinking" and "Sin-shrinking" world which results in a diminished view of God and sin (106ff.).

In chapter 6, "Holiness and the Nature and Goal of Salvation," the author diverges from the classic Wesleyan-Arminian position on the doctrines of foreknowledge and election. Van De Walle opts for unconditional election: "The biblical concept of election indicates that God's choice of these people issues substantially and entirely from within himself; it is unconditional, based on his own unfathomable will" (113). The author describes foreknowledge in similar Calvinistic language. After brief sections on regeneration and redemption, the writer begins a lengthier discussion of the doctrine of justification and defends Luther against popular misconceptions of his theology. In identifying problems with evangelical theology which has largely imbibed Luther's thought, Van De Walle criticizes the forensic view of the doctrine of justification: "Such a view leaves humanity not only with nothing to contribute to its salvation but with no obligation in response to it either" (117). However, the author leaves his readers wondering how he can hold to unconditional election which has the same effect upon the elect. How can Van De Walle insist upon holiness when God unconditionally elects? In the excursus, he refutes legalism and license while opting for liberty.

"Holiness and the Nature and Goal of the Church" is the subject of the final chapter. The writer states that the holiness of the church is "a derived holiness, a second-order holiness... a holiness that comes from God and is proper to him alone" (133) and considers the Trinitarian relations of the church: the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Following a section on the morality of the church, the excursus focuses on holiness and the Donatist heresy, emphasizing the tension between the unity and the holiness of the church during that controversy.

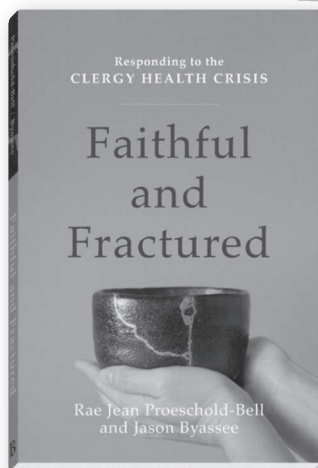
Recurring themes are emphasized in the conclusion: 1) "holiness is not merely a matter of behaviour but is fundamentally a way of being" (147); 2) "true holiness is a divine property alone" (148); 3) "all forms of creaturely holiness are derived from and constantly dependent on God" (149); 4) "human holiness is grounded in union with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit" (150).

Van De Walle provides fresh and engaging introductions to each chapter with illustrations which connect easily to his North American audience. While readers will not be disappointed with the author's accessible style, readers of a Wesleyan persuasion may be disappointed with the lack of Wesleyan terminology from this professor of a Wesleyan-holiness sponsored institution. Especially notable are the following missing



elements: references to prevenient grace and other Wesleyan categories, a treatment of the General Epistles (especially Johannine thought), correspondence with Wesley and other Wesleyan theologians, and a robust theology of the Trinity with respect to soteriology. Instead, one finds Reformed themes. Sometimes these themes are latent, such as alien righteousness, but at other times one finds the author touting openly Calvinistic doctrines which classic Wesleyan-Arminian theologians believe inveigh against the doctrine of holiness. The value of this book, therefore, is its potential to challenge those of the Reformed tradition to rethink holiness.

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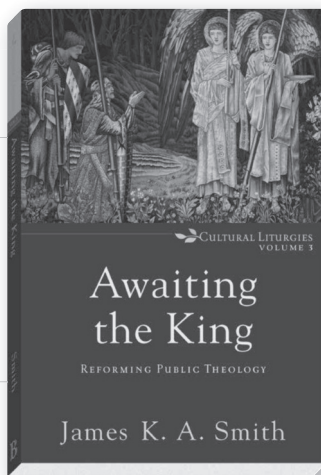
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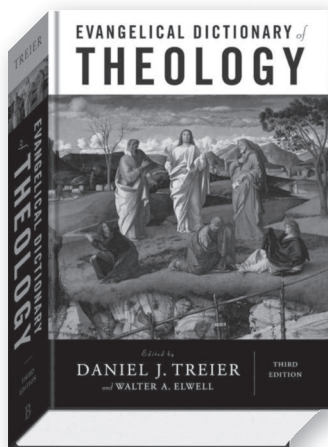
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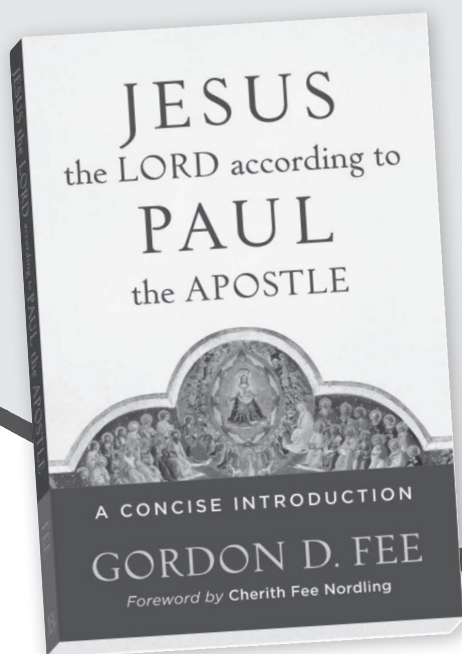


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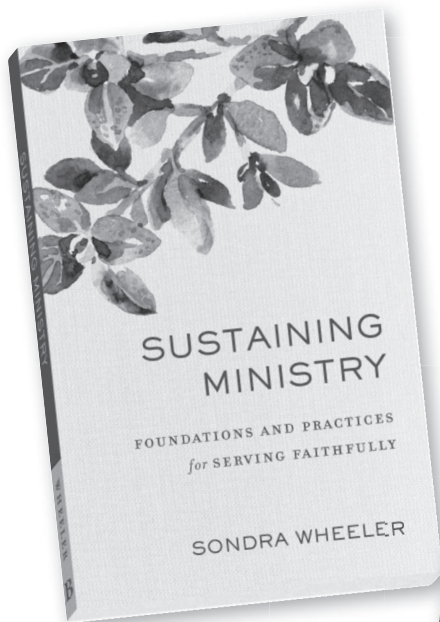
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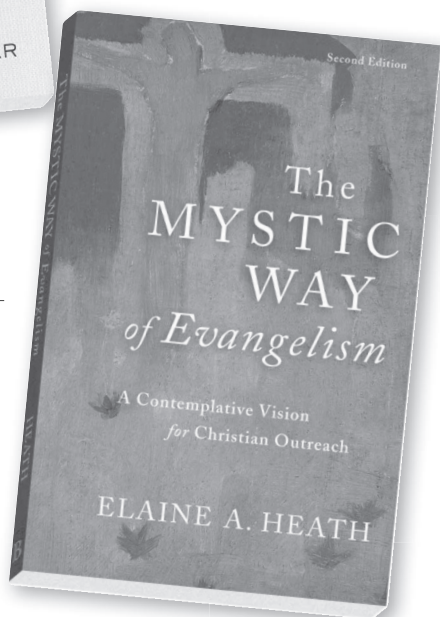
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